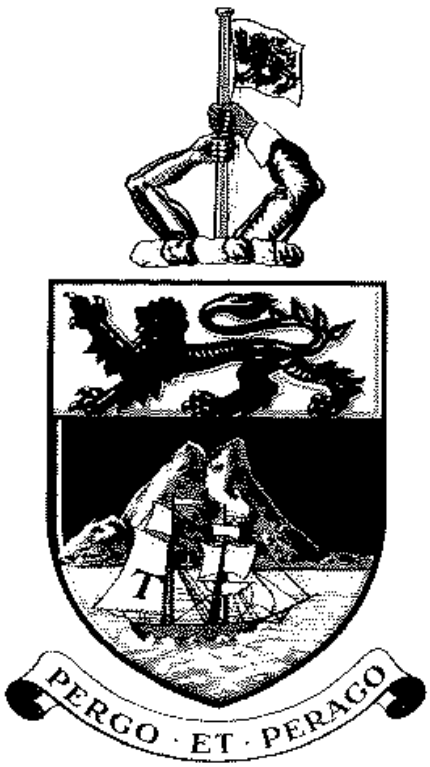
A White Headhunter in Borneo



North Borneo Coat of Arms

His Majesty the King, by a Warrant dated the 13th September, 1948, granted to the Colony of North Borneo its Coat of Arms. The Arms are a combination of the original Arms of the Straits Settlement of which Labuan was a part before the war, and of North Borneo (Chartered) Company, which, from November 1st, 1881, until July 15th, 1946, enjoyed sovereignty over North Borneo.

The Arms of Labuan are represented by the lower half of the panel which shows Mount Kinabalu in the background and a sailing ship in the foreground. On the mainsail of the schooner is the letter 'T', which commemorates the liberation of Labuan and North Borneo from Japanese occupation by the 9th Australian Division. The 'T' represents the shoulder badge of that Division, and stands for Tobruk, where the 9th Division won a historic victory over the Germans.

The Chartered Company's Arms are represented by, first, the lion and, second, the two arms holding the flag staff. The second representation symbolizes the joint efforts of the people of North Borneo and of the British to secure the Colony's progress.

The Latin motto "Pergo et Perago" means "I persevere and I achieve".

A White Headhunter in Borneo

STEPHEN HOLLEY

Natural History Publications (Borneo)
Kota Kinabalu
2004

Published by

NATURAL HISTORY PUBLICATIONS (BORNEO) SDN. BHD.

(Company No. 216807-X)
A913, 9th Floor, Phase 1, Wisma Merdeka
P.O. Box 15566
88864 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
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A White Headhunter in Borneo *by* Stephen Hollfey

ISBN 983-812-081-2

First published February 2004.

Printed in Malaysia.

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1194384

20 JUL 2005
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

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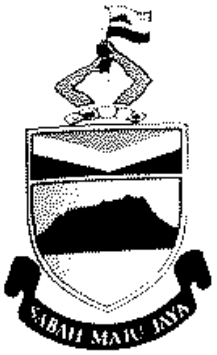

KETUA MENTERI
SABAH

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MINISTER

It has been almost fifty years since Stephen Holley first came to Sabah to work for the government of what was then the British colony of North Borneo. In the immediate post-war years, when control of Sabah passed from the Chartered Company to become a Crown Colony, the challenges were enormous. The infrastructure had been destroyed, malnutrition was widespread and public services such as health and education were severely limited.

For almost the next two decades, dedicated men like Holley worked towards establishing a base that would allow the state to become independent. Locals were trained to eventually take over the government, with many administration staff and other promising students sent abroad for training. This fascinating personal account, illustrated by photographs taken during the author's stay in Sabah from 1946 until 1964, gives an insight into Sabah in a stage of transition.

This is an account not only for the different areas of Sabah and the various personalities of those days, but an insider's story of negotiations leading up to the formation of Malaysia. The author was intimately involved as an adviser to the Chief Secretary, preparing briefing papers with his views on how to best serve North Borneo's interests. After Sabah gained independence with the formation of Malaysia in 1963, Holley stayed on for a short period as State Secretary, directly advising the first Chief Minister of Sabah.

I welcome the publication of this book, which is a valuable addition to the records on the history of Sabah.

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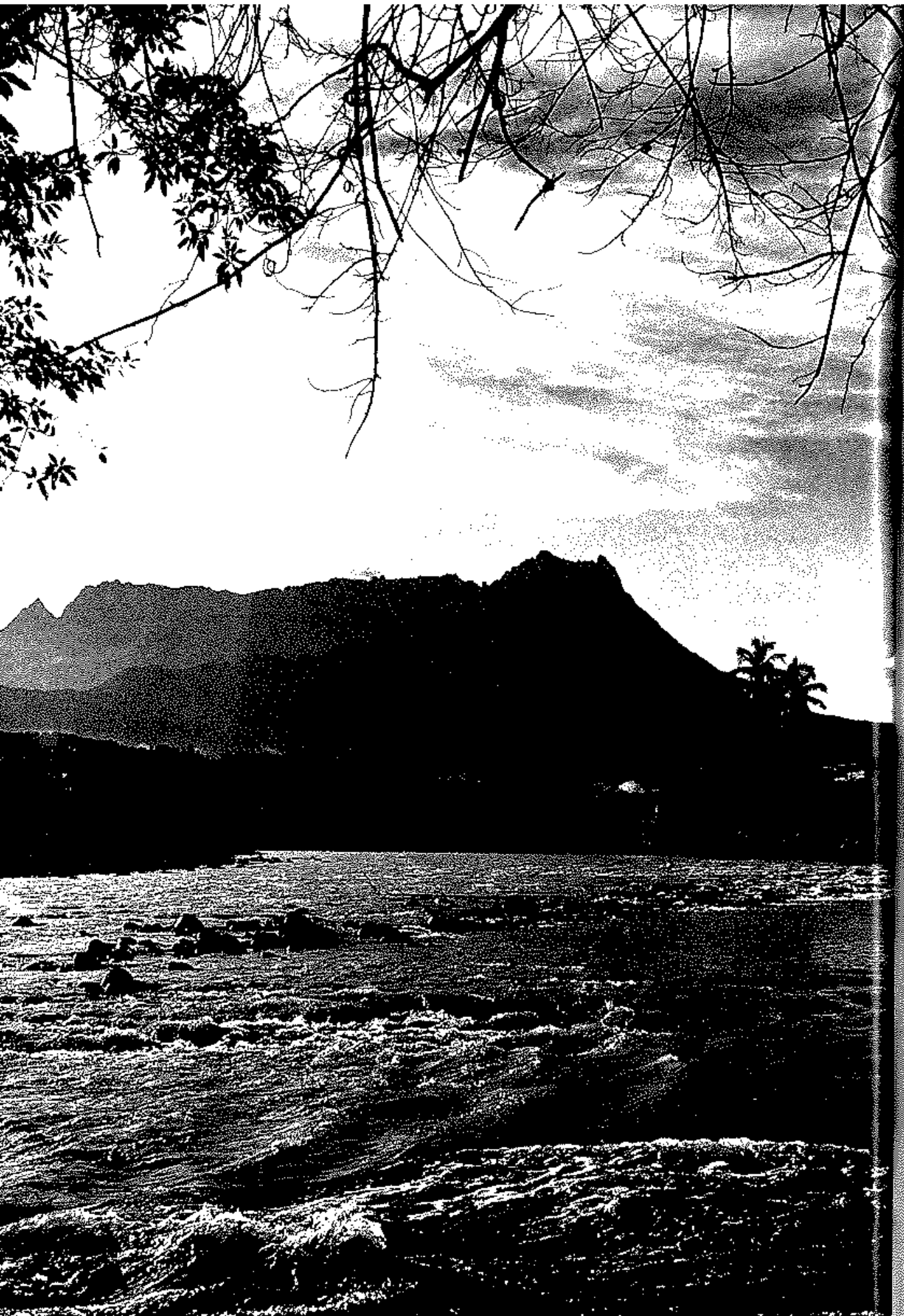


Preface

This book is not a history of the period between July 15th 1946 and August 31st 1963 when North Borneo was a British Colony. For those interested in the overall history of those years the most comprehensive and accurate account can be obtained from the Colony Annual Reports for the years 1946 to 1963. They record in detail the works of each department of government and the development of the country and its institutions.

This is a personal story of my time as an Administrative Officer in Borneo from the last days of the war in 1945 until the independence of Sabah within the Federation of Malaysia. Others could tell similar tales.

The various tasks of an Administrative Officer in those years certainly broadened the mind. I looked up an old CV recently and list some of the jobs I did during those years:—

"District Officer, which covers a range of duties depending on one's posting. Magistrate, Harbourmaster, Protector of Labour, Officer-in-charge of Police, Public Works, including road and airfield construction, Inspector of Schools, Lands Officer and general supervision of agricultural and forestry matters on behalf of the departments. The duties of a Resident combined the oversight of several Districts, a close relation with all departments and a seat on the Legislative Council. In the latter years it involved the establishment of several District Councils, the first tentative steps in the establishment of Local Government.

In the central Secretariat or as Private Secretary to the Governor I was Clerk to the Executive and Legislative Councils, Defence Secretary, Establishment Officer and, after taking a course at the UK Treasury during my leave, seconded to carry out Organisation and Methods surveys of the Secretariat, Public Works Department, Medical Department, Inland Revenue Department, Education Department, Lands and Surveys Department, Agricultural Department, Rubber Fund Board, Forest Department, and Police Force. I also prepared a book of standard office procedures for all

departments. For a time I was Chairman of the Land Advisory Committee which prepared a policy on the priorities for land use. The duties of State Secretary included being Permanent Secretary to the Chief Minister and Chairman of Whitley Council.

Initial selection for the service did not mean that one's job was secure. We served a three year probation period during which we had to pass exams in law, local legislation and customs and language. I learned Malay and eventually passed in writing Jawi script. I never used it again after the examination. Failure to pass examinations meant that one's annual salary increment was withheld. Several people failed and were obliged to leave the service.

Before air travel became the practice in the mid 1950s we served a tour of up to four years, with a week of local leave once a year. This was an opportunity for local sightseeing, visiting friends in other stations, climbing Mount Kinabalu or taking a trip on the Straits boat.

When I left Sabah in July 1964 to seek a job in Britain, I felt that none of this would have any significance in the sophisticated Western world. I was fortunate. It was ideal training for the post I eventually obtained as General Manager of a Development Corporation charged with the construction of a New Town of 60,000 people in the old mining area of Washington in the North East of England. That too was exciting and rewarding. In both jobs there was that great satisfaction that comes with seeing the results of a team's efforts unfold.

I was persuaded by James Sarda, the Editor of the Sabah *Daily Express* to write this book and had intended to call it *To Sabah with Love*. Its present title, *A White Headhunter in Borneo*, is a tribute to his journalist skill. It is undoubtedly more eye-catching and I certainly was involved in head hunting in some fashion in both meanings of the term. But this is essentially a book written in gratitude for the happy and friendly years I spent among the people of Borneo.

I am grateful to James Sarda for his help in editing the text and to Associate Professor Danny Wong for reading the manuscript and checking it for the accuracy of dates and statistics.

Stephen Holley

Introduction

So that a reader who is not familiar with Borneo can put this book into context here is a brief—very brief—resume of the history of British Borneo with a map to locate places mentioned, and a short glossary on p. 137 to help with local words and expressions.

From the 16th century onwards, European powers had been interested in the area from India to what is now Indonesia and Malaysia to trade in spices and other exotic goods. Trade required ports and settlements to survive, and survival required naval protection.

In 1819, Stamford Raffles established a flourishing trading centre in Singapore. In 1841, James Brooke, in return for putting down piracy along the Borneo coast, was ceded the Kuching river area by the Sultan of Brunei. This area gradually expanded to cover what is now the State of Sarawak. Brooke became Rajah and established the dynasty of "White Rajahs" which continued until Sarawak became a Colony in 1946.

In 1846 the island of Labuan was ceded to the British by the Sultan of Brunei.

By the late 19th century, with the blossoming of the industrial revolution and the improvement of sea communications, there were entrepreneurs from Britain, Germany, Austria, Holland, Spain, Portugal and America sniffing around the area for lucrative ventures.

In 1881, after a great deal of horse trading, the North Borneo Chartered Company was established, covering the area now known as the State of Sabah. Previously it had been, in undefined fashion, in the possession of the Sultans of Brunei and Sulu. Possession had not meant rule. River by river, people had lived under tribal chiefs, often engaged in piracy. The interior of the country was unexplored.

North Borneo, when acquired by the Chartered Company, was a series of coastal trading stations—Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu), Kudat, Sandakan, and Tawau, accessible by sea only. The Chartered Company ruled until the Japanese invasion in 1941. By this time they had brought the whole of North

Borneo under control. The country had been divided into Residencies and sub-divided into Districts. Local customs were administered by appointed Native Chiefs. The centre of Government was in Sandakan where the Governor resided.

The country had developed steadily in the manner of the time. Rudimentary medical services had been provided, law and order was established, roads began to spread from the towns where water supplies and electricity services had been installed. On the West Coast a railway had been constructed giving access via the Padas gorge to the interior. Rubber, timber, tobacco and copra provided the main source of revenue, but there were some unusual products doing their bit for the economy, such as birds' nests, turtle eggs, dried fish, seed pearls, firewood for Hong Kong, and cutch, a tanning agent extracted from mangrove.

Life at that time has been delightfully chronicled by Agnes Keith in her book *Land Below the Wind*. It was into this dreaming world that the Japanese marched in 1941 and ruled by terror until Borneo was freed in 1945, mainly by Australian and Ghurka forces.

Here my story begins.

Chapter One

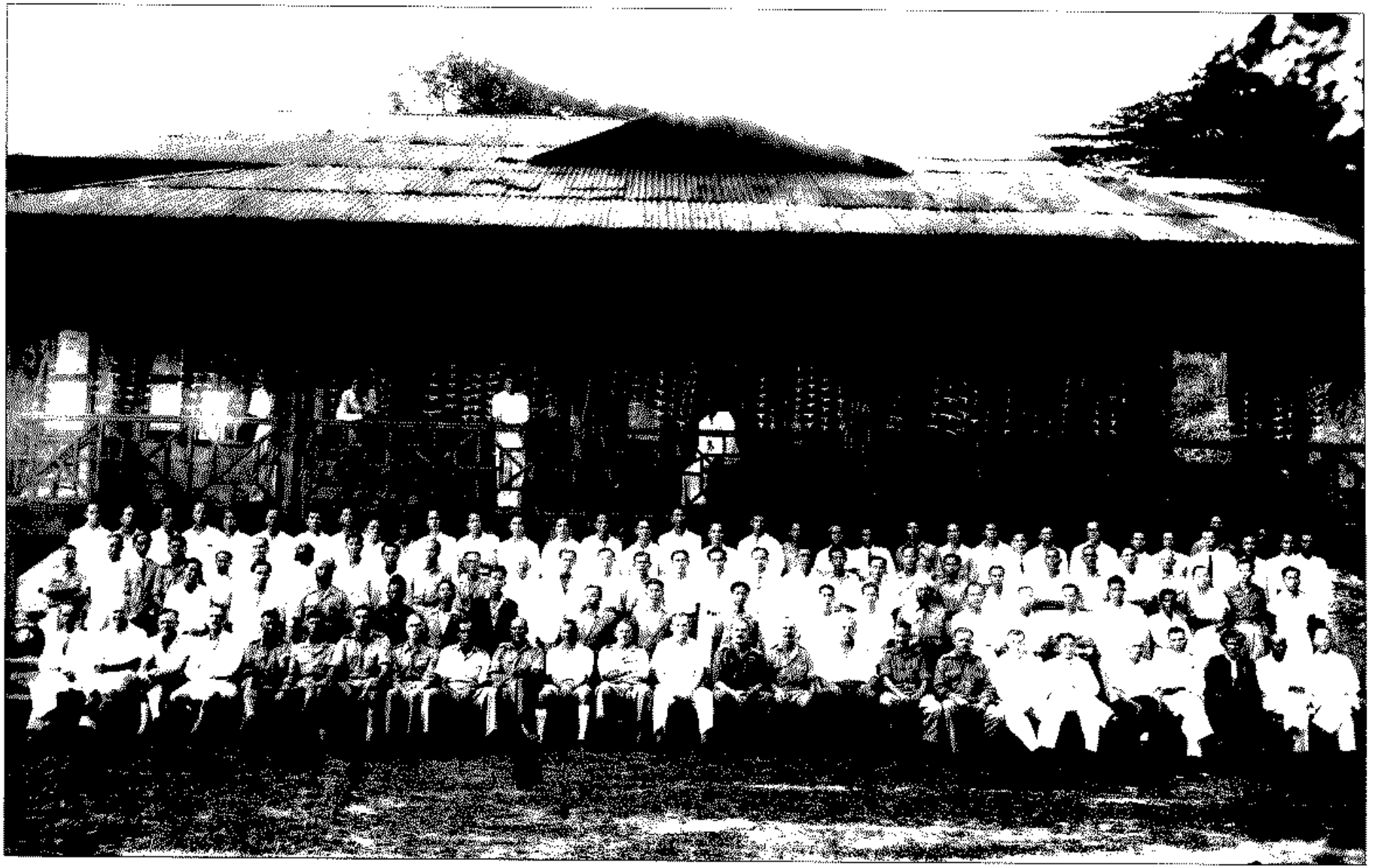
Borneo Ahead

I must begin at the beginning, but I am not sure where the beginning is. Much has been written about the early days of the Chartered Company and the days before that, but little about the period from 1945 when the horrors of the Japanese occupation ended. For eighteen years until 1963, when North Borneo became the State of Sabah within the Federation of Malaysia, it was a British Colony. I was there and have been asked to record my story.

The beginning of my story is the spring of 1945. The war had already taken me to Crete and the Western Desert. I was a twenty-five year old Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. The Allies had retaken France and I was on a troopship bound for Australia via Panama, destined for Borneo as part of the Military Administration when it was liberated.

It was a relaxing break from the wartime restraints which had become routine to our generation. Six years had passed since the Nazis had marched into Prague. Friends and I had joined our local Territorial Regiment with much the same feelings as our fathers in 1914. We expected a war. We expected to win it. We expected to win it quickly. Like our fathers' we were horribly wrong. But there I was with blue seas, sunshine, the magnificence of the Panama Canal, and whales spouting in the wide waters of the Pacific Ocean. Heaven!

We were an eclectic bunch, some from the Services, the odd old-hand planter, and ex-employees of the Chartered Company who had been assembled to put the shattered pieces of Borneo back into shape again. We were under the command of Brigadier Macaskie, a retired Chief Justice of North Borneo, an active man in his sixties, but the man I remember most was Colonel Maxwell-Hall who was then seventy-two. He had served with the Chartered Company from the early 1900s. He later related his experiences in a series of delightful stories in his book *Makan Siap*. He had been a pioneer administrator and Judge. He taught us Malay and told us of the customs of



The last days of the military administration before North Borneo became a Colony in July 1946. The picture was taken in front of the Recreation Club on the edge of the Jesselton padang.

the country. I had originally volunteered to go to Borneo out of boredom with my post of gunnery instructor in a training camp in Wales, but Maxwell-Hall's earthy tales of adventure whetted my appetite. My enthusiasm must have been evident for I was asked by Brigadier Macaskie if I would agree to join a group operating behind the Japanese in the interior of Borneo. As a result of this I did parachute training in Australia. I was proud to wear my wings and magenta beret.

To someone from a belt-tightened Britain, Australia was a land of milk and honey with giant steaks for breakfast, heaped plates and huge unrationed helpings of sugar and butter. I had served with Australians in the Western Desert and had some particular Australian friends who had endured an officers training course with me in the bug-ridden Kasr-el Nil barracks in Cairo, so I felt at home. We were stationed in a camp called Ingleburn not far from Sydney in New South Wales. My parachute training took me to Queensland and Victoria and I managed to take a short break in the Blue Mountains. People were kind to us and took us into their homes. I had first-hand knowledge of the part that the Australians had played in Greece, Crete and the Western Desert and was grateful that I could now make my own small contribution in their part of the world.

I had plenty of time to ponder on what lay ahead. I spent a lot of time learning Malay. I studied the geography of Borneo and the location and customs of the various tribes. I practiced unarmed combat with a PT Sergeant twice my size and always came off worst. It was a period of waiting. I wondered when and where I would go. Then the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The last act of the war had begun.

Chapter 2

The First Taste—Sarawak

In August 1945, our group embarked in Sydney harbour on a Liberty ship called the Joseph P. Carrigan and sailed into Victoria harbour Labuan on August 31st. The Australian 9th Division had liberated the island and fighting was still going on in the Brunei and Weston area. The harbour was a busy turmoil of warships, supply ships, landing craft and launches. Before we got to our moorings we struck a mine and shuddered to a stop. An American frigate came racing by and an officer enquired through a loud-hailer what the trouble was. Our Captain (Dutch I think) replied that we had struck a mine. "There ain't no mines in these waters, Sir" which elicited the reply from our Captain, "Vat do you think I just hit? A fucking turtle?" Two Australian officers were killed by a lifeboat blown inboard.

Our ship was taken in tow and grounded. We were taken ashore in "ducks" and I was brought to SRD HQ and briefed. SRD (Services Reconnaissance Department) was the organisation operating in the interior of Borneo behind the Japanese.

On the 2nd of September, I was aboard a Catalina flying boat bound for Kanowit. It was the intention to drop on our way several storps (store torpedoes) to a unit in Belaga, but it was wreathed in cloud. We circled the area for some time but it could not be found. A short time later we landed upstream at Kanowit on a fast-flowing brown river, taxied to a makeshift jetty and threw ropes to a *prahu* (canoe) which pulled us alongside. The bank was crowded with Ibans. There was an air of carnival; a great tumult of noise and excitement. People were bustling and shouting as they streamed down the paths to the river. Bare-breasted women and naked children crowded round to see what was going on. A small group of warriors who were John Fisher's bodyguard were resplendent in bright coloured *chawats* (loin-cloths) made from plundered silks. John (Major) Fisher was a pre-war officer of Rajah Brooke, a fluent speaker of Malay and Iban. He was in charge of the military administration in the Third Division. I was unloaded together with the

supplies and the aircraft was milked of 50 gallons of high octane fuel which would later be blended with distilled rubber oil for use in the outboards. Rubber oil was effective for a time but plugs soon became gummed up.

Kanowit was a typical up-river outpost. The office was a *billean* (ironwood) fort with the police and administration on the ground floor and the District Officer's quarters upstairs. From the windows of the fort we watched the Iban guerillas drilling, and a strange unkempt mob they were, dressed in whatever they had been able to acquire. There were several hundred of them. I stayed a little time at Kanowit visiting longhouses and becoming familiar with local customs. The area was badly damaged. The Japanese had retreated down river to Sibu and the Ibans had ransacked every shop and house in their path as they followed. I visited a bungalow upriver from Kanowit which had belonged to a rubber smallholder. It had been stripped of every bit of metal, even to the hinges which had been hacked out of the doorposts.

Eventually I was ordered to go down river, skirt the Japanese in Sibu and cut through sidestreams and jungle to take over the administration of the Lower Rejang district, which was currently being controlled by an Australian Sergeant called Keith Barry and a Canadian Chinese called Lew King. They were a great couple and Keith and I subsequently became close friends. I kept a rough diary over this period. Here are a few extracts which give the flavour of the situation at that time:

"**Sept 3rd 1945.** Went through set-up with John Fisher and food control with Willie Geiki (a Sarawak man). Sat in on trial of Chinese *taukeh* (shopkeeper) for selling salt fish at exhorbitant prices. Four months gaol and stock confiscated. Jap flag with mournful face painted on the sun was displayed behind the bench with a smoked Japanese head on either side. Went to tea at Mission. Father Chin and nuns fed us excellently on rice cakes and bananas. There was a beautifully laid table and the Father's conversation highly interesting. He told us of his experiences in prison—water torture etc. and of the padre's prayers which were means of passing information. Drank *tuak* (rice wine) and ate peanuts.

Sept 4th. Listened to interviews of Dyaks from 2nd Division who wanted to snap up a few Jap heads at Sibu. Idong (an Iban) came in with *tuak*. We did the necessary. Idong in great form. Tongues loosened.

Sept 7th. Checked prisoners and inspected Chinese launch. Beaufighter dropped leaflets about situation. *Kejang satis* (deer satay) for supper.

Iban querillas displaying Japanese heads, 1945.

Sept 8th. Ben tried *taukeh* for overcharging. Four months and stock confiscated. Liberator dropped a storp which hit roof and damaged a Chinese girl's head. Gave her some tinned fish and fruit as compensation. Bags of mail arrived by Catalina. Parcelled 25,000 dollars to take to Sarikei. Heavy thunder and lightning. Jap General Babbah signed surrender in Labuan.

Sept 13th. Left Kanowit in launch en route down river to skirt Japs in Sibu and head overland for Binatang. Then with Abang Haji and Shin Tek up the Assam river. Stopped at Dyak house for night. They first thought we were Japs and fled. Lots of talk and smoke. Finally to bed. Slept fitfully with myriad noises—children, dogs etc.

Sept 14th. Left by *prahu* early. Arrived Pengulu Brinau about 8.30. Got carriers. Travelled by filthy swamp track to Ulu Assam and across to Ulu Binatang. Lunched at a Dyak house. Women and a small boy carried for us to Chinese village. *Prahu* downriver to Binatang. Met Keith Barry and Lew King. Opened cash book and handed over money to Chief Cashier. Started Food Control to come into operation on Monday. Engaged one outboard driver. Met Chinese headmen. Told them to clean up around *kampong* (village) and bazaar. Impressed Food Control prices on them. Inspected town with two Native Officers. Loot* and cloth coming in. Chinese from Sariki offers loan of 20,000 dollars in old Sarawak money. Flag hoisted. Town bell to be rung. Present Arms ceremony inaugurated. Chief Clerk to prepare list of all staff and wages. Office completely haywire.

Sept 16th. Making some impression. Interviewed Native Officers from Saratok and Rejang. Prepared cash and instructions for them. Interviewed arrack salesman and fixed price at two dollars a bottle. Worked out police establishment with Sergeant Cotter. Good bloke. Inspected Jap offices. Told Chinese they could use them again as soon as goods were stored and inventory taken. Collected sack of rat poison to distribute free to public. Told Wan Hussein to do this. Found hundreds of tools for road mending and harvesting and three sacks of whitewash. Will get started on painting government buildings tomorrow. Remembered John Fisher's remark that nothing happens for a week! Patrol returned with loot and two Jap heads. Tricky story. Sorted it out with Keith and Lew. More cloth for Food Control from proceeds.

(Heads were very much in evidence in the aftermath of the war. In the longhouses clusters of recently taken Japanese heads hung, smoked and blackened, with the burned skin peeling off them. Behind the Court bench in Kanowit hung a Japanese flag with a woe-begone face painted on it. On each side of the flag hung a grinning head. In the turmoil of the final months of the war, as the guerillas moved down river, several non-enemy heads had been removed in error, in revenge, or as a fortuitous means of erasing records of debt at the *kedai* (shop). As the result of an edict by John Fisher that taking friendly heads was bad form, half a dozen of them, black and smoked, arrived at my office with no evidence as to who had taken them, but with indications as to the identity of the original owners.

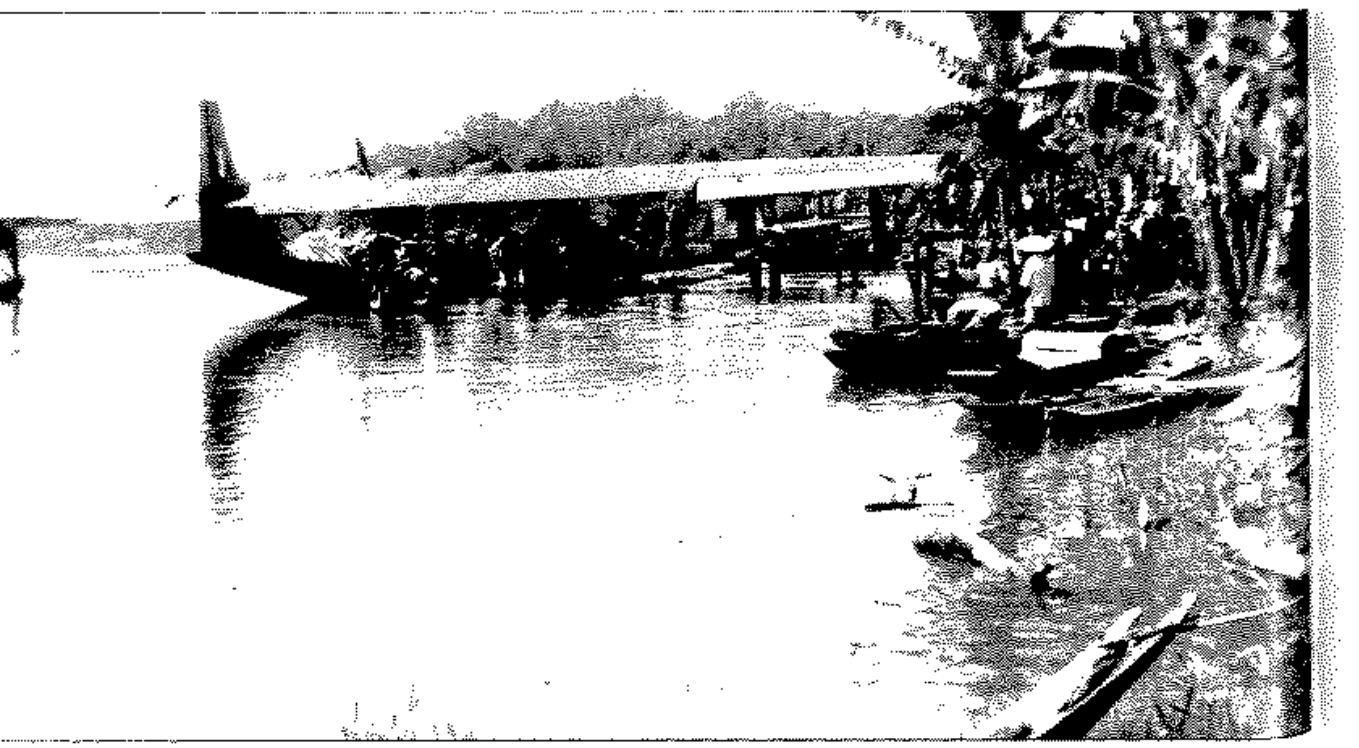
*Loot refers to property confiscated from the Japanese which could be used for the public good. Most of it had been looted from the public by the Japanese army.

I restored them to their relatives. It was an unpleasant task. On the last occasion, a man came in to say that he wished to identify and collect his brother's head. I took it from the bottom drawer of my desk and gave it to him. He examined it carefully and then began to wail and shout. I asked the Chief Clerk, who was interpreting, to tell him that I realised that it must be a terrible shock to see his brother's head like this, but would he please take it outside so that work could proceed in the office. The Chief Clerk replied "It is not that, Sir. He says that they have stolen the gold teeth.")

The extracts from my "Official" diary dealt mainly with restoring administration in the urban areas, but my greatest joy at that time was when I did my tours upriver in the Iban areas. In some areas I was the first European to be seen since 1941 or even earlier, and for the younger children, a great curiosity. The Iban were loyal subjects of Rajah Brooke. The last District Officer in the Lower Rejang had been the Rajah's nephew. Thus my reception was a regal one, one which I hasten to add was due to respect for those who had served them before. I kept a private diary of some of these expeditions and extracts from it will give a flavour of the time from the point of view of a twenty-five year old in a world completely new to him.

