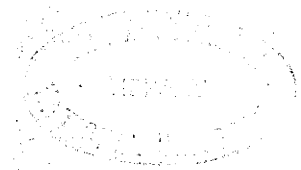


**BANGSA MELAYU : CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNITY
AMONG THE MALAYS, 1945 - 1950**

By

Ariffin bin S.M. Omar



A thesis submitted for the degree of

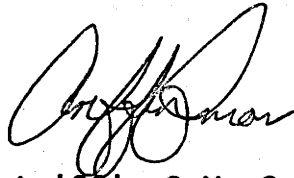
Doctor of Philosophy

at the Australian National University

July 1989

Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ariffin S.M. Omar', written in a cursive style.

Ariffin S.M. Omar
July 1989

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research on Malay society has more often than not represented a broad and sweeping view of the changes in the political and social values within Malay society. Little attention has been paid to what Malays themselves wrote and said during recent major upheavals. As such, there is a serious gap in understanding the Malay community as it reacted to crises confronting them.

I am convinced that it is important to examine a relatively narrow period in detail in order to understand the fundamental changes that Malay society experienced at that vital point in time and which have significant bearing on the subsequent course of Malay political and social development. The two important episodes in Malay history that I chose to study are the Malayan Union crisis in Malaya and the political upheavals experienced by the Malays in the East Coast of Sumatra immediately after the war.

One feature of this research is the relatively detailed consideration of a restricted *corpus* of sources and a close reading of the texts. In recent years the encyclopedic coverage of archival data displayed in many authoritative historical volumes has been subjected to an increasing amount of criticism.

A growing number of historians have become sensitive to the complex literary and ideological significances present in many written sources. Reports, letters, speeches and articles which were once viewed as relatively straightforward sources of data, able to be tapped with ease by the empirical researcher, are now viewed as problematic.

The historian now asks questions about authorship, language, style and discourse which were once the provenance of the literary critic or the philologist. Malay studies have already been influenced by this historiographical development.

Particularly at Cornell University and the Australian National University, a number of historical studies have been written which explore and attempt to explicate texts in traditional Malay literature. I have been influenced by this historiographical approach; however, my focus is not on the *Hikayats* and other pre-colonial materials but rather on modern newspaper materials. I have based my research on the *Majlis* and the *Warta Negara* which reflected conservative Malay political ideas and the *Utusan Melayu* which upheld the views of the Malay radicals. For East Sumatra, I relied on the *Soeloeh Merdeka* which was an important source of information on the Republican Government's policies. Other Sumatran newspapers, *Waspada*, *Atjeh Sinbun*, *Sumatra Sinbun*, were also important sources of information. The easy style

of the writing and language of these newspapers facilitated my research. The modern and thus familiar style of this writing has led some researchers to assume that they are relatively unproblematic in character. Also partly because of the mere volume of this printed matter the historian seldom pauses to analyse in depth the content and style of individual articles.

In this sense my reasons for focussing on a relatively brief period of Malay history are in part methodological. My approach also requires that I insist on the tentative character of the conclusion reached. The close reading of texts is even more open ended than the good conventional history writing of the past. It is often more successful in raising than in answering questions. It invites the intervention of specialists in other disciplines such as literature, philosophy and anthropology. My hope is that this thesis will be pioneering in the sense that it draws attention to the significance of certain documents and issues which have long been submerged beneath the narrative histories of the 1940s.

In undertaking this research on Malay society in transition after the Second World War, I am grateful to the Universiti Sains Malaysia for awarding me a research scholarship under the Academic Staff Higher Education Scheme (ASHES) without which this work would not be possible.

I am also grateful to the National University of Australia for accepting me as a research scholar for 4 years. I am most thankful to the University's Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History which provided me with the facilities to undertake my research. In particular I owe my success to the invaluable guidance of my supervisors, Dr. Anthony J.S. Reid, Dr. Anthony C. Milner and Dr. David Marr. Dr. Reid and Dr. Milner had been very conscientious and immensely helpful at every stage of my work.

For my fieldwork in Indonesia, I am grateful to LIPPI for processing and approving my application for fieldwork speedily and I am indebted to Tengku Dr. Amin Riduan of the Universitas Sumatera Utara for sponsoring me in my fieldwork in Jakarta and Sumatera Utara.

In my work I was assisted and aided by Dr. Virginia Matheson, Dr. Michael van Langenberg, Dr. Raden Fernando, Professor A.H. Johns, William O'Malley, Chris Penders, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Dr. Wong Soak Koon, Dr. Tan Liok Ee, Mr. Masashi Hirose, Twang Peck Yang and Richard Mason.

I also wish to show my appreciation to many informants who gave me invaluable data in my interviews conducted in North Sumatra, Jakarta, and in the major towns of Peninsular Malaya. I am particularly thankful to Tengku Luckman Sinar who introduced me to the surviving members of the various

kerajaan families in North Sumatra and Nip Karim who introduced me to the various *pergerakan* activists. In Malaysia, I am grateful to Y.T.M. Tengku Abdul Rahman, Ishak Haji Mohammad, Senu Abdul Rahman and Khir Johari. My gratitude also extends to those whom I have not named as more than 50 interviews were conducted in the course of my fieldwork.

I also wish to thank the libraries of the Australian National University, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Arsip Nasional in Jakarta and the National Archives of Malaysia for granting the facilities and assistance needed for my research. Among the librarians who helped me were Mr. George Miller of the A.N.U. library, Mrs. Chang Siw Lai and Miss Wong Sook Jean of the U.S.M. library.

Last but not least, I owe my wife and three children, Soraya, Adam and Juliana my heartfelt thanks for their forbearance and support during the difficult months of research and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

ABSTRACT

This study concentrates on the changes and perceptions of the Malay communities in Malaya and Sumatra concerning *bangsa*, *kerajaan*, democracy, *negara* and *negeri*. Like most societies under western colonial domination, Malay society had to redefine itself and its relationship to other communities residing in areas considered to be Malay lands.

The Malays in Malaya chose a path of non-violence in their struggle to redefine themselves. The radical *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* opted for union with Indonesia in a *Melayu Raya* which would encompass the various ethnic groups in a wider *bangsa Melayu*. The conservative UMNO redefined the role of the monarchy and upheld an ethnic definition of *bangsa Melayu* that would exclude the Chinese (and Indians) and preserve Malay political dominance under British protection. When *Melayu Raya* was no longer possible, the P.K.M.M. in cooperation with the non-Malays put forward the idea of *Melayu* as a nationality for all who chose Malaya as their homeland. This idea was not accepted by the Malay majority which wanted *bangsa Melayu* to remain exclusive. The Federation of Malaya Agreement in 1948 maintained *bangsa Melayu* as an exclusive ethnic identity. The non-Malays received citizenship rights but no nationality.

In East Sumatra, the various *kerajaans* wanted to maintain the privileged status of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* even though the territory had become a part of independent Indonesia. The Indonesian Republican upheld *bangsa Indonesia* as a nationality which gave all Indonesians equality before the law. Peoples' sovereignty was an important feature of their beliefs. The 'social revolution' of March 1946 saw the destruction of the Malay *kerajaans* as they were unable to change and conform to the wishes of the majority who accepted *bangsa Indonesia* and democracy with all its political and social implications.

When the Dutch used force to reassert their presence in East Sumatra in July 1947, they helped to set up the *Negara Sumatera Timur*. The N.S.T. was supposed to safeguard the interests of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. It was not successful because the N.S.T. depended on Dutch support. It failed also because *bangsa Indonesia* was widely accepted and the calls for *kedaulatan rakyat*, freedom and equality were too powerful to be ignored. When the N.S.T. was dissolved in 1950, the only *bangsa* that triumphed was the *bangsa Indonesia*.

ABBREVIATIONS

- A.P.I.Angkatan Pemuda Insaf
- A.W.A.S.....Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Movement of
Conscious Women)
- B.P.I.....Badan Pemuda Indonesia (Indonesian Youth
Body)
- B.P.K.I.....Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan
Kemerdekaan Indonesia
- D.K.A.....Darah Keturunan Arab (a derogatory term
for a Malay of Arab descent)
- D.K.K.....Darah Keturunan Keling (a derogatory term
for a Malay of Indian descent)
- K.M.M.....Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Union of Malay
Youth)
- K.N.I.....Komite Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian
National Committee)
- K.R.I.S.....Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung
(Union of Indonesian Citizens of the
[Malay] Peninsula)
- M.I.T.....Majlis Islam Tinggi (High Islamic Council)
- M.P.A.J.A.....Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army
- M.A.T.A.....Majlis Agama Tinggi
- N.S.T.....Negara Sumatera Timur (State of East
Sumatera)
- P.P.K.I.....Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia
(Committee for the Preparation of
Indonesian Independence)
- P4S.....Pucuk Pimpinan Persatuan Perjuangan
Sumatera (Leadership Council of the
Association for the Struggle of Sumatra)
- P3ST.....Persatuan Perjuangan Sumatera Timur
(Association for the Struggle of East
Sumatera)

P.A.D.I.....Perkumpulan Anak Deli Islam (Association of Islamic Citizens of Deli), Partai Anak Deli (Deli Citizens Party)

PARDIST.....Partai Daerah Istimewa Sumatera Timur (Party of the East Sumatra Special Region)

PESINDO.....Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia (Indonesian Socialist Youth)

PETA.....Pembela Tanah Air (Defender of the Motherland)

P.K.I.....Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)

P.K.M.M.....Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya

P.M.C.J.A.....Pan Malayan Council For Joint Action

P.N.S.T.....Partai Nasional Sumatera Timur (Nasionalist Party of East Sumatera)

P.S.T.....Persatuan Sumatera Timur (East Sumatran Association)

PUTERA.....Pusat Tenaga Rakyat

Recomba.....Regeeringscommisaris voor Bestuuraangelegenheden (Netherlands Indies Government Commissioner of Administration)

Sekata.....Serikat Kaum Tani (Federation of Farmers)

T.N.I.....Tentera Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army)

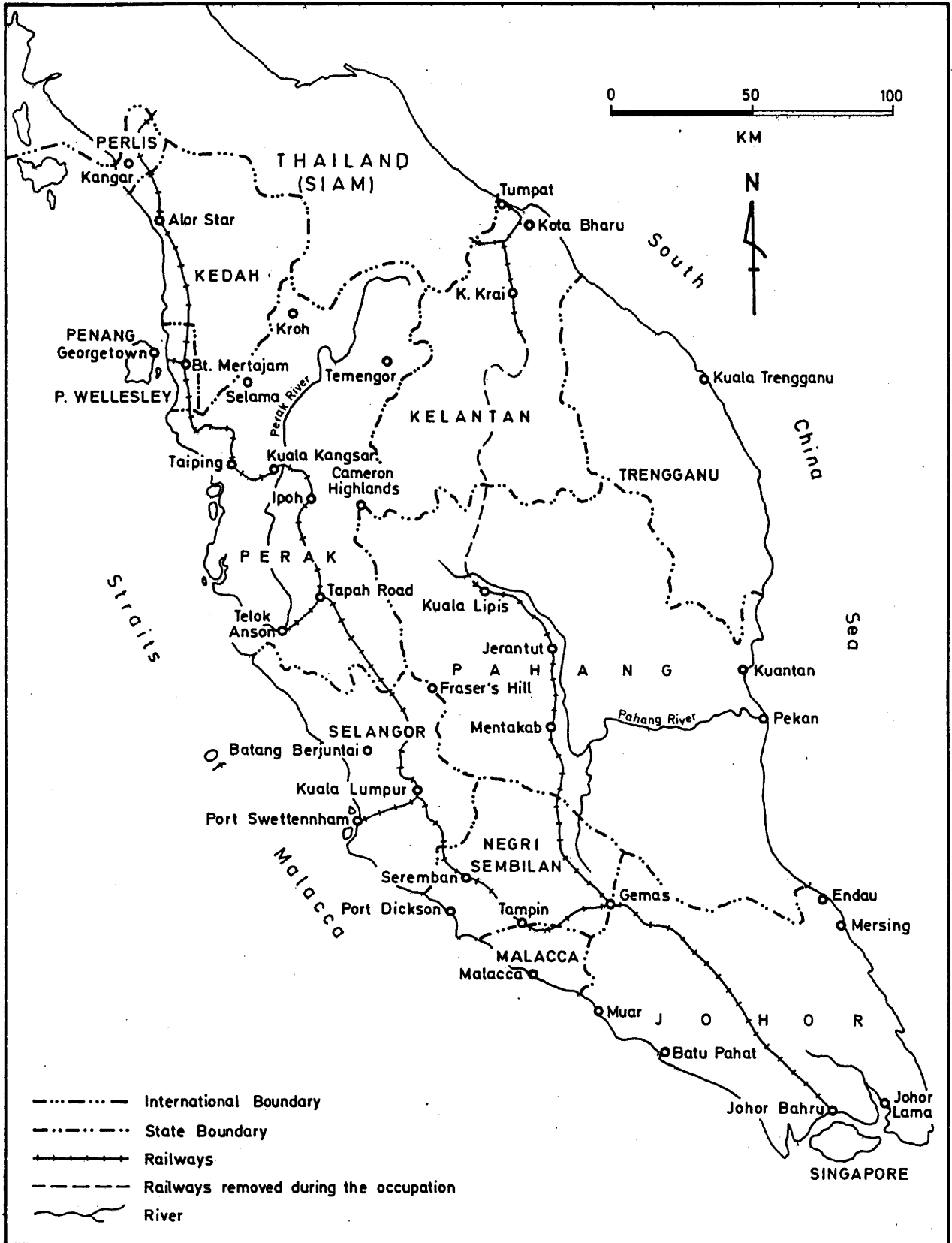
T.R.I.....Tentera Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Republican Army)

U.M.N.O.....United Malays National Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

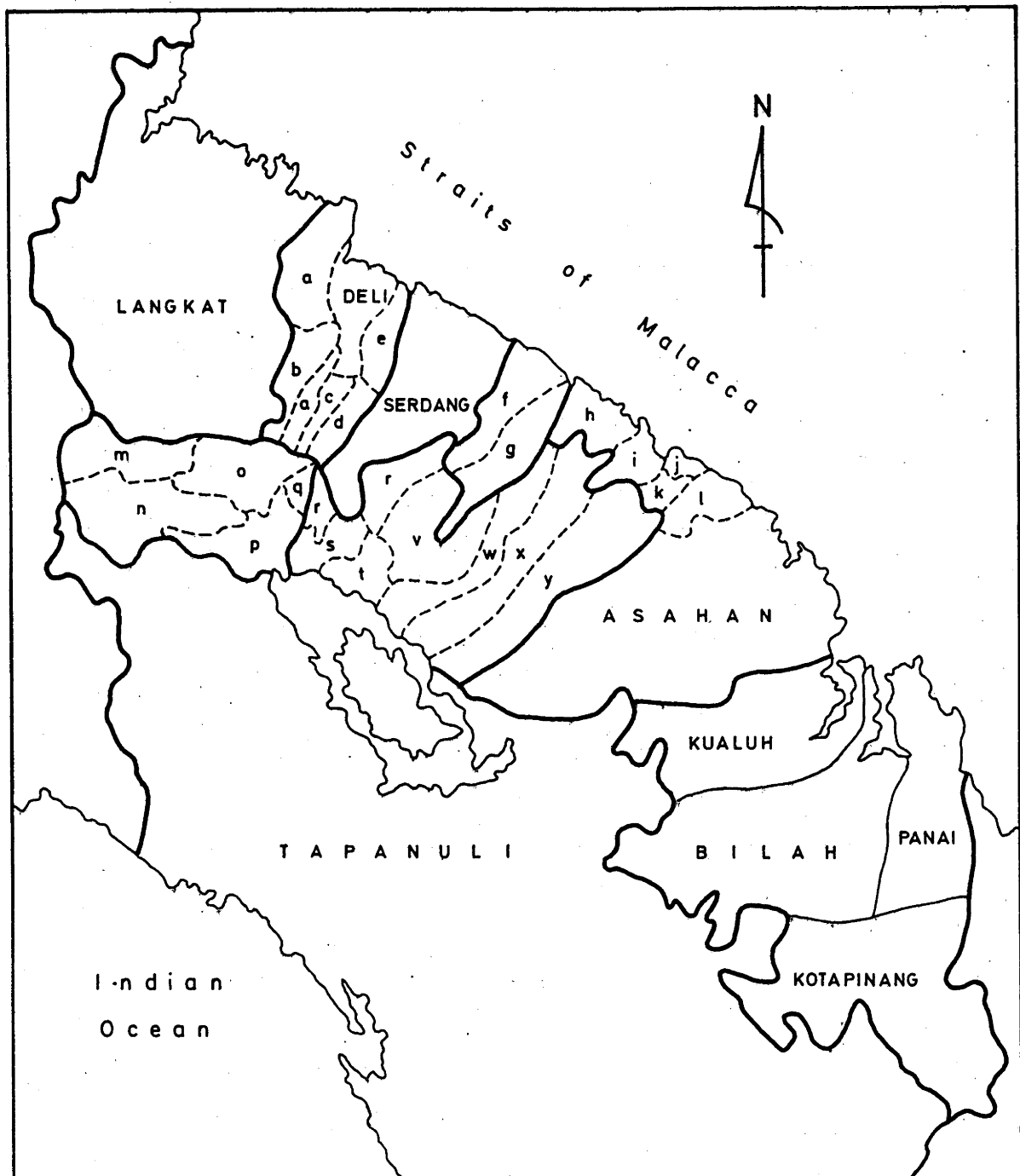
	Page
Title Page	i
Declaration	ii
Preface and Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	viii
List of Abbreviations	x
Table of Contents	xii
Map 1: Malaya 1945	xiii
Map 2: Native States in East Sumatra 1945	xiv
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2: Malayan Union: The Crisis of Identity	50
CHAPTER 3: Kebangsaan or Nasional	101
CHAPTER 4: Persekutuan Tanah Melayu or Federation of Malaya	159
CHAPTER 5: Negara Sumatera Timur	224
CHAPTER 6: Democracy	299
CHAPTER 7: Community	346
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion	393
Glossary	402
Appendixes	405
Bibliography	408
Biographical Appendix	426

