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Chinese Politics in Malaysia

A History of the
Malaysian Chinese Association

Heng Pek Koon

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Perpustakaan Negara
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To Mother and Father
and
to Paul

Preface

THIS study is a revised and updated version of my doctoral thesis presented to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1984. My interest in embarking on an intensive study of the development of Chinese politics in Peninsular Malaysia after World War II was spurred by the scarcity of published materials on this subject of great importance to all Malaysians, particularly those of us who are of Chinese descent. Standard works on Malaysian politics, such as those by G. P. Means, K. J. Ratnam, R. S. Milne, R. K. Vasil and K. van Vorys, have tended to treat Chinese politics as one component part in the complex overall mosaic of multiracial politics in Malaysia. I have tried to give greater focus to the unique configurations of Chinese political development within that mosaic.

I have made the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) the central player in this narrative because of its crucial role in weaning the Chinese away from their preoccupation with the old motherland and engaging their active participation in the mainstream politics of their new homeland. In this sense, the MCA's history is a history of the indigenization of Chinese politics in Malaysia. In addition, I am hopeful that this account will remind contemporary readers that the MCA, which today seems to be in a state of confusion and decline, played a pivotal part in the dramatic events surrounding the defeat of the Communist insurgency and the attainment of independence.

This study would not have been possible without the generosity of Datuk Lee San Choon, MCA president from mid-1974 to April 1983. Datuk Lee granted me permission to consult the party's archives, thus opening up a large and rich body of hitherto unconsulted MCA and Alliance materials. Several other party leaders, in particular Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan and Datuk Dr Ling Liong Sik, were equally co-operative in facilitating my research. Their frank and stimulating discussions during interviews greatly broadened my understanding of the MCA and Chinese politics in general, and their interest in my study made it possible for me to observe the workings of the party through direct access to party general as-

semblies, meetings and seminars at the national, state and local levels.

Past MCA leaders were also most generous with their time, and provided invaluable information which supplemented that found in party documents. I am especially grateful to Tun Tan Siew Sin, who gave me firsthand accounts of the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock, his father and the founder of the MCA, as well as his own involvement in the independence negotiations, his role in the Alliance government (1957-74) and his stewardship of the MCA (1961-74). I likewise gained immeasurably from the personal reminiscences of Tun H. S. Lee, Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin, Datuk Dr Lim Chong Eu, Datuk Douglas K. K. Lee, Ng Ek Teong and the late Tan Sri T. H. Tan.

The generosity and co-operation of leaders in the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) helped me place MCA politics in their proper context. I am particularly grateful to have had the opportunity to interview Tunku Abdul Rahman, whose role in Malaysian politics needs no elaboration. Other UMNO veterans such as Datuk Senu bin Abdul Rahman, Tan Sri Mohamed Khir Johari and Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, as well as present-day leaders such as Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Datuk Musa Hitam, Tengku Tan Sri Razaleigh Hamzah and Encik Abdul Ghafar bin Baba likewise shared their wisdom and knowledge of the dynamics of Alliance and Barisan Nasional (National Front) politics.

I also wish to thank Chinese leaders from the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and other parties for having provided me with valuable insights into the broader spectrum of Chinese politics. I especially thank Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Datuk Dr Goh Cheng Teik and Datuk Alex Lee of the Gerakan; Lim Kit Siang and Lee Lam Thye of the DAP; and Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon, who was a major force in opposition politics until the late 1970s.

In addition, I am grateful to the many individuals in the MCA, UMNO, Gerakan, DAP and other parties whom I have not, in the interest of space, been able to mention by name here. I am also indebted to the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, where I was given access to research facilities as a Research Associate. In particular, I would like to thank Datin Patricia Lim, the ISEAS librarian, for making available to me the Institute's collection of the Tan Cheng Lock Papers. The staff of the Arkib Negara (National Archives), Kuala Lumpur, likewise rendered me invaluable assistance when I consulted its records.

I am deeply grateful to my thesis supervisor, Dr Ruth McVey, for her guidance, insistence on high academic standards and patience during the lengthy gestation period of my dissertation, and to the New Zealand Universities Grants Committee which funded my doctoral programme at the University of London.

Finally, my deepest gratitude belongs to my parents, for giving me unstinting emotional support of a kind known only to those fortunate enough to be part of a close, loving family, and to Paul, for his understanding and encouragement, especially when I needed it most.

In presenting this study I hope to make a meaningful contribution to the study of Chinese politics in Peninsular Malaysia, a subject too long slighted by serious scholarship. I am acutely aware, however, of the limitations of my study. I especially regret that, despite my desire to present as much new data as possible, I have had to keep the discussion within manageable bounds and thus be selective both in time frame and scope of analysis. None the less, I hope that my findings will suggest fruitful areas for future research and stimulate more thorough attention to the subject of Chinese politics in Malaysia.

Bangkok
1987

HENG PEK KOON

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Note

All dollar figures cited in this study are Malayan or Malaysian ringgit.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACCC | Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce |
| AMCJA | All Malaya Council of Joint Action (also known as PMCJA, Pan Malaya Council of Joint Action) |
| BMA | British Military Administration |
| CCC | Chinese Chambers of Commerce |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CLC | Communities Liaison Committee |
| CRCGA | Council of Representatives of Chinese Guilds and Associations |
| CWC | Central Working Committee |
| DAP | Democratic Action Party |
| FELDA | Federal Land Development Authority (also known as FELDA) |
| ICA | Industrial Coordination Act |
| IMP | Independence of Malaya Party |
| JMBRAS | <i>Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> |
| JSEAH | <i>Journal of South-east Asian History</i> |
| JSEAS | <i>Journal of South-east Asian Studies</i> |
| KMT | Kuomintang |
| KMTM | Kuomintang Malaya |
| KSM | Koperasi Serbaguna Malaysia (co-operative move- ment of the MCA Youth section) |
| KVHG | Kinta Valley Home Guard |
| MARA | Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Council of Trust for the Indigenous People) |
| MCA | Malaysian Chinese Association (known as Malayan Chinese Association prior to 1963) |
| MCP | Malayan Communist Party |
| MDU | Malayan Democratic Union |
| MIC | Malaysian Indian Congress (known as Malayan Indian Congress prior to 1963) |
| MNP | Malay Nationalist Party |
| MPAJA | Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army |
| MPAJU | Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union |

| | |
|----------|--|
| MPHB | Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad |
| MU | Malayan Union |
| NEP | New Economic Policy |
| NOC | National Operations Council |
| NSM | National Salvation Movement |
| OCA | Overseas Chinese Association |
| OCAJA | Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army |
| PAS | Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (also known as PMIP) |
| PERNAS | Perbadanan Nasional (National Trading Corporation) |
| PETRONAS | Petroleum Nasional (National Petroleum Agency) |
| PMFTU | Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions |
| PNB | Permodalan Nasional Berhad (National Unit Trust) |
| PPP | People's Progressive Party |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| PUTERA | Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre of People's Power) |
| RIDA | Rural and Industrial Development Authority |
| SCBA | Straits Chinese British Association |
| SEDC | State Economic Development Corporation |
| UCSCA | United Chinese School Committees Association |
| UCSTA | United Chinese School Teachers Association |
| UDA | Urban Development Authority |
| UDP | United Democratic Party |
| UMNO | United Malays National Organisation |
| UPAM | United Planters Association of Malaya |

Introduction

It is hoped this study of the development of Chinese politics in Peninsular Malaysia¹ will contribute to a better understanding of the past-and future-role of the Chinese as a determinant of social stability and political viability in that multi-ethnic society. The study focuses on the period 1945-57, years that witnessed the emergence of the Chinese as an integral component within the political community of Malaya. Prior to those years, Chinese political behaviour was China-centred in orientation; later it became more Malayan-centred, or 'indigenized'.

The emergence of political consciousness within the immigrant Chinese community in Malaya was spurred by the growth of nationalistic and patriotic activities in mainland China that culminated in the Republican revolution of 1911. The ensuing bitter and protracted rivalry between the Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist movements in China found parallel expression in Malaya through the fierce competition between the Kuomintang Malaya (KMTM) and Malayan Communist Party (MCP). Another China-centred event, the Japanese invasion and occupation of that country, led to a period of great mobilization and politicization of the Chinese in Malaya, as anti-Japanese activities and campaigns were launched to support the war effort in China. The Japanese conquest of Malaya in late 1941, which forced the community to turn inward, thus was an important watershed in the development of Chinese politics in the country.

An indigenous Malayan-centred Chinese political culture, with both a radical and a conservative stream, began to take firm root within the Chinese community during the Japanese Occupation and in the period immediately following the Japanese surrender. The break in communications between Malaya and China during the war resulted in the Malayan Communist movement displaying a much more indigenous character than previously. Furthermore, as part of the Soviet Union's strategy in the global anti-fascist

struggle, the Comintern's instructions to Communist parties the world over emphasized nationalistic goals.

The Communists in Malaya succeeded in organizing the only viable underground against the Japanese. In so doing, they obtained widespread co-operation and support from the Chinese and were well positioned to disseminate radical political ideology within the community at large. Following reimposition of British rule in Malaya after August 1945, the Communist leadership attempted to gain political control, initially working within the constitutional confines of the Malayan Union, but subsequently opting for outright insurrection. The failure of the Communists to seize power, either through peaceful means or via the Emergency which began in 1948, signalled the demise of radical Chinese hopes for political domination in Malaya.

The central player of this study, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA—known as the Malaysian Chinese Association after 1963) represented the conservative stream of Chinese political culture. Linking traditional and modern elements of the community for the first time, the party brought together in a single organization Westernized leaders, Sino-centric pro-Kuomintang notables and socially-concerned business leaders. Flourishing in the hothouse climate of first the anti-Communist campaign and then the struggle for independence, the party brokered the growth of a Malayan-centred conservative Chinese political culture. In its finest hours, the MCA played an innovative and pivotal role in the independence movement, galvanizing and articulating the aspirations of the Chinese community, as well as effectively representing Chinese concerns *vis-à-vis* the British Administration and Malay powers-that-be. Rejecting the attempt of party president Tan Cheng Lock to integrate the MCA with Datuk Onn bin Jaafar's Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) in a non-communal multiracial party, the MCA leaders forged a communally based coalition with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). This alliance of Chinese, Malay and Indian interests persists to the present day in the expanded National Front coalition.

The relationship the MCA formed with the UMNO in the years preceding independence was highly satisfactory to both parties: interaction was harmonious and based on mutual respect as well as mutual interest. Co-operating with the UMNO in drawing up the country's Independence Constitution, the MCA ensured, for

the first time, that the immigrant Chinese would have a legitimate political position through becoming citizens of their adopted homeland. The UMNO, in return, obtained special rights treatment for the economically disadvantaged Malay community.

After the attainment of independence in August 1957, the Chinese community had to adjust to the reality of Malay political dominance. However, its political leadership, both within and outside the MCA, persisted in demanding rights and privileges equal to those enjoyed by the Malay community. The Chinese challenge to Malay political dominance, compounded by profound Malay frustration over the lack of economic progress made by their community since independence, produced the explosive ingredients that led to the racial riots of May 1969.

That cataclysmic rupturing of the multi-ethnic fabric of Malaysian society has since forced the Chinese to acknowledge Malay political supremacy. In adjusting to that fundamental reality, Chinese politics in the country have lost the optimism and energy which characterized the 1945-57 period. Thirty years after independence, the Chinese body politic has reached a cul-de-sac, its vitality sapped by the painful 'coming to terms' with Malay political dominance and concomitant loss of all serious prospects of again playing a central role in the political life of the country.

In examining the fundamental changes which have affected the Chinese political position in the country, it is useful to look more deeply at the roots of its political culture, i.e. the political orientation, beliefs, behaviour, attitudes and styles displayed by leaders and followers in that political milieu. In general, Chinese political culture in Malaya since the mid-nineteenth century has stemmed from both specifically Chinese characteristics and hybrid qualities made necessary by adjustment to the new homeland. Its 'Chineseness' can best be described in terms of the Confucian values and world-view that formed the basis of the immigrants' political behaviour in Malaya. Central to that world-view was a highly developed sense of racial superiority, a conviction that China was the Middle Kingdom, the centre of civilization and fount of great learning and unsurpassed accomplishments. The Chinese immigrants in Malaya had an unwavering and single-minded desire to preserve their cultural heritage through the promotion of the Chinese language, and the operation of schools to transmit their core values.

Rather than re-creating a microcosm of Chinese society in

the new homeland, only institutions congruent to the needs of a pioneering community were transplanted. The dominant Chinese institutions for the greater part of the nineteenth century were secret societies, organizations that had their origins in the homeland but never achieved such ascendancy there. As the population became more settled and permanent, other types of institutions, the Chamber of Commerce and dialect/provincial association in particular, acquired greater prominence. And early in this century, political parties appeared on the scene, as activists and organizers arrived from China to mobilize the resources of the increasingly urbanized and prosperous Chinese population in support of various political causes in the motherland.

The Confucianist status hierarchy re-emerged in a modified form within the Chinese community in Malaya.² In traditional Chinese society, scholar-officials constituted the social élite and provided the leadership of the country—e.g. court officials, magistrates, administrators, and local dignitaries. The Malayan environment produced a different social élite and criteria of leadership. Wealthy merchants, possessing more material means to dispense largess and patronage than any other social group in the community, became the new élite. With the establishment and growth of a Chinese educational system, social status within the immigrant community tended more closely to mirror that of Imperial China, with education providing as important a channel of social mobility as wealth. After 1900, an English- and Chinese-educated élite increasingly replaced largely illiterate merchants as community leaders. The ranks of the post-World War II Chinese leadership have comprised English-educated professionals such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects and teachers, as well as Chinese-educated teachers, and university graduates. In addition to such professionals, merchant-entrepreneurs educated in English and/or Chinese have continued to be part of the leadership.

Chinese political and social institutions in Malaya have historically existed within an 'encapsulated' framework, functioning quite independently of the overarching British colonial and Malay indigenous political systems.³ As the forces of indigenous government in the nineteenth century were undeveloped or rudimentary in the areas of Chinese pioneering activities, and since British colonial policy was based on indirect rule, the immigrant population was able to enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the running and management of its community affairs. The colonial and Malay

authorities were happy to deal with the immigrant population through appointed headmen known as Kapitan China (Chinese Captains). The Kapitan China, who was almost always a rich merchant with secret society connections, would already have been firmly established as a community leader before his formal appointment to that office.

The Kapitan China system laid the foundations for present-day Chinese political institutions. The moral authority of the Kapitan China was based not on the Confucianist tradition of learning and wisdom, but on his ability to perform effective intermediary services between the Chinese community on the one hand, and the British- and Malay-dominated bureaucracy and government on the other. Leadership of present-day Chinese political institutions bears many resemblances to the earlier period. Most noticeable is the fact that political authority is still measured by the capacity to secure benefits for the Chinese community from powerful non-Chinese patrons. In this respect, Chinese political authority in Malaysia remains derivative, a function of having access to those who control real power.

These conditions have produced and perpetuated a Chinese political leadership readily inclined to acquiesce in a status quo defined initially by the colonial authorities and later by the Malay authorities. Over the past hundred years, the most effective and prominent Chinese political brokers have been conservative, pro-establishment community leaders. For example, the leaders most acceptable to the colonial administration were, not surprisingly, the handful of Anglophile English-educated such as those professionals and businessmen who were originally organized in the Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA) and who subsequently spearheaded the formation of the MCA. At ease with the manners and values of the West and familiar with the practices of parliamentary democracy, the English-educated élite were the natural allies and clients of the colonial government in Malaya. Having received political tutelage in representative government through their appointment to the Legislative Councils in the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, these leaders emerged as the most experienced practitioners in national-level politics and possessed the widest network of key contacts in the highest circles of government.

Compared to the English-educated political élite whose Western socialization commonly resulted in a dilution of their 'Chineseness', Chinese-educated leaders displayed a greater affinity with

the thinking and aspirations of the Chinese masses and enjoyed far wider grass-roots support. However, lacking the social and linguistic skills to deal with the non-Chinese political centre, the natural leaders from this segment of the community were forced into subordinate leadership positions. When this was not the case, the results have been unfortunate. The demise of the abortive breakaway movement in 1956, led by an MCA Chinese-educated leadership whose views on the Independence Constitution probably far more faithfully represented Chinese thinking of the time than did the English-educated leadership involved in the constitutional talks, demonstrates a recurrent theme in Chinese politics in Malaysia: that independent political action undertaken by the Chinese-educated élite has tended to be highly quixotic.

Notwithstanding the above, Chinese-educated leaders do have an essential political role, for they serve as the vital intermediaries between the Westernized national élite and the grass-roots. Without the brokerage services of these conservative leaders, especially those controlling the Chambers of Commerce and voluntary associations, the British and Malay authorities would have had little means of governing the Chinese population in the country.

Chinese leaders who displayed anti-colonial and/or Communist views, however popular they might have been within their own community, inevitably faced intense opposition from the authorities. Not only did the colonial administration relentlessly oppose the Communist movement at all stages except for a relatively brief period after August 1945, it was equally hostile towards a small group of English-educated leaders who organized the leftist and anti-colonial Malayan Democratic Union (MDU) in the immediate post-war period.

While favoured treatment by colonial and Malay leaders has consistently facilitated access to positions of Chinese political leadership, receiving colonial or Malay patronage has never in itself ensured leadership status. Rather, Chinese leaders have had to legitimize their own positions by demonstrating an ability to fulfil Chinese aspirations. The fundamental goals of the Chinese in Malaysia have been, and remain, to prosper and to preserve their cultural traditions through the unfettered practice of Chinese language, customs and traditions.

Until recent decades and except for the duration of the Japanese Occupation, Chinese leaders were able to maintain control over the community's social and political institutions. The colonial admin-

istration was content to let the Malays, Chinese and Indians retain their own separate cultural and linguistic heritage, although English education was made available to a small group of aristocratic Malays and urbanized Chinese and Indians, primarily to provide the necessary manpower for the organs of government. Chinese leaders under British rule thus experienced minimal outside involvement in the management of the affairs of their community. Colonial interference, when it occurred, commonly took the form of action against Communist and anti-British activities, such as the closure of schools suspected of disseminating left-wing teachings and the imprisonment or deportation of Communist leaders.

The Chinese continued to enjoy virtual autonomy until the reins of power passed from the British Government to the Malay-dominated government of independent Malaya. The popularly elected Alliance government identified Malayan nationhood and national identity predominantly in Malay terms. Islam was designated the official religion and Malay the national language of the country. The ceremonial rituals of the newly established Malayan Parliament and state assemblies were derived from the Malay court, and the Sultans were to serve as the new nation's constitutional monarchs.

The question of reconciling Malay nationalism and Chinese chauvinism did not in fact arise for several years after the attainment of independence. In the pre-independence period, although issues central to Chinese interests such as citizenship, language, education and special rights were the major issues treated by the UMNO and MCA leaders who participated in the constitutional negotiations, these representatives of the two races were able to reach compromises for a number of reasons. Most important was the overriding need for the Alliance leadership to maintain a common stand on the Independence Constitution in order to persuade the British Government that the different races of Malaya possessed the necessary spirit of goodwill for successful self-government. During its period of greatest achievement the MCA proved that not only could it contribute significantly to the defeat of the Communist insurgency and build an effective political party with mass support, but it was also able to meet the challenge of satisfying British concerns while fashioning a historic compromise with its Malay partners.

Unfortunately, the issues which seemed soluble when discussed as abstract objectives became intractable in the face of Malay nationalist assertiveness, particularly in the period beginning in the

1960s and extending to the present. Under these circumstances, Chinese leaders who in earlier days effectively served the community have experienced a steady erosion of their authority both within the community and as leaders of the coalition government of Malaysia. The 'epilogue' of this study describes the emasculation and 'marginalization' of Chinese politics in Malaysia in recent decades that has grievously endangered the party's standing as a credible representative of Chinese interests in the country.

1. For purposes of this study, Peninsular Malaysia will be referred to as 'Malaya' in the period before 1963, the year of the formation of Malaysia, and as 'Malaysia' for the period after 1963.

2. Wang Gungwu, 'Traditional Leadership in a New Nation: The Chinese in Singapore and Malaya', in S.T. Alisjahbana (ed.), *The Cultural Problems of Malaysia in the Context of Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Society of Orientalists, 1966, pp. 172-5.

3. The concept of 'encapsulated community' is based on M. J. Swartz's and F. G. Bailey's definition of the power relationship between the host society, the 'encapsulating' system, and the local-level 'encapsulated' system. See F. G. Bailey, *Stratagem and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1969; and M. J. Swartz (ed.), *Local Level Politics: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, London, University of London Press, 1969. Judith Strauch applies the concept to the Malaysian context in her study, *Chinese Village Politics in the Malaysian State*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981, Ch. 1.

The Historical Background: Chinese Settlement and Political Institutions in Malaya

PRESENT-DAY Malaysian Chinese political culture grew out of institutions and social systems which developed within the community as mechanisms of internal organization, mutual aid, competition for power, self-protection and channels of interaction with the colonial and Malay authorities. Different institutions acquired primacy at different phases of settlement, reflecting the manner in which the community adapted to changing needs and conditions arising from the local political environment as well as from the demographic structure of the immigrant population.

Generally, one can discern three distinct phases in the pattern of Chinese immigration and settlement in Malaya: (1) the earliest period, from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the founding of the Straits Settlements by the British, which saw the establishment of the *Baba* (Straits Chinese) community; (2) from the advent of mass immigration in the 1820s onwards, when the *Laukeh*¹ community emerged and flourished; and (3) from the 1900s to the outbreak of World War II, when political groupings took shape and political activities proliferated.

Chinese Settlement in Malaya

At the time mass Chinese immigration commenced in Malaya in the period following the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there was already a small but established Chinese community located primarily in the British-administered Straits Settlements. Known today as *Baba*, *Peranakan* or *Straits Chinese*, this group of Chinese were the descendants of the earliest Chinese settlers, mainly Hokkiens from the south-eastern Chinese province of Fukien, who first came to Malaya around 1400 to engage in the thriving maritime trade of the newly established Malacca Sultanate.

Baba culture is predominantly Chinese, but overlaid with Malay and European elements.² While Babas have retained Chinese religious, cultural and familial practices, they have been socially, culturally and, to a lesser extent, biologically assimilated into Malay society. Most Babas speak Malay or patois Malay, eat Malay food and practise certain Malay customs, but few have converted to Islam. After the founding of the Straits Settlements (Penang in 1786, Singapore in 1819, and Malacca in 1824) and the commencement of British colonial rule, the Babas became fluent in English and proficient in Western modes of transacting business. They also adopted Western styles of dressing and recreational habits, but retained most of their Chinese and Malay traits.

The Babas were the earliest mercantile and professional class within the Chinese community in Malaya. Being the first settlers and trading pioneers, they had accumulated capital which enabled them to set up business enterprises with the onset of British colonial rule. When Singapore was founded in 1819, wealthy Baba merchants from Malacca moved to the island and financed the gambier and pepper agricultural industries of Singapore and Johore.³ These Baba capitalists also acted as compradors between the European import-export agency houses and Chinese retailers and shopkeepers. In addition, the Babas were numerically strong in the professional classes of the Straits Settlements, joining the legal, medical and teaching professions, and serving as clerks in the colonial administration.

The mass arrival of Chinese immigrants and their control of the tin and agricultural industries after the 1820s eclipsed Baba predominance of the economic life of the Straits Settlements. In addition, with the mass influx of immigrants, the size of the Baba community in relation to the total Chinese population was proportionately diminished. In 1911 the percentage of local-born Chinese stood at 23 per cent in the Straits Settlements and 8 per cent in the Federated Malay States.⁴ The Baba proportion was much smaller than these percentages indicate, since by 1911 many of the locally born were from the growing immigrant population, virtually none of whom took on attributes of the Baba culture. Surrounded and outnumbered by the immigrants, the Babas gradually became resinicized, especially in their increased use of the Chinese dialects. However, they did not completely assimilate into Chinese culture, but still retained many Anglo-Malay socio-cultural traits. Representing a hybrid Malayan social and political subculture combining

in varying proportions British loyalty, Chinese self-consciousness and Malay identity, the Baba Chinese became remarkably effective political brokers between the colonial, Chinese and Malay societies.

Mass Chinese immigration to Malaya was prompted as much by the economic opportunities created by the British mercantile and administrative presence in the Straits Settlements and encouragement by the Malay authorities of tin-rich states, as by adverse social and political conditions in China. British merchants residing in the Straits Settlements, and Malay Sultans, were quick to grasp the fact that great profits could be made in the agricultural and tin-mining industries of the west coast Malay States, provided the necessary pioneering work and clearing of jungle land were undertaken by a regular and large supply of cheap coolie labour. The British Government encouraged the flow of emigrants leaving China by forcing a treaty upon the Manchu Government which lifted the long-standing and traditional ban on emigration.⁵

The flow of immigrants to Malaya started in earnest after the 1820s. In 1824, the Chinese population in Singapore was 31 per cent (3,317 people) of the total population. By 1860, it had jumped to 61 per cent (50,043). In Penang, it stood at 28 per cent (8,270) in 1820. By 1860, it had grown to 46 per cent (28,018). In the Malay States, the Chinese presence prior to the 1850s was insignificant. After that date, it increased so rapidly that it exceeded the Malay population in the tin-rich areas. In 1891, there were 50,844 Chinese to 26,578 Malays in Selangor; in the Kinta district of Perak there were 39,513 Chinese to 14,472 Malays. By 1901, the overall Chinese population in the Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang) had exceeded the Malay population, the figures being 299,739 to 285,278.⁶

The free inflow of immigrants to Malaya continued unabated until the enactment of the Immigration Restriction Ordinance (1929) and the Aliens Ordinance (1933) curbed the process. Bringing with them a distinctive way of life, the immigrants established community patterns in Malaya which were extensions of their life-styles in their home villages and towns. This phenomenon resulted in the creation of an 'encapsulated' China-oriented Laukeh community within a British colonial structure (after 1874) and an indigenous Malay population.

Three principal types of socio-economic organization existed in the south-eastern provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien, from where the majority of immigrants came. The first, and by far the most

important, was the lineage system; the second, the voluntary association; and the third, the secret society.

The village in South-east China was the outcome of lineage settlement, and in the nineteenth century local government was managed largely by the leading branch families of lineages. Imperial officials delegated to this local gentry the responsibility of overseeing the progress of public works, of assuring local defence, and of providing relief in times of flood and famine. Local autonomy was even more pronounced in Kwangtung and Fukien, where not only were whole villages populated by single lineages, but in certain areas a single lineage settled over a few villages. Immigrants thus came to Malaya from a region in China dominated by highly organized, strong lineages which enjoyed a large degree of political autonomy. Lineages did not migrate *in toto*, however, as usually only the more destitute or adventurous members of the lineage would leave their home villages in search of a better livelihood overseas.

The existence of the lineage as the basic unit of social organization meant that when people moved out of their villages, they sought to congregate in organizations which would serve similar mutual aid and protection functions. These characteristics were common to the voluntary organizations (*huay-kuan*)⁷ founded by groups of Chinese outside their home villages both in China and overseas. Voluntary associations in China proliferated in urban centres populated by different lineages and diverse dialect groups. Three major types of voluntary association developed: the dialect/territorial association, the trade guild, and the clan or surname association. The dialect/territorial association admitted members based on common dialect group and territorial origins; the trade guild admitted members from the same craft, trade or service; and the clan association recruited members having the same surname.⁸ The principal functions of these voluntary associations were the provision of facilities for the worship of common ancestors and gods; the settlement of disputes among members; the extension of aid to poorer members; and the supervision of burial of members. The trade guild concentrated on protecting its *de facto* monopoly in each craft and regulated conditions of work for members. Other minor types of voluntary association also existed which looked after the general cultural and recreational needs of members. These included literary, dramatic, musical, pugilistic and mutual aid/funerary clubs.

The third type of socio-economic grouping in China was the secret society. Though not based on common blood or trade interests, secret society membership was normally confined to the same dialect group.⁹ Secret societies perhaps first developed as an expression of protest by an oppressed peasantry which had been already organized into sects of shamanistic origins. The antiquity and long-standing political potential of these sects can be seen in the fact that they led the revolt which culminated in the founding of the Han Dynasty in 200 BC.¹⁰ Throughout the ages, bands of vagabonds and wanderers, usually victims of flood, famine, war or oppressive rule, gathered around charismatic leaders to resist the local authorities. They were united by secret rituals of initiation and oaths of loyalty to their society based on precepts derived from popular Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, ancestor-worship and belief in astral travel.

During the Ching Dynasty, secret societies developed into effective political organizations for mobilizing support against government and authority. They also constituted an extra-legal and alternative means of social mobility, allowing their members to achieve leadership status and to bypass the established hierarchical structure topped by the official and scholar.¹¹ The largest and most influential secret societies in South-east China were a group known collectively as the Triad Brotherhood (or the Heaven and Earth League, or the Hung Brotherhood). The Triad Brotherhood had far wider political, social and economic control over its members than any form of social grouping other than the lineage. It was widespread in both rural and urban areas, and was also supported by the emerging proto-proletariat of the coastal ports. Its rigid hierarchical order, the quasi-patriarchal powers of its leaders, the juridical sway it exercised over members and the esoteric nature of its ceremonial rituals all served to augment the members' sense of absolute identification and loyalty, although many of them might also have belonged to voluntary associations and other groupings.

The Kapitan China System and Secret Societies

Upon their arrival in Malaya during the nineteenth century, groups of immigrants joined together in organizations based on familiar prototypes to meet their organizational and functional needs in the harsh pioneering conditions of the new society. Political conditions were conducive to the establishment and growth of secret societies

and voluntary associations. Malay political power in the Malay states was decentralized, and the forces of government were at best rudimentary in most of the areas where Chinese pioneering activities were carried out. Following the intervention of British rule in the Malay states in 1874, the Chinese immigrant community continued to enjoy autonomy in the management of their activities because of the colonial practice of indirect rule based on the Kapitan China system.

The Kapitan China system was first introduced by the Portuguese after their conquest of Malacca in 1511 as a means of indirectly governing the local populace. The Kapitan China was the Chinese headman appointed by the Portuguese, who, like his counterparts, the Malay, Arab and Indian Kapitan, served as a political intermediary between the colonial authorities and the different racial communities. The Kapitan were invested with considerable executive, administrative and judicial power over their respective communities. When the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the ruling power in Malacca in 1640, they retained the practice of appointing Kapitan to oversee the local needs of their own racial groups. Following the establishment of British rule in the Straits Settlements and the western Malay states, colonial administrators maintained the practice of dealing with the fast-growing Chinese immigrant population through appointed Kapitan China. In the areas which came under Malay jurisdiction, Kapitan China were likewise appointed by the Sultans to supervise the activities of Chinese settlers.

The Kapitan China system existed in the Straits Settlements until 1826, when a Charter of Justice extended the jurisdiction of the Recorder's Court in Penang throughout the Straits Settlements, thus ending the formal role of the Kapitan China as intermediaries between the colonial government and its Chinese subjects.¹² In the Malay states, the system functioned officially until 1901. In both cases, however, unofficial Kapitan China continued to be appointed long after the system had technically been discontinued—until the 1880s in the Straits Settlements and as late as the 1930s in the Malay states.¹³ The system survived its official abolition because the authorities still depended on the services of Chinese political intermediaries to develop and exploit the commercial potential of the Straits Settlements and the Malay states, but lacked the administrative capacity to govern the Chinese community directly. The intermediaries were required to collect revenue from taxes imposed

on local goods (tin, gambier and pepper) produced by the immigrants and to operate revenue-generating excise farms related to gambling and pawnbroking activities and the sale of pork, spirits and opium. The unofficial Kapitan China were also needed to maintain law and order and to attend to the general welfare of their local communities.

Recruitment into voluntary associations was based on commonality of dialect and territorial origins, surname or craft affiliations, but in Malaya the immigrants came from varied dialect and territorial backgrounds, and even fewer had common surname or craft affiliations. Secret societies, on the other hand, recruited across such barriers and members were bound together by the rituals of sworn brotherhood around a charismatic and semi-mystical head. Being tightly knit, and glorifying martial prowess, they were particularly well suited to the task of colonization and self-protection demanded of a pioneering community. Mak Lau Fong observes in his sociological study of secret societies in Peninsular Malaysia: 'When sworn brotherhood binds Triad membership together, dialect differences are naturally de-emphasized, and the clan system is consigned to a secondary position.'¹⁴

A second, perhaps more important, reason why secret societies emerged as the dominant form of organization stemmed from the class structure and sex-ratio of the immigrant population in nineteenth-century Malaya. These Chinese immigrants were largely young adult males drawn from the peasantry and working classes of China. The low female sex-ratio and working-class structure of the immigrant population was particularly conducive to the tightly organized and male-orientated character of secret societies. However, as the female numbers increased and the population became sexually balanced, and as social mobility created an urban-based middle-class mercantile population, voluntary associations assumed greater organizational relevance within the community, particularly after secret societies were banned by the colonial authorities in 1890.

Until the imposition of the ban, secret societies in Malaya were neither illegal nor anti-government, as was the case in China. For example, though outlawed in China, the Triad Brotherhood was legal in Malaya and in fact comprised the predominant group of secret societies in the country. Instead of opposing the government, the Triads in Malaya worked to promote their members' livelihood through co-operative efforts at land clearing for agri-

cultural and tin-mining enterprises, and through fending off encroachments from rival secret societies. They became so powerful and influential that they controlled the recruitment of new immigrants from China to work in the plantations and tin mines. They also governed the economic activities of the immigrants and maintained law and order in their respective territorial preserves. In contrast to their outlawed status in China, secret societies in nineteenth-century Malaya were the vehicles through which the British and Malay authorities conducted economic and political relations with the immigrant Chinese population, and the more influential secret society leaders were appointed Kapitan China by the authorities. Among the most famous of the Kapitan China cum secret society headmen were Yap Ah Loy, founder of Kuala Lumpur and leader of the local Hai San secret society, Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee of the Hai San in Larut, and Kapitan Chin Ah Yam of the Ghee Hin, also in Larut. Besides their role in organizing Chinese labourers for tin-mining, land development and other activities, they became embroiled in Malay internecine feuds and thus played a significant role in the events leading to British intervention in the Malay states.¹⁵

Trocki's study of Johore and Singapore during the period 1784-1885 shows that the colonial and Malay authorities utilized a variant of the Kapitan China system, the *Kangchu* (river chief or master) system, as a major means of developing the pepper and gambier economy of southern Malaya and regulating the activities of the immigrant Chinese labourers.¹⁶ Under the *Kangchu* system, land, usually near the waterfront or waterways, was leased to individuals or groups of Chinese for cultivation and development, and lessees were given the right to collect taxes, operate excise farms and exercise functions of government over the immigrant population under their charge. Secret societies were deeply involved in the operation of the *Kangchu* system, as exemplified by Tan Nee Soon, who was the head of the Ngee Heng secret society and also the *Kangchu* of Tebrau.¹⁷

Once the authorities recognized secret society leaders as men of authority within their own communities, secret societies became a major channel of social mobility within Chinese society. As political office and positions of leadership could not be inherited or attained through other means such as educational achievement, as was the case in China, wealth became a major criterion of leadership status within the Chinese community in Malaya. However, an

individual who became a secret society leader through physical prowess and dexterity in the martial arts could also become a Kapitan China or a Kangchu. Heading a secret society was also an important means of obtaining and preserving wealth because of the economic opportunities offered by the position. Wealthy merchants naturally aspired to become patrons of secret societies, because the authorities were willing to deal with them in that capacity and also because secret societies offered opportunities to amass greater wealth.

Although secret societies were useful to the colonial authorities as organizational vehicles of Chinese pioneering efforts in Malaya, their drawbacks eventually brought about their demise. The principal reason behind the colonial government's decision to make secret societies illegal was the frequent outbreaks of secret society feuding, most commonly caused by economic and dialect group rivalries, which disrupted the political and economic life of the Straits Settlements.¹⁸ Between 1867 and 1889, the government vacillated between a policy of recognition and partial suppression of secret societies in its quest for a successful formula to regulate their activities.¹⁹ It also established a Chinese Protectorate in 1877 to help curb abuses arising from secret society powers.²⁰ All these measures, however, failed to bring the secret societies to heel. With the gradual extension of the British administrative capacity, both in terms of taxation and security, the government finally decided that the convenience of having secret society leaders perform Kapitan China functions was far out-weighted by the societies' anti-social behaviour. They thus enacted the Societies Ordinance of 1889, which effectively caused secret societies to become illegal organizations.

With the imposition of the ban, secret societies lost their previous status and powers within the Chinese community, and degenerated into underworld gangs involved in organized crime, drug-pushing, extortion and prostitution rackets. Although secret society leaders were no longer accredited leaders of the community, they continued to exert influence through their position as bosses of the underworld. They maintained personal relations with the new leaders of the community—the leaders of voluntary associations and political groupings—by offering 'protection' for the business activities of these leaders, by serving as their personal bodyguards or by becoming their partners in business deals. Despite their illegal status, secret societies still possessed con-

siderable organizational and financial muscle, and their support was covertly sought by the leaders of the Chinese community after 1900 (and up to the present).

Voluntary Associations: Huay Kuan and Chinese Chambers of Commerce

Voluntary associations were formed in the period when secret societies dominated Chinese society in Malaya. While secret societies were concerned with facilitating the pioneering activities of the community, voluntary associations catered to general social and recreational needs of members such as the organization of arrangements for ancestor and deity worship, the overseeing of burials and maintenance of cemeteries, the settlement of disputes and the provision of mutual aid. The earliest huay kuan were dialect/territorial and clan associations, formed in the Straits Settlements as early as the 1810s and in the Malay states in the 1850s. These associations were commonly formed by secret society leaders, and the membership of the huay kuan overlapped with that of secret societies.

Secret societies were eclipsed by voluntary associations in importance and influence after the Societies Ordinance of 1889 suppressed the former and allowed the latter to operate freely. Other factors also accounted for the growing importance of voluntary associations. As Chinese society had less of a frontier character, and with law and order being increasingly imposed by the British, the community leaders became more and more capable of supporting voluntary associations. The rapid increase in the number of female immigrants after 1911 led to the establishment of a sexually balanced community, with a high percentage (63.5) of locally-born persons by 1947.²¹ The growth of the modern commercial sector based on wealth generated by the tin and rubber industries in the period 1900-41 resulted in the development of urban centres and urban-based Chinese middle and working classes.

During the inter-war period, voluntary associations proliferated to meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of a consolidated and established Laukeh community in Malaya. Seven major types of voluntary association existed: (1) the dialect/territorial association formed at the provincial, prefecture, county and village level; (2) the clan/surname association; (3) the trade guild and Chamber of Commerce; (4) the cultural, dramatic and/or musical society; (5) the social/recreational society; (6) the religious/moral

uplifting society; and (7) the mutual aid/funerary society. Of these, the huay kuan at the provincial level and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCC) were the largest and most important types of organization.

The provincial huay kuan was the paramount organization within each dialect group and the CCC was the most important pan-dialect organization. The CCC had the earmarks of both a traditional association and a modern organization. On the one hand, it derived from the ancient Chinese merchant guild, but on the other, it reflected a new Chinese organizational form. Chinese Chambers of Commerce in China were first promoted by the Ching Government at the turn of the twentieth century as part of the Manchu reformist movement to generate nationalism and modernize China in the face of the Western imperialist threat to China's sovereignty. In 1902, the Ching Government encouraged trade guilds in each city in China to affiliate in Chambers of Commerce to promote commerce and national unity.²²

Chinese Chambers of Commerce were introduced in Malaya after 1905 by Manchu officials as part of the Chinese Government's campaign to promote commerce and Chinese nationalism among the *hua chiao* (overseas Chinese) in South-East Asia.²³ Their efforts resulted in the formation of the Singapore CCC in 1906. Others were subsequently formed throughout Malaya—in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca, Ipoh, Seremban and other Chinese urban centres. In Malaya, the CCC served at least as an avenue for negotiating settlements to disagreements between dialect groups that would otherwise have been fought along sectional lines. They promoted a sense of unity across dialect boundaries and were instrumental in engendering Chinese nationalism within the Chinese community in Malaya. They were also instrumental in presenting a united Chinese position in dealings with the authorities.

The day-to-day functions of the CCC centred primarily on the promotion of Chinese commerce, but they were concerned also with the regulation of community affairs which had previously been performed by the Kapitan China. However, the CCC leaders' role was much more circumscribed, as the colonial government had greatly increased its administrative and judicial capability, and their powers were limited to the promotion of Chinese commerce and community welfare services.

CCC leaders formed a number of other inter-dialect organizations to promote Chinese unity and carry out social welfare and

recreational activities within the community. These included the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in Kuala Lumpur, the Perak Chinese Association in Ipoh, and the Johore Bahru Chinese Association. The pre-eminence of the CCC and their subsidiary pan-Chinese associations reflected the commercial importance and social dominance of merchants within Chinese society in Malaya.

Political Groupings, 1900-1941

The rise of the CCC, directly promoted by the Manchu Government as a pan-Chinese vehicle for generating Chinese nationalism, ushered in the political awakening of the Laukeh community in Malaya. However, this increased political consciousness was not expressed through the CCC, which was not a political party, as much as through two overtly political groupings even more closely linked to parent bodies in China, the Kuomintang Malaya and the Malayan Communist Party. A third major political actor during the period was the pro-British indigenous Straits Chinese British Association.

The Kuomintang Malaya and the Malayan Communist Party

The KMTM and MCP represented in Malaya the two dominant and conflicting political movements of twentieth-century China. Both drew on their parent organizations for ideology, cadres, and support. Their fierce competition and vigorous proselytization of their respective causes generated political awareness—but also discord—within the Laukeh community.

The KMTM was formed as a result of the efforts of Chinese republicans led by Sun Yat Sen to mobilize overseas Chinese support behind the nationalist, anti-Manchu movement that culminated in the Revolution of 1911. The appeals of the founding fathers of the Republic of China were given an enthusiastic reception by the Laukeh community, which responded with handsome financial contributions, moral support and active enlistment of cadres for the revolutionary cause. The predecessor of the Kuomintang, the Tung Meng Hui, was established in 1906 in Singapore. After the overthrow of the Ching Dynasty the Singapore lodge of the KMT was formed in 1912; a year later several KMT branches were set up throughout Malaya and the party soon received the support of a considerable proportion of the Laukeh community.²⁴

Communism was first introduced to Malaya by radical elements within the KMT. In 1923 Sun Yat Sen decided to reorganize the KMT in China along the Soviet Communist cell system in the hope of making it strong enough to undertake the reunification of China. Following the Sun-Joffe Pact of 1923 under which members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) were permitted to join the KMT as individuals, many Communists came into the KMT between 1923 and the 1927 split between the KMT and CCP. In Malaya these Communists or 'left KMTM' members were organized into the Malayan Revolutionary Committee of the KMTM. Following the break-up between the Nationalists and Communists in China, the MCP was formed in Malaya by 1930 by this group.²⁵

The KMT and the MCP concentrated their efforts on capturing the support of three main groups: the traditional network of the CCC and *huay kuan*, the Chinese schools and, of least importance in terms of size and influence, the nascent trade unions. These three institutions represented the only means through which Chinese public opinion could be articulated; together they encompassed almost the complete spectrum of the potential political clientele within the Chinese community: merchants, small traders, artisans, labourers, white-collar workers, professionals, students, farmers and fishermen. Generally, the KMTM managed to win over the CCC and *huay kuan*, the MCP dominated the trade unions, and the two parties shared control of the Chinese schools.²⁶

The preference of the Chinese traditional leadership in Malaya for the Republican over the Communist cause is understandable in the light of their class interests. Winning the allegiance of the CCC and *huay kuan* was extremely valuable to the KMTM, because it afforded access to the most established and widespread organizational base for mobilizing the manpower and financial resources of the *Laukeh* community.

Between 1920 and 1940, prominent CCC and *huay kuan* leaders who joined or supported the KMTM included Tan Kah Kee, Lee Kong Chian and Lim Keng Lian in Singapore; Ho Pao Jin in Malacca; Lau Pak Khuan and Ong Chin Seong in Perak; Lee Hau Shik (H. S. Lee) in Selangor; Wong Shee Fun in Johore; and Ong Keng Seng and Saw Seng Kiew in Penang.²⁷ These CCC leaders were responsible for organizing and co-ordinating several pro-KMT campaigns in Malaya—mounting fund-raising efforts for various flood, famine and refugee relief activities in China, organizing memorial services in honour of China's statesmen, and, after

1937, co-ordinating anti-Japanese campaigns. The KMT Government assiduously wooed the CCC-huay kuan leaders and maintained close links by sending out high-ranking officials on diplomatic missions. However, despite these ties and despite membership by individual leaders in the KMTM, the organizations themselves did not become political arms of China's KMT Government or allow themselves to fall under the domination of the KMT Consuls in Malaya.²⁸ Ever concerned that the British colonial administration might undertake reprisal action against them, the CCC-huay kuan leaders not only guarded their independence from the KMT but also played a significant role in muting the KMTM's anti-imperialist ideology.

Chinese schools were a natural target for KMTM and MCP competition as they were important vehicles for the political and social indoctrination of Chinese youths and were of great importance in maintaining the values of the community. In Malaya, they were particularly attractive targets for politicization by political parties as they did not come under the direct control and supervision of the colonial government. The British administration, which financed free Malay primary education and partially financed English education (usually carried out by missionary bodies), left the Chinese community to sponsor Chinese education.²⁹

The Chinese community continued to enjoy considerable autonomy in educational affairs despite attempts by the government to regulate the proliferation of Sino-centric activities in Chinese schools by requiring them to register with the Education Department after 1920. However, the government was unsuccessful in this effort, partly because it allotted most of its attention and financial resources to the financing of free Malay education and the subsidizing of English education, and partly because Chinese nationalistic feelings took such a strong hold within the Laukeh community that they could not be easily suppressed by the colonial government. Furthermore, the colonial government did not have the necessary Chinese-speaking administrators to effectively supervise the activities of the Chinese schools.

Many more Chinese children and youths went to Chinese-medium schools than to English-medium schools. For example, in 1938, Chinese enrolment figures showed that 91,534 pupils attended Chinese schools, compared to 26,974 attending English schools.³⁰ In 1947, an estimated 55 per cent of all Chinese children between the

ages of six and twelve attended Chinese schools, compared to 10 per cent in English schools.³¹ Clearly the great majority of Chinese students who would become the future grass-roots and community leaders in Malaya were exposed to schools inculcating Sino-centric values, whether Nationalist or Communist, a fact which accounted for the strong overlay of such values among the Chinese political leadership in the period well after World War II.

The major patrons of Chinese schools in the pre-independence period were the dialect/provincial huay kuan and, to a lesser extent, clan associations, which formed management committees to operate the schools. In the nineteenth century the schools followed a traditional curriculum (based on Confucian and other Chinese classics) which had not changed for over a century in China. After 1911, the KMT Government initiated educational reforms in Malaya as part of its campaign to modernize China and to inculcate loyalty among Chinese (both in China and South-East Asia) towards Republican China. School curricula were redesigned to emphasize the teaching of Sun Yat Sen's *San Min Chu I* (three principles of nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood) and to include modern scientific subjects. After 1917, *kuo yu* (Mandarin) was introduced as the common medium of instruction in all modern Chinese schools. Hitherto all Chinese schools had taught in the dialects of sponsoring huay kuan or schoolmasters. The use of *kuo yu* in Chinese schools was one of the most important factors in breaking down traditional dialect group barriers in Malaya. It served as a unifying vehicle, paving the way for inter-dialect group co-operation in the management of community affairs, and generating a sense of pan-Chinese nationalism within Chinese society in Malaya.

Modern schools in Malaya continued to be financed and managed principally by the huay kuan. However, the KMT Government in China, which set up a number of committees within the Chinese Ministry of Education to plan for overseas Chinese education, contributed educational grants and helped to train and recruit teachers for service in Malaya (as well as other South-East Asian countries). The KMT Government also directed overseas Chinese schools to register with the Ministry of Education in China, and teachers to register with the Chinese Consulate at their places of employment.³²

In the competition between the KMTM and MCP for the allegiance of Chinese schools in Malaya, the KMTM initially possessed a clear advantage, due to the role the KMT Government played in

the development of modern Chinese education in Malaya, and equally important, the fact that the majority of the patrons of Chinese schools were pro-KMT huay kuan leaders. However, there were two periods when the MCP was particularly successful in mobilizing support from Chinese schools. These were the United Front period of 1924-7, and the Nationalist Salvation Movement (NSM) period of 1937-41.

Operating within the KMTM before their expulsion in 1927, Communist organizers successfully propagated Marxist-Leninist teachings in Chinese schools. Communist doctrine was also disseminated among the Chinese student population through the establishment of several night schools opened by Hainanese teachers.³³ The early success enjoyed by Communist activists in Chinese schools received a set-back following their expulsion from the KMTM. However, during the NSM, when the MCP co-operated with the KMTM for a period of time in jointly organizing China-relief campaigns, it was highly successful in mobilizing the support of Chinese students. MCP-affiliated NSM bodies, such as the Anti-Enemy Backing Up Society, the Anti-Enemy Elimination of Traitors and Voluntary Corps, and the Chinese Anti-Enemy National Salvation Society, effectively appealed to nationalist as well as anti-imperialist sentiments to increase their support base within the student and worker population.³⁴ The KMTM was less successful in mobilizing popular support, because its CCC-huay kuan allies restrained the KMTM-backed NSM bodies from preaching anti-imperialist doctrines popular with students and workers, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the British authorities. Also, the KMT Government did not wish the KMTM to pursue an anti-British line in Malaya, for it wanted Britain as an ally in the Sino-Japanese conflict.³⁵ One can see, therefore, that although the KMTM was better placed to capture the support of Chinese schools and generally had the advantage, a great deal of the initiative had passed to the MCP shortly before the outbreak of World War II.

Consistent with their ideological and class orientations, the MCP dominated the labour movement, while the KMTM found natural allies in the CCC and huay kuan. The origins and development of the labour movement in Malaya stemmed from the radicalization of Hainanese society at the turn of the century, which led to the transformation of their traditional trade guilds into unions, and from the desire of the Comintern and CCP to organize Malayan labour.

The early Communist movement in Malaya was dominated by the Hainanese, a phenomenon which Khoo Kay Kim explains in terms of the early and pervasive hold which communism had on Hainan Island, and the particularly low social and economic status of Hainanese workers within the Chinese community in Malaya. Traditional trade guilds of the Hainanese dialect group were the first to display pro-Communist sentiments, and the nascent modern trade union movement took shape in the late 1920s from a cluster of Hainanese-dominated unions of rubber tappers (centred especially in Negri Sembilan), domestic servants, shoemakers, carpenters, seamen and mechanics.³⁶

Trade union activities were stepped up in Malaya when the Comintern, aided by the CCP, established the Nanyang General Labour Union in 1924 to undertake the organization of labour in South-East Asia. Following the formation of the MCP in 1930 the Malayan General Labour Union (known subsequently as the Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions) was established. It successfully organized labour in the fast-growing economic sectors based on tin and other mining activities, rubber, transportation, stevedoring, light manufacturing and other industries. Despite Communist ideological stress on inter-ethnic co-operation along class lines, MCP mobilization of labour in Malaya was limited to the Chinese population; little attention was paid to non-Chinese labour, especially Indian plantation workers, in the period before World War II.³⁷ The overwhelming majority of MCP leaders and labour organizers, being China-born and Chinese-educated, were deeply imbued with a sense of Chinese chauvinism which tended to overshadow the multiracial aspect of the party's class struggle objective.

While the MCP controlled the modern Chinese labour movement in Malaya, the KMTM generally had the support of the traditional trade guilds, which comprised both employers and workers within their ranks. Many workers remained loyal to their employers, the wealthy leaders of the CCC and *huay kuan*, or were afraid to sympathize openly with the MCP, mainly out of fear of losing their sources of financial support. They also feared potential persecution by pro-KMTM secret societies as well as pressure from the government on the Communist-dominated trade unions.

The MCP's successful organization of Chinese labour introduced new factors into the organizational fabric of Chinese society by offering alternative principles of mobilization to traditional ones based on the voluntary association. New routes to leadership posi-

tions were also opened, allowing for the emergence of populist labour leaders. The mobilizing potential of the trade union was highlighted during 1936 and 1937 when the MCP successfully orchestrated a series of strikes in rubber estates, tin mines and other industries to demonstrate worker solidarity in opposition to low wages, long hours, poor working conditions and abuses arising from the Chinese contract system.³⁸ However, due to swift and effective police action, these strikes were quickly contained. More strikes were organized during the NSM period, but these were likewise suppressed by effective government action.

The Straits Chinese British Association

The activities of the KMTM and MCP, representing the establishment and revolutionary strains of China-centred politics, engaged the attention and involvement of large segments of the Chinese population. The third political grouping of the period, the SCBA, in contrast, was an extremely small organization with a minute political clientele. However, the party was able to play a prominent role in the colonial politics of Malaya due to its special relationship with the colonial government.

The SCBA was formed in Singapore and Malacca in 1900 to safeguard the political privileges enjoyed by Chinese who were Straits-born British subjects, as well as to promote their social and educational welfare.³⁹ Although the SCBA displayed a British-oriented political affiliation, it was also the first political organization in Malaya to espouse the creation of a common Malayan identity among the different communities in the country. However, it remained a small party even in its heyday. For example, in 1931 it had only 1,060 members, out of an estimated Straits Chinese population of 200,000.⁴⁰ None the less, its political impact and significance was considerable, thanks in large measure to its highly capable leadership.

SCBA leaders were English-educated professional men and wealthy merchants acculturated to British ways and ideas.⁴¹ At the same time a considerable proportion of Babas had become resinicized as a result of prolonged economic and social contact with the Laukeh population. The process of resinification, encouraged by increasing intermarriage between Laukehs and Babas, occurred mostly along cultural and social lines. Few Babas displayed political orientations towards China, but maintained instead an Anglophilic political identification. However, some of the resinicized

Baba leaders were able to operate on both Baba and Laukeh planes, thus taking advantage of what each culture offered in terms of social status and political power. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a few wealthy Baba merchants were able to span the two cultures and become secret society leaders.⁴² A prominent example was Tan Kim Cheng, a Ghee Hin headman and unofficial Kapitan China in Singapore during the 1860s to 1880s. After 1900 a small group of Baba leaders, most notably Dr Lim Boon Keng, were involved in China-oriented politics,⁴³ but their contribution to the development of Chinese nationalist politics in Malaya was insignificant compared to that of the Laukeh leaders.

The most prominent leaders in the SCBA were Tan Cheng Lock, Dr Lim Boon Keng, Song Ong Siang, Han Hoe Lim and Lim Cheng Ean. These men were appointed by the colonial government to serve on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, where they were active in pressing for political and educational reforms. Arguably, their most important achievement was their success in 1932 in persuading the government to open up the Straits Settlements Civil Service to non-European (i.e. Asian) British subjects.⁴⁴

Of central relevance to this study are the ideas of Tan Cheng Lock, who headed the Malacca SCBA from 1928 to 1935, and who subsequently was instrumental in forming the MCA, which he led from 1949 to 1958.

Like other SCBA leaders in the early period, Tan Cheng Lock emphasized that the local-born Straits Chinese were loyal only to the British Government and were proud of their status as British subjects. In a speech delivered on 3 November 1924 in the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, he said:⁴⁵ '... I can assure you we are animated by a sense of loyalty and duty to serve this Empire and Throne to whom we owe allegiance, and inspired by an earnest and keen desire to make this country and the Empire our real and permanent home.' However, Tan Cheng Lock's Anglophilism was overlaid with a Malayan-centred patriotism which questioned the continuation of colonial tutelage for the people of Malaya. He urged the government to grant self-rule to Malaya and advocated implementation of policies which would generate a common Malayan consciousness among the various races. For example, in 1926 he said:⁴⁶

Our ultimate political goal should be a united self-governing British Malaya with a Federal Government and Parliament for the whole of it, functioning

at a convenient centre, say, at Kuala Lumpur, and with as much autonomy in purely local affairs as possible for each of its constituent parts. I think that it is high time that we commence to take action towards forging the surest and strongest link of that United Malaya by fostering and creating a true Malayan spirit and consciousness amongst its people to the complete elimination of the racial or communal feeling.

Tan Cheng Lock urged the government to introduce legislative reforms so that the Legislative Council would contain an elected majority. He argued that the introduction of the franchise and an elected unofficial majority in the country's legislature would stir the people's interest in political affairs and put an end to the prevalent mood of political apathy.⁴⁷

He also asked the government to introduce educational reforms to generate a spirit of Malayan consciousness and identity among the different races:⁴⁸

I hope that the policy of the Government in the matter of education, as well as in other matters, is one of Malaya for the Malaysians and not only for one section of the people; and I also hope that the policy of Government will be one of Malaya for the people who have made Malaya, who are loyal to the country, to the Empire and to the King, so that thereby you will get a contented people, a people who from year to year will grow more contented and more and more loyal to our King, country and Empire.

Tan Cheng Lock was against High Commissioner Sir Cecil Clementi's proposal to introduce free primary education in the Malay language as a means to Malayanize the children of the various races. Like some Baba and all the Laukeh leaders, he did not want the Chinese in Malaya to adopt Malay characteristics at the expense of their Chinese heritage. Addressing the Legislative Council on 12 February 1934, he said he endorsed the government's intention to use education as a means to create a common sense of Malayan consciousness. He hoped, however, that the process of Malayanization envisaged would not result in the non-Malays being assimilated into Malay culture:

I hope and presume that the term "Malayanization" does not at all imply that the Government has the least intention in view, however remote, ultimately to attempt the mixing ethnologically of the various races living in Malaya, so that the product of this race mixture will be a homogenous [*sic*] amalgamation in whom the Malay characteristics will predominate, or to make non-Malays adopt the Malay language as their own.

He further argued that, rather than acquiring Malay traits, the Babas should 'be brought into harmony with their native Chinese ethos' in order that Chinese customs and traditions would be preserved in Malaya.⁴⁹

Tan Cheng Lock's speeches cited above summarized the major tenets of Baba Chinese political philosophy in the pre-war period. In stressing the need for creation of a common Malayan identity, as well as self-rule, the SCBA leadership manifested a political sophistication and awareness which was far ahead of its time. Although vowing loyalty to the British Government, they were also concerned to retain their Chinese cultural heritage. This last concern reflected the extent to which the Babas had been resinicized, as a result of their being engulfed by the Laukeh masses and the rise of Chinese nationalism. Tan Cheng Lock himself, very much a resinicized Baba, demonstrated his deep interest in the preservation of Chinese language and culture many years later during his term of office as MCA president.

Basically an elitist organization dominated by English-educated professionals and intellectuals, the SCBA's influence within the Chinese community at large, compared to the mass-based KMTM and MCP, was small. None the less, its leaders were politically articulate and were the only voices of the Chinese community recognized by the colonial government. Thus, their backing was sought by the Chinese parties and by the CCC-huay kuan establishment.

Throughout the period from 1911 to 1941 the SCBA carefully avoided identifying itself with Laukeh nationalist activities organized by either the left or right wing. It goes without saying that the Anglophile capitalist leadership of the SCBA found the Communist movement highly objectionable. Speaking in the Straits Settlements Legislative Council in October 1932, Tan Cheng Lock described the MCP as a movement led by 'a few misguided Hylams of the class of domestic servants to sow the seed of the poison of communism...'.⁵⁰ In the same speech, he also endorsed the government's containment of the KMTM's activities. While Tan Cheng Lock's unsympathetic attitude towards the MCP accurately reflected the general feeling of the Baba community, a small group of SCBA leaders, notably Dr Lim Boon Keng, a founder member of the SCBA, openly identified with the KMTM and were actively involved in its inception and subsequent development. The SCBA, however, did not condone the open pursuit of KMT activities by

its leaders, and when it decided that Lim Boon Keng had gone too far in his identification with the KMT, he was no longer elected to any position in the Association.⁵¹

Baba identification with Chinese nationalism was strongest during the National Salvation Movement, when the Chinese community in Malaya was deeply involved in fund-raising campaigns in support of China against the Japanese invasion. The British Government sympathized with the anti-Japanese activities and allowed the Chinese in Malaya to mobilize support for China's war effort.⁵² Many Baba leaders openly organized relief fund collections and concerts in aid of the NSM. On the whole, however, SCBA leaders who held office in government bodies such as the Legislative Council and municipal commissions refrained from participating in the NSM,⁵³ probably because they were against any form of political loyalty except identification with the British and with Malaya.

While SCBA leaders generally stayed away from the KMTM, they maintained links with the CCC and huay kuan out of the need to have close economic and social ties with the wealthy and influential Laukeh associational leadership (and partly because the CCC and huay kuan, although allied to the KMTM, did not become a political wing of the KMTM). Many Baba leaders had strong economic and professional links with Laukeh CCC and huay kuan leaders and several successful commercial enterprises were the result of joint business ventures by Baba and Laukeh merchants, e.g. the Ho Hong Bank, the Oversea Chinese Bank and the United Saw Mills in Singapore.⁵⁴ In addition, a number of SCBA leaders, including Tan Cheng Lock, held office in the CCC and dialect/territorial huay kuan.

Possessing social and business ties with the Laukeh CCC and huay kuan leadership and enjoying colonial political patronage, the SCBA leadership straddled the world of Westernized colonial politics on the one hand, and Laukeh politics on the other. This unique position gave them indispensable skills as communicators and arbiters between the two political worlds that impinged upon the lives of the Chinese in Malaya.

The Colonial Administration and Chinese Politics in the Pre-war Period

The crucial factor which made it possible for Chinese agents to propagate Chinese nationalist ideas freely and successfully in Malaya

at the turn of the century was the British policy of non-interference in the affairs of the community. After a period of relatively unhampered opportunity to mobilize support among the Chinese population in Malaya between 1912 and 1920, the KMTM faced increasing suppression by the colonial government, which was extremely concerned at the propagation of anti-imperialist and class struggle teachings by leftist and Communist elements of the party. The authorities attempted to contain the movement by arresting and/or deporting radical leaders, schoolteachers and other activists, and by imposing a ban on the organization in the Straits Settlements in 1925, which was extended to the Federated Malay States in 1930.⁵⁵ However, these measures failed to check the growth of KMT influence in Malaya, partly because the effectiveness of the ban was undermined by an agreement between the British and KMT Governments in late 1930 allowing direct membership of Malayan Chinese in the KMT in China,⁵⁶ and partly because individual CCC and huay kuan leaders helped to promote KMTM activities within the traditional associations.

Although the colonial administration was aware that the level of Chinese nationalistic and anti-imperialistic fervour was largely due to the unrestricted activities of political agents and schoolteachers arriving from the mainland to propagate the Kuomintang and Communist causes in Malaya, as well as to the continued usage of uncensored textbooks imported from China, the solution to the problem was quite outside its control. Successful monitoring of institutions and organizations within the Chinese community entailed the assumption of direct responsibility for Chinese affairs, a task well beyond the capability of the colonial administration of the time. Apart from its own limitations in dealing with the problem, the restraining influence of the conservative mercantile leadership of the CCC and huay kuan upon the more strident aspects of the KMTM's anti-imperialism also explains the administration's often lenient attitude towards the KMTM. After 1937, the KMTM was allowed to operate openly within the context of the NSM in aid of China's anti-Japanese war effort, as the British Government was sympathetic to China's plight (although it officially professed a neutral stand in the Sino-Japanese conflict).⁵⁷

In contrast to its vacillating policy towards the KMTM, the colonial administration was consistently hostile towards the Communist movement from the very beginning. Following the first signs of organized Communist activity in Malaya, the police kept a close surveillance on the movement. Pro-Communist schools were

closed, premises of trade unions sacked, and Communist school-teachers and strike leaders arrested or deported. Anti-Communist measures were implemented most harshly whenever the Communist leadership made public showings of its strength, such as the Kreta Ayer demonstration of 1926, the country-wide labour strikes of 1936-7 and the May Day Rally of 1940. Arrests and deportations of leaders following the Kreta Ayer incident decimated the first flowering of the Communist movement. During the early 1930s, the MCP slowly rebuilt its support and, through the labour strikes of 1936-7, demonstrated the success of its unionization efforts. However, the movement's growth was once more temporarily halted by the arrests of several union leaders. It regained momentum following the inauguration of the NSM.

Since the British authorities had allowed the Chinese in Malaya to organize on behalf of China's anti-Japanese war effort, the MCP was able to capitalize on the opportunity through the establishment of NSM-affiliated front organizations. For a short time the KMTM and the MCP jointly sponsored NSM activities, but the co-operation broke down when the KMTM realized that the Communists were gaining popular support at their expense. Despite the termination of the alliance, MCP support grew rapidly because of its strong organization and the powerful appeal to the Chinese lower classes and students of its nationalist, anti-imperialist, and class struggle ideology.⁵⁸ Popular support for the MCP reached an all-time pre-war high at the end of 1939 and in early 1940, when its membership and that of affiliated labour and NSM organizations was estimated at between 80,000 and 105,000.⁵⁹ On May Day 1940, the MCP held a rally attended by 15,000-20,000 participants.⁶⁰ The highly successful rally was followed up by a series of strikes staged by the Singapore General Labour Union, marking the climax of MCP-organized activities during the period.

The open display of anti-British sentiments at the 1940 May Day rally produced an inevitable reaction by the colonial authorities, who undertook swift and effective police reprisals against MCP student leaders and trade union agitators. By July 1940, 229 Communist leaders had been arrested, and police raids on all MCP-linked organizations seriously undermined their activities. By early 1941, for example, membership in the Singapore General Labour Union had dropped by 75 per cent to 4,120 from the May 1940 figure of some 20,000.⁶¹

British containment of the MCP counted more than any other

single factor in curbing the growth of the Communist movement and prevented it from eclipsing the KMTM during the inter-war period. However, with the removal of this constraint by the Japanese occupation of Malaya between December 1941 and August 1945, the MCP expanded rapidly and eventually emerged temporarily as the leading political force in Malaya.

1. 'Laukeh' (literally, 'old guests') refers to established Chinese immigrants and to Malayan-born Chinese who were socialized within a completely Chinese milieu. Newly arrived immigrants were commonly called 'Sinkeh' ('new guests').

2. Studies on Baba society and culture include the following: J. R. Clammer, *Straits Chinese Society: Studies in the Sociology of the Baba Communities of Malaysia and Singapore*, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1980; Png Poh Seng, 'The Straits Chinese in Singapore: A Case of Local Identity and Socio-cultural Accommodation', *JSEAH*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1969; and Tan Chee Beng, 'Baba and Nyonya: A Study of the Ethnic Identity of the Chinese Peranakan in Malacca', Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1979, Chs. 4-10.

3. Lee Poh Ping, *Chinese Society in Nineteenth Century Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 13-27.

4. J. E. Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya*, London, 1922, p. 95.

5. Chen Ta, *Emigrant Communities in South China: A Study of Overseas Migration and Its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change*, London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 49-53. The treaty was signed after China's defeat in the Arrow War.

6. Taken from *Report on the Census of the Straits Settlements Taken on 5 April 1891*, Singapore, Government Printing Office, 1892, p. 31; *Census of the State of Perak 1891*, Taiping, Perak Government Printing Office, 1892, p. 3; *Federated Malay States Census Papers 1901*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1902, p. 30; and Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, reprinted Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 68.

7. 'Huay kuan' is used in this study to refer generally to an organization or grouping of people based on common interest, and does not refer only to the dialect/territorial association as is sometimes the case.

8. For an account of the historical origins and functions of these associations, see H. B. Morse, *The Gilds of China*, New York, Bombay and Calcutta, Longmans, Green & Co., 1909.

9. For an account of secret societies in China, see J. Chesneaux, *Secret Societies in China in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1971; and W. Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 14-35.

10. Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, p. 16.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 18; Chesneaux, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

12. C. S. Wong, *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitans*, Singapore, Government Printing Office, 1963, p. 28.

13. Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, p. 83; Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 103.
14. Mak Lau Fong, *The Sociology of Secret Societies: A Study of Chinese Secret Societies in Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 32.
15. For a discussion of the historical factors behind British intervention, see C. D. Cowan, *Nineteenth-century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961; C. N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877*, Singapore, University of Malaya Press, 1960; Khoo Kay Kim, 'Origins of British Administration in Malaya', *JMBRAS*, Vol. 39, Pt. 1, 1966; W. D. McIntyre, 'Britain's Intervention in Malaya', *JSEAH*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1961.
16. C. A. Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johore and Singapore 1784-1885*, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1979, see especially Ch. 4.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.
18. See Lee Poh Ping, *op. cit.*, Ch. 4; Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, pp. 75-9, 94, 201-2.
19. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, pp. 169-72.
20. For an account of the functions of the Chinese Protectorate, see R. N. Jackson, *Pickering: Protector of Chinese*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1965, and Ng Siew Yoong, 'The Chinese Protectorate in Singapore 1877-1900', *JSEAH*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1961.
21. M. V. del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population*, London, HMSO, 1947, pp. 57, 84.
22. S. S. Garret, 'The Chambers of Commerce and the YMCA', in M. Elvin and G. W. Skinner (eds.), *The Chinese City between Two Worlds*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1974, p. 217.
23. Taku Suyama, 'Pang Societies and the Economy of Chinese Immigrants: A Study on Communalism in Southeast Asia', *Review of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, Singapore, 1977, p. 16.
24. For a discussion on the origins of the KMT in Malaya, see Png Poh Seng, 'The Kuomintang in Malaya', *JSEAH*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1961.
25. G. Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1971, Ch. 1; and Khoo Kay Kim, 'The Beginnings of Political Extremism in Malaya 1915-1935', Ph.D. thesis, University of Malaya, 1973, Ch. 5.
26. A fourth group, the shadowy and illegal secret societies, was not easily accessible to political recruitment, but their support was none the less sought by the KMTM and MCP. On the whole, given their close ties with the CCC and huay kuan, it is not surprising that they supported the KMTM more than they did the MCP. See G. P. Means, *Malayan Politics*, 2nd ed., London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1976, pp. 11-12, and Laurence K. L. Siaw, *Chinese Society in Rural Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 164-5.
27. Stephen M. Y. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations of Overseas Chinese Nationalism in Malaya 1937-1941', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1976, pp. 162-4, 256-7, 415-16.
28. The independence of the CCC from the KMT Consul in Singapore is described by Pang Wing Seng, 'The "Double-Seventh" Incident 1937: Singapore Chinese Response to the Outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War', *JSEAS*, Vol. 4, No. 2, September 1973, p. 281.