November 21st 1945. I left Sarikei in the outboard this morning with Mudin (my house boy), Tom Crocker (a Sarawak Eurasian), and two Ibans who wished to go upriver with us. We have enough rations for a week and going up the Sarikei river with its swirls and bends, with the *apong* palms dipping at the banks, I feel as though I am off on a week's holiday. Through the Jakar bridge. The river narrows fast now and soon we are at Penghulu Giman's house. Gongs beat a welcome in half tones, dreary and mysterious. The Penghulu was on the bank to meet me, dressed in a jacket, slacks and two felt hats, one on top of the other. The house was hung with flags and mats. An old Dyak got two fowls and waved them in front of us, walking up and down chanting monotonously "Welcome, welcome, for years now we have suffered, but now you are back things are well again". On and on he droned. We lunched with the Penghulu, rice and boiled chicken, the Penghulu making hay with my tomato sauce. The idea, he seemed to think, was to get everything on the plate well hidden beneath a blanket of red. In the afternoon we talked and slept in the *ruai* (the balcony that runs down the side of a Dyak longhouse.) Tom had a touch of fever. The women pounded rice with heavy rhythmic thuds. The children played the gongs and I drifted off to sleep. When I awoke we sat on the *tanjok* talking to the children, giving them cigarettes to race up the betel palms (Not a politically correct thing to do today).

November 22nd. There was much fuss in Giman's room this morning as his seven-year-old daughter was dressed in her ceremonial regalia. She wore a beautifully woven brocade sarong in red, blue and gold, two thick silver belts and chains of silver dollars, anklets and armlets, six to each arm, two silver combs in her smooth black hair and a tall coloured tiara which was fixed into the bun behind her head. Her face was creamed and she licked a leaf to redden her lips. A scarf was draped around her throat and she held a coloured kerchief in her hand. She tinkled to the *tanjok* where I took a photograph of her against a background of betel palms and rubber trees. Then upstream in two boats to Rumah Ngumbang. Usual things – "Glad you are back—no cloth—no clothes. *Chelaka* Jepun." Then overland to Rumah Abun. This was a very pleasant house, newly built and with fine looking girls. Ate bitter but refreshing *buah nyabor* (fruit). From there, down river, scraping the bottom of the *bandong*, through shallow rapids, and then off across the hills. It was a steep track, sometimes just steps cut into the side of a hill, through rubber gardens and cleared padi land where there was a good view of the dark green hills in the *ulu* (headwaters). The path led through the river, knee deep only and refreshingly cool, across ditches on tree-trunk bridges and along small creeks. Soon we came to Rumah Gunang. We rested



Catalina bring supplies to Kanowit, Rejang River September 1945.

and talked, then fifteen minutes to Rumah Empu. This is a long one with 24 doors. There was a great welcome here with gongs, a walk down the *ruai* shaking hands with all and sundry, wishing them well. An old woman clung hard to my hand and kissed it. She was crying with joy. I felt proud and felt that faith like this must be justified and reciprocated. A chicken was waved over our heads prior to its sacrifice, chants were chanted and with much talk they drifted off to eat their rice, squatting on the *ruai*. I took this opportunity to write up my diary. A rest after lunch until the rain stopped. Then, to the broken-down house of Uda. He wanted to build a new house and complained that the neighbouring house would not let him. I did not quite trust him as he talked too much. Later I got the whole story from Tuai Rumah Gala. "Once" said Gala, "we lived in that house but it was unlucky. The omens were bad. On the day we put in the headposts there was blood on the path, and when we built it the land split beneath it. That was too much. The Gods were angry, so we moved. I asked Uda to move with us but he refused. Now he wants to move into my land. His house would be too close. It would be between us and our padi fields. That is against the *adat*."

The lifestyle of the longhouse in the remoter areas came as a cultural shock. I soon became at ease with the communal way of life with a "door" for each family along the length of the longhouse, perhaps up to 50 families under one roof. Single men slept in a bachelors' loft but had the freedom to seek a maiden in her bedroom through a custom called *nyap* whereby he could stay if she dowsed the primitive lamp beside her bed, but had to leave if she left it glowing. But it wasn't an open ended freedom. Three acceptances and he had to marry the girl. Three strikes and you are in!

The sanitary arrangements were simple. Urination took place by squatting on the slatted floor, a practice employed by both male and female. Below the longhouse lived the pigs and the poultry. Defecation took place in a patch behind the house. My first experience of this was terrifying for the moment I squatted I was surrounded by a circle of snapping, snorting, small black pigs.

Becoming a eunuch was not an exciting prospect so I abandoned any pretence of dignity and screamed at them. I was rescued by a girl about seven years old who came wielding a stout stick which, after whacking the pigs, she gave to me and demonstrated how to wield it in a circular sweep to keep the enemy at bay. My children probably owe their existence to this act of vigilance.

Chapter 3

To North Borneo

In January 1946, I said goodbye to my Sarawak friends and boarded a Sunderland flying boat at Sibu. There were many of us and we were allowed to take only essential baggage. The rest would follow by sea. Mine never did.

With its passengers jam-packed, the Sunderland roared and strained along the log-strewn Rejang river and after an agonisingly long time, left the muddy water and shuddered over the jungle. It was raining heavily when we landed in Victoria harbour at Labuan. We were off-loaded into "ducks" which churned towards the shore through a harbour dotted with small craft We landed on a beach littered with wrecked landing craft and the debris of war. The roads were a morass of mud and dumped hardcore. Labuan was an island of camps. There were camps for the Army, camps for the Air Force, camps for local staff, camps for displaced persons, camps for coolies and camps for war criminals.

One of the main tasks of the Military Administration was to supply the Borneo territories with relief goods from the central supply depot at Labuan. Food, cloth, pots and pans, kerosene, knives and nails were despatched to various ports in a makeshift fleet.

It was in one of these small ships that I went to Weston a few days later and travelled by a converted jeep along the railway line to Beaufort. This was an exciting trip as in the Lower Rejang, all travel was by river and there was a thrill of speed as we hurtled through the overgrown rubber estates and mangrove swamp along rails which were visibly parallel with each other only from time to time. At Beaufort, I was met by Colonel Nick Combe, a stocky, moustached figure in jungle greens. He sized up my slight figure, probably concluded that I was better than nothing, bought me a *Kopi-o* (coffee) and in the late afternoon took me in another rail jeep to Jesselton.

It was dark when we reached the outskirts, and clattering along past dim lit houses gave me the nostalgic feeling of going through the suburbs of an English town. But daylight changed that. Galvanise and *kajang* supply

godowns were spreadeagled around the wharf. There was a vehicle dump by the town railway station. By the Survey office and in the *kedai* area, jagged frames of bombed and burned buildings poked into the sky. The remains of corrugated roofs creaked in the wind. When the wind was strong, a red dust of pulverised bricks blew through the town. Along Beach Street and South Road, there was a forlorn spread of squatters' shacks. They were like the hovels that grew around the fortress towns in mediaeval times. Here was a town where there was work perhaps, money, and food and clothing for the family. Here was a chance of life again, so in they came, the homeless, the starved and the ragged, to build themselves shacks from broken crates, salvaged wood and flattened kerosene tins; and here they lived in indescribable filth and squalor.

Every day, gangs of expressionless Japanese prisoners guarded by a few Gurkhas cleared the rubble, dumping it into the sea or using it to fill bomb craters. When a soldier passed, they leaped to attention and bowed. This was an embarassing business, a product of their own servile discipline. We ignored it and it gradually died out. Their rule had left its mark on the civilian population. Old people and children bowed and got out of the way of anyone in uniform. I always had a lump in my throat when I told them that they need not do that anymore. We may not have brought them prosperity, but could give them back their dignity.

There was utter revulsion for the Japanese at that time. The horror of the Ranau death march in which two thousand of prisoners-of-war had died had come to light and survivors from the internment camps had told their stories. The mass grave at Petagas was a terrible reminder of their brutality. In Jesselton, the Sports Club overlooking the *padang* had been the headquarters of the Kempitai and for months was instinctively given a wide berth by the locals. A few years later, the Jesselton Dramatic Society used the building to perform their offerings to culture- Oscar Wilde's *Importance of being Ernest*, Gilbert & Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, Rattingan's *Flare Path*, and other delights. The thought sometimes stole into my mind when an audience was laughing in enjoyment that a few years earlier in the same place prisoners had been screaming in terror. So when one day in 1946, a smooth young Japanese Lieutenant asked me if I could arrange transport from Jesselton to Tanjong Aru for his gang as it was raining, he was refused in icy contempt. They marched in the rain to join their 20,000 fellow prisoners. Gradually they were shipped home.

The civilian internees gave a concert to their guardians before they left. Some Japanese gentlemen sang "Home Sweet Home". Four painted and

kimono'd ladies sang "Auld Lang Syne" and threw flowers at us. My shackmate Major "Wendell" Wilkey and I left early and drank a bottle of Australian gin between us to get the taste out of our mouths. From the Customs House on the wharf I watched the last of the POWs depart. They stood to attention on the quayside whilst an Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) walked through the ranks. Suddenly, he turned on a soldier, ripped open his tunic and extracted a tin of condensed milk. He punched the man in the face and stomach and kicked him when he fell. The NCO then called his officer, who repeated the treatment.

There was, however, one Japanese for whom I developed a grudging respect. He was a murderer but a very brave man. I cannot remember his name, but his face I still see. He was a Sergeant Major who had been convicted and sentenced to death by the War Crimes Tribunal for the murder of a group of Dusun people in the Tambunan area. There was a procedure in force whereby condemned war criminals were allocated a "Prisoner's Friend" and I was so appointed. My duties were to visit him, ensure that he was treated humanely, carry out his reasonable requests and finally to confirm that his sentence had been carried out. I visited him daily in his cramped wooden cell in the prison at Batu Tiga. There was a long row of them. We talked in Malay. He was always dignified and polite. He told me that he was a Christian and wished to die with a bible by his heart. I managed to get one from the Roman Catholic Mission. His gratitude was touching. It was an English Bible and he did not understand English, but it gave him comfort.

There were two other war criminals sentenced with him and when I left him on the eve of his execution, three ropes were being stretched with heavy sandbags to ensure that there would be no give in them. At dawn, the three of them were strapped and hooded and led to the gallows. I guided my charge by the arm until we reached the steps, where he shook me off and said that he could manage on his own. He went up those steps with a great deal more assurance than I did. There was a grim tension in the air and a sullen murmuring from the prisoners in their cells. The end was swift. The ropes went round their necks. They shouted "Bansai", the trapdoors opened and they dropped with a thump and dangled, swinging slightly. A great scream of "Bansai" came from the Japanese in the cells. After the medical officer (MO) had certified them as dead and I had signed the necessary form, I went home to breakfast. I remember that it was fried eggs and tinned sausage.

When I visited the beautiful city of Kota Kinabalu recently, with its busy roads, beautiful buildings and international quality hotels, I sat in a deck

chair at Tanjung Aru savouring the glow of a sunset that had first overwhelmed me with its beauty over half a century before. That had not changed, but much else had. I remembered the fishing fleet of a hundred or so *lipa-lipa* that used to sail into the sunset each evening when the breeze began to blow off the land, and head for the fishing grounds beyond Gaya. In first light of dawn, they would appear again like a flock of coloured butterflies, their crews striving with paddle and sail to land their catch at the fish market. Sadly, but understandably, sail was replaced and the tranquil, timeless ritual gave way to the whine and reek of the outboard motor.

My work at that time varied from day to day. I was officially SOII (Staff Officer) to Colonel Combe, who was responsible to Headquarters in Labuan for the Administration of North Borneo. RGPN Combe (Nick) had served with the British North Borneo Chartered Company since 1930. He had been a District Officer in Kota Belud, Kudat, Tawau and the Interior. He had also held posts in the Labour and Customs departments and had acted as Chief Justice. North Borneo owed much to his experience and indefatigable energy, and to the regard in which he was held by local people.

The Chartered Company had governed with a shoestring administration and this meant that a District Officer could only do his job properly if he became part of his local community. So a District Officer had a wide range of friends and contacts. Nick used these assets to establish a trust between the Military Administration and the people which would otherwise have been impossible, for we were a mixed bunch of soldiers from Australia and the United Kingdom doing our inexperienced best in a situation that was completely new to us. Nick had been on leave when war broke out in Europe, and had returned to Borneo by parachute in the Kudat area to organise guerilla operations against the Japanese. He was awarded the Military Cross for these services.

Nick spent most of his time in early 1946, when I worked for him, travelling by air, jeep, launch or pony to all districts from Tawau to Sipitang and the Interior. My job was to keep things running while he was away, doing what I could to keep HQ off his back, assisting officers in outstations, directing requests for supplies, medical requirements, engineering assistance and general advice to the appropriate quarter.

I was proud of my office organisation.

I had three files:

"Administration West Coast", "Administration East Coast" and "Administration Interior"

They fattened rapidly and I was forced to open a fourth, "Miscellaneous". This, of course, eventually changed, but it is nice to reflect in these days of computers, complicated forms and returns in triplicate that for a short time in the middle of the 20th Century, North Borneo was governed through the medium of three burgeoning files. My only problem with Nick was that I could only decipher 50% of his writing, a problem I still have half a century later. Fortunately an answer was at hand. Whenever I came across a series of tadpole-like squiggles which I could not interpret, I would call for Michael Yong, a pre-war Clerical Officer who would without hesitation declare that it read "Brigadier Macaskie " or "Criminal proceedings should be instituted". A pearl without price.

It is difficult now, at the beginning of the 21st Century, for people to understand the problems of communications at that time. Teenagers in Tambunan talk on their mobiles to friends in Kuala Lumpur. Planes arrive hourly from various parts of the world. Newspaper editors receive e-mail from every continent. In the 1940s the most rapid form of communication in North Borneo was by twice-daily Morse code radio schedules. Outstations had a schedule of one hour in the morning and another in the afternoon when they could send and receive their dot and dash messages. The longest stretch of metalled road in North Borneo was between Jesselton and Tuaran, about 22 miles. Air transport was by courtesy of RAF Sunderlands and therefore limited to the coast. The railway via Beaufort and Melalap provided a gateway to the Interior, where travel was either by bridle path or footpath. A visit to Kota Belud was quite an adventure. In 1946, when the wonder of it all was enfolding me, I recorded a few of my impressions when they were fresh in my youthful mind. Here is one of them.

A VISIT TO KOTA BELUD

7th May, 1946. From Jesselton by jeep through Inanam and the rubber gardens of Menggatal to the makeshift Tuaran office. At Tuaran, one has to cross the river which is about 50 yards broad. The ferry is a small dugout *prahu* with bamboo outriggers. The ferryman was across the river so we hailed him. He pointed the nose of the *prahu* obliquely upstream against the current and came across on a crescent-like course. I was watching two Dusun maidens preparing to bathe on the far bank. They fitted well into the background of jungle, coconut palm and *kapok* trees. The were dressed in

black velvet *bajus* (short black coats) and dark sarongs. Their hair was sleeked back and fastened by silver combs. Their red rattan waist rings and ivory bangles gave them a stylish air. They dress in good taste. A girl stripped off her *baju* and stood in a white undergarment, waist bands and sarong.

I watched a man halfway up a *kapok* tree picking tufts of it with a split bamboo.

The girl was slipping the waist bands over her head. The ferry was halfway across the river. The girl wriggled inside her sarong and slipped off some nebulous garment which I didn't know they wore. She stepped out of it, or them, and flipped it or them, with her toes on to a pile of clothes. She loosened her sarong and it fell about her feet. She wore another, a short blue one, beneath it. She stepped into the water and I stepped into the *prahu*.

Two ponies were waiting on the far bank. My "boy" and I mounted and went at a gentle pace to Sungei Tajau. The barang followed by coolie. We waited for a *prahu* to take us to Tenghilan. At last it came and with much arranging and rearranging of *barang* (goods) we set off. The river opened into a large lake with Bajau *kampung* on the edge sleeping on the shining water. Then, suddenly, Kinabalu came into view. From here it dominates all, as indeed it dominates the life of the people, their folklore, religions and legends. She broods with a wreath of cloud on her brow, old and wise. Perhaps I should say "He" for Kinabalu is said to be a corruption of "Aki Balu" which means "Lonely Father".

The journey by *prahu* took three lazy hours. Ponies were at Tenghilan to meet us. It had been hot in the *prahu* and at the Tenghilan office, I drank young coconut juice and coffee. The policeman rang up Kota Belud to tell them that I was coming and that they should prepare a dance at night.

It is a good three hours, ride from Tenghilan to Kota Belud. The bridle path winds along the side of hills with a magnificent view of patchwork padi fields and thick jumbled jungle with the "Lonely Father" watching over all. Through valleys, down and up, across streams and boulders the track winds. Small gulleys are crossed by flattened log bridges which the sure-footed ponies negotiate with ease. I soon discovered that my pony was lazy and to break him into a trot, let alone a canter, cost me more energy than the animal.

I soon began to develop all the aches and pains which one does when riding for the first time in months. The stirrup-leather buckles chafed my thighs. The saddle chafed a very sensitive portion of me and my back began to ache. A stirrup leather broke. I tried riding without stirrups. I ached still more. I fixed it with rope. I still ached. We trotted, cantered and walked. I walked over the rough spots leading my pony. It was both quicker and more

comfortable. We rounded a bend at the foot of the hill. The Native Chief and a party of his followers were waiting on ponies. We shook hands. One horse had bells round its neck and jingled gaily.

The Chief wheeled his horse. His followers wheeled theirs, and we flew in a flurry of dust, kicked up heels and flying tails. My aches disappeared and we rode along like a band of robbers from the Arabian Nights. The Bajau in the lead wore a turban and sat on his horse as straight as a ramrod. My pony cantered now as a result of the excitement of the chase and the application to his hindquarters of a switch ably swung by the man on the horse behind. Past the bazaar where heads poked out, hats came off and women sat breastfeeding their babies. Then up the hill to the District Officer's (DO) house, and "Oh" — an armchair to sit in.

The DO was away but his houseboy had made all the arrangements for me. The sun was fading in the west and I relaxed in an armchair on the lawn, aching gloriously.

The DO's house is built of bamboo, a friendly gay little house. It commands a magnificent view of the countryside. To the southeast, Kinabalu stands, cold in the evening light, with a streamer of cloud across its breast.

Kinabalu from the bridle path near Tambunan.

From its flank, a ridge of hills curves round to the sea. Across the hill-studded plain of grassland and jungle the river wanders, twisting and turning over the pebbles and through the coconut palms. To the north, the plain, the sea and Mantanani island.

A cool breeze sprang up, the birds sang in the valley, the nightjar chopped in the jungle. The cool sweet smell of evening, of wet grass and flowers, stole into the air. The colour of the flame trees faded. The gold in the west turned to red. Kinabalu faded to a silhouette. A mantle of cloud settled round its shoulders like a shawl on an old lady. The stars came shyly out. The half moon began to turn from white to silver. Moon shadows materialised and then it was night with the rustle of the jungle, the whisper of the river, the shouts of the gongs, the laughter of the kampung below, and the scent of gardenias from the garden.

I bathed in icy water and soothed away my aches, ate some tasty fish and settled in the cool to dream. I remembered the journey, the buffalo that lowered its head and the horse edging sideways, the bucking goat and the shying horse, the guide drinking water out of a long bamboo, the party of women taking tobacco to the bazaar at Tenghilan. Not a care, not a worry, free and cool, a cigarette and coffee. No wonder people rave about Kota Belud. I watched the clouds sail by, the moon sliding behind them.

I went down the hill to the dance. The *ajau* (gongs) were beating to a fast tempo. The men danced. The women danced. They sang *pantun* to each other. Then came the *berungsai*. The men formed a crocodile and the women followed behind.

They sang part songs, the men singing first and the women answering. I asked the Orang Kaya to translate them from Bajau to Malay for me. It went something like this:

Men. Tell us the news about the Japanese. Where are they now?
Women. All the Japanese should be killed. Help us and give us some to kill.
Men. We suffered badly under the Japanese. They tortured our people badly.
Women. When the British went away, we cried tears of sadness.
Men. Now you have come back and we are glad.
Women. When you came back, we wept tears of joy.
Men. We have come tonight to give our greetings.
Women. We have come tonight to give honour.

Men. We have not met you before but we shall be good friends.

Women. Now your friendship is like the middle of the ocean. You have not yet reached the shore of our friendship, but we are waiting there to greet you.

Men. You have come from lands across the sea and we are happy to meet you.

Women. Cloth is very difficult to get now. Coupons only allow enough to make a pair of trousers. (Women are the same the world over.)

Men. Never mind. Things will get better. Don't worry and don't worry the Tuan about it. And so it went on, with me making replies to the Orang Kaya and he shouting them to the crowd.

I went slowly up the hill and slept sore and contented.

8th May 1946. Up before the sun. Tea and bananas in the cool air. Kinabalu shook the mist from its head. The wind blew the fragrance of dawn from the mountains. The sun sprang up behind the hills; the murmur of the kampung rose from below. I breakfasted and read Lin Yutang's *The Importance of Living*—a comfortable philosophy.

After breakfast, I walked down the hill to the *kajang* and *attap* shops. A bullock had just been killed. It lay with its throat cut in a pool of blood. The Bajaus grouped round it with their parangs. In a few minutes it was beef, bones, hide, flesh and flies.

Chapter 4

Labuan

After some months, I was transferred to Labuan—which was the HQ of the British Military Administration for North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei—to the post of Welfare Officer for local staff. Gradually, such pre-war staff as had survived made themselves known. They were essential for the re-establishment of civil government.

They were quartered in tents in military fashion and we recorded their experience and skills and ensured that they were fed and clothed. As far as possible, we kept them informed of the situation in the various parts of Borneo.

Gradually they were dispersed to posts in Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo. This was not as simple as it sounds, for the country was on the verge of starvation, communications were primitive and moving people around, especially if accompanied by families, presented problems. Often the best that could be done was to get some deck space on an army supply vessel with makeshift arrangements for their accommodation at the port of arrival. Whilst in our care, they lined up with the rest of us with their messtins and fed on army rations. In the years ahead in my various postings, I met again many of the staff who had been our guests at Labuan.

By now, the camps at Labuan had become more organised. The bulk of the Military had been withdrawn and we lived in a well-tended tented village in a coconut grove by the beach. We took pride in our surroundings. Flower gardens and pebbled paths appeared between tents. The Archpriest of this horticultural crusade was Chuck Fenton, a chubby irreverent Queenslander who later became Director of Posts and Telegraphs in North Borneo. Like many Aussies, he was a racing enthusiast and played a large part in the post-war establishment of horse racing in North Borneo.

I had the luxury of a tent of my own across the path from his. He had a pet monkey which, one day, took exception to something I said or did, leapt

on to my head and scratched it deeply. The wound became septic, which resulted in hospital treatment and a shaved head. I was still in this skinhead state when I met my future wife. I covered my embarrassment with an Australian bush hat.

Civil government was to be re-established on July 15th, 1946 and would be based in Jesselton. This was ordained in the mellifluous archaic language of the North Borneo Cession Order in Council enacted at Buckingham Palace on the 10th Day of July 1946.

"Present, The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

1. Whereas the British North Borneo Company (hereinafter referred to as "the Company") was incorporated by Royal Charter dated the first day of November 1881.
2. As from the 15th day of July 1946 the State of North Borneo shall be annexed to and shall form part of His Majesty's Dominions and shall be called, together with the Settlement of Labuan, The Colony of North Borneo."

A few days before the 15th, I stood on the wharf at Victoria harbour, Labuan, with Colonel Maxwell-Hall and watched as a supply ship loaded with the personnel, furniture and files considered appropriate for an annexation chugged out of the harbour. As it sailed into the distance, he turned to me and said "And there, my boy, you have all the ramifications of a Government—such as it is."

He departed the following day for Jesselton in his capacity as Acting Chief Justice to swear in the first Officer Administering the Government, the official title for the stand-in for a substantive Governor.

The ceremony took place in the only stone building in Jesselton, a building which, in its time has served many roles. Now it is a bright and cheerful Sabah Tourism office. Then it was a bomb-scarred relic. It subsequently served as the Post Office and Treasury.

The ceremony was performed on the upper floor. Those present sat on odd chairs around old rickety tables. Notes were taken on Australian Comforts Fund paper. After the swearing in was performed, the first meeting of the Colony' s Advisory Council was held. Those present were Mr J.M. Calder, the OAG (Officer Administering the Government); Colonel M.L. Bernacchi, Acting Chief Secretary; Mr C.D. Todd, the Financial Secretary; Mr R.F. Evans, a pre-war senior officer of the Chartered Company who had

been interned by the Japanese and had returned to North Borneo to take up the post of Resident West Coast; Mr G. Robertson, another returned officer of the Chartered Company; Mr J.C. Bryant, a rubber planter; Mr Phillip Lee Tau Sang, the leader of the Chinese community and OKK Yahya, OKK Lajungah and OKK Sundang, leaders of the Native community.

Taking notes at that meeting was Mr Vun Hon Kyong, who in his capacity as Office Superintendent in the Secretariat gave great service to the Colonial Government and, after independence, to the Sabah State.

Chapter 5

Serving Soldier to Obedient Servant

And so, on the 15th day of July, 1946 the British Empire, on which the sun never set, acquired its last Colony. Sarawak had earlier been taken into the fold. In a bomb-scarred building, on salvaged furniture, with those assembled in jungle greens and crumpled suits, began a venture with no more elevated goal than to restore a system of government which would enable the needs of health, education, agriculture and commerce to be addressed and revenue to be collected.

And those were noble aims at the time for the world was still in shock. The wounds of war take a long time to heal.

There were only makeshift public services. The main towns and villages had been destroyed, and with them the schools and hospitals. Government records had been lost and most of the senior local staff had been killed. There were no funds until a grant of one million dollars was sent by the UK government to prime the pumps.

Malnutrition was a major problem. Rice was imported, requisitioned and distributed by the Supplies Department. In 1946, the ration per day was 2 ounces of rice and four ounces of flour.

Gradually, but at a gathering pace, trade and commerce began again. Expatriates returned to rejoin government, commerce or estates, and local produce found ready markets. In Jesselton and other towns, rows of single-storey shops and houses sprang up on the foundations of old buildings, or on earth floors or vacant plots of land. Water was supplied through scattered standpipes, drains were cleared and nightsoil collected and disposed of. Homemade buses, constructed on old lorry chassis, spluttered their way to Penampang and Tuaran. Repaired locomotives, belching smoke and sparks, creaked and trumpeted along the West Coast line, bringing local produce to

the capital and returning with cement, nails, rope, cloth, pots and pans, shoes, tinned food, milk powder, beer and brandy.

North Borneo was waking up, stretching itself, ready to face what lay ahead after a numbing nightmare.

I had been posted from Labuan to Jesselton a few weeks after the transfer to civil government. The changes were already apparent. Instead of a Commanding Officer we had an Excellency, to be referred to directly as "Your Excellency", and in the third person as "His Excellency". Our Excellency was Mr J. Calder CMG, Officer Administering the Government, a pre-war Resident of Labuan, which had, at that time, been a part of the Straits Settlements.

My flattering title of Staff Officer was changed to Assistant Secretary (General), which meant that I was a dogsbody and anything that did not fall within a specific category was thrown at me. It was excellent experience.

The hierarchy of the Secretariat was jig-sawed together as officers arrived to complete the picture. Starting at the top were the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary, and travelling downwards, a Deputy Chief Secretary, a Principal Assistant Secretary and then the humble Assistant Secretaries.

I shared an office with the Principal Assistant Secretary, Nick Waddell, a pre-war officer in the Colonial Service who had served in the Solomon Islands, earning deserved distinction for his service during the war. He had remained in the islands relaying information to the Allies about Japanese shipping and troop movements. He was to become, later in his career, Governor of Sierra Leone and subsequently, Governor of Sarawak.

Our office was not very large. Its previous function was as the ladies' lavatory at one end of the verandah of what had earlier been Government House. The building, so the story goes, had a ghost which stalked the upper storey. It was exorcised by the simple procedure of removing the top floor, depriving the spirit of its lodging. The seat of government was later moved to Sandakan. The legacy of the building's history was a road from the foot of Secretariat Hill which ran straight, like the drive of a baronial mansion, to the beach at Tanjung Aru.

Our office was not elaborate. We shared a telephone and a large table, facing each other across it. There was sufficient space on it to accommodate our IN, OUT, and PENDING trays and enough room to spread a file or two. On the wall we nailed a container which we christened our "Rocket Box", in which we placed our daily red-ink admonishments from Mr Calder for mutual enjoyment before they were consigned to file or waste paper basket.

Our joy in being in such luxurious surroundings, thumbing through files on road repairs, rice rations, buffalo theft, sewage disposal, clerical salaries, market regulations, customs duties and other delights was enhanced by the view from our window across a wealth of flame trees and coconut palms to the glorious blue sea and the islands which now form part of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park.

The Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and the Attorney General operated from a newly constructed *kajang* and *attap* building alongside the relic in which we worked. The main body of the old building was gloomy, with barely enough light in which to work. It was presided over by an oversized Mr Murugesu, who had been brought from Malaya by Mr Calder. Mr M. wedged himself into his office chair at eight o'clock each morning and orchestrated the movement of files to their destinations until noon. He repeated the procedure in the afternoon. I have no recollection of him leaving his seat other than at the end of office hours.

Office life was certainly not luxurious. We operated with salvaged equipment with only basics provided. The sanitary needs of the whole staff were met by a pit latrine on the back slope of Secretariat Hill.

With the advent of Civil Government came all the trappings, traditions and formalities; the icing and the cherries on top of the colonial cake. Having an Excellency meant having a Visitors Book situated at the entrance to Government House drive. It was presented to His Excellency each morning to see who had paid their respects.

Those considered appropriate were invited to a Government House dinner, a ritual which went back beyond the days of Queen Victoria. I took part in several between 1946 and 1963, either as a guest or as an ADC. It was always a sweltering experience.

Sharkskin dinner jackets, cummerbunds and bow ties did not go well with high humidity and temperature in the days before air-conditioning. Malcolm MacDonald, when Commissioner General for South East Asia, dispensed with the jacket. Never in the history of human comfort has one man done so much for so many.

The dinner party always followed a basic pattern.

Procedure as follows:

1. Guests arrive and inform ADC of their names.
2. ADC announces names to HE and his Lady who wait, side by side, to greet guests. Length of greeting is dependent on whether guests are old hat or first timers. Old hats are rapidly disposed of. I

observed over the years that female pulchritude and daring décolletage lengthened introduction times by up to 100%.

3. Once past HE and Lady, stengahs, gin and tonic, sherry (duty free as part of the Governor's very limited perks) or soft drinks are offered by a smiling waiter.
   Note: Savour it because, other than in exceptional circumstances, you will not get another before dinner.
4. The ADC will, if you are standing round wondering what to do, introduce you to someone. This can range from a visiting diplomat to a charming lady journalist, or an ageing missionary delighted at the prospect of shortly being introduced to his Maker.
5. The gong will sound. Guests, having previously perused the seating plan, proceed to their places. His Excellency sits at the centre of one side of the long table with the leading lady guest on his right. The Governor's wife sits opposite him with the leading gentleman guest on her right.
   Then:
   Soup with sherry;
   Fish with white wine;
   Main course with red wine;
   Dessert.
   His Excellency is always served first.
   When the Sovereign has been toasted and dinner is over, the Governor's wife will rise and lead the ladies to an upstairs drawing room for relief, cosmetic repairs and liqueurs. Gentlemen will rise and led by His Excellency, proceed to the edge of Government House Hill, and in line, with His Excellency on the right, urinate in synchrony on the laterite hibiscus bed below. (No better blooms ever graced a garden plant.)
6. Gentlemen return to the dining table where they cluster round the centre and discuss world affairs or important things like cricket over port or brandy.
7. Ladies appear, tripping lightly down the stairs. Men rise and guests are directed to seats around the lounge.
8. This is the point at which the Leading Lady guest assumes a great responsibility. It is her role to bring the party to an end. This is achieved by sitting directly opposite the ADC, who sits within the vision of His Excellency. When HE decides that he has had enough

of the evening's delights, he nods or winks to the ADC who nods to the leading lady who then rises to take her leave.