MAP 1: MALAYA 1945



- International Boundary
- State Boundary
- Railways
- Railways removed during the occupation
- ~~~~~ River

MAP 2: "NATIVE STATES" IN EAST SUMATRA 1945



MALAY

- a. Hamperan Perak (Deli)
- b. Sunggal (Deli)
- c. Sukapiring (Deli)
- d. Senembah (Deli)
- e. Percut (Deli)
- f. Begadai (Deli)
- g. Padang (Deli)
- h. Indrapura
- i. Tanah Datar
- j. Pasisir
- k. Limapuluh
- l. Sukudua

KARO

- m. Kutabuluh
- n. Sarinembah
- o. Lingga
- p. Suka
- q. Barusjahe

SIMALUNGUN

- r. Dolok Silau
- s. Silimakuta
- t. Purba
- v. Raya
- w. Pane
- x. Siantar
- y. Tanah Jawa

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study rests on the assumption that Malay society has manifested changing value systems at different points in time as a result of challenges faced by the Malay community concerning its identity, political culture and ethnic solidarity. Such challenges have resulted in the Malay community searching for new ideas, beliefs and attitudes. The first chapter deals with the changes undergone by the Malay community in the Malay states of the Peninsula and East Sumatra as a result of the impact of colonialism.

In an innovative work on Malay society in East Sumatra and the Malay states of the peninsula, A.C. Milner suggested significant elements of similarities in the political culture of Malaya and Sumatra's East Coast.¹ It was noted that in both regions, the Malays perceived their political condition in terms of the *kerajaan*. That is to say, they considered themselves to be living in a community oriented around a *raja* who was not only the focus of what we call today political life but possessed a critical religious and psychological significance. In particular, according to Milner, traditional Malay writings from East Sumatra and the

¹ See A.C. Milner, Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona, 1982.

Malay peninsula suggest that the Malay sense of identity - of name, of reputation, of position, sometimes referred to as *nama* - was defined in terms of the *kerajaan*.

The Malays had settled on the banks of rivers which cut through the hills of the Malay peninsula and the highlands of East Sumatra or were coastal dwellers whose settlements dotted the estuaries of the Malay archipelago. Rivers and seas played an important role as highways and were also the channels of political control.

The economy of the Malay peasantry was basically one of subsistence with a small volume of barter trade. Trade on a larger scale was normally in the hands of the local nobility or foreigners such as Indians, Arabs and Chinese.

The largest territorial unit was the *negeri* or settlement which was headed by the sultan who was supported by territorial chiefs who controlled important areas of the *negeri*. A *negeri* is sometimes translated as "state" but A.H. Hill, the editor of the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* has provided a more specific definition which is, *negeri* "denotes a fairly large community, centred usually on a river estuary, an entrepot for foreign merchants, with some

political influence over the surrounding territory."² These in turn have minor chiefs and village headmen under them who were important agents of administration and collectors of revenue and who raised the necessary manpower for war or other projects. The head of the *kerajaan* was the sultan who was protected by his *daulat*, a supernatural force conferred upon him by his kingship. This *daulat* gave him an aura of sanctity and sacredness as well as supreme temporal authority.

The origins of *daulat* can be traced to the idea of divine kingship. Indeed "the divinity of Kings was conceived in various ways according to the prevailing religion. Where Hinduism prevailed the King was considered to be either an incarnation of a god or a descendent from a god or both. Mostly, it was Siva who was thought to incarnate himself in Kings to engender dynasties."³ Though since the Malacca Sultanate the Malay *kerajaans* were Muslim, "they still embody the ancient Hindu conception of a kingdom as an image of the heavenly world of stars and gods, a

² See A.H. Hill, Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, JMBRAS, XXXIII, 2, 1960, p.173, n.2. Virginia Matheson has also noted that there was the absence of "evidence for the existence of the state as a concept" in the Tuhfat al-Nafis as was shown in "Concepts of State in the Tufhat al-Nafis", in A. Reid and L. Castles (eds.), Pre-colonial state systems in Southeast Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 1975, p.21.

³ Robert Heine-Geldern, "Conception of the State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," in Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol.2, 1942, p.22.

conception current in Founan and borrowed probably from Founan by Sri Vijaya."⁴ This conception was still accepted. The monarch was accordingly regarded as "'the Lord over the Whole World', he was a 'Sultan' and the 'Shadow of God Upon the Earth'".⁵ It was this 'link' with the Omnipotent that provided an aura of divinity to the sultan's position. Despite the fact that the sultans were Muslims, the old idea of divinity was retained and perpetuated in various ways.⁶

According to Chandrasekaran Pillay "since rulers were perceived as divine, unquestioning loyalty was accorded them by their subjects. Their power was supposed to be rooted in the very idea of the Omnipotent and for that reason defying their wishes would constitute a transgression of Divine authority. This supernatural quality about them - their *daulat* - was what ordinary mortals had to fear."⁷

⁴ Richard Winstedt, Malaya and Its History, Hutchinson's University Library, 1953, p.33.

⁵ Papers on Malay Subjects, R.J. Wilkinson (ed.) selected and introduced by P.L. Burns, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, p.370.

⁶ It was noted that in the various ceremonies practised in the Malay states where this idea of divinity was emphasised, certain Muslim features were incorporated. For example in Negri Sembilan, a colonial official noted that, "The local *Kathi* recites a prayer in Malay seeking Allah's guidance for the new *Khalifah* He has raised to the throne, the assistance He gave to the Prophet Solomon." See R.O. Winstedt, "Kingship and Enthronement in Malaya," JMBRAS, Vol.XX, June 1947, p.137.

⁷ Chandrasekaran Pillay, "Some Dominant Concepts And Dissenting Ideas On Malay Rule And Society From The Malacca Sultanate To The Colonial And Merdeka Periods", Ph.D Thesis submitted to the University of Singapore, 1976, pp.50-51.

Malay legends also revealed that loyalty to the ruler is emphasised at the very beginning of Malay history. According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, a Raja Sri Tri Buana, the first royal ruler of the Malays who descended from Iskandar Dzulkarnain (Alexander the Great) agreed to have a covenant with one Demang Lebar Daun, the representative of his subjects. According to the covenant, Demang Lebar Daun was supposed to have stated that:

Your Highness, the descendents of your humble servant shall be the subject of your Majesty's throne, but they must be well treated by your descendents. If they offend, they shall not however grave be their offence, be disgraced or reviled with evil words; if their offence is grave, let them be put to death, if that is in accordance with Muhammadan Law.

And the King replied, "I agree to give the undertaking for which you asked: but I in my turn require an undertaking from you, Sir." And when Demang Lebar Daun asked what the undertaking was, the King answered, "that your descendents shall never for the rest of time be disloyal to my descendents, even if my descendents oppress them and behave evilly." And Demang Lebar Daun said, "very well, your Highness. But if your descendents depart from the terms of the pact, then so will mine." And Sri Tri Buana replied, "very well, I agree, I agree to the covenant": whereupon both of them took a solemn oath to the effect that whoever departed from the terms of the pact, let his house be overturned by Almighty God so that its roof land on the ground and its pillars be inverted. And that is why it has been granted by Almighty God to Malay rulers that they shall never put their subjects to shame, and that those subjects however gravely they offend shall never be bound or hanged or disgraced with evil words. If any ruler puts a single one of his subjects to shame that shall be a sign that his kingdom will be destroyed by Almighty God. Similarly it has been granted by Almighty God to Malay subjects that they shall never be disloyal or treacherous to their rulers, even if their rulers behave evilly or inflict injuries upon them.¹

¹ Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals, an annotated translation by C.C. Brown with a new introduction by R. Roolvink, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1970, p.16.

This covenant showed that the ruler was directly responsible only to God and indirectly to his subjects. The subjects had to serve with complete and unquestioning loyalty. Loyalty meant submission and an acceptance of a hierarchical social system which placed the common Malays on the lowest rung of the social scale. During the colonial period officials serving in the Malay states noted the abundance of Malay sayings which testified to the acceptance of such a hierarchy. For instance W.E. Maxwell interpreted the saying "whoever may be raja, my hand goes up to my forehead all the same" to mean "ruler may succeed ruler, or other important changes in the government of a country may take place, but the condition of the lower classes will remain the same."⁹ Maxwell noted the acceptance of the Malays that "the small are at the mercy of the great" in the proverb which says that "Small fish become the food for big fish."¹⁰ R.J. Wilkinson has also compiled a wealth of Malay sayings and proverbs which reveal some acceptance of tyrannical behaviour on the part of the Malay rulers by the people.¹¹

⁹ See W.E. Maxwell, "Malay Proverbs Part II", JSBRAS, December 1878, pp.143-144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹¹ R.J. Wilkinson, "Malay Proverbs on Malay Character" in Malay Literature Part III, Papers On Malay Subjects, Kuala Lumpur, 1925.

However certain sociological factors modified this apparent submissiveness. Malay peasants would resist oppression if they had no other option, but they could also choose to emigrate to some other *negeri* in order to escape tyranny. Since as Milner has pointed, the prestige and power of a Malay *raja* can be seen in the "desire to acquire and retain subjects"¹² it would be foolhardy to drive them away. It would be against the interests of the Malay sultans if they were to deal too harshly with their subjects.

Indeed, the oppressiveness of the Malay rulers has probably been exaggerated, partly because of some striking individual acts of extreme cruelty. British administrators and historians were largely responsible for perpetuating this unfair image of the Malay rulers and their officials. Hugh Clifford wrote that, "The old native rulers had been oppressive, with hearts like flint and hands of crushing weight, but they always had a personal motive for their acts, a motive which their people recognised and understood."¹³ Clifford gives numerous examples of

¹² A.C. Milner, Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona, 1982, p.28.

¹³ Hugh Clifford, In A Corner of Asia, Unwin Overseas Library, 1899, p.163.

oppression.¹⁴ Swettenham also gives examples of oppression in his writings.¹⁵ It must be remembered, however, that these British writers chose to highlight acts of cruelty and injustice in order to justify British intervention in the Malay states.

Whatever their motives, the British were conscious of the pivotal role of the *kerajaan* in Malay political culture. Thus it was necessary to use the Malay monarchies in order to control the Malay masses. The British in all their treaties with the rulers accepted the rulers as representatives of their various *negeri* (settlements) not as heads of state. The concept "state" was not yet familiar in Malay political culture. *Kerajaan* is best defined as connoting "being in the condition of having a Raja."¹⁶ Thus in dealing with the *kerajaans*, the British and the Dutch were dealing with the raja who was the embodiment of the political culture.

¹⁴ See Hugh Clifford, Studies in Brown Humanity: Being scrawls and smudges in sepia, white and yellow, London, 1893, and his In Court And Kampong: Being tales and sketches of native life in the Malay Peninsula, London, 1897, Stories By Sir Hugh Clifford selected and introduced by William R. Roff, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1964.

¹⁵ Frank A. Swettenham, The Real Malay, London, 1922. See also his Footprints In Malaya, Hutchinson and Company, 1941, Stories And Sketches By Sir Frank Swettenham, selected and introduced by William R. Roff, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1966.

¹⁶ A.C. Milner, Kerajaan, p.9. See also J.M. Gullick, Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya, University of London, 1956, p.44.

The Malay *negeri* became definable as a state in the modern context only after British colonial domination when there was the need to define boundaries, collect revenues and establish a modern administrative machinery that could only function if a modern state came into existence.¹⁷ However though for administrative purposes the British saw the Malay *negeri* as states they were aware that to the minds of most Malays, it was the concept of the *kerajaan* that mattered.

As late as 1927 the British recognised the importance of the *kerajaan* as can be seen in Hugh Clifford's speech to the Federal Council which was as follows:

These States were, when the British Government was invited by their Rulers and Chiefs to set their troubled houses in order, Muhammadan monarchies. Such they are today, and such they must continue to be. No mandate has ever been extended to us by *Rajas*, Chiefs, or people to vary the system of government which has existed in these territories from time immemorial...¹⁸

Such a view was also held by the British Government as could be seen in a report submitted by Sir Samuel Wilson on his visit to Malaya in which it was clearly stated that:

¹⁷ Only in modern times has the term *negara* come to express the western idea of 'state', J. Gonda, Sanscrit in Indonesia, New Delhi, 1973, p.629.

¹⁸ Federal Council Proceedings, November 16, 1927.

It seems clear that the maintenance of the position, authority and prestige of the Malay Rulers must always be a cardinal point in British policy: and the encouragement of indirect rule will probably prove the greatest safeguard against the political submersion of the Malays which would result from the development of popular government on western lines, or in such a government the Malays would be hopelessly outnumbered by the other races owing to the great influx of immigrants that has taken place into Malaya during the last few years.¹⁹

W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore had earlier stated that:

The Malay Sultans are the heads of the national religion in each State, and the traditional protectors of Malay customs which is so dearly cherished in the manners and life in all classes of Malays. The Courts of the Sultans and Rajahs maintain a measure of dignity and colour loved by the masses...I will not labour the point but to me the maintenance of the position, authority and prestige of the Malay rulers is a cardinal point in our policy.²⁰

Such statements are an explicit admission on the part of the British authorities of the importance and role of the *kerajaan* which they had to maintain in order to further their own aims.

However, despite the belief that the Malay political system would remain unchanged under British 'protection'

¹⁹ Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Wilson, Visit to Malaya, 1932, Cmd.4276, 1933, p.12.

²⁰ Report by G.W.A. Ormsby-Gore on His Visit to Malaya, Ceylon and Java, 1928, Cmd.3235, 1928-1929, p.18. After his return Ormsby-Gore had minuted on 14/8/28 his views on the Sultans in the following terms: "Politically they (Malay Sultans) are a real and to my mind essential asset. But for them the Malays would become a mob," in C.O. 717/60.

subtle changes were indeed taking place. Any understanding of the changes in certain political values, concepts and ideas in Malay society in both Peninsular Malaya and the East Coast of Sumatra must begin with the onset of colonialism and its consequences in both these territories. The Treaty of 1824 placed the Malay states in Peninsular Malaya under the British sphere of influence while the Treaty of 1871 placed Sumatra under the Dutch sphere of influence.²¹ While the Malay states on both sides of the Malacca Straits fell under colonial domination, their experience and treatment under different colonial masters led to different end results.

Beginning with the Malay Peninsula, we noted that in the 19th century, the British concluded a series of treaties with the Malay sultans in which British authority was exercised through a Resident or Adviser in the case of Johor.²² By the first decade of the 20th century, the Malay states had emerged as British Malaya with clearly defined boundaries dividing it from Siam in the north to the Netherlands East Indies in the south and west.

²¹ See W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson (eds.), Treaties and Engagements Affecting the Malay States and Borneo, London, 1924 for the details of these two treaties.

²² The first such treaty was the Pangkor Engagement signed by the Chiefs of Perak and the Governor of the Straits Settlements on 20 January, 1874. For this and subsequent treaties, see C.D. Cowan, Nineteenth-Century Malaya, London, 1961, pp.176-11 and pp.238-262.

In the Malay Peninsula, the British were in the Malay States at the invitation of the Malay rulers.²³ Though the British Residents were to advise the ruler on governing his state, this government by advice was purely in name. British administrators asserted direct control over the administration of the various Malay states but agreed to respect Malay custom and religion, the sovereignty of the rulers and the autonomy of the various Malay states.²⁴ This was so even after the four Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang were federated in 1896. Thus the Malay states were seen not as colonies but as Protectorates.

By this method, the real nature of British intervention was cleverly camouflaged. In place of outright annexation, the British decided to keep the sultan as head of his political unit while they assumed an advisory role. The impression given as far as the Malays were concerned was that the sultan was still the sovereign power and the

²³ Whatever the practical realities were, the treaties and correspondence between the British and the Malay rulers expressed the symbolic truth that it was the Malay rulers who requested the presence of British residents to advise them in the art of government.

²⁴ See Emily Sadka, The Protected Malay States 1874-1895, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, pp.364-381 and Eunice Thio, British Policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880-1910, vol.I, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, *passim*.

sultanate still an independent entity.²⁵

Where Malay society was concerned, its interaction was with the ruling elites, i.e. the raja and his chiefs. The people's links with the colonial powers were minimal. British rule took the form of two slightly different administrative patterns in the Malay Peninsula. The Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang were known as the Federated Malay States with intensive British involvement in administration. In Johor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, colonial control was less direct. These states were known as the Unfederated Malay States and they retained more of their Malay characteristics.

In the East Coast of Sumatra, it is of great significance the Dutch made no pretence about preserving the sovereignty of the Malay rulers or the independence of the Malay states of Deli, Serdang, Langkat and Asahan. From the time of van Heutz it was made clear to the rajas that their states were part of the Netherlands East Indies and that the sultan and his successors must swear allegiance to the Governor-General and carry out whatever instructions issued by the Dutch colonial government. This meant that the Malay

²⁵ This is mentioned in Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Ruler, reprinted University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1964. See also A.C. Milner, "Colonial Records History: British Malaya," in Kajian Malaysia, vol.4, no.2, December 1986.

states ceased to be sovereign states (while in Malaya, the Malay states retained their sovereignty).

Dutch control of the Malay states in Sumatra's East Coast began through a treaty with Siak Seri Indrapura which claimed suzerainty over these Malay states. By signing a treaty with the Dutch in 1858, Siak and its dependencies became a part of the Dutch colonial empire.²⁶

In both Malaya and the East Coast of Sumatra, it could be argued that the main aim of the colonial powers was to reap economic benefits through the introduction of plantation crops which soon became important sources of revenue. In response to the international demand for products such as tin, pepper, gambier, rubber, tobacco and palm oil, western enterprise recruited a cheap labour force from China and India for the Malay Peninsula, while the Dutch brought Chinese and later Javanese into the East Coast of Sumatra.²⁷

The emergence of a colonial economy brought along with it far reaching consequences in Malay society. The 1921

²⁶ See Anthony Reid, The Contest For North Sumatra: Atieh, the Netherlands and Britain, 1858-1899, Oxford University Press/University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, pp.25-51, Tengku Luckman Sinar, Sari Sedjarah Serdang, n.p., 1971, pp.64-84.

²⁷ See G.C. Allen and A. Donnithorne, Western Enterprise in Indonesia and Malaya, London, 1957, for details of western economic involvement in the Malay states.

census report revealed that the peninsular Malays and others of Malay-Indonesian stock were numbered at 1,623,014 or 48% of the total population of 3,262,695 while the Chinese were enumerated at 1,171,740 or 35.2% and Indians 471,514 or 14.2%. The British initially saw the Chinese and Indians as transients who would normally be repatriated back to their homelands after having served an economic purpose. By the time the 1931 census was taken, however, close to one third of the Chinese and one fourth of the Indians were locally born and the trend towards settling in the Malay states was established.²⁸ While the paramount British interest was the development of a colonial economy, British Advisers were wont to look upon protection as the retention of the Malay character of administration as a bulwark against the intrusion of non-Malay immigrants.

Economic development in both territories accelerated in the first two decades of the 20th century. In the wave of prosperity, there were few political issues that distracted both the colonial powers and the native aristocracy to a re-examination of the treaties signed earlier. But perceptive Malay rajas were questioning the basis of colonial domination and even its intention. In 1903, Sultan Idris of Perak expressed the dissatisfaction of the Malay ruling elite as a whole with the effects upon the rights of the

²⁸ See Appendix I, Table 1 for population breakdown based on ethnicity.

sultans and their officials of the administrative integration of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang. Sultan Idris stated that,

A Malay proverb says that there cannot be two masters in one vessel. Neither can there be four Rulers over one country. It is my hope that the affairs of each state may be managed by its own officers so that the governments may be separate entities.²⁹

In 1924, Sultan Iskandar Shah of Perak made a strong call for the restoration of the original powers of the ruler as envisaged in the 1874 Pangkor Treaty. His speech shows that the idea of one Malay nation was still a novelty among the Malay elite. Complaints on the part of the Malay ruling elite reflected their concern for the effects of British rule upon the indigenous power structure. The consciousness of their own interest and privileges in relation to British authority was to manifest itself again and again till 1941. Such complaints from the rajas in the Malay peninsula were possible because the nature of the treaties signed with the British maintained the belief that the Malay states were sovereign states under British protection.

In East Sumatra, there were fewer complaints concerning sovereignty simply because the Malay rulers knew perfectly

²⁹ Jagjit Singh Sidhu, "The Administrative Development of Malaya 1896-1941," in Zainal Abidin Wahid (ed.), Glimpses of Malaysian History, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1970, p.73.

well where they stood in relation to the Dutch colonial authorities. While they may not have had formal sovereignty the Political Contracts between the Malay states of Deli, Serdang, and Langkat and the Dutch gave the Malay rajas "autonomous administrative and juridicial structures of completely aristocratic Malay composition with full nominal responsibility in a number of areas."³⁰ At least in matters concerning land, the rulers had an important role. Thus foreign planters and also the Dutch government found the Malay rulers very convenient for their economic purposes. Bribery and other material benefits to the Malay rulers were adequate to ensure goodwill on their part towards the planters. As a result, the rulers of Deli, Serdang and especially Langkat were enormously wealthy and lived in lavish palaces and owned expensive cars.

The Malay and Karo subjects of the rulers were not altogether unhappy with the economic benefits of the plantation economy. In the 1920s, notions of state, nation and nationality were yet to spoil the tranquility of their existence though in other areas in the East Indies, notably the cities of Java, the stirrings of nationalism were being felt. The Malays according to contractual arrangements between the rulers and the planters had a comfortable existence. Malay families living within the area of the land

³⁰ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1979, p.45.

concessions were initially allocated 4 hectares of prepared land (later 2.8 hectares) on a shifting basis for their crops. Most Malays who were entitled to these lots either used them as orchards or leased them to Chinese or Javanese migrants.

However as in the Malay Peninsula, the East Coast of Sumatra experienced the influx of immigrants on such a massive scale that the indigenous population was reduced to a minority within a markedly plural society. This plural society was perceived by some Malays, Karos and Simalungun as a threat to the rights and privileges of their communities by foreign immigrants who could at a later stage take over the whole state. By 1930, according to Michael van Langenburg, "Dutch colonial rule had reduced the three *orang asli* ethnic groups to minorities in a number of the native states, including all four major sultanates - Langkat, Deli Serdang and Asahan."³¹ The total Javanese population in East Sumatra's East Coast residency was 589,836 or 40.51% of the entire population while the Chinese population was tabulated at 192,822. Hence more than half the population of Sumatera Timur was made up of non-Sumatra immigrants.³² The reduction of the *asli* communities to insignificant

³¹ Michael van Langenburg, "North Sumatra Under Dutch Colonial Rule: Aspects of Structural Change," Part I, in R.I.M.A., vol.II, no.1, 1977, p.99.

³² Indisch Verslag 1940, pp.15 & 38 as quoted in *ibid.*, p.98.

minorities within the first half of the twentieth century led to intense anti-foreigner sentiments.³³

The ideological debates in the 1930s in both areas were important in that though the rajas were not involved, their positions were seriously undermined by the growing critical awareness of their subjects. While the Malays did not profess disloyalty to their rajas, the setting up of state associations which were now claiming to represent Malay interests posed challenges more dangerous to the monarchy than even the advance of Dutch and British colonialism in the late 19th century. The political developments of the period have been examined by several scholars, notably Roff, in the case of Malaya but what has received far less attention is the impact of these events on Malay political culture.

In the Malay Peninsula, it was the first decade of the 20th century that witnessed the first manifestation of a developing sense of national consciousness, as can be seen in the publication of *Al-Imam*, a monthly published in Singapore between 1906-1908. Roff has pointed out that of the main backers of *Al-Imam* only "Haji Abas, born in Singapore of Sumatran parents, could in any sense claim to

³³ Refer to Appendix II for population statistics.

be a 'peninsular Malay'."³⁴ Abdullah Haji Jaafar noted that the majority of those involved in *Al-Imam* were of Arab descent and asked whether they could be considered as *pemimpin Melayu* (Malay leaders). Nevertheless Abdullah accepted that the *Al-Imam* was the first step of Malay nationalism in the *tanah Melayu* as well as the official organ of the first nationalist movement.³⁵

Malay criticism of the rajas goes back as far as Munshi Abdullah³⁶ in the first half of the 19th century. For Abdullah, the Malay rajas behaved like beasts of prey and his comments on the decadence and corruption of the Malay ruling class are well documented in the *Kesah Pelajaran Abdullah*. However, it is his observations on Malay society that are important. For him, indolence or negligence were not the causes of Malay backwardness. As long as people could derive benefits from their work as well as satisfaction and profits, they will work. But if the people

³⁴ W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1967, p.64.

³⁵ Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar, *Al-Imam*, in Lembaran Akhbar Melayu, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p.31.

³⁶ Munshi Abdullah was born in Malacca in 1796. He was the author of the Hikayat Abdullah I and II and the *Kesah Pelayaran Abdullah*. He was well versed in the Q'uran and was familiar with all the Malay Hikayats and even compiled one version of the *Sejarah Melayu*. He was reasonably fluent in Tamil, Hindi, English and Chinese. At various points in his life he worked as a writer, translator and language teacher. He died in 1854 at Jeddah on his way to the haj.

live in perpetual fear of the persecution and greed of the ruler and the nobility, the society will be poor and backward. If what they earned was being seized by the ruling elite, it was pointless to be industrious for they would not enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Abdullah represented a minority Malay writing critical of the *kerajaans* going back a long way, but it was predominate among *peranakan* in the cities outside *kerajaan* control. Other criticism of the Malay rajas came from the *Kaum Muda* who were influenced by the Islamic reformism of the Middle East. The *Kaum Muda's* attack on the Malay royalty was through *Al-Imam* which published the history of Islam and the lives of upright religious leaders as a basis of comparison with the bad deeds of the Malay rulers. Their articles criticised the Malay rulers subtly with the aim to "appeal to all the rajas and our chiefs and important men to hold fast to and carry out their obligations to the community."³⁷ When they were ignored by the rulers, the *Kaum Muda* questioned "whether the Malay rajas were aware of what cruel deeds were being done by their Ministers and Chiefs to the people."³⁸ The *Kaum Muda* asserted that the traditional elite kept the ordinary people in ignorance concerning

³⁷ *Al-Imam*, 17 September 1906, as quoted by Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar in Lembaran Akhbar Melayu, Persatuan Sejarah Melayu, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p.15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1980, p.235.

developments in other nations for fear that the Malays would be influenced by such news.³⁹

The editors of *Al-Imam* were acutely aware of their own marginality with the Malay community whom they were addressing. In the preface to the first issue of the monthly, Shaykh Mohd. Salim wrote that:

...though *peranakan* we are not of the same direct descent as the people here, but we love this country as our homeland, have drunk its milk, used its products to increase our flesh and blood, received from it the good things of life. Are we not therefore indebted to it, and to its children?⁴⁰

Despite the efforts of the *peranakan* to identify with the Malay community some Malays questioned their acceptance into the Malay community. Indeed Shaykh Mohd. Salim saw himself as

...a person who even though he has not become *Melayu*, but has made his life and his soul and all his aims to live as a *Melayu* as much as possible.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.235.

⁴⁰ *Al-Imam*, as quoted in Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.65.

⁴¹ Mohammad Sarim bin Haji Mustajab, "Gerakan Islam Islamiyah di Tanah Melayu, 1906 hingga 1948" in Malaysia: Sejarah dan Proses Pembangunan, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1979, p.126.

Shaykh Mohd. Salim was aware of his marginality within the *bangsa Melayu* but justified his inclusion and concern for the Malay community because of his 'debt' which he owes to the land and its people. His main claim to being included was because he was a muslim and since Malays are muslims all are part of the *umat Islam*.

Probably, the need to protect the well-being of the Malay community came about because of the apprehension felt by the ruling Malay elite as a result of the competitive threat posed by non-Malay communities, which expressed itself in some of the political issues that threatened the position of the Malay community. The Malay elite were aware of the growing presence of Chinese and Indians in the Malay states, some of whom were involved in the professional services of government administration. However, the problem of defining who or what constituted a Malay was a stumbling block. While Chinese and Indians were excluded, Arabs and Indian muslims were in a dubious position as to where they stood within the community.

Roff suggests that after World War I, the issue of descent (*keturunan*) became important and the claims of the *peranakan*, both Indians and Arabs, to being Malays were rejected. This was due to the emergence of a group of young English-educated Malays, amongst them Mohd. Eunos Abdullah, who were aware of the social and economic gap between the

Arabs and the Malays as well as between the Malays and non-Malays. A serious split surfaced over the question of a Malay representative on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council in 1921. Mohd. Eunos Abdullah was appointed in 1924 and was supported by the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* which was formed in 1926 and which supported him as the voice of the Malays,⁴² against the claims of Arabs and Indian Muslims who felt that they could also represent Malay interests by virtue of the fact that they were muslims.

The *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* was the first specifically Malay organization with explicitly political aims that attempted to assert the rights of the Malays as a community (*bangsa*) and was not willing to have anyone who was not a Malay by descent even if they belong to the *umat Islam*. The issue of Malay socio-economic and political backwardness in the 1920s and 30s became the focus of Malay consciousness. Eugene Kamenka has noted that:

Nationalism is for the deprived, for the unfortunate for those who still had to find or create the conditions for their own dignity.⁴³

Kamenka's observation fitted in well with the struggle of the Malay *bangsa* to uplift their socio-economic

⁴² W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.190.

⁴³ Eugene Kamenka, Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea, Edward Arnold, London, 1973, p.16.

conditions. The Malay intellectual Zainal Abidin bin Abas (Za'ba) was aware of the backwardness of the Malay community. But he was steadfast in his opposition towards a narrow-minded and communal nationalism. Za'ba maintained that the Malay community was poor not only materially but was lacking in the positive character traits which made for progress and because of this they were losing out to the non-Malays.⁴⁴ According to Za'ba,

My state, my community (*bangsaku*)! Right or wrong my community. My state. If the other *bangsa* can become my slaves and give me some benefits so much the better. So long as my *bangsa* becomes important!! The Malay lands for the Malays only! Java for the Javanese only. The Johor Malays say only Johor is great! Kelantanese will say only Kelantan!...In reality these sentiments of race consciousness and territory must not at all be planted in us. What we want is a territorial conception that is vast - that is the dignity of Islam even though a muslim is a Benggali, Javanese, Keling, Chinese. Or any one else.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Al-Ikhwan*, November 1926, as quoted in Abdullah Hussain and Khalid Hussain, Pendita Za'ba dalam Kenangan, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1974, p.232.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.236. Negriku! Bangsaku!! Ia itu benar atau salah bangsaku! Negriku! Kalau bangsa-bangsa lain itu semuanya boleh jadi hambaku dan memberi faedah kepada aku lagi baik. Asal-kan bangsaku dapat besar!! (Tanah Melayu bagi orang Melayu sahaja! Tanah Jawa bagi orang Jawa sahaja. Kata Johor Melayu Johor sahaja yang lebih! Kata Kelantan Melayu Kelantan sahaja!...) Sesungguhnya inilah perasaan kemuliaan bangsa dan watan yang jangan sekali-kali ditanamkan pada kita. Yang kita mahu ialah habulwatan yang luas - ia itu kemuliaan Islam walau seorang Muslim itu Benggali, Jawa, Keling, Cina. Atau lain lain.

Being a *Melayu jati* (true Malay) and recognised as one, he could make such comments without coming under attack. But Za'ba was a lone voice against a trend towards a communal perspective of the *bangsa*.

By the late 20s and 30s, Malay graduates from the Sultan Idris Training College were adding to the increase of an "autochthonous elite" in Malay society and the number of Malay newspapers and journals multiplied. For these young Malays, the Indian muslims and the Arabs who claimed to be a part of the community and had spoken on its behalf in the past, were mere upstarts and could not be a part of the *bangsa Melayu* since by virtue of *keturunan* (descent) they were not Malays. Abdul Rahim Kajai, writing in a Malay paper stated that:

Islam is not a *bangsa* but a religion even though a part of our comrades who acknowledge Islam require us not to *berbangsa* with *Melayu* but 'advise' us to acknowledge Islam only.¹⁶

Kajai rejected Islam as a bond that linked the muslim Indians and Arabs to the *bangsa Melayu*. He adopted a different stand from Za'ba who upheld Islam as a bond of universal brotherhood. Kajai was determined to distinguish between the *anak negeri* (sons of the state) and the *bangsa*

¹⁶ *Utusan Zaman*, 17 June 1939 as quoted by Abdul Latif Abu Bakar in Abdul Rahim Kajai: Wartawan dan Sasterawan Melayu, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1984, p.372.

asing. For him, only those of patriarchal Malay descent could be considered *bangsa Melayu*. He popularized the derogatory terms D.K.K. (for *Darah Keturunan Keling*) and D.K.A. (*Darah Keturunan Arab*) which succeeded in ostracising them from the *bangsa Melayu* even though they were part of the muslim *umat* which included Malays.

While the muslim Indians and Arabs might not be considered Malays, Islam was their link with the Malays and the possibility of them becoming *Melayu* at some future time was there. There was no such link with the Indians and the Chinese migrants who had to face the full force of the Malay "national grievance."

The thirties witnessed an open and hostile debate between some Chinese and Indians who claimed to be "Malayans" and thus entitled to political rights, and Malays who did not recognise the term "Malayan" and who considered the non-Malays as foreigners who had no rights in the Malay states.⁴⁷ The conflict between *Melayu* and "Malayan" began in 1931 when a prominent Penang Chinese leader Lim Cheng Yan was reported to have said that, "we have become inseparable

⁴⁷ In my interviews with him, Ishak Haji Mohamed claimed that to the Malays, the term *Malaya* was a hated and unacceptable label because it implied that if *tanah Melayu* which comprised the various Malay states were known as *Malaya* it would deny them their individual identities and that *Malayan* meant a native of *Malaya* of which the Malays did not feel a part.

from this country."⁴⁸

This remark more than any other inaugurated the bitter debate between "Malayan" and *Melayu*. Since the thirties witnessed the flowering of Malay journalism, every Malay newspaper was involved in this debate. As a result, it was the Malay vernacular press that brought the debate and the consciousness of Malayness to the reading public. In publicising widely the debate between non-Malays and Malays, a feeling of solidarity in the wake of what was perceived as a serious threat from alien immigrants emerged within the Malay community.

Benedict Anderson has persuasively argued that the advent of "print capitalism" was one important factor in the development of the insistent call of new "imagined communities."⁴⁹ This was true in the case of the *bangsa Melayu*. With the advent of print, Malay newspapers and journals in the first half of the 20th century, though limited in circulation, were able to put forward a commonality in the understanding and use of terms like *bangsa Melayu*, D.K.K. and D.K.A. They were also able to propagate effectively against the emergence of the "Malayan"

⁴⁸ "Orang China Mengaku Semenanjung Negeri-nya dan kata-nya Bukan Negeri Melayu" in *A1-Ikhwan*, 5th February 1931, as quoted in W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.209.

⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso Editions and NLB, reprinted 1985, pp.41-49.

imagined community and show its political and historical weakness.

During the 1930s, the following Malay newspapers were in circulation: *Warta Malaya* (founded by an Arab family), *Saudara*, *Majlis*, *Utusan Melayu*, *Bumiputra*, *Suara Benar*, *Tanah Melayu*, *Berita Sekolah*, *Cahaya Singapura*, *Persahabatan* and *Warta Kinta*. These were the newspapers that reacted vigorously to Lim Cheng Yan's comment. *Suara Benar* responded by stating that:

...the Malays have rights not because they were born in Malaya but because they belong to the Malay *bangsa* and are first *bangsa* that owns the land.⁵⁰

Majallah Guru in a stinging rebuff to the claims of non-Malays to political rights in Malaya goes on to state that:

The foreign *bangsa* naturally do not have any rights here and their actions in claiming rights are considered by the Malays as insulting the *bangsa Melayu* which will lose their Malayness...⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Suara Benar*, 22 November 1932 "...hak anak Melayu itu bukan kerana mereka beranak di Malaya bahkan anak Melayu itu kerana berbangsa Melayu dan bangsa yang asal yang mempunyai tanah air." as quoted in Mohd. Kurnain bins Hashim's "Soal Kaum Imigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu (1930an)" in Lembaran Akhbar Melayu, Persatuan Sejarah Melayu, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p.93.

⁵¹ *Majallah Guru*, 1st October 1932. Bangsa asing itu sememang tidak mempunyai hak di sini, dan perbuatan menuntut hak itu dianggap oleh orang Melayu sebagai menghina bangsa Melayu yang kehilangan sifat kebangsaan...

In 1932 Abdul Rahim Kajai, an ardent proponent of *bangsa Melayu* as a politically imagined community, called upon the British High Commissioner to stop the *bangsa-bangsa asing* from asking for rights in this country.⁵²

Majlis characterised the claims of the non-Malays for rights in the Malay states in the following manner:

If ducks want to claim the rights of hens, therefore must they leave the water and come to the land and eat by pecking and not eat like ducks, that is the custom of hens until they can crow. When it is like that, there is no longer any obstacle for the hens to accept it as its kind.⁵³

Some Malays saw the "national grievance" of socio-economic deprivation brought about some basis for Malay unity. However, this unity was not based on a belief in the need to have a national identity, unite the Malay states to oppose British control and demand independence. The proof of the division within the Malay community was the setting up of the various Malay state associations that catered exclusively to state identity and interests and had nominal links with one another.

⁵² Editorial in *Majlis*, 14 March 1932 as cited in Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, Abdul Rahim Kajai: Wartawan dan Sasterawan Melayu, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1984, p.346.

⁵³ *Majlis*, 8 January 1934. Maka jika itik berkehendakan hak ayam hendaklah mereka keluar dari air naik ke darat malan mematuk jangan menyudu lagi, itulah adat resam ayam hingga sampai boleh berkokok lagi, seperti yang sesudah itu tentulah tidak ada halangan bagi ayam itu mengakui bangsanya.

Pan-Malayan organizations that attempted to build a nationalist movement which would unite the Malay community from all the states were unable to overcome the problem of state parochialism and narrow-minded interests. According to Roff, the *Persaudaran Sahabat Pena Malaya* which was the "first genuinely pan-Malayan organization" held its first national congress on 11 November, 1934 at Taiping, Perak which was attended by members from all over Malaya. By itself this was a notable achievement. The organization had as its slogan *Hidup Bahasa, Hiduplah Bangsa*, (Long live the language, long live the community) and tried to lay the basis for a Pan-Malayan Malay consciousness by building a strong link between language and national identity. It failed miserably. Within four years of its inauguration, serious tension developed between the "*peranakan*-dominated headquarters in Penang and the purely Malay state branches" and a serious split developed.⁵⁴

While the *Melayu* versus *peranakan* issue was a stumbling block, a more serious problem was the reluctance of many Malays to be involved in political activities. According to Ishak Haji Muhammad, the majority of Malays chose not to be involved in *siasah* (politics) because of the disapproval of the traditional elite.⁵⁵ Roff agrees and

⁵⁴ See W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, pp.215-221.

⁵⁵ Interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, April 1985, Kuala Lumpur.

states that, "this view was encouraged both by the highly authoritarian cast of traditional Malay political (and more recently religious) life and by the fact, widely known in the 1930s, that the British were employing agents to hunt down persons plotting to subvert the present order."⁵⁶

Up to the outbreak of the Second World War every attempt to unite the Malays politically and develop a nationalist movement ended in abject failure. The first Pan-Malayan Congress of state Malay associations which was held in Kuala Lumpur in 1939 had to grapple with the problem of deciding between the credentials of two Malay associations in Penang, one largely *Jawi Peranakan* and the other supposedly *Melayu jati*.⁵⁷ At the second Congress in December 1940 in Singapore an attempt was made to agree on a *takrif Melayu* (definition of *Melayu*) which would make it easier for the state associations to decide on who would qualify for membership. The *Persatuan Melayu Selangor* proposed that:

⁵⁶ W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.218.

⁵⁷ W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.242.

He who is considered *Melayu* is a person who claims descent from his father who originates from the Malay Peninsula and speaks the Malay language or one of the languages in the Malay archipelago and practices the Malay adat as well as being a muslim.⁵⁸

However delegates from Negri Sembilan raised strong objections to the *takrif* because according to the *adat perpatih Minangkabau* the line of descent was matriarchal. The second congress was also unable to decide whether the congress should be presented as the *Persidangan Bangsa Melayu* or *Persidangan Kebangsaan Melayu*. There was an attempt by the Congress to provide some clarification on this point which is as follows:

A movement is considered *kebangsaan* when it is inclined towards self-sufficiency or independence and it is called *bangsa* if it is used by the entire community or descendents.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Copy of the minutes of meeting from Ishak Haji Mohammad in Cheah Boon Kheng's Tokoh-tokoh Tempatan (Kumpulan Esei Sejarah Malaysia oleh Pelajar-pelajar U.S.M. Pulau Pinang: Kertas-kertas berkala dari Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan, 1982) pp.165-166. Yang dikatakan "Melayu" itu ialah seseorang yang keturunan sebelah bapa berasal daripada Semenanjung Melayu atau Gugusan Pulau-pulau Melayu dan bertutur bahasa Melayu atau suatu daripada bahasa-bahasa Gugusan Pulau-pulau Melayu dan berpegang dengan adat-adat Melayu serta beragama Islam.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.173. Sesuatu itu dikenakan 'kebangsaan' apabila ia cenderung kepada self-sufficiency (lengkap diri) atau independence (kemerdekaan) dan sesuatu itu dikatakan 'bangsa' (national) apabila ia dipakai oleh seluruh kaum atau keturunan...

Finally it was decided to call the Congress the *Persidangan Persatuan-persatuan Melayu Semenanjung Tanah Melayu*. Roff states that the leaders of the Malay associations were "essentially conservative in nature" and were not ready to commit themselves to the nationalist struggle for independence.⁶⁰ From the above quotation it can be seen that the various Malay associations were unwilling to link *bangsa* with nationalist (*kebangsaan*) objectives.

The Malay radicals Ibrahim Yaacob and Ishak Haji Muhammad were disgusted with the narrow-minded state parochialism of the Malay associations because it served to divide the Malays against each other. In 1938, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* was formed by these radicals who were led by Ibrahim Yaacob. The K.M.M. was conceived to be a national political movement. Ibrahim has written that the K.M.M. wanted to overthrow the British and bring about a political union between Malaya and the Dutch colonial territories in an *Indonesian Raya* or *Melayu Raya*.

There are very few contemporary documents concerning the K.M.M. and its activities and one is forced to rely primarily on the written accounts of Ibrahim Yaacob published many years later. According to Roff, the K.M.M.

⁶⁰ W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.246.

"meant different things to different people."⁶¹ For Ibrahim Yaacob, the K.M.M. was a nationalist movement with the avowed aim of liberating the *bangsa Melayu* which comprised a core of 60 million people in the Malay peninsula and the surrounding Malay archipelago. Writing in the *Majlis* Ibrahim called upon the Malays to

...rise as one *bangsa* which possesses a civilization and refinement which will at the very least become one *bangsa* which lives in the south of the Asian continent, living in its homeland.⁶²

Ibrahim Yaacob felt that his *Melayu Raya* was synonymous with *Indonesia Raya*, and had a common history linked in historical continuity to a glorious past. As such his aim was for the various groups of *bangsa Melayu* in both the Dutch colonial territories and the Malay states in Malaya to be liberated from colonial rule and emerge in a sovereign state as one united *bangsa*. According to him,

the aspiration of the *bangsa orang Melayu* is to struggle for the independence of the land and the *bangsa Melayu* which will unite again in one great country according to the interest and desire of the people as a whole... The aim of *Melayu Raya* is towards *Indonesia Raya* which is the aspiration of the Malay nationalist movement, that is to revive again the

⁶¹ W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.232.

⁶² *Majlis*, 16 November 1939...bangun sebagai satu bangsa yang mempunyai tamaddun dan kesopanan sekurang-kurangnya akan menjadi satu bangsa yang hidup di selatan benua Asia hidup dengan tanah airnya.

heritage of Sri Vijaya which is in the direction of a common unity of the *bangsa*.⁶³

Whatever may have been his political ambitions, it is doubtful if his idea of the "imagined community" went beyond his personal beliefs and that of his immediate following. Until the Japanese Occupation of Malaya in 1941 there was little chance of the K.M.M. being able to carry out its political aims.

In East Sumatra, the situation was markedly different. The Malays could not claim to be the only indigenous people as the Karo and the Simalungun were also indigenous to the area. The problem was not so much which among the three *sukus* were indigenous but how to bring about a political unity among the three so as to be able to have an "imagined community" within an acceptable political, cultural and religious framework.

Even more fragmented than Malaya, the native states in East Sumatra were divided into at least forty-one states

⁶³ Ibrahim Yaacob, Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu, N.V. Alma'ariff, Jakarta, 1951, p.65. Yang menjadi tjita2 bangsa orang Melayu ialah memperdjuangkan Kemerdekaan Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu jang mempersatukan kembali kepada satu ikatan nusa jang besar menurut kepentingan dan kemauan rakjat seluruhanja. Tujuan Melayu Raya kearah Indonesia-Raya jang djadi tjita2 pergerakan kebangsaan Melayu itu ialah untuk menebus kembali hak warisan Sri-Vidjaya, ialah kearah kesatuan bangsa bersama.

which had signed different contractual arrangements with the Dutch. As seen earlier, in these agreements the rulers gave up their sovereignty to the Dutch and accepted their territories to be part of the Netherlands East Indies. The rulers were not in favour of Indonesian nationalism because it would threaten their interests. Indonesian nationalism made its appearance about the same time as a sentiment that Sumatra was different and distinct from Java. This was quite apparent in the founding of the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* (Association of Sumatran Youths) in the second decade of the twentieth century in Batavia. Some of its members were to play an important role in the political development of East Sumatra.

Tengku Dr. Mansur, whose speech was published in the first issue of the association's organ, stressed unity among the various *sukus* in Sumatra and that it was futile to rely on the sultans who were envious of each other.⁶¹ Among the educated and politically conscious Malays, the sultans were not perceived as leaders or even as agents of change. However, the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* existed in Batavia and in Sumatra for a brief period and it was established at a time before Indonesia-wide nationalism had much credibility. In East Sumatra, there were nationalist organizations and associations that were established within the first two

⁶¹ *Jong Sumatra*, Organ van den Jong Sumatranen-Bond, 1ste Jaargang, No.1, Jan. 1918, p.3.

decades of the twentieth century. The *Insulinde* was formed in Medan in May 1917 by a small group of Eurasians and Indonesian civil servants with branches in Belawan, Pangkalan Branden, Siantar. Those involved in *Insulinde* were also members of either *Sarekat Islam* or *Budi Utomo*.⁶⁵ Branches of the *Parti Nasional Indonesia* were formed in East Sumatra⁶⁶ while the *Taman Siswa* which was founded in Java in 1922 was also established in East Sumatra in 1928⁶⁷. Both these organizations despite their 'Javanese character' stressed the concepts of an Indonesian Nation State, of an Indonesian National Culture, a National Language, a National Flag and a National Anthem.⁶⁸ Nationalist activities helped broaden support for these organizations among some Karo and Simalungun Batak youths who were opposed to Dutch colonial rule in towns such as Medan, Kabanjahe and Siantar. These youths were also disillusioned and frustrated with the conservative authorities in their ethnic homelands.

Whether Indonesian nationalism made an impact on some segments of the Malay community in Sumatra Timur is an open question. Probably few were attracted to Indonesian

⁶⁵ Oostkust van Sumatra Instituut Kroniek, 1917, pp.44-45.

⁶⁶ Bernard Dahm, History of Indonesia in the Twentieth Century, Pall Mall Press, London, 1971, p.65.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁶⁸ Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli 1942-1950", Ph.d, Sydney, 1976, p.135.

nationalism because of the lack of tangible benefits that might accrue to them.⁶⁹

Indonesian nationalism had some impact in Malaya. Roff recounts that students of the Sultan Idris Training College were influenced by Indonesian national consciousness.⁷⁰ Cheah Boon Kheng states that O.T. Dussek, a British colonial official, was credited by the late Haji Buyong Adil with awakening political consciousness among the students. Dussek believed that Malay welfare could be promoted by improving Malay vernacular education. In order to overcome the shortage of lecture books in Malay, Dussek purchased and used a considerable number of books published by the *Balai Pustaka*. Thus were students like Ibrahim Yaacob, Buyong Adil and others influenced by Indonesian nationalism.

Ibrahim Yaacob claimed that the political awareness resulting from exposure to Indonesian nationalism led him and four other college friends to enrol secretly as members of the *Partai Nasional Indonesia*.⁷¹ As for the majority, Roff has quoted a graduate of the S.I.T.C. who remarked that the

⁶⁹ Dutch records on Sumatra do not mention any significant Malay involvement in Indonesian nationalists activities there.

⁷⁰ Roff, Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.155. See also Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya," Indonesia 28, pp.86-88.

⁷¹ Iskander Kamel Agastya (Ibrahim Yaacob), Sedjarah dan Perjuangan di Malaya, Yogyakarta: Nusantara, 1951, pp.60-61.

students were not greatly interested in politics though there was admiration for the political ability of the Indonesians. However, the Malay students were more inclined towards writing as a means to help the Malays raise their standard of living.¹²

Therefore, it can be seen that while Indonesian nationalism did influence some Malay students in the S.I.T.C., it did not lead to political activism of the scale that existed in East Sumatra.

By the 1930s the East Coast of Sumatra like the Malay states in Malaya saw the setting up of Malay ethnic associations. All of these associations were sponsored by the sultanate ruling families or by other prominent *kerajaan* leaders. According to Tengku Luckman Sinar, two associations for the preservation of Malay national and cultural identity were established in Serdang. These were the *Bangsawan Sepakat* and the *Persatoean Soleaiman*. The *Persatoean Kita* was set up in Deli while the *Bangasawan Langkat Sedjati* was formed in Langkat. In 1937, the sultan of Deli sponsored the *Persatoean Boemi Poetera Deli* while in 1939 a Malay youth organization, the *Persatoean Anak Deli Islam* (PADI), was established. PADI was more militant and politically inclined and stressed the need for the Malays in

¹² W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, p.155.

Deli to protect their rights.⁷³

These associations like their Malayan counterparts were strongly ethnocentric but the East Sumatran associations stressed an Islamic orientation which was in line with the doctrines of the *Kaum Tua*.⁷⁴ In both the Malay peninsula and Sumatra's East Coast, these associations reflected a fear for the future of Malay culture and Malay rights since demographically the Malays were in a minority in what they considered to be their *tanah Melayu*. In both territories, these associations were divided by political rivalries and state loyalties and until the final years of colonial rule did not progress towards establishing a national movement.

It was only in 1938 that an association which tried to emphasise a genuinely Pan-Malay identity in East Sumatra was formed. It was called the *Persatoean Sumatera Timoer* (PST) and was initiated by two school teachers, Abdoel Wahab and Zahari, who were disturbed by the social and economic backwardness of the three *orang asli suku*.⁷⁵ In order to give the PST greater influence and membership it was placed under the leadership of Tengku Dr. Mansur, a well known

⁷³ Tengku Luckman Sinar, 'Sedjarah Negeri-negeri Melayu Sumatera Timur,' typescript, n.p., no.d. 1973. Interview with Tengku Luckman Sinar, Medan, 1985.

⁷⁴ According to Deliar Noer, the *Kaum Tua* championed the continuation of the established custom and tradition.

⁷⁵ *Soematera-Timoer*, 3, 15 January 1940.

physician who was related to the Asahan royal family and who as a student had led the *Jong Sumatranen Bond*. Tengku Dr. Mansur was assisted by some senior Malay government officials and some prominent members of the various *kerajaans* in East Sumatra. Most of the members of the PST were Malays with a sprinkling of Simalungun Bataks.

The PST did try to step beyond the boundaries of the Malay community by claiming to speak for all three *orang asli* (indigenous) communities. However because its leadership was in the hands of members of the Malay *kerajaan*, it was seen to represent ethnic Malay interests and it did not attract members from the Karo and Simalungun *sukus* on a large scale. Mohamad Said who was one of the founder members stated that as a result of the PST falling into the hands of *kerajaan* individuals it become inactive and ineffective.¹⁶

In both Malaya and Sumatra's East Coast, the Malay *kerajaans* were no longer seen in a positive light by some Malays. Indeed their role as leaders and protectors of the Malay community was being questioned as a result of the economic and social disadvantages that were being faced by the Malays vis-a-vis the non-Malays in all fields. Colonial domination had reduced the active role of the Malay rulers

¹⁶ *Waspada*, 26 January 1977, article by Mohamed Said on "Revolusi Nasional Di Sumatera Utara".

and they were seen by some Malays such as Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ibrahim Yaacob as collaborators with the colonial powers in the exploitation of the people and resources of the country.

By the time of the K.M.M. there was in existence a group of Malays that harboured anti-raja sentiments. Among them were Ibrahim Yaacob, Ishak Haji Muhammad, and Ahmad Boestamam.⁷⁷ Despite such minority voices of criticism most Malays in both Sumatra and Malaya continued to see their rajas as an essential feature of Malay identity. The Japanese Occupation of the Malay states in 1941 led to a radical change in the position of the Malay raja. They were successfully manipulated by the Japanese and were forced to surrender many of the powers and privileges they had during the British period. The Japanese "governed Malaya as a single integrated colony under one supreme government headed by the Malayan Military Administration in Singapore."⁷⁸ In practice there were no longer any separate states with their own symbols and administrative apparatus. The role of sultans was "reduced to that of minor officials, heads of the state Islamic affairs bureau, in contrast to their positions under the British when they enjoyed the prestige of being, at least nominally, heads of their own states."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, Kuala Lumpur, 1986.

⁷⁸ Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star Over Malaya, p.28.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

Quoting from British reports, A.J. Stockwell noted that:

"the public humiliations and manifest feebleness of the sultans dismayed their subjects. Moreover, the *raayat* itself was becoming a force to be wooed by aspiring Malay leaders, as men were recruited to para-military units while even Malay women were being mobilized for the war effort."⁸⁰

The Japanese treated the sultans with scant respect. It was reported in British records that "the Sultan of Johor was publicly reprimanded for leaning on his stick before Japanese officers; and that the residence of the Sultan of Kedah in Alor Setar was commandeered by the Japanese and stripped of all furniture and fittings."⁸¹ In addition the ease with which the Japanese replaced Sultan Musa Udin by Alam Shah in Selangor, and attempts to replace Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak by a descendent of the late Sultan Abdullah who was implicated in the murder of the first British resident James Birch, reduced their standing in the eyes of the Malays. Even in the domain of religious affairs, their powers were reduced. The *Majlis Ugama Islam* or State Religious Councils were abolished, and not reintroduced until 1943. In Perak, Sultan Abdul Aziz was bitterly resentful of the loss of his prerogative to appoint *Kathi*

⁸⁰ A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During The Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, MBRAS, Monograph No.8, pp.11-12.

⁸¹ BMA/PS no.408 pt.III as quoted in Stockwell's British Policy And Malay Politics During The Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, p.11.

and Assistant *Kathi*. This power was taken over by the Japanese governor.⁸²

The situation seemed equally bad (but for different reasons) for the Malay sultans in Sumatra's East Coast. When the Japanese entered East Sumatra, they were greeted with slogans which called for the dissolution of the *kerajaan* (*hapuskan kerajaan*) or the removal of the raja's powers (*hilangkan kuasa raja-raja*).⁸³ Abdullah Hussain recollected that, "among the Karo and the Simalungun Bataks, there was hardly any sympathy for the rajas. Both these two *sukus* would have been happy to see the destruction of the rajas. The Malays were still loyal to their rajas but they were not too sure of the ability of the rajas to protect their interest."⁸⁴ A member of the Serdang royal family stated that no doubt the Malay sultanates were threatened at the time of the Japanese but the Serdang sultanate was secure in that it had always been anti-Dutch in outlook and sentiment.⁸⁵ According to van Langenburg, "in February and March of 1942, the Dutch defeat had raised fears of

⁸² See Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya, with Reference to Sultans, the Islamic Religion and the Muslim Malays, 1941-1945", Asian Studies 7, No.1, Apr. 1969, pp.103-104.

⁸³ Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1982, p.217.

⁸⁴ Interview with Abdullah Hussain, Penang, 1985.

⁸⁵ Interview with Tengku Luckman Sinar, Medan, April, 1985.

impending doom in most *kerajaan* hearts, especially as they viewed the close ties being established between the Japanese and *pergerakan* sectors of the nationalist movement." But it became obvious to the *kerajaans* that they were needed and that an accomodation with the Japanese was possible. Similarly A.J.S. Reid states that as far as Japanese policy was concerned, any radical change to the position of the sultans was to be avoided.

One good reason why the Japanese were unwilling to demolish the *kerajaans* was because they had a purpose for them in winning over the Malay *rakyat* to the Japanese cause. Therefore, their incomes, titles and religious authority were maintained as in Dutch times.⁸⁶ While the position of the *kerajaans* was maintained the *pergerakan* and the Islamists were also given a role to play in that they were important in the structures established by the Japanese for mobilising and propagating support for Japanese plans. This meant that polarisation between the *kerajaan*, *pergerakan* and Islamists became more pronounced. For van Langenburg the Japanese cultivation of the various groups in East Sumatra was based on a policy of divide and rule in which the Japanese played opposing sides and factions against one

⁸⁶ H.J. Benda, J.K. Irikura, and K. Kishi (eds.), Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia: Selected Documents, New Haven, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1965, p.190, also Shonan Simbun, 22 January 2603.

another.⁸⁷ So long as the Japanese remained master of the situation the Malay *kerajaans* were not in any danger from the *pergerakan* or Islamic groups but neither could the *kerajaan* take any action against these groups. But their prestige and standing fell tremendously during the Japanese Occupation. The sultans were prevailed upon to support the Japanese war effort as well as celebrate Japanese victories and military achievements and through them the Japanese called upon their subjects to make sacrifices for the ultimate victory of Japan.

However, Japanese rule brought in its wake tremendous hardships as essential goods and services were unavailable except to those with money or political connections with the Japanese. These included the sultans and nationalist and religious leaders cultivated by the Japanese. While the popular leaders could claim that their collaboration with the Japanese was not voluntary or that it was directed to a longer term nationalist goal, some of the Malay rajas like the Sultan of Deli could not use nationalism as a cover for their actions for some of them had overtly suppressed nationalism and flaunted their loyalty to the Dutch even though they did not cooperate willingly with the Japanese.

⁸⁷ See M. van Langenburg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra", pp.182-183.

A.J.S. Reid explained that in the midst of intense suffering among the people, the sight of "rajas and their relatives wielding a *cangkul* (hoe) to give a public example of farming or 'voluntary' road building, as was required of them increasingly as economic conditions deteriorated"⁸⁸ was startling. This in itself served to degrade the rajas' image. It was difficult to accept their sincerity when they lived well and comfortably while the masses suffered great deprivations and yet were urged to make 'sacrifices.'

Even in defending the integrity of Islam the rajas were probably found wanting. Hamka, a Minangkabau has written about the introduction of *Keirei* in East Sumatra which was to bow in the direction of the imperial palace in Japan, a practice repugnant to Islamic sensitivities since it resembled the bowing during prayer. The sultans were unwilling to bring the matter up to the Japanese authorities even though they were heads of religion in their own states. It was left to Hamka and other non-Malay *ulamas* to seek clarification from the Japanese concerning this matter.⁸⁹

Incidents of this nature served to reveal among the Minangkabaus, Bataks and other non-Malays how helpless the

⁸⁸ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, p.107.

⁸⁹ Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1982, pp.208-212.

rajas were and how little influence they had concerning the general welfare of the populace. The decline in the prestige of the *kerajaan* both in Malaya and in Sumatra's East Coast gave other groups an opportunity to attempt to take over leadership roles that were once assumed by the raja and his immediate family. In East Sumatra, it was the anti royal nationalists who wielded considerable influence at the time of the Japanese surrender. In Malaya, both the Malay radicals and the moderate aristocrats that moved into positions of influence and sought to obtain a greater role for themselves than was possible before the war. The ending of the war created a situation in which in East Sumatra as well as in Malaya there was an active bid for power and influence by both the *kerajaan* and the nationalists. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

MALAYAN UNION: THE CRISIS OF IDENTITY

The sudden capitulation of the Japanese Army on August 15, 1945 was a cause of surprise to both the British and the inhabitants in Malaya. While the Malaya of pre-1941 was easily recognisable and comfortable for the Malay *kerajaans* and the Malays in the Federated Malay states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang and the Unfederated Malay states of Johor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, the situation in August 1945 was different.

Divided politically among the nine petty Malay *kerajaans*, the Malays were leaderless, demoralised and politically unprepared for the kind of changes that the British had drawn up for the Malay peninsula. For some Malays, the Japanese surrender meant a return to the pre-war political and social arrangement through the symbolic assurance that the Malay character of the *kerajaan* would be safeguarded by the British administration. It was assumed by Malays that such a policy would continue and the return of the British would be most welcomed to counteract the newly assertive Chinese community.

Serious Sino-Malay clashes took place in Johor, Negri Sembilan, Perak and Selangor. As stated by one writer,

before the Japanese Occupation, racial tensions between the Malays and the Chinese were not characteristic of the relationship between the different communities. The Occupation changed all that. It accentuated racial differences and heightened communal fears which later resulted in racial antagonism and violence.¹

Fear of Chinese domination was uppermost in the minds of some Malays connected with the Malay courts and it was reported that "in all the villages throughout the Malay states, the Chinese Resistance Forces are in command."² Since the Chinese Resistance Forces were in the main insensitive to Malay culture and considered the Malays to have been collaborating with the Japanese, their treatment of Malays was often unsympathetic. For some Malays the interregnum from the takeover of the towns and villages in the Malay states was a period of crisis within the Malay community. As a former police inspector recollected,

that was the time when to be an *orang Melayu* (Malay) of any position slightly above the masses meant having your life at the end of a bayonet. The Chinese communists who took over towns and villages acted as if the *negeri-negeri Melayu* (Malay states) were their own property and they took reprisals against any Malay they suspected of having collaborated with the Japanese. To all intents and purposes, they "owned" the country and we were treated like aliens in our own country.³

¹ Khong Kim Hoong, Merdeka: British Rule And The Struggle For Independence in Malaya, 1945-1957, Institute for Social Analysis, Kuala Lumpur, 1984, p.32.

² B.M.A./TS Com no. 58/9, "Report on the Military Government, 12-30 September 1945," by the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer of Malaya.

³ Interview with Inspector Abdul Latif Ahmad, Kuala Kangsar, Perak, April 1985.

British records do acknowledge the hostility between the Malays and the Chinese as well as the threat the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army could pose to the British and it was noted that "the Malay Police Force had become utterly demoralised" while "the Chinese Resistance Forces were establishing themselves to the detriment of the Malay population."¹ Malays were mindful of the implications of a concerted Chinese communist takeover of the Malay states and they were determined to prevent this at all costs.²

The image within the Malay mind of that period is best summarised in the words of a Malay historian.

Within those two weeks, the *Bintang Tiga* guerillas had taken prisoners, tried, sentenced and murdered anyone they suspected of being Japanese supporters or lackeys. Within that period many Malays, Indians, Eurasians, Chinese and others, especially members of the police force were taken away and killed by the M.P.A.J.A. guerillas in a cold-blooded and cruel manner...The Malay states and the Straits Settlements were under an inhuman regime. There was no longer any proper laws and human lives no longer had any value.³

¹ B.M.A./TS Com no.58/9