29. For a discussion of British educational policies, see Philip F. S. Loh, *Seeds of Separatism: Educational Policy in Malaya 1874-1940*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1975.

30. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 222.

31. 'Annual Report Chinese Schools 1947', mimeo., Director of Education file, 699/47, Part 2.

32. Lee Ah Chai, 'Policies and Politics in Chinese Schools in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, 1786-1941', MA thesis, University of Malaya, 1958, pp. 174-202; Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', pp. 394-407.

33. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', pp. 223-4; Khoo, 'The Beginnings of Political Extremism', pp. 198-212.

34. See Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', Ch. 7.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 436-7.

36. Khoo, 'The Beginnings of Political Extremism', pp. 200-2, 213-18.

37. See M. R. Stenson, *Industrial Conflict in Malaya: Prelude to the Communist Revolt of 1948*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970.

38. Yeo Kim Wah, 'Communist Involvement in Malayan Labour Strikes: 1936', *JMBRAS*, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, 1976.

39. Straits-born Chinese could acquire British nationality after 1867 in accordance with Section 8 of the Naturalisation Ordinance. Lee Yong Hock, 'A History of the Straits Chinese British Association 1900-1959', BA (Hons.) academic exercise, University of Singapore, 1960, pp. 8, 10-16. The Penang SCBA was not formed until 1920. See Diana Ooi, 'A Study of the English Speaking Chinese of Penang 1900-1941', MA thesis, University of Malaya, 1967, pp. 94-100.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

41. For a breakdown of the occupational and educational background of the office-holders of the Singapore SCBA from 1900 to 1941, see Yong Ching Fatt, 'A Preliminary Study of Chinese Leadership in Singapore 1900-1941', *JSEAH*, Vol. 9, No. 2, September 1968, p. 264.

42. See Khoo Kay Kim, *The Western Malay States 1850-1875: The Effects of Commercial Development on Malay Politics*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 202-7.

43. See Yen Ching-Hwang, 'The Confucian Revival Movement in Singapore and Malaya 1899-1911', *JSEAS*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 1976.

44. Lee Yong Hock, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.

45. *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements*, 3 November 1924, B120.

46. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1926, B161.

47. *Ibid.*, 3 November 1924, B160.

48. *Ibid.*, 8 December 1930, B174-175.

49. *Ibid.*, 12 February 1934, B18, B22.

50. *Ibid.*, 19 October 1932, B144.

51. Pang, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

52. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', pp. 597-8.

53. Pang, *op. cit.*, pp. 293, 295.

54. Yong Ching Fatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-3.

55. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 213; Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', pp. 118-19, 212-21.

56. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', p. 218.

57. Ibid., pp. 249-53.

58. Stephen Leong, 'The Kuomintang-Communist United Front in Malaya during the National Salvation Period 1937-1941', *JSEAS*, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 1977, pp. 34-46.

59. Leong gives the following breakdown: MCP membership, 2,000; Malayan General Labour Union, 40,000; Anti-Enemy Backing Up Society, 30,000. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', pp. 495-6. J. H. Brimmell places MCP membership at 5,000, with the party controlling a base of some 100,000 workers and students. J. H. Brimmell, *Communism in Southeast Asia: A Political Analysis*, London, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 148.

60. Leong, 'Sources, Agencies and Manifestations', p. 529.

61. Ibid., pp. 538, 792-3.

Radicalization of Chinese Politics and the Conservative Revival

JAPANESE troops landed in North-east Malaya on 8 December 1941, and rapidly advanced down the length of the peninsula. Having anticipated the Japanese onslaught to come from the sea against the naval base in Singapore, the colonial government was caught off guard by the rearguard attack and the hastily assembled defence positions of the colonial forces were easily overrun by the invading army. On 15 February 1942, British rule in Malaya was replaced by Japanese military rule.

The Japanese Occupation, which lasted until August 1945, produced fundamental changes in the power structure and leadership patterns of Chinese society in the country. By the end of the war, the Communist movement emerged as the ascendant political force not only within the Chinese community, but also within the country at large.

With the imminent outbreak of hostilities, several prominent Chinese community leaders, including Tan Cheng Lock, left the country to seek refuge in safe havens such as India. Of those who remained, hundreds were arrested or killed for their role in the National Salvation Movement. It has been estimated that the purge of anti-Japanese Chinese elements, known as the *sook ching*, claimed approximately 40,000 lives.¹ The *sook ching* purges drove thousands of Chinese youths into the jungle to support the Communist underground resistance movement. It also had the effect of strengthening Chinese nationalistic sentiments and ethnic solidarity.

The majority of the CCC-huay kuan notables who were spared collaborated with the Japanese, thus discrediting themselves and losing the support and respect of the Chinese population. The Japanese Military Administration created the Overseas Chinese Association (OCA) with a branch in each town to replace all existing Chinese associations. It appointed leaders from each major

dialect group to implement the policies of the OCA, particularly the collection of a \$50 million 'gift' from the Chinese community as 'atonement' for its anti-Japanese activities in the pre-war period. The OCA was also responsible for supervising the development of Chinese agricultural colonies, such as Endau in Johore and Bahau in Negri Sembilan, as part of the Japanese Military Administration's effort to make Malaya self-sufficient in food production. The creation of these Chinese agricultural settlements in what had traditionally been Malay Reserves, together with a widespread movement of the urban Chinese population to the fringes of the jungle to eke out a livelihood away from the punitive hand of the Japanese authorities, were to have significant political consequences in the form of the 'squatter problem' during the Emergency which began three years after the end of the war.

The KMTM disintegrated in the face of the Japanese Occupation. Although some of its leaders and members took to the jungle to organize an underground resistance like the MCP, the KMTM resistance, organized as the Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army (OCAJA), was small and localized. Comprising some 400 men, the OCAJA operated in the remoter parts of Kedah and northern Malaya, compared to the 7,000-strong Communist Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), which engaged the Japanese army in skirmishes throughout the length of the peninsula.² The pre-war rivalry between the KMTM and MCP had been so intense that the two groups were unable to co-operate effectively against the common enemy. Indeed, the OCAJA and MPAJA engaged each other in combat almost as frequently as they fought the Japanese.

The OCAJA was a much less disciplined force than the Communist resistance fighters. Its guerrillas were not above looting and plundering in the same manner as other roving gangs of common bandits made up of secret society and criminal groups. Not surprisingly, the OCAJA's reputation suffered severely and the movement had virtually no appeal for the Chinese population.

The Communist underground movement, in contrast, drew widespread support, not only from the Chinese lower classes but also from petty bourgeois and capitalist elements as the Chinese community almost universally identified with the anti-Japanese cause. The MPAJA tapped the resources of the local population through a number of affiliated organizations, the most important of which was the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU).

Although established as a multiracial organization to carry out logistics, intelligence and propaganda functions, the MPAJU was hampered by the fact that it was 95 per cent Chinese in membership. The MPAJA also established a loose network of volunteer groups known as the *Ho Pi Tui* (Reserves) which sought to recruit manpower in every village and town throughout the country.

MCP Predominance

Upon the surrender of the Japanese, re-establishment of British civilian rule in Malaya was preceded by a period of military rule known as the British Military Administration (BMA) which lasted from September 1945 till March 1946. When British troops re-occupied Malaya, they found that the Communist movement had emerged from the jungle to become the dominant political force in the country. The Deputy Chief of Civil Affairs of the BMA reported: 'There is no doubt that in all the villages throughout the Malay States the Chinese Resistance Forces are in command and it must be admitted that without their assistance in those places law and order could not be maintained....' Observing that the MPAJA was made up of young Chinese who had little respect for the traditional community leaders, the report continued: '... there is no doubt that the latter for the time being have lost their leadership of the various Chinese communities and that such leadership has passed to the Chinese Communists and Chinese youth movements.'³

For several months following British reoccupation of Malaya, the MCP operated alongside the BMA as an alternative government. The MCP set up People's Committees to administer the areas under their jurisdiction, which amounted to almost 70 per cent of the small towns and villages and most of the major urban centres in the country. Towns in the most heavily Communist areas such as Batu Pahat and Muar in the state of Johore were designated as 'soviets', and others such as Titi in the state of Negri Sembilan were governed by a 'People's Communist Government'.⁴

The MCP set up various organizations for youths, women, farmers, teachers, artisans and other functional groups to strengthen its position and to replace the traditional network of voluntary associations within the Chinese community. The Selangor Commercial Union, for example, was formed as the Communist substitute

for the CCC. Among the most important of the MCP-sponsored bodies were the Congresses of People's Representatives established at the district and state levels, apparently as a move to prepare its supporters for key roles in an envisaged Communist-dominated Malayan Democratic Republic.

During this period the MCP not only surpassed all its previous successes in organizing Chinese labour, but also made a breakthrough in the radicalization of non-Chinese labour. War-time dislocation created ideal conditions for this radicalization, thanks both to the seriously depressed economic conditions of the time and to the fact that older forms of labour control and patronage had been eroded. By September 1947 the labour wing of the MCP, the Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU), controlled 214 of the 217 registered trade unions and claimed the allegiance of some 75 per cent of all organized labour, including a significant proportion of the Indian plantation work-force.⁵

The BMA had initially pursued a liberal policy towards the MCP, allowing considerable latitude in the exercise of freedom of speech and assembly. However, as British rule became more firmly entrenched, the authorities took steps to reduce the Communist influence. In early December 1945 the BMA neutralized the MCP as a potential military and political rival by successfully persuading the MPAJA to disband and getting some 6,800 guerrillas to turn in their arms.⁶ It is not clear why the MCP agreed to disband its military arm, but its action was consistent with its moderate position as expressed in an eight-point programme outlining the scope of Communist co-operation with the British which was released just prior to the return of the colonial forces.⁷ The reasons for the MCP's moderation, in contrast to the more aggressive stance of other Communist movements in South-East Asia during the same period, particularly that of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, may be traced to two major factors: the role of party secretary-general Lai Tek and the lack of Malay support for the Communist movement.

Lai Tek's credentials as a committed Communist were far from impeccable, and for reasons which still remain obscure, he had agreed to work clandestinely for pay-masters hostile to the Communist cause.⁸ Believed to be of Vietnamese origin, Lai Tek had served successively as an agent for the Comintern, the French Sûreté, the British Special Branch and the Japanese Kempetai during his career within the Vietnamese and Malayan Communist movements.

Lai Tek's control of the MCP at the fateful moment of the British reoccupation of Malaya was a crucial factor in steering the party away from the path of revolution. Arguing in favour of the moderate line, Lai Tek's success was reflected in the party's historic eight-point manifesto of 27 August 1945, as well as in other party publications. The party news organ, *Min Sheng Pau*, for example, carried an editorial on 10 September 1945 welcoming the return of the British and pledging the co-operation of the MCP in the British rehabilitation of the country.

Lai Tek's task in persuading the MCP to take a pro-British stance was undoubtedly aided by the fact that several of his colleagues had experienced friendly and close working relationships during the war with officers of the British resistance organized in Force 136. More importantly, British assurances of free and unhindered participation for Communist leaders in the political rehabilitation of Malaya at a time when the MCP was at the height of its influence may have made the party optimistic about its chances of gaining eventual control of the government of Malaya through constitutional means.

The constitutional route to power must have appeared an attractive option in the face of Malay hostility towards the party. With the Malay Muslim half of the population rigidly opposed to communism, the prospects for staging a successful revolution were remote. Furthermore, Sino-Malay race relations in the immediate post-war period had taken an unprecedented turn for the worse.

The impact of the Occupation had brought Malays and Chinese into sharp confrontation. By co-opting Malays into the lower levels of the administration, as well as the police and other volunteer forces used in anti-guerrilla operations, the Japanese occupiers had sowed an unprecedented level of distrust and tension between the two races. The Communist guerrillas, for their part, incurred the wrath of the Malays by their frequent raids into their *kampung* (villages) to requisition food, levy taxes and deal out summary justice to collaborators and informers. Malay counter-reprisals against the MPAJA surfaced as early as May 1945, when groups of the Sufi *tarekat* (brotherhood), led by charismatic religious leaders, organized for self-defence in the Batu Pahat region of Johore. By the time of the Japanese surrender, they had instigated a *jihad* or *Sabilallah* (Holy War) against the Chinese population in the states of Johore, Perak, Kedah, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Pahang and Kelantan. Numerous Chinese deaths were reported in predominantly Malay rural areas, and large numbers of Chinese sought refuge in pre-

dominantly Chinese towns. At the height of the tensions in Johore, close to 10,000 Chinese refugees reportedly surged into Muar, and a further 4,000 into Batu Pahat.⁹ The vicious cycle of reprisals and counter-reprisals between Malays organized in the Sabilallah and Chinese organized by MPAJA, OCAJA and secret society leaders continued into the BMA period, lasting till early March 1946, when the British authorities (aided by the Sultans and the MCP) finally succeeded in imposing a permanent truce. Although race relations had ostensibly been restored to an even keel, the riots had left a deep wound in Sino-Malay relations. The vehement Malay reaction in April 1946 to the Malayan Union constitutional proposals offering equal citizenship and political rights to Chinese was a direct outgrowth of the racial polarization which occurred during the Occupation and its immediate aftermath.

The manifestation of widespread hostility toward the MCP led the party to adopt a more consciously 'Malayan' strategy to woo Malay support. In a working paper approved by its Central Executive Committee in August 1946, the party outlined various measures to win over the Malays, including a proposal that cadres working among Malays should convert to Islam and be well versed in Malay customs and traditions.¹⁰ These plans, however, appear not to have been implemented, and the MCP fared little better than other post-war Chinese-based parties in its efforts to cultivate meaningful Malay support.

Although the MCP leadership was able to think beyond narrowly Sino-centric perspectives, the party members at large were more preoccupied with developments in China and issues of immediate concern to the local Chinese community. For example, the *Min Sheng Pau* editorial of 7 May 1946, which reflected the attitude of its Communist readership on the subject of the Malayan Union citizenship proposals, welcomed the move to grant equal citizenship rights to Chinese in Malaya. At the same time, the paper also stated that the Chinese should be entitled to Chinese as well as Malayan nationality. It argued that while dual nationality obligated the Chinese to be loyal to both Malaya and China, ultimate allegiance should be owed to China in the event of conflict between the two countries. Given the strength of such Sino-centric feelings, it was hardly surprising that the MCP did not evolve into a genuinely multiracial Malayan-based party during this period.

When the MCP leadership agreed to lay down arms and co-

operate with the British, it also decided to keep secret caches of weapons, and to maintain a potential fighting force in the MPAJA Ex-Comrades Association, should the conditions for revolution arise. From the very beginning of their period of co-operation, it was clear that amicable relations between the British and the MCP would be short-lived.

In early 1946, when the BMA convened a number of local and regional advisory committees, Communist representatives were appointed to serve on them. Representation on these bodies, however, was heavily weighted in favour of conservative leaders. Sample lists containing the names and occupations of Chinese representatives reveal that the majority were well-known CCC and huay kuan personalities who were literate in English. These included Khoo Teik Ee, Yong Shook Lin and H. S. Lee in Selangor, Khaw Seng Lee in Penang, and Ong Seong Tek in Pahang.¹¹ When the BMA was succeeded by the Malayan Union Government in April 1946, the policy of excluding Communist representatives on government bodies became more pronounced. The Secretary for Chinese Affairs noted in a correspondence that Chinese leaders invited to serve on official bodies should be drawn from 'the long established and more conservative section of the community...'. He added that leftist elements were, in his opinion, 'not yet fitted to serve on any representative body'.¹² No Communist representatives were appointed to the Malayan Union Advisory Councils when these were set up after April 1946.

The Conservative Revival

British patronage of the traditional Chinese leadership was crucial in reviving the position of CCC and huay kuan leaders and their KMTM allies. Apart from appointing them to government bodies, the British authorities helped to rehabilitate their businesses. For example, a Loan Committee was set up in April 1946 to administer funds to re-establish Chinese tin mines. In addition, a War Damage Claims Commission was set up to process claims for compensation for property destroyed during the war, and several CCC leaders successfully applied to the Commission for such assistance.

British political and economic promotion of Chinese conservative leaders restored their influence and power within the Chinese community. Colonial reaffirmation of the 'middleman' role of the

CCC-huay kuan leaders made the positions held by Communist leaders irrelevant, except when they related to working class unrest. The influence of the MCP waned among all but the disaffected proletariat and others who felt they had little stake in the colonial system.

The revival of CCC-huay kuan influence saw a corresponding rise in the position of the KMTM. Taking advantage of the opportunity for unrestricted political organization and association in the immediate post-war period, the KMT Central Executive Committee in Nanking supervised the revival of KMT branches in Malaya and the launching of a nation-wide campaign to register old and new members.¹³

Between early 1946 and mid-1948, rivalry between the KMTM and the MCP became intense, and taking up where it left off before the Japanese invasion of Malaya, the KMTM once again courted the allegiance of Chinese youths, students and workers. The Acting Secretary for Chinese Affairs described the KMTM-MCP rivalry in Singapore in the following terms:¹⁴

At present it is only a tug of war with the school children and labour unions as the rope. In Singapore if the Youth Democratic League put up a school, the SMCY [San Min Chu Yi] Youth Corps immediately start another one next door. How they can always get the premises beats me. I hear that the KMT are trying to start a GLU [General Labour Union] here.

The youth wing of the KMTM, the San Min Chu Yi, was particularly active and effective in mobilizing Chinese students and youths, representing, in an important sense, a 'self-defence corps' for the CCC-KMTM establishment against MCP inroads. The KMTM's efforts at labour organization were largely unsuccessful (as in the case of its pre-war attempts) except in the Kinta region, where it successfully organized a union of tin-mine workers against the MCP-led Perak Mining Labourers' Union.¹⁵

Prominent CCC figures who played leading roles in reviving the KMTM during this period included several individuals who would be founder members of the MCA a few years later, among whom were Lau Pak Khuan, H. S. Lee and Lim Keng Lian. Lau Pak Khuan, the CCC strongman in Ipoh, was a member of the KMTM Central Supervisory Council who visited the KMT Government in January 1947 to observe the proceedings of the Chinese National Congress.¹⁶ H. S. Lee, the CCC leader in Selangor, led a campaign requesting the Malayan Union Government to declare the 10 Octo-

ber anniversary (Double Ten) of the 1911 Revolution a public holiday in Malaya, a request which met with a negative response.¹⁷ Lim Keng Lian, a former president of the Singapore CCC, was appointed by the KMT Government to serve as China's Vice-Minister of Overseas Affairs.¹⁸

Consular representatives of the KMT Government likewise played active roles in reviving the KMTM. These officials helped to organize fund-raising campaigns, nationalist rallies and celebrations of the Double Ten to generate moral and material support for the KMT Government, which was locked in the final stages of its bitter struggle with the CCP for supremacy in China. As had been the case during the NSM in 1937-41, the colonial government allowed the Chinese in Malaya to participate freely in China-oriented activities. The attitude of the government, until the outbreak of the Communist insurrection in June 1948, was to allow foreign political parties to organize legally in Malaya as long as they did not work against the 'peace, good order and welfare' of Malaya.¹⁹

In contrast to the authorities' tolerant treatment of the KMTM, the activities of the MCP were progressively suppressed. After October 1945, the PMFTU organized several strikes among rubber plantation, tin-mine, light industry, transportation and manual workers. They were initially successful in getting employers to meet most of the strikers' economic demands due to the pressing need for labour to rehabilitate the war-ravaged plantations, mines and other industries. Employer and government resistance hardened after the end of 1946, and Communist-inspired strikes were met with harsh police and military action. The activities of the PMFTU were increasingly curtailed, until it was proscribed in May 1948.

In contrast to the KMTM and the MCP, the SCBA commanded little attention after the war. It had become politically obsolete with the introduction of political reforms by the British Government aimed at creating a common citizenship and establishing eventual self-rule in Malaya. SCBA leaders no longer enjoyed official patronage, because the Association was too small and inconsequential a force within Chinese community politics to be used as a counter to the MCP. Realizing that the SCBA's political life had come to an end, leaders such as Tan Cheng Lock looked for an alternative political organization to achieve their political ambitions. Meanwhile, the SCBA itself increasingly became a social organization promoting the cultural activities of the diminishing Baba community in Malaya.

*From Malayan Union to Malayan Federation:
The Chinese Response*

During 1946-8 the British Government introduced major constitutional changes in Malaya. In April 1946 the transitional British Military Administration gave way to the Malayan Union scheme, which aimed at achieving two basic objectives related to the political reorganization of post-war Malaya: (1) to centralize and rationalize the administration of the fragmented pre-war political units—the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States, and (2) to create a form of common citizenship to integrate the indigenous Malay and immigrant non-Malay population and thus pave the way for eventual self-rule.²⁰

The Malayan Union plan, however, was never fully implemented, because it met with determined and effective Malay opposition led by the newly-formed United Malays National Organisation (UMNO; established in March 1946) and the Malay rulers (who had initially signed the MacMichael treaties that formed the constitutional basis for implementation of the scheme). Malay opposition stemmed from a conviction that it was an unacceptable infringement of Malay sovereignty and that the Sultans had been forced to sign the MacMichael treaties. Furthermore, the scheme contained citizenship provisions that were so liberal that the Malays feared they would be politically and economically dominated by the Chinese, who made up 43 per cent of the total population in Malaya and Singapore in 1941.²¹ Malay fears of Chinese domination should also be seen in the context of the very poor state of Sino-Malay race relations during the period, as discussed earlier.

The lack of Malay co-operation stymied full implementation of the Malayan Union scheme. Conceding to the inevitable, the British Government renegotiated a new constitutional arrangement in consultation with the UMNO and the Malay rulers. The new constitution, the Federation of Malaya Agreement, which became effective on 1 February 1948, satisfied both British and Malay requirements. It met the basic British objectives of a strong central government and common citizenship. On the other hand, it safeguarded Malay sovereignty and the special position of Malays as well as providing for a restricted form of citizenship.²²

While the Federation of Malaya Agreement satisfied the Malays, it was opposed by the Chinese and other non-Malays, who unsuccessfully attempted to block its implementation. Chinese

objections, both those of the conservative and the radical leaderships, were directed principally at the stringent citizenship clauses and the lack of equal rights for Malays and non-Malays.²³ Having failed in the anti-Federation movement during 1947, the conservative Chinese leadership led by Tan Cheng Lock spent the following ten years fighting the citizenship provisions contained in the Federation Agreement, succeeding partially in 1952 and completely in 1957, as will be seen later.

Allen has suggested that the lack of positive Chinese response to the Malayan Union scheme was, together with Malay opposition, a major factor in the British decision to abandon the experiment.²⁴ However, the Chinese response, whether positive or negative, was secondary and possibly irrelevant. The British gave priority to Malay views because the legitimacy of their rule in the country had traditionally depended on recognition obtained from the Sultans, and in return the colonial government had safeguarded the sovereignty of the rulers. By abandoning protection of the political sovereignty of the Sultans under the Malayan Union proposals, the British risked losing Malay conservative support at a time when the Communist threat to their rule was becoming serious. Furthermore, opposition by the Malay aristocracy and UMNO leaders in the civil service threatened to undermine the functioning of government. In contrast, the Chinese played no role in validating the legitimacy of British rule, nor did they contribute substantially to the bureaucracy.

However, while it was true that the Chinese conservative leadership was too busy rehabilitating itself both politically and economically to involve itself deeply in the Malayan Union debate, it none the less did not display the degree of apathy claimed by Allen and in some government statements of the time.²⁵ As Cheah observed: 'The Malayan Union proposals were favourable to the Chinese and had aroused sufficient interest among them. They were now eager to obtain further details of the scheme.' He added that the Chinese press whole-heartedly welcomed the equal citizenship provisions, though questions were raised as to their implementation.²⁶ In addition, Chinese representatives on the newly-convened Malayan Union Advisory Council (H. S. Lee, Dr Ong Chong Keng, Tan Eng Chye, Dr Soo Kim Lan and Dr Tan Cheng Leng) welcomed the proposals and sought at the same time further clarification on the advantages and disadvantages of Malayan Union citizenship.²⁷

The only Chinese group that came out strongly against the

Malayan Union was the MCP, which in February 1946 denounced the scheme as a ploy to retain control of Malaya, convert Singapore into a permanent colony and military base, weaken Communist control over workers, and offer a meaningless grant of citizenship to non-Malays.²⁸

When it became clear that the tripartite talks between the British Government, the UMNO and the Malay rulers (August–November 1946) would lead to the replacement of the Malayan Union by the Malayan Federation proposals, an anti-Federation movement emerged, led by the All Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA; known also as the Pan-Malaya Council of Joint Action) formed on 14 December 1946. The AMCJA was spearheaded by the small, centre-left Malayan Democratic Union (MDU)²⁹ and by MCP front organizations such as the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's Federation, and the New Democratic Youth League.³⁰ It was expanded in February 1947 and renamed the AMCJA-PUTERA (Pusat Tenaga Rakyat, or Centre of People's Power) after the original organization was joined by a group of radical Malay cultural and social organizations affiliated with the left-wing Malayan Nationalist Party (MNP). The influential Baba leader Tan Cheng Lock, who strongly opposed the Federation citizenship proposals, served as the movement's chairman from its inception to its demise in late 1947, and succeeded for a brief period in getting the backing of the CCC-huay kuan establishment.

The AMCJA-PUTERA attempted to put pressure on the authorities through militant activities such as anti-Federation mass rallies and demonstrations,³¹ and boycotting the Cheeseman Consultative Committee, which had been set up to consult non-Malay opinion on the Federation proposals. The CCC-huay kuan initially avoided association with the movement, and attempted to articulate their opposition through official channels. H. S. Lee and Leong Yew Koh, the two appointed Chinese members on the Cheeseman Consultative Committee, presented the CCC-huay kuan views. These two leaders said in a session of the Malayan Union Advisory Council on 25 August 1947 that they had not endorsed the Federation citizenship proposals.³² Other Chinese leaders on the Council likewise stated their opposition. Dr Lee Tiang Keng, for example, said:³³

The Revised Proposals are a flagrant injustice to the domiciled Chinese community. They spurn Chinese goodwill and co-operation, treat their

past services to the country with contempt and deny the heritage of those who were born here. The implicit racial and religious discrimination is a cantankerous worm which will very likely gnaw the bowels of the Commonwealth.

When it had become clear that the colonial government was not heeding the protestations of the Chinese representatives in the Cheeseman Consultative Council or in the Malayan Union Advisory Council, the CCC-huay kuan leadership decided to co-operate with the AMCJA-PUTERA, and helped to stage a nation-wide hartal on 20 October 1947.³⁴ These leaders pulled out of the movement shortly thereafter, however, because of concern at the perceived pro-Malay bias in the AMCJA-PUTERA's People's Constitution³⁵ and because of deep suspicions of the MCP role in the anti-Federation movement.

While the weaknesses of the movement were considerable, it failed not because of problems inherent in the campaign itself but because the colonial government had made it clear that it would consider only conservative Malay opinion in the new constitutional arrangement. In the face of unbending British resolve to proceed with the Federation, Chinese business and community leaders declared their refusal to accept appointments to serve on the Federal Legislative Council and other government bodies.³⁶ This resolve was, however, short-lived: when the Federation was actually inaugurated on 1 February 1948, the Federal Legislative Council and State Councils were represented by familiar CCC stalwarts such as H. S. Lee, Dr Lee Tiang Keng, Ee Yew Kim, Woo Ka Lim, Yong Shook Lin, Khoo Teik Ee, Leung Cheung Ling, Tan Siew Sin, Toh Eng Hoe, Leong Yew Koh and Ng Sui Cam.

The CCC 'betrayal' of the anti-Federation cause could be interpreted as a move by these pragmatically minded businessmen to salvage what could still be saved from a seemingly lost cause. They apparently hoped that their representation on government bodies might well give them an opportunity to redeem the situation from within the system by manipulating the constitutional processes available to them as representatives on government bodies. More fundamentally, the 'betrayal' by the CCC leaders had its roots in the *raison d'être* of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and the whole system of Kapitan China-type leadership and patronage, where all effectiveness depended on access to the authorities in power.

By February 1948, when the Federation of Malaya was inaugurated, the Chinese conservative leadership, due largely to the patronage of the colonial government, had made considerable progress in re-establishing its position within the community. The CCC-huay kuan leadership had by that time been permitted to have its representatives appointed to the newly-convened Federal Legislative Council as a reward for finally complying with the Federation proposals. In contrast, the MCP's position was fast deteriorating, especially in the first months of 1948, when its labour movement was being decimated by police action, the establishment of an officially-sponsored reformist labour movement, and introduction of restrictive legislation, which forced the dissolution of the PMFTU on 12 June 1948.

Feeling that free and open channels of organization and mobilization were no longer available to it, the MCP under its hard-line new secretary-general, Chin Peng, decided to prepare for armed insurrection to seize power.³⁷ The outbreak of the uprising inevitably brought about shifts in the balance of power within the Chinese community. Not only were the MCP and its front organizations removed from the lawful political arena, the KMTM was also proscribed in May 1949 following a government ban on operations by foreign political parties in Malaya.³⁸ With the MCP in the jungle and hoping to seize power through armed revolt, and the KMTM banned, the traditional CCC-huay kuan leadership had to consolidate its resources and explore new means to strengthen its support base and to aid the colonial government's anti-insurgency campaign. In this turbulent environment the MCA was born.

1. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946*, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1983, pp. 21-4.

2. V. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 261-2.

3. Brigadier H. C. Willan, D.C.C.A.O., B.M.A., 'Report on the Military Government of the Malay Peninsula for the Period ending 12 September to 30 September', mimeo., p. 3, BMA file C/1/1/4(3).

4. Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya*, Chapter 7; also pp. 249-52.

5. 'Report on the Military Government of the Malay Peninsula for the Period ending 12 September to 30 September', p. 7, BMA file C/1/1/4(3).

6. Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 267. The militarily insignificant KMTM-sponsored OCAJA was disbanded in July 1946.
7. C. B. McLane, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia: An Exploration of Eastern Policy under Lenin and Stalin*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 306-7.
8. For a discussion on Lai Tek's fascinating career, see the references on pp. 29-30 of Cheah's *Red Star over Malaya*.
9. Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya*, p. 23.
10. Ibid., p. 68.
11. See BMA file, MAL/4015; and Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA/C/3/1 (12/46).
12. Letter from S. E. King, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, to J. Calder, Resident Commissioner, MU, dated 10 April 1946, Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA C/3/4(50/46).
13. See letter from Siew Kye Wai, Chinese Affairs Officer, to Secretary for Chinese Affairs, n.d., Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA/218/48(2). The opening of new KMTM branches and San Min Chu Yi (the KMT Youth Wing) branches was reported in the following press reports: *China Press*, 26 April, 6 May, 31 July and 21 November 1946; *Kwong Wah Yit Pau*, 6 and 9 May 1947.
14. Letter from the Acting Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Singapore, E. C. S. Adkins to W. Blythe, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, MU, dated 24 May 1946, Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA 85/46(3).
15. W. Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 387.
16. *China Press*, 15 January 1947.
17. Letter from H. S. Lee to the Chief Secretary, MU, dated 3 March 1947, Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA H/1/7/1(4).
18. *Straits Times*, 9 May 1947.
19. See Minutes by E. D. Fleming, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, dated 10 August 1948, Secretary for Chinese Affairs file, SCA (FM) 156/48.
20. See *Malayan Union and Singapore: Statement of Policy on Future Constitution*, London, HMSO, 1946. For a discussion of the origins of the Malayan Union scheme, see A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Monograph No. 8, 1979, Ch. 2.
21. See Stockwell, op. cit., Ch. 4, for a discussion of Malay opposition to the scheme. See also M. N. Sophe, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysian Region 1945-65*, Kuala Lumpur, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1974, pp. 21-9. The percentage of Chinese in the population is cited from Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Appendix II. Malays formed 41 per cent and Indians 14 per cent of the population.
22. *Summary of Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Summary of the Report of the Working Committee Appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organisation*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1946, pp. 6-8. See also Stockwell, op. cit., p. 92.
23. The conservative Chinese leadership also opposed the exclusion of Singapore from the Federation and the lack of an elected majority with equal Chinese and Malay representation in the Federal Legislative and Executive Councils. See *Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Consultative Committee Together with*

the Proceedings of Six Public Meetings. A Summary of Representations Made and Letters and Memoranda Considered by the Committee, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1947, Appendix G. The Chinese left-wing leaders wanted fully elected Legislative and Federal Councils with a 55 per cent Malay representation. Furthermore, they wanted Malay to be the National Language and the new citizenship to be termed 'Melayu'. See the AMCJA-PUTERA People's Constitution in the *Straits Times*, 11 September 1947.

24. J. de V. Allen, *The Malayan Union*, New Haven, Yale University, Southeast Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 10, 1967, pp. 15, 16, 19.

25. An official report on the Malayan press response to the Malayan Union White Paper stated that Chinese press reaction was indifferent. However, the report contradicted itself by revealing that Chinese-language and Chinese-controlled English newspapers had in fact discussed the pros and cons of the constitutional proposals at great length. *Malayan Press Comment on the White Paper on Malayan Union*, Press Intelligence Publication, BMA, 1946, pp. 2, 5, 6.

26. Cheah Boon Kheng, 'Malayan Chinese and the Citizenship Issue, 1945-1948', *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs* (University of Sydney), Vol. 12, No. 2, December 1978, pp. 102-3.

27. *Official Statement on the Malayan Union Citizenship Proposals Issued by H.E. The Governor, Malayan Union, on 18 April 1946. Summary of Views on the Proposals Received from Persons, Organisations and Other Sources*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1946, see headings of Correspondence No. W.L. 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 54 and 64.

28. *Min Sheng Pau*, 5, 8, 19 and 22 February 1946. The party did not oppose the idea of common citizenship, however, as noted earlier.

29. The MDU, which lasted from December 1945 to June 1948, was formed in Singapore with the backing of the MCP. It drew its leadership and support from a small group of English-educated intellectuals who sought political reforms and self-rule for Malaya. See Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades: A Study of the Communist United Front in Malaya 1945-1948*, Singapore, Times Books International, 1979, Chs. 7-10.

30. The anti-Federation movement also received support from a few Indian organizations, such as the Indian Chambers of Commerce of Selangor and Singapore and the Singapore Ceylon Tamils' Association.

31. Rallies were held on 27 January in Seremban, 8 February in Malacca, 31 March in Singapore, 20 May in Kuala Lumpur, 20 September in Singapore, 29 September in Kuala Lumpur, and 4 October in Penang. These rallies were reported in the *Straits Times*, *Kwong Wah Yit Pau*, *Min Sheng Pau* and other major newspapers.

32. *Proceedings of the Malayan Union Advisory Council*, 25 August 1946, pp. 24-5.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

34. The Chinese press reported that the hartal was widely observed. The *Straits Times*, however, claimed it was only a partial success. See *Min Sheng Pau*, 22 October 1947; *Kwong Wah Yit Pau*, 21 October 1947; and *Straits Times*, 21 October 1947.

35. Tan Cheng Lock told Gerald de Cruz of the MDU and secretary of the AMCJA-PUTERA that the CCC-huay kuan leaders strongly opposed the AMCJA-PUTERA's demand that Malayan citizens be called 'Melayu' for fear of losing their 'racial individuality, culture and independence'. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Gerald de Cruz dated 7 October 1947, TCL Papers, TCL/1/15. [The Tan Cheng

Lock (TCL) Papers collection is found at both the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, and the Malaysian National Archives, Kuala Lumpur. Papers headed 'SP' are in the Kuala Lumpur collection and those headed 'TCL' are found in Singapore.]

36. *Straits Times*, 20 January 1948.

37. After having long suspected Lai Tek's ties with the Kempetai and Special Branch, Chin Peng finally gathered evidence by March 1947 to oust him from his position as party secretary-general. Lai Tek failed to appear before the special committee convened to indict him. It is widely believed that he was finally tracked down and assassinated in Bangkok by an MCP killer squad.

38. *Straits Times*, 10 May 1949.

The Social and Ideological Foundations of the MCA

THE Malayan Chinese Association was formed on 27 February 1949. A watershed in the development of Chinese politics in Malaya, the formation bridged the divide between traditional and modern modes of community organization in both ideological and structural terms. It also spanned the gap between the Laukeh (KMTM-CCC-huay kuan) and Baba (SCBA) political cultures to produce a synthesized Malayan-centred Chinese world-view. At the same time, the interplay of diverse influences within the MCA created a Janus-like organization which displayed the characteristics of both a modern political party and a traditional association in organization, function and ideology.

The Formation of the MCA

The immediate impetus for the formation of the MCA was the outbreak of the Emergency. Faced with a militant Communist challenge, Chinese conservative leaders sought to consolidate their position within the community. Meanwhile, the colonial government actively encouraged them to centralize their resources through the formation of a political party in order to garner Chinese support behind its anti-insurgency campaign.

By early 1949, the government realized that a large proportion of the Chinese population, especially rural squatters, supported the Communist cause, whether voluntarily or under intimidation from guerrillas. It contemplated two alternatives to cut off this base of support from the MCP: either to bring the squatters under direct government scrutiny or to deport them. With deportation an impractical alternative, squatter resettlement was chosen as the more viable remedy to the problem.¹ To successfully implement a comprehensive squatter resettlement programme, the colonial government clearly needed the backing of Chinese community

middlemen, the CCC-huay kuan leaders, many of whom were without strong organizational links once the KMTM was banned.

The British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, wanted a centralized pro-British Malayan Chinese party to fill the vacuum and provide effective leadership in the anti-insurgency campaign. Gurney urged H. S. Lee, president of the Selangor CCC and Federal Legislative Councillor, to help in the formation of such a party.² Addressing the Federal Legislative Council shortly before the MCA was inaugurated, Gurney said: 'Such an Association can clearly be of very real help in many directions, including solution of the squatter problem, which will call for heavy expenditure, and the restoration of contact between isolated Chinese communities and the authorities.'³

The inaugural meeting of the MCA was held in Kuala Lumpur under the sponsorship of the sixteen Chinese Federal Legislative Councillors, the majority of whom were prominent CCC-huay kuan figures.⁴ The meeting was attended by 300 people, including 178 delegates from the organizing committees of all the states except Kelantan.⁵ Tan Cheng Lock (who became the first party president from 1949 to 1958) was appointed chairman of the Protem Committee. Yong Shook Lin and Leung Cheung Ling were appointed as joint secretaries and Khoo Teik Ee as treasurer. Tan Cheng Lock's appointment as party president received the clear endorsement of the colonial authorities, as reflected in Sir Henry Gurney's favourable assessment of him:⁶

... he commands considerable respect among the Chinese. He is 66 years old; he has had experience in Malayan policies, he is sincere; and he is able to rise above the arguments of the different dialect groups in Chinese society. He is sincere in his efforts to do the best for the Chinese in Malaya. He has, therefore a strong influence with moderate Chinese opinion here. He is still independent and will support Government if he is convinced that Government desires to treat the Chinese fairly.

While the organizing energy and momentum for the formation of the MCA came from the combined efforts of H. S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, Yong Shook Lin, Khoo Teik Ee and Tan Siew Sin, the guiding light behind its inception was Tan Cheng Lock. Tan Cheng Lock's role in the MCA's formation deserves further elaboration, for the concept of a Malayan-centred Chinese political party was his brainchild, as demonstrated in the following tribute made by Yong Shook Lin: 'The idea of an Association or League in

which all Malayan Chinese who intend to have their permanent homes in Malaya should be qualified to become members was conceived in the fertile brain of Mr. Tan Cheng Lock.⁷ Furthermore, Tan Cheng Lock's thinking on the ideological function of such a party subsequently formed the innovative element in MCA party philosophy.

As early as November 1943, Tan Cheng Lock had propounded the need for Chinese living in Malaya to form a pan-Malayan political party. He conceived the idea while living in India, where he and his family had sought refuge from the Japanese Occupation. Tan Cheng Lock wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonel Oliver Stanley, to inform him that overseas Chinese from South-East Asia who had fled to India had organized themselves into an Overseas Chinese Association. Describing the Association's Malayan Chinese members as people with 'a big stake and important and extensive interests in Malaya', Tan Cheng Lock wrote: 'On our return to Malaya, those of our members who are Malaysians will constitute themselves into a Malayan Chinese Association devoted to the interests of the country.' He informed the Colonial Secretary that the proposed Malayan Chinese Association would aid the British Government upon reoccupation of Malaya to deal with problems 'relating to reparations from war damage' and other 'post-war problems affecting its [Malaya's] future'.⁸ The MCA was thus originally conceived as an organization to protect Chinese capitalist interests in anticipation of a period of economic and political rehabilitation in Malaya. When the party was finally formed five and a half years later, the political circumstances which prompted Tan Cheng Lock to propose the idea had changed, but one factor remained constant: it was formed to advance Chinese capitalist interests.

The formation of the MCA did not materialize when Tan Cheng Lock first proposed it, as no support for the idea was forthcoming from the colonial authorities or the CCC-huay kuan establishment. He himself did not possess the organizational resources and support base to successfully launch a pan-Malayan political party, as evidenced by his failure to set up the Malayan Chinese League. During the ensuing five-year span, however, Tan Cheng Lock continued to sow the idea of a Chinese political party. His involvement in the anti-Federation movement gave him deeper and more sophisticated perceptions regarding the function and role of such a party. The anti-citizenship clauses of

the Malayan Federation constitution made him realize as never before how vital it was for Chinese to acquire citizenship in order to safeguard their political liberties and economic interests. At the same time, witnessing the discord between Malays and non-Malays wrangling over the Malayan Federation proposals, he modified his initial idea of a party serving purely Chinese interests. Instead he began to favour political solutions aimed at promoting relations among the different races. These ideas were laid out in his proposals for a Malayan Chinese League and a National Unity Organisation.

In early May 1948, Tan Cheng Lock announced his intention of forming the Malayan Chinese League with the following three major objectives: protection of Chinese political and economic interests; promotion of interracial harmony; and attainment of self-government for Malaya.⁹ Among the three objectives, the greatest stress was placed on the first:¹⁰

It is unlikely in the ultimate shape of things to come in the New Malaya that those of its residents who do not share the burden of civic responsibilities will be permitted to enjoy civic rights, and that the non-citizens can continue in an unrestricted manner to own property, exploit the country and participate in all the privileges of carrying on trade, commerce and business etc. for the [sic] personal enrichment, while regarding the country as primarily a temporary place of residence for them to make money in.

It is merely a question of time that those people in Malaya who do not identify themselves with the interests of this country and enrol themselves in the ranks of its loyal citizens, making it their permanent home, will inevitably suffer from certain legal disabilities that will be imposed upon them to restrict their liberty to exploit the land. . . .

Here, as in the argument he forwarded when proposing the Malayan Chinese Association in 1943, Tan Cheng Lock's overriding concern was that the economically privileged position of the Chinese mercantile class should be protected through political action. Aware that less than 10 per cent of the Chinese population would receive Malayan citizenship under the existing Federation Constitution, he wrote that it was clearly a 'matter of self-preservation' of Chinese interests that the Chinese organize themselves politically to acquire citizenship.¹¹

Aside from the advancement of Chinese economic interests, Tan Cheng Lock wanted the Malayan Chinese League to serve as a vehicle to instil loyalty towards Malaya. He wrote: 'My own idea

is to wean the China-born from China and Chinese politics and encourage them to transfer their love, for the good of all concerned including themselves, to Malaya... through the organisation of the Malayan Chinese League....¹² He saw the 'Malayanisation' of Laukeh as the first and most crucial stage in his plan to propagate an all-embracing Malayan consciousness and identity among the various races.

Tan Cheng Lock explained how the proposed organization could enhance racial harmony:¹³

We have the ideal—a new Malayan consciousness among all who regard Malaya as their home and the object of their loyalty.

I have suggested the idea of a Malayan Chinese League in order to help develop among those Chinese who have decided to make Malaya their permanent home, a consciousness of Malayan unity and loyalty which will draw them closer to other Malayan communities.

This Malayan Chinese League... together with other communal organisations should be branches of a central National Unity Organisation which would be based on the goodwill and co-operation of the domiciled communities in Malaya. Thus we shall move from present realities to our ideal of a common Malayan consciousness and Malayan unity.

He did not draw up a constitution or propose other specific details regarding the organizational and functional structure of the National Unity Organisation, aside from indicating that it would embrace 'all parties, races and classes' to promote unity, goodwill and co-operation among all Malaysians permanently resident in the country.¹⁴ Although his ideas about the National Unity Organisation were not fully developed, the concept was significant because it was perhaps the first public recognition by a Chinese leader of the value of coalition politics as potentially the best means of serving Chinese interests in a multiracial Malaya.

Tan Cheng Lock's plans to establish the Malayan Chinese League did not materialize. Lacking a support base outside his home state of Malacca, he failed in his efforts to get the patronage of the CCC-huay kuan establishment, especially in Chinese-dominated urban centres such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Penang. However, with the outbreak of the Emergency, his proposal for a Chinese political party fitted perfectly with the interests of both the colonial government and the CCC-huay kuan establishment.

A potentially serious obstacle to the formation of the MCA would have arisen if the Malay establishment had opposed it. Fortunately, the UMNO raised no objections. In July 1948 Datuk

Onn Jaafar, then leader of the UMNO, stated that 'law-abiding Chinese should band together in a political party to help the government in the fight against Communism'. He added: 'I would appeal to the leaders of the Chinese community to organise themselves and to come in together with us, and we can stamp this danger out.'¹⁵ Datuk Onn's endorsement allayed fears held by British officials and Chinese leaders, and paved the way for the founding of the MCA.

Sir Henry Gurney and Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner-General for South-East Asia, had played an active role in securing the UMNO's support for the formation of the MCA. The High Commissioner assured the sponsors of the new party that there would be no Malay objection, an indication that he had worked behind the scenes to ensure a favourable UMNO reception.¹⁶ Malcolm MacDonald, for his part, used the newly convened Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) as a forum to promote cordial co-operation between Tan Cheng Lock and Datuk Onn.¹⁷

The Social Background of Party Leadership and Membership

Differences in the social background of the leadership and membership of the newly formed MCA affected the ideological and functional structure of the party. In order to compare and contrast the varying degrees of control exerted by leaders at different levels of the party hierarchy, a sample of party office-holders at the national, state and grass-roots levels for the period 1949-57 was studied. The sample consisted of 32 Central Working Committee (CWC) members, 198 Working Committee members of six state branches and 648 office-holders of 76 area and district branch committees in Johore and Perak.¹⁸ The social background of the office-holders was examined in relation to: (a) place of birth, (b) education, (c) occupation, (d) appointments to government bodies, and (e) office-holding in public organizations, both Chinese associations and multiracial societies.

The National Leadership

The picture which emerges shows that the majority of MCA national leaders were Malayan-born, English-educated, wealthy businessmen and/or professionally qualified men who held positions in

government bodies as well as Chinese associations and multiracial organizations. A second, and small, definable group in the CWC consisted of Chinese-educated men who were essentially state representatives and did not play significant roles in the multi-ethnic political centre. These individuals had been elevated into the CWC to solidify the linkage between the English-educated Westernized national leadership and the Chinese-speaking Laukeh base at the party grass-roots level.

Between 1949 and 1957, the most prominent national MCA leaders in the CWC included the following: Tan Cheng Lock, Tan Siew Sin, Khoo Teik Ee, H. S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, Yong Shook Lin, Ong Yoke Lin, T. H. Tan, Dr Lim Chong Eu, Too Joon Hing, Ng Ek Teong and Yong Pung How. Of the state representatives, the better-known individuals included Lau Pak Khuan from the state of Perak, Wong Shee Fun from Johore, Goh Chee Yan from Malacca, Lim Teng Kwang from Kedah, Foo See Moi from Kelantan and Wu Cheok Yee from Trengganu.

Twenty-six of the 32 CWC members were Malayan-born. Of the remaining 6, 4 were born in China (H. S. Lee, Lau Pak Khuan, Ng Sui Cam and Goh Chee Yan), 1 in Hong Kong (Leung Cheung Ling), and 1 in Burma (Dr Lee Tiang Keng). Regarding their educational status, 23, a large majority, were educated up to the post-secondary level: 10 went to universities and colleges in England, 2 to universities in both England and Hong Kong, 2 to Canada and Hong Kong, 3 to Hong Kong and 1 to China. Five were locally trained in Malaya and Singapore. Of the remaining 9, 7 were educated up to the secondary school level. Only 2 men were not educated beyond the primary school level. The majority were educated in English-medium institutions, but a large proportion could speak Mandarin, since they either had attended Chinese schools up to the primary level or had received private tuition. Central Committee meetings were held in English, and party minutes and documents were recorded in English. Chinese translations of these were then made for the benefit of CWC members not literate in English such as Lau Pak Khuan, and for distribution to state branches. Most of these CWC leaders were also conversant in Malay; however, literacy in Malay was not a necessary precondition in attaining MCA leadership status till after the mid-1970s, when the language was widely used within government and bureaucratic circles.

All the 32 leaders were men of considerable wealth, and some

were certainly among the wealthiest in Malaya. These men derived their fortunes mainly from tin mines, rubber and other agricultural estates, banking, shipping, real estate development, import-export agencies, wholesale and retail trading, and other commercial enterprises and small-scale manufacturing industries. The widespread network of Tan Cheng Lock's business concerns illustrates the extent of his wealth. His main income came from several rubber estates in Malacca, but he also held directorships in several companies, including a bank (the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation), an insurance company (the Oversea Assurance Corporation Ltd.), a number of British-based import-export agencies (including Sime Darby and Co. Ltd. and Cycle and Carriage Co. Ltd.), a newspaper company (the Malayan Tribune Press Ltd.) and an ice factory. H. S. Lee was another successful businessman; among his extensive commercial undertakings were tin-mining and banking concerns, and a newspaper company (the China Press).

Fifteen, or slightly under half, of the 32 were professionally qualified men: 6 advocates and solicitors (trained mainly in Britain), 3 doctors, 2 architects, 2 engineers, 1 chartered accountant and 1 journalist. These men also engaged in commercial enterprises besides carrying out their professional practices. Leong Yew Koh, for example, had large tin-mining interests in Perak in addition to his law practice in Ipoh. Khoo Teik Ee was one of the most successful lawyers in Kuala Lumpur, and also a prominent businessman. Ng Sui Cam in Penang was a mechanical engineer, a landed proprietor and real estate developer.

As noted earlier, wealth has traditionally been the most important criterion of social mobility within the Chinese community in Malaya. The fact that the CWC members were all wealthy men indicated that it still functioned as an effective criterion in the 1950s—as it continues to do to the present. Although most leaders in the party would have the political contacts in government to bring development projects to benefit the local community, a rich party office-holder could dispense financial patronage on a personal basis in addition to carrying out his political duties towards his supporters. The wealthy leader was expected to make donations from his private fortune towards all sorts of charitable causes within the local community. He was also well placed to advance the interests of his supporters by employing them in his business concerns or by giving them loans or preferential trading terms. At

the very least, he could give them introductions for making the necessary contacts to set up or widen their businesses. It is clear that the *towkay* leader in the party was (and still is) a much respected figure.

All 32 CWC members held government appointments, ranging from Federal bodies to local boards. These bodies included the Federal Legislative Council, State Legislative Councils, Town and Municipal Boards, Chinese Advisory Boards, State War Executive Committees, Rubber Licensing and Replanting Boards and State Housing Boards. It was not unusual for a CWC member to hold several positions simultaneously. H. S. Lee, for example, was a member of the Federal Legislative Council, the Selangor State Advisory Council, the Kuala Lumpur Town Board, and the Chinese Tin Mines Rehabilitation Loans Board, while Tan Siew Sin served on the Federal Legislative Council, the Malacca Chinese Advisory Board, and the Central Advisory Council on Education.

Most of the 32 men also held office in multiracial voluntary organizations. These included community service bodies such as the Rotary Club, the Jaycees, and the Red Cross Society (later renamed Red Crescent Society); recreational and sports clubs such as golf, tennis, badminton and shooting associations; and welfare institutions for the physically handicapped. The few state representatives in the CWC who had been educated in Chinese tended not to participate actively in these multiracial bodies because of language barriers. Office-holding in multiracial societies offered immense opportunities for Chinese leaders to forge personal contacts with senior British and Malay officials in government. In Malaya, as in most other plural societies, recreational activities such as playing golf constituted an effective informal channel for consolidating political and social ties between individuals from different socio-cultural and racial backgrounds. The English-educated CWC members were therefore able to advance their political careers more easily than their Chinese-educated colleagues.

Although the English-educated CWC leaders achieved leadership status of national prominence through the forging of multiracial contacts within the country's highest political circles, it appears that this process took place only *after* they had established strong reputations as respected and acceptable leaders within the Chinese community itself. Non-Chinese leaders quite naturally judged the political worth of their Chinese allies on the strength

of the latter's standing within their own community and ability to influence Chinese public opinion. Leadership status within the community was measured by the individual's standing in the Chinese associational network, and office-holding in Chinese associations was in turn seen as a manifestation of the individual's high social standing within the community. The wealth of the English-educated leaders enabled them to move up the Laukeh social ladder and hold high positions in the CCC-huay kuan establishment.

The CWC members held major positions in almost every type of Chinese association. The following table lists examples from different types of Chinese associations which were dominated by the MCA CWC for the years 1949-57:¹⁹

Office-holding of MCA CWC Members in Major Types of Chinese Associations, 1949-1957

| <i>Types of Chinese Association</i> | <i>Office-holders</i> |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>The Chinese Chamber of Commerce</i> | |
| The Malacca CCC | Tan Cheng Lock Tan Siew Sin Goh Chee Yan } presidents |
| The Perak CCC | Lau Pak Khuan (president) Leong Yew Koh Y. C. Kang Too Joon Hing |
| The Selangor CCC | H. S. Lee (president) Leung Cheung Ling Ong Yoke Lin |
| The Negri Sembilan CCC | Lee Tee Siong (president) |
| The Johore CCC | Wong Shee Fun (president) |
| The Penang CCC | Ng Sui Cam (president) |
| The Kelantan CCC | Foo See Moi (president) |
| The Trengganu CCC | Wu Cheok Yee (president) |
| The Sungai Patani (Kedah) CCC | Lim Teng Kwang (president) |

(continued)

| <i>Types of Chinese Association</i> | <i>Office-holders</i> |
|---|---|
| 2. <i>The Chinese Assembly Hall/ Chinese Association</i> | |
| The Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall | H. S. Lee (president) Khoo Teik Ee Leung Cheung Ling Yong Shook Lin Y. T. Lee |
| The Perak Chinese Association | Lau Pak Khuan (president) Y. C. Kang Too Joon Hing |
| The Johor Bahru Chinese Association | Wong Shee Fun (president) Yap Kim Hock |
| The Penang Chinese Town Hall | Ng Sui Cam (president) |
| 3. <i>The Dialect/Territorial Huay Kuan</i> | |
| The Federation of Kwangtung Huay Kuan (includes the Cantonese, Teochew and Hakka dialect groupings) | H. S. Lee Lau Pak Khuan } presidents Leung Cheung Ling Leong Yew Koh Yap Mau Tatt |
| The Federation of Hokkien Huay Kuan | Khoo Teik Ee Tan Cheng Lock |
| The Federation of Fui Chew Huay Kuan (Hakka) | Soon Cheng Sun |
| The Federation of Kheng Chew Huay Kuan (Hainanese) | Foo See Moi Too Joon Hing |
| The All-Malaya Ko Chow Huay Kuan (Cantonese) | H. S. Lee (president) |
| The Selangor Nam Hoi Huay Kuan (Cantonese) | Y. T. Lee |
| The Selangor Eng Choon Huay Kuan (Hokkien) | Gunn Chit Wah |
| The Selangor Kwong Siew Huay Kuan (Cantonese) | Leung Cheung Ling |
| The Penang Toi Sin Ning Yang Huay Kuan (Cantonese) | Lee Wun Moon |

| <i>Types of Chinese Association</i> | <i>Office-holders</i> |
|---|---------------------------|
| 4. <i>The Clan/Surname Association</i> | |
| The Penang Lee Shi Ching Shing Lee Clansmen | Lee Wun Moon |
| The Kulim Soon Clan Association | Soon Cheng Sun |
| 5. <i>The Trade Guild</i> | |
| The Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations | Lau Pak Khuan (president) |
| The Combined Committees of 24 Chinese Labour Guilds, Penang | Lee Wun Moon (president) |
| The Perak Coffee Shopkeepers' Association | Too Joon Hing |
| The Chinese Hawkers' Association, Batu Pahat | Tan Suan Kok |
| 6. <i>The Cultural, Social/Recreational Association</i> | |
| The Chen Woo Association | Lau Pak Khuan (president) |

A number of points emerge from the above table: first, it can be seen that in nine states, CWC members had been presidents of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the most important type of Chinese association in Malaya. (These men were also the chairmen of the state MCA branches.) All the CCC in Malaya came under the supervision of a pan-Malayan body, the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce (ACCC) formed in 1947 under the chairmanship of H. S. Lee, who was also chairman of the Selangor CCC. Throughout the 1950s the ACCC came under the influence of the MCA CWC, since the chairmanship of the Associated Chambers was filled by the presidents of the CCC of the different states on a rotation basis.

The MCA CWC likewise exercised an extraordinary degree of influence over the entire Chinese associational network through multiple office-holding in the most important categories of associations. H. S. Lee, for example, had been the president of the Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, the Federation of Kwangtung Huay Kuan, and

the All-Malaya Ko Chow Huay Kuan, while Lau Pak Khuan had been the president of the Perak Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Perak Chinese Association, the Federation of Kwangtung Huay Kuan, and the Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations. Leadership within this CCC dialect/territorial huay kuan-trade guild nexus automatically made these MCA CWC members superior in social status to all other Chinese leaders who held office in minor mutual aid, cultural, sports, dramatic, social, and moral uplifting associations.

In addition to controlling the Chinese associational network, the MCA CWC also played a significant role in promoting Chinese education in Malaya. Chinese schools had traditionally depended for their survival on donations from wealthy community leaders. These rich patrons were invited to sit on the schools' boards of governors, which controlled all the affairs of the schools, including decisions affecting the employment of teaching staff, curricula and textbook content. MCA CWC members who had been chairmen of the boards of governors of some of the biggest Chinese schools in the country included the following: H. S. Lee (the Kuen Cheng Girls' School in Kuala Lumpur), Y. T. Lee (the Confucian Chinese School in Kuala Lumpur), Wong Shee Fun (the Foon Yew School in Johore Bahru), Goh Chee Yan (the Pay Teck Girls' School in Malacca), and Lee Fong Yee (the Chin Hwa School in Seremban). Leung Cheung Ling was the vice-chairman of the United Chinese School Committees Association (UCSCA), the co-ordinating body of the boards of governors of Chinese schools. The influence exerted by MCA top-ranking leaders over the boards of governors (and by second-echelon leaders over Chinese school teachers' associations) buttressed the major role played by the MCA in Chinese educational affairs.

While the Westernized national leaders played prominent roles in government bodies at the political centre and in multiracial societies, the state representatives with their Laukeh social orientation dominated the activities of Chinese traditional associations and educational institutions, and thus were the real power-brokers within the Chinese community.

One final feature which emerges from the pattern of office-holding of the MCA CWC is the disproportionately large role played by leaders from Baba backgrounds. Of the CWC members, only four (Tan Cheng Lock, Tan Siew Sin, Lim Chong Eu and Lim Khye Seng) came from Baba families. These men had held

office in the SCBA and in other Baba societies such as the Penang and Malacca Chinese Recreational Clubs. Though the number of Baba leaders in the MCA was extremely small, the first four presidents of the party from 1949 to 1974—Tan Cheng Lock, Lim Chong Eu, Cheah Toon Lock and Tan Siew Sin—were all Baba leaders who had held office in the SCBA prior to their joining the MCA. This phenomenon suggests that Baba leaders from the SCBA had one crucial political advantage over other English-educated leaders in the Association. Their Westernized political and social background combined with their activities in the SCBA gave them greater and easier access to officials in the colonial government than was available to most other Chinese leaders. Through their former deep involvement in Malayan colonial affairs, these MCA leaders had gained intimate insight into the workings of government at the highest levels, and were therefore well equipped to lead the party. During the period prior to the formation of the MCA and immediately after, Tan Cheng Lock was the Chinese leader best known to the highest government officials (such as Malcolm MacDonald and Henry Gurney), as he had established his reputation during his term of service in the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. His election to the presidency of the MCA may have been due to this consideration as much as to the fact that the Association was his brainchild.

It appears, therefore, that the political mobility of a Baba leader within the party hierarchy was determined to a great extent by the degree of influence he had within the highest government circles. At the same time, no SCBA leader who had joined the MCA was likely to get far in the party hierarchy unless, first, he had close social and economic ties with the Laukeh leaders in the party, and secondly, he held office in the most important Chinese associations. The four presidents of the MCA with Baba backgrounds fulfilled all these requirements; they had all been resinicized to the extent of being able to fit well into the commercial and social world of the Laukeh leaders.

One final point to be made on the social background of the CWC members is the pattern of dialect groupings. Of the 32 men, 12 were Hokkiens, 11 Cantonese, 6 Hakkas, 2 Hainanese, and 1 Teochew. Clearly there was no domination by a single dialect group at the top level of the MCA. The distribution of dialect grouping in the CWC broadly reflected that within the Chinese community at large. In 1957, the proportion of the different dialect groups in

Malaya was: Hokkiens, 31.7 per cent; Hakkas, 21.8 per cent; Cantonese, 21.7 per cent; Teochews, 12.7 per cent; Hainanese, 5.3 per cent; Kwongsai, 3.0 per cent; Hokchiu, 2.0 per cent; Henghua, 0.5 per cent; Hokchia, 0.4 per cent; others (mainly from North China), 1.5 per cent.²⁰ The predominance of Hokkiens in the CWC reflects the Hokkien proportion within the Chinese community at large. Though the Hakka and Cantonese proportion within the community was almost equal, more Cantonese than Hakkas were to be found in the CWC. This might have been due to the fact that the party's central office was located in Kuala Lumpur, with its predominantly Cantonese population. Though the minor dialect groups such as the Kwongsais, Hokchius and Henghuas were not represented in the CWC, they were represented at the lower levels of the party hierarchy. The multiplicity of dialect groupings found in the CWC, as well as the fact that most of the members had been educated in English, was a major reason why English was used as the common language of communication among them.

In conclusion, from the above analysis of the social background of the CWC members, one can see that an individual could rise to the top level of the party hierarchy if he fulfilled two criteria: he had to be wealthy, and he had to be a recognized and respected leader within the Chinese associational network. If the individual aspired to be a national leader, he had to fulfil two further criteria: he had to be literate in English and have close ties with British officials and Malay leaders in the highest circles of government.

The State Leadership

The second-rung leadership in the MCA consisted of office-holders in the Working Committees of the different state-level organizations. In this section the office-holders of the Working Committees for the states of Perak, Selangor, Johore, Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Penang are examined. The social background of these men is analysed principally in terms of occupational and educational status, and office-holding in government and other public bodies.

There were 49 men in the Perak Working Committee (for the term 1953-5) and 29 men in the Selangor Working Committee (for 1952-3). A large majority, 40 out of 49 in Perak and 26 out of 29 in Selangor, described their occupations as either businessmen or merchants. An examination of their business activities discloses

that the majority were engaged in tin mining, rubber planting and processing, banking, insurance, shipping, real estate development, import-export agencies, and general wholesaling and retailing, trading in items such as foodstuffs, hardware, clothing, cigarettes, petroleum and kerosene. The number of professionally qualified men in the two Working Committees was small: 9 out of 49 in Perak, and only 3 out of 29 in Selangor. Of the 9 in Perak, there were 4 lawyers, 2 chartered accountants, 2 doctors, and 1 engineer. Of the 3 in Selangor, one was a lawyer; another, an architect; and the third, an accountant.

The majority of the Working Committee members were Chinese-educated. The number of English-educated was 15 (out of 49) in Perak; in Selangor the proportion was slightly higher, 12 out of 29. The small number of English-educated men explains the correspondingly small number of professionally trained men noted above.

The predominance of Chinese-educated leaders in the two Working Committees likewise accounts for the small proportion of men who held office in government bodies. Since it was necessary for an individual to be at least bilingual in order to be appointed to government bodies, Chinese-speaking wealthy towkay usually did not qualify for those posts. In the Perak Working Committee, only 13 of the 49 held office in bodies such as the Federal Legislative Council, the State Legislative Council, the Chinese Advisory Board, and town and municipal Boards. The proportion of members in the Selangor Working Committee who held similar positions was slightly higher—12 out of 29—probably because MCA leaders living in Kuala Lumpur tended to have better chances of being appointed to government bodies than their colleagues away from the country's political centre, and the English-educated constituted a higher proportion in the Selangor Working Committee.

The educational background of these men was also a determining factor in the low incidence of office-holding in multiracial organizations. The Selangor Working Committee, being more English-educated, had a correspondingly higher proportion of men who participated in the activities of multiracial organizations than the Perak Working Committee. Ten out of the 29 men in Selangor held office in community service organizations such as the Rotary Club, the Jaycees and the St. John's Ambulance Society, and social clubs such as the Royal Selangor Golf Club and the Lake Club. In Perak, only 9 out of 49 participated in the activities of similar multiracial organizations.

Although the majority of these Working Committee members did not hold office in government bodies or multiracial organizations, office-holding in Chinese associations was almost universal. They were represented on the committees of every category of association, ranging from the CCC, the Chinese Assembly Hall/Chinese Association, the dialect/territorial huay kuan, the clan/surname association, and the trade guild, to the recreational, cultural, and mutual aid society. For example, the Perak and Selangor CCC were dominated by members from the MCA Working Committees of the two states. The positions of president, vice-president and secretary were filled by men such as Ang Keh Tho, Chong Khoon Lin, Cho Yew Fai, and Chin Chee Meow in Selangor, and by Cheong Chee, Foong Seong, Chin Swee Onn and Wong Kin Sun in Perak. Major trade guilds came under the leadership of some MCA Working Committee members: the Selangor Chinese Guilds and Associations was led by Leong Chee Cheong and Chong Shih Guan; the Selangor Chinese Hardware Dealers' Association by Chong Shih Guan; the Selangor Shopkeepers' Association by Leong Chee Cheong; the Assembly of Perak Chinese Associations and Commercial Guilds by Cheong Chee; and the Perak Gold Merchants' Association by Ho Sau Sau. Both Perak and Selangor were rich tin-mining states; the Chinese Mining Association in the two states was therefore a key organization. This body also came under the influence of the MCA state leaders: the Selangor Chinese Mining Association was led by men such as Moe Pak Kion and Chan Kwong Hon, and the Perak Chinese Mining Association by Ng Yin Fong, Ong Chin Seong and Foong Seong.

The dialect/territorial huay kuan which were led by these MCA state leaders spanned a variety of dialect groups. These included the Kwangtung, Hokkien, Kwong Siew, Teochew Pooi Ip, Koo Kong Chau (Cantonese), Nam Hoi (Cantonese) and Char Yong (Hakka) Huay Kuan in Selangor. In Perak, they included the Kwangtung, Hokkien, Ka Yin Chiu and Fui Chiu (Hakka), Teochew Pooi Ip and Kheng Chew (Hainanese) Huay Kuan. This pattern indicates that the second-echelon leadership in the MCA comprised men from all the major dialect groups in the country. However, there were more Cantonese and Hakkas than any other dialect groups in the Working Committees of Perak and Selangor, not surprisingly since Cantonese and Hakkas formed the majority of the Chinese population in the two states.