The first time I acted as ADC, I made a hash of it. It was also the Leading Lady's first time in her role. She sat on the edge of her chair, like a sprinter in the blocks, tense and nervous. His Excellency was chatting to a young commercial wife, newly arrived and garbed in a revealing evening gown. I caught His Excellency's eye and he gave me a nod with which he intended to indicate his appreciation of the object of his attention. I took it to be the evacuation signal, conveyed it to the Leading Lady who leapt from her seat and covered the first five yards in under a second. Her panic conveyed itself to the other guests and in moments the place was empty. His Excellency looked at me coldly and said, "What the Hell did you do that for?"

Immediately after the war, there was no official Government House crockery and provision was made on loan by the Custodian of Enemy Property. As most of the Japanese property had been acquired from the British residents when Borneo was invaded, it was frequently the case that a guest would recognise part of their dinner service or silver and go home with it.

Government House dinners were the source of many stories, based on fact, but much elaborated in the retelling—of the enamoured dog and bitch tearing through the dining room and misbehaving under the table during the meal, of clip-on bow ties dropping in the soup, of the horror of a guest helping himself to more than the ration of two potatoes thus depriving a guest further down the table.

I can vouch for one episode which I witnessed during the reign of Excellency Calder. A lady, while partaking of her ice-cream, dropped a portion down her cleavage. Understandably she said "Oh" rather loudly. Mrs Emma Calder, the OAG's wife was very deaf, but heard the ejaculation.

"What did you say?" she enquired, pointing her ear trumpet at the unfortunate lady.

"I said "Oh"," replied the lady.

"And why did you say "Oh", my dear?", and before a table of guests, hushed into intrigued silence, the embarrassed lady had to explain to an ear-trumpet the cause of her discomfort.

Life was never dull.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies at that time was concerned for our moral welfare, anxious that loneliness, isolation and straightforward lust should not tempt any young male to sully the name of Empire.

There had been a practice in North Borneo in the days of the Chartered Company, enjoyed by both government officers and planters, of taking a *nyai*, a local girl who would perform all the duties of a wife in a stable relationship and have comparative wealth and status in return. It worked well. Children were given as good an education as was available at the time and many of them achieved senior posts in government or commerce.

A poignant example of the practice happened during the period of military administration. A young officer, whose name, rank and number I have conveniently forgotten, was posted to a remote outstation. He was lonely in his camp bed at nights and decided to do the decent thing in local eyes and take a *nyai*. He paid a substantial bride-price in cash and buffaloes, had a large wooden bed constructed and hosted an opulent wedding feast. On the morning following his night of bliss, he received an order instructing him to report immediately to HQ for transfer to the UK via India.

Someone in the Colonial Office, anxious to ensure that we led blameless lives in their newest Colony, decided to remind all expatriate officers of Lord Crewe's Circular of 1909. It fell to me to bring it to the notice of those concerned.

It is hard to read it without a smile. Even then it struck me as encapsulating all the high ideals and pompous righteousness of that era. In 1909, the throne was occupied by King Edward VII, whose views about mistresses did not entirely coincide with those expressed by Lord Crewe. The Circular was addressed to Governors. Here it is:

CIRCULAR

Downing Street

11th January 1909

Sir,

I desire to inform you that my attention has recently been called to one or two instances of misconduct on the part of officials in the Crown Colonies and Protectorates which have resulted in scandal and grave discredit to the public service.

In the cases in question it has been established that Government Officers have entered into an arrangement of concubinage with girls or women belonging to the native population of the district in which they were stationed, and, as it would appear that the point of view from which such practices are regarded by His Majesty's Government may not hitherto have been fully appreciated by all members of the Colonial and Protectorate Services, I think it desirable that it should be explicitly stated, and that it should be made clear to all members of those Services, that quite apart from all questions of morality, I regard such conduct as both injurious and dangerous to the public service.

I am satisfied that much has been done in various parts of the Empire to diminish the evils to which I refer; but I am compelled to recognise that they still exist in some parts of it. It is my earnest wish that the improvements which have been brought about in the past by the pressure of public opinion and the personal influence of senior officers should also have full effect in those territories under the administration of the Colonial Office in which such practices may still continue; and I have very carefully considered whether any additional measures can be adopted with a view to diminishing still further the risk of misconduct of this kind.

In order to bring the view of His Majesty's Government with regard to such practices under the notices of the Colonial and Protectorate Services as a whole, I have caused two circulars to be prepared (of which copies are enclosed), and I desire that the one marked "A" may be communicated to all British officers who in future enter the service of any of the Colonies or Protectorates in which such practices have existed or may still exist at the time when they enter upon their duties, and that the one marked "B" should be similarly communicated to all British officers at present in the service of those Colonies and Protectorates.

It will be open to you in your discretion to communicate the sense of Circular "A" with any officers already in the service in whose cases you may think an additional warning desirable; and it will also be understood that summary punishment for offences of this character may at any time be applied to individual officers, irrespective of whether that Circular has or has not been issued to them, should the facts show such action to be necessary.

I am confident that the Governors and leading officials will spare no effort to diminish these abuses where they may be found still to exist, and

that for this purpose they will be able to rely upon the assistance of the senior officers of the districts in which instances of such misconduct may possibly occur. You will, no doubt, explain to these officers that it will in future be their duty, whenever an instance of conduct to which I have referred comes to their notice, to make it the subject of official action.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant,

CREWE

Obedient, humble Servants could be quite overbearing! I wonder what Lord Crewe would have said about the custom of "partners" so prevalent in the western world today?

Despatches from the Secretary of State were infrequent. Most correspondence with the Colonial Office was conducted between officials in a less formal manner, but until the end of Colonial rule in 1963, the format and rolling phrases of the Despatch remained much the same as in the days of Lord Crewe.

Chapter 6

Into the Corridors of Power

The Officer Administering the Government, whose substantive post was Chief Secretary, was a stop-gap. He was not a man of vision and was mainly concerned to restore pre-war procedures and appearances. There was, in fact, little else that he could do. He was finicky about things like the Order of Precedence, the neatness of files and the retention of the pericarp on milled rice. The latter was a matter of some importance, for malnutrition was rife, beri-beri was common and the pericarp was a source of essential vitamins.

One of my duties as Assistant Secretary (General) was that of Clerk of the Advisory Council. On the 15th February, 1947 in the top floor of a hastily restored Land & Survey office, resplendent in its whitewashed walls and red painted galvanised roof, I read the proclamation appointing our first Colonial Governor:

"George the Sixth by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India: To our Trusty and well-beloved Edward Francis Twining Esquire, Companion of Our Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Member of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire — Greeting" —and so on through the ponderous text.

Edward Twining, later to become Sir Edward, and via the Governorship of Tanganyika, Lord Twining, was an imposing figure, a bulky, friendly extrovert who, when dressed in his uniform and plumes, had the visual impact of a Brigade of Guards.

He was welcomed by speeches from OKK Sundang, Mr Phillip Lee Tau Sang and Mr J. Bryant, members of the Advisory Council representing the

various communities. When he was duly sworn in, welcomed and installed, he walked over, and towering over me said, "You read that very well, my boy, but you forgot to say "God Save the King" at the end of it." The opportunity never occurred again to do the job properly.

The arrival of Governor Twining marked the beginning of a new era. Restoration would of course go on, but not for its own sake. Plans were made for a different future. The attitude of the British Government to its Empire was changing. India was shortly to become independent, and independence, with an adequate economic base and an acceptable form of democratic structure, became the aim of the Colonial Service. This meant achieving sustained progress in all aspects of government and the economy—what a military commander would describe as a steady advance along a broad front. Methodically the resources for the drive were gathered. Staff were recruited from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, India, Malaya and Burma with skills in teaching, agriculture and veterinary practice, engineering, aviation and port management. Local staff were sent abroad to study.

Development is not something which can be described in the round. It is a weave of many strands, each contributing something to the pattern. The late 1940s were the years of laying foundations, of building up departments, of improving communications, planning the economy and laying the basis for a massive expansion of education, the key to future prosperity. Of this and the other strands, more later.

In 1946, a Miss Dinah Harper, working for the Foreign Office, arrived from Singapore to become Secretary to Robin Black, later to become Governor of Singapore and subsequently Governor of Hong Kong. Her office was at the opposite end of the corridor, a mirror image of the one shared by Colonel Waddell (we were still in the army) and me. We became engaged and were married in England during our leave in 1947.

Sporadically, demobilisation papers arrived for those of us in the services. We celebrated our return to civilian status with a series of "Demob Dinners". These consisted of large Chinese meals in a *kajang* shop in the Jesselton bazaar. These were festive occasions with large quantities of beer consumed. To aid digestion, we had a break after the fifth or sixth course and had a brisk walk round the block before completing our meal.

My turn came in January 1947. I received a polite stereotyped letter from the Secretary of State for War thanking me for my service to my country, and a note from the Paymaster advising me that he was crossing me off his books.

I was also advised that my seven-year service in the Army had earned me a gratuity which just about covered the cost of my demob dinner.

I was no longer a Major but a potential junior cadet in His Majesty's Colonial Service, with my future depending on an interview at the Colonial Office in London and, if that was successful, the negotiation of a three-year probationary period and the passing of examinations in language, law and local customs.

Glimpses of my interview at the Colonial Office, bright little cameos, still come back to me. My first port of call was the office of a terribly, terribly erudite young man about the same age as myself who shook hands, asked me to sit down and enquired as to what I was reading. I was currently halfway through a Hornblower novel, but felt that his enquiry was directed at a more intellectual level.

"Bernard Shaw," I replied, which was true, because I had a complete book of his plays and dipped into them whenever I felt a need for mental stimulation.

"Very dated," he replied, and left the room. Within seconds, the telephone rang. Having been recently acquainted with the wiles of army psychiatrists (trick cyclists to the soldier), I was convinced that this was a ploy to test my initiative. I picked up the phone to explain that Mr X was not available, horribly aware that I could not remember the name of the gentleman to whom I had so recently been introduced. But all was well. It was an enquiry from the tea lady.

I was then brought through various corridors to the door of the interview room. It opened to reveal the setting for a 17th-Century Dutch painting. Across an expansive chequered floor of black and white tiles sat a semi-circle of serious, mainly grey-headed interviewers, all I assumed with astronomically high IQs. I was guided to a single chair facing them. Thoughts of a Naval Court Martial flashed through my mind. I was asked a range of questions about my education (or lack of it), my army career and my work in Borneo. Then someone asked, with the sort of smile that one associates with a Gestapo interrogator.

"Mr Holley, If you were posted to an African Colony, would you be happy working under an African superior?" I said that I presumed that he would be more qualified than me. "Not necessarily so" was the reply.

"Then" said I, "I think I would resent it, but would do my best not to show it."

"Resent" was obviously not politically correct. The panel contracted into a tight group of heads and whispered to each other for a few moments. From

the scrum the Chairman emerged, looked me in the eye, and said "Well, at least you are honest, my boy." All my superiors seemed to address me as "My boy" at that time. My slight build was perhaps the cause.

I got the job, thankful that it was to be in North Borneo. It felt like going home.

Chapter 7

East Coast

In 1948, the world still trembled in the aftermath of World War II. In the West, the nations were divided in nuclear distrust across the Iron Curtain. In the East, China was in the throes of a bitter civil war. The Communist armies had destroyed the Nationalists in Manchuria and were sweeping south across China. In Malaya, a new Federation had been established and the grim internal war with the Communists had begun. South East Asia looked with trepidation at the flow of the red tide. Great changes, which would transform the area, were taking place. An air of apprehension and uncertainty hung over the East.

Dinah and I arrived back in North Borneo in January of that year to a country struggling, with limited resources, to repair the ravages of war and to re-establish the export trade in timber and rubber on which it depended for the major part of its revenues.

My first posting was as Assistant District Officer Sandakan, attached to the Resident East Coast. As the Resident was Nick Combe this was very pleasant and he kept me busy with a variety of chores ranging from reporting on elephant damage to a road trace, to supervising the sale of seed pearls and taking charge of the Treasury.

This was our first experience of setting up a home and we were delighted with our house of *kajang* and *attap* which sat upon the top of a hill on the site of a pre-war timber house which had been bombed into firewood. The garden was overgrown but we managed to clear a patch. Full of the excitement and vigour of the early months of marriage, we cheerfully unpacked our treasured china and silver, bought curtains and fabrics to brighten our PWD issue furniture, and hung our pictures. Around the house we planted cannas, impatiens, hibiscus cuttings and tomatoes. As soon as the tomatoes decided to change from jungle green and blush a shy red, we were posted to Lahad Datu and began the reverse process of putting our belongings back into crates.

And so one afternoon we embarked on the *Serudom* and left the great harbour of Sandakan with its rafts of logs, its bustling launches and stately ocean-bound ships. We looked back on a town of leaf and timber buildings covered with a haze of smoke from thousands of mangrove cooking fires.

The *Serudom* was an odorous box of a ship which chugged its way between Sandakan, Lahad Datu and Tawau once a week. It was reasonably comfortable however, and there was always a plentiful supply of cold beer. Fried rice with fresh fish was the main item on the menu. We arrived at Lahad Datu at dawn.

Lahad Datu lay in a sheltered inlet behind Sakar Island in Darvel Bay. It was a small town of temporary Chinese shops built over the sea, a row on either side of a culverted coral road, so that at high tide they all stood over the cleansing sea. It was only comparatively cleansing however, for at all times, behind the acrid smell of burning firewood and the odours of cooking and coffee, was the raw tang of the muddy sea and the jetsam of those who lived over it. From dawn to dusk, apart from a brief siesta period, the town was a-clatter with the staccato sound of wooden pattens on wooden walkways.

From the town, a long coral mole ran to the wharf, which had on its edge a timber customs office and a tobacco godown. From the sea, the wharf was approached along a marked channel, which wound its way through a splatter of coral reefs. Bajau and Idahan kampungs were dotted around the edge of the bay, some of them hidden behind a screen of mangroves.

On the hill behind, the shophouses stood, scarred but miraculously preserved, the pre-war timber District Office, Police Station, jail and the open-sided courthouse.

Around them were the remains of old coral fortifications. These were full of snakes and it was not uncommon to see a cobra migrating from one coral wall to another. One day, sitting at my desk writing a letter to the Resident, I looked up for inspiration to see a fairly large cobra heading straight for my open office door. Alongside it appeared a pair of unshod policeman's feet. One of these came down firmly on the cobra's head. End of cobra. The policeman, a man from Tambunan did not think the matter in any way unusual.

Our house was but 50 yards from the office. Like most government quarters at that time, it was built of *kajang* and *attap*. From its tiny verandah it commanded a wonderful view across the town and the bay to Sakar island, a tranquil scene at times with brightly sailed *lipa-lipa* gliding between the reefs, and at others, when a tropical storm descended, an awesome spectacle

of lowering black clouds and jagged lightning accompanied by rolling explosions of thunder.

We were not alone in our new abode, for at nights we could hear rustles in the space between the double-leaf walls, and it was not unusual to wake in the morning to find that ones pillow had been gnawed into holes by rats seeking the seeds of the *kapok* with which the pillow was stuffed.

There were no glass windows. *Tingkat* (leaf shutters) kept out the sun or rain, but not the coconut beetles, flying ants and other lepidoptera which homed in on our Tilly lamp after dark. A tennis racquet was a satisfying method of disposing of coconut beetles, but the only safe haven was under a mosquito net.

We inherited a pre-war gardener who recognised the various shrubs which came to light as the area around the house was cleared. He delighted in telling us the names of each shade of bougainvillaea. We made a small patio with broken slabs of concrete from the foundations of the old house and soon, with hibiscus, alamanda, gardenia, morning glory, Miss Vanda Joaquim orchids and a patch of canna lilies to add to the blaze of the bougainvillaea, we had a garden that gave comfort to the soul when we sat out in the soft light of evening. We had plenty of visitors. Planters and their wives would call when visiting the town and government officers passing through would pay us a courtesy call.

For company, and as a means of alarm if visited by unwelcome guests, which included civet cats, snakes and pi-dogs from the town, we acquired a dog. After a great deal of searching the innermost recesses of our minds for an original name we called it "Pup". Pup was of doubtful ancestry. Somewhere in its line of descent was a bull-terrier. Pup was pink-nosed, off-white and ugly, but a great character. It discovered quite early in its life via some canine grapevine that it was the District Officer's dog and shamelessly took advantage of its position, roaming the shops for titbits and the shore for offal. One morning when I was trying a case in court, Pup arrived and deposited a decaying crocodile's foot before me. I reasoned that it was best to behave as though this was nothing unusual and proceeded with the hearing. Any attempt to remove both Pup and the crocodile's foot would certainly have brought proceedings to a clamorous halt.

When not around the town overseeing the canine world, Pup liked to snooze in the shade of our bungalow. We were but 50 yards from the Police Station and it was customary for the hours between dawn and dusk to be sounded by a constable beating a length of old railway line with an iron bar. This was anathema to a snoozing Pup, who would head rapidly for the source

of disturbance. Policemen soon became aware of this and 12 noon was sounded with micro-second intervals between beats. When I left Lahad Datu, I bequeathed Pup to Robert (Bob) Gay and his wife Joy, who had recently arrived. Bob was the Chief Police Officer for the District so, no doubt, Pup continued to trade on his position in the canine hierarchy.

Reminiscing about dogs reminds me of a peculiar tale. Two or three evenings a week, an old Chinese man trudged up the hill behind our house on his way home. He was always followed by a pack of barking and whimpering dogs a few yards behind him. I asked a local why this was so and was told that the man ate dog meat and the dogs could sense this. It may have been true.

To the north east of Lahad Datu, the Tengah Nipa road, a bumpy stretch of coral and earth, ran for about seven miles through swamp and coconut and rubber smallholdings. A few fishing kampung lay, half hidden, in the mangroves on the coastal side.

Behind the town, an earth road ran to Tamoi estate. It was owned by an old Dutchman named Murembeldt. He had managed the estate in the 1920s and when the slump came, he had stayed on earning shares in the company instead of a salary, living off the land with his gun and vegetable garden. He eventually owned the estate. Mr Murembeldt was a bulky cheerful character, his benevolent view of the world sustained by gin. Living in isolation in a dreary sea of rubber trees and coconut palms, this was understandable. It was said that he always kept a bottle under the bed and that on one occasion when reaching for it in the small hours grasped a recumbent cobra. The snake fled. What Mr Murembeldt did is not recorded, but my guess is that he found the bottle and ignored the slight variation to normal procedure.

The main road from Lahad Datu was the Segama road, a single lane coral road with passing bays. It ran straight across low-lying swampy ground over 50 or more *billean* bridges past Chinese smallholdings to the Segama estate on the banks of the Segama river.

The Segama Tobacco Estate dominated the area. It was a pre-war enterprise, part of the BAT, and produced high grade wrapper leaf for cigars. The wrapper leaf produces the special aroma of a good cigar. The estate covered 13,000 acres of good riverine soil and because of the danger of crop disease, was cultivated on a seven-year cycle so that only a portion of the estate was used at one time. The leaf was cropped in various stages from the sand leaves up to the top leaves. They were then dried in covered sheds and graded for size and, I think, nine shades of colour. The tobacco was then pressed and wrapped in cloth bales. Shipping was a meticulous operation.

The ship's hold would be examined to discover whether it had retained any obnoxious smells from previous cargoes.

Segama was a self-governing enterprise. Half a dozen or more Europeans worked there. The manager was an Englishman named Jan Rowse and there were several Dutch assistants, plant specialists and engineers. My contact on the administrative side was usually through the accountant, Bill Brownsey. The staff lived in comparative luxury and were very hospitable. The estate had its own medical service and helped out whenever our own primitive dispensary could not cope.

I was much impressed by the Estate doctor's method of dealing with yaws, an ulcerous skin disease. It could be cured simply with two injections of NAB. The trouble was that the first injection so drastically reduced the sores that the patient did not always come for the second. The doctor's solution with anyone he did not expect to return was to put the patient's leg in plaster, make fourteen marks on it and tell the patient to cross one off each day. When they had all been crossed the patient was to return, when the plaster was removed and the second injection given.

Working the land on a seven-year cycle the estate was always on the move and its requirements for labour varied with the seasons. They had a large force of around 1,500, a mixture of Ibans from Sarawak, who did the felling and clearing, Chinese, Javanese, Indian and local Dusuns who did the tilling, harvesting and other tasks connected with the production. Some of these, such as grading, were highly skilled.

With such a mixture of employees and a frequent turnover, there was bound to be trouble. There were two riots during my period as District Officer. The first was when a Iban who was walking through a drying-shed accidentally knocked over a cooking pot being used by a Chinese. An argument followed, mutually misunderstood, as neither spoke the other's language and, as I was later to learn, at a volume sufficiently loud to attract spectators from the neighbouring quarters. The Iban, greatly outnumbered, fled to his quarters vowing vengeance.

I was warned by phone of impending trouble and sped to the estate in my jeep, accompanied by the Police Sergeant and four policemen armed with Lee Enfield rifles. A mob of angry Ibans had gathered and were moving towards the Chinese quarters. We were in time to get between the two factions and with the help of the manager and his mandors, got all the Chinese out of the fields and back to their own area. We were then confronted by a howling mob of Ibans waving spears and *parangs* as they came along the path between the plots of tobacco. We managed to get them to stop except

for the man who had been involved in the altercation in the drying shed. He tried to press past me, so I took a rifle from a policeman and audibly and visibly loaded a round into the breech and put the muzzle on his stomach. I told him I would shoot him if he went past me. We stared at each other for some moments and then he turned and walked away. I immediately got him and about a dozen others on to my jeep and had them driven back to their quarters. The jeep was so grossly overloaded that everyone hooted and jeered and the riot broke up in laughter.

It was a near thing, however, and I considered myself lucky. I have often pondered since on the responsibilities of officers facing riots. If I had shot the man, I could have been charged with murder if my action had been considered excessive. If I had let them pass and several innocent people had been killed, I could have been censured for cowardice and perhaps held responsible for their deaths. There was not much time to make decisions. If the Ibans had not stayed in a group on the road but had spread into the tobacco fields, there was nothing we could have done to stop them. Nowadays, when I read of enquiries about riots and disturbances, my first thoughts are always for the man on the spot who had to make his decisions in the light of what he knew at the time. Hindsight can be a cruel judge.

Luckily, things worked out and the matter ended with me fining the ringleader in court a few days later. I suggested that, as the trouble had arisen from a misunderstanding, he and the Chinese owner of the cooking pot should shake hands.

They did. It sounds like something from a Boy's Adventure Annual, but that was how it was.

On the way back to Lahad Datu after the riot, I remarked to my Sergeant that I had been very impressed with his imperturbable manner, standing calmly watching with his sten gun on his shoulder. He replied that he was glad I had not asked him to fire it as he did not know how it worked. There was a small valley behind the government station at Lahad Datu and the following morning it echoed to the sound of weapon practice.

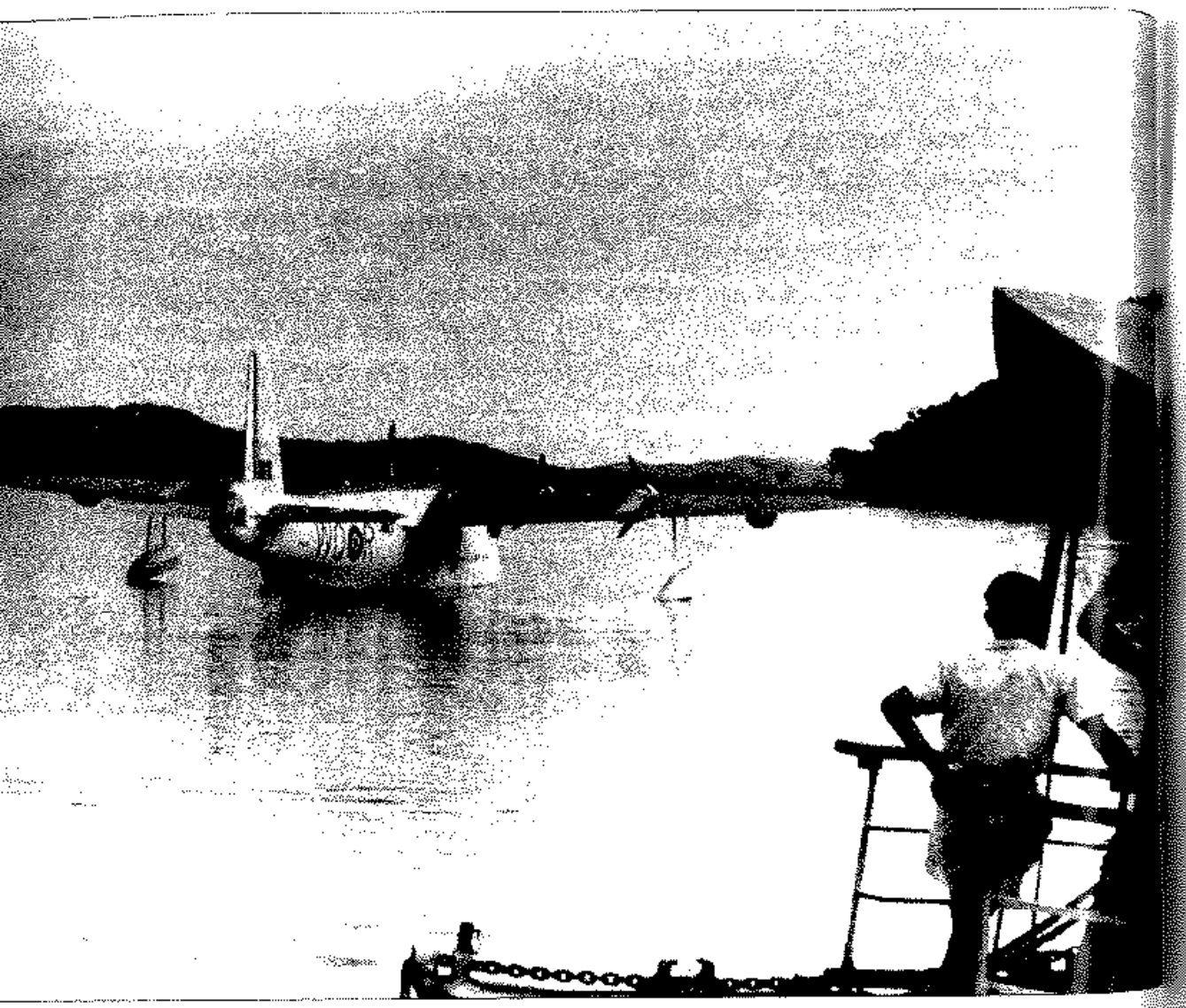
Imported labour caused the second disturbance on the estate. Labour was short and the estate had acquired the sweepings of displaced Javanese from Singapore. They were an ugly crowd and I expected trouble. It came quickly. Several of the houses on the estate were robbed, the inhabitants injured, and open fighting was taking place. After dark, the Javanese held sway. Witnesses were afraid to come out into the open but luckily the estate held the photographs of the Javanese which had been taken for immigration purposes. We managed to identify about 20 of the gangsters and I arranged for a swoop

on their quarters during the midday break. Jack Boles, who was later to become Sir Jack and Director General of the National Trust, was my Assistant District Officer. We went with a police squad and surrounded the quarters. Jack, who had problems with swollen ammunition for his Purdey, took over a Bren gun and with the police, formed a ring so that no-one could get away. I called on the Javanese to come out and sat them in rows to be identified. To make sure that no one stayed inside, I went through the rooms brandishing a revolver (recently confiscated from a trader) with a policeman at my side. We eventually identified the ringleaders and drove them off to Lahad Datu gaol. I put a quite illegal curfew on the estate for a few days as a precaution. I had to call for reinforcements from Sandakan as I had many more prisoners than police. I also managed to get an RAF Sunderland flying boat to overfly the estate at low level to demonstrate that we had other resources at our disposal.

The main problem in situations like this was communication. Our contact with the world outside Lahad Datu, apart from the weekly boat, was by two Morse-code radio schedules of an hour each, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, a frustrating business when a matter was urgent.

An occasional hazard on the Segama road was the migration of elephants. Each year they moved eastwards in August across the narrow strip of land between the Segama river and the coast at Lahad Datu. In their progress they demolished crops, particularly young coconuts in the smallholdings which lined the road. I recall a trailer load of salty *nipah attap* left beside the road which so appealed to them that they ate the lot and reduced the trailer to matchwood in the process. There was little we could do about it except to go out at night with a few policemen and scare them off with rifle fire, but I would not recommend roaming around in the dark in secondary jungle firing shots at anything that sounded elephantine. I was always glad to get home.

Lahad Datu district stretched from Semporna and the offshore islands in the south round the tip of Borneo at Tambisan to the Segama estuary in the north. Semporna was a delightful place with its long coral mole and acres of fish drying platforms. There was virtually no hinterland and one of the joys of the place was to visit the many islands around it, mostly inhabited by boat-dwelling Bajaus. The islands varied greatly. There were craggy ones rising steeply from the sea. There were flat, sandy coral islands occupied only by land crabs, and there were miles and miles of shallow reefs where one could see the wonders of underwater life. To me, they were the reward for hard days spent in the Semporna court and office. Eight hours in an airless court in an



Sunderland flying boat at Lahad Datu, 1949.

old *bilkan* fort a few degrees north of the equator was not my idea of the good life.

Today the islands are the preserve of the international tourist.

I had a government launch, but most of the travelling between islands was in a *tipa-tipa* with an outboard motor and I was generally accompanied by the Native Chief. At that time the Senior Native Chief was Panglima Abdullah bin Panglima Udang. He was a man of great dignity, serious and always seeking the best for his people. He was widely respected by the Chinese traders and the various peoples who lived in his area, a floating population in more ways than one. But he hated outboards, and apart from

their ability to get you from one island to another despite the wind, or lack of it, so did I. I remember, one hot windless day, with the outboard belching smoke and smell and drowning conversation, watching the distaste on the Panglima's face at the intrusion of the mechanised world. Then a breeze sprang up, the sail was hoisted and the hateful motor silenced. The boat creaked to the pull of the sail and slapped its way through the shallow waves. A look of bliss stole across the Panglima's face as he stretched himself and pulled at a rope. He was now a man in his natural element.

I did as much travelling in the district as I could. It was important to show, in an area of scattered and remote settlements, that there was a government presence. I visited the timber camps, and the abaca estate at Mostyn. Abaca was much in demand at that time for rope making. It has now been replaced by synthetic fibres.

Madai birds' nest caves provided me with my first experience of drafting legislation. These great gloomy, smelly vaults were harvested by the Idahan people whose Chief was Datu Jinorain. The rights of collection were handed down from generation to generation, specific not just by caves but by niches within caves, and within those niches, by the allocation of years for collection. A man could could have the right to have 1/702 of the produce of a part of a cave every ninth year. The disputes which inevitably rose were to be settled by the District Officer.

The Conservator of Forests, Harry Keith, within whose authority birds' nests caves lay, decided that this was an opportune subject for democratisation. Between us, with a great deal of help from Datu Jinorain, we drafted an Ordinance which vested the powers of allocation and organisation in the hands of a Native Council. In the course of these negotiations, Datu Jinorain and I became good friends and I persuaded him to relate to me the folklore of the origin of the Idahan people. It is an intriguing tale beginning with magical fruits in the jungle, with a biblical series of 'begets' ending with Datu Jinorain himself. It was published in the Sarawak Museum Journal at the time.