² Most elderly Malay informants always assumed that there was a plot by the Chinese to take over the Malay states. In fact, a good number of Chinese and especially the English educated ones were all for the re-establishedment of the pre-war political system and some even feared the M.P.A.J.A. and its policies.

³ Haji Buyong Adil, Sejarah Johor, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, pp.323-324.

Haji Buyong Adil well reflects the terror that had descended on all the major ethnic groups in the peninsula. The Malay *kerajaans* too were very unsure where they stood in such a situation. In at least three Malay states, the *kerajaan* was under some sort of threat. According to Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman,

In Alor Star, there was an attempt by the M.P.A.J.A. to take over the state capital and depose the Sultan. However, the Kedah Malays got wind of their plans and prepared to resist the attempt to seize power by force. The help of the Japanese Army was enlisted by the Malays and had the Chinese of the *Bintang Tiga* attempted to take control of Alor Star and depose the sultan, they would have been finished. In Kedah, we put a stop to their mischief.¹

The possibility of any attempt to depose the Sultan of Kedah was enough to send *Saberkas*² youths armed with *parangs* (long knives) to the *Balai Besar* (Great Hall) to hoist the

¹ Interview with Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, Alor Star, Kedah, March, 1985. See also Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946, Singapore University Press, 1983, p.172.

² *Saberkas* was purportedly founded during the Siamese administration of Kedah in 1953. *Saberkas* was supposed to stand for *Syarikat Rakyat Kedah Alor Star* or Peoples' Co-operative Society Kedah, Alor Star, another meaning attributed to it was *Syarikat Bekerjasama Kebajikan Am Saiburi* or General Welfare Co-operative of Saiburi. Saiburi was the name given to Kedah during the Siamese control of that state. It was clear that the second of these names was used in 1943 to allow it to function under Siamese/Japanese auspices. An alternative meaning of *Saberkas* was *Sayang Akan Bangsa Ertinya Redza Korban Apa Segala* which is love of the race means the sacrifice of anything. This alternative meaning emerged as Japanese/Siamese authority disappeared. Its motto is Social Justice and the Sovereignty of the People. Its most important members were Khir Johari and Senu Abdul Rahman.

Kedah state flag and to issue a warning to the communists that any attempt to interfere in the affairs of Kedah would be resisted.⁹ In Pahang it was suspected that the M.P.A.J.A. had plans to kidnap Sultan Abu Bakar and force him to agree to the establishment of a communist state in Pahang. Worse still, it was rumoured that the M.P.A.J.A. had plans to kill him. This possibility stirred the *Wataniah*, a Malay anti-Japanese resistance force operating in Pahang to work together with British officers of Force 136 to spirit him away in hiding until it was felt that there was no threat to his person.¹⁰

In Kota Bharu, the state capital of Kelantan, Chinese guerillas from the Kuomintang took over the town and caused fear among the local people.¹¹ Though there was no concrete evidence to show that the M.P.A.J.A. had plans to depose the various sultans or even to assassinate them, the fact that the M.P.A.J.A. units were making their presence felt and were summarily meting out retribution to Malays (and Chinese) who were accused of being Japanese collaborators

⁹ Interview with Mohd. Khir Johari, Sungei Patani, Kedah, March, 1985. See also Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946, Singapore University Press, 1983, p.172.

¹⁰ Harry Miller, "The Ruler who was Kidnapped," *Straits Times*, Sing., 29 May, 1957. See also Buyong Adil, Sejarah Pahang, Kuala Lumpur, 1972, p.365.

¹¹ Harry Miller, Menace in Malaya, London, 1954, p.51.

after conducting kangaroo court trails led Malays to believe that their political institutions were in danger of being destroyed.

Because these active M.P.A.J.A. units were mainly Chinese many Malays believed the Chinese planned to destroy the Malay monarchies and control the country. We have seen that the sultans played a crucial role in Malay religion and culture and in the community's sense of identity. It was not surprising, therefore, that a threat to the Malay monarchies whether real or imaginary provoked in many Malays a violent reaction.¹² Defence of the institution of the monarchy was to inspire Malay political action in even more dramatic ways during the next year. In explaining the violent Malay reaction to the M.P.A.J.A. takeover of towns and villages, however, other factors must also be considered. It is necessary to analyse how the Malays felt and what their thoughts were at this critical period between the Japanese capitulation and the coming of the British back to Malaya. In looking back at this period some Malays explained that the M.P.A.J.A. action was not legal (*sah*), that they possessed no right (*hak*) to control the Malay states. The Chinese, it was said, were foreigners and had their own country of origin.

¹² I have been told by those I interviewed that during the Sino-Malay clashes after the Japanese capitulation many Malays chose to become amok and attack their opponents whenever they saw that the odds were against them.

This troubled period in Sino-Malay relations has already been dealt with in depth by Cheah Boon Kheng.¹³ Cheah has pointed out that the violent Malay reaction to the Chinese was due, among other factors, to the fear that their identity, culture and political institutions would be supplanted by Chinese culture and political dominance. Particularly alarming was the way the local Chinese reacted towards the triumphal entry of M.P.A.J.A. units into the main towns and villages.

After taking control, guerillas marched along the main streets under triumphal arches erected in their honour by their supporters, and the Chinese population especially came out in large numbers to greet them. Where these towns were predominantly Chinese the takeovers went ahead smoothly, but in areas where there was a large Malay population they were violently disputed.

The arrival of the British and their determination to re-establish law and order were welcomed by Malays, particularly English educated Malay aristocrats, as well as by Chinese and Indians who were fearful of the M.P.A.J.A.¹⁴

¹³ See Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1983.

¹⁴ The majority of Malays were waiting for their leaders to decide what stand to take concerning the British return, or were too busy trying to survive to take any stance.

As far as the British were concerned, their main task was reviving an administration which would facilitate economic recovery and the return to civil government. The ravages of the war had created serious problems in communications, health facilities and personnel for the administration. Malayan Civil servants who returned from England or were released from internment were soon to fill important positions in the administration. For the Malay conservatives who were linked to the palaces, it seemed natural to assume that the same pre-war partnership between the Malay aristocrats and the British would resume. The Malay left-wing who had acquired political prominence during the Japanese Occupation were of the opinion that the Malay states should be united with the Indonesian Republic in an independent *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia).

The reactions and ideas of these two Malay groups were in sharp contrast. The Malay left had a clearer conception of what they wanted to do, as well as a set of ideas that had been worked out. Those who had been members of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* had considerable influence within the Malay community during the Japanese Occupation, as they worked closely with the Japanese. Members of the K.M.M. were active propagandists for the Japanese as well as for their own ideas of *Melayu-Raya*. However they enjoyed no political power and their influence faded after the Japanese

surrender.¹⁵ The Malay left established the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* at an inaugural meeting in Ipoh, Perak on 17 October, 1945, where Mokhtaruddin Lasso was elected protem Chairman, with Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy¹⁶ as Vice-Chairman in his absence. The Secretary-general was Dahari Ali. Other members included Arshad Ashaari, Baharuddin Tahir, Rashid Maidin, Abdullah C.D. and Ahmad Boestamam.

The *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* held its inaugural congress on 30 November 1945 at Ipoh where an eight-point programme was produced and adopted. The programme was as follows:

1. To unite the *bangsa Melayu* (Malay race) and plant *kebangsaan* in the hearts of the Malays with the aim of uniting Malaya in a big family i.e. the *Republik Indonesia Raya*.

¹⁵ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-45: Ibrahim Yaacob and the Struggle for Indonesia Raya", in *Indonesia* 28, October 1979.

¹⁶ Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy whose full name was Burhanuddin bin Haji Muhammad Nor was born in Cangkat Tualang, Perak. He was active in Malay nationalist activities during both the pre-war and post-independence period in Malaya. He was involved in K.R.I.S. (*Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung*), and the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*. He was also active in the *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (PUTERA) and the All Malaya Council For Joint Action. His main achievement can be seen in his idea of *Melayu* as the nationality of Malaya. This was adopted by the PUTERA and the AMCJA in the Peoples' Constitution. In 1950 he was detained by the British for his involvement in the Maria Hertogh riots. He was released in 1953. He died in 1969.

2. To achieve the rights of free speech, movement, assembly, meeting and obtaining education.
3. To raise the economic position of the *bangsa Melayu* through developing industry, business and agriculture as well as raising the standard of living of the *bangsa Melayu*.
4. To obtain freedom to practice farming; those who want to be farmers are to be exempted from the land rent altogether no matter where they are and they should be free to sell their produce at the market.
5. To require that full freedom be given to the Malays to establish their *sekolah kebangsaan* (national schools) where they will receive education in their own language free of charge.
6. To require the freedom to print their own books, to encourage education by democratic means so as to enhance the position of the *bangsa Melayu* in politics and to promote the feeling of *kebangsaan* or nationalism among the Malays.
7. The *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* wants to work with other *bangsa* who live in the country to live in peace and work towards setting up a Malayan United Front to enable Malaya to be *merdeka*, prosperous and peaceful as a part of the *Republik Indonesia Raya* or Republic of Greater Indonesia.
8. Support the movement of the Indonesian *umat* (people) in the struggle to achieve independence.¹⁷

In this programme we encounter the words *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* both of which will be dealt with in depth in a later chapter. The P.K.M.M. had the view that the *bangsa Melayu* should be united and that *kebangsaan* should be planted within them. This implied that the Malays were disunited even though they belonged to the same community.

¹⁷ See UMNO/SG no:96/1946.

Nationalism (*kebangsaan*) was absent and needed to be fostered in them. The P.K.M.M.'s aim was *kemerdekaan* (independence) of the *bangsa* and the country.¹⁸ To the party, the meaning of the term *kebangsaan* was nationalism based on loyalty to the country. It had no wish for British rule in the Malay states. To the party, Malaya was a British colony which should be given its freedom; the legal fiction about Malaya being under British protection (*naungan*) was rejected.¹⁹

The congress also adopted the Indonesian flag, the *Merah-Putih* (lit:Red-White), as the P.K.M.M.'s banner and voiced its support for the Malayan Union.²⁰ Of greater significance, because the P.K.M.M. considered Malaya to be a part of the Republic of *Indonesia Raya* and aimed to establish a Republic of Malaya, is the implication that the various *kerajaans* would have to be abolished, though this did not prevent the founders of the party from trying to get support from aristocratic leaders. Attempts were made to

¹⁸ Interview with Ishak Hj. Mohammad, April, 1985. Ishak stated that the *Indonesia Raya* that was envisaged would be a Federal structure and so it was necessary for Malaya to join it as an independent state.

¹⁹ See the introduction for the conflicting views of British control in the Malaya peninsula.

²⁰ The P.K.M.M. supported the union of the Malay states for the sake of Malay unity. Interview with Ishak Haji Mohammad, Kuala Lumpur, April 1985.

cultivate leaders like Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen,²¹ the Dato Panglima Kinta and the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang.²² Yet, despite the party's commitment to the establishment of a Republic in Malaya, there was little indication during this period that members gave serious consideration to the idea of peoples' sovereignty (*kedaulatan rakyat*). We shall see that the concept of *kedaulatan rakyat* was certainly discussed and elaborated across the Straits of Malacca.

The concept to which the P.K.M.M. ideologues made most contribution was that of *kebangsaan*. From the outset, it can be seen that the P.K.M.M. was a *Melayu* centric party and its idea of a nation was not confined to the Malay peninsula but was one where all the Malay speaking peoples were united within one political entity, and where the *bangsa Melayu* in Malaya would be reunited again with their Indonesian kith and kin as had been the case before colonialism separated them. It was not openly anti-Chinese, but it was anti-*kerajaan*. Its cherished aim was to bring Malaya into the *Republik Indonesia Raya*. Many of its supporters were former members of Ibrahim Yaacob's *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* and the

²¹ Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen had recommended the abolition of the sultans, as he believed that they did not represent the people. See CO825/35 pt.1 no.55104/1/3. He later renounced his title of Tengku in the interests of modernity. See *Majlis* 24, 27, 28 September 1946.

²² Both these individuals played important roles in U.M.N.O. The Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang was U.M.N.O.'s first Secretary-General.

Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semananjung, which had advocated joining Malaya with Indonesia as the ultimate unity of the Malay speaking peoples against Chinese economic and political domination. Thus the P.K.M.M.'s ideas were not really new in this respect.

The P.K.M.M.'s views were written down by Burhanuddin in a pamphlet entitled *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oktober 1945-17 Oktober 1946*, and printed in Singapore in 1946.²³

The historical perspective plus archaeological remains showed that for more than 3,000 years, the area mentioned had a civilization...The Sri Vijayan *kerajaan* in the state of Palembang has existed for not less than 2,000 years. Hindu and Chinese chronicles have mentioned it clearly; the same also in Arab chronicles...After Sri Vijaya the greatness and glory of our people passed to Majapahit and finally went to Malacca. The three empires stood alone, sovereign and great, free and independent, in harmony and friendship with other neighbouring governments and empires like India and China.²⁴

²³ Burhanuddin's pamphlet *Perjuangan Kita* was republished in romanised Malay in Kamaruddin Jaafar's Dr. Burhanuddin ElHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, Yayasan Anda Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1980.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32. Dipandang pula daripada segi ilmu tarikh dengan beberapa zat tanda-tanda menunjukkan lebih daripada 3,000 tahun bahawa kawasan tersebut telah bertamaddun...Kerajaan Sri Vijaya di negeri Palembang tidak kurang daripada 2,000 tahun telah terdiri. Kitab tarikh Hindu dan Cina ada menyebutkan dengan nyata; demikian juga dalam tawarikh Arab...Setelah Sri Vijaya itu berpindah pula kebesaran dan keagungan bangsa kita ke Majapahit dan pada akhirnya berpindah ke Melaka. Ketiga-tiga empayar itu berdiri sendiri dengan mulia dan agung, bebas dan merdeka; berbaik-baik bersahabat dan berhubungan dengan kerajaan-kerajaan dan empayar yang berjiran dengannya seperti India dan Cina.

Like Sukarno and other Indonesian nationalists, Dr. Burhanuddin used history as the major argument for the establishment of *Indonesia Raya*. Dr. Burhanuddin chose to ignore the conflicts between the Sri Vijayan and Majapahit empires as well as the conflict between the Malaccan empire and other Indonesian states. He saw these empires succeeding each other as a continuity in the political unity of the Malay speaking peoples.

The territorial extent of these three *kerajaan Melayu Raya* which succeeded each other is to the north to Siam, to the west till the shores of India onwards to the island of Madagascar, to the east including the island of Formosa near the island of Kyushu, Japan and to the south, the thousands of islands in the Pacific Ocean. At that time, the entire world did not have a political administration like today. The meaning of national is different from the political meaning of today. At that time it can be said that a *bangsa* or *kebangsaan* follows a *kerajaan*. The people are described as *rakyat* of the Sri Maharaja of Sri Vijaya, *rakyat* of Majapahit or *rakyat* of Malacca. That is a clearer way of uniting a *bangsa* and a *kebangsaan* at that time. As we know the Chinese are recognised as people of the Chin Dynasty.²⁵

²⁵ Burhanuddin AlHelmy as cited by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, p.32. Kawasan sempadan tiga kerajaan Melayu Raya yang berganti-ganti itu ke utara bersempadan dengan Siam, ke barat hingga pantai-pantai negeri India lantas kepulauan Madagaska, ke timur termasuk pulau Formosa berdekatan (Pulau) Kyushu Jepun dan ke selatan beribu-ribu pulau di Lautan Teduh (Pasifik). Pada masa itu seluruh dunia tidak mempunyai politik pemerintahan seperti hari ini. Erti kebangsaan (National) berlainan dengan politik hari ini. Pada masa itu bolehlah dikata bangsa atau kebangsaan ialah mengikut sesuatu kerajaan. Orang-orang atau rakyat dihitung dengan takrif seperti rakyat Sri Maharaja Sri Vijaya, rakyat Majapahit, rakyat Melaka. Begitulah cara yang lebih jelas susunan kesatuan sesuatu bangsa dan kebangsaan pada masa itu. Sebagaimana kita kenal bangsa Cina ialah dikenal daripada rakyat Chin Dynasti.

The Sultan and other Indonesian nationalists, Dr. Burhanuddin used history as the major argument for the establishment of Indonesia Raya. Dr. Burhanuddin does not ignore the conflicts between the Sri Vijayan and Majapahit empires as well as the conflict between the Malaccan empire and other Indonesian states. He saw these empires succeeding each other as a continuity in the political unity of the Malay speaking peoples.

The territorial extent of these three Keratan Malay Raya which succeeded each other is to the north to Siam, to the west till the shores of India onwards to the island of Madagascar, to the east including the island of Formosa near the island of Kyushu, Japan and to the south, the thousands of islands in the Pacific Ocean. At that time, the entire world did not have a political administration like today. The meaning of national is different from the political meaning of today. At that time it can be said that a bangsa or Keratan follows a Keratan. The people are described as rakyat of the Sri Maharaja of Sri Vijaya, rakyat of Majapahit or rakyat of Malacca. That is a clearer way of uniting a bangsa and a Keratan at that time. As we know the Chinese are recognised as people of the Chin Dynasty.

Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, as cited by Burhanuddin Latief in Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, p. 32. Keratan-sembadan tiga Keratan Melayu Raya yang beranggunganti itu ke utara bersempadan dengan Siam, ke barat hingga pantai-pantai negeri India Timur Kepulauan Madagaskar, ke timur termasuk pulau Formosa berdekatan (Pulau) Kyushu Jepun dan ke selatan bersempadan pulau di Lautan Tengah (Pasifik). Pada masa itu seluruh dunia tidak mempunyai politik pemerintahan seperti hari ini. Pada masa itu rakyat berlainan dengan politik hari ini. Pada masa itu rakyat dikata bangsa atau Keratan ialah mengikut keratan Keratan. Orang-orang yang rakyat ditentang dengan rakyat seperti rakyat Sri Maharaja Sri Vijaya, rakyat Majapahit, rakyat Melaka, Beritulah orang yang lebih jelas zaman Keratan sesuatu bangsa dan Keratan pada masa itu. Sebagai mana kita kenal bangsa Cina ialah dikenali sebagai rakyat Chin Dynasty.

Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy had a vision of a past cultural and historical unity which these areas seemed to have shared. The cultural and historical unity that affected these territories should now be considered as a basis for promoting a political unity of these vast and diverse areas. Continuing his case for a *Melayu Raya* he states:

There is no other great *bangsa* in this world which had extended culture on a vast scale for the whole race at the same time and pace as the *bangsa Melayu*. The *bangsa Melayu* has absorbed three cultures one after another which has fulfilled the character and soul in the descent of the *bangsa Melayu* i.e. Hindu culture for thousands of years and for a thousand years the soul and blood of the *bangsa Melayu* flowed with Buddhist culture. From the 11th century Anno Domini, Islamic culture has replaced these two cultures and lived in splendour and glory with the light of God that is pure in the soul of the *bangsa Melayu* as a whole. The *bangsa Melayu* is indeed a race that is unique in the world...²⁶

From the quote above, Burhanuddin had defined *bangsa Melayu* in the broadest possible way to include Javanese, Taiwanese, Madagascans etc. The implication of such a view

²⁶ Article of Burhanuddin as cited by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, p.32. Tidaklah suatu bangsa yang besar dalam dunia yang telah pernah menempun kebudayaan yang besar-besar seluruh umatnya serentak dan selari seperti bangsa Melayu. Bangsa Melayu telah menempun tiga kebudayaan berganti-ganti yang telah memenuhi budi dan jiwa keturunan bagi bangsa Melayu itu iaitu kebudayaan Hindu beribu-ribu tahun dan ribuan tahun pula jiwa dan darah bangsa Melayu mengalir dengan kebudayaan Budha. Dan dari abad kesebelas masihi mulalah pula kebudayaan Islam menggantikan kedua-dua kebudayaan itu hidup bergemilang dan bercahaya-cahaya dengan Nur Yang Maha Esa marak dan bersih dalam jiwa raga bangsa Melayu seluruhnya. Bangsa Melayu memang adalah suatu bangsa yang bersendirinya dalam dunia....

is that he had rejected ethnicity as a basis for *kebangsaan* and that when he used the term "Malays" he was referring to the broad Malayo-Polynesian ethno-linguistic group. This shows implicitly that to Burhanuddin Islam was a foundation for Malay culture. To Burhanuddin, the unity of the *bangsa Melayu* that existed in the glorious past as well as its wealth attracted traders from all over the world.

The prosperity, breadth, fame and glory of the *kerajaan Melayu* spread its name all over the world. Beginning from traders from India and China who for thousands of years have had trading links with the Malay states until finally the wealth, riches and fame of the Malay states spread even further till it was known in Persia, Arabia, Rome and Europe...²¹

Dr. Burhanuddin pointed to the time in the distant past when:

The *kerajaan Melayu* was prosperous, rich and wealthy. They lived in ease and in excess wealth in peace and harmony. They lived with their own *bangsa* and cooperated with each other and there was no one that came to annoy and disturb them before the arrival of the foreigners.²²

²¹ Article of Burhanuddin as cited by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, pp.32-33. Kemakmuran, kebesaran, kemegahan dan keagungan kerajaan Melayu semerbak namanya keseluruh dunia. Mulai dari saudagar bangsa-bangsa India dan Cina beribu-ribu tahun yang lalu telah mengadakan perhubungan perniagaan dengan negeri-negeri Melayu, akhirnya kemewahan kekayaan, kemakmuran negeri-negeri Melayu tersiarlah bertambah-tambah luas perkhabarannya hingga ke Parsi, Arab, Rum dan Eropah...

²² *Ibid.*, p.33. ...kerajaan Melayu mewah, makmur dan kaya. Mereka hidup dengan manja dan limpah makmur yang berlebihan hidup dengan aman dan damai. Hidup sesama bangsa sendiri - bekerjasama sendiri - tiada siapa-siapa yang mengacau dan mengganggu sebelum datang orang-orang dagang.

Burhanuddin's vision of the distant past was almost a description of the Garden of Eden before the fall of man. To him the past was glorious, the present was dark because of the colonialism of the European powers, but the future would be a glorious one again, especially as the aim was to achieve *merdeka* (independence) and unity of the *bangsa Melayu*. Burhanuddin's views were similar to the views expressed by Sukarno during his trial in 1930. Sukarno had stated that history was important for the national struggle and it was necessary to show the people that they had a glorious past. After this the people's consciousness would be raised by showing them a dark present under colonial rule. Finally, the shining future which is full of promise must be shown to the people.²³ His views fit in nicely with the rhetoric of nationalism. Dr. Burhanuddin consistently claimed that the arrival of foreigners brought about the disintegration and destruction of the unity of the *bangsa Melayu*.

Changes that came to the *bangsa Melayu* and the Malay states were due to trade - and because of that there is a Malay saying and among the Malays a term for outsiders whether Chinese, Indians, Arabs and others which is *orang dagang* (trading people), because they recognised these people as those who came to trade with their wares. So long as they (the Malays) saw anyone

²³ Anthony Reid, "The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past", in Anthony Reid and David Marr (eds.), Perception of the Past in South East Asia, ASAA Southeast Asia Publication Series, 1979, p.390.

else who was not from their *bangsa*, they called such a person an *orang dagang* which denoted not only an outsider but one who was connected with trading activities while in the English language the term used is foreigner and stranger.³⁰

According to Dr. Burhanuddin, these *orang dagang* brought not only trade but destruction to the Malays:

The Chinese, Indian, Persian and Arab races came to grab trade only but the Europeans who came to do business and trade came not only to control trade and business but finally grabbed the independence of the *bangsa* and the land of the Malays... Since 1511 which is the year the Malay kingdom of Malacca fell repeatedly there had been disasters on the entire *bangsa Melayu* in the Malay archipelago. From that time onwards the rights and justice for the Malays sank from the face of the earth.³¹

³⁰ Article of Burhanuddin as cited by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, p.33. Perubahan yang datang kepada bangsa Melayu dan Tanah Air Melayu ialah oleh perdagangan - kerana itulah dalam peribahasa Melayu dan orang-orang Melayu memanggil orang-orang luar negeri itu sama ada Cina, Hindu, Arab dan sebagainya dipanggilkan 'orang dagang' kerana mereka itu kenal orang-orang itu datang berdagang atau datang dengan perdagangannya. Asal sahaja mereka lihat panggil orang itu orang dagang... bukan sahaja menunjukkan orang luar tetapi orang luar yang berkaitan dengan hal dagang sedang dalam bahasa Inggeris berlainan balaghahnya (istilahnya) dengan perkataan FOREIGNER, dan STRANGER.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.34. Bangsa Cina, Hindi, Parsi dan Arab datang merebut perniagaan sahaja tetapi bangsa-bangsa Eropah yang datang berniaga dan berdagang itu bukan sahaja merebut perniagaan dan perdagangan hinggakan akhirnya merebut kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah air Melayu... Dari semenjak tahun 1511 itulah tahun jatuh kerajaan Melayu Melaka beransur-ansur sahajalah kemalangan dan nahas seluruh bangsa Melayu di Gugusan Pulau-Pulau Melayu. Dari semenjak itulah mula tenggelam hak dan keadilan Putera Melayu dari muka dunia.

With such a viewpoint, it can be seen that Dr. Burhanuddin was an idealist who desired the political unity of the "Malays" which according to him existed before the arrival of the Europeans. Thus the founding of the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* was the first step in the process of working towards the attainment of his ideal of *Indonesia Raya*. Since he was of the opinion that an independent Indonesia would be the basis of this new *Melayu Raya* or greater Malay unity, it made sense to link the Malay peninsula with Indonesia. Thus the P.K.M.M. was set up as a political party that was very vocal in its struggle to restore Malay rights. The slogan of the P.K.M.M. during its struggle was *membela hak dan keadilan putera Melayu* or "protect the rights and obtain justice for the Malays." But to promote Malay nationalism in Indonesia at that stage was to be seen as parochial, anti-Indonesian nationalism and identity, which was supposed to transcend and supplant ethnicity.

Thus Burhanuddin's concept that *Indonesia Raya* was a form of *Melayu Raya* had serious flaws when seen in the context of Indonesian nationalism. The Indonesians on their part had never used the term *Melayu Raya* but were consistent in their use of the term *Indonesia Raya* which was accepted by every ethnic group in Indonesia. Were they to use the term *Melayu Raya* it was unlikely that the nationalist movement would have received such widespread support, for

the term *Melayu Raya* implied Malay cultural and ethnic dominance over the rest. From the viewpoint of numbers, the "Malays" were a very insignificant group in the Indonesian archipelago. Though Burhanuddin's use of the term *Melayu* was not limited to the specifically Malay speaking and Muslim groups but covered the whole of the far-flung Malayo-Polynesian ethno-linguistic group, the Malays of the peninsula might not have accepted such a broad definition as it might be seen as a threat to their *kebangsaan*. It is quite possible that Burhanuddin knew about this but chose to play up the theme of *Melayu Raya* to make his political programme more palatable to the Malays, with the aim of getting Malay support in the peninsula for his plans.³²

The P.K.M.M. had five principles which were adopted on 17 October 1945:

1. belief in God or *ketuhanan yang maha esa*
2. nationalism or *kebangsaan*
3. sovereignty of the people or *kedaulatan rakyat*
4. universal brotherhood or *persaudaraan sejagat*
5. social justice or *keadilan masyarakat*³³

³² It could also be that his idea of *Melayu* was what linguists would call "Austronesian", which some anthropologists would argue is still a valid category for a vast group not only on linguistic grounds.

³³ Article of Burhanuddin as cited by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu Dan Islam, p.54.

In looking at Dr. Burhanuddin's enumeration of the five principles of the P.K.M.M., it is clear that he drew his inspiration from the Panca Sila of the Republic of Indonesia. The Panca Sila as it was expounded by Sukarno in the meeting of the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* on 18 August 1945 in Jakarta also had five principles:

1. belief in an all embracing God or *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*
2. righteous and moral humanity or *kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*
3. the unity of Indonesia or *persatuan Indonesia*
4. democracy wisely guided and led by close contact with the people through consultation or *kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebidjaksanaan dalam permusjawaratan perwakilan*
5. social justice for the whole Indonesian people or *keadilan sosial bagi seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*³⁴

The similarities between the *Panca Sila* and the five principles of the P.K.M.M. are too close to be a mere coincidence. Burhanuddin was aware of the *Panca Sila* as he had access to Indonesian publications which had mentioned the *Panca Sila*. However, he made some important changes to it when he accepted it as the five principles of the P.K.M.M.

³⁴ See Muhammad Yamin, Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, jilid Pertama, Djakarta: Siguntang, 1959, p.49 for the English translation of the five principles and p.407 for the Indonesian original.

The second principle of the P.K.M.M., *kebangsaan* is equivalent to *persatuan Indonesia* and the fourth principle *persaudaran sejagat* is equivalent to *kemanusiaan*. In the case of Indonesia, nationalism certainly existed but unity was even less in evidence than in Malaya. Sukarno had to stress on *persatuan Indonesia* mainly because of the extraordinary diversity he was trying to appeal to. Burhanuddin preferred *kebangsaan*, not because Malaya was less united but because the term *kebangsaan* would strike a receptive chord among the Malays. Sukarno and Burhanuddin were emphasizing what they most needed - unity among Indonesia's myriad *sukus* (who would have misunderstood the term *kebangsaan*), and a sense of nation for Malays not much affected by modern movements.

The third principle of the P.K.M.M., sovereignty of the people (*kedaulatan rakyat*), was different from the fourth point in the *Panca Sila* which is *kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan perwakilan* (democracy wisely guided and led by close contact with the people through consultation). This was mainly a question of timing. The *Panca Sila* was first enunciated in June 1945 in a relatively conservative body (B.P.K.I.) under Japanese supervision. *Kedaulatan rakyat* was already a concept in Indonesian nationalist thinking in the 1930's. It was suppressed under the Japanese but it showed itself forcefully in the early stages of the revolution, especially

in October and November 1945. Burhanuddin was aware of it as the current definition of democracy. Even formulations of the *Panca Sila* at that time included *kedaulatan rakyat*. Events in Indonesia influenced the P.K.M.M.'s conception of *kedaulatan rakyat*. The P.K.M.M. felt that it could enhance Malay unity in the peninsula and was more inclined to press for *kedaulatan rakyat* as a means to counter the feudal monarchies in the Malay states. We can surmise that *kerakyatan* and *kedaulatan rakyat* were simply two ways of expressing democracy but the latter was more radical than the former. It is of interest that the P.K.M.M.'s call for *kedaulatan rakyat* had no qualifications attached to it, while the Indonesians in the fourth principle of their *Panca Sila* accepted democracy but qualified it by saying that it (democracy) should be wisely guided and led by close contact with the people through consultation. This element of hesitation shows the unease and wariness of the Indonesian elite in the P.P.K.I. concerning the principle of democracy.

Thus we can see some basic differences between the P.K.M.M.'s five principles and that of the *Panca Sila* of Indonesia. To Dr. Burhanuddin, the main reason for the struggle of the *bangsa Melayu* was to unite the Malays with other Malay speaking peoples of the Malay archipelago. It was not unlikely that his reasons for uniting Malaya and Indonesia were the same as the Indonesians. The Malay

radicals therefore possessed relatively clear if somewhat unrealistic policies, while the conservatives waited to see what the British would do.

What the British planned to do, as is well known, was to implement a Malayan Union in the Malay states. To achieve this union they obtained the consent of the traditional Malay rulers. What did British hope to achieve in the Malayan Union scheme? The immediate aim was to integrate the large Chinese community and the smaller Indian one into a Malayan polity with the aim of creating a sense of Malayanness. Secondly, the British wished to do away with the cumbrous pre-war administrative structure which comprised ten government units consisting of the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, the Unfederated Malay states of Johor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu and the Straits Settlements of Penang, Singapore and Malacca. They would replace these with a single centrally controlled state with Singapore as a separate entity. The third long term aim was to lead Malaya to independence.

For the British Government to achieve these aims, it was necessary to reorganise citizenship qualifications whereby 83% of the Chinese and 75% of the Indians would qualify under very liberal laws for citizenship.³⁵ At the

³⁵ K.J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1965, p.75.

same time, the British intended to open up the Civil Service - hitherto a British and Malay preserve - to all communities.³⁶ In the union the sultans would forfeit their positions as heads of respective states and would retain restricted authority only in the religious domain. The position of the sultans under the union was described in one Malay newspaper as that of *muftis* in their respective states. And it was pointed out that even in the domain of Islam the powers of the sultans would be curtailed.³⁷ As we have seen, in an important sense sovereignty had continued to reside with the Malay rulers during the colonial period. It was now to be entirely transferred to the British monarch. Therefore, the Malay rulers and many of their subjects were unlikely to welcome the new policy. If, as some historians have argued, the sovereignty of the rulers was a mere 'fiction' before the war, Malay animosity regarding the Malayan Union would indeed be meaningless. It was because, to quote again W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore's words, "the maintenance of the position and authority of the Malay rulers" was "a cardinal point" in British policy that the

³⁶ Mohammad Noordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1974, p.24.

³⁷ B. Simandjuntak, Malayan Federalism, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, p.39. "They (the rulers) were given legislative powers on matters of the Muslim religion but not on the collection of tithes and taxes, and even such legislation required the Governor's assent". See also Malayan Union and Singapore: Statement of Policy on Future Constitution, Cmd.6724, 1946, p.4, for a confirmation of the rulers diminished position vis-a-vis Islam.

Malayan Union startled and angered the conservative Malays.³⁸ The post-war British policy makers had made the error of grossly misunderstanding the significance of the Malay sultans.

Undoubtedly the British knew that consent would not be given easily and therefore it was necessary to use methods that under ordinary circumstances were not ethical or politically wise. The Malay elite that emerged from the ravages of the Japanese Occupation was tainted with the stigma of collaboration and as such were in a weak bargaining position. Raising the issue of collaboration with the Japanese was a powerful means of intimidating the Malay sultans. Among the sultans who were most objectionable to the British was Sultan Musa Udin of Selangor who had been placed on his throne by the Japanese. Musa Udin, aware of the fate in store for him, stated:

I wish to assure the British of the loyalty of the Malays to the protecting power...if as a result of what has happened in the three and a half years, doubts have crept into the British minds, I think we Malays can dispel these if we are put to the acid test...With the approaching change of Government I do not know what the future holds for me; but if it should be a reversion to the position before the occupation of Selangor by the Japanese, then I repeat, as I did many years ago, that you Malays should serve my brother as loyally as you did before the war. The air has been thick with rumours about the future of this state. Let us hope whatever happens in the future will be for our good.³⁹

³⁸ Report by W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore, on His visit to Malaya, Ceylon and Java, 1928, Cmd.3235, 1928-1929, p.18.

³⁹ *Malay Mail*, 11 Sept., 1945.

The Sultan's anxieties were well founded, regarding both his position as sultan and the attitude of the British towards the Malays. It was not long before he was placed under house arrest in Kuala Lumpur and subsequently deported to the Cocos-Keeling islands.⁴⁰ In the eyes of many Selangor aristocrats, this was a perfidious act as Musa Udin had always been the rightful heir to the Selangor throne."⁴¹

The role played by the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (D.C.C.A.O.), Brigadier H.C. Willan, in putting the Malay sultans into a state of uncertainty was significant. In his capacity as D.C.C.A.O., Brigadier Willan "was to contact the Malay Sultans who had survived the Japanese

⁴⁰ The Cocos-Kneeling Islands had been part of the colony of the Straits Settlements before the war. They remained under the jurisdiction of Singapore until 1955, when they became a part of Australia. Tengku Musa Udin remained on the islands until May 1946. After petitions from his wife and leading Malays in Selangor were submitted to the British, he was sent to Singapore.

⁴¹ See Haji Buyong Adil, Sejarah Selangor, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, p.171. He was also bypassed in the succession for the throne of Selangor during the Selangor succession dispute because he was heavily indebted. According to James de V. Allen, The Malayan Union, New Haven, Conn., 1967, p.17, Theodore Adams, the Resident of Selangor, decided that Musa Udin was unsuitable to succeed the throne and he "advised" the Sultan to depose him as the Raja Muda and replace him with his third son Tengku Alam Shah, whose educational qualifications were to Adam's standard far superior. The Sultan did as he was "advised" but was against the idea. He took his case to London and caused embarrassment to the British. Adams was transferred to Nigeria as a result of this incident. See Yeo Kim Wah, "The Selangor Succession in Dispute, 1933-1938", in Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol.II, No.2, for an account of the episode in which it was clearly demonstrated that Musa Udin had strong Malay support for his claim.

Occupation and, where they had not survived, to ascertain what Malays were occupying the positions of Sultans."⁴² Of the British appointed sultans, there were only five survivors -the sultans of Johor, Selangor, Perak, Pahang and the Yam Tuan of Negri Sembilan. Between 8 and 9 September, 1945, Willan toured the Malay peninsula and met all the sultans or the heirs-apparent. He had friendly meetings with the sultans of Johor, Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Pahang.

However, in the states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, the sultans had died during the Japanese Occupation and their heirs were yet to be recognised by the British. While most accounts of the Malayan Union focus on the role of Sir Harold MacMichael in using duress to obtain the signatures of the Malay sultans to the Malayan Union Agreements, I am of the opinion that the first step in the policy of intimidating the Malay rulers was taken by Brigadier General Willan. In Trengganu, the State Civil Affairs Officer, Lt. Col. Headley, with the cooperation of dissatisfied elements of the Malay aristocracy headed by the Dato Jaya Perkasa, was able to depose Sultan Ali, who had succeeded his father Sultan Suleiman Badrul Alam Shah after

⁴² BMA/TS Com no.58/9. Willan was in effect given the power of making or unmaking a sultan.

the latter's death in 1942.⁴³ In the case of Perlis, Syed Hamzah, the Japanese appointee, had renounced his claims to the throne by the time Willan reached Kangar.⁴⁴ Sultan Badlishah of Kedah and Sultan Ibrahim of Kelantan posed different problems as both had been recognised heirs before the Japanese Occupation. However, Willan made it clear that they, plus the new Sultan Ismail of Trengganu and the Raja of Perlis, Syed Putra, could not be recognised by him.⁴⁵ The question of British recognition of these rulers and the confirmation of the positions of the other sultans was the task of Sir Harold MacMichael.

To acquire the signatures of the Malay rulers to the Malayan Union, Sir Harold MacMichael was despatched to Malaya, arriving at Port Swettenham on 11 October 1945, just a day after the first public mention of the Malayan Union scheme in a brief announcement in the House of Commons.⁴⁶

⁴³ It was Willan who made it clear to Sultan Ali that he was not recognised by the British. See *Utusan Melayu*, 26 Nov. 1947. Refer also to Alwi Jantan, "Trengganu 1945-1957: A Study in Political Development", unpublished B.A. Honours academic exercise, University of Malaya, 1958.

⁴⁴ BMA/TS Com no.598/9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* The task of recognising these rulers was entrusted to Sir Harold MacMichael and recognition was given only after the rulers signed the Malayan Union Agreements.

⁴⁶ See instructions to Sir Harold MacMichael in Malayan Union and Singapore: Statement of Policy on Future Constitution, Cmd.6724, 1946, p.6, which reads as follows:

Malay newspapers made brief comments concerning the announcement as there were few details available at that stage.⁴⁷ The British were, it appeared to Malay observers, working with indecent haste to conclude the new arrangements with the Malay rulers. Sir Harold MacMichael had his first interview with a Malay ruler on 18 October 1945 and by 21 December 1945 had concluded his interviews. The intimidating methods he used in obtaining the Rulers' signatures have been described by other writers.⁴⁸ It was significant that

You will visit Malaya at a date to be agreed by the supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command, and invite each Malay Ruler's co-operation in the establishment of a fresh constitutional organization of Malaya which has been approved by His Majesty's Government and communicated to you and which is intended to ensure towards unity and ultimate self-government within the British Empire.

In furtherance of this object you are authorized as special Representative of His Majesty's Government to conclude with each Ruler on behalf of His Majesty's Government a formal Agreement by which he will cede full jurisdiction to His Majesty in his State.

⁴⁷ Among the Malay newspapers that were being published after the war, the most important ones were the *Majlis*, *Utusan Melayu* and the *Warta Negara*. The *Majlis* was a Jawi script Malay daily that was founded in 1931 and published in Kuala Lumpur. It was a watchdog of Malay interests. It resumed publication after the war on 1 October 1945 and played an important role in convening the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress in March 1964. Thereafter, it was regarded as the mouthpiece of U.M.N.O. The *Utusan Melayu*, was another Jawi script newspaper founded in 1939. After the war, it was rather cautious in its policy but after Abdul Samad Ismail and Abdul Aziz bin Ishak's involvement in it, the paper became racial and pursued an anti U.M.N.O. line. The *Warta Negara* was another Jawi script daily published in Penang. It adopted a strong pro-U.M.N.O. line.

⁴⁸ See J. de V. Allen, The Malayan Union, New Haven, Conn., 1967 and A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948.

the man entrusted with enough powers to alter the destiny of Malaya had no Malayan experience at all and knew no Malay, being assisted by former Malayan Civil Service Officers from the Malayan Planning Unit. Among his terms of reference, one particular set of instructions seem to point clearly to the purpose the British had in mind concerning agreement to the Malayan Union. The pertinent paragraph reads as follows:

In any Malay state where the Ruler recognised by His Majesty's Government is either no longer in Office or has so compromised himself in relations with the enemy as to be no longer prima facie worthy of being recognised as Ruler by His Majesty's Government, you should telegraph to the Secretary of State for the Colonies through the Supreme Allied Commander the name and credentials of the Malay personage whom you recommend as competent and responsible to undertake such a commitment in respect of the State concerned.⁴⁹

Sir Harold MacMichael was also empowered to "open discussions with the individuals recommended as competent and responsible to undertake formal commitments as Rulers, to recognise them on behalf of His Majesty's Government and to sign Agreements with them, without the risk of delay and complication attendant upon interim reference."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Report on a Mission to Malaya, October 1945-January 1946, by Sir Harold MacMichael, London: H.M.S.O., 1946, Paragraph 10, sub-paragraph 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, paragraph 12.

Stockwell and Allen have recorded the anxiety which the nervous sultans and their advisers reluctantly accepted the new Union.⁵¹ To the Malay conservatives who wanted the old political arrangements to continue, the signing of the Malayan Union Agreements by the sultans was seen as a disaster. These Malay conservatives were a group that was not ready to commit themselves to the nationalist struggle for independence. They believed in continued British protection for the Malays. Unlike the Malay radicals, however, they were not ready with a new political framework and programme by way of rebuttal.⁵² The Malayan Union not only took away the sovereignty of the sultans but it weakened the position of the Malay aristocrats. With the Malayan Union there would no longer be any State Councils. In fact, the State Councils had not been revived ever since Proclamation no. 3 of the British Military Administration. There were no state governments, the *Mentri Besars* (Chief Ministers) and *Setiausaha Negeri* (State Secretaries) had no powers. Thus the Malay conservatives were also fighting for their self-interests when they opposed the Malayan Union.

⁵¹ J. de V. Allen, The Malayan Union, pp.168-172 and A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, pp.39-72.

⁵² Malay conservative opinion can be gauged from the editorials in the *Majlis*. Mohamad Yunus Hamidi, the Secretary of the *Persatuan Melayu Selangor*, was also the editor of the *Majlis* and he wrote editorials as well as printed articles that reflected the views of the conservative Malays.

Initially they were at a loss as to what should be done, even though there were vigorous reactions to the Malayan Union. Their concern about the Malayan Union was expressed by the revival of pre-war state associations like the *Persatuan Melayu Selangor* (Selangor Malays State Association), *Persatuan Melayu Perak* (Perak Malays State Association), *Persatuan Melayu Pahang* (Pahang Malays State Association). In addition, there were new associations like the *Perikatan Melayu Perak* (Malay League of Perak), the *Pemuda Melayu Kedah* (Malay Youth of Kedah) and others. One can sense that in the setting up of these societies "there was a certain degree of hostility directed towards the Sultans."⁵³

According to the *Majlis* these societies were set up because many Malays felt that their interests could be preserved by these societies rather than by sultans who could be intimidated by the British. The societies represented an alternative focus of loyalty for the Malays.⁵⁴ For the first time there existed organised mass hostility of the Malays towards their sultans for having agreed to sign the MacMichael Agreements and surrendering their birthright. In the past sultans had occasionally fallen foul of popular feeling. But there had never been modern organizations to focus opposition on their deeds.

⁵³ Interview with Mohd. Khir Johari, Sungei Patani, Kedah, March, 1985.

⁵⁴ *Majlis*, 8 December 1945.

The conservative mouthpiece *Majlis* believed initially that the sultans would protect Malay interests, not betray them. Their opinion of the MacMichael mission was that he wanted cooperation from the sultans of the various states.⁵⁵ The sultans were advised to tread carefully in their dealings with Sir Harold MacMichael and not follow blindly or be led.⁵⁶ Thus it appears that initially there was some faith in the ability of the sultans to defend Malay interests against the *bangsa-bangsa asing*. The Malay conservative viewpoint was that the Malay states were not colonies but protected states. As stated in the *Majlis*:

According to Malay history, the Malay states and the Malay peoples of the Malay peninsula were under British protection (*naungan*) starting from 1874, that is about 71 years ago. Since then it has never been heard that the pure-bred indigenous Malays of the peninsula showed any sign of wanting self-government, that is a Malay *kerajaan* that is *merdeka* (independent). Probably because the Malays of the peninsula are naturally aware that they do not have the qualifications or ability to administer themselves. What is needed by them are justice, tight protection, peace and quiet and education that is good so that they will be qualified to rule themselves when the time comes in the future.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Majlis*, 13 October 1945.

⁵⁶ *Majlis*, 25 October 1945. The paper goes on to add that this is the time when their highnesses should burn incense as they demand their rights.

⁵⁷ *Majlis*, 24 October 1945 - Menurut sejarah Melayu, negeri-negeri dan rakyat-rakyat Melayu Semenanjung Tanah Melayu ini telah dinaungi Kerajaan British mulai pada tahun 1874, iaitu kira-kira 71 tahun dahulu. Semenjak daripada itu belum pernah kedengaran umat Melayu bumiputera jati semenanjung ini menunjukkan gerak-geri berkehendak kepada berkerajaan sendiri, yakni kerajaan Melayu yang merdeka. Agaknya ialah

The recurring themes in conservative Malay arguments against change to the status quo and the introduction of the Malayan Union were that they wanted protection (*naungan*) and that Malays from sultans to commoners did not want self-government.⁵⁸ We have encountered the concept of *naungan* before the war when we saw that in treaties signed between the British and the Malay rajas, it was agreed that the British will protect Malay interests. The Malays also considered the Malay states (*tanah Melayu*) to be the right (*hak*) of the Malays, whereas the *bangsa asing* (foreign races) were just lodgers (*penumpang*).⁵⁹ To the conservative Malays the terms "Malaya" and "Malayan" were anathema. Thus the Malayan Union and its consequences were seen as a victory to the *anak-anak Malayan* (Malayans), causing the emergence of a *bangsa Malayan* that was not indigenous to the land and which would deprive the *bangsa Melayu* of their rights. The *Majlis* summarised Malay feelings on the matter:

At this time can be heard the cries of delight in the newspapers throughout Malaya from the *anak-anak bangsa asing* who will be given the same rights of

kerana umat Melayu semenanjung ini memang sedar bahawa mereka belum lagi mempunyai kelayakan atau kebolehan memerintah sendiri. Apa yang dikehendaki oleh mereka ialah keadilan yang saksama, *naungan* yang cukup rapi, kesentosaan dan keamanan yang tenang dan didikan yang sempurna, sekiranya boleh melayakan diri mereka boleh berkerajaan sendiri apabila sampai masa kelak.

⁵⁸ *Majlis*, 26 October 1945.

⁵⁹ *Majlis*, 3 and 25 October 1945.

citizenship. The cheers of the *anak Malayan* do not only prove their delight because they will get the same citizenship rights for entry into the Malayan Civil Service which has always been what they desired but also to the extent of teasing the *umat Melayu* as if to say, "Now you Malays know. We, the *anak Malayan* have won in the political struggle. What we have desired all this while has been achieved."⁶⁰

Knowing these prevailing sentiments, it was imperative for the sultans not to bungle their dealings with the British concerning the Malayan Union, the details of which were still unknown to the general public. In the period before the full extent of what they had conceded became known to the Malays, right through to the month of November, there were numerous appeals to the sultans to safeguard Malay rights and privileges and not concede any gains to the *bangsa-bangsa asing*. In November the *Majlis* in an editorial put the Malay case to the sultans quite plainly:

In short from generation to generation the *rakyat* (people) surrendered themselves (to the sultans) because they believed that their sultans love their Malay subjects. Therefore for many years before the sultans had made several agreement or treaties with the British Government with the aim of improving the country and the Malay inhabitants of the states...The reason for the treaty was that the powers of the sultans would be more strong and permanent with the hope that the *kerajaan Melayu* will be protected (*bernaung*) under the strong power of the English

⁶⁰ *Majlis*, 10 November 1945.

Government.¹¹

By December 1945 there were some doubts whether the sultans could really live up to the role of defending the interests of the *bangsa Melayu* vis-a-vis British policies in the Malay states. But this doubt did not materialize in the form of bitter attacks against the sultans as yet. Malay criticism took an oblique path as it called on the *bangsa Melayu* to rely more on itself and less on its traditional leaders. This subtle change can be detected in another *Majlis* editorial of 8 December 1945 which called upon "the Malays to be aware that democracy is the dominant political force and that they must now rely on themselves and no longer look to the raja and his chiefs for guidance."¹²

Even a brief perusal of this editorial shows the changes that were already affecting the conservative Malays concerning their perception of the sultans and their ability to protect the Malays. The stress on democracy here, the

¹¹ *Majlis*, 24 November 1945. Pendeknya dari zaman berzaman rakyat menyerahkan diri kerana mereka percaya Sultan-Sultan itu kasih sayang kepada rakyatnya Melayu. Maka beberapa tahun dahulu Sultan-Sultan itu telah membuat beberapa perjanjian atau treaty dengan kerajaan British dengan tujuan untuk mengelokkan negeri dan anak-anak negeri bangsa Melayu...Adalah maksud treaty itu dibuat ialah supaya kuasa-kuasa Sultan-Sultan lebih teguh dan tetap dengan mengharapkan supaya kerajaan Melayu itu bernaung di bawah kuasa kerajaan Inggeris yang kuat.

¹² *Majlis*, 8 December 1945. This quotation is again analysed in depth in Chapter 6 on Democracy.

need for the *bangsa* to stand on its own feet, were similar to arguments made against the *kerajaans* in East Sumatra, which we will deal with in the following chapter. Just after Sir Harold MacMichael visited the Sultan of Selangor, Muhammad Yunus Hamidi had written to warn Sultan Alam Shah of the consequences if he (the sultan) disregarded the wishes of his subjects regarding their welfare and future in his dealing with the British. The seriousness of Hamidi's warning was evident in the following words which were conveyed to the sultan with all the respect required of a Malay in addressing his monarch:

From afar your humble servant lifts his ten fingers (to his forehead) to respectfully state that with the signing of the MacMichael Treaty, Your Majesty had ignored Your Majesty's subjects. It is hoped that Your Majesty will not be angered (*murka*) if Your Majesty's subjects at some time in the future ignore Your Majesty.⁶³

By January 1946, the full extent of what had been conceded by the sultans was widely known. The outcry commenced with stinging attacks on the sultans published in the local Malay press. The *Majlis* printed a series of articles by one Ayub bin Abdullah of Kedah on the position

⁶³ Muhammad Yunus Hamidi, Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, p.9. Dari jauh patek menyusun jari yang sepuluh menyembahkan bahawa dengan menanda-tangani treaty MacMichael itu Tuanku telah membelakangi rakyat Tuanku, diharap janganlah Tuanku murka sekira-kiranya rakyat Tuanku di suatu masa kelak akan membelakangi Tuanku.

of the sultans in Malay societies." These are important articles and will be examined in detail in a later chapter. Ayub Abdullah claimed that:

...according to custom from time immemorial every Ruler is chosen and enthroned by the people. When a Ruler dies, it is incumbent upon the people to agree, come together and discuss so as to find a replacement."

Ayub bin Abdullah here conferred upon the people the right and power to choose their rulers, which was a new element in Malay political thinking. Malay tradition did not confer any rights to the subjects of the rulers, being regarded as the *hamba raja* or slaves of the rulers. In a situation of urgency a 'tradition' was invented in order to put into effect a new element in Malay political thinking, and to justify a break with past traditions. Ayub went on to argue that the people (*rakyat*) have rights just as the rulers have rights.

Therefore, when the custom of enthronement of the Raja is settled, the person who is now the Raja or Sultan acquires in his hands the authority to govern and pronounce judgement in the state and on the people

" Ayub bin Abdullah was prominent in the *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah*. He was a petition writer. His articles were printed in the *Majlis* issues of 4th, 5th and 6th January 1946.

" *Majlis*, 4 January 1946. Bahawasanya menurut adat daripada zaman berzaman bahawa tiap-tiap seorang Raja atau Sultan itu dilantik dan ditabal oleh rakyat. Manakala mangkat seseorang Raja atau Sultan, bertanggunglah di atas rakyat bermufakat, berhimpun, bermesyuarat mencari gantinya.

in ways that are just. However, if his administration and judgement is not just or in keeping with the wishes of the state and people, he can be deposed and replaced with another. In this world, many Rajas and Sultans were replaced by others. In Perak, our people the Perak Malays had deposed one of their Sultans from the throne of Perak i.e. the late Sultan Ismail, and enthroned instead the late Sultan Abdullah to replace him...Therefore, when a Raja or Sultan wishes to sign any treaty to surrender the rights of the state and the people to whomsoever, without obtaining prior agreement from the people of his state, is the treaty recognised as legal?"

Such arguments suggest that the Malayan Union brought about a change of perspective within the ranks of conservative Malays who now felt that they legitimately represented the Malay masses. It was a period of ideological ferment. The changes and debates which occurred will be analysed in depth later in this thesis but it was clear, even at first glance that some Malays no longer considered their monarchs to have absolute powers or that their actions

" *Ibid.* Maka manakala telah sempurnalah adat istiadat mentabal seseorang Raja atau Sultan, seseorang yang menjadi Raja atau Sultan itu termasuklah ketangannya kekuasaan hak memerintah dan menghukum di atas negeri dan rakyat dengan jalan-jalan yang adil. Maka sekiranya pemerintahannya dan hukumannya tiada adil dan tiada suatu dengan kehendak negeri dan rakyat maka rakyat ada hak boleh pecat perturunkan daripada takhta dan diganti dengan yang lain. Di negeri Perak orang-orang rakyat Melayu kita Perak telah pecat, perturun seorang Sultannya daripada takhta kerajaan Perak, iaitu al-marhum Sultan Ismail dan ditabal al-marhum Sultan Abdullah menggantikannya...Tatkala demikian adalah harus mana seorang Raja atau Sultan yang hendak sign mana-mana surat treaty menyerah hak-hak negeri kepada mana-mana pihak yang lain, jika lebih dahulu tiada mendapat persetujuan rakyat negeri adakah surat-surat dan treaty itu boleh diakui sah?

could not be questioned. In the past, to question the commands and deeds of the rajas and sultans was tantamount to committing *derhaka* or treason.⁶⁷ According to *Majlis* the old saying *Tiada Raja tiada Rakyat* or "no sultans means no people", no longer held true. According to Milner, the Malay word for "government", "state" or "kingdom" was *kerajaan*. Since *kerajaan* connotes little more than "being in the condition of having a Raja", most Malays it would appear considered themselves to be living not in so many states but under individual rajas.⁶⁸ If in the past the Malays existed for the sultans, or at the behest of their sultans, it might be argued that the Malayan Union events provoked a very different understanding, that is to say, for a growing number of Malays, the sultanates were no longer the centre point of the Malay worldview; they were no longer seen as being able to protect the Malays. Malayism, which can be defined as a belief that upholds the interests of the *bangsa Melayu* over everything else, was increasingly the basis of Malay focus, and so long as the rajas upheld and protected Malayism, the Malays would not commit treason. The interests of the rajas were subordinated to the demands of Malayism. This is confirmed by an article in the *Majlis* of 13th April, 1946 which stated that:

⁶⁷ *Derhaka* is defined as treason against the ruler, God or the state. With such a definition of *derhaka*, it follows that in Malay traditions, a person who commits *derhaka* is punished on earth by his sultan and in the hereafter by God.

⁶⁸ A.C. Milner, Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona, 1982, pp.8-9.

But it must be remembered that the institution of Sultans is important but not important for itself, but important as a guarantee and symbol of Malay *kebangsaan* vis-a-vis the foreign *bangsa* in Malaya.¹¹

What was expected to replace the sultanates as the focus of Malay identity? From the available evidence, I shall argue that it was *bangsa* (race) which replaced the sultanates. For some Malays the survival of the *bangsa Melayu* and the need to foster *kebangsaan Melayu* (Malayism) supplanted the sultans as the focal point of Malay identity. As for the sultans, they were now subordinated to the interests of *kebangsaan Melayu* and their continued existence was now due to it rather than vice-versa. In these circumstances, important concepts like *derhaka* (treason), *taat dan setia* (loyal and true), *kedaulatan rakyat* (peoples' sovereignty) and *kedaulatan raja* (sovereignty of the raja) acquired different interpretations altogether. No longer could a concept like *taat dan setia* be seen as a one-sided affair. The Malayan Union crisis had revised even this basic concept. Writing on the conflict between himself and his sultan, Dato Abdul Rahman Yasin put his case in the following manner: "To a Muslim, loyalty is reciprocal. The fact that the Malays have hitherto, through ignorance or otherwise, been blindly obedient does not reduce loyalty to

¹¹ Tetapi hendaklah diingatkan bahawa pertubuhan Sultan-Sultan itu mustahak iaitu bukan mustahak pada jasadnya, tetapi mustahak sebagai jamin dan cogan kebangsaan Melayu melawan bangsa-bangsa asing dalam Malaya.

a one-sided affair."⁷⁰ Another example of this change can be discerned in an issue of the *Majlis* which stated that if ever a sultan committed an act that was against the interests of his people, that act would be seen in the following light:

Whereby, it is not the *rakyat* that has committed *derhaka* towards the Raja but on the contrary, it is the Raja that has committed *derhaka* towards the *rakyat*.⁷¹

Never before in Malay history had a sultan been publicly accused of committing *derhaka* towards his subjects.⁷² To do so would have been unthinkable. Milner has argued that "to destroy one's *Raja* would imply the destruction of one's integrity."⁷³ Thus it was a major development in Malay political thinking when the *Majlis* of 19th February 1946 carried a statement to the effect that Sultan Ibrahim of Johor was no longer recognised as sultan by his own people. According to the report, in signing the

⁷⁰ R.C.J. (Arkib Negeri, Johor Bahru) No.217/46: Dato Abdul Rahman to the Resident Commissioner, Johore, 8 July 1946.

⁷¹ *Majlis*, 13 April 1946. Tentang itu bukannya rakyat yang derhaka kepada Raja melainkan sebaliknya Raja yang derhaka kepada rakyat.

⁷² See Chandrasekaran Pillay, "Some Dominant Concepts and Dissenting Ideas on Malay Rule and Malay Society From the Malacca Sultanate to the Colonial and Merdeka Periods", unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to the University of Singapore, 1976.

⁷³ See A.C. Milner, Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eye of Colonial Rule, University of Arizona Press, 1982, p.104.

MacMichael Agreements whereby he ceded the State of Johor to Great Britain, Sultan Ibrahim had neglected to consult his people and had also violated Article 15 of the Johor State Constitution which prohibited the Ruler from signing away any part of Johor to a foreign power. In doing so, he had committed *derhaka* towards his throne and the state and people of Johor.¹⁴

Thus for the first time in Malay history a reigning sultan was accused of committing *derhaka* against his throne, the State of Johor and the people. It was a situation where

¹⁴ *Majlis*, 19 February 1946. The statement which was released by the Johor elite who were unhappy with Sultan Ibrahim also carried Article 15 of the Johor State Constitution which was promulgated by the late Sultan Abu Bakar in 1895. The English translation is from Allen, Malayan Union, pp.173-174.

The Sovereign may not in any manner surrender or make any agreement or plan to surrender the country or any part of the country and state of Johor to any European state or Power, or to any other State or nation, whether because he thinks it is a trouble or burden to him to be a Ruler, or because he does not care to rule, or because he desires to obtain; take and accept any payment or pension from another nation or State; and this prohibition and restraint are likewise laid and decreed on all and everyone of the heirs and relatives of the Sovereign. And if this prohibition and restraint be resisted, or an attempt be made to resist them, by the sovereign himself, he shall be treated as guilty of betraying the trust reposed in him by God, in which case the citizens of the country shall be under no obligation to continue any longer their allegiance to him; and if by a relative of the Sovereign, he shall be considered to have committed high treason against the Sovereign and the State, and shall be liable to any punishment which it may deem proper to award.

the sultan could no longer claim to be the embodiment of the state. Rather he was under it and answerable to it. He was now seen as a man occupying an office of state which he himself had to respect. He had also committed *derhaka* against the people of Johor. The western concept of state had been adopted and the sultan was seen in the role of a constitutional monarch who had to conform to the norms and requirements of the Constitution of the State of Johor. The modern interpretation of the sultan's role in the state is seen in the charge that he had committed *derhaka* to the people to whom he must be answerable and who had the power to judge his actions.

However, despite the western influence in the logic of the case they had against Sultan Ibrahim of Johor, they could not free themselves completely from the past which gave a sultan an almost divine right to do as he pleased. None of those who accused the sultan of committing *derhaka* could consider an appropriate punishment, as the awe in which a sultan was held was such that it was left to God to punish him while the people are freed from owing allegiance to him.

This change was reflected in the *Majlis* which pointed out that:

The aura of *daulat* is not just the Raja's but the *rakyat's daulat* is even higher. If there is no *rakyat* there will be no Raja, but if there is no Raja, the *rakyat* can become Raja.¹⁵

The statement above must be construed as the most radical statement against the monarchy, a clear sign of a very strong democratic sentiment, belief in the sovereignty of the people. The statement was potentially revolutionary, indicating the intense displeasure that the sultans had incurred when they acted against the interests of the *bangsa* without first having consulted them. The sultans had never come so near to being disowned by their subjects.

In the chapter on Community, I will suggest that the Malayan Union brought in its wake a new perception of the Sultans by the Malays. If fighting for the *bangsa Melayu* was now all important we must see why it was so. The Malayan Union intended to confer on the non-Malays rights once thought to be the prerogative of Malays. To some Malays, such an act was not legal (*sah dan halal*). They saw the Malay states as independent entities and not British colonies but under British protection (*naungan*). To them, the Malay states belonged to the Malays and the non-Malays were

¹⁵ *Majlis*, 6 February 1946. Yang berdaulat itu bukannya Raja melainkan rakyat itu lebih tinggi daulatnya lagi. Jika tiada Rakyat tiada Raja, tetapi tiada Raja, rakyat boleh jadi Raja.

considered as transients.¹⁶ The Malay states were under British protection since 1874 and what was needed was protection, not union.¹⁷ The conservatives were not nationalists in the sense in which we understand the term. They saw no need to fight for "independence" but for continued British protection for the *bangsa Melayu*, and continuance of a pro-Malay British policy. The *kebangsaan* that they were fighting for cannot be translated as nationalism but as a form of community solidarity. The term *kebangsaan* is itself derived from the Malay word *bangsa* which could mean race, people, community or even nation, depending in what context the term is used. Since the Malay states are 'independent' the British must protect not just the *bangsa Melayu* but *kebangsaan Melayu* as well. The

¹⁶ *Majlis*, 3 October 1945, and also Muhammad Yunus Hamidi, *Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung*, p.110. Point 8 of the memorandum of the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* states that:

...The Malay States are Malay States, owned by the Malays, Sovereign and Independent theoretically if not practically.

This was the point that was always stressed by the conservative Malays in the arguments against the Malayan Union. However, there was no clarification of what "independent" meant. One can argue that from this, they saw the relationship between the British and the Malay monarchies as a form of lord-vassal relationship whereby the lord merely protects the vassal who had 'independence' to do as he pleases. This would also mean that the Chinese and Indians were not a party to such a relationship and were to be excluded in any arrangements concerning the Malay states.

¹⁷ It was argued in a *Majlis* editorial of 10 November 1945 that since the Malay states 'invited' the British to protect them, the Malay states are 'independent' states.

creation of a Malayan Union will be a threat to the *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu* as it will give the non-Malays citizenship rights in the Malay states.

The act of giving citizenship under liberal terms to non-Malays was seen as an act of betrayal of trust that the Malays had in the British. The Malays would be reduced from a nation to a mere community among other communities, in a land that was historically theirs. They would be forced to become Malayan nationals against their wishes as they were, had been and always would be *Melayu*. The Malays felt that they would be reduced to sharing the same fate as the North American Red Indian.¹⁸ Dato Onn bin Jaafar echoed this fear at a dinner held on 5 March 1946 in the Sultan Suleiman Club, organised by the Malay Congress.

The Malays have always been looked upon as a simple and law-abiding people and we propose to live as such, but at the same time, like every other race or every other nation, we hope we can still claim a place in our country.¹⁹

Dato Onn's speech echoed the sentiment in a *Majlis* editorial which reminded the British of a solemn pledge made by Hugh Clifford in 1927 that the Malay states "are and must

¹⁸ *Majlis*, 26 November 1945.

¹⁹ Mohammad Yunus Hamidi, Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, pp.106-107.