The Chinese educational system in Perak and Selangor came

under the influence of the two MCA Working Committees, through the financial leverage which these men had over Chinese schools as members of the schools' boards of governors. Working Committee members sat on the boards of governors of various schools: Woo Saik Hong in the San Min Middle School in Telok Anson, Ng Yin Fong in the Chung Hwa School in Kampar, Yeoh Kim Tian in the Pooy Lam High School and Yuk Choy High School in Ipoh, Chong Khoon Lin in the Confucian Chinese School in Kuala Lumpur, and Moe Pak Kion in the Kuen Cheng Girls' School and the Chung Hwa School in Kuala Lumpur. Besides being patrons and governors of Chinese schools, MCA leaders also exerted influence over the activities of Chinese school teachers. This was done through representation on the highest co-ordinating body of Chinese schoolteachers, the United Chinese School Teachers Association (UCSTA). Between 1953 and 1955, the UCSTA was under the chairmanship of Lim Lian Geok of the MCA Malacca Working Committee.

Before proceeding to make a comprehensive comparison of the differences and similarities in the social background of the top and second-echelon leadership of the MCA, the social background of the members of the Working Committees of Johore, Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Penang will be briefly considered.

The Johore Working Committee for the years 1953-5 comprised 29 people. Of the 29, an overwhelming majority of 27 listed their occupation simply under the all-encompassing category of 'merchant' (the other two were both doctors). Based on the economic activities of the Perak and Selangor Working Committee members, one may assume that the Johore state leaders were also successful towkay engaged in fairly large-scale business enterprises. These Working Committee members were either Chinese-educated or non-educated towkay who in turn dominated the Chinese associational network in Johore, especially the CCC and dialect/territorial huay kuan, and played influential roles in the Chinese schools. Finally, because of language obstacles, only a handful of English-educated leaders in the state were represented on government bodies and multiracial organizations.

The overwhelming majority of the 45 men in the Negri Sembilan Working Committee (for the years 1951-2) appear to have been Chinese-educated or non-educated towkays. Forty-two of the 45 described their occupations either as businessmen or as property owners. The remaining three men were a retired civil

servant, a secretary, and a Chinese schoolteacher. The occupational pattern of the Negri Sembilan Working Committee reinforces the picture which has emerged: that the second-echelon leadership of the MCA was dominated by Chinese-speaking, successful towkay.

The occupational backgrounds of the Malacca and Penang Working Committees (for the years 1952-3) display an interesting variation to that found in the other states. It has been seen that only 9 of the 49 Committee members in Perak were English-educated, professional men; in Selangor there were 3 out of 29; in Johore 2 out of 29; in Negri Sembilan 3 out of 45. In Malacca, the proportion was noticeably higher: 8 out of 28. In Penang it was even higher: 14 out of 18. The deviation seen here does not, however, fundamentally alter the pattern of the argument so far. This deviation stemmed from the fact that Malacca and Penang had the largest concentrations of Baba Chinese in the country. Thus one would expect to find a larger proportion of Westernized English-educated Chinese in the Working Committees of the two states than in any other state. This variation in educational status does not mean that the state leaders in Malacca and Penang came from a social class that was different from that of leaders in other states. Like Tan Cheng Lock and Tan Siew Sin in the CWC, Baba state leaders in Malacca and Penang had to be accepted by the Chinese community at large before they could rise up the party hierarchy. In other words, they came from the same social and commercial circles as the Chinese-speaking towkay leaders, and actively participated in the affairs of Chinese associations, especially the CCC.

What then were the differences and similarities in the social background of the top and second-level leadership of the Association? The most significant differences between the two groups were that the top leadership had a predominantly larger proportion with a Westernized English-educated background, included more professionally trained men and tended to have higher levels of education.

The English-educated men at the top were also more likely to hold office in government bodies and multiracial organizations. Thus, many more CWC members participated in the multi-ethnic political activities at the centre than did members of the State Working Committees from Laukeh backgrounds, who were severely handicapped by language constraints. Essentially, however,

the English-educated professionals and Chinese-educated or non-educated Laukeh towkay in the MCA at the top and second-rung levels came from the same social class in the country despite differences in educational and occupational status. In short, together they comprised the Chinese mercantile, capitalist élite of Malaya.

The multiplicity of dialect groupings in the CWC and State Working Committees indicates that the top and second-level leadership was not monopolized by any particular dialect group. It also indicates that dialect group origins were not a barrier to office-holding at the top level of the party hierarchy. (This, however, was not the case at the grass-roots level, as will be shortly seen.) The language of communication in the State Working Committees tended to be the predominant dialect of the locality or Mandarin, and rarely English as in the case of the CWC.²¹

The Grass-roots Leadership

The social background of the MCA grass-roots leadership will be examined through the results of the author's survey of the occupational status of 648 office-holders in the 1950-2 Working Committees of forty-three area branches in Johore and thirty-three area branches in Perak.²²

Out of the total of 489 office-holders in Johore, 399 (81.7 per cent) engaged in commercial enterprises. The majority were small-scale retail traders dealing in foodstuffs, clothing, medical supplies, hardware and other miscellaneous merchandise. A few were coffee-shop owners, and some others were rubber dealers engaged in the rubber trade of the countryside and in the processing of latex into smoked rubber sheets. These traders in the small towns and villages constituted the bulk of the economic middlemen who have traditionally provided a range of commercial services for the Malay peasantry, often on terms regarded as exorbitant.²³

Only 30 (6.1 per cent) of the Johore grass-roots leaders dealt in businesses which approximated in scale to the commercial holdings of the top and second-echelon leadership in the Association. These included mining, plantation, real estate, banking, insurance and wholesale trading interests. Another 44 (8.9 per cent) of these office-holders were not self-employed traders or businessmen, but belonged to the lower-income, wage-earning, working class: they were mostly shop assistants, clerks, craftsmen and manual labourers. A few of them were farmers and fishermen. Finally,

only 16 (3.3 per cent) of the 489 men in Johore belonged to the professional class. Here again, as with the case of the merchants, a qualitative difference existed between the professions as compared to those of the men higher up the party hierarchy. Most of the grass-roots leaders were poorly paid schoolteachers in Chinese schools. Some others were Chinese physicians (*sinseh*) and dentists who either were trained in China or were self-taught in the rudimentary skills of these disciplines. Unlike the mainly Western-trained professionals in the upper levels of the party hierarchy who had lucrative practices in the bigger towns, these men were modestly remunerated for their professional services in the smaller towns and villages.

The occupational pattern of the 159 grass-roots leaders in Perak reveals a similar trend to that found in Johore. A hundred and thirty-eight (88.8 per cent) of them described their occupations either as merchants or rubber dealers. They were mostly small-scale retailers and traders. Fifteen of the men in Perak (9.4 per cent) were fairly wealthy men engaged mainly in the tin-mining industry (which is located principally in Perak). Four out of the 159 were wage-earners: 2 were shop assistants and the other 2 were clerks. Finally, only 2 men were professionally trained: a schoolteacher in a Chinese school and an accountant.

The dearth of Western-trained professionals and the predominance of petty traders among the grass-roots leaders of the MCA indicates that they were mostly Chinese-educated or non-educated men belonging to the lower middle and lower income groups within the Chinese community. They were also either first-generation immigrants or local-born Chinese who had preserved the social, cultural and traditional values of their forefathers from China.

During the early 1950s, a number of village councils and squatter committees were set up in the small towns and New Villages as part of the government's campaign to win the loyalty of the rural Chinese population. The MCA grass-roots leaders were selected to serve on these government consultative bodies and they also monopolized office-holding in the Chinese associations in the small towns. They were also the chairmen and members of the boards of governors of the local Chinese schools. This last office represented the highest-ranking social status within the village community, since the chairman of the local school committee was responsible for the smooth running of village affairs and

was entrusted with informal power to settle disputes between villages.²⁴

The small number of grass-roots MCA office-holders from the rural proletariat (for example, rubber tappers and labourers) and the peasantry—3.2 per cent of the total in Johore, and none in Perak—clearly shows that the MCA was a party led by merchants, from the CWC right down to the lowest level. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the MCA was—and still is—commonly referred to as a 'towkay party', with the clear implication that the towkay leaders of the party, be they wealthy capitalists or small traders, were self-seeking opportunists who put personal business interests before those of the party. This image has impaired the Association's ability to gain the support of the lower-income and working classes within the Chinese community, especially in the urban areas.

A government report on the party's work in the New Villages stated that the common villager was not keen to join the MCA, since that would make him a target for reprisals from the Communist terrorists, but it added that the élitist composition of the party also acted as a deterrent. The report read: 'The work of the MCA is more useful and important than many people suppose, but unfortunately its leaders are mostly from the towkay class. The common man regards it as an association of capitalists. ...'²⁵ A similar observation was made by Victor Purcell when he was invited to Malaya by the party to advise it on its Emergency activities and to evaluate the political position of the Chinese community under the Templer Administration. Purcell immediately noticed the élitist make-up of the party leadership and warned the party of the danger inherent in such a situation. He wrote:²⁶

The economic interests of the MCA leaders may ultimately be found to be incompatible with those of the mass of the Chinese. It would be disastrous if the MCA, because of its middle-class composition at the higher levels, came to be regarded as a "reactionary" right wing bourgeoisie of bankers, businessmen, and lawyers intent merely on safeguarding their own economic interests. This would be to repeat in Malaya the mistakes of the KMT in China.

Almost as if prompted by Purcell's warning, the MCA party organ, the *Malayan Mirror*, carried an article which sought to reassure the Chinese population that the party was not a towkay organization. It stated that several men from the 'labouring and

working classes' were representatives on the Working Committees of all MCA branches, and went on to proclaim: 'Let it be understood that the MCA is not a rich man's Association, pandering to the wants of the well-to-do. It bears the standard of Democracy today, and rich and poor alike have equal say in its management.'²⁷ This piece of party propaganda did not tally with the real situation; although the MCA included in its ranks thousands of lower-class party members, they virtually had no impact on the running of the party, which remained in the hands of towkay leaders. During the mid-1960s, the party president, Tan Siew Sin, was still attempting to dispel the party's towkay image. Addressing the party General Assembly, he said:²⁸

Our opponents and our detractors have always stated that the MCA is an association which exists for the rich and the well-to-do, or for those who want to become rich through politics. It may not be true, it may not be fair, but if this belief becomes increasingly accepted by wide sections of the Chinese public, then the MCA is doomed.

Relationships within the Party Hierarchy

The three groups of party leaders—the national leaders, the state leaders and the grass-roots leaders—interacted with each other through a patron-client relationship based on reciprocal political and economic ties and services.

The MCA grass-roots leaders were the power-brokers of the Chinese population located in small towns and New Villages. Being office-holders of the local associations and the local school committees, they were responsible for the smooth running of community affairs and the settlement of domestic disputes between local residents. These leaders were commonly regarded as community headmen and had the highest-ranking social status within the local Chinese population. The Chinese settlements where MCA grass-roots leaders exercised influence were Laukeh communities which had remained encapsulated from the multi-ethnic superstructure and the Malay host environment.²⁹ Being grass-roots leaders, they needed the English-educated national leaders to help them obtain government funds for development projects and other services for their communities.

While the dependency of the MCA grass-roots leaders on the top leaders was dictated by political concerns, their relationship with the second-rung leaders was economically motivated. Petty

bourgeois traders and retailers in small Chinese communities servicing rural areas depended on urban towkay, the wealthier tradesmen and wholesalers, to obtain credit and supplies to run their businesses, and to provide transportation and marketing facilities for their rubber, rice and other merchandise. In exchange for these economic services, MCA grass-roots leaders pledged political support and the popular backing of their local communities for the party's state leaders.

Backed by the political support of the grass-roots leaders, the second-rung leaders constituted the power-brokers between the English-speaking national echelon and the Laukeh base of the party. The party national leadership needed the influence which the state leaders could bring to bear on local-level leaders to attract mass support for the MCA. The state leaders were happy to provide this service for the top leaders because they in turn sought favours from the latter.

The membership of the top leaders in the multi-ethnic political élite of Malaya put them in a position to dispense political and economic patronage to their clients in the state branches of the party. The personal ties of certain MCA national leaders such as Tan Cheng Lock and Tan Siew Sin with UMNO leaders, rendered them particularly useful to the Laukeh second-rung leaders, as it was anticipated that the UMNO would be the key political force in independent Malaya. The state leaders wanted to have access to the new Malay political élite for public recognition and private economic gain. Publicly, they wanted to play a role in the movement for independence and to influence the course of post-independence politics with a view to promoting Chinese interests as well as their own prestige within the Chinese community. Privately, they hoped to further their commercial interests through making contact with key members of the future government of independent Malaya. In sum, the MCA top leaders were much sought-after middlemen who could provide the intermediary services linking up the Malay centre and the Laukeh periphery.

The party's top echelon looked upon the Laukeh lower-echelon leaders as the foundation for building the MCA into a mass-based party. Westernized Chinese leaders by themselves were in no position to set up a widely based party, because their social sources of party recruitment would be confined to the English-speaking section of the Chinese community, which constituted a mere 7.6 per cent of the total Chinese population in Malaya in 1957. In

contrast, the Chinese-speaking and Chinese-educated proportion of the Chinese population stood at 90.6 per cent of the total number.³⁰

Membership and Party Recruitment

The social background of party membership and the social sources of party recruitment also underline the extent to which the Westernized national leaders had to depend on the linkage services provided by lower-echelon Laukeh leaders to attract support for the party. MCA members were recruited mainly from the widespread network of traditional associations and the New Villages, and to a lesser extent from the secret societies.

The party membership statistics for the years 1949-57 indicate that it was a fairly widely based organization.³¹ In November 1949, a mere eight months after the Association's inauguration, the party boasted an impressive membership of 103,000. The support given to the new party by Chinese association and business leaders, who became office-holders in the party, immediately drew a large proportion of the membership of Chinese associations to the MCA. When the party embarked on its Emergency welfare work, its membership increased dramatically. In May 1950, there were 145,000 members. The introduction of the party sweepstake (discussed in the following chapter) gained it several thousand more members attracted by the generous financial inducements contained in the lottery. In February 1953, the party membership reached the quarter million mark. By 1957, on the eve of Malaya's independence, the MCA claimed well over 300,000 members, making it by far the most widely based party in the country.³² (However, it should be noted that a significant proportion of the claimed party membership during the 1950s were not active members but members in name only. Many local branches of the time consisted of no more than the local businessmen who, as party chairmen, submitted names of their employees and friends as party members and paid their annual dues.)

The Chinese associational network was easily the most important source of membership recruitment for the MCA, as well as its major source of leadership. When an association leader joined the MCA, those Chinese who belonged to the associations in which he held office likewise joined the party in the hope that their patron would dispense favours in return for their political

support. The proportion of Chinese association membership in the MCA was so great that when elections were introduced in Malaya on a Federal basis in 1955, the state branches informed the party headquarters that the Chinese association in each state should select candidates on behalf of the party. The Penang MCA, for instance, claimed that this action was wholly justified since the 16,000 odd members of the Penang state branch were all members of various Chinese guilds and associations in Penang.³³

The New Villages formed the second major source of membership recruitment. The Association's welfare work on behalf of the squatters resettled in New Villages reaped rich rewards for the party, and its membership grew by leaps and bounds. The chairman of the Kedah/Perlis state branch, for example, noted that party membership in the two states had trebled within two years because of the party's Emergency welfare work among the New Villages there.³⁴ The importance of recruitment of New Villagers and squatters to the party is evident from the following MCA leader's speech regarding efforts to get the government to lift the curfew imposed on Tanjong Malim:³⁵

There have been many expressions of appreciation by the local inhabitants of HQ's work in this affair, which gave us a chance to help and serve and make known to remote villages the name of MCA. In proof of this, let it be known that the membership in Tanjong Malim in the MCA jumped, almost overnight, from a pre-curfew 200 to a post-curfew 2,000.

The party's concerted campaign in New Villages resulted in the creation of a widespread branch network in those areas. This fact may be established by comparing statistics compiled on the New Villages and on MCA branches and membership.³⁶ Out of the 444 New Villages created during the period 1949-60, 314 New Villages (70.7 per cent) had MCA area branches. The importance of the New Village population as a source of membership recruitment can also be seen in a comparison of the size of party membership of the different state branches and the New Village population in each state. By 1957, the Perak state branch had the highest membership figures—84,197 or 28 per cent of the national membership. Perak was also the state with the highest Chinese New Village population—236,961 or 30.7 per cent of the total—and the greatest number of New Villages—134 or 30 per cent of the total number of New Villages created between 1949 and 1960. The next two state branches in terms of membership, Selangor and Johore, were also the states

with the second and third largest Chinese New Village population. The party membership of the Selangor state branch stood at 18.3 per cent of the national total in 1957, and the New Village population in the state was 22.4 per cent of the total. Johore had 12.2 per cent of the national party membership and 24.9 per cent of the total New Village population.

With access to this large source of membership recruitment, the MCA rapidly became well entrenched in the rural areas. The geographical distribution of membership in Malacca indicates that the party was basically a rural-based organization. In 1951, the Malacca state branch reported that out of a total state membership of 8,690, slightly over half (4,909) came from small towns and villages, while the rest came from Malacca town. By 1957, the rural-urban disparity had increased: out of a total 12,350 members, 7,352 or 59.5 per cent came from the countryside, while 4,998 or 40.5 per cent came from the town of Malacca.¹⁷ The picture of the MCA as more rural than urban based is reinforced by the occupational breakdown of party membership, to be discussed shortly.

The MCA also recruited from secret societies, but little data exists on this source of recruitment, as MCA leaders are reluctant to acknowledge the links they had (and probably still have) with illegal organizations and bosses of the underground world. Secret society heads did not usually hold office at the higher ranks of the party hierarchy and remained grass-roots leaders.¹⁸ As noted in Chapter 2, secret society members comprised a considerable proportion of the membership of voluntary associations and naturally were recruited by the MCA to become the rank and file of the new party. Furthermore, it may be safely assumed that when a Laukeh association leader cum secret society boss joined the MCA, he would have recruited members of his secret society for the MCA in order to secure his political base in the party.

MCA party leaders tended to call upon the services of secret societies for 'bully boy' tasks, especially in conjunction with party youth wing efforts to mobilize support for the party in local election campaigns following the introduction of electoral politics in Malaya after 1952. Leaders of opposition parties were highly critical of the MCA ties with secret societies which were especially evident at election times. They accused MCA Youth members who were also secret society members of harassing, intimidating and beating up the supporters of opposition parties during election campaigns. For example, V. David of the Labour Party said that

the MCA Youth Section accommodated 'most of the "number one" thugs and gangsters' in the towns and villages.³⁹ D. R. Seenivasagam, the leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), likewise accused the chairman of the MCA Youth Section in Chendong Village (near Ipoh) of being the leader of the Wah Kee secret society in the village. Seenivasagam added that the MCA Youth Section was in fact a Wah Kee organization: 'Wah Kee is Mah Ching [MCA Youth] and Mah Ching is Wah Kee.'⁴⁰ On yet another occasion, the chairman of the Labour Party based in the village of Pajam (near Seremban) accused the MCA Pajam Youth Section of being the local cover for secret society thuggery in the area. He apparently supplied enough evidence to back up his accusation, as the Special Branch opened an investigation into the matter.⁴¹

The overwhelming majority of the MCA membership was, and remains, male. The female proportion of the total membership has been so insignificant that in 1973, twenty-four years after the Women Sub-Committee was originally set up, Chinese women formed a mere 7.9 per cent of the total membership.⁴² The leading female figures in the party were the English-educated wives of national leaders. They tended not to participate in the mainstream of party activities, but occupied themselves with organizing traditional women's activities such as cooking, sewing and child-care classes for the benefit of the less educated women members and wives of party members. The dearth of female membership in the party was a reflection of the general lack of participation by females in the activities of Chinese associations and organizations. It also reflected the traditional Chinese view of women as inferior in social status to men.⁴³

The Social Background of Party Membership

The social background of party membership must be seen in relation to occupational and educational status, income and dialect groupings. Broadly speaking, one can say that the most substantial portion of MCA members belonged to the lower-income group: the working proletariat, craftsmen, white-collar wage-earners, farmers and fishermen. A smaller though considerable section belonged to the middle-income group: merchants and professionals.

The earliest information on the occupations of party members was compiled by the party headquarters in 1962. In that year,

there were 67,700 members.⁴⁴ Of these, 23,603 (34.9 per cent) were listed as 'businessmen' and 1,865 (2.8 per cent) as 'shopkeepers'. Thus, the capitalist/petty bourgeois element in the party stood at 37.7 per cent of the total membership. The professional class—comprising teachers, students, technicians, engineers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants, and civil servants—formed an insignificant 1.7 per cent (1,183) of the total. The working proletariat class—listed as rubber tappers, mine workers, construction workers, hawkers, miscellaneous labourers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, dhobies, barbers, and tailors—formed 48.3 per cent (32,705), which was the biggest proportion of the total membership. The white-collar working class—clerks and shop assistants—constituted 1.9 per cent (1,277) of the total. The remaining 10.4 per cent (7,067) consisted of farmers and fishermen.

The occupational background of the party membership indicates the rural-urban distribution of party members. Generally speaking, the capitalist/petty bourgeois and professional section of the party membership was spread over the major urban centres and smaller towns. White-collar workers, craftsmen, domestic workers and construction workers were found in the same areas. These occupation categories added up to 50.7 per cent of the total membership figures in 1957. At a conservative estimate, one may say that at least half of this 50.7 per cent (25 per cent) were found in the smaller towns. The rural section of the party located mainly in New Villages—the farmers, fishermen, rubber tappers, mining and manual labourers—stood at 49.3 per cent of the total membership. It may be concluded, therefore, that approximately three-quarters (25 per cent plus 49.3 per cent) of the MCA party membership was drawn from outside the major urban centres in Malaya. The low farmer/fisherman proportion (10.4 per cent) of the party membership reflects the low number of Chinese in the country engaged in these occupations, which are the traditional preserves of the Malay population.⁴⁵

Census statistics on the rate of literacy within the Chinese community bear out the observation made earlier that the bulk of the MCA grass-roots leadership and membership were mainly Chinese-educated or non-educated. In 1957, 70.1 per cent of the Chinese male population over 10 years old were literate in at least one language. Of these only 14.4 per cent were literate in English and 3.9 per cent in Malay.⁴ Thus, at least 51.8 per cent of the Chinese male population over 10 years old were literate in Chinese (Mandarin) and 29.9 per cent were illiterate.

While the upper levels of the party leadership were not monopolized by a particular dialect group, this was not the case at the grass-roots level. The historical settlement of dialect groups in Malaya resulted in the predominance of certain groups in certain areas in the country. The Hokkiens, for example, are generally concentrated in coastal areas, particularly in the former Straits Settlements, while the Hakkas and Cantonese are mainly found inland, especially in old tin-mining towns such as Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. Teochews are concentrated generally in areas adjacent to Province Wellesley and in West Johore. Some small towns are peopled almost entirely by a single dialect group. Sitiawan in Perak has a large Hokchiu population, while Raub and Bentong in Pahang have a predominantly Kwongsai population. Given this situation, it was usually difficult for a party member who did not belong to the predominant dialect group of the locality to be voted into the local Working Committee. The importance of dialect group origins as a criterion of political mobility at the party grass-roots level is borne out by the fact that leaders in the CWC usually made it to the top if they originally came from local bases in the party where their dialect group was predominant. Tan Siew Sin and Lim Chong Eu are Baba Hokkiens from the predominantly Hokkien towns of Malacca and Penang; H. S. Lee is a Cantonese from Kuala Lumpur which has a large Cantonese population. Usually a leader had to be a Kwongsai to be acceptable to the party rank and file in Raub and Bentong, and he had to be a Hokchiu to be accepted by the rank and file in Sitiawan.

The information on the occupational and educational status of the party rank and file shows that the large majority were either China-born or locally born Laukeh Chinese. Since the party constitution (from 1949 to 1959) stipulated that any Chinese over 18 years old who had lived in Malaya for at least five years was eligible for membership,⁴⁷ the bulk of the party membership in the early 1950s could not have been Malayan citizens, since the Malayan Federation Constitution of 1948 rendered the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population ineligible for Federal citizenship. By the end of 1950, only about 24 per cent of the Chinese population in Malaya had become citizens.⁴⁸ In 1954, two years after the liberalization of certain citizenship requirements in 1952, the non-citizen proportion of the Chinese population still remained as high as 50 per cent.⁴⁹

Development of an MCA Ideology

The MCA embraced three world-views, reflecting different priorities on issues of primary concern to the conservative Chinese leadership of Malaya. The three perspectives—the Westernized outlook (which incorporated the Baba outlook), the traditional CCC-huay kuan outlook, and the KMT outlook—were not held by exclusive groups of leaders within the party. Many leaders had more than one ideological perspective, and they all had certain goals in common. For example, all the leaders wanted the MCA to be protective of Chinese interests and supportive of the anti-Communist cause, as well as to be effective within the wider framework of multiracial Malayan politics. In addition, they all supported the objectives published in the party's first constitution in 1949:⁵⁰

- (a) To promote and maintain inter-racial goodwill and harmony in Malaya.
- (b) To foster and safeguard the social, political, cultural and economic welfare of the Malayan Chinese by legitimate or constitutional means.
- (c) To promote and assist in the maintenance of peace and good order for the attainment of peaceful and orderly progress in Malaya.
- (d) Generally to do all such acts and things as may be incidental to or connected with or conducive to the attainment of any of the above-mentioned objects.

However, there were different priorities among the three major groups regarding issues of primary concern.

The world-view of the Laukeh leaders was moulded by their bourgeois capitalist mentality and their positions of leadership in voluntary associations. These towkay leaders saw accumulation of wealth as the primary path to power and status. Voluntary associations offered the organizational structure by which this status could be developed and recognized, while at the same time providing contacts and opportunities for advancing their economic objectives. A primary function of leadership in voluntary associations was the dispensation of material assistance for social welfare, educational and other mutual aid purposes required by the local community. Office-holding in the MCA was thus regarded by many Laukeh leaders as mirroring that of voluntary associations. To them, the MCA appeared to be another institutionalized means to acquire status and prestige, to advance their business activities and to distribute largess through community-oriented welfare work.

The KMT world-view was held by party leaders who had been active in the KMTM before it became defunct after 1949. Indeed, in the early 1950s the list of prominent MCA state office-holders read like a 'Who's Who' of the pre-war KMTM leadership. These men included Lau Pak Khuan, Leong Yew Koh, Ong Chin Seong, Peh Seng Khoon, Cheong Chee and Foong Seong in Perak; H. S. Lee, Ang Keh Tho, Cho Yew Fai, Leong Chee Cheong and Chong Shih Guan in Selangor; Ong Keng Seng, Saw Seng Kiew and Ng Sui Cam in Penang; Goh Chee Yan and Ho Pao Jin in Malacca; Wong Shee Fun in Johore; Yap Mau Tatt and Lee Tee Siong in Negri Sembilan; and Lim Keng Lian, Chuang Hui Tsuan and Chua Ho Ann in Singapore.⁵¹

The ideological perspective of these ex-KMTM leaders was coloured by the political objectives of Chiang Kai Shek's government, which emphasized, in its relations with overseas Chinese, the propagation of a pan-Chinese nationalism and the mobilization of overseas Chinese support and loyalty behind the KMT anti-Communist cause. Following its defeat by the CCP in late 1949, the Taiwan based KMT Government courted overseas Chinese leaders in the hope of obtaining moral and financial backing for its campaign to regain China. Pro-KMT leaders in Malaya publicly championed the KMT cause within the Chinese community in Malaya.

The world-views of Laukeh and ex-KMTM leaders in Malaya were essentially the same as those found in other overseas Chinese communities. Leaders of Chinese voluntary associations in South-East Asia and elsewhere, like Laukeh leaders in Malaya, concerned themselves with the pursuit of status-oriented and local-level community service goals. Leaders of pro-KMT organizations outside Malaya, like their counterparts in the KMTM, likewise involved themselves in pro-KMT overseas Chinese politics.⁵² In contrast, the Westernized MCA leadership defined new ideological and organizational functions for the MCA aimed at making the new party specifically pertinent to Malayan-centred needs created by the rise of strident Malay nationalism, the stringent citizenship clauses of the Federation of Malaya Constitution, and the outbreak of the Communist insurrection. The Westernized leaders explicitly did not want the MCA to merely copy traditional functions carried out by the CCC-huay kuan nor to be embroiled in pro-KMT overseas Chinese politics.

These English-educated leaders (a few of whom were British-trained lawyers) understood the political and constitutional pro-

cesses which defined the political game in colonial Malaya, and possessed the political sophistication and experience to use the MCA as an effective bargaining counter when dealing with the British. In contrast, Laukeh party leaders, both from the CCC-huay kuan and KMTM, not only lacked the skills but also the motivation to play such an innovative role.

In the early 1950s, the MCA manifested all three ideological approaches, leading to confusion and uncertainty over the party's exact identity. The English-educated leadership insisted that the party was the first Malayan-centred Chinese political party; on the other hand, the CCC-huay kuan element led many to regard it as merely another traditional association. And finally, the activities of pro-KMT leaders made others believe that the new party was in fact the KMTM in a different guise.

Arguing the views of the modernist leadership, party president Tan Cheng Lock constantly emphasized the Malayan-centred political objectives of the party. He stressed the point that the MCA was formed principally to educate Chinese in Malaya to regard Malaya as the sole object of their loyalty. Speaking on this theme at a public meeting in 1951, Tan Cheng Lock said that the MCA would politically educate the Chinese 'to become genuine Malaysians' who would co-operate with the other races so that the ideal of 'one Malayan Nationality animated by Malayan consciousness and Malayan patriotism' would be realized in the near future.⁵³ At the annual assembly of the Central General Committee in 1951, Tan Cheng Lock emphasized that the MCA had been formed to

... foster and to engender a truly Malayan outlook, consciousness and patriotism among the domiciled Malayan Chinese in order to forge and fortify their ties with this country and unity as an integral part and parcel of the Malayan people, and to help develop their sense of civil responsibility, duty and obligation to their country of adoption.⁵⁴

Tan Cheng Lock argued that the political metamorphosis of the Chinese into true Malaysians could only come about if they were accorded constitutional rights and privileges equal to the Malay community. The citizenship clauses of the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement had reduced the Chinese to a position which he described as 'helots and pariahs without rights and responsibilities of citizenship'.⁵⁵ He emphasized that the MCA would be dedicated to obtaining 'a full measure of justice in all things' for the Chinese community.⁵⁶

The MCA's role as initiator of political action to protect Chinese interests was likewise articulated by other English-educated party leaders. Tan Siew Sin, for example, pointed out: 'In the context of present-day events, the necessity for a strong political organisation to protect the rights and interests of the Chinese needs no argument. Today it is clear that the Chinese must either unite or perish. They are already political pariahs and should remember that it is easier to go downhill than uphill.'⁵⁷ The Westernized leadership was immediately concerned to achieve their political objectives, as is evidenced by their participation in the Communities Liaison Committee and overtures to UMNO leaders to form an electoral pact and political alliance during the 1952 Kuala Lumpur municipal elections.

The pro-KMT ideological manifestation of the MCA ran counter to the claims of the English-educated leadership that the MCA would act as midwife to the birth of a Malayan-centred loyalty and consciousness among Chinese in Malaya. The activities of pro-KMT party leaders, which often included public showings of support for Chiang Kai Shek's regime, raised fears that the MCA was a tool of the Taiwan Government out to propagate pan-Chinese nationalism and a foreign loyalty within the community. As this posed a serious problem for the party, the role of the KMT in the early development of the MCA will be examined in some detail.

As seen in Chapter 3, the KMTM successfully reorganized itself during the period of the British Military Administration. By the outbreak of the Communist insurrection in June 1948, the KMTM had re-established its pre-war influence over the associations. Although the KMTM officially ceased to function with the prohibition on foreign political party activity in May 1949, party branches all over the country remained open till mid-September 1949.⁵⁸ The welfare of the KMT was thereafter kept alive by the presence of Nationalist Chinese consular representatives stationed in the major towns of Malaya. The KMT consuls finally departed from Malaya after June 1950, when Britain, upon its recognition of the People's Republic of China, cut off diplomatic ties with Chiang Kai Shek's government in Taiwan.

The closure of KMTM branches and the withdrawal of KMT diplomats left the party members without an organizational structure and formal leadership. The establishment of the MCA, shortly before the KMT consuls left the country, must therefore have appeared a well-timed solution to the quandary in which the dis-

banded KMTM found itself. Knowing the fall of Peking to be imminent, Chiang's representatives in Malaya used the little time remaining to them to mobilize support for the proposed MCA, which they hoped would take the place of the KMTM as a vehicle for propagating the Nationalist cause within the Chinese community.

The role played by the KMT consul based in Ipoh bears testimony to the deep interest which the KMT had in the founding of the MCA. A few weeks before the inaugural meeting of the MCA, the Ipoh KMT consul, Haji Ibrahim Ma, started to prepare the groundwork in Perak by convening a series of public meetings of CCC-huay kuan leaders in Ipoh to discuss the possibility of forming a society which would become the Perak Branch of the MCA.⁵⁹ Although the society was not formed, the occasion gave Ibrahim Ma the opportunity to spread pro-MCA feelings among the most powerful community leaders in Perak. He urged all community leaders under his consular jurisdiction to attend the inaugural meeting of the Association to be held in Kuala Lumpur. He also instructed Chinese leaders in Penang, Kelantan and Trengganu to do likewise. In addition, he advised those leaders to cast their presidential vote for Tan Cheng Lock, whom he believed to be the most suitable candidate for the office.⁶⁰

Although Tan Cheng Lock had not supported the KMTM in the pre-war years, even endorsing the government ban on the party in 1925, he became more favourably disposed towards it after the war. He regarded the KMTM as a useful counter-measure to the MCP, and responded favourably to overtures made to him by KMT consuls, becoming a good friend of Haji Ibrahim Ma. He was regularly invited to address functions organized by pro-KMT leaders to celebrate events such as the Double Ten anniversary and the birthdays of Sun Yat Sen and Chiang Kai Shek. The speeches he delivered on those occasions contained a pronounced degree of ethnic chauvinism. For instance, he concluded his address to the Double Ten celebration held in Malacca in October 1950 with a resounding salute to China's greatness: 'China is unbreakable and indestructable [*sic*] like her Great Wall. She cannot fail. China will last forever, for her roots touch the earth and her spirit is continually in the heavens. China for ever. God save China!'⁶¹ Tan Cheng Lock's endorsement of KMT celebrations appeared to have been motivated by a great sense of pride in his Chinese heritage; he did not at any stage advocate political support for the KMT.

When the MCA was formed, the KMTM branches had not ceased to function (they were closed seven months after the formation of the MCA), and KMTM members rallied to set the new organization on its feet. H. S. Lee, a leading KMT figure in the country, and chairman of the Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce, helped to convene the MCA inaugural meeting, aided by five KMTM branches in Selangor.⁶²

British political reports of the period noted the prominent role played by the KMTM in the formation of the MCA.⁶³ In Johore, it was reported that the MCA enrolled members through the assistance of local *Shu Pao She* (libraries or reading rooms) which functioned as KMTM organizations in disguise.⁶⁴ Intelligence reports also noted that known KMT leaders, H. S. Lee and Lau Pak Khuan, were instrumental in bringing in the support of the KMTM apparatus in Malaya for the new party.⁶⁵

The involvement of the KMTM in the MCA's formation led some observers to regard the two organizations as synonymous. Likewise, the colonial authorities noted that MCA assistance to the government in the anti-insurgency campaign was in reality KMTM assistance. Although the government welcomed the role played by the MCA in the Emergency, it was afraid that the KMTM would use the new party as a cover for its activities after it became illegal. Apprehension over the potentially negative political consequences of the KMTM tie is indicated by the following political report of the period: 'There is a risk that the Malayan Chinese Association will be one of the covers [of the KMTM], and this, coupled with events in China, will continue to keep Chinese eyes focussed either on their ancestral homes, or on the communal aspect of their problems in Malaya.'⁶⁶

The KMT affiliation of prominent MCA office-holders manifested itself in several ways. For instance, during the Emergency, when the recruitment of manpower within the Chinese community fell abysmally short of target levels needed to fight the Communists, Leong Yew Koh, who later became secretary-general of the MCA, proposed an alternative means of securing manpower. He suggested to Sir Henry Gurney that 10,000 soldiers be recruited from the Kuomintang forces based in Taiwan, or the Kuomintang 26th Army then interned in North Vietnam. (Leong Yew Koh himself had served as a Liaison Officer with the 26th Army during the war.) He proposed that when the Emergency was over the Kuomintang soldiers could either be repatriated to Taiwan or resettled in Malaya.⁶⁷ Another well-known MCA leader, Yap Mau

Tatt, advised Tan Cheng Lock: 'It is absolutely necessary to rally KMT personnel to come in with the MCA under the MCA banner.'⁶⁸

Many Chinese soon came to regard the MCA as a revived KMTM, as is evident in the following editorial comment:⁶⁹

It is undeniable that the office bearers of the Singapore Branch after its election, such as the Vice-Chairman, Chua Ho Ann and Dr. Ho Pau Jin, the Hon. Secretary, So Hau Siang, and the Executive Secretary, Lee Leng Keng, are all utterly powerful ones of a foreign political party, the KMT. How can the powerful ones of the KMT be able to occupy the important posts of the MCA and to manipulate the MCA? ... Broadly speaking, the MCA is a political organisation of the Malayan Chinese while the KMT is a party of the Overseas Chinese in Malaya. There seems to be no particular divergence between these two political parties. It is not even strange to see these two organisations amalgamated into one body.

The openly pro-KMT activities of the Singapore leadership aroused the anger of the English-educated national leadership in Kuala Lumpur. One particular incident led the party headquarters to censure the behaviour of the Singapore leadership. The vice-chairman of the branch, Chua Ho Ann, led a delegation to visit Taiwan on the occasion of Chiang Kai Shek's birthday. While in Taiwan, Chua was reported to have said that he officially represented the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore who wished to pay their respects to President Chiang. A Taiwan-based newspaper carried the following account of Chua's visit:⁷⁰

The leader of the Singapore and Malaya Team, Mr. Chua Ho Ann, in his speech reported that the overseas Chinese in Singapore and Malaya had a strong affection for their free fatherland and a high respect for the national saviour, President Chiang. He mentioned that spiritually they were one hundred percent behind the free fatherland, and materially they were so willing to contribute money and manpower in aid of the military expenses [in the campaign to regain mainland China], if it had not been for the various inconveniences caused by the local legal restrictions.

The UMNO leadership was particularly galled by the incident. It informed the MCA that such actions on the part of KMT leaders in the Association were bound to undermine current negotiations between the two parties to consolidate the coalition arrangement. In its letter of protest to Tan Cheng Lock, Dr Ismail bin Abdul Rahman noted: 'The statement has naturally caused misgivings among the Malay community, and we in UMNO expect to be severely attacked by Malays for allying ourselves with people

who owe allegiance to a foreign, albeit friendly, country.⁷¹ An emergency meeting convened by Tan Cheng Lock decided to ask Chua to resign his post in the MCA.⁷²

From 1949 to 1956, all the pro-KMT leaders in the MCA organized and participated in celebrations such as the Double Ten. These activities often made front page headlines in the Chinese press, and though some MCA leaders made it a point to explain that they participated in these celebrations in their capacity as leaders of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and *huay kuan*, and not as MCA office-bearers, this distinction was often lost on the general public.

The Acting Secretary for Chinese Affairs, R. H. Oakeley, felt it necessary to advise Tan Cheng Lock of the harmful consequences of the pro-KMT activities carried out by leaders within the party. He pointed out that the efforts of the Department for Chinese Affairs to improve political relations between the Malays and Chinese were 'being continually hindered by publicity given to Missions to Formosa by "Malayan" Chinese, and by publicity given to celebrations of political anniversaries such as that of the Double Tenth'.⁷³ He also pointed out that these factors would undermine any demand made by the MCA for better citizenship rights for the Chinese community. In October 1952, a month after the receipt of Oakeley's letter, the MCA headquarters took an official stand on the subject for the first time. The party headquarters asked all branches to inform party members not to attend future KMT celebrations nor to send congratulatory despatches to President Chiang. In addition, it directed all MCA leaders to discourage Chinese in Malaya from involving themselves in Taiwan-oriented activities: 'The Chinese in Malaya, in demanding for equal rights in Malaya, should not attend the Double Tenth National Day Celebration and to call themselves Overseas Chinese thereby losing the right of such a demand.'⁷⁴

The party headquarters was deluged by angry letters from party leaders and members objecting to the official line on the matter. Heading the pro-KMT counter-attack, Tan Kee Gak of Malacca replied that the party had no right to dictate to the Chinese on the matter. He said that if the party were foolhardy enough to try and impose its ruling, there would be mass resignations from it.⁷⁵ Another pro-KMT stalwart, Ong Chin Seong of Perak, told the party headquarters that it had no power to act on the subject, since in his opinion the Chinese in Malaya had not severed their

emotional links with Free China.⁷⁶ In addition, the Communist insurrection in Malaya had heightened support from the capitalist elements in the MCA for Chiang Kai Shek's government in Taiwan. The celebration of KMT anniversaries was, therefore, regarded by them as a necessary demonstration of their belief in a non-Communist Malaya and a non-Communist China.

Double Ten celebrations continued to be held till the eve of Malaya's independence, to the consternation of the MCA national leadership which could not control such activities and was acutely aware that the KMT presence in the party threatened its very existence. A party document described the predicament:⁷⁷

If the KMT elements among our members are allowed to assert themselves, we may expect real trouble from the Government because the KMT has been outlawed by the Emergency Regulations. If the KMT should again rise to the surface through the MCA, our Association will be outlawed one of these days. Any tendency by the KMT to take control of the MCA must be arrested without hesitation. . . . It was never intended that the MCA should concern itself with China politics; nor should China politics be allowed to influence MCA policies.

The memorandum further stated that a remedy must be sought to counter the KMT hold over the MCA in the states of Singapore, Johore, Negri Sembilan, Perak, Penang and Malacca. It suggested that the party headquarters embark on a massive membership drive aimed at recruiting the Malayan-born Chinese within the community.

However, this measure could not be fully implemented, since the most important source of membership recruitment for the Association was the pro-KMT Laukeh Chinese associational network. If the party were to purge itself of its KMT elements, it would have to reduce its leadership to the non-Laukeh section of the Chinese community—i.e. the small Baba and English-educated population. The party leadership was not attracted by the idea, and thus the KMT problem was quietly over-looked until the issue regained prominence during the independence constitutional negotiations.

While manifestations of the MCA as a Malayan-centred party as well as a revived KMTM were discernible in the first two to three years of its existence, it behaved most consistently and conspicuously as a CCC-huay kuan prototype, carrying out social welfare activities within the community. This phenomenon

stemmed from the exigencies of the Emergency and the involvement of the party in the government's counter-insurgency campaign, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

1. A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960*, London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1975, Ch. 7.
2. Interview with H. S. Lee, 22 July 1975.
3. Address by Henry Gurney, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 17 February 1949, B771.
4. These were Tan Siew Sin, Leong Yew Koh, H. S. Lee, Yong Shook Lin, Khoo Teik Ee, Dr Lee Tiang Keng, Ee Yew Kim, Toh Eng Hoe, Khoo Khoon Huat, Leung Cheung Ling, Ng Sui Cam, Mrs B. H. Oon, Woo Ka Lim, Lim Khye Seng, Lee Woon Mun, and Liew Kwong Hon.
5. *Straits Times*, 28 February 1949.
6. Letter from Gurney to J. J. Paskin dated 4 April 1949, CO537/52849/48/49 (14). However, Gurney added the proviso: 'but I cannot myself see Tan Cheng Lock as capable of any great things'.
7. Letter signed by Yong Shook Lin dated 8 March 1948 (addressee unknown), TCL Papers, SP13, Item 175.
8. Tan Cheng Lock, *Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View*, Singapore, Tansco, 1947, pp. 5, 7. The suggestion drew no response from the Colonial Office.
9. 'Rules of the Malayan Chinese League', mimeo., n.d. The rules were essentially those drafted by Tan Siew Sin in 1946 for a proposed Malacca Chinese Union. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Haji Ibrahim Ma dated 17 February 1949, TCL Papers, TCL/111/90.
10. 'Rules of the Malayan Chinese League', Section 7.
11. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Haji Ibrahim Ma dated 7 February 1949, MCA Headquarters.
12. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to C. L. Peet dated 30 September 1948, taken from Tan Cheng Lock, *A Collection of Correspondence*, Singapore, Tiger Standard Press, n.d., pp. 18-19.
13. Tan Cheng Lock, 'National Unity in Malaya', mimeo., c. August 1948, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 140.
14. *Straits Times*, 4 May 1948.
15. Speech by Onn bin Jaafar, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 5 and 6 July 1948, B315.
16. Interview with H. S. Lee, 22 July 1975. Gurney wrote to J. D. Higham to inform him that 'neither Onn nor the politically minded Malays in general have expressed any opposition to the MCA'. CO537/4790(18).
17. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 25 January 1978.
18. The information was compiled from lists of particulars of party office-holders kept at the MCA Headquarters.
19. This information was obtained through cross-references made between lists of MCA office-holders and lists of office-holders of Chinese associations submitted to the Registrar of Societies.

20. H. Fell, *1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Department of Statistics, Report No. 14, Table 3.3, p. 14.
21. The predominant dialect in Kuala Lumpur was, and still is, Cantonese; Cantonese and Hakka are used in Ipoh; Hokkien in Malacca and Penang; and Teochew and Hokkien in Johore Bahru.
22. The Johore area branches were grouped under the district branches of Johore Bahru, Segamat, Muar, Pontian, Kluang, Kota Tinggi, Batu Pahat, and Mersing. The Perak area branches came under the district branches of Kinta, Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, Batang Padang, Lower Perak, and Dindings.
23. For a discussion of orthodox and more current views on this issue, see Tan Tat Wai, *Income Distribution and Determination in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1982, Ch. 7.
24. For a discussion on the role played by school committees in village affairs, see W. H. Newell, *Treacherous River: A Study of Rural Chinese in North Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1962, p. 38. Kiyoshige Maeda, *Alor Janggis: A Chinese Community in Malaya*, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Social Science Series, S-1, Kyoto University, 1967, pp. 35-6.
25. 'Report No. 5 in Lab. M. Conf. 1/52', Appendix, mimeo., n.d. (c.1952), TCL Papers, SP13, Item 175, Kuala Lumpur.
26. 'Report on a Visit to Malaya from 10 August to 20 September at the Invitation of the Malayan Chinese Association by Victor Purcell and Francis Carnell', mimeo., pp. 73-4, TCL Papers, TCL/VI/1.
27. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 30 October 1953.
28. Speech by Tan Siew Sin at the MCA Central General Assembly on 9 November 1963. (Party and Alliance documents cited here, unless otherwise indicated, are found at the MCA Headquarters.)
29. Examples of such communities are Sanchun New Village described by J. Strauch in *Chinese Village Politics in the Malaysian State*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981, Chs. 3-6, and Titi in Negri Sembilan discussed by Laurence K. L. Siaw in *Chinese Society in Rural Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press for Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983.
30. Fell, op. cit., Report No. 14, Tables 5.3 and 9b(1), pp. 23, 94.
31. Though it is known that political parties tend to inflate their membership figures, it is nevertheless useful to employ official party membership figures for they may indicate an overall pattern of growth over a period of time. The membership figures cited here were obtained from the MCA Headquarters.
32. By 1954, the membership of the MCA had exceeded that of the UMNO—the figures were 300,000 and 200,000 respectively. 'Statement by UMNO/MCA Alliance Released in London 17 May 1954', mimeo., TCL Papers, TCL/8/52a. At present the UMNO's membership is far larger than the MCA's—approximately 1,400,000 compared to 450,000. Figures given by the MCA Headquarters.
33. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Working Committee of the MCA Penang and Province Wellesley Branch to Discuss Settlement Elections and to Take Necessary Action, held at the premises of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on 20 December 1954.
34. Address by Soon Cheng Sun at the Special Meeting of the MCA Kedah/Perlis Branch on 3 May 1952.
35. Notes for the President on the Conduct of the Meeting of the Working Committee on 22 June 1952.

36. The list of party branches was obtained from the MCA Headquarters. The information on the New Villages is taken from D. Z. Fernandez, *New Villages in Peninsular Malaysia Created during the Emergency 1948-1960*, Kuala Lumpur, Department of Statistics, n.d. (c.1975), Appendices A and D.

37. Report of the MCA Malacca State Working Committee for the year ended 30 June 1952 to be submitted to the Second Annual General Meeting of the Malacca Branch to be held on 31 December 1952, p. 2; and Report of the MCA Malacca State Working Committee to be submitted to the Fifth Ordinary Annual General Meeting to be held on 17 March 1957, p. 2.

38. Siaw (op. cit., p. 122) observed that in the town of Titi, where he conducted his field-work, there were several Wah Kee secret society members in the local MCA branch.

39. Speech by V. David, *Dewan Ra'ayat Debates*, 21 April 1961, Col. 210.

40. Speech by D. R. Seenivasagam, *Dewan Ra'ayat Debates*, 21 April 1961, Col. 183.

41. See letter from the Hon. Secretary, Pajam MCA Youth Section, to the Chairman, MCA National Youth Section, dated 11 October 1966.

42. Figure supplied by MCA Headquarters.

43. Since the early 1970s, the MCA leadership, realizing that female Malay voting power is a significant factor in UMNO politics, has made a concerted attempt to recruit more female members and to give them a more responsible role in party affairs. The female proportion of party membership has increased from 7.9 per cent in 1973 to approximately 15 per cent in the mid-1980s.

44. The sharp drop in party membership from the figure of 300,000 claimed by the party in 1957 is partly due to the exodus of party members in the wake of the 1959 party crisis (discussed in Chapter 9), lapsed membership and the fact that the 1957 figure was most likely an inflated claim.

45. In 1957, for example, the Chinese percentage of the total number of people in Malaya engaged in rice growing was 2.3 per cent compared to the Malay percentage of 95.5 per cent. Chinese fishermen made up 31.6 per cent of the total fishing population while the Malay percentage was 67.4 per cent. Taken from Fell, op. cit., Report No. 14, Table 11.

46. Fell, op. cit., figures compiled from Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 in Report No. 14.

47. *Rules of the Malayan Chinese Association*, Kuala Lumpur, Ling Wah Press, 1949.

48. Five hundred thousand persons out of a total Chinese population of 2,100,000. K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1965, p. 84.

49. There were 1,210,227 citizens out of a total Chinese population of 2,334,000. Figures taken from *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 4 May 1955, Col. 234.

50. *Rules of the Malayan Chinese Association*. (These rules were passed at a general meeting held on 12 June 1949.)

51. These names have been compiled from reports in Chinese newspapers, namely *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *China Press*, of KMT functions held by Chinese leaders in Malaya during the period 1948-56.

52. See G. W. Skinner, *Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1958, and V. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1965.

53. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock at Port Dickson Road Resettlement Area,

Seremban, on 18 January 1951, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 172.

54. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock at the MCA Annual Central General Committee Meeting held on 21 April 1951, TCL Papers, SP13, Ucapan Tan Cheng Lock, Item 35.

55. Address by Tan Cheng Lock at Taiping and Ipoh on 10 April 1949 entitled 'The Chinese in Malaya', in Tan Cheng Lock, *A Collection of Speeches*, Singapore, Ih Shih Press Ltd., n.d., p. 19.

56. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock at Port Dickson Road Resettlement Area on 18 January 1951.

57. Speech by Tan Siew Sin entitled 'Why the Malayan Chinese Association is Necessary', c. April 1953.

58. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 9 and 15 September 1949.

59. Letter from Haji Ibrahim Ma to Tan Cheng Lock dated 24 February 1949, TCL Papers, TCL/3/84. To the author's knowledge, Haji Ibrahim Ma was the only Muslim KMT consul to have served in Malaya.

60. Letter from Haji Ibrahim Ma to Tan Cheng Lock dated 15 February 1949, TCL Papers, TCL/3/94.

61. Address by Tan Cheng Lock at the Malacca Chinese Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of the Double Ten celebration, 10 October 1950, TCL Papers, SP13, Ucapan Tan Cheng Lock, Item 34.

62. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 20 February 1949. H. S. Lee made a bid for control of the MCA, but the Chinese leaders behind the party's formation decided that Tan Cheng Lock was the more suitable candidate as party president, mainly because they feared that H. S. Lee's pro-KMT alignment could create problems for the new party.

63. See, for example, extract from Singapore Political Report, No. 2, February 1949, CO537/52849/48/49(4).

64. Extract from Review of Chinese Affairs for October 1949, CO537/4761/52849/48(35).

65. Extract from Pan-Malayan Review, No. 6, 16 March 1949, CO537/52849/48/49(16).

66. Extract from Federation of Malaya Political Report for July 1949, CO537/4761/52849/48/49(30).

67. Letter from Leong Yew Koh to the Officer Administering the Government dated 15 November 1950, TCL Papers, TCL/15/64c. Not surprisingly, the suggestion drew a negative response.

68. Letter from Yap Mau Tatt to Tan Cheng Lock dated 29 September 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/15/54.

69. *Sin Pao*, 18 August 1953, MCA Headquarters.

70. *China Press* (Taipei), 16 November 1953. Quoted from a translation from the minutes of a Special Meeting of the MCA held on 2 December 1953.

71. Quoted from the minutes of a Special Meeting of the MCA held on 2 December 1953.

72. The decision was not imposed, as Chua Ho Ann insisted that the Taiwanese press had misreported his speeches given during his visit. He said that he went to Taiwan purely as a representative of several Chinese associations in Singapore and the visit had nothing to do with the MCA. Minutes of the Working Committee Meeting on 24 February 1954.

73. Letter from R. H. Oakeley to Tan Cheng Lock dated 19 September 1952, MCA Headquarters.
74. Quoted from *Sin Lit Pau*, 15 October 1952, MCA Headquarters.
75. *China Press*, 10 October 1952.
76. Letter from Ong Chin Seong to T. H. Tan dated 30 November 1953, MCA Headquarters.
77. Unsigned memorandum entitled 'The Problems Facing the Association Are Growing in Seriousness', mimeo., c. late 1953.

The Emergency: Beginnings of Indigenization

THE Emergency brought Chinese politics in Malaysia to centre stage and set the conditions for the growth of the MCA as an indigenized political party. The outbreak of the Chinese-led Communist insurrection constituted a deadly serious challenge to British hegemonic rule in Malaya, and to the capitalist system then well entrenched in the country. At the same time, it swept up the Malay and Indian communities into the vortex of the struggle. Fearful of having to live under a Chinese-dominated Communist regime, Malays enlisted in large numbers to fight the guerrillas. However, while the Malays undoubtedly played a key role in the anti-guerrilla war effort, the primary battle was for the hearts and minds of the Chinese community.

At the insurgency's outbreak in 1948, the political allegiances of the Chinese fell broadly into four categories: a small group who actively championed the Communist cause; a second minority group who were avowed Kuomintang supporters; a third and even smaller group who solidly backed the British; and the fourth and by far the largest group, totalling at least three-quarters of the population, who displayed no clear political preferences. The key to victory for the contending parties in the Emergency was to capture the loyalty of these fence-sitters, who it was assumed would support the party which could best provide for their livelihood and security.

The MCP was supported by left-wing groups within the Chinese-educated intelligentsia comprising mainly school-teachers, middle-school students and journalists; the urban proletariat including shop assistants, artisans and labourers; and rural workers such as rubber estate and tin-mine labourers. The material assistance given to the MCP by the rural Chinese population was usually obtained through intimidation tactics. Chinese owners of rubber estates, tin mines and other rural-based enterprises in areas where the guer-

rillas operated likewise paid 'protection' money to insure themselves against attack and sabotage.

The MCP maintained an effective and disciplined main fighting force estimated to number from 6,000 to 7,000 men during the period 1951-4.¹ The main guerrilla units were supported by a several thousand strong auxiliary fighting and propaganda force called the Min Yuen (People's Organization), which was also responsible for recruiting manpower and maintaining a nationwide network of logistics and intelligence gathering.

The number of KMTM members at the outset of the Emergency was estimated at about 45,000.² The Chinese business community formed the core of Kuomintang strength in Malaya, augmented by conservative groupings within the Chinese-educated intelligentsia, and within the urban and rural work-force. When the KMTM was disbanded as a consequence of the Emergency regulations, its supporters allied themselves with the pro-British Westernized group.

For a while it seemed that the Communist insurrection was gathering momentum, aided by developments outside Malaya. The most significant of these were the establishment of Communist rule in China in October 1949, Britain's recognition of the newly created People's Republic of China (PRC) in January 1950, and the outbreak of the Korean War in mid-1950, which appeared to many to signal a potential rapid expansion of communism into South-East Asia.

The Communist victory on the mainland boosted the image of the MCP within the Chinese community in Malaya and produced widespread feelings of pride at the emergence of a strong and unified China. This new China had a deep appeal to the politically idealistic within the community; from June 1949 to April 1952, departures from Malaya to China exceeded arrivals by approximately 40,000, a significant proportion of whom were students setting off for higher education and participation in the task of building the PRC.³

When the British Government recognized the PRC on 6 January 1950, the colonial administration in Malaya feared the action would greatly impede its efforts to wipe out the Communist insurrection. Of particular concern was the anticipated replacement of KMT Chinese consuls by those from the PRC. A political analysis of the period reported that while the Chinese left wing was openly jubilant about the recognition of China, the Chinese

business community, the MCA and pro-KMT elements on whom the government had to rely in its campaign against the Communists, were angry and shocked by the move. The report stated that the anti-Communist group within the community believed acceptance of PRC consuls would be 'tantamount to a reinforcement of a division of troops for the bandits'.⁴ The High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, and the Commissioner-General for South-East Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, also both strongly opposed the establishment of PRC consulates in Malaya. They argued that such a move would nullify all their efforts at rallying the Chinese population to the government's cause, since the presence of Communist consuls would strengthen the hand of the MCP and increase the scale and scope of Communist united front activities throughout the country.⁵

Fearing that the exclusion of Chinese consuls in Malaya might give the Chinese Government grounds for refusing or limiting the establishment of British consular positions in China, the Foreign Office was initially unsympathetic to the case presented by the Malayan colonial administration. However, Whitehall eventually decided that the situation in Malaya warranted special consideration and acquiesced in Gurney's request that no PRC consuls be accepted in Malaya for the duration of the Emergency.⁶ Gurney's argument that political stability in the country would be threatened if the consulates were established was strengthened by the recognition that Malaya at the time was overwhelmingly Britain's greatest foreign exchange earner among her colonies.⁷

This resolution of the issue of PRC consuls constituted the first of several diverse developments which worked to the disadvantage of the MCP. Among these were the upsurge in the Malayan economy due to Korean War tin and rubber purchases, the psychological boost provided by the successful containment of Chinese military force on the Korean battlefield, and, most important of all, growing disenchantment within the Chinese community in Malaya regarding the harsh realities of the revolution on the mainland.

By mid-1953 the reported excesses of the PRC Government against landlords and other members of the property-holding class in southern China had hardened local anti-Communist sentiment, resulting in a marked reduction in the numbers of Malayan Chinese returning to the mainland.⁸ Particularly significant was the fact that the revolution in China put an end to the longstanding practice by which Chinese in Malaya who could afford to do so,

maintained houses and families in both countries. Faced for the first time with having to regard Malaya as their sole country of residence, the Chinese could now be successfully weaned away from their age-old attachment to their country of origin.

These developments in the external political environment encouraged the rise of conservative sentiments within the Chinese population in Malaya. At the same time the colonial anti-insurgency programme, after an unpromising start, began to achieve results by 1952, particularly with the successful implementation of the Briggs Plan.

Soon after the outbreak of hostilities, the colonial authorities realized that the successful suppression of the insurgency depended not merely upon an effective military strategy, but also upon cutting the guerrillas off from the major source of their life support system—the squatter population. The Briggs Plan, which envisaged the resettlement of squatters in New Villages, was conceived to isolate the squatter population from the guerrillas—in Maoist analogy, to separate the fish from the water. The newly formed MCA was central to the success of that plan, for, lacking administrative resources and experience in dealing with the Chinese community directly, the colonial authorities depended on the party to help implement the New Village programme and all other counter-insurgency measures affecting the Chinese.

The Squatter Problem

The squatter problem, a central issue in the government's counter-insurgency effort, emerged in the early 1930s when mass unemployment drove thousands of workers and their families from tin mines, estates and factories to live off the land. These migrants to the countryside had difficulty in obtaining legal titles to the land they cultivated, as the colonial administration had attached stringent terms to non-Malay landownership through the 1933 Amendment of the Malay Reservations Act. By 1940, it was estimated that the number of farmers illegally squatting on Malay Reservations, forest reserves, state mining and agricultural land as well as privately owned estates, had reached 150,000.⁹

The squatter population increased dramatically during the Japanese Occupation. Many urban dwellers, joined also by rubber tappers and tin-mine workers, moved to the countryside to cultivate food and seek refuge from the excesses of the Japanese Military

Administration. The Japanese, for their part, encouraged cultivation of agricultural land by non-Malays to meet the objective of self-sufficiency in food production. By the end of the war, the squatter population, which was largely Chinese in composition, had grown to almost half a million.

The surrender of the Japanese and the establishment of the BMA introduced no changes in the squatter situation. A communication from the BMA to the Colonial Office stated that in view of the post-war food crisis, the BMA found it essential that all government forest lands cleared and cultivated during the Japanese Occupation continue to be used, rent-free, by squatters. In addition the BMA wanted the Colonial Office to authorize the granting of free concessions for squatters to cultivate cleared rubber lands.¹⁰ With the easing of the food crisis, however, the Malayan Union Government was pressed to review its squatter policy. In late 1946, the Department of Forestry decided to reclaim the 150,000 acres of forest reserve which had been felled during the Occupation and the BMA period.¹¹ The strongest lobby pressing the government to change its squatter policy, the United Planters Association of Malaya (UPAM), wanted the return of 70,000 acres of rubber land then occupied by squatters, for the new planting and replanting of rubber. It urged the government to change existing land legislation to facilitate an immediate and simplified method of evicting squatters from rubber plantations.¹²

Confronted by these demands, the government found itself in a quandary. When the BMA issued free temporary occupation licences to squatters for a period of two years, starting from January 1946, it made no provisions for looking after the welfare of squatters in the event of their being evicted from rubber estates and forest reserves. During the immediate post-war years, squatters had opened up huge tracts of land miles away from government administrative centres, and the Malayan Union Government found it lacked manpower in the District Offices and Agricultural Department to control and administer them. Its unease over the problem is reflected in an exchange of minutes between the Deputy Chief Secretary and the Assistant Economic Secretary, the former confessing that he had not known 'that this problem was so vast and complicated'.¹³ At a loss for a solution, the government procrastinated until it was forced to take action with the outbreak of the Emergency, when it became apparent that Chinese squatters were providing food, supplies, intelligence and recruits to the MCP.

During the Japanese Occupation the MCP and its military wing, the MPAJA, had established strong relations with the squatter population through their anti-Japanese campaign. In addition, immediately after the war the MCP had established itself as the *de facto* government in the rural areas before British rule was properly re-established. Thus, when the MCP began its militant campaign to liberate Malaya from British imperialistic rule, it had little difficulty in re-asserting its previous influence within the squatter population, and many squatters were enrolled as part-time workers in the Min Yuen when it was formed in early 1949.

Faced with this threat, the government finally stated a definitive policy on the squatter problem. During a meeting between the High Commissioner, the Acting Solicitor-General and officials of the UPAM, the government declared that eviction of squatters could be allowed only when alternative land was obtained, and that the resettled squatters should be given security of tenure initially in the form of temporary occupation licences which could subsequently be converted to permanent titles. It directed the state and settlement governments to examine the availability of state land which could be alienated for squatter resettlement.¹⁴ A Squatter Committee, set up in January 1949 to advise the government on measures to be taken, established clear-cut policies regarding settlement in place or resettlement of squatters.¹⁵

The initial implementation of squatter resettlement was complicated by differences of opinion between the federal government and state authorities over the issue of land rights. Since jurisdiction over land matters lay with state authorities, they asserted their prerogative by insisting that the eviction and resettlement of squatters be left to them without any interference from the federal government. The state governments were initially reluctant to act on squatter resettlement because they preferred to deport squatters. One Mentri Besar (Chief Minister of the state government) considered an even more drastic way of solving the squatter problem. He suggested 'burning out squatters and leaving them to work out their own salvation, i.e. by going into settled areas, towns and so on, or into other and temporarily less objectionable squatter areas, or best of all, slipping over the Siamese border'.¹⁶ Massive deportation to China as a solution to the squatter problem was rendered impractical by the Communist victory in China. By November 1949, the CCP had taken over all the southern ports in that country. Shipping services were disrupted and the repatriation process which the Malayan authorities had entered into with the National-

ist Government came to an end.¹⁷ Consequently, the state governments were forced to regard the squatters as part of the permanent population in Malaya, and to accept the need for their long-term settlement or resettlement.

Thus, when Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs arrived in Malaya on 22 March 1950 as the Director of Operations, to plan, co-ordinate and direct anti-insurgency measures, he encountered little of the initial recalcitrance shown by the state governments on the subject of resettlement. He was therefore able to concentrate the resources of both federal and state governments on the comprehensive New Village resettlement scheme known as the Briggs Plan. Two years after Briggs' arrival in Malaya, the plan had largely been implemented: 470,509 squatters were now resettled in 440 New Villages.¹⁸

Government-MCA Liaison

The colonial administration, relying heavily upon the middleman services of the MCA to implement the New Village programme, recognized its acute lack of individuals expert in Chinese matters. In May 1950, Gurney informed the Colonial Secretary that slowness in implementing the resettlement programme was due more to the shortage of officers having the administrative capacity to carry out their duties than to political unwillingness by the state governments to excise land from Malay reservations, or reluctance of Chinese to be resettled, or shortage of funds.¹⁹ MCA office-holders were therefore appointed to serve on the government bodies formed to administer counter-insurgency programmes. The most important of these was the Federal War Council created by Briggs, the Director of Operations, on 16 April 1950 to replace the Federal Legislative Council as the supreme Emergency decision-making body. Briggs also set up a chain of state and settlement War Executive Committees which took over the duties of state governments. A corresponding chain of Advisory Committees to the Federal War Council and the War Executive Committees was established to keep 'unofficials' informed about government policy and to obtain their advice on Emergency matters affecting the public. MCA representatives were invited to sit on the Federal War Council, a few of the War Executive Committees (Perak, for example), and all the Advisory Committees.²⁰ The inclusion of MCA office-holders on these various committees built up an effective linkage and com-

munication system between the Association and Government from the grass-roots to the national level.

Deliberations between the two parties in the Emergency Chinese Advisory Committee (chaired by the Secretary for Chinese Affairs) resulted in the institutionalization of co-operation between the MCA and the local authorities in charge of squatter areas. The MCA was encouraged to form branches in all squatter areas where Communist activities were discernible, and local squatter representatives were appointed as MCA office-holders. These squatter representatives held regular fortnightly meetings with MCA officials from the state and settlement branches as well as the Chief Police Officers of their areas to discuss matters of mutual concern. The MCA squatter representatives also furnished regular security reports on conditions in their villages to their respective District Officers.²¹ Through this system, the government obtained a regular flow of intelligence at the grass-roots level concerning the movements of the Min Yuen and the Malayan Races Liberation Army, the military wing of the MCP. In turn, squatter representatives were responsible for keeping the local population informed about government Emergency policies. They were required, for instance, to disseminate information regarding the consequences of paying protection money and supplying goods to terrorists, the ways available for squatters to pass on to the government any intelligence on the activities of terrorists, and the rewards offered for such information. The MCA Headquarters and the state branches prepared and distributed Emergency publicity in the form of written propaganda, and MCA spokesmen and interpreters accompanied government mobile units during tours of squatter areas.

In early 1951, MCA representatives from various branches from state down to village levels were invited to sit on 'Consultative Liaison Committees' which comprised representatives from the Police, the Special Branch and the Department of Chinese Affairs. The main function of the MCA representatives in these committees was to assist the government in the screening, classification, release, rehabilitation and resettlement of detainees and Surrendered Enemy Personnel. MCA representatives were also present while police carried out the searching or screening of squatters.²²

Co-operation between the MCA and government was further strengthened through the appointment of more Chinese Affairs Officers at the state level under the control of the Federal and

State Secretary for Chinese Affairs, and at the district level, answerable to the State Secretary for Chinese Affairs and the District Officer. These Chinese Affairs Officers, a number of whom were Malayan Chinese, formed an important link between the government, the police and the Chinese community. At the lowest level, they dealt with all matters arising from squatter village committees. It was in this grass-roots interaction between the Chinese Affairs Department, the MCA and the squatter committees that the most vigorous and fruitful exchange between the government and the Chinese community occurred.

Relations between the MCA and government over Emergency affairs were not consistently cordial. Although MCA leaders were loyal government supporters, they often criticized the government for its heavy-handedness and insensitivity in the implementation of the New Village programme and other counter-insurgency measures directed at the squatter population. For example, in a widely publicized speech given a few months after the party's formation, party president Tan Cheng Lock stated that the insensitive handling of anti-insurgency measures by the authorities had caused much resentment and frustration among the Chinese. He stressed that official reprisals against squatters allegedly helping the guerrillas, such as burning their villages and crops, would drive them over to the Communist camp.²³ On another occasion Tan Cheng Lock confided to an old friend, Sir George Maxwell, that the government must be blamed for the abuses and gross negligence arising from its resettlement policy; the evacuation of resettlement areas in Mawai, Changang, Jenderam and Tras showed conclusively that 'something was radically wrong' with the government's handling of resettlement.²⁴ The MCA Annual Report for 1954 concluded on a note which showed that party leaders were generally critical of the manner in which the government was implementing the counter-insurgency campaign:²⁵

Certain actions taken by the Government had the effect of embittering some sections of the masses rather than of winning their hearts and minds. For example, there was the destruction recently of Nanong Sebrang New Village, and the removal of its Chinese inhabitants to another area 50 miles away. This latter village has long been known as a complete resettlement failure and yet the Chinese of Nanong Sebrang New Village were moved there, much against their will.