One of my visits took me round the tip of North Borneo to the estuary of the Segama river. A Dutch geologist was surveying the area for an oil company. I anchored my launch in the mouth of the river and went by *prahu* through meandering channels to a makeshift *sulap* (shelter) where he had been living for weeks on a diet of rice, fish and Bols gin. He was glad to have someone to talk to and was so pleased with the tins of corned beef that I gave him that he insisted that I shared a bottle of gin with him. I was quite willing to do so. His technique was subtle. He first poured a weak one and when it

was about half consumed, he filled it up with neat gin. As the session went on, the drink became stronger but one's sense of discrimination became weaker. I left in a rather hazy state to night-stop in Tambisan.

Tambisan was a flat, mud-surrounded island on the northern tip of North Borneo. It was hot and humid, and apart from clumps of coconut palms, covered in secondary jungle. There was a makeshift government office and a small police detachment. It was not a popular posting.

We set off for Lahad Datu in the launch at first light. As extra passengers, we had a police constable and his wife who were thankful to be transferred from the outpost. We droned across a calm sea with the exhaust smoke hanging in the air behind us. About an hour into the journey, the engine gave a horrible scream and the *serang* shut it down. The propeller shaft had sheared and we drifted with tide about a mile away from the shoreline. The tide was taking us off the coast towards the southern Philippines visible in the distance. We stripped the canvas off the deck and made a makeshift sail, which, with the beginnings of an onshore breeze, just about enabled us to hold our position. An hour later a small freighter passed. We waved but got no response. Luckily, some time later we managed to attract the attention of two Suluk fishermen in a small *prahu*. With the help of their sail and a great deal of paddling, we managed to tow the launch into a creek where we anchored.

It was now late afternoon. I left the policeman plus rifle with the launch and gave the *serang* my shotgun with an assorted bag of cartridges suitable for shooting game or repelling pirates. I set off in the *prahu* with the two Suluks heading for Tungku, where I hoped to be able to get an outboard to take me to Lahad Datu where I could radio for help. I took with me my .22 rifle and a tin of baked beans. The rest of my food I left with the launch.

We, all three, paddled along the coast. I sat in the middle. In front of me was the man with whom I had conversed in Malay. Behind me was a small wiry-haired man dressed in a pair of tattered red shorts. He had not spoken, except to his colleague in his own dialect. I was a little apprehensive; piracy and murder were not uncommon in the area and my gun and the dollars I carried would be an attractive prize. Sometime in the night, I felt the man behind me moving closer. I felt his breath on my neck and reached for my gun to whip it over and hit him on the head, but before I had reached it he said in a soft American accent,

"Say, have you guys got the atom bomb yet?"

He then went on to tell me that his young sister was at university in Manila. We paddled on. There were the first glimmerings of dawn. Sunrise in

the tropics was nothing new to me, but I had never seen it from a silent *prahu* as day broke over the Sulu sea. When the soft splash of paddles stopped, it was as if we were suspended in space. The loom of the land was a deeper darkness and the sea ran black and smooth till it merged with the sky. The stars seemed almost touchable. The indigo lightened and there was a touch of green on the horizon. The clouds over the land were shot with purple and gold. The beauty of it commanded silence. The sea lightened slowly to the colour of pearls. Then, suddenly, the sun was up, the magic gone, and Tungku was in sight. The following day, the launch was recovered.

Towards the end of my stay in Lahad Datu, there was a welcome addition to the government staff. Bob Gay, an ex Gurkha officer, arrived to take over responsibility for the Police. He was accompanied by his charming wife, Joy. They took up residence in a hastily restored timber house in the swamp alongside the Tengah Nipah road. It was their first posting and they enthusiastically threw themselves into district life. Their arrival festivities coincided with those of my departure. They were saying Hello to new friends. I was saying Goodbye to mine. It was a hectic time. Every community insisted on taking part, so there was a constant series of parties ranging from elaborate Chinese meals to *kampung* cooking, *dindang* dancing, *wayang kulit* and "Main Darling", a dance from the southern Philippines which had strong overtones of the Spanish flamenco.

Bob, a good footballer, did a wonderful job training our mostly barefoot team. When we beat Segama, heads were held high in the town.

I was blessed with wonderful staff, several of them with long pre-war service with the Chartered Company. I especially remember my Chief Clerk, Chong Phin Su, who helped me through many procedural minefields. He had a grisly scar on his neck and held his head at an angle, the result of a botched beheading by a Japanese soldier.

My last day in Lahad Datu was eventful. On the eve of my departure, Bob told me that his Sergeant, an amply built curry-eating man named Khanizaman, had unearthed an opium distribution ring at Segama estate. "*Saya semua tahu*" (I know everything) he insisted, and on the strength of this Bob decided to carry out a night raid on the office of the estate *jaga* (watchman). To prevent any warning of the police departure, I agreed to man the telephone at the Lahad Datu end. Bob and his squad returned at midnight with a large haul of opium and a dejected prisoner. By noon the following day, he had been brought before me in my magistrates role, sentenced, and was a guest in the local jail. Justice was swift in those days!

I left at noon and watched Lahad Datu fade into the distance from the stern of the *Serudom*. I was sad to go, but I was heading for home and would soon see my wife and recently born son again. I was to attend the Second Devonshire course at Oxford and London universities. This was a project specifically organised for serving officers to broaden their knowledge of anthropology, colonial history and world political trends, with particular emphasis on preparing the Colonies for eventual independence. I found it of great value. In my group was a friendly Malayan officer called Abdul Razak. I was later to meet him during the Malaysian negotiations. He followed Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister of the new Federation of Malaysia.

Chapter 8

Governors

On my return from leave, I was appointed Private Secretary to the new Governor, Sir Ralph Hone (ex-Major General) who had been Deputy Commissioner General to Malcolm MacDonald. From his headquarters in Singapore, MacDonald held a watching brief on behalf of the British Government over the whole of South East Asia.

The post of Private Secretary carried with it the position of Clerk to the Executive Council, the Cabinet of the Legislative Council. It was a body with an official majority but nevertheless an important stepping stone towards local autonomy.

The early 1950s were eventful years. Communist China was making its presence felt in the region and many overseas Chinese fell under its spell. In Malaya, communists waged guerrilla war from jungle bases, terrorising and murdering occupants of rubber estates. Singapore had its problems with them also, and in the Borneo territories, cells of communists were being established.

Britain was still an important power in the region. There was a substantial naval presence in Singapore and Hong Kong, backed by the Army and Air Force. British troops were fighting the insurrection in the jungles of Malaya. The main preoccupation of the British at the time was to maintain stability while the work of restoration, development and progress towards local autonomy progressed.

I found my work arduous but fascinating. As a District Officer, I had handled the nuts and bolts. As Private Secretary, aware of the thoughts of the Governor and his advisors, and with access to the dispatches and communications with the Secretary of State for the Colonies and diplomats in South East Asia I was privileged to watch the design process; to see how our work in North Borneo was part of a much wider canvas.

It is not generally realised how sparsely populated North Borneo was at that time. The 1931 census gave the total population as 277,476. In the 20

Reception for Native Chiefs attending the annual conference at Keningau.

from the time North Borneo became a Colony in 1946 and achieved independence as the State of Sabah in Malaysia in 1963. Much was accomplished in that short period of less than 18 years.

The Colonial Office, whatever we may have thought of it, showed a certain genius in their choice of Governors – the sagacity to appoint the appropriate man for the situation. As mentioned earlier, the first incumbent, on an acting basis, was James Calder, a disciplinarian who wielded authority like a sledgehammer. He took a delight in being unpopular, justifying it, no doubt, as proof that he was doing a good job in knocking into shape a motley crew – senior officers recruited from other Colonies, ex-Chartered Company officers, Service officers awaiting demobilisation, ex-planters, and drifters recruited to fill gaps; all this within the stringent limits of the funds made available by an impoverished British Government. To his credit, when Governor Twining arrived, the skeleton of a colonial government was there. It was for others to flesh it out.

Mr Calder took no exercise and drank *stengahs*.

Governor Twining arrived from East Africa in February 1947 as Mr Edward Twining. The prime need at that time was to demonstrate the British presence both within and without North Borneo, and to show the service that there was a Governor who knew what he was about. His size, blustering bonhomie, aura of confidence and ability to make fast and firm decisions soon got things moving. He told the Colonial Office what he needed and badgered it until he got most of it. He was unflappable.

I remember him at a public presentation of awards on the *padang* at Sandakan. He stood, a magnificent sight in his dress uniform, awaiting the National Anthem to be played over the public address system. There was a roll of drums. Sir Edward's right arm came up to the salute in a dignified sweep, but before he had completed it he and those of us present realised that the National Anthem being played was that of the United States of America. There was a brief silence as the record was turned over. His Excellency's arm continued its circuit to arrive at his forehead on the second time round, perfectly timed, as the strains of God Save the King blaired across the *padang*.

Sir Edward toured extensively, visiting most places that were accessible. People turned out to see what a real Colonial Governor looked like. They were not disappointed. I recall, when I was District Officer Lahad Datu, greeting him on the wharf as he stepped from his launch dressed in a white jacket buttoned over the top of his ample shorts. On his head was a brown trilby hat and in his hand a sturdy walking stick. The audience of Native Chiefs and Headmen, *taukehs* and wharf coolies looked on in silent wonder.

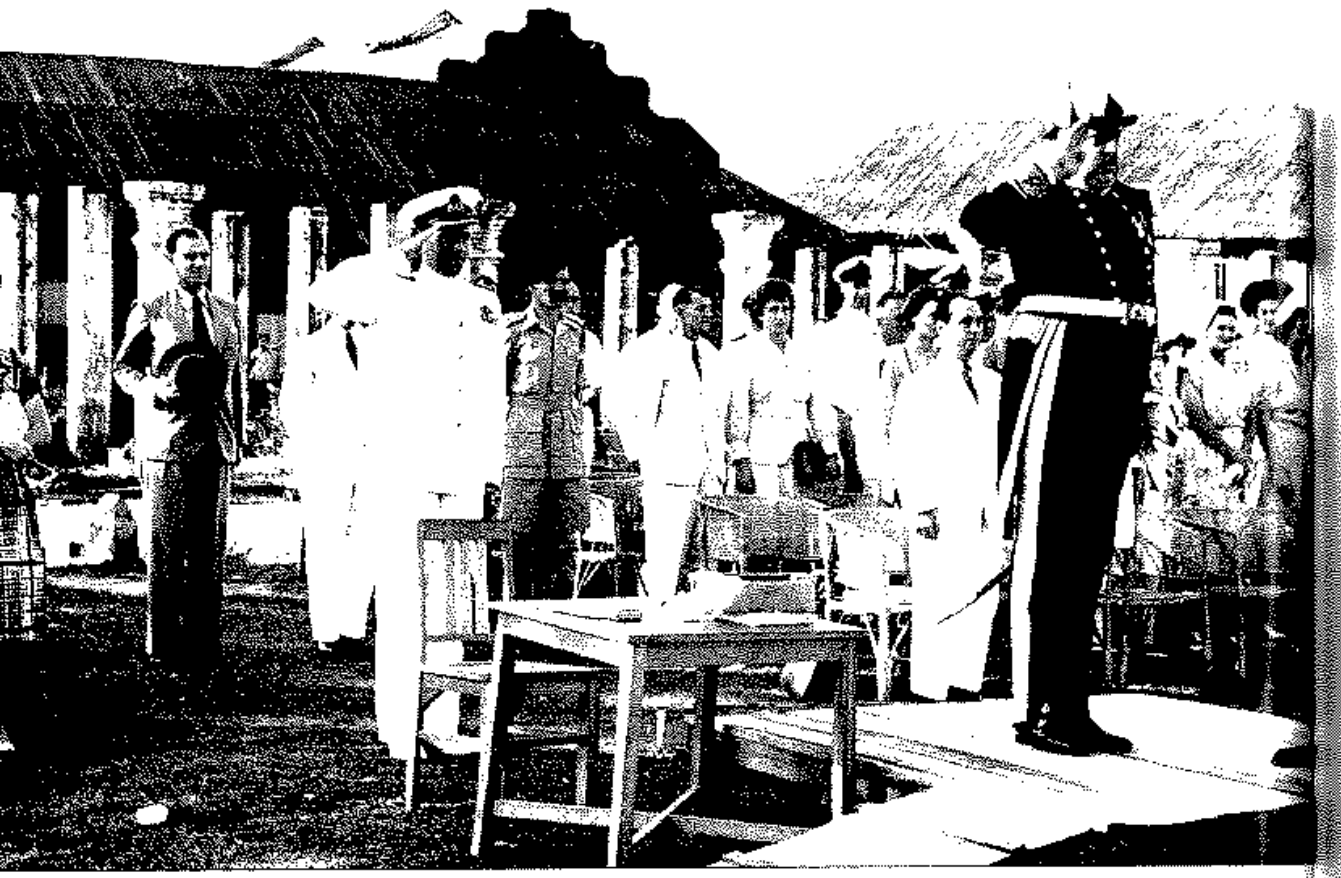
Sir Edward took his exercise by detailing young officers, such as myself, to play deck tennis with him on the beach at Tanjung Aru. The court was marked by scratching lines in the sand. After a few minutes of play, it had somewhat indefinite boundaries. If we called one of his marginal shots out, he would silently look to the Heavens and stalk back to the baseline, his body language conveying more than all the words of John McEnroe ever did.

Sir Edward left North Borneo to become Governor of Tanganyika, seeing it through to independence. He was later to become Lord Twining. His hobby was researching the Crown Jewels, about which he was a leading expert.

He drank whisky and soda.

Governor Twining, affectionately known as "Twankers", was succeeded by Sir Ralph Hone.

Sir Ralph Hone was succeeded in 1954 by Sir Roland Turnbull. I was working in the Secretariat at the time and was present at his inauguration. He



Governor Twining at Sandakan 1947. In front of the ruins, Robin Black, later Governor of both Singapore and Hong Kong, stands clutching his trilby hat. The author, and his wife Dinah are in the centre. Agnes Keith is the tall hatted lady in the background on the right.

was a complete contrast to his predecessors, short, plump and without their stature. He looked oddly out of proportion beneath his gubernatorial plumed pith helmet. He seemed distant, with an air of disdain for those around him. His speech was eloquent and beautifully composed, but as I trudged back to my desk in the Establishment Office I felt uneasy. I wondered how this seemingly remote man would be judged by local people. I don't think that he was ever liked but he came to be much admired. He had a penetrating intellect and the ability to speak and write (in red ink, as Governors do) flowing, arresting, rhythmic English.

In 1959 a booklet titled "North Borneo 1954 to 1959" was issued via the Government Printing Office. It contained extracts from his speeches and minutes to illustrate the development of major policies during his term of office. No punches were pulled. I include some extracts below. Nothing could

demonstrate more vividly his eloquence and the efforts that were being made in all aspects of government to move North Borneo on to eventual independence.

Minute dated 22 Sept., 1954.

"When I first came to North Borneo I counselled myself to refrain from drastic changes until I had been here six months. I have followed my own advice, but closer acquaintance with the country has served to confirm what was my earliest impression.

In the last generation, in more advanced Colonies, the tendency has been to accord to professional and technical departments a relative independence that has been made possible and desirable by the closeness of administration and the sound foundations of confidence and understanding laid by earlier generations of District Officers. In post war years an attempt has been made to impose this new pattern on the administration of this country, with, as I am convinced, unhappy results. The departments of Government have been accorded a degree of independence which, through no fault of their own, they are ill-equipped to assume. The consequence has been that departmental heads have perforce concentrated authority in their own offices, the responsibility for co-ordination thereby falling on the Secretariat. The administrative Officer in his district or Residency, has not, therefore, been able to regard himself as the responsible head of his area and has, as I have found, been positively discouraged from taking too intimate an interest in departmental activities.

The professional departments are too thin on the ground to perform the role assigned to them, and the paucity of communications makes too detailed a control from Jesselton impracticable and undesirable.

In order that the work of the departments may be furthered and the Government generally made more efficient we must restore to the Administrative Officer his representative and responsible character. In his area the Resident and the District Officer is my representative, responsible to me for the conduct of all its affairs, and he must again become the acknowledged leader and co-ordinator of all the activities of Government".

The minute then went on to decree the establishment of District Teams, which would be the precursors of Local Councils.

Extract from an address to the Jesselton Chinese Chamber of Commerce on 25th November, 1956:

> "North Borneo has been singularly happy in that it has been a country that has seen little of politics in the more pejorative sense of that word. Again, how long can we expect that it will remain so? I am not complacent. Any kind of growth implies friction, and friction in public affairs means politics. Indeed, we must have politics, for in the best sense of the word it means the whole science and art of Government, and good government is impossible if we lack proper knowledge of the needs and ambitions of those who are governed. The question is whether, in seeking to associate the people with the management of their own affairs, we can avoid politics of the baser sort and can be spared the turmoil and racial stress that have characterised political development in so many countries. I think that if we are sufficiently wise we might do so."

The following is an extract from an address to the Legislative Council on December 2nd, 1959.

> "The third foundation of a good country is vital: the voice of the people must be heard. You should not wait until it rises raucous in protest; it must be a function of government to go to the people and consult them. In the end it is of no permanent value just to know what is good for the people and to do it, however earnest the will: if their loyalty is to be assured, they must be consulted as to their wishes and, if they are ill-informed, the responsibility is again ultimately ours. In this too we have made a beginning. Five years ago I established District Teams, and these have already grown into what is known as Local Government. Even the institutions we already have are lively and are becoming increasingly responsible. In 1954 I was depressed to find that nobody seemed to want anything: today everybody seems to want something. They cannot all have it, certainly not all at once, but I am delighted that they should clamour for it."

The extracts from the minutes and speeches cover the Government Service, Racial Harmony, Native Law and Custom, Education, Immigration,

Timber, Rubber and several other matters which were the responsibility of Government.

Sir Roland took his exercise by conscripting members of staff, of whom I was one, to play padder tennis on the car parking area in front if Government House. Members of the Police Guard acted as longstops. Afterwards we took liquid refreshment in the shade, Sir Roland drank Rye on the Rocks with a marischino cherry. He smoked cigarettes incessantly and died of cancer of the throat at the end of his term of office.

The last Governor of North Borneo was Sir William Goode. He had been associated with the area since 1931 when he joined the Malayan Civil Service. He spoke Malay fluently, having been a District Officer in Raub, Malaya, from 1936 to 1939. He was transferred to Singapore where he joined the Volunteer Corps and was taken prisoner when the Japanese invaded. He spent several years as a slave labourer on the Burma/Siam railway. He was not overly fond of the Japanese.

After a brief spell as Chief Secretary of Aden, he became Chief Secretary of Singapore from 1953 to 1957. He was Governor of Singapore from 1957 to 1959,during which period he became well acquainted with peninsular politics and the leading characters involved in the quest for independence. He and Lee Kuan Yew had a mutual respect for each other. He came to North Borneo in 1960 and oversaw the negotiations which led to Malaysia. He worked closely with local leaders and helped them to consolidate their apprehensions into the "Twenty Points" which became North Borneo's manifesto.

He was an imposing but very approachable figure, tall and with a natural dignity. He spoke to peasants as he spoke to princes. He was a realist who understood that the ideal was not always available and that, in the world of politics, it was often a matter of fighting for as much as one could get.

I knew him well as I crewed for him on his GP14 yacht *Kunyet* for more than a year, when I discovered that he had an excellent vocabulary of mildly profane nautical language.

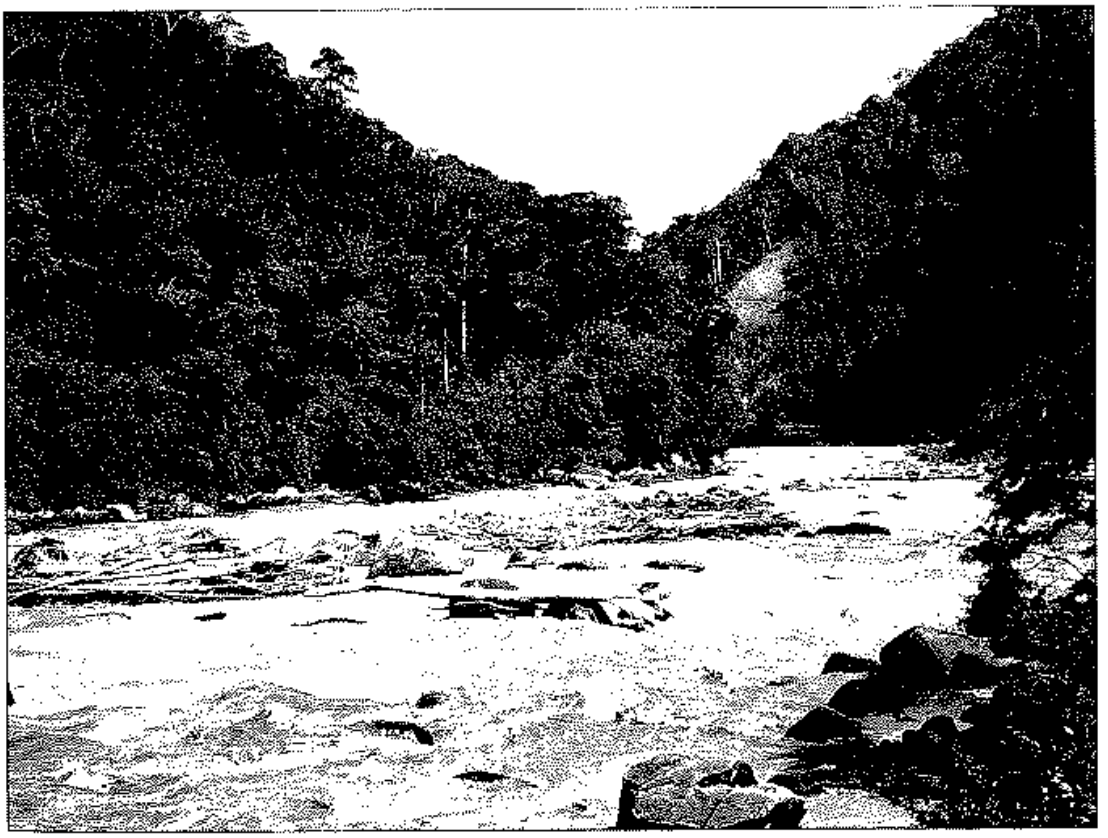
His recreation was sailing. He drank beer and whisky.

Chapter 9

The Interior

I was fortunate enough to have two spells in the Interior, the first as District Officer, Keningau, in 1951 and 1952, and the second as Resident Interior from 1959 to 1962. What a wonderful posting this was. After the sticky confines of an office in Jesselton, the open spaces and cool morning mists of Keningau were Heaven.

Keningau was not easily accessible at that time. It was reached by rail up the Padas gorge to Melalap, and then by a narrow and sometimes quagmired earth road for about 20 miles, often blocked by swollen rivers.



The Padas gorge.

(Top) Railcar on the Padas gorge railway. (Bottom) The repair trolley, 1961.

The town had been completely demolished by Allied bombing during the war and consisted of single storey *attap* shops round three sides of a square with a small *kajang* market in the centre. There was no water supply. Water was carried from a nearby stream and the shops were lit with kerosene lamps. Diseased and starving dogs flopped on the sidewalks or scavenged the gutters. They were dealt with quickly by a Murut policeman with a blowpipe.

The Government station was about half a mile further on, on top of a hill commanding a wonderful view across the plain to Kinabalu, about sixty miles away, and Trus Madi, an impressive peak in the jumble of mountains that lay between the Interior and the East Coast. The mornings were delightful. They were cool and a mist usually lay on the plain. The pack ponies and the Zebu cattle munched their way across the *padang*. There was the smell of wet grass and the smoke of *kamping* fires being lit for the day. It was the best time to be about, so after a quick cup of morning tea on the verandah, I was out on a pony whenever I could to visit the town and the neighbouring *kampungs*.

In our house we had a Murut cook named Kilap, who kept me up to date with *kamping* affairs. His son and mine played together and effortlessly learned each others' language. Kilap was delighted when I offered to pay for his son's education in English at the local Mission. A month after he had started, I asked the lad to read his first English lesson to me. He stood, a model of concentration, holding his book before him and read:

"Who is God?"

"God is three persons."

I was not sure that I had done the right thing.

Our general factotum, Dawat, was also from *Kamping* Keningau. He always dressed in white and padded his barefoot way quietly around the house ensuring that we had not put anything out of place. Before the war he had worked for Hugh Sykes, the District Officer. When the Japanese imprisoned Hugh, Dawat had rescued and buried Hugh's family silver. After the war, Dawat returned the silver intact to Hugh with an ingeniously spelt inventory, one item of which was "One masitat pot".

Dawat invited my wife and me to an evening meal at his home in the *kamping*. After squatting on mats for an excellent curry and home brewed *tapai*, he said that he had something special to show us and produced an object bundled up in pages of the *Straits Times*. He unbundled it and out rolled a smoked head.

"Japanese" he said.

"Where did you get that?"

"I took it myself, Tuan"

"When was that?"

"Near the end of the war the Japanese were moving across Keningau down to the coast. They were hungry and were taking food from people. A soldier came and said he wanted one of my hens and when he bent down to pick it up I took his head off with my *parang*."

I am sure that he did it very politely. Dawat was always polite to everyone.

I had relieved a tough New Zealander named Sam Chisholm. He had worked for the Chartered Company and had been on leave in England when war with Germany broke out. He enlisted in the British army and was extracted from it by the Company, which needed experienced staff. He had arrived back in North Borneo just in time to be captured by the Japanese and interned. He was very much an outdoor man and office work was not to his liking, but he got things done and was held in high regard by the people in the District. His office safe contained, as well as the cash, a stock of gelignite which he used for roadworks and occasional fish bombing when on tour, a practice much admired by the Muruts. There was also an experimental mixture of gelignite and powder from Chinese fireworks designed to eke out supplies. In the bottom drawer was an unofficial fund which he had acquired from the sale of some of the cattle which grazed the *padang*. It was invaluable in providing for worthy causes when no official money was available, such as feeding and providing shelter for visiting Muruts, prizes for schools and footballs for the local team.

The war was only five years behind us and the main task was to get things moving again. The town had to be rebuilt, better quarters provided for government staff, bridges rebuilt, roads repaired and extended, crops organised and schools provided for a growing number of children. As more *kampungs* became accessible more schools were required. The same considerations applied to medical care. The hospital in Keningau and outstation dispensaries were temporary *kajang* and *attap* buildings.

With a lot of cooperation from the shopkeepers and help from the Public Works and Lands and Survey Departments, I managed to get the market and shops rebuilt in timber. They were painted white and looked quite impressive after the drabness of decaying *attap*. In the government station area, timber quarters replaced the temporary ones, Dover stoves replaced the open fires and kerosene-tin ovens, roads improved and materials became available. There was an exciting air of progress. Working to the design of the Aviation Department, I started the construction of the Keningau airstrip.

Keningau tamu beneath the coconut palms. The new hospital is in the background. 1961.

Life in the Interior at that time was one of subsistence farming. Apart from those living near government stations where cash could be earned for labouring, the only source of income was from work on rubber estates at labour-intensive tasks of clearing scrub or tapping trees every morning. This work, essential to the estates where there was an acute shortage of labour, disturbed *kampung* life. This was especially true of the remoter areas where the adults, both male and female, would trek to an estate to work for a few months, leaving the old and infirm and their children to fend for themselves.

One of our aims was to settle as many as possible where they could be self sufficient in food and grow a cash crop to give them direct access to money. We started a series of settlement schemes, the first of which was on the Keningau plain, an extensive area of scrub and jungle running alongside the Pegalan river. Part of it was irrigated by primitive boulder dams which had to be rebuilt each year, but there was clearly a much greater potential. A scheme was drawn up in concert with the Irrigation Department to construct a concrete dam on the Bayayo river and irrigate a much larger area with better control of the water supply. The aim was to give settlers three acres of irrigated padi field and a plot of ten acres for the planting of high yielding rubber and the construction of a home and garden for fruit and vegetables.

It gave me great pleasure in 2000 to visit *Kampung* Baginda, an area of scrub which I had staked out in the 1950s, and drive through a village of sturdy timber houses with gardens lush with papaya, coconut, mango,

Keningau plain before the settlement scheme.

Kerbau relaxing in Tambunan.

oranges and limes, cassava and sweet potatoes. *Kerbau* (buffalo) lazed in the wallows and goats slept on the tarmac road. The recently harvested padi fields stretched alongside, resting in the sun, waiting for the next season.

Similar schemes flourished in the Tenom District where Chinese settlers had already provided fine examples of the productivity of smallholdings.

An interesting example of development was the construction of a fish farm by the Chans, an immigrant family from Hong Kong who integrated, in fact intermarried, into the local community. They pioneered a carp farm of several acres and also grew large quantities of green vegetables, wilting them in the sun and packing them tightly in boxes for the rail journey to Jesselton market where they would be refreshed to regain their crispness.

We were also experimenting with a cattle farm on the south bank of the Pegalan river. The Chartered Company had pioneered a scheme but the cattle had become feral during the war and the frequently hunted herd was wary of any human approach. My predecessor as District Officer had partially tamed


(Left) The Chan's vegetable garden enterprise at Mile 28 Keningau. (Right) And the fish pond initiative.

them by laying patches of salt and gradually gaining their confidence. Much of this was shattered when the local headmen insisted on barbecuing a bull for a departure feast for him. With galloping ponies and whooping riders around and among the herd as the bull was separated, and the crack of shotguns as he was despatched, it sounded like a retake of Custer's last stand. An hour later, we sat in the shade of the teak trees and enjoyed a gourmet's barbeque washed down by mugs of *tapai*. The smoke of the embers drifted across us as we ate.

The Colonial Development Corporation became interested in the scheme later on and its Chairman, Lord Reith of BBC fame, flew to Keningau to assess the prospects. His enthusiasm was somewhat dampened when the plane to take him back to Jesselton broke down and he had to wait several hours at a primitive airstrip waiting for a replacement. His comments were controlled but acidic.

Our local airline at that time used second-hand Rapides which had seen much service elsewhere. They were fabric covered and the many splits and tears were patched with what looked like sticking plaster. The cabins were not completely waterproof and on a very wet day when I was flying from Keningau, I was handed a *payong* (a waxed umbrella) to protect me from the drips. The pilots were brave men and we were apprehensive travellers.

There were two main outstations to be visited, Tambunan and Pensiangan. Tambunan required the best part of a day's journey to get there.

A visit to Pensiangan took anything from nine days to a fortnight to get there and back.

A journey to Tambunan started at dawn with a dash in a jeep across the misty plain, along the earth road to the Apin-Apin river, some 15 miles or so. If the river was low enough to drive across, the jeep would crawl up the widened bridle path for a few miles to where the ponies would be waiting. If the river was high we would struggle across on foot.

In fair weather, the ride to Tambunan was delightful. Tambunan is 2,000 feet above sea level, 1,000 feet higher than Keningau. The bridle path traversed the hills which buttress the Crocker Range, with sharp climbs when Kinabalu could be seen ahead, steep drops into valleys with a clear stream at the bottom, patches of padi stepped into the hillside and clusters of bamboo

A group at the cattle farm Keningau. Lord Reith, chairman of the colonial Development Corporation, is in the Panama hat. He is talking to J. Dingle, a previous Resident Interior. Front left is AM Grier, Development Secretary. Myself in front. In background with stick is J. Berwick, Director of Agriculture and in the trilby hat on the right is John Baxter, the "eminence gris" of the planters in Sabah.