forever remain essentially and primarily Malay states"⁸⁰ which 'involved' the British to help put them in order. Therefore, the Malay states did retain their 'independence' and were not British colonies.

Some Malay conservatives believed that legally and morally they had a strong case to justify the continued existence of the Malay states as Malay polities. The Malay radicals too accepted that it was the Malay sultans of the peninsula who had invited the British to protect and safeguard the rights and privileges of the Malays.⁸¹ The P.K.M.M. formally rejected the Malayan Union during a meeting of Malay association in March 1946 in Kuala Lumpur because it was forced upon the Malay sultans.⁸² Another probable reason why the P.K.M.M. was forced to reject the Malayan Union was because it came under severe criticism by segments of the Malay community.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Majlis*, 10 November 1945. See page 9 Chapter 1 for details of the speech of Sir Hugh Clifford in Federal Council Proceedings, November 16 1947.

⁸¹ Article of Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy as quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, p.34.

⁸² Mohammad Yunus Hamidi, Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung, p.65.

⁸³ See *Majlis*, 13 and 15 December 1945, for criticism of the P.K.M.M. In page 76 of his Monograph on British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, A.J. Stockwell noted that the Malay campaign against the Malayan Union compelled the P.K.M.M. to withdraw its support for the Union.

A Malayan nationality was unacceptable to conservatives and radicals alike because both felt that it was a British creation to legitimize non-Malay citizenship in Malaya, relegating Malays to a minor position in their own states. Few Malays accepted even the possibility of Malayan nationalism. Malays tended to see themselves only as a *bangsa* that was holding its own against other *bangsa* in the Malay states. The idea of a Malay nation was remote to the dominant Malay conservatives. When the pre-war state associations were revived by the Malay conservatives in the various Malay states in response to the introduction of the Malayan Union, these state associations pandered to state parochialism.⁸⁴

One of the main reasons perhaps for the greater consciousness of *bangsa* was the fact that the threat of the Malayan Union cut across state boundaries. It was in this context that the United Malay National Organization was created within the traditional hierarchy of Malay society, a hierarchy that bound the lowest Malay peasant to the monarch at the very apex. At its inception, U.M.N.O. was not a monolithic political party but a federation of state associations that got together because they faced a common

⁸⁴ It must be noted that just before the war various associations had discussed the idea of merging their associations into a Pan-Malayan Federation, but separate state feelings were too strong to be submerged and the attempt failed miserably.

threat and had a common interest in the preservation of the *bangsa Melayu* in the various Malay states. In this respect, U.M.N.O. was very different from most nationalist parties and movements in other parts of Southeast Asia; it saw no need to fight for independence but for the maintenance of continued British 'protection' of 'independent' Malay entities under which the *bangsa Melayu* would be granted progress. Nationalism in both Indonesia and Vietnam, by contrast, assumed strength and stature outside the traditional structure and resulted in sharp conflicts between the emergent class of nationalists and the traditional elites. In those cases the new nationalists - harbingers of a brave, new social order - triumphed, but not in the case of peninsular Malaya. We note in the next chapter that to a certain degree the same problems concerning the *kerajaan* existed in East Sumatra, where the sultanates were in a much weaker position; they had to ascertain their role in the Republic of Indonesia while insisting on maintaining some degree of ethnic exclusiveness in order to preserve their position.

On both sides of the Straits of Malacca the Malay sultans found that they were under pressure to readjust and assess their role in a changing political situation. In the next chapter, we will examine the fate of the Malay *kerajaans* in both these areas as they responded to these pressures.

CHAPTER 3

KEBANGSAAN OR NASIONAL

In the previous chapter it was noted that in Indonesia too Japanese capitulation was followed by a period of turmoil. But here, those who saw themselves as revolutionaries acted decisively.

The Japanese capitulation on August 15 1945 was followed by the declaration of the independence of Indonesia on 17 August in Jakarta. The independence declaration was as follows:

We the *bangsa Indonesia* hereby declare Indonesia's independence. Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time.

This short declaration was signed by Sukarno and Hatta. What strikes the Malayan specialist immediately is the phrase *bangsa Indonesia*, which we saw in the previous chapter developed into a potent symbol of unity in the Malay states. The declaration appeared to do away with ethnicity and regionalism and replaced these two stumbling blocks with the reality of one nation and one *bangsa*, both of which came to be called Indonesia. Sumatra was declared to be a province of the Republic of Indonesia with Medan as its capital.

While these momentous events were known far and wide in Java, the same cannot be said for the East Coast of Sumatra, where there was a stricter control of information than elsewhere. Nevertheless, there were Sumatran delegates who had been sent to Jakarta by the Japanese on 11 August 1945. They were Teuku M. Hasan, Dr. M. Amir and Mr. Abbas. All of them participated in the proceedings that led to the declaration of independence. Mr. Teuku M. Hasan was appointed Governor of Sumatra and the three men departed from Java on 24 August 1945. On arrival at South Sumatra, they contacted Dr. A.K. Gani, informed him of the events in Jakarta, and passed on instructions to set up the *Komite Nasional Indonesia* in South Sumatra. From here till their arrival at Tarutung in North Tapanuli, Teuku Hasan and Dr. Amir did not encounter any difficulties. Both men also met Dr. Ferdinan Lumban Tobing, conveying the instructions to set up a Tapanuli branch of the *Komite Nasional Indonesia*. However, it was at Tarutung that Dr. Amir received news from an acquaintance that several leaders on the East Coast of Sumatra had fled from the area because the Sultans and the Rajas had taken over power from the Japanese and were taking action against Japanese collaborators.¹ Among those who chose to leave the East Coast of Sumatra were Hamka,

¹ PRIMA (Perjuang Republik Indonesia Medan Area), Biro Sejarah, Medan Area Mengisi Proklamasi Perjuangan Kemerdekaan dalam Wilayah Sumatera Utara, Vol.1, Medan, Badan Musyawarah PRIMA, 1976, p.93.

Jacob Siregar and Saleh Umar.² However, Saleh Umar and Hamka came back to Medan after realising that it had been a mistake to flee.

In reality, the 'news' that Dr. Amir received while in Tarutung regarding an attempt by the sultans and rajas to take over control had no basis. The report originated from a meeting held on 25 August 1945 by Dr. Tengku Mansur at his house. In his capacity as chairman of the *shu sangi kai* (regional council), he had invited a select group that comprised members of the *kerajaans* and some *pergerakan* leaders like Xarim M.S. and Mr. Jusuf. It was decided to set up a committee to explain to the Allied forces, including the Dutch, why it had been necessary for everybody to co-operate with the Japanese.³ With this in mind, a *Comite van Ontvangst* (reception committee) was set up. However, because the exact events regarding the setting up of the committee were not widely known, hearsay and rumours proliferated until it was difficult to separate fact from fiction.⁴

The effect this 'news' had on Dr. Amir and Mr. Teuku M. Hasan was unsettling and they both returned to Medan on

² See Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, 2nd. print., Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1982, pp.300-301, Edisaputra, Gelora Kemerdekaan sepandiang Bukit Barisan, Medan, Sejarah Militair TNI Divisi Bukit Barisan, 1972, p.88, PRIMA, p.94.

³ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, p.150.

⁴ PRIMA, p.94.

28 August thoroughly demoralized. The fact that it was popularly believed that the various *kerajaans* were involved in attempts to establish links with returning Allied and, in particular, Dutch forces stimulated widespread anti-*kerajaan* feelings in East Sumatra. It was a bad omen for the future relationship between the *kerajaans* and the newly declared Republic of Indonesia. On 2 September, Mr. Teuku Hasan and Dr. Amir made an effort to carry out the instructions to establish a Republican Government for Sumatra centred in Medan. Dr. Amir met with Tengku Dr. Mansur and other members of the various *kerajaans* with a view to setting up the *Komite Nasional Indonesia* in East Sumatra and realising the proclamation of independence in the area, but the meeting ended in a complete failure. This contributed to the belief that the *kerajaans* were not willing to support the Republic and were eagerly awaiting the return of Dutch colonialism.⁵ Another attempt by Teuku Hasan was made on 17 September to invite the leaders of the various *kerajaans* to help in the setting up of the *Komite Nasional Indonesia* which ended in failure again. The only result of this meeting was the setting up of the *Panitia Kebangsaan* which had a social and economic programme for the people in East Sumatra. However, the *Panitia Kebangsaan* lasted for a mere three weeks.⁶ The name *Panitia Kebangsaan* is of significance. According to Michael van Langenberg:

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.98.

The very choice of the word *kebangsaan* in the name of the first administrative institution in Sumatra Timur points to an attempt at compromise with the *kerajaan* elements. As distinct from the the word *nasional* (more commonly used in Indonesian nationalist terminology), *kebangsaan* has a Malay ethno-centric connotation. Amongst *kerajaan* circles the words *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* were used constantly to refer to either the Malay or *orang asli* groups in East Sumatra. The Sultans and rajas regarded themselves as the leaders of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* (the East Sumatran ethnic groups) and as defenders of *kebangsaan Sumatera Timur* (East Sumatran nationalism). In its Malay sense, *kebangsaan* means ethnic or racial, rather than political nationalism.⁷

Thus while we sense a tension between the *bangsa* and *kerajaan* in Malaya in the immediate post-war period, in Sumatra the rajas would have preferred an ethnic based community to a wider political entity i.e. the *bangsa Indonesia*. We can see therefore, the importance of the terms *kebangsaan* and *bangsa* and their importance in the interethnic conflict in East Sumatra which we will examine in greater depth in a coming chapter on Community.

In the meantime other factors were at work which would have far reaching consequences for the relations between the *kerajaan* and the republic. With the failure of the *kerajaans* to come to terms with the representatives of the Republican government, the *kerajaans* progressively lost control of the situation and the initiative passed to other

⁷ Michael van Langenberg, "The Establishment of the Republic of Indonesia in North Sumatra: Regional Differences and Political Factionalism," in Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs, vol.6, no.1, Jan.-Jun 1972, pp.30-31.

groups. These groups were the *pemudas* (youths), a good number of whom had para-military training in such Japanese organization as the *giyugun* (volunteer soldiers), *heiho* (auxillary soldiers) and *kenkukotai shintai* (unit dedicated to upbuilding the country). They had the potential to be organised into a force capable of resisting attempts by the Dutch to re-impose their colonial rule in Sumatra. They were very nationalistic, willing to resist the return of the Dutch, and unsympathetic to the various *kerajaans*. However, the *pemudas* were divided into innumerable groups each headed by a *jago* (leader) who as a result of his charisma commanded the loyalty of his followers. These various groups though professing loyalty to the Republic were often at odds with each other. When political parties were legalised, on 3 November 1945 these *pemudas* affiliated themselves to these parties. Despite the internecine warfare between the rival *pemuda* groups, there was 'a degree of superficial unity' among the Medan *pemuda* movement as a result of the efforts of Xarim M.S. and other officials. It was the 'unity' that enabled the *pemudas* to harass allied forces in Medan and elsewhere.⁸

The motto of the *pemudas* was *merdeka atau mati* (independence or death) and while some drew their inspiration from events like the French Revolution of 1789

⁸ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, pp.161-169.

and the Russian Revolution of 1917 the majority were inspired by anti-colonialism. They believed in *kedaulatan rakyat* (sovereignty of the people) and *sama rata dan sama rasa* (fairness and equality), *demokrasi seratus-persen* (one hundred per cent democracy) as well as the idea of one people, the *bangsa Indonesia*. The more educated *pemudas* were aware of western concepts of freedom and liberty and had even read about the struggle of the American people for their independence. Thus they felt themselves free from old fashioned ideas based on feudalism.¹

With the declaration of independence, these terms became important. To the *pemudas* who were idealistic in their struggle, *merdeka atau mati* became a favourite motto as were *kedaulatan rakyat*, *sama rata dan sama rasa*. Headed by radical leaders like Xarim M.S., Saleh Umar, Luat Siregar, these various groups decided to consolidate the strength of the Republic. They had tried to meet with Mr. Teuku Hasan on 19 September but failing to do so, they met Dr. Amir who told them of the events in Jakarta. The *pemuda* groups held a meeting on the 23 September and decided on the setting up of the *Badan Pemuda Indonesia* (Indonesian Youth Body) with the avowed aim of defending Indonesian independence. On 30 September, the *Badan Pemuda Indonesia* held a rally where the proclamation of independence was officially made public in Medan. The absence of *kerajaan*

¹ Interview with Saleh Umar on 3 February 1985.

representatives at this rally was later to be used against them.

Thus the lines were drawn whereby the *kerajaans* stood on one side and the Republican Government on the other. As Mr. Teuku M. Hasan came to rely more and more on the *pergerakan* (nationalist) leaders, the need to deal with *kerajaan* leaders lessened and the result was greater isolation on the part of the *kerajaans*. The *kerajaans* were accused by the *pergerakan* leaders of having links with the Dutch and of establishing armed units to oppose the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁰ The Malay sultans in East Sumatra were publicly criticised with a frankness which would have been extraordinary in British Malaya. At a public meeting, for instance, Saleh Umar, the head of the P.N.I. in Sumatra, told *kerajaan* leaders to their face that they were *kolot* (antiquated) and smelt of feudalism.¹¹ Teuku Hasan, the Governor, considered the *kerajaans* to be a feudal administration that should be democratised.¹² The *kerajaans* represented an exclusiveness based on a regional East Sumatra identity which hid behind the Malayism on which the strongest *kerajaans* were based. Their unwillingness to help establish the K.N.I. and their insistence on the

¹⁰ See Imam Marah, untitled typescript describing the situation in East Sumatra, Bukit Tinggi, December 1947, p.6.

¹¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946.

¹² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946.

establishment of a *Panitia Kebangsaan* with its ethno-centric and parochial connotation conveyed the impression to the *pemudas* of an unwillingness to cooperate with the Republic. In East Sumatra the nationalist leaders acquired their strength and stature as well as legitimacy outside the traditional *kerajaan* structure and operated in opposition to the *kerajaans*.

Given the situation of the returning Allied and Dutch forces and the difficulty of knowing how events would turn out, both the *kerajaans* and the *pergerakan* leaders adjusted to changes as they occurred. The Dutch reasserted their presence more quickly and forcefully than elsewhere in the former Netherlands East Indies because of the economic potential of the East Coast of Sumatra. Lt. Brondgeest, a Dutch officer who landed by parachute in northern Sumatra, made contact with the sultans of Langkat and Deli and other pre-war leaders who were willing to cooperate with the Dutch. Unlike the case of peninsular Malaya where large sections of the population welcomed the return of the British, the majority in the East Coast of Sumatra viewed the returning Dutch not as liberators but as colonial masters. On the other hand, the sultans of the various *kerajaans* and their officials appeared to have been relieved to see the Dutch. The *kerajaan* leaders would have expected to benefit from the Dutch return by gaining protection and support against the *pergerakan* leaders.

Though the independence of Indonesia was officially proclaimed and publicly made known in Medan on 4 October, 1945, the task of setting up a functioning Republican administration was a major problem in the East Coast of Sumatra. Outside Medan and the other towns, the only effective administration was that of the *kerajaans*. The Republican government could only liaise with them and according to Tengku Ziwar,

the *kerajaans* were reluctant to accept Republican directives for the main reason that they viewed the Dutch return as inevitable and they did not want to compromise themselves in the eyes of the Dutch.¹³

The *kerajaans* of Langkat and Deli had links with the Dutch through Brondgeest. The Sultan of Deli who succeeded his late father to the throne of Deli had sent a secret message of loyalty to the Dutch Queen. Dr. Tengku Mansur, the most prominent *kerajaan* figure, held back from cooperating with the Republican Government of Governor Hasan.

On his part, Governor Hasan did try to incorporate the *kerajaans* into the Republican Government with the hope that this would enable both parties to have a working

¹³ Interview with Tengku Ziwar, Medan, 15 February, 1985.

relationship.¹⁴ On 30 November, 1945, he reshuffled the administration. The Resident of East Sumatra, Mr. M. Jusuf was made the *wali kota* (mayor) of Medan. He replaced the mayor, Mr. Luat Siregar, who became a high official with the function of assisting the Governor on political matters. The position of Resident was given to Tengku Hafaz, while among other important *kerajaan* figures Dr. Mansur was given an appointment as Health Inspector of Sumatra, and Tengku Mr. Bahriun and Tengku Dhamrah as high officials with the function of assisting the Governor. This attempt of Governor Hasan to bring the *kerajaan* elite into the Republican Government was a golden opportunity for the various *kerajaans* to demonstrate their willingness to accept the Republic of Indonesia and the political realities of a *bangsa Indonesia*. Governor Hasan placed great faith in the ability of these men whom he had appointed to bring the *kerajaans* solidly into the fold of the Republic. His hopes were not realised. A major portion of the reason why the *kerajaans* could not fit themselves into the Republican mould was their unwillingness to accept central Indonesian political concepts prevalent at that time and to adjust to these concepts.

Among the important concepts was that of democracy. The need to democratise the *kerajaans* was made clear in a

¹⁴ PRIMA, p.160.

meeting held on 12 January 1946 which was hosted by the Sultan of Langkat at the behest of Dr. Amir, his personal physician. Among those who attended the meeting were two *datuks* from Deli, and Tengku Anwar, the crown prince of Serdang. None came from Asahan because of communication difficulties. The Republican Government was represented by Dr. Amir, Tengku Hafaz, Mr. Luat Siregar, Mr. M. Yusuf, Tengku Mr. Bahriun and M. Yunus Nasution.¹⁵ At this meeting, Dr. Amir pointed out that the Javanese *kerajaans* of Solo and Jogja had very good relations with the Republic. Mr. Luat Siregar stated that the *daerah istimewa* (special regions) as these various *kerajaans* were known should implement *kedaulatan rakyat* (peoples' sovereignty) or democracy as quickly as possible. *Kedaulatan rakyat* was an important term which we will analyse in detail in a coming chapter. After discussing the question of democratising the various *kerajaans* the meeting agreed to two important decisions. The Sultans and their officials would, firstly, establish quickly a Peoples' Representative Council in each area and secondly, until these were established, accept the local *Komite Nasional* as the People's Representative Council and rule in close cooperation with it. Democracy would be strictly observed in the administration of the various *kerajaans*.¹⁶ However, the means of enforcing the two

¹⁵ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, p.219. See also *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 14 January, 1946.

¹⁶ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 14 January, 1946.

decisions and setting up a structure to carry them out were lacking. The *kerajaans* considered the meeting to have resulted in nothing more than the formality of exchanging greetings and a statement of good intent.¹⁷

In interviews conducted with the surviving *kerajaan* elite who lived through this period, the writer was told that the reticent attitude of the *kerajaans* was due to several factors. These included the inability of the Republican Government to establish law and order effectively, and the danger of the *anak Sumatera Timur* being swamped by outsiders and particularly Javanese (who according to Tengku Ziwari and Tengku Muchtar Aziz, were described as "coolies") if the *kerajaans* had agreed to democratise their administrations without adequate safeguards for the *anak Sumatera Timur*. Most important, no one could foresee who would emerge victorious in the conflict between the Indonesians and the Dutch. At that point, the Dutch seemed to be gaining control of the situation in Medan. Since the *kerajaans* likened themselves to the mousedeer caught between two fighting elephants, it was good sense to adopt a wait and see attitude.¹⁸

¹⁷ In my interviews with surviving members of the *kerajaan* families who were involved in this meeting, the opinion they expressed was that the meeting was just a formality with no real substance.

¹⁸ The interviews were conducted in Medan between 7 to 14 February 1985, with Tengku Muchtar Aziz, Tengku Razali Hafaz, Tengku Ziwari and Tengku Aziz Putra.

However, it was clear that events were getting out of the control of the *kerajaans* and that they were becoming isolated from the main stream of events. The *kerajaans* and the republicians were aware of the violent removal of the hereditary *uleebalang* rulers in Aceh in December 1945 and the tragic consequences of the use of violence.¹⁹ Political parties were authorised in a decree signed by Vice-President Mohamad Hatta and the parties now provided a focus for the *pemudas* who chose to align themselves with the various parties. The political parties and the *pemudas* were vociferous in their demands that democracy be implemented without delay in East Sumatra. Furthermore, effective control over economically important *kerajaan* areas where the bulk of the rubber, oil palm and tobacco estates were located, was falling into the hands of rival *pemuda* groups who fought each other for control of these estates.²⁰

As far as the *kerajaans* of Langkat, Serdang, Asahan and Deli were concerned, their position was made more uncomfortable by Sultan Sjarif Kasim of Siak who had thrown in his lot with the Republican Government. The numerous statements which he and others made at that time are significant in a study of Malay political ideology. On 1

¹⁹ For an account of the violent overthrow of the *uleebalang* rulers of Aceh see Anthony Reid, Blood of the People, Chapter VII.

²⁰ Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, p.200.

November, 1945, he had accepted the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* without any reservations by publicly pledging his solidarity with the *rakyat* in support of the Republic. He had donated 20,000 rupiahs for the struggle and went so far as to promise to sell all his belongings for the Republican cause if this was required.²¹ He became the model of a good "peoples' Sultan" and a gauge by which to judge the reticent *kerajaans* in East Sumatra who were dragging their feet about implementing *kedaulatan rakyat* in their areas.

For Governor Hasan, it was a golden opportunity to reassert that the "Republican administration will help the *kerajaans* in Sumatra to fit in their administration with the present trend and establish Peoples' Representative Councils which will help the *kerajaan* administration."²² Sultan Sjarif Kasim arrived in Medan on 25 January and had an official reception in Medan during which it was reported "may this action by His Highness become a valuable model and a guide for the rajas of East Sumatra."²³ As reasons for his visit to East Sumatra, the sultan stated that "it was for the purpose of meeting the leaders of the Government and to reiterate that he and the Riau *kerajaan* assert their

²¹ *Semangat Merdeka*, 17 November 1945, also Osman Raliby, *Documenta Historica*, Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1953, p.73.

²² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 23 January 1946.

²³ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 26 January 1946.

loyalty and stood behind the Republic of Indonesia."²⁴ But the focus of his speech was as follows:

With awareness therefore we state here that we will restructure the administrative system of the Siak *kerajaan* in keeping with the principles of democracy in the Constitution of our country.²⁵

The Sultan of Siak was probably the first Malay ruler (in either Malaya or Sumatra) to declare publicly his willingness to restructure his administration in accordance with democracy. His statement was important in making it clear that he accepted the Constitution of the Republic as being above his personal status. As we have seen in the previous chapter, not a single ruler in the Malay peninsula was prepared to make a statement that he would be willing to restructure his administration and accept a constitutional role.²⁶

In his reply to Sultan Sjarif Kasim, Governor Hasan stated:

²⁴ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 26 January 1946.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Dengan insaf akan yang demikian, maka disini kami nyatakan bahwa kami akan menyesuaikan susunan Pemerintahan Kerajaan Siak dengan dasar-dasar demokrasi dan Undang-Undang Dewan Negara Kita.

²⁶ It can be surmised that because they were not under pressure by any group to do so, they preferred to keep quiet on the matter.

We have received and witnessed the signs of loyalty from Your Highness towards the Republic...which we regard highly as Your Highness had no hesitation or doubts in declaring your loyalty and standing behind President Sukarno and the Government...we feel grateful that the oldest and biggest *kerajaan* on the coast of Sumatra has given an example to other *kerajaans* in Sumatra and shown the firmness of heart to live or die with the Republic.²⁷

Other prominent *kerajaan* members were also present at the meeting such as Tengku Hafaz, Dr. Tengku Mansur, Tengku Dzulkarnain, Tengku A. Hamid, Tengku Amir Hamzah and Tengku Dhamrah. From the *pergerakan* there was Xarim M.S. Thus it was fairly obvious to the various *kerajaans* in East Sumatra in what direction they had to move.

On 29 January, 1946 the *Balai Penerangan dan Penyelidikan Negara Republic Indonesia*²⁸ came out with an announcement that there would be a meeting in Medan in the coming week between the Republican Government and all the sultans, rajas, *sibayaks* and *datuks* in East Sumatra:

²⁷ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 26 January 1946.

²⁸ See *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946 concerning the setting up of the *Balai Penerangan dan Penyelidikan*. The aims of the *Balai* were printed in English as follows:

1. to give complete information pertaining to all procedures of Government machinery which are undertaken with the sole intention of perfecting and strengthening the structure of the Republic of Indonesia.

The aim of the meeting was not only to strengthen the links between the Republican Government and the rajas but also to discuss the broad guidelines concerning the position of the *daerah istimewa* as defined in Chapter VI article 18 and the *Aturan Peralihan* (procedure for transition) concerning the *daerah istimewa* in the Constitution of the Republic.²⁹

The communique stated that the administration in the *daerah istimewa* had been decided in the Constitution in keeping with *kedaulatan rakyat*. Because of that the time was ripe to change the feudal structure or to change the *kedaulatan* that was not in keeping with the times. The administration was pleased to hear that this view was received satisfactorily by the rajas, and there were already districts in the *daerah istimewa* that were working hard to set up Peoples' Representative Councils. To arrange the structure of the Representative Councils in all districts, it was necessary to have a meeting with all the

2. to give educational needs on politics to all classes of people, the fundamental structure of our Republic, especially those procedures that concern the workings of democracy, Indonesian nationalism, social justice, humanitarianism, religion, political education which will be carried out through the media of radio, papers, magazines and pamphlets.
3. to investigate into all matters resulting from the above mentioned efforts, all those that concern the trends of general political outlook of the people, the workings of the various political parties, religious organizations, the conditions of the entire people of Sumatra, their urgent needs, progress and deficiencies.

²⁹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946.

rajas.³⁰

In the same issue of the *Soeloeh Merdeka* a speech by Sultan Sjarif Kasim was given prominence as it fitted in well with the aims of the Republican administration for democratising the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra.

In the past ages, the raja held all power and the *rakyat* can be said to have had no rights whatsoever other than having obligations towards their raja. A state like this sometimes led to the opinion that all that is within the country is the property of the raja. World history has enough examples of this. But man in his existence is always finding and achieving progress. Finally there arose the belief of people's sovereignty which has become one of the bases of our country. Naturally from before I was pro-democracy therefore pro-people's sovereignty. If the *rakyat* progresses, I too will progress. Through people's sovereignty, every citizen is aware, whether from the top ranks of society to the lowest, and will feel responsible towards the success or failure of the country and our people. Definitely people's sovereignty which is meant in Chapter 1, article 2 in the constitution will be implemented in full by following the procedure which has been arranged carefully, until the people's sovereignty is carried out with full wisdom...In independent Indonesia, there will be rajas from and for the *rakyat*, not like the times of Dutch colonialism when the raja and the *rakyat* are always separated by them... I hope that concerning this matter, the *kerajaans* in East Sumatra will agree with the *kerajaan* of Siak and I will always be ready to serve for the interests of our state and people.³¹

³⁰ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 29 January 1946.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Pada zaman dahulu kala rajalah yang memegang kekuasaan tertinggi dalam negeri dan rakyat boleh dikatakan tidak mempunyai hak apapun, melainkan ia mempunyai kewajiban terhadap rajanya. Hal yang demikian terkandung-kandung menyebabkan timbul pendapat bahawa segala apa yang ada dalam negeri itu menjadi hal miliknya. Sejarah dunia cukup memberikan contoh-contoh. Akan tetapi manusia dalam kehidupannya senantiasa mencari dan mencapai kemajuan.

Sjarif Kasim's statement was very important in that he acknowledged that the absolute powers the rajas had were a thing of the past and that the notion of progress implied that absolutism should give way to democracy and popular participation in government. He was the first sultan to make this statement publicly and introduce into Malay political ideology the need for the *kerajaans* to change in accordance with progress. He also made the startling remark that in future there would be rajas from the people and for the people. However he did not develop this line of thinking further. As if to demonstrate that the sultan had not lost the loyalty of his subjects by declaring his support for the Republic, it was reported in the *Soeloeh Merdeka* that the *rakyat Indonesia dari Siak* (Indonesian citizens from Siak) who were residing in Medan swore an oath of loyalty to Sultan Sjarif Kasim. The sultan in his reply stated that:

Akhirnya timbul pula fahaman faham kedaulatan rakyat, yang juga menjadi salah satu sendi negara kita. Memang dari dahulu saya pro-demokrasi, jadi pro-kedaulatan rakyat. Kalau rakyat maju, saya turut maju. Dengan jalan kedaulatan rakyat itu tiap-tiap warga negara, sedari yang berkedudukan setinggi dalam masyarakat sampai yang serendah-rendah akan merasa bertanggung jawab terhadap maju-mundur negeri dan bangsa kita. Tentu kedaulatan rakyat yang dimaksudkan dalam Pasal 1, ayat 2 dalam Undang-undang Dasar kita akan dilakukan dengan sepenuhnya dengan menurut aturan yang tersusun rapi, sehingga kedaulatan rakyat itu dijalankan dengan penuh kebijaksanaan...Dizaman Indonesia merdeka akan terdapat raja dari dan bagi rakyat, bukan sebagai dalam zaman penjajahan Belanda, sewaktu rakyat dan raja selalu dipisah-pisahkan oleh mereka...Saya yakin pula bahawa berkenaan dengan hal ini kerajaan-kerajaan di Sumatera Timur akan sefaham dengan kerajaan Siak dan saya pasti akan selalu bersedia berbakti untuk kepentingan negara, nusa dan bangsa kita.

...don't use provincialism, because we are now one *bangsa* and have one country and one language, that is Indonesia. Furthermore there won't be any raja if there are no *rakyat*, the dignity of the raja is the dignity of the *rakyat*.³²

It would seem obvious that the sultan was directing his remarks to the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra rather than to his subjects residing in Medan. Nevertheless, the issue that he raised concerning one *bangsa* was the issue that was uppermost in the minds of the various *kerajaans* as they pondered where they stood on that issue. Furthermore in telling the East Sumatran rulers that without the *rakyat* there could be no raja, he was pointing out that they were insignificant without their *rakyat*.

We have suggested that in espousing the cause of an East Sumatran consciousness the Malay rulers were thinking not so much of the interests of the East Sumatran people but their own interests, because the emergence of the *bangsa Indonesia* was seen as a challenge to their positions. They were in the same position as the Malay rulers in Malaya who had to uphold a new constituency i.e. the *bangsa Melayu*. However, while the *bangsa Melayu* did emerge and did pose a challenge to the Malay rulers, their position was never as seriously threatened as in East Sumatra, where the *bangsa*

³² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 1 February 1946....janganlah memakai sifat propinsialis, kerana kita sekarang adalah satu bangsa, dan bertanah air dan mempunyai bahasa yang satu iaitu Indonesia. Lebih-lebih lagi tidak ada raja kalau tidak ada rakyat, mulia raja mulia pula rakyat.

Sumatera Timur consisted of three ethnic groups, not all sympathetic to the Malay rulers, which weakened their position. No reply to the remarks of Sjarif Kasim was reported from any of the other *kerajaans* of East Sumatra, but it cannot be doubted that they were disturbed by his comments especially as they had to meet with the Republican leaders within the next 48 hours.

Sjarif Kasim continued in his role as the 'republican sultan' as can be seen in his speech to the people of Tanjung Pura, Langkat.

The policy of people's sovereignty in the administration of the Republic of Indonesia in reality will enhance the greatness of the sultanates and not lessen it as perceived by certain quarters. In the days of Dutch colonialism and during the Japanese subjection, the position of the sultans and rajas was not more than that of a concubine in a house and not as the lady of the house. If during the days of my ancestors the *rakyat* had to obey all the raja's commands, now however, by itself this must come to an end because the *rakyat* is conscious and has the right and duty to be responsible for the progress of government. The consciousness of the *rakyat* eases the efforts to arrange the nation's administration and smooths the wheels of government.³³

³³ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 2 February 1946. Dasar kedaulatan rakyat didalam pemerintahan Negara Republik Indonesia sebenarnya adalah turut menambah kebesaran daerah-daerah kesultanan, bukan memperkecilkan sebagai dugaan beberapa golongan. Dalam zaman penjajahan Belanda dan pembelungguan Jepang, kedudukan sultan-sultan dan raja-raja tidak lebih dari seorang "nyai" didalam suatu rumah bukan sebagai nyonya rumah. Jika dizaman pemerintahan nenek-moyang saya, rakyat mesti menurut saja segala perintah Raja, maka pada masa sekarang hal itu dengan sendirinya mesti lenyap, sebab rakyat sudah cerdas dan berhak dan wajib turut bertanggung jawab terhadap kemajuan pemerintahan. Kecerdasan rakyat adalah mempermudah usaha mengatur tata negara dan melincin roda pemerintahan.

An interesting feature of Sjarif Kasim's speech was his claim that *kedaulatan rakyat* would enhance the Malay ruler's greatness. No other Malay sultan had made such a claim. In fact their views were the opposite as implied by Sjarif Kasim's allusion to certain quarters which did not share this view. In introducing progress as an element of Malay political culture, the sultan was breaking away from the static position of traditional Malay thinking which placed the sultan and the *kerajaan* at the apex of society and which denied participation in government by the *rakyat*. Until Sjarif Kasim made this statement, all the Malay sultanates had tried to pattern their administration on the Malacca sultanate as described in the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) whereby the idea of progress or of *kedaulatan rakyat* was denied.

Sjarif Kasim broke with tradition by stating that since progress brought consciousness and enlightenment to the *rakyat*, the autocracy and absolutism which was applicable during the days of his ancestors were no longer valid. Therefore, he argued that democracy must be implemented. His ideas were clearly in line with those of Republican officials in Sumatra and it was not surprising that they considered him to be a model sultan. The idea of progress and popular participation in government will be discussed in the chapter on Democracy.

With the pressure rapidly mounting to democratise the *kerajaans* in accordance with the demands for *kedaulatan rakyat*, a second meeting was held between the Republican Government of Governor Teuku M. Hasan and the various *kerajaans* of East Sumatra on 3 February, 1946. This time all five sultans of East Sumatra attended except the ailing Sultan Sjariful Alamshah of Serdang, who was represented by the *Tengku Mahkota* (Crown Prince). The Sultan of Langkat was the spokesman for the sultans and rajas. The Republican Governor Mr. Teuku Hasan in his welcoming address thanked the sultans and rajas for being present at the meeting, which demonstrated their willingness to support the Republic, and stated that clause 18 of the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 acknowledged explicitly the right of the *zelfbestuurs* (self-governing districts) to exist in Indonesia and that there were no plans to isolate or destroy the *kerajaans*. He added that in the past the rajas were:

...tools of the colonial administration to administer the people and crush all movements or situations which were not permitted by the colonial administration...now the time has come whereby the rajas can become the leader of their people again. The situation now had changed, the *rakyat* is already conscious and aware and value themselves and their level and group. They demand their rights...Only in East Sumatra there is entrenched an autocratic administration of the rajas whereby the *rakyat* cannot speak out but must just say yes and every public opinion is oppressed. The trend of the world is democracy but East Sumatra has been made into a fortress of autocracy...Now after independence the rajas must come close to their *rakyat* and act as a father to the people and lead them, and all this is for achieving and getting progress for the people. The political movement in Indonesia which during this time

is ignored and treated with hostility by the rajas...has succeeded in obtaining Indonesian independence...The majority of the Indonesian people have taken the Republican form as the basis of our nation and because of that the rajas too are entitled to become leaders and head of the Republic of Indonesia.³¹

In this lengthy speech by Governor Hasan, it was made clear to the *kerajaans* just what was expected and how fast they must act in democratising their administrations. The Republican administration of Governor Hasan was prepared to accept the sultans and rajas as executive heads of the territories but under the authority of the Resident and Governor as well as the elected legislative councils in their states. Their role would be constitutional in the new arrangement. In his courteous reply the Sultan of Langkat who acted as the spokesman for the *kerajaans* stated:

³¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. ...perkakas oleh pemerintahan jajahan untuk memerintah rakyatnya dan membasmi segala gerakan dan keadaan yang tidak diizinkan oleh pemerintahan jajahan...Sekarang datanglah masanya yang raja-raja itu menjadi pemimpin bangsanya kembali. Suasana sekarang sudah berubah, rakyat sudah sadar dan insaf akan harga diri dan harga lapisan atau kastanya. Dia menuntut hak kedaulatan rakyat...Hanya di Sumatera Timur ditanam satu pemerintahan autokrasi raja-raja, yaitu rakyat tidak boleh buka suara, hanya mengamin saja dan tiap-tiap pikiran rakyat ditindas. Aliran dunia ialah demokrasi, tetapi Sumatera Timur dijadikan benteng autokrasi oleh Belanda...Sekarang dizaman kemerdekaan semestinyalah raja-raja merapatkan dirinya lebih rapat kepada rakyatnya dan berlaku sebagai bapak rakyat dan pemimpin rakyat, dan segala ini ialah untuk mencapai dan memburu kemajuan rakyat. Pergerakan politik di Indonesia yang selama ini berada luar perhatian dan dimusuhi oleh raja-raja...kini telah berhasil merebut kemerdekaan Indonesia...Sebahagian besar dari rakyat Indonesia telah mengambil corak Republik sebagai bentuk negara (staatvorm) kita, dan dengan demikian juga raja-raja berhak menjadi pemimpin dan kepala Negara Republik Indonesia.

We the sultans and rajas are grateful to have received several valuable guidelines from the Governor regarding the situation of the Republic and the links between the Republic and the *daerah istimewa* and because there is this acknowledgement, it has become an obligation for us all to adapt our administrations and ourselves in keeping with democratic arrangements now. We the sultans and rajas have taken the collective decision to reaffirm our oath to stand steadfast behind the President and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and together uphold and strengthen our Republic. We are very much aware that the structure of the *daerah istimewa* must be in keeping with the policy of the Republic, that is an administration based on people's sovereignty. On this very day, we will discuss under the leadership of the Resident of East Sumatra the question of people's representation for the *daerah istimewa* and the plans that we make, we will present to the Government in a short time for examination and agreement so that within a short time orderly people's representative councils can be established in East Sumatra.³⁵

In this speech on behalf of all the sultans and rajas, the Sultan of Langkat had pledged unequivocal support for the Republic and acknowledged the need to democratise their

³⁵ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Kami sultan-sultan dan raja-raja Sumatera Timur merasa bersyukur telah menerima beberapa petunjuk yang berharga dari Tuan Governor tentang keadaan Republik dan perhubungan antara Republik Indonesia dengan daerah-daerah istimewa dan oleh kerana ada pengakuan ini, maka menjadi satu kewajipanlah bagi kami sekaliannya untuk menyesuaikan pemerintahan dan diri kami dengan susunan demokrasi sekarang ini. Kami sultan-sultan dan raja-raja telah mengambil keputusan bersama untuk melahirkan sekali lagi itikad kami bersama berdiri teguh dibelakang Presiden dan Pemerintahan Republik Indonesia dan turut menegakkan dan memperkokoh Republik kita. Kami pun sangat insaf, bahwa susunan daerah istimewa mesti selaras dengan dasar Republik, yaitu corak pemerintahan kedaulatan rakyat. Pada hari ini juga kami akan memperbincangkan atas pimpinan Residen Sumatera Timur soal susunan perwakilan rakyat untuk daerah istimewa ini dan rancangan yang kami perbuat itu akan kami persembahkan dalam sedikit waktu kepada Pemerintahan untuk diperiksa dan disetujui, supaya dalam waktu yang singkat dapat didirikan badan-badan perwakilan rakyat yang teratur di Sumatera Timur ini.

states in keeping with the concept of people's sovereignty. However there was a difference between the Sultan of Langkat's speech and that of Sjarif Kasim of Siak which we saw earlier. To the East Sumatran rulers, democratic change was seen as an obligation to the Republic, and did not arise from the belief that democracy was in keeping with changing times and that the people were conscious and had the right to be involved in the administration of the state. The *kerajaans* still felt that they should be treated differently from the way envisaged by Governor Hasan. They wanted the same status as the Javanese princely states which were linked directly to the Republic through a special High Commissioner. If this wish was agreed to, it would have given the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra autonomy from the Republican Government in Sumatra and a free hand to establish their own kind of popular elected people's councils. By making such a request, the *kerajaans* felt that they could still bargain for a better deal for themselves, without realising that the mood of the *pemudas* and their leaders was rapidly turning against them. However, Hasan did not give in to the request. The agreements on the part of the *kerajaans* to come up with a plan to democratise their states was the first concrete step taken towards satisfying the demands of the *pergerakan* leaders that people's sovereignty must prevail over the existing feudal structure. As Tengku Hafaz was the Resident of East Sumatra, Hasan expected no problems in the discussions that were to be held

between the *kerajaans* and the Republican administration.

We noted earlier that in Malaya the *kerajaans* were never subjected to the kind of pressure their counterparts underwent in East Sumatra, even during the Malayan Union crisis. In East Sumatra the public mood was clearly against the *kerajaan* as was revealed in a speech by Mr. Luat Siregar in February 1946:

The people at this time are restless and demand that democratic methods be implemented as soon as possible in the *daerah istimewa*. The people demand the establishment of a People's Representative Council in that area. The demand of the people is like a flood that can't be stopped.³⁶

Luat Siregar made it clear that the changes expected were the result of the demands of the *rakyat* and not because of obligation to the Republic as the Sultan of Langkat had stated. It was the wish of the people that was paramount. In terms of interpreting the reasons for democratic change, the East Sumatra rulers and the *pergerakan* leaders did not share the same view.

³⁶ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Rakyat pada waktu ini gelisah dan menuntut agar cara-cara demokrasi dijalankan dengan secepat-lekasnya didaerah-daerah istimewa. Rakyat berkehendak akan adanya Balai Perwakilan Rakyat didaerah itu. Kemahuan rakyat adalah laksana banjir yang tidak dapat dihalang-halangi.

Luat continued:

although externally the situation seems peaceful and quiet, in reality there is a political, social and economic revolution. The Government supports the revolution that has arisen within the *rakyat* and this is in keeping with democratic beliefs. The government is just a structure that carries out the people's wishes and can only stand with the support of the people.³⁷

Coming to an important point concerning the *kerajaans*, Luat Siregar stated that:

there must be a change in thinking. Feudal characteristics and outmoded practices must be discarded. All arrangements must fit with the demands of the *rakyat* and any area that is not willing to change and accept *kedaulatan rakyat* will cease to exist.³⁸

Whereas in Malaya the radicals in the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* did not have the support of the majority of Malays to force the sultans to democratise their administration, the sultans of the East Coast of Sumatra were under intense pressure. It was clear that the *pergerakan* leaders were running out of patience at the slow pace taken towards democratising the *daerah istimewa* and were probably thinking of a radical solution to the problems posed by the *kerajaans*. The *kerajaans* on their part did

³⁷ Soeloeh Merdeka, 4 February 1946.

³⁸ Soeloeh Merdeka, 4 February 1946.

decide to take some steps towards democratising the states. From interviews conducted, it has been ascertained that the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra did set up a committee to discuss the proposed democratic structures for the various *kerajaans* but it was composed entirely of *kerajaan* personalities.³⁹ According to Mr. Mahadi the committee did complete its work and prepared a draft paper on the type of people's representative council that was to be set up and those who would qualify to sit in it.⁴⁰

Concerning the 3 February meeting, the Resident of East Sumatra Tengku Hafaz stated that:

Recently, there was a special meeting between the Government and the *rajas* which discussed the question of the *kerajaan* areas being administered according to the wishes of the *rakyat*. The *rajas* in that special meeting have promised that they will work to help the administration to achieve this noble aim. They have stated that they will work even harder to develop the state and the *rakyat*. I wish to inform you that now under my leadership the *rajas* have established a committee to study this question.⁴¹

In the same issue of the *Soeloeh Merdeka*, Mr. Mahadi stated that:

³⁹ Interview with Mr. Mahadi and Tengku Muchtar Aziz in Medan on 19 February, 1985.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mr. Mahadi, Medan, 19 February 1985.

⁴¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 February 1946.

At a time when we remember that our country is half a year old, it is hoped that with the support and help from all groups so that all levels of society will protect the Representative Councils which we have for a long while waited for...with cooperation between the people and their leaders with the *kerajaans*, the *bangsa Indonesia Sumatera Timur* in particular and Indonesians all over generally will defend and build the Republic of Indonesia.⁴²

Neither of these statements revealed much as to what the *kerajaans* were thinking at that time. However, Mr. Mahadi's statement showed that the rajas were aware that they could no longer claim to be representatives of the people. Mr. Mahadi's statement also distinguished between the *bangsa Indonesia Sumatera Timur* and the other Indonesians as if they were two separate entities. This clearly revealed the trend of thought of the *kerajaans*. While there are no documents to support it, interviews with some of the surviving members of the Malay aristocracy showed that they held the view that in the dealings with the Republican Government, the *kerajaans* viewed themselves as representing exclusively the interests of the *anak Sumatera Timur*. Such a view was not surprising because the pre-war Dutch administration gave them responsibility only for the *anak daerah*. Tengku Muchtar Aziz stated that:

it was necessary for the *kerajaans* to defend the *anak Sumatera Timur* because they were the *rakyat negeri* (people of the country) and they should be the one allowed to participate while the *orang luar* (outsiders)

⁴² Soeloeh Merdeka, 17 February 1946.

should not be given these rights until much later when they had fitted themselves into the society of East Sumatra and showed that they understood the political realities of the *zelfbestuur*.⁴³

To the Republicans the question of insiders and outsiders was a non issue since they held the view that all were Indonesians and had equal rights. Mr. Mahadi recalled that in the report prepared for the Governor concerning democratising the *kerajaans* a residential qualification was held to be necessary, otherwise people would be elected who would not be able to represent the interests of the *orang asli* (original inhabitants).⁴⁴ Tengku Putra Aziz stated that "it was necessary for the *kerajaan* committee to insist that the *anak Sumatera Timur* be given the sole right to be elected into the People's Representative Council because this would ensure the survival of the *kerajaans* which did not trust the outsiders such as the Javanese, the Minangkabaus and some of the Toba Bataks."⁴⁵ Tengku Jafizham added that "it was most unfair of the Republic not to grant the *kerajaans* the request that they be given a High Commissioner which would mean a direct link with the Republican Government in Java rather than dealing with a provincial administration. After all under the Dutch the

⁴³ Interview with Tengku Muchtar Aziz, Medan, 17 February 1985.

⁴⁴ Interview with Mr. Mahadi, Medan, 17 February 1985.

⁴⁵ Interview with Tengku Putra Azia, Medan, 17 February 1985.

kerajaans were recognised as *zelfbestuurs* and had greater autonomy."⁴⁶

These interviews suggest that the *bangsa Indonesia dari Sumatera Timur* was considered by the Malay elite to be separate from the rest of the *bangsa Indonesia*. It was believed that the majority of the *bangsa Indonesia dari Sumatera Timur* were Malays. This was especially so in the biggest *kerajaans* of Deli, Serdang, Langkat and Asahan.⁴⁷ Politically it was not wise to stress the Malay aspect of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* identity as they would be open to charges of being anti-*bangsa Indonesia* as well as being parochial in outlook. It can be seen that the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra were having difficulties on how to proceed with democratising their regimes. The ideological problems facing the Malay royalists in East Sumatra, although somewhat obscure to specialists of Indonesia, are familiar to students of Malaya. The *kerajaan* leaders across the Straits of Malacca would have empathised with Tengku Nurdin when he complained that:

⁴⁶ Interview with Tengku Jafizham, Medan, 20 February 1985.

⁴⁷ This view can only be accepted if the Javanese and other ethnic groups that were not native to East Sumatra are excluded. However, even so this view which was communicated to me by surviving members of the Malay aristocracy is a doubtful one.

Even if the *kerajaans* had wanted to change and conform with the idea of *kedaulatan rakyat* it was very difficult to do so because that was not in the political tradition of the *kerajaans*. There has never been a time in the history of the *kerajaans* in the East Coast of Sumatra when they shared power with the *rakyat*. As far as can be seen, the various *sukus* (ethnic groups) that resided in the East Coast of Sumatra merely accepted the *kerajaans* as a government that held power in its own hands.⁴⁸

Unlike Tengku Nurdin, Sjarif Kasim of Siak had an idea of progress whereby the *kerajaans* had to be democratised because this was in keeping with the times and the progress of the people. Nurdin's view echo the sentiments of the *kerajaan* elite who were unable to consider changing with the circumstances. Some of the *pergerakan* figures had the same view, as exemplified by Saleh Umar:

Kerajaans could never democratise to the satisfaction of the *rakyat* because they could not decide whether they wanted to be *Melayu* first or Indonesian first and this attitude carried over towards their perception of the people and how they differentiated between the *orang Melayu* and the *bangsa Indonesia*. As a result of such indecisiveness, it was the *suku Melayu* that paid for the mistakes of the *rajas* because they were also the targets of the 'social revolution.' The *kerajaans* had to accept the Indonesian identity though they disliked it in their hearts, especially the Sultan of Deli who was a reactionary. But even though they accepted the Indonesian identity, they were tied to their Malay *suku* identity while we

⁴⁸ Interview with Tengku Nurdin, Medan, 23 February 1985. Tengku Nurdin was the nephew of the Sultan of Serdang. He was trained in the *giyugun* during Japanese Occupation and he threw in his lot with the Republic and became an officer in the Republic's *Tentera Nasional Indonesia* instrumental in saving members of the Serdang *kerajaan* from the excesses of the 'social revolution' by using the T.N.I. to protect them.

felt that we should not put too much emphasis on the *suku* identity but should accept without question the Indonesian identity.⁴⁹

Arif Lubis, the editor of *Soeloeh Merdeka* stated that "not all Malays supported the sultans and a good number of them stood behind the Republic, but because they did not have a visible pro-Republican *persatuan* (society), it was generally assumed that the *suku Melayu* supported their sultans.⁵⁰ Ustaz Kadir pointed out that:

The *tengkus* and *datuks* never cared for the *suku Melayu* and the fate of the *suku Melayu* only became important for the sultans when they felt that they could not trust the Javanese, Bataks, Mandailings and Minangkabau with regard to the survival of their *kerajaans*. Even then it was not too successful as many Malays were no longer willing to accept the *kerajaan* as representing their interests...the only reason why they took any interest in the common Malays was because their own interests were threatened and they felt that they could only rely on the Malays for their continued existence.⁵¹

The statement of Ustaz Abdul Kadir was an indication of the way the sultans were potentially not so much allies as rivals of Malay nationalism. The *suku Melayu* was not the

⁴⁹ Interview with Saleh Umar, Medan, 19 February 1985. Saleh Umar stated that he considered himself an Indonesian and would never use his *marga* (tribal) identity which is Hasibuan.

⁵⁰ Interview with Arif Lubis, Medan, 27 February 1985.

⁵¹ Interview with Ustaz Abdul Kadir, Medan, 17 February 1985.

only constituency of the sultans. It was when Dutch protection was absent and their personal *daulat* no longer effective that the sultans might turn to the *suku Melayu* for support. Therefore, it became convenient for them to use the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* identity for their continued existence and interests. The same phenomenon was present in the Malay peninsula. A detailed study of this question follows in the chapter on Community.

It can be seen to what extent the concept of *bangsa Indonesia* put the *kerajaans* at such a psychological disadvantage that they could no longer find shelter in their Malay identity but had to use the term *anak Sumatera Timur* to try to separate the Malays and other East Sumatrans from the all embracing Indonesian identity. They had failed to realise that with the emergence of the *bangsa Indonesia* into a political reality, the other inhabitants of the East Coast of Sumatra had acquired the legitimate right from the Republican Government of Indonesia to be treated on the same par as the original inhabitants of that area. In this respect the situation differed from the Malay peninsula where the Malays could pressure the British to recognise their claim to have the sole right to the land and treat the non-Malays as transients.

The problems and difficulties faced by the *kerajaans*, as well as their inability to adapt quickly like the Sultan

of Siak to the changing situation, earned the distrust of the *pergerakan* leaders. In fact, the hostility of some *pergerakan* leaders towards the *kerajaans* was so great that plans to destroy the *kerajaans* were made as early as December 1945 or early January 1946.⁵² This decision was not made by the Republican Government of Teuku M. Hasan. Though it can be ascertained that the decision to destroy the *kerajaans* was made by the *Markas Agung* which was set up in early December 1945 by *pergerakan* leader Nathar Zainuddin, nobody was sufficiently strong to control events and to determine in advance what should be done, even though one observer claimed "that in a practical sense, it was the *Markas Agung* that administered Sumatra."⁵³ However, the *Markas Agung* soon gave way to another organization, the *Pucuk Pimpinan Persatuan Perjuangan Sumatera* or P4S which was set up on 1 February 1946 as a result of the establishment of the *Volksfront* in Java. On 14 February, 1946, the *Pusat Persatuan Perjuangan Sumatera Timur* or P3ST took over the tasks of the *Markas Agung* and became the political body of the P4S. The programme to destroy the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra was taken over by the P3ST. The implementation of this plan would go on smoothly as the

⁵² Interview with Nip Karim in Medan, 21 February, 1985. This interview confirms that the decision to destroy the *kerajaans* was made much earlier than March 1946 when the actual violence broke out.

⁵³ Hasan Basrie, Tentang Pimpinan dan Struktur Pemerintahan di Sumatera Timur pada awal tahun 1946, typescript.

leaders of the P4S also led the P3ST and they were also the former leaders of the *Markas Agung*.⁵⁴

The meetings which the *kerajaans* held with Governor Hasan on 12 January, 1946 and 3 February, 1946, were abortive because the *kerajaans* were half-hearted about democratising their states and also the decision to destroy the *kerajaans* had already been made. The Governor and other moderates had considered these two meetings as vitally important negotiations. According to Nip Karim,

Governor Hasan knew nothing about the decision to destroy the *kerajaans* and he had openly accepted that the *kerajaans* were recognised as *daerah istimewa* and that there was no attempt on the part of the Republican Government to destroy them. Teuku Hasan was not a strong leader and from the point of view of men like Abdul Xarim M.S., Nathar Zainuddin and other revolutionary leaders, the Government of Mr. Hasan was devoid of meaningful substance. The manner in which Mr. Hasan and Dr. Amir went about realising the declaration of independence in Sumatra showed how weak they were. They thought that the traditional and feudal elites would follow them. When this did not happen because these feudal elites were more than willing to be stooges of the Dutch, they gave up hope. Yet, if they had relied on men like Abdul Xarim, Nathar Zainuddin and other *pergerakan* leaders their tasks would have been made easier.⁵⁵

Governor Hasan felt that he could democratise the *kerajaans* without destroying them. The *Komite Nasional*

⁵⁴ PRIMA, p.290.

⁵⁵ Interview with Nip Karim, Medan, 21 February 1985.

Indonesia which was set up in East Sumatra on 23 November, 1945 with Luat Siregar as its head was a sort of people's representative body. It was hoped that this K.N.I. would be the vehicle by which the autocratic *kerajaans* would be converted into democratic institutions. It was with this in mind that Hasan had his meeting with the *kerajaans* on 3 February, 1946. After his meeting was concluded, he went on an inspection tour of Sumatra which began on 6 February, 1946. According to Nip Karim,

it was necessary to get him (Hasan) out of the way, because it was likely that he would not agree to the action that would be taken against the *kerajaans*, and also because he had pledged that the Republican Government would allow the *kerajaans* to exist and it would reflect badly on him if they were destroyed while he was still around. But if he was not on the scene, he could claim that he knew nothing about it which was quite true anyway.⁵⁶

As such, the plan to destroy the *kerajaans* went ahead and the absence of Governor Hasan removed a major restraint on the more radical *pergerakan* leaders. The acting Governor Dr. M. Amir was won over to the idea of destroying the *kerajaans* by the Assistant-Resident, M. Yunus Nasution who was also a member of the *Volksfront*. But a few loose ends needed to be tied up before the operation proceeded. In a meeting held on 1 March, 1946 with representatives of the *Tentera Republic Indonesia* (T.R.I.) Col. Ahmad Tahir and

⁵⁶ Interview with Nip Karim, Medan, 21 February 1985.

Maj. Mahruzar as well as the representatives of the K.N.I., Luat Siregar, Yunus Nasution and Marzuki Lubis (both members of the *Volksfront*) did not reveal that they intended to destroy the *kerajaans* and detain the feudal elements. Instead, they alleged that the *kerajaans* were strengthening themselves with the aid of the N.I.C.A. (Netherlands Indies Civil Administration) to threaten the Republic. Mention was also made about an armed group known as the *Perkumpulan Anak Deli Islam* (PADI) which was anti-Republic. The *Volksfront* intended to take strong action against such groups with the aid of the masses, and requested that the T.R.I. should not be involved in the matter. The T.R.I. agreed with the plan of the *Volksfront* on the condition that no acts out of the ambit of the law be carried out and that all those detained be handed over to the police for investigation and, if necessary, judgement. These conditions were accepted by M. Yunus Nasution and Marzuki Lubis.⁵⁷

Unlike the Malayan rulers, those of East Sumatra were unable to bridge the gap between themselves and the *pergerakan* leaders and the situation rapidly deteriorated into violence. The first violent incidents occurred on 3 March in Sunggal (Deli) and Tanjung Balai (Asahan). In Sunggal, bitter fighting broke out, pitting the PADI and

⁵⁷ PRIMA, p.299. See also Edisaputra, Simalungun Jgajonya Sumatera Dalam Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia, penerbit U.P. Bina Satria 45, Medan.

the *Pasukan Lima* under Datuk Hitam against the *Barisan Harimau Liar*. The *Barisan Harimau Liar* was able to disperse the two groups and the survivors fled to Medan. In Tanjung Balai, thousands of armed men of various ethnic groups surrounded the palace but the sultan escaped. However, Tengku Musa with his Dutch wife and all his household were seized and killed. Those who were not killed were interned. The wives and children of most of the dead were interned, and their houses plundered for treasure by the *pemudas*. In Serdang, the sultan was protected by a T.R.I. unit in Perbaungan under Captain Tengku Nurdin who obtained approval from Colonel Ahmad Tahir to take power into his own hands. On 4 March, a transfer of authority was carried out and the *kerajaan* officials and aristocrats were interned in the palace under the watchful eye of the T.R.I.⁵⁸ In Medan, the Sultan of Deli was privileged to be under British protection when the violence broke out. Elsewhere, the situation was different.

In Langkat, the attack on the sultanate was even more traumatic. The *Penjaga Istana Langkat* (palace guards) were withdrawn after negotiations between the sultan and the *pemudas* of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* and *Pesindo*. However, on 8 March, the palace was surrounded. The

⁵⁸ Details of the killings and other acts of violence can be read in Tengkoeh Joesoef Aziddin, *Revolutie Antie Sociaal*, Tanjung Balai, 1948, pp.61-63, Tengku Luckman Sinar, 'Revolusi Sosial' and 'Suatu Tengah Malam' (typescripts).

following night, the palace was invaded and all the occupants were seized. On 11 March, seven politically prominent Tengkus were taken out and beheaded.⁵⁹ Furthermore, two daughters of the Langkat Sultan were raped by the leaders of the *pemudas*.⁶⁰

The aim here is not to give a day by day account of the events of the 'social revolution' as this had been adequately dealt with in other publications.⁶¹ My concern here is to examine the 'social revolution' in the context of a study of Malay political ideology. In this regard, the comments of Tengku Muhammad Lah Husny are of particular interest. He noted that just before the 'social revolution' many Muslims who were from Tapanuli and who had lived in the kampongs for 2 or 3 generations and who never used their clan names (*margas*) started to use them as if reacting to a signal from above. According to Lah Husny,

⁵⁹ Tengku Luckman Sinar's Revolusi Sosial di Langkat gives the following names: Dato Jamil, the sultan's secretary, his brother O.K. Ibrahim, Tengku Siddik (the prosecutor), Tengku Isa (commander of the palace guards), Tengku Ilyas, Tengku Harrison and the Tengku Kejuruan Binjei Sulaiman.

⁶⁰ Tengku Luckman Sinar, Revolusi Sosial di Langkat. Tengku Luckman states that the women consented to being raped in return for their father's life. Also interview with Tengku Muchtar Aziz in Medan.

⁶¹ See Tengko Joesoef Aziddin, Revolutie Antie Sociaal, Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra: Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli 1942-1950," Phd. dissertation, University of Sydney, 1976, Chapter 4 on the 'Social Revolution', and Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, Chapter 7 on the 'Social Revolution'.

If in the past, a person was called Baharuddin, he was now known as Baharuddin Siregar, Mansur became Mansur Lubis, Tahir changed to Tahir Situmorang, Munir to Munir Simatupang and so on. Perhaps the *marga* became a protective amulet for the future. The Karos who embraced Islam and who for quite a while did not use the *marga* names also reverted to using them. As such, Karim became Karim Sembiring, Aban became Aban Tarigan and so on.⁶²

In those days the reversion to clan names meant that the person concerned had given up Malay culture and identity and had returned to his roots i.e. his Batak clan (*marga*). Such an act was specifically seen as an anti-Malay act because this meant returning to the Batak identity and it involved total rejection of Malay political culture including disavowing the *kerajaans*.

However, according to Arif Lubis, this process of leaving the *bangsa Melayu* took place even during the Japanese Occupation because:

It did not make sense anymore to be a part of the *kerajaan*. After the proclamation of independence and with the emergence of one *bangsa* and one *negara*, many people opted out of the Malay *suku* (tribe) and chose to become Indonesians.⁶³

⁶² Tengku Muhammad Lah Husny, Revolusi Sosial 1946 di Sumatera Timur/Tapanuli, published by Badan Penerbit Husny, Jalan Amaliun, Medan, 1983. Also interview with Lah Husny, Medan, 22 February, 1985. Dr. A.C. Milner informed me that the former Sultan of Asahan, Tengku Saibun, also told him of this in 1972.

⁶³ Interview with Arif Lubis, Medan, 22 February 1985.

It was pointed out to the writer by Arif Lubis that if you could *masuk Melayu* you could also *keluar Melayu*. However, other scholars have pointed out that the process of 'Malayization' and 'Batakization' had been going on backwards and forwards. A.C. Milner has written that "after the fall of Aru in the seventeenth century, many Aru people moved into the interior. Evidently Aru Muslims would have become "pagan Bataks."⁶⁴ Similarly in the 19 century in East Sumatra, many Bataks were becoming Malay "by adopting Malay culture."⁶⁵ It was also noted that in the *Sejarah Melayu* it was stated that the Raja of Aru traced his descent from the Bataks. Similarly the chiefs of Hamperan Perak (Deli) traced their descent from the Bataks.⁶⁶ Therefore, the movement into and out of either Malay or Batak identity was a continuous process and the Malays who opted out of Malay identity were merely repeating what was going on in the past. When the *kerajaans* collapsed, it was no longer possible to attract and retain those who had chosen to be Malays and when it became a liability to be known as a Malay, many would reassess their identity and return to their Batak *marga*.

⁶⁴ A.C. Milner, Kerajaan, University of Arizona Press, 1982, p.153.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁶⁶ See A.C. Milner, E. Edwards McKinnon, and Tengku Luckman Sinar S.H., "A Note on Aru and Kota China," in Indonesia, No.26, October 1978, pp.14-15.

The 'social revolution' was accepted by the Republican government though it did not play a direct role. The acting-Governor, Dr. Amir, stated that the government was not against but in fact condoned and encouraged it, ensuring that the *kerajaans* were destroyed beyond recovery.

With suddenness the people throughout East Sumatra have acted to uphold justice (*keadilan*) and oppose tyranny (*kezaliman*) in their own districts; this movement is a social revolution of great force. The actions of the people to sweep away all enemies of the Republic of Indonesia in this state,...In such a critical situation, it is necessary to take extraordinary steps, that is, to change the structure and form of the Government radically in order to conform with the desires of the people (the people's sovereignty)...In connection with this, the Government of East Sumatra is temporarily from today being carried out by saudara M. Yunus Nasution (until now Assistant-Resident) with the assistance of an Executive Council (*Badan Perkerja*) from the K.N.I. and from the *Volksfront*...I have appointed saudara Luat Siregar as pacificator for the whole of East Sumatra with powers as wide as possible.⁶⁷

The acting-Governor's support for the 'social revolution' and his statement that the movement was to 'uphold justice and oppose tyranny' seemed to give it legitimacy in the eyes of those who had felt uneasy about the possibility that it might lead to violence and loss of lives. He was the first senior government official to have

⁶⁷ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 5 March 1946, also reprinted in Raliby's *Documenta Historica*, p.598. See also Michael van Langenburg, "Nationalism and Revolution in North Sumatra", pp.441-442.

used such strong language against the *kerajaans*. Amir's appointment of Yunus Nasution and Luat Siregar to positions of power ensured that the *kerajaans* would be abolished as both these men were completely against the *kerajaans*. It also showed clearly that Dr. Amir had lost control of the situation. On 7 March, 1946 a meeting was called in Medan in order to resolve the *kerajaan* issue. A huge crowd gathered outside the building in which the meeting was held and called for the abolition of the *kerajaan*. Yunus Nasution came out to announce that the Deli sultanate was abolished. *Kerajaan* officials who attended the meeting were seized.⁶⁸ Earlier on in Langkat, on 5 March at a meeting in Binjai which was attended by Yunus Nasution the Langkat *kerajaan* was declared abolished and the K.N.I. of Tanjung Pura took over authority. Tengku Saidi Husny was confirmed as the *wakil pemerintah* N.R.I.⁶⁹