Another source of irritation is the continued detention of people. Prolonged detention and often unjustifiable on security grounds without

recourse to the Court of Law is bound to create resentment and this can hardly be regarded as a means for winning the hearts and minds of the people.

These criticisms, however, did not aggravate relations between the MCA and the government, as the latter tolerated the party's 'watch-dog' role in protecting the welfare of squatters. The one occasion that aroused official anger was when the MCA invited Victor Purcell and Francis Carnell to prepare a report concerning the impact of the Emergency on the Chinese community. At that time, Purcell was the honorary Political Adviser to the MCA, a post which he held till April 1958. During the course of his field-work in Malaya, Purcell had an interview with Templer, the outcome of which was recorded in his report to the MCA. Purcell observed that the High Commissioner made concessions to the MCA and the Chinese 'purely as a matter of political expediency in order to assist in the ending of the Emergency', and that Templer was not interested in long-term objectives related to Chinese welfare, and showed a complete lack of sympathy with Chinese aspirations. Purcell also stated that Templer said that the Federal Constitution was 'undoubtedly as bad as it could be' from the Chinese viewpoint, but he would not change it since it might offend the Malays, who were bearing 98 per cent of the brunt of fighting the Communists; and he added: 'If you give the Chinese an inch they will take an ell.'²⁶

Purcell's report, like his book on the Emergency, was strongly pro-Chinese and acutely critical of the government, particularly Templer.²⁷ Needless to say, Purcell's highly charged criticisms of the High Commissioner placed the MCA, his sponsor, in an embarrassing position. For the most part, the MCA maintained a discreet silence on the subject, but Tan Cheng Lock tried to reduce tension by manoeuvring diplomatically between the contenders. In October 1953, he wrote to Purcell informing him of a recent meeting he had with Templer: '... he [Templer] told me that he was certainly not anti-Chinese... He was extremely friendly to me and his idea was to clear up whatever misunderstanding there might be between him and the Chinese here.' At the same time, he tactfully assured Purcell: 'As far as I am personally concerned I would always like to be guided by your advice and views in matters affecting the Malayan Chinese community.'²⁸ Fortunately, no discernible damage was done to the MCA's relationship with Templer by the Purcell incident.

MCA Activities during the Emergency

When Tan Cheng Lock addressed the inaugural meeting of the MCA in February 1949, he said, 'In some quarters there is an inclination to blame the Chinese as a whole for the existence or continuation of terrorism in Malaya, from which they have suffered most atrociously and the greatest amount of injury.'²⁹ In July of the previous year, he had written to Lord Listowel, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, arguing that allegations about the Chinese refusing to co-operate with the government of Malaya were untrue. Stressing that the 'overwhelming majority of the victims of the forces of terrorism' were Chinese, he added:³⁰

...the Chinese community as a whole... (is) in the most unenviable situation of being placed between two *millstone* [*sic*] between which they stand to be crushed, or, to put it bluntly, between the devil and the deep sea. Should they give information or actively co-operate with the Government against the Malayan Communist Party, they or/and their families would simply be slaughtered by the guerrillas, whilst Government would be unable to protect them by reasonably *preventive* measures.'

Returning to the same theme a few years later, the MCA party president observed: 'The Emergency was not only imperilling the lives of many Chinese and jeopardising the vital interests of our community, but there was also a tendency to call into question our traditional sense of loyalty to this land which we have made our permanent home.'³¹

MCA leaders, anxious to establish the Chinese community's loyalty to the government, took the lead in mobilizing Chinese support for the government counter-insurgency campaign. Once the party was established, they explored various ways to raise funds for welfare work in the squatter resettlement schemes and for other counter-insurgency efforts. The party raised money initially by asking for donations from Chinese business concerns and the community in general, a method used traditionally by voluntary associations to finance public welfare projects. By the end of 1949, it had devised an innovative method of fund-raising in the form of a party sweepstake (lottery).

In December 1949, the party's honorary treasurer, Khoo Teik Ee, instructed the state and settlement branches to set up sub-committees to promote the sale of lottery tickets among MCA members. Each ticket would cost \$1; 60 per cent of gross sales would be distributed in prizes and the balance of 40 per cent would

be retained by the party for its welfare fund and for defraying administrative expenses.³² The first lottery, drawn at the end of February 1950, increased party membership by almost 50 per cent; total sales amounted to \$346,656, of which \$138,663 was retained for squatter resettlement work.³³ From January 1951, the sweepstake was renamed the 'Million Dollar Lottery', with prizes amounting to \$600,000.

The MCA sweepstake was so popular that it was believed that lottery tickets were used as 'unofficial' currency by some traders. Tan Siew Sin observed: 'I understand that... our lottery tickets are being used to finance trade between Malaya and neighbouring territories and hence are practically being accepted as legal tender in such countries...'³⁴ While Tan Siew Sin's claim appears somewhat extravagant, it is clear that the party lottery was an uncommonly successful method of raising party funds and attracting new members.

Between the holding of its first lottery in February 1950 and the time the government banned it in mid-1953, the MCA raised several million dollars, of which \$4 million was spent on Emergency work.³⁵ The major areas of Emergency-related expenditure were: (a) squatter resettlement, (b) adult education, (c) detainee welfare, (d) manpower recruitment, and (e) miscellaneous services.

Squatter Welfare

The forced resettlement of nearly half a million people to fenced-in areas with no infrastructure to support their economic and social livelihood was an extremely painful experience for the evacuees. These squatters were also subjected to strict and often harsh police and military surveillance made possible by the promulgation of a series of Emergency Regulations. Such legislation proscribed almost all civil rights, provided for detention without trial, allowed collective punishment of whole villages, imposed curfews, food control and gate searches, and severely restricted the movement of the squatters.

It must be said, however, that the authorities attempted to make life tolerable in the New Villages by providing a measure of social amenities in the form of schools, clinics, community halls and recreational centres. Electricity (necessary for the lighting of perimeter fences) and piped water were also brought to these

areas,³⁶ and financial assistance was given to squatters to build homes, grow food and raise livestock. Most important, the federal government worked hard to persuade the state authorities to alienate land to New Villages and grant land titles to squatters in order to strengthen their allegiance to the government. However, the state governments moved slowly in giving land to the New Villages. By the end of 1954, only about 50,000 acres of state land in the immediate vicinity of the New Villages had been alienated for squatters to grow food crops.³⁷ Furthermore, the state governments attached stringent time periods to the land titles. Penang, for example, granted temporary occupation licences lasting 33 years for house, shop and agricultural lots; Malacca and Kedah made an allowance of 30 years; while Perak issued titles for a maximum period of only 2 years, though this time limit was later extended to 33 years.³⁸

Government expenditure on squatter resettlement and welfare—which amounted to \$2,500,000 on land acquisition and over \$100,000,000 on general resettlement by March 1954³⁹—was augmented by MCA funds derived from its lottery. Although the MCA share of squatter expenditure—a total of \$4,000,000 by the time the lottery was terminated in mid-1953—was modest in comparison to the official outlay, its contribution was crucial in the implementation of a few key resettlement programmes. For example, the first organized large-scale resettlement scheme at Mawai undertaken by the Johore government was made possible by the sum of \$400,000 advanced from MCA funds.⁴⁰ The government acknowledged that the MCA had 'played an important part in resettlement schemes' and had 'assisted with funds, materials and personal exhortation'.⁴¹

The bulk of MCA funds was spent on subsidizing the government's education programme in the New Villages. In 1952, for example, the government spent a total of \$2,126,700 on the construction and equipment of 228 schools in the New Villages, nearly all using Chinese as the medium of instruction, with a total enrolment of 46,745 pupils and 1,262 teachers.⁴² The MCA contributed a total of nearly \$1,000,000 during that year towards the New Village education programme, thus making it possible for nearly three-quarters of the New Villages to have schools by the end of 1952.⁴³

The MCA also assisted squatters financially in the building of houses and fences, and the purchase of livestock and agricultural

products and other necessities to promote self-sufficiency. Finally, sums of money were spent in conjunction with government projects to provide social and recreational facilities in the New Villages. These included the construction of community centres, medical dispensaries and clinics, children's crèches, basketball courts, and the establishment of youth clubs, boy scout and girl guide movements.

MCA promotion of squatter welfare was not solely financial. The party also played a major role in bringing to light problems and abuses arising from resettlement, to ensure that the process was carried out in as humane a manner as possible. The MCA employed Y. C. Kang as its 'Agent-General', with special duties to enquire into and report on living conditions in newly set-up resettlement projects. Kang and other MCA leaders submitted several reports to the government recommending measures to mitigate the trauma of resettlement. These included: giving adequate notice (i.e. more than the usual notice of three days) on dates of removal; steps to minimize squatter losses of personal property during removal; provision of proper sanitation facilities in the New Villages prior to the arrival of the settlers; supply of adequate financial and technical assistance to work the land upon arrival; and, most important, careful selection of suitable sites for resettlement.⁴⁴ This MCA watchdog role helped prevent excessive bureaucratic disregard for squatter welfare during resettlement moves.

Besides making representations on behalf of squatters concerning adverse living conditions in New Villages, the MCA also attempted to check abuses arising from over-zealous application of the Emergency Regulations. For example, in early 1951, after a series of terrorist incidents in the area, the inhabitants of Sungkop Village in Kedah were collectively punished by the levying of a \$25,000 fine, and the closure of all shops for three months, during which they were allowed to open for only an hour each day. The Kedah MCA finally succeeded in persuading the Menteri Besar to reduce the fine to \$5,000 and reduce the length of time for the closure of shops.⁴⁵ Another case in which the MCA succeeded in tempering the harshness of punitive measures concerned Machap Village, which was known to have supplied food to the guerrillas. The police intended to cut off this supply line by wholesale detention of squatters and immediate evacuation of the village. The Malacca MCA approached the authorities and persuaded them to

drop the idea of detention. Evacuation was to go ahead, but a period of grace of one month was obtained before the villagers were moved to Machap Bahru.⁴⁶

Adult Education

The MCA New Village adult education programme, publicized as having been started to 'eradicate illiteracy, raise standards of knowledge, improve living techniques and cultivate good citizens for this country',⁴⁷ formed the core of the counter-insurgency psychological campaigns in the New Villages. A report prepared by T. H. Tan, the chief executive secretary of the party, stated: '... our work in the New Villages would go beyond the pale of a literacy campaign. The task ahead of us was one of winning over the adults of the New Villages from Communist influence, if not domination.'⁴⁸ The chairman of the social, benevolent and cultural subcommittee, Leung Cheung Ling, entrusted with the running of the adult education and public library programme, noted in a memorandum that the Chinese library units were formed in the New Villages 'as a measure to conduct the ideological war and to promote culture and education in Malaya'.⁴⁹ The importance of psychological warfare as a platform in the MCA Emergency programme is reflected in Tan Cheng Lock's statement that the party existed 'primarily ... to win the hearts and mind of the people to the side of the free world of democracy, and thus prevent the people from going over to the side of the Communists'.⁵⁰

In its ideological venture to combat communism, the MCA was aided by the leading self-professed guardian of democracy—the American Government. The Director of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Singapore informed the MCA that he would support its adult education programme 'to the limit of his budget' and assured the party that his officers would work closely with MCA officials in the New Villages. The office did not make direct financial payments to the MCA but underwrote publication costs of 'desirable literature', mainly textbooks in Chinese with a strong anti-Communist content, for use in the adult education as well as the public library programme.⁵¹

The MCA's effort in opening public libraries was supported by another American body, the Central Intelligence Agency-funded Committee for Free Asia, the fore-runner of the Asia Foundation. Robert Sheeks, a member of the Committee for Free Asia, formed an Advisory Committee in conjunction with the MCA to supervise

the running of the Malayan Public Library Association, which set up a number of public libraries throughout the country. By 1956, 85 libraries had been established; smaller ones were located in the New Villages while larger ones operated in towns such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Taiping, Kuala Pilah and Raub.⁵²

The party's adult education programme, which started in mid-1952, was well attended. In 1953, the programme ran a total of over 1,000 classes with an enrolment of some 35,000 students. It employed 4,000 teachers, helped by a small number of MCA volunteers. Out of these 1,000 classes, 35 per cent were courses on Chinese language, 30 per cent on English, 30 per cent on arithmetic, and 5 per cent on Malay and other subjects. The programme was fairly widespread; in Johore, for example, 42 of the 60 New Villages ran a total of 293 classes, with an enrolment of 10,000 pupils.⁵³

Statistics prepared by the party on pupils attending the classes indicated that 20 per cent of the attendees were between the ages of 12 and 14 years, 50 per cent between 15 and 18 years, and 30 per cent over 18 years. Occupation statistics based on the Selangor classes revealed that 34.0 per cent of the attendees were rubber tappers, 20.0 per cent domestic workers, 4.0 per cent mining labourers, 2.5 per cent farmers, 2.5 per cent merchants, and 37.0 per cent labourers, including carpenters and other artisans. Of these attendees, 20 per cent were classified as completely illiterate and 80 per cent slightly illiterate.⁵⁴ The statistics showed that the Chinese working class within the younger age-group constituted the largest single social group taking advantage of the MCA's adult education programme. While one is unable to draw any conclusions from the statistics regarding the efficacy of the programme as a counter-insurgency psychological measure, it can be said that the programme doubtless offered very welcome opportunities for self-improvement to illiterate and semi-illiterate Chinese working-class youths in the rural areas.

Detainees

The question of detainees interned under Emergency Regulations 17, 17C and 17D, was an urgent consideration of Emergency policy. Emergency Regulation 17 provided for the detention of activists and suspects for a period up to two years without trial, during which the detainees need not be informed of the grounds on which they were being held. Regulation 17C described measures

for the deportation of detainees and their dependants other than those who were federal citizens and British subjects. Regulation 17D paved the way for collective detention of groups of people suspected of having aided, abetted or consorted with bandits, of having suppressed evidence from the authorities or of illegally possessing arms.⁵⁵ To ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of its control over the movement of the squatter population, the government introduced a system of national registration whereby a person apprehended by the police without his identity card was liable to immediate detention.

By the end of 1948, detention camps were opened to house detainees who were arrested as a result of the Emergency Regulations. Six detention camps had been established by March 1952, at Ipoh, Port Swettenham (now Port Kelang), Muar, Tanjong Bruas, Kluang and Majeedi (Johore Bahru).⁵⁶ In addition, special rehabilitation centres were established where detainees were taught elementary technical skills such as carpentry and electric wiring so that they could find employment upon their release. Squatter detainees who were considered suitable for resettlement after the police had no more case for detaining them were subsequently moved to New Villages. Mawai New Village, for example, which was financed largely from MCA funds, was resettled by detainees from the Majeedi Camp.

Between June 1948 and February 1953, 29,828 people were detained under Emergency Regulation 17. Of these, 11,083 were eventually released. During the same period, a further 10,146 were held under Emergency Regulation 17D, and an additional 24,036 detainees and their dependants were repatriated, almost all to China.⁵⁷

The detention question was a major preoccupation of the MCA because the party considered the legal safeguards governing the detainees' right of appeal to be inadequate. A number of the MCA Federal Legislative Councillors spoke up against the detention regulations: for example, Ng Sui Cam brought the Council's attention to the disproportionately large numbers of people who had been detained during the first few months of the Emergency, commenting that the very number indicated that the innocent had also been held, together with the guilty. Leong Yew Koh stated that many hundreds had been arrested without trial and inquiry, and pointed out that though Advisory Committees had been formed a few months previously to enquire into the arrests, so far not one

single case had been dealt with.⁵⁸ On another occasion, Tan Siew Sin wanted the government to take steps to allay public anxiety regarding allegations that persons held in police custody were subjected to physical violence.⁵⁹

The major objectives of the MCA's work on detainees were to ensure that justice was properly administered and detainee welfare adequately safeguarded. As in the case of squatter welfare, work related to detainees necessitated constant communication between MCA office-holders, the authorities and the squatter population, which made up the largest number of detainees. Party branches located in New Villages formed special subcommittees to keep a close watch on detainee problems. MCA local leaders used the Consultative Liaison Committees—bodies formed in New Villages comprising representatives from the police, Special Branch, Department of Chinese Affairs, and the MCA to assist the government in the screening, classification, release, rehabilitation and resettlement of detainees and Surrendered Enemy Personnel—to advance the interests of detainees and their families, particularly by seeking redress in cases where justice had not been done.

In early 1951, the MCA prepared a comprehensive report outlining how the party could work with the authorities and how detainees' welfare could be safeguarded. Its major recommendations were:⁶⁰

- (a) that MCA representatives be allowed to assist officers in the Chinese Affairs Department in the screening of detainees to ascertain whether they should be held or released;
- (b) that MCA representatives be appointed to the Boards of Inspection of the various detention camps;
- (c) that liaison be established between the Chief Police Officers and the various MCA branches concerning all matters arising from detention;
- (d) that each squatter area have a Chinese Council of Ketua (headmen) to act as liaison between security forces and inhabitants of the area;
- (e) that any detainee must be notified of his right to lodge objections against his detention order;
- (f) that the government revise its list of detainees and release on bond those whom the authorities had no real case against;
- (g) that the government provide a definite scheme of employment for detainees and surrendered bandits;
- (h) that deportees be transported at the expense of the government to their native places after arrival at any port in China;
- (i) that wives and children of detainees who were to be deported be allowed to remain if they did not wish to accompany the deportees;

- (j) that minors born in the Federation and eligible to apply for Federal citizenship should not be deported.

These recommendations, most of which appeared to have been heeded by the authorities, helped to ensure that justice was administered as correctly as possible.

Furthermore, the party collected case histories of detainees who were believed to have been wrongly detained. The three cases quoted below give an indication of the problems MCA representatives tried to deal with:⁶¹

Case 1: Detainee No. 884, Port Swettenham Detention Camp.

Interviewed on 18 March 1953

The detainee was a Hokkien male, aged 20, born in Dengkil in Negri Sembilan. He had three years of Chinese education and worked as a rubber tapper. He was arrested on 30 July 1952. He testified that soldiers came while he was tapping rubber and arrested him:

I was the only person arrested and the reason for my arrest was as follows: My identity card was asked for. I had only a temporary identity card which I produced. My original Identity Card has been handed in by me to the District Office for replacement on account of the card having been damaged. When I handed in the original I was given a temporary Identity Card.

When I produced my temporary Identity Card to the soldiers there were \$2 in one dollar notes enclosed in this paper. I kept the temporary Identity Card in my purse and I forgot to take out the \$2 when I went out to work in the morning.

I was therefore arrested because I had \$2 enclosed in my Identity Card which was kept in my purse.

Asked if he had any enemies in the area, he replied:

None, except one Lim Leong San who is a coffee shop keeper in Dengkil and who also sells cooked food (i.e. Mee Hoon). I quarrelled with him because I complained about the cup of "meehoon" supplied to me when I went to his shop for lunch. The vegetable had not been properly washed and there was a vegetable worm in the cup. I have [sic] had a few mouthfuls before I noticed the worm. I complained about it and I refused to pay him. The price was \$1.20. I believe that he (Lim Leong San) has informed against me either before or after my arrest.

After my arrest and detention my mother came to see me. My mother informed me that Lim Leong San had sent one Ah Khim Soh to see my father after my arrest. Ah Khim Soh told my father that Lim Leong San

could help me out if my father would spend a sum of \$500. My father did not entertain the proposal.

When he was asked whether he had given money or food to the Communists, he denied having done so.

The MCA's Agent-General's recommendation was: 'Judging from the detainee's demeanour and out-spoken attitude I believe that he had been truthful. The detainee struck me as a decent young man and a dutiful son. . . . If you should consider that it is not possible to release him now then I would suggest that he be sent to the Rehabilitation Camp in Taiping.'

Case 2: Detainee No. A/25895 in Majeedi Camp. Interviewed on 28 April 1953

The detainee, aged 48, was arrested for being in the company of Communist guerrillas. Born in China, he had come to Malaya 28 years previously, owned about 22 acres of rubber land and a house in Triang New Village, and was married with five children. He was arrested on 20 December 1951. He stated that he was visited and harassed by Communist terrorists because he was a member of the Kuomintang, which he had joined soon after the liberation of Malaya from the Japanese. His statement read:

Sometime in 1949 the head of the Triang Kuomintang Branch named Tee Cheow Yeam was killed by bandits in Triang Town. About one month after Tee Cheow Yeam was killed, 3 bandits visited my house one night between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. My door was shut at the time. The bandits ordered me to open my door by speaking in Malay. I thought that the security people were outside and opened my door. It was when they entered my house that I became aware that they were bandits. . . . One of the bandits held a short gun at me—pointing it close at my stomach. The other two bandits also had short guns. The bandit who held a gun at my stomach ordered me to produce my Kuomintang membership certificate. He said that he knew I was a Kuomintang member. I was in great fright. I did not deny that I was a Kuomintang member but I said that I did not have a membership certificate. The bandit then said that if I did not produce it within a week he would deal with me severely. The bandits did not search my house. They then went away. They did not take anything from me.

The Agent-General's recommendation to the Secretary of Defence was that the order of detention and repatriation should be cancelled.

*Case 3: Detainee No. 8449-A/206114, Ipoh Detention Camp.
Interviewed on 31 April 1953*

The detainee, aged 50, was born in China. He was a rubber tapper, married with five children. He lived with his family in Sungei Patang Estate in Pahang behind estate labourers' lines which were fenced in. He was arrested on 5 February 1952. Upon his arrest, he was told that a Surrendered Enemy Personnel had informed the authorities that he was a member of a Communist-led labour union. He denied that he was a member of the labour union and said that the only party he belonged to was the MCA. His statement said:

... sometime in May 1950 bandits came to my house and took away my identity card and that of my wife. The bandits came about 8 p.m. Two bandits entered my house. Both were armed with (short) guns. ... I recognised one of the bandits. ... He was known as Yip Wai Choon. ... I knew him when he was a boy during the time when I was a vegetable gardener in Lanchang. ... It was Yip Wai Choon the bandit who took away our identity cards that night. I reported the matter to the Police at Karak. I did not give the name of the bandit. I was in great fear.

He went on to say that his brother had been murdered by bandits in December 1949. After killing him, the bandits robbed his family. He continued:

My sister-in-law told me that Yip Wai Choon was one of the bandits who killed her husband. My deceased brother was also a member of the MCA. During that period, we were all afraid to admit to anyone that we were members of the MCA.

I did not know who was the S.E.P. [Surrendered Enemy Personnel] who gave information against me, but if it was Yip Wai Choon, then his motive would be to get me out of the way in order to save himself from being prosecuted for murder.

The Agent-General recommended that the Secretary of Defence reconsider the detention order of the above.

Squatters were often forced, under threat to life and property, to give assistance to the guerrillas, but duress was no excuse, for under Emergency Regulation 17 anyone was liable for detention even if he was only seen in the company of a guerrilla. The detainees in Cases 2 and 3 were visited by guerrillas and this alone provided sufficient cause for their arrest. As can be seen from Case 1, people might be arrested due to false information given in order to settle personal scores. Moreover, informers gave false information

because it was an easy way of extorting money from the victim's family, or more often, of obtaining money from the Special Branch which paid cash for such information. Since those accused were presumed guilty, it is likely that a high proportion of innocent people were detained. Finally, Cases 2 and 3 indicate that MCA and KMT supporters were singled out as targets by the MCP.

Given the fact that detainees had little means of redressing injustice, the MCA provided a crucial avenue of defence through its access to officialdom. The party's efforts in obtaining the release of detainees were not entirely futile, for various branches reported successful results from their intervention with the authorities. For instance, the Negri Sembilan state branch managed to obtain the release of 50 people out of 105 listed for detention. In another case, the Kelantan state branch reported that on 9 March 1956, after having made representations to the Kelantan authorities, most of the 24 detained villagers from Gua Musang were released on bond.⁶²

Apart from working for the release of detainees, the MCA urged the government to improve conditions in detention camps and to make the transition back to civilian life easier for Surrendered Enemy Personnel. On 15 November 1949, for instance, the president of the Johore state branch wrote to the Secretary for Chinese Affairs about the subhuman living conditions in the Kluang Detention Camp. He pointed out that the camp was grossly overcrowded; there were 1,883 detainees when the full capacity was fixed at 1,500. Inmates there also suffered from malnutrition, and one detainee had died from *beri-beri*.⁶³ The MCA also distributed money, clothing and food to the inmates of detention camps, used its influence to obtain jobs for released detainees, and gave cash relief to help them readjust to civilian life.⁶⁴

Manpower Recruitment

When in 1951 the government passed an Emergency Bill on the conscription of manpower, directing 20,000 men of all races into the police force, the Chinese response was appallingly low.⁶⁵ Chinese youths between the call-up ages of 18 and 24 years moved from place to place to avoid service to call-up notices; 6,000 of them absconded to Singapore and several thousand others to Indonesia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.⁶⁶ Response to the Bill instead came mainly from Malays.

On 3 July 1952, the Federal Legislative Council passed a

National Service Bill designed mainly to improve the recruitment of Chinese youths to the police and armed forces. The government had set up a Federation Regiment, and it hoped that 50 per cent of its servicemen would be Chinese. More Chinese were also desired for other divisions such as the Federation Armoured Car Regiment and the Federation Engineer Squadron. However, the Chinese response was again abysmally poor: applications for the Federation Regiment were 81 per cent Malay.⁶⁷ By 31 October 1952, there were only 50 Chinese recruits in the Federation Regiment and 505 in the police force, or 0.003 per cent and 0.089 per cent respectively of the male Chinese population over 19 years. By November 1954, Chinese recruitment into the Federation Regiment had improved slightly, but the overall percentage of Chinese in the armed forces remained at 5.1 per cent of the rank and file, and 3.3 per cent at the officer level. The situation was hardly better in the police force: out of 50,000 policemen, only 2,059, or 4.1 per cent, were Chinese.⁶⁸

MCA national leaders, seeing the call-up as much a claim upon Chinese to demonstrate their loyalty to Malaya as a security measure, joined the government in expressing concern over the poor Chinese response. Speaking during the debate on the National Service Bill, Tan Siew Sin said, 'We can probably never build up a national consciousness in this country, the diverse races living in this country can never feel a sense of oneness unless amongst other things we have a National Army comprising all races.'⁶⁹ Moreover, since two-thirds of all civilians killed by terrorists during the first few years of the Emergency were Chinese, it is not surprising that the party saw it was to the advantage of the community if the defence forces were strengthened and Chinese participation in them increased.⁷⁰

Although the MCA believed in the need to increase Chinese participation in the defence forces, it argued that conscription in the manner required by the National Service Bill would not be supported by the Chinese community. Tan Cheng Lock presented a memorandum to the Federal War Council outlining the reasons for Chinese failure to respond to conscription, and recommending an alternative scheme in the form of the Home Guard service.⁷¹ He identified the reasons for the failure of Chinese recruitment as the low level of Malayan-centred political consciousness exhibited by the community, low awareness of Malaya as a nation-state requiring sacrifice of lives in its defence, and lack of political

incentives for Chinese to sacrifice their lives for their adopted country. Over and above these considerations was a cultural tradition which put low value on soldiering as a profession, as is evident in the Chinese proverb: 'Good steel is not made into nails, and good sons do not serve as soldiers.' This proverb was based on a popular traditional Chinese belief that the military tradition attracted only criminal and other undesirable elements, and that ill-disciplined soldiers frequently terrorized decent citizens. Such a belief was, of course, used by some Chinese as an excuse to avoid a profession that demands rigorous discipline and for which the remuneration was regarded as insufficient to compensate for the physical risks involved. Traditional Chinese antipathy towards soldiering was also related to the practice of ancestor-worship which required sons, especially the first-born, to remain with and outlive their parents to carry on ancestral worship rites required by the Chinese religious-cultural system.

The memorandum pointed out that Malayan Chinese consciousness of duty, service, and group loyalty had not developed beyond that to family, clan, dialect group and community. Tan Cheng Lock explained: '... universal conscription depends for public support on public education and ideals such as loyalty to the nation and social justice which are not yet generally held by the Malayan Chinese'. He argued that the concept of national service, with its connotation of sacrifice for the defence of nation-state, king and country, did not make sense to the 'present mentality of the Malayan Chinese', and added that the spirit of a Malayan nationhood was still lacking within the community. The 'concept of general social justice' was of far less importance than the preservation of the immediate interests of the individual family. This lack of recognition of the fact that Chinese had a duty towards the upkeep of law and order during the Emergency resulted in Chinese youths evading their obligations, 'abetted and encouraged by parents and friends'.

Tan Cheng Lock further pointed out that Chinese lacked political incentives to sacrifice their lives for Malaya. While Malays were granted the privileges of citizenship under the Federation of Malaya Constitution, most Chinese had been denied the 'full status, rights and privileges of Malayan citizenship'. They were therefore reluctant to shoulder the 'duties, responsibilities and obligations of citizenship' demanded of them by the Manpower Regulations. Chinese community leaders likewise singled out

disenfranchisement as a major reason for the poor Chinese response to the call-up. For example, when over 100 delegates representing 60 bodies—which included the MCA, CCC, huay kuan, trade guilds and 19 schools in Malacca—met to discuss the National Service Bill, they stated that 'Chinese should be accorded equal political rights along with the other communities in Malaya' to make them feel it was their 'bounden duty... to protect and defend this country'.⁷²

As national service was an untenable means of getting Chinese to join the armed forces, the MCA advised the government to find another course of action, 'a traditional Chinese way of thought to bring the Chinese to battle'.⁷³ Tan Cheng Lock argued that the only institutionalized method of committing more Chinese to fight the guerrillas was through the Home Guard service, which was based on traditional principles of self-defence familiar to Chinese society. He explained: 'The Home Guard system makes use of the only universal loyalty, loyalty to family and locality.' He listed the following advantages of the Home Guard system from the Chinese point of view: (1) a full-time Home Guard service would introduce the Chinese gently to the military arts without arousing passive disobedience, which had been the reaction to the Manpower Regulations; (2) hardships caused by conscription into the police and armed forces and posting outside the locality would be avoided; parents would not lose sight of only sons, and the latter in turn would be at hand to perform the filial duties required of them; (3) financial hardships caused to families would be largely eliminated since the Guard member could still help in the family agricultural or commercial interests while off duty; (4) the Home Guard would not have to fear bandit reprisals while at work since his duties would be within the perimeter fences of the New Village.⁷⁴

The Home Guard system, implemented along the lines suggested by the MCA, proved to be a successful means of getting Chinese to defend lives and property during the Emergency. General Sir Gerald Templer, who succeeded Gurney as High Commissioner, enlarged the system in mid-1952, directing that 400 fully armed and fully operational Home Guard units be formed to serve alongside the police and armed forces.⁷⁵ The proportion of Chinese in the Home Guards grew steadily. At the end of 1950, out of a total of 30,000 Home Guards, only 3,500 or 11.6 per cent were Chinese. However, by September 1954, 129 New Villages out of

323 were defended by Chinese Home Guard units.⁷⁶ The MCA Annual Report for 1954 noted: '... the policing and defence of a large number of New Villages have now been transferred to the hands of Home Guards whose personnel is mostly Chinese'.⁷⁷

A special Home Guard unit, the Kinta Valley Home Guard (KVHG), was the country's most successful local Chinese defence scheme. Unlike normal Home Guard units which were planned, financed and operated by the authorities, the MCA played a major role in planning, partly funding and running the KVHG, which existed to protect the mining activities of Perak towkay, the majority of whom were MCA leaders.⁷⁸

Leong Yew Koh, a founder member of the MCA in Perak and a successful tin miner, recalled that the idea was the outcome of a meeting of the Perak State War Executive Committee. During the meeting it was alleged that 90 per cent of the Chinese tin miners in Perak were paying protection money to the terrorists, and that the government's suspicions had been confirmed by a confession signed by two representatives from the Perak Chinese Miners' Association. The position of all Chinese miners in Perak was endangered by this state of affairs, as it rendered them liable to detention. Consequently, Leong Yew Koh submitted a scheme whereby the Chinese mines in Perak would be protected by a Home Guard unit financed by the Perak miners and the MCA. The existence of the KVHG would make it unnecessary for the miners to continue payment of protection money; at the same time no further suspicions would be cast in their direction.⁷⁹

According to H. S. Lee, fighting men for the KVHG were recruited from the ex-KMTM and secret societies allied to it.⁸⁰ Lau Pak Khuan, the KMTM leader in Perak and founder member of the MCA, apparently resurrected the old KMTM guerrilla unit in Perak, which had been disbanded since the end of the war. Lee stated that Templer was initially reluctant to sanction the scheme, as he felt that a well-trained and fully armed KMT force owing loyalty to Taiwan might prove a liability to the Malayan authorities. Moreover, he objected in principle to a private army raised by private means to protect the interests of the Kinta tin miners. He opposed the idea of 'allowing the Chinese to arm themselves for their own protection' since it contradicted his belief that defence should be provided by the government for the collective security of all Malaysians.⁸¹ However, Templer finally sanctioned the scheme, as he was persuaded by the argument that the regular

police and armed forces were unable to defend the Kinta mines effectively. Adequate defence of the Kinta Valley was a major consideration, for it was the country's largest source of tin supply, and tin and rubber were the government's two biggest revenue earners.

Templer finally consented to the scheme also because he was assured by the MCA leaders that the unit would be disbanded when its services were no longer needed (which was the case). After approving the scheme the government contributed a generous two-thirds towards expenses incurred in setting up the force and assumed a measure of responsibility and control over its operation. The MCA, for its part, spent a total of \$225,000 on the KVHG, a sum exceeding that of its nation-wide recruiting drive for the police force (discussed below). During a meeting of the General Committee in 1953, a delegate from Negri Sembilan objected to what he considered the disproportionately large sum of money which the party had spent in Perak alone, by reason of the KVHG, and insisted that future expenditures be spread out more fairly among the other states.⁸² His objection reflected the belief that Emergency welfare funds, controlled by a few leaders in the Central Working Committee, were being used to benefit a privileged group, the Perak towkay.

At its peak, the KVHG was a well-organized and well-trained force comprising 1,656 men and officers.⁸³ Its success in carrying out its counter-insurgency duties was clearly evidenced by a substantial decline in incidents of Communist sabotage of tin mines and intimidation of mine owners and workers shortly after the force commenced operations.

In April 1952 the MCA forwarded a proposal to Templer to make good the shortage of Chinese in the police force by pledging to recruit 2,000 Chinese policemen. In return, the government was asked not to enforce the National Service Bill except in case of external emergency. Incentives recommended by the MCA included the granting of citizenship to recruits after three years' satisfactory service in the force, payment of a bonus of \$200 to each recruit and postings as near the recruits' homes as possible for a minimum period of one year after the period of training.⁸⁴

The government decided to let the MCA recruit Chinese policemen on its behalf, because it was uncertain about the potential success of the National Service Bill. Addressing a Federal War Council meeting on 8 February 1952, the Federal Chief Secretary

said that though the Federal Legislative Council had already accepted the National Service Bill in principle, the government would not enforce it. He explained that the government was not totally convinced that compulsory conscription would necessarily produce the desired results:

... what we have to weigh is the probability of a lot of trouble with young men running away into the jungle when Registration is proclaimed coupled with the demand for manpower which the scheme will require to work it, against the alternative of keeping the registration machinery in the background while attempting to meet our demands by voluntary enlistment.⁸⁵

At the same meeting, the Deputy Chief Secretary divulged that the government was willing to try a recruiting drive along the lines suggested by the MCA, starting in April 1952.

While the government agreed to the grant of citizenship, it objected to the MCA's suggestion of financial incentives on the grounds that it would both be improper and unfair to Chinese and non-Chinese already in the police forces.⁸⁶ Malay members of the Federal War Council likewise opposed the proposed bonus payment, pointing out the inevitable negative impact on Malay police forces of money subsidies to Chinese recruits.⁸⁷

Despite their reservations, the authorities did not stop the MCA from paying out subsidies once the recruitment scheme was launched. As it was widely known that Chinese youths balked at serving in the defence forces because they could find more lucrative employment in the private commercial, mining and agricultural sectors, the government decided to tolerate these payments as a temporary measure to obtain much needed Chinese police manpower. The MCA for its part was aware that it had to offer bonus payments and to play up the issue of economic security—that a career in the police force guaranteed long-term employment and a pension—rather than appeal to the youths' sense of duty.⁸⁸

The MCA recruitment drive was a well-organized and intensive campaign. Before its scheme received official sanction, the party had set up, at every MCA centre, special subcommittees to deal with recruitment under the Manpower Regulations. In its drive to recruit the quota of 2,000 youths for service in the regular police force, the MCA Headquarters alerted all branches to publicize the time of arrival of recruiting teams, the qualifications required for

service, the terms of service and the emoluments provided. Branch officials were told that their propaganda work should not be confined only to the towns, but 'it should reach the level of villages including all schools'.⁸⁹ They were also to make known to the Chinese that recruits would not have to eat Malay food, that the police headgear was not a Malay cap but a survivor from a former British Regiment, and that many of the instructors in the Training Depots were in fact Chinese. Such information, given to reassure Chinese recruits that becoming a policeman did not involve adopting a Malay life-style, shows that the MCA perceived racial differences to be obstacles to Chinese joining the Malay-dominated police forces. Above all, the MCA wished it to be known to recruits that three years' full-time service would automatically give them Federal citizenship.⁹⁰

After a slow start, the recruiting campaign headed by Yap Yin Chung—the Recruiting Liaison Officer responsible for mediating between government recruiting officers, District Officers, Resettlement Officers, members of village committees and local MCA officials—successfully attained the target quota. Yap reported that the MCA's campaign had 'broken to some extent the "barriers" and age-old customs' inhibiting the Chinese from entering a military-type profession. However, he emphasized that the majority of the applicants were drawn by the widely rumoured 'welfare' the MCA gave to recruits.⁹¹

The total number of recruits at the end of the campaign was 2,059. When a member of the CWC suggested that the party spend another \$200,000 to recruit a further 1,000 Chinese policemen, this proposal was vetoed, as the CWC considered that the party had already spent 'hundreds of thousands of dollars to recruit a mere fraction of the Police Force'.⁹² At the same time when, during a session in the Federal Legislative Council, the Secretary of Defence complained that 2,059 new recruits for the Police Force were insufficient, Leong Yew Koh retorted that the Federal War Council had been satisfied with the number of 2,000 recruits when the MCA submitted its recruitment scheme, and the MCA and the Chinese community should not now be blamed for not providing more than the agreed quota.⁹³

The MCA campaign also raised recruits for the armed forces. By the end of June 1953, it had recruited 855 Chinese youths for the Federation Regiment Boys' Company and Federation Engineer Squadron.⁹⁴ Although this figure was considered inadequate by

the government, no special drive was launched to increase it. While the MCA succeeded in getting more Chinese to join the Home Guard service and police force through special incentives and appeals to traditional concepts of self-defence, it realized that Chinese cultural prejudice against a soldiering career in the regular defence forces remained extremely difficult to overcome.

Miscellaneous Services

In addition to its work on squatter welfare, adult education, detainees and manpower recruitment, the MCA carried out a number of other social service activities which mirrored those performed by the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and *huay kuan*. For example, the MCA paid for burial expenses of destitute members and gave financial relief to flood and fire victims, and during Chinese New Year, the most important festival celebrated by Chinese, the MCA gave *ang pow* (gifts of money) to the old and poor. The settlement of disputes arising from family or business differences was also a major service provided by party leaders. The Muar branch, for example, reported that it settled 296 cases of family disputes for the period 1955-6.⁹⁵ Some state branches even set up special bureaus to provide miscellaneous welfare and advisory services for the Chinese public. In March 1954 the Penang and Province Wellesley settlement branch established an Advice and Service Bureau to 'give and render service, where possible, to all members of the Chinese community, besides its own members, in all matters affecting their personal affairs, their dealings with the Government, and in their duties and their rights as law-abiding citizens of this country'. It was stated that the Bureau rendered service mainly to the poor and distressed 'who did not know where to turn to for help when such help was urgently needed'.⁹⁶ The Perak state branch set up a similar bureau, called the Public Services Bureau, which performed several services including helping all Chinese on immigration, citizenship and other legal matters, obtaining employment for the poor, and advising on cases of family and business disputes.⁹⁷

The MCA likewise contributed a considerable amount of money to non-communal charitable organizations such as the Red Cross (Red Crescent) Society and St. John's Ambulance Brigade, which carried out important medical work in the New Villages. The party's Annual Report for 1952 stated that when teams of the

British Red Cross and the St. John's Ambulance Brigade arrived in Malaya to work in the squatter areas, the Association 'extended to them financial aid to the tune of nearly \$500,000, enabling them to get the necessary transport for their work in the New Villages'.⁹⁸ The MCA also spent \$210,000 towards the expenses of raising 25 teams of nurses and welfare officers for work in the New Villages. Another charitable organization carrying out welfare work in the Kinta New Villages, the St. Michael's Catholic Action, received \$51,250 from the MCA. Smaller sums of money were also given to a number of public organizations working among the orphaned, poor, sick and aged of all races. Among the recipients of such aid were the Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged (Singapore), the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (Malacca), the Home for the Aged (Penang) and the Ramakrishna Orphanage (Penang). On one occasion, the party contributed money to defray the expenses of Buddhist monks proselytizing in the New Villages in Selangor.⁹⁹

The final item of miscellaneous expenditure was spent on Malay welfare. In July 1952 the MCA set up a Malay Welfare Fund with \$500,000 from its lottery proceeds.¹⁰⁰ From this fund, money was made available for the welfare needs of Malay policemen, soldiers, squatters and detainees. Gifts of money during Hari Raya (the end of the Muslim fasting month) were distributed among Malays held in detention camps throughout the country. In addition, \$3,000 was allotted to Malay settlers at Kampong Sepial in Pahang, and \$5,000 was given towards the building of married quarters for Malay soldiers stationed in Singapore.¹⁰¹ The MCA thus did not ignore the needs of the non-Chinese; however, compared to the volume of time, energy and money expended on behalf of party members and the Chinese community at large, the attention it gave to the other races was modest indeed.

The MCA and the Emergency: Some Conclusions

From the beginning of the outbreak of the Emergency, the government was fully aware that the Chinese community in Malaya was reluctant to commit itself to the official side in the terrorist war. This reluctance stemmed from a number of reasons, the main ones being fear of reprisals from terrorists, genuine support for the Communist cause, deep-rooted prejudices against serving in the armed forces, unfamiliarity in dealing with affairs outside the scope of their immediate family, clan and dialect group concerns, and more

generally, hostility towards being controlled by a government which was overwhelmingly non-Chinese.

The government realized that a successful conclusion of the war depended upon its ability to change these attitudes, especially among the squatters. To achieve this, it had to use the mediatory services of a group of community leaders brought together in the MCA. The party proved to be the ideal 'political broker' between government and squatters for a number of reasons. First the loyalty of its leaders to the anti-Communist cause was unquestionable. They were successful capitalists who had as much to lose as the British and Malay leaders if the MCP were to win the war. Secondly, they were established public figures within the Chinese community before they came together in the MCA. As traditional association leaders, they had built up an impressive and comprehensive structure of patron-client relationships within the community, and therefore to a considerable extent they could influence political behaviour and command the loyalty of members of the community. Thirdly, a number of these leaders were trilingual. Thus the party could communicate between an English- and Malay-speaking official élite on the one hand and a Chinese-speaking (Mandarin and all dialects included) squatter population on the other.

The enthusiasm which the MCA leaders displayed in carrying out their Emergency duties did not derive solely from purely selfish motives relating to the protection of capitalist class interests. They also believed they had a responsibility to alleviate the hardships inflicted on the Chinese masses during the Emergency. For the MCA's vigorous contribution towards the terrorist war, the lives of party leaders and members were frequently at considerable risk, as demonstrated by the attempted assassinations of Tan Cheng Lock, shortly after becoming MCA president, and of Leong Yew Koh. These two men were among the fortunate few who escaped with their lives, for Communist terrorists succeeded in slaying some 300 MCA office-bearers and members during the Emergency.¹⁰² Pro-KMT allies of the party were also targets of MCP assassination squads. For example, in early 1952 a leading community figure in Penang, David Chen, the principal of Chung Ling High School and president of the Chinese School Teachers' Association, was gunned down, allegedly for being a KMT secret agent.

Despite the danger and the many difficulties it faced, the MCA

doggedly pursued its Emergency welfare work. Its belief in the critical importance of its own role in the fight against communism was succinctly expressed by Tan Cheng Lock: 'I am perfectly positive that without some such Chinese organisation as the MCA as a counter to the MCP, the danger of communism establishing its rule over Malaya will be increased ten-fold.'¹⁰³ The government likewise gave strong recognition to the MCA's key role in facilitating its counter-insurgency programme, and praised it for serving as a rallying point in the anti-Communist crusade.¹⁰⁴ Thus, when the Emergency finally reached its end, the MCA could feel justly proud of its part in helping the nation achieve victory over those who aimed to destroy its foundations.

1. A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960*, London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1975, pp. 349-50.

2. Memorandum issued by the Commissioner-General's Office, July 1953, 'Notes on the Overseas Chinese in Each South East Asian Territory', p. 11, CO/1022/404.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

4. Monthly Political Intelligence Report, February-April 1950, FO 371/84501/10166.

5. Telegram from Gurney to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 3 and 10 April 1950; telegram from MacDonald to the Foreign Office dated 3 April 1950, FO 371/83550/1903.

6. Communication from Sir W. Strang to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 May 1950, FO 371/83551/1903.

7. Notes by the Economic Intelligence Department, Foreign Office, 13 April 1949, FO/371/76049/1114.

8. Memorandum, 'The Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia', dated June 1953, p. 4, CO 1022/404.

9. Studies which discuss the squatter problem include, R. Nyce, *Chinese New Villages in Malaysia: A Community Study*, Singapore, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1973; Francis Loh Kok Wah, 'Beyond the Tin Mines: The Political Economy of Chinese Squatter Farmers in the Kinta New Villages, Malaysia', Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1980; and Short, *op. cit.*

10. Communication from the BMA to the Colonial Office, no signature, c. December 1945, MU file, 5706/46(A).

11. See communication from the Acting Resident Commissioner, Negri Sembilan, to the Chief Secretary of the Malayan Union, 10 September 1946, MU file, 5705/46(1), and circular entitled 'Removal of Illegal Occupants of State Land', mimeo., n.d., MU file, 5705/46(3).

12. See letter from H. K. Dimoline, Secretary of UPAM, to the Chief Secretary of the Malayan Union, 6 December 1947, MU file, 4949/47(10). Dimoline pointed out that under the existing laws, the issuing of court orders for eviction were 'slow,

cumbersome and expensive'. See also letter from the President of UPAM to Sir Edward Gent, 24 May 1948, MU file, 4949/47(25).

13. Minutes sheet addressed to the Deputy Chief Secretary from the Acting Economic Secretary dated 10 May 1948, including comments by the Deputy Chief Secretary dated 18 May 1948, Federal Secretariat file, 2318/38.

14. 'Note on a Meeting Held at King's House on 15 June 1948 to Discuss the Eviction of Squatters on Estates', mimeo., MU file, 4949/1947. See also 'Note of a Meeting Held in the Committee Room of the Federal Legislative Council Chamber to Discuss the Squatter Problem', mimeo., MU file, 4949/47(40a).

15. See Federation of Malaya, *Report of Committee Appointed by His Excellency the High Commissioner to Investigate the Squatter Problem*, Council Paper No. 3 of 1949, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press.

16. Quoted from Short, op. cit., p. 180.

17. Federation of Malaya, *Detention and Deportation during the Emergency in the Federation of Malaya*, Council Paper No. 24 of 1953, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, p. 14. By November 1950, however, new arrangements were made with the People's Republic of China and the repatriation programme was resumed on a much diminished scale.

18. Reply from the Chief Secretary to question raised by Leung Cheung Ling, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 10 September 1952, p. 355. Existing villages which were enlarged under the Briggs Plan were also termed 'New Villages'.

19. Telegram from Gurney to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 3 May 1950, CO 717/201/52849/41(20).

20. Note of a meeting held at King's House on 29 November 1951, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 164.

21. See 'A Scheme for Promoting Liaison and Co-operation between Squatter Areas and Local Authorities Prepared by a Sub-Committee of the Emergency Chinese Advisory Committee on 10 May 1949, and Subsequently Approved by the Members of the Advisory Committee', mimeo., n.d., and 'A Scheme for Promoting Liaison and Co-operation between Squatter Areas and Local Authorities Prepared and Recommended by the Emergency Chinese Advisory Committee', mimeo., 7 July 1949, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 144, No. 3.

22. See circular issued by the Acting Commissioner of Police, W. D. Robinson, to all Chief Police Officers on the subject of co-operation with the MCA, 19 February 1951; and memorandum by the Director of Operations entitled 'Chinese Co-operation-MCA Resolutions', mimeo., 1 February 1951, MCA Headquarters.

23. Address by Tan Cheng Lock at Taiping and Ipoh on 10 April 1949 on 'The Chinese in Malaya', in Tan Cheng Lock, *A Collection of Speeches*, Singapore, Ih Shih Press, n.d., p. 16.

24. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Sir George Maxwell dated 18 December 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/V/232.

25. Report of the Hon. Secretary-General of the MCA to be submitted to the Seventh Annual Meeting of the General Committee to be held on 15 January 1955, p. 10.

26. 'Report on a Visit to Malaya from 20 August to 20 September 1952 at the Invitation of the Malayan Chinese Association by Victor Purcell and Francis Carnell', mimeo., pp. 2-3, TCL Papers, TCL/VI/V. In a letter to Tan Cheng Lock written after his departure from Malaya, Purcell said that Templer had 'insulted and intimidated' him and Carnell. He added that Templer made known his 'hatred

of the Chinese' to him, never dreaming that Purcell would dare reveal what he said. Purcell to Tan Cheng Lock, 13 February 1953, TCL Papers, TCL/10/21a. An 'ell' is an obsolete unit of measurement of approximately 45 inches.

27. V. Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free*, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1954. Some writers do not agree with Purcell's disparaging evaluation of Templer's administration of the Chinese during the Emergency. They point out that though Templer's collective punishment of the squatters of Tanjong Malim, Permatang Tinggi and Pekan Jabi was regarded by many as an unduly harsh method of forcing the Chinese to co-operate with the authorities, it was nevertheless his overall handling of counter-insurgency measures which succeeded in driving the MCP to retreat to the Malayan-Thai border. See Short, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-87; E. O'Ballance, *Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War, 1948-1960*, London, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1966, Ch. 6; and R. Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960*, 2nd ed., London, Cassell, 1967, pp. 79-85.

28. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Victor Purcell dated 23 October 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 18.

29. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock on 27 February 1949 at the MCA inaugural meeting, Kuala Lumpur. Tan Cheng Lock, *A Collection of Speeches*, p. 4.

30. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Lord Listowel dated 24 July 1948, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 133.

31. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock at the MCA Annual Central General Committee Meeting held on 21 April 1951.

32. Circular issued by Khoo Teik Ee entitled 'Unlimited Sweep for Members Only', mimeo., 17 December 1949; and memorandum by Khoo Teik Ee entitled 'MCA Sweepstake', mimeo., 20 June 1950.

33. Extract from Federation of Malaya Political Report for February 1950, CO 537/52849/48/50(2).

34. Letter from Tan Siew Sin to Lau Pak Khuan dated 24 April 1952, MCA Headquarters.

35. The MCA Headquarters compiled an inventory entitled 'List of Welfare Expenditure Approved by the Standing Finance Sub-Committee of the Malayan Chinese Association on Settlement, Re-settlement and Regrouping of Squatters'. The inventory listed every item of expenditure incurred during the period the lottery was held.

36. These facilities rarely existed in Malay villages during this period. Fearing that Malay hostility might be aroused, the Attorney-General cautioned the government not to over-concentrate its activities in the New Villages at the expense of the Malay villages. See Minutes of the Federal War Council Meeting on 8 February 1952 (item 6), TCL Papers, SP13, Item 170.

37. Speech by Templer, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 25 November 1953, p. 756, and speech by Dr Ismail, Member for Natural Resources, 31 March 1954, p. 17.

38. See the following circular: 'Land Tenure Policy in Regard to New Villages and Associated Agricultural Land', issued by the government of the Settlement of Penang and Province Wellesley, mimeo., n.d., and 'Land Titles for Re-settled Squatters', issued by the Perak State Secretariat, mimeo., 5 November 1952. See also: letters from the Hon. Secretaries of the Malacca and Kedah/Perlis Settlement and State Branches to the MCA Hon. Secretary-General on the subject of land leases, dated 29 July 1952 and 16 July 1952 respectively, MCA Headquarters.

39. Speech by Dr Ismail, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 31 March 1954, p. 17.
40. Federation of Malaya, *The Squatter Problem in the Federation of Malaya in 1950*, Council Paper No. 14 of 1950, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, Appendix 'D'.
41. Federation of Malaya, *Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952*, Council Paper No. 33 of 1952, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, p. 17.
42. Appendix to Templer's Annual Address, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 19 November 1952, p. 495.
43. Minutes of the MCA Sixth Cabinet Meeting, 10 November 1952.
44. Letter from the President, MCA Kedah/Perlis State Branch, to the Agent-General, 16 September 1952; letter from the Hon. Secretary of the MCA Perak State Branch to the Perak State Agricultural Officer, 10 March 1953; and 'Report of the MCA Agent-General: Yong Peng Resettlement', mimeo., 7 June 1952.
45. Address by Soon Cheng Sun, President of the MCA Kedah/Perlis Branch, at the Special Meeting of the MCA Kedah/Perlis Branch on 3 May 1952.
46. Report of the Malacca MCA Branch to be submitted to the Second Annual General Meeting on 31 December 1952, p. 4.
47. 'Rules for the Formation of Literacy and Adult Education Classes', mimeo., n.d.
48. Report by the Chief Executive Secretary entitled 'Adult Education', mimeo., 15 October 1952, p. 1, TCL Papers, TCL/V/315.
49. Letter from Leung Cheung Ling to the MCA Hon. Secretary-General dated 4 August 1954, TCL Papers, TCL/15/105.
50. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Templer dated 15 May 1953, MCA Headquarters.
51. Report by the Chief Executive Secretary entitled 'Adult Education', pp. 1-2. The United States Information Service is an overseas agency of the US Government responsible for US official information activities, and cultural and educational programmes.
52. Report of the MCA Hon. Secretary-General to be submitted to the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Central General Committee on 20 May 1956, p. 2, TCL Papers, SP3, List of Printed Materials, No. 21, and *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 2, No. 12, 30 June 1954.
53. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 June 1953.
54. Report entitled 'MCA Social, Benevolent and Cultural Sub-Committee: Statistics on Literacy and Adult Education Classes', mimeo., 23 February 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 2.
55. Federation of Malaya, *Detention and Deportation during the Emergency*, p. 8. See also Short, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 184, 188.
56. Information provided by the Secretary of Defence, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 19 March 1952, p. 33.
57. Federation of Malaya, *Detention and Deportation during the Emergency*, p. 6 and Appendix B.
58. Speeches by Ng Sui Cam and Leong Yew Koh, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 5 October 1948, B474.
59. Speech by Tan Siew Sin, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 19 September 1951, p. 210.

60. Report to be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the General Committee to be held on 21 April 1951, pp. 3-4.
61. These case studies are kept at the MCA Headquarters.
62. Minutes of the MCA Sixth Cabinet Meeting on 10 November 1952; Annual Report of the MCA Kelantan State Branch for 1956, p. 6.
63. Letter from Dr M. Birchee, President, Johore Bahru MCA, to the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, 15 November 1949, MCA Headquarters.
64. See Annual Report of the MCA Muar Branch for 1952, p. 3; Report of the MCA Taiping Branch for the period 24 June 1951-4 September 1952, p. 2.
65. Speech by D. C. Watherston, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 20 September 1951, p. 269.
66. Tan Cheng Lock, 'Memorandum on Manpower Conscription (A Chinese View)', mimeo., 19 December 1951, p. 1, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 146.
67. *Singapore Standard*, 4 December 1953.
68. *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 18 November 1954, p. 1036.
69. Speech by Tan Siew Sin, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 3 July 1952, p. 300.
70. Circular issued by Tan Cheng Lock entitled 'Direction of Manpower: The Need', mimeo., 18 July 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/1/30e-f.
71. Tan Cheng Lock, 'Memorandum on Manpower Conscription'.
72. Minutes of the Joint Meeting of Representatives of Chinese Associations, Guilds, Societies and Schools in the Settlement of Malacca held to consider the National Service Bill on 16 March 1952.
73. Tan Cheng Lock, 'Memorandum on Manpower Conscription'.
74. Ibid.
75. See Templer's Annual Address, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 19 November 1952, p. 462. For more information on the formation and functions of the Home Guard, see Short, op. cit., pp. 411-15.
76. Speech by Tan Cheng Lock at the MCA Annual Central General Committee Meeting, 21 April 1951, and Short, op. cit., p. 413.
77. Report of the Hon. Secretary-General of the MCA to be submitted to the Seventh Annual Meeting of the General Committee to be held on 15 January 1955, p. 9.
78. Ibid.
79. See Chong Wai Meng, 'Report of the Perak Chinese Mining Association Home Guard Fund: Period 16-4-52 to 30-11-54', mimeo., n.d., LYK Papers, SP3, No. 42; and Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the MCA General Committee on 27 December 1953.
80. Interview with H. S. Lee, 22 July 1975.
81. Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the MCA General Committee on 27 December 1953, p. 5.
82. Ibid., p. 7.
83. Chong Wai Meng, op. cit., p. 1.
84. Malayan Chinese Association, 'Scheme on Recruiting of Chinese into the Police Force for Submission to H.E. the High Commissioner', mimeo., 21 April 1952. See also Tan Cheng Lock, 'Plan to Mobilise MCA Resources to Produce 2,000 Police Recruits', mimeo., 8 April 1952.
85. Minutes of the Federal War Council Meeting on 8 February 1952 (item 2), TCL Papers, SP13, Item 170.

86. Letter from Templer to Tan Cheng Lock dated 24 April 1952, MCA Headquarters.

87. Minutes of the Federal War Council Meeting on 4 January 1952 (item 3), speech by Mustapha Albakri, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 170.

88. An MCA official advising the party on the recruitment drive stated that few Chinese would 'act from the duty incentive' when deciding to join the police force. Ho Yung Chi, 'Memorandum on Recruitment of Chinese Policemen', mimeo., 2 May 1952.

89. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Bingham, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, 9 May 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/V/91; and Circular from the MCA Agent-General to the Hon. Secretaries of all State/Settlement Branches entitled 'Chinese Recruits for Regular Police Force', 10 April 1952.

90. Circular from the MCA Agent-General to the Hon. Secretaries of all State/Settlement Branches entitled 'Chinese Recruits for Regular Police Force', 28 April 1952.

91. Memorandum by Yap Yin Chung entitled 'Recruiting', mimeo., 24 April 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, No. 66-67.

92. Minutes of the MCA Central Working Committee meeting on 4 April 1954, p. 10.

93. Speech by Leong Yew Koh, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 19 November 1954, p. 1081.

94. Yap Yin Chung, 'Progress Report on Recruiting', mimeo., 25 July 1953.

95. MCA Muar Branch: Report of the Association's affairs for the period 1955 to 1957, p. 2.

96. MCA Penang and Province Wellesley Branch, Report for the year ended 30 June 1954, p. 5.

97. MCA Perak State Branch, Report of the Working Committee to be submitted to the Sixth Annual General Meeting to be held on 28 December 1954, p. 3.

98. Report of the Hon. Secretary of the MCA to be submitted to the Fifth Annual General Committee Meeting to be held on 31 January 1953, p. 8, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 20.

99. MCA Headquarters, 'List of Welfare Expenditure'.

100. *Straits Times*, 14 July 1952.

101. MCA Headquarters, 'List of Welfare Expenditure'.

102. During the MCA Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Central General Assembly in 1969, it was proposed that the party erect a monument in Kuala Lumpur to commemorate the deaths of these 'MCA Patriots' who 'sacrificed their lives in order that the people of Malaya may live in peace and harmony'. Annual Report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Central General Assembly to be held on 17 March 1969, p. 7.

103. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Templer, 15 May 1953, MCA Headquarters.

104. See Extract from Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs (n.d.), CO 537/4761/52849/48/49(28), and Federation of Malaya, Despatch No. 3 by Gurney to Colonial Office dated 12 January 1950, CO 717/201/52849/41(3).

The Maturation of MCA Politics

BETWEEN 1952 and mid-1957 the colonial administration instituted measures to devolve power from the British Crown to an independent indigenous government in Malaya. These moves were a major component in its overall strategy to defeat communism: by introducing local government and promising self-rule, the Templer Administration was neutralizing a key plank in the MCP platform, its call for immediate independence. At the same time, movement toward independence brought into focus an equally crucial issue—how the new government in Kuala Lumpur might best deal with problems of national unification in a country with an extreme degree of pluralism.¹ While the British Government planned to introduce a political system based on the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, its major goal was to foster co-operation among the English-educated élite of the three major races, a political system which some writers have referred to as consociational democracy.²

The British Government intended to hand over the reins of power to the Westernized élite of Malaya, who were to be entrusted with the responsibility of working out a *modus vivendi* to contain the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the nature of Malaya's plural society.³ The socialization of English-educated leaders in Western educational and political institutions gave them a common point of reference for resolving political differences, especially those arising from racial issues, within a democratic framework. Sharing a common outlook, these leaders, it was believed, might make political compromises more readily than leaders from purely Malay, Chinese and Indian backgrounds, who tended to display stronger primordial loyalties to their ethnic origins.

The Transition of the MCA into a Political Party

Realizing that the political reforms envisaged by the British Government would enable the Chinese community to play meaningful

roles in the central political fabric of the nation, the English-educated MCA leadership set about to reorganize the party to take full advantage of the process of devolution. The imperative at hand was to ensure that the MCA was streamlined into an efficient, modern political organization capable of winning elections and mobilizing the Chinese population to participate in the independence movement.

Recognition of the need to reform the MCA coincided with High Commissioner Henry Gurney's call on the party to improve its capacity for leading the Chinese labour movement and increasing its effectiveness as a key figure in the counter-insurgency campaign. While the High Commissioner was happy with the MCA's performance in Emergency social welfare work, he was dissatisfied by the party's failure to provide effective political leadership, especially in counter-insurgency programmes directed at winning the allegiance of the Chinese working class.⁴ In September 1951 Gurney urged the MCA national leadership to reorganize and strengthen the party so that it would be considered by the Chinese community at large to be an attractive political alternative to the MCP.⁵

In addition to the above considerations, the need for reorganization was also dictated by an internal recognition that the party, as a result of its close links with the traditional leadership of the associations and the nature of its involvement in the Emergency, had acquired a widespread reputation for being merely an umbrella CCC-huay kuan social welfare organization. In June 1950 party president Tan Cheng Lock first brought up the need to reorganize the party, expressing concern that the MCA had failed to become the centralized political body its national leadership wanted it to be. He was also worried that the MCA's *raison d'être* revolved so much around the Emergency that with the defeat of the Communists the party would become moribund:

... the MCA is very far indeed from being a well-organised and disciplined body. It is in fact a rather loosely-knit association of persons scattered all over the country, most of whom may not even know what precisely are the basic aims and objects of the Association. It is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs, and there is little doubt that if we go on as we do the MCA will pass out of existence after the end of the Emergency.⁶

Furthermore, in order to court Malay co-operation in the local election in Kuala Lumpur scheduled to take place in February 1952, the MCA leaders had to instil confidence in potential Malay

allies that their party was an effective political organization capable of winning elections. Thus, they hoped to overcome such negative opinions as that of the top-ranking UMNO leader, Dr Ismail bin Abdul Rahman, who averred that the MCA was largely a social welfare association whose members joined in the hope of benefiting from the party lottery.⁷

Party Organization

In making their case to the UMNO, the MCA leaders were able to point to aspects of the party structure which could be described as modern and efficient. For example, from its inception the MCA had a rationalized and streamlined hierarchy of branch organization. At the base of the pyramid were the area (later renamed ward) and district branches which in turn came under the domain of the state branches. According to the party constitutions for the period 1949-57, the MCA's organizational principles were democratic in nature. Representatives to the Working Committees of the branches at the three levels were to be elected every two years. The state branches were to elect delegates, also every two years, to the party General Committee (later renamed the Central General Assembly), which in turn were entrusted with the authority to direct, manage and control the affairs of the party. The General Committee was to meet at least once a year to review and recommend policies and activities. The General Committee was also authorized to elect the party president and the chairmen of standing subcommittees responsible for looking after specific activities. The first subcommittees established by the party were welfare, legislation, political, youth and women, publicity, social, education and benevolent, financial and economic, and labour. (From 1949 to 1952, due to the party's involvement in Emergency welfare activities, the active subcommittees were welfare, financial and economic, and publicity.) Furthermore, the General Committee had the authority to elect members of the CWC, which was empowered to act on behalf of the General Committee.

While party rules provided for a democratic process of conducting party affairs, in actual practice, power was very much concentrated in the hands of the president. For much of the duration of his term of office as party president, Tan Cheng Lock was able to select a small group of presidential aides from within the CWC and to run the party with their advice, without much

reference to the General Committee. Major decisions and policies made by the president and his aides were then presented to the General Committee, which proved uncommonly pliant in complying with the president's wishes. It appears that the MCA rank and file was still imbued with traditional deference for their social superiors, and so did not avail themselves of the considerable democratic powers assigned to them in the party constitution. Furthermore, lacking the ability and confidence of having to deal so constantly and intimately with the British and Malay authorities, the MCA rank and file, and indeed the top and second-echelon Laukeh leaders, did not object to having the small group of English-educated leaders dominate the show.

While the MCA had the organizational traits of a modern political party, it was in fact structurally superimposed upon the traditional associational network, thus giving rise to its CCC-huay kuan-like characteristics and other anomalies which the reorganization campaign sought to rectify.

As noted earlier, the MCA was launched with the co-operation of leaders from the most important Chinese associations in the country, and its subsequent growth was due largely to the work done for the party by the CCC-huay kuan leaders. The setting up of state branches was left to the initiative of CCC strongmen in each state: Lau Pak Khuan and Leong Yew Koh in Perak; Wong Shee Fun in Johore; Ng Sui Cam in Penang; Foo See Moi in Kelantan; Wu Cheok Yee in Trengganu, Lim Teng Kwang in Perlis and Kedah; Lee Tee Siong in Negri Sembilan; and H. S. Lee, Khoo Teik Ee and Yong Shook Lin in Selangor. The fact that Chinese association leaders were the founders and promoters of the MCA resulted in the party being physically accommodated on the premises of Chinese associations, most notably the Chambers of Commerce. All the state branches (except that of Negri Sembilan) were housed on the premises of the offices of CCC. Below the state branch, Chinese association premises were likewise used to accommodate the local party branch or were used as venues for party meetings. For example, the Muar district branch held its meetings at the Chei Chih Assembly Hall; the Bukit Merah district branch was located at Hung Kang (Teochew) Huay Kuan; and the Bentong district branch was at the Bentong Chinese Town Hall.⁸ Area branches were less frequently found at the Chinese associations, since these associations were seldom established in New Villages and small towns, but, rather, in local Chinese vil-

lage schools and the community halls. The administration of party affairs was often attended to by employees of the CCC or huay kuan which accommodated the party branch; this same body of CCC-huay kuan personnel aided the MCA in carrying out Emergency activities such as those concerning squatter and detainee welfare, and the manpower recruitment drive.⁹

The dependence of the MCA Westernized leaders upon the linkage services of CCC-huay kuan leaders to provide a wide-spread organizational as well as membership base for the MCA meant that the latter constituted the real power-brokers within the new party. Possessing a large degree of autonomous power, these Laukeh figures were able to run state and local branches much in accordance with their own wishes. The lack of centralized control and supervision over local party affairs resulted in the MCA becoming, in Tan Siew Sin's words, like 'a capitalist organisation with no coherent aims...drifting helplessly about like a ship without a rudder'.¹⁰

In attempting to assert central control in the party, the Westernized top leadership was in significant measure motivated by concern over the negative public image generated by the Laukeh leaders' conduct of party affairs. Since the Laukeh leaders did not view the MCA as a political party, but rather as another CCC-huay kuan, they tended to regard office-holding in the MCA as a right and privilege owed to them because of their high social status within the CCC-huay kuan establishment, and to conduct their party responsibilities in the same manner as they conducted association affairs. As such leaders were the patrons dispensing largess in local communities, they conducted the MCA's business in a highly personalized and occasionally opportunistic manner, with little public accountability for their actions. They were thus frequently subject to allegations of corruption and abuse of power.