Kadazan village Tambunan area, 1960.

houses lazing in their gardens, puffing out kitchen smoke from beneath the eaves. There was that glorious evocative smell of a hill *kampung* – a mixture of smoke, freshly cut wood, chickens, *kerbau* and coconut husks.

It was not until the edge of the Tambunan plain was reached that it was possible to gallop the ponies, and they were eager to go. Here on the plain the padi fields were bigger, fed by water from the hills running through lengths of split bamboo for miles along the hillside. The sound of water trickling along the channels and gushing over the tiny waterfalls provided constant background music.

The ADO at Tambunan was Orang Kaya Kaya Tembakau, a local man of great dignity who kept the wheels turning with a minimum of fuss. Tambunan was a peaceful place, crime being mainly confined to buffalo theft and offences against Native custom.

The most colourful character was Father Connolly, the Roman Catholic missionary. He had been born in the Liverpool area and had retained the

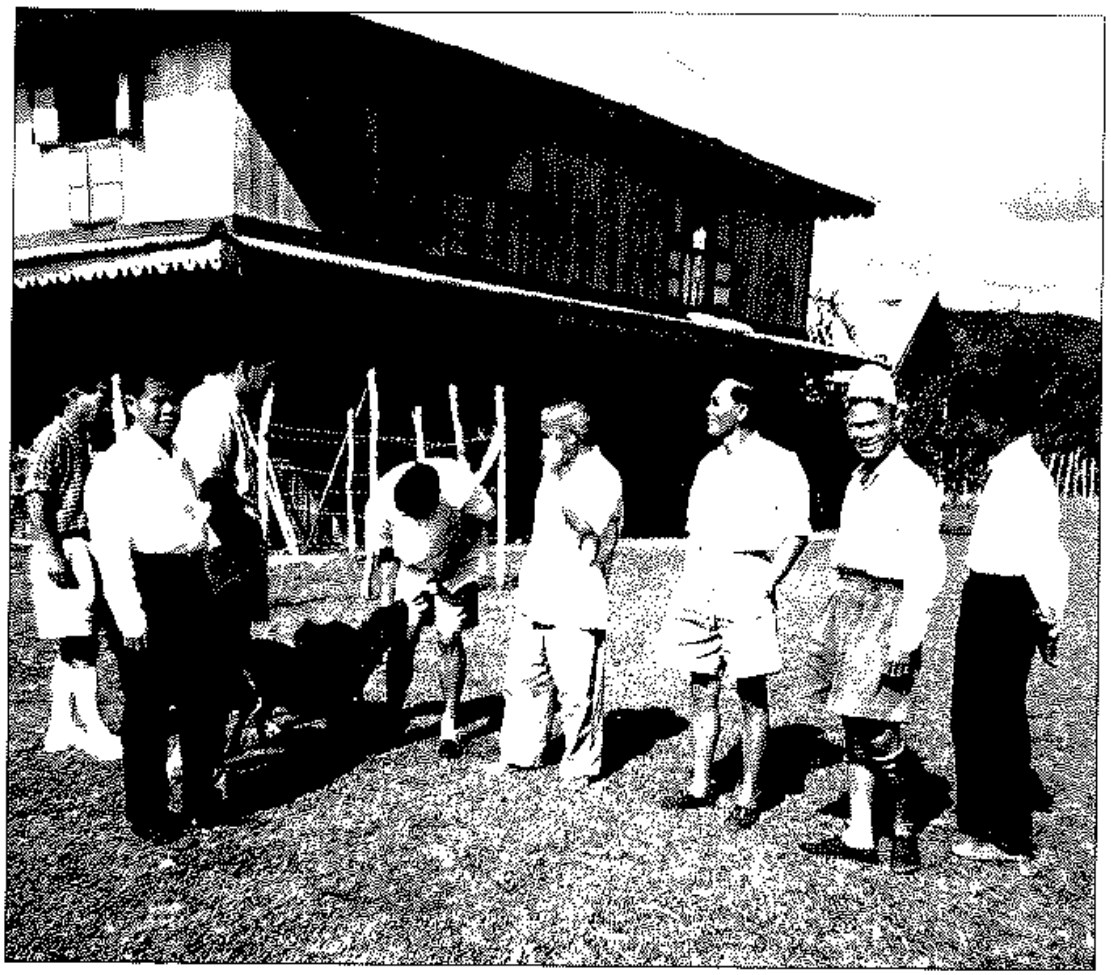
traces of a scouse accent. He had been stationed in Tambunan before the war and was interned by the Japanese. He spoke several dialects of Kadazan and had published a dictionary and grammar of the language. With the help of a Mission staffed by a few nuns, he ministered to a large number of people on the plain. His ambition was to build a church in stone, and this he did before he finally left for home. He was well read, and from radio news and old newspapers had a wide knowledge of world affairs. It gave him great pleasure to converse, so a visit by the District Officer was quite an occasion for him.

I always brought a bottle of whisky with me and would invite him to join me for an evening drink. Lounging in a cane chair, his shoes kicked off, his bare feet on another chair, he was the picture of a peasant farmer. In the mellow light of a hurricane lantern with smoke from burning mosquito coils drifting round our ankles, we would talk into the small hours when we solved the world's problems and made severe inroads into the contents of the whisky bottle. The following evening, he would arrive with a bottle of communion wine to resume the conversation. I have to report that it was not nearly as effective at redeeming the world as whisky.

My days in Tambunan were spent in court and visiting the *kampungs* to hear from the headmen. Tambunan, in those days, was isolated. The main line of supply for the few shops was by *bongon* load carried from Penampang up the Sunsurun trace across the Crocker Range. Outside goods were expensive and the bulk of Tambunan people lived on local resources. They had extensive padi fields and there were bamboo forests in the surrounding hills. Bamboo was the main building material.

One day, returning to Keningau after an evening on communion wine, I was flagged down at Bingkor by a nurse who told me that the doctor was at the house of Orang Kaya Kaya Sedoman attending to his senior wife and wanted me urgently. It transpired that Sedoman's senior wife was having a difficult delivery and was losing blood. I was group O, universal donor and provided a pint, laced, no doubt, with communion wine. She recovered and afterwards always called me *abang* (brother).

Orang Kaya Kaya Sedoman bin Gunsanad was the hereditary Paramount Native Chief of the Interior. He was a Kwijau but his authority extended over a large section of the Kadazan and Murut people. He lived in comparative grandeur in a concrete floored timber building which had been strafed on several occasions by the Australian Air Force and was well ventilated with bullet holes. He was a solid undemonstrative man whose cattle and *kerbau* roamed the plain, whose padi fields provided him and his family with plenty, and whose several wives produced babies with commendable regularity. One



Orang Kaya Kaya Sedoman, Paramount Chief of the Interior (arm raised in centre) in front of his bullet ridden house in Bingkor. On his left are visiting chiefs from Sarawak. To his right are Ben Stephens (DO Keningau) and on the extreme right OKK Sundang, Sedoman's brother who later became a signatory of the Malaysia agreement.

day, when having a beer with him on his verandah, I enquired whether a lad playing football outside was one of his. He was not certain and referred the question to his senior wife.

Sedoman's younger brother, Sundang, was in Government service. He was fluent in English and had been sent to the UK before the war by the Chartered Company to broaden his education. A few years later, he became ADO Tambunan where he used his authority to get free labour from the *kampungs* to widen the bridle path from Keningau into a jeep track, an event of some significance. Later in his career, he became leader of the Pasok Momogon political party and was a signatory of the Malaysian agreement.

The Murut area between Keningau and Pensiangan was a much tougher proposition. Pensiangan was 114 miles away, close to the Indonesian border, at the end of a bridle path which wound its hilly way through primary jungle. The area was sparsely inhabited, the Muruts practising shifting cultivation. There was the annual ritual of felling, burning, and protection of the crop from birds and harvesting, each phase accompanied by feasts and drinking to request assistance from or give thanks to the Spirits.

The Muruts had an ingenious way of felling the trees. They would half cut the trunks of the trees in a triangle of hillside forest, narrowing as it rose up the hillside. The tree at the peak would then be felled, bringing all down together. It was then burned and the women went between the charred logs planting the padi with a pointed stick.

Because the Muruts were few and the jungle extensive, little, if any, permanent damage was done. Most patches were re-visited after seven years or so.

There were two main tribes on the route to Pensiangan. To the north, running to the Ulu Kinabatangan, lived the Bokan Muruts whose Chief was Arusap of Agnes Keith fame. To the south lived the Dalit Muruts whose Chief was Usang, a wiry old man who walked up mountains with ease. He wore

A Bokan Murut with blowpipe and ammunition at the ready.

jar through the straw and swallowed, or spat out the contents if the straw contained insects or rice leavings from previous use. She eventually settled on one which she considered would be suitable for the DO. I was not surprised that it was the *tapai* brewed by Arusap's wife. It was in a beautiful blue glazed *tajau*.

The gongs pounded, the fires at each end of the *bangsal* smoked and spat as bits of chicken and pork were thrust into the flames. A *keladi* leaf of jarok appeared by my side. *Jarok* was a wonderful drinking aid. It was made by stuffing uncooked wild pig, snake, rat, fish or any other flesh into a bamboo tube with fermented rice. The tube was then sealed with mud and hung on the wall until required. It had a unique, pervading smell and taste and a good swig of *tapai* was needed to remove it.

I do not wish to disparage *tapai*, some of it was quite appealing, a sharp white wine quality about it, but some, especially if made with *ubi kayu* (cassava) and spiced with chilli was revolting. My defence on these occasions was to plead a call of nature and, out of hearing of my hosts, put two fingers down my throat with the usual consequences.

When I had finished my stint, I retired to the group at the back of the *bangsal* to gossip about local affairs, but it was not long before I was dragged to a two-straw jar with a drinking companion to ensure I did not cheat by tipping the jar or any other unsporting manoeuvre. She was plump and bare-breasted with an infant suckling on one of them. Her lower lip bulged with a wodge of half-chewed tobacco. She smiled through betel-stained teeth and together with much expression of pleasure, smacking of lips, smiles and belching, we completed our stint. The baby all this time had fed contentedly, except for a moment when mother had mischievously transferred it from nipple to straw. The infant rejected the intake over its mother's breast and resumed normal service.

The small wet-padi scheme went ahead, which led to a request for *kerbau* to puddle the field. These were supplied on the usual understanding that they would be nurtured and some of their progeny passed on to others. A few months later I received a request for barbed wire as the *kerbau* were damaging the unfenced padi field. I arranged for some to be dropped by the RAF Labuan. The RAF were very helpful. They dropped supplies for us in remote areas and would fly headmen to see their *kampungs* from the air. I would take a group down to Labuan and off we went in a Valetta. The pilots

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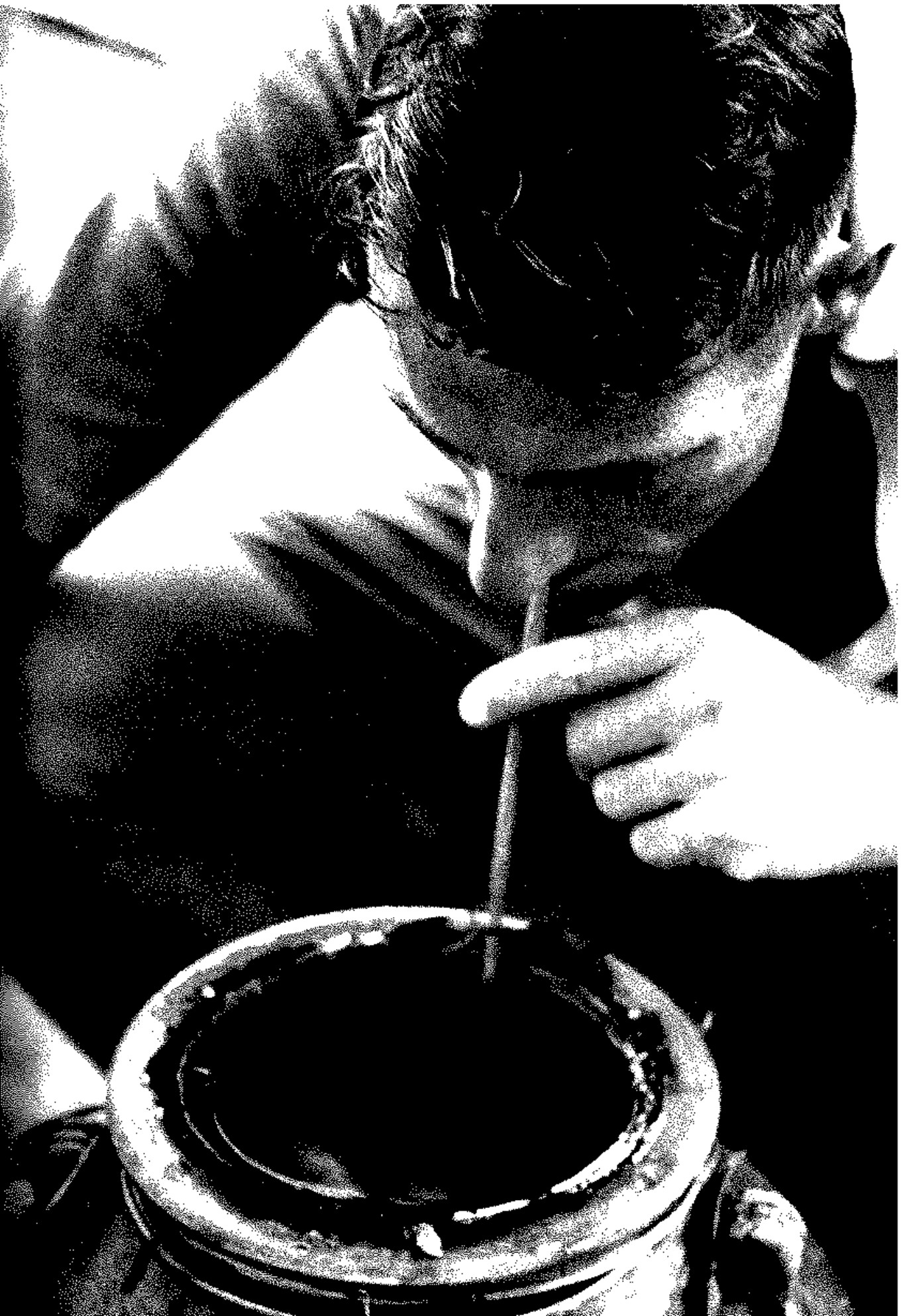
Myself at a tapai jar in Sook, 1953.



Pensiangan government station, 1963.

had their fun by flying feet above the waves, island hopping and performing tight turns in narrow valleys.

All of us were scared stiff but on disembarking, professed to have enjoyed it immensely. And what wonderful tales were told in the *kampungs* afterwards.

I managed to get Tulid on the official Education Department list for a primary school.

(I could not get similar approval for a school at Dalit, but arranged with Orang Kaya Usang for him to build one of *kajang* and *attap*. His son, who was literate, became the teacher and I paid him as a bridle path coolie)

Arusap built the school. It was a sturdy framework of *billean* posts. Only a roof of modern material would suffice. We arranged to airdrop some

aluminium sheeting. How this was done without beheading the inhabitants of Tulid I do not know, but I do know that an aluminium roof in a jungle clearing under an equatorial sun produces a dazzling explosion of light which can stop you in your tracks. We were all somewhat cool about aluminium after that.

I was never able to check on the numbers of the *kerbau* at Tulid. Whenever I enquired I was told that they were foraging in the forest and unfortunately could not be rounded up for a head count. There was nothing I could do about it so I pretended to swallow the explanation. I also swallowed, along with Arusap and his friends, a fair amount of cooked *kerbau* during my visits. This, perhaps, was also relevant to their absence.

Our next joint development scheme was in the field of communications. I agreed that if he would get his people to convert the track from Sook into a bridle path, I would provide a telephone link along the path to Tulid. Sook

The Resident's house at Keningau, 1960.

was the first relay point on the single wire earth return that ran 114 miles along bridle path and jungle *rentis* (track) from Keningau to Pensiangan. In dry weather it worked well. When it was wet it was either out of action or the best one could hope for was that the message passed from Keningau to Sook, from where it was passed to Sepulot and thence to Pensiangan bore some resemblance to the original.

Arusap had the bridle path constructed, not quite as agreed as the bridges which were to have been made from *billean* were made with soft wood which would not stand the weight of the pack ponies. This was remedied and the telephone duly installed. On the day that it was finally connected, Arusap telephoned to report the momentous event and told me that there would be a big celebration that night. I congratulated him and wished them well.

At two o'clock the following morning, my telephone woke me. The duty policeman informed me that Arusap wanted to speak to me urgently. Through a background of gongs and pentatonic chanting he told me that he had been conferring with his Orang Tua and they wished to start a soap factory in Tulid. Would I please send them the appropriate pans and other equipment? I asked him where he would get the oil for the process. "Surely", Arusap replied in injured tones, "Tuan knows that there is a coconut palm on the *padang*." I did know. It was the only one for miles around. Arusap did not get his soap factory but he had demonstrated to his *rakyat* (people) the miracles of modern science.

Once, when returning from a trek to the Ulu Kinabatangan where there was plenty of evidence of the presence of elephants, I asked Arusap why there were no elephants near Tulid.

This what he told me.

ARUSAP'S TALE

"Why are there no elephants in Tulid, Arusap?

It is because of the porcupines Tuan. A long time ago a buffalo from this valley was foraging in the *ulu* and met a solitary elephant.

"Why do you eat on our land?" the buffalo asked.

"We are Lords of the Forest and will eat where we like. It is good here and I will bring the rest of my herd." said the elephant.

"Then we will fight you," said the buffalo, "for this our land, and has always been."

The elephant trumpeted with derision. "Let us arrange a battle. Let it be on this very spot. Bring all your comrades and I will bring mine. We will meet here on the sixth day from now and fight for the valley."

The buffalo ran down the valley and called a meeting of all the animals. He told his story and was berated by the bears and the wild boars for his stupidity. "We can never fight the elephants. What is to become of us?" And they began to weep and moan.

The little mousedeer Si Pelandok was curled up at the foot of a guava tree. "Do stop that awful noise," he said. "On the fifth day I want the buffaloes, the boars, the bears and the porcupines to meet me here at daybreak. Now go away, all of you and let me sleep."

On the morning of the fifth day the bears, boars, porcupines and buffaloes met Si Pelandok.

"Let us go" he said "to the place of battle."

When they arrived he said to the buffaloes "Charge every small tree and bush and knock them down."

To the boars "Dig up every root you can find".

To the bears "Climb every tree and pull off the branches to the height of two elephants."

To the porcupines, "Wait with me."

To all "Return here when the sun has passed its peak. I am going to have a short nap."

Just after noon he was awakened. He yawned, stretched his legs, looked around him and said "Go home all of you, except the bears, the porcupines and the buffalo that met the elephant."

When they had departed, Si Pelandok said to the bears "Pull the quills from the porcupines and stick them high in the trees."

When they had finished he sent the bears and the porcupines home. Only the buffalo remained with him. Together they walked around the devastated patch of jungle, the torn earth and the uprooted trees.

"Let us lie down now" said Si Pelandok, "and I will tell you what to do tomorrow."

In the morning, before the sun was up, the earth shook with the tread of the elephants, and the birds screamed in the trees. The monkeys leapt from bough to bough as they followed the trumpeting herd. In their hundreds the elephants burst into the clearing, trunks raised, heads waving from side to side.

Si Pelandok got slowly to his feet, stretched and nudged the buffalo. Buffalo, too, roused himself with exaggerated torpor.

"Ah," he said " Here you are at last, a day late. It is only out of courtesy that we have waited for you."

"This is the sixth day," said the leader of the elephants.

"Sixth day? But we promised to meet on the fifth," replied the buffalo.

"There is a misunderstanding," said Si Pelandok, "but it is just as well that you did not come yesterday because the porcupines were here. Look around you and see what damage they have caused as they walked through. See the hairs they left on the trees as they went by.

The elephants looked at the torn ground and the quills high on the trunks of the trees and they marvelled at the size of the porcupines. And they turned and left and never crossed the watershed again.

"And that," said Arusap "is why there are no elephants in Tulid!"

And on to Pensiangan.

From Sook, the bridle path ran through flat, uninteresting secondary jungle, the only change of scenery being the occasional pyramid-shaped burial mound at the side of the track, with its faded rags of cloth and broken jars left to accompany the spirits of the dead. Ponies tread along bridle paths at the monotonous pace of two and a half miles an hour. By trotting and cantering over suitable stretches, a rate of four miles an hour can be achieved. I used to fight the boredom of seven or eight hours in the saddle in the jungle gloom by trying to pass a milepost every fifteen minutes exactly. Nabawan was reached about midday, when we would stop for a rest and a snack and burn off with a cigarette end any leeches we had managed to acquire from the undergrowth or streams.

A few headmen and bridle path workers would meet us for a chat about local affairs and occasionally the *bungsal* would be occupied by a group of Muruts from the Indonesian side of the border. Some of them had never seen or heard of a pony before and would retreat to the shelter of the forest until they were assured that these strange beasts were harmless. A man seated on a horse or a string of loaded pack ponies must have been a frightening sight when confronted for the first time.

A Murut family on the move along a bridle had a set pattern. In the van would be a group of males with *parangs* slung at their sides. Some would be holding a spear-tipped blowpipe. In their free arm they cuddled a small hunting dog, resting it so that it would not be wearied by the march and ready to tear after any pig or other quarry that appeared. Behind the men came the

Orang Kaya Kaya Sedoman presents a blowpipe to Prince Philip. Governor Turnbull is behind the Prince.

women and children, all carrying loads of family belongings, some of the women straining under huge *bongons* almost as big as themselves. Every so often they would stop at some traditional resting place where a tree or two had been felled, so that they offered a means of easing *bongons* off weary backs and provided a place to sit.

At these stops there would be the equivalent of the local newspaper. This took the form of several notched sticks stuck upright in the ground. In the notches there were leaves or twigs and perhaps small bones. The leaves of trees or shrubs folded in a special way were personal signs or represented particular objects. A typical interpretation would be "Kalau stopped here a few days ago and ate a chicken before he went on to Pandewan".

From Nabawan began the winding climb over the watershed between the rivers that ran north to the Pegalan and the Padas and those that ran south to Indonesia. On the far side of the ridge was the resthouse at Metiku, a *kajang* hut on the bank of a muddy stream. A night stop here and on the next morning to Sepulot at Mile 80.

Sepulot was a small government station of relative luxury. It was run by a clerk, a small detachment of police and a dresser. It also had a shop owned by cheerful and enterprising Ah Jut, a Chinese with a Murut wife. He had a kerosene refrigerator and always presented me on arrival with a bottle of cold Guiness, a drink renowned in the Interior for its energising and aphrodisiac qualities. This was a noble gesture considering that the bottle had been carried there by manpower for at least eighty miles. In truth, he was the engine that kept Sepulot ticking. His shop was a typical *kedai kampung* with shelves laden with dusty tins of pilchards, ancient sauce bottles, strips of dried meat, ropes, string, cheap perfume, pots, tin plates, knives, axe heads, bottles of beer and kerosene, cheroots wrapped in Chinese newspaper, bundles of local tobacco, blocks of washing soap, jars of salt, singlets, shirts and patent medicines, including, of course, the essential Tiger Balm. From the back of the shop at sundown came the appetising smell of a meal being prepared by Ah Jut's Murut wife. He always invited me and the neighbouring headmen to dinner. I tried to return his hospitality in some small way whenever he visited Keningau.

Sepulot was a striking place on a hill above the river, and because the jungle had been cleared, there was a glorious view to a massive stone outcrop from which bats and flying foxes erupted at dusk. Great flocks of them soared from their caves and flew across the jungle to forage for fruit.

At the first glimmer of dawn we were off along the bridle path which followed the river to Agis at Mile 91. The path continued to Pensiangan, but

to bring a little variety into the journey we transferred to *prahus* and shot off down river at great speed through shallows and rapids with the Murut crew fending off rocks with paddles and poles. It was exhilarating and sometimes dangerous as some of the rapids were virtually waterfalls. About ten miles down river, we met the Tagul which flows from Pensiangan and off to Kalimantan. From here it was upstream poling the *prahus*.

How long the journey took depended on the state of the river, but eventually we arrived at the government station with its whitewashed office, school and barracks, and a well kept *padang*. It was always a welcoming sight.

Pensiangan was run by an Assistant District Officer whose remit covered Sepulot and all the riverine area back to the Tenom District and down to the Kalimantan border where the Sembakang flowed down to the Celebes sea. The Sembakang was used as a route for trade goods from Tawau. In the government station there was a school, a small hospital run by a dresser and a police detachment under the command of a sergeant.

It is remarkable that this remote district spawned so many leading figures in the new state of Sabah. Mickey Robert, who later as Datuk Mohamad Adnan Robert became Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri, was my ADO there. Thomas Koroh, son of OKK Koroh of Keningau, was the clerk in Sepulot and later became the Head of State. Harris Salleh, later to become an enterprising Chief Minister, was the Chief Clerk at Pensiangan.

The journey back from Pensiangan was usually an uneventful plod, but sometimes enlivened by meeting herds of wild boar during their migrations. A shotgun was useful on these occasions and a police issue Lee Enfield rifle an effective provider of meat for the *kampungs* we passed. Flash flooding was also a hazard and sometimes we would have to leave the path and seek higher ground. I remember on one occasion, when stranded on a hilltop about fifty miles from home, we managed to get a connection to the telephone that ran nearby. We reported our situation on a remarkably clear line. I spoke to my wife, who enquired if I would be home for tea. I was, but that was two days later. I spent most of that time watching snakes, lizards and other jungle residents swim by our temporary refuge. It was the time of wild fruit and we arrived back in Keningau reeking to high heaven with the pack ponies laden to the limit with durian fruit.

My most interesting journey to Pensiangan, however, was by foot via the Dalit country. I was the first DO to do it after the war and, in the remote *kampungs*, the first European some had seen. I was accompanied on this trip by Orang Kaya Kaya Sedoman, the Paramount Chief of the Interior. He had

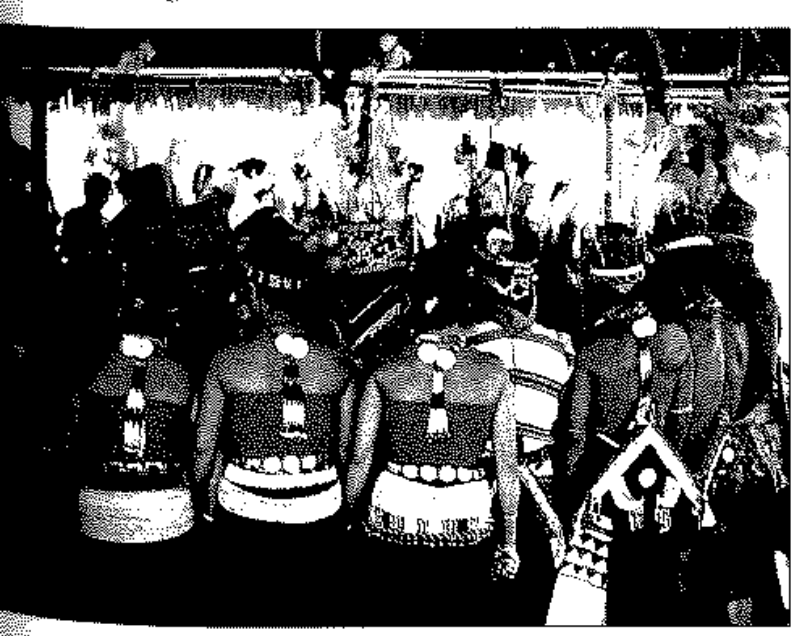
Mission-owned Piper Tripacer at Meligan airstrip, 1961. Bob Speddy (DO Beaufort) and Harris Salleh (ADO Sipitang) are in the picture. The airstrip was so undulating that at times planes disappeared in the hollows.

not made this journey for twenty years. It took us six days. On some of them it rained. The track, little used, was difficult to follow and was often deep in mud. The gravelly noise of the rain on the jungle canopy was incessant. Spouts of water showered on us from the tangle of creepers overhead. A deep green gloom enveloped us. We walked and climbed through the high moss forest where gaunt twisted trees were festooned with beards of grey. We trudged without a word, each of us concentrating on where our next step would go — on top of a root — on a ledge — in a hollow between boulders — on the slippery moss on a rotting log. Then into the river, feet on rounded stones, fingers grasping roots to drag our bodies from the water. Leeches, blood on legs, blood on arms. We scraped the leeches off with our *parangs*.

The reward came in the afternoon, whether it was wet or fine. The track would become more discernible, the primary jungle would thin to scrub and saplings where previous crops of hill padi had grown, dogs barked and roosters crowed in the distance, and as soon as we were seen, the gongs started a furious beating. People came thronging from the houses to meet us and after greetings we flopped on mats to rest. The most effective reviver was a fat yellow *timun* (cucumber) eaten in chunks dipped into coarse salt.

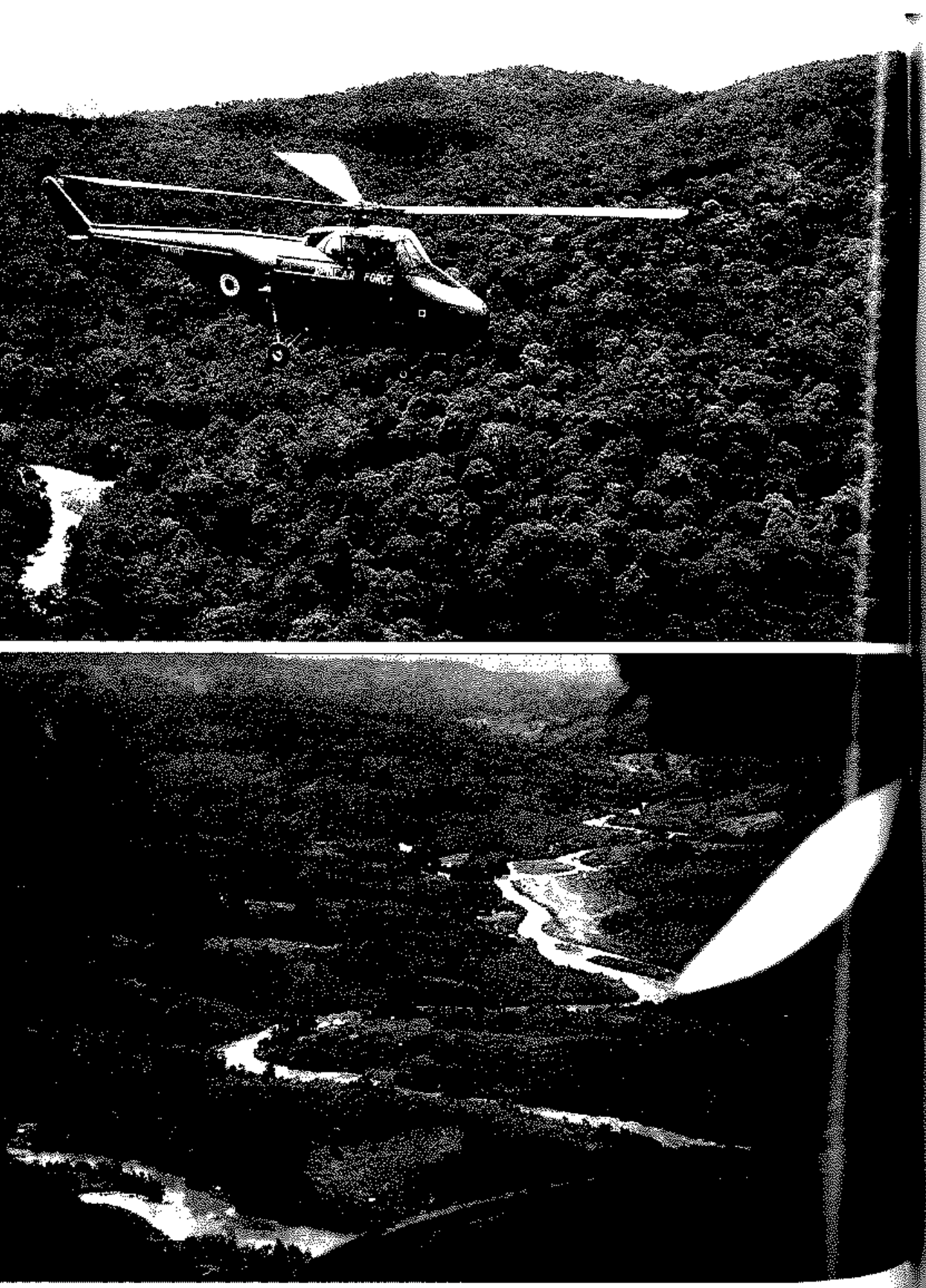
In the late afternoon we had a refreshing bath in the river, a meal enhanced by the fact that bamboo shoots were in season to brighten up the chicken stew. I spent time talking about local affairs and answering questions. Sedoman spent his settling problems of Native Custom, usually about property and marriage matters. I remember one of his judgements relating to Native Chief Usang, the head of the Dalit Muruts. Usang had taken on a second wife who was young and beautiful and slept with her every night, to the annoyance of his first wife, who complained to Sedoman. After a long and noisy session with the first wife haranguing the court and Usang insisting that sleeping with his first wife did not excite him in any way, Sedoman made a judgement of Solomon and decreed that Usang must sleep with each wife on alternate nights. If Usang's first wife did not arouse him, said Sedoman, Usang would doubly enjoy his night with the younger one. Judgement was accepted by both parties.