Luat Siregar, the "pacificator" appointed by Dr. Amir, reached Pematang Siantar on 5 March. He was accompanied by Sarwono and Saleh Umar. At a meeting he explained that the government terminated the rajas' authority because of their contacts with the Dutch. In a vote to elect the new

⁶⁸ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7, 8 and 20 March 1946. Interview with Mr. Mahadi, Medan, 22 February 1985.

⁶⁹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 6, 12 March 1946. Also Saidy-Hoesny, Kenangan Masa, Medan, 1969, pp.42-45.

head of government in Simalungun, Urbanus Pardede of the P.K.I. was elected. On 6 March, Luat reached Tanjung Balai and declared Abdullah Eteng the new government representative there.¹⁰ From all accounts, the popular mood in favour of the 'social revolution' was overwhelming. The *Partai Boeroeh Indonesia* stated that the 'social revolution' in East Sumatra had started and would go on and that the workers from all ethnic groups were fully behind the government.¹¹ The *Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia* (Pesindo) at the opening of its branch at Kolam Berenang, Medan which was attended by Dr. M. Amir, Yunus Nasution and other notables heard a speech by Dr. Amir proclaiming that "by God, feudalism is being, has been and will be wiped out now."¹² Dr. Amir claimed the 'social revolution' took place in the *kerajaan* areas because:

...Among them, there are many who are openly or secretly organizing the forces to oppose the Republic of Indonesia and had links with the N.I.C.A. After the people with their forces saw such treacherous acts, they therefore acted quickly and without restraining themselves helped the Government to wipe clean the enemies of the country. The people demand that the *daerah istimewa*, the fortress of feudalism which are full of the country's enemies and foreign capitalists, be abolished immediately so that the Republic of Indonesia in the whole of Sumatra is established on a

¹⁰ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946. Also Joesoef Aziddin, pp.65-66.

¹¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946. See the statement of Qesman Effendi.

¹² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946.

firm footing according to the rules of the N.R.I.: people's sovereignty and social welfare.¹³

While the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra were being destroyed, a new factor entered Malay political ideology when the *Balai Penerangan* in a press statement in the *Soeloeh Merdeka* announced that Sultan Sjarif Kasim of Siak had abdicated (*meletakkan jabatan*) by his own accord.¹⁴ In the same issue of the paper the sultan stated that:

...because (I) think of the interests of the state and the *bangsa* (Indonesia), I an individual who in the past had always upheld *kedaulatan rakyat* therefore with a heart that is sincere...ABDICATE MY RIGHTS AND POWERS IN FULL. There is nothing that can prevent or (be an) obstacle to me to abdicate my position in thinking of the interests of the state and *bangsa*.¹⁵

His action was without comparison in the post-war history of the Malay monarchies in East Sumatra and Malaya. Sjarif Kasim had given two reasons for his voluntary abdication and these are for the interests of the nation and the *bangsa Indonesia*. His abdication was a tacit admission of the superiority of the state and the *bangsa Indonesia*

¹³ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946.

¹⁴ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946.

¹⁵ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946. ...oleh kerana mengingat kepentingan nusa dan Bangsa, saya seorang yang telah dahulu menjunjung tinggi kedaulatan rakyat maka dengan hati yang tulus ikhlas...MELETAKKAN HAK DAN KUASA SAYA DENGAN SEPENUH PENUHNYA. Ta'ada suatu yang menjadi halangan dan keberatan bagi saya untuk meletakkan jabatan itu mengingat kepentingan Nusa dan Bangsa.

over himself and this in itself introduced a new element in Malay political thinking whereby the state and the *bangsa* took precedence over the sultan. He was the only Malay sultan to make such a statement and abdicate out of his personal conviction.

Popular support for the 'social revolution' was such that even the Islamic reformist movement which had hesitated to be involved initially quickly decided to align itself with the popular mood against the *kerajaans*. There had long been doctrinal differences between the interpretation of Islam of the *kaum tua* (old orthodox scholars) who were pro-*kerajaan* and that of the *kaum muda* (young reformist scholars) who were modernistic and nationalistic and were not inclined to support the East Sumatran *kerajaans*. The *kaum muda* stood for a liberal and modern approach to Islam which will liberate the Islamic communities from superstitious beliefs. They stressed more on reason and logic in interpreting and adapting Islam to the modern world. In the 1930s there had been conflicts within the Islamic community. The Malay rulers saw themselves as upholders of the doctrines of the *madzab Sjafii* (Imam Sjafi's School of Thought) against the modernists who did not accept the *madzabs*.¹⁶ According to one writer, "the

¹⁶ In Islam there are four orthodox *madzabs* i.e. Hambali, Sjafii, Maliki and Hanafi.

kaum tua championed the continuation of the established customs and tradition, while the *kaum muda* were for the advancement of the overall condition of the country without abiding by the traditions."⁷⁷

In East Sumatra the reformist threat to the *kerajaan* was the *Muhammadiyah* movement. The members of *Muhammadiyah*, which established schools and conducted reformist propaganda in East Sumatra, "were mainly Minangkabaus and were often in conflict with the officials and subjects of the *kerajaan*."⁷⁸ The conflict between the *kerajaan* and *Muhammadiyah* was not just doctrinal but also ethnic and was seen by the former as Malay versus Minangkabau.⁷⁹ *Muhammadiyah* Ulama were banned from using the *Mesjid Besar* (Great Mosque) in Deli by the sultan in 1932.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the *Muhammadiyah* was sympathetic to the nationalist movement.⁸¹ Hamka, the *Muhammadiyah* Consul in East Sumatra, has recorded instances where mosques erected by the *Muhammadiyah* in *kerajaan* areas

⁷⁷ Deliar Noer, The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, p.6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁷⁹ Michael van Langenberg, "Nationalism and Revolution in North Sumatra", p.58.

⁸⁰ Deli Data 1863-1938, p.10.

⁸¹ Lance Castles, "The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency: Tapanuli 1915-1940," Doctoral Thesis, Yale University, 1972, p.233.

were forced to close.⁸² Thus the relationship between the *Muhammadiyah* and the *kerajaans* was never smooth.

The other Islamic organization of significance was the *Jamiatul Wasliyah*, which was formed in Medan in 1928 out of a debating club of students from the *Maktab Islamijah Tapanuli*.⁸³ Though insisting (unlike *Muhammadiyah*) on submission to the interpretations of the dominant law school (*madzab*), it was inclined to stress Muslim unity and propagation (*dakwah*) and play down the issues between conservatives and reformists.⁸⁴

The Malay rulers were not inclined to see the *Jamiatul Waslijah* as a serious threat to their positions. According to one writer,

in September 1939, the Sultan of Langkat announced his support for a campaign by the *Jamiatul Waslijah* to convert the Karonese communities in Langkat to Islam. The same month, the sultan of Deli declared that *Jamiatul Waslijah* would be officially recognised in the sultanate, so long as it abided by *kaum tua* doctrines.⁸⁵

⁸² Hamka, Kenang-kenangan Hidup, Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1982, pp.279-284.

⁸³ Lance Castles, "The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency", p.241.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.241.

⁸⁵ Michael van Langenberg, "Nationalism and Revolution in North Sumatra", p.58.

Despite the seeming lack of conflict between the *Jamiatul Waslijah* and the *kerajaans* there were political differences as the *Jamiatul Waslijah* like the *Muhammadiyah* was pro-nationalist and anti-colonial.⁸⁶ Since the *kerajaans* were seen to uphold colonialism as well as deriving benefits from it, the potential for turning against the sultans was ever present. Wartime experience, when the *Muhammadiyah* and the *Waslijah* were obliged to work together in many forums, and balanced against the secular nationalists, changed the pre-war alignments.

When the war ended, the Islamic reformists of the *Muhammadiyah* and the *Jamiatul Waslijah* openly supported the nationalist groups opposing the *kerajaans*. Tengku Jafizham later claimed that this was an example of opportunism on the part of some Islamic leaders to cash in on the mood against the *kerajaans*. Jafizham himself was seized by activists of the *Muhammadiyah* on the orders of Haji Abdul Rahman Sjihab at the Medan railway station on 4 March after attending a *Majlis Islam Tinggi* rally in Langkat.⁸⁷ The *Majlis Islam Tinggi* itself joined a political party, the *Masjumi*, during the 'social revolution.' The local leaders of the party were Haji Abdul Rahman Sjihab, M. Yunan Nasution and Bachtiar

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁸⁷ Interview with Tengku Jafizham in Medan, 14 February 1985.

Yunus.⁸⁸ This was a balanced leadership drawn from the *Muhammadiyah*, *Waslijah* and the *pemuda*. Two days later in a statement the M.I.T. called for sermons to be held throughout East Sumatra to explain the proclamation of the acting-Governor dated 5 March so that it would be understood by the people. The statement added that as from 6 March, Tengku Jafizham was removed from the leadership of the M.I.T. of East Sumatra.⁸⁹ By 9 March, the attitude of the *Masjumi* was more militantly anti-*kerajaan*. The party called for 'social revolution' sermons to be delivered on Fridays. In the Raya mosque, Haji Abdul Rahman Sjihab as *imam* gave a sermon about Islam and Indonesian independence, while M. Yunan Nasution spoke on the backwardness of the understanding of Islam in the *daerah istimewa*. At the Gang Bengkok mosque, Haji Abu Bakar Jacob gave an identical sermon while at Binjei, Haji Halim Hasan went into the pulpit with a drawn sword as was done by the Prophet.⁹⁰

Tengku Jafizham believed that among the various groups involved in the 'social revolution' it was the *Masjumi* that made significant gains as religion became its monopoly. This

⁸⁸ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 8 March 1946.

⁸⁹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 7 March 1946.

⁹⁰ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 9 March 1946. The *Soeloeh Merdeka* though giving publicity to the actions of the radical preachers did not report the contents of their sermons. Thus it is difficult to quote what they actually said and to analyse their ideas.

weakened considerably the position of the *bangsa Melayu* and the *kerajaans* as Islam was an integral part of the Malay identity and *adat*.⁹¹ The acting-Governor Dr. Amir had issued a statement on 9 March that full authority to organise religious affairs in the former *daerah istimewa* was given to the leaders of the *Masjumi*. This gave the party powers to appoint *kadhis* and other religious officials.⁹² By 12 March, the *Masjumi* had welcomed the 'social revolution.' According to the party,

The current of 'social revolution' which has swept through the principalities of East Sumatra is not only bringing in political changes and changes in the structure of government, but is also bringing benefits in the form of new ideas and progress in the Islamic religion...As a political party with a religious basis and religious ideals, the *Masjumi* also views these changes as the sweeping away of a barrier which has stood in the way of the Islamic reform movement...It is not surprising, therefore that the development of the religious movement has been uneven in East Sumatra. In the principalities, religious teachings were directed towards lulling men to sleep, so that there arose the belief among the people who did not look for an explanation of this situation that the religion of Islam concerns itself only with the hereafter. Thanks be to God! With the destruction of the principalities, the course of religious activity can be made uniform throughout the region of East Sumatra.⁹³

⁹¹ Interview with Tengku Jafizham, Medan, 24 March 1985.

⁹² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 9 March 1946.

⁹³ Herbert Feith and Lance Castles (eds.), Indonesian Political Thinking, Cornell University Press, 1970, pp.56-57; Osman Raliby, Documenta Historica, pp.274-5; *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 12 March 1946.

The *Masjumi* was seen as the Islamic organization of the Republic, just as the Japanese required it to be their organization (in Java) in 1943-1945. The *Masjumi* was a federation of Islamic organizations of which the *Muhammadiyah* was important. In East Sumatra, both the *Muhammadiyah* and the *Jamiatul Waslijah* were its members. With the destruction of the *kerajaans* and the taking over of religious affairs by the *Masjumi*, the sultans ceased to be head of religion. Jafizham stated that the sultan was not only head of the *kerajaan*, but he symbolised the unity of the Malay *negeri* and in his person he embodies the norms, values and traditions that Malays who uphold the *kerajaan* could emphathise with. With the removal of the sultans, the *kerajaan* with its traditions and norms which held the East Sumatran Malays together was gone and there was no substitute for the Malays to turn to.⁹⁴ Though the position of the head of religion was done away with, the *ulama* could yet accept that since President Sukarno was the legitimate head of state, the *shaukah* or religious authority was vested in him and since he (Sukarno) had delegated this authority to the local *Masjumi*, Abdul Rahman Sjihab now had the power to dismiss the old *kadhis* and appoint new ones.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Interview with Tengku Jafizham Medan, 24 February 1985. Tengku Jafizham went so far as to claim that since religion and Malay *adat* were very closely interwoven, the destruction of the *kerajaan* meant that the *bangsa Melayu* ceased to have *adat* heads as well.

⁹⁵ See *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 12, 13 March 1946.

The implications of these developments meant that the sultans lost control of Islam and that it was now possible for anyone to become muslims without the need to declare themselves Malays. In the past, to become a muslim in a *kerajaan* area meant that one had to *masuk Melayu* and accept Malay customs as well as the values and traditions of the *kerajaan* and recognise the sultan as the head of religion as well as adhere to the doctrines of the *kaum tua*. Since the *kerajaans* no longer had any control over Islam, religion was no longer an important determinant in facilitating the entry of non-Malays into the Malay community. The taking over of religious affairs by the *Masjumi* also signified the triumph of the *kaum muda* over the *kaum tua* who had always been indentified with the Malay monarchies and had always served the interests of the monarchies. Quick to take advantage of their newly acquired powers, the *Masjumi* appointed new *kadhis* in East Sumatra. On 19 March, Haji Abdoerrahman Abd. Djabbar was appointed *kadhi* of Deli based in Medan, with Haji Abd. Halim Hasan appointed for Langkat and based in Binjai and Abd. Aziz for Serdang based at Perbaungan.⁹⁶ However, the extent of the powers wielded by the *Masjumi* became apparent when the party made it clear that there could be no question of 'popular sovereignty' in religion and that *kadhis* and other religious officials could not be chosen by the people because there was a distinction between

⁹⁶ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 18 March 1946.

government officials who could be appointed based on 'popular sovereignty' and the appointment of *kadhis* based on God's laws. According to the party,

...the *kadhis* do not carry out matters that must adhere to laws which are made by the *rakyat* but must bow to laws already made by God according to the Quran and the Sunnah...There are conditions for the appointment of a *kadhi* other than the fact that he must be just. Firstly, the person must have a vast knowledge concerning the workings of Islamic law, primarily concerning with marriage. Secondly, he must be able to adjust to the times. An individual who has these criteria and is supported by the people is definitely the best person to be *kadhi*. On the other hand, an individual though supported by the people cannot be *kadhi* if he does not have the qualifications. Therefore, the appointment of *kadhi* need not necessarily adhere to democratic norms because his job is not that of a Government administrator who must act according to the demands of the populace but as an Islamic judge who is responsible to God.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Soeloeh Merdeka, 22 March 1946. ...Kadi-kadi itu tidaklah menjalankan sesuatu urusan yang harus takluk kepada peraturan-peraturan yang diciptakan oleh rakyat tetapi mesti takluk kepada undang-undang yang sudah diatur oleh Tuhan menurut nash (Quran) dan sunnah. Yang menjadi syarat yang terutama bagi seorang kadi selain dari mesti adil ialah pertama, pengetahuan yang luas tentang selok-belok hukum agama, terutama yang berkenaan dengan soal nikah kahwin. Kedua yang dapat membawakan diri dengan kehendak zaman. Seseorang yang mempunyai syarat-syarat tersebut dan disamping itu disetujui pula oleh rakyat, memang orang yang demikian yang sebegus-bagusnya dijadikan kadi. Sebaliknya, tidak perlu tiap-tiap orang, walaupun disetujui oleh rakyat bisa diangkat menjadi kadi kalau syarat-syarat tak cukup padanya...nyatalah bahawa pengangkatan kadi-kadi tidaklah mesti takluk kepada asas-asas demokrasi sebab perkerjaannya bukan sebagai wakil pemerintah yang mesti bertindak menurut aliran kemahuan orang banyak, tetapi sifatnya sebagai hakim Islam yang bertanggung jawab kepada Tuhan.

With this explanation, the *Masjumi* strengthened its control over Islam. The party consolidated its strength even further with the establishment of the *Dewan Agama Islam Tinggi Sumatra* with wide powers concerning Islamic affairs.⁹⁸

The 'social revolution' struck at the *kerajaans* and the *bangsa Melayu* at two levels i.e. the physical level which led to the destruction of their political institutions and the spiritual level which led to the freeing of Islam from Malay *adat* and Malay identity. In a subsequent chapter on the *Negara Sumatera Timur*, we will examine the attempts made by the Malay *suku* in cooperation with other indigenous *sukus* to reconstruct an acceptable political arrangement that could serve the interests of the various communities as well as pose a viable challenge to Indonesian nationalism.

⁹⁸ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 30 March and 2 April 1946. The wide powers included the right to appoint and dismiss religious officials, control mosques and collect funds for religious purposes.

CHAPTER 4

PERSEKUTUAN TANAH MELAYU OR FEDERATION OF MALAYA

In the previous chapter we have examined the conflict between the emergence of a *bangsa Indonesia* and the rulers of the East Coast of Sumatra. We have noted that the inability of the *kerajaans* to come to terms with the nationalist movement and the need to democratise led to the 'social revolution' of March 1946 whereby the *kerajaans* were destroyed and the Sumatra Timur identity was submerged in an all embracing Indonesian identity. In Malaya, however, the *kerajaans* were pragmatic in coming to terms with the changing situation and this ensured their survival. We also noted in the last chapter how political convenience did encourage the sultans to favour the emergence of an East Sumatran consciousness even though this was not a natural alliance. This East Sumatran consciousness was meant to be multi-ethnic while in Malaya it was basically a Malay consciousness. In Malaya we must not assume that the Malay conservatives favoured *kebangsaan* wholeheartedly. Of the Malay rulers, some were in favour as they were faced with the potency of a Malay communal solidarity developing in the Malayan Union period. Others may have continued to despise and fear *kebangsaan* as a potential threat to the Malay monarchies.

The Malay left-wing took a different interpretation of the term *kebangsaan* and *bangsa Melayu*. The radicals understood the term *kebangsaan* as in keeping with the English term 'nationalism.' For them it could not be defined as 'raceness' in the narrow communal sense used by the Malay conservatives. To the Malay radicals *kebangsaan* was the demand for independence of the people and country.¹ The *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* which took part in the meeting that led to the setting up of U.M.N.O. in March 1946 believed in the union of Malaya with Indonesia in an *Indonesia Raya* as both Malays and the various ethnic groups in Indonesia were from the same *bangsa*.²

The representative of the P.K.M.M. was the only one who mentioned links with Indonesia and the ethnic ties with the Indonesians. The delegates from the other state associations were preoccupied with the threat faced from the Malayan Union. The main reason why they had all assembled for the meeting was, according to Dato Onn:

¹ Kamaruddin Jaafar, Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, Yayasan Anda Sdn. Bhd., 1980, p.48.

² Muhammad Yunus Hamidi, Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1961. In a speech made at the inaugural meeting of the Pan Malaya Malay Congress on 1 March 1946 the representative of the P.K.M.M. stated as follows "...ahli-ahli P.K.M.M. tetap berdiri kepada dasarnya yang sejati menuju kepada Indonesia Raya dan berhubung rapat dengan dan serta seperjuangan dengan anak-anak Indonesia kerana kita satu bangsa. Kita sudah 350 tahun kena jajah dan sekarang kita sudah insaf. Kita akan bersama-sama dengan 75 juta umat berkerja untuk mencapai kemerdekaan dan dibawah bendera Merah-Putih," p.48.

...we wish them (the Malays) to play their part and work towards warding off the ignominy brought about by the destruction and extinction of our *bangsa*.¹

For the conservatives the Malayan Union was the issue of the day. The P.K.M.M., however, continued to press its plan for a broader Malay/Indonesia unity. In fact, the P.K.M.M. felt that the ending of the war and the struggle for independence was the best opportunity to achieve this aim to bring the two countries together as they had been before the advent of colonialism. We need to look into this aspect more carefully to assess whether the scheme of the P.K.M.M. was acceptable to the majority of the Malays.

In early July 1945 members of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* had made some attempts to influence members of the Indonesian *Badan Penyelidikan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* to put forward the "Greater Indonesia" concept. Indeed Sukarno in his address to the B.P.K.I. on 11 July, 1945 made a speech as follows:

Yesterday, three youths from Syonanto, (Singapore), came to see me and handed me a request from the youths in Malaya to me so that Malaya will be incorporated into Indonesia. One of the well known Malayan leaders, Lt.Col. Abdullah Ibrahim (Ibrahim Yaacob) conveyed the request that Malaya be

¹ *Ibid.*, p.26. Also *Malaya Tribune*, 3 March, 1946, *Straits Times*, 4 March 1946. ...kita berkehendak kepada mengambil bahagian dan pikulan kita pada menolakan ke'aipan yang disebabkan oleh kebinasaan dan kehapusan bangsa kita.

incorporated into Indonesian territory.⁴

Sukarno also justified the inclusion of Malaya into Indonesia because Indonesia's security would be threatened if it did not control both sides of the Straits of Malacca, to which he added that Malaya constituted part of the unity of the Indonesian archipelago.⁵ He was supported in this by Muhammad Yamin, who went so far as to agree that the new state of Indonesia should coincide with the Indonesian fatherland (*Tumpah-darah Indonesia*) whose extent had been determined by the fourteenth-century state of Majapahit which included Sumatra, Java, Madura, the Lesser Sundas, Borneo, Celebes, the Moluccas, Peninsula Malaya, Timor and Papua.⁶ It is difficult to ascertain which of these factors was more persuasive: the request of Ibrahim Yaacob, the strategic reasons by Sukarno, or Yamin's understanding of the history of Majapahit, but the B.P.K.I. supported the "Greater Indonesia" concept by a vote of 39 for with 27 against.⁷ The Malay advocates of the *Indonesia Raya* or *Melayu Raya* concept interpreted it purely in racial terms.

⁴ Muhammad Yamin, Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, Jajasan Prapantja, 1959, pp.205-206.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.206.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.127, p.135.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.214.

Sukarno and Yamin saw it in geo-political and ethnic terms.¹ The main reason for the difference was that in Malaya this idea was the product of racial anxiety while in Indonesia it was an extension of the nationalist attempt to build a multi-ethnic unity on the basis of vanished empires and the Malay language.¹ However, the attempts to incorporate Malaya into Indonesia failed because the Japanese who brought Sukarno and Hatta to Saigon for discussions would not lend their support to this.¹¹ Consequently at the opening of the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* Sukarno stated that he would settle for the territory of the former Netherlands Indies.¹¹ Thus it was that when the Indonesians declared their *merdeka* on 17 August 1945, Malaya was not included in the territories of the Republic.

However, it took quite a while for the P.K.M.M. to put on the shelf their idea of linking Malaya with Indonesia. The idea of a *Melayu Raya* had a strong emotional appeal to

¹ The Malay advocates saw as a unity of the Malay race against foreigners while Sukarno and Yamin saw it as the unity of groups that were ethnically akin...

¹ Angus McIntyre, "The "Greater Indonesia" idea of nationalism in Malaya and Indonesia," in Modern Asian Studies, 7, i, 1973, pp.75-83.

¹⁰ Bernard Dahm, Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, Cornell University Press, 1969, p.301. The Japanese had made it clear that they would not recognise the extensive territorial claims voted by the B.P.K.I.

¹¹ B.R.O. Anderson, Some Aspects of Indonesian Politics Under the Japanese Occupation: 1944-1945, Cornell Modern Indonesian project, 1961, p.2.

members of the P.K.M.M. especially to Burhanuddin who was their theoretician. Burhanuddin never gave up his idea of uniting Malaya with Indonesia.¹²

Yet a close look at how Indonesians viewed that unity would have dispelled any idea that it was based on the unity of *Melayu Raya* or greater Malay race. It is inconceivable that the Indonesians were thinking in terms of a greater Malay unity for this concept had very strong racial undertones. In Indonesia *Melayu* came to be seen primarily as one of the many *sukus*.¹³ Had the idea of a greater Malay unity been propounded in Indonesia, there would have been few prepared to accept it. The unity of the various ethnic groups was seen as an Indonesian unity to which all ethnic

¹² *Utusan Melayu*, 10 May 1947. Dr. Burhanuddin represented Malaya at a conference of Asian peoples in Delhi. While making a stopover in Burma as a guest of the Burmese government, he stated that "full independence is the final hope of Malaya but our fate is closely linked with other Malay territories in Southeast Asia. With these territories we will merge and unite in a greater unity. The unity of the *bangsa Melayu Raya* will comprise Malaya, Java, Borneo, Sulawesi and other islands within the Malay archipelago..."

Kemerdekaan penuh adalah cita-cita akhir Malaya tetapi nasib kami adalah berkaitan rapat dengan daerah-daerah Melayu yang lain di Asia Tenggara. Dengan daerah-daerah ini kami akan tercantum dan bergabung didalam suatu perpaduan yang besar. Gabungan bangsa Melayu Raya yang seperti ini terdiri dari Malaya, Java, Borneo, Sulawesi dan pulau-pulau Melayu yang lain didalam gugusan pulau-pulau Melayu...

¹³ This is not the same as the semi-scientific broad sense of proto-Malay, deutero-Malay or even the very broad based term which could embrace the Filipinos and the various races in the Indonesian archipelago.

groups could feel an affinity. Thus even the Javanese who constituted the largest ethnic group would come to find an Indonesian identity more acceptable to the other ethnic groups than the propagation of an identity based on Javanism.¹⁴ Sukarno had stated in his speech that the *rakyat Melayu* felt themselves to be *bangsa Indonesia*. He did not mention *Melayu Raya* at any point in his speech.¹⁵ However, the Malays who wanted *Melayu Raya* appear to have wrongly assumed that it was similar to *Indonesia Raya*.

It became clear to the Malay left-wing in the latter half of 1945 that the British were going ahead with the Malayan Union, and the union with Indonesia was wishful thinking because there was no revolution in Malaya or support from Indonesia. Despite opposition from Malays who were fighting for the rights of their *bangsa* and their sultans, the Malayan Union was implemented on 1 April, 1946. The British felt that they could ride out the storm of Malay protest. When it became clear that Malaya was not going to get rapid independence from the British and could not unite with Indonesia, the Malay left had to consider a change of strategy. It became necessary for them to redefine the concept of *bangsa Melayu* in line with the political realities in the Malay states and to attract non-Malays to

¹⁴ Such a view began to be accepted in the 1920s.

¹⁵ Muhammad Yamin, Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, p.206.

it so as to strengthen their position in their struggle against the conservatives for support among the Malays.

A clear indication of this change in strategy could be discerned in Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy's book entitled *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (The Basis of a Malay National Philosophy) printed in Penang in 1954 and represented his speeches made during his active involvement in the P.K.M.M. in the late 1940s. Burhanuddin advocated the identification of a *bangsa Melayu* based on *kebudayaan Melayu* (Malay culture) and the eventual formation of a *kebangsaan Melayu*. This *kebangsaan Melayu* was to form the basis of political integration in Malaya. He saw the concept of "Malayan" as the antithesis of this, that is, a policy of "divide and rule" among the peoples of Malaya.¹⁶

Because many foreign races came to Malaya, therefore how are these foreign races to change their *bangsa*? They will not be accepted as Malays unless they are *mualaf* (muslim converts). Because of this, the foreign races who really want to settle in Malaya or those who are two faced chose to exchange their respective *bangsa* to a Malayan *bangsa*, a term that is never used by Malay people or race.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Burhanuddin AlHelmy, Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu, in Kamaruddin Jaafar's Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, Yayasan Anda Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p.107.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.107. Kerana banyak bangsa-bangsa datang ke Malaya, maka bangsa-bangsa dagang itu bagaimana pula hendak mengubah bangsanya yang tak dapat biasanya diterima menjadi bangsa Melayu selain daripada dahulu menjadi mualaf. Maka bangsa-bangsa asing yang betul-betul hendak berwatankan Malaya atau pun bertalam dua muka memakai penukaran bangsanya masing-masing itu kepada bangsa Malayan iaitu suatu sebutan yang tak pernah dipakai oleh orang atau bangsa Melayu sendiri.

To Burhanuddin, there was only one way to solve this problem of being called Malayan and he stresses that his solution which is the concept of *kebangsaan Melayu* was not based on racial ancestry.

Just as a certain group and inhabitants of a state become constituents in the building of *kebangsaan Melayu*, so can every individual from whatever group or race which has broken or severed its ties and links with its original *kebangsaan*, do so. If (he or she) has taken the oath of loyalty and fulfils the rules and requirements of *kebangsaan Melayu*, therefore that individual adopts the Malay nationalism (*kebangsaan*) according to that political tradition. On the other hand, a person of Malay descent cannot be admitted to the *kebangsaan Melayu* if that person has severed links with the *kebangsaan Melayu* of his own free will and with ample explanations.¹¹

In adopting *kebangsaan Melayu* as a focus of identity Burhanuddin takes great pains to allay the fears of the non-Malays that they would lose their identity. He states that:

Those aspects concerning the change in *kebangsaan* are not followed by a change in hereditary traits and racial descent of a particular group because that is in the realm of feelings and characteristics of a person

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.113. Sebagaimana sesuatu puak dan penduduk suatu negeri jadi anggota atas binaan kebangsaan Melayu, maka demikian jua tiap-tiap seorang daripada apa puak atau bangsa pun yang telah putus atau memutuskan pertalian dan perhubungan dengan kebangsaan asalnya, lalu menumpahkan taat setia dan memenuhi syarat dan kehendak kebangsaan Melayu maka seseorang itu jadilah berkebangsaan Melayu menurut istilah politik. Sebaliknya pula tidaklah dapat dimasukkan seorang baka Melayu kepada kebangsaan Melayu jika seseorang itu telah memutuskan daripada kebangsaan Melayu dengan pilihannya sendiri dengan cukup keterangan-keterangan pula.

but *kebangsaan* is within the ambit of the law and politics."

In *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oktober 1945 - 17 Oktober 1946*, (Our Struggle 17 October 1945 - 17 October, 1946) Burhanuddin had strongly stressed unity with Indonesia and the concept of *Melayu Raya* but in his second book, *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu*, these emphases disappeared as he devoted his efforts towards arguing for *Melayu* identity for all races in the Malay peninsula. Though the changing political situation had forced him to reassess his struggle to unite Malaya with Indonesia in a greater *Melayu Raya*, he never gave up this ideal. If the earlier work did not see the necessity of accomodating the non-Malays as they would be inconsequential in any unity between the Malay states and Indonesia, his later work saw the need to build bridges with the non-Malays becoming more important when the possibility of unity between the Malay states and Indonesia became remote.

Our discussion has shown that both the Malay conservatives and the Malay radicals attached great importance to the *bangsa Melayu*, how it was to be defined and who was to be included or excluded within that

" *Ibid.*, p.114. Bagaimanapun penukaran kebangsaan itu tidaklah turut bertukar darah baka dan bangsa keturunan sesuatu kaum, kerana perkara itu termasuk dalam kuasa perasaan dan tabii seseorang tetapi kebangsaan itu termasuk dalam kuasa undang-undang dan politik.

definition of *Melayu*. It will be shown that to the Malay conservatives, *bangsa Melayu* meant Malay race in an exclusive way unless the non-Malay *masuk Melayu* (lit: enter the Malay race) by becoming a Muslim and practising Malay culture while to the Malay radicals it meant a nationality that was supposed to transcend race or ethnic sentiments and was not conditional on becoming a Muslim.

We can see how the terms *bangsa Melayu* and *kebangsaan Melayu* became so important to the Malays in defining themselves, their culture and political dominance. It is also clear that both the Malay radicals and the conservatives who founded the U.M.N.O. shared the view that the term "Malayan" was a British creation and an unnatural term which had no historical roots within the Malay states. The Malay conservatives were of the opinion that the "Malayans", who they identified as non-Malays, had no place in the Malay states and should not be given citizenship or political rights while the radicals felt that they should only be accepted if they became *Melayu*. The radicals advocated a nationality to be known as *kebangsaan Melayu* which the non-Malays could acquire. Terms like "Malayan Chinese" and "Malayan Indians" were totally unacceptable because they raised the spectre of communalism and groupism. In such a situation, the Malays who demanded the right to be a *bangsa* that is sovereign like other *bangsa* in this world would be

treated only as a (minor) group in their own country.²⁰ Thus the *orang asing* must become *Melayu* to be accepted by the Malays.

However, as far as the Malay conservatives were concerned, they would never accept the term *Melayu* as a nationality for the non-Malays whom they considered as *bangsa dagang* who were merely "lodging in the Malay states"²¹ because it would be a serious threat to their exclusive racial definition of who could be defined as *Melayu*. Therefore, the Malayan Union that threatened to give citizenship and political rights to the *bangsa asing* must be destroyed at all costs. Dato Onn made it clear that any Malay who was involved in any way in the setting up of the Malayan Union would no longer be considered as belonging to the Malay community:

...any Malay who takes part (in the Malayan Union), a Malay like that is not a person who can be counted as a member of the Malay *bangsa*.²²

²⁰ Kamaruddin Jaafar, Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, pp.107-108.

²¹ *Majlis*, 25 October 1945. This was taken from an editorial entitled "Nasib Orang Melayu Yang Kehadapan."

²² *Majlis*, 2 April 1946. ...sebarang orang Melayu yang mengambil bahagian maka orang Melayu yang demikian itu bukanlah ia daripada jumlah orang yang berbangsa dengan Melayu. What this was to mean in a practical sense is not clear but as a form of psychological threat it was quite potent.

To emphasise that this was no idle threat, Dato Onn made it clear to the sultans that they would be overthrown by their own people if they attended the official installation of the Governor of the Malayan Union on 1 April, 1946.²¹ This decision was taken at an emergency meeting held by the Malay Congress on 30 and 31 March 1946 in Kuala Lumpur.

From the viewpoint of Malay political ideology, the threat to overthrow (*buang*) the rajas showed that the rulers were no longer the pivot of Malay political values and that their *daulat* (aura) which was so potent in the past was no longer unquestioned. They were perceived as a part of the body politic and could be overthrown if the need arose and this implied that they could no longer take any independent action without the agreement of their subjects. The sultans complied with the decision of the emergency Congress, well aware of how weak their standing was at this point in the eyes of their subjects. The immense significance of their surrender to the Malay conservatives has yet to be analysed in its proper context. Malay sultans had never failed to attend a British ceremony even when they disagreed with British policy for it had always been part of their etiquette to show courtesy. But the installation of

²¹ *Majlis*, 2 April 1946. The actual words were: "...maka Raja-raja itu akan dibuang terus oleh rakyat." Also *Straits Times*, 3 April 1946.

Governor Gent of the Malayan Union was a different matter altogether as it was defined by Dato Onn as "the funeral rites of (the Malays) birthright and liberty."²⁴

In choosing to adhere to the demands of the Malay Congress the sultans put to rest the old relationship with the British, but at the same time acknowledged the fact that their *rakyat* had a voice in their actions. Thus the Malay conservatives had shown their strength and ability to get their decisions enforced. The fact that the Malay conservatives were able to demonstrate such power over the sultans were not lost on ordinary Malays, nor was it lost on the British and the P.K.M.M. More than anything else, the involvement of Malay royalty in functions staged by the Malay conservatives seemed to confer on the latter a form of legitimacy.²⁵

It was Sultan Hishamuddin Alam Shah of Selangor who opened the first Congress of Malay organizations in Kuala Lumpur on 1 March, 1946.²⁶ The third Congress of Malay

²⁴ *Malaya Tribune*, 3 April 1946.

²⁵ In a publication of the *Perikatan Melayu Perak* (Malay League of Perak), a foreword by Sultan Abdul Aziz stated: "I commend the example of the U.M.N.O. leaders to all the *rakyat*s in whose interests they, along with the Rulers, are waging this national struggle which, I am convinced will ultimately succeed," p.1 of Hidup Melayu: A Brief Review of Activities of the Malay National Movement, Ipoh, n.d..

²⁶ U.M.N.O. 20 Tahun, U.M.N.O. Headquarters, 1966, p.32.

organizations where the U.M.N.O. Constitution was approved was held in the *istana* (palace) at Johor Bharu. The leaders of U.M.N.O. were connected with the palaces of the sultans. The man who was elected President of U.M.N.O., Dato Onn bin Jaafar, came from the aristocratic class.²⁷ Leaders of the various Malay societies also were aristocrats like Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil, Dato Nara, Tengku Mohamed, Haji Abdul Wahab (Panglima Bukit Gantang), Wan bin Md. Yussof, (Panglima Kinta, Perak) and Dato Hamzah bin Abdullah.²⁸ The leadership of this class in the U.M.N.O. and its mobilisation of Malays from every sphere and stratum of society is very significant. These men who led the Malay conservatives succeeded in mobilising the Malay community without destroying the traditional order. The sultans and the aristocrats at one level, and the *penghulus* (village heads) and *ketua kampongs* (village elders) at another, were all maintained in office. The P.K.M.M. which was led by Burhanuddin Elhulaimy and Ishak Haji Muhammad were radicals whose beliefs were not in keeping with maintaining the traditional structure. The Malay radicals could not expect

²⁷ Dato Onn came from a family of Mentri Besars with a distinguished record of service to the Sultanate of Johor. His father, Dato Jaafar bin Haji Muhammad, and three of his brothers, Dato Abdullah, Dato Mustafa and Ungku Abdul Aziz, were Mentri Besars. As a child, Dato Onn was brought up by Sultan Ibrahim of Johor. First educated by an English lady tutor in Johor Bharu, he was then sent to England together with the Sultan's sons for further studies. See Anwar Abdullah, Dato Onn: Riwayat Hidup, Pustaka Nusanatara, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, for his life history.

²⁸ Muhammad Yunus Hamidi, Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, pp.17-24.

sultans and rajas to grace their functions. The P.K.M.M. was hampered by organizational difficulties and ideological squabbles. The party was also harrassed by the British authorities.²¹ Therefore, the P.K.M.M. could not compete on equal terms with the U.M.N.O.

Furthermore the idea of joining with a Republican Indonesia in the *Indonesia Raya* of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* was not acceptable to the majority of Malays who were attached to their *kerajaans*. The party was seen to be anti-sultan in that it wanted to establish a Republic of Malaya.²² Speakers of the party had publicly called for the establishment of "a Republic of Malaya as part of the Indonesian Republic" and claimed that "Indonesia and Malaya are one and indivisible."²³

The P.K.M.M. could therefore not get royal patronage to legitimise itself in the eyes of the majority of the Malays. Furthermore the issue that captivated the attention of the Malays was not joining a republican Indonesia but the *bangsa Melayu* and its relations with the sultans, the non-Malays

²¹ Interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, Kuala Lumpur, April 1985.

²² See aims of the M.N.P. in UMNO/SG no.96/1946.

²³ See the speech of Aisah Ghanie in *Malaya Tribune*, 18 April 1947 and 30 April 1946 editorial on "Malayan Republic."

and the British. It was also seen as possible that in the *Indonesia Raya* envisaged by the P.K.M.M., the Malayness of the Malays would be overwhelmed. In fact the idea of linking the Malay states with Indonesia did not become an issue of debate within the Malay community. In the *Majlis* of 13 December 1945, an attack on the decisions of the Congress held by the P.K.M.M. in November 1945 stated that the idea of linking Malaya with Indonesia was just a hope and a dream.¹² There was also anger at the party's decision to foster links with the non-Malays.¹³ The P.K.M.M.'s principles were not even accepted by all of its own branches, since it was reported that the Kelang (Selangor) branch of the P.K.M.M. made a decision on 8 December 1945 to sever all links with the P.K.M.M. at Ipoh.¹⁴ The reason given was that the P.K.M.M. Ipoh was under strong communist influence and could not reflect Malay opinion truly. A probable reason was the P.K.M.M. Kelang Branch had succumbed to state parochialism and Malayism. The P.K.M.M. Kelang branch was renamed the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Selangor*.

Probably the most damaging action of the party was its acceptance of the Malayan Union. This action on the part of

¹² *Majlis*, 13 December 1945. The actual wordings were: Itu semua cita-cita dan anggan-anggan sahaja.

¹³ *Majlis*, 13 December 1945.

¹⁴ Isum No.7, Hqs. Malaya Command, 15 December 1945, in M.U. Secret 335/46, Vol.1.

the P.K.M.M. alienated Malay support from the party.¹¹ While the P.K.M.M. reversed its support for the Malayan Union, it did not change its policy of cooperating with the non-Malays and thus earned itself a severe rebuke in a *Majlis* editorial which complained that:

...*Suara Rakyat* (The People's Voice) in its editorial dated 11 December 1945 announced that the basis of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu* (Malay Nationalist Party) is internationalism, that is a basis which demands equal importance for all *bangsa*. Even though we do not understand what is meant by the term demanding equal importance for all *bangsa* we are not questioning the matter here.

What we are questioning now is that the name *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu* (Malay Nationalist Party) is not in keeping with its basis. It is as if what is said is different from what is meant which means making false use of the term *kebangsaan Melayu* as a mask only. In fact, its desire is internationalism, the unity of a group of Malays with the *bangsa-bangsa asing* (foreign races). Because of this therefore the name *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu* must be changed to the name *Parti International Malaya* (Malayan International Party) so that the ordinary Malays will not be confused and also don't misuse the term *kebangsaan Melayu* for the purposes or benefit of internationalism of a Malay group that unites with the *bangsa-bangsa asing*.¹²

¹¹ In my interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, I was told that the P.K.M.M. had initially accepted the Malayan Union because they thought that it would unite the Malays of the peninsula. At that point they did not realise the real reasons why the British wanted to implement the Malayan Union.

¹² *Majlis*, 15 December 1945. ...*Suara Rakyat* dalam rencana pengarangnya yang bertarikh 11hb Disember 1945 ini telah memaparkan bahawa dasar Parti Kebangsaan Melayu, Malay Nationalist Party ialah internationalism iaitu kononnya dasar yang menuntut kepentingan yang bersama bagi semua bangsa. Meskipun kita belum mengerti apa yang dimaksudkan dengan perkataan menuntut kepentingan yang bersamaan bagi semua bangsa bangsa tetapi belumlah kita hendak membicarakan hal ini sekarang. Apa yang kita akan bicarakan sekarang

Of even greater significance was the ability of the U.M.N.O. and especially Dato Onn to divert the hostility of the majority of the Malays from the Malay rulers and direct it towards the Malayan Union. Dato Onn had shown this ability when he defused the campaign to dethrone Sultan Ibrahim of Johor in February 1946 at the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque where the *Persatuan Melayu Johor* had called for a meeting of the Johor Malays to condemn Sultan Ibrahim for having signed the Malayan Union Agreement. He was to show this skill again when he mobilised the Malays at the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur on 1 April 1946, to the cries of "*Daulat Tuanku*" to pressure the sultans not to attend the installation ceremony of Sir Edward Gent, and instead to work with their subjects in opposing the Malayan Union." On 2 April in an unprecedented action, the sultans held a

ialah bahawa nama Parti Kebangsaan Melayu, Malay Nationalist Party itu tidak seolah-olah lain lafas lain makna, yang berarti membuat palsu menjadikan nama kebangsaan itu sebagai topeng sahaja. Padahal bathinnya internationalism, pepaduan sebahagian orang-orang Melayu dengan bangsa-bangsa asing. Oleh sebab itu, maka nama Parti Kebangsaan Melayu mesti diubah dengan nama Parti International Malaya, Malayan International Party supaya orang-orang awam Melayu jangan terkeliru dan supaya jangan mempertopengkan nama kebangsaan Melayu yang bermakna menjual nama kebangsaan Melayu untuk muslihat atau faedah internationalism puak Melayu yang berpadu dengan bangsa-bangsa asing.

" *Majlis*, 2 April 1946. Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak had stated on behalf of the other sultans his gratitude to witness the Malays from all walks of life united in expressing their loyalties to their respective sultans, *bangsa*, and homeland. In his reply Dato Onn stated that: "Today we have built a Malay Union (*Kesatuan Melayu*)." He was referring to the healing of the rift between the sultans and their subjects.

press conference to reject the MacMichael Treaties and called upon the British Government to replace the Malayan Union with a federation of Malay states." To further close ranks between the sultans and their subjects Dato Onn coined a new slogan: *Raja jadi rakyat; rakyat jadi raja*, or the ruler is the subject and the subjects are the rulers." This slogan was coined at a meeting of the Malay Congress which formally established U.M.N.O. at the Istana Besar Sultan Johor, Johor Bharu. Onn stated that:

I hope that within a short while there will be one desire and aim because it is important to show that not only is the raja united with the *rakyat* but also the *rakyat* with the raja. I am happy to mention that the *rakyat* has become the raja and the raja has become the *rakyat*. The aim is that together in the struggle that is going on, I believe that the rajas in the Malay states will no longer ignore the *rakyat* as in the past. But the raja will be sincere and will love their *rakyat* even more."

" *Majlis*, 2 April 1946, *Malaya Tribune*, 2 April 1946.

" *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. Though the slogan is attractive it does not imply that rulers will be elected by their subjects or that there will be non-hereditary succession. This slogan was used purely for the purposes of uniting the rulers and the subjects and had only a symbolic value.

" *Ibid.*, Saya berharap dalam masa yang sedikit lagi jadi satu niat dan satu tujuan kerana itu mustahak menunjukkan persatuan yang padu bukan saja persatuan antara raja dengan rakyat tetapi dengan rakyat dan raja. Saya suka menyebutkan bahawa rakyat jadi raja dan raja jadi rakyat. Tujuannya supaya dalam perkerjaan yang dijalankan berserta saya percaya raja di tanah Melayu tidak lagi akan membelakangkan rakyat seperti dahulu. Tetapi hendaklah raja-raja itu ikhlas dan bertambah mengasehi rakyat.

This statement of Dato Onn has interesting analogies with the statements of Teuku Hasan and Luat Siregar during their meeting with the various sultans and rajas of East Sumatra in February 1946 which was discussed in the last chapter. The calls made by the East Sumatran Republican leaders for the sultans to be close to their people and for the people to have a greater say in the running of the administration were somewhat similar. In Malaya, the tide of democracy was flowing so strongly as a consequence of political changes brought about by the war that similar sentiments were mouthed by Malay leaders even in very different conditions.

Dato Onn also brought forth a new concept concerning the role of the sultans in Malay society. According to him, the sultans were the cement that tied and strengthened the Malays." After having healed this breach between the sultans and their subjects, it became quite possible for Dato Onn and the U.M.N.O. to face the British with some degree of confidence and strength. While it is not our aim to discuss the reaction of the British towards the development of the combined opposition of the U.M.N.O. and the Malay sultans, it was clear that the British were

" *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. Adalah Raja-raja itu menjadi ikatan atau 'cement' mengikat dan menguatkan umat Melayu seluruhnya. It must be pointed out that in the case of the East Sumatra such a metaphor would not have been used by the adherents of the Indonesian Republic.

affected by this solidarity of the majority of the Malays against the Malayan Union.⁴² For Sir Edward Gent, it came as a shock that the Malay sultans would boycott his installation as Governor of the Malayan Union. It did not take long for him to realise the gravity of the situation and he embarked on a policy of allaying the fears of the Malays.

However, there had been subtle changes in the scheme of things for despite the apparent healing of the rift between the sultans and their subjects, the initiative had now passed into the hands of their subjects. It was now the subjects who called the tune as can be witnessed by a letter to Sultan Abdul Aziz sent by the *Perikatan Melayu Perak* (Malay League of Perak) informing him that at a meeting held on 27 March, 1946, the *Perikatan Melayu Perak* had agreed unanimously to 'request' with all due respect that the sultan must not involve himself in any matter that was connected with the setting up of the Malayan Union such as attending Gent's installation as Governor as it was not in keeping with the actions which were taken by the *Perikatan Melayu Perak* in particular and the *rakyat* and *umat Melayu* in the peninsula in general in opposing the Malayan Union. Any

⁴² For a detail study of British reactions to Malay politics, refer to A.J. Stockwell, "British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948," in MBRAS, Monograph No.8, 1979.

involvement (on his part) would damage the *rakyat's* actions."¹¹

The emphasis on the *bangsa Melayu* instead of the sultans was clearly demonstrated by the slogan *Hidup Melayu* (long live the Malays) by Dato Onn in Malacca.¹² In coining the term, Dato Onn was clearly appealing to Malayism. His skill in first defusing the anger of the Malays towards the sultans and then conjuring up again the appeal to Malayism within the space of a single month was impressive. Yet all the while there had been no doubt where the initiative lay for the sultans knew that they could no longer contemplate any action concerning the Malayan Union which was not in keeping with the wishes of their subjects whom the conservatives in U.M.N.O. now claimed to represent. The sultans had decided to take their case to London concerning their disavowal of the MacMichael Treaties and the Malayan Union. They had decided on this trip without testing the Malay mood or consulting U.M.N.O., and as such were to find out just what their subjects thought of their action. Opposition to such a move by the other Malay newspapers was carried in the *Majlis*, which stated that the *Warta Negara*,

¹¹ *Majlis*, 3 April 1946. The *Perikatan Melayu Perak* goes on to add that in following its 'request' His Highness will be demonstrating to the world with deeds and action (his commitment) and that this decision which was conveyed by the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang to him had strengthened even more the claims of the *rakyat* to their rajas.

¹² *Majlis*, 4 May 1946.

the *Utusan Melayu* and *Pelita Melayu* as well as the *Persatuan Melayu Kelang* opposed it. The *Majlis*, quoted from the *Pelita Melayu* the assertion that, "it is not the wishes of nine persons which should be followed by the British Government but the desire and demand of two million *rakyat* which must be discussed now." The *Majlis* carried another comment from a reader which stated that:

I feel that if the sultans do not depart for England, on our own we can get a fair consideration from the British Government not too long from now because the opposition and protest of the *rakyat jelata Melayu* (the Malay commoners) is enough...In looking back, the issue of the sultans going to England will not bring any benefit or convey the feeling of hope of the *umat Melayu jelata* that their (the sultans) requests will materialise. Even so, when their Highnesses have gone to England on their own what is the meaning of the (Malay) Congress which has worked so hard to protect the rights (*Hak*) of the *bangsa Melayu*? I feel that it is better for us *rakyat* to stand with what we have now. Support the (Malay) Congress. *Hidup Melayu!*⁴⁵

In less than a year after they had signed the MacMichael Treaties, the sultans came to realise that their pivotal role in Malay society had been replaced by Malayism in which they were only one constituent. Even Arthur Creech Jones, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies noted that the sultans:

⁴⁵ *Majlis*, 8 May 1946.

...are alarmed by developments among the Malays of political consciousness and the emergence of Malay leaders closely associated with the lives of the people."

It would not be surprising if the Malay rulers found that they too had to come to terms with the emphasis of the *bangsa Melayu*. Addressing the U.M.N.O. conference in Ipoh on 29 June 1946, Sultan Abdul Aziz stated that he spoke "as a Malay and not as a Sultan" and urged Malays to strengthen and sustain the unity already achieved and added that "whatever we do, we must remember first that we are Malays and must not lose our customs and religious practices, which are our prized possessions."¹¹ The Sultan of Pahang in a speech to his subjects warning them about communist propaganda had this to say about the Malays:

We Malays are not a nation of slaves nor are we foreigners in this prosperous and beautiful land. This country is internationally recognised as belonging to the Malays. And as such it must be defended against the enemy of our national sovereignty."¹²

The sultan's assertion that the country belonged to the Malays and not to himself was important in understanding the changing perception of the rulers towards the Malays as well

¹¹ *Straits Times*, 30 April 1946.

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 30 June 1946.

¹³ *Malaya Tribune*, 6 September 1948.

as their place in Malay society. The sultan acknowledged that he was one with his subjects and did not view them as his property.

Indeed, Gent was to acknowledge that the "strength and organization of Malay opinion and their free criticism of their own Rulers has surprised all who have experience of Malaya" and he could see the political situation deteriorating if the government proceeded with its original scheme.¹¹ To all intents and purposes the Malayan Union died on the day of its proclamation. Other works have touched in depth on the reasons why the British abandoned the Malayan Union in great haste and swiftly took steps to reconcile the Malays.¹²

We are concerned mainly with the Malay perceptions of the rejection of the Malayan Union and its replacement by the Federation. To the Malay conservatives, the turning point in the struggle for the dismantling of the Malayan

¹¹ Sir Edward Gent in a Most Secret Personal telegram to Hall dated 11 May 1946 as cited by A.J. Stockwell in "British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union experiment, 1942-1948," in MBRAS, Monograph No.8, 1979, p.88.

¹² See James de Allen, The Malayan Union, New Haven, Conn., 1967, Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region, 1945-65, Kuala Lumpur, 1974, and A.J. Stockwell, "British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948," MBRAS, Monograph No.8, 1979, for sole excellent accounts of the changes in British policy during this period.

Union was reached during two meetings held at Kuala Kangsar. The first was between Sir Edward Gent and the Malay sultans from 2 to 4 May during which Gent was converted to the idea of federation and the second was held on 28 to 30 May 1946 between Sir Edward Gent, Gammans, Rees-Williams, the sultans and the U.M.N.O. leaders. While it would take some time for the British to abandon the Malayan Union officially, it was a foregone conclusion among the Malay conservatives that the Union was dead. Thus the need to replace the Union with something else became a cardinal point. The Pan-Malayan Malay Congress, which met in early March 1946, proposed a return to the pre-1941 system, a system which had been rejected by the British at the very outset and which remained completely unacceptable to Whitehall."

Thus how did the idea of replacing the Malayan Union with a federation come about? From the evidence, it is apparent that it originated from the sultans and not from the U.M.N.O. As early as March 1946, Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak on behalf of the Sultans of Selangor and Kedah, and the Yang DiPertuan of Negeri Sembilan had sent a cablegram to

⁵¹ Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, p.26. See also Utusan Melayu, 15 March 1946 where point 6 of the cable of protest that was sent to England specifically called for a return to the pre-1941 situation and also "UMNO - Its Aims and Objects" in Hidup Melayu, where it was stated that the Malay Congress "...urges H.M.'s Government to withdraw the aforesaid proposal immediately and restore the status quo with no change whatsoever for the present," p.12.

the Secretary of State for the Colonies suggesting that there should be a federation of all Malay states with a central body to control matters of common interest. A copy of this cable was sent to Sultan Ibrahim of Johor.¹² In this respect, the Malay sultans were probably more far sighted and willing to compromise than the leaders of U.M.N.O. The former had enough political acumen to come up with a viable alternative whereas the leaders of U.M.N.O. which claimed to represent the *rakyat* could only think of a return to a vanished past. Indeed, at its meeting at Johor Bharu, "the subject of a Malay Federation, made public as a proposal to the British Government by the Malay rulers, was discussed by the committee."¹³

Some written accounts of the process of replacing the Malayan Union by a federation oversimplify in interpreting the Federation of Malaya as an alternative that was immediately agreed to by Malay spokesmen.¹⁴

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 27 March 1946, *Straits Times*, 30 April 1946.

¹³ *Straits Times*, 14 May 1946.

¹⁴ Mohamad Noordin Sopiie's From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, pp.35-38, does not give an account of the differences in perception between the British and the Malay. He touched more on British motivations for a federation policy and paid little heed to Malay views on the federation. Similarly A.J. Stockwell's *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* does not mention how the Malay leaders were sidetracked from their demand for a federation of the Malay states to the Federation of Malaya which was a totally different thing altogether. It must be pointed out that a federation of

In rejecting the Malayan Union, the Malay sultans were demanding that a federation of Malay states (*Persekutuan Negeri-Negeri Melayu*) be set up. A month earlier, Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak on behalf of his fellow sultans had sent a cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking for the alteration of the Malayan Union to a federation of Malay states.¹⁵ Indeed, the impression conveyed to the ordinary observer was that in place of the Malayan Union a federation of Malay states would be set up by the British. When Capt. Gammans visited the Malay states to ascertain the wishes of the Malays, he was greeted by placards that read "We want Malay Union and not Malayan Union."¹⁶ Similarly, when reports were printed about the impending conference between the sultans, U.M.N.O. and the British at Kuala Lumpur at the end of May, it was mentioned publicly that a "federation of Malay states should be negotiated as proposed by the rulers."¹⁷ This view was not held only by Malays, for the English language newspaper the *Malaya Tribune* stated that the "British Labour Government intends to amend the

Malay states would give total pre-eminence to the Malays in all fields while the non-Malays will not have any political rights whatsoever. A Federation of Malaya would imply that non-Malays would be given some political participation as well as citizenship right which may be absent in a Malay federation.

¹⁵ *Majlis*, 27 March 1946 and *Malaya Tribune*, 27 March 1946. Also *Majlis*, 2 April 1946 where the call was repeated.

¹⁶ *Sunday Tribune*, 26 May 1946.

¹⁷ *Straits Times*, 14 May 1946.

Malayan Union to Malay Federation." The paper argued that in the meeting between the British, the sultans and U.M.N.O., two vital matters must be acceded to by the British Government. These were (i) the Treaties made by Sir Harold MacMichael with the Malay rulers must be declared null and void and (ii) future constitution making must be made with full agreement of the U.M.N.O. and not only with that of the rulers.¹¹

When we look at the struggle of the Malays during this period we see the gradual emphasis and development of *bangsa* as a force that had the potential to challenge the Malay rulers in playing a pivotal role in Malay society. In the struggle to gain control of *bangsa* as a powerful force, the Malay conservatives had succeeded in obtaining the support of a greater proportion of Malays than that adhering to the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*. The Malay conservatives used *bangsa* as a means to deny the non-Malays any political rights and privileges in the Malay states. With the acceptance by the conservative Malay leaders of the Federation of Malaya, which gave to the non-Malays those very rights that were supposed to be denied to them, it became clear that some compromise was arrived at with the British which was contrary to the expectations of most of the Malays that supported U.M.N.O. Dato Onn himself had

¹¹ *Malaya Tribune*, 6 July 1946.

openly stated that the establishment of the Malay Congress in March 1946 was to unite the Malays to protect their rights, the needs of the *bangsa* and the safety of the (Malay) homeland." The answer to this riddle can be obtained when we look at the Constitutional Working Committee of Twelve that was set up to consider what should replace the Malayan Union. In this working committee the Malayan Union was represented by A.T. Newbould, K.K. O'Connor, W.D. Godsall, W. Linehan, A. Williams, and D.C. Watherson as Secretary. The Malay sultans were represented by Dato Hamzah b. Abdullah (Selangor), Hj. Mohamad Sheriff (Kedah), Raja Kamarulzaman b. Raja Mansur (Perak), Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil (Kelantan). The U.M.N.O. was represented by Dato Onn b. Jaafar (Johor) and Dato Abdul Rahman b. Yasin (Johor)."

This committee was agreed to in talks held between the British, the Malay sultans and U.M.N.O. concerning general principles in July 1946. The working committee met on 6-16

" See *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. Tubohan Kongress itu telah tunjukkan kepada orang lain dan kepada kerajaan lain bahawa dalam tahun 1946, bangsa Melayu telah bersatu tujuan menjaga hak and faedah bangsa dan keselamatan tanah air.

" Malayan Union, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee Appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization, Kuala Lumpur, 1946, p.1. Subsequently referred to as) Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee.

August, 6-28 September, 11 October-1 November and 11-18 November 1946. This working committee met behind closed doors and prepared the draft constitutional proposals which were published on December 1946. While the superficial impression conveyed is that the British had given in to Malayism, the reality is indeed very different.

The General principles followed by the Committee were as follows:

- (a) that there should be a strong Central Government so as to ensure economical and effective administration of all matters of importance to the welfare and progress of the country as a whole;
- (b) that the individuality of each of the Malay states and of the Settlements should be clearly expressed and maintained;
- (c) that the new arrangements should, on a long view, offer the means and prospects of development in the direction of ultimate self-government;
- (d) that, with a view to the establishment of broad-based institutions which would be necessary if principle (c) is ultimately to become effective, a common form of citizenship should be introduced which would enable political rights to be extended to all those who regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty;
- (e) that, as these states are Malay states ruled by Your Highnesses, the subjects of Your Highnesses have no alternative allegiance to other country which they can regard as their homeland, and they occupy a special position and possess rights which they can regard as their homeland, and they occupy a special position and possess rights which must be safeguarded."

" Malayan Union, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee, p.7.

From the general principles outlined above it can clearly be demonstrated that the Federation that was agreed to by the Malay conservatives in U.M.N.O. and the Malay sultans had few similarities to the creation of a federation of Malay states that they had advocated earlier on.¹² The main concession to U.M.N.O.'s position was point (e). But there were the serious problems of reconciling point (d) and point (e) as well as point (a) and point (b). These contradictions were not resolved to the satisfaction of the Malay conservatives.

Similarly the principle of popular participation in the government that was upheld by the U.M.N.O. during its opposition to the sultans and the Malayan Union was forgotten and conveniently left on the shelf as a prospect in the distant future. One of the ironies that emerged from the deliberations of this working committee was the choice of title for the new federation. According to the deliberations:

...the Malayan Federal Union was rejected as its translation into Malay involved contradictory terms and also because any title including the word "Union" would be most distasteful to and suspect by Malays. The Malayan Federation was also suggested but opposed by the Malay representatives on the ground that "Malayan" had come to mean people who had some association with Malaya, but did not include Malays, and the Malays took

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 21 November 1946. The *Tribune* reported the agreement of the U.M.N.O. and the rulers towards a strong central government and common citizenship.

the strongest objection to being called or referred to as Malaysians. There was also the further difficulty that the expression "Malayan Federation" could not be translated into Malay. Thus the final choice was the Federation of Malaya which was accepted because this alternative, which is a strict translation of the Malay title "Persekutuan Tanah Melayu" and is preferred by the Malay representatives, was found to be generally acceptable."

One cannot help but wonder how it was that the Federation of Malay could be translated as *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* which is literally translated as Federation of Malay Lands. Yet the title "Malayan Federation" was rejected when it was argued that this was not suitable and could not be translated into Malay. However, the decision to accept the title "Federation of Malaya" was a political decision.

What emerged from the work of this twelve-man committee was neither Malayan nor a *Melayu* nation. K.J. Ratnam puts the issue neatly:

To sum up, it appears that the roots of the conflict lay in a single issue: were the British going to recognize the *de facto* position of the non-Malay communities who now claimed to regard Malaya as their only home and hence considered themselves eligible for widely increased political rights, or were they going to continue recognizing Malaya as essentially a Malay country?"

" See Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee, p.9 for an amazing account of this decision.

" K.J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process, Kuala Lumpur, 1965, p.50.

From the events that took place, we can conclude that the British did both. Neither the U.M.N.O. and the Malay rulers obtained all that they desired in the federation proposals. In trying to get the federation proposals accepted by the Malay community Dato Onn defended the recommendations of the twelve-man Working Committee as the best that could be achieved. He said that:

firstly, the Union scheme which amounted to annexation had been jettisoned. Secondly, various States had been brought under one constitution which for the first time will enable Malays to think of themselves as a single nation. Thirdly, they have recognised Malaya essentially as a Malay country."

Speaking to a Malay audience Dato Onn skillfully courted them by stating that:

You will remember the widespread opposition you put up against the MacMichael Treaties. You will remember how you gathered in thousands throughout towns and kampongs to condemn the Union scheme. Today I wish to inform you that the Union has been nullified. We have achieved this victory with the help of the Malay masses."

A part of the answer why the majority of the Malays accepted the federation proposals could be Onn's skill as a politician while the other part can be found in the Working Committee's discussion on the terms of citizenship for the

" *Malaya Tribune*, 11 January 1947.

" *Ibid.*

non-Malays (Malayans). The citizenship extended to them did not affect in any way the special position of the Malays.

In approaching the subject of Citizenship, it must be remembered that there is a very real fear on the part of the Malays that they may steadily become submerged in a country in which (except for the aborigines) they are the indigenous people, unless the categories of persons admissible to citizenship are confined to those who look to Malaya as their homeland. The Malays live in a country in which they, owing to the influx of foreign immigrants, are already numerically inferior. It is important to emphasise that the Malays have no alternative homeland, whilst the remainder of the population, with a few exceptions, retain in varying degree a connection with their country of origin and, in very many cases, regard that country and not Malaya as the primary object of their loyalty and affection. In these circumstances, the insistence by the Malay members of the Committee on a strict interpretation of the Secretary of State's statement that citizenship should be extended only to those who "regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty" was considered by the Committee as a whole to be justified."

Thus only a few non-Malays would qualify for citizenship under conditions that would be strictly enforced. However, this was not the only obstacle for the non-Malays (Malayans). The meaning of citizenship would have a bearing on their status as well as justify the conservative Malay leaders' assertion that Malay identity and interests would be protected and that the non-Malays could not pose a threat to the Malays. According to the Working Committee the meaning of citizenship was as follows:

" Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee, p.23.