Relations between the national leadership and the Pahang state branch chairman, Ong Seong Tek, vividly illustrate the cavalier manner in which the state leader conducted party affairs, and the extent to which power at the state level could be concentrated in single hands. Ong Seong Tek, the foremost CCC leader in Pahang, set up the MCA state branch in 1949 and remained chairman till 1954. During his five-year term of office, Ong did not convene a single meeting of his Working Committee or call for the election of new office-holders.¹¹ While the rest of the squatter community in the country benefited from the welfare work carried out by the

party, the squatters in Pahang were neglected to a large extent, apparently because of the state chairman's lack of interest in discharging his duties. Despite repeated requests from party headquarters to the state chairman to fulfil his obligations, Ong continued to treat the MCA in Pahang imperiously, for example by ignoring requests from Headquarters to submit audited accounts of the branch's finances for scrutiny by the party's auditors. At one point he even moved the state branch office to his shop premises in Kuala Lipis, thus creating the impression that the MCA in Pahang was the personal property of its state chairman. Finally in 1953, the party headquarters decided to take legal action against him, on the grounds that he had failed to submit the financial statements of the Pahang state branch for the years 1949-53. The party won the lawsuit, Ong resigned, and in November 1954 the Pahang State Committee met for the first time since 1949 and elected a new state chairman and Working Committee.

While there is little evidence to suggest that the first Pahang chairman engaged in personal profit-making, a serious controversy arose over corruption by party officials of the Singapore branch. During 1952, MCA Headquarters discovered that a considerable sum of money (\$37,575) from the party sweepstake held in Singapore had not been remitted to the Central Welfare Subcommittee. Investigations revealed that the money had been misappropriated by a number of senior office-holders in the Singapore Working Committee. The findings compiled by the party headquarters read: 'It is clear... that not only the President but other members of the Singapore Branch thought that there was no harm in utilising the funds of the Association for their own private purposes and it is surprising that no report was ever made that these substantial sums of money were missing from the Association's funds.'¹² When the party headquarters asked the Singapore Committee to make good the loss of party funds, the latter, instead of making amends, tried to re-elect itself and vindicate itself of any guilt in the affair.¹³

Faced with this blatant flaunting of party discipline, the chief executive secretary, T. H. Tan, advised Tan Cheng Lock to proceed with legal action, arguing that '...unless the Singapore branch is handled firmly, the whole future of the MCA is at stake.... A political association of our size if it is incapable of taking firm action within its own house cannot hope to achieve anything outside. So far, you have repeatedly attempted conciliation, only to

meet with open challenge to your authority.¹⁴ He suggested that the president appoint a pro tem committee and remove the present one even if it entailed calling in the police: '... I do not see how the Singapore Branch troubles can be eased over. I have a feeling that, in the end, we shall have no alternative but to lay information before the Deputy Public Prosecutor and let the whole crowd go to jail.'¹⁵ Tan Cheng Lock eventually succeeded in working out a compromise acceptable to both sides, and the incident did not develop into an embarrassing public scandal.¹⁶

A wider dimension was added to the Singapore incident through the involvement of the Johore state chairman in the affair. His son was an office-holder in the Singapore Committee and was believed to have been implicated in the scandal. The state chairman of Johore shielded his son's involvement when investigations were made, thus implicating himself. When Headquarters wanted the guilty parties to resign, the chairman of the Johore branch retorted that 'he was not prepared to resign unless the MCA was liquidated'.¹⁷ His reaction illustrates the confidence of a party strongman who believed he could make or break the party in the region under his control. The state chairman's grip over the party apparatus in Johore was so secure that despite this incident he remained as chairman from the inception of the state branch in 1949 till 1961.

The MCA received numerous complaints from party members alleging abuse of power and corrupt practices by local party bosses. For example, a member of the Klang district branch wanted Headquarters to investigate a missing sum of party funds which he believed had been embezzled by the branch secretary and treasurer.¹⁸ In another instance, three members of the Seremban district branch wrote to the party's chief executive secretary claiming that a senior office-holder in the branch was 'always making tea-money' getting stall licences for individuals who needed them. They complained that MCA office-holders should discharge these services on behalf of the Chinese community without having to be bribed.¹⁹

In a third case, a member of the Mersing district branch wrote to the Agent-General to draw his attention to 'the corruptible ways [of] the President of the MCA of Mersing...'. He said that the branch chairman would not allow any other office-holder or member to look at the branch's financial statements; this, he thought, was because the branch chairman was siphoning off party funds for his private use. He also complained that this cor-

rupt office-holder never found time to attend to the needs of poorer members: 'When poor people come to see the MCA president for help he is usually too busy or [is] in Singapore. But when rich people come to see him he is not too busy and even his brothers will go all out to help.'²⁰

Such incidents indicate why the MCA developed a reputation of being a party dominated by self-seeking opportunists and corrupt towkay. Moreover, as it became apparent that party headquarters could not prevent local bosses from abusing their office, the MCA's reputation was severely damaged. It should also be pointed out, however, that some state chairmen worked selflessly for the benefit of the MCA and its constituents. The behaviour of the Penang state chairman is a case in point. Party headquarters reported that the state chairman was doing all he could to work for the good of the party and that there was no abuse of power in the state.²¹ It appears, therefore, that the degree of co-operation which party headquarters obtained from the various state branches depended almost entirely upon the personality and temperament of the individual state strongman.

The Reorganization Campaign

In preparing the party for electoral politics in co-operation with the UMNO, the basic objectives of the reorganization programme were to centralize party machinery, play a leading role in the organization of Chinese labour, and improve co-ordination between party headquarters and branches in order to mobilize the rank and file for political action.²² Tan Cheng Lock formed a 'Cabinet' of twelve prominent members, including himself, to implement the reorganization; however, he ultimately relied on a smaller group of seven advisers whom he termed his 'Inner Cabinet'. These advisers drew up a blueprint which envisaged establishment of a widespread network of channels of communication linking the party to the Chinese community, especially the rural squatter population and urban labourers.²³ However, not all of the proposed changes were fully instituted. For example, although a Central Party Office was set up to conduct political relations with the colonial administration and non-Chinese political bodies, there was no increased centralization of the party apparatus after the reorganization campaign was terminated in mid-1953. The appointment of a chief executive secretary and an Agent-General

to be the watchdogs of the party headquarters over the state branches did see an improvement in co-ordination of party activities, but there was little diminution in the autonomy of the state branches.

Inconsistencies between avowed objectives and achieved results in the campaign stemmed largely from the top leadership's own attitude toward the whole notion of reorganization. Examination of the way it handled the 'reorganization' of Chinese labour demonstrates all too clearly that it did not intend to transform the Association into an organization giving priority to the interests of the Chinese working class.

In early 1953, the party launched its 'unionisation of Chinese labour' campaign and issued a 15-point Labour Manifesto.²⁴ The Manifesto made a general statement that the MCA would ensure that Chinese labour receive better working and living conditions and fair wages. A special labour organizer, B. H. Tan, was appointed to take charge of the labour subcommittee. Tan was charged with two duties: to encourage Chinese workers to join the existing trade union of their craft, and to form trade unions among Chinese workers in areas where none existed.²⁵ Given the fact that organized labour in the country was dominated either by Indian trade unionists or pro-Communist labour organizers, B. H. Tan was directed to concentrate his efforts among the Chinese New Village population.

The scheme was never properly initiated. It appears that the labour subcommittee's most significant achievement was the unionization of some 4,000 workers in B. H. Tan's own state of Negri Sembilan.²⁶ A year after his appointment, Tan fell out completely with the MCA leadership, accusing the party of being insincere and hypocritical in its unionization drive. He said that the MCA was 'afraid that the scheme might turn out to be a hideous Frankenstein... which would devour them in the end'.²⁷ The party defended itself by saying that its efforts to enter the labour arena were obstructed by the Indian-dominated Malayan Trades Union Congress,²⁸ a justification too transparently weak to warrant serious consideration. The party leadership finally made a complete volte-face on the subject. On 6 May 1954 it issued a press release stating that the party had never had a policy of forming Chinese labour unions. At the same time, it tried to save face by insisting that it was none the less concerned with the welfare of the Chinese working class. All this heightened the reputation of the

party as a towkay party and alienated the Chinese working class.

During the reorganization campaign the very leaders who advocated the necessity of regarding the MCA as a political party often behaved in a completely contradictory manner when it suited their interests to treat the MCA essentially as a *huay kuan*. For example, when in October 1952 the government decided to ban the party sweepstake in Singapore on the grounds that political parties were prohibited from gaining income from lotteries, Tan Cheng Lock suggested that the Singapore branch of the Association be retained as a purely social welfare party and not be reorganized. Instead, he would form a separate organization to be called the 'MCA National Election Party' which would carry out political goals.²⁹ The scheme was not accepted by the government of Singapore, and the incident only made party members and outside observers more confused about the purposes of the MCA.

A second incident reveals an even more alarming departure from the avowed principles of the reorganization. The party headquarters was looking for a means of activating the youth section, which had existed only on paper because the party lacked financial resources and physical facilities for looking after it. In October 1952 the CWC entertained the idea of affiliating its youth wing to a wealthy and famous Chinese association in Kuala Lumpur, the Chen Woo Association.³⁰ The party proposal was that the Chen Woo be given charge of the MCA youth and sports sections, which would accordingly be renamed the 'MCA-Chen Woo Department'. The merger did not materialize, but the incident itself illustrates the willingness of the party leadership to let a Chinese association have control over an integral part of its organization for reasons of financial expediency.

The inconsistency of behaviour found among the leaders who called for reorganization makes sense if one remembers that these leaders were also the most important Chinese Chamber of Commerce and *huay kuan* leaders in Malaya. While they wanted to modernize the Association by fashioning it along the lines of a Western political party, they themselves were none the less too rooted in the Laukeh political culture to pursue a consistent course of reorganization. Even the most cosmopolitan leaders such as Tan Cheng Lock were not immune to this tendency. For example, on one occasion he engaged a stratagem commonly used by Chamber of Commerce and *huay kuan* strongmen to rig MCA branch elections. This involved the enrolment and payment of members of

the huay kuan under their leadership to attend the party election to vote them into office. In mid-1953, Tan Cheng Lock decided to stand for the post of chairman of the Singapore Working Committee, which would replace incumbent office-bearers who were stepping down as a result of the lottery fund scandal discussed earlier. To that end, he consented to the payment and recruitment of 1,500 members from the Chiang Chew Kong Huay (a territorial huay kuan of his dialect group) in Singapore to attend the forthcoming branch meeting and vote him into office, an event which duly took place.³¹

Ironically, the factor which finally dispelled the image of the party as a social welfare organization came not as the result of the party's reorganization programme but from a move taken by the government—the banning of the party sweepstake in June 1953. The High Commissioner, General Templer, in deciding to ban the lottery, explained that its proceeds had given the Association an unfair financial advantage over other political parties contesting the Kuala Lumpur election of February 1952.³² Another consideration which led Templer to instruct the MCA to terminate its lottery was the fact that the bulk of the most pressing Emergency welfare and squatter resettlement work had been accomplished by mid-1953; thus, the MCA's financial contribution was no longer as vital to the government anti-insurgency campaign as it had been between 1949 and 1952. Deprived of its most lucrative source of party income, the MCA terminated its Emergency social welfare projects by the end of 1953. Following this withdrawal from welfare work, the image of the party as a social welfare body began slowly to erode.

Although the reorganization campaign did not completely erase the CCC-huay kuan orientation of the MCA, the exercise successfully strengthened the political dimension of the organization, thus enabling it to play a key role in participatory electoral politics. Still, right up to independence in 1957, the MCA manifested three distinct facets—as a modern-day political party eager to participate in elections and the independence movement, as a CCC-huay kuan body engaged in community welfare work, and as a pro-KMT organization displaying sympathy for Chiang Kai Shek's Government in Taiwan.

An intriguing footnote to the history of the reorganization campaign is Tan Cheng Lock's prophetic statement at the time that the MCA's future lay primarily in functioning as a Western-

style pressure group. Likening the role of the reorganized MCA to that of a 'pressure group on the American model and not precisely a political party on the English model', Tan Cheng Lock wrote that the party would have a 'fact-finding and advising' function in representing Chinese interests to the authorities.³⁹ The MCA's first president thus appears to have astutely assessed the fact that no matter how well organized, the Chinese of Malaya could never expect to play a central role in the governance of the country, but instead would have to work through powerful Malay allies for the protection and advancement of their interests.

*The Communities Liaison Committee: A Prototype
for Multiracial Political Co-operation*

In preparing the groundwork for Malayan independence, the British recognized that personal co-operation among the leaders of the different communities was crucial to the long-term stability of the country. To promote the concept of élite co-operation, the colonial government established the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) in early 1949. The CLC was both the manifestation of the British concept of consociational democracy and the forerunner of successive multiracial political coalitions such as the Alliance and the present-day National Front (Barisan Nasional). The viability of this institution stemmed basically from the affinity of class interests and social backgrounds of the UMNO and MCA leaders first brought together in the CLC by the colonial authorities. Apart from having similar Westernized social backgrounds, UMNO and MCA national leaders had a common élitist ethos. Top-ranking UMNO leaders came mainly from the landed Malay aristocracy and the higher reaches of the bureaucracy; their MCA counterparts came from wealthy towkay circles. The two groups thus shared a conservative political and economic philosophy.

The architect of the CLC was Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner-General for South-East Asia. Concerned at the racial tension generated by the heated argument between Malays and non-Malays over the Malayan Union and Federation proposals, and feeling the need to bring the conservative Malay, Chinese and Indian leadership together to confront the MCP insurrection, MacDonald persuaded Datuk Onn Jaafar and Tan Cheng Lock, together with their close colleagues, to work out their political

differences behind closed doors with a view to minimizing inter-ethnic friction.³⁴

Although the life-span of the CLC was short—it began early in 1949 and was defunct by late 1951—and although it was an organization which attracted little public notice, its impact on the development of Malayan politics was far-reaching. The racial composition of the CLC, its style of conducting business and the subject matter it treated set the trend for subsequent communal coalition politics, and prepared the ground for the UMNO-MCA partnership in the Alliance. The Alliance inherited from the CLC an agenda centred on the resolution of racially salient issues, in particular citizenship for non-Malays and special rights for Malays, and the practice of holding meetings *in camera*.

The CLC comprised six Malays and six Chinese, the majority of whom came from the UMNO and MCA, and one representative each from the Indian, Eurasian, Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) and European communities.³⁵ The UMNO and MCA delegates dominated the proceedings of the CLC, and negotiations in the Committee were conducted mainly by these two groups. Business was conducted in a highly elitist manner—all meetings were held in secrecy, free from public scrutiny and without reference to UMNO or MCA second-echelon leadership and membership opinion. The CLC members concurred that they would be unable to reach consensus on racially sensitive issues if they had to take into consideration grass-roots sentiments, which were often irreconcilable on matters pertaining to race.³⁶ Upon reaching consensus, CLC decisions were turned over to the Federal Legislative Council to be acted upon, and the public only then got to know of them through press statements.

Discussion of Citizenship and Special Rights

The CLC opened the dialogue on citizenship for non-Malays and special rights for Malays, which dominated UMNO-MCA inter-party talks until final consensus was reached in the Independence Constitution (discussed in Chapter 8). The major preoccupation of the MCA delegates in the Committee was to overturn the stringent citizenship provisions of the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement; the UMNO delegates, on the other hand, wanted to obtain unequivocal non-Malay support for Malay special rights and have the government implement a special rights policy.

The Federation of Malaya Agreement citizenship clauses dis-

qualified the overwhelming majority of Chinese and other non-Malays from becoming citizens. According to the MCA leadership, out of the 3,100,000 persons (59 per cent of the total population) who had become federal citizens by early 1951 through the process of automatic operation of law and through application and naturalization, the racial breakdown was as follows: 78 per cent Malays (2,450,000 persons), 12 per cent Chinese (380,000 persons), 7 per cent Indians, Pakistanis and Ceylonese (210,000 persons), and 2 per cent others (60,000 persons). Of the remaining 41 per cent who were ineligible for citizenship, the large majority were Chinese.³⁷

The MCA national leadership was determined to widen the Chinese citizenship base, both from a desire to establish the MCA as a Malayan-centred political party and to increase the party's base of support. It was clear to the MCA leadership that so long as large numbers of Chinese remained disenfranchised, the MCA could never be an effective force in Malayan politics. This viewpoint was understood and shared by the Laukeh second-echelon leadership, who fully supported the top leadership in seeking a liberalization of the 1948 citizenship clauses.

The MCA leaders in the CLC argued their citizenship case both on grounds of political ideals and pragmatic security concerns, as is reflected in a memorandum submitted by the party to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, James Griffiths, and the Secretary of State for War, John Strachey, in May 1950:³⁸

To obstruct the *natural legitimate aspirations* of the non-Malays to become Malayan citizens and to cast doubt on their loyalty and bona fide intention to identify with this country would alienate them and militate against the success of the task of constructing Malayan nationhood and the solidarity of the anti-Communist united front.

The only effective way of *weaning the China-born Chinese* from being concerned with Chinese national politics is to make a generous offer to them, as for instance, under the original Malayan Union Schemes, of Malayan Citizenship, which alone can reconcile them to their loss of interest or participation in the Kuo Min Tang.

We cannot have it both ways, i.e., prevent the Chinese from embracing the Kuo Min Tang or any other Chinese National political party or object thereto and at the same time place obstacles to their becoming Malayan citizens.

The security argument made the case that the grant of citizenship would cause the Chinese population to identify itself with Malaya and the authorities' fight against the MCP. At the same time, it was

argued that if all Chinese were treated as Malayan citizens, they would have less incentive to engage in 'un-Malayan' political activities through participation in the Kuomintang and other China-centred organizations. The argument based on political ideals stressed the need to bind the loyalty of Laukeh Chinese to their adopted home, and the need to generate a common spirit of Malayan identity through the grant of citizenship for all the domiciled races.

Happily for the MCA, the colonial administration had already decided on its part to make significant concessions to the Chinese community. Having identified the citizenship question as one of the major stumbling blocks which prevented the authorities from gaining the active support of the Chinese population, Gurney instructed the British Advisers and Resident Commissioners to get the Malay District Officers and other government officials to persuade the Malay population to accept a liberalization in the citizenship clauses: 'They [the Malays] do not appreciate the true nature of the Communist threat to Malaya, which can never be successfully resisted by holding at arm's length nearly half the population of the Federation instead of enlisting the co-operation and help which most of them are anxious to give.'³⁹

Gurney left the initiative with Malcolm MacDonald to use the CLC as the vehicle to neutralize Malay opposition on the issue of citizenship for non-Malays. MacDonald played on Malay fears that the MCP could seize power unless the government acted upon the issue, explaining that Chinese supported the Communists because the MCP, unlike the government, promised citizenship and equal political rights for all races if they came to power. He said that the government should pre-empt this appeal by offering the same deal to non-Malays;⁴⁰ and, in the face of the Communist threat, the UMNO leadership felt it had little choice but to give in to MacDonald's urgings and to help the MCA increase its popular standing within the Chinese community. It therefore consented to meet the MCA's demand for a liberalization of the citizenship provisions.

It was, however, the MCA leadership's agreement to the implementation of a Malay special rights policy that finally removed UMNO opposition to the easing of citizenship conditions for non-Malays. Datuk Onn told the CLC that the UMNO would agree to political changes if Malays got economic privileges in return. Central to Datuk Onn's agreement to liberalize the citizenship

provisions was the establishment of the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) in mid-1950 with himself as its Chairman.⁴¹

The principle of special rights treatments for the Malay community had been written into the Federation of Malaya Agreement (Clause 19d).⁴² The Malay leaders in the CLC reminded the non-Malay representatives that the Malay community had an intrinsic and unquestionable claim to special rights treatment for the following reasons:

- (a) The Malay race should be accorded the status of *primus inter pares* in relation to other races in Malaya because Malays (and the term included recent immigrants from the Indonesia archipelago) were the true indigenous people of Malaya.⁴³
- (b) The colonial government had recognized that the fount of authority and sovereignty in Malaya stemmed from the Malay monarchical institutions in the nine Malay states. The British administration in Malaya derived its legitimacy and authority from its treaty arrangements with the Malay Sultans. Thus it had regarded Malaya as a Malay country from the inception of colonial rule in the country.
- (c) The Malay community, however, had to live with the fact that the other half of the population, which had migrated to Malaya with the advent of British rule, was not going to return to its countries of origin, China and India. As a by-product of colonial rule in Malaya, the immigrant races had come to enjoy the lion's share of Malaya's economic wealth. It was therefore argued that if the immigrant races were to be accorded political rights in Malaya, the Malays should be accorded special rights to give them a just share in the wealth of their motherland.⁴⁴

The Malay representatives in the CLC outlined how the policy of special rights should be implemented and recommended three strategies to improve the economic position of their community.⁴⁵ First, the government should subsidize Malay business ventures and set up trade schools to train Malay manpower to participate in the modern economic sector of the country. Secondly, a system of quotas should be introduced in certain industries where Malay capital and enterprise would be put to good use. The transport industry in rural areas having a predominantly Malay population was singled out as a sector where Malay special rights should be implemented; quotas to operate bus businesses should be introduced,

and ownership of shares be transferred to Malays so that bus companies serving predominantly Malay areas would have at least 51 per cent Malay share capital.⁴⁶ Thirdly, Malays should receive preferential treatment in the allocation of educational and employment opportunities; scholarships and jobs should be reserved for Malay applicants on a quota basis. Fourthly, non-Malay businessmen and employers should voluntarily increase the proportion of Malay participation in all sectors of the country's economy, in particular the tin-mining, rubber and coconut processing, rice-milling, fishing, textile, road transport and retail trade sectors. A striking feature of these recommendations, which foreshadowed the policies of the present New Economic Policy, was their overt objective of creating a Malay capitalist class. The privileges were aimed at improving the position of Malays who were in or wished to enter the bourgeoisie rather than be peasants and workers. The UMNO representatives in the CLC were mainly 'feudal' leaders who saw the creation of a Malay bourgeois class as a solution to Malay economic backwardness, possibly because their Western-style upbringing had persuaded them that such a strategy was necessary for the Malays to achieve prosperity.

The UMNO leaders' approach in the CLC dialogue on special rights was unaggressive and low-key. They emphasized repeatedly that they were seeking the voluntary co-operation of Chinese business interests in raising the economic performance of the Malays. They also urged the MCA leaders to ensure that Chinese businessmen refrain from obstructing the establishment and development of fledgling Malay enterprises. The MCA leaders' response was ambivalent: while they appeared sympathetic, they were in fact both unable and unwilling to comply with the UMNO's requests, which went against the interests of the Chinese business community that was their constituency. Although these Westernized MCA leaders might feel it necessary to support pro-Malay economic measures and might not themselves be affected by such policies, they were unable to obtain the co-operation of the second-rung Laukeh leadership to support Malay special rights policies which threatened Chinese business interests. For example, they were unable to prevent a combine of Chinese bus companies from blocking the successful establishment of an UMNO-backed bus company.⁴⁷

As early as 1932, when he was a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, Tan Cheng Lock had made the following statement on the problem of special treatment for Malays:⁴⁸

... we are very sympathetic with the Malays and consider it the duty of the Government to assist them where they are badly handicapped in their competition with the other races. Let Government help them in every way so long as the interests of the non-Malays are not seriously and prejudicially affected thereby and when and where necessary similar assistance and treatment will be extended to the other races.

Seventeen years later, speaking on the same subject in the CLC, he raised the following questions: 'I do not say that the special position should not be upheld, but in what direction? Is there going to be inequality as between the citizens themselves or are they to be on equal footing?'⁴⁹ Tan Cheng Lock's query epitomized the divided mind of the MCA on the subject of special rights: while preferential treatment for Malays appeared a necessary thing, the specifics of its implementation raised the difficulty, if not impossibility, of reconciling non-Malays to the creation of two classes of citizenship in Malaya. It was clear to all observers that special rights by its very nature abnegated the principle of equal citizenship and equal opportunities sought by the MCA and the non-Malay community at large. At the same time, by stressing equality of citizenship and the need to respect free enterprise and private property, Tan Cheng Lock held on to a political card useful in minimizing the effect of Malay demands on the Chinese community.

The obstruction of Malay economic interests by Chinese combines and the inaction of the MCA leadership evoked a strong warning from Malcolm MacDonald. He stressed that unless the Chinese co-operated voluntarily in setting up Sino-Malay business ventures and increasing Malay participation in all sectors of the economy, the government might well be forced to legislate on behalf of Malay economic interests. He pointed out that the prevalent *laissez-faire* policy did not provide adequate scope for Malays to compete effectively with Chinese, and the government might have no choice but to curb the free interplay of economic forces and ensure more effective Malay participation in economic life. MacDonald warned the MCA leaders:⁵⁰

... one or two other communities, by their activities here, have put themselves in a much stronger position than the Malays are in, and if that position were allowed to develop without any kind of qualification or curb, the Malays would perhaps come to a situation in their own country where they would be so poor that they could not stand up themselves. Therefore it follows from the fact that the position of the Malays must be safeguarded in Malaya, that all sorts of steps should be taken, and that the High Commissioner is charged with the responsibility of seeing that they

are taken, to safeguard the Malays, so economically they have a proper share in the wealth of Malaya.

MacDonald's words are significant in that they presaged the basic economic policies which the Alliance Government subsequently introduced in Malaysia, especially the New Economic Policy implemented after 1969.

Apart from leading to the establishment of RIDA, the CLC dialogue on special rights ended inconclusively. However, it marked the first phase of a series of negotiations between the UMNO and the MCA which eventually culminated in the agreed common stand which was written into the Independence Constitution.

While MCA assurances to the UMNO on special rights, however guarded, appeared instrumental in gaining UMNO agreement to the liberalization of citizenship for non-Malays, it should also be noted that Tan Cheng Lock himself played a crucial role in gaining the friendship, confidence and trust of Datuk Onn, the UMNO president responsible for getting the UMNO General Assembly to approve the citizenship amendments. Before being brought together in the CLC, the UMNO and MCA presidents had not enjoyed an amicable relationship, as they had occupied opposing positions during the Malayan Union-Malayan Federation controversy, Datuk Onn leading the UMNO-orchestrated anti-Malayan Union movement and Tan Cheng Lock heading the AMCJA-PUTERA. However, the experience of working together in the CLC built up a bond of trust between the two men, an outcome which MacDonald had planned and hoped for.⁵¹ The following argument used by Tan Cheng Lock to further the Chinese case for more liberal citizenship provisions is a good illustration of the manner in which he succeeded in winning the confidence and goodwill of the Malay members in the Committee, especially that of Datuk Onn:⁵²

... if the Chinese are sincere and want to be loyal and give their allegiance to this country, and to be regarded by the Malays as their true brothers and sisters, the Chinese should prove their sincerity by being willing to be also the subjects, in the same way as the Malays are, of the Malay Sultan of the State in which they are born or in which they reside and want to settle down. Only when the Chinese acknowledge the same sovereign as the Malays do, can they demonstrate their will to be the equals and brethren of the Malays.

Tan Cheng Lock's words struck the right psychological chord in playing on the emotional attachment of the UMNO's leadership

to the sovereignty of the Malay monarchical institution. In fact, the Malay response to his argument was so favourable that the Committee resolved unanimously 'that the *jus soli* should be introduced forthwith in each of the Malay States, so that all persons of Asiatic or Eurasian parentage who are born in that State shall become natural-born subjects of the Rulers of that State, thereby entitling them automatically to become at the same time Federal Citizens under the terms of the present Federal Constitution...'.⁵³

None the less, when the Federation of Malaya Agreement was amended in 1952 to liberalize the citizenship clauses, the principle of *jus soli* was not incorporated into the amendments. This change reflected a shift in the power relationships within the UMNO, as well as a modification in British views. Datuk Onn made the promise on *jus soli* to the MCA in early 1950, but in August 1951, shortly before the amendments came up before the Federal Legislative Council, he was replaced by Tunku Abdul Rahman as UMNO president. Tunku Abdul Rahman was unwilling to give in on the point, partly because he had not participated in the CLC and did not feel bound by its decision, but more importantly, because the decision was unacceptable to the UMNO second-rung leadership and rank and file. Being newly elected to his office, the Tunku was reluctant to support the unpopular measure.⁵⁴

The colonial government's withdrawal of complete support for the idea of *jus soli* stemmed from its concern that the sudden granting of citizenship to large numbers of non-Malays, potentially more than 50 per cent of the voting population, would be both destabilizing and politically unacceptable to the Malays. MacDonald explained to the Colonial Secretary: 'Actually, the High Commissioner and I think that these proposals are better than the Communities Liaison Committee's proposals, for we too felt concerned when we realised fully the very large number of non-Malays who would be admitted to citizenship under the Committee's proposals.' He added that Malay agreement to an amendment of the 1948 citizenship clauses 'depended on the numbers of non-Malays qualifying for citizenship being not too great in relation to the number of Malays who (would) qualify'.⁵⁵

However, although the amendments did not include *jus soli*, they eased considerably the citizenship conditions and made possible a significant increase in the number of Chinese and other non-Malay citizens in Malaya. The percentage of Chinese who were citizens increased from about 24 per cent in 1950 to 50 per cent by June 1953.⁵⁶

Other issues discussed by the CLC included the introduction of local elections and self-government, the cultural position of Malays *vis-à-vis* the other races, and a national education policy. Since citizenship and special rights occupied the centre stage, dialogue on these other issues was mainly perfunctory and did not result in any major decisions or policies. The Committee did not draw up a detailed timetable for the introduction of elections and self-government, but merely recommended that elections be held as soon as the security situation improved. Guided by MacDonald, the CLC recommended that elections be held on a progressive basis, starting from the town and municipal councils to the state councils and finally to the Federal Legislative Council; it also advised that the franchise should be based on possession of Malayan citizenship.⁵⁷

On the question of a common education policy, the CLC members concurred that English and Malay should be taught as compulsory subjects in every government and government-aided primary school in the country.⁵⁸ The Committee, however, was dead-locked in its cultural discussions. The Malay members wanted to see Malay culture form the basis of the new Malayan culture, and the Malay language become the new Malayan national language. The MCA members rejected this position, arguing that it was unacceptable to assume that non-Malays had to acknowledge the supremacy of Malay culture and language over their own in an independent Malaya.⁵⁹ Neither party, however, pushed the matter at this point, because of their overriding concern to reach consensus on citizenship and special rights.

The Experiment with Integrationist Politics

For a short period, from the middle of 1950 to the middle of 1952, it appeared that the coming together of the UMNO and MCA leadership in the CLC might result in the institutionalization of multiracial integrationist politics in Malaya. During that period, Datuk Onn Jaafar and Tan Cheng Lock led a campaign to decommunalize the structure of the UMNO and MCA and to make the newly created multiracial Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) the leading political party in the country.

The move towards multiracial politics, was encouraged by high-ranking British officials, particularly Gurney and MacDonald. In 1949 Datuk Onn had first entertained the idea of forming a multi-

racial party, the United Malaya National Party, to embrace the different racial groups. According to Tan Cheng Lock, who urged Datuk Onn to establish such a party, the latter had consulted both Gurney and MacDonald and had received their support and encouragement for the project.⁶⁰

Datuk Onn's motives for initiating a multiracial party while he was still the undisputed leader in UMNO, the strongest political force in the country, remain unclear. Vasil has suggested that Datuk Onn acted out of visionary ideals in wanting to turn Malaya into a politically integrated multiracial state, the strident Malay chauvinism he displayed between 1946 and 1948 having been dictated by the sheer need to ensure Malay political survival in the face of the Malayan Union proposals. After that threat was averted, his more deeply held political convictions came to the surface.⁶¹ This interpretation does not appear to be borne out by subsequent events in Datuk Onn's political life, particularly when he returned to conservative Malay communal politics following the failure of his multiracial experiment in the form of the IMP. At least as likely an explanation is that he simply misread the major political currents of the period. Lacking an appreciation of the strength of communally based politics in the country or the potential of an Alliance-type coalition of such parties, and more importantly, misreading the strength of the apparent British desire to turn over power to a completely multiracial independence government, he made what appears to have been a major political miscalculation. In any case, his initiative reflected the only plausible and seriously taken attempt at inter-ethnic politics involving high Chinese and Malay leaders in the history of Malaya and Malaysia, and its failure sounded the death knell for any similar efforts in subsequent decades.⁶²

Over-confident from his success in leading the UMNO crusade against the Malayan Union scheme, Datuk Onn believed he was strong enough to carry the UMNO with him in his move to de-communalize Malayan politics. He had hoped to use the UMNO as the vehicle for integrationist politics by opening the party to non-Malays and by changing its name to the United Malayan National Organisation. His manoeuvrings, however, were rejected by the party Central Working Committee and general assembly, which instead accepted his resignation in August 1951. Faced with this failure, Datuk Onn formed the IMP on 16 September 1951 to pursue his political objectives.

The IMP was supported from its inception by Tan Cheng Lock and a few other Westernized MCA leaders such as Tan Siew Sin, Khoo Teik Ee and Yong Shook Lin, who had become personal friends of Datuk Onn. These MCA leaders were attracted to the IMP partly because of their friendship with Datuk Onn, but mainly because the IMP's platform promised to grant citizenship based on *jus soli* to non-Malays as well as equal rights for Malays and non-Malays. Writing about his support for the IMP to his old friend, Sir George Maxwell, Tan Cheng Lock stated: 'My interest in the IMP is primarily in support of the principle for which I have been fighting all my life, that is, the issue of communal harmony and equality in this country.'⁶³ It may be recalled that shortly before the formation of the MCA, Tan Cheng Lock had made an unsuccessful attempt to set up a multiracial party himself.

Although Tan Cheng Lock campaigned vigorously for the IMP, speaking at the inaugural meetings of IMP branches formed in Kuala Lumpur (16 September 1951), Johore Bahru (16 November 1951), Malacca (11 May 1952) and Penang (15 May 1952), he was unable to persuade the majority of the MCA top leadership and the second-rung Laukeh leadership to support Datuk Onn's new party. At the same time, the MCA leadership also rejected Tan Cheng Lock's attempts to decommunalize the MCA.

Between late 1950 and mid-1951, there were unsuccessful moves by both Datuk Onn and Tan Cheng Lock to decommunalize the UMNO and the MCA as a first step towards their goal of promoting an integrationist political system in Malaya. Just as the UMNO leader had failed in his attempts to manoeuvre the UMNO on to a multiracial course and open its doors to non-Malay members enjoying full membership rights, the MCA General Assembly in April 1951 likewise turned down the party president's proposal to accord non-Chinese associate members equal voting and office-holding rights.⁶⁴ The sharpest opposition to Tan Cheng Lock's proposal came from the Selangor and Perak state branches, the strongholds of the CCC-huay kuan establishment.⁶⁵ Faced with his threat to resign as party president and seeing the necessity of retaining his services as party spokesman in the CLC citizenship talks, his opponents struck a compromise with him. It was agreed that associate members would be allowed to vote at party meetings and to stand for public elections on the MCA ticket, but would not be allowed to hold office in the party.⁶⁶

The compromise on the status of associate members was short-

lived and had no impact on the existing structure of the MCA. Only one associate member, an Indian woman, was ever selected to stand on the MCA ticket during the party's entire history; and her selection during the Kuala Lumpur 1952 municipal elections was based purely on the fact that the voters in the ward in question were predominantly Indians. Non-Chinese party participation was circumscribed beginning in December 1953 when the party constitution was amended to deny associate members the right to vote on party affairs and to be nominated for election to party committees. A further constitutional revision in 1967 withdrew the category of associate membership from the party rules, thus closing the MCA completely to non-Chinese.⁶⁷

The Institutionalization of Communal Politics: Formation of the UMNO-MCA Alliance

In contrast to the IMP, the UMNO-MCA Alliance, formed in January 1952, developed rapidly as a successful and viable arrangement for inter-ethnic political coexistence. Not only was the coalition arrangement acceptable to the Malay and Chinese electorate, it also satisfied the British desire to see multiracial power-sharing in the soon-to-be independent Malayan nation-state.

The formation of the UMNO-MCA Alliance, a major turning point in the development of Malayan politics, institutionalized the country's political system on a communal basis. The Alliance was the brainchild of the Selangor UMNO and MCA leaderships, particularly the chairman of the Selangor UMNO Election Committee, Datuk Yahaya bin Datuk Abdul Razak, and Selangor MCA chairman H. S. Lee and Working Committee members Ong Yoke Lin and S. M. Yong. The initiative for forming the coalition came from the MCA leaders. Rejecting Tan Cheng Lock's decision to support the IMP in the election, the Selangor MCA leadership searched for an alternative strategy which would enable the MCA to field its candidates on a communal ticket but within an inter-ethnic framework. A coalition arrangement with the UMNO appeared an attractive possibility and Ong Yoke Lin, a schoolmate of Datuk Yahaya, paved the way for talks between H. S. Lee and the UMNO leaders.⁶⁸

Major contributing factors to the formation of the UMNO-MCA Alliance were: the intensity of communal feelings among the

Malay and Chinese population at large; the organizational strength of the MCA and the UMNO within their respective communities; the financial resources of the MCA; and the desire on the part of both parties to be part of the government of Malaya on the attainment of independence.

Of these, the communal particularism of the Malays and Chinese was the most important reason for the founding of the Alliance. When the Selangor state branches of the UMNO and the MCA were preparing their separate strategies to contest the election, the racial arithmetic of the Kuala Lumpur electorate was the foremost consideration. The racial breakdown of the town was then roughly 62 per cent Chinese, 23 per cent Indian, Pakistani, Ceylonese, Eurasian and European, and 15 per cent Malay.⁶⁹ The Chinese proportion of the electorate, however, was substantially lower than its proportion of the total population, as the franchise was weighted in favour of the Malay electorate. None the less, the Chinese voters of Kuala Lumpur still exceeded the Malay voters: they formed 37.7 per cent of the electoral rolls, compared to 33.8 per cent Malay and 28.5 per cent Indian.⁷⁰ Franchise for the election was not based on Federal citizenship, but length of residence (a minimum period of three years) in Malaya.

The significant feature was that despite the disproportionate representation of Chinese voters in the electoral rolls, Chinese formed the majority of voters in two electoral wards (Petaling and Imbi), Malay voters in one (Sentul) and Indian voters in the fourth (Bungsar). Thus, out of the total 12 seats in the four wards to be contested (three seats in each ward), six were 'Chinese' seats and only three were 'Malay' seats. The racial arithmetic therefore suggested rather strongly that the MCA could capture at least six seats and the UMNO only three.

Although the Selangor MCA leadership was confident that the MCA would win the election by itself because of the majority of Chinese seats, it none the less wanted to contest the election on some sort of inter-ethnic platform. This consideration was dictated by the need to gain the approval of the colonial administration and to pursue a multi-ethnic approach to political participation, since the British had made it clear that self-rule for Malaya would be withheld until there was political co-operation between the leaders of the different communities.⁷¹

While the MCA leadership in Kuala Lumpur appreciated the fact that they had to come up with a solution to promote political

coexistence with non-Chinese leaders, they did not believe that Tan Cheng Lock's attempts to decommunalize the MCA and his co-operation with Datuk Onn in the IMP was a desirable solution to the problem. Tan Cheng Lock wanted the Selangor leadership to campaign on behalf of the IMP, or better still, to field MCA candidates not on its own party ticket but the IMP's.⁷² The chairman of the Selangor MCA, H. S. Lee, decided against the advice of the party president. He and his members of the State Working Committee felt that Tan Cheng Lock's vision of political Utopia in Malaya—symbolized by harmonious multiracial coexistence under the leadership of the IMP or other such multiracial organizations—was mere wishful thinking. The cold facts of the matter, they thought, were that Chinese, Malays and Indians, for all the historical reasons which brought about a plural society in Malaya, were too deeply rooted in their own communally based life-styles to abandon organizations which promoted their specific communal interests. The prevailing opinion in the MCA leadership hierarchy was that the Chinese masses, especially the Laukeh, would not vote for the IMP or any other multiracial party in the Kuala Lumpur election.

The racial arithmetic of the Kuala Lumpur electorate made Datuk Yahaya realize the advantage of forging an electoral pact with the MCA. Datuk Yahaya's decision was also influenced by the Penang UMNO's experience in contesting the municipal election of Georgetown held on 31 December 1951, the first local government election staged in Malaya. Georgetown, the second largest town in Malaya after Kuala Lumpur, was also a predominantly Chinese town. There the Chinese formed 73 per cent of the population, the Malays 14 per cent, Indians, Pakistanis and Ceylonese 11 per cent, and others 2 per cent. The Chinese likewise formed the largest proportion of the electorate.⁷³ The Penang UMNO contested the election in an electoral coalition with the Muslim League.⁷⁴ Opposing the UMNO-Muslim League coalition were the Penang Labour Party and the Radical Party, ostensibly non-communal organizations but regarded by the Malays as representing the sectional interests of the Chinese.⁷⁵ The Penang MCA did not contest the election, for reasons that probably had to do with a desire to launch the Association's political debut in the more important Kuala Lumpur election. The UMNO-Muslim League coalition performed poorly: it won only 1 seat out of a total of 9 contested. The Radical Party took 6 seats, the Labour Party 1, and the remaining seat went to an independent candidate.⁷⁶ It appeared

from the results that the Chinese voters had supported Chinese-based organizations and that the UMNO stood little chance of getting voted into power in electoral constituencies with a majority of Chinese voters. Under these circumstances, Datuk Yahaya understandably found the MCA coalition proposition attractive.

The second factor which made coalition with the Selangor MCA appealing to the UMNO was the strength of the Association's organization in Kuala Lumpur. The linkage services provided by the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and huay kuan leaders who held office in the MCA gave the party access to the Chinese community at large. In Kuala Lumpur, H. S. Lee, besides being the MCA state chairman, was among the most influential Chinese association leaders, as the chairman of the Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Selangor Kwangtung Huay Kuan. Other prominent association leaders represented on the Selangor MCA Working Committee were confident that the Chinese would close ranks behind their communal organizations and the MCA when presented for the first time with the unfamiliar process of the Western electoral system. At the same time, the recently launched campaign to transform the MCA into a modern-day political party with an effective election-participation machinery made the MCA an even more attractive political partner.

An interesting insight into the politics of the Chinese community in Malaya is offered by the IMP admission that it had to organize along 'sectional or communal' lines in order to build a base within the Chinese society at large.⁷⁷ Given the MCA's hold over the Chinese associational network during the 1950s, it meant that if another organization were to compete with the MCA for the support of the Chinese community, two possible tactics were open to the competitor. It could attempt to win over the allegiance of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and huay kuan, say, by putting up a set of leaders to displace the pro-MCA leaders as office-holders in the associations, and so dislodge the MCA from its position of influence within the Chinese associational network. Alternatively, it could choose to by-pass the linkage services provided by the Chinese associations and build up an independent organizational structure to parallel the associational network within the community.

In Chapter 2 it was shown that when the MCP and KMTM were competing for the support of the Chinese masses during the inter-war years, the KMTM gained the allegiance of the Chinese

associations and mobilized the Chinese through them. The MCP set about to build up an extensive network of trade unions as an alternative base within the community, and succeeded in establishing an independent structure which rivalled the traditional associational network to reach the Chinese masses, especially among workers and students. It is a reflection of the degree of the MCP's success that the government had to prohibit the activities of the MCP-led trade unions and close a number of Chinese schools between 1946 and 1948 to prevent the further growth of the Communist-inspired organizational structure within the Chinese community.

In the Kuala Lumpur municipal election, the UMNO-MCA coalition allotted seven seats to the MCA and five to the UMNO. The MCA fielded six candidates, who were all well-known figures in the Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall and/or the various dialect huay kuan of Kuala Lumpur: Ong Yoke Lin, Douglas K. K. Lee (the son of H. S. Lee), Cheah Ewe Keat, Chan Chee Hong, Chan Kwong Hon, and Y. T. Lee. In addition to holding office in Chinese associations, these men were also represented on the boards of governors of leading Chinese schools in Kuala Lumpur. The seventh MCA candidate, an Indian associate member, was slated to contest a seat in the predominantly Indian ward of Bungsar. The UMNO-MCA coalition won the election handsomely, gaining nine of the twelve seats and 60.4 per cent of the total votes cast.⁷⁸

The majority of MCA candidates selected to contest the municipal and state elections held between 1952 and 1955 similarly came from well-established Chinese Chambers of Commerce and huay kuan backgrounds. In the country's first general election held in 1955, thirteen of the fifteen candidates fielded by the party were well-known CCC-huay kuan leaders: Tan Siew Sin, Ong Yoke Lin, Tan Suan Kok, Tay Hooi Soo, Too Joon Hing, Cheah Ewe Keat, Lee Eng Teh, Teoh Chze Chong, Lee Thuan Hin, Lim Teng Kwang, Leong Yew Koh, Chee Swee Ee, and Lim Kee Siong. Only two, Dr Cheah Khay Chuan and Dr L. H. Tan, had no discernible links with the Chinese traditional associations.

In addition to racial arithmetic and the organizational strength of the MCA, the Alliance was given impetus by the financial resources available to the UMNO arising from its coalition with the MCA. Unlike the MCA, the UMNO did not have a regular and lucrative source of party funds, as it was a party which drew its

membership from the rural and most economically deprived sector of the Malayan population: farmers and fishermen engaged in the subsistence economy of *kampung* (village) life. The upper levels of the party hierarchy comprised members of the Malay aristocracy, civil servants, religious teachers, petty landowners and *kampung* traders. The dearth of wealthy businessmen in the party resulted in a constant shortage of party funds. For example, in July 1950, it was believed that the UMNO bank balance amounted to only \$35.⁷⁹ The MCA, on the other hand, drew its income from a lucrative party lottery and, to a lesser extent, donations made by wealthy business patrons. At one point, the UMNO leadership considered launching a party lottery modelled along the lines of the MCA sweepstake to obtain income for the party. The scheme was dropped not on religious grounds but because, according to Tunku Abdul Rahman, UMNO members lacked the financial resources to subscribe to such a lottery, and the party itself did not possess the organizational means and know-how to run the venture on a sufficiently large scale to make it a profitable undertaking.⁸⁰

The Selangor MCA was aware that Datuk Yahaya, the chairman of the Selangor UMNO Election Committee, was concerned about his party's shortage of money to finance the UMNO election campaign. H. S. Lee accordingly proposed to Datuk Yahaya that his Working Committee help out with the UMNO's election expenses as part of the terms of the proposed coalition.⁸¹ The MCA's financial support to the UMNO, which contributed to the former gaining three out of the five seats contested in the Kuala Lumpur election, led Tunku Abdul Rahman, who had previously kept out of the internal settlement between the two Selangor parties, to push for the idea of consolidating and formalizing the *ad hoc* Selangor arrangement on a permanent Malayan-wide basis. According to T. H. Tan, the chief executive secretary of the MCA, the Tunku had confided to him that 'UMNO had no money' and would benefit from 'a share of the MCA financial resources'.⁸²

A report prepared by T. H. Tan, who subsequently became the secretary of the Alliance Party, accounting for the source of money used to finance the costs of the administrative and election expenses of the Alliance up to the Federal election of 1955, stated that the MCA had borne the bulk of such expenses.⁸³ The MCA contribution towards the expenditure of the Alliance came from a sum of money which had originally been set aside for Malay welfare. In July 1952 the party had allocated \$500,000 from the

proceeds of its sweepstake to a Malay Welfare Fund, a move which was inspired by the discussions of the CLC on the need for non-Malays to help improve the economic well-being of Malays. The Association initially could not decide which specific Malay projects the Malay Welfare Fund should assist. However, in April 1953 Tan Cheng Lock informed the High Commissioner, General Templer, that the Fund would be used to build vocational training centres to train Malay youths as apprentices to work in light manufacturing industries.⁸⁴ In the event, the Fund was not used for that purpose. Half of it was used to cement the MCA's ties with the UMNO in the recently formed Alliance by financing a good part of the Alliance's administrative and election expenses.⁸⁵ The remaining half was spent on cultivating Malay, particularly UMNO, grass-roots goodwill. Donations were made towards the building of mosques and kampung schools in UMNO strongholds, and towards meeting the special requests of a few top UMNO leaders.⁸⁶ A portion of the Malay Welfare Fund was also spent on the welfare of Malay detainees, as mentioned earlier.

The Malay response to the creation of the MCA Malay Welfare Fund as a means to obtain Malay goodwill was mixed. A number of Malay leaders, including a few within the UMNO, were indignant that the MCA thought it could buy Malay goodwill. An UMNO office-holder in Kedah urged the Malays to reject the scheme, saying: 'Malays cannot be valued at \$500,000.' Another UMNO leader in Selangor described the MCA move as an attempt to 'buy over Malays at 20 cents a head'.⁸⁷ It was clear the scheme offended the moral sensibility of many Malays and served to reinforce the notion held by some Malays that Chinese thought money could buy anything. The UMNO top leadership, on the other hand, argued that the scheme was motivated by a genuine desire on the part of the MCA to benefit the Malays, and Tunku Abdul Rahman supported its implementation.⁸⁸

The MCA Headquarters encouraged the MCA state branches to contribute financially towards the needs of various UMNO branches. The following cases illustrate the types of financial assistance which some UMNO branches received from the MCA. The Perak MCA financed the bulk of the Alliance's expenses in local elections held in the state during 1954. It also donated \$15,000 towards the building of a Malay hostel in Ipoh to accommodate trade apprentices and \$2,000 towards the purchase of equipment in the Telok Anson (Teluk Intan) Malay Trade Training School.

The Penang MCA contributed a small sum towards the construction of the Penang UMNO office. The Johore MCA gave \$12,000 to the UMNO branch in Tangkak to help defray its expenditure on the building of a local mosque. The Malacca MCA raised a sum of money towards the building of a Malay school in the state.⁸⁹

Besides its financial strength, the MCA was an attractive ally to the UMNO because it was a widely based party with members distributed throughout the country, especially in the west coast states. The MCA's membership had grown so rapidly that by May 1954 there were 300,000 members in the party, compared to 200,000 in the UMNO.⁹⁰

The final reason for the formation of the Alliance was a desire on the part of both parties to attain independence for Malaya at the earliest possible date, and to form the first government in an independent Malaya. As the British Government insisted on seeing multiracial political co-operation among the races before it left the country, a coalition of the two leading Malay and Chinese parties in Malaya appeared a suitable arrangement. In addition to its acceptability to the colonial administration, the coalition pact between the UMNO and the MCA allowed them to present a multiracial front to the Malayan people without having to dismantle the communal structure of their organizations.

The Selangor UMNO-MCA Alliance was a limited, *ad hoc* electoral pact. It did not produce a comprehensive manifesto outlining its stand on racial issues, but was merely a pragmatic agreement between the two parties to field candidates on a joint ticket on the basis of the racial composition of each seat. The Alliance manifesto for the Kuala Lumpur election in February and the Johore Bahru election in December 1952 dealt purely with parochial, non-racial issues such as the improvement and extension of public services and amenities, better schools, housing, sewerage and drainage.⁹¹ It was not until the creation of the Alliance Roundtable in February 1953 that the Selangor *ad hoc* coalition was extended beyond its original scope.

Consolidation of the UMNO-MCA Alliance

Although the MCA top leadership was divided over the question of whether the Association should affiliate itself politically with the UMNO or the IMP, the disagreement did not lead to any crisis or separatist movement within the party. Except for the single

resignation of Yong Shook Lin, a founder member of the MCA, who identified himself completely with the IMP, the rest of the party's top leaders eventually chose to work with the UMNO. Although Tan Cheng Lock and Tan Siew Sin had campaigned for the IMP and not the MCA during the Kuala Lumpur election, the poor performance of the IMP forced them to reconsider their views on integrationist politics. Tan Cheng Lock could not effect an IMP-MCA partnership, because he did not hold the key to the MCA organizational strength and finances in Selangor and the other states, except for his home state of Malacca. Since the Selangor MCA power-brokers had chosen the UMNO for an ally and had shown that they could deliver the Chinese vote, the party president had to accede to that political reality and condone the UMNO-MCA Alliance.

Having succeeded in getting Tan Cheng Lock to fall into line, H. S. Lee and the Selangor leaders made no attempt to challenge his position; instead they sought his co-operation in extending the *ad hoc* Alliance arrangement to the other states. Urging the party president to take up the matter with Tunku Abdul Rahman, H. S. Lee wrote:

I myself feel that I am not in a position to encroach upon the sphere of influence of other leaders of the MCA in other States and Settlements. I therefore beg of you to give my suggestion your kind consideration. If the UMNO-MCA could be established in the other parts of the country, it would go a long way to achieve a united Malaya.⁴²

It would appear that H. S. Lee refrained from challenging Tan Cheng Lock's position, perhaps because he had no desire to become national president, but most probably because he was aware that his support base was limited to his Selangor home state. He realized that Tan Cheng Lock commanded the overall support and allegiance of the MCA state leaders and was the only party leader capable of promoting the interests of the Alliance on a country-wide basis.

Although Tan Cheng Lock actively backed H. S. Lee's plans for the Alliance, he did not terminate his co-operation with the IMP immediately. Indeed, from early 1952 until mid-1953, he politically cultivated both Tunku Abdul Rahman and Datuk Onn. Following the IMP's disappointing showing at the Kuala Lumpur polls, Tan Siew Sin wrote to Datuk Onn: 'You can rest assured that IMP will be formed in Malacca in the near future and will

receive the *active* support of both my father and myself.⁹³ At the same time, starting from March 1952, Tan Cheng Lock began talks with Tunku Abdul Rahman concerning the institutionalization and expansion of the UMNO-MCA coalition arrangement.⁹⁴

It is not clear why Tan Cheng Lock continued to support the IMP after he made his commitment to the UMNO. It might have been that, due to his friendship with Datuk Onn, he wanted to save the Malay leader's face by not breaking off their political ties immediately. It might also have been because the MCA leader still harboured a hope that British patronage would help Datuk Onn reverse his political fortunes *vis-à-vis* Tunku Abdul Rahman and the UMNO. At that point, Datuk Onn was more obviously singled out for official favour than the Tunku. For example, when the member system—a modified cabinet system—was introduced in March 1951 with the objective of allowing appointed non-government officials and Malayan leaders to participate in the formulation of government policies, Datuk Onn was given the prestigious portfolio of Home Affairs. Again, the colonial government appointed many more IMP than UMNO leaders to the Federal Legislative Council until April 1955, when the Council was reconstituted with the introduction of elected members.

However, with each electoral set-back experienced by the IMP, Tan Cheng Lock moved further away from Datuk Onn. The IMP performed disastrously in all the elections it contested during 1952 and 1953—out of a total of 134 local government seats contested, it won only 3 seats.⁹⁵ The UMNO-MCA Alliance, in contrast, chalked up impressive victories. In 1952, it captured 32 (74 per cent) out of a total 43 contested seats in municipal and town elections. In 1953, it gained 64 seats (70 per cent) out of the 92 local government seats which it contested. In 1954, it scored a 91 per cent success rate, winning 69 out of 76 contested seats. In the four state elections held by October 1955, the coalition scored landslide victories, winning all the seats in the State Councils.⁹⁶ Datuk Onn reorganized the IMP into the Malay-communal Party Negara in February 1954, but this shift in tactics could not halt the downslide in his political fortunes. The Party Negara failed to win any seat in the Federal election held in April 1955, while the Alliance won 51 of the 52 contested seats.⁹⁷

Recognizing that Datuk Onn's political career had no long-term prospects, Tan Cheng Lock decided to vest his, as well as the MCA's, political future in a close formal affiliation with the

UMNO. On 3 February 1953, the two presidents set up the Alliance Roundtable as a vehicle to institutionalize the UMNO-MCA Alliance on a pan-Malayan basis. This body functioned as the supreme decision-making organ of the coalition until early 1955, when it was reorganized into the Alliance National Council. The Alliance Roundtable directed the UMNO and the MCA state branches to form UMNO-MCA Liaison Committees to run the affairs of the Alliance in each state. The UMNO-MCA State Liaison Committees were then instructed to set up similar Committees at the district, town, and rural area or village levels within each state. Each UMNO-MCA Liaison Committee at every level was to have an equal number of representatives (six each) from the two parties, and it was to function as the co-ordinating body during elections.⁹⁸ By early 1954, thirty UMNO-MCA Liaison Committees had been established at the state, district, town and village levels throughout the country.⁹⁹

By allying itself with the UMNO, the MCA made a shrewd investment in the long-term political opportunities that would flow from UMNO goodwill. Whereas in the 1952 Kuala Lumpur election, the UMNO gained from the partnership, as only three of the twelve seats contained a majority of Malay voters, this situation was atypical, save for municipal elections in Penang, Ipoh, Malacca and Seremban, which had Chinese majorities. Apart from these urban centres, the Chinese population was spread throughout the country and outnumbered by Malays, especially in the east coast states. For example, in Johore Bahru, the third town to hold a local government election in December 1952, Malays comprised 80.8 per cent of the electorate, while Chinese made up only 13.7 per cent and Indians and others 5.5 per cent. All the seats contained a clear majority of Malay voters.¹⁰⁰ However, the Johore UMNO-MCA coalition allotted three out of the total of nine seats to the MCA. This pattern was similar for elections held at the state and federal level. For instance, when the election for the Johore State Council was held in 1954, there were 122,087 Malays (78.4 per cent) who were eligible to vote compared to 26,400 Chinese (21.6 per cent).¹⁰¹ And, in the country's first general election of 1955, Malays formed 84.2 per cent of the electorate compared to 11.2 per cent Chinese and 4.6 per cent Indian and others, in the 52 Federal constituencies in the country; out of the 52 Federal Legislative Council seats, only two had a majority of Chinese voters.¹⁰² The MCA nevertheless was allotted 15 seats for the election. Thus although Chinese voters then

formed only 11.2 per cent of the electorate, the MCA was given a disproportionately generous share, 28.8 per cent, of the seats to be contested.¹⁰³ One can see, therefore, that the MCA relied significantly on the goodwill of the UMNO and the backing of Malay voters to win local government and federal seats during the period prior to the attainment of independence. This pattern has persisted up to the present day.

In return for its generosity to the MCA in the allocation of seats, the UMNO anticipated continued access to the MCA electoral machinery and its sources of financial support. In addition, by maintaining a strong alliance with the MCA, the UMNO was able to thwart all efforts by the IMP to attract MCA backing. Finally, because the UMNO leaders believed that many elements within the colonial administration favoured the IMP, it appeared all the more urgent that they demonstrate that the UMNO-MCA Alliance was the more viable alternative to the form of multiracial integrationist politics advocated by the IMP.

Angered and frustrated by his failure to win Chinese and Malay support, Datuk Onn led a campaign in the Federal Legislative Council to weaken the Alliance by seeking a ban on the MCA party lottery and attempting to discredit the party as the Kuomintang Government's 'fifth column' in Malaya. As the Member for Home Affairs, he introduced a motion in September 1952 asking for a ban on the MCA lottery. On the grounds that income from the MCA lottery, which was used to finance election expenses, gave the Alliance an unfair advantage over other political parties, the colonial government decided to impose such a ban, which took effect in Singapore in October 1952 and in the Federation in June 1953. However, far from decreasing the MCA's political activity, the lottery ban terminated the MCA's social welfare activities and thus contributed towards its evolution into a modern-day political party, completing the work of the reorganization campaign of 1952. For its development as a party, the MCA had other sources of income, primarily in the form of contributions by wealthy towkay members and other leading figures within the Chinese business community, whose interests it represented. Backed by these Chinese capitalists, the MCA had no difficulties in raising funds to help finance the Alliance's election campaigns.

Datuk Onn's action against the MCA lottery precipitated the resignation of Tan Siew Sin from the IMP. In his letter of resignation, Tan Siew Sin declared: 'By passing the resolution on

lotteries run by political organisations, the Party [IMP] has thrown a direct challenge at the Malayan Chinese Association. The resolution is couched in such strong language that the Party has compelled the Malayan Chinese Association to come to the conclusion that the Party is definitely hostile to the Association.¹⁰⁴

Tan Cheng Lock had maintained a discreet silence during the fracas between Tan Siew Sin and Datuk Onn, but his own break with the IMP leader came a few months later. The occasion was precipitated by Datuk Onn's characterization of MCA leaders as political lackeys of Chiang Kai Shek and the organization as a fifth column working for the Kuomintang Government in Taiwan. Datuk Onn focused the public's attention on the presence of well-known KMTM leaders in the MCA leadership hierarchy and the fact that these leaders were constantly visiting Taiwan to pledge their political support for the Kuomintang Government. He further stated that the MCA was controlled by the Chinese Chambers of Commerce in Malaya, which had been the stronghold of the KMTM.¹⁰⁵

The Malayan Chinese Association and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce are carrying out a plan to make this country the 20th Chinese Province to owe allegiance to Formosa, which was the 19th Province.... The Malayan Chinese Association had assumed the role formerly played by consular representatives. The Chinese Chambers of Commerce had become the underground Kuomintang Party and is [*sic*] now dictating politics to the Malayan Chinese Association.

This accusation angered Tan Cheng Lock so much that he terminated his political association with the IMP forthwith.

Faced with the necessity of having to win Malay support after the IMP was reorganized into the Party Negara, Datuk Onn mounted a series of attacks against the UMNO in order to discredit the latter's standing within the Malay community. Datuk Onn sought to weaken the UMNO by playing on Malay racial prejudices against the Chinese. For example, addressing a predominantly Malay election rally in Kuala Trengganu, he stated that the UMNO had come under the control of the MCA, and that UMNO leaders were selling out the interests of the Malay community to the MCA. He added that the identity of the UMNO had changed so much as a result of its partnership with the MCA that the UMNO flag no longer displayed the *keris* (Malay dagger) but the chopstick, a metaphor with a political message which would not be

missed by Malays.¹⁰⁶ The *Parti Negara*'s dismal electoral performance indicated, however, that Datuk Onn's campaign had failed to erode the bond between the UMNO and the majority of Malay voters.

When Datuk Onn tried to drive a wedge between the MCA and the UMNO by calling the MCA the Kuomintang Government's fifth column in Malaya, it did not produce a discordant note in the Alliance, as the UMNO leadership did not let whatever private reservations it held on the subject of the Kuomintang presence in the MCA come between the two parties. In fact, the top UMNO leaders went out of their way to demonstrate their support for the MCA when Tan Siew Sin introduced a motion of censure in the Federal Legislative Council against Datuk Onn for making his speech about the MCA and the Kuomintang. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dr Ismail and Tuan Sheik Ahmad voted with the MCA members for the motion which, however, failed to get passed.¹⁰⁷ On another occasion, in a rare and unexpected display of solidarity between the UMNO and the MCA in Malacca, a leader from the UMNO Youth Section attended the Double Ten Celebration held by the Malacca Chinese Chambers of Commerce, which was also attended by a number of MCA office-holders, including Tan Cheng Lock.¹⁰⁸

It appears likely that the UMNO turned a blind eye to the problem of the Kuomintang presence in the MCA because it wanted to preserve the necessary spirit of unity and goodwill to enable the Alliance to get on with its task of attaining independence for Malaya. It was only when independence was imminent that Tunku Abdul Rahman wrote a discreet note to the MCA honorary secretary-general suggesting that the Association should deal with the presence of 'un-Malayan elements' in its midst. He advised the MCA to screen carefully the political affiliations of potential members and to reject the applications of those whose political loyalty to Malaya was suspect because of attachment to the political doctrine of either Peking or Taiwan.¹⁰⁹ It will be seen later that the UMNO made a distinction between the two sets of leadership within the MCA—the English-educated and/or Baba leaders, whom UMNO regarded as true and loyal Malaysians, and the Chinese-speaking Laukeh leaders, who were regarded as pro-Kuomintang and Chinese chauvinists. During the independence negotiations between the UMNO and the MCA on the Merdeka Compact, the UMNO leadership ignored what it considered the pro-Kuomintang

requests of the Laukeh leaders and worked only with the English-educated leaders of the MCA.

In conclusion, one can see that the period 1950-5 was marked by two separate and opposed movements led by leaders from the UMNO and MCA to institutionalize politics in Malaya. Datuk Onn and Tan Cheng Lock initially sought to decommunalize the structure of the UMNO and the MCA and to create a multiracial integrationist political system embodied by the IMP. On the other hand, Datuk Yahaya, H. S. Lee and Ong Yoke Lin worked to promote multiracial political co-operation on a strictly communal basis but within the broader framework of the inter-ethnic Alliance coalition. It was the latter movement which succeeded in gaining the political support of the Malay and Chinese electorate throughout the country, first through the Selangor UMNO-MCA Alliance formed in January 1952 and ultimately through the permanent and nation-wide Alliance structure established between 1953 and 1955.

1. The concept of pluralism used here is based on J. S. Furnivall's definition, which states that a plural society comprises two or more entities living together but separated from each other by race, language, culture, religion and place of origin. Each entity possesses its own parallel set of values and institutions and pursues its life interests and goals more or less independently of the other(s). J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1939. Studies which deal with the theoretical aspect and practical impact of pluralism in Peninsular Malaysia include the following: J. A. Nagata (ed.), *Pluralism in Malaysia: Myth and Reality*, Contributions to Asian Studies, No. 7, Leiden, 1975; John A. Lent (ed.), *Cultural Pluralism in Malaysia: Polity, Military, Mass Media, Education, Religion and Social Class*, De Kalb, The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, North Illinois University, 1977; A. Rabushka, *Race and Politics in Urban Malaya*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1973.

2. The concept of consociational democracy was developed by Arend Lijphart in his case study of the Netherlands, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968, and in the following of his other works: 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2, January 1969, pp. 207-25; *Democracy in Plural Societies*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1977. R. S. Milne and D. K. Mauzy apply the concept to the Alliance and National Front coalition system of government in Malaysia in *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, rev. ed., Singapore, Times Books International, 1980, pp. 352-6.

3. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 24 May 1977.

4. Note from Gurney to Tan Cheng Lock, n.d., TGL Papers, SP13, Item 158.

5. Speech by Henry Gurney, *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 20 September 1951, p. 300.

6. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Leong Yew Koh dated 24 June 1950, TCL Papers, TCL/2/131.
7. Dr Ismail told MCA leaders that this was his initial opinion of their party. Minutes of the Alliance Roundtable Meeting held on 21 February 1953.
8. Information obtained from the list of addresses of party branches for the period 1949-50 kept at the party headquarters.
9. 'Report by the Agent-General on a Visit to Penang and Province Wellesley', c. April 1952, mimeo., p. 3. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 1, No. 14, 31 December 1953, p. 5.
10. Letter from Tan Siew Sin to Y. C. Kang dated 9 February 1952, MCA Headquarters.
11. The following account is based on: Report on the Pahang Branch by T. Y. Chen dated 11 April 1953; letters from T. Y. Chen to the Chief Executive Secretary dated 14 May and 24 July 1953; and 'Pahang Branch Accounts: Ourselves vs Mr. Ong Seong Tek', circular sent out by T. H. Tan, Chief Executive Secretary, to all members of the CWC, dated 11 November 1954.
12. Memorandum on the missing money in the Singapore Branch, unsigned, typescript, n.d. (c. January 1953), p. 5.
13. Letter from T. H. Tan to Tan Cheng Lock dated 13 April 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 6.
14. Ibid.
15. Letter from T. H. Tan to Tan Cheng Lock dated 24 March 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 6.
16. The guilty parties agreed to repay token sums of money and to remit \$80,000 from the branch's coffers to the headquarters. The state chairman was allowed a face-saving gesture: he remained in office for another year before a new chairman was elected.
17. Memorandum on the missing money in the Singapore Branch, p. 3.
18. Letter signed by a member of the MCA Klang Branch to Tan Cheng Lock dated 29 January 1953, MCA Headquarters.
19. Letter signed by three members of the Seremban Branch to the Chief Executive Secretary dated 8 June 1955, MCA Headquarters.
20. Letter signed by a member of the Mersing Branch to the Agent-General dated 22 May 1952, MCA Headquarters.
21. 'Report by the Agent-General on a Visit to Penang and Province Wellesley', p. 4.
22. See pamphlets entitled 'Memorandum on the Organisation of the MCA', 28 October 1951, and 'Progress Report on Reorganisation, Centralisation of Funds, Headquarters Building, Labour Organisation and Investment' by Tan Cheng Lock, Paper No. 1 of 1953, MCA Headquarters.
23. Memorandum by Tan Cheng Lock entitled 'Democratising the MCA', mimeo., 14 September 1952, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 8.
24. 'The MCA Labour Manifesto', mimeo., c. February 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, Box 6. See also 'A Note on the Labour Sub-Committee of the Malayan Chinese Association', mimeo., c. early 1953, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 127.
25. B. H. Tan's duties were described in a progress report of the MCA's activities prepared by the Chief Executive Secretary dated 7 September 1953, mimeo., p. 4.
26. Ibid., p. 5.
27. Quoted in a party press release issued by Leong Yew Koh, Secretary-

General of the MCA, dated 6 May 1954.

28. Letter from C. H. Yin, a party labour organizer, to Leong Yew Koh dated 25 May 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, No. 66-71 (single bundle).

29. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to M. J. Hogan, Attorney-General of Singapore, dated 5 October 1952, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 89-166 (single bundle).

30. The Chen Woo Association, housed in a large building in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, is the city's major cultural, dramatic and recreational huay kuan.