A Murut evening in the Dalit area was quite an occasion. With dancing on the *langsaran* the main feature. After the *tapai* has done its work the gongs sound, the singing starts and dancing gets wilder and wilder. The *langsaran* is essentially a trampoline. A Murut longhouse is some ten feet above the ground. In the middle of it the floor is cut away to provide a dancing platform about three feet below the main deck. The dancing floor is set on springy saplings and had a vertical play of some three feet or more when pounded by a group of lusty Murut youths. Rhythmic dancing takes place, but the highlight of the evening is a jumping contest to recover a prize hung from the rafters.



Murut dancers on a sprung langsaran floor.

Leaping from a bouncing *langsaran* floor is an acquired skill. You have to take off just before the sprung floor reaches the top of its upwards run. If you are a microsecond late you will be leaping off fresh air, and gravity being what it is, you will land flat on your back on



(Top) RAF helicopter on its way to Pensiangan during "Confrontasi" in 1963. (Bottom) Sepulot airstrip by river, 1963.

the floor which is by then flying upwards. I know from personal experience that this is a painful way of partying and never passed my O levels at *langsaran* leaping. My contribution to these Bacchanalian occasions was a rendering of "She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes", with gongs and Murut choir in the Kai Yai Yippy Yippy Yai chorus. It was the jungle equivalent of the Last Night of the Proms.

There were some strange sights on this journey. One morning, we emerged from the jungle gloom to the glare of a river bank and right in front of us was a platform piled with skulls and bones. The inhabitants of the longhouse had decided to empty their burial jars for re-use.

On our sixth day, we reached the upper Rundum river and had an exciting ride down river to the Tagul and on to Pensiangan. Gliding and bumping downriver was a delight after a wearying few days of foot slogging in jungle over mountains which sometimes took us through moss forest at over 7,000 feet.

Pensiangan at that time was a peaceful, well kept outstation. The ADO and Native Chief Sigoh, an ex-police Sergeant and a Murut, ran it well. My last visit to Pensiangan was in 1964 when I was State Secretary. This was the era of "Konfrontasi". My journey was by RAF light plane to Sepulot, where I landed on the short airstrip that I had had cleared when I was Resident Interior. From Sepulot I went by RAF helicopter to Pensiangan, which was then manned by the British army. It was an outpost of slit-trenches, machine guns and barbed wire, a sad sight, contrasting sharply with my memories of happy days of the past when there were colourful crowds on the *padang*, children having a sports day and *langsaran* dancing at nights with the inevitable accompaniment of gongs, songs and gurgling jars of *tapai*.

Incongruously, the Interior Residency included the District of Sipitang, a palm-groved fishing village on the coast opposite Labuan island. The area had been the scene of bitter fighting in the last months of the war when SRD guerrillas harried the Japanese garrisons in the area. The Assistant District Officer was Datu Mohamed Yassin, known to his friends as "Myassin". He was the hereditary Native Chief in the area and had looked after his people as best as was possible during the Japanese occupation. He eventually made contact with the SRD guerrillas and took part in several strikes against the Japanese.

Mohamed Yassin was a man of great courage and character, a man you instinctively trusted. He was ebullient and friendly, with a streak of showmanship. When my children were in Borneo for the summer break, he took us fishing in his *prahu*. The children and I trailed a line each. Myassin

Getting supplies into Pensiangan by RAF in 1950. A parachute is on the *padang*.

trailed four, one in each hand and two more hitched round his big toes. His contortions when he got two bites at once made the children shriek with laughter.

When Malaysia approached, he left government service to enter politics. He later became a Minister in the State Government. His successor in the District was Harris Salleh, a forceful character who also left the administrative service to enter politics and after the tragic death of Donald Stephens in an air crash, succeeded him as Chief Minister. Both these officers were being groomed for senior posts in administration, and though this was not to be, they both more than adequately served Sabah as politicians.

I owed a lot to my staff in the Interior. In Keningau, Ben Stephens was the District Officer. He went on to a distinguished career and became President of the Malaysian Senate. Benedict Shim also served there and later became Chairman of the Public Service Commission. We were a team of good friends. We worked hard and played hard. Once a week we played a no-holds-barred game of polo on the *padang* with teams of locals who rode bareback, aggressively and vocally on their prized ponies. One Saturday evening, after a celebration in the *kedai*, and some boasting about our fitness, we arranged to meet at six a.m. on the following day to run a mile along the old Japanese road. Our wives came with us to wait at the winning post with cold beers. It was much harder than I had expected. Ben Stephens and Benedict Shim both finished ahead of me. I was not last. This honour was reserved for Mr Hoole, our Veterinary Officer, a rotund Tamil with a smile and a laugh that brightened the world. Together we were all trying to improve it.

Chapter 10

A Pause for Reflection

This is my story, but it is time to look around and see what has been happening to other people and other places. All over North Borneo, people were striving in their various fields to improve and develop the country. By the late 1950s the restoration phase had been completed and development and expansion were proceeding apace. The District Teams established by Sir Roland Turnbull had indeed evolved into Local Authorities. Local people were increasingly becoming involved in the running of affairs.

On all fronts, in all disciplines, there was a steady march forward. Expanding the economy and providing education were the two essential aims and this involved every aspect of government—agriculture, health, communications, law and order, revenue collection, exports, imports, building, training and every other need of society.

The main source of revenue was from the cess on rubber exports, and by the end of the decade there were over 170,000 acres of it, mainly of high yielding varieties. Timber extraction, strictly controlled, was increasing and around 60,000,000 cubic feet a year was being produced, mostly for export to Japan, Hong Kong and Australia. There was much experimentation with potential crops. Oil palm, which was to prove so important in future years, was being tried out at Mostyn on the east coast and at Limbawang near Beaufort, and Unilever had acquired 10,000 acres for production at Labuk. Extensive trials were being undertaken with cocoa and various strains of coffee. Irrigation schemes were opening new land for padi planting.

Communications were extending rapidly. Jeep tracks were being upgraded to feeder roads. The main roads from the towns were stretching further into the countryside. Regular air services had been established between North Borneo, Brunei, Sarawak, Singapore and Hong Kong, and within North Borneo to all the major towns. Huge improvements were taking place at the ports. The railway service, still the main means of transport for

the West Coast and the Interior, had been vastly improved with re-laid track and new rolling stock. The straggling telephone lines were being replaced by multi-channel VHF radio via a master station on the shoulder of Mount Kinabalu.

It would be sad to tell of North Borneo in the 1950s without a mention of the Straits Steamship boats upon whose routes the Malaysian empire was strung. The *Darvel*, the *Kajang*, the *Kimanis* and the *Marudu* sailed their way from Singapore round the coast of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo—Kuching, Sibu, Miri, Labuan, Jesselton, Kudat, Sandakan and Tawau—bringing with them on their outward journey cars, lorries, soap powder, tinned milk, lavatory basins, heavy machinery, books, shirts, cloth, whisky, gin and brandy, crate upon crate of beer and stout, furniture, tiles, nails, cornflakes, tea, aspirins and adding machines. On the return journey they were full to the scuppers with copra, rubber, hemp and rattan. Pigs for the Singapore market were stacked on the deck, five or six high in cylindrical baskets and hosed down hourly to keep them alive.

On both journeys, the forward area was crammed with deck passengers, huddled together under the awnings—Hakka Chinese with their broad woven hats and a mixture of local and immigrant workers. They spent most of their time on thin sleeping mats, moving only to buy rice and soup from the galley or visit the latrines. The native people were usually silent, dozing or watching the sea and sky. The Hakka women conversed in strident monosyllables across the deck.

The cabins for the first class passengers were light and pleasant. Fans played over the bunks. Morning tea was brought to the bedside and a dulcimer sounded the call for meals—fresh fruit and delicious eastern cooking served by immaculate Chinese stewards, their uniforms creaking with starch.

In the evenings, chugging up the coast, the cool wind from the hills brought the jasmine scent of the *tembusu* trees. The wake stretched phosphorescent to the end of the world.

New modern hospitals had been built in Jesselton (as Kota Kinabalu was then named), Sandakan and in several outstations. An anti-malarial campaign backed by the WHO was being carried out from the coast to the remote *kampungs* of the hinterland. In Labuan, malaria was judged to have been eliminated. Effective efforts were making headway against tuberculosis, which had thrived in the confined insanitary slums which were the aftermath of war.

Hand in hand with all this was the essential drive for education and training. This was a matter that required sensitive handling. The needs and aspirations of the Native and Chinese communities had to be taken into account as had the need for education in English to enable students to obtain entry to the professions and the commercial world. This work was increasingly coordinated by a Board of Education representing the various communities in North Borneo.

There were many threads to this intricate tapestry. There were Native Voluntary Schools operating in the remoter areas, assisted by government finance. There were Government Primary Schools with teaching in Malay and English. Chinese Primary Schools established by the Chinese community and assisted by government, schools run by Catholic, Anglican and other missions, and primary schools run by estates. The products of these various agencies were being fed as fast as resources would allow into secondary and further education.

There was a great shortage of teachers. Kent College had been established at Tuaran to train indigenous teachers; teachers were recruited from outside North Borneo from Colony funds or via the Colombo plan. In the ferment of the '50s great care had to be taken to avoid exploitation by communist infiltration.

Higher education was not available in North Borneo and local students were being sent overseas in increasing numbers. There were many sources of money and facilities for this—Colony funds, Colonial Development and Welfare grants from the British government, the Colombo Plan, and provision from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Malaya, Singapore and the USA. A Training Officer had been appointed within the Secretariat to provide hands-on assistance to those studying overseas and to coordinate the internal training which was being developed within departments.

Everywhere there was an air of optimism. The economy was growing, the towns were expanding, modern air-conditioned buildings were rising on broad avenues, water from new reservoirs and electrical supplies were becoming reliable. The major towns had libraries and community centres. Local newspapers and the government's Information and Broadcasting Service were both opening up the world and welding together the various races into a common loyalty to North Borneo.

It was an exciting time.

Chapter 11

Malaysia— The Background

In 1960 and 1961, progress continued at an increasing rate. The towns stretched farther into the countryside. Local people were taking a greater part in government. Qualified students were beginning to return from overseas to take up posts in government. Trade was increasing and standards of living were rising rapidly. In the towns, air-conditioning was no longer a novelty. Cinemas and restaurants brought the delights of leisure. In the countryside, feeder roads and four-wheel drive trucks were replacing jungle tracks and back-breaking loads. On the west coast, trade with the outside world via Singapore flourished and on the east coast there were growing timber exports to Japan and Australia. Tawau had become a Mecca for the copra trade in the islands and North Borneo was becoming a beacon of prosperity and racial concord on the rim of a troubled Indonesia. There was confidence that North Borneo would move steadily towards a self-governing future. There was, perhaps, too much confidence. Eyes were too closely focussed on local affairs without regard to the rumblings in the surrounding world.

There is an old Malay proverb "*Macham katak di-bawa kelapa*", "Like a frog beneath a coconut shell" referring to someone who lives in their own world and is startled when something unforeseen occurs. On the 27th of May 1961, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, made a proposal at a press luncheon in Singapore that a Federation of Malaysia should be created comprising the eleven states of Malaya, Singapore, and the three Borneo territories of Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei. He had lifted the coconut shell and let in the dazzling and bewildering light of the outside world.

It was a daunting prospect for all in North Borneo. In government circles, it was felt that more time was needed to build up the service with returning

overseas students and those in training locally. To many of the North Borneo people, Malaya was as foreign as Indonesia and the Philippines, a land where a lingering jungle war was being fought against communist guerrillas. How would our burgeoning local leaders cope with the political sophisticates of Singapore and Malaya where robust party politics, elections and self government had been around for some years? And Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were a thousand miles away!

There were several well-springs that fed the Tunku's proposal: the perceived desire of the British to withdraw from South East Asia, the proportions of the Native and Chinese populations in the area, the political tug of war between Malaya and Singapore, and apprehension about the intentions of China and Indonesia.

At the beginning of 1961, there were no political parties in North Borneo—not an encouraging starting point for a rapid leap into independence in a novel Federation! The situation is succinctly described in the General Review at the beginning of the North Borneo Annual Report for 1961:

> *" Although there had been talk for some time past of the formation of political parties, and it is widely acknowledged that sooner or later these were bound to come, there was an understandable reluctance to take the plunge through a realisation that they carried with them the danger of communal dissention and a breakdown in the harmony between the many different races, in which the country has always taken a justifiable pride...*
>
> *... The lead, in the absence of elections, tended to come from nominated unofficial members of Executive and Legislative Council and other persons of standing in the community. At first they had many difficulties to contend with, such as lack of political experience, shortage of suitable organisers and the reluctance of many people to embark on the stormy sea of politics.*

In the early months of political organisation, it was not surprising that there should have been frequent shifts in allegiance and alignment. But by the end of the year a clearer pattern had emerged, with five main political parties, the United National Kadazan Organisation (the first in the field), the United Sabah National Organisation, the United Pasok Momogan Organisation, the United Party and the Democratic Party. These parties differed mainly in the

composition of their membership and in their attitude towards Malaysia. The United National Kadazan Organisation appealed for its membership to the Kadazans living around Jesselton and by extension to all the Dusun people who, as a racial group, form approximately one-third of the population. Under the leadership of the Honourable Donald Stephens, it favoured Malaysia. The United Sabah National Organisation under the leadership of the Honourable Datu Mustapha bin Datu Harun O.B.E. was predominately Muslim and also welcomed Malaysia.

The United Party, of which the Honourable Khoo Siak Chiew was the Chairman, although multi-racial drew its strength from the Chinese, and had its headquarters in Sandakan. The Democratic Party, led by Mr Peter Chin of Jesselton, was also largely Chinese. Both these parties advocated self-government before Malaysia. The United Pasok Momogun Organisation under the Honourable G.S. Sundang also opposed Malaysia: it draws its membership mainly from the Dusun and Murut people of the Interior who disagreed with the views of the United National Kadazan Organisation."

The first reaction of the people of North Borneo was one of suspicion and anxiety. North Borneo was developing rapidly. Trade and services were improving and people were free to pursue their own way of life and follow their own religions without discrimination. The British forces in South East Asia guaranteed their security. So why change? Many thought that Sarawak and North Borneo were being drawn into Singapore/Malayan problems to provide a balance of non-Chinese in the population equation.

This was strange ground for all concerned. The British had negotiated the independence of several Colonies where there had been local demand and active political parties. In North Borneo there was none. Malaya was still digesting its coalescence into a full Federation and its recent independence. It was, with British help, fighting a war against communism in the jungles of its hinterland. Singapore, also recently independent, was battling communism and striving to create a viable state. Brunei was an independent Sultanate under British protection. Sarawak and North Borneo were British Colonies, the first recently owned by a White Rajah and the second by a Chartered Company. An exotic mix for a Federal cocktail!

Speculation was abundant. The only things in short supply were facts, so arrangements were made for leading members of the Legislative Council to attend a regional meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Singapore to meet the Tunku and to see the progress made in Malaya since independence. This was mainly to demonstrate their drive for rural

A Murut lady at a tapai jar with three drinking partners, 1953.

development which had the twin aims of bringing wealth to the *kampungs* and discouraging rural dwellers from cooperation with the communists. Doubts remained and a Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee was formed, with members from the five territories involved. Donald Stephens was its Chairman. The aims of the committee were to collect and collate information about the Malaysia proposal, to encourage discussion and generally support it.

The greatest concern in North Borneo was about immigration. The Colonial government had strictly controlled it. With a population of under half a million and untold acres of land available for eventual development, there was a deep fear that in the proposed Federation the existing inhabitants would be swamped by land-hungry settlers and undesirables from Singapore and Malaya. This fear was felt right across the population spectrum and fired a need for an intense examination of all the implications of the Malaysia proposal. Public opinion was a bubbling stockpot of ideas with something new being added daily —a newspaper article, a statement by a party leader, and a heady dash of juicy rumours.

The way ahead became a little clearer in November 1961 when the Tunku and the British Prime Minister met in London and agreed that Malaysia was a desirable aim, and that the views of the people of North Borneo and Sarawak should be sought. The British and Malayan Governments were pressing the accelerator.

A Commission was set up under the Chairmanship of Lord Cobbold, a former Governor of the Bank of England. Sir Anthony Abell, a former Governor of Sarawak, 'Che Mohamed Ghazali, Permanent Secretary to the Malayan Ministry of External Affairs, and Dato Wong Pow Nee, Chief Minister of Penang. To prepare the ground a North Borneo Government paper had been issued in January setting out the implications of Malaysia. It concluded as follows:

> *"the main issue before the people of North Borneo is simply this. They must assess the future advantages of Malaysia; they must weigh up the prospects Malaysia offers of security from external aggression and internal Communist subversion, of stability and prosperity, and they must consider how far they are prepared to give powers to the central Government of Malaysia to achieve these ends. The central Government must be strong and provide security; it must have powers sufficient for its purpose. But local aspirations and needs must also be recognised and safeguarded. The State Governments must be able to protect vital local interests."*

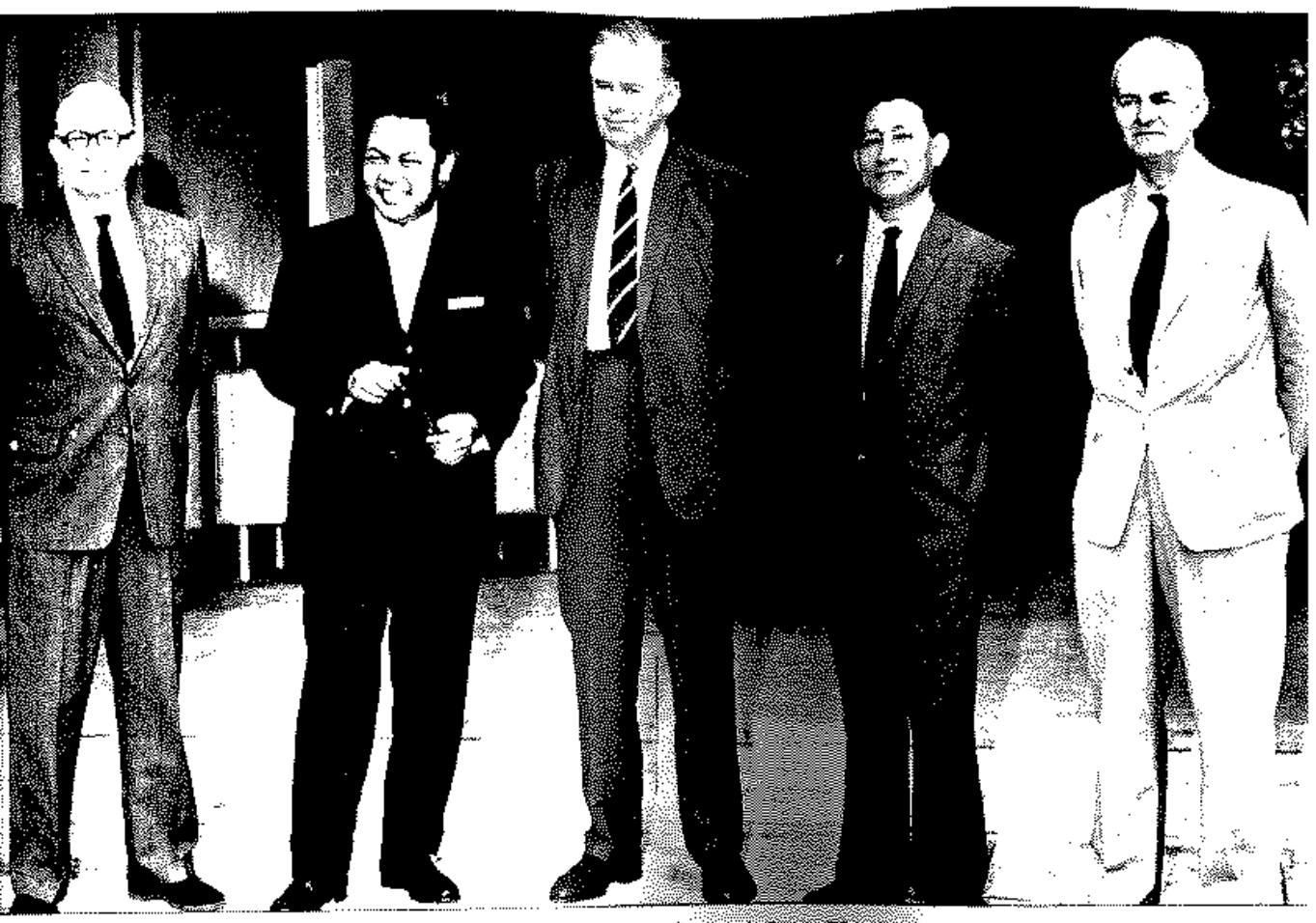
The Cobbold Commission visited North Borneo in February and March 1962 and sat in Jesselton and Sandakan to hear representations and to receive written material. After a visit to Sarawak, they visited North Borneo again from the 2nd to the 15th April 1962, when they travelled widely, sitting in Papar, Beaufort, Tenom, Keningau, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Kota Belud, Kudat, Labuan and several small outstations.

There was a lot of interest. Over 4,000 people from the Borneo Territories appeared before it and 600 written representations were submitted in North Borneo alone from Town Boards, political parties, Trade Unions and individuals. The Commission concluded that:

"About one-third of the population in each territory strongly favours early realisation of Malaysia without too much concern about terms and conditions. Another third, many of them favourable to the Malaysia project, ask, with varying degrees of emphasis, for conditions and safeguards varying in nature and extent: the warmth of support among this category would be markedly influenced by a firm expression of opinion by Governments that the detailed arrangements eventually agreed upon are in the best interests of the territories. The remaining third is divided between those who insist on independence before Malaysia is considered and those who would strongly prefer to see British rule continue for some years to come. If the conditions and reservations which they have put forward could be substantially met, the second category referred to above would generally support the proposals. Moreover once a firm decision was taken quite a number of the third category would be likely to abandon their opposition and decide to make the best of a doubtful job. There will remain a hard core, vocal and politically active, which will oppose Malaysia on any terms unless it is preceded by independence and self-government: this hard core might amount to nearly twenty per cent of the population of Sarawak and somewhat less in North Borneo."

It also concluded that Malaysia was an attractive and workable project and was in the best interests of North Borneo and Sarawak. In my view, their conclusions were an accurate report of the state of opinion in North Borneo at the time.

On August 1st 1962, the British Government announced that it and the Malayan Government had accepted the findings of the Commission and set a



The Cobbold Commission in Jesselton. **Left to right—Sir Anthony** Abell, K.C.M.G; Enchik Mohammed Ghazali bin Shafie; **The Rt. Hon. Lord Cobbold,** P.C.; Dato Wong Pow Nei, P.M.N.; Sir David Watherston, **K.B.E., C.M.G.**

date of August 31st 1963 for the **transfer of North Borneo** to the new Federation of Malaysia. There were **safeguards to be worked** out covering religious freedom, education, **representation in the Federal** Parliament, immigration and other matters. **These were to be worked** out by an Intergovernmental Committee under **the Chairmanship of Lord** Landsdown, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, **to include representation from** Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak.

I had, over the past months, **been preparing background papers** for the Chief Secretary and Governor on **matters relating to Malaysia,** but at this stage became more intimately involved **as I was appointed Secretary** to the North Borneo negotiating team which **was jointly led by the Chief Secretary,** Mr Noel Turner, a man of great **integrity** and experience **with an** insistence

on detail and clarity, and Donald Stephens, who had become the leading spokesman of the local politicians.

It was my task to prepare the material for our delegation and to set out, with advice from the Governor, Sir William Goode, who had already overseen the proceedings of independence in Singapore, the Chief Secretary and our leading politicians, the stance that North Borneo should take.

With the merging of political party views on Malaysia and the issue of the "Twenty Points", a document that had been prepared by the parties with considerable help from Sir William Goode, North Borneo's position was fairly straightforward. My main problem was to establish, in the midst of many unknowns, tactics and procedures which would best serve North Borneo. At this stage the Malayan attitude, perhaps more for negotiating purposes rather than from belief, was that the Borneo Territories should simply join the Federation as two new states under the existing Constitution, with minor procedural amendments. This was clearly unacceptable.

On September 3rd 1962, I sent a minute to the Chief Secretary setting out my views about how we should proceed in the negotiations. It is reproduced in Appendix 2.

Chapter 12

Malaysia—Negotiations

The "Twenty Points" as agreed by the main political parties, parties more in name than in substance, formed the basis of North Borneo's representations. They are set out in Appendix 1. Over the years they seem to have acquired the aura of a Charter of Independence, but they were what would now be called a political manifesto, a statement of aims and desires. They provided the only composite statement of views upon which the nascent political parties could agree. With hindsight, they give the impression of hasty preparation with contributors coming from several different viewpoints, and this is true, a consequence of the lack of political experience and structure at that time.

What they do illustrate, however, are the matters about which the people of North Borneo felt most deeply; no State religion, the use of English as the official language of Sabah, a new Federal constitution, not just the Malayan constitution with amendments, strong State control over immigration, and the retention of British officers until their posts could be filled by people from North Borneo.

There were several meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee (ICG). On many matters the division of powers between the Federal Government and the State Government of Sabah had been agreed in advance, but there was much argument about lengths of transitional periods, finance and taxation. The Malayan Government, anxious to demonstrate the progress they had made since they achieved independence, took members to see their impressive Rural Development schemes which Tun Razak was masterminding. The North Borneo members, aware of the extensive rural development in their own country, were not overly impressed and were wary of the control that the Federal Government exercised over what was a State subject. I remember an argument with Tun Razak when I said to him that the

Federal control exercised, necessary in the peninsular with small States bordering each other, would not be acceptable in North Borneo.

The pattern of negotiations did not go the way I had expected. There was no assembly of all the parties to the proposed Federation. Malaya and Singapore negotiated directly with each other and, because of defence agreements, with the British Government. The negotiations with the Borneo territories took place with only the British, Malayan, North Borneo and Sarawak representatives. Brunei negotiated separately. The fabric of the agreement for the new Federation was woven by the British and Malayan Governments from the strands of their various negotiations.

Since the statement by Harold Macmillan and the Tunku that Malaysia was a desirable aim, and the subsequent report of the Cobbold Commission, Malaysia was inevitable and the task of those of us representing North Borneo was to secure the best possible terms for the new State of Sabah. This, perforce, meant that the nuts and bolts were left to expatriate staff to sort out at official levels. Our appointed tyro politicians did not have the backing of an electorate and therefore had not the status to confront, or be intractable, in the way that Singapore could. Over the years I have often mused upon how the negotiations might have gone if they had taken place with all parties to Malaysia present, when our North Borneo members could have had the moral support of witnessing elected politicians at work. The only meeting I attended with Lee Kuan Yew and the Singapore delegation present was at the signing of the Malaysian Agreement on July 9th 1963.

There was little unanimity of views between North Borneo and Sarawak, which precluded any joint approach. Sarawak was much more amenable to Federal control than North Borneo, probably because it had fewer natural resources than North Borneo, an unhealthy communist presence, and was closer to the mainland and its influence. Its general attitude was that in matters of doubt, powers should be Federal with special advantages for Sarawak. The British Government remained pontifically aloof from negotiations, more interested, understandably, in Federal matters such as defence, finance and law. "The Independence of the Judiciary" was a phrase frequently used by them, and a phrase related to finance, "Quinquennial Grants", sticks in my mind.

The attitude of the Malayan Government was that, as far as possible, they should adhere to their existing Constitution.

In a frustrated and irreverent mood after one meeting I parodied the situation in a mock minute about cricket. It went something like this:

Item 66. Cricket.

The Malayan Government considered that this should be a Federal subject. Sarawak agreed but considered that they should be given the right to field 13 players. North Borneo considered that Cricket should be a State subject as the only reason that it was a Federal subject in the Peninsula was that some States were too small to contain a full-sized pitch.

The British Government said that it was concerned about the independence of the Umpiracy. It would, of course, continue with the quinquenial supply of cricket balls.

It was agreed that the matter should be referred to a sub-committee."

Looking back, I think this gives a fair impression of the character of the negotiations.