It was explained that it was not a nationality, neither could it developed into a nationality. It would not affect or impair, in any respect whatever, the status of British Subjects in the Settlements or the status of subjects of the Rulers in the Malay States. It is an addition to, and not a subtraction from, nationality and could be a qualification for electoral rights, for membership of Councils and for employment in Government service, and it could confer other privileges and impose obligations. It was not possible at present to lay down precisely what these privileges and obligations would be."

The non-Malays were only given citizenship rights but no nationality. Since citizenship was not a nationality, the Working Committee decided that:

We conclude the oaths of allegiance would be out of place and that it would be better to provide a simple oath or affirmation of faithful service as a citizen, and or loyalty to the Federation and obedience to the lawfully constituted authorities therein."

The decisions of the Working Committee only gave the non-Malays a legal right to reside in the Malay states. They were not even referred to as Malaysans in the Working Committee's report. The term "Malayan" thus had no legal status. In this way separate ethnic identities were maintained in the Federation of Malaya Constitution. The non-Malays were referred to as citizens of the Federation of Malaya and had to qualify to be subjects of the Malay sultans whereas "subjects of the Rulers" were defined as:

" *Ibid.*, p.23

" *Ibid.*, p.25.

- (1) any person who belongs to an aboriginal tribe resident in the State; or
- (2) any Malay born in that State or born of a father who is a subject of the Ruler of that State; or
- (3) any person naturalised as a subject of that Ruler under any law for the time being in force;

and that the word "Malay" should mean a person who

- (i) habitually speaks the Malay language; and
- (ii) profess the Muslim religion; and
- (iii) conforms to Malay custom.

An arrangement of this kind satisfied the conservative Malay leadership because their exclusive definition of *Melayu* was limited to the Malay race. Thus while one could legally define a *Melayu*, a "Malayan" was not defined at all in the constitutional proposals for the Malay states.

The Federal Agreement was signed by the sultans and representatives of the British Government on January 1948. Non-Malay reaction to the constitutional proposals when it was made public on 24 December 1946 was to see it as a surrender of the British to Malay demands. The *Indian Daily Mail* saw the constitutional proposals as putting Malayan nationalism in danger. It attacked the constitutional proposals as "absolutely undemocratic, anti-national and

retrograde." It queried "how a strong central government of Malaya can be compatible with the maintenance of the individuality and integrity of each and every Malay State and Settlement" and "how can a common form of citizenship be possible if the Malays are to be conceded a special position and special rights?" and concludes that "if the Malayan Union sent the Malay community into temporary mourning, these new Federal Proposals will send the entire Malayan Nation into perpetual mourning."¹⁰ In these protests we can glimpse the conflict between the *bangsa Malayan* and *bangsa Melayu*. It was a situation that satisfied neither Malaysians nor the proponents of *Melayu* nationalism, but the British.

In order to placate the feelings of the non-Malays, the British Government insisted that the new constitution should not be approved until all Malayan communities had been consulted. A Consultative Committee was set up by the British to fathom that opinion, which had played no role whatsoever in the constitutional proposals.¹¹ This Consultative Committee was headed by H.R. Cheeseman, the Director of Education. However, the storm over the

¹⁰ *Indian Daily Mail*, 25 December 1946.

¹¹ See the Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Consultative Committee together with the Proceedings of Six Public Meetings, a Summary of Representations Made and Letters and Memoranda Considered by the Committee, Kuala Lumpur, 1947. Hereafter referred to as Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Consultative Committee.

Constitutional proposals had developed and there was no way of avoiding it.

A united non-Malay opposition to the constitutional proposals was formed on 14 December with the setting up of the Council for Joint Action by John Eber¹² of the Malayan Democratic Union.¹³ This Council of Joint Action which was based in Singapore was superseded by a Malaya wide Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action (PMCJA) with Tan Cheng Lock¹⁴ as its Chairman and John Eber as its Secretary.¹⁵ The PMCJA was later renamed the All Malaya Council for Joint Action (AMCJA).

Malay opposition to the constitutional proposals was centered on the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* which opposed U.M.N.O. which it claimed was supporting the cause of the "degenerate Malay aristocracy" and which stood as a bulwark

¹² John Eber was a Eurasian. He had campaigned for a Malayan identity and opposed giving any preference to the Malays. He had also attacked the sultans and their supporters as remnants of a feudal order that was incompatible with democracy and national self-determination. See John Eber "Sultans as Sovereign Rulers," *Straits Times*, 8 August 1946 and "Loyalty to Malaya," *Straits Times*, 9 August 1946.

¹³ *Malaya Tribune*, 13 December 1946.

¹⁴ Tan Cheng Lock was born in Malacca and entered public life when he became a Malacca Municipal Commissioner in 1912. From 1933 to 1935 he was an Unofficial Member of the Straits Settlement Legislative Council and became recognized as the leading representative of the Chinese in Malaya.

¹⁵ This PMCJA was formed on 22 December 1946.

against Malay progress and sacrificed Malay interests for the sole purpose of enriching itself both in wealth and privileges.¹⁰ The P.K.M.M. decided to strengthen its position and set about organizing its own coalition of Malay organizations. This organization known as the *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (PUTERA) was inaugurated on 22 February 1947.¹¹ Among the groups which founded PUTERA were the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API), which was supposed to be a youth wing of the P.K.M.M. but was quite independent. It was founded by Ahmad Boestamam on 17 February 1946 and had as its slogan *Merdeka dengan Darah* (independence with blood).¹² It had support in the states of Perak, Malacca and Pahang. The *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS), API's sister organization, was led by Shamsiah bte Fatah and sought to unite all Malay women to support API to fight for independence as well as the abolition of negative customs such as forced marriages. Undeniably the security services were disturbed with organizations with names like API (fire), AWAS (beware) and kept a close watch on them.

With the establishment of PUTERA, the PMCJA decided to cooperate with it. Both groups combined to boycott the Consultative Committee and they rejected any constitution

¹⁰ *Straits Times*, 9 December 1946.

¹¹ *Sunday Tribune*, 23 February 1947. It was claimed that 100 Malay associations attended the inauguration of PUTERA.

¹² *Straits Times*, 17 July 1946.

which was devised "without the full participation and approval of the true representatives of the Malayan and Malay peoples." Yet in our analysis the two societies had mutually contradictory reasons for the boycott and rejection of the proposed constitution. The PMCJA had objected that the Working Committee that drafted the constitutional proposals did not include any non-Malays or "Malayans" while PUTERA was offended that the Consultative Committee which was to sound out non-Malay opinion was entirely non-Malay. When its demands that Malays be included on the Committee were not met, PUTERA and its affiliated societies boycotted the Consultative Committee.¹¹ Thus even in their boycott the problem of "Malayan" and *Melayu* can be discerned in the background. In July 1947, the revised Constitutional Proposals¹² were published which proposed a federation which incorporated major points drafted by the Working Committee of Twelve. It was met with outright opposition by the AMCJA and PUTERA coalition.

Though the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition may seem to be a powerful combination, their collaboration was marred with

¹¹ *Straits Times*, 14 January 1947. The P.K.M.M. was also furious that it was excluded from the discussions in the Working Committee of Twelve to discuss the constitutional proposals for Malaya while its arch-enemy U.M.N.O. was invited. See *Straits Times*, 25 November 1946.

¹² See Federation of Malaya: Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals Accepted by His Majesty's Government, 24 July 1947, Kuala Lumpur, 1947.

problems. There was no common and effective structure of decision making and control and the two parties could not decide whether they were going to fight for a Malayan or *Melayu* nationality. Writing in the *Malaya Tribune* an avid supporter of the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition noted that "the forces of reaction are organised and concerted while the forces of progress are disorganised..." and "without any well-planned programme of action, are muddling through to defeat and disillusionment."¹¹ It was only by the end of March that the coalition managed to send a joint letter to the Colonial Secretary outlining six principles upon which they both agreed. These were as follows:

- (i) A United Malaya including Singapore
- (ii) Responsible government through elected Central and State and Settlement Legislatures
- (iii) Equal political rights for all who make Malaya their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty
- (iv) the status of the Sultans to be that of genuine Constitutional Rulers subject to democratic State Councils
- (v) special measures to be introduced into the New Constitution for the advancement and uplift of the Malay people

¹¹ See N.T.R. Singam, "United People's Front a Vital Necessity" in *Sunday Tribune*, 16 March 1947.

(vi) matters pertaining to the religion and customs of the Malay people to be under the control of the Malays.¹²

But the Federal Agreement was signed by the sultans and representatives of the British Government on January 1948.

The AMCJA-PUTERA coalition rejected the Constitution outright even though there was no chance that the British would be persuaded to reconsider any more objections. Nevertheless, throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition continued to oppose the new Constitution. The AMCJA-PUTERA also staged demonstrations in protest against the inevitable Federation of Malaya. In April 1947 a joint committee was appointed to draft the People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya which was an alternative to the Federation of Malaya Constitution that was drawn up by the British, the Malay rulers and U.M.N.O. This joint committee held two conferences, one on 4 - 7 July 1947 and the other on 10 August and came up with an impressive alternative constitution to the one worked out by the Working Committee. In looking at the objections voiced by both PUTERA and the AMCJA we find that there are some similarities as well as differences. Looking at the similarities, we find that both PUTERA and the AMCJA were

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 27 March 1947. These six points were modified when the People's Constitution was published.

committed to the concept of popular participation in government and condemned the Federation Constitution as undemocratic, enhancing British imperial control as well as perpetuating communal divisions.

Both PUTERA and AMCJA noted that the Malay rulers had no power as there was the requirement that they must accept the "advice" of His Majesty's Government through the High Commissioner and the British Advisers in the exercise of their entire legislative and executive authority, with the exception of matters of Muslim religion and Malay custom." It was also noted that full executive and legislative authority remained in the hands of the High Commissioner which meant that Malaya was a colony in reality."

In their counter proposals as revealed in the People's Constitutional Proposals, the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition came up with the following recommendations on citizenship. In contrast to the Working Committee, they insisted "there shall be a citizenship of Malaya. This citizenship shall be a nationality, to be termed *Melayu*, and shall carry with

" AMCJA-PUTERA People's Constitutional Proposals, Kuala Lumpur, 1947, p.7. Hereafter to be referred to as People's Constitutional Proposals. This People's Constitution was printed and distributed publicly in November 1947. While there could be a Malay version of the constitution, I was not able to find any.

" People's Constitutional Proposals, pp.8-9.

it the duty of allegiance to the Federation of Malaya." It was noted that the term *Melayu* shall have no religious implications." The AMCJA-PUTERA coalition demanded that citizenship and nationality should be synonymous and that both these terms connote permanent allegiance." The AMCJA-PUTERA accepted that the national status of citizens should be termed *Melayu* because:

...the Malay delegates at the first conference emphasised that the term "Malayan" to designate the national status was completely unacceptable to the Malays. They (the Malay delegates) felt that the term "Malayan" had always been used in contradistinction to the word "Malay" to denote the non-indigenous inhabitants of the country, and that the Malays had therefore become accustomed to regarding themselves as excluded from the category of "Malayans." The use of the term "Malayan" to designate the common national status would therefore involve the abandonment by the Malays, as the indigenous people of the country, of their proper title, and the acceptance by them of a title which, in its accepted sense, included many who do not regard Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty."

The People's Constitutional Proposals upheld two important points, a common citizenship and nationality and the sovereignty of the people, both of which were

" People's Constitutional Proposals, p.11

" This was an interesting development because if nationality was termed as *Melayu*, the old concept of *masuk Melayu* which means becoming a Malay on embracing Islam is no longer applicable. This also removes the ethnic connotation to the term *Melayu*.

" People's Constitutional Proposals, p.12.

" People's Constitutional Proposals, p.20.

conspicuously absent from the Working Committee's Constitutional Proposals for a federation. For all their hard work the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition received a rebuff when it was reported that the sultans did not agree with the People's Constitution." It was to be expected that the British, the sultans and the U.M.N.O. would not consider accepting the Constitution that was drawn up by the coalition. At the same time there were opposition to the Federation of Malaya Constitutional proposals from Malay groups other than the P.K.M.M. and the PUTERA.

It was reported that 10,000 Johor Malays opposed the Federation plan at a rally at the Johor Bharu padang. The vice-President of the *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor*, Ungku Abdullah Omar, addressed the rally and obliquely attacked Dato Onn by stating that "if any Malay dares to say that the Malays are not fit to govern themselves, indeed he is my bitterest enemy."¹¹ Malay opposition groups like the *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor* which claimed to be supporting the P.K.M.M. and AMCJA-PUTERA coalition caused embarrassment to the P.K.M.M. by their actions. Their opposition to Sultan Ibrahim's manner of conducting himself during the visit of

¹¹ *Utusan Melayu*, 18 July 1947.

¹² *Malay Tribune*, 18 April 1947. It was noted that among those present at this rally were Tan Cheng Lock, Mr. Philip Hoalim, John Eber and Mr. J. Thivy, all of whom were in the AMCJA.

Sir Harold MacMichael which led to the Malayan Union crisis and the federation of Malaya constitutional proposals could best be described as provocative.¹¹ The *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor* was basically a parochial organization that stood for the separate independence and identity of Johor. However, it linked up with the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition.¹²

The *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor* had a meeting on 12 September 1947 to announce that Sultan Ibrahim had ceased to be ruler of Johor as he had violated Article 15 of the Johor State Constitution.¹³ The society continued its offensive by stating that Sultan Ibrahim should be reinstalled as Sultan of Johor as the state had no ruler and decided to appoint a three-person delegation to meet the sultan to inquire on the Johor State Constitution and the independence of the state.¹⁴ State parochialism was evident for the issue was the State Constitution and the independence of Johor as a state. The three men chosen to meet Sultan Ibrahim to discuss these issues were Ungku Abdullah b. Omar, Encik Abdullah b. Haji Taib and Syed Mohamad b. Idrus Al-Attas. It was not known whether the three-man delegation was

¹¹ They had made the outlandish claim that Johor no longer possess a sultan and that for Sultan Ibrahim to be recognised as the lawful ruler of Johor he should be installed again.

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 13 January 1947, also 18 April 1947.

¹³ *Sunday Times*, 10 August 1947.

¹⁴ *Utusan Melayu*, 15 and 17 September 1947.

able to meet Sultan Ibrahim; it would have been out of character for the Sultan to have consented to meet them. As a result of the embarrassment caused by the activities of the *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor*, the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition came out with a statement that "neither of the organizations planned any action on the opposition of certain organizations in Johor concerning the alleged infringement of the Johor constitution by the sultan." PUTERA and the AMCJA continued that "the dispute whether the Sultan of Johor should cease to be ruler because of his signing of the MacMichael Agreement was a local matter."¹¹

At the same time the P.K.M.M. itself continued with its offensive against the U.M.N.O. during a tea-party to welcome back the Malayan delegates who attended the Asia conference in New Delhi. Dr. Burhanuddin stated that "we are not taking away anything that belongs to some other community or race. We only want the restoration of Malay rights and Malay liberty." Ahmad Boestamam, the leader of the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*, stated that "when we state or utter anything in the name of our nationalism, we have been accused of treading in seditious territory."¹² He was soon to realise how prophetic his own words turn out to be.

¹¹ *Straits Times*, 6 September 1947.

¹² *Malaya Tribune*, 5 June 1947.

The Malayan Union government as well as the U.M.N.O. were increasingly worried by the continuous political agitation of the Malay radicals whose actions might cause difficulties in implementing the Federation of Malaya Agreement. Contrary to the opinions of Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, the Malay left were a force to be reckoned with.¹⁷ The reports of the Malayan Security Service contain numerous accounts where it was felt that in order to ensure that the Malay conservatives (U.M.N.O.) were not undermined, it was necessary to take action against organizations that followed the ideology of the Malay radicals.¹⁸ Thus Ahmad Boestamam was convicted of sedition in April 1947 as a result of the publication of his book *Testament Politik Api*.¹⁹ Following the conviction of Boestamam, Governor Gent proscribed the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* on 17 July 1947 on the grounds that the society was being used for a purpose incompatible with

¹⁷ Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, p.53. Sopiee stated that the leaders of the MNP were seen by the vast majority of Malays as traitors to their race. This would imply that they had hardly any support and were politically ineffective.

¹⁸ MSS/PIJ no. 20/47 called for the Malayan Union government to give support to U.M.N.O. against the Malay radicals and the communists.

¹⁹ Boestamam was defended by John Eber of the Malayan Democratic Union while Tan Cheng Lock, President of the AMCJA, raised funds to pay the fine of \$1,400 for Boestamam and save him from a jail sentence of nine months.

the peace, good order or welfare of the union.¹⁰⁰ There were strong protest against the banning of API.¹⁰¹

Government actions against the Malay left were a serious obstacle to their political activities among the Malay masses. With the banning of API an attempt was made to reorganise the radical Malay youth into other societies. The PETA (*Ikatan Pemuda Tanah Ayer Melayu*) (Youth of the Malay Fatherland League) was set up.¹⁰² Another youth society, the *Pemuda Radikal Melayu* (PERAM), came into existence sometime in January 1948.¹⁰³ PETA was led by Wahi Anwar, a Malay communist, while PERAM was headed by M. Mustaza. However neither of these two Malay societies were as well known as API and could not really step into API's shoes. There were no other youth leaders that could match Boestamam in stature. The P.K.M.M. made a cogent point when it stated that Malay opposition to the Constitutional Proposals was considered a threat by the Malayan Union

¹⁰⁰ *Malaya Tribune*, 17 July 1947. It was noted by the Malay radicals that the Government of the Malayan Union considered their societies to be even more dangerous than the Malayan Communist Party. The Malayan Security Service considered the action to be well-timed. See MSS/PIJ 12/47.

¹⁰¹ *Malaya Tribune*, 26 July 1947 where it was reported that 16 societies including the M.D.U. opposed the ban. See also the *Malaya Tribune*, 28 July 1947 where the P.K.M.M. condemned the banning of API as a fascist move.

¹⁰² The actual date of the setting up of this society is unknown but the Security Service in MSS/PIJ 16/47 reported the existence of this society.

¹⁰³ MSS/PIJ 2/48.

Government. The P.K.M.M. stated frankly "that members of the P.K.M.M. were threatened and the people were warned not to take part in progressive activities. This shows that genuine patriotism of the Malays is greatly feared. Fake patriotism is encouraged to cheat the people and to lead the people astray."¹⁰⁴ In a searing attack on the U.M.N.O. and the Malay sultans, the PUTERA and the P.K.M.M. stated that they stood firm on the principles of independence (*kemerdekaan*) and *kedaulatan* (sovereignty), social justice and humanism (*peri kemanusiaan*) and continued:

From the viewpoint of a narrow understanding of nationalism (*kebangsaan*) definitely the U.M.N.O. and the Malay rajahs can shout and claim that they have won in the Malayan Union struggle and destroyed the MacMichael Treaties because in the central government of the Federation of Malaya that will come they will have the majority voice. But this victory is in reality meaningless and will be shortlived...the rajahs are just puppets of the colonialists, no more, no less. The result (of it) is that very quickly the rajahs will no longer be heeded and respected by the common people who are awake and aware of the people's struggle and will get stronger stimulus.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *Malaya Tribune*, 18 August 1947.

¹⁰⁵ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. Daripada sudut pahaman kebangsaan yang sempit, memang boleh PEKEMBAR dan raja-raja Melayu bersorak mengatakan mereka telah menang dalam perjuangan Malayan Union dan menghapuskan Treaty MacMichael kerana dalam kerajaan pusat Federation of Malaya, mereka akan dapat suara yang lebih. Tetapi kemenangan itu pada hakikatnya tidak berarti dan akan pendek umurnya...Raja-raja hanya bersifat patung-patung penjajah, tidak lebih, tidak kurang. Akibatnya yang tertentu ialah dengan lebih lekas akan raja-raja itu semakin tidak dipedulikan dan tidak dihormati oleh rakyat jelata yang sudah celek dan insaf perjuangan rakyat akan dapat dorongan yang lebih kuat.

Warning the Malays of the consequences of an UMNO victory and the threat to *kebangsaan Melayu*, PUTERA and the P.K.M.M. stated:

Concerning the constitution that is sponsored by PUTERA, we will not admit we have achieved victory. But one big victory is already evident. We wish to make clear we state to the non-Malay *bangsa* that if they really love this nation then in order to demonstrate the truth of this [it] is not sufficient to take an oath or to know the Malay language but these things must be accompanied by a willingness to change their *bangsa* in order to become *bangsa Melayu*. If they are not willing to accept these conditions there is therefore no way for the *bangsa Melayu jati* (pure bred Malays) to be able to recognise their rights in this country even though they have been in this country for seven generations. Why does not PUTERA give and take in this matter? The answer is to prevent a great danger to *kebangsaan Melayu* for all times. In the past people who were not *bangsa Melayu* are by circumcision not only considered immediately to have become *Melayu* but immediately also obtain the rights of *kebangsaan Melayu* in full. There are not a few who are like this who have gone up to be Raja, become *Raja Permaisuri*, Minister, Dato and own land in Malay areas. A situation like this cannot be allowed. This is the main reason that caused Malacca to fall to the Portuguese, Singapore to be sold. In the ranks of the rajas and the Malay aristocracy there are some who originated from the Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Turks and other *bangsa* who have settled in the Malay states of Asia for one or two generations...Just go to any *istana*, if permitted, definitely [it] can be seen a kind of person who is not Malay and not Chinese resting with all ease, eating and sucking the riches of this nation.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. Berkenaan dengan Perlembagaan yang ditaja oleh PUTERA, maka kita belum mahu mengaku mendapat kemenangan. Tetapi satu kemenangan yang besar sudah terbukti. Dengan terus terang kita katakan kepada bangsa-bangsa yang bukan Melayu bahwa jikalau mereka sebenar-benar cinta kepada negeri ini, maka syarat menunjukkan kebenaran itu bukan hanya cukup dengan bersumpah atau tahu bahasa Melayu, tetapi hendaklah disertai redha menukar bangsanya jadi bangsa Melayu. Jikalau mereka itu tidak sanggup menerima syarat-syarat ini maka tidaklah ada

Both Dr. Burhanuddin and Ishak Haji Muhammad made it quite clear that they wanted the non-Malays to become *Melayu*. But becoming *Melayu* did not imply that they have to become Muslims. Their idea of *Melayu* was that it is a nationality as explained in the People's Constitution. By getting the non-Malays to become *Melayu* they hope to save the Malays from those who by the process of *masuk Melayu* (become Malay through religious conversion) are considered as Malays and entitled to enjoy the full benefit that accrued to the Malays. We note that their argument is a non-ethnic one.

Appealing to the Malays, the leaders of the PUTERA and the P.K.M.M. continued:

jalan bagi bangsa Melayu jati boleh mengakui hak-hak mereka itu dinegeri ini walaupun mereka sudah tujuh keturunan dinegeri ini. Kenapakah PUTERA tidak mahu bertolak ansur dalam hal ini? Jawabnya ialah hendak mengelakkan bahaya yang paling besar kepada kebangsaan Melayu buat selamalamanya. Pada masa yang telah lalu, orang-orang yang bukan bangsa Melayu dengan hanya memotong kemaluannya yakni bersunat bukan saja disifatkan dengan serta-merta jadi Melayu, tetapi juga dengan serta-merta mendapat hak-hak kebangsaan Melayu yang sepenuhnya. Bukan sedikit orang-orang yang seperti itu sudah meningkat menjadi Raja-raja, jadi Raja Permaisuri, Menteri, Dato dan mempunyai tanah dalam kawasan Melayu. Keadaan yang demikian ini tidak boleh dibiarkan. Inilah hal yang pertama yang telah menyebabkan Melaka jatuh ketangan Portugis, Singapura dijual. Dalam gulungan Raja-raja Melayu dan pembesar-pembesar Melayu bukan yang tiada berasal daripada Cina, India, Arab, Turki dan lain-lain bangsa yang dua atau tiga keturunan, baharu mastautin dinegeri Melayu Asia...yakni pergilah kedalam mana-mana istana jika dibenarkan, nescaya akan dapat dilihat jenis manusia yang Melayu bukan dan Cina bukan ini beristirehat dengan soal kesenangannya, memakan dan menghisab kekayaan negeri ini.

The People's Constitution of PUTERA is based on elections, *kedaulatan rakyat* (sovereignty of the people) and moves towards social justice, and egalitarianism, no classes in the *bangsa* except according to capability, intelligence and the industry of the individual. We hope that in this matter the *rakyat* won't have any doubts but more faith in the struggle and loyal to their respective movements. Because of this we appeal once more, struggle onwards with a fiery spirit but with a cool head until the sacred aims that we point to are achieved. Think comrades that the world is changing fast and we can't live with the knowledge and feelings of the year 1941. We are now in the year 1947 in the atomic age, the old age has passed.¹⁰⁷

Their statement stressed the view that because of progress the old way of thinking and administering the Malay states must be done away with. Furthermore the stress on equality (*sama rasa dan sama rata*) lays strong emphasis on egalitarianism which is in keeping with the idea of progress that the PUTERA and the P.K.M.M. have been advocating. In this their views coincide with the East Sumatran republican leaders. The statement by the PUTERA and the P.K.M.M. revealed the issue of how they perceived the question of

¹⁰⁷ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. Dan Perlembagaan Pusat Tenaga Rakyat itu berdasar kepada pilihan raya, kedaulatan rakyat dan menuju kepada keadilan sosial, sama rata sama rasa, tidak berkelas bangsa lebih dan kurang melainkan mengikut kebolehan-kebolehan, kecerdasan otak dan usaha seseorang itu. Kami yakin dalam soal ini rakyat jelata sudah tiada ragu-ragu lagi bahkan bertambah yakin kepada tekad perjuangannya, patuh kepada gerakan masing-masing. Oleh kerana itu, kami berseru sekali lagi, berjuanglah terus dengan semangat bernyala-nyala tetapi dengan kepala yang dingin hingga cita-cita suci yang kita tuju itu bercapai. Ingatlah saudara-saudara bahawasanya dunia sedang berubah cepat kita tidak seyugia hidup dengan pahaman dan perasaan tahun 1941. Kita sekarang berada dalam tahun 1947 dalam zaman atom, zaman kolot telah lupt.

the *bangsa Melayu* as well as their attitude as to the role of the Malay sultans and the Malay aristocrats in the U.M.N.O. whom they considered to have betrayed the Malay masses.

In a meeting that was held on 10 August 1947, 14 Malay societies were present at a meeting during which Ungku Abdullah b Omar claimed that Sultan Ibrahim had violated the Johor State Constitution by signing the MacMichael Treaties and that he had thus automatically ceased to be Sultan of Johor. The societies decided to send a telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Arthur Creech Jones, opposing the Federation of Malaya as well as despatching a telegram to Sultan Ibrahim asking him to refrain from signing the Federation Agreement in his own right.¹⁰⁰ Those involved in the meeting were still insisting that the State of Johor had always been independent and possessed a Constitution and that Sultan Ibrahim would violate it if he were to sign the Federation of Malaya Agreement just as he had violated it by signing the MacMichael Treaty. The old argument that he had ceased

¹⁰⁰ *Sunday Times*, 10 August 1947. The organizations that were present at the meeting were: the *Kesatuan Melayu Muar*, *Persatuan Kebajikan Malaya Cawangan Johor Bharu*, Boyanese Association of Johor, *P.K.M.M. Johor*, the Malayan Anti-Japanese Association, *P.K.M.M. Singapore*, the Pan-Malayan Labour Union of Johor, the H.Q. *P.K.M.M. Singapore*, the Johor Drivers Association, the Indian Congress Party, the Johor Medical Labour Union, the *Lembaga Kesatuan Johor*, the Johor Labour Union, the *Johor Lembaga Pulai Sebatang*.

to be ruler because he violated the constitution was repeated but now it was suggested that he should be reinstalled as sultan.¹⁰⁹

The U.M.N.O. defended the sultan at the seventh General Assembly of the U.M.N.O., where two resolutions were passed unanimously concerning the protests against the Sultan of Johor:

- (1) That this General Assembly of U.M.N.O. records with contempt (*memandang kejinya*) the action of several Malays both in Johor and Singapore in connection with their protest and behaviour towards His Highness the Sultan of Johor as reported in the press.
- (2) That this General Assembly of U.M.N.O. considers with contempt the action of several foreign organizations who are interfering with the rights of Johor subjects in connection with the Constitution of the State of Johor and towards His Highness the Sultan of Johor. This Assembly further warns such organizations that these acts will be strongly opposed by U.M.N.O.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Utusan Melayu*, 11, 13 & 15 September 1947.

¹¹⁰ *Straits Times*, 13 September 1947, *Utusan Melayu*, 13 September 1947.

Dato Onn had shown just how much the sultans would depend on U.M.N.O. for protection and should seriously consider having second thoughts if they felt that they could now dispense with U.M.N.O. This meeting which was held in Johor was declared open by the Tengku Mahkota on behalf of Sultan Ibrahim who had just returned from London. To make his point clear Dato Onn stated:

The work of U.M.N.O. in opposing the Malayan Union policy will succeed, that is, it will be replaced by a federation but there are many other matters which must be considered...When this [federation] agreement is inaugurated the Malayan Union will cease to exist. This success will be achieved if there are close links between the representatives of U.M.N.O. and the administration. As I have said before, the raja is the *rakyat* and the *rakyat* is the raja. As such the *rakyat jelata Melayu* (common Malays) with U.M.N.O. have succeeded in putting back the rajas on the thrones of their *kerajaan*. This deed was done without a drop of blood being shed. The way of repaying the efforts of the *rakyat* in the future is for those at the top [the rajas] to take a serious interest in the life of the *rakyat* in the villages. If they are unconcerned, therein lies the responsibility of their representatives to remind the rajas that [they must] rule with a populist attitude.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ *Utusan Melayu*, 4 September 1947. Perkerjaan U.M.N.O. melawan dasar Malayan Union akan jaya iaitu akan digantikan dengan federation, tetapi hendaklah diingat bahawa ini hanya permulaan kerana ada banyak lagi perkara yang mesti diambil tahu...Apabila perjanjian ini dimulakan maka dengan demikian Malayan Union hapus. Kejayaan itu akan dapat dijalankan lagi jika ada perhubungan yang rapat diantara wakil-wakil U.M.N.O. dan pemerintah. Sebagaimana yang telah saya katakan dahulu, Raja itu rakyat dan rakyat itu raja, maka rakyat jelata Melayu semenanjung ini dengan U.M.N.O. berjaya menetap dan meletakkan balik raja-raja Melayu keatas takhta kerajaannya. Jasa ini dibuat dengan tidak setitik pun menumpahkan darah. Faesah membalas usaha rakyat jelata dalam masa yang akan datang ialah supaya pehak yang diatas mengambil berat dalam hal kehidupan rakyat dikampong-kampong. Jika sekiranya mereka lalai, maka disitulah ditanggungkan kepada wakil-wakil mengingatkan kepada raja-raja supaya hendaklah dijadikan pemerintahan dengan fikiran ramai.

The P.K.M.M.'s view on *Melayu* as a nationality was rejected by Dato Onn. His speech made it apparent that U.M.N.O. wanted the term *Melayu* to be used exclusively by the *bangsa Melayu*. He states:

If the Constitution is studied carefully then [we see] the representatives have endeavoured to obtain as many benefits as possible for the Malay people. The opposition of those groups that do not agree includes Malays...One matter which has been mouthed by them from the beginning has involved an attempt to destroy the name *Melayu*, that is change the name *Melayu* and every custom of the *Melayu*. We are called *Melayu* but the other side now propose is that we live like "Malay," dress like "Malay," and be "Malay." We have been renowned for hundreds of years as *Melayu*. In the past every person wanted to become *Melayu* (*masuk Melayu*), but now we are asked to enrol or be enrolled to become *Melayu*.¹¹²

From the tone and tenor of Onn's speech, there was no longer any possibility of reconciling the differences between the Malayan and the *Melayu* identity and it was only through a political struggle that the issue can be resolved.

¹¹² *Utusan Melayu*, 4 September 1947. This particular speech of Dato Onn is extremely difficult to translate into English as his use of the Malay language here is colloquial. Jika dihalusi keadaan Perlembagaan ini maka wakil-wakil telah berikhtiar sedapat-dapat dan seberapa banyaknya bagi mendapat keuntungan-keuntungan kepada orang Melayu. Bantahan pehak-pehak yang tidak bersetuju termasuk orang-orang Melayu...suatu barang yang terbit daripada mulanya dan dahulu, berkerja hendak menghilangkan nama Melayu, mengubah nama Melayu, tiap-tiap adat istiadat Melayu, diri kita dikata Melayu tetapi cadangan pehak sebelah berkehendakan supaya berhidup seperti Malay, berpakaian Malay, berbangsa Malay. Kita telah bermegah beratus-ratus tahun lamanya bernama Melayu. Dahulu tiap-tiap orang hendak masuk Melayu tetapi sekarang kita diminta supaya masuk atau dimasukkan menjadi Melayu.

However, the victory was conclusively U.M.N.O.'s victory as the British had accepted the U.M.N.O. concept of an exclusive Malay identity. Nevertheless the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition struggled on against great odds and their opposition to the federation could never muster the overwhelming force that was needed to persuade the British to reconsider their plans. On the other hand they were drawing upon themselves closer scrutiny from the British security officials who were concerned that in their opposition to the Federation, the Malay left were being drawn into closer cooperation with the Malayan Communist Party. There were Malay communists who were involved in the P.K.M.M.'s struggle who could easily be recognised as such. These were Mochtaruddin Lasso, Wahi Anwar, Abdul Rashid b Maideen and Abdullah C.D. On the other hand Ishak Haji Mohamad, the President of PUTERA, Burhanuddin El-Hulaimy and Ahmad Boestamam were by no means communists. There was a struggle between the Malay communists and the nationalists within the P.K.M.M. and the PUTERA but the communists were never able to gain control of either organization though they did retain some influence. At the P.K.M.M.'s third congress in December 1947, Ishak Haji Mohamad was elected as president to replace Dr. Burhanuddin.¹¹³

¹¹³ MSS/PIJ no.22/47.

The P.K.M.M. and PUTERA were seen as tainted by some Malays as they chose to work with the non-Malays and non-Malay organizations concerning issues that affected Malay interests. Furthermore, alleged links of the P.K.M.M. and PUTERA with the Malayan Communist Party aroused the suspicion of both the Malays and the security service.¹¹⁴ Thus it was not long before the government took action against the Malay left. Yet it was difficult to accept intelligence reports that the Malay left were communist controlled stooges. Indeed, they were nationalists with left-wing inclinations.

The Malay left were also involved in the setting up of the *Majlis Islam Tertinggi* (Highest Islamic Council or MATA) at a religious conference at Gunong Semanggul in Perak on 22 and 23 March 1947. This conference was chaired by Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir who was the founder of the Arabic College called the *Maahad Al-Ehya Al-Shariff*.¹¹⁵ The MATA was attacked by Dato Onn in a cryptic manner in which he stated that if "formerly the danger arose from the jungle now it descends from the mountain."¹¹⁶ MATA held its second

¹¹⁴ MSS/PIJ reports that the M.C.P. had a good hold on the Malay radical societies.

¹¹⁵ See MSS/PIJ nos.5/47 and 14/47 for details of the conference.

¹¹⁶ He was savagely attacked for making this remark. See *Utusan Melayu*, 21 June 1947 which published letters severely criticising the Dato.

conference on 12 and 13 July 1947 at Gua Chempedak, Kedah where its rules were discussed as well as to emphasise the safety of the (Islamic) society and Islam which can be attained by spreading awareness and the depth of knowledge to enable the *umat Islam* to defend the Islamic religion and its dignity.¹¹⁷ Sheik Hussain Rafiq stated that MATA's policy was to struggle in the defence of the dignity of Islam and for the dignity of the *bangsa*.¹¹⁸

At a meeting in Johor between MATA and members of the *Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor*, the *Persatuan Melayu Johor* and the Johor PUTERA branch, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir was asked whether it was true that MATA at its recent conference had proposed that authority over religion should be seized from the hands of the sultans? The Ustaz replied that MATA in requesting that power over religion which lay in the hands of the sultans be handed over to MATA does not mean that MATA intended to seize that power from the sultans. According to Ustaz Abu Bakar,

MATA viewed the sultans highly and because of that it requested that control over Islam be handed over so that the responsibility of the sultan and the trust of God for running religious affairs are not neglected or ignored. By this way the responsibility of bearing great sins is not borne by the sultans whom we all regard highly. But if the sultans manage the religion

¹¹⁷ *Utusan Melayu*, 16 July 1947.

¹¹⁸ *Utusan Melayu*, 25 July 1947. Sheik Hussain denied that MATA was communist oriented.

in the manner expected by God and his Prophet, MATA will work and support them. But now with these words there is no awareness among those who should be aware, it is definite that the *rakyat jelata* (common people) will act so that the power over religion will be handed over completely to a body that is established by the *rakyat jelata*.¹¹⁹

Its attempts to get the Malay sultans to hand over their control of Islam to MATA were rebuffed. Realising that the only way it could achieve its goal was to be politically involved, MATA decided to establish a religious party *Hizbul Muslimin* with its headquarters in Johor Bharu.¹²⁰ However it faced enormous difficulties in gaining Malay support. With the establishment of the Federation of Malaya on 1 February 1948 the struggle of the Malay left and their supporters in MATA had virtually reached a dead end. The more communist inclined Malays within the P.K.M.M. and PUTERA had already decided on armed struggle to overthrow what they termed as British colonialism in Malaya. Yet it was the Malay left who were the first to pay the price of

¹¹⁹ *Utusan Melayu*, 7 August 1947. MATA memandang tinggi kepada sultan dengan sebab itulah diminta serahkan kuasa agama itu supaya tanggungan sultan dan amanah Tuhan untuk menjalankan agama itu tidak dipercuai-cuai dan dipermudah-mudahkan. Dengan ini tidaklah tertanggung dosa yang maha berat itu kepada sultan-sultan yang kita sama-sama pandang tinggi. Sekiranya sultan-sultan itu menjalankan agama sebagaimana yang dikehendaki oleh Allah dan Rasul, MATA akan berkerja dan menyokong sama-sama. Sekarang jikalau dengan kata-kata itu tidak juga mendatangkan insaf kepada yang mesti insaf sudah tentu rakyat jelata bertindak supaya kuasa agama itu diserahkan bulat-bulat kepada badan yang dibangunkan oleh rakyat jelata.

¹²⁰ MSS/PIJ no.16/47.

the decision by the more militant left to wage an armed struggle against the British.

In July 1948, Ishak Haji Mohamad was arrested.¹²¹ In August seven members including three leaders of the *Hizbul Muslimin* were arrested under the Emergency Regulations. Among the seven was Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, the President.¹²² Thus the attempts of the P.K.M.M. and the PUTERA as well as their allies to change the course of history came to an end. The AMCJA itself had ceased to function by July 1948 when the Malayan Indian Congress, a member of the AMCJA, publicly acknowledged that the AMCJA had ceased to function.¹²³

The arrests of leaders of the P.K.M.M. and PUTERA ended the attempt to evolve a *kebangsaan Melayu* that could encompass both Malays and non-Malays. The P.K.M.M. had

¹²¹ *Malaya Tribune*, 19 July 1948. The Federation of Malaya Government stated that Ishak was detained because he "had been working with communist elements for the overthrow of the Government and the establishment of an alternative Government by force." See *Malaya Tribune*, 28 July 1948 for more details.

¹²² *Malaya Tribune*, 4 August 1948. The Secretary-General of the party stated that notes of appeal have been sent to their Highnesses the Sultans of the Malay states, the various Mentri-Besars, the High Commissioner for the Federation, the Governor of Singapore and the Commissioner-General for South East Asia, stressing that the party stood for peace, law and order and condemned violence as a means of achieving political ends.

¹²³ *Malaya Tribune*, 26 July 1948.

shown its ability to adapt to the changing political situation in Malaya when it gave up its call for a union with Indonesia in a *Melayu Raya*. The attempt of the P.K.M.M. and PUTERA to work with the AMCJA was a serious attempt by Malays and non-Malays to come together by accepting the term *Melayu* as a nationality. Their efforts failed because the conservatives in UMNO and the sultans rejected the idea of a *Melayu* nationality and succeeded in limiting the use of the term *Melayu* to the *bangsa Melayu*.

The failure to evolve a nationality that was acceptable to all was evident in the setting up of the Persekutuan Tanah Melayu (Federation of Malaya) which gave citizenship rights to the non-Malays but denied them a nationality. For Malays and non-Malays, the Federation created a greater sense of ethnic consciousness as it did not lead to the emergence of a *bangsa* Malayan that all could identify with. A detailed discussion on *bangsa* will be undertaken in a subsequent chapter on Community.

CHAPTER 5
NEGARA SUMATERA TIMUR

From the time of the 'social revolution' till the first Dutch police action on 21 July 1947, the *kerajaans* had ceased to exist and with them Malay political dominance. The *suku Melayu* was left without any coherent political leadership. The *kerajaan* families were under internment at various camps. Those members of the various *kerajaans* who were not interned by the Republican authorities continually "complained to the Dutch authorities in Medan, Jakarta and the Netherlands about their sufferings as well as the sufferings of the *orang asli* (indigenous peoples) at the hands of the Republicans whom they termed 'bandits' and 'robbers.'"¹

After the Dutch "police action", some of the *kerajaan* elite of East Sumatra, some of the *suku Melayu*, the Chinese and Eurasians were willing to throw in their lot with the Dutch. These were some of the groups that had suffered most under Republican 'extremists'. To them the Dutch stood for *rust en orde* (law and order) which they had last experienced before the Japanese Occupation. In the eyes of the Republicans these groups were the *tali barut* (lackeys) of

¹ Interview with Tengku Ziwari in Medan, February 1985.

the Dutch.² The setting up of a *negara* would serve both the interests of the Dutch and the disaffected groups. To the Dutch, it was a good chance to reap the rewards of an economy based on the pre-War structure of large scale plantation production financed by a high level of foreign investment. To the members of the surviving *kerajaan* elite, it meant a return to power and privileges as well as the protection of the rights of the *orang asli* and the reemergence of Malay political dominance. To the Chinese and Eurasians, it meant no more 'extortion' and 'intimidation' from some Republican groups and a chance to do business without any hindrance.

However, the plans to establish a state in East Sumatra did not necessarily mean the resurrection of the various *kerajaans* that were destroyed in the wake of the 'social revolution' of March 1946. The conservative Malays, unlike their counterparts in Malaya, were forced into a situation where they had to accept a *negara* identity in order to safeguard their interests. The Dutch and the prime movers of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* had one aim in common and that was the establishment of a state. The westernized elements of the *kerajaan* elite and the Dutch both recognized that the *kerajaans* were a liability and an obstacle in the *negara* that was to be set up in the East Coast of Sumatra. Ten days after the Dutch began their 'police action' in East

² Interview with Saleh Umar, Medan, February 1985.

Sumatra and even before their offensive came to an end, a mass meeting took place in Medan to demand the establishment of an autonomous state for East Sumatra. The mass meeting was chaired by a Simalungun Batak lawyer, Mr. Djomat Purba and among those present were the Dutch brigade commander Col. Scholten, the Dutch Resident for Sumatera Timur, Mr. J. Gerritson, and the Netherlands Indies' Government Commissioner for Administration in North Sumatra (*Regeeringscommisaris voor Bestuursaangelegenheden - Recomba*) Dr. van de Velde. The mere presence of important Dutch officials at this mass meeting was a form of legitimizing the aim to establish a *negara* in East Sumatra.

Djomat Purba read out a petition on behalf of the *orang asli*³ peoples appealing to Lieutenant Governor-General H.J. van Mook to recognize Sumatera Timur as an autonomous state within an independent federal Indonesia, in accordance with the terms of the Linggadjati Agreement. He then made known to all present that a *Comite Daerah Istimewa Sumatera Timur* (Committee for an East Sumatran Special Region) for this purpose was set up, headed by Tengku Dr. Mansur.⁴ Among the

³ The term *orang asli* peoples would embrace the Malays, Simalunguns and the Karos.

⁴ Tengku Dr. Mansur was related to the Asahan royal family as the uncle of Sultan Saibun. He was trained at the medical school for natives (STOVIA) in Batavia. He was the founding president of the student organization, the *Jong Sumatra*. He went to Leiden for further studies and married a Dutch woman. In the 1930s, he was involved in the establishing of the *Persatuan Sumatera Timur* which was aimed at enhancing the educational and material development of the *orang asli* peoples. In 1940, he became its chairman.

members of the *Comite DIST* were Tengku Hafaz (Malay), Tengku Mr. Dzulkarnain (Malay), Datuk Hafiz Haberham (Malay), Djomat Purba (Simalungun), Raja Sembiring Meliala (Karo), Tengku M. Bahar (Malay), Mr. Jaidin Purba (Simalungun), Raja Silimakuta (Simalungun), Madja Purba (Simalungun), Anak Raja Pane (Simalungun), Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga (Simalungun), and Orang Kaya Ramli (Malay).⁵

Whatever gratification the Dutch may have felt about the aim of the *Comite DIST* to campaign for a *negara*, they had some apprehensions about the movement. The *Recomba* noted that the movement was still mostly limited to the *kerajaan* and the ethnic Malay sector of the population with some support for it being mobilised by Simalungun leaders around Pematang Siantar. He also noted that with the emergence of the movement, coupled with the release from internment of the Sultans of Langkat and Asahan and the impending return to Medan of the Sultan of Deli, the question of the restoration of the traditional kingdoms would emerge.⁶ However this problem remained in the background for the moment. The idea of setting up the *negara* did have some

⁵ See Negara Soematera Timoer Sepintas Laloe, Medan, 1948, p.8; also Indonesia, Kementerian Penerangan, Republik Indonesia: Propinsi Sumatera Utara, Jakarta, 1954, p.216.

⁶ Letter from *Recomba*, Medan to Lt. Gouverneur-General. Batavia, No.405/P.Z., August 2 1947 (BZ).

degree of support for during the few days following the Medan rally, similar mass meetings were held in Binjai, Lubukpakam and Siantar.¹ By the time the Dutch 'police action' ended on 8 August, the time to set up the *negara* was ripe.

While Dutch motives for setting up the *negara* were understandable, we must look at the motives of the leaders of the *Comite DIST* to get a better understanding of the problems involved. By the time the U.N. negotiated ceasefire had come into operation, Dutch officials began working with the *Comite DIST* leaders to set up a working administrative machinery that would facilitate the setting up of the *Negara Sumatera Timur*. For members of the *Comite DIST*, the first task was to set up the *negara* which was to be free of the republicans and to set up the necessary political institutions that would be representative of the *orang asli* peoples. However, from the composition of the *Comite DIST* it seemed quite obvious that the *negara* that was to be set up would be firmly in the hands of the *orang asli* and in particular in the hands of the Malays of the *kerajaan* elite.

¹ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.216, Negara Soematera Timoer Sepintas Laloe, p.9

It was also clear that this Malay elite would be prepared to work very closely with the Dutch in the economic and defence spheres. On August 25, members of the *Comite DIST* and senior Dutch officials met at the home of Dr. Tengku Mansur in Medan to discuss the setting up of a *negara* in East Sumatra which was to be based on popular support.

Dr. Tengku Mansur and other members of the *Comite DIST* knew that the *kerajaan* did not enjoy the support of the Simalungun and Karo, who formed a significant proportion of the *orang asli* peoples and whose views had to be taken into consideration. Indeed the *Recomba* noted in a letter to the Lt. Governor-General that:

The Simalungun Bataks, Tobas and Karo Bataks, who will struggle by word and deed for a more or less democratic polity, will certainly withdraw if they get the impression that they have been fitted before the cart of the coastal Malay sultans for whom they hold not a grain of sympathy, particularly not for the Sultan of Deli.¹

Djomat Purba later recalled

although it was agreed in principle that *kedaulatan rakyat* (sovereignty of the people) would be implemented in full, there were some reservations on the part of the Malay leaders. They did not seem to have full trust in the other *orang asli suku* (other indigenous groups). They felt that only when Malay

¹ Letter from Recomba, Medan to Lt. Gouverneur-Generaal Batavia, No.135/Geh., September 13, 1947 (BZ).

political dominance was assured would they democratise the political institutions. However, they were unwilling to see that unless they gave the other *sukus* an equal right in running the government the whole thing would be seen as a *sandiwara Melayu* (Malay opera). The Dutch were more realistic as they knew that unless all the *orang asli* peoples had an equal say in the *negara*, the Republicans would always say that the *negara* was not based on *kedaulatan rakyat* but was ruled by a feudal clique.¹

With the need to establish a state in the East Coast of Sumatra, the question of popular participation in the government had to be considered. There was the delicate problem of how to have popular participation without threatening the interests of the *orang asli* peoples, especially if popular participation would mean the political participation of the non-*orang asli* peoples.

The Dutch took the principle of 'democracy' much more seriously than the *kerajaan* elite when they insisted that the *Comite DIST* be expanded so as to give more representation to other ethnic groups. The *Comite DIST* was expanded from 13 to 22 members and the new additions included representatives from the Toba, Chinese, Menadonese, Ambonese and Timorese communities. The 12 new members of the expanded *Comite DIST* were Florencius Lumbantobing (Toba), Dr. F.J. Nainggolan (Toba), H.F. Sitompul (Toba), Tan Boon Djin (Chinese), Tan Wee Beng (Chinese), M. Lalisang

¹ Interview with Djomat Purba, Medan, February 1985.

(Menadonese), C.B.M. Manusiwa (Ambonese), A.H.F. Rotty (Timorese), Abdul Wahab (Malay), Sajoeti (Malay), Mohamad Noeh (Malay) and Datuk Kamil (Malay).¹⁰ Nevertheless the *Comite DIST* was still dominated by Malays. It was evident that there would be no serious attempts to give a fair representation to the other *sukus* whether at the elite level or at the level of the common people. There was no representation from the Javanese though they were the largest single ethnic group in East Sumatra. According to Tengku Zivar, "they were not represented because they could not be considered as *orang asli Sumatera Timur* unlike some of the Simalungun and Tapanuli Bataks who had adopted our ways, and also because they were mainly plantation labourers who were there just to serve the interests of the plantation companies."¹¹

The members of the *Comite DIST* sponsored and led a political party to gather support from the *orang asli* peoples. This party was called the *Partai Daerah Istimewa Soematera Timoer* (Party of the Special Region of East Sumatra) or *Pardist*. This party was officially inaugurated at a ceremony in Medan on September 27, and among those who attended were the *Recomba* and other senior Dutch officials.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Djomat Purba for the list of names of the additional members of the *Comite DIST*.

¹¹ Interview with Tengku Zivar, Medan, February 1985. It was probable that the Javanese were not represented because it was assumed that they were on the side of the Republic.

The party printed a pamphlet which stated that:

Pardist has been formed out of the Secret association "S.S." (*Siap Sedia*) and the P.S.T. (*Persatoean Soematera Timoer*) which have been active since the Japanese Army occupied Indonesia. The aims of those secret associations was to struggle against and hinder the greedy aims of the Japanese against our country...

At the time of the Japanese surrender and the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia, the aims and purposes of which we have already experienced together, when the majority of us which had at first been disbanded, were re-activated in order to free our compatriots and those of the Sumatera Timur people who since that time had been held in internment by the Republic of Indonesia, even though the Republic of Indonesia itself had been unable to prove them guilty of any offence.

Since then these secret associations have worked well within Republican territory and also within the Dutch controlled region, that is within and outside the demarcation line.

These secret associations have played their part in speeding up the long desired release of these Republican prisoners, in cooperating with the Netherlands Army...

Pardist is a party of the PEOPLE. All inhabitants irrespective of descent, religion or ethnicity, may become members of the party.

Pardist firmly and resolutely opposes the reestablishment of the government of the Republic of Indonesia in Sumatera Timur.

Pardist supports the *KOMITE Daerah Istimewa Soematera Timoer* which has now been formed by the leaders from the above two secret associations.

Pardist is willing to become the kernel of the *KOMITE Daerah Istimewa Soematera Timoer*.

Since *Pardist* was the political organ of the *Comite DIST*, it had to mobilise popular support for the *negara*. The

Pardist was headed by Datuk Hafiz Haberham as first chairman, Tengku Bahriun (second chairman), J.E. Kalalo (first secretary), Abdul Wahab (second secretary), and Datuk Mohamad Item (treasurer). The patron of the party was Tengku Dr. Mansur while other members who were involved in its council were Mr. Djaidin Purba, Tengku Hafaz, Tengku Bahar, Orang Kaya Ramli, Djomat Purba and Raja Sembiring Meliala as well as Tengku Saibun, the Sultan of Asahan.¹² Djomat Purba recalled later that unlike the P.N.S.T., the *Pardist* had some Karo and Simalungun Bataks within the leadership council of the party. However, "there was always the feeling that the Malay elite were making the decisions while we were just consulted as a form of courtesy but no actual substance of power was given to us."¹³

The fact that the *kerajaan* elites of the *Comite DIST* accepted Dutch proposals that there would be a defeudalised state created a serious split within the ranks of the East Sumatran political elite and led to the emergence of rival political parties. The *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer*, was formed on 8 September, 1947 by a group of Malay aristocrats who were not in agreement with the way Dr. Tengku Mansur or the Dutch supporters treated the *kerajaans*.

¹² The list of the *Pardist* leadership was provided by Tengku Luckman Sinar and Djomat Purba in interviews in Medan, February 1985.

¹³ Interview with Djomat Purba, Medan, February 1985.

Tengku Mochtar Aziz recollected that

Dr. Tengku Mansur took it upon himself to decide the fate of the four major *kerajaans* without even the courtesy of consulting them. Even the Republic of Indonesia in its Constitution had, in principle, a place for the *kerajaans* in an independent Indonesia. However, the Dutch who claimed to have liberated us from the terror of the *lasykar rakyat* (people's army) had conveniently decided to accept the illegal actions of the destruction of the *kerajaans* during the 'social revolution' as a *fait accompli*. Perhaps the 'social revolution' was a blessing for the Dutch.¹⁴

The majority of those involved in the setting up of the *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer* were aristocrats who had been interned during the 'social revolution.'

The background and the aspirations of the *Partai Nasional Sumatera Timoer* were clearly revealed in its official history.¹⁵

In March 1946 leaders of the Republic of Indonesia together with their followers organized a movement which they called the Social Revolution. In this so-called Social Revolution movement they seized governmental power, killed, kidnapped, robbed, raped and carried out other illegal actions against thousands of people from all ethnic groups, a large proportion of whom were the Native Inhabitants of East Sumatra (*Boemipoetra Soematera Timoer*) from all strata (men,

¹⁴ Interview with Tengku Mochtar Aziz, Medan, February 1985. The above sentiment was not necessarily an accurate reflection of what happened. There were lengthy but inconclusive negotiations with the sultans throughout the N.S.T. period.

¹⁵ The Riwayat Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer, Medan, 1947.

women and children). Almost all the intellectuals among the Native Inhabitants of East Sumatra were interned, even though judicial investigations by the Republic produced no evidence of wrongdoing on their part.

In consequence of this we got the impression that this movement had been organized for the purpose of seizing our motherland *Sumatera Timur* by destroying the power of our people, killing those who had become leaders in accordance with the customary law - interning the intellectuals, impoverishing our people, dividing other ethnic groups from our own and making false allegations of feudalism.

In our internment camps we came to realise that the Republic of Indonesia was unwilling to guard the peace, something acknowledged by the official newspaper of the Republic of Indonesia itself.

Because of this, in our places of internment, we decided that, whenever we had the opportunity, we would quickly establish an association (*serikat*) which would have as its aims

- (1) to unite the natives of East Sumatra within a single party so that, although not a large (ethnic) group, they will not vanish within the society at large;
- (2) to create consciousness of our customs and traditions and the special privileges commensurate with the times;
- (3) to press for positions of responsibility for its members;
- (4) to withdraw *Sumatera Timur* from the Republic.

Recalling the period many years later, Djomat Purba stated unequivocally that the founders of the *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer* were unrealistic in their aspirations as they were living in the past. They had no conception of what it meant to administer a state according to modern demands.

They were foolish enough to believe that they would be able to leave the Republic and that the Dutch would agree with this and their sole aim was to reestablish their *kerajaans* and their privileges at the expense of the need to democratise the *negara*. It is little wonder that the Karos and Simalungun refused to support them.¹⁶

There was more than an element of truth in Djomat's statement. For when we look at the pamphlets of the *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer*, there was hardly any mention of the need to democratise the *negara* or any intention to accede to the demands of popular sovereignty. Since the founders of the P.N.S.T. were mainly Malay *tengkus*, they were articulating mainly their own and a section of the Malay people's interests. The most outspoken members of the *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer* were Tengku Nikmatullah and Tengku Jafizham of the Serdang royal house and Tengku Mochtar Aziz of the Langkat royalty. They stood firmly for a return to pre-war conditions.¹⁷ However, the chairman of the party, Tengku Bachrudin, was more realistic. He merely insisted that recognition be given to the existence of the *kerajaans* but was not in favour of the resurrecting of the old conditions.¹⁸

¹⁶ Interview with Djomat Purba in Medan, February 1985.

¹⁷ Interview with Tengku Luckman Sinar, Medan, February 1985.

¹⁸ Interview with Tengku Razali Hafaz, February, Medan, 1985. We can surmise from this that even among conservative Malays, the position of the *kerajaans* was very controversial.

The *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer* also had a programme which stated that:

The National Party of East Sumatra which constitutes the kernel of the original native peoples has come to the conclusion that, because of various weaknesses, foreign assistance is greatly needed for the creation of this state. Among such foreign peoples, our particular choice falls upon the Dutch people, because in culture and education this region has been influenced by Dutch culture for about the last 100 years...

The National Party of East Sumatra wishes that *Sumatera Timur* be made an autonomous territory; Sumatra Timur is not able to be a state because of lack of territory, lack of population, shortage of intellectuals, lack of economic strength.

The efforts of the National Party of East Sumatra are directed towards other regions of Sumatra achieving autonomy and these regions later uniting to become a SUMATRAN STATE, which will be free of Java.

According to history, custom and tradition Sumatra and Java are different, foreign to each other, so much so that the two islands must be separate, that is each become a state in itself.

Later these states could be combined into a federation in accordance with "Linggadjati" to be called: THE INDONESIAN FEDERATION (NEGARA INDONESIA SERIKAT (N.I.S.)). AN INDONESIAN FEDERATION which will be linked with the Netherlands.¹³

This programme, suggests that the conservative P.N.S.T. (like the U.M.N.O.) was reluctant to accept a *negara* because they felt insecure. It was anti-Javanese and it wanted Dutch protection at least until it could achieve a strong

¹³ See "Beginsel-Programma Dari Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer" Medan 1947. A much fuller exposition of the P.N.S.T.'s views is given in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.1, 29 November 1947.

Sumatran state free from Java. There was no mention of the role of popular participation in government.

However, it was unable to attract popular support or even firm Dutch support despite its pro-Dutch stand. The party was unable to attract other ethnic groups of the *orang asli* to support its policies. The people in East Sumatra were so heterogenous that the party was not able to talk about a *bangsa Soematera Timoer* but was forced to use weak terms like *orang asli*, or *penduduk asli* or *boemiputera Soematera Timoer* which was no substitute for the term *bangsa* which connotes belonging to a race or a people. The terms which they used revealed an admission of the difficulty of the elite to create a much more meaningful focus of loyalty and community that could unite the various groups in East Sumatra.

To Saleh Umar, the two parties were nothing but a *sandiwara bangsawan Melayu* (Malay aristocratic theatre) because the main leaders were mainly *kerajaan* elements who refused to accept the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat*. According to Saleh Umar,

surely those who were used to being called *Yang Mulia* or *TuanKu* and to have others calling themselves *patik* or *pachai yang dihina* when addressing these feudal elites were not going to be converted to democracy just like that. Therefore it was not surprising that the vast majority of the *rakyat* were not willing to support them as these feudal elites were only interested in getting the Dutch back and working

with them in bringing back the old system where only the *kerajaan* elites would get the benefits while the vast majority of the *rakyat* would be treated like coolies in the plantations.²⁰

Despite their differences, both these political parties were strongly Malay and *orang asli* oriented. The leaders in both parties had to some extent suffered during the 'social revolution.' According to Nip Karim,

there was hardly any support for the *kerajaan* elites from the vast majority of Indonesians. Those who supported them were those who had grievances against the Republic because of some acts of lawlessness by ill-disciplined *lasykar rakyat* units, or those who were given money and so threw in their lot with the *kerajaan* elites. Of course, the Republic could not offer much but the hope for *merdeka* and a better future. Even then, we were very sure that most of the people supported us with food, shelter and information though they had no money.²¹

However, so long as there was some support for setting up a state in East Sumatra, the *kerajaan* elites and the Dutch were prepared to proceed with their plans. On 30 September 1947, the Lieutenant Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, Dr. H. van Mook arrived in Medan to hold talks with the *Comite DIST*. The formal talks began on 2 October. The East Sumatran side was represented by Tengku Dr. Mansur (Malay), Tan Wee Beng (Chinese), Tan Boon Djin (Chinese) Manusiwa (Ambonese), Djomat Purba (Simalungun),

²⁰ Interview with Saleh Umar, Medan, February 1985.

²¹ Interview with Nip Karim, Medan, February 1985.

O.K. Ramli (Malay), Rotty (Timorese), Tengku Hafaz (Malay), Sajoeti (Malay), Lalisang (Menadonese), Tengku Mr. Dzulkarnain (Malay), Datuk Hafiz (Malay), H.F. Sitompul (Toba), Abdul Wahab (Malay), Dr. Nainggolan (Toba), R. Kaliamsjah (Simalungun), Florencius L. Tobing (Toba), Mr. T. Djaidin Purba (Simalungun) and Tan Tjeng Bie (Chinese). The Dutch were represented by van Mook, Prof. Enthoven, Dr. van de Waal, Dr. Ozinga, Dr. J.J. van der Velde.²²

The large representation on the part of the *Comite DIST* was the result of the insistence of Tengku Dr. Mansur who wanted to impress upon van Mook that the *Comite DIST* represented the various ethnic groups in East Sumatra.²³ However, the Lieutenant Governor-General was not easily taken in as the discussion between him and the *Comite DIST* were to show. The Lt. Governor-General stated that the claim that the committee represented the majority of the East Sumatran people could be proven by general elections which for the world would be an important factor. H. van Mook also queried why there was no representative from the Javanese, to which Dr. Mansur replied that for the moment no one was willing to join in. Mansur stated also that among the groups involved in the *Comite DIST* were the *Siap Sedia*

²² Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.216.

²³ Interview with Djomat Purba, Medan, February 1985.

and the *Persatuan Sumatera Timur*²⁴ but he added significantly that there was no one from the *golongan bangsa Indonesia*²⁵ Mansur's use of the term *golongan bangsa Indonesia* conveys the impression that those classified under this term were not the native sons of East Sumatra (*anak Sumatera Timur*) and would probably comprise the Javanese and other ethnic groups who were believed to be Republican supporters. In reality there was a narrow representation of the various ethnic groups within the *Comite DIST*, and it was dominated by a section of the Malay aristocrats who were doing all they could to ensure their dominance. Mansur's own admission that there were no representatives from the *golongan bangsa Indonesia* was an indication of the inability of the *Comite DIST* to be truly representative and to uphold the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat*. Thus van Mook touched on a delicate point when he stated that:

You gentlemen state that your committee represents a majority of the Sumatra Timur population. We must take care to ensure that people cannot claim this to be just play-acting. "

²⁴ The *Persatuan Sumatera Timur* was founded in 1938 and was headed by Dr. Tengku Mansur. The P.S.T. was an attempt to unite the *orang asli* peoples to defend their interests vis-a-vis the other Indonesian communities as well as attempt to create a *bangsa Sumatera Timur* out of these various groups.

²⁵ See Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.217.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.217.

H.J. van Mook had in mind the question of Karo, Simalungun, Toba and Javanese support for the *Comite DIST*. Mr. T. Djaidin Purba stated that once peace was fully restored throughout East Sumatra, all ethnic groups in the Simalungun area would stand behind the *Comite DIST*.²⁷ Virtually the same assurance was given by Dr. Nainggolan who stated that he and the two Tapanuli Bataks represented 200,000 Batak people.²⁸ As for the delicate question of the sultanates that were destroyed during the 'social revolution' Tengku Dr. Mansur stated that:

If we compare this area with West Kalimantan, there is a difference. In Kalimantan there are the representatives of the people and representatives of the sultanates. Here there has been a social revolution. Here the Sultans do not possess *de facto* powers. The committee is not anti-Sultanate (*Zelfbestuur*) but intends to make clear the democratic (*democratie*) policy in the area...But at this time we consider that it is not necessary and dangerous if we include representatives of the Sultans on the committee.²⁹

On this score the Dutch and the *Comite DIST* agreed. Mansur considered that it would be dangerous to include representatives of the sultans in the planning for a state because it would not be a popular move and it might incur

²⁷ Cited in Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.218.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.219. It was not clear whether the 200,000 Bataks were intended to represent the total who had migrated to East Sumatra. It could not refer to all Bataks in Tapanuli who were much more numerous.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.218-219.

some violent reaction from those who were opposed to granting any political role for the sultans. Opposition to the sultans was evident within the Simalungun and Karo communities. Other agreements from this meeting concerned the setting up of an autonomous state, its administrative structure and its inclusion within the federal state of Indonesia.

On 5 October, the *Comite DIST* sent a delegation comprising Tengku Dr. Mansur, Tengku Zulkarnain, Datu Hafiz Haberham, Djomat Purba, Lalisang, and Dr. F.J. Nainggolan to Jakarta. On 8 October 1947, the Lieutenant Governor-General H.J. van Mook issued a decree which had five points:

- (1) The *Comite DIST* which will work closely with the Administration will be changed to become a Provisional Council after the addition of representatives from groups or interests which have not had adequate representation in it.