31. See letter from C. H. Yin to Tan Cheng Lock dated 19 June 1953, LYK Papers, SP3, No. 66-71 (single bundle).

32. Letter from the Financial Secretary of the Federation of Malaya to Tan Cheng Lock dated 5 June 1953, MCA Headquarters.

33. Memorandum entitled 'The Organisation of the MCA as a Political Pressure Group', by Tan Cheng Lock, mimeo., 19 April 1951, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 177, No. 35.

34. MacDonald stated that he was successful in forming the CLC only because Datuk Onn agreed to its formation. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 24 May 1977.

35. Although Datuk Onn was the leading figure in the CLC, Datuk E. E. C. Thuraisingham, president of the Ceylon Federation, was its chairman. MCA leaders who served on the CLC at one time or another, apart from Tan Cheng Lock, included: Yong Shook Lin, Khoo Teik Ee, Leong Yew Koh, Chin Swee Onn, Foo Yin Fong, Y. C. Kang, Toh Eng Hoe, Lee Kong Chian, Dr Ong Huck Chye and Lim Koon Teck.

36. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 24 May 1977.

37. The statistics were presented by Tan Cheng Lock in his address to the MCA Annual Central General Committee Meeting held on 21 April 1951, TCL Papers, SP13, Ucapan Tan Cheng Lock, Item 35.

38. Tan Cheng Lock, 'Confidential Memorandum on Malaya Submitted to the Right Honourable James Griffiths, Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Right Honourable John Strachey, Secretary of State for War', mimeo., 19 May 1950, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 169.

39. Letter from Gurney to all British Advisers and Resident Commissioners dated 3 June 1950, CO537/6018(39).

40. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 30 December 1949.

41. See letter from Onn to Gurney dated 16 May 1950 and letter from Gurney to Onn dated 18 May 1950, CO537/6018(24).

42. For a description of the term 'special rights' see G. P. Means, "'Special Rights' as a Strategy for Development: The Case of Malaysia", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, October 1972, pp. 29-61.

43. Technically speaking, the aborigines of Malaya are the earliest inhabitants in the land. However, their political, economic and social isolation from the mainstream historical development of Malaya—a fact dictated by their isolated existence in the interior highlands and the insignificant size of their population in relation to the total population of Malaya—has resulted in virtually a total lack of impact on Malayan political life.

44. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 13 and 14 August 1949.

45. See Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 18 and 19 February, 14 and 15 March, 19 and 20 April, 13 and 14 August, 29, 30 and 31 December 1949, and 21 February 1950.

46. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 9 and 10 February 1949.

47. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 29 December 1949.
48. Tan Cheng Lock, *Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View*, Singapore, Tannisco, 1947, p. 75.
49. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 13 August 1949.
50. Ibid.
51. A British political report suggested that Datuk Onn had softened his constitutional position as a result of the moderating influence exerted by Tan Cheng Lock and Datuk E. E. C. Thuraisingham in the CLC. *Malayan Political Report for September 1949*, CO537/4790(79).
52. Quoted from letter by Tan Cheng Lock to Yong Shook Lin dated 19 January 1950, TCL Papers, SP13, Item 167.
53. Ibid.
54. Interview with Tunku Abdul Rahman, 2 August 1976.
55. Letter from MacDonald to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 5 April 1950, CO537/6018(9).
56. K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1965, pp. 84, 92.
57. Communities Liaison Committee Issues Statement of Policy (Press Release), dated 18 September 1949.
58. Ibid.
59. Notes of Discussion of the CLC held on 8 September 1949.
60. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Sir George Maxwell dated 12 July 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/V/148.
61. R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 41-2.
62. Multiracial parties formed since the IMP, such as the People's Progressive Party, the United Democratic Party, the Democratic Action Party and Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia, have never received the backing of top-ranking Malay leaders.
63. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Sir George Maxwell dated 18 December 1951, TCL Papers, TCL/V/232.
64. Associate members without voting or office-holding rights located mainly in Singapore, comprised nearly 10 per cent of the party membership in 1951. *Straits Times*, 21 May 1951.
65. *Straits Times*, 15 May 1951.
66. *Straits Times*, 21 May 1951.
67. 'Amendment of Rules Approved by Our General Committee on 27 December, 1953', mimeo.; and *Constitution of the Malayan Chinese Association* (Incorporating all amendments up to March 1967), Kuala Lumpur, Solai Press.
68. Interview with H. S. Lee, 22 July 1975; and with Ong Yoke Lin, 18 May 1976. Tunku Abdul Rahman stated, 'It was Ong Yoke Lin (now Tan Sri Omar Ong Yoke Lin) who got together with Datuk Yahaya and decided to form an Alliance to contest this election.' Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1977, p. 180.
69. Taken from D. O'Callaghan, 'The 1952 Local Body Elections in Malaya: A Study of the Relationships between British Policy and Malayan Political Evolution', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1974, p. 35.
70. *Sunday Mail*, 17 February 1952.
71. On a visit to the country in December 1951 just before the Kuala Lumpur election, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttleton, reiterated that there

would be no independence unless the leaders of the various communities could work together. See speech by Tunku Abdul Rahman at the Alliance National Convention, dated 23 August 1954.

72. T. H. Tan, 'How the Alliance Began, the First Roundtable Conference', *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 2, No. 21, 16 November 1954.

73. O'Callaghan, op. cit., p. 31.

74. The Muslim League in Penang is a communal organization formed by the Indian Muslim community of Penang. Some of its members have since joined the UMNO, and the Muslim League has become an insignificant body limiting its function to social welfare work within the community.

75. For an account of the Labour Party and Radical Party, see Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society*, pp. 80, 91, 93-166.

76. O'Callaghan, op. cit., pp. 27-34.

77. See Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society*, p. 62.

78. The three seats the coalition failed to secure were in the Bungsar ward; the IMP won two seats and an Indian independent the third seat. O'Callaghan, op. cit., p. 57.

79. Extract from Malayan Political Report for July 1950, CO537/4790(13).

80. The UMNO Butterworth Branch unsuccessfully operated a small-scale (\$50,000) lottery for a short period in 1952. Report by T. H. Tan on a conversation with Tunku Abdul Rahman on 23 September 1952, mimeo.; and letter from T. H. Tan to Tan Cheng Lock dated 8 October 1952, MCA Headquarters.

81. Interview with H. S. Lee, 22 July 1975.

82. Report by T. H. Tan on his conversation with Tunku Abdul Rahman on 23 September 1952.

83. T. H. Tan, 'Memo on Alliance Party, National Council and Executive Committee, With Proposed Rules', mimeo., 18 November 1955, p. 2.

84. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to General Sir Gerald Templer dated 2 April 1953, MCA Headquarters.

85. Circular from T. H. Tan to the members of the MCA Standing Finance Sub-Committee dated 3 May 1953.

86. Mosques which benefited from the MCA Malay Welfare Fund included the Tiram Duku Mosque in Johore, the Pantai Kundor Mosque in Malacca, and the Kampong Bahru and Jalan Pasar Mosques in Kuala Lumpur. See 'List of Grants towards the Cost of Building or Repairing Malay Mosques', typescript. UMNO office-holders who received MCA grants included the party Publicity Officer who received a grant of \$1,000, and another office-holder, the Chairman of the Kedah UMNO, who received a grant of \$20,000 for medical expenses. Minutes of the MCA Headquarters Standing Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 December 1956; letter from Senu Abdul Rahman, Secretary-General of UMNO, to the President and Treasurer of the MCA dated 5 January 1956. Interesting enough, the MCA turned down a request from the UMNO for a loan of \$45,000 which the UMNO wanted to buy out a Malay daily, the *Majlis*. The Association said the purpose of such a loan was outside the scope of the Malay Welfare Fund. Minutes of the MCA Headquarters Standing Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 December 1956. Another interesting application from the UMNO which was rejected was for a loan for \$50,000 towards the building cost of its headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. Circular sent out by T. H. Tan to the MCA Headquarters Standing Finance Sub-Committee dated 22 June 1954.

87. *Straits Times*, 30 July and 1 August 1952.
88. Minutes of the Alliance Roundtable meeting held on 3 February 1953.
89. See Minutes of the Perak MCA Working Committee meeting held on 24 August 1954; Report of the Committee to be submitted to the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Perak MCA Branch to be held on 16 August 1953, pp. 8-9; Report of the Penang and Province Wellesley MCA Branch for the Year Ending 30 June 1955, p. 4; Minutes of the Johore MCA Working Committee meeting held on 3 May 1953; and Report of the Malacca MCA Branch for the Year Ending 30 June 1952, p. 3.
90. 'Statement by UMNO/MCA Alliance Released in London 17 May 1954', mimeo., TCL Papers, TCL/8/52a.
91. See 'Joint UMNO MCA Manifesto to the Electors of the Johore Bahru Town Council Election', MCA Headquarters.
92. Letter from H. S. Lee to Tan Cheng Lock dated 18 February 1952, TCL Papers, TCL/9/33.
93. Letter from Tan Siew Sin to Datuk Onn dated 18 January 1952, TCL Papers, TCL 13/19. Tan Siew Sin helped to form the IMP Malacca Branch in May 1952.
94. See letter from H. S. Lee to Tunku Abdul Rahman dated 7 March 1952, TCL Papers, TCL/9/38.
95. O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
96. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 2, No. 23, 16 December 1954; *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 3, No. 19, 1 October 1955.
97. For a discussion of the 1955 Federal election, see Ratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-200. The Pan-Malayan Islamic Party captured the remaining seat.
98. Minutes of the Fifth MCA Cabinet Meeting held on 3 October 1952, p. 10; Minutes of the Seventh MCA Cabinet Meeting held on 9 March 1953, p. 12; and T. H. Tan, Secretary to Alliance, 'Memorandum on Alliance Organisation, Elections Machinery and Finance', mimeo., 26 October 1954.
99. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 31 January 1954.
100. O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-3.
101. Minutes of the Muar MCA sub-branch Working Committee meeting held on 22 August 1955. The Muar MCA pointed out that the electoral roll for the Johore state election for the Muar District comprised 44,555 Malay voters and only 9,721 Chinese voters, a percentage of 78.2 against 21.8.
102. Ratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
103. The allocation of seats was, and still is, decided by the UMNO Supreme Council after consultations with the party's state leadership and other partners in the Alliance (National Front after 1969) coalition.
104. Letter from Tan Siew Sin to C. F. Gomes, Chairman, IMP Malacca Branch, dated 18 September 1952, MCA Headquarters.
105. Address by Datuk Onn to the IMP Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, reported in the *Malay Mail*, 26 March 1953.
106. Datuk Onn's speech was reported in a letter from Tan Eng Aun, MCA Trengganu Branch, to T. H. Tan, MCA Chief Executive Secretary, dated 1 April 1954, MCA Headquarters.
107. *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 7 May 1953, pp. 395-6.
108. *China Press*, 12 October 1955.
109. Letter from Tunku Abdul Rahman to the MCA Hon. Secretary-General dated 21 June 1957, MCA Headquarters.

The MCA and the Politics of Independence

IN examining the role of the MCA during 1953-5, when the UMNO-MCA Alliance initiated a campaign to attain independence for Malaya, this chapter will first analyse the events forming the backdrop to the UMNO-MCA independence campaign, and then highlight the manner in which the MCA developed in those years. It is argued that the period under review marked the peak of the party's popularity with the Chinese community at large.

By early 1954, the MCA had evolved into a highly effective Malayan-centred political party, sharing the limelight with the UMNO at the forefront of the independence movement. The MCA's involvement in that movement dispelled its original image of a social welfare organization concerned only with problems in the New Villages, and blurred the party's reputation as a revived KMTM. However, the Kuomintang presence in the party continued to be a source of concern to its English-educated national leaders and to the UMNO between mid-1956 and independence in August 1957.

When the party was formed, the English-educated leadership relied heavily on the linkage services of the Chinese-educated to create a widespread organizational base. With the launching of the UMNO-MCA independence campaign, however, the Chinese-speaking leaders began to play a less prominent role, as they lacked the linguistic and political skills to deal with the British authorities and the UMNO national leadership in the politics of independence. None the less, the Chinese-speaking leaders, committed as they were to the attainment of independence, were happy to let the English-educated leaders steer the party through the process of decolonization.

Relations between the English-educated and Chinese-educated leaders and the party rank and file were relatively harmonious during this period, as all the various groupings in the MCA were united in pursuing essentially the same basic goals. Besides sharing the desire for immediate independence, their other key objective

was to settle the problem of Chinese education created by the enactment of the 1952 Education Ordinance. A further pre-occupation was the party's participation in the country's first Federal election held in July 1955. This undertaking involved the MCA national leaders in negotiating with the UMNO an election manifesto embracing a whole range of issues affecting the interests of Malays and non-Malays. Most fortunately, the manifesto produced by the MCA and UMNO leaders satisfied the interests of the Chinese-speaking elements in the MCA as well as the Chinese community at large. The Alliance platform on citizenship and Chinese education appealed to all Chinese social groupings, the economic pledges satisfied the interests of the Chinese mercantile class, and the promises on land policies attracted the support of the half-million-strong New Village dwellers.

The UMNO-MCA Independence Movement

By mid-1953, the political leaders of Malaya knew it would be only a matter of time before the British Government gave Malaya her independence. The foremost question thus was, Who amongst them would be the recipient of power and form the government of independent Malaya? Of the political parties formed in the country since the end of World War II, only three parties, the UMNO, MCA and IMP, were seriously considered by the British to be suitable candidates for that role. As the UMNO and the MCA had combined their political fortunes with the formation of the Alliance in February 1952, the struggle for the leadership of the independence movement was between the Alliance and Datuk Onn's IMP.

The two objectives pursued by the UMNO-MCA leadership from mid-1953 to late 1954 were (a) to outbid Datuk Onn in the competition for the leadership of the independence movement, and (b) to apply pressure on the British Government to speed up the timetable for self-government in Malaya. In the pursuit of these two objectives, the UMNO-MCA leadership employed two strategies, namely the sponsorship of the Alliance National Convention, and the staging of a boycott by Alliance members of the Federal Legislative and Executive Councils and other government bodies in the country.

During the early 1950s, Datuk Onn was clearly the chief recipient of colonial political patronage. He was the leading Malayan

figure in the wholly nominated Federal Legislative Council, holding the key post of Member for Home Affairs. Despite the fact that the IMP was soundly defeated by the UMNO-MCA Alliance during the municipal and state elections held in 1952 and 1953, the colonial administration still nominated more IMP than UMNO-MCA leaders to the Federal Legislative Council. Datuk Onn continued to have the ear of the colonial administration essentially because a number of high-ranking British officials, including the High Commissioner, General Templer, and Malcolm MacDonald, wanted the IMP to succeed as Malaya's first multiracial political party. Templer in particular felt that Malayan political life ought to be decommunalized, and an all-embracing multiracial organization like the IMP ought to have official support, for it represented the ideal of multi-ethnic political coexistence in a racially divided country.¹ After the IMP was disbanded and replaced by the Malay-communal Party Negara in February 1954, Datuk Onn retained the favour of the British authorities, largely because a coincidence of opinion existed regarding the timetable for self-rule in Malaya, with both parties feeling that it should take place at a later rather than earlier date.

Although no one doubted then that the British Government was committed to the granting of independence for Malaya, there was some debate concerning the exact date of the handing over of power. In mid-1953, General Templer felt that in view of the fact that the Emergency was then not under complete control, independence should not be granted in the immediate future. He thought that it would take up to another ten years before conditions in Malaya were stable enough for the British Government to hand over power to an elected indigenous government.² The colonial administration's preference for a later rather than earlier date for independence was warmly supported by Datuk Onn and his followers. It was obviously to the veteran politician's advantage to have a delay in the holding of a general election and independence, since he needed time to reorganize and revive his ailing political fortunes.

Datuk Onn's view that independence for Malaya should not be an immediate consideration emerged from the proceedings of a National Conference which he convened in April 1953 to debate the matter. The National Conference was attended by the IMP and ten other organizations representing the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. All these were, however, very small organiz-

ations which represented the interests of less than 15 per cent of the total population.³ The National Conference recommended the following: (a) that the Federal election which was expected to occur in the immediate future to elect representatives to a reconstituted and enlarged Federal Legislative Council be postponed for at least another two years; (b) that there be an increase in the size of the nominated unofficial membership of the Council pending the elections; and (c) that the Member for Home Affairs, namely Datuk Onn, be accorded the status of 'Deputy Leader of the Government' in the Council.⁴ It appears that the IMP leader had convened the National Conference to assure the colonial administration of his satisfaction in the prolongation of the colonial status quo. This pro-colonial bias in Datuk Onn's action at the time must not be construed as a lapse in the nationalist fervour which had driven him to organize the UMNO and to lead the campaign against the Malayan Union in 1946. In 1953 Datuk Onn was as determined as other nationalist figures to see independence realized in Malaya; his advocacy of a delay in the date of independence was merely a pragmatic move to buy time to reorganize his political resources to overcome the challenge posed by the UMNO-MCA coalition.

The UMNO and MCA leaders were, not surprisingly, highly critical of the activities of Datuk Onn. They boycotted the National Conference (turning down an invitation to attend) and roundly condemned its recommendations in no uncertain terms:

Instead of recommending immediate steps to establish democratic self-rule in the Federation, instead of granting the people—even if only by measured stages—their right of self-determination, the Working Committee of the National Conference proposes that the people, for more years to come, shall be governed in a manner more undemocratic than they are at present. The recommendations... constitute a deliberate attempt to put back Malaya's political clock.⁵

Tunku Abdul Rahman in fact believed that the National Conference was actually the brainchild of Malcolm MacDonald, whom he felt had asked Datuk Onn to act as the colonial administration's front man to forestall the UMNO-MCA demand for immediate self-rule. MacDonald maintained that the Tunku's allegation was unfounded and that the colonial government had no vested interests in the proceedings of the National Conference.⁶

Having gained a clear advantage over other political parties in the local and state elections, the UMNO and MCA national

leaders were naturally anxious to see independence granted at the earliest possible date. From the middle of 1953 until July 1955, when the country's first general election was held, the Alliance leaders initiated a series of co-ordinated measures designed to out-manoeuvre Datuk Onn's attempt to delay the date of independence, and to gain British acceptance of the Alliance leadership of the independence campaign. These moves involved: first, the activities of the Alliance representatives in the proceedings of the Election Committee; secondly, the sponsorship of the Alliance National Convention; and thirdly, the staging of a boycott of the Federal Legislative and Executive Councils and other government bodies.

In July 1953 the British Government appointed an Election Committee to investigate the question of holding a general election in Malaya. The membership of the Committee was dominated by Datuk Onn and his supporters, the Chief Ministers and IMP leaders; there were only seven UMNO and MCA representatives out of the total number of 46 appointed members.⁷ When the findings of the Committee were released in January 1954, the seven UMNO and MCA members of the Committee objected to the majority findings on three key points, namely the composition of the reconstituted Federal Legislative Council, the timetable for independence, and the eligibility of civil servants to stand for the elections. The majority report recommended that the appointed membership of the reconstituted Council be slightly larger than the elected membership (48 nominated and 44 elected members) and that there be a gradual transitional change to a wholly elected Council. This recommendation in effect meant that independence would be withheld for the time being, since full power would only be transferred to a Council having an elected majority. The majority report also recommended that civil servants should be debarred from standing for the election. The Alliance minority report, on the other hand, stated that the elected membership should be larger than the nominated membership in the reconstituted Council (60 elected and 40 appointed members). It also insisted that the Federal election be held by November 1954, and that there be no delay in the timetable for independence. It lastly argued that civil servants should not be excluded from standing as candidates in the election. This point was made because such an exclusion would effectively prevent a large number of UMNO leaders from seeking candidacy in the elections, since a major part of the party leadership were government officials.⁸

The Alliance National Convention and Boycott of the Federal Legislative Council

To ensure that their views contained in the Election Committee report were not ignored by the British Government, the UMNO and MCA leaders organized a campaign to draw mass support for their cause. This consisted of sponsoring the Alliance National Convention, which held three meetings, on 23 August and 11 October 1953 and on 14 February 1954. Following the Convention, in May and June 1954 the Alliance leadership staged a boycott of the Federal Legislative and Executive Councils and other government bodies to press the British Government to accept the views of the Alliance.

The proceedings of the National Convention, despite the attendance by four organizations other than the UMNO and the MCA, were entirely dominated by the Alliance leadership.⁹ The Alliance leaders had invited a number of Malayan organizations to attend the Convention mainly to give it a more convincing image as a truly national affair. It was, however, the case that the UMNO and the MCA were indeed the most popularly based Malay and Chinese parties in the country; their claimed combined membership of 360,000 in mid-1953 and 500,000 in mid-1954 far outstripped the total membership of all other legal political parties in the country.¹⁰ While official estimates of the time put the Alliance membership at a much more modest level, giving a breakdown of 230,000 for the MCA and 100,000 for the UMNO, the authorities had no doubt that the coalition was by far the largest political organization in Malaya.¹¹ The National Convention passed a number of resolutions, including a call for an elected majority in the reconstituted Federal Legislative Council, eligibility of civil servants to stand for elections and a Federal election to be held not later than November 1954, demands echoing the Alliance recommendations in the report of the Election Committee.¹² Whilst the Alliance-sponsored National Convention took a harder line on these issues than Datuk Onn's National Conference, the UMNO-MCA leadership was at the same time mindful to assure the British Government that its programme for decolonization was not a radical alternative to Datuk Onn's proposals. During the National Convention key speeches made by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dr Ismail and Tan Cheng Lock emphasized that an Alliance Government would be a loyal ally of the departing colonial power and would govern Malaya

in such a manner that all British commercial and political interests in the country would be protected. The Alliance leadership also sought the goodwill of the Malay rulers by stressing that it intended to uphold and guarantee the sovereignty of the Malay monarchical system in independent Malaya. The Sultans of the nine Malay states were given firm assurances that all existing rights and privileges which the monarchs enjoyed under the terms of the Federation of Malaya Agreement would be preserved with the attainment of independence. The Alliance leaders stressed that they had no desire to radicalize the political order in Malaya. They declared that they wished to attain independence only through 'peaceful and constitutional means', and Dr Ismail took pains to characterize the Malay rulers as 'the pivot round which the loyalty and unity of the peoples of Malaya should revolve'.¹³

The Alliance courting of Malay royal approval for their independence initiative was dictated by two considerations: the coincidence of aristocratic class interests between the UMNO national leadership and the Malay monarchy, and the allegiance showed by the Malay masses towards their Sultans. As a sizeable number of the UMNO top leaders had aristocratic connections—Tunku Abdul Rahman being himself a scion of the Kedah ruling house—their elitist social origins help explain their desire to preserve the monarchical system in independent Malaya. The vested interests of the UMNO in this respect happily coincided with the political and religious status enjoyed by the Sultans within Malay society. The Malay community has historically regarded the Sultan of each Malay state as the local fount of political and religious authority. Their allegiance to the Sultans has survived the colonial era and remains much in evidence three decades later.¹⁴ It was thus both necessary and advantageous for the Alliance coalition to safeguard the privileged position of the Sultans, since they possessed the influence to promote the cause of the Alliance through their hold over the Malay masses.

The Alliance was not immediately successful in its courting of British goodwill through its pledges to maintain good relations with the British Government after independence. In early May 1954 three Alliance representatives—Tunku Abdul Rahman, Datuk Abdul Razak bin Hussein and T. H. Tan—went to London to seek the consent of the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttleton, to implement the resolutions passed by the Alliance National Convention. When their mission failed, the Alliance leaders decided to stage

a boycott of the Federal Legislative Council and other bodies to put further pressure on the British Government to heed the Alliance terms for independence.

The Alliance boycott, held between late May and July, called for all UMNO and MCA members of the Federal Legislative and Executive Councils, state, municipal and town councils, and other government bodies such as the Chinese Advisory Boards, not to serve on these bodies until the Alliance demands were met by the British Government. The boycott was observed by a total of about 1,000 UMNO and MCA members (600 UMNO and 400 MCA), who resigned their positions in these bodies.¹⁵ Elected MCA representatives serving on the local councils in the New Villages were exempted from joining the boycott, as the Alliance leadership agreed that the administration of the newly settled squatter population should not be disrupted by the boycott in view of the Emergency. The MCA leadership in particular did not want to undermine the political advantage it enjoyed in the New Villages through its social welfare work among the squatter population.¹⁶

In addition to holding a boycott of government bodies, the Alliance also staged a number of mass rallies attended by their supporters to back up the national leadership's call for an elected majority in the Federal Legislative Council and the immediate holding of the Federal election. Rallies were held throughout the country in June and July; on 8 July, a 6,000-strong crowd assembled in Kuala Lumpur and similar rallies were held in Seremban, Alor Star, Pekan and other towns in the country.¹⁷

Shortly after the implementation of the Alliance boycott, Sir Donald MacGillivray, who had recently succeeded General Templer as High Commissioner, held secret talks with Tunku Abdul Rahman, Datuk Abdul Razak and H. S. Lee to settle the dispute between the Alliance and the colonial government. MacGillivray's concessions to the Alliance leaders satisfied their demands on the composition of the reconstituted Federal Legislative Council and assured them of the intention of Whitehall to grant independence to Malaya at the earliest possible date.¹⁸ Having secured their objective, the Alliance leaders called off the boycott. They were now firmly in control of the independence movement, having successfully beaten off Datuk Onn's challenge.

The decision of the colonial government to transfer its patronage from Datuk Onn to the Alliance leaders and its acquiescence in the latter's demand for immediate self-rule stemmed from a re-

evaluation of the political situation. By mid-1954, British officials had become convinced that the depth of communal feelings in the country made the Alliance coalition a viable and realistic mode of inter-ethnic political regulation. It was also evident that the Alliance leadership had the widespread backing of the Malayan people in its call for immediate self-rule. Furthermore, Datuk Onn had abandoned the IMP and had returned to the fold of communal politics. Whitehall therefore decided that it had much to gain by accommodating the wishes of the Alliance leaders, who had pledged to safeguard British commercial and political interests in Malaya after independence. If Whitehall were to ignore the guarantees of the Alliance to protect British interests and to introduce the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy in Malaya, a Malay and/or Chinese radical nationalist alternative to the Alliance might develop in the country as a result of popular discontent and frustration bred by a continuation of colonial rule. Finally, the British Government felt confident enough to hand over the reins of power to an indigenous government, as it felt that the Communist threat was sufficiently under control by mid-1954.

The Ascendancy of the MCA

The MCA's participation in electoral politics after 1952 provided the first overt evidence that it had begun to function effectively as a Malayan-centred political party. The rise of independence politics in Malaya and the MCA's role in the movement brought the party into the national limelight alongside the UMNO, establishing its nationalist credentials and strengthening its popularity. During the period 1953-5, the high point of the party's popularity with the Chinese populace, there existed a strong bond of shared interests between the English-educated top leadership and the Chinese-speaking lower-level leadership. This bond was created by a number of factors, the most important ones being the pursuit of independence, the settlement of the Chinese education problem that had arisen from the 1952 Education Ordinance, and the wide appeal of the UMNO-MCA Federal Election Manifesto of July 1955.

The objective of attaining independence was shared by all the leaders of the MCA, regardless of differences in class and social backgrounds. Anti-colonial sentiments had been generated during the inter-war years within the Chinese community in Malaya as a

result of the efforts of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party in China. KMTM and CPM leaders in Malaya propagated the belief that it was the patriotic duty of Chinese to combat colonialism whether it existed in Malaya or China. When the nationalist movement in Malaya came to a head during the early 1950s, the Chinese-speaking leadership and membership of the MCA were thus predisposed to be sympathetic to the cause.

The English-educated leadership of the party was drawn from the same small Westernized social group as the UMNO top leadership. Both were deeply committed to the objective of an independent Malaya. This commitment was made evident as early as 1926 when Tan Cheng Lock, then a member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, had argued for political autonomy in Malaya. After World War II, when he and other English-educated leaders took the initiative of forming the MCA, they included the pursuit of self-government for Malaya as a key party objective.

When the process of decolonization reached its final stages in Malaya, the English-educated and Chinese-speaking leaders of the party performed separate but complementary functions to achieve the objective of immediate independence. The English-educated leaders assumed complete control of party policies whilst the Chinese-speaking leaders mobilized the support of the party rank and file, as well as that of the traditional Chinese associations. That the English-educated leaders had complete control over policy issues is most clearly demonstrated by their presence on all the committees and working groups set up by the UMNO-MCA coalition. The following is a list of the MCA representatives on the major committees established between 1953 and 1957 to draw up the coalition's policies and to co-ordinate its activities during the independence movement:¹⁹

- (1) *The Alliance Roundtable* (set up in February 1953 to formulate Alliance strategy on seeking an early Federal election and to extend the UMNO-MCA coalition nation-wide; reorganized as the Alliance National Council in February 1955, it functioned henceforth as the supreme decision-making body of the Alliance): Tan Cheng Lock, Tan Siew Sin, H. S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, S. M. Yong, Ong Yoke Lin, T. H. Tan, Leung Cheung Ling (temporary member).
- (2) *The Special Committee of the Alliance National Convention* (set up in mid-1953 to draw up the agenda and resolutions which were presented to the National Convention): Tan Cheng Lock,

Tan Siew Sin, H. S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, S. M. Yong, Ong Yoke Lin, T. H. Tan.

- (3) *The Working Party to prepare the Alliance Federal Election Manifesto of July 1955*: Tan Cheng Lock, Tan Siew Sin, H. S. Lee, Ong Yoke Lin, T. H. Tan, Leong Yew Koh, Leung Cheung Ling.
- (4) *The Alliance Ad Hoc Political Working Committee* (established in March 1956 to draw up the Alliance proposals for the Independence Constitution): Tan Siew Sin, Ong Yoke Lin, Leong Yew Koh, H. S. Lee, Dr Lim Chong Eu, Ng Ek Teong, Too Joon Hing, Yong Pung How, T. H. Tan.

It is clear from the above that a handful of English-educated MCA leaders monopolized the conduct of party policies during the independence movement (H. S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh and Leung Cheung Ling were, however, also educated in Chinese). These representatives were appointed by Tan Cheng Lock, acting in consultation with the party Central Working Committee which derived its authority from the party General Committee, which in turn had given them wide powers to promote the cause of independence.²⁰

It is pertinent here to note the role played by Tan Cheng Lock in the independence campaign. It has been demonstrated that he initiated the formation of the MCA with a view to using the party to work for self-rule in Malaya. He pursued this goal with total dedication, participating in all the committees which were set up by the Alliance to obtain independence. However, his health took a turn for the worse in early 1955, and he played an increasingly less active role in party affairs after that time.²¹ Although he sat on the Working Party which prepared the Alliance Federal Election Manifesto, his role was largely nominal, and he was not responsible for the drawing up of any major policy paper. Poor health prevented him from participating in the intra-Alliance negotiations which produced the Alliance constitutional proposals. In contrast, his son, Tan Siew Sin, was very active in the affairs of the Alliance throughout this period. When Tan Cheng Lock's health failed after 1955, Tan Siew Sin in fact became the *de facto* president of the party, until March 1958 when Dr Lim Chong Eu formally succeeded Tan Cheng Lock as the party president. However, before his health declined, Tan Cheng Lock played a crucial role in party affairs, especially those related to the problem of Chinese education.

Whilst the English-educated leaders handled the party's rela-

tions with the UMNO in co-ordinating the Alliance independence campaign, the Chinese-speaking leaders performed the vital task of proving to the British authorities that the MCA possessed the political clout to mobilize mass Chinese support to back up the Alliance demands. Its claimed membership of 300,000 in 1954 was almost entirely Chinese-educated and/or Chinese-speaking.

When the National Convention passed its resolutions to press for an elected majority in the reconstituted Federal Legislative Council and immediate independence, the MCA Chinese-speaking leaders brought their influence to bear upon the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and *huay kuan* to back up the Alliance demands. They convened mass meetings of Chinese associations to draw up petitions, copies of which were forwarded to the High Commissioner, the Colonial Secretary and the Malay rulers. In Selangor, 57 Chinese associations, ranging from the influential Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall to the major dialect/regional *huay kuan* in the state and smaller bodies such as the clan associations, trade guilds, and social, cultural and recreational societies, held a mass meeting in Kuala Lumpur in February 1954 to support the resolutions passed by the National Convention. Similar meetings were held by Chinese associations in the other states: in Perak, the National Convention got the support of 25 Chinese organizations; in Negri Sembilan, 51 bodies; in Malacca, 16 bodies; and Kelantan, 9 bodies.²²

When the Alliance national leaders decided to boycott the Federal Legislative Council and other government bodies, the success of this move depended on the willingness of the lower-level leaders in both the UMNO and the MCA to observe the boycott. The Alliance national leaders who were members of the Federal Legislative Council could readily absent themselves from the Council, but the boycott of the state, municipal and local councils, and other local government bodies would have to be observed by the local leaders. The willingness of the MCA Chinese-speaking leaders to comply with the wishes of the Alliance national leaders was expressed at a meeting of the party General Committee on 13 June 1954, where the following resolution was passed:²³

In accordance with this resolution, those MCA members who were appointed by the Federal, State or Settlement Government to the membership of the Federal Executive and Legislative Councils, the Councils of State and Settlement Councils, State Executive Councils and Settlement nominated Councils, Municipal Councils, Town Councils and

Town Boards will resign from such Councils, and those MCA members who were elected to these Councils will not participate in such Councils.

The MCA national leaders organized meetings of Chinese associations to back up the boycott. In Selangor, for example, H. S. Lee, chairman of the state branch and president of the Selangor Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Chinese Assembly Hall, chaired a meeting of 120 Chinese associations which gathered to endorse the party resolution on the boycott.²⁴

On the whole the MCA national leaders were quite successful in getting the state and lower-level leaders to heed the Alliance boycott. The boycott was effectively implemented in Selangor, Malacca, Johore, Pahang, and Negri Sembilan, partially observed in Perak, and largely ignored in Penang.²⁵ The Alliance national leadership had decided that the observation of the boycott should be a voluntary affair, and had not planned to impose disciplinary action to enforce the boycott. In the event, the number of rebellious leaders lower down the UMNO and MCA party hierarchy were few, and the Alliance national leaders appeared satisfied with the overall results of the boycott, which saw some 1,000 Alliance resignations from government bodies.

To sum up, one can see that the effectiveness of the MCA's role in the Alliance independence campaign depended on the extent to which Chinese community leaders, both inside and outside the MCA, were prepared to support the MCA's efforts. The widespread response of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and huay kuan to the proceedings of the Alliance National Convention and the boycott of government bodies demonstrated that the MCA indeed had the support of the traditional leadership of the Chinese community.

Although the appeal of independence in itself attracted considerable Chinese support for the MCA during the party's most successful years of 1952-5, the Chinese public at large also looked to the MCA for leadership on other questions which preoccupied them, particularly education issues.

The MCA Initiative on Chinese Education and Language

Of all the issues pertaining to Chinese interests in the 1950s, the one relating to education and language evoked the most intense

emotional reaction from the population at large. In the face of threats to the status of its language and vernacular educational system, the community readily submerged differences of class and ideology to maintain a united position. The MCA's successful initiatives in the period 1952-5 in defending the status of Chinese education were responsible, more than any other battle fought by the party on behalf of Chinese interests, for gaining the widespread support of the community. Although Chinese left-wing groups were still actively working to extend their influence in Chinese schools, their efforts were largely eclipsed by the MCA's leadership on education issues.

In 1952, following the colonial government enactment of an Education Ordinance which threatened to destroy the system of Chinese vernacular education in Malaya, there was a spontaneous and massive outcry from Chinese community leaders and educationalists demanding repeal of the Ordinance. At the same time, the efforts of the community were also taken up by another major educational issue—the setting up of the Nanyang University in Singapore, a move which was deemed necessary both to promote the standard of Chinese learning in Malaya and Singapore, and to obviate the need for Chinese students to seek higher education in Taiwan, Hong Kong or China.

The 1952 Education Ordinance was based on the Barnes Report (released on 19 September 1951) which recommended an overhaul in the existing educational system in the country. That report called for the abolition of the separate vernacular schools and the creation of an integrated system of national schools where only the Malay and English languages would be taught.²⁶ At the same time as the Barnes Report was being prepared, the colonial government also appointed another Committee to make recommendations on Chinese education. The resultant report, the Fenn-Wu Report, advised against the findings of the Barnes Report; it insisted that Chinese and Indian vernacular schools should not be abolished, but be incorporated into the proposed Malay and English national school system.²⁷ However, the colonial administration, ignoring the recommendations of the Fenn-Wu Report, based the Education Ordinance completely on the findings of the Barnes Report.

The publication of the Barnes Report immediately galvanized the leaders of the Chinese community into fighting against it as they were convinced that implementation of its recommendations

would sound the death knell for Chinese education and language in Malaya.²⁸ Chinese education in Malaya had been set up through the patronage of community leaders of the traditional associations, particularly the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and dialect regional *huay kuan*. On 31 March 1954, the Chinese student population in Malaya stood at 31 per cent (251,174) of the total student enrolment (803,803) in the country.²⁹ The 250,000-odd Chinese students were enrolled in 1,200 schools, the majority of which received partial financial backing from the government in the form of grants-in-aid. As grants-in-aid per student paid to Chinese schools were lower than grants-in-aid paid out to English-, Malay- and Indian-medium schools,³⁰ the Chinese schools still depended to a considerable extent upon financial endowments made to them by the *huay kuan* leaders.

Hundreds of Chinese associations and educational bodies sent petitions and letters to the government, criticizing the Barnes Report and requesting that the proposed Education Ordinance be based on the Fenn-Wu Report. The following quotations, one taken from the memorandum prepared by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce (ACCC) and the other by Chinese school governors and school teachers, illustrate the tone of the Chinese response to the issue. The ACCC memorandum is quoted at some length because it lucidly expresses the reasons why the Chinese community found the Barnes Report objectionable:³¹

The [Barnes] Committee propose that Chinese and Indians should eventually abandon their own languages and cultures and accept instead those of the English and Malays. Such action is considered to be "Malayanisation", without which there is no national unity. We quite agree that a true Malayan must have a Malayan outlook. But true Malayanisation... is a successful digestion and combination of four cultures and ways of life dominant in Malaya, namely, Western, Muslim, Indian and Chinese. To favour only two and ignore the others is basically unjust, and will undoubtedly create a sense of fear and suspicion in the minds of those thus neglected, which might easily cause resentment and opposition. This will also contribute to communal misunderstanding and national disunity.... Self-government is not only a form of government, but an expression of a combined life. To think that such a government relies on the uniformity of language and culture is to underestimate its significance; and to compare loyalty to Malaya with willingness to accept [a] bilingual (English and Malay) system, as does the Barnes Report, borders on ignorance.

Chinese form almost half of the population in the Federation and the great majority of them are prepared to take Malaya as their homeland. By right

their language should be taken as one of the official languages. But, to our great disappointment and dismay, its very existence is even now in peril.

The Fenn's Report on Chinese education is in direct conflict with the Barnes Report in the understanding of Malaya and Malayan culture. The latter believes that the formation of a Malayan culture and a Malayan nation, for that matter, presupposes the need to cherish two languages (English and Malay) and to extinct the others (principally Chinese and Indian). To the former, however, a Malayan culture may be achieved by mutual toleration and cooperation among all the existing races. . . . Unless we purposely choose the autocratic and the unjust, we are bound to agree in principle and method with the Fenn's Report.

The letter from the Chinese school governors and Chinese school teachers sent to General Templer read:³²

It is generally admitted that Chinese culture is one of the best in the world, and for this alone it may well deserve to be preserved and nurtured in Malaya. In addition, Chinese form about half the population in the Federation. . . . Your Excellency appreciates that the United Nations Charter stipulates that non self-governing governments should give due respect to the cultures of different peoples. . . .

The unity of a nation does not, as contended by Dr. Fenn in his Report on Chinese education, depend on the singleness of tongue or the uniformity of languages. . . . In Malaya today, it appears to be politically more expedient to win the hearts of the people than to insist on the restriction of language.

The above passages indicate that Chinese objections were basically founded on two premises. First, there was the insistence that any ethnic group had a right to preserve its cultural heritage, especially in the case of the Chinese in Malaya, as they formed nearly half of the total population of the country. Secondly, it was considered extremely unjust to create a sense of Malayan identity and consciousness among the various races by excluding the cultural heritages of the immigrant races. Such a method of Malayanization, it was argued, could only cause interracial dissent rather than harmony.

The fears generated by the findings of the Barnes Committee led the teachers in Chinese schools to form the United Chinese School Teachers Association (UCSTA) on 25 August.³³ (The UCSTA was the first pan-Malayan Chinese school teachers' organization and it functioned more as a pressure group lobbying for the interests of Chinese school teachers than as a trade union.) When the colonial administration brushed aside the objections of

the Chinese community and enacted the Education Ordinance based upon the Barnes Report, Chinese response was immediate and widespread. The strength of Chinese anger aroused by the Education Ordinance is forcibly demonstrated in a letter written by Lim Lian Geok, the chairman of the newly formed UCSTA, to Tan Cheng Lock, conveying his wish that the MCA president make known the following view of the UCSTA (which by August 1954 had a membership of 7,300 teachers in 1,200 schools, with a student enrolment of 260,000 and 23 branches throughout the Federation) to the High Commissioner, MacGillivray:³⁴

Chinese here on becoming citizens of Malaya will do their duties and demonstrate their loyalty, but will never give up their mother tongue and culture. If Chinese education is not recognised as part of the educational system, then the Chinese are looked upon as conquered slaves and will never submit to the rule [of government].

It is clear from the above that the Chinese-educated and Chinese-speaking population, which formed nearly 90 per cent of the total Chinese population in Malaya, would question the legitimacy of a government which acted against the interests of Chinese language and education. Although this claim made by Lim Lian Geok may have been exaggerated, it nevertheless indicates the extent to which Chinese passions were aroused whenever the community perceived threats to the position of Chinese education and language.

From the very start, the leadership of the campaign to fight the 1952 Education Ordinance came under the control of the MCA. This occurred because of two factors: the relationship between the MCA and Chinese educational bodies and the *huay kuan* patrons of Chinese schools, and the personal commitment of Tan Cheng Lock to the cause of Chinese education in Malaya.

The Chinese-speaking leaders of the MCA who were the leaders of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and *huay kuan* were also the patrons of Chinese schools. They sat on school boards and on committees which financed and managed the running of the schools. A central body for Chinese school governors was set up with the formation of the United Chinese School Committees' Association (UCSCA) on 21 April 1954.³⁵ The UCSCA was as deeply concerned as the UCSTA about the threat posed by the Education Ordinance to Chinese education.

The commitment of Tan Cheng Lock to the cause of Chinese

education was a great boon to the Chinese-speaking leaders, who on their own would not have had the necessary skills to mount a campaign that would be a real source of concern to the colonial government. The importance of his involvement in the Chinese education campaign lay not so much in his access to the highest circles of British officialdom in Malaya, but in his personal relationship with Tunku Abdul Rahman and in the political alliance between the MCA and UMNO. Although it was Templer's administration that passed the Education Ordinance and it was his successor, MacGillivray, who approved the release of the 1954 White Paper on Educational Policy,³⁶ Tan Cheng Lock and other national MCA leaders knew that it would finally be the Alliance and not the colonial administration which would decide the fate of the Education Ordinance. The colonial administration was about to wind up its affairs of government in Malaya and to hand over power to the indigenous government soon to be chosen by the Malayan electorate. Therefore, although it had formulated an educational policy and enacted a bill to implement the policy, the colonial government could hardly justify the vast financial outlay which was required to train the manpower and construct the infrastructure for a system of national schools at a time when it was about to leave the country. Given these circumstances, the MCA national leaders realized that it would be up to the Alliance (since the coalition stood the best chances of winning the forthcoming Federal election) to decide whether the 1952 Education Ordinance would be retained and implemented or be replaced by a policy drawn up by the new Alliance government. The vital factor, therefore, was the attitude of the UMNO national leadership towards the question of Chinese education. Only if the UMNO were to co-operate in the MCA's efforts to fight for repeal of the Ordinance would Chinese grievances be redressed.

In the meantime, it was to the political advantage of the MCA national leaders to do all they could to persuade the British authorities to repeal the Ordinance, which had provoked such consternation within the Chinese community. This was also an opportune moment for the MCA to gain the widespread support of the Chinese masses at a time when the very existence of Chinese education was threatened. Whilst the party's vigorous opposition to the Ordinance no doubt stemmed partially from this consideration, it is necessary to look also at Tan Cheng Lock's role in the matter to understand why the MCA was so deeply committed to the cause of Chinese education in the early 1950s.

Tan Cheng Lock's interest in Chinese education and language grew out of a deep personal regard for his Chinese heritage, which in his opinion sprang from one of the world's most ancient and greatest civilizations. Although he was completely English-educated, he had taken great trouble to study Chinese classical works and had written a number of tracts on Chinese philosophical thought.³⁷ One of his most abiding beliefs was that Chinese in Malaya should never lose their cultural heritage, and that the promotion of Chinese education in the country was crucial to the preservation of that heritage. As early as 1923, Tan Cheng Lock had advised the colonial government that it should never contemplate doing away with Chinese and Indian vernacular schools, for the Chinese and Indian languages should be used as the means to inculcate a sense of Malayan loyalty among the offspring of newly arrived Chinese and Indian immigrants in the country.³⁸ After the MCA was formed, Tan Cheng Lock continued to champion the cause of Chinese education and language, as is shown in the following speech given in 1952 to a group of Chinese educationalists:³⁹

While politically the Malayan Chinese must be one and united with the rest of the permanent population of Malaya, culturally they must be independent and must maintain a very strong intellectual and spiritual life of their own. . . . The Chinese must be brought into harmony with their native Chinese ethos in order that they may preserve their traditions, customs, institutions and manners and be conversant with the Chinese classics and culture. Thus only can they become good Chinese as well as good Malaysians.

In April 1953 Tan Cheng Lock set up the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee to lead and co-ordinate the campaign to fight the 1952 Education Ordinance. His speech delivered at the second meeting of the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee is noteworthy for the stress he placed on the MCA's duty to champion the cause of Chinese education, and his belief that the Chinese would become loyal Malayan citizens only if they had the freedom to uphold their cultural traditions:⁴⁰

. . . the MCA . . . must protect the Chinese not only politically but economically, culturally, educationally, and in every other respect. Because if the Chinese don't know any Chinese, they are not Chinese (without knowing Chinese culture); they cannot be Chinese if they do not practise Chinese customs and traditions. . . . Our idea is to be good Malayan Chinese as well as real, genuine Chinese culturally, racially, intellectually, religiously, and

at the same time, we must be politically at one with the rest of this country in order to create what is most imperative—a united Malayan nation working and living in perfect harmony with each different component part.

The MCA Chinese Education Central Committee espoused the following objectives: (a) to study, decide and act on the policies pertaining to Chinese education in the Federation; (b) to help or represent Chinese schools in any negotiations with the government on all matters relating to Chinese education; (c) to unite school committees and teachers for the purpose of promoting the cause of Chinese education; (d) to discuss, promote and manage affairs pertaining to the development and betterment of Chinese schools.⁴¹

The membership of the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee comprised three groupings: representatives of the MCA, representatives of the UCSCA (the patrons of Chinese schools), and representatives of the UCSTA (the school teachers). The Committee collated the views of the three parties on the threat posed by the 1952 Education Ordinance to Chinese education and language. Its findings, a summary of the views Tan Cheng Lock and the Chinese bodies noted above, were published in a report presented to the government and 'to all those charged with the responsibility of shaping the Malayan Nation of the future through education'.⁴²

Besides presenting the MCA Education Memorandum to the colonial government, Tan Cheng Lock also sought a number of private meetings with Templer and his successor, MacGillivray, to seek a satisfactory settlement of the problem. The meetings and correspondence between these men revealed that the colonial government would not repeal the Ordinance; on the contrary, the 1954 White Paper on Education stated that the colonial administration intended to proceed with the gradual implementation of the 1952 Education Ordinance. However, this policy had not been implemented by the time independence was declared.⁴³

The impact of the MCA's leadership of the campaign against the 1952 Education Ordinance was not in any way undermined by the fact that Tan Cheng Lock's negotiations with Templer and MacGillivray had not resulted in the revocation of the Ordinance. Despite its lack of success, the very fact that the party had rallied to the cause of Chinese education, combined with the party president's outspoken views on Chinese culture, proved potent enough

to generate widespread Chinese confidence in the party. In addition, the MCA's influence over the patrons of Chinese schools and Chinese school teachers in the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee gave the party a powerful hold over the allegiance of the Chinese community at large.

The high regard which the Chinese community had for the MCA during this period was due very much to the personality of the party president and his strong championing of Chinese culture in Malaya. Lim Lian Geok, the chairman of UCSTA, paid fulsome homage to Tan Cheng Lock's leadership of the Chinese community in the following words: 'Sir Cheng Lock is known for his genuine love of Chinese culture, and could be said to be the real leader of Chinese in Malaya. He deserves the respect of our community including the teachers.'⁴⁴

The other popular issue related to Chinese education and language in the first half of the 1950s, aside from the opposition to the 1952 Education Ordinance, was the project to set up a Chinese university to provide tertiary education for graduates from Chinese secondary schools in Malaya and Singapore who otherwise would have normally gone to Chinese universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The proposed Nanyang University was to be built in Singapore on a piece of land donated by the Hokkien huay kuan there. The building and running of Nanyang University was to be largely financed by endowments made by individual Chinese philanthropists (such as Tan Lark Sye and Aw Boon Haw), Chinese Chambers of Commerce, huay kuan and business houses. The colonial administrations of Singapore and Malaya approved of the project and Malcolm MacDonald gave it his warmest support.⁴⁵

The overwhelming backing of the Chinese community for the project is reflected in numerous editorials and reports carried in the major Chinese dailies during the first half of 1953, when the campaign to raise money for the project took off. Leaders of Chinese associations in every state in the Federation set up Nanyang University State Committees to raise funds for the project; by the end of July 1954, it was reported that the various Committees had raised nearly \$2,500,000.⁴⁶

The national leaders of the MCA spoke out in favour of Nanyang University from the very start. Tan Cheng Lock was a keen advocate of the project, and other leading MCA figures such as Leong Yew Koh and H. S. Lee publicly pledged their support for the university.⁴⁷ Several party branches passed resolutions backing

the proposal and held meetings to discuss ways and means of helping to finance it.⁴⁸ A year later, in August 1954, the MCA became a member of the Nanyang University Council, the body responsible for supervising all activities connected with setting up the university.⁴⁹

An important development in the MCA's involvement was the endorsement it obtained from the UMNO for the project. UMNO blessing was contained in the manifesto drawn up by the MCA and UMNO national leaders for the Alliance National Convention held on 23 August 1953. The manifesto stated that the Alliance pledged its support for 'the proposed Nanyang University as well as other universities that may be established in the future, so as to benefit all the communities of Malaya'.⁵⁰

The involvement of the MCA in the Nanyang University project greatly enhanced the party's reputation as the custodian of Chinese cultural and educational interests. Chinese-speaking towkay party leaders in each state were involved in the campaign to raise funds for the building of the university and made generous contributions themselves. They were also represented in every Nanyang University State Committee. Thus the commitment of both the English-educated and Chinese-speaking MCA leaders to the Nanyang University project strengthened the solidarity between the top and lower-echelon party leadership and contributed greatly to the party's popularity with the Chinese community at large.

The Alliance Election Manifesto of July 1955

The UMNO's endorsement of the proposed Nanyang University at the Alliance National Convention held on 23 August 1953 reflected the concern of the party's top leadership to conduct its newly formed political partnership with the MCA in as supportive and harmonious a manner as possible. This UMNO willingness to accommodate the MCA's wishes can be seen in the pledges made on issues affecting Chinese political, economic and cultural interests in the Alliance Manifesto for the country's first Federal election held in July 1955.⁵¹

The most compelling motivation behind the UMNO wooing of the MCA was its ambition to become the first government of independent Malaya. The British Government had attached a precondition to the granting of Malayan independence: it would hand over power only to a multiracial government and not an exclusively

Malay government (although it was understood the Malay component in it would be the superior force). The UMNO top leadership therefore had to seek allies from the leaderships of the Chinese and Indian communities. The electoral usefulness of the MCA to the UMNO was made apparent during the first municipal, local and state elections held in the country, when the organizational and financial assets of the MCA contributed towards the massive victories won by the newly formed Alliance.

While the UMNO wished to promote a harmonious relationship with the MCA by being considerate of Chinese interests, it also knew that it could afford to make generous election pledges to non-Malays since election promises, unlike constitutional guarantees, need not always be honoured. The function of an election manifesto lay primarily in its effectiveness as a vote-catching device; it had to appeal to as wide a section of the electorate as possible. The problem of sorting out the conflicting interests of Malays and non-Malays would be faced after the all-important objective of winning the election was first achieved.

A crucial factor which the UMNO top leadership had to bear in mind when drafting the Alliance Election Manifesto was the imperative need to retain the goodwill and support of its Malay voters whilst concessions were made to non-Malay voters.⁵² This consideration meant that the UMNO national leadership had to maintain a careful balance in its pledges on issues affecting both Malay and non-Malay interests, a far from easy task since these interests were often diametrically opposed. The UMNO and the MCA national leadership, however, successfully performed this balancing act during the Federal election.

The 1955 election results showed that the Alliance Manifesto had appealed to the Malayan electorate regardless of racial and class background, as the Alliance Party won a landslide victory, gaining 51 out of a total of 52 contested seats, and polling 80 per cent of the popular vote.⁵³ The success of the UMNO and MCA leaderships' wooing of Malay and non-Malay votes lay in a number of carefully thought-out strategies. The first of these was that it held out, as far as it possibly could, equally attractive pledges on racially salient issues to both the Malay and non-Malay voters. Where this golden mean could not be achieved because of the sheer depths of racial passions aroused by the issues concerned, the UMNO and MCA national leadership avoided giving offence by declaring that the responsibility for making the decisions on

these issues lay not with the Alliance but with an outside party—the Independence Constitutional Commission, which was to be appointed to investigate the terms of independence for Malaya.

Another strategy which the UMNO and MCA top leaders employed to retain their hold over the allegiance of their supporters was to control the information that was allowed to filter down to the Malay and Chinese grass-roots during the election campaign. This objective was achieved mainly through the publication of two versions of its Election Manifesto.⁵⁴ The comprehensive version contained the full text of the Alliance pledges and policy statements and was intended only to have a limited circulation amongst the country's political élite—the British officials and members of the Federal Legislative Council and other opinion-makers of the country. The main purpose of this version was to show the country's inner circle that the Alliance leadership had a clearly thought-out policy on every major issue and was qualified to govern the Malayan people. The other version of the manifesto, specially designed for mass consumption and circulation, was an abridged and censored summary of the comprehensive manifesto. Parts of policy statements in the comprehensive manifesto pertaining to racially salient issues such as citizenship, special rights, land, and agriculture were omitted in the abridged version, lest it provoke the hostility of either the Malay or non-Malay voters.

Finally, the Alliance leadership contrived to take the heat out of racial sentiments by focusing attention on the immediate objective of Malayan independence. The Alliance leadership had judged correctly that independence would be its trump card in the election campaign, having staged the National Convention to press for immediate self-rule and holding the boycott to press the British Government to accept the recommendations of the National Convention. In the eyes of the Malayan populace, the Alliance coalition had done more than any party to promote the smooth handing over of power in Malaya; certainly its record on that score was far more impressive than that of the other parties contesting the election, including its most serious challenger, the Party Negara. By making the attainment of independence the key plank in its electoral platform, the Alliance national leadership cleverly appealed to supra-communal sentiments and successfully got the Malayan electorate to submerge racial and class differences to achieve the higher objective of emancipation from colonial rule.

The MCA English-educated leaders played important roles in

drawing up the Election Manifesto. Responsibility for formulation of the election platform was given to five UMNO and seven MCA representatives. The MCA drew up the following papers: 'Finance and Economic Policies' by H. S. Lee; 'Education' by Leung Cheung Ling (a leading MCA representative on the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee); 'Consequences of the Alliance Assuming Responsibility without Financial and Economic Powers' by Tan Siew Sin; 'Housing and Town Planning in the Federation' by Ong Yoke Lin; 'Alliance Organization, Elections Machinery and Finance' by T. H. Tan; 'Cost of the Emergency in the Federation' by Tan Cheng Lock; and 'Economic Aid to Malays' by Leong Yew Koh.⁵⁵

The MCA papers on economics, finance and education contained clear-cut policies which were beneficial to Chinese interests. Although the platform papers on special rights, citizenship, land, agriculture and fisheries were drawn up by the UMNO representatives, Chinese interests in these fields were not adversely affected; on the contrary, the pledges on land and agriculture were positively attractive to Chinese voters. All in all, the various planks in the Alliance election platform satisfied the different class interests of the Chinese community, from the capitalist towkay to the petty traders down to the squatter population in the New Villages. Chinese hopes and expectations were high, and a sense of well-being and harmony prevailed between the different social groups within the MCA, and between the party and the Chinese community at large.

Aside from independence, two other major issues—citizenship and education—were issues which would draw the support of Chinese voters regardless of class and social origins. Although it is true that all Chinese resident in Malaya were unhappy about the stringent conditions governing the acquisition of Malayan citizenship in the Federation of Malaya Agreement, the problem of Chinese education was in fact the 'hotter' issue with the Chinese community at large, because the very existence of Chinese education in Malaya was threatened by the 1952 Education Ordinance and the 1954 White Paper on Education. The pledges made by the Alliance on Chinese education helped reduce fears regarding these policies. The Alliance promise to review the 1952 Education Ordinance clearly implied that an Alliance Government would oppose the aims of the Ordinance, since the Manifesto (in the version designed for mass circulation) stated that the Alliance would allow

'vernacular schools their normal expansion' and would 'encourage rather than destroy the schools, languages or culture of any race living in this country'.⁵⁶ The MCA efforts to fight the 1952 Education Ordinance had finally produced positive results; it now stood to reap the goodwill of the Chinese community during the Federal election.

The UMNO was willing to accommodate the interests of Chinese education because it was able to make similar promises regarding the development of Malay education and language in the Manifesto. The Alliance promised that more money would be allocated to finance the expansion of Malay government schools as well as privately run Islamic schools, which predominated in the rural areas. Most important, the Manifesto promised to make the Malay language the national language of the country. This pledge reflected the personal commitment of the UMNO English-educated leadership to the issue as much as popular demands by the Malay community at large. Tunku Abdul Rahman's statements on the question showed the deep commitment he felt to the status of the Malay language. When the 1952 Education Ordinance was debated in the Federal Legislative Council, the Tunku obviously did not favour the intention of the colonial administration to abolish Chinese and Indian schools in the country. In his speech defending the right of the different communities to be educated in their own language, he also made an important point regarding the status of the Malay language: 'Let the Chinese be taught in their schools, let the Indians be taught in their schools.... Our only concern is that... Malay must remain an official language of this country.'⁵⁷ The Alliance therefore promised to uphold the right of the different races to an education in their mother tongues; however, the Malay language was to be accorded a more privileged status than the Chinese and Indian languages. Malay voters could then deduce that the usage of the Malay language was to have top priority in the educational system of an Alliance-governed independent Malaya.

Citizenship for non-Malays was the other issue affecting the interests of Chinese from all class and social backgrounds. The stringent citizenship provisions of the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948 prevented the overwhelming majority of Chinese then resident in the country from getting the franchise. The MCA national leaders had since that time argued persistently for the liberalization of the citizenship provisions, particularly for

the granting of citizenship to non-Malays based on the principle of *jus soli*, as has been shown in the earlier discussion of the proceedings of the Communities Liaison Committee. Whilst the Chinese voters wanted a pledge from the Alliance to grant *jus soli* to non-Malays, the Malay voters completely opposed it. It is not an exaggeration to say that citizenship was the most divisive of all the racially salient issues in the first half of the 1950s: the Malay community had fought for the demise of the Malayan Union because it promised to grant citizenship based on *jus soli* to non-Malays and the community was not prepared to see the advantage it had gained taken away in 1955. The Alliance leadership, therefore, had to devise a plan to deal with this seemingly intractable issue.

It decided that the only way of resolving the conflicting interests of Malay and non-Malay voters was to actually disclaim that it was going to make any decisions on citizenship. In the abridged Manifesto, the Alliance stated that it would press the British Government to appoint a special Independent Commission to investigate the terms of Malayan independence and make recommendations on constitutional reforms. One of the main duties of this Commission would be 'to study the nationality problem in the country so that it can be satisfactorily resolved'. The public stand of the Alliance on citizenship was thus to avoid holding out any promises to non-Malays while at the same time reassuring them that the problem would receive serious consideration in the immediate future.

The MCA leadership, however, knew that the UMNO national leaders had conceded far more to the non-Malay demands on citizenship than what had been made public. The Alliance position as expressed in its full Manifesto designed for limited circulation and the Tunku's views in an election policy paper on citizenship make this point clear. The Alliance top leadership could afford to be less circumspect on the issue of citizenship in its comprehensive Manifesto, because it was protected by the restricted circulation of the document. In this document, the Alliance implicitly expressed its willingness to grant citizenship to the large majority of non-Malays resident in the country:⁵⁸

As a result of the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, a problem of a large alien population has been created in the Federation.... An independent Malaya cannot tolerate this state of affairs.... To meet this situation, it is essential that Independent Malaya must create unity and a common loyalty among her peoples, and this will not be achieved if half her population were to remain aliens.

While the willingness of the Alliance to grant citizenship to the majority of non-Malays was implicitly made in the above, the statement on the same subject made by Tunku Abdul Rahman in his platform paper was totally explicit. The Tunku stated that the UMNO and MCA national leaders had privately agreed that citizenship based on *jus soli* should be granted to non-Malays as part of a deal in which Malays would be guaranteed special rights:⁵⁹

The principle of *jus soli* is almost universally adopted and practised. In the Federation, if this principle were adopted, the special position of Malays must be safeguarded, because Malays are weak economically and they have a genuine fear that their legitimate interests might be relegated to the background; if the principle of *jus soli* is recommended by the Special Independent Commission to be written into the Constitution, the Alliance pledges that the special position of the Malays will be safeguarded and likewise written into the Constitution... The Alliance... feels that the genuine aspirations of non-Malays and the legitimate interests of Malays could be met by accepting the principle of *jus soli* and the principle of the special position of Malays be written into the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya...

The above is quoted at some length because, as will be seen in the next chapter, the issues of citizenship and special rights dominated the intra-Alliance talks to draw up the Alliance proposals for the Independent Constitution, and the Tunku's views as expressed above were an important point of reference for the UMNO and MCA negotiations. Even before publication of the paper quoted above, the Tunku had made his position clear at a meeting of the MCA General Committee convened in June 1954 to garner the support of the MCA Chinese-speaking leaders for the Alliance boycott of government bodies, when he said '... the principle of *jus soli* has been accepted by UMNO'.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that the UMNO's views on *jus soli* were only aired in private to the MCA top leaders, and on one occasion during a closed session of a meeting of the MCA General Committee, the Alliance leaders were careful to ensure that Malay sentiments be placated if news of this private assurance given to the MCA should leak out. Both the MCA and the UMNO top leadership were in agreement that the goodwill of Malay voters was paramount to the interests of the Alliance during the Federal election because Malay voters then formed 84.2 per cent of the total electorate. (Chinese voters formed 11.2 per cent and the others a mere 4.6 per cent.⁶¹) Therefore, while the UMNO national leaders

wished to please their MCA friends and accommodate Chinese interests, they would not do so at the expense of alienating the Malay vote.

The insurance taken out by the UMNO to retain the loyalty of its Malay supporters during the Federal election was its pledges on special rights. While the Alliance did not make any specific promises on citizenship in its widely circulated Manifesto, that was not the case with special rights. The abridged Manifesto stated that the Alliance would 'safeguard the special position of Malays'; and the comprehensive Manifesto declared '... the Alliance pledges that the special position of the Malays will be safeguarded and written in the Constitution...'.⁶¹

The MCA leaders raised no objections to the public statements on the special position of the Malays, because they were satisfied with the private assurances given to them by the UMNO on citizenship. Besides, they felt that the Manifesto's pledges on Chinese education were enough to draw in the Chinese vote. Furthermore, the Alliance platform on economics and finance, land and agriculture were also beneficial to certain class interests within the Chinese community; the platform on economics and finance attracted the support of the capitalist towkay, and the policies on land and agriculture held out security of land tenure to the half-million-strong Chinese New Village population. At the same time, the class interests of Chinese petty traders, farmers and fishermen were likewise accommodated.

The Alliance platform on economics and finance was drawn up by H. S. Lee, one of the most successful Chinese businessmen in Malaya and also the president of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the bastion of Chinese capitalist interests in Malaya. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that capitalist interests in the country should be so well served by the Alliance economic policy. In fact, the larger part of the economic policy was based on recommendations submitted to the Alliance National Council by members of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce.⁶² These economic policies emphasized a strong commitment to free enterprise and other classic features of a capitalist economy, such as the granting of tax exemptions for newly established business enterprises and the relaxation of exchange controls to attract foreign investment into Malaya. In addition, there would be no nationalization of local private industries, or British and other foreign concerns in the country. The UMNO national leaders left

the task of drawing up the Alliance economic platform to the MCA leaders, because they felt that they themselves lacked the commercial experience and background to deal with business policies. It must be remembered that there were hardly any UMNO leaders then who were engaged in commercial and industrial enterprises; the present breed of successful Malay entrepreneurs is very much the product of the New Economic Policy introduced in the country after 1969.

The Alliance agrarian platform, drawn up by the UMNO leadership, reflected awareness of two important considerations: that Malay voters formed nearly 85 per cent of the total electorate, and that these voters were mainly poor farmers and fishermen. The UMNO leadership had always believed that the welfare of such deprived Malays should be improved, and this belief had formed the basis for its insistence on Malay special rights. The numerical importance of the Malay rural vote in the Federal election made it even more pertinent and necessary for the UMNO to take immediate action in this respect. The Alliance Election Manifesto consequently placed a great deal of emphasis on agrarian policies which were designed to benefit the majority of the Malay population living in rural areas. Both the comprehensive and abridged versions of the Alliance Manifesto spelt out in careful detail the types of measures which an elected Alliance Government would implement relating to land, agriculture, fisheries, rural welfare, and so on.⁶³

While it is clear that the Alliance agrarian platform sought primarily to benefit Malay interests, the MCA leadership did play a part in influencing the platform in a manner advantageous to Chinese interests. The MCA leadership's influence on the Alliance agrarian platform is discernible in three ways: in persuading the UMNO leadership to exclude a comprehensive programme of drastic economic reforms from the Election Manifesto; in obtaining a pledge from the UMNO to ensure security of land tenure for Chinese agriculturalists; and in getting the UMNO to soft pedal on a pledge made to Malay fishermen which would have harmed the interests of Chinese middlemen in the fishing industry.

When the UMNO and MCA delegates met to discuss the contents of their Election Manifesto, the UMNO leaders had already formulated a programme to improve Malay welfare.⁶⁴ However, none of the recommendations contained in the UMNO memorandum were included in the Alliance Manifesto, as the UMNO and MCA leaders agreed that the election was not an opportune time to publicize the contents of the document.

The UMNO memorandum had recommended that government should introduce radical economic reforms to improve the Malay standard of living. It declared that there should be 'drastic and direct Government involvement' in every sector of the Malayan economy to ensure that Malays would have 'rapid and active participation in the economic life of the country'. The document then outlined the types of special rights which Malays would have in education, agriculture, industry, trade and commerce. Malay special rights in these areas were to be implemented through the legislative and executive arms of the state. The scope and range of state interventionist action envisaged by the UMNO to implement Malay special rights was indeed far-reaching. In the agrarian sector, for example, the UMNO's proposals for improving rural Malay welfare, radical by any standard, involved the abolishing of private enterprises connected with the processing, transporting and marketing of agricultural produce, and their replacement by state-run co-operatives. The memorandum declared that only government-sponsored co-operatives should be allowed to exist to service the needs of Malay farmers and 'all other private undertakings should be abolished by law'. It added that in mainly Malay areas 'no individual produce buyer should be permitted to operate'. The memorandum further stated that private marketing organizations would be banned and replaced by state marketing boards; and State Agricultural Banks would be the sole source of credit for Malay agriculturalists. In other words, the major purpose of these agrarian reforms was to eradicate the role of the middlemen in the subsistence economy of the Malay peasantry. It was widely held that the dealings of middlemen, most of whom were Chinese, had created Malay rural poverty, chiefly through the practice of charging exorbitantly high interest rates on credit loaned to Malay agriculturalists. Therefore, the UMNO sought to abolish Chinese control over the Malay peasantry, even though these middlemen provided essential services which included the financing, processing and marketing of the produce of the Malay peasant household, and the provision of agricultural goods and other daily necessities, albeit often on terms unfavourable to their Malay peasant clients.