The Inter-Governmental Committee had five sub-committees to deal with subjects which required detailed examination. They were:

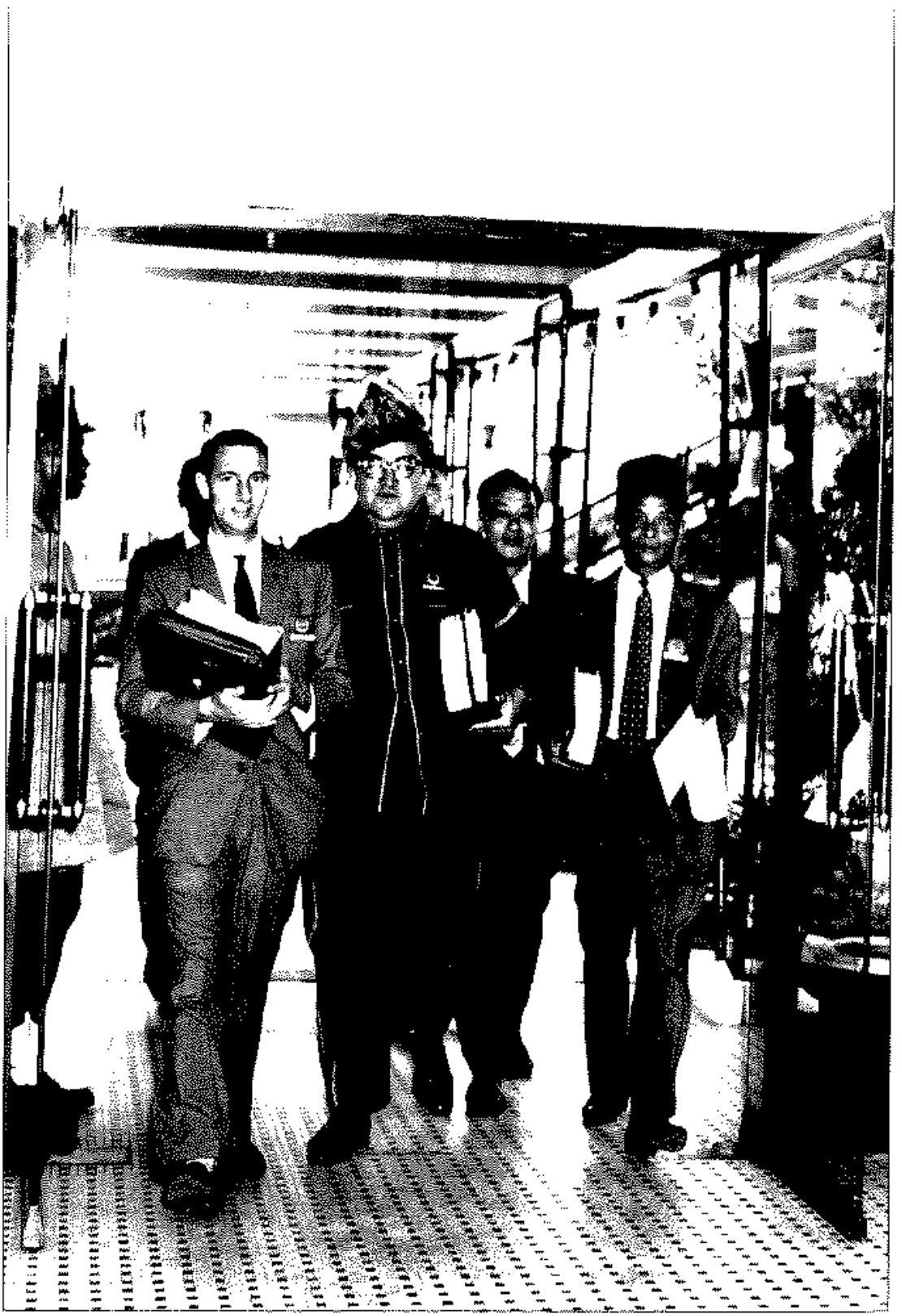
1. Constitutional sub-committee
2. Fiscal sub-committee
3. Public Services sub-committee
4. Legal and Judicial sub-committee
5. Departmental sub-committee

The threads were gradually drawn together in these committees so the plenary meetings were mainly concerned with the approval of their recommendations.

By 20th December 1962, the IGC had agreed on the terms of the draft report and no further meetings were held, matters of detail being delegated to a small representative sub-committee.

And there were many matters of detail to be settled. North Borneo was to change from a system where the Governor was the supreme authority administering the country through a coordinating Secretariat and professional Heads of Departments to a Ministerial system whereby authority would vest in Ministers, and Federal matters would be based in Kuala Lumpur.

Whilst the main preoccupation of the Colonial Government at this stage was the Malaysian Agreement, there was an anxious realisation that the political parties (there had been none a year earlier in 1961) were ill-organised and lacking funds. Government assisted them by granting timber concessions to provide the resources to organise and develop. The forests of



Donald Stephens and Datu Mustapha with author at the Malaysia negotiations in Kuala Lumpur in 1962. William Lim is in the background.

North Borneo provided a reservoir of wealth which after Independence, was sadly squandered.

It was also a fact that although local leaders were emerging and assuming responsibility and authority, not one of them had been elected. All were the nominees of Colonial Governors. It was decided to introduce basic elections at Local Government level as soon as possible. A Local Government Elections Bill was passed by the Legislative Council (which by now had an unofficial majority) in June 1962. In August 1962, it was announced by the British and Malayan Governments that Malaysia would come into being just a year later on August 31st 1963. It was not the happiest prospect and there were clearly going to be problems ahead on the political front.

The phrase "Power Vacuum" used a lot in the shifting post-war world was burned onto my mind during this period. On a regional scale, with the waning of British influence, Indonesia and the Philippines sought to get what they could. Inside North Borneo, the aims of the new political parties to get their hands on the reins of power created or magnified tensions which had previously been muted.

The first elections at Local Government level took place in December 1962, with the result that by the end of the year there were elected majorities in 14 out of the 18 Local Authorities. The Sabah Alliance, which was a grouping of all the main political parties, won 85% of the vote, a not unexpected outcome given that they were virtually the only choice. So, barely eight months before promised Independence Day, North Borneo had its first elected politicians, and that was at District Council level only—not an ideal foundation for a stable democracy, however good the intentions of those elected.

I spent the next months working with officials from Britain, Malaya and Sarawak, sorting out details which the constitutional experts embodied into the Malaysian Agreement. At this stage, though it is now often forgotten, Brunei was a party to Malaysia and the draft to which we finally agreed included references to its status in the proposed Federation. We waited for the summons to London.

It was intended that the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General and myself should accompany the North Borneo representatives who were Donald Stephens, Datu Mustapha, Khoo Siak Chiew and G.S. Sundang. The summons duly came and the Attorney General and myself were despatched to London with our delegation. The Chief Secretary (Mr Noel Turner) was to follow the next day. While we were in mid-air, too late to be recalled, the summons was cancelled. Embarrassed officials from the Colonial Office met

us at Heathrow Airport and took us to a small hotel off Oxford Street. The delay was due to the continuing wrangling between the UK, Malaya and Singapore about the details of their relationship in the new Federation.

We were instructed to be ready at any moment to attend a formal signing ceremony. "Being ready at any moment" was not as easy as it sounds. London had many diversions. Mobile telephones and electronic tagging were yet to be invented and we could not be expected to sit in a group for twenty-fours a day awaiting the summons. We did our best by sounding the Colonial Office each morning about the prospects and instituting a system of reporting among our members.

Datu Mustapha did not make our task any easier. He asked me to inspect his small single room. Demonstrating his increasing knowledge of English idiom and a growing taste for authority and luxury, he informed me that "Here there is not a room to swing a cat" and promptly took himself off at his own expense to grander accommodation at another hotel. The remainder of our delegation remained in our modest lodgings.

Our contacts at the Colonial Office kept us informed as far as they could and gave us an insight in to the way that the negotiations with Singapore were proceeding. The Secretary of State, Duncan Sandys, was a tough negotiator whose practice was to wear down the other parties by dragging on negotiations until sheer weariness resulted in acceptance of his views. I was told that the response of the Singapore delegation to this at one meeting was to ask for an adjournment to a separate room where they could have a discussion in private. They were discovered some hours later, fast asleep on the floor. Eventually, the British and Singapore Governments reached agreement. The only thing preventing comprehensive agreement on Malaysia was the continuing wrangle between the Tunku and Lee Kuan Yew on the exact and detailed terms for Singapore.

The Tunku was now in London and final agreement between him and Lee Kuan Yew was agreed in a note scribbled on the back of a hotel envelope on 7th July 1963.

In the evening of 8th July, the North Borneo representatives were summoned to appear at Marlborough House for the signing of the Malaysia Agreement at 11 pm. We assembled our team without too much difficulty and appeared in good time. The Attorney General (Ken Jones) and I were taken aback to discover that the Agreement we were to sign contained no reference to Brunei. The draft that we had been working on included the State of Brunei. Brunei had decided to remain as an independent British Protectorate

and we had not been informed. It was possible that the omission of references to Brunei in the Agreement had implications for the North Borneo so we hastily put together a form of words to protect North Borneo's position. It read as follows:

> *"This agreement has not been perused by the North Borneo Delegation and is signed on the understanding that nothing herein contained derogates from the position affecting North Borneo set forth in the form of agreement including Brunei".*

We presented it to Duncan Sandys, who signed it himself.

The delegates seated themselves around the table and the ceremony began. Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, made a fatherly address, congratulating all parties and wishing well to his departing children. The Tunku welcomed us aboard and Lee Kuan Yew made a light-hearted off-the-cuff speech describing the manner in which final agreement had been achieved. The documents were passed around the delegations for signature. The official pens provided were old fashioned wooden ones with scratchy broad brass nibs to be dipped into the weighty inkwells set before us. We were encouraged to take them away as mementos of the occasion. I assumed that they were surplus stock from the Victorian age, which like the Empire, the British were anxious to dispose of. When the scratching finally ceased, the time was something after midnight in the early hours of July 9th 1963.

We took the first possible air passages back to North Borneo. Ken Jones and I spent most of the journey going through the Agreement clause by clause to ensure that North Borneo was not affected by the withdrawal of Brunei. We decided that it was not and on the 15th July, cabled an anxious Colonial Office from Jesselton to say that our reservations had been withdrawn.

The Tunku's proposal was now enshrined in a Treaty. Malaysia was due to come into being on 31st August 1963.

Chapter 13

Signed and Sealed, but Hardly Settled

To parody that well known quotation about greatness, "Some are born Independent. Some achieve Independence, and some have Independence thrust upon them." Sabah certainly falls into the last category. There was no local demand for it. There was an aspiration which all local leaders knew would be met in the not too distant future when they felt ready for it.

Now that the Agreement had been signed, there followed a period of rapid and ragged re-adjustment. The Sabah Alliance was engaged in tortuous negotiations about distribution of offices in the new Ministries. The expatriates were anxious about their futures and the civil service in general was wondering how it would be to work with remote and unknown superiors in Kuala Lumpur.

On the international front there was still opposition. Indonesia and the Philippines would not accept Malaysia. Because Malaya had a defence agreement with the British they called it a neo-colonial plot, a convenient label for what was a desire to enlarge their territory and influence.

On the 3rd July, at the invitation of President Macapagal of the Philippines, the Tunku and Dr Sukarno, the President of Indonesia, met in Manila for a meeting described in diplomatic language as "Frank and Cordial". The outcome was a joint approach to U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, to ascertain the views of the people of the Borneo territories. This was agreed and a team from the United Nations

(Opposite). Sabah Cabinet 1964. Front row. Harris Salleh, Donald Stephens, Khoo Siak Chiew. Second row. Md. Yassin, Pang Tet Tshung, Sundang, Said Keruak and Richard Yap. Third row. T. Jayasuriya, S. Holley, W.K.H. Jones (Attorney General) Back row: M. Saville Ag Financial Secretary and T. Jones, Cabinet Clerk.

would be sent. The problem was that they would not be able to report before August 31st, the date agreed for the establishment of Malaysia.

This irked the British Government and the leaders in North Borneo, who by a unanimous vote in Legislative Council on August 8th, agreed that North Borneo would become independent on August 31st whether or not Malaysia had been formed by that date. And so it was. On 31st August 1963, Sabah was granted internal self-government with Sir William Goode remaining as the Queen's Representative until Malaysia came into being. Defence and External Affairs were still a British responsibility.

Meanwhile we had to cope with the United Nations. It fell to me and the Secretary for Local Government, John Macartney, to prepare papers for their Mission. Our memorandum was basically an update of the various stages of negotiations through which we had gone the Cobbold report, the Intergovernmental Committee, and by now the fact that Local Government elections had been held to provide an electoral college for the State Government.

The Mission to North Borneo was headed by Mr George Janacek, Head of External Relations Division of the United Nations Office of Public Information, a long and pompous title for a pleasant and approachable man. He arrived in Jesselton on August 19th, to be met at the airport by an organised demonstration in favour of Malaysia. On September 14th, U Thant announced that he was satisfied that the people of the Borneo Territories wanted Malaysia and wished them well for their future within it.

On the Jesselton *padang* on the morning of September 16th, in the presence of Tun Abdul Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaya the Proclamation of the Federation of Malaysia was read. Datu Mustapha bin Datu Harun OBE was sworn in as Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri (Head of State) and Mr Donald Stephens as Chief Minister.

Sir William Goode had departed on *HMS Lion* the previous evening. Datu Mustapha and Donald Stephens had stood sadly with many others on the wharf as the warship slowly sailed away to the fading sounds of the Royal Marine band and the rumble of the ship's engines.

It had been agreed that Sabah should carry on with its departmental functions, revenue collection and budgeted expenditure until the end of the year. After that, Federal responsibilities would be taken over by the Ministries in Kuala Lumpur. By and large things went quietly on as before—except for Defence. What had previously been a matter for the British Services and the North Borneo Armed Constabulary now became a sensitive

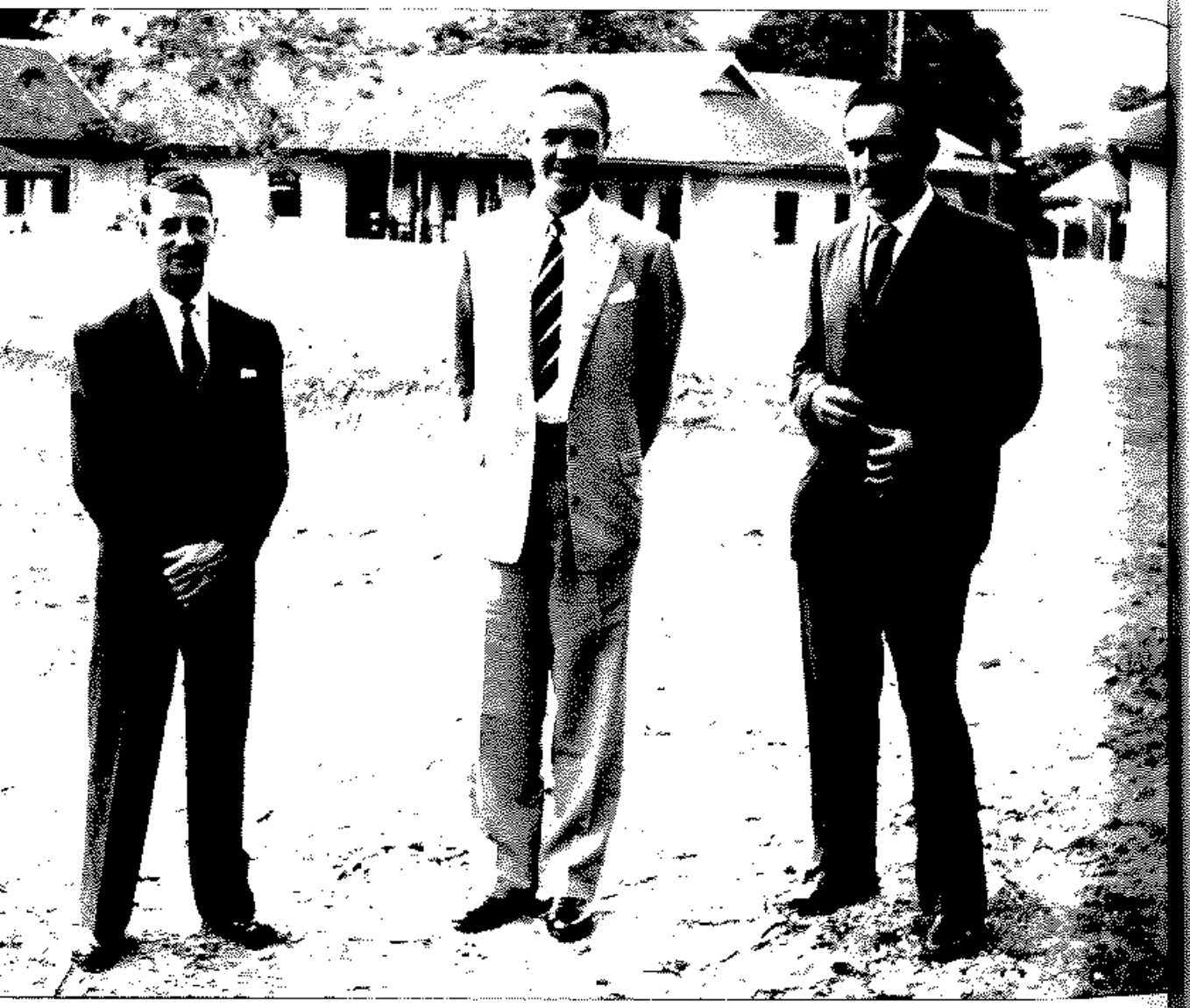
responsibility of the Federal Government. Despite the earlier "Frank and Friendly" discussions in Manila, Indonesia continued its incursions into Sarawak and Sabah. There were raids into the Interior and the Tawau Residencies. After an Indonesian raid on Kalabakan in the Tawau area on 29th December 1963, when several members of the Royal Malaysian Regiment were killed and wounded, the Tunku was understandably apprehensive about the effect that this would have on public opinion in the Malayan Peninsular and on the already strained relations with Indonesia. The raiders were eventually dealt with, with British and Gurkha troops supplementing Malaysian resources. This was a difficult period, full of uncertainty about Indonesian intentions and the use of the forces that could be brought together to oppose them.

Prior to Malaysia, the Governor, operating from Jesselton, could consult directly with his officers and the forces commanders. Now we were all learning the hard way about the difficulty of dealing with a mixture of forces from Malayan, Bornean and British sources, with decisions being made a thousand miles away by authorities which had limited knowledge of the area. There seemed to be a resentment in Kuala Lumpur that the Borneo States had brought them this trouble and that it was not being handled as well as they wished. This remained a problem for some time.

Another matter which gave many of us some uneasiness was "Information", which was now a Federal responsibility. Prior to Malaysia, Radio Sabah had broadcast news in a factual manner with little comment. There was the occasional government announcement and the relay of the BBC news. After Malaysia, there was an abrupt change to the use of broadcasting as an instrument of propagation of government policy and the denigration of its opponents. To those of us brought up with an independent BBC, this was uncomfortable.

Mr Noel Turner, who had been Chief Secretary before Malaysia, stayed on for several months and performed the duties of State Secretary until he retired. I was appointed State Secretary from 27th February 1964, working directly under Donald Stephens, the Chief Minister. The post of State Secretary carried with it responsibility for the Civil Service, the position of Permanent Secretary to the Chief Minister, and consequent on the Malaysia Agreement, an ex-officio seat in the State Cabinet with the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary.

It became apparent to me that there would be a rapid loss of expatriate staff in the Administrative service and that urgent measures must be taken to



The author, Sir William Goode and Ben Stephens outside the government offices in Keningau. Now the site of the Hotel Perkasa.

fill these posts with local officers. I had agreed with the Chief Minister to serve in the post for two years, after which I would retire and a local officer would take over.

I confess that I found my task extremely difficult and often confusing. Handling matters within the government service presented few problems, but there were certainly many when attempting to implement political decisions.

Papers for Cabinet were prepared by officials on the instructions of the Chief Minister in the traditional format. The problem arose in reaching decisions which could be implemented. Decisions were made, hedged by so

many provisos that their meaning was uncertain. Decisions reached in one meeting would be modified later when their implications were realised.

I had also taken up the office of State Secretary when the Sabah Alliance began to split. The main cause of this was that Datu Mustapha had finally realised that as Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri, he had only formal powers. He had believed that he would be able to act like a Governor. Direct power, however, lay with the Chief Minister. The split between them widened into personal bitterness. Having known both of them well for several years, I believe that this was inevitable.

I had known Datu Mustapha from my early days as Clerk of the Executive and Advisory Council. He was slight in build and vain about his appearance. Colonel Combe, with whom Datu Mustapha had served in the guerrilla war period against the Japanese, had a great regard for him. He had served as an office peon in the pre-war days of the Chartered Company and had risen to be a Native Chief. He had an innate dignity and presence—charisma is perhaps the word for it. He became the acknowledged head of the Muslim people on the north coast. He took little part in public discussion in Council meetings, preferring to operate behind the scenes.

Governor Sir Roland Turnbull, somewhat of a voluptuary himself, groomed him as a future leader. He was sent to Britain in the 1950s to acquire a greater knowledge of the world outside North Borneo. He and the Datin spent a week-end with my wife and myself in our small Cotswold cottage when I was home on leave. I met them at Moreton-in Marsh railway station. I thought they had missed the train but just as it was about to leave, they emerged from a first class carriage (a luxury I could not afford) and waved to me. Datu Mustapha, immaculately tailored, handed me his suitcase and we drove to our home. When in the house, the Datu spent most of his time writing postcards, a pile of which he handed me to post. The Datin helped in the kitchen, cheerfully taking part in the domestic chores. I showed them around the countryside and he was much impressed by the neatness of the fields and the regimented rows of vegetable crops. Most of all, however, he was impressed by my black and white television set and wanted to buy one to take back to Borneo. I dissuaded him for at that time there were no broadcasts in the Borneo area.

Datu Mustapha was always polite and correct, but I never felt close to him. He hid his real self. There was a certain remoteness about him. It was not easy to discover what his opinions really were. He was not averse to the pleasures of alcohol.

Donald Stephens was the complete opposite, with a bluff and hearty personality, emotional, fun-loving, with an overt zest for life. He and his wife Junie were a charming and entertaining couple. A sight that I shall never forget is that of a very portly Donald doing the Twist, streaming with perspiration and red in a face adorned by a beaming smile. He was articulate and a good writer with a mission to improve the lot of those he represented, but I felt that he was often over-awed with the powers and responsibilities, which because he was the acknowledged leader, had been so suddenly thrust upon him. He did not wish to offend others and lacked the ruthless streak that political leadership requires.

So the clash within the Alliance was one of both policies and personalities. Datu Mustapha, being unable to exercise power via the State Government – and power was his aim –made his overtures to the Federal Government. This was very divisive, for besides splitting the Alliance, it made relations between Sabah and the Federal authorities more difficult than they need have been. There were aspects of Federal and State policy where interests were not the same. One of the main reasons for the Tunku's proposals for Malaysia was that the native populations of the Borneo territories should augment the Malays as a counterweight to the Chinese population in Singapore and Malaya. I think that the Federal government was somewhat bewildered to find that many of the non-Islamic indigenous people in Sabah did not share the same views as the Peninsular Malays on this matter.

It is also true to say that expatriate officers including myself, having served North Borneo for many years, felt a strong loyalty to Sabah. We had helped to rebuild and develop it from the ruins of war. Our loyalty to Sabah was perceived in Kuala Lumpur as having an anti-Federal attitude. It was not anti-Federal, but a determination to ensure that State rights were upheld. Advice to the State Cabinet always had that in mind, but in the light of Datu Mustapha's machinations, expatriate officers, especially myself, were seen in Kuala Lumpur as resenting the loss of our previous powers. There was, it is true, some of this, but the most disruptive element at that time was the political struggle for power which was splitting the Sabah Alliance.

This came to a head in June 1964. Sabah had been obliged under Article 52 of the State Constitution to dissolve the "carry over" Legislative Council as it existed on Malaysia Day before June 1st 1964. This was done in April 1964, and provision was made to increase the number of elected members from 18 to 32. The elections were from existing District Councils to Electoral Colleges and by the Colleges to the Legislative Assembly. This was easily

manipulated and the seats were allocated in advance as follows: USNO 15, UPKO 12, and SANAP 5.

At the USNO meeting after the elections, it was proposed that USNO should have the Chief Minister's job which would have resulted in a nominee of Datu Mustapha holding the office. This was put to the Alliance National Council a few days later and agreement was impossible without splitting the Alliance.

Ever since Malaysia, there had been a running battle between the Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri (Datu Mustapha) and the Chief Minister (Donald Stephens) with Datu Mustapha demanding complete executive powers not withstanding the Constitution. His letters to the Chief Minister were clearly drafted by professionals in constitutional affairs. The split in the Alliance was reported in the press on June 6th. Relations between the two were very strained and they were only brought together by pleading at an official level. They agreed to go to Kuala Lumpur to try to settle the matter.

There was great public concern about the proposed removal of Donald Stephens as Chief Minister. He had already left for the discussions in Kuala Lumpur and I was left in charge of affairs. I felt strongly that the Federal Government, already heavily involved in combating Indonesian confrontation in Sabah and Sarawak, should be aware of the possible consequences of Donald Stephen's removal and sent via the Special Branch the following telegram to the Tunku.

1. "UNKO/USNO split has been reported in Press today. Discussions have taken place between the Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri and Chief Minister but no definite agreement has been reached.

My assessment of the removal of Donald Stephens at this stage is:

(1) Sabah Alliance will be completely split;

(2) There will be serious loss of face in UNKO and this will lead to disorder on racial and religious lines in many areas in West Coast and Interior. This would pose serious internal security problem and it should be remembered that Police Force is largely Kadazan;

(3) UNKO opposition to USNO could turn to opposition to Malaysia and create a situation easily exploitable by Indonesia.

2. Break up of Alliance is inevitable at some future stage but from presentational point of view, this would best happen after first direct elections."

On the 9th June Donald Stephens wrote a letter to me from the Federal Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. I still have it. It reads:

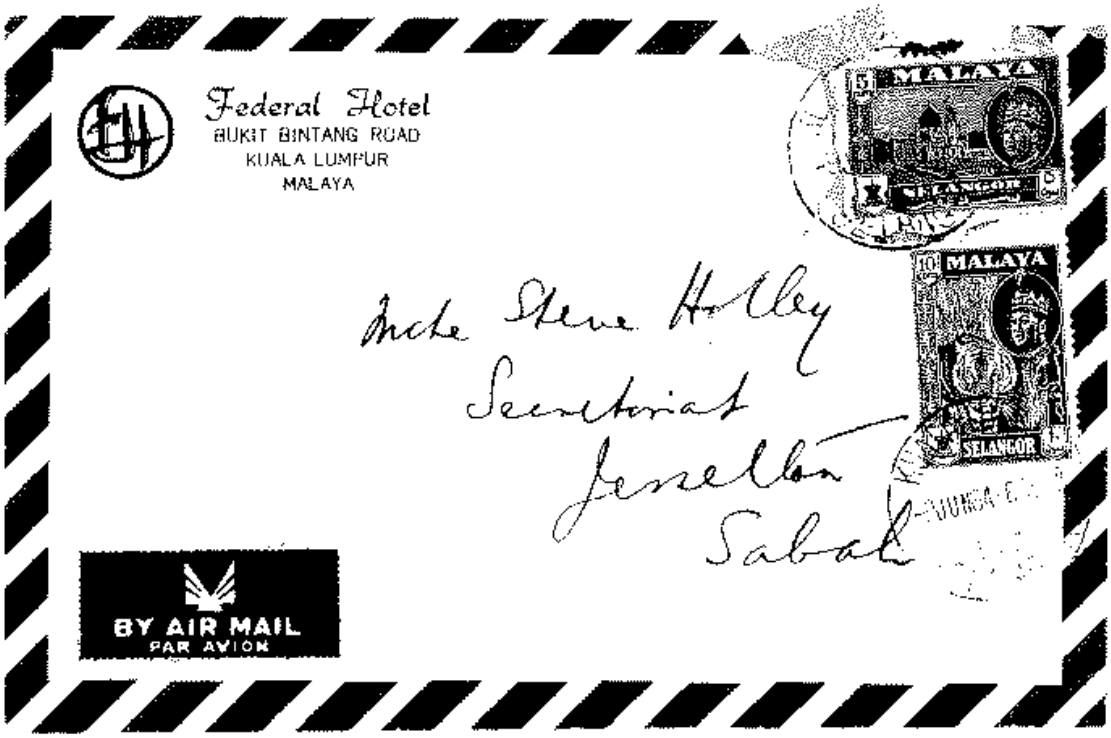
"Dear Steve. Wheels within wheels within wheels! The Y refused to see us in Singapore and although he invited T.J. to lunch when T. turned up the Y was in Johore!

Atmosphere in K.L. still very friendly and signs are that they want everything to be settled amicably. We meet the Tunku this evening. Speaking to Tunku's political secretary last night I got the impression that the Tunku will be impartial and will do all he can to stop the Alliance breaking up. Let us hope that he succeeds.

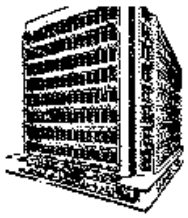
The whole place is talking about "the split". Hope all is well in the office.

Donald"

But when Donald returned the story was very different. The discussions in Kuala Lumpur had been acrimonious. He was tearful when he met me in



(Above & opposite) The Chief Minister's letter to the author from Kuala Lumpur on 9th June 1964. He has mistakenly dated the letter 9.8.64 but the envelope is correctly postmarked as 9th June.



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Federal Hotel
吉隆坡・馬來亞
KUALA LUMPUR
MALAYA

35 BUKIT BINTANG ROAD – TEL 88991 (10 LINES) FEDEROTEL

9. 8. 64

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Hope all is well in the office. Donald.

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the office and gave me a general outline of what had been agreed. I had heard from outside sources about the proposal to replace me as State Secretary and remove the three ex-officio members (State Secretary, Attorney General and Financial Secretary) from the State Cabinet and Legislative Assembly. This, in essence, meant the removal of the remaining three expatriate members. I asked him if this was so. He replied that he had signed the agreement under protest and had intended to tell me after the Alliance meeting when he hoped to get things changed.

I told him that an expatriate's job was bad ground on which to break an agreement and the best he could salvage out of it would be to insist that my replacement should be from Sabah and not from Malaya. He then asked me, and the request was made by other Ministers also, to stand on my rights under the provisions of the Compensation Scheme in the Malaysia Agreement and refuse to go.

The position was that they could not appoint another expatriate to the post after September and they were doubtful if a local officer could be found with enough experience. They did not want a Malayan to fill the post. I named a local officer who, I thought, with support could hold the job. I told the Chief Minister that I could not stand on my constitutional rights in the face of an agreement reached by the leaders of the political parties in the Alliance and witnessed by the Prime Minister. To do so would place myself and all expatriates in the service in an intolerable position.

He later gave me a copy of the agreement reached in Kuala Lumpur which read as follows:—

AGREEMENT

We the leaders of USNO, UNKO, PASOK and SANAP have agreed as follows:

1. A Malaysian should be appointed as the State Secretary of Sabah on or before 1st September 1964.

2. The Sabah Alliance constitution should be strictly adhered to.

3. The Sabah State Constitution should be amended to exclude all ex-officio members from the Legislative Assembly and from the Cabinet.

4. The composition of the State Cabinet and the respective responsibilities of the Ministers should be as provided in the schedule hereto.

5. All Ministers including the Chief Minister when making public statements in their official capacity should do so for and on behalf of the Sabah Alliance and not as individuals.

6. All policy matters involving major issues connected with rights and interests pertaining to land including alienation of land, mining rights, lumbering rights etc, should have the prior approval of the Cabinet.

7. No Minister shall make any public statement on major policy issues unless such statement has been cleared with the Cabinet, and no major policy on national matters which does not conform with Federal policy should be made.