- (2) This Council has a special function by working with the *Recomba* of North Sumatra to speedily draft the constitutional legislation for the state.
- (3) Concerning the Sultanates, a decision will be made only after an orderly election where there will be complete consultations with the people's representatives.
- (4) The Council while awaiting the decisions in the matter mentioned above will carry out the functions of the Sultanates and the *Recomba* will directly work with the Council concerning internal matters among which is guaranteeing the peace in the areas mentioned.

- (5) For the moment whatever is needed for these tasks will be provided by the Administration for which an accounting will be made in the future.¹⁰

Welcoming the decision of the Lt. Governor-General to recognise East Sumatra as a *daerah istimewa* the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* in its first issue stated that "East Sumatra which is the property of the *anak-anak Soematera Timoer* has now returned to its native sons (*boemipoetranja*). Now they with all the other *bangsa* who reside in East Sumatra in cooperation will use this opportunity together to sail to a harbour of peace for its passengers."¹¹ Thus, the *daerah istimewa* was to be set up for the benefit of the *anak-anak Soematera Timoer* and for the other *bangsa* who were accepted there. Initially, there was some promise for a united East Sumatran people working out a political system that would suit the complex ethnic mix of the region. In fact on 30 October the final composition of a 28 member Council was agreed to and the *Comite DIST* was reconstituted into the *Dewan Sementara*. Ten new members were added to it and these included representatives for the Javanese, Dutch, Eurasian and Indian communities. Tengku Dr. Mansur, Tengku Dzulkarnain, Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga and Lalisang were appointed as *de facto* Executive Council members and

¹⁰ Besluit Lt. Gouverneur-Generaal, No.3, 8 October 1947. (Staatsblad No.176/1947). The full text of the decree is given in Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.221. Also Negara Soematera Sepintas Laloe, p.13.

¹¹ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.1, Tahun 1, 22 November 1947.

therefore did not sit in the *Dewan Sementara*. Members were appointed to the *Dewan Sementara* as representatives of the various ethnic groups. The composition of the *Dewan Sementara* was as follows: Tengku Hafaz (Malay), Orang Kaya Ramli (Malay), Datu Kamil (Malay), Datu Hafiz Haberham (Malay), Abdul Wahab (Malay), Sajoeti (Malay), Florencius Lumbantobing (Toba), Dr. F.J. Nainggolan (Toba), H.F. Sitompul (Toba), Raja Meliala Sembiring (Karo), C.B.W. Manusiwa (Ambonese), A.H.F. Rotty (Timorese), Tan Boon Djin (Chinese), and Tan Wee Beng (Chinese), Tengku Bahriun (Malay), Orang Kaya Djafar (Malay), Abdul Rahman (Malay), C.J.J. Hoogenboom (Dutch), D.P. van Meerten (Dutch), P.W. Janssen (Dutch), Nerus Ginting Suka (Karo), R.M. Sudardjadi (Javanese), F. Enkorama (Eurasian) and Partap Singh (Indian).

Despite the attempts to provide adequate ethnic representation, there is more to representation than to have someone from every ethnic group. Though *Sumatera Timur* is an ethnically complex region, there were other categories that were perhaps more important than ethnic identity such as social class, religion (Muslim/Christian balance) and political stance. It is doubtful whether these were taken into consideration. However, from the ethnic composition of the council, there was weak Simalungun representation but strong Toba Batak representation. This could be an attempt to secure Toba Batak support in

Tapanuli. Malay representation was strong and the council seemed to confirm that *orang asli* and especially Malay elite domination would be maintained. Tan Boon Djin recalled that:

The Malay leaders were very much afraid of Javanese domination and they made it quite clear to the Dutch that any inclusion of the Javanese in the *Dewan Sementara* was for purposes of satisfying Dutch demands to have some form of representation for the Javanese. However, I also know from the conversations that I had with Tengku Dr. Mansur that the Malays were not willing to trust the Bataks completely as they feared that they would be overwhelmed numerically by them and that they also held the Bataks responsible for the events in the 'social revolution'. The idea that there would be *kedaulatan rakyat* was not fully accepted as the Malay leaders decided to impose conditions concerning length of residence, loyalty to the region, and also an anti-republican stance as criteria to qualify persons residing in East Sumatra as citizens with rights to vote in any future elections.¹²

This suggests that the Malay elite interpreted the 'social revolution' primarily in ethnic terms and made its political decisions in the light of the same ethnic terms. In some respects this is similar to Malaya after the M.P.A.J.A. takeover, where the serious Sino-Malay clashes were seen as a defensive action taken by Malays against what were seen as aggressive "Chinese" intentions to take over Malay states. Sino-Malay clashes took place because the M.P.A.J.A. was perceived by Malay conservatives in ethnic terms, though it claimed itself to be acting in "anti-fascist" non-racial terms.

¹² Interview with Tan Boon Djin, Medan, February 1985.

Tengku Nikmatullah presented in the first issue of *Soeloeh Ra'jat* his views on the origins of ethnic conflict, views which were widely shared among the Malay elite.

The relations of the *anak Soematera Timoer* with our brothers from Java were very good because there were a lot of them in the towns and in the villages and it is well known that among the groups that were very refined were our brothers the Javanese. Not only were the actions of the *anak Soematera Timoer* good towards our brothers from the other regions but also towards the Dutch, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and others...But in this world it is not for long that goodness is repaid with goodness because the power of one group or *bangsa* always plays a big role in getting its desire...a secret organization led by leaders outside East Sumatra which wanted to seize power from the *anak Soematera Timoer* came and stated that the government of the *anak negeri* had ceased...and brought divisions within the people.³³

The quote above indicates the level of anti-Javanese distrust that had developed as a result of the 'social revolution' of March 1946. However, the tasks of setting up the *negara* went on despite the problems faced in deciding who were the *anak Soematera Timoer* or *orang asli* especially after the declaration of Indonesian independence and more so since the 'social revolution'. In line with the creation of the *Dewan Sementara*, recruitment and training began for an indigenous army, the *Barisan Pengawal Soematera Timoer* better known as the *Blaupijpers* because of the blue uniforms they wore. Djomat Purba was given command with the rank of Colonel. A Dutch officer, Lt. Col. F. Supheert, was in

³³ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.1, Tahun 1, 22 November 1947.

charge of training the *blaupijpers*.³⁴ On 15 November, the *Dewan Sementara* convened specifically to approve the constitution and to elect a *Wali Negara* (Representative of State) for the *Negara Sumatera Timur*. After two days of discussions concerning the constitution, Tengku Dr. Mansur was elected the *Wali Negara*, while Tengku Bahriun and the Dutch representative, C.J.J. Hoogenboom, were elected as First and Second Chairman respectively of the *Dewan Sementara*.³⁵ Mohamad Nuh, one of the Malay members of the *Dewan Sementara*, later recalled:

Despite the fact that we were supposed to be a *negara*, the reality was that we were a Dutch colony for the Dutch ran almost everything in the *negara*. The leaders of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* were put up by the Dutch. They never really enjoyed public support and they were at odds with other elements of the *kerajaan* elite that wanted to restore the *kerajaans*.³⁶

On the other hand Partap Singh stated that the *Dewan Sementara* was dominated mainly by the *kerajaan* elite who made sure that they were the ones who were firmly in control. Tengku Dzulkarnain and Tengku Bahriun were the ones who resisted any erosion of the powers of the Malays

³⁴ Interview with Djomat Purba, Medan, February 1985.

³⁵ Negara Sumatera Timoer Sepintas Laloe, pp.14-15, also Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.221-222.

³⁶ Interview with Mohamad Nuh, Medan, February 1985. Mohamad Nuh stated that he was a republican supporter all along but he saw himself as representing the republic in the N.S.T.

and were not keen to allow the development of political institutions that would truly represent the East Sumatran peoples as well as the other Indonesians.³⁷

These two contradictory statements as to who ran the state show the element of subjectivity in defining where power resided. While the Dutch held many of the levers of power, they needed the cooperation of the Malay elite in the administration of the state. Within the ranks of the Malay elite there were some groups in favour of the N.S.T. and others opposed to it.

The discussions concerning the constitution lasted from 27 November to 5 December 1947 and were held in Jakarta. The Dutch insisted that a guarantee be given by the *Comite DIST* that all non-Malay ethnic groups would be given proper representation. Tengku Dr. Mansur agreed but added that only those who had been in East Sumatra for a long while and had been absorbed into the *orang asli* cultures would be accepted. The Dutch though not happy with this assurance decided to carry on with the task of establishing the *negara*. On 25 December 1947 the Lt. Governor-General issued a second decree "Concerning the Recognition of the State of East Sumatra,"³⁸ and the *Negara Sumatera Timur* came into

³⁷ Interview with Partap Singh, Medah, February 1985.

³⁸ See *Gouvernementsbesluit* No. 3, October 8, 1947 (Staatblad No.176/1947), also Lampiran-lampiran Bagian Kedoea Kearah Hoekoem Baroe di Indonesia, Batavia: Kolff, n.d., pp.148-150.

being. According to Arif Lubis, "the N.S.T. was the wish of a minority."³⁹

The *Dewan Sementara* passed a law on December 31 concerning the administrative organization of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* in which the structure of the state and the governing institutions were broadly set out. There was hardly any mention of *kedaulatan rakyat*, nor of the interests of the *orang asli* peoples for whom the state was set up in the first place. However, it did mention that the Head of State must have "special ties with East Sumatra, by reasons of history, descent, and custom..."⁴⁰ The *Negara Sumatera Timur* was officially proclaimed on 29 January 1948 at a ceremony in the *Dewan Sementara* where Tengku Dr. Mansur was installed as *Wali Negara* and the yellow, white and green flag of the *Negara* was officially hoisted for the first time.

³⁹ Interview with Arif Lubis, Medan, February 1985. He stated that: "He (van Mook) thought he was Santa Claus and that his gift of the the N.S.T. to the people of East Sumatra on Christmas day was what they had desired all along. If he had really inquired from the people whether they really wanted the *negara*, he would have got a different answer. As it was, the N.S.T. was indeed a gift to the Malay elites for it was feudalism in a different guise and it was also a gift to the Dutch themselves for it was the same old collusion with the parasitical Malay elite at the expense of the people."

⁴⁰ See Peratoeran Soesoenan Tata Negara Soematera Timoer, in Oendang-oendang Dewan N.S.T., No.1, December 31, 1947, for the full text of the law.

A look at the constitution of the *negara* showed that legislative and executive powers were divided between three institutions i.e. the *Dewan Perwakilan* (Representative Council) of fifty members; a *Badan Amanah* (Executive Council) and the *Wali Negara* who was elected by the *Dewan* for a five year term. The *Wali Negara* would be assisted by a five-member cabinet. However, it was far easier to form the *negara* than it was to create a true *bangsa Sumatera Timur*.

Saleh Umar made a cogent point when he recalled that the *Negara Soematera Timur* was a state without a *bangsa*. According to him,

There was no *bangsa* in it. The N.S.T. made the Malays more Malay and the Bataks more Bataks. The only way out of this problem was the destruction of the N.S.T. and the reassertion of *bangsa Indonesia* as the sole identity of the region. It is understandable why the Dutch puppets were not willing to accept the reality of *bangsa Indonesia* as it meant accepting everyone as equal citizens with equal rights, through which the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* can be attained. But this would mean the disintegration of feudal culture and values which the N.S.T. leaders believed in. It had never occurred to them that terms like *anak Soematera Timoer*, *orang asli*, *boemipoetra Soematera Timoer* were considered as anti-national, anti-*kedaulatan rakyat* and racist as well as parochial. We were always able to convince the people in East Sumatra as to the worthlessness of such terms.¹¹

¹¹ Interview with Saleh Umar, Medan, February 1985.

Saleh Umar's statement contrasts with the relentlessly ethnic emphasis of Nikmatullah. Once the N.S.T. spokesmen expressed their relationship with other East Sumatrans in ethnic terms, then there developed a cycle of racial and ethnic animosity.

However, serious attempts were made to create a meaningful identity for the *orang asli suku* in East Sumatra. Tengku Nikmatullah in an article in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* stated that a *bangsa* desires to be free (*merdeka*) so that that *bangsa* can enjoy special privileges in its country. To him *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* had to be seen in the context of East Sumatra.

He was convinced that a state must cater first to its indigenous inhabitants. Equality in all fields for indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants could not be maintained as it was against the interest of *kebangsaan*. Independence must bring about the elevation of the indigenous *bangsa*.⁴²

This statement of Nikmatullah is in many ways similar to the views held by the Malays in the Malay peninsula in evaluating their relationship with the non-Malays.

⁴² *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.1, Tahun 3, 29 January 1949. A detailed analysis of Nikmatullah's views will be given in the chapter on Community.

Nikmatullah insisted that it was a necessity for a state to promote the interests and privileges of its native inhabitants and therefore there must be some element of partiality in the treatment of the non-indigenous inhabitants. The Malays in the Malay peninsula did not see the need to have a state in a way the East Sumatrans had to have one because they needed a state to protect their interests. To the peninsular Malays, the Malay states were *tanah Melayu* (Malay lands) and as such implicitly claimed for themselves the special privileges and interests as they considered themselves the *bumiputras* (native sons).

However, in East Sumatra Tengku Nikmatullah had to use the term *bangsa* to mean *bangsa Soematera Timoer* or East Sumatran people in an attempt to promote solidarity among the various indigenous inhabitants. Unlike in peninsular Malaya where the indigenous inhabitants were mainly Malays, in East Sumatra the indigenous inhabitants comprised the Malays, Karos and Simalunguns. This being so, it raises questions as to whether the term *bangsa Sumatera Timur* was emotionally satisfying to all the three ethnic groups. Since it was not possible for any of the three ethnic groups to stress their own ethnic claims and exclude the other two, they had to settle for the term *bangsa Sumatera Timur*.

The leaders of the N.S.T. were aware of this problem and tried to bring the *orang asli* into one meaningful entity

that could really be called the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. Yet at the same time, their efforts and policies to overcome this problem were not successful in matters concerning politics and land rights. Thus the *orang asli* were in a situation where they could not work out an acceptable formula of dividing power fairly among themselves. Though terms like *orang asli Soematera Timur* and *boemipoetra Soematera Timoer* were used, they did not create the unity which the Republicans with their *bangsa Indonesia* were able to achieve.

Since leadership of the N.S.T. was in the hands of a section of the *kerajaan* elite it seemed obvious that the major beneficiaries of their policies would be those closely connected to them. The Netherlands Indies Government Advisor for Political Affairs for Sumatra, Dr. van de Velde, noted that:

The *Wali Negara* himself and all the Indonesian dignitaries with the exception of two, are from the sultanate families and the two exceptions are non-Sumatrans, viz., East Indonesians. Moreover, two of the department heads, Tengku Bahriun and Tengku Sulung, are brothers of Tengku Dzulkarnain, so it is no wonder that the Republican press talks about a feudal clique.⁴³

In looking at the composition of the five-member cabinet that Tengku Dr. Mansur appointed we find that it

⁴³ Letter from Rapolsum, Medan to Lt. Gouverneur-Generaal, Batavia, No.35/Z.G., February 27, 1948 (ARA).

consisted of the Sultan of Asahan (Tengku Saibun), Tengku Bahriun, Tengku Hafaz and the two Indies government advisors to the *Comite DIST*, Forch and van Gelder. The seven-member Executive Council which came into being in 1948 consisted of Tengku Bahar (Malay), Datuk Kamil (Malay), Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga (Simalungun), Raja Meliala Sembiring (Karo), Tan Boon Djin (Chinese), D.P. van Meerten (Dutch), and A.H. Rotty (Timorese).⁴⁴ From the composition of the key figures of the 'representative council' of the *negara*, one can draw the following conclusions. Firstly, these were a small group of men ethnically mixed but from the same aristocratic and educated backgrounds who would not risk implementing the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* as it was understood by those who supported the republican government. Secondly, they never had an understanding of a national identity comparable to that which the term *bangsa Indonesia* came to have. Thirdly, they stood for a narrowly based East Sumatran identity which effectively excluded the vast majority of Indonesians who regarded the East Coast of Sumatra as their home. Fourthly, they were closely identified with the Dutch and easily portrayed as puppets of Dutch colonialism; and fifthly, their policies were geared towards the needs and requirements of foreign plantation owners to the detriment of the Indonesian population.

⁴⁴ Negara Soematera Timoer Sepintas Laloe, pp.27-28.

However, because *orang asli* was an amorphous term which embraced at least the Malay, Simalungun and Karo *sukus*, inter-ethnic rivalry between these various groups was never far from the surface. To complicate matters even more, there was also the rivalry with the Toba Bataks which none of these *sukus* accepted as belonging to East Sumatra. Since most of the appointments in the *Badan Amanah* as well as the *Dewan Sementara* were filled according to ethnic representation, it was not long before serious splits developed in the N.S.T. along ethnic lines. This was not what the leaders of the *Comite DIST* wanted, for they had hoped that appointments based on ethnicity would cause the *sukus* to rally around their leaders and thus achieve some degree of unity. In this East Sumatran unity they had hoped to exclude other Indonesians whom they felt had no legitimate rights and status in the N.S.T. Those Indonesians did not accept their exclusion for they had enjoyed equal status with the *orang asli* just after the declaration of independence. Hence the *negara* was seen as parochial, anti-republic and anti-Indonesia and as a result of its policies, many Indonesians were excluded from owning lands, jobs, avenues to government office and other forms of social mobility.

The uncompromising ethnocentrism of N.S.T. spokesmen was represented in an article in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* in December 1947 which stated that:

We in this area desire very much to have our own state, governed by our own *bangsa* without interference from other people...We will not budge if others say that we are promoting the feeling of parochialism or provincialism at this time.⁴⁵

The quote was an attempt to justify a policy of discrimination towards other Indonesian communities by stating that the desire to govern oneself without interference from others was an important factor.

Thus from the outset, the attitude of the pro-republican inhabitants in East Sumatra towards the *negara* was one of hostility. However, even those who were recognised as citizens of the *negara* were not satisfied with it. The complaint of one writer to the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* gives an idea of the view of the common citizen.

It has been two months since *Sumatera Timur* was recognised by the Netherlands Indies, but what are the changes that have been witnessed by the people? From the point of view of propaganda and planning for the *anak asli* (native sons) there doesn't seem to be any hope for joy...as citizens, we all hope that the *negara* will give some information or clarification on what are the aims of the *negara* in the future...till today every decision taken by the *negara* is not known by the *rakyat*. Meetings in the 'temporary representative councils' are never made public neither is there any explanation of the decisions that have been made...the meetings of the *Dewan Sementara* are very secret and

⁴⁵ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.3, Tahun 1, December 1947. Kita didaerah ini sangat ingin hendak mempoenjai Negara sendiri, diperintah oleh bangsa sendiri dengan tidak ditjamper orang-orang lain...Kita tidak akan moendoer kalau dikatakan orang kita mengembangkan rasa 'kedaerahan' atau 'provincialisme' pada masa ini.

cannot be attended by the *rakyat* and as such it is a matter of question whether the *Negara Sumatra Timur* is owned by a group of intellectuals?"

This remark highlights an important difference between the N.S.T. and the period of the Republican government. After the mass meetings and instant democracy of the Republican period the people were not easily satisfied with methods of government that would have seemed 'progressive' before the war. Yet it should be noted that the quote stresses the need to have better communication, not necessarily people's democracy.

Even more telling are the people's perception of the leaders of the N.S.T.

The *Wali Negara*, Dr. Mansur, is undoubtedly a man of quality, who combines intelligence with bonhomie; he is to an important degree Holland oriented, such that one hears him use the term "we Hollanders" in casual conversation.⁴⁷

However satisfactory this may have been in Dutch eyes, when the people of East Sumatra viewed their *Wali Negara* as a Dutchman with a brown skin it was by no means a favourable image for the *negara*, especially as he was seen as a man who

⁴⁶ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.4, Tahun 1, 1948.

⁴⁷ Algemeen Vertegenwoordiger van the Secretaris van Staat voor Economische Zaken, Batavia, "Besprekingen te Medan/Jhr. Mr. C.H.V. de Villeneuve, 12-16 December 1948" (BZ), p.2.

could not transcend his orientation. In an interview printed in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, Tengku Dr. Mansur had used the term "we in Holland", giving the impression that he thought of himself more as a Dutchman than as a native of the land.¹⁸

Therefore, it was not surprising that the *negara* was seen as representing foreign interests rather than the interests of the *orang asli* or that of the other Indonesians residing in East Sumatra. Mansur himself seems to have given credence to such a view when he stated that *Pardist* not only encompassed the *bumiputras* of the region but all inhabitants including the Europeans, Chinese and Indians and added that without the *maatschappijen* (companies) Sumatra Timur would have no meaning at all.¹⁹ Thus it seemed that for the *negara* to survive, it was necessary to cater to the needs of the foreign companies that owned plantations in the East Coast of Sumatra. The need to return the lands taken over by squatters during the Japanese Occupation to these

¹⁸ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.7, Tahun 2, 14 February 1948. The interviewer, J.W. Hofwijk had asked, "Kesal, toean waktoe meletakkan pisau (lancet) itoe doktor?" Mansur's reply was as follows, "Na, kesal...Lihatlah segala apa jang telah saja alami dalam tahoen-tahoen yang terachir disini sesoenggoehnja tak ada jang lebih saja soekai daripada melepaskan negara ini boeat selama-lamanja dari repoebliek. Boekan perkara takoet, demi perloe saja maoe djoega memasoekkan anggota-anggota yang repoebliken kedalam dewan Daerah; pada kita dinegeri Belanda, (begitoe katanja: "pada kita dinegeri Belanda") boekan joega ada sebeloem perang anggota-anggota N.S.B. didalam Kamer..."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

companies was one of the main concerns of the *negara*. From this we can see the contradiction between the views of Mansur and Nikmatullah who stated that East Sumatra should only look after the interests of the *anak Sumatera Timur*.

Indeed vast areas of plantation lands had been taken over by former plantation labourers, most of whom were Javanese who had to resort to subsistence agriculture during the harsh conditions of the occupation. The Republican government that was established in East Sumatra after the war had not objected to their occupation of the land and had acknowledged their rights to it. But in 1948, the *Negara Sumatera Timur* was unwilling to accept squatter land occupation as legal and the N.S.T. leaders were determined to remove the squatters by force if necessary and return the land to the plantation owners to use for commercial purposes on which the prosperity of the *Negara* depended. However, the leaders of the N.S.T. were not the only ones who saw the Javanese and Toba Batak squatters as illegally occupying land that was not rightfully theirs.

In the latter half of 1947, squatter lands occupied by Javanese and Toba Bataks were scenes of violent and bloody clashes. According to Luckman Sinar, in the Deli area Malay youths attacked and evicted both Javanese and Karo farmers from the land which they considered to be traditionally

Malay.⁵⁰ Malay youths in their zeal to recover lands did not discriminate between non-Malay *orang asli* and Javanese, Toba Bataks and other ethnic groups who were considered as outsiders. Thus bitterness developed between the other *orang asli* groups and the Malays. Ustaz Abdul Kadir who led these Malay youths on the campaign to reclaim Malay land subsequently stated:

there was nothing illegal about what I did as I felt that I was taking back land that rightfully belonged to the *suku Melayu* which the other *sukus* had seized. The N.S.T. government under Tengku Dr. Mansur was not sympathetic to our problems and so we had to take the land back on our own. The N.S.T. was more interested in getting the land back to the companies than for us.⁵¹

These inter-ethnic clashes alienated the N.S.T. further from the non-Malay *orang asli* communities as well as the non East Sumatran Indonesians who were the main targets of the policy to reclaim 'illegal' lands from squatters and to return them to the companies. However, the problems of reclaiming lands that were 'illegally' occupied were immense as there was squatting on a massive scale and attempts to remove the squatters proved futile. Nevertheless, by the beginning of 1948, about 208 plantations were returned to their pre-war owners, of which 163 were in some stage of

⁵⁰ Tengku Luckman Sinar, "Tragedi Tanah Djaluran di Sumatera Utara," unpublished manuscript, 1972, p.15.

⁵¹ Interview with Ustaz Abdul Kadir, Medan, February 1985.

production.⁵² The seriousness with which both the Dutch and the N.S.T. pursued the policy of restoring the plantation economy to production bore fruit when by the end of 1948, the N.S.T. was considered economically sound from the viewpoint of export earnings.⁵³

But from a political viewpoint, the N.S.T. was a Dutch vassal state. The N.S.T.'s "autonomy" was under the direct control of the Netherlands Crown Commissioner in Medan.⁵⁴ Forch and van Gelder, who were former Dutch intelligence officials, were members of the N.S.T. cabinet. The N.S.T. police and the *blaupijpers* were under the operational guidance of Dutch military officers. Dutch remained the official second language in government business and all legislation and most government publications were issued in both *bahasa Indonesia* and Dutch. Finally the N.S.T. bureaucracy was run by Dutch officials. Thus republican

⁵² Of these 208 plantations, 113 were rubber plantations, 41 tobacco, 15 tea, 14 oil palm, 7 coconut and 5 fibre. Of the 163 in part production, there were 86 rubber, 35 tobacco, 15 tea, 15 oil palm, 7 coconut and 5 fibre. See The Economic Review of Indonesia, vol.2, no.4, 1948.

⁵³ The land conflict between the East Sumatrans and the other Indonesians as well as the problem of rehabilitating the plantations are dealt with in Clark E. Cunningham, The Postwar Migration of the Toba Bataks to East Sumatra, New Haven, Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1958 and Karl J. Pelzer, Planters Against Peasants: The Agrarian Struggle in East Sumatra 1947-1958, 'S-Gravenhage-Martinus Nijhoff, 1982.

⁵⁴ A. A. Schiller, The Federal Republic of Indonesia, van Hoeve, Hague, 1955, p.220.

propagandists had a field day in calling upon those aggrieved by the actions of the Malay youths under Ustaz Abdul Kadir and the policies of the N.S.T. government, to support the republican cause in overthrowing Dutch colonialism in the N.S.T. and to destroy the N.S.T. and put an end to Malay feudalism.

To complicate matters further, the N.S.T. had with tacit Dutch agreement begun discussions with surviving members of the various *kerajaans* with the aim of deciding on the status of these *kerajaans* in the N.S.T. The negotiations were long and inconclusive. As a reaction to the discussions, pro-*kerajaan* elements set up parties to campaign for the restoration of the *kerajaans*. In Deli two organizations were set up by members of the Deli *kerajaan*. The *Partai Anak Deli (PADI)* which called for a federation of the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra along the lines of the Malayan Federation, while the *Deli Sepakat*, which was under the personal patronage of the Sultan, saw itself as a protector of cultural values.⁵⁵ The *Deli Sepakat* became a part of the pro-*kerajaan* P.N.S.T.⁵⁶ By February 1949, the *Partai Serdang Sepakat* and the *Partai Langkat Sepakat* were in

⁵⁵ See *Recomba*, Medan "Verslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand Maart 1948," (ARA), pp.3-4.

⁵⁶ *Recomba*, Medan "Verslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand Mei 1948," (ARA), pp.2-3

existence and were voicing identical demands to the Deli *kerajaan*.⁵⁷ These parties were mainly interested in restoring their respective *kerajaans*. However, since they had common aims, they decided to cooperate with each other. On February 20, 1949, the Sultan of Deli convened a meeting of eleven *orang asli* rulers at his palace for this purpose.⁵⁸ The meeting agreed to take joint action in defence of the *kerajaans*.

On March 1, the Sultan of Deli and ten other rulers submitted a resolution (*Qaulloehoelhaq*) to the Dutch Government complaining that in the eighteen months of the N.S.T.'s existence, no final decision had been made about the future of the *zelfbestuur* in Sumatra Timur. It pointed out that the contracts between the *kerajaans* in Sumatra Timur and the Netherlands Indies government were still binding. The resolution also called for the establishment of a council of rulers and *adat* chiefs as an essential institution within the N.S.T.'s political structure.⁵⁹ Determined not to surrender without a fight, the Deli Sultan

⁵⁷ Algemeen Secretaris, Wali Negara van Soematera Timoer, Medan, "Maandverslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand February 1949," (BZ), p.2.

⁵⁸ These were the rulers of Asahan, Langkat, Deli, Serdang, Kualuh-Leidong, Indrapura, Kotapinang, Lima Puluh, Tanah Datar, Siantar and Suku Dua.

⁵⁹ Sultan of Deli et. al. to HVK, Batavia, March 2, 1949 (ARA).

demanded on behalf of his fellow rulers that the *kerajaans* be reorganized into a federation along the lines of the Federation of Malaya and put pressure on the Dutch to recognise the pre-war treaties signed between the various *kerajaans* and the Dutch.⁶⁰ The *kerajaans* were sources of worry to the N.S.T. government throughout 1948 and into 1949. However, the demands of the Sultans were not accepted by the N.S.T. leadership which believed that if the *kerajaans* were recognised as autonomous within the *negara*, the N.S.T. would have its territorial sovereignty compromised.⁶¹ The *Wali Negara*, Tengku Dr. Mansur, was not willing to compromise on this issue. In an interview, he stated that the Sultan of Asahan, Tengku Saibun, had a new job as nominal commandant of the *blaupijpers* and had fitted himself with changing times which could not be avoided.⁶² On March 21, 1949, Dr. Mansur made a speech in the N.S.T. parliament calling for the absorption of the *kerajaans* into the *negara* so that the N.S.T. would have complete

⁶⁰ *Waspada*, June 19 and July 19, 1948.

⁶¹ Algemeen Secretaris, Wali Negara van Soematera Timoer, Medan, "Maandverslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand Maart 1949," (BZ), p.2, and also Algemeen Secretaris, Wali Negara van Soematera Timoer, Medan, "Maandverslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand April 1949," (BZ), p.3.

⁶² See *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, No.7, Tahun 2, 14 February, 1948. About Sultan Saibun, Tengku Dr. Mansur stated as follows: "Ia sekarang mempoenjai 'perkerjaan' jang baroe dan telah menjadi commandant 'blaupijpers' dan saja haroes berkata bahwa ia telah menjesoeaikan diri dengan peroebahan soeasana jang tak dapat dielakkan itoe."

authority.⁶³

It was a lost cause for the sultans and their *kerajaans* for by the latter half of 1949, negotiations on the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia were going ahead and their fate was sealed. During the second half of 1948, the Interim Federal Government of Indonesia had effected the transfer of specific autonomous governmental powers to the N.S.T. which also included residual autonomous powers formerly held by the *kerajaans*. On July 19, 1948, the *Dewan N.S.T.* legislated for the transfer of all autonomous political authority and functions of the *kerajaans* to the N.S.T.⁶⁴

However, an even more serious problem than the *kerajaans* was the inter-ethnic conflict that threatened to destroy the N.S.T. altogether. The splits between the *orang asli* made it difficult for them to cope with the threat from the Toba Bataks. While the Javanese were considered docile and easily manageable, the same could not be said for the Toba Bataks, who were moreover indigenous to Sumatra. The Toba Bataks were a socially cohesive force because of clan

⁶³ Algemeen Secretaris, Wali Negara van Soematera Timoer, Medan, "Maandverslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand Maart 1949," (BZ), pp.2-4.

⁶⁴ See Oendang-oendang Dewan N.S.T., "Perjerahan Kekoeasaan Keradjaan dan alat-alat Goebernoerman." See Warta Rasmi Negara Soematera Timoer No.17/1948. Also A.A. Schiller, The Formation of Federal Indonesia, van Hoeve, Hague, 1955, p.325.

and church links, well educated as well as socially assertive. They had, since the Japanese Occupation, been moving in large numbers into the East Coast of Sumatra.⁶⁵ Indeed, the view of some segments of the Malay elite is that the Toba Bataks had a secret plan to form a greater Batak State or *Negara Batak Raya*.⁶⁶ Thus relations between the Toba Bataks and the *orang asli* especially Malays, became strained to the point that many Toba Bataks threw in their lot with the Republicans. Other Toba Bataks not favourably inclined towards the Republic, tried to set up a political party to cater for the interests of the Tapanuli Bataks and to work for the creation of a Batak State in Tapanuli on the model of the N.S.T.⁶⁷ The establishment of parties based on ethnicity created serious communal tensions within the N.S.T. The alternative for those who did not want communal parties and were anti-N.S.T. was the setting up of the *Front Nasional*.

This *Front Nasional* was set up as a result of a meeting held on February 6, 1948 by Republican supporters in Medan. The meeting was chaired by Ir. Indratjaja, formerly head of

⁶⁵ See Clark E. Cunningham, Postwar Migrations of the Toba Bataks to East Sumatra, Cultural Report Series No.5, Yale Southeast Asia Studies, New Haven, 1958:

⁶⁶ Interviews with Luckman Sinar, Tengku Zivar, Tengku Mochtar Aziz, Medan, February, 1986.

⁶⁷ *Recomba*, Medan, "Verslag betreffende de politieke en economische toestand in de Negara Soematera Timoer over the maand Maart 1948," (ARA), p.2.

the Republic's Department of Economic Affairs for Sumatra, and among those present were Dr. Abdul Manap, Elias Sutan Pangeran and Mr. Kasiman.⁶⁸ Indratjaja declared at the meeting that:

It is not that we oppose political autonomy in the de facto territory of the Republic (Sumatera Timur), provided it is of such a form as is really approved by the people, but we will struggle for a single sovereign Federal Indonesian State.⁶⁹

The important aspect of his statement is the emphasis on whether the form of the *negara* had the approval of the people. Here again we get a glimpse of the struggle to reassert *kedaulatan rakyat* in the face of Malay aristocratic control of the N.S.T. It was also at this meeting that the decision was made to form the *Front Nasional* to unite Republican supporters within the N.S.T. A few days later a leadership council for the *Front Nasional* was formed with Indratjaja elected as chairman and Dr. Djabangoen as deputy chairman.⁷⁰ The N.S.T. and the Dutch did not take any action to suppress the *Front Nasional* or the Republican press. The Dutch were anxious to present the Federal states as open and "democratic" as the Republic. The importance of the *Front Nasional* does not lie merely in the fact that it

⁶⁸ These three men were leaders of the pro-Republic *Perserikatan Saudagar Indonesia Medan* or (PERSIM).

⁶⁹ *Waspada*, 7 February 1948.

⁷⁰ *Waspada*, 17 February 1948.

was a political organ of pro-Republican supporters but that it signalled the re-emergence of the struggle in East Sumatra to re-establish *bangsa Indonesia* as a dominant force over the narrow East Sumatran identity. Ethnicity was not stressed in its statements, but the membership of the *Front Nasional* itself spoke eloquently by cutting across ethnic lines and included Malays, Simalungun, Karo, Toba and Javanese. Its platform was to uphold the principles of *kedaulatan rakyat*, equality and equal opportunities for all.

One cannot discount the role of newspapers in the struggle of the pro-republican groups to promote the idea of a unitary nation and an Indonesian *bangsa*. The pro-Republican press was active and had reasonably large circulations. *Mimbar Umum*, edited by Arif Lubis, and *Waspada*, edited by Mohamad Said who was also a founder member of the *Front Nasional*, both took a strong anti-N.S.T. line. In contrast the N.S.T. had the support of the *Mestika* which was edited by Tengku Jafizham.¹¹ By mid 1948, the Republicans were holding meetings, circulating their materials and winning more support among the various ethnic groups in East Sumatra. Indeed in a speech that was reported in the local press, it was stated that the *Front Nasional* was formed to protect the interests and freedom of the supporters of the Republic in keeping with the "wishes and

¹¹ Interview with Arif Lubis, Medan, February 1985.

urging of a section of the people of Sumatera Timur."¹² It was prepared to accept seats in the *Dewan N.S.T.* so that it could "represent the aims of Republican supporters, namely, the attainment of one Indonesian nation which is free and sovereign..."¹³

Within the space of a couple of months, the *Front Nasional* had branches in the larger towns of Deli, Serdang and Simalungun while in Medan there were at least six minor branches.¹⁴ The growth of the *Front Nasional* cut the ground from under the feet of the narrow and ethnically oriented political parties. The *Front Nasional* held its first general conference on 4 July 1948 during which Dr. Djabangoen was elected as Chairman.¹⁵ At this conference, the tone was moderate and no open anti-N.S.T. sentiments were displayed. There was the singing of the *Indonesia Raya* and a resolution expressing complete loyalty to the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁶ However, in the latter half of 1948 there was a discernible change in the strategy of the *Front Nasional* which saw the society change from a moderate to a

¹² *Waspada*, 3 March 1948.

¹³ *Waspada*, 6 March 1948.

¹⁴ The *Waspada*, issues of February, March and April 1948 revealed a phenomenal growth of the influence of the *Front Nasional* in East Sumatra.

¹⁵ Dr. Djabangoen had replaced Indratjaja who left for Bukittinggi in March 1948.

¹⁶ *Waspada*, 9 July 1948.

radical policy towards the N.S.T. This was due to the influx of newer members who were more militant. Among the new members were radicals who were members of the *Masyumi*, *Hizbullah*, the *Partai Nasional Indonesia*, *Partai Komunis Indonesia*, *Barisan Merah* and *Pesindo*.¹¹ On 17 August 1948, branches of the *Front Nasional* held mass rallies to celebrate the third anniversary of the declaration of Indonesian independence and it was noted that Republican flags as well as the portraits of Sukarno and Hatta were openly displayed. The leaders of the *Front Nasional* made speeches supporting the Republican government and demanded nothing less than 100% *merdeka* for Indonesia.¹⁸

One reason for the radicalization of the *Front Nasional* was the involvement of two Republican farmers' organizations, the *Barisan Tani Indonesia* and the *Geraktani*, which functioned even after the Dutch 'police action' of July 1947. There was also a federation of farmers' associations known as the *Gabungan Persatuan Tani (Gaperta)* which was headed by a lawyer in Medan, Musa Pattipeluhu, who had close connections with the leaders of the *Front Nasional*. The massive support of the farmers for the *Front Nasional* was the result of the land policies pursued by the N.S.T. with Dutch support, to recover lands under squatter

¹¹ *Waspada*, 17 August 1948.

¹⁸ *Waspada*, 18 August 1948.

cultivation and to restore these lands to the plantations and secondarily to Malays who had conventional rights under the *jaluran* system. Indeed Tengku Dr. Mansur had plainly stated that:

We are well aware that agricultural activity, which most benefits the State and the people, must be cared for as much as possible, since, at the present time, it is the export of the agricultural products which provides us with the finance necessary for development. We will protect the rights of those who have worked here for a long time, but we must also pay special attention to the rights of our own people. The policy of replacing (plantation) concession rights with long term leases, which had begun before the war, will be continued, although perhaps in a different form. In carrying this out, efforts will be made to look for equitable settlements, which do not destroy economic viability...*Sumatera Timur* hopes to assist in meeting world needs by the export of the many items produced by the plantations.⁷⁹

Those who did not fall into the categories of *orang asli* or Malay readily concluded that they were being discriminated against by the state. There were increasingly violent clashes between non-Malay squatters and Malay farmers.⁸⁰ As a result ethnic hostilities intensified and the Karos, Toba and Javanese saw themselves as victimised by 'Malay feudalism.' They responded to the Republican call to crush feudalism and colonialism and channel their frustration against the N.S.T. through the *Front Nasional*,

⁷⁹ See 'Pidato Wali Negara', in Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.226.

⁸⁰ *Waspada*, 18 April 1948.

which rapidly came to be perceived as a movement that represented the *bangsa Indonesia* against the *bangsa foedal Melayu*.

Within the *Front Nasional* itself there were some problems; Dr. Djabangoen and Elias Sutan Pangeran were still in favour of a moderate line towards the N.S.T. while another faction headed by the Secretary M.A. Dasuki was becoming more revolutionary. However the radical faction soon began to steer the *Front Nasional* in a more confrontational direction. The *Front Nasional* backed the *Gaperta* in its attempts to resist and overturn the N.S.T.'s policy of returning land to the plantations. The *Gaperta* encouraged squatters who were evicted to return and recultivate the land.⁸¹ The N.S.T. government was unwilling to tolerate such acts and its leaders attacked the squatters. The Director of the N.S.T. Cabinet, Tengku Hafaz, was in favour of evicting the squatters.⁸² The N.S.T. government passed a tough law on 23 June 1948 which imposed severe penalties, fines and arrest on those illegally occupying land belonging to the Netherlands Indies, the N.S.T. or the plantation lease holders.⁸³

⁸¹ *Waspada*, 17 February 1948.

⁸² Oostkust van Sumatra Instituut Kroniek 1948-1949, pp.54-55.

⁸³ Ketetapan Wali Negara Soematera Timoer No.16, 23 June 1948 (Ordinansi memakai tanah dengan tiada hak.) in Warta Rasmi Negara Soematera Timoer No.14/1948.

Tough government action caused the moderates in the *Gaperta* who were pursuing a policy of not antagonising the N.S.T. to expel the radicals who immediately founded the *Serikat Kaum Tani* or *Sekata*.⁸⁴ This new farmers' organization headed by Musa Pattipeluhu swiftly overtook the *Gaperta* and emerged as a formidable challenge to the N.S.T. The *Gaperta* was now afforded recognition by the N.S.T. but faded from the scene since it was no longer seen as a farmers' movement but as a tool of the N.S.T.

While the land problem between the squatters and the N.S.T. was important in eroding the authority of the *negara*, the political problems also played their part. The second Dutch military action which began on 18 December 1948 brought the territories of South Asahan and Labuhan Batu under Dutch military occupation. The N.S.T. decided to incorporate the *Aslab* (Asahan Selatan/Labuhan Batu) region into the *negara* and it moved in to set up an administrative structure. On February 15 1949, the *Dewan N.S.T.* incorporated the *Aslab* region into the *negara*.⁸⁵

However, the Republican government was not prepared to concede the *Aslab* region to the N.S.T. without a fight. On 14 April 1949, the Republican and Netherlands governments

⁸⁴ *Waspada*, 1 June 1948.

⁸⁵ "Ketetapan Wali Negara Soematera Timoer," No.54/1949, in Warta Rasmi Negara Sumatera Timur No.2/49.

started negotiations in Jakarta under United Nations auspices. On 7 May, the Roem-van Royen Agreement was signed which provided for an immediate ceasefire between Dutch and Republican forces throughout Indonesia, the restoration of the Republican government at Yogyakarta and the convening of the "Round Table Conference" at The Hague to decide the conditions under which national sovereignty would be transferred to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia.⁸⁶ The Indonesian delegation at the Roem-van Royen negotiations refused to recognize the incorporation of the *Aslab* region into the N.S.T.⁸⁷

This was not the only obstacle which the N.S.T. had to face. Tengku Dr. Mansur had always cherished the idea of a Sumatran Federation which would be a counterweight to Java. In this aim he had the wholehearted cooperation of the Dutch who were keen to set up as many *negaras* as possible in the hope of weakening Republican control over the Netherlands East Indies. Thus on 28 March 1949, eighty-four delegates from sixteen regions in Sumatra met in Medan for the opening of a Sumatra conference, the *Muktamar Sumatera*. The sixteen regions that took part in this *Muktamar* were Bengkulu, Jambi, Indragiri, Lampung, Minangkabau, Riau, Sibolga, Tapanuli Selatan, Tapanuli Utara, Sabang, *Negara*

⁸⁶ Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution, pp.421-425.

⁸⁷ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.328-329.

Sumatera Selatan, Negara Sumatera Timur, Bangka, Bengkalis, Biliton and Siak. The last four regions attended as observers. The dominant roles in organising the *Muktamar* were played by the *Negara Sumatera Timur* and the *Negara Sumatera Selatan*. The *Negara Sumatera Timur* was represented by 18 representatives.⁸⁸ It was the *Wali Negara* of *Sumatera Timur* that had issued invitations to all the regions, including the Republican administrations in Aceh and Nias which declined to participate. In his invitation Tengku Dr. Mansur had stated that the aim of the *Muktamar* was to establish links first between the various regions and the *sukus* of the *bangsa Sumatera*, and secondly between the latter and the *bangsa Indonesia* as a whole.⁸⁹ Thus the aim of the N.S.T. was to promote a Sumatra oriented nationalism that would be distinct from that of Java and represent one variant of Indonesian nationalism. The *Muktamar* lasted for five days. It did not achieve much in an atmosphere of much bickering on ethnic and regional

⁸⁸ They were Tengku Dr. Mansur, Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga, G.J. Forch, Tengku Hafaz, G. Van Gelder, Tengku Sulung, J.F. Keulemans, M. Lalisang, Tan Tjeng Bie, Datu Kamil, Ngeradjai Meliala, Tan Boon Jin, D.P. van Meerten, Tengku M. Bahar, Tengku M. Arifin, A.H.F. Rotty, Tengku Dhamrah and the Sultan of Asahan. The full list of members of the other delegations are given in Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.293.

⁸⁹ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.291. Tudjuan konferensi ini, jang (lebih kurang) 5 hari lamanja, ialah mengadakan perhubungan jang pertama diantara daerah-daerah dan suku-suku bangsa Sumatera jang berbagai-bagai itu dan saja menjatakan pengharapan saja moga-moga perhubungan jang pertama ini berangsur-angsur tumbuh mendjadi pertalian jang bertambah-tambah eratnja untuk kebahagiaan bangsa Sumatera dan bangsa Indonesia seluruhnja.

sentiments. There was nothing to suggest that a federation could be established. The regional and ethnic sentiments were too strong to be bridged. The only 'tangible' result of this *Muktamar* was a *manifest* of four points of which the two most important stated that the twelve regions which took part in the conference would:

Make strenuous efforts swiftly to establish an independent and sovereign Federal Indonesian Nation composed of regions having equal status and equal rights and joined with the Netherlands in a partnership of equals.

Endeavour to create a Sumatra which is strong and united...⁹⁰

There was also an undertaking that a second *Muktamar* would be convened in Palembang, the capital of the *Negara Sumatera Selatan*. It was an irony that Tengku Dr. Mansur's political calculations that ethnic and regional sentiments would be strong enough to support a Sumatra federation would itself be the main obstacle to such a plan.⁹¹ It did vindicate the claims of the Republicans who had stated that provincialism (*kedaerahan*) and ethnicity (*sukuisme*) could only be overcome by accepting the ideal of a unitary *negara*

⁹⁰ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.322-324.

⁹¹ Tengku Dr. Mansur had always believed that Sumatra should be a federation whereby the different ethnic groups would have their own region and not move into other regions to displace other ethnic groups. He was thinking of East Sumatra in which the *orang asli* were now in the minority as a result of the influx of other ethnic groups from other regions in Sumatra as well as from Java.

Indonesia and the all encompassing concept of the *bangsa Indonesia*.

The second *Muktamar* which was held in Medan instead of Palembang on 28 May 1949 was even more of a failure than the first conference. The regions that took part were Bengkulu, Djambi, Indragiri, Lampung, Minangkabau, Riau, Sabang, Sumatera Selatan, Sumatera Timur and Tapanuli. The Roem-van Royen Agreement had decided the issue of Sumatra Federation even before the *Muktamar* began and the atmosphere was one of acute pessimism as most of the delegates were aware that most of Sumatra was now recognised by the Dutch as being *de facto* Republican territory including also some of the regions represented at the second *Muktamar*.¹² The idea of a Sumatra Federation became a dead letter. The conference ended on 30 May, and a week later the N.S.T. itself decided against participating in the 'Sumatra Federation' lest it compromised N.S.T. independence.¹³

Even the N.S.T. was deeply affected by the Roem-van Royen Agreement and serious divisions developed within its ranks. Some elements within the N.S.T. elite were now willing to come to an agreement with the Republic. The restoration of Republican authority in Yogyakarta on 6 July

¹² For full details of this second conference see Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.328-330. *Waspada*, 28, 30, 31 May and 2 June 1949.

¹³ *Waspada*, 7 & 27 June 1949.

1949 was seen as a victory for the Republicans and a setback for the Dutch. Initially the N.S.T. decided on taking a tough stand against the Republic. Tengku Dr. Mansur stated that the N.S.T. would not recognise any ceasefire agreement between the Netherlands and the Republic which allowed Republican forces to operate in its territory and the *Blaupijpers* would drive them out.⁹⁴ The Roem-van Royen Agreement recognised Asahan Selatan/Labuhan Batu as Republican territory even though these areas were in the N.S.T. For many Malays, especially Tengku Dr. Mansur who was from Asahan, this was an emotive issue. They were accustomed to seeing the whole of the former *Oostkust van Sumatra* as their 'natural' area of dominance. However, as the Dutch were committed towards upholding the Roem-van Royen Agreement there would be no support for the N.S.T.'s tough stand and the *negara* was forced to back down. Dr. Mansur was himself forced to be more flexible towards the Republicans. On 6 August 1949, he met the executive council of the *Front Nasional* and announced that as a result of the agreements reached at the Inter-Indonesian Conference, the N.S.T. would officially recognize the *Front Nasional* as a legal organization.⁹⁵ On 10 August, the N.S.T. lifted the

⁹⁴ *Waspada*, 12 July 1949.

⁹⁵ *Waspada*, 9 August 1949. The Inter-Indonesian Conference was held from July 19 to 22 in Yogyakarta and from July 30 to August 2 in Batavia. The conferences were between the BFO (Federal Consultative Assembly) a committee composed of representatives of the various federal units and the Indonesian Republic. See Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution, pp.430-431 for details.

ban of civil servants joining the *Front Nasional*.⁹⁶ On 9 August Tengku Dr. Mansur and Raja Kaliamjah Sinaga had left Medan for the Round Table Conference at The Hague. Under the acting N.S.T. leadership of Tengku Hafaz, conciliatory moves were made towards the Republic as can be seen in the 17 August celebrations to commemorate the fourth anniversary of independence. Republican flags were flown by the N.S.T. alongside the Dutch and N.S.T. flags and O.K. Ramli, the head of the N.S.T. Department of Information, told a crowd that:

We the Indonesian nation are no longer divided by differences between federalists or republicans, but together celebrate the 17 of August and actively commemorate this fourth anniversary with untold rejoicing and in an atmosphere of well being.⁹⁷

However, Republican organizations including the *Front Nasional* did not participate in the celebrations organized by the N.S.T. For the Republicans, their hour of victory was at hand and they waited for the results of the Round Table Conference at the Hague which opened on 25 August 1949. The recent developments made the Republicans more militant in their stand against the N.S.T. In the second conference of the *Front Nasional* in Medan on 10 and 11 September, Sugondo Kartoprodjo, who had consistently opposed

⁹⁶ "Ketetapan Wali Negara Soematera Timoer No.219/1949," in Warta Resmi Negara Sumatera Timur No.37/1949.

⁹⁷ *Waspada*, 18 August 1949.

the recognition of the N.S.T., was elected chairman. The conference decided on a policy of non-cooperation with the N.S.T., the status of which was held to be indeterminate and to be settled only by the future independent federal Indonesian government.⁹⁸ The *Sekata* also had its conference and elected the militant Musa Pattipeluhu as chairman of the organization in East Sumatra.⁹⁹ This conference also adopted a position of non-cooperation and compromise with the N.S.T.¹⁰⁰ These developments served as a cue for other Republican organizations to follow and an active political opposition demanding an end to the N.S.T. began to develop with rapidity in East Sumatra, both in the rural and urban areas.

The Round Table Conference at The Hague ended on 2 November 1949 with an agreement to an Interim Constitution for an independent federal Indonesia. The *Republic Indonesia Serikat (RIS)* would have 16 states including the N.S.T.¹⁰¹ One direct effect of the conference was that all existing military forces of the various states including the *Barisan Pengawal* would constitute the Armed Forces of the

⁹⁸ *Waspada*, 12 & 15 September 1949.

⁹⁹ *Waspada*, 11 October 1949.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ The other states included South Sumatra, Riau, Bangka, Biliton, Pasundan, Central and East Java, Madura, East Indonesia, West Kalimantan and East Kalimantan.

the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (*Angkatan Perang Republic Indonesia Serikat*). In this A.P.R.I.S., the T.N.I. (*Tentera Nasional Indonesia*) would be the dominant force. The military effectiveness of the *Barisan Pengawal* was affected by this change. The momentum to dismantle the N.S.T. gathered force and by December 1949 a number of trade unions, labour and farmers organizations began to work towards this common aim. The *Partai Komunis Indonesia's Sobsi*, led by Xarim M.S., convened a broader labour front, the *Panitia Daerah Vaksentral Seluruh Indonesia Sumatra Timur*.¹⁰² On 23 December sixty-five youth organizations met in Medan for an Indonesian Youth Conference for East Sumatra (*Konperansi Pemuda Indonesia Sumatera Timur*). The conference passed a resolution which demanded that the N.S.T. flag be abolished, that the former *Sumatra Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* should absorb the *Dewan N.S.T.* and that Republican civil servants should be employed in the N.S.T. bureaucracy.¹⁰³

From the support which the pro-Republicans could muster for their cause, it was clear that they had the vast majority of the politically active people of East Sumatra on their side. The N.S.T. elite was seen as a small group

¹⁰² See *Waspada*, 31 December 1949 for the full list of groups that gathered under this new organization.

¹⁰³ *Waspada*, 30 December 1949. Thirty six of the Youth Organizations were from East Sumatra, thirteen from Tapanuli and sixteen from Aceh.

that represented their own and Dutch interests and not the aspirations of the common people. Furthermore, the Republican cause cut across ethnic sentiments. The Republican was seen as a means whereby equality in landownership and social and political mobility could be attained through complete independence and freedom. By contrast with this promise, the "independence" of the N.S.T. appeared a colonial sham with little change from the pre-war social and economic structure beyond the removal of the *kerajaans*. Instead there had emerged a small Malay political elite which had its origins in the *kerajaan* but was now able to stand on its own with Dutch support. This new political elite of educated Malays was in direct competition for power with analogous Karo, Toba and Simalungun elites, and could not act with the arbitrariness of the traditional monarchies because they did not possess the traditional charisma and power of these monarchies.

On 27 December 1949, sovereignty was formally transferred from the Netherlands to the RIS. This event was marked by a ceremony in Medan which was not attended by the *Front Nasional* and the *Vaksentral*. The N.S.T. was beset by the militant actions of the Republican organizations even before the transfer of sovereignty. Strikes were organised to cripple the N.S.T. The *Vaksentral* fully supported the strike of the shipping and

Harbour Worker's Union in Belawan for better wages.¹⁰⁴ On 5 January 1950, a *Panitia Resolusi Rakjat Tanah Karo* was formed as a reaction against the continued existence of the N.S.T. This showed how much more anti N.S.T. the Karos were than the Simalungun. On 10 January a similar movement developed in South Asahan and Labuhan Batu. The month of January also saw the reestablishment of branches of political parties like the *Masyumi*, P.K.I. and *Parkindo*.¹⁰⁵ The *Front Nasional* convened a meeting in Medan on 21 January 1950 demanding that the N.S.T. be dissolved and that *Sumatra Timur* be incorporated into the Republic.¹⁰⁶ To make matters worse, President Sukarno arrived in Medan on 23 January on his way to India and addressed a huge crowd in which he pointed out that there was only one Indonesian *bangsa* and one Indonesian nation. There was no place for any other *bangsa* such as the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*.¹⁰⁷

Sukarno's speech was a powerful boost to the argument for a *bangsa Indonesia*. He had dismissed the idea of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* and dealt a blow to *sukuisme* and parochialism. A speech of that nature would have made it

¹⁰⁴ *Waspada*, 31 December 1949.

¹⁰⁵ For reports of the establishment of branches of these political parties, see *Waspada*, 12, 13, 16, 17, 23 January and 4 & 8 February 1950.

¹⁰⁶ *Waspada*, 23 January 1950.

¹⁰⁷ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.387.

difficult to talk about the continued existence of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* without conveying the impression of being 'anti-national.'

By late January, a strong and militant movement was actively campaigning for the dissolution of the N.S.T. This unitarist movement was composed of organizations like the *Front Nasional*, *Vaksentral*, the various political parties in *Sumatera Timur* and it included religious organizations like the *Muhammadiyah*, the Christian H.K.B.P., and the Javanese educational organization *Taman Siswa*, farmer's organizations and women's groups. This militant movement took action through strikes, mass demonstrations, public rallies and occupation of plantation lands all of which were aimed at the destruction of the N.S.T. The *Front Nasional* spearheaded the move to destroy the N.S.T. and mass demonstrations in towns throughout the N.S.T. were not uncommon. It was reported that:

Outside Medan, i.e. in Tanah Karo, Central *Sumatra Timur* (Serdang and Simalungun), South *Sumatra Timur* (Asahan and Labuhan Batu), Langkat and Deli there grew a movement known as the "Action for the People's Demands" (*Aksi Tuntutan Rakyat*). This Action for the People's Demands was for the *Negara Sumatera Timur* to be disbanded and merged with the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.334.

On 30 and 31 January, the *Aksi Tuntutan Rakyat* at Pancur Batu¹⁰⁹ and its surroundings had a demonstration to demand the dissolution of the N.S.T.¹¹⁰ Another demonstration held on 15 February by the *Aksi Tuntutan Rakyat* in South Asahan and Labuhan Batu stated that the administration of the N.S.T. was not recognised in the two areas and the people recognised only the administration of the Republic.¹¹¹ Tengku Hafaz, the Director of the N.S.T. cabinet, stated that:

...the Government of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* has faced a number of difficulties in carrying out the tasks of government, because there exists in several place within the territory a situation generally known as one of 'dual government'...¹¹²

Though the N.S.T. government existed, the majority of the people would only recognise the Republican government. Attempts by the N.S.T. to assert its authority were contested by the people. In Tanah Karo, the N.S.T. sent units of police to Kabanjahe, Tiga Nderkat,¹¹³ Tiga Serangkat and other towns to reassert its authority. At

¹⁰⁹ Pancur Batu was the centre of the Karo *dusun* of Deli, where Karo antipathy to Malay dominance exploded into violence in 1942.

¹¹⁰ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.334.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.345.

¹¹² *Waspada*, 7 February 1950.

¹¹³ Tiga Nderkat was another centre of Karo resistance to Malay dominance.

Tiga Nderkat the police unit could not enter the town because of 1,000 demonstrators and it had to return to Kabanjahe.¹¹⁴ In Kabanjahe itself there was a huge anti-N.S.T. demonstration. This prompted the deputy *Wali Negara*, Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga, the senior Simalungan leader in the N.S.T., to go to negotiate with the leader of the demonstrators. He was not successful and was called a liar to his face.¹¹⁵

Undoubtedly, the key role in channeling the action of the people against the N.S.T. was played by the *Front Nasional*. However, the existence of the N.S.T. was also threatened by events in Jakarta. On 19 March 1950 the RIS parliament accepted a motion submitted by twenty-four members demanding the dissolution of the N.S.T. and its incorporation into the Republic. The motion stated that there were numerous resolutions by political and mass organizations which proved that the majority of the people of East Sumatra did not want the N.S.T. This motion was signed by four well known Republican leaders from East Sumatra - M. Yunan Nasution, Sarwono Sastrosutardjo, Abdullah Yusuf and Dr. Sinaga.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Waspada*, 13 February 1950.

¹¹⁵ *Waspada*, 16 February 1950. Raja Kaliamsjah was called a liar by the crowd when he announced that he too was a nationalist.

¹¹⁶ See "Mosi Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat RIS Pergabungan Negara Sumatera Timur dengan Republik Indonesia" in *Ichtiisar Parlemen No.27/1950*. This motion was also known as the Yamin motion after Muhammad Yamin.

March 19 also saw an important political agitation against the N.S.T. when a meeting of eighty-four representatives from a number of organizations affiliated to the *Front Nasional* held a meeting in Medan and decided to hold a *Kongress Rakyat Sumatera Timur* (East Sumatera People's Congress) which would be a forum for a single movement to demand the dissolution of the N.S.T. and its incorporation into the Republic.¹¹⁷ A central committee, the *Panitia Pusat Kongres Rakyat Sumatera Timur*, was formed with Mohamad Said as the Chairman and Jahja Jacob, Haji Abdul Rahman Sjihab, Sugondo Kartoprodjo, M.A. Dasuki, Ani Idris, Ishak Djanggawirana, Abdul Wahid Er and B. Hutadjulu as committee members. The aim of the committee was to organise the congress and to form committees in the various parts of the N.S.T. for this purpose.¹¹⁸ The committee had no real difficulties in mobilising support as there was enough resentment against the N.S.T. among the common people. Political parties, trade unions, and farmers organizations were among the many societies that met and passed resolution after resolution demanding the dissolution of the N.S.T. and its absorption into the republic.¹¹⁹ Strikes also became very common as the momentum for the N.S.T.'s dissolution gathered speed. The railway workers

¹¹⁷ *Waspada*, 20 March 1950.

¹¹⁸ *Waspada*, 27 March 1950.

¹¹⁹ See *Waspada*, 17, 21, 22, 25 March 1950 for some of the meetings held and the anti-N.S.T. resolutions.

went on strike in March¹²⁰ and this strike was supported by the Plantation Workers Union.¹²¹ By April about 80,000 workers from 35 tobacco and 17 rubber estates had gone on strike.¹²² The strikes were seriously undermining the economic base of the N.S.T. and showed the N.S.T. leaders how vulnerable they were. Even more serious was that on 4 April 1950 the RIS parliament approved the Yamin motion by a majority of 73 to 11 declaring East Sumatra to be a part of the Republic.¹²³

In Medan the *Kongres Rakyat Sumatera Timur* (KRST) committee announced that a *Kongres Rakyat* demanding the dissolution of the N.S.T. and its incorporation into the Republic would be held on 27 April 1950. This congress took place as scheduled in a former warehouse with 417 delegates representing a large number of pro-Republican organizations.¹²⁴ Mohamad Said, the Chairman of the KRST, stated that the N.S.T. was Dutch created and neo-colonial and that:

¹²⁰ *Waspada*, 21 March 1950.

¹²¹ *Waspada*, 24 March 1950.

¹²² *Waspada*, 5,6,7,8 April 1950.

¹²³ *Waspada*, 5 April 1950.

¹²⁴ *Waspada*, 2 May 1950. The newspaper also reported that a RIS delegation was also present at the congress.

In many places, such as West Java, Central Java, East Java, Madura, Kalimantan and South Sumatra, the people are busy and jointly concentrating their energies on exterminating the colonial left-overs of Dr. van Mook. ...so long as there exist in Indonesia elements who defend the colonial remnants of van Mook, it is immaterial if they are unitarist or Federalists, and as long as such elements are not cleaned out, political tensions will continue to be felt...Many resolutions, motions, demonstrations etc, have been effected by the people to press for the dissolution of the N.S.T., not merely because of the federalist concepts which are professed by the leaders of that government, but because the people want to wipe out the remnants of van Mook's colonialism.¹²⁵

The congress lasted three days, at the end of which there was a resolution urging the *RIS* government to dissolve the N.S.T. and incorporate East Sumatra into the Republic as quickly as possible.¹²⁶ For the N.S.T. these developments were ominous signs of an impending political disaster. To counteract them, the N.S.T. leadership decided on a political counter-offensive to show that they did have some support among the East Sumatran peoples to justify the continued existence of the N.S.T. While the *Kongres Rakyat* was still in progress, a group of pro-*kerajaan* supporters associated with the P.N.S.T. decided on a congress on similar lines. A meeting was held in the house of the P.N.S.T. chairman Tengku Nikmatullah in Medan on 28 April to plan for the convening of a *Permusjawaratan Rakyat Sumatera Timur* (East Sumatra Peoples' Conference).

¹²⁵ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.347-352.

¹²⁶ See Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.354-357 for the full text of the congress resolution. Also *Waspada*, 2 May 1950.

According to Ustaz Abdul Kadir, the conference was initiated by Tengku Dr. Mansur who met him (Ustaz Abdul Kadir) and Tengku Nikmatullah secretly in order to plan the conference as a counter move to the active pro-Republican groups. Financial support for this conference was secretly provided by the N.S.T. which chose to remain discreetly in the background.¹²⁷ The meeting led to the setting up of a *Panitia Pusat* which consisted of Tengku Nikmatullah himself, Sjamsuddin, R. Bahri, A. Kadir, Chairuddin, M. Saleh and Hasan.¹²⁸ This *Permusjawaratan Rakyat Se-Sumatera Timur* was held on 7 May 1950 with the aim to demand a legal and peaceful determination of the future status of East Sumatra in keeping with the desires of the people.¹²⁹

This conference opened on 7 May 1950 with six hundred delegates from members of the N.S.T. government, politicians, civil servants, traditional rulers and chiefs. Tengku Nikmatullah made a long speech which showed the conflicts between the ideas of the N.S.T. elites and the supporters of the Republic.

¹²⁷ Interview with Ustaz Abdul Kadir, Medan, February 1985. To confirm this account I have been able to read notes on interviews done by Tengku Luckman Sinar in which Ustaz Abdul Kadir had stated that he was approached by Tengku Dr. Mansur to organise this conference.

¹²⁸ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.365.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.365.

It is clear to us that in general there are two ideological currents in Indonesia, namely leaders loyal to an orderly struggle as demanded by President Sukarno and Prime Minister Hatta, and the other *aliran* which is always taking a road that is not in keeping with a constitutional state, as for example in the social revolution in *Sumatera Timur* in 1946. This was not approved by our national leaders and was not legalised by the *Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat*, because it was very clear that those who fell victim to the social revolution, according to the legal investigations of the Republic of Indonesia itself, were not guilty. The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is based on belief in One Supreme God, Humanity, family, social justice and democracy, but the actions of the social revolution movement is contrary to that and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia itself from then until now has not yet been willing to take action against the leaders of the movement that disgraced our national struggle...

You have been informed that the efforts of President Sukarno and Drs. Mohamad Hatta have been directed towards upholding a Constitutional state in all of Indonesia but these efforts have always been subverted by illegal *alirans* like the Madiun rebellion in 1948. These two *alirans* are continually in conflict with each other, one upholding a state based on law, the other striving to destroy that state...

After peace had been restored in *Sumatera Timur*, economic development proceeded step by step and the situation began to improve, political leaders who had earlier fled, among them prominent leaders at the time of the social revolution, returned to *Sumatera Timur*. Here they once again began actively to interfere and sing the old songs, for example that the state reeked of colonialism, there were people in it with colonial attitudes and other false accusations.

During the social revolution which was organised by leaders disloyal to our national leaders Sukarno-Hatta, they had carried out or ordered mass murders, robberies and other illegal actions on the grounds that the victims were Nica agents and so on when in fact they were not guilty according to investigations which I have mentioned above just now.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Propinsi Sumatera Timur, pp.365-370.

The N.S.T. was now forced to appeal to constitutionality and the prestige of Sukarno and Hatta to prevent itself from being swamped by what it saw as lawless Republican elements. In calling the N.S.T. loyal to Sukarno and Hatta and following their orderly struggle, the N.S.T. tried to present itself as a faithful part of the Republic while painting the East Sumatran republicans as disloyal to the national leaders. This was in complete contrast to the mood in which the N.S.T. was founded. The conference ended on 9 May 1950 with a resolution that Indonesia be based on an independent federal state and the *Panca Sila*, and the N.S.T. should remain a state within the *RIS*. It also stated that South Asahan and Labuhan Batu must remain a part of the N.S.T. and alleged that certain groups had illegally and undemocratically forced people in *Sumatera Timur* to profess unitarist principles.¹³¹

After the conference, a four member delegation led by Tengku Nikmatullah and comprising Sutan Iskandar Muda, Abdul Kadir and Saridin Purba left for Jakarta to forward the resolutions to the *RIS* government. This mission was unsuccessful. The federal system was collapsing like a house of cards and it was unlikely that *Sumatera Timur* by itself could reverse the trend towards a unitary state. This impotence was recognised by the N.S.T. itself for the