The memorandum likewise argued that state legislative and executive action should be implemented in the fields of education, trade, commerce and industry to increase the level of Malay performance in these areas. The memorandum proposed that, among other things, Malays should receive preferential treatment in the distribution of educational grants and places in educational insti-

tutions, and in the allocation of business licences and bank loans. It also stated that 'in the management of estates, factories and mines, the employment of a percentage of Malays on the staff should be made compulsory'. In addition, it should also be compulsory for 'estates, factories and mines to employ a percentage of Malays where a large number of labourers (are) employed'. These proposals indicate that the UMNO leadership had thought out a coherent policy on Malay special rights as early as 1953. The New Economic Policy, implemented in the wake of political turmoil and weakened Chinese political clout following the racial disturbances of May 1969, incorporates the major features of this earlier blueprint.

The UMNO memorandum on the economic position of Malays was carefully studied by the MCA national leadership and its reaction was noted in the election policy paper, prepared by Leong Yew Koh, called 'Memorandum on the Economic Aid to Malays'. A study of this paper reveals that the MCA national leadership had no objections to the UMNO claim that Malays ought to receive special treatment to improve their economic welfare. The paper stated that 'the political stability and well-being of the country' depended upon a marked improvement in the standard of living of Malays. The MCA national leadership also agreed with the UMNO that government legislation should be introduced to bring about an improvement in Malay welfare. However, the MCA top leadership sharply disagreed with the UMNO on the scope and extent of government intervention on behalf of the Malay community, arguing that legislation benefiting the welfare of Malays should be implemented only if existing non-Malay economic interests were left unharmed. It proposed that Malay special rights should be introduced in the following ways: (a) loans to be made easily available to Malays by state-controlled banks to enable them to set up businesses in urban and rural areas; (b) education centres and training facilities to be set up to equip Malays with the necessary managerial, commercial and technical skills to participate in commerce and industry; (c) licences to be reserved for Malays in forestry, saw-milling, tin mining, rubber and other agricultural produce enterprises, and in other businesses such as the running of restaurants, hotels, petrol kiosks, rice- and provision-dealing and public transportation; (d) land to be set aside in urban centres for Malays to run their businesses; and (e) where absolutely necessary, the government to pass laws to promote the economic interests of Malays.

In the agrarian sector, the MCA top leadership was adamantly opposed to the proposed banning of private enterprise as a means of safeguarding the interests of the Malay peasantry. Specifically, it completely disagreed with the UMNO that the function of the middlemen be eradicated. Its argument appears to have been based on two premises. First, the prohibition of private enterprise in the rural areas would severely damage the business interests of Chinese petty traders and retailers living there and performing middleman and other services for Malay kampung dwellers. The business interests of wealthy towkay in the bigger urban centres would also be adversely affected, for they had considerable financial dealings with the rural Chinese petty bourgeois class, particularly through credit and goods provided to rural Chinese traders. Since urban towkay and rural petty traders constituted the backbone of the MCA leadership from the national down to the grass-roots level, the MCA top leadership discouraged the UMNO from restricting, let alone banning, their business activities.

Apart from their vested interest in maintaining private enterprise in the agrarian sector of the economy, the MCA leaders argued that a curtailment of Chinese business activities would not alleviate Malay poverty, because the wealth of Malaya lay primarily in the hands of British and other foreign concerns. They tried to persuade the UMNO top leadership that the solution to Malay poverty lay not in curtailing Chinese business activity in the rural and urban areas, but in limiting the control exerted by foreign interests in the plantation, mining, industrial and commercial sectors of the Malayan economy.⁶⁵

The MCA top leadership was greatly concerned that Chinese support for the Alliance should not be alienated during the country's first Federal election. They therefore persuaded the UMNO leadership to avoid all mention of the contents of both the UMNO and MCA memoranda on the economic position of Malays in the Alliance Election Manifesto. They assured the UMNO national leadership that they supported the latter's claim for Malay special rights; however, they pointed out that the election was not a suitable occasion for publicizing the MCA's stand on the matter, as it would surely drive away non-Malay support for the Alliance.

The UMNO national leaders complied with the MCA's views on the matter, largely because they themselves had no desire to introduce such communally divisive issues into the election campaign, particularly because the issue of independence was at stake and the Alliance coalition could not afford to lose the support of

any racial group in the country. The whole matter was thus left out of the Election Manifesto and the Chinese public was not informed about the private MCA national leaders' agreement to Malay special rights. Similarly, the UMNO national leaders on their part did not disclose their private views on citizenship for non-Malays to the Malay public, for the same reason of wishing to avoid controversial and highly-charged communal issues in the election campaign.

A second feature which bore the mark of MCA influence on the Election Manifesto was the platform on fisheries. In the comprehensive Manifesto, the UMNO leadership pledged to improve the standard of living of Malay fishermen through various measures. One of these read: 'to find ways and means of preventing the fishermen from being indebted to middlemen'. Since many MCA lower-echelon leaders and supporters were engaged in middleman activities in the fishing industry, the inclusion of a pledge to make Malay fishermen less dependent on the services of middlemen in the popularly circulated Manifesto would be injurious to the standing of the MCA within the Chinese community at large. Recognizing this political fact, the UMNO leaders agreed to exclude the fisheries pledge in the broadly circulated Manifesto. The inclusion of the pledge in the comprehensive Manifesto, however, was deemed necessary by the UMNO national leaders, for they wanted to show Malay community leaders that they were aware of the major problem of indebtedness faced by Malay fishermen (and farmers) and were prepared to deal with the issue.

The third area of MCA influence on the Alliance agrarian platform concerned the policy pertaining to land. The MCA national leaders made a positive contribution here by obtaining a pledge from the UMNO to ensure security of land tenure for Chinese agriculturalists, especially the newly settled squatter population in the New Villages. In the comprehensive Manifesto, the Alliance promised to replace the practice of issuing land licences based on temporary occupation licences, which were normally valid for one year, with longer-term leases. The Manifesto stated that this measure would give 'the occupiers of land security of tenure, and... a "touchable, seeable stake" which they would, in consequence, protect and develop'. Furthermore, good agricultural land was to be made available to all farmers irrespective of race.

The promise contained in the Alliance Election Manifesto to secure an improvement in the deal for Chinese squatters stemmed largely from the efforts of the MCA national leaders, who, besides

being sympathetic to their plight, were also aware that the land issue was the key reason behind the alienation of the rural Chinese population from the authorities during the Emergency. The MCA national leaders had consistently argued that Chinese squatters had to be given greater security of land tenure if the government was to make any headway in weaning the Chinese rural population from the Communists during the opening years of the government anti-insurgency campaign. This point was forwarded in a party document drafted by Tan Siew Sin in February 1952 and subsequently circulated to the members of the Alliance Roundtable in mid-1954. The paper declared:⁶⁶ 'The squatters, most of whom are of Chinese origin, should be given permanent titles to the land they occupy, thus giving them a stake in the country, and such land should not be less than five acres for each family. They must also be assisted with a view to increasing production per man per acre.' It appears that the UMNO national leaders were responsive to the argument of the MCA on the subject, largely because the circumstances created by the Communist insurgency made it necessary for the Alliance, in its aspiration to form the first government in independent Malaya, to appear at least to have the interests of the squatter population at heart. Although the Emergency was well under control militarily in early 1955, the MCP could nevertheless continue to remain a significant thorn in the side of the authorities if land grievances amongst the Chinese New Villagers were left to fester. The UMNO agreed that it was politically intelligent to offer greater security of land tenure to Chinese squatters, for this would kill two birds with one stone: the MCP would find the New Villages a less fruitful base to operate in, and the MCA would receive more positive commitment from the Chinese lower classes living in the rural areas. These potential MCA supporters included not only the full-time farmers but also seasonal agriculturalists, who comprised plantation workers and tin-mine labourers temporarily made redundant by a fall in the demand for labour in the plantations and mines in the vicinity of the New Villages.

While the UMNO national leaders were aware that it was politically desirable to remove a major source of discontent prevalent among the rural Chinese population, it also had to consider how the Malay peasantry would react to pledges of liberal land tenure to Chinese farmers in the Alliance Manifesto. The UMNO national leaders were not blind to the fact that the Malay peasantry

would regard any liberalization of the existing system of Chinese land tenure as a serious encroachment upon its traditional rights to agricultural land in Malaya, which had been upheld by the colonial government and enshrined in the system of Malay Reserves. Because the UMNO national leaders wished to please the MCA on the matter and yet retain the support of the Malay masses at the same time, they agreed that a pledge ensuring greater security of land tenure for Chinese agriculturalists would be included in the comprehensive Manifesto but would be worded more ambiguously in the abridged Manifesto distributed to the masses. The abridged Manifesto stated that the Alliance would 'ensure the security of land tenure to agriculturalists', and 'ensure vegetable growers of security of tenure by replacing Temporary Occupation Licenses with Leases'. The significant difference between the two Manifestos is that whereas the comprehensive Manifesto promised to replace temporary occupation licences with longer-term land leases, the abridged Manifesto deliberately did not state whether the land leases would be short or long-term ones. Furthermore, the comprehensive Manifesto promised to make agricultural land freely available to all farmers regardless of race. The abridged Manifesto did not mention this pledge. It would appear that the differences between the two Manifestos were created by the Alliance national leadership to allow MCA election campaigners to assure the New Villagers that they faced brighter prospects concerning security of land tenure under an Alliance Government; at the same time UMNO campaigners could tell Malay kampung dwellers that an Alliance Government would not whittle away their established rights to rural land. In its quest for power in 1955, the Alliance leadership chose to balance itself rather precariously between the conflicting land claims of Malays and non-Malays; the problem was so intractable that it was felt best to leave it aside for the time being.

A final pledge in the Alliance Manifesto, for which the MCA was responsible, was the labour policy aimed at getting the vote of the non-Malay rural and urban proletariat. A large part of the labour movement in the country, like the Chinese squatter population, had come under the influence of the MCP in the period immediately after World War II in Malaya. Whereas the Alliance pledges on land were an attempt to weaken Communist influence among the New Village population, its labour pledges were designed to appeal to the predominantly Chinese tin-mining labourers,

the predominantly Indian rubber estate workers, and the mixed Chinese and Indian urban unskilled and semi-skilled work-force. The Alliance promised, among other things, to ensure a fair deal for workers; to achieve full employment; to provide training facilities for workers; to promote the growth of healthy and strong trade unions; and to encourage the expansion of workers' co-operative shops in rubber estates and other areas with a concentrated work-force. While it may be said that the implementation of an enlightened labour policy would be inimical to the capitalist interests represented in the MCA—the towkay who were the employers of labour in business, manufacturing, mining and plantation enterprises—it was nevertheless considered necessary for the party to seek the support of the urban and rural Chinese proletariat during the election campaign.

In conclusion, it can be said that the MCA's activities in the independence movement during the period 1953-5 constituted a watershed in the development of the party, both in terms of the role it played in the nationalist politics of Malaya and in its relations with the Chinese community. At the supra-communal level, the MCA's joint efforts with the UMNO to grasp the initiative in the independence campaign established it as a leading Malayan nationalist party. By mid-1955, it had evolved from its social welfare origins into a well-organized political party with a larger membership and greater financial resources than the UMNO. The party's co-operation with the UMNO in sponsoring the National Convention and holding the boycott of the Federal Legislative Council and other government bodies was instrumental in speeding up the timetable for independence in Malaya.

The MCA English-educated national leaders won the goodwill and friendship of the UMNO top-ranking leaders as a result of their whole-hearted support for the Alliance independence campaign. UMNO goodwill and trust in the MCA's top leadership in turn made it possible for the MCA to advance the interests of the Chinese community at large, as is seen in the liberal pledges on the educational, economic and political position of the Chinese community made in the Alliance Election Manifesto of July 1955. The Alliance pledges on education and citizenship gave the MCA the support of Chinese voters from different class and social backgrounds. The Manifesto's economic platform appealed to Chinese capitalist interests, and the agrarian and labour platforms attracted the sympathy of the Chinese rural and urban proletariat. The

Alliance election pledges raised the hopes of the Chinese community and created widespread support for the MCA. Although these hopes were in many cases later proven to have been unrealistic, there were high expectations amongst the Chinese in 1955 that their interests would be well served by an Alliance Government in independent Malaya.

The efforts exerted by the MCA national leadership to fight for the repeal of the 1952 Education Ordinance and the sincerity of Tan Cheng Lock's commitment to obtain a better deal for Chinese education and language between 1952 and 1955 created widespread Chinese confidence in the English-educated leadership of the party. A strong bond of party solidarity existed between these top-ranking English-educated leaders and the Chinese-speaking lower-echelon leaders and party rank and file. United by the common objective of gaining independence as well as by the mutual desire to protect the existing system of Chinese education, the MCA reached the zenith of its popularity with the Chinese community during this period.

1. Interview with Sir Gerald Templer, 9 November 1978.

2. Interview with Sir Gerald Templer, 9 November 1978.

3. The conference was convened by Datuk Onn and three Chief Ministers (Mentri Besar), Datuk Panglima Gantang of Perak, Othman bin Mohamad, Acting Mentri Besar of Selangor, and Datuk Nik Ahmad Kamil of Kelantan. The other ten organizations which attended the Conference besides the IMP were: the All-Malayan Muslim Association, the Eurasian Association of Malaya, the Straits Chinese British Association, the Ceylonese Federation of Malaya, the Federation of Indian Organisations, the Malayan Indian Association, the Malayan Indian Congress, the Malayan Pakistani Association, the Malayan Sikh Association, the Malayan Sinhalese Association.

4. *Report of the Malayan National Conference*, Kuala Lumpur, Charles Grenier & Son Ltd., August 1953, pp. 7-9.

5. 'Statement by the UMNO-MCA Alliance on the Report and Recommendations of the Working Committee of the Mentri-Mentri Besar Sponsored National Conference Issued on 23 August 1953', mimeo.

6. See letter from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Tan Cheng Lock dated 24 March 1953, and 'Notes of a Conversation between Tengku Abdul Rahman and Datuk E. E. C. Thuraisingham' by T. H. Tan, mimeo., 12 May 1953, MCA Headquarters. Tunku Abdul Rahman told Thuraisingham that Malcolm MacDonald had got Datuk Onn, Datuk Panglima Gantang of Perak and Datuk Nik Kamil to convene the National Conference. Malcolm MacDonald, on the other hand, informed the author that he had not initiated the event but simply encouraged the other men to go ahead when they asked his advice on the matter. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 24 May 1977.

7. The UMNO and MCA members were: Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dr Ismail, Datuk Abdul Razak, H. S. Lee, Tan Siew Sin, Leong Yew Koh, and Leung Cheung Ling.

8. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine the Question of Elections to the Federal Legislative Council*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1954. The percentage of civil servants in the Supreme Executive Council of UMNO for the years 1949-55 is as follows: 79 per cent in 1949; 61 per cent in 1950; 58 per cent in 1951; 68 per cent in 1952; 63 per cent in 1953; 63 per cent in 1954; 50 per cent in 1955. Figures taken from Chandrasekaran Pillay, 'Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position and Opposition Attitudes', MA thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1974, p. 7.

9. Fifteen organizations were invited to attend the Convention but only four bodies turned up—the Peninsular Malays Union, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, the Kelantan Malay Union and the Pan-Malayan Labour Party. The low level of acceptance was due mainly to dissatisfaction over the allocation of voting rights at the Convention—the UMNO and MCA allocated 14 votes each for themselves and gave only two votes each to other organizations. For further details of the Convention, see G. P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 2nd ed., London, Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 144-50.

10. This figure was given by Hashim Ghani, the leader of the Peninsular Malays Union, in his address to the first session of the National Convention held on 23 August 1953. In mid-1954 the UMNO-MCA Alliance claimed membership of 500,000 included 300,000 in the MCA and 200,000 in the UMNO. See 'Statement by UMNO/MCA Alliance Released in London, 17 May 1954', mimeo., TCL Papers, TCL/8/52a.

11. Official estimates for other mainstream parties were: 20,500 for the MIC, 2,010 for the IMP, 2,000 for the Pan-Malayan Labour Party, and 2,000 for the Malayan Indian Association. Monthly Emergency and Political Report, April 1954. FO371/111854/1018.

12. Minutes of the Third Session of the National Convention held on 14 February 1954, MCA Headquarters.

13. See speeches by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dr Ismail and H. S. Lee at the First Session of the National Convention held on 23 August 1953, MCA Headquarters.

14. For a discussion of this proclivity, see Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector? An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-Led Relationships within Malay Society*, Penang, Aliran, 1979.

15. Memorandum from T. H. Tan to Datuk Abdul Razak, 4 June 1954, LYK Papers, SP3, No. 49.

16. Letter from T. H. Tan to Goh Chee Yan dated 24 June 1954, MCA Headquarters.

17. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 2, No. 13, 15 July 1954.

18. Letter from D. C. MacGillivray to Tunku Abdul Rahman dated 6 July 1954, MCA Headquarters.

19. The following lists are compiled from the minutes of the Alliance Roundtable; the minutes of the Alliance National Convention; the Report to the Alliance National Executive Committee by the members of a Special Committee to scrutinize Alliance Platform papers prepared by members of the Roundtable; the minutes of the Alliance Ad Hoc Political Working Committee.

20. See Minutes of the meeting of the MCA Central General Committee held on 13 June 1954.

21. Interview with Tan Siew Sin, 24 June 1976. Tan Siew Sin said the following in Tunku Abdul Rahman's collection of memoirs: 'You will recall that my father, though still nominally President of the MCA had, in fact, been out of action since the accident and illness which overtook him in 1955, and which had incapacitated him mentally.' Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1977, p. 177.

22. Letter from H. S. Lee to the Secretary of the Federal Elections Committee dated 12 October 1953; letter from T. H. Tan to the Chairman of the Federal Legislative Council Elections Working Committee dated 14 October 1953. See also Minutes of a meeting of Chinese public organizations in the state of Selangor held on 21 February 1954; Minutes of a meeting of Chinese associations and guilds in the state of Negri Sembilan held on 21 February 1954; and Minutes of the Meeting of Representatives from all Chinese organizations in Kelantan held on 28 February 1954.

23. Minutes of the meeting of the MCA Central General Committee held on 13 June 1954.

24. Letter from H. S. Lee to the Hon. Chief Secretary, Federation of Malaya, dated 22 June 1954, MCA Headquarters.

25. The poor response from Perak and Penang was a result of the unwillingness of local party leaders to observe the boycott. Letter from Ong Seong Tek, Chairman of the Pahang State MCA, to T. H. Tan, Chief Executive Secretary, dated 31 July 1954; Annual Report of the Malacca Settlement MCA for 1955; Minutes of a meeting of the Muar MCA Working Committee held on 22 August 1954; Minutes of a meeting of the Penang Settlement MCA Working Committee held on 14 July 1954.

26. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee on Malay Education*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1951 (known as the Barnes Report).

27. Federation of Malaya, *Chinese Schools and the Education of Chinese Malaysians: The Report of a Mission Invited by the Federation Government to Study the Problem of the Education of Chinese in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1951 (hereafter cited as the Fenn-Wu Report).

28. *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 5, 15 August 1953.

29. *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, Council Paper 96 of 1955, 30 November 1955: Second annual report for 1954 of the Member of Education as required by Section 10 of the Education Ordinance 1952.

30. See *Fenn-Wu Report*, p. 11.

31. 'Memorandum on the Report of the Committee on Malay Education and the Report on Chinese Education Presented by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce of Malaya', mimeo., n.d.

32. 'Memorandum on the Select Committee on Educational Policy and the Education Bill 1952', presented by the meeting of Representatives of Chinese School Committees and Teachers in the Federation of Malaya to the High Commissioner, mimeo., 14 November 1952.

33. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 25 August 1951.

34. Letter from Lim Lian Geok to Tan Cheng Lock dated 1 November 1954, MCA Headquarters.

35. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 21 April 1954.

36. The 1954 White Paper on Educational Policy stated the colonial administration's intention to implement the 1952 Educational Ordinance. Federation of

Malaya, *Educational Policy: Statement of the Federal Government on the Report of the Special Committee on the Implementation of Educational Policy together with the Report of that Committee*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1954.

37. These include: 'Ancient Chinese Philosophy', 3 February 1949, and 'An Outline of Taoism', n.d., TCL Papers, SP13, Item 176 and Item 177, No. 42.

38. See speeches by Tan Cheng Lock in the *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements*, 29 October 1923, B185, and 26 October 1925, B175.

39. Speech delivered by Tan Cheng Lock at the Conference of Chinese School Committees and Teachers on 9 November 1952 in Kuala Lumpur.

40. Speech delivered by Tan Cheng Lock to the Second Meeting of Representatives of Chinese School Committees and Teachers in the Federation and Representatives of the MCA held on 19 and 20 April 1953.

41. Minutes of the Second Meeting of Representatives of Chinese School Committees and Teachers in the Federation and Representatives of the MCA held on 19 and 20 April 1953.

42. *Memorandum on Chinese Education in the Federation of Malaya*, by Tan Cheng Lock, President MCA and Chairman MCA Chinese Education Central Committee, Kuala Lumpur, 31 March 1954.

43. See letters from Tan Cheng Lock to General Templer dated 12 May 1953, and Templer's reply dated 6 July 1953; letters from Tan Cheng Lock to MacGillivray dated 21 October 1954 and 6 November 1954, and MacGillivray's letter to Tan Cheng Lock dated 15 October 1954, MCA Headquarters.

44. Speech by Lim Lian Geok taken from the Minutes of the Second Meeting of the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee held on 21 August 1954.

45. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 24 January and 19 February 1953.

46. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 8 August 1953.

47. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 11 and 27 July 1953. See also letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Goh Hon Sien, Hon. Secretary, MCA Singapore Branch, dated 15 February 1954, in which he stated that he strongly supported Nanyang University. LYK Papers, SP3, No. 34.

48. See, for example, Minutes of the Working Committee meetings of the Penang MCA Settlements Branch dated 23 March 1953 and 24 March 1954; Minutes of the Working Committee meeting of the Taiping MCA Branch dated 15 March 1953; Annual Report of the MCA Negri Sembilan State Branch for the year 1955, p. 2.

49. Minutes of a meeting of the MCA Central Working Committee held on 21 August 1954.

50. 'Manifesto to be Tabled at the Malayan National Convention', mimeo., 29 May 1953.

51. Although the MIC became the third partner in the Alliance Party and took part in the Federal election on the Alliance ticket, its leaders played no role in the drawing up of the Election Manifesto. This was because the contents of the Manifesto had already been decided upon by the UMNO and the MCA leaders before the MIC joined the coalition in April 1955.

52. There were no citizenship requirements for non-Malays to be eligible to vote in the 1955 Federal election, only a five-year residential qualification.

53. Party Negara, in contrast, failed to capture a single seat and polled a mere 7.6 per cent of the total votes. K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1965, pp. 186-200.

54. The full Manifesto is a 42-page booklet entitled *Menuju Kearah Kemerdekaan*

(*The Road to Independence*): *Alliance Platform for the Federal Elections*, printed by the Alliance National Council in 1955; the abridged version is a 4-page pamphlet entitled *Alliance Manifesto for Federal Elections*, TCL Papers, SP13, List of Printed Materials, No. 37.

55. Leong Yew Koh's paper on 'Economic Aid to Malays' was not a policy paper on Malay special rights, but merely a comment on the UMNO papers on the subject. The UMNO representatives who drew up policy papers for the Manifesto were: Tunku Abdul Rahman—'Politics' (this included papers on the Position of Rulers and Constitutional Reforms, Malayization of the Services, Citizenship, National Language, Form of Government); Datuk Razak bin Hussein—'Administration', 'Alliance Believes in Free Malaya', and 'Local Government'; Dr Ismail bin Datuk Abdul Rahman—'Agricultural Policy', 'Land Policy', and 'Medical and Health'; Bahaman bin Samsuddin—'Social Services'; Aziz bin Ishak—'Information Services'. Information taken from 'Report to the Alliance National Executive Committee', mimeo., 18 March 1955.

56. *Alliance Manifesto*, p. 3.

57. *Federal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 20 September 1951, p. 260.

58. *Menuju Keadah Kemerdekaan*, p. 36.

59. Paper on citizenship prepared by Tunku Abdul Rahman, 18 March 1955.

60. Speech by Tunku Abdul Rahman at the Central General Committee Meeting of the MCA held on 13 June 1954.

61. Ratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

62. 'Memorandum on Federal Elections', by Henry T. W. Wong, Secretary of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce, mimeo., 6 January 1955, TCL Papers, TCL 111/295.

63. The major promises made by the Alliance in these areas consisted of the following: (a) Land Policy—to develop and expand Malay reservations which were unsuitable or inadequate for farming; to establish land settlement schemes to provide land and livelihood for the landless. (b) Agriculture—to improve the marketing and transport system serving agriculture; to make loans easily available to farmers and smallholders; to provide agricultural education; to improve farming methods; to diversify crop cultivation; to establish and expand co-operative societies for farmers. (c) Fisheries—to increase catches by employing the most efficient methods of fishing; to provide proper storage and transport facilities for the fishing industry; to help fishermen find suitable employment during off-seasons. In addition to the above, the Alliance pledged to improve the overall quality of life for rural Malays by improving and expanding educational, medical, housing and other social welfare services in the countryside.

64. 'United Malays National Organisation: A Memorandum on the Economic Position of Malays', mimeo., February 1953.

65. See article by Tan Siew Sin in the *Malayan Mirror*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 June 1953. Tan Siew Sin provided statistical evidence to back up his claim that British and other European companies owned and controlled a greater share of the country's wealth than did Chinese companies. The same conclusions were reached by a non-Chinese who studied the problem. See J. J. Puthuchear, *Ownership and Control in the Malayan Economy*, Singapore, Eastern Universities Press, 1960.

66. *A Statement of the Aims and Objectives of the Malayan Chinese Association* (printed pamphlet), Kuala Lumpur, n.d. (c.1954).

The Independence Constitution

THE drawing up of the Alliance constitutional proposals for independence, commonly referred to as the *Merdeka* (Independence) Compact or bargain, had a profound impact upon the development of the MCA from early 1956 to the declaration of independence in August 1957, because it produced two countervailing trends in the MCA. At the supra-communal level, the party continued to play as pivotal and important a role as it had done in the years 1953-5, as shown in the preceding chapter; however, at the intra-communal level, the standing of the MCA within the Chinese community began to decline. This situation developed because although the MCA leaders were successful in bringing Chinese concerns into the political mainstream while at the same time negotiating the bargain which led to independence, a wide segment of the Chinese community was dissatisfied with the compromises made on the issues of special rights and language, and a breakaway movement emerged from within the party.

The Alliance Merdeka Compact

The Alliance Merdeka Compact was presented to the Reid Constitutional Commission, which had been appointed by the British Government to make recommendations regarding the terms of Malayan independence.¹ However, the constitutional proposals ultimately recommended by the Reid Commission differed significantly from the Merdeka Compact, particularly on the subject of special rights, language, and a number of other racially salient issues. The Reid proposals on these issues benefited non-Malay interests more than the Alliance proposals, yet the MCA national leadership supported the UMNO in arguing for the inclusion of the Alliance, not the Reid, proposals in the Federation of Malaya Constitution.

It is vital that the motives of the MCA top leadership in support-

ing constitutional proposals which were highly unpopular with the lower-echelon party leadership and membership, and with the Chinese community at large, and which gave rise to a breakaway movement within the party, are understood. A key question is: Why did the movement fail to supplant the MCA top leadership which had negotiated the unpopular constitutional proposals? To understand the process in which the English-educated leadership overcame the challenge to its position, reimposed control over the party rank and file, and regained the allegiance of the Chinese community, attention must be focused on the role played by the British Government and the UMNO in influencing and manipulating the relationship between the MCA top leadership, the breakaway movement, and the Chinese community at large.

The Alliance Merdeka Compact was drawn up by an élite group of English-educated leaders who formed a subcommittee to prepare the documents. The UMNO was represented by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Datuk Abdul Razak bin Hussein, Dr Ismail bin Datuk Rahman, Ismail bin Mohamed Ali, Mohamed Khir Johari, Senu bin Abdul Rahman, Rahman bin Haji Talib, Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, Abdul Aziz bin Ishak and Mohamed Daud. The MCA negotiating team comprised Tan Siew Sin, Leong Yew Koh, H. S. Lee, Ong Yoke Lin, Dr Lim Chong Eu, Ng Ek Teong, Too Joon Hing, Yong Pung How and T. H. Tan, who functioned as rapporteur for the negotiating sessions. A conspicuous MCA absentee was Tan Cheng Lock, the party president, who could not participate in the negotiations because of poor health. The MIC representatives were V. T. Sambanthan, K. Ramanathan, K. L. Devaser, B. Kaher Singh, V. Manickavasagam and A. Krishnadas.²

Citizenship, special rights and language were the three major issues which caused division and dissent not only among the Alliance negotiators, but also among the second-echelon party leadership and membership, and among the different communities at large. The popular sentiments of the different communities regarding these issues were given wide expression in vernacular and English press reports of the period.

Typical of the uncompromising and unchanging views of the Malay community were press editorials and reports; resolutions passed by some UMNO branches; statements of leaders such as Datuk Onn of the Party Negara, Ahmad Boestamam of the Party Rakyat and Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy of the Pan Malayan

Islamic Association (forerunner of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party); and the deliberations of the Second Malay Congress. These different sources of Malay public opinion expressed four basic common viewpoints on the constitutional question: (1) that citizenship based on *jus soli* not be given to non-Malays, (2) that Malays have an unquestionable and perpetual claim to special rights, (3) that the Malay language become the sole national and official language in independent Malaya, and (4) that the ceremonial and substantive foundations of the new Malayan nation-state be based upon the Malay cultural and political heritage.³

UMNO second-echelon leaders such as Datuk Mohamed Haniffah sounded constant warnings to their national leaders not to concede any ground related to citizenship, special rights and language to the non-Malays at the Alliance constitutional negotiations.⁴ Equally strong cautioning came from Malay vernacular press editorials. A leader writer in the *Warta Negara* pointed out that the UMNO was formed in 1946 to unite and lead the Malay community in opposing the Malayan Union. He stated that the main reason why Malays opposed the Malayan Union was because it promised equal citizenship rights to Malays and non-Malays. He then concluded that the victory of the Malays in aborting the life of the Malayan Union would be a hollow one if the UMNO were now to give in to the MCA demand for *jus soli* and equal citizenship rights.⁵

Of the Malay political leaders, Datuk Onn was the most vocal and active in calling for a hardline stand. When the Reid Commission released its findings, he organized a number of mass rallies, including a 2,000-strong rally in Province Wellesley on 10 March 1957, to denounce the Reid proposals which recommended that a time limit be placed on the implementation of Malay special rights, and that Chinese and Indian be official languages for a period of time after independence.⁶ More significantly, Datuk Onn convened a meeting attended by political rivals of the UMNO such as Dr Burhanuddin of the Pan Malayan Islamic Association and Boestamam of Party Rakyat. The organizers called the meeting the Second Malay Congress, explaining that it was the successor to the First Malay Congress convened by Datuk Onn in March 1946 to oppose the implementation of the Malayan Union. The objective of the Second Malay Congress was to prevent Malays from losing their birthrights under the proposed Independence Constitution in the same way as the First Malay Congress had sought to protect

the Malay position which was threatened by the Malayan Union scheme.⁷

Chinese public opinion (like Indian public opinion) was diametrically opposed to the Malay position. Laukeh leaders of influential and powerful huay kuan and Chambers of Commerce, such as the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, the Perak Chinese Association and the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce, and schoolteachers organized in the United Chinese School Teachers Association, were the most vocal champions of Chinese rights. These leaders wanted the following concessions granted to Chinese and other non-Malays in the Federation of Malaya constitution: (1) citizenship based on *jus soli* for all non-Malays in Malaya born before and after the date of independence; (2) citizenship for those born outside Malaya after a continuous residential period of five years and without a qualifying language test in Malay or English; (3) equal political, economic and cultural rights for all Malayan citizens regardless of race; (4) recognition of *kuo yu* (Mandarin) as an official language, together with Malay, Tamil and English; and (5) multilingualism in the country's legislative and executive assemblies.⁸

Typical of highly charged Chinese feelings and arguments justifying the Chinese right to citizenship and equal rights was the vexed editorial cry of a Chinese daily: 'What is the meaning of independence for Chinese if Malays become the masters and non-Malays the slaves of Malaya?'⁹ The vernacular press warned the MCA national leaders that if they disappointed the expectations of the community in their negotiations with the UMNO, the MCA would lose the support and allegiance of the community.¹⁰

Given the irreconcilable differences between the Malay and Chinese communities, the UMNO and MCA leaders at the Alliance constitutional negotiations knew that no one set of compromises would satisfy everyone. Moreover, the negotiations would have been greatly complicated had the leaders attempted to consult grass-roots opinion at every stage of the deliberations. In the case of the MCA, the party's English-educated representatives insisted on, and obtained, the mandate of the party General Assembly to make the final decisions on behalf of the party and the Chinese community at large.¹¹ The Westernized leaders succeeded in getting the mandate because the Laukeh party leaders and members approved of, and had confidence in, their handling of party matters to that point. In particular, the Laukeh elements in the party were pleased with their championing of Chinese education and their campaign

against the 1952 Education Ordinance, as well as with their successful efforts to obtain a satisfactory deal for Chinese interests in the Alliance Election Manifesto of July 1955.

The Merdeka Compact worked out by the UMNO and MCA dealt with a whole range of issues pertaining to the political and administrative structure of independent Malaya, as well as the constitutional position of the different races in the country.¹² The delegates devoted most of their time to working out an agreement on citizenship, special rights and language. Final agreement was reached only after much heated argument, offering and withdrawing of tentative compromises, and protracted bargaining.

On the issue of citizenship, the UMNO leaders agreed to the following basic terms: (1) citizenship based on *jus soli* would be automatically given to all those born in Malaya on and after the date of independence; (2) those who were born in Malaya before independence would qualify for citizenship after having resided in the country for five out of seven years preceding the date of application for citizenship; those not born in Malaya would qualify after a period of eight out of twelve years.¹³ Thus the UMNO, after holding off pressure from the MCA for several years—ever since Tan Cheng Lock first brought up the issue at the Communities Liaison Committee deliberations in 1949–50—had at last decided to agree to the MCA citizenship proposals.

The UMNO finally agreed to *jus soli* because of three considerations: pressure from Whitehall, the need to provide a stable and strong foundation for the new Malayan nation-state, and the desire to gain concessions from the MCA on special rights and language.

The British Government had emphasized to the Alliance leaders, time and again, that power should be shared by Malay and non-Malay leaders (although Malays would be the dominant partners), and that future generations of Chinese and Indians should not be excluded from playing a legitimate role in the political, economic and cultural life of independent Malaya. The UMNO leaders believed that Whitehall would grant independence only if nearly all non-Malays could become Malayan citizens.¹⁴ Coupled with the pressure from Whitehall was UMNO's own desire to provide a solid and strong basis for the new Malayan state. Granting citizenship based on *jus soli* to the immigrant Chinese and Indian population would lay the cornerstone of the foundation for independent Malaya, since their loyalty and allegiance would be bound to their new country of adoption.

The final UMNO motivation behind its citizenship decision was

the usefulness of *jus soli* as a bargaining counter to obtain unqualified MCA support on Malay special rights and the sole status of Malay as the official and national language of independent Malaya. MCA support for the UMNO was crucial in the light of the Reid proposals which recommended placing restrictions on the implementation of special rights policy and recognizing Mandarin and Tamil as official languages for a period of time after independence.

The Alliance proposal on special rights as submitted to the Reid Commission gave a comprehensive elucidation of the issue and raised a number of important points:¹⁵

While we accept that in independent Malaya all nationals should be accorded equal rights, privileges and opportunities and there must not be discrimination on grounds of race or creed, we recognize the fact that the Malays are the original sons of the soil and that they have a special position arising from this fact, and also by virtue of treaties made between the British Government and the various sovereign Malay States. The Constitution should, therefore, provide that the Yang di-Pertuan Besar should have the special responsibility of safeguarding the special position of the Malays. In pursuance of this, the Constitution should give him powers to reserve for the Malays a reasonable proportion of lands, posts in public service, permits to engage in business or trade, where such permits are restricted and controlled by law, grant scholarships and such similar privileges accorded by the Government; but in pursuance of this further responsibility of safeguarding the legitimate interests of the other communities, the Constitution should also provide that any exercise of such powers should not in any way infringe the legitimate interests of the other communities or adversely affect or diminish the rights and privileges at present enjoyed by them.

The phraseology above indicates that the MCA negotiators agreed to a number of significant points. First, the MCA recognized that Malays had an undisputed claim to special rights treatment because of this status as 'sons of the soil', i.e. *Bumiputra*. Secondly, the MCA acknowledged that Malays had a political position superior to that of non-Malays. Since the British Government acquired legitimacy for its colonial rule in Malaya through treaties made with Malay Sultans, the traditional rulers of Malay society, the MCA accepted that modern-day Malay political representatives stood to inherit sovereignty from the departing colonial power. Thirdly, the MCA conceded that the Sultans, being the traditional fount of authority in pre-colonial Malaya, would be invested with more than a ceremonial role in independent Malaya. The Malay

head of state, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar (Agong), would possess substantive powers to safeguard the special position of Malays. He would have powers to reserve lands, government posts, business permits, and other privileges for Malays. Fourthly, the MCA expected the 'legitimate interests' and rights and privileges of other communities would not be adversely affected or diminished by the implementation of special rights policy. Finally, the Alliance proposal on special rights did not stipulate whether there should be a time limit governing the implementation of special rights. This oversight was deliberate, as will be evident soon.

The question of language was the only area where the Alliance delegates submitted two sets of proposals to the Reid Commission. The first represented the joint views of the UMNO, MCA and MIC, and the second represented the views of the MCA and MIC only. (A final common stand was produced only after further negotiations were held in view of the Reid proposal recommending multilingualism.) The joint UMNO-MCA-MIC viewpoint stated that Malay would be the national language, provided there was 'protection of the languages and culture of all races, and of their schools and cultural institutions'.¹⁶ It was also agreed by all that English would be recognized as an official language for a maximum period of ten years after independence.

The MCA and MIC asked for the recognition of Kuo Yu and Tamil as official languages for a period of time after independence. They wanted 'the use of English, Kuo Yu and Tamil in Councils with the permission of the Chairmen or Speakers for a minimum period of ten years and thereafter until such time as the legislature should decide that the use of language other than Malay is no longer necessary'.¹⁷ The MCA delegates had insisted upon the submission of the above proposal largely because MCA Laukeh leaders were organizing a breakaway movement to champion the cause of multilingualism. In the face of MCA insistence, the UMNO had reluctantly agreed that the Alliance would submit two sets of proposals on language, and that the final Alliance position would be worked out after the Reid Commission released its findings.

The Reid Constitutional Proposals

The Reid Constitutional Commission toured Malaya from March to May 1956, collating the views of public organizations and influential individuals on constitutional reform, and published its report

in February 1957.¹⁸ The differences between its findings and the Alliance constitutional proposals triggered off further negotiations among the Alliance partners. Whitehall appointed a Constitutional Working Party comprising three representatives of the British Government, four representatives of the Malay Rulers and four representatives of the Alliance coalition (Tunku Abdul Rahman, Datuk Abdul Razak, Ong Yoke Lin and V. T. Sambanthan) to resolve the differences between the Reid and Alliance constitutional proposals. The Alliance delegates had the clear-cut support of the Malay rulers in the Working Party, for the Alliance proposals on the position of Malay rulers benefited their interests more than did the Reid recommendations.

The most significant distinction between the Merdeka Compact and the Reid Report was the difference in emphasis placed on the political and cultural identity of the new Malayan nation-state. Whereas the Merdeka Compact generally emphasized the symbolic and substantive Malay character of independent Malaya, the Reid Report placed greater emphasis on the multiracial aspect of the nation. On matters related to special rights, language, religion, the position of Malay rulers and Malay land reservations, the Reid Report wanted a greater parity in the treatment of Malay and non-Malay interests than was found in the Merdeka Compact.¹⁹

One may assume that the Reid Commission favoured a generally balanced treatment of Malay and non-Malay interests because it felt that institutionalized favouritism for one race, be it political, cultural or economic, would be potentially damaging to Malaya's long-term stability. The Reid Commission apparently believed that the singling out of Malays for privileged treatment would generate hostility, envy and frustration in non-Malays, and impede the process of national integration and nation-building. However, it recognized that Malays needed special help to improve their economic position, which was far behind that of non-Malays. It therefore recommended that Malays should have special rights, but only for a limited period of time in order to fulfil the objective of advancing the Malay position without harming the long-term political stability of Malaya. It recommended that special rights not be included in the permanent section of the constitution, but be written as transitional and temporary clauses which would be reviewed for possible removal after a period of fifteen years after independence.²⁰

On the subject of language, although the Reid Report recognized that Malay would become the national language, it also recommended that Kuo Yu, Tamil and English be official languages for a period of ten years or more as determined by the Malayan Parliament.²¹ The Reid recommendation on multilingualism recognized the multi-ethnic nature of Malayan society and the implicit desirability of independent Malaya functioning as a pluralistic entity in government, commerce, education, culture and other aspects of community life. The proposal also widened the base for political activity, as Chinese and Indian leaders who spoke neither English nor Malay would be able to participate in the political processes of independent Malaya. The UMNO, in contrast, wanted to use only the Malay language as the language of government and the basis for state education and state culture, a policy which would exclude vernacular-speaking non-Malay leaders from the corridors of power.

The Reid proposal on religion, like language, recognized the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Malaya, but was silent on the question of an official religion. The Alliance proposal, on the other hand, had recommended that Islam become the official religion of Malaya, provided that 'The observance of this principle shall not impose any disability on non-Muslim nationals professing and practising their own religions, and shall not imply that the State is not a secular State'.²² Instead of endorsing the Alliance proposal, the Reid Report merely stated that the Sultan of each state should remain the head of Islam in his state and should continue to be responsible for the supervision of Islamic affairs.²³

On the question of the constitutional position of the Malay rulers, the Reid Report recommended that the role of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Sultans be strictly ceremonial in character. The Commission proposed that all substantive powers and functions of government at the federal and state levels be invested with the elected representatives of Parliament and the state assemblies. The only area where Malay rulers would exercise real power was in overseeing Islamic matters of their states.²⁴ The Alliance, in contrast, had proposed that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong have real powers in several areas to protect the special position of the Malays.

In the case of Malay land reservations, the Reid Report proposed placing restrictions upon the creation of new Malay reserves in any state after independence. The Alliance, however, wanted state governments to have the authority to increase Malay reserves

up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the total area available for private use in any state. Furthermore, the Alliance wanted the system of Malay reservations to be introduced to Malacca and Penang, the two former Straits Settlements, on the same terms as the Malay states.²⁵

The Reid Report's and the Merdeka Compact's views on citizenship differed over the question of dual nationality, but not the liberal terms governing the acquisition of Malayan citizenship by non-Malays advocated by both. As expected, the Reid Report proposed that non-Malays born on or after the date of independence would automatically become Malayan citizens. Others born in Malaya before the date of independence or outside Malaya could apply for citizenship after fulfilling a relatively short period of residence in the country and passing a simple language test in Malay or English. Unlike the Merdeka Compact, which did not endorse dual nationality, the Reid Report recommended that Malayan citizens could also become Commonwealth citizens.²⁶ Non-Malays could thus become citizens of Malaya as well as of their former motherlands or other countries which were then member countries of the Commonwealth.

The Constitution of Independent Malaya

The Constitutional Working Party set up to resolve the differences between the Reid Report and the Merdeka Compact overwhelmingly decided in favour of the UMNO-MCA agreements which made up the heart of the Merdeka Compact. The constitution of independent Malaya thus reflected the dominant Malay perspective on national policy, state religion and culture, and state education, while at the same time it codified citizenship rights for non-Malays.

Islam was recognized as the official religion, and Malay the sole official and national language. English, but not Mandarin or Tamil, was recognized as an official language for a period of ten years after independence. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Malay rulers became more than ceremonial heads of state. They possessed substantive powers and functions to safeguard the special position of Malays and to oversee the implementation of the special rights policy. They remained the supreme authority of Islam in the Federation and in the Malay states. The constitution also decided against the restrictions on the creation of Malay reservations

favoured by the Reid Report. Clauses pertaining to Malay special rights were written into the permanent and not temporary section of the constitution, and there was no time limit restriction on the implementation of the special rights policy.²⁷

While the constitution gave Malays special treatment in areas such as government employment, business opportunities, education and land rights, it also contained provisions safeguarding non-Malay interests. In the case of economic opportunities, the constitution stated that the implementation of Malay special rights should not adversely affect the legitimate interests of non-Malays. Article 153, for instance, stated:²⁸

Nothing in this Article shall operate to deprive or authorise the deprivation of any person of any right, privilege, permit or licence accrued to or enjoyed or held by him, or authorise a refusal to renew to any person any such permit or licence, or a refusal to grant to the heirs, successors or assignees of a person any permit or licence when the renewal or grant might reasonably be expected in the ordinary course of events.

....
Nothing in this Article shall empower Parliament to restrict business or trade solely for the purpose of reservations for Malays.

The constitution also contained a provision [Article 89(4)] which stipulated that the creation of future Malay land reserves would not impinge upon the existing land-holdings of non-Malays.

Constitutional provisions safeguarding the right of non-Malays to practise and propagate their religions and languages also existed. Article 11(1) and (3) provided for freedom of worship and the right of all religious groups to maintain and propagate their religious beliefs. On the question of language, while Article 152 recognized Malay as the sole official and national language, it also stated that 'no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (except for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language; and nothing... shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or of any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation'.²⁹

It was only in the area of dual nationality that the Reid position prevailed. Although the Alliance was against the proposal which recommended that Malayan citizens could become Commonwealth citizens as well, the constitution recognized dual nationality.³⁰

In the above areas which were racially salient, the British

Government decided to base the constitution of independent Malaya upon the Alliance rather than the Reid proposals. Having been elected in the July 1955 Federal election as Malaya's first indigenous coalition party to exercise limited home rule, the Alliance was to inherit power from the colonial administration upon its departure from Malaya. Since the Alliance would rule Malaya until 1959, when a general election was scheduled to be held, Whitehall felt that the Alliance constitutional proposals should be given special priority. It appeared more sensible to accept the Alliance constitutional arrangements for the Malayan people than to impose a settlement worked out by a foreign constitutional commission. Moreover, the Alliance position, which reflected basically the UMNO position, received unconditional support from the Malay rulers as well as from the MCA and MIC representatives in the Constitutional Working Party.

One might speculate if the British Government would have as readily consented to the Alliance position had the MCA leaders not endorsed the UMNO viewpoint. Since Chinese then made up almost 40 per cent of the population, the MCA's support of the UMNO position, particularly on the issues of special rights and language, might well have been an important factor in convincing the British to incorporate the UMNO viewpoints in the Independence Constitution. It is pertinent, at this point, to ask why the MCA top leadership finally accepted the UMNO viewpoint on special rights, language and other racially salient issues when acceptance of the Reid proposals would have benefited the Chinese community more.

MCA Acceptance of the UMNO Constitutional Position

With all the activity surrounding the Alliance negotiations, the presentation of the Reid Report and the final framing of the constitutional proposals, the moves towards independence quickly gained momentum. The final round of Alliance negotiations, held between March and July 1957, took place in an atmosphere of euphoria. There was a universal desire to secure the immediate realization of independence and a strong determination to overcome all outstanding barriers along the last stretch of the road to independence. The MCA, the weaker of the bargaining partners, was anxious not to be cast in the role of presenting obstacles that would delay independence.

The MCA representatives went into the negotiating room with one basic objective—the attainment of citizenship based on *jus soli* for non-Malays. To secure this objective, the MCA top leaders were ultimately prepared to make concessions on special rights, language and other issues sought by the UMNO. The MCA top leaders realized that if they failed in their bid to obtain *jus soli*, not only the political but the economic future of the Chinese would be severely threatened. On the eve of independence, MCA leaders were successful businessmen without a secure political base. They knew that the attainment of *jus soli* and further relaxation of residential and language test requirements governing the acquisition of citizenship would enfranchise the majority of Chinese and thus enable them to protect their considerable stake in the country's economy. In addition, Chinese votes and party funding from Chinese business quarters would guarantee a secure political base for the MCA in independent Malaya.

The MCA top leaders also knew, however, that the security of their political base depended upon the continued political patronage of the UMNO. They recognized the fact that the degree of political influence which the MCA would enjoy after independence would be a function of the degree of UMNO co-operation. The British Government, in keeping with its objective of making Malays the dominant political element in independent Malaya, had drawn up federal and state constituencies in such a manner that Malay representation would overshadow that of non-Malays.³¹ For the MCA to win more than a few seats in Parliament and the state assemblies, it needed to rely on UMNO willingness to allocate to it seats with a majority of Malay voters, and on UMNO political clout to deliver Malay votes to MCA candidates.

During the Alliance negotiations, the desire to cultivate and retain UMNO goodwill was heavy in the mind of the MCA leaders to the point that UMNO political patronage was considered more essential to the MCA than relations with the major Chinese pressure groups, the *huay kuan* and Chambers of Commerce. The following metaphor describing the relationship between the Malays (i.e. UMNO), the MCA and Chinese associations reflected thinking which was typical of the top leaders: 'Nothing can compensate the Chinese for falling out with the Malays, but if the tail [Chinese associations] is allowed to wag the head [MCA], the MCA and the Chinese shall be in mortal danger.'³² Therefore, in their desire to establish the basis for long-term collaboration with the UMNO,

the MCA top leaders were prepared to sacrifice the demands of the Chinese associations regarding the constitution, with the exception of *jus soli*, to the needs of the UMNO.

The MCA leadership also had a stake in the continued pre-eminent position of the UMNO within Malay society. The compromises it made on special rights and language stemmed in part from a perceived need to help the UMNO maintain its position at a time when widespread Malay anger arising from Chinese demands could be capitulated on by Malay opposition leaders against the UMNO. The proposals of the Reid Constitutional Commission on racially salient issues received vociferous Malay disapproval and hostility.³³ The angry Malay reaction to the recommendations on multilingualism and a time restriction on special rights provided a timely opportunity for the UMNO's rivals to organize and mobilize Malay opposition to the Reid proposals. Datuk Onn of Party Negara, Dr Burhanuddin of the Pan Malayan Islamic Association, and Boestamam of Party Rakyat organized the Second Malay Congress to rouse anti-UMNO feelings and to articulate Malay opposition to the Reid proposals. Faced with an obvious movement to undermine its standing within the Malay community, the UMNO top leaders felt they could not afford to make 'Reid-like' concessions on special rights and multilingualism to the MCA. The UMNO, however, still agreed to *jus soli*, for it was a pre-condition required by the British Government before it handed power over to the Alliance, and also because it represented the UMNO's own thinking on the matter.

Even in the case of *jus soli*, the UMNO could not be seen as the party responsible for making the concession. Steps were taken by the Alliance top leaders to mask the fact that the UMNO had already agreed to *jus soli* in the Alliance negotiations in mid-1956, well before the Reid Commission published its findings in February 1957.³⁴ UMNO's acceptance of *jus soli* was not revealed to the Malayan public, who were told instead, 'The three parties of the Alliance-UMNO, MCA and MIC-deadlocked on the controversial question of *jus soli*... decided today to pass the baby on to the Reid Constitutional Commission.'³⁵ Malay hostility towards the UMNO would be neutralized if it was believed that the British Government and the Reid Commission were responsible for granting *jus soli* to non-Malays. The MCA leaders were anxious to help the UMNO leaders overcome any potential opposition movement, for the efficacy of the UMNO's political

patronage lay in its pre-eminent position among the Malays.

The MCA top leaders' concessions on special rights and language were a vivid demonstration of goodwill. Their view that Malays had a claim to special rights is reflected succinctly in a party press release distributed to party publicity officers:³⁶

Ever since the advent of the British to Malaya, the Malays have enjoyed their special position. The present Federation of Malaya Agreement acknowledges this fact. So in admitting that the Malays are in a special position, we are not doing anything new. On the other hand, if we do not accept the special position of the Malays, we shall be denying to them what is already theirs.

The circular further stated:

We wish to point out that despite the racial position of the Malays, the other communities in this country have not suffered. We all have prospered during the last 150 years, and there is every reason to believe we shall continue to prosper, as long as there is goodwill and co-operation amongst the races living in the country. We should also remind the Chinese that the Malays are also in a very special position, on account of their voting strength. And yet during the Federal Election they did not use that special position to the detriment of others. On the contrary, the Malays, through the good offices of the UMNO, used their voting strength to help the Chinese in particular.

The MCA leaders believed that UMNO goodwill up to the time of independence had benefited the Chinese community politically; they wanted to assure the community that as long as the spirit of co-operation prevailed between the UMNO and the MCA, Chinese interests after independence would not be damaged by their agreement to accept the special position of Malays.

Believing that the constitution itself afforded grounds for their optimistic assurances to the Chinese community, the MCA argued that the constitution contained sufficient safeguards protecting non-Malay interests. In their acceptance of Malay special rights, the MCA delegates at the Alliance negotiation had insisted upon the inclusion of constitutional safeguards providing for the freedom of non-Malays to preserve, practise and propagate their religion, culture and language. The MCA delegates were especially concerned that non-Malay economic interests not be seriously weakened. Tan Siew Sin, in particular, had insisted that the legal language describing the carefully-crafted provision on special rights, Article 153(a), be worded as unambiguously as possible to

protect the legitimate interests of non-Malays.³⁷ In its final version, the Article read: 'Nothing in this Article shall empower Parliament to restrict business, or trade solely for the purpose of reservations for Malays.'

In addition to the written constitutional safeguards, the MCA leaders believed they had the assurance of the UMNO leaders that special rights would be reviewed after a period of 15 years following independence, and eventually terminated. Responding to the MCA request that a time limit be imposed on the policy of Malay special rights, an UMNO representative on the Alliance Working Party set up to discuss the issue concurred that 'special privileges to be accorded to the Malays should be of a temporary nature'.³⁸ Later, reporting back to the MCA Central Working Committee, Yong Pung How and Ng Ek Teong stated, 'It had been agreed by the Alliance that provisions should be included in the Constitution for the "special position of the Malays" to be reviewed after 15 years.'³⁹ However, more careful consideration of the subject convinced the UMNO leadership that such a move would not be acceptable to the Malay community, a judgement which was subsequently supported by the hostile Malay response to the Reid proposal on special rights. The UMNO delegates therefore decided that a time limit qualification on special rights should not be included in the Alliance memorandum to the Reid Commission. The MCA leaders agreed to the UMNO position; their confidence that Malay special rights would be temporary stemmed from the fact that Tunku Abdul Rahman had verbally informed the Reid Commission that while the UMNO opposed the inclusion of a constitutional time limit proviso, the Alliance none the less intended to review the policy 15 years after independence.⁴⁰

A final explanation for the MCA leaders' acceptance of the UMNO position was their belief that the constitution itself could be amended at some future date. They thought that as more non-Malays became enfranchised Malayan citizens, and if the number of non-Malay voters eventually exceeded Malay voters, the non-Malay communities would one day possess the means to amend the constitutional provisions pertaining to special rights, language and other racially salient issues. However naïve this argument may appear, it was none the less effectively propounded by the party top leadership in persuading the rank and file to accept the UMNO position, as illustrated by the final meeting of the Party General Committee held to discuss the draft constitution. Joining in the

debate, Dr Lim Chong Eu successfully argued that the constitution was amendable, and that the meeting should accept the draft constitution, as the MCA's immediate objective—*independence with jus soli* for non-Malays—was already assured.⁴¹

The MCA top leaders believed that the Merdeka Compact represented a fair deal for the Chinese community. *Jus soli* had been obtained and written constitutional safeguards existed to protect non-Malay interests in the face of Malay special rights. Moreover, these leaders were confident that the spirit of goodwill and trust between the UMNO and MCA would act as a bulwark against the erosion of the non-Malay position.⁴² The MCA top leadership's confidence and optimism, however, was not shared by a group of Laukeh party leaders who spearheaded a campaign to press for greater protection of Chinese interests in the Independence Constitution.

The Abortive Breakaway Movement

It may be recalled that popular Chinese demands regarding the constitution centred on three issues—citizenship for non-Malays based on *jus soli*, equal rights for all Malayan citizens, and the status of Mandarin as an official language. Chinese demands for the recognition of these issues by the colonial administration had existed for some years before the beginning of the Independence Constitution negotiations.

When the MCA Westernized leadership mounted its campaign for *jus soli* in the early 1950s, it had the strong and energetic backing of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the *huay kuan*, educational bodies and other pressure groups within the community, all of which had opportunities to present their views when the Reid Commission toured Malaya from March to May 1956. Typical of the impassioned arguments justifying the demand for *jus soli* and equal citizenship rights that were presented to the Commission were the following views of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce:⁴³

Chinese popular opinion has repeatedly reminded us of the fact that by the terms of the Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, a very large section of the non-Malay population was deprived of their birthrights and their political franchise. Now that a new Constitution is to be written, they naturally expect to see their rights and privileges restored so that in this newly-born independent and democratic Federation of Malaya, all

nationals will become equal subjects enjoying equal rights and privileges and fulfilling equal duties, obligations and responsibilities.... It is our firm conviction that the principle of *Jus Soli* should be restored as an absolutely necessary provision in the New Constitution, if the country is to have peace and prosperity when independence is attained.

The memorandum submitted by the representatives of Chinese organizations in Negri Sembilan argued for the necessity of *jus soli* and equal rights in a similar vein, stating that unless political equality were given to non-Malays, 'the granting of independence to Malaya would bring about unrest and eventual chaos'. It further warned that unless non-Malays were given a stake in the new nation-state which was worth fighting for, Malaya would 'from the moment of its birth [be] a ready-made Hot Bed for Communism'.⁴⁴ According to this line of reasoning, the MCP stood a good chance of renewing its armed struggle if a discontented and largely disenfranchised Chinese population still existed to fuel its activities after independence.

The call for Mandarin to be recognized as an official language was first raised in 1952 by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce in connection with the controversy over Chinese education stirred up by the Barnes Report. Although General Templer ignored the request, the cry was taken up by the Chinese press, Chinese associations and educational bodies.⁴⁵ In mid-1953, Tan Cheng Lock, the party president, wrote to Templer asking him to recognize Mandarin, English, Malay and Tamil as the official languages of Malaya.⁴⁶ A year later, the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee resolved that the MCA should play a key role in getting Mandarin recognized as an official language.⁴⁷

When the Alliance constitutional talks began in April 1956, the MCA top leaders, after taking great care to consult the views and opinions of party branches and Chinese associations, obtained the mandate to make decisions on behalf of the party and Chinese community at the Alliance talks. However, Laukeh party leaders were fearful that the outcome of the talks would not satisfy their demands. Their apprehension stemmed from the realization that the MCA was the weaker bargaining partner compared to the UMNO, and that the leaders, being English-educated, might not be assertive enough on Chinese language issues. The Laukeh leaders therefore decided to organize a breakaway political party, comprising all the Chinese associations, to take over leadership from the MCA should the MCA top leaders fail to obtain the full

range of the constitutional demands of the Chinese community.⁴⁸

The breakaway movement was spearheaded by four leading MCA-huay kuan figures, known popularly as the 'Big Four'. They were Lau Pak Khuan, a founder member and one-time president of the Perak MCA, chairman of the Federation of Registered Chinese Guilds and Associations (which claimed a membership of 1,094 organizations), and chairman of other leading associations such as the Perak Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the Perak Chinese Mining Association and the Federation of Kwangtung Associations; Leong Chee Cheong, chairman of the Federation of the Selangor Chinese Guilds and Associations; Cho Yew Fai, vice-chairman of the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall; and Lim Lian Geok, chairman of the United Chinese School Teachers Association. Lau Pak Khuan, the leading light of the movement, was at the time one of the most influential huay kuan leaders in the country.

Leong Chee Cheong's involvement in the movement is a point of interest. The issue of multilingualism was first raised by him in January 1955 when he sent a petition to Tan Cheng Lock on behalf of the Federation of the Selangor Guilds and Associations. Leong Chee Cheong wanted the MCA to press for the recognition of Mandarin as a language of communication in the Federal Council and state assemblies. He argued that Chinese-speaking MCA Laukeh leaders were, in his opinion, better qualified than the English-educated leaders to represent Chinese interests, as the former came from the less elitist backgrounds of the Chinese-speaking and Chinese-educated masses. He stated: 'most of them [English-speaking Chinese leaders] are not conversant with social conditions especially the life of labourers. Their views cannot therefore represent the public opinion [*sic*].'⁴⁹ Leong Chee Cheong's request was politely rebuffed by the party top leaders. T. H. Tan, the chief executive secretary, informed him that it was then premature and unwise to insist on multilingualism, for it would retard the Alliance's 'progress towards self-rule through the resistance of those at present in authority to changes in our electoral laws'.⁵⁰ H. S. Lee, the MCA Selangor chief and a powerful huay kuan leader in the state, was asked by the party headquarters to persuade Leong Chee Cheong to drop his demand.⁵¹ Although the demand was formally withdrawn, Leong Chee Cheong continued to fight for his cause outside the formal party structure.

The Big Four sponsored a mass meeting in Kuala Lumpur on

27 April 1956, attended by 900 delegates representing 400 organizations. There were two items on the agenda—to draw up a list of demands of the community regarding the constitution and to form a mass-based party, to be called the Chinese General Association, as a movement to rival the MCA.⁵² The meeting drew up four constitutional demands: citizenship based on *jus soli* for anyone born in Malaya; citizenship for aliens who had lived in the country for five years, without the need to pass a language test; equal rights and privileges, and equal duties and obligations for all Malayan citizens; and acceptance of Malay, Chinese and Indian languages for official use.⁵³ The meeting, however, dropped the proposal to form a mass-based party comprising the Chinese associations. In its place, a smaller body called the Council of Representatives of Chinese Guilds and Associations (CRCGA), headed by Lau Pak Khuan and a 15-man Working Committee, was set up. A mass-based Chinese opposition party failed to materialize at the meeting because two of the four leading sponsors, Cho Yew Fai and Lim Lian Geok, withdrew their support for the project at the very last minute. The withdrawal of Cho Yew Fai's and Lim Lian Geok's backing for the proposed Chinese General Association at a critical juncture, for reasons discussed below, destroyed the momentum of the breakaway movement and prevented the emergence of a serious threat to the MCA's political pre-eminence within the Chinese community.

Lacking the open mass backing of Laukeh leaders, Lau Pak Khuan's CRCGA conducted an ineffective campaign to press for Chinese rights.⁵⁴ Its activities were largely confined to helping and co-ordinating the efforts of Chinese organizations in preparing their memoranda to the Reid Constitutional Commission. It continued, with little avail, to pressurize the MCA top leaders to obtain the full range of Chinese demands at the Alliance negotiations.⁵⁵ The most significant and most publicized activity of the CRCGA was the despatching of a delegation to London to meet the Colonial Secretary, the outcome of which is discussed below.

The MCA top leaders viewed the emergence of the breakaway movement with alarm, and took immediate steps to abort its growth. They manoeuvred to break the unity of the Big Four, and eventually succeeded in drawing Cho Yew Fai and Lim Lian Geok back to the MCA camp. Both Cho Yew Fai and Lim Lian Geok stated that they eventually decided against breaking ranks with the MCA because of the top leadership's plea for Chinese unity at a

time when Malays and Chinese were locked in fierce bargaining over the Independence Constitution.⁵⁶ At the same time, the MCA appeared to have benefited from the emergence of the breakaway movement, for the UMNO was under some pressure to concede, at the very least, to the most minimal MCA demand for *jus soli*, since this concession would help the MCA to destroy the threat from Lau Pak Khuan's CRCGA.

The English-educated leaders further appealed to the Laukeh leaders to place their trust in the track record of the English-educated leaders on Chinese education and language issues which they had persistently championed, including spearheading the campaign to obtain the repeal of the 1952 Education Ordinance which threatened the extinction of the Chinese language in state schools. They had also obtained a deal from the UMNO in the Alliance 1955 Federal Election Manifesto on Chinese education and language which was satisfactory to the Laukeh leaders. Finally, their most recent achievement was their role in the preparation of a new education policy contained in the Razak Report.

The colonial administration had appointed an Education Commission in 1956 under the chairmanship of Datuk Abdul Razak, the Minister of Education, to formulate a new education policy to replace the 1952 Education Ordinance. Too Joon Hing, an MCA delegate to the Alliance negotiations, was the Assistant Minister of Education and one of the four MCA members on the Razak Education Commission. The Razak Education Report of May 1956, subsequently enacted as the Education Ordinance of March 1957, recognized the principle of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, thus making Chinese education a permanent feature of state education, at least at the primary school level. Provisions existed to make the study of the Chinese language available to Chinese pupils in English-medium schools; in addition, there were safeguards for the continued existence and expansion of private Chinese secondary schools.⁵⁷

Despite the fact that the terms relating to Chinese education in the Razak Report were a marked improvement on the 1952 Education Ordinance, it still drew criticisms from Chinese educationalists. The UCSTA, for example, was unhappy with the Report over its lack of official recognition and funding for Chinese secondary schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction and examination. However, there did not appear to be widespread opposition to the Report, as reflected by the fact that the Chinese

press reaction to it tended to be more favourable than unfavourable. Furthermore, the MCA top leaders gave assurance that, despite UMNO's objections, they would include proposals recommending Chinese as an official language and multilingualism in the Alliance memorandum to the Reid Commission.

The plea for Chinese unity and satisfaction with the top leaders' performance on Chinese education were two of many considerations which persuaded Cho Yew Fai and Lim Lian Geok to formally dissociate themselves from the breakaway movement. On the basis of the writer's examination of party documents of the period, it may be conjectured that most of the Laukeh leaders accepted the top leadership's argument that the institutionalized collaborationist basis of political co-operation between the UMNO and MCA in the Alliance, and the goodwill of the UMNO, were indispensable to the attainment of any Chinese political goal. The emergence of an opposition Chinese party, working against the UMNO and challenging Malay interests, would, according to this line of argument, wholly undo the progress made by the UMNO and MCA in achieving a stable political relationship and in attaining the imminent realization of independence. One could also say that the Laukeh leaders had a nagging fear that should they persist in setting up a mass-based Chinese opposition party at a time when the constitutional debate had raised the degree of racial tension, not only would they destroy the realization of independence, but their action might also cause the outbreak of racial hostilities.

Although the MCA top leaders moved swiftly to check the momentum of the breakaway movement, their success in winning back the allegiance of most of the Laukeh leaders owed more to the manipulations of the UMNO than to their own actions. UMNO took advantage of the dependence of MCA leaders on UMNO patronage, a clientelistic relationship paralleled in many respects by the dependence of the Laukeh leaders on the English-educated leaders to articulate and represent their interests at the multiracial political centre. UMNO leaders, skilfully manipulating events at this critical juncture, aborted the growth of the breakaway movement by steadfastly refusing to negotiate with the Laukeh leaders and blocking their access to Whitehall. By tarnishing the nationalist credentials of the breakaway leaders as Kuomintang-inspired, the UMNO succeeded in ensuring that the movement's delegation

to London received an unsympathetic reception from the Colonial Office.

The UMNO's characterization of the breakaway movement as Kuomintang-inspired had a valid basis. The Laukeh leaders associated with it, and the Big Four who sponsored the mass meeting of 27 April 1956, all had Kuomintang backgrounds. The Big Four—Lau Pak Khuan, Leong Chee Cheong, Cho Yew Fai and Lim Lian Geok—and other leaders of the breakaway body such as Peh Seng Khoon, Ong Chin Seong, Yap Mau Tatt, Toh Seang Ong, Tan Kee Gak, Ong Keng Seng, Chung Swee Thye and Tan Seng Soon, were well-known leaders of the KMTM before and immediately after World War II. Lau Pak Khuan had been a high-ranking KMTM office-holder; he was a member of the KMTM Central Supervisory Council in 1945-6 before the KMTM was banned following the outbreak of the Emergency. Even after the ban on the KMTM and the absorption of most of its leaders and supporters into the MCA, these ex-KMTM men had continued to display their solidarity with the Chiang Kai Shek Government. The ex-KMTM men in the MCA displayed their support for the Kuomintang Government in various ways, most conspicuously through the public celebration of the Double Ten Anniversary until 1956. In 1954, for example, Cho Yew Fai was the toastmaster in the Double Ten celebration ceremony organized by the huay kuan in Kuala Lumpur. In his speech to the celebrants, Cho Yew Fai had stated that Chinese in Malaya should make every effort to promote the cause of the Kuomintang Government in its struggle to regain the motherland.⁵⁸

The loyalty of the ex-KMTM leaders to Malaya was questioned by the UMNO and other Malay leaders. The following *Utusan Melayu* editorial reflected typical Malay opinion *vis-à-vis* the huay kuan leaders who supported the breakaway movement: 'Most of the Chinese associations and guilds are based on narrow chauvinism in that they are led by leaders who are generally inclined towards the Kuomintang and are imbued with narrow chauvinism.'⁵⁹ When the CRCGA delegation arrived in London to present its views, the Colonial Secretary, A. Lennox-Boyd, was asked by Tunku Abdul Rahman not to receive the delegation. The UMNO president stated that the delegation was a Kuomintang group which was illegal in Malaya and whose loyalty to the country was suspect.⁶⁰ Defending his activities and the CRCGA, Lau Pak

Khuan stated, 'Our loyalty to Malaya is not in doubt. It is because of our loyalty that we are trying to ensure fair treatment and cordial relations between different communities after independence. But there cannot be harmonious relations when nearly half the population is dissatisfied.'⁶¹

Lau Pak Khuan's defence that the CRCGA was a loyal body acting in the interests of Malayan Chinese failed to remove the taint of its Kuomintang connection in the eyes of Whitehall. Lennox-Boyd initially refused to receive the CRCGA delegation, but after the final round of constitutional talks between the British Government and the Alliance delegation was over, he decided to meet Lau Pak Khuan and the other CRCGA delegates, primarily to censure them for their activities. He advised Lau Pak Khuan and his colleagues to be 'loyal Malaysians' and to accept the constitution as worked out by the British Government, the Alliance and the Malay rulers.⁶² Whatever Lennox-Boyd's personal views on the case for Chinese rights were, he could not deal with the CRCGA because of the doubts raised by the CRCGA's links with the Kuomintang Government. He could not be certain whether the body constituted a 'fifth column' representing the foreign policy ambitions of Taiwan towards Malaya, or was a genuinely Malayan-centred Chinese body.