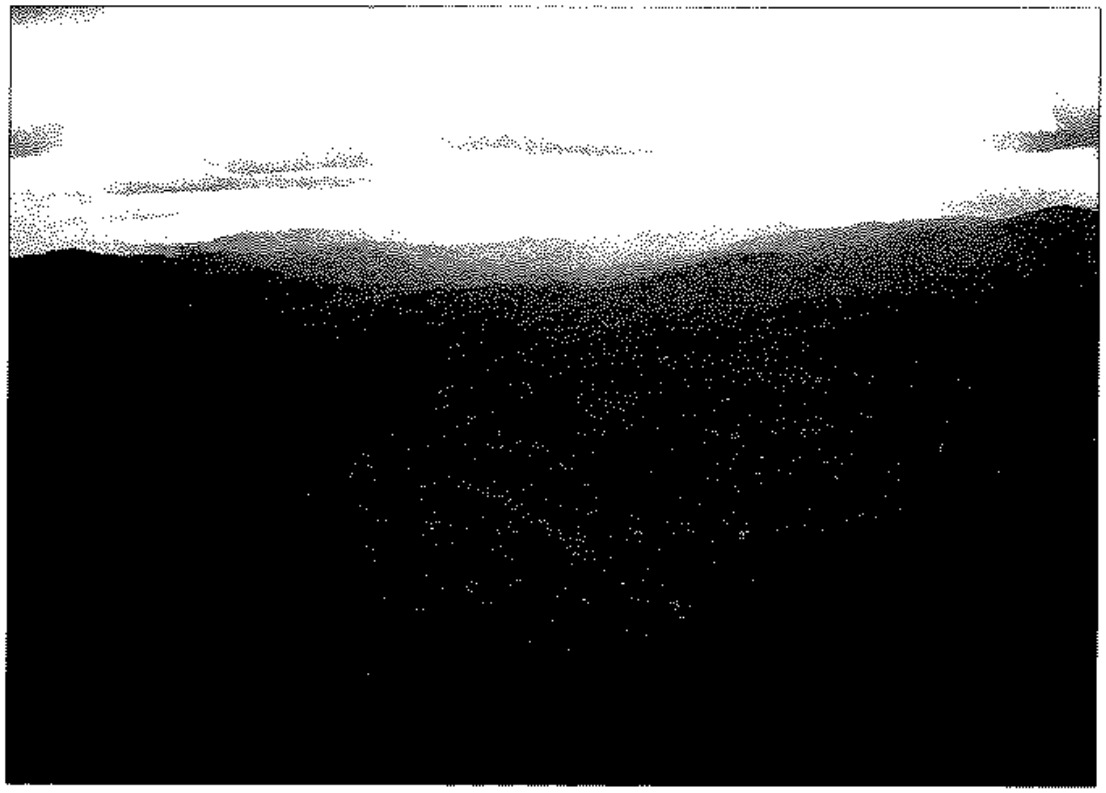
8. If the Chief Minister does not agree with the decision of a Minister regarding a matter within the Minister's portfolio, the Minister may refer the matter to the Cabinet for a final decision.

9. To preserve Party and racial harmony, USNO and UNKO should not take Chinese as members, SANAP should not take natives as members, and when UNKO and PASOK merge, it shall not take Chinese as members. This is without prejudice to existing members.

Donald also told me that he had been offered the Ambassadorship in Tokyo and a fund of $500,000 if he stood down. He did not accept the offer.

I wrote a note to Lord Head, the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, informing him of the position. I said that it was my view that Donald Stephens was by far the most popular leader (certainly the most capable) in Sabah, but had been manoeuvred into a position in the Alliance in which he was virtually powerless; the cleanest and safest thing for Sabah was for direct elections as soon as possible with a Government and an Opposition.

As it was important that expatriate staff remained for a few more years until local officers could take over, I told senior expatriate officers that I did not think that there was a move to get rid of them, but that my removal was because it was felt that an expatriate should not be directly advising the Chief Minister.



Rain forest as it was on the Crocker Range, 1960.

I had already arranged to go on a short leave on July 18th and would now make this my leave prior to retirement. I was sad to go but glad that I had, during my period of office, managed to draw up a scheme for the Chief Minister for the filling of all but a few of the administrative posts in the State by local officers within the next two years. I also remembered with feelings of satisfaction that we had negotiated for Sabah a position in Malaysia that met the most important of the "Twenty Points". Sabah had freedom of religion, the use of English in the State, strong powers to control immigration and the resources of the forests, land and minerals to sustain its revenues.

Almost 40 years later, I can still remember looking out of the aircraft as it climbed from the airport with the beach at Tanjung Aru, the coconut palms in the *kampungs*, the mountains of the Crocker Range in the background, and Sulug, Manukan and Mamutik islands lazing in a sky-blue sea. I thought it would be my last glimpse of Borneo. Fortunately, it was not.

Chapter 14

Looking Back

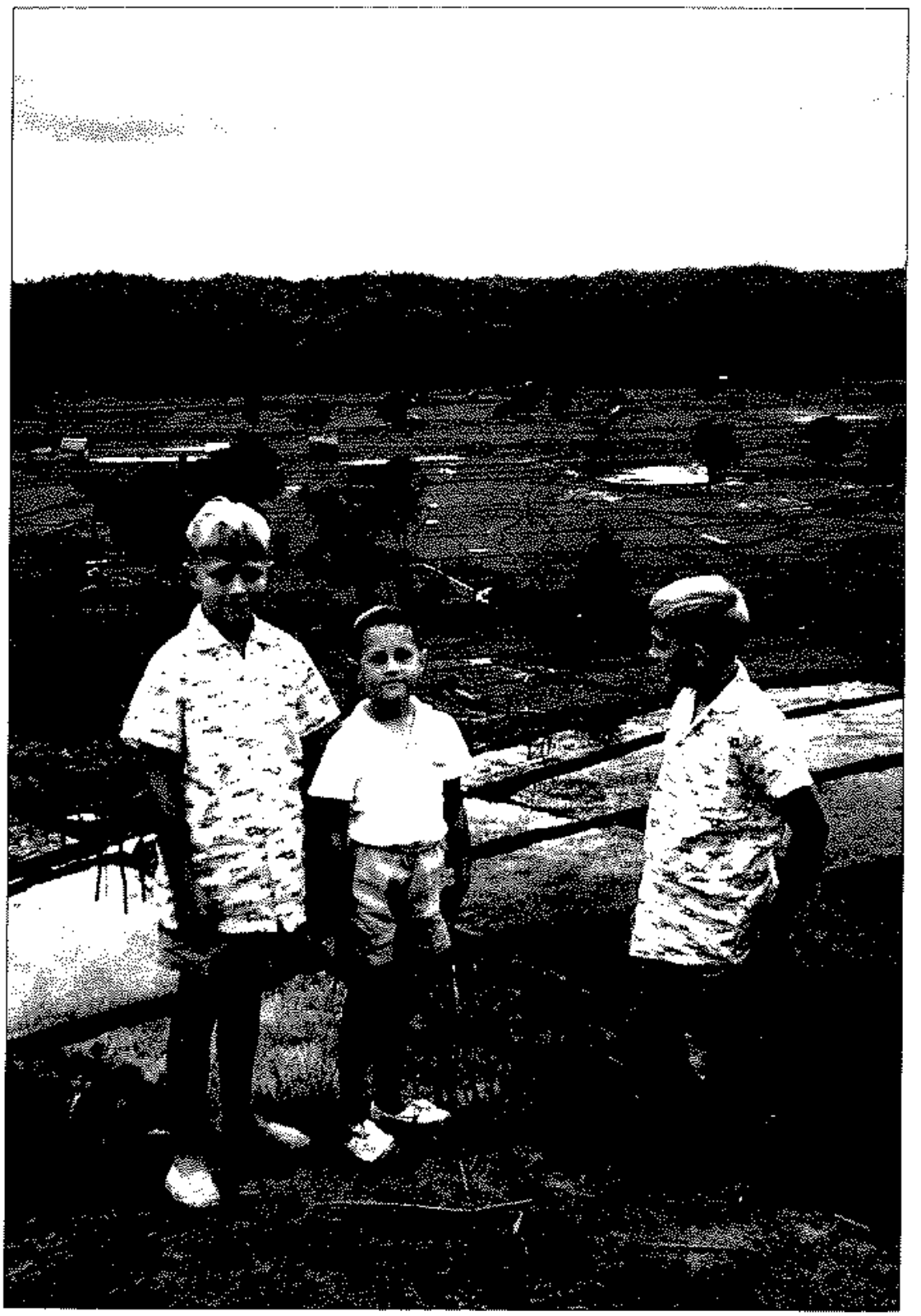
Forty years later I ask myself "Was Malaysia a good thing for Sabah". And my answer is an unequivocal "Yes". Nothing is ever ideal in politics or diplomacy. It would have been advantageous to Sabah if the proposal had come five years later when there would have been a core of experienced politicians and a flow of trained local officers. On the other side of the equation, one must consider what the position would have been if the Tunku, encouraged by the UK government, had not made his proposal in 1961.

The intention of Britain to reduce its commitments in the East was well known. Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo would have been prime targets for an embrace that would have clutched them firmly to the Indonesian bosom, and they would have been dependent on continuing British military support for many years. As it was, British forces were involved heavily until 1966 in bitter border battles, several years after Malaysia became independent.

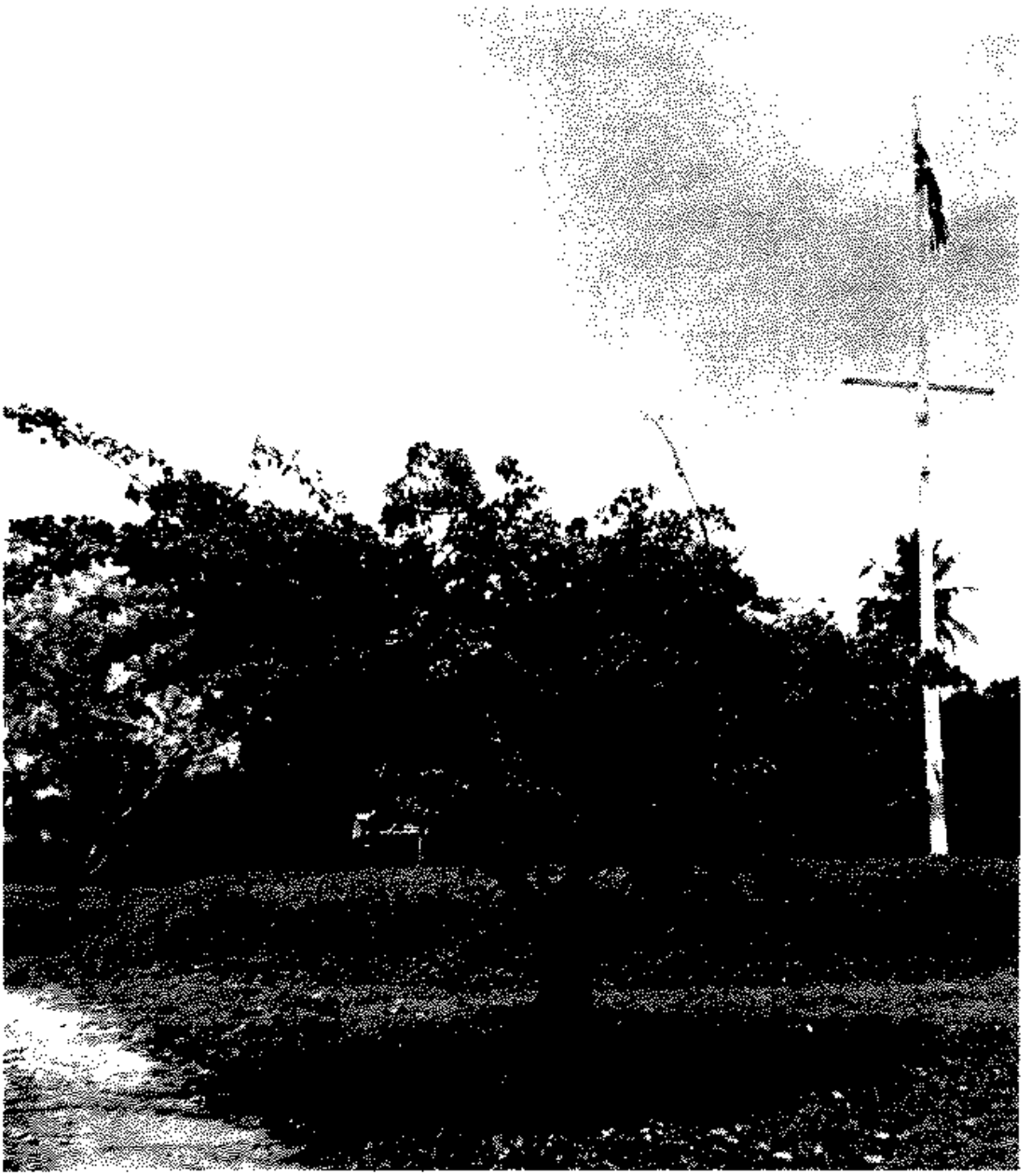
It is probable that it would only have been possible to grant the Borneo territories limited areas of self-government as long as Defence and Foreign Affairs were the responsibility of Britain, and Indonesia would have had much more international backing if its confrontation had been directed against a colonial power. The Borneo territories did not have the resources to survive as independent states and the merging with Malaya and Singapore gave them the opportunity of joining others which had shared a British colonial system of administration.

Sabah had a bumpy ride in the early years of independence, and no doubt there will more bumps to come. Much has changed in the 40 years since I left a country which was a second home to me. My children were born there. My friends were there and I looked at the world from a Borneo point of view.

It has been a great pleasure to visit Sabah again and to see the tremendous development that has taken place. The bomb-shattered Jesselton



Keningau plain after irrigation. Author's sons in foreground.



The bougainvillaea planted by the author outside the old District Office in 1950. It still flourished in 2000 outside the Perkasa Hotel.

which I first saw in 1946 has been transformed into the flourishing city of Kota Kinabalu. On the beach at Tanjung Aru, where I once lived in a makeshift shack lit only by a hurricane lamp, with water delivered daily from 40-gallon drums on a PWD truck, there now stands a luxury hotel with facilities of an international standard, and a cheerful service unsurpassed anywhere.

There are so many people who have extended hospitality during my return visits that it would be wrong to try to name them all, as I am bound to have forgotten a few, but it would be an act of ingratitude to omit my thanks to Datuk Harris, one of my District Officers when I was Resident Interior, who later became Chief Minister; Tan Sri Ben Stephens, another of my District Officers who later ran the Sabah Foundation and became President of the Malaysian Senate. I also have special memories of the Koroh family. OKK Koroh was Native Chief Keningau when I was the District Officer in 1950. He lived in a timber and *attap* house in the *kampung* and got his supply of water from a nearby stream. His son Suffian became Minister of Agriculture and lives in an elegant home in Kota Kinabalu, where he grows the finest durians in South East Asia. I can personally vouch for this. I now exchange letters with his son Razali who works for an international company in Kota Kinabalu—three generations of friendship.

Sabah is now settling into the Federal system. Its citizens have held and continue to hold senior posts in the Federal Government. Soon, I hope, one of them will be Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaysia. Forty years after its establishment, it is surely time that someone from a Borneo State became the holder of that office.

APPENDIX 1

The "Twenty Points"

1. RELIGION.

While there was no objection to Islam being the national religion of Malaysia there should be no State religion in North Borneo, and the provision relating to Islam in the present constitution of Malaya should not apply to North Borneo

2. LANGUAGE.

(a) Malay should be the national language of the Federation;
(b) English should continue to be used for a period of ten years after Malaysia day;
(c) English should be the official language of North Borneo, for all purposes State or Federal, without limitation of time.

3. CONSTITUTION.

While accepting that the present Constitution of Malaya should form the basis of the Constitution of Malaysia the Constitution of Malaysia should be a completely new document drafted and agreed in the light of a free association of States and should not be a series of amendments to a Constitution drafted and agreed by different States in totally different circumstances. A new Constitution for North Borneo was, of course, essential.

4. HEAD OF THE FEDERATION.

The Head of State of North Borneo should not be eligible for election as Head of the Federation.

5. NAME OF FEDERATION.

"Malaysia" but not" Melayu Raya."

6. IMMIGRATION.

Control over immigration into any part of Malaysia from outside should rest with the Central Government but entry into North Borneo should also require the approval of the State Government. The Federal Government should not be able to veto the entry of persons into North Borneo for State Government purposes except on strictly security grounds. North Borneo should have unfettered control over the movement of persons, other than in Federal Government employ, from other parts of Malaysia into North Borneo.

7. RIGHT OF SECESSION.

There should be no right to secede from the Federation.

8. BORNEANISATION of the public services should proceed as quickly as possible.

9. BRITISH OFFICERS:

Every effort should be made to encourage British Officers to remain in the public services until their places can be taken by suitably qualified people from North Borneo.

10. CITIZENSHIP

The recommendations in paragraph 148(k) of the Report of the Cobbold Commission should govern the citizenship rights in the Federation of North Borneo persons subject to the following amendments:

(a) Subparagraph (1) should not contain the proviso as to five years residence:

(Author's note) Paragraph 148 (k) sub para (1) recommended, among other things, that all persons born in Sarawak or North Borneo should become citizens of Malaysia, but recommended that persons who had severed connexions with the Borneo territories should be deemed to be permanently resident in North Borneo, and therefore eligible for citizenship, only if they had residence in North Borneo for a period of five years immediately before Malaysia. North Borneo was not happy about this as it was ambiguous about the status of many North Borneans studying or working overseas.

(b) in order to tie up with our law, subparagraph (II) (a) should read "seven out of ten years" instead of "eight out of twelve years".

(Author's note) A tidying up relating to period of residence before becoming eligible for citizenship.

(c) subparagraph (iii) should not contain any restriction tied to the citizenship of parents—a person born in North Borneo after Malaysia must be a Federal citizen.

11. TARIFFS AND FINANCE.

North Borneo should have control of its own finance, development funds and tariffs.

12. SPECIAL POSITION OF INDIGENOUS RACES.

In principle, the indigenous races of North Borneo should enjoy special rights analogous to those enjoyed by Malays in Malaya, but the present Malaya formula in this regard is not necessarily applicable in North Borneo.

13. STATE GOVERNMENT.

(a) The Chief Minister should be elected by unofficial members of Legislative Council;

(b) There should be a proper Ministerial system in North Borneo.

14. TRANSITIONAL PERIOD.

This should be seven years and during such period legislative power must be left with the State of North Borneo by the Constitution and not be merely delegated to the State Government by the Federal Government.

15. EDUCATION.

The existing educational system of North Borneo should be maintained and for this reason it should be under State control.

16. CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS.

No amendment, modification or withdrawal of any special safeguards granted to North Borneo should be made by the Central Government without the positive concurrence of the Government of the State of North Borneo.

The power of amending the Constitution of the State of North Borneo should belong exclusively to the people in the State.

17. REPRESENTATION IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT.

This should take account not only of the population of North Borneo but also of its size and potentialities and in any case should not be less than that of Singapore.

18. NAME OF HEAD OF STATE.

Yang Di-Pertuan Negeri.

19. NAME OF STATE.

Sabah.

20. LANDS, FORESTS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETC.;

The provisions in the Constitution of the Federation in respect of the powers of the National Land Council should not apply in North Borneo.

Likewise the National Council for Local Government should not apply to North Borneo.

APPENDIX 2

Minute to Chief Secretary about Negotiating Tactics

(Mr Hall was the Colonial Office co-ordinator, Mr John Ballard was the assistant attorney General, North Borneo, with whom I worked closely, and Mr Shaw the Secretary of the Sarawak delegation.)

To Chief Secretary. 3rd September 1962

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
SUBMISSIONS TO SUB-COMMITTEES

1. Tactics need to be thought out for two reasons, first, to get the operation started, and second, to enable North Borneo and Sarawak to gain and hold the initiative.

2. On the first point the difficulty is in selecting a point to start. Mr Hall has asked member Governments to submit papers. I gather Malaya do not wish to do so, and this suits us, but they have got to be submitted in a planned manner so that further work can flow from agreement reached. It is no use submitting papers on departmental organisation for example if the constitutional position of the function of that department is in doubt. Similarly constitutional and financial matters are so related that it will be necessary either to agree the constitutional point first and then relate the financial position to that decision, or in some cases perhaps to consider the constitutional and financial position together in a joint Sub-committee.

3. It would probably be of advantage also to establish early, on some point on which North Borneo and Sarawak politicians have taken a firm stand, the precedent of amending the present Malayan Constitution.

4. I have discussed the method of approach with Mr Hall and Mr Ballard and I consider that our first submission should be to the Constitutional Sub-Committee on the division of Federal and State functions. From this will flow: —

(1) some matters on which agreement is reached. These can be passed to the Public Services, Departmental Organisation, and Financial Sub-Committees for action or information;
(2) some matters which will need to be passed to the plenary I. G. C. to be resolved, or via a joint Constitutional/ Financial Sub Committee;
(3) some matters on which the Borneo territories will wish to submit further papers, (e. g. Education)

5. On the second point, i.e. that of holding the initiative, I consider that wherever possible we should try to put up joint papers with Sarawak, or if this proves too difficult in terms of consultation and time, should aim (subject to different conditions in the territories) at a similar approach in papers. But in any case Sarawak and North Borneo should work in concert on the general method of operation, agreeing the line to be taken on the first paper, and subsequently deciding after each meeting what the next step should be... I discussed this matter in general terms with Mr Shaw when he was here.

6. One matter of some difficulty in the preparation of papers is finding the starting point. There are several possible ones:—

(1) Wide open
(2) Cobbold
(3) London communiqute
(4) The twenty points
(5) Decisions of statutory bodies, e. g. Executive, Legislative Council, Board of Education

7. My view is that we (the officials) should decide each one on its merits referring to Executive Council if necessary.

8. On the form of papers, subject to approval, I propose where applicable to adopt the following format:

Minute to Chief Secretary

(1) Argument leading to:—
   (a) Arrangements for and length of transitional period:
   (b) Final aim, in the general form of an Ex. Co. paper requesting approval of the proposals made.

9. Although the legal position will have to be carefully checked and implications noted my aim will be, subject to approval, to keep decisions to simple statements of what is administratively required, and leave the lawyers to sort this out in terms of constitutional amendment, agreements, etc. afterwards rather than obfuscate issues with legal embroidery. It may of course be necessary on occasions to break this rule in order to obtain exact definition of what has been agreed, and other delegations can affect the aim also. But if we prepare the papers we have the initiative.

10. On matters which are agreed as Federal I intend to aim at the maximum possible delegation of powers and functions to local or regional heads.

11. As to my own duties and terms of reference, I submit the following for approval:—

(1) to acquaint myself, as far as possible, with the current situation as regards Malaysia in Sarawak, Singapore, Malaya and Brunei.
(2) In particular to study current trends in North Borneo.
(3) To liase with official members of Executive Council when directed with a view to obtaining an agreed approach to a subject.
(4) To prepare, co-ordinate or assist in the preparation of submissions to the Sub-Committees of the I. G. C. or to the plenary committee.
(5) To liase on a d/o basis with Mr Shaw in Sarawak on matters of mutual interest.
(6) To keep Government officers and the public informed as far as possible of developments.
(7) To co-ordinate action with the Secretariat and Heads of Departments on matters arising from decisions of the I. G. C.

12. I attach a draft first paper for submission to the Constitutional Sub-Committee. I will get on, as soon as I can, with other papers which can be considered separately. E. g. Borneanisation.

W. S. Holley
Underseeretary Malaysia.

The signatories of the Malaysia Agreement in London on the ninth of July 1963

ARTICLE XI

This Agreement shall be signed in the English and Malay languages except that the Annexes shall be in the English language only. In case of doubt the English text of the Agreement shall prevail.

In witness whereof the undersigned, being duly authorised thereto, have signed this Agreement.

Done at London this Ninth day of July, 1963, in five copies of which one shall be deposited with each of the Parties.

For the United Kingdom :

HAROLD MACMILLAN
DUNCAN SANDYS
LANSDOWNE

For the Federation of Malaya :

T. A. RAHMAN
ABDUL RAZAK
TAN SIEW SIN
V. T. SAMBANTHAN
ONG YOKE LIN
S. A. LIM

For North Borneo :

DATU MUSTAPHA BIN DATU HARUN
D. A. STEPHENS
W. K. H. JONES
KHOO SIAK CHIEW
W. S. HOLLEY
G. S. SUNDANG

For Sarawak :

P. E. H. PIKE
T. JUGAH
ABANG HAJI MUSTAPHA
LING BENG SIEW
ABANG HAJI OPENG

For Singapore :

LEE KUAN YEW
GOH KENG SWEE

Glossary

Adat	custom, inherited law
Attap	woven leaf roofing
Billean	a hard wood, ironwood
Bingkasan	a spring animal trap
Bongan	a waterproof carrier made from bark and carried on the back
Chelaka	scoundrel
Durian	a highly flavoured and odorous fruit, an acquired taste
Jarok	another acquired taste, a preserve made from fermented rice and flesh
Kedai	shop
Kejang	muntjac deer
Keladi	a yam
Kerbau	water buffalo
Kopi	a sweet milky coffee, usually served with the cup awash in the saucer
Langsaran	a sprung dancing floor used by Muruts
OK	Orang Kaya, literally a rich man, used as a title for Native Chiefs
OKK	Orang Kaya Kaya, a senior Chief
OT	Orang Tua, literally, old man; a village headman
Padang	an open grass field, a public space
Penghulu	an Iban chief
Rumah	house
Rentis	a cleared cutting or trail
Stengah	a glass of whisky, from *tengah*, a half
Tajau	a large jar
Taukeh	shopkeeper
Ulu	upstream, headwaters, downstream is *hilir*
Wayang kulit	shadow theatre, *kulit* means skin or leather

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to James Sarda and Danny Wong for editing and verifying my narrative. James Sarda is the Chief Editor of the Sabah Daily Express. He was winner of Malaysia's 1999 Journalism Award (Print Media for News/Features), Malaysia's top Environmental Journalist in 1996 (ICI-CCM Print Media) and Sabah's top Environmental Journalist in 1977. In addition he was also the recipient of a dozen Gold and Silver journalism awards in Sabah State. In March 1995 he and fellow journalist Clifford Santa Maria unearthed the whereabouts of the rogue trader Nick Leeson of Baring's in Singapore In 2002 he was awarded the British government Chevening scholarship to complete his Masters in Journalism at Cardiff University.

Danny Wong is Associate Professor at the Department of History at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. He is the author of "Transformation of an Immigrant Society" (London Asean Academic Press) and is currently working on a book about Sabah during World War Two.

Bendera ini mengandungi tiga jalur melintang yang sama lebar berwarna merah, putih dan biru dengan bulan bintang pecah empat belas berwarna kuning terletak di tengah bendera. Jalur-jalur merah, putih, biru dan bulan bintang berwarna kuning yang melambangkan warna Bendera Malaysia membawa makna Pulau Labuan adalah menjadi Wilayah Persekutuan di dalam Persekutuan Malaysia. Bulan Bintang bermakna Agama Islam sebagai agama rasmi dan bintang pecah empat belas menggambarkan negeri-negeri dan Kerajaan Persekutuan bersatu dalam Persekutuan Malaysia.

Merah : Melambangkan keberanian bermakna Pulau Labuan adalah menjadi Wilayah Persekutuan di dalam Persekutuan Malaysia.

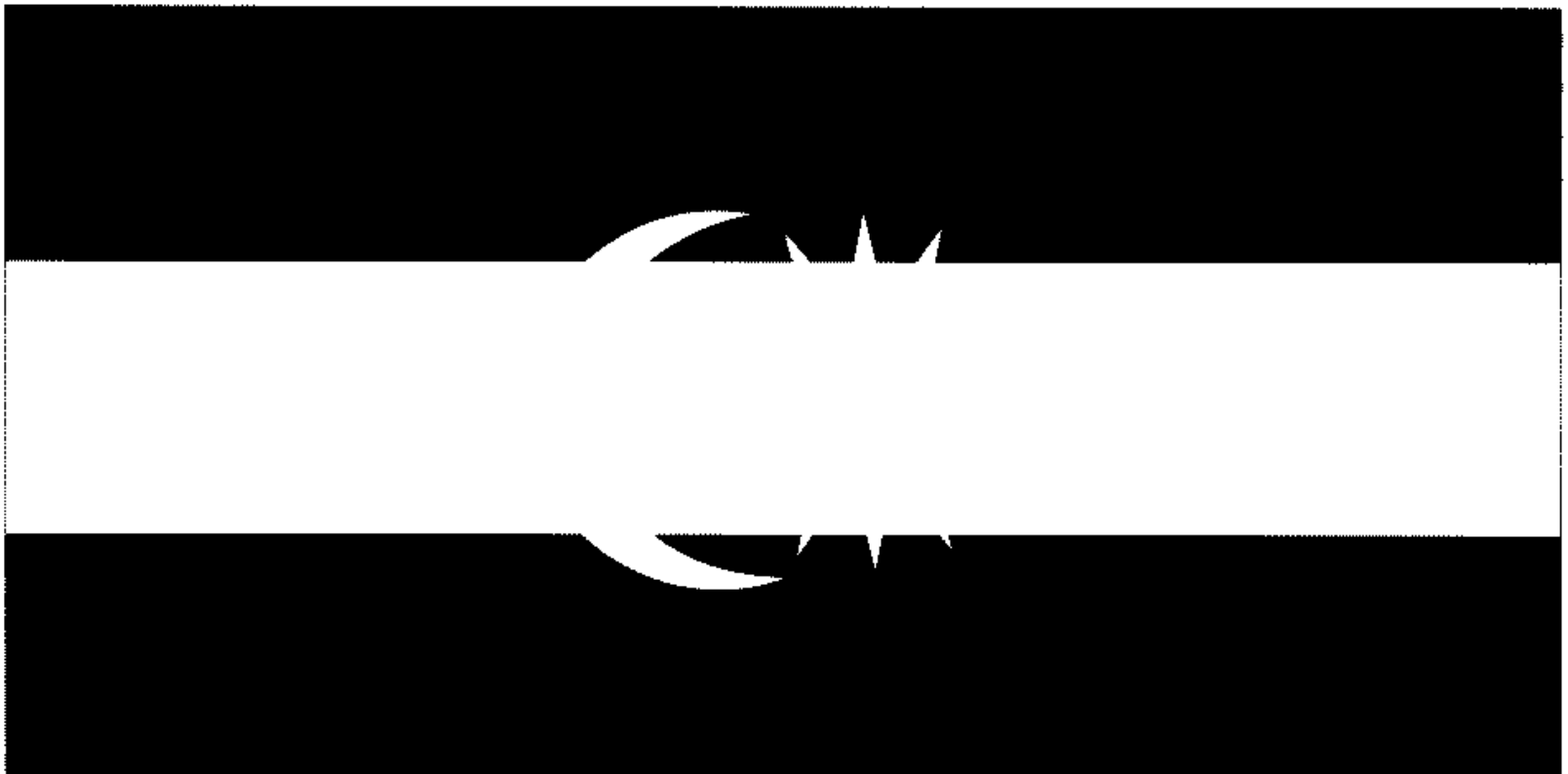
Putih : Melambangkan kesucian, keikhlasan dan kesungguhan dalam mempertingkatkan ketahanan rakyat yang beradab, berkebudayaan dan berkeperibadian Malaysia.

Biru : Melambangkan perpaduan rakyat berbilang kaum, hidup bersatu, aman makmur hormati serta berusaha untuk memajukan pembangunan ekonomi yang berasaskan sains dan teknologi.

Kuning : Melambangkan kedaulatan Raja Berperlembagaan serta mendokong dan menghormati lunas-lunas perlembagaan dan falsafah Rukun Negara.

Bulan Bintang : Bulan bintang berwarna kuning yang menjadi lambang kelslaman dan Kedaulatan Raja Berperlembagaan yang terletak di tengah-tengah dan mencakupi ketiga-tiga jalur (merah, putih, biru) menampakkan kestabilan dan kekuatan di dalam menyatukan lambang-lambang keberanian, kesucian dan perpaduan.

BENDERA WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN LABUAN



*B*endera baru bagi Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya adalah berasaskan dua (2) warna utama, iaitu biru dan kuning.

Warna biru melambangkan keharmonian dan perpaduan rakyat Malaysia yang berbilang bangsa.

Manakala warna kuning bendera adalah warna Diraja bagi Duli-Duli Yang Maha Mulia Raja-Raja Melayu.

Logo Persekutuan melambangkan Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya menjadi tonggak pentadbiran negara yang baru dengan kekuatan dan semangat yang utuh dalam mengharungi era globalisasi dan matlamat menjadikan Malaysia sebuah negara maju.

* **Nota** - *Logo Persekutuan perlu dibuat di kedua-dua belah bendera.*

BENDERA WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN PUTRAJAYA