Condemned by the UMNO and denied access to the British Government, the breakaway movement lost the support of the majority of huay kuan leaders, who shied away from it after the initial burst of organizing activities. These Laukeh leaders formed the backbone of the Chinese mercantile class in Malaya and they needed the largess of official patronage and access to government goodwill to pursue their economic activities. Therefore, while the CRCGA represented the Chinese position more accurately than the MCA, it was an ineffective body because its Laukeh backers would not openly support it for fear of jeopardizing their private interests.

The MCA top leaders cleverly used the Kuomintang taint of the CRCGA to silence opposition to the Merdeka Compact from the lower-echelon party leaders and rank and file. When the crucial Party General Committee meeting was convened to approve the White Paper on the constitution, the top leaders indicated that only the 'Kuomintang diehards' in the party would oppose the draft constitution. A party second-rung leader and ex-KMTM member, Chin See Yin, described the move as a 'cleverly con-

cocted attempt to avoid debate on the White Paper'. The tactic succeeded in silencing rank and file protest, and the meeting duly approved the draft constitution.⁶³

Tan Siew Sin and Ong Yoke Lin, two of the MCA representatives to the Alliance constitutional negotiations, had earlier asked for the expulsion of ex-KMTM party leaders involved with the breakaway movement, such as Lau Pak Khuan, Yap Mau Tatt, Leong Chee Cheong and Toh Seang Ong. They also asked for the dismissal of other ex-KMTM and CRCGA supporters who held office in the state branches of Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Johore, Penang, Selangor and Malacca.⁶⁴ The intention to sack the ex-KMTM and CRCGA men from the party turned out to be more of an exercise in bluster than an actual threat. The MCA support base was sustained by these same huay kuan leaders and their removal would irreparably weaken the party. The predicament of the English-educated leaders was nicely observed by Chin See Yin in his letter to the party's honorary secretary-general:

As many important members of the Working Committees of the local MCA are the supporters of the Pan Malayan Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations [CRCGA], I don't see how such Working Committees could investigate and submit the names of members who acted in any way injurious to the interests of the Association [MCA]. It would be the case of the "pot" calling the "kettle" black.⁶⁵

The MCA contained so many ex-KMTM huay kuan leaders who supported the CRCGA that it was not realistic for the top leaders to contemplate taking disciplinary action against the instigators of the breakaway movement.

Reconciliation of the MCA and the CCC-Huay Kuan Establishment

The futility of supporting the breakaway movement due to lack of UMNO and British patronage made its leaders amenable to the reconciliatory overtures of the MCA top leadership. Aware of the impracticality of taking disciplinary action against the Laukeh leaders, the top leadership worked to obtain their co-operation on a matter of immediate urgency, the citizenship campaign. This was a massive effort involving all MCA branches and Chinese associations to help Chinese eligible for citizenship obtain that right during the first year of independence when applicants were

exempted from the Malay and English language tests. The MCA top leaders dropped all action to expel Lau Pak Khuan and his CRCGA colleagues, and Lau Pak Khuan, in return, pledged the services and backing of the Chinese associations for the MCA citizenship campaign.⁶⁶ The reconciliation between the MCA and the CRCGA leaders was formally marked by a Conference of Chinese Associations convened by the MCA on 10 November 1957 to inaugurate the MCA citizenship campaign which successfully registered several thousand Chinese as Malayan citizens. Public esteem was shown to the Big Four when the Conference appointed them to sit on the 15-men Working Committee set up to direct and supervise the citizenship campaign.

The return of the CRCGA to the fold of the MCA and the re-imposition of the authority of the Westernized leadership over the Laukeh leadership and rank and file was welcomed by the UMNO. Tunku Abdul Rahman was particularly pleased that the MCA top leadership had successfully persuaded the Laukeh leaders to drop the celebration of the Double Ten Anniversary on 10 October 1957, a few weeks after the declaration of independence in Malaya. The UMNO president lauded the 'fine gesture' of the Chinese community for demonstrating its 'single loyalty' to the new nation-state by ceasing to observe the Double Ten,⁶⁷ after having celebrated the event for an uninterrupted period of 46 years (except during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya). The demise of the Double Ten Anniversary in October 1957, symbolizing the allegiance of Laukeh Chinese towards their new motherland, was the first of many steps taken by that group in performing their new role as politically active citizens of Malaya.

The Laukeh leaders of the breakaway movement had started off by challenging the MCA English-educated top leadership's hold over the Chinese community and had ended up by closing ranks with the party, thus reaffirming the supremacy of the Westernized leaders and the pre-eminence of the MCA. They sealed their reconciliation with the MCA by helping spearhead the citizenship drive and by placing the large manpower and financial resources of the huay kuan at the disposal of the MCA.

Thus, at the advent of independence, the joint efforts of the MCA and Laukeh huay kuan leaders helped many thousands of Chinese obtain their citizenship rights. From that time onward, the Chinese community of Malaya (and Malaysia) has contained large numbers of enthusiastic participants in the electoral politics of the nation.

1. The Alliance Party, after five months of negotiations from April to September 1956, submitted their constitutional proposals to the Reid Commission in a document entitled 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission', mimeo., 27 September 1956. Although the memorandum contained the constitutional views of the Alliance, it did not represent the final Alliance position on special rights and language. These matters were resolved in mid-1957 after the Alliance leaders held further negotiations to define their final viewpoints following the release of the Reid proposals in February 1957.

2. The Merdeka Compact was essentially a bargain between the UMNO and the MCA. The MIC, being a small and poorly organized party which represented less than 10 per cent of the population, played a relatively minor role in determining the outcome of the negotiations. For a discussion of the MIC role in the negotiations, see R. Ampalavanar, *The Indian Minority and Political Change in Malaya 1945-1957*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 195-9.

3. See, for example, the following press reports: *Utusan Melayu*, 5 March 1953, 28 April 1956, 12 March 1957, 5 May 1957; *Majlis*, 17 April 1956, 31 August 1957; *Warta Negara*, 26 March 1956, 4 January 1957; *Straits Times*, 3 April 1956.

4. *Straits Times*, 13 April 1956.

5. *Warta Negara*, 16 April 1956.

6. *Utusan Melayu*, 12 March 1957.

7. The Second Malay Congress passed five resolutions during its five-day sitting: (1) that Malay special rights not be governed by a time limit; (2) that Malay be the sole national and official language; (3) that Islam be the official religion; (4) that Malayan nationality be called 'Melayu' nationality; (5) that independent Malaya be named 'The Federation of Malay States'. *Utusan Melayu*, 10 April and 8 May 1957.

8. These views were contained in the memoranda submitted by Chinese associations to the Reid Commission. See, for example, *Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce: Memorandum to the Chairman and Members of the Independence Constitutional Committee for the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Charles Grenier & Co. Ltd., June 1956; 'The Constitution for Independent Malaya and Political Equality for All People of Malaya', memorandum submitted by the Representatives of Registered Chinese Societies and Associations in the state of Negri Sembilan, mimeo., July 1957; and *Memorandum to be Submitted to the Reid Constitutional Commission by Chinese Organisations in Malacca*, Malacca, Wah Seong Press, 28 July 1956.

9. *China Press*, 25 April 1956.

10. *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, 13 April 1956.

11. See 'Sequel of Action Taken by MCA on Constitutional Proposals', mimeo., August 1957.

12. The Alliance proposals in the 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission' were arranged under the following headings: (1) Composition of new state, (2) Name of new state, (3) Head of State, (4) Their Highnesses the Rulers and Conference of Rulers, (5) The Legislature: the Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat, (6) Elections, (7) Powers of both Houses, (8) The Executive, (9) The Judiciary, (10) Division of Legislative and Executive Powers between the Federal Government and State Government, (11) Fundamental rights, (12) Principles of National Policies, (13) Common Nationality and Citizenship, (14) Special Position of Malays, (15) Definition of Malay, (16) Language, Religion and other miscellaneous issues, (17) Amendments to the Constitution.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-16.
14. Interview with Tunku Abdul Rahman, 2 August 1976.
15. 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission', p. 17. The memorandum further stated (p. 18): 'For the purpose of providing for the special position of Malays, it is necessary to have a definition of Malay... We therefore suggest the following as a definition: "A person shall be deemed to be a Malay if (1) He practises the religion of Islam; (2) He habitually practises Malay customs; (3) He habitually speaks the Malay language; and (4) He is a person, or the descendant of a person, who at the commencement of the Constitution, (a) was domiciled in the Federation of Malaya, or (b) had been born in the territories comprised in the Federation of Malaya, or (c) had been born of parents one of whom had been born in the territories in the Federation of Malaya".'
16. 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission', see section entitled 'Appendix on Fundamental Rights'.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
18. The Commission comprised Lord Reid and four other members: W. J. McKell from Australia, B. Malik from India, Abdul Hamid from Pakistan, and Ivor Jennings from Great Britain.
19. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission: Appendix II, Draft Constitution of the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, February 1957. See particularly pp. 7, 126-35, 150-2, 173-4, 183.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
22. 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission', p. 19.
23. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission*, pp. 7, 126-7.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-5.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-2; 'Memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission', p. 9.
26. *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission*, pp. 128, 131-3.
27. L. A. Sheridan, *The Federation of Malaya Constitution: Texts, Annotations and Commentary*, Singapore, University of Malaya Law Review, and New York, Oceana Publications, 1961.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
30. However, the concept of dual nationality as defined in the constitution was more nominal than real. The constitution made clear that the Federation of Malaya Government would not give the rights and privileges held by Malayan citizens to Commonwealth citizens, and the Government also possessed the right to refuse Commonwealth citizens entry into Malaya. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
31. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Constituency Delineation Commission*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer, 1954.
32. Memorandum on the subject of Citizenship of Chinese with regard to the Reid Constitutional Commission (probably written by T. H. Tan), mimeo., 11 April 1956, TCL Papers, TCL/12/11a.
33. See, for example, the following press reports: *Warta Negara*, 27 February 1957, 21 March 1957; *Utusan Melayu*, 7 and 12 March 1957, 4 May 1957.
34. Minutes of the Alliance Ad Hoc Political Sub-Committee meeting held on 11 and 25 June 1957.

35. *Singapore Standard*, 11 July 1956.
36. MCA press release, mimeo., 30 October 1956.
37. Minutes of the Alliance Ad Hoc Political Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 April 1957. See also the minutes of 2 and 5 April 1957.
38. Record of the Eleventh Meeting of the Alliance Working Party on Single Nationality and Special Position of the Malays held at MCA Headquarters on 16 July 1956.
39. Memorandum from Yong Pung How and Ng Ek Teong to the MCA Central Working Committee, mimeo., 20 October 1956.
40. Minutes of the Alliance Ad Hoc Political Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 April 1957.
41. Minutes of the MCA General Committee meeting held on 7 July 1957.
42. The optimism of the MCA leaders was in fact borne out by the fact that during the first twelve years of independence, i.e. 1957-69, the UMNO, under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, refrained from implementing an assertive Malay national language and special rights policy.
43. *Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce: Memorandum to the Chairman and Members of the Independence Constitutional Committee.*
44. Memorandum entitled 'The Constitution for Independent Malaya...'.
45. See, for example, the following press reports: *China Press*, 11 August 1954; *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 7 August 1954, 3 March 1955, 28 September 1955.
46. Letter from Tan Cheng Lock to General Templer dated 12 May 1953, MCA Headquarters.
47. Minutes of the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee meeting held on 21 August 1954.
48. *Kwong Wah Yit Pau*, 20 April 1956; *Straits Times*, 18 April 1956.
49. Letter from Leong Chee Cheong to Tan Cheng Lock dated 5 January 1955, MCA Headquarters.
50. Letter from T. H. Tan to Leong Chee Cheong dated 21 January 1955, MCA Headquarters.
51. Minutes of the MCA Central Working Committee meeting held on 21 February 1955.
52. *Kin Kwok Yit Pau*, 28 April 1955.
53. 'A Declaration of the Meeting of Representatives of Registered Chinese Organisations in Malaya for the Acquiring of Citizenship Rights', mimeo., 27 April 1956.
54. Lau Pak Khuan also formed a second body, the Perak People's Constitutional Rights Committee, which comprised Perak-based MCA leaders such as Ong Chin Seong and Peh Seng Khoon, as well as some Indian leaders such as D. R. Seenivasagam, B. Kanapathi Pillai and John Emmanuel. The body was short-lived, and apart from organizing a mass rally attended by some 3,000 people in Ipoh, did not appear to conduct any other significant activities. *Kin Kwok Yit Pau*, 30 April 1956; *Straits Times*, 21 April 1956.
55. *China Press*, 11 March 1957; *Sin Lit Pau*, 17 April 1957. See also letter from Lau Pak Khuan addressed to Tan Cheng Lock dated 28 August 1956 in which Lau asked the MCA to support his movement.
56. *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, 14 and 25 April 1956.
57. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Education Committee*, Council Paper No. 21 of 1956, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printer.
58. *China Press*, 12 October 1954.

59. *Utusan Melayu*, 26 March 1956.
60. *Utusan Melayu*, 7 May 1957.
61. *Straits Times*, 20 April 1957.
62. *Straits Times*, 2 June 1957.
63. *Straits Times*, 4 July 1957. Minutes of the MCA General Committee meeting held on 7 July 1957.
64. Minutes of the MCA Central Working Committee meeting held on 4 May 1957.
65. Letter from Chin See Yin to the MCA Hon. Secretary-General dated 24 May 1957, MCA Headquarters.
66. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 1 November 1957.
67. *Straits Times*, 12 October 1957.

Epilogue: From Indigenization to Marginalization

THE first eight years of the MCA's existence, 1949-57, coincided with a political watershed in Malaya's history, a period marked by the early, most turbulent phase of the Emergency, the moves towards decolonization and the final grant of independence. The period was also a watershed in the development of Chinese politics in Malaya.

The stringent citizenship terms of the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948 had disqualified from citizenship over three-quarters of the Chinese population, and the outbreak of the Emergency in June 1948 had given rise to a belief that most Chinese either actively supported the Communist terrorists or were uncommitted in their attitude towards the federal government. However, the formation of the MCA in February 1949 led to a dramatic improvement in Chinese political fortunes. In its 'glory days' the MCA succeeded in destroying the myth of Chinese being either disloyal Communist sympathizers or apolitical; linked up Chinese concerns with mainstream Malayan nationalist developments; forged a political alliance with the premier Malay party, the UMNO; brought Chinese influence to bear upon the Independence Constitution; and obtained citizenship rights which ensured the Chinese community a legitimate political role in independent Malaya.

The MCA's task of weaning Chinese loyalty away from the motherland was given an unexpected boost by the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, just eight months after the party's formation. The Communist victory in China forced the majority of Laukeh sojourners to regard Malaya as their only permanent home. Fearing persecution from a Communist government which had confiscated their properties and businesses, or not wishing to live under Communist rule, the great majority of Laukeh Chinese abandoned all intention of resettling in China.

However much the MCA's role in indigenizing Chinese politics in Malaya was facilitated by the establishment of Communist control in China, the party's own contribution to the process should not be underestimated. The MCA became the principal party of the Chinese during the early and mid-1950s because its policies and activities were relevant to the needs of its Chinese constituency, with vulnerabilities both created by the exigencies of the Emergency and stemming from lack of citizenship and access to the political centre. Both in organization and method of operation, the MCA was an effective and innovative vehicle to serve conservative Chinese business and political interests by combining the resources of English-educated and traditional community leaders—the former drawn mainly from the SCBA and the latter from the *huay kuan* and the defunct KMTM. The anglophone leaders contributed their knowledge of Western political ideas and modern party organization, while the traditional leaders provided a widespread organizational base. Thus, Laukeh support at the grass-roots wedded to a sophisticated English-educated top leadership made the MCA a formidable mass-based party capable of dealing effectively with the most urgent problems facing the Chinese in Malaya in the post-war period leading to independence.

Once the hybrid party had developed the organizational and financial resources to advance Chinese interests, particularly after the 1952-3 reorganization campaign, it began to shift its attention to the national political arena. Being a communally based party itself, the MCA, in its search for Malay political allies, was attracted to the UMNO not only because it was the dominant party within the Malay community, but also because the national leaderships of the two parties shared common English-language schooling experiences, a mutual fear of communism, and affinity for Western political beliefs and capitalist practices.

The UMNO-MCA relationship was first established when the leaders of the two parties made contact in the Communities Liaison Committee. When UMNO president Datuk Onn bin Jaafar left the UMNO to form the multiracial IMP, Tan Cheng Lock attempted to persuade his colleagues in the MCA to support Datuk Onn in building a basis for non-communal political co-existence between the two major races of Malaya. However, the preference of the majority of the MCA leadership for a communally based relationship with the UMNO led by Tunku Abdul Rahman resulted in the formation of the Alliance electoral pact to

contest the 1952 Kuala Lumpur election. The coalition's landslide victory and the clear-cut pattern of voting along racial lines brought the MCA's brief flirtation with multiracial integrationist politics to a close.

The top leaderships of the UMNO and MCA were united by a desire to wrest the initiative of the independence movement from other political rivals, especially Datuk Onn, and to inherit power from the British Government at the earliest possible date. While Whitehall was prepared to hand over power to the Alliance coalition which had emerged as the undisputed victor in the country's first Federal election, it made it clear that independence would be granted only when the political leadership of Malaya had settled their outstanding differences pertaining to citizenship, special rights, language and other fundamental issues. Driven by the strong desire for independence, the Alliance leadership finally overcame sectional interests to arrive at the compromises contained in the Merdeka Compact.

However, the Laukeh constitutional breakaway movement, with its demands that Chinese be made an official language and its objections to Malay special rights, threatened to set back the momentum towards independence made by the Alliance leadership. It was ultimately the UMNO leadership's refusal to deal with the dissident group, which it regarded as Kuomintang-inspired, and its ability to persuade the British Government to do likewise, which brought about the collapse of the movement. The UMNO's role in thwarting the Laukeh challenge to the MCA Westernized leadership demonstrated at that early date the extent to which the latter had to depend on UMNO backing to maintain its position, a dependency which became even more pronounced after independence.

The successful governance of Malaya since independence has depended in large measure upon the ability of the Alliance coalition leaders, particularly those of the UMNO, to persuade their respective masses to comply with the bargain represented in the Independence Constitution. Malaysian politics since 1957 may be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase, lasting from 1957 to 1969, saw the Alliance leaders attempting to maintain the support of their respective constituencies for the essential elements of the Merdeka Compact. Although they gave the country stable and effective governance, their positions were steadily eroded by increasing Malay frustration over lack of progress made on Malay

special rights on the one hand, and strident Chinese demands on equal rights, language and education issues on the other. The 1960s marked the rise of Chinese oppositionist politics, particularly the highly assertive political style introduced during the 1963-5 period when Singapore formed part of Malaysia, and a corresponding rejection of the collaborationist politics of the MCA Westernized leadership. The UMNO national leadership, for its part, came increasingly under the attack of its party Young Turks. By early 1969, it was clear that the UMNO and MCA founding fathers of Malayan independence could no longer claim full rank and file support. The cataclysmic racial riots of 13 May 1969 shattered the pre-independence mould of Alliance consensus, and set the direction of Malaysian politics on a new course.

The second phase, dating from 1970 to the present day, has been characterized by undisputed Malay political dominance, and concomitant Chinese political emasculation. Implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the New Educational Policy and other pro-Malay policies are simply the most obvious symbols of this new reality. During the 1960s, Chinese opposition parties had both believed and behaved as though they could successfully challenge Malay political power and unseat the Alliance Government, while many accommodationists within the MCA believed that they could play important partnership, albeit junior partnership, roles in the governance of the country. The 1970s and 1980s, on the other hand, brought a painful Chinese awakening to the reality of overwhelming Malay dominance in all major aspects of the nation's political life.

The MCA on the Defensive

Chinese-based opposition political parties such as the Labour Party and the People's Progressive Party had been formed in the early 1950s. However, they commanded little popular appeal and played no significant role in the independence movement. In the period after independence, the increasing inability of the MCA to satisfy Chinese aspirations boosted the popularity of these parties. Ironically, the major demands of the community in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s echoed those of the earlier Laukeh constitutional breakaway movement—equal citizenship rights and recognition of Chinese as an official language. Realizing that lending its backing to these demands would amount to renegeing

on the bargain it had earlier struck with the UMNO, the MCA national leadership did not support them. Moreover, they failed to prevent passage of two major pieces of UMNO-sponsored legislation, the Education Ordinance of 1957 and the Education Act of 1961, which further restricted the scope of Chinese education in the country.

The 1957 Education Ordinance was based on the Razak Report of 1956. It designated two types of fully government-assisted primary schools within the National Education System: Malay-medium schools, referred to as National Schools, and other schools using English, Mandarin and Tamil as the media of instruction, referred to as National-Type Schools. Although Chinese primary schools received official recognition and financing under the Ordinance, the status of Chinese secondary schools was left ambiguous. For the time being, they continued to receive partial government funding and were allowed to be administered by their respective management committees (UCSCA). The 1961 Education Act, based on the Rahman Talib Report, dealt a much harder blow at the status of Chinese education by giving wide powers to the Minister of Education to make rulings pertaining to schools, managers, governors, employees, education advisory boards, and teacher registration. The gravest cause of concern to the Chinese community was clause 21(2) of the Act, which empowered the Minister of Education to convert any National-Type primary school into a National primary school, thus making Chinese primary schools liable to extinction. With regard to Chinese secondary schools, the Act terminated partial government assistance to them, stipulating that only those schools which converted into National-Type secondary schools, where only Malay and English were recognized as media of examination, would be entitled to full assistance.

Chinese frustration and anger over their deteriorating cultural position was further compounded by the National Language Bill. The Independence (Federal) Constitution had provided for a 10-year grace period during which English was recognized as an official language alongside Malay. When the grace period lapsed in 1966, the government announced its intention of introducing legislation to make Malay the sole national and official language of the country as from September 1967. This announcement provoked instant and widespread reaction from the Chinese community. The CCC-huay kuan leadership, the UCSTA and

UCSCA, and even the second-echelon leadership and rank and file of the MCA, protested against the implementation of the bill and instead urged the government to sanction 'a more liberal use of the Chinese language for official purposes'.¹ Forced to choose between the UMNO position and that of its own rank and file, as well as its traditional supporters among the CCC-huay kuan leadership, the MCA national leadership opted to accommodate Malay interests. On 18 October 1966, the party Central Working Committee endorsed the Alliance position and resolved that it was 'unable to support any move to make Chinese an official language'.²

The reasons behind the MCA leadership's closing of ranks behind the UMNO at the expense of its Chinese constituency can best be explained by examining the earlier Alliance crisis of July 1959, which involved two groups of leaders who had participated in the independence negotiations. These two groups had quite different views regarding the permanency of the compromise embodied in the Independence Constitution. Dr Lim Chong Eu, who took over as party president from Tan Cheng Lock in 1958, believed that outstanding differences the MCA had with the UMNO could be resolved after the more immediate goal of independence had been achieved, and intended to redress what he perceived as an unacceptable (i.e. unequal) relationship between the MCA and the UMNO. Among the newly elected office-bearers who supported Lim Chong Eu were Yong Pung How, Ng Ek Teong and Too Joon Hing. Arrayed against the group of reformers who had captured control of the party was a powerful faction led by Tan Siew Sin, Ong Yoke Lin and T. H. Tan. These men believed that the status quo should not be challenged. The fact that Lim Chong Eu and his group were voted into office and that both Tan Siew Sin and Ong Yoke Lin lost was a clear reflection of where party sentiments lay at that juncture.

Lim Chong Eu's demands to UMNO president Tunku Abdul Rahman were: first, that the Chinese be accorded equal treatment in their language, schools and economic activities; and secondly, that the MCA be apportioned 40 parliamentary seats out of a total of 104 in the forthcoming general election. The justification for the latter demand was that Chinese voters at the time outnumbered Malay voters in 39 parliamentary constituencies.³ The party's aim was to ensure MCA control of at least one-third of the parliamentary seats in order that Malay political parties could not amend the constitution at will.

Tunku Abdul Rahman's response was predictably curt: he simply announced that the Alliance was prepared to contest the election without the MCA unless the MCA president withdrew his demands. Additionally, he stipulated that the MCA would be allowed to remain as a member of the Alliance only on the condition that it accepted his terms: an allocation of 31 seats for the MCA and the nomination of MCA candidates by himself. The MCA General Committee met on 12 July 1959 to deliberate the issue, and voted by a narrow margin, 89 to 80, to accept the Tunku's conditions.

The fact that the General Committee buckled in to the UMNO's ultimatum despite its erstwhile almost unanimous support for Lim Chong Eu's demands may be explained in two ways. First of all, some of the MCA leaders may have felt honour-bound to follow the terms of the gentlemen's agreement represented in the Merdeka Compact, and were thus willing to back down in the face of UMNO intransigence. However, an at least equally plausible explanation may be that the majority of MCA leaders were Laukeh towkay whose economic interests were a major factor in weighing the consequences of political actions. For these businessmen-cum-political leaders, continued membership in an MCA which belonged to the ruling coalition was a much better proposition than being cast out into the political wilderness.

The outcome of the crisis, which drove Lim Chong Eu and his major supporters from the party, taught the Chinese community a major political lesson: that the UMNO possessed the means to make or break any MCA leader. Throughout the period of intra-party struggle, Tunku Abdul Rahman's patronage of Tan Siew Sin and Ong Yoke Lin was crucial to their continued strong position and ultimately to their ability to re-establish control of the party. Although the two men lost in the 1958 party election, the Prime Minister retained them in his cabinet, thus ensuring that they were able to distribute favours and gather support while Lim Chong Eu and his group were left in the cold. As he was then Minister of Commerce and Industry, Tan Siew Sin was strategically well placed to court the support of the MCA business leaders. In fact his close friendship with the Tunku and his cabinet position gave him influence over economic issues, which was indispensable to Chinese business interests. Not unexpectedly, although he was not the preferred presidential candidate in 1958, Tan Siew Sin became MCA president in 1961, succeeding interim acting president Dr Cheah Toon Lok. It was similarly his power-

ful position as Finance Minister which subsequently enabled him to retain his office as MCA president until 1974, despite obvious grass-roots discontent with his handling of Chinese education and language issues.

Following the 1959 debacle the MCA never again regained the same level of support it had earlier commanded from the Chinese community. Besides losing the confidence of those who looked to it as the champion of their interests, the party was severely weakened by the resignation of several top-ranking leaders, including Lim Chong Eu, who had left to pursue the objective of Chinese equal rights as independent candidates in the general election of 1959. Hundreds of their supporters lower down the party likewise resigned, leaving a badly decimated MCA in their wake.

Although generally respected for his abilities at the time of his accession to the MCA presidency, Tan Siew Sin was widely held by the Chinese to be too willing to accede to Malay wishes on the issues of Chinese education and language. Tan Siew Sin's deep sense of loyalty to and affection for the Tunku, whom he regarded as much a close personal friend as political mentor, is often cited as a reason for his willingness to collaborate with the UMNO. Furthermore, as a Westernized Baba Chinese who did not speak Mandarin, he was believed to have been less emotionally concerned about those issues than were his Chinese-educated colleagues in the party.

A third and often overlooked reason is the fact that Tan Siew Sin had a deeper commitment towards the protection of Chinese economic as opposed to cultural interests. During the independence negotiations, for example, he was most concerned that the constitutional clause pertaining to Malay special rights should also explicitly state that the implementation of such a policy would not be at the expense of the legitimate interests, rights and opportunities of non-Malays.⁴ As Minister of Commerce and Industry and subsequently as Minister of Finance, the two cabinet portfolios which he held for the duration of his career in government from 1957 to 1974, Tan Siew Sin probably understood better than any other non-Malay politician of the period, the full economic implications a wide-ranging implementation of Malay special rights could have upon Chinese business interests. It appears he successfully influenced the Tunku to pursue a low-key policy in regards to Malay special rights throughout the 1960s. The forcing

out of Agriculture Minister Abdul Aziz Ishak from the cabinet in early 1963 has been cited as an example of the Tunku's reluctance to undermine well-entrenched pro-MCA Chinese business interests in order to advance Malay economic welfare.⁵ During the 1960s the UMNO-MCA relationship was therefore characterized by an element of reciprocity: the UMNO pursued a moderate line on Malay special rights in return for the MCA's acquiescence to its wishes regarding Chinese cultural interests.

The seemingly excessive accommodation of the UMNO during the 1960s spawned widespread support for Chinese-based opposition parties, in particular the Labour Party, the People's Progressive Party, the United Democratic Party (UDP), the Democratic Action Party (DAP, which grew out of the Singapore-based People's Action Party) and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement, referred to as Gerakan).⁶ The UDP was formed in 1962 by former MCA president Lim Chong Eu, with the support of the group of dissidents who left the party with him in 1959. These parties were multiracial organizations in theory, but their espousal of equal political, cultural and economic rights for Chinese caused Malays to consider them narrow, chauvinistic Chinese parties. They drew their support mainly from the Chinese-educated population located in the states of Selangor, Johore, Penang, Perak, Malacca and Negri Sembilan. Pro-Labour Party votes came mostly from both the rural and urban Chinese working-class population, while the UDP, DAP and Gerakan had a stronger following among the urban middle class.

The results of the general elections, particularly those of 1959 and 1969, reflected the growing strength of the Chinese opposition parties.⁷ In 1959, the Alliance won 74 out of a total of 104 parliamentary seats; it polled 51.8 per cent of the popular vote compared to 79.6 per cent in 1955. The decline was caused mainly by losses sustained by the MCA, which failed to capture 12 of the 31 seats it contested. The ruling coalition improved on its performance in 1964, gaining 58.4 per cent of the total votes and 89 of the 104 seats. The MCA's performance was likewise better: the party won 27 of the total 33 seats contested. These election results were strongly influenced by the formation of the Federation of Malaysia (with its addition of Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak to the polity of Malaya) in the previous year, and the external threat to the new nation's security posed by Indonesia's belligerent policy of 'konfrontasi' (confrontation). The formation of Malaysia,

in which the Alliance leadership had played a key role, was favourably received by citizens of all racial and class backgrounds, and Indonesia's bellicosity had aroused a wave of patriotic sentiment which translated into pro-establishment votes. However, racial tensions were stirred up during the period up to and beyond Singapore's departure from the Federation in 1965, particularly by Lee Kuan Yew's slogan of 'Malaysian Malaysia', with its implicit claim of fully equal rights for Chinese and Malays. While the platform struck a strongly responsive chord among the Chinese population, it produced an equally, if not more strongly, negative chord among most Malays.

Campaign issues of the 1969 general election once again focused on domestic differences between Malays and non-Malays. The country witnessed the most aggressive campaign ever staged by Chinese opposition parties on non-Malay equal rights, and saw unprecedented gains scored by the parties, particularly the DAP (which retained much of the ideological and organizational dynamism of its Singaporean PAP antecedent). The Alliance suffered a 10 per cent decline in its share of the popular vote, from a percentage of 58.4 to 48.4, and retained only 66 of the total 104 parliamentary seats, thus losing the two-thirds majority it previously commanded in the Lower House. Although the UMNO lost considerable ground to the opposition Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the MCA's losses were much more serious. The party managed to retain only 13, of which 9 had a majority of Chinese voters, out of 33 parliamentary seats contested. In comparison, 20 of the 25 parliamentary seats captured by the DAP, Gerakan and PPP were Chinese-majority seats. In addition to ending the two-thirds majority parliamentary control exercised by the Alliance, the Chinese opposition also gained control, for the first time, of the state government of Penang. In Perak it won half of the state seats (20), and almost half (13 out of 28) of those in Selangor.

The electoral gains of the Chinese opposition constituted an unprecedented threat to Malay political dominance and aroused a level of outrage and fear seldom before experienced within the Malay community. The highly charged post-election atmosphere quickly deteriorated into interracial rioting which took its heaviest toll in Kuala Lumpur and its suburbs.⁸ Apart from the unacceptable challenge made to its political authority, Malay anger crystallized over several other points. A group of Young Turks within the UMNO, represented by leaders such as Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad and Musa Hitam, had become increasingly impatient with lack of

progress on Malay economic welfare. Other sources of discontent within the UMNO centred upon the slow pace of implementation of Malay as the national language and the continued liberal usage of English in government departments, schools and other public institutions. Unlike the UMNO leaders who had developed a special relationship with their MCA colleagues as a result of the shared experience of leading the independence movement, the post-independence generation of UMNO activists not surprisingly took a much harder line on Chinese issues. A movement within the UMNO to replace the Tunku with a leader who would pursue more stridently pro-Malay policies gained steady momentum; the 1969 election results and the outbreak of the riots finally provided the occasion for a change of leadership within the party.

Chinese Politics: Moving to the Periphery

The experience of the May 1969 riots revealed to non-Malays the undisputable fact of Malay superior political power backed up by overwhelming Malay-controlled military force. Having observed the efficacy of the armed forces in quelling the fighting and restoring peace at the time of the rioting, the Chinese became keenly aware that in a show-down they lacked the means to impose their will on any issue of fundamental concern to the Malays. The 1969 riots, and their aftermath, marked the onset of a steady process of monopolization of power by the UMNO, and the consequent relegation of Chinese politics to an increasingly peripheral position within the Malaysian polity.

In the wake of the rioting, emergency rule was declared, parliament was suspended, and executive authority was exercised by a newly established National Operations Council (NOC). Although the NOC had military representation, it was dominated by UMNO politicians and bureaucrats led by Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, who held the position of Director of Operations, and Home Minister Tun Dr Ismail. The cabinet, presided over by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, continued to exist and co-ordinated its activities with the NOC. During this period the Tunku faced increasing discontent with his leadership, as evidenced by Dr Mahathir's stinging criticism of his 'softness' toward the Chinese in June and a public demonstration by university students in July. In September 1970, he resigned

from office and was succeeded by Tun Razak as Prime Minister.

During the NOC period, which lasted until early 1971, Chinese involvement in the leadership of the country was essentially limited to its representation in the National Consultative Council which was set up as a sounding board for public opinion. The organization became the forum within which UMNO-initiated policies were first broached. Most important of these were the New Economic Policy, the Rukunegara (national ideology), and a number of constitutional amendments to entrench the special status of the Malays, the national language, and citizenship. While the Malays demonstrated in the NOC period that they had the means to govern without their Chinese and Indian partners, the UMNO leaders were committed to the restoration of parliamentary democracy. However, in restoring the parliamentary system, the UMNO secured the agreement of all parties in the coalition to operate within new ground rules, specified in the Constitution (Amendment) Act passed in February 1971, which prohibited public discussion of racially sensitive issues—i.e. special rights, the national language policy, the sovereignty of the Rulers, and citizenship.

The most fundamental policy change from the pre-1969 period was the introduction of the NEP, with its emphasis on improving the economic status of the Malays through the dual objectives of eradication of poverty and the elimination of identification of occupation by race. It also set specific goals of increasing the proportional share of bumiputra corporate equity, with a long-term target of 30 per cent Malay holding; the other 70 per cent was to be held respectively by foreigners and non-Malays in a 30-40 ratio. This policy, which has had implications in virtually every sphere of Malaysian life, was initially intended to last for 20 years (i.e. from 1970 to 1990). However, UMNO leaders have made it clear that they intend to extend the major elements of the NEP beyond the original deadline.

In considering the political and social philosophy which has served as the basis for the NEP, it is worth recalling that the major elements in the plan had been articulated as early as 1949 during the CLC discussions and in the UMNO Economic Manifesto of February 1953. That Manifesto had, for example, called for special economic assistance to Malay farmers, an accelerated programme aimed at raising the educational standards of the Malays, and the creation of a Malay entrepreneurial class. Since its implemen-

tation, the NEP has succeeded in greatly increasing the educational opportunities for Malays at every stage of education, especially at the university level; in producing an impressive body of Malay managerial and entrepreneurial talent; and in using the powers of the state to advance the economic interests of the Malays. Of particular note has been the proliferation of state-sponsored enterprises to improve Malay performance in all fields of economic activity. In addition to the pre-NEP institutions which sought to advance Malay welfare, such as MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat, or Council of Trust for the Indigenous People) and the Federal Land Development Authority (FLDA, later FELDA), among the most significant of the newly-established bodies were PERNAS (Perbadanan Nasional, or National Trading Corporation), the Urban Development Authority (UDA), PETRONAS (National Petroleum Agency), Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB, or National Unit Trust) and the state economic development corporations (SEDCs).

Government statistics indicate that NEP policies have managed to raise the level of Malay corporate wealth from 2.4 per cent in 1970 to 17.8 per cent in 1985. During the same period the non-Malay, largely Chinese, share has also grown from 34.3 per cent to 56.7 per cent.⁹ Although their total corporate share has not decreased during the NEP, the Chinese have felt threatened by the overt favouritism extended toward the Malays, particularly in the field of education, and by business competition from government-sponsored economic enterprises, including preferential treatment extended toward Malay businessmen in the awarding of government contracts. It is, of course, recognized that the Chinese businessmen have been able to hold their own, and even circumvent some of these policies, by making use of their business skills, their contacts with Malays in positions of authority, and the establishment of joint venture enterprises with Malay partners (who may or may not play an active role in the particular business).¹⁰

The NEP period has seen a marked change in Chinese perception of what constitutes their most vital interests. Although the community remains concerned about the position of Chinese culture, language and education, these issues have been overshadowed by the anxiety generated by NEP constraints on Chinese businesses. The Industrial Coordination Act (ICA), which came into force in 1976 as the key piece of NEP legislation regarding the requirements for bumiputra ownership and employment in

businesses, has created widespread disquiet as much for Chinese as for foreign interests. Except for small firms, business licences are now liable to be revoked if the enterprises concerned are found to be in contravention of the ICA.¹¹

The Merdeka University controversy illustrates the lowered expectations of the Chinese community in articulating its education and language interests. The idea of establishing a privately funded Chinese university using Mandarin as the main medium of instruction and examination was first raised in 1968. Support for the idea was instantaneous and widespread; the CCC-huay kuan, UCSTA and UCSCA provided leadership by spearheading a nation-wide fund-raising campaign after the fashion of the Nanyang University campaign of the early 1950s. However, unlike its earlier support for the Nanyang University, the MCA national leadership under Tan Siew Sin did not endorse the Merdeka University proposal. Instead, Tan Siew Sin proposed the establishment of a feeder college, Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College, as a means of assisting students from Chinese independent and National-Type secondary schools who had failed to secure places in the local universities. TAR College would provide the opportunity for higher education otherwise denied to these students. This MCA initiative, however, was given a lukewarm reception by the Chinese community, who saw it as a poor substitute for the full-fledged university they aspired to, and the opposition parties were able to make considerable political capital out of the Merdeka University issue during the 1969 general election.

Throughout the 1970s, the sponsors of the University worked assiduously to get official approval for their scheme. Following the government's rejection of the proposal, the case was brought to the country's courts. The High Court made a negative ruling in 1981; when the sponsors appealed against the ruling to the Federal Court, they likewise lost the case in 1982. During this period some MCA activists explored the possibility of making arrangements with a university in Toronto to accept a large number of Malaysian Chinese students. However, the plan was dropped when it aroused Malay opposition. In the era of lowered expectations of the 1980s such set-backs did not have as devastating an impact as they would have had in previous, more optimistic years, and the 1982 general election saw the MCA under the leadership of Lee San Choon score its highest electoral gains in decades.

MCA Politics, 1970-1986

The trauma dealt the Chinese community by the experience of the riots and the exclusion of an effective Chinese political voice during the NOC period, aroused a new wave of enthusiasm for participation in political activity when parliamentary procedures were reintroduced. Of the Chinese-based opposition parties which existed prior to 1969, only the DAP continued to function as an effective opposition. The Labour Party and UDP had become defunct, and others like the Gerakan and PPP were co-opted into the expanded National Front government coalition established by the UMNO in August 1972 as a means to reduce public 'politicking' among the parties representing the interests of the different racial groups in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The immediate catalyst for renewed Chinese political mobilization appeared to have been Tun Dr Ismail's warning that the UMNO would be better off without its Alliance partners who were 'neither dead nor alive'.¹² As an indirect means of rebuilding its grass-roots support, some leaders within the MCA initiated the Chinese Unity Movement in February 1971.¹³ This Movement sought to establish grass-roots support for Chinese objectives within the context of building a greater national unity embracing all races in the country. Spearheaded by leaders representing different interest groups within the community—the CCC-huay kuan, the UCSTA and UCSCA, as well as some English-educated professionals led by Alex Lee (the son of H. S. Lee)—the Movement gathered momentum from those, such as Tan Siew Sin, who initially felt it had potential for advancing Chinese political aims. In the face of the Movement's burgeoning popularity and its leaders' attempt to register it as an independent body, opposition to it quickly grew from Tan Siew Sin, who saw it as presenting a threat to the MCA, and from UMNO leaders concerned about its chauvinistic appeal. Denied government support and following the arrest of two of its leaders, UCSTA president Sim Mow Yew and lawyer Koo Eng Kuang, under the Sedition Act of 1971, the Movement soon faded into oblivion.

With the demise of the Movement, Tan Siew Sin recruited a strong team of English-educated professionals to assist in rehabilitating the MCA. This group of reformers, known as the Young Turks, launched a number of activities, the most significant of which was the 'Task Force' campaign aimed at revitalizing the party's traditional support base located in the New Villages. The

state of Perak, with a large New Village population which had shifted its loyalty to the opposition parties over the years, was targetted for special attention. Working through Teh Siew Eng, a local CCC-huay kuan stalwart who recruited a corps of Chinese-educated activists to spearhead the Perak Task Force, the MCA successfully re-established its legitimacy as the champion of Chinese interests in the New Villages. The New Villages throughout the country, largely neglected by the government since independence, were by the early 1970s suffering from an acute shortage of amenities, high rates of unemployment and land hunger. In a major step to obtain official recognition of these problems, Tan Siew Sin succeeded in having Dr Lim Keng Yaik, a member of the Young Turks, appointed as Minister with Special Functions for New Villages. When the MCA's credibility problem appeared to be well on the mend, a power struggle between the Young Turks and the Perak Task Force on the one hand, and a group led by party Youth chairman Lee San Choon on the other, broke the upward momentum of its rehabilitation campaign.

The Young Turks' rapid leap into the national limelight threatened the positions of longer-established leaders, in particular that of Lee San Choon, who had been steadily moving up the party hierarchy since joining the party in 1958. The Young Turks' allegations that the 'selfish' interests of certain Laukeh leaders were hurting the MCA's image drove the Old Guard to join forces with Lee San Choon. The Youth chairman also had the support of a group of English-educated professionals, notably Dr Neo Yee Pan and Dr Ling Liong Sik. As the Young Turks' rise to prominence had occurred under his patronage, Tan Siew Sin was initially reluctant to act against them. However, he became increasingly critical of the activities of the Perak Task Force, believing that the movement had been infiltrated by left-wing and Communist elements and had become too narrowly chauvinistic. The UMNO leadership formed a similar opinion, and denounced the movement as a security threat. When the Young Turks started to question the efficacy of his leadership, Tan Siew Sin threw his weight behind Lee San Choon's faction and prevailed upon Tun Razak to remove Lim Keng Yaik from the cabinet. By August 1973, the Young Turks had either been expelled or had resigned from the party. The majority of them decided to join the Gerakan led by Lim Chong Eu, who had previously headed the now defunct UDP.

The 1973 power struggle within the MCA—with its scenario of initial reformist enthusiasm, internal rupture of the party, isolation of the dissidents because of UMNO and conservative Chinese opposition, demise of reform momentum, and re-established unity among MCA stalwarts—repeated a pattern of earlier events. In its major dimensions, the crisis echoed the 1956 constitutional breakaway movement, the 1959 clash between Lim Chong Eu and Tan Siew Sin, and the demise of the Chinese Unity Movement. Significantly, despite the fact that the breakaway leaders, Lim Chong Eu, Alex Lee, and Lim Keng Yaik, all could claim with some justification to be reflecting the desires of the great majority of the Chinese in the country, each of these campaigns quickly ended in failure because of UMNO opposition to what it perceived as excessively chauvinistic appeals to the Chinese populace. Whenever the MCA has been under challenge by such groups, the UMNO has repeatedly given public endorsement to accommodationist Chinese leaders espousing the argument that the MCA is much better off within the ruling coalition than out of power altogether, despite its status as a junior partner of declining significance. These dynamics, seen in each of the major party crises, have revealed the UMNO's ability to play a strong, often decisive, role as final arbiter of internal MCA divisions.

In April 1974, while recovering from major surgery, Tan Siew Sin resigned his position as party president. His appointment of Lee San Choon as acting president was subsequently endorsed by the party General Assembly. Generally regarded as uncharismatic, and lacking the social status or Westernized background of past presidents, Lee San Choon's ability to revive the MCA's image to a new level came as a surprise to most people. Though educated both in Chinese and English, he was more comfortable communicating in Chinese and fraternizing within a Chinese milieu. While his 'Chineseness' may have been a reason why he did not develop as close ties with the UMNO leadership as his predecessor, it was his major strength within the MCA. For the first time since its formation, the party was led by a president who had risen from the ranks, who was completely fluent in Chinese, and who had a strong empathy for Chinese aspirations. The 'resinification' of the MCA under Lee San Choon attracted renewed interest from the majority Chinese-speaking section of the community, which felt its interests had not been adequately protected by Tan Siew Sin.

During his nine-year tenure as party president, from 1974 to 1983, Lee San Choon implemented a number of programmes which addressed Chinese economic, educational and cultural issues, and raised the image of the MCA within the community. These accomplishments included the campaign to corporatize Chinese family businesses; the broadening of educational opportunities through the expansion of TAR College and the setting up of a scholarship fund (Kojadi) to help members finance their children's higher education; the construction of a prestigious high-rise party headquarters; and a concerted nation-wide membership recruitment drive. Of these, it was the party's economic programme which attracted the greatest support, and which, ironically, was also responsible for its crisis of the mid-1980s, which will be discussed below.

The major trends in Chinese political preferences during the NEP period can be discerned from the results of general elections held since 1969.¹⁴ First of all, the figures underline the strong standing of the National Front coalition, which has retained a two-thirds majority in the Malaysian Parliament. In 1974 the National Front's share of the total vote rose from the 1969 low of 48.4 per cent to 60.8 per cent, and the number of its parliamentary seats increased to 135 out of a total of 154. In 1978 the corresponding figures were 57.6 per cent of total votes and 131 out of the total seats; in 1982 they stood at 60.4 per cent and 132 respectively. In the 1986 general election, the coalition won 55.8 per cent of the popular vote and captured 148 of the 177 seats in Parliament.

During the 1974 general election, both the MCA and Gerakan turned out credible performances; the former won 19 of the 23 seats it contested while the new arrival to the coalition won 5 out of 9 contested seats. However, both parties lost ground to the DAP in 1978, owing to rancour between the two parties over allocation of seats, as well as the DAP's effective campaign on issues pertaining to rising urban unemployment within the Chinese community, the low rate of Chinese university quotas, dissatisfaction over the Industrial Coordination Act and other Chinese issues. The DAP increased its share of parliamentary seats from 9 (in 1974) to 15; the MCA's proportion of 19 seats in 1974 fell to 17, while the Gerakan's 5 seats were reduced to 4.

By the mid-1970s the MCA had lost the wholehearted support it had previously received from leaders of *huay kuan* and other Chinese public bodies, largely because of its perceived ineffective-

ness in advancing Chinese educational and economic interests. Although the political and social role of the CCC-huay kuan leaders have been increasingly taken over by Chinese political parties and by national and state-level government institutions, such as those responsible for health, education, welfare, housing, and labour, these leaders are still able to articulate Chinese concerns and mobilize voters. Expressing their dissatisfaction with the MCA, they influenced Chinese voting behaviour in favour of the DAP during the 1974 and 1978 general elections, largely because of the opposition leaders' positions on Chinese issues, particularly the Merdeka University question.

No longer so closely linked to Chinese traditional organizations, the MCA became increasingly more dependent on UMNO patronage, and as a consequence, more vulnerable to manipulation by UMNO leaders, who for their part no longer view the MCA as the sole, or most authentic, advocate of Chinese interests. In addition, the UMNO—much changed from being a party of civil servants, schoolteachers, farmers and smallholders, and now having its own capitalist clientele—since the 1970s has not needed the financial assistance of the MCA, which underwrote the major part of the Alliance's election campaign expenses during the 1950s. The wealthiest Chinese businessmen in fact prefer to contribute directly to UMNO politicians of their choice, and are thought to give more financial assistance during elections to Malay politicians than they do to Chinese ones.

For a brief time it appeared that the MCA might recapture the initiative, and regain its stature within the Chinese community when Lee San Choon's leadership of the party finally bore fruit during the 1982 general election, as the party succeeded in winning 24 of the 28 seats it contested, a number of them in urban areas considered DAP strongholds. The most dramatic victory was in Seremban, where Lee San Choon himself defeated DAP chairman Dr Chen Man Hin. The MCA gains, together with the five seats won by the Gerakan, reduced the DAP's share of parliamentary seats from 15 (in 1978) to 6.

The DAP, however, was by no means crushed: its share of the popular vote in fact exceeded that of the MCA by 20.7 per cent compared to 18.3 per cent. While the DAP's voters are assumed to be almost entirely Chinese, the MCA has consistently benefited as well from pro-UMNO Malay votes in racially mixed constituencies allotted to the MCA. It is clear from the above figures that, even

with its respectable popular vote, the DAP was (and remains) handicapped by the bunching of the Chinese voters into a limited number of electoral constituencies, a delineation which gives Malays decisive majorities in most of the country's election districts. The MCA, for its part, drew much satisfaction from the fact that it had recaptured enough previously DAP votes to strengthen its position in traditional opposition strongholds. With this set-back to the DAP, and the Gerakan's influence still limited to the state of Penang (the party managed to poll only 3.96 per cent of the nation-wide popular vote), the MCA was highly optimistic about once more becoming the dominant Chinese political force in the country. Unfortunately, barely a year after the 1982 electoral breakthrough, the party grievously damaged its hard-earned credibility through a near ruinous factional struggle lasting almost two years.

The party crisis was initially brought on by the unexpected resignation of Lee San Choon as party president, and subsequently compounded by problems arising from the party's economic programme. Lee San Choon's resignation as the MCA head as well as Minister of Transport in the Mahathir Administration in April 1983 came as a great surprise, because not only had he proven to be a highly effective party chief but, as a man still in his late forties, he was expected to lead the MCA for many years to come. While Lee San Choon himself has maintained that he resigned in order to make way for 'new blood' in the party, this explanation has been considered implausible by many. There was widespread speculation that, among other reasons, he resigned because of an unsatisfactory working relationship with Prime Minister Dr Mahathir. It was felt that although he was strong within the MCA and had a considerable following within the Chinese community, his apparently weak political clout with the top UMNO leadership impeded his ability to deliver the goods expected of the top Chinese political figure in the country.

Lee San Choon's departure precipitated a savagely acrimonious power struggle within the party. His choice of his protégé and close ally, Dr Neo Yee Pan, as acting president met with the disapproval of an influential group of top-ranking leaders led by Tan Koon Swan, the architect of MCA-initiated economic reforms within the Chinese business community. The spectacle of MCA national leaders fighting for power using all manner of means—court injunctions, extraordinary general meetings, drawing up of 'phantom'

membership rolls—left the reputation of the party in shreds and tried the patience of the UMNO to its limits. Finally, as a result of the mediatory efforts of the UMNO, Tan Koon Swan was elected the new party president in late 1985, barely in time to prepare the party for the general election scheduled for August 1986.

Not surprisingly, the MCA's performance in the election was a disappointment to its coalition partners. It managed to win only 17 seats—10 of which had a majority of Malay voters—out of 32 contested seats.¹⁵ A large majority of the Chinese electorate had once again preferred to cast their votes in favour of the DAP, leaving the MCA to be carried through the election on the back of the UMNO. In the wake of its rejection by the Chinese electorate, the party was dealt an even more humiliating blow by the Singaporean Government's arrest and imprisonment of Tan Koon Swan in late 1986 for illegal manipulations in the country's stock exchange.

Since that time, further Chinese disaffection with the party has set in as a result of the poor performance of several enterprises established by and at the urging of the party. The MCA's economic programme had been conceived during the early 1970s at a series of economic seminars organized by the English-educated professional leadership. Convinced that traditional Chinese business practices were outmoded, the party argued for the corporatization of family businesses into financially viable enterprises able to withstand competition from large non-Chinese firms, especially government-backed Malay enterprises. In 1975 Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad (MPHB) was established to spearhead the 'economic revolution' in Chinese business practices. As the company's Managing Director from 1977 until his conviction in 1986, Tan Koon Swan masterminded MPHB's expansion into a giant conglomerate, with one of the largest levels of issued and paid-up capital among the companies listed on the Malaysian stock exchange, some 18,000 employees, and interests in all the vital economic sectors—finance, property development, manufacturing, plantations, shipping and trading.¹⁶ Holding just over 40 per cent of share equity, the largest MPHB shareholder was, and still is, the MCA Youth Cooperative Society, Koperasi Serbaguna Malaysia (KSM), set up in 1968 by the Chinese lower middle-class membership of the party's youth wing led by Lee San Choon. Through their ownership of the bulk of KSM's shares, some 80,000 families, mostly from small towns and the New Villages, have become the major equity owners of the MPHB.¹⁷ The rest of MPHB's shares

are held by several thousand small Chinese traders and investors, while shareholding by big Chinese entrepreneurs appears to be largely insubstantial.

Apart from gaining the support of considerable numbers of small Chinese investors, the MCA's corporatization programme also attracted the interest of the CCC and huay kuan. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the formation of a spate of Chinese holding companies representing the interests of the CCC-huay kuan network, the most significant of which was Unico, the investment arm of the ACCC, reflected the MCA's success in promoting Chinese corporatization of assets. However, these companies have remained inactive, due largely to lack of adequate capital funding and poor management.

By 1986, MPHB had become a bitter disappointment to its supporters. In that year the company reported losses of some \$200 million, the largest ever for any local company.¹⁸ Although the primary architect of its early successes, Tan Koon Swan appeared also to have contributed towards MPHB's problems. As the company's Managing Director, he had the support of MCA leaders who served on the board of directors, as well as that of large numbers of MCA members who comprised the majority of the company's shareholders. When he challenged acting president Neo Yee Pan for the party's top post, MPHB was inevitably caught up in the protracted struggle, undermining company morale and efficiency, as well as producing severe tension between employees of the company and MCA-employed workers (both of whom work in the same building, the MCA Headquarters building). Finally, when Tan Koon Swan was convicted of criminal breach of trust relating to his business practices in Pan-Electric Industries, a company in which he was the majority shareholder, the fall-out from the scandal inevitably undermined investor confidence in MPHB.

An additional reason why MPHB has suffered stemmed from the fact that MCA party bosses have dominated its board of directors and top management. While some of these MCA leaders undoubtedly possessed the business skills for the positions held, recruitment of managerial talent on a strictly merit basis would have served the company better: a team of non-partisan professional managers would have ensured greater profitability and prevented the company from being embroiled in the factional politics of the party. This shortcoming was redressed in February 1987 when a

rescue package for the company was organized by the country's most successful entrepreneur, Robert Kuok Hock Nien. Known to be politically neutral, Kuok has replaced MPH's politician-heavy board of directors with a new team of prominent businessmen.

Following immediately on the heels of the arrest of Tan Koon Swan, was another blow for the party. Two of its top leaders, Youth chairman Kee Yong Wee and Central Working Committee member Wang Choon Wing, were charged in early 1987 with criminal breach of trust in connection with the demise of a large MCA-sponsored savings co-operative (Komuda), one of 24 deposit-taking co-operatives to have its assets frozen by the government because of liquidity problems arising from poor management and over-extended investments in a time of economic recession. Although only 3 of the 24 co-operatives were set up by the MCA, the party has been blamed for the problem, because an estimated 4,500 party members were directly involved in the co-operatives either as directors or as employees.¹⁹ The hundreds of thousands of mostly Chinese working-class depositors, who in many cases stand to lose their life savings, have looked to the MCA to come to their rescue in a manner similar to that in which Malay financial institutions such as Bank Bumiputra have been bailed out by the UMNO leadership in times of difficulty. The fact that the MCA has lacked access to political and economic resources to assist them has further undermined its standing within the Chinese community. However, an eleventh hour move in mid-1987 involving alleged threats of an MCA pull-out from the National Front prompted the Mahathir Administration to agree to Central Bank involvement in a partial rescue package for the depositors.

Thus, although the MCA's fortunes were revived in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the promise of advancing Chinese economic interests through the formation of innovative, party-sponsored financial institutions, the serious difficulties faced by these institutions because of alleged incompetent and corrupt management by certain party leaders, a condition made all the more apparent by the mid-1980s recession facing the Malaysian economy, have caused the MCA to fall to its lowest ebb since its formation in 1949. In contrast to the pre-independence years from 1949 to 1957, when the MCA was effectively championing the cultural, economic and political interests of the Chinese, the post-independence period has witnessed first the party's failure in

the 1960s to prevent erosion of the Chinese position on education and language issues, and then its inability in the 1970s and 1980s to advance the economic interests of middle- and lower-class Chinese.

During the 30 years since independence, the MCA has likewise seen a steady deterioration of its political standing, even while it retains the distinction of being the world's third largest Chinese political party (after the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang), with a claimed present-day membership of some 450,000. The reasons for its steady demise are complex, but seem largely to revolve around a central dilemma: at a time of declining political clout, the MCA has lost credibility both as a partner in government and as a potential voice of opposition to the government. Unable to develop a successful strategy of either accommodation or confrontational 'hard bargaining' *vis-à-vis* the UMNO which would enable it to renegotiate the special rights of Malays that make the Chinese of Malaysia appear permanent 'second-class' citizens, the MCA seems incapable of reversing its fortunes. The political imperative behind the MCA's initial compromise in exchanging Chinese citizenship for Malay special rights, in order to lay the foundation for legitimate Chinese political participation in the country, has increasingly little relevance for the post-independence generations. Of more immediate concern to the Chinese community is the ineffectiveness of the MCA in devising a plausible strategy for arresting the decline in the Chinese political position and its related lack of influence over the major state institutions which affect the economic and educational aspirations of the community.

Chinese political decline has been accompanied by a proportional increase in the centralization and monopolization of UMNO power. Since 1971, a pliant Parliament has incrementally endowed the UMNO-dominated executive with a panoply of extraordinary powers, all justified by perceived internal security threats arising from communalism, communism (although the 2,500-strong MCP force located at the Malaysian-Thai border no longer constitutes a real threat), and other more recent causes of social instability such as drug addiction and trafficking.

In addition to the 1971 Constitution (Amendment) Act, other legislation that has concentrated more power in the hands of the UMNO-dominated government includes: the 1975 Amendment to the Universities and University Colleges Act, which prohibited

unauthorized student assembly; the 1981 Amendment to the Societies Act of 1966, which gave the government greater control over the activities of private voluntary organizations; the 1983-4 constitutional amendments that increased executive power at the expense of the King and Sultans; and the 1986 Amendment to the Official Secrets Act, which restricted the flow of information between the government and the public. The UMNO's concentration of power has effectively reduced the non-Malay partners in the 11-member National Front coalition to being essentially lobbies representing parochial interests—a situation foreseen by Tan Cheng Lock decades earlier. UMNO's coalition partners may propose, opposition parties may criticize and protest, but it is UMNO that disposes.

In late October 1987, in a move that startled the nation, the Mahathir administration arrested more than 100 politicians, educators, social activists, and others under the Internal Security Act. In addition, the Prime Minister banned all public gatherings and closed down three prominent newspapers—the English-language *Star* and its Sunday edition, the *Sunday Star*, the Chinese-language *Sin Chew Jit Pau*, and the Malay-language *Watan*. These papers were said to have exceeded the bounds of permissible criticism of government policies. The arrests came in the wake of escalating racial tensions which involved, on the one hand, a deep split within the UMNO leadership and, on the other hand, dissatisfaction within the Chinese community over the appointment of English-educated Chinese schoolteachers to administrative positions within Chinese schools.²⁰ The seemingly minor issue of Chinese school administrators was the tinder which ignited a volatile situation reflecting a deeper level of alienation and frustration over diminishing economic and political opportunities, and a fear of future challenges to Chinese culture and education.

Members of all of the major political parties, including the UMNO itself, were affected by the arrests, but the DAP and the MCA were hardest hit. The DAP's two top leaders, Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh, remain under arrest (at this writing) while the major MCA figures, a party vice-president and the MCA Youth president and vice-president, have since been released. The closure of the *Star*, despite its sponsorship by Tunku Abdul Rahman and its status as a respected journal and unofficial organ of the MCA, sent a clear message that the government intends to brook no public expression of opinion that is at variance from official policies.

These restrictions on political activism inevitably make it more difficult for Chinese political parties and lobby groups to advance Chinese interests. The Chinese community's political effectiveness is further weakened by the fact that its leaders are divided among parties which espouse diametrically opposed means of achieving influence. These means, as noted earlier, are the accommodationist approach of the MCA and the oppositionist strategy represented by the DAP and other Chinese-dominated opposition parties. During the crucial juncture of the country's transition from colony to independent nation-state, the MCA's collaborationist approach represented the most successful means of achieving Chinese goals. Since then, perceived lack of progress achieved by this method of political interaction with the Malay power élites has resulted in strong support for oppositionist tactics. It is clear, however, that opposition politics have reached a similar cul-de-sac. Of the several Chinese-based parties which flourished in the 1960s, only the DAP has survived into the 1980s. Although it appears to enjoy more popular support from the Chinese electorate than the MCA and the Gerakan, its views are rarely, if ever, taken into account in national policies.

There has been a third channel of Chinese political articulation, that of the multiracial integrationist approach. Tan Cheng Lock's interest in the IMP during the early 1950s stemmed from his belief that political interaction among the different racial groups along integrationist and not mutually exclusive communal lines would best ensure the country's future stability. However, the inability of the IMP, as well as its post-independent ideological successors such as the Gerakan, to break down race-oriented patterns of voting have led advocates of integrationist politics to return to the fold of communally-based politics. Left-wing parties such as the Chinese-dominated Labour Party and the Malay-led *Parti Rakyat*, which pursued an integrationist approach in a Socialist Front coalition during the 1960s, likewise failed to generate enough class-based support from Malays and Chinese to make their temporary alliance into a permanent one.

Given the low level of interethnic class consciousness, the integrationist approach remains more an ideal than a pragmatic proposition. Most present-day Chinese politicians, whether from the MCA, Gerakan or DAP, would prefer to work with the Malay political leadership within an integrationist multi-racial framework, but are unwilling to leave their communally-based parties

in the face of UMNO's decided lack of interest in sharing power with non-Malays.

Whether responsibility for the painful spectacle of continued MCA decline should be laid at the doorstep of ineffectual leadership or is the inevitable consequence of larger political forces over which they have little control, it is clear that the Chinese of Malaysia, having achieved true indigenization of their politics, are increasingly becoming marginal political actors. They recognize that the situation could be much worse, however, particularly within the kind of Islamic state of Malaysia which some Malay leaders espouse. If there is a bright side to the current context, it lies in the fact that this generation of secular Malay national leadership takes a relatively enlightened view of inter-communal relations. The rise to power of an Islamic fundamentalist party could visit upon the Chinese community of Malaysia draconian measures far more serious than political emasculation and cultural, social and economic discrimination at current levels.

1. *Malay Mail*, 4 October 1966.

2. *The Guardian*, 26 October 1966. *The Guardian* replaced the *Malayan Mirror* as the MCA party organ in April 1966.

3. Minutes of the MCA Central Working Committee meeting held on 9 July 1959.

4. Minutes of the Alliance Ad Hoc Political Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 April 1957.

5. See R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 278. It is believed that Aziz Ishak's downfall came about primarily because he had wanted to establish government co-operative rice-mills in the states of Perak and Penang in the hope that they would make Malay farmers independent of what he regarded as the exploitative middleman services of Chinese rice-millers.

6. For a detailed and highly interesting study of these parties, see Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society*.

7. The following election statistics are compiled from R. K. Vasil, *The Malaysian General Election of 1969*, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1972, Appendix II, pp. 73-110.

8. For an account of the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the riots on 13 May, see Goh Cheng Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, and J. Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, London, John Murray, 1969. The official account is contained in *The May 13 Tragedy: A Report of the National Operations Council*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1969.

9. *Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1976,

p. 86; and *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 September 1986. The figures indicate that the foreign share has dropped from 63.3 per cent to 25.5 per cent.

10. For a study of the activities of Chinese business leaders in the country since the NEP, see the author's paper, 'Chinese Business Elites of Malaysia', prepared for the Social Science Research Council-Joint Council for South East Asia Conference on 'Industrializing Elites of South East Asia' held at Sukhothai, Thailand, on 9-12 December 1986.

11. Due to the economic downturn in Malaysia beginning in 1982, which saw a corresponding fall in foreign as well as domestic private sector investment, the Mahathir Administration has since liberalized the ICA provisions governing the level of bumiputra participation in business enterprises in order to stimulate economic growth.

12. *Straits Times*, 18 January 1971.

13. For an account of the rehabilitation of the MCA during this period see Loh Kok Wah, *The Politics of Chinese Unity in Malaysia: Reform and Conflict in the Malaysian Chinese Association 1971-1973*, ISEAS Occasional Paper No. 70, Singapore, Maruzen Asia, 1982.

14. The statistics are taken from R. S. Milne and D. K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, rev. ed., Singapore, Times Books International, 1980, pp. 158, 397; D. K. Mauzy, 'The 1982 General Elections in Malaysia: A Mandate for Change?', in B. Gale (ed.), *Readings in Malaysian Politics*, Petaling Jaya, Pelanduk Publications, 1986, pp. 4-14.

15. 'MCA at Its Lowest Ebb', *Malaysian Business*, 1 March 1987.

16. *Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange 1985 Annual Companies Handbook*, pp. 468-9. B. Gale, *Politics and Business: A Study of Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad*, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Eastern Universities Press, 1985, gives a detailed account of the company's history and operations.

17. *Anatweek*, 22 June 1986.

18. For a detailed discussion of the causes of MPHB's financial problems, see this author's paper on 'Chinese Business Elites of Malaysia'.

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20. The causes behind the deteriorating situation are too complex for full discussion here. However, it was believed that the Prime Minister acted to halt further erosion of his authority resulting from a challenge mounted by a powerful opposition group within the ruling party, as much as to stop the spate of communal politicking which threatened to rupture the precarious equilibrium of inter-ethnic relations.

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Malayan Nan Pao
Min Sheng Pau
Nanyang Siang Pau
Sin Chew Jit Pau
Sin Lit Pau
Sin Pao
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- H'ng Hung Yong-24 March and 25 July 1975.
- Datuk Richard Ho-20 and 27 May and 4 June 1976.
- Kan Toong Foong-13 August 1975.
- Datuk Alexander Lee-9 April 1976 and 21 February 1986.
- Datuk Douglas Lee-14 May 1976, 30 November 1984 and 20 February 1986.
- Tun Sir H. S. Lee-22 July 1975.
- Datuk Lee San Choon-on several occasions, including 21 November 1975, 21 October 1976, 4 September 1980 and 4 December 1984.
- Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew-25 June 1976.
- Datuk Lew Sip Hon-12 and 13 July 1976; and 7 April 1977.
- Datuk Dr Lim Chong Eu-3 and 4 September 1976.
- Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik-17 January and 23 August 1976.
- Lim Kian Hoon-16 July 1975.
- Datuk Dr Ling Liong Sik-21 May 1976.
- Lock Siang-11 and 25 July 1975.
- Datuk Loh Fook Yen-21 November 1975.
- Lui Thye Heng-on numerous occasions during 1975 and 1976.

- Datuk Mak Hon Kam-19 November 1975.
Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan-on numerous occasions during 1975 and 1976, and on 23 September 1980 and 30 November 1984.
Ng Ek Teong-1 November 1976.
Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin-18 May 1976.
Ooi Gin Sun-16 July 1975.
Shu Soo Neng-27 February 1976.
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Tun Tan Siew Sin-24 June and 17 August 1976, 29 November 1984 and 20 February 1986.
Tan Sri Tahir (T. H.) Tan-7 May 1976.
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