¹³¹ Propinsi Sumatera Timur, p.371.

Dewan N.S.T. gave its approval to the N.S.T. government to commence negotiations with the RIS on the eventual incorporation of *Sumatera Timur* into a unitary state.¹³² After this Tengku Dr. Mansur empowered Hatta to act on behalf of the N.S.T. government in negotiating with the Republic the final program for setting up the unitary state.¹³³ On 19 May, a *Piagam Persetujuan* (Charter of Agreement) was signed between the RIS which represented the N.S.T. and the Republic which announced that the parties had agreed to cooperate in the formation of a unitarian state.¹³⁴

On 10 July the RIS government established a *Panitia Persiapan Negara Kesatuan Sumatera Timur* (Unitary State Preparatory Committee for East Sumatra) to put into operation the final incorporation of the N.S.T. into a unitary Republic of Indonesia. This committee was headed by Sarimin Reksidihardjo with Mr. Mohamad Jusuf, Mr. Mohamad Amin and the Deputy *Wali Negara* of the N.S.T., Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga, as members.¹³⁵ Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga

¹³² *Waspada*, 12 May 1950.

¹³³ *Waspada*, 15 May 1950. The newspaper also stated that President Sukowati of East Indonesia took a similar line of action.

¹³⁴ See Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.379-381 for full details of the Charter of Agreement.

¹³⁵ *Waspada*, 12 & 13 July 1950, Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.381.

withdrew on the grounds that membership of the P.P.N.K.S.T. would conflict with his duties as Deputy *Wali Negara*.¹³⁶ After intense discussions with N.S.T. leaders and the various Republican leaders, the P.P.N.K.S.T. announced that an *Urgensi Program* for the incorporation of East Sumatra into the unitary state would be implemented. The *Urgensi Program* made it clear that once East Sumatra became part of the unitary republic it would no longer be autonomous but only an administrative area. Priority would be given to re-employing all anti-N.S.T. civil servants while N.S.T. government leaders and civil servants who could not be absorbed into the new administrative structure would be transferred to the central government or to other regions. Concerning the agrarian and economic problems, the program would plan to redistribute land from commercial enterprise to the small farmers who needed land.¹³⁷

The *Urgensi Program* spelt the death of the N.S.T., but even in its death throes the N.S.T. elite was trying to salvage some advantages. On 23 July, Raja Kaliamsjah Sinaga issued a five-point program as a counter to that of the *Urgensi Program* of the P.P.N.K.S.T. in which he stressed that East Sumatra must be "an autonomous region within the Unitary State in accordance with the powers and

¹³⁶ *Waspada*, 15 July 1950, Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.381.

¹³⁷ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.381-383 for the full text of the Urgent Program.

authorities which were handed over by the Government of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* to the Government of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia."¹³⁸ However, it was a lost cause and nothing came out of this program as the Republicans were in no mood to compromise. The end result of this was the total rejection of the principles of special community rights and the notion of regional autonomy on which the N.S.T. had been premised.

The absorption of East Sumatra into the unitary Republic of Indonesia was put into motion on 1 August 1950 when the *Panitia Penjelenggara Pembentukan Propinsi Sumatera Utara* (Preparatory Committee for the Formation of a Province of North Sumatra or P4SU) was established. This Province of North Sumatra consisted of three pre-1945 Residencies of Aceh, Tapanuli and the East Coast of Sumatra. The Chairman of the P4SU and Acting-Governor of the proposed province of North Sumatra was Sarimin Reksodihardjo who also retained his position as Chairman of the P.P.N.K.S.T. His function was to prepare and set up a unitary state administration after which the P.P.N.K.S.T. would be dissolved. In the meantime the P4SU would carry on as an administrative unit until a permanent governmental and administrative structure was formed for the Province of North Sumatra.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.383.

¹³⁹ *Waspada*, 19 August 1950 and Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.385.

On 13 August 1950, the *Dewan N.S.T.* passed legislation dissolving the N.S.T. and incorporating it into the unitary Republic.¹⁴⁰ After this act, the *Dewan N.S.T.* itself was dissolved. On 14 August the Acting President of the Republic, Drs. Hatta, signed into law an act incorporating East Sumatra, Tapanuli and Aceh into the unitary province of North Sumatra with Medan as the provincial capital.¹⁴¹ The last scene to the tortuous saga of East Sumatra took place on 15 August in Medan where at a ceremony, Tengku Dr. Mansur formally surrendered all powers and authority of the N.S.T. government to the Chairman of the P.P.N.K.S.T.¹⁴² At the same time in Jakarta, Mohamad Hatta submitted the resignation of the *RIS* cabinet to President Sukarno who signed the provisional constitution of unitary Indonesia into existence. 17 August 1950 saw the fifth anniversary of the declaration of independence and the re-emergence of the unitary Republic of Indonesia.

We noted that the original goal of the Malay elite in the setting up of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* was to cater for the interests of the indigenous inhabitants. The state envisaged would be free from Indonesian control,

¹⁴⁰ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.395-397.

¹⁴¹ *Waspada*, 28 August 1950.

¹⁴² *Waspada*, 16 August 1950, Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.395-396.

economically viable and protected by Dutch arms in a federal system. Though the N.S.T. was initially welcomed by large segments of the indigenous inhabitants, the unwillingness of the Malay elite to share power with the indigenous Simalungun and Karo communities alienated the N.S.T. from them.

In contrast the Indonesian revolutionaries were determined to reassert the sovereignty of the Indonesian Republic in East Sumatra as was the position before the Dutch police action of July 1947. The revolutionaries upheld equality for all communities - indigenous or otherwise - and encouraged the landless to take over lands belonging to the *kerajaans* and foreign companies. The revolutionaries had the added advantage that while some of them worked openly in the political arena in East Sumatra their comrades were also fighting to overthrow the N.S.T. through force of arms.

The Malay elite found that their appeals to the indigenous communities to work together in creating a *bangsa Sumatera Timur* were unsuccessful, as this slogan could not compete with the politically viable *bangsa Indonesia*. The accusations levelled against them were that they were anti-democratic, feudal, and pro-Dutch. Their fate was sealed when the Federal system collapsed and the Dutch had to transfer sovereignty to the Indonesian Government.

CHAPTER 6

DEMOCRACY

We have noted in the previous chapters that the idea of *kemajuan* (progress) and democracy were used as arguments against the *kerajaans*. In this chapter, we will examine what is meant by such terms and how they were interpreted in a changing political order.

In East Sumatra as well as in Malaya, the *kerajaans* were perceived as *kolot* (archaic), autocratic and unchanging by their opponents. Since most Malays were familiar with the *kerajaan* and its values we need to discuss how new ideas and concepts such as *kedaulatan rakyat*, progress and democracy were explained and developed in a manner that could be readily understood by the common people. It is necessary to see how the indigenous communities struggled with these issues as they attempted to retain their position and privileges in a period of change. The analysis will rely on speeches and statements of important personalities as well as official pamphlets that were published by the ruling authorities. The local newspapers such as the *Majlis* and the *Utusan Melayu* which were printed in peninsular Malaya and the *Soeloeh Merdeka* and *Soeloeh Ra'jat* of East Sumatra will be utilised. Important quotes and excerpts from the speeches of important personalities will be analysed so as to examine

the content and meaning of the important terms that were connected to the idea of change and democracy.

Because terms like democracy, progress and feudal are western in origin, it is necessary to understand what Malays meant when they used such terms in their speeches or attempted to render them into Malay. The use of such terms in itself implies that Malays accepted changes in their political culture.

A period of change is not synonymous with the notion of change. For example in the Malay states, a period of change took place after the Second World War when the *kerajaan* had to change. A notion of change is an aspect of ideology, as when East Sumatrans identified their social system as feudal during a period of change in which they linked their own society to the kind of evolutionary political developments western societies had undertaken.

After the Japanese Occupation ideas of change were sweeping through Southeast Asia, and the Malay communities on both sides of the Malacca Straits were affected by them. The Japanese Occupation had ended the sense of invincibility and permanence of the various colonial powers in Southeast Asia and this in turn stimulated ideas of independence from the colonial powers after the Japanese surrender. Furthermore, education, especially that of the Japanese, had

fostered an egalitarian view of society in which the aristocracy of birth lost much of its legitimacy to mass leaders. These ideas were accompanied by the suggestion that the Malay monarchies which were based on what was perceived as royal absolutism should be replaced with a democratic system that gave the populace some degree of political participation and administration. In Malaya barely a month after the Japanese surrender, the *Majlis* noted that:

...we are aware that the pattern of the whole world at this time now has changed to democracy. Because of this, Malaya as a part of the world must change to democracy also whether we like it or not¹.

This editorial set the trend towards discussing the need to *berubah* (change) to a democratic system. The term *berubah* was used twice in order to emphasise the need to change. Changes were considered inevitable and could not be tied to personal or cultural preferences. While the use of the term *ubah* may indicate that in the period of change there was the desire to change, we need to delve deeper into the Malay understanding of change to decide whether it was a fundamental change that was taking place or not. The reason evinced for the changes was that since the world was changing towards democracy, Malaya as a part of the world

¹ *Majlis*, 17 September 1945. ...kita sedar bahawa corak seumum dunia pada masa ini ialah telah berubah kepada demokratik. Oleh sebab itu Malaya, sebahagian dari alam yang ini mesti berubah kepada demokratik juga samada kita suka atau tidak.

must change in that direction. This idea of change was not the result of a serious evaluation of Malay society or of the *kerajaans* and seemed to imply that if the world did not undergo the change, Malay society would remain the same. Therefore, the need for change was due to an external factor and not because of internal contradictions within Malay society. Probably external support was sought for the idea of change by those who might not otherwise dare to challenge the system.

Following this, another editorial was printed in the *Majlis* in which the idea of change and what it implied was discussed in depth:

The *umat Melayu* throughout the Malay peninsula in general and in Selangor in particular should be aware (*sedar*) and we hope are already aware that according to the requirements of the era after the Second World War, the pattern of the world has changed to a democratic hue...So also our Malay peninsula which before was based on bureaucracy will become democratic...which can lead to the conclusion that if in the past (*dimasa dahulu*) our Malay people usually look to their raja and his chiefs as the sole patron or leader to protect and defend the fate (*nasib*) and rights (*hak*) of the Malay people, in the end according to the trend in this democratic era, all thoughts and beliefs like these within the Malays must be discarded (*buang*) and wiped clean (*dihapuskan licin*) altogether.²

² *Majlis*, 8 December 1945. Umat Melayu diseluruh Semenanjung Tanah Melayu ini amnya dan di Selangor khasnya sudah sepatutnya sedar dan kita percaya sudah harus sudahpun sedar bahawa menurut kehendak aliran zaman sudah tamat Peperangan Dunia yang Kedua ini corak dunia telah ubah kecorak warna demokrat...Begitu juga Semenanjung Tanah Melayu kita yang dahulunya berdasarnya birocratik akan menjadi demokratik...yang boleh dimaknakan kepada pengertian bahawa dimasa dahulu orang-orang Melayu kita biasanya memandang

The above quotation gives more detail than the previous one. The editor of the paper noted that the need to democratise was unavoidable. His choice of the terms used was important in that he used the Arabic term *zaman* (era or epoch) twice and linked it with *sudah tamat* (an era had ended) and *demokrat* (democratic era). The argument concerning the need to change was presented in such a way as to suggest that the ending of one era (*zaman sudah tamat*) had to be followed by a *zaman demokrat* (democratic era). The anglicised term *demokrat* was used. The paper preferred the use of the English word "democratic" to stress the modernity and international status of the concept, rather than attempting the dangerous task of giving it a concrete meaning in Malay terms. The urge to democratise appears not to have arisen from conflict between the rulers and the people. The reason given for democratising was that it was the trend of the world. By the same token, the government was seen as bureaucratic and not autocratic or colonial. The use of the term "bureaucratic" showed that at this point there was no consensus on a Malay description of the pre-war form of government and, a foreign term was used as it would not arouse too much controversy. There was no image of the sultan or the British wielding absolute power. The more

kepada Rajanya dan orang-orang besar Rajanya sebagai penganjur atau pemimpin yang ma'shul tentang membela dan mempertahankan nasib dan hak bangsa Melayu tetapi dimasa akhir menurut aliran zaman demokrat ini, segala fikiran dan fahaman yang semacam itu pada sisi orang-orang Melayu hendaklah dibuang dan dihapuskan licin sama sekali.

significant point in the quotation was that democracy meant that the Malay people must no longer look to their rajas and the chiefs as patrons and protectors of the fate and rights of the Malay people. No specific views were yet advanced as to what should be done with the *kerajaan* system or what form of popular participation there should be.

Ayub bin Abdullah, a petition writer and prominent personality in the *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah*, argued for a change in the role of the sultans which was in keeping with the idea of progress and which measured up to the standards of European nations and in particular England. According to him,

The King and Sultan do not have power if it is not with the agreement of the people. It has been established in England that His Majesty the King has no power to sign any kind of treaty especially with foreign states of his own free will if he has not beforehand obtained the agreement of the majority of the people of his country in England. Wherefore now that Malay states are under the protection of the British then whatever is the *adat* (law) for the King that also is [the same] for our Malay Rajas.¹

¹ *Majlis*, 4 January 1946. King dan Sultan tiada berkuasa jika tiada dengan persetujuan rakyat. Telah diadakan di England, Duli Yang Maha Besar Baginda King tiada berkuasa boleh sign apa-apa sebarang jenis surat-surat treaty dengan khasnya kuasa asing negeri dengan pandai dirinya sendiri jika lebih dahulu tiada mendapat persetujuan suara ramai daripada orang-orang rakyat negerinya di England. Maka sekarang dinegeri-negeri Melayu kita duduk dibawah naungan Kerajaan British, maka apa-apa yang cadangan adat bagi Raja Kerajaan British itulah juga bagi Raja-Raja Kerajaan Melayu kita ini.

The statement suggests that to progress the Malay Sultans must follow the example of the British monarch. That perhaps was one interpretation of *kemajuan* (progress), since the Malays viewed the British as a nation that had undoubtedly attained progress. Yet if examined closely, Ayub's statement lacks the clear definition of what the role of a constitutional monarch should be. According to him the British King must get the agreement of his people (*mendapat persetujuan suara ramai*) before he can act. Ayub equated the British King with the Malay Sultans, although the latter had more power in their own states than the British King. In short, Ayub was not only calling for change but asserting that already the Malay sultans only ruled by consent of the people because of British *adat*.

Ayub continued with a call for the Malays to take their fate in their own hands.

Ten years ago in the year *hijrah* 1355 [1936] I wrote an article entitled *Watan Kita Dengan Orang Asing* (Our Land And The Foreigners). In that article, I opposed, I did not agree there should be unions and associations for the people because I depended completely on the Rajas, Sultans as well as their Chiefs. But at this time the world has changed, (*dunia beredar*), the times have changed (*zaman berubah*), the general opinion is different (*fikiran am berlainan*), as such it is most important for us to have to stand under our unions and associations. We cannot find out whether our Rajas and Sultans have been pressured. Because of that the Malays have to have unions and associations for their protection.'

' *Majlis*, 7 January 1946. Sepuluh tahun dahulu *hijrah* 1355 saya telah mengarang sebuah risalah yang bernama Watan Kita

For Ayub too, the times had definitely and permanently changed. Part of the change was because the rulers were no longer reliable and might have been pressured. The nature of the change involved relying on Malay associations since the sultans were incapable of protecting the Malays. He reinforced the term *ubah* (change) with terms like *beredar* (change), and *berlainan* (difference) which all connote some idea of change. Changes were necessary because the world had changed, the times had changed, and public opinion was different from what it had been in the past. The use of the term *fikiran am* (general opinion) was an invocation of public opinion which was new. The concept of public opinion came to be discussed during the Malayan Union crisis because some Malays felt that the sultans should not have the monopoly of decision making in matters that affect the Malays. This was a change from the pre-war period during which the majority of Malays left their fate in the hands of the sultans. But what exactly in the opinion of Ayub and other Malays had changed?

Dengan Orang Asing. Dalam risalah itu saya bantah, saya tidak bersetuju diadakan kesatuan-kesatuan dan persekutuan-persekutuan umat kerana saya berharap semata-mata pada Raja-Raja dan Sultan-sultan serta orang-orang besarnya. Tapi dalam masa sekarang dunia beredar, zaman berubah, *fikiran am* berlainan, jadi termustahaklah diatas kita kena berdiri dibawah kesatuan dan persekutuan. Kita tidak boleh dapat ketahui adakah Raja-raja dan Sultan-sultan kita telah terkena tekan. Oleh sebab umat Melayu kenalah kesatuan dan persekutuan membelakan.

The issues of progress and democracy became dominant in the press only after the Japanese Occupation and during the Malayan Union crisis. The old system of administration whereby the Malays left the control of their affairs to the rajas, chiefs and the British were no longer acceptable. Ayub himself had pointed out that before the Japanese Occupation he had felt that unions and associations were unnecessary because he depended (*berharap semata-mata*) on the sultans but now he had changed his mind. As was shown by Cheah and Stockwell,⁵ the effect of the Japanese Occupation was that the sultans had been humbled and proved to be impotent in terms of protecting the Malays. The upheavals of the Japanese Occupation plus the fact that the Malay sultans had been prevailed upon to sign the Malayan Union agreement in which Malay rights and privileges were done away with meant that the sultans and the chiefs could no longer safeguard the interests of the Malays. This was the "general opinion" among the Malays which was different from that before the war. To Ayub this change required a shift from relying on the sultans to setting up unions and associations to safeguard Malay interests.

⁵ See Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946, (Singapore University Press, 1983), and A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During The Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948, MBRAS, Monograph No.8, 1979.

Malay radicals in the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* also stressed the need to change. Their views were that the sultans did not rule with the wish of the majority, hence:

A definite result is that quickly the Rajas will more and more be ignored and not respected by the people who are already aware (*celek*) and conscious (*sedar*) of their struggle (*perjuangan*) which will be even more stimulated...Think brothers that the world is changing fast, we cannot live with the understanding and feelings of the year 1941. We are now in the year 1947 in the atomic era (*zaman atom*), the old era (*zaman kolot*) has been left behind.⁶

This press release by Ishak Haji Mohamad and Burhanuddin revealed that to the radicals, change meant awareness and consciousness on the part of the *rakyat* (people). The frequent use of the term *zaman* had a long history in Malay thought, derived from the Islamic sense of history. The the term *zaman* had been used for example in the autobiography of Dr. Soetomo, who had helped found the *Budi Utome* in 1908. The use of *zaman* by Soetomo revealed a contrast between the past and present as he recollected events that he experienced as a youth. Yet we notice in Soetomo's writings that *zaman* was not necessarily pegged to change in time but could also be linked to an altered state

⁶ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. Akibahnya yang tertentu ialah dengan lekas akan Raja-raja itu semakin tidak dipedulikan dan tidak dihormati oleh rakyat jelata yang sudah *celek* dan insaf perjuangan rakyat yang akan dapat dorongan yang lebih kuat...Ingatlah saudara-saudara bahwasanya dunia sedang berubah cepat...kita tidak sayugia hidup dengan pahaman dan perasaan tahun 1941. Kita sekarang berada dalam tahun 1947 dalam zaman atom, zaman kolot sudah luput.

of consciousness, as he described his changing view of events that he had witnessed.⁷

At the time of the Malayan Union crisis, some Malays believed that the system of administration which did not give any role for the people in government coupled with the unwillingness to share power with the *rakyat* could no longer be acceptable and belonged to the *zaman kolot*. The *zaman atom* (atomic era) meant participation by the people in government. The choice of the year 1941 clearly showed that it was the Japanese destruction of British colonial rule and the helplessness of the Sultans which were the main reasons for the demand for changes. The role of atomic power underlined their insistence that the attitudes and values of 1941 could no longer be accepted in an utterly transformed post-war world.

However, not everyone accepted the view that change meant that democracy and popular participation were inevitable. While many Malay aristocrats were disturbed by what they perceived as threats to their positions within Malay society, only one among them made a public statement to express his view that change was not necessary. A letter written by one Raja Musa of Klang claimed:

⁷ See Benedict Anderson, "A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light," in Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia, edited by Anthony Reid and David Marr, ASAA, Southeast Publications Series, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., Singapore, 1979.

In short the term *taat dan setia* had been implanted in the heart and soul [of Malays] for generations...The term *taat dan setia* at this time is seldom heard from the lips of the Malays in Malaya because it is said that the times have changed (*masa telah beredar*) and the Malay states will become the Malayan Union and the Rajas who ruled will it is said have no power over anything. We hear from the Malays at this time "Why bother about the Raja? Whatever our problem we bring it to the Malay Congress"...it is right that each of us who squat on the verandah of a person's house must necessarily be thankful to the owner of the house...and so also to the Rajas in whose *negeri* we squat.¹

Raja Musa was swimming against the tide in dismissing the changes brought about by the Japanese Occupation. However, since less than ten years previously his was the prevalent view, it was difficult for him to accept that the sultans were no longer to hold absolute powers. Raja Musa was merely applying the standards and values that had been universal in the Malay peninsula before the war. But by 1945, such views were very rare. It is not clear how many Malays of noble birth subscribed to this view, but the rapidity and nature of the change must have alarmed some of them. Raja Musa held the view that the settlement (*negeri*)

¹ *Majlis*, 11 October 1946. Pendek kata perkataan "taat dan setia" itu sudah tertanam dihati-perut dan jantung hingga turun menurun...Perkataan "taat dan setia" itu pada masa ini jarang-jarang kita dengar daripada mulut orang-orang Melayu di Malaya sebab kononnya masa telah beredar dan Tanah Melayu hendak dijadikan Malayan Union dan Raja-Raja yang memerintah kononnya tidak berkuasa lagi atas serba-serbinya...Yang kita dengar pada masa ini dari pehak orang-orang Melayu "Apa peduli Raja? Apa-apa hal kita mengadu hal kita kepada Kongress Melayu"...Sepatutnya tiap-tiap kita menumpang diserambi orang itu telah wajib kita menerima kasih kepada tuan rumah itu...dan demikian jua pada Raja-raja yang tempat kita menumpang negerinya.

was owned by the Raja and the people were merely squatting in it and must be grateful to the ruler for that privilege. His view of the power of royalty in Malaya represents an extreme one. His admission that the Malays prefer to go to the Malay Congress and ignore the rajas was indirectly an admission that times had indeed changed.

Since the idea of change was linked to democracy and public opinion, we need to look at how Malays expressed the term "democracy" in Malay and the indigenous meanings they gave to the term. In the Malay peninsula, we have noted the scrupulous avoidance of the term *kedaulatan rakyat* by certain Malay conservatives and the preference for the English term "democracy" which was not necessarily revolutionary. Even when the Sultans were rebuked for signing the MacMichael Treaties, the term used was not *kedaulatan rakyat* but the less clear-cut *daulat rakyat*. The *Majlis* stated that:

It must be remembered that the aura of *daulat* is not just the Raja's only but that the *rakyat's daulat* is even higher. If there is no *rakyat* there will be no Raja, but if there is no Raja, the *rakyat* can become Raja.¹

¹ *Majlis*, 6 February 1946. Hendaklah diingat bahawa yang berdaulat itu bukannya Raja sahaja melainkan rakyat itu lebih tinggi daulatnya lagi. Jika tiada rakyat tiadalah Raja, tetapi tiada Raja, rakyat boleh jadi Raja.

The linking of the term *daulat* to the people was revolutionary, inverting the sacredness of the raja by investing in the *rakyat* all the traditional supernatural and temporal power that used to reside in the person of the raja. *Daulat* entered Malay from the Arabic language with the meaning of divinity, or possessing divine attributes.¹⁰ In the past according to Malay traditions, rulers were imbued with divine attributes as their power stem from a divine source. It was not uncommon to address Sultans by the term *Daulat Tuanku* which meant "may your divine Highness prosper." Therefore to link the term *daulat* to the term *rakyat* (people) was a revolutionary blow against Malay political tradition in which it was precisely the divine attributes of kings which distinguished them from ordinary people.

In this context, the term *daulat* was being given a new meaning closer to the English "power". The message of the *Majlis* was that in terms of power, the people had much more of it as the raja depended on them for his existence but they did not depend on the him. A novel factor in the argument was that the *rakyat* too possessed *daulat*. The implication of this was that if in the past it was only the *rakyat* who could commit *derhaka* (treason) by offending

¹⁰ R.J. Wilkinson, A Malay-English Dictionary (Romanised.) vol.1, London, 1959, p.261, also R.O. Winstedt, An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary, Marican & Sons, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, p.82.

against the *daulat* of the ruler the raja could now commit *derhaka* against the *daulat* residing in the *rakyat*. This argument was a powerful one in that it placed the *rakyat* and the raja on the same plane, with the *rakyat* the more fundamental ingredient.

The question arises why the idea of *kedaulatan rakyat* (sovereignty of the people) did not develop into full bloom as in East Sumatra? Part of the answer could be discerned from the quotes above. At no time was there the suggestion among Malay conservatives to do away with the monarchy even though there must have existed within some of them a feeling of deep disillusionment with the rulers. The action that was suggested was that the rulers and the chiefs should not be relied on and that the rulers should rule with the opinion of the majority and be closer to the people. At the most the traditional "conservative" elite hoped that there would be a partnership between *rakyat* and raja in the defense of Malay interests and in the running of the state. A demand for *kedaulatan rakyat* with the radical connotations which existed in East Sumatra would mean that the rulers were out of the scheme of government and would be completely subordinate to the *rakyat* who would assume complete power. Fundamental changes would have to be made in Malay society for the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* to be realised fully. The anglicised term *demokrat* was preferred because it seemed possible to be *demokrat* without having *kedaulatan rakyat*.

Since some Malays welcomed back the British and looked forward to continued *naungan* (protection) under the British administration, the call for *kedaulatan rakyat* would have disrupted the cosy relationship between the British and some sections of the conservative Malays. More important, *kedaulatan rakyat* could be perceived to be against Malay interests, because it might have to include the non-Malays and this was unacceptable to the Malay elite.

Nevertheless the argument that the people too had power, and that the *kerajaans* must listen to the people, was an important element in the vernacular definition of democracy that can be read in the following quotation from the *Majlis*:

...the meaning of democratic is that of a *kerajaan* that is based on the opinion of the people (*rakyat*) who possess the right of citizenship. The representatives who become members of the *kerajaan* council are people who are chosen or voted according to the voice of the people. Here it can be seen that whatever was decided on in the council meant following the will of the people.¹¹

There was some difficulty in finding a Malay equivalent of the term *demokrat* and explaining in Malay what it meant.

¹¹ *Majlis*, 17 September 1947. ...ertinya demokratik itu ialah suatu kerajaan yang terdiri dari suara rakyat yang mempunyai hak kerakyatan. Wakil-wakil yang menjadi ahli-ahli mesyuarat kerajaan ialah orang-orang yang dipilih atau diundi menurut ukuran suara rakyat itu. Disini nampaknya bahawa apa jua yang diputuskan dalam mesyuarat itu berarti menurut kemahuan rakyat.

Therefore democracy was defined as that of a *kerajaan* which was based on the voice of the people who possess citizenship rights, and this would be limited to Malays as a way of coping with the non-Malays. The use of the term *kerajaan* implied that the monarchy would be retained, as *kerajaan* meant the state of having a raja. Similarly, in Indonesia the moderate Republicans argued that the people would not rule directly, but by having elected members in the council.

Democracy was construed to mean that the *kerajaan* would rule with a populist attitude. There was an attempt to make "democracy" acceptable to Malays by excluding certain categories of inhabitants in the Malay peninsula from the political process by limiting participation to those who were citizens (*mempunyai hak kerakyatan*). In the context of the Malay peninsula, this implied that non-Malays would be excluded as they did not have citizenship rights at this point. Even the representatives who were elected were not perceived as members of an elected legislature but members of an existing state council of the *kerajaan* (*ahli-ahli mesyuarat kerajaan*). There was no discussion of the class composition of those elected, leaving open the option that Malays would continue to be represented by the aristocracy. For the Malays, the suggestion that the *kerajaans* should rule with a populist attitude and that there should be elections to the council was novel and progressive, even though such a suggestion was made earlier by the K.M.M..

In the atmosphere of change Malay conservatives within the U.M.N.O., especially Dato Onn bin Jaafar, saw the need to bring the rulers closer to the people so that there would not be unnecessary conflicts between the Sultan and the Malays. Attempts were made to indentify the Malay rulers closely with the people (*rakyat*) and to control the demands of the people for a more direct participation in the affairs of government. Dato Onn bin Jaafar, the president of U.M.N.O., coined the slogan *Rakyat jadi Raja dan Raja jadi rakyat* (the Raja becomes the people and the people become the Raja) to bring about this closeness. According to Dato Onn,

I hope that in a short time from now, there will be one desire and one aim because that is important to show the solid unity not only between the Raja and the people (*rakyat*) but the people and the Raja. I would like to say that the *rakyat* has become the Raja and the Raja has become the *rakyat*. The aim is that in joint cooperation I believe that the Raja in the Malay states will no longer ignore the *rakyat* as in the past. But the Rajas must be sincere and love the *rakyat* more.¹²

This stress on unity between the raja and the people served to blur the differences between the two. The call for

¹² *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. Saya berharap dalam masa yang sedikit lagi jadi satu niat dan satu tujuan kerana itu mustahak menunjukkan persatuan yang padu bukan saja persatuan antara Raja dengan rakyat tetapi dengan rakyat dan Raja. Saya suka menyebutkan bahawa rakyat jadi Raja dan Raja jadi rakyat. Tujuannya supaya dalam perkerjaan yang dijalankan berserta saya percaya Raja di Tanah Melayu tidak lagi akan membelakangkan rakyat saperti dahulu tetapi hendaklah Raja-raja itu ikhlas dan bertambah mengasehi rakyat.

a raja to rule with a populist attitude would be superfluous because of the close relationship between the raja and the people. But because there was no structure established to give meaning and life to the slogan, we can surmise that Dato Onn's aim in coining it was with the pious hope that in the future, unlike in the past, the raja would love the people and no longer ignore them. The role of the people in the statement is passive and apparently dependent on the good will of the raja.

The main emphasis of the Malay conservatives in the U.M.N.O. was unity and cooperation between the Malay rulers and the Malays against the Malayan Union and the non-Malays. As we have seen they strove to bring the rajas and the *rakyat* closer by stressing unity and cooperation. Even in discussing the need for changes and democracy, the Malay conservatives sought to limit the meaning of popular participation in government to elected councils and the need for the rulers to rule with the opinion of the majority. It is significant that Malay conservatives avoided the term such as *kedaulatan rakyat*. It is an indication that they saw it as revolutionary and potent. The idea of *kedaulatan rakyat* was picked up from Indonesia by the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* in its policy and programme. According to Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy, *kedaulatan rakyat* was one of the principles of the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* when it

was first established on 17 October 1945.¹³ While it was mentioned, there was no attempt made to give any explanation of what it meant. It was only during the time of the Malayan Union crisis that the term was published in the press, notably in the *Utusan Melayu* which supported the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*.

Kedaulatan rakyat was an issue picked up by the P.K.M.M. only after the party learned that the Federation of Malaya set up to replace the Malayan Union did not give any scope for popular participation in the administration of the government. We have noted earlier how the P.K.M.M. had teamed up with the A.M.C.J.A. to oppose the Federation of Malaya proposals, to draft the People's Constitution, and to campaign for the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat*. According to the party,

If PEKEMBAR [U.M.N.O.] does not bring about the wishes of the common people, the common people themselves will find [a] society or organization of the people which is based on *kedaulatan rakyat*...¹⁴

¹³ See "Perjuangan Kita," by Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy, as quoted by Kamarudin Jaafar in, Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, Yayasan Anda, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p.54.

¹⁴ *Utusan Melayu*, 7 May 1947. Jikalau PEKEMBAR tidak menghasilkan kemahuan rakyat jelata itu, maka rakyat jelata sendiri akan mencari pertubohan atau perkumpulan sesama rakyat yang berdasar kedaulatan rakyat.

In using the term *kedaulatan rakyat* the P.K.M.M. did not give it a detailed explanation. There was no clear idea of what it meant and what it implied other than that it involved the participation of the people in government. Similarly, when the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* was mentioned as one of the major aspects of the People's Constitution it was presented in the following terms:

The *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* will definitely not budge [in] following its policy and aim [in its] struggle for freedom, a broad nationalism, *kedaulatan rakyat*, social justice and humanism.¹⁵

Once again there was no detailed explanation of the term *kedaulatan rakyat* other than that it was one of the principles of the P.K.M.M. The issue of *kedaulatan rakyat* was again raised by the *Utusan Melayu* which was pro-P.K.M.M.:

...Can the Malay Rajas now rule by using the policy of *kedaulatan rakyat*? The Federation will carry on. The Malay Rajas will be in power again, in fact will have more power than before. In the past the administration of the Malay states was not based on majority opinion. Can the Malay rajas now rule by

¹⁵ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* tetap tidak berganjak mengikut dasarnya dan tujuan perjuangan yang merdeka, kebangsaan yang luas, kedaulatan rakyat, keadilan sosial dan peri kemanusiaan. It is noted that these principles were taken from the Panca Sila of Indonesia by the P.K.M.M. which favoured a union of the Malay states with Indonesia.

utilising majority opinion or the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat*?¹⁶

This editorial, in a newspaper considered to be very radical during that period, explained what *kedaulatan rakyat* was construed to be. The rajas should rule in accordance with the opinion of the majority (*dengan fikiran ramai*). While this definition was nowhere near the radical connotation that we see in East Sumatra, we must bear in mind that this was still a revolutionary suggestion when viewed from the angle of the political awareness of the Malays in Malaya. Earlier on, the paper had suggested that a lesson that could be learnt from the Malayan Union crisis was that it should:

...become a big stimulus towards the consciousness that a new experiment must be made, that is, the *rakyat* must be with the Rajas in all matters concerning the business of state.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Utusan Melayu*, 18 December 1947. ...bolehkah Raja-raja Melayu sekarang memerintah dengan memakai dasar kedaulatan rakyat? Federation akan berjalan. Raja-raja Melayu akan berkuasa semula, bahkan akan berkuasa lebih daripada dahulu. Dahulu pemerintahan dinegeri-negeri Melayu tidak berdasar fikiran ramai. Bolehkah Raja-raja Melayu sekarang memerintah dengan memakai fikiran ramai atau dasar kedaulatan rakyat?

¹⁷ *Utusan Melayu*, 6 May 1947. ...menjadi pendorong besar kepada kesedaran bahawa suatu percobaan baharu mestilah diadakan iaitu rakyat jelata mestilah ada bersama dengan Raja-raja didalam segala hal urusan negeri.

Even though there was no definition of a new political structure whereby the role of the people would be enhanced and that the rajas curtailed in keeping with democratic practice, by the standards of Malay political culture in the peninsula, even the suggestion of an equal status for the people alongside the ruler must have appeared revolutionary and threatening to the rajas. Even the conservative Malay newspaper *Majlis* urged that:

The Mentri Besars and the State Secretary should be appointed by the *rakyat* through the U.M.N.O. The rulers should consult the *rakyat* and accept their advice when appointing Datas in each state.¹⁸

Though the *Majlis* had identified the U.M.N.O. as the representative of the Malay people, it saw the need for the rulers to consult the people and accept their advice in making decisions. This in itself meant that the rulers would have their powers curtailed and that the people would have a say in the affairs of state. The similarities in the views of the Malay conservatives and radicals are significant in that both demanded that the Malay rulers should rule with a populist attitude and that the people be involved in the administration of the state. Though they had fundamental differences in other aspects, it is

¹⁸ *Majlis*, 1 January 1947. This suggestion was put forward by the editor with the hope that there will be greater participation by the people in the affairs of state administration. However, nothing seems to materialise from this.

important to note that both still had a place for the *kerajaans* within their arguments.

In East Sumatra the link between change and democracy was emphasised even more strongly. The *Soeloeh Merdeka* carried speeches and articles concerning the need to change and to progress towards democracy. One of the sultans, Sjarif Kasim of Siak, himself succumbed to the irresistible idea of change and of democracy.

If during the era of my ancestors the people had to obey all the Raja's commands, now (*masa sekarang ini*) this must of itself cease (*mesti lenyap*), because the people are now more capable (*cerdas*) and have the right and must be responsible for the progress of the administration.¹⁹

While it was assumed by some Malays that the tradition of Malay kingdoms was at least in theory absolutist, it was agreed by many that this absolutism had to change. Sjarif Kasim was one of the first sultans to talk of progress and change. His use of the term *masa sekarang ini* showed an awareness that change had taken place and his point that blind obedience to the raja's commands would necessarily cease (*mesti lenyap*) was an indication that the old mode of

¹⁹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 2 February 1946. Jika dizaman pemerintahan nenek-moyang saya, rakyat mesti menurut saja segala perintah raja, masa sekarang ini hal itu dengan sendirinya mesti lenyap, sebab rakyat sudah cerdas, dan berhak dan wajib turut bertanggung jawab terhadap kemajuan pemerintahan.

kerajaan administration must be changed. His idea of progress was that the people were now clever (*cerdas*) and have the right and responsibility to be involved in government. By implication his remarks seemed to suggest that in the past the people were stupid (*bodoh*) and did not have the right or responsibility to be involved. Like many educated youth, he appeared to accept that education had brought profound changes in what was appropriate for society.

Governor Mr. Hasan stated:

The situation now has changed (*sudah berubah*), the *rakyat* are now aware (*sedar*) and conscious (*insaf*) and value themselves and their level and group. They demand the right of people's sovereignty (*hak kedaulatan rakyat*)...The trend of the world is democracy.²⁰

Mr. Hasan's statement explicitly links progress to democracy. His use of the terms *ubah* (change), *sudah sedar* dan *insaf* (conscious and aware) and his linking of them to the demand for popular participation in the government and the trend of democracy in the world was a skilful way of giving substance to his argument that progress and democracy are linked and cannot be resisted. The choice of the terms *berubah*, *sedar* and *insaf* demonstrate that change brought

²⁰ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Suasana sekarang sudah berubah, rakyat sudah sedar dan insaf akan harga diri dan harga lapisan atau kastanya. Dia menuntut hak kedaulatan rakyat...Aliran dunia ialah demokrasi...

about awareness and consciousness of the rights of the people. Addressing the East Sumatran Malay *kerajaans*, Governor Hasan stated that:

They must be capable as autocrats of being reconciled to becoming democrats and change the system of administration from autocracy to democracy...²¹

The entire statement of Hasan dealt with the need to change towards democracy on the part of the *kerajaans*. The link between change, progress and democracy was clear. His presentation of the Republic as democratic and the *kerajaans* as autocratic reinforced the view of the *kerajaans* as not progressive. They had to change and become democratic.

The Sultan of Siak in his explanation of *kedaulatan rakyat* and progress put his opinion in the following terms:

In the past epoch, it was the raja who held the highest authority in the state and the people it can be said did not possess any rights at all but only obligations towards their raja. A situation like this sometimes led to the opinion that all that was within the country was the property of the raja. World history has enough examples of this. But mankind was always seeking and achieving progress. Finally there arose the belief of peoples' sovereignty (*kedaulatan rakyat*), which has become one of the bases of our country. Indeed from before I was pro-democracy, therefore pro-peoples' sovereignty. If the people progress (*maju*), I

²¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Mereka harus sanggup menyesuaikan dirinya sebagai autokrat menjadi demokrat dan menyesuaikan corak pemerintahannya dari autokrasi ke demokrasi.

too will progress.²²

In looking at this statement of Sjarif Kasim we become aware of *zaman dahulu kala* as the antithesis of *zaman sekarang* (the present era). The term *zaman dahulu kala* gave no idea when this began or ended but instead left one with a sense of the past as opposed to the present. This is a purely dualistic framework of old versus new, and notably did not distinguish colonial from pre-colonial. Sjarif Kasim's description of the *zaman dahulu kala* as a past in which the raja had absolute power and the people (*rakyat*) had no rights whatsoever was an extreme statement of the *zaman dahulu* of the *kerajaans*. It was clear that at this period of change in Malay history there were few voices that attempted to glorify the Malay past. His acceptance of mankind seeking and, more important, achieving progress was important as a pointer that to him change was inevitable and that he had a grasp of the notion of change. In committing himself to progress (*maju*) he linked his fate to the progress of the people, but without conceding that his attitude had to change.

²² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946. Pada zaman dahulu kala rajalah yang memegang kekuasaan tertinggi dalam negeri dan rakyat boleh dikatakan tidak mempunyai hak apapun melainkan ia mempunyai kewajiban terhadap rajanya. Hal yang demikian terkadang-kadang menyebabkan timbul pendapat bahawa segala apa yang ada dalam negeri itu menjadi hak miliknya. Sejarah dunia cukup memberi contoh-contoh. Akan tetapi manusia senantiasa mencari dan mencapai kemajuan. Akhirnya timbul pula faham kedaulatan rakyat, yang juga menjadi salah satu sendi negara kita. Memang dari dahulu saya pro-demokrasi, jadi pro-kedaulatan rakyat. Kalau rakyat maju saya turut maju.

An even more forceful interpretation of progress and democracy was given by Luat Siregar in his remarks to the Sultans:

We must change our way of thinking and throw out what is old and dried to replace it with what is useful. All outdated characteristics with a feudal smell must be erased. All arrangements and actions that are not in keeping with the demands of the *rakyat* at this time (*pada waktu ini*) must be changed (*harus diubah*). In an independent Indonesia, any area will not be able to exist if it is not administered according to the basis of peoples' sovereignty (*kedaulatan rakyat*).²³

Luat Siregar's statement must rank as one of the most radical expressions of the 'progress' theme. Luat's emphasis on change was strongly suggested by his use of the terms *merubah jalan pikiran* (to change the way of thinking), *membuang yang lama usang dengan yang baru berguna* (discard what is old and dried with what is new and useful), *sifat yang kolot* (a characteristic that is outdated), *tidak cukup dengan tuntutan rakyat pada waktu ini* (not in keeping with the demands of the people at this time), *harus diubah* (must be changed), all of which point to the old being replaced by the new and progressive. Of importance was the link which

²³ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Kita mesti merubah jalan pikiran kita, membuang yang lama usang dengan yang baru berguna. Segala sifat yang kolot yang berbau feodal harus dihapuskan. Segala susunan dan tindakan yang tidak cukup dengan tuntutan rakyat pada waktu ini harus diubah. Dizaman Indonesia merdeka, daerah manapun juga sekali-kali tidak akan dapat berdiri jikalau tidak dikendalikan menurut azas kedaulatan rakyat.

Luat Siregar draws between *kolot* (outmoded) and anti-*kedaulatan rakyat*. The use of the term *zaman Indonesia merdeka* implies that a new chapter of progress was opened with an independent Indonesia which had as its basis sovereignty of the people (*kedaulatan rakyat*).

Jamaluddin Adinegoro, a well known journalist and nationalist, also linked democracy explicitly with progress.

Democracy is one aspiration that is holy because it gives the widest rights to the people and because in a democratic atmosphere the people can get unlimited progress (*kemajuan yang tidak terbatas*). But to achieve democratic progress (*kemajuan demokrasi*) the people must overcome several "fronts" which seem to obstruct this democracy with its allies, that is, feudalism which is based on autocracy and also very often gives rise to arbitrary actions of capitalism, commercialism, bureaucracy, anarchism as well as nihilism.²⁴

Adinegoro's article clearly links progress to democracy by his use of the term *kemajuan* and its association with democracy. The term *kemajuan* not only means progress but also success. Hence this was a positive value contrasted to feudalism, which should be rejected as negative and which

²⁴ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 19 February 1946. Demokrasi adalah satu cita-cita yang suci murni sebab dia memberikan hak yang seluas luas kepada rakyat dan kerana hanya dalam suasana demokrasi itu rakyat dapat kemajuan yang tidak terbatas. Akan tetapi untuk mencapai kemajuan demokrasi rakyat harus menembus beberapa front yang seolah olah mengukung demokrasi itu, dengan pasukannya iaitu feudalisma yang berdasar autocrasi dan lagi sering menimbulkan tindakan sewenang wenang kapitalisma, commercialisma, birokrasi, anarkisma serta nihilisma.

he characterised as autocratic and arbitrary and the main protagonist to *kemajuan*. Feudalism according to Jamaluddin was supported by capitalism, commercialism, bureaucracy, anarchism and nihilism. Jamaluddin's use of these European words was not likely to be understood by his readers who were not as westernized as he was. Probably these terms were used to impress his readers and to blacken the image of the *kerajaan*.

We have noted the use and linking of feudalism to *zaman kolot* and its opposition to democracy and *zaman baru* by both Luat Siregar and Jamaluddin Adinegoro. Luat Siregar used the term "feudal" as a characteristic i.e. *sifat yang kolot yang berbau feodal* (an outdated characteristic with a feudal smell) while Adinegoro linked feudalism to a string of negative Dutch concepts. Governor Hasan stated that "in a republican arrangement, there will be allowed to exist a feudal administrative structure that must be democratised as quickly as possible."²⁵ What was meant by the term "feudal"? Why did nationalists use the term "feudal" to characterise their societies and political institutions when there was no parcellized sovereignty, or fief system as well as other characteristics which historians would insist were crucial to feudalism as known in European society? Part of the answer lies in the local or vernacular interpretation of

²⁵ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946.

feudalism given by the nationalists to their societies. To the nationalists, classifying their society or political institutions like the *kerajaans* as feudal meant that "it assimilates Asian societies to the Western evolutionary scheme, thereby denying to those societies uniqueness and autonomy".²⁶

As one study has pointed out:

In Indonesia, as in most Asian countries, the term "feudalism" became very popular in the 1930s and 40s. It was part of the jargon which nationalists accepted eagerly from Marxism, because it seemed to locate their own societies on a linear path of inevitable progress. By making an explicit analogy with European history, it emphasised that the royal courts and aristocratic officials protected by the colonial power were in fact anachronistic doomed relics of an earlier age. It helped legitimate the aspiration of nationalists to replace not only colonialism but also the internal hierarchy based on birth by a more democratic order in which education and the skills of mass mobilization would be adequately rewarded. At a popular level "feudal" became simply the pejorative equivalent for "aristocratic" or traditional.²⁷

The evolutionary scheme which the nationalists adapted by classifying their institutions as 'feudal' meant that they could point out that feudalism was a stage in the

²⁶ See J. Craiz Reynolds, "Feudalism As A Trope Or Discourse For the Asian Past With Special Reference to Thailand," in Edmund Leach, S.N. Mukherjee & John Ward (eds.), Feudalism: Comparative Studies, Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture, No.2, Sydney, 1985, pp.135-154.

²⁷ Takeshi Ito and A. Reid, "From Harbour Autocracies to "Feudal" Diffusion in Seventeenth Century Indonesia: The Case of Aceh," in Feudalism: Comparative Studies, p.197.

evolution of a society that was passed and was now outmoded. Similarly Marxist oriented nationalists used the term "feudal" in a Marxist historicist scheme by pointing out that feudalism was a stage that should be done away with as a result of social revolution and progress. Therefore in classifying the Malay *kerajaans* of East Sumatra as feudal, we can see that the East Sumatran nationalists had imbibed the notion of change and that the changes they were demanding were indeed fundamental changes arising out of a conflict within the society itself.

The link between change, progress and democracy which led to the *kerajaans* being described as 'feudal' led naturally to the demand that changes in the absolutism of the *kerajaans* should be accompanied by greater popular participation in the administration. In East Sumatra, it was demanded that the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* be implemented in full and that the *kerajaans* be completely subservient to the voice of the people who would participate in administering the state through wholly elected councils. It was noteworthy that the idea of *kedaulatan rakyat* was taken from the historical examples of the American and French Revolutions. As argued in the *Soeloeh Merdeka*:

In reality, freedom and equal rights for every person was espoused as a principle in the constitution of a nation when in the year 1776 the American states declared their independence. But nevertheless the most important influence in the history of democracy was the French Revolution (*Pemberontakkan Perancis*) which took

place 13 years after the Declaration of American Independence. It was the French Revolution that was seen as the source of democratic arrangement in the administration of nations. It can be said also that the ideals of the French Revolution have become the source of democratic politics. The ideals of the French Revolution were based on the famous slogan that is "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."²¹

The important concepts in this statement are *kemerdekaan* (freedom or liberty) and *persamaan hak bagi tiap-tiap manusia* (equality of rights for the individual) which were very revolutionary when stated in Malay, even though they would have been standard political theory in Dutch, French and English political ideology. However, the whole meaning becomes creatively different and even dangerous and revolutionary in Malay. The rationale for the existence of the *kerajaans*, an inequality supposedly divinely ordained, was directly under attack. Those more familiar with the histories of the American and French revolutions, would have understood that these were revolutions against the divine right of kings.

²¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946. Sebetulnya kemerdekaan dan persamaan hak bagi tiap-tiap manusia itu diterangkan secara prinsipel didalam undang-undang negara ketika pada tahun 1776 negeri Amerika menyatakan kemerdekaannya (Declaration of Independence). Akan tetapi pengaruh lebih paling besar didalam riwayat demokrasi ialah Pemberontakan Peranchis yang meletus 13 tahun sesudah Pernyataan Kemerdekaan Amerika tadi. Revolusi Peranchis itulah yang dapat dipandang sebagai sumber daripada peraturan demokrasi didalam pemerintahan negara. Dapat dibilang juga bahawa demokrasi politik. Cita-cita Revolusi Peranchis itu bersandar atas semboyan yang terkenal iaitu, "Kemerdekaan, Persamaan dan Persaudaran."

The term *pemberontakkan* (rebellion) was mentioned once and than quickly replaced by the term "revolution." *Pemberontakkan* (rebellion) had always had primarily negative associations and thus was seldom used by the East Sumatran Malays, who preferred to view their struggle as a revolution. The Malays had no term for revolution except negative ones, and so a foreign term *révolusi* was used instead. Furthermore a rebellion was always linked to treason (*derhaka*) against the ruler for which the offenders would be punished now and in the hereafter. It was therefore unusual for Malay political culture to countenance rebellion.²⁹ Since the American and French Revolutions were seen as positive in conferring democracy on the people, revolution was identified as a source for democratic arrangements in a country's administration (*sumber daripada peraturan demokrasi didalam pemerintahan negara*) in which a republic was set up to replace the monarchies. A republican form of government was alien to Malay political culture, since it implied an equality that would enable any Malay to be elected to the office of president. While democratization without destroying the *kerajaans* was a theoretical possibility, because of the serious internal conflicts within East Sumatran society it was widely accepted that the way to democratise was to revolutionise (overthrow) the *kerajaans*. The slogan of the French

²⁹ See Chapter One on the negative image of rebellion in Malay political culture.

Revolution, translated into Malay as *Kemerdekaan, Persamaan dan Persaudaraan* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), was dangerous when viewed from traditional Malay political ideology. They threatened the existence of the *kerajaans* which demand undivided loyalty on the part of the people and believed in a divinely ordained inequality within the society.

Since these ideas were new in Malay political terminology and had yet to be defined clearly, the scope for anarchy was perceived to be great if every Malay accepted the principle that *kedaulatan rakyat* resided in him and decided to act on that premise. Such a view of the power of the people was illustrated by the statement of Governor Hasan to the Sultans of East Sumatra in a meeting held between the Republican government and the East Sumatran *kerajaans*:

In a republic, it is the people who govern in reality because the president is chosen by the people from the people for some years only...In a *kerajaan* the position of the raja is hereditary and it is not the people who are sovereign (*berdaulat*) but the raja. The Indonesian people have chosen a republican state system and the system of administration is based on democracy (*kedaulatan rakyat*). Democracy is in opposition to autocracy (an arbitrary administration from one man).³⁰

³⁰ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 28 January 1946. Dalam republik rakyat sebetulnya yang memerintah sebab presiden itu dipilih oleh rakyat dari kalangan rakyat untuk beberapa tahun sahaja...Dalam kerajaan pangkat raja itu turun temurun dan bukan rakyat yang berdaulat melainkan raja. Nasib rakyat

Hasan's statement emphasized the contrast between the Republican system and the *kerajaan*. The Republican system was presented in a positive imagery since it was the people who governed, who had the power and who elected one among themselves to be president. The *kerajaans* were presented as reactionary and negative in that the people had no power, no choice over who should be leader and no sovereignty. *Daulat* was presented as something tangible which could be acquired by the people and not something supernatural that could only accrue to the sultans. In this respect, a new element in the interpretation of *daulat* can be discerned. Of equal importance was the link Hasan made between democracy and the republic on the one hand and between autocracy and the *kerajaans* on the other. In many respects his statement was value laden, since the *kerajaans* were presented as undemocratic, autocratic and negative as well as static and lacking a notion of change.

Since the line of argument that had been advocated consistently in East Sumatra was that *kedaulatan rakyat* belongs to everyone regardless of station in life, the events of the 'social revolution' of March 1946 which led to

bergantung kepada satu orang (raja). Rakyat Indonesia telah memilih corak susunan negara Republik dan corak pemerintahan yang berdasar kedaulatan rakyat (demokrasi). Demokrasi ini lawan autokrasi (pemerintahan sewenang-wenang dari satu orang).

the physical destruction of the Malay *kerajaans* can be described as a fulfilment of such a view. In describing the 'social revolution' Dr. M. Amir justified the physical destruction of the *kerajaans* in the following terms:

To understand the serious incidents now [social revolution] in East Sumatra, it is necessary to know that in the entire island of Sumatra for thousands of years there were democratic structures in the *kampong*, *huta* and *nagari*, except for East Sumatra which until now is still a nest and fortress of feudalism (administration of aristocrats). Outside East Sumatra the masses since the N.R.I. [was established] are people who are free and protected by the laws of the government. The people of East Sumatra live in the *daerah istimewa* (*kerajaan governments*) under the rule of the Rajas and Datus and others (who are the) feudal elite who in general don't like the Republic.³¹

The statement of Dr. Amir was an attempt to justify the concrete demonstration of *kedaulatan rakyat* by an insurgent people. Therefore the East Sumatran *kerajaans* were pictured as anomalous fortresses of feudalism which Amir defined as the rule of the aristocrats. Amir used the modern and

³¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 5 March 1946. Untuk mengertikan kejadian yang hebat sekarang (revolusi sosial), di S. Timur, haruslah diketahui bahawa diseluruh pulau Sumatera semenjak beribu tahun ada susunan demokrasi dikampong dan huta dan nagari, kecuali di Sumatera Timur, yang sampai sekarang menjadi sarang dan benteng feudalisma (pemerintahan keningratan). Diluar S. Timur rakyat jelata selama N.R.I. ini adalah rakyat yang merdeka, yang dibela oleh grondwet pemerintahan rakyat Republik. Rakyat di S. Timur hidop dalam "daerah istimewa" (kerajaan landschap) dibawah pemerintahan raja, datuk datuk d.l.l., kaum feudal, yang umumnya tidak suka pada Republik.

negative Javanese term *keningratan* to describe the aristocrats and not the Malay term which would be *bangsawan*.

Since the populace had demonstrated what could happen when they took the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat* seriously, Dr. Amir chose to accept and justify their actions.

In such a critical situation, it is necessary to take extraordinary steps, that is, to change the structure and form of the government radically in order to conform with the desires of the people (*kedaulatan rakyat*).³²

The interpretation of this manifestation of *kedaulatan rakyat* was by the use of terms such as *diambil tindakan yang luar biasa* (to take extraordinary steps), *diubah dengan radical* (to change radically) in keeping with *kedaulatan rakyat*. The point being made here was that the actions were unusual and extra-ordinary and should not be seen as a norm.

³² *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 5 March 1946. Dalam keadaan yang genting ini perlu diambil tindakan yang luar biasa, yaitu akan diubah susunan pemerintahan dan cara pemerintahan dengan radical, supaya selaras dengan keinginan rakyat (*kedaulatan rakyat*).

We have noted in chapter three that the excesses of the 'social revolution' caused a reevaluation of the principle of *kedaulatan rakyat*. This became necessary since the 'social revolution' had demonstrated to many that an unqualified interpretation of that principle could lead to anarchy. The *Soeloeh Merdeka* carried an article concerning the interpretation of *kedaulatan rakyat* which was as follows:

What is *kedaulatan rakyat*? This simple question is also confusing. Just think that in reality *kedaulatan rakyat* meant the highest power. In the past, the holder of such a *kedaulatan* was usually the king or queen. Because the *rakyat* was mentally used to this, the king or queen's sovereignty (*kedaulatan raja*) was usually understood. This highest power that was held by a king did not create confusion because the holder of this power was one man and [he] can be easily seen. But then if the *kedaulatan* was with the people then there will emerge complex questions.³³

³³ See "Sedikit Tentang Demokrasi dalam Undang-Undang Dasar Kita," a publication produced by the Ministry of Information in *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946. Apakah *kedaulatan rakyat* itu? Pertanyaan yang sederhana itu saja sudah agak memusing kepala. Cobalah fikirkan dengan benar-benar *kedaulatan rakyat* berarti kekuasaan yang tertinggi. Pada zaman dahulu kala yang memegang *kedaulatan* seperti itu biasanya raja atau ratu. Oleh kerana *rakyat* bisa akan hal itu, *kedaulatan raja* atau ratu dapat bisa mengerti. Kekuasaan tertinggi yang dipegang oleh seorang raja itulah tak membikin pusing kepala sebab sipemegang kekuasaan itu hanya seorang raja dan dapat mudah dilihat pula. Akan tetapi, kalau *kedaulatan* itu ada pada *rakyat*, maka mulailah timbul soal yang sulit.

The statement revealed the extreme difficulty the writer faced by trying to explain in a simple manner to the common people what *kedaulatan rakyat* really meant. After describing it as the highest power, the writer was forced to refer to the monarchy to give a visual idea of what it was. But in the question how *kedaulatan* could also be held by the *rakyat* we see the crux of the problem. The admission that complex problems would arise (*mulailah timbul soal yang sulit*) suggests the danger the writer saw - that, in principle, *kedaulatan* might confer on the *rakyat* unlimited freedom to do as they please.

This attempt to show the meaning and substance of *kedaulatan rakyat* by using the raja's possession of *daulat* as an example together with the emphasis on the arbitrary exercise of power by the raja raised the danger that once *kedaulatan* had passed to the *rakyat*, they could act in the same manner as the monarch who had served as a term of reference for the exercise of *kedaulatan*. The article went on to add:

Just now, I have described how in the past the raja held the highest power, wherefore it can be said power that was unbridled. In such a nation, the people have no rights whatsoever. The people only had obligations towards their raja. The unbridled power of the raja resulted in the fact that whatever was in the state was considered to be his property until the raja had power over the life and death of his *rakyat*. A power as vast as that [meant] *kedaulatan raja* which was so powerful was premised on God. It was said by the raja that *kedaulatan* which was unbridled originates from God. Therefore, the raja was seen as God's

representative in this world...in a society like this definitely individual freedom could not develop. Freedom of thought or meeting and assembly did not exist even; still more the freedom to criticise the government certainly did not exist at all.³¹

In reconciling the conflicting notions that though the people had *kedaulatan* yet they could not exercise it as each of them saw fit, the writer had to explain the use of *kedaulatan rakyat* by linking it to the Constitution in the following terms:

...Our Constitution guarantees *kedaulatan rakyat*...Because it is guaranteed that there will be *kedaulatan rakyat* and this *kedaulatan* can be implemented, therefore the citizen will often act according to his own inclinations. So long as there is possession of power, *kedaulatan* can be implemented. But then, what is meant in our Constitution is that *kedaulatan rakyat* will be implemented in an orderly way. Therefore arising from that, the *kedaulatan* that

³¹ Soeloeh Merdeka, 17 January 1946. Tadi sudah saya gambarkan bahawa pada zaman dahulu kala rajalah yang memegang kekuasaan tertinggi bahkan boleh dikatakan kekuasaan yang tak terbatas. Di dalam negara yang demikian itu, rakyatnya tak mempunyai hak apapun juga. Rakyat mempunyai kewajiban sahaja terhadap rajanya. Kekuasaan raja yang tak terbatas itu menyebabkan bahawa segala apa yang ada didalam negeri itu dianggap menjadi hal miliknya, sehingga rajapun menguasai atas hidup mati rakyatnya. Kekuatan yang begitu besar itu, kedaulatan raja yang begitu luas biasanya disandarkan atas asas ke Tuhanan. Dikatakan oleh raja itu, bahawa kedaulatan yang tak terhingga berasal dari Tuhan, jadi dapatlah raja dipandang wakil Tuhan didunia ini...Didalam masyarakat yang sedemikian itu tentulah kemerdekaan seseorang tidak dapat berkembang. Kemerdekaan berfikir atau bersidang dan berkumpul tidak ada; terlebih lebih kemerdekaan untuk mengeluarkan kecaman (kritik) terhadap Pemerintahan tentu tidak ada sama sekali.

is in the hands of the *rakyat* must be implemented in full by the Peoples' Representative Council.³⁵

By limiting *kedaulatan rakyat* to the Constitution and the interpretation of it within the Constitution, this exegesis curtailed its use by anyone who might be of the opinion that it could accrue to him. The statement is an excellent example of the position that *kedaulatan rakyat* exists within the people but cannot be utilised. By its sophisticated reasoning, the article sought to defuse resentment against the curtailment of the direct exercise of *kedaulatan rakyat* by the *rakyat*. Indirectly, the newspaper was saying that sovereignty exists within the people but the exercise of it can only be in a representative council. Otherwise it would be extremely difficult to cope with *kedaulatan rakyat* if the *rakyat* accepted it literally and decided to translate into action the *kedaulatan* that they were said to possess.

³⁵ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 17 January 1946. ...Undang-Undang Dasar kita menjamin kedaulatan rakyat...Oleh kerana dijamin ada kedaulatan rakyat, dan kedaulatan rakyat itu dapat dilakukan pula maka sering-sering rakyat bertindak menurut kehendaknya sendiri-sendiri. Asal sahaja mempunyai alat kekuasaan, maka kedaulatan rakyat itu pun dengan muda dilakukan. Akan tetapi, yang dimaksudkan dalam Undang-Undang Dasar kita ialah kedaulatan rakyat yang dilakukan dengan teratur. Maka dari itu, kedaulatan yang ada ditangan rakyat harus dilakukan sepenuhnya oleh Majlis Permusyawaratan Rakyat.

Because *kedaulatan rakyat* was indeed revolutionary if its meaning were to be taken literally, Governor Hasan himself took this argument even further:

The Republican administration was not based on *kedaulatan rakyat*, democracy, the people chose their representatives in consultative bodies, and these institutions choose the President once every five years...³⁶

What Hasan was stating was that there would be no direct democracy but democracy as exercised through the legislative councils which would be composed of elected representatives of the people. This was clearly an attempt to keep the literal interpretation of *kedaulatan rakyat* in check. In denying that the administration was based on *kedaulatan rakyat* at all, Hasan was retreating from the position of early 1946 which stated that the *rakyat* possessed the *kedaulatan* and were entitled to use it.

In the section above, we have discussed how a period of change after the Second World War brought ideas of change to the Malay community in East Sumatra and Peninsular Malaya

³⁶ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 February 1946. Pemerintahan Republik tidak berdasarkan kedaulatan rakyat, demokrasi, rakyat memilih wakilnya dalam badan-badan permusyawaratan dan badan-badan ini yang memilih Presiden sekali lima tahun...

with regard to the role of the *kerajaans*, democracy and *kedaulatan rakyat*. In both areas the changes advocated were revolutionary, though East Sumatra went even further. In Malaya, some Malays questioned the absolutism of the *kerajaans* and the lack of popular participation in the governing of the state. The peninsular Malays used terms that connoted change such as *edar* and *berubah* and demanded that the *kerajaans* should rule on the basis of popular opinion and also possess elected councils. By the standards of Malay political culture in Malaya, these demands were revolutionary. But even though these changes were demanded and advocated, the peninsular Malays were unwilling to break completely with the past. The *kerajaans* were not seen as feudal nor were they categorised as feudal, for to have done so would have implied that the *kerajaans* represented a stage in the evolutionary development of government which had to be left behind.

Similarly the cautious use of anglicised terms such as *demokrat* instead of the radical *kedaulatan rakyat* seem to imply that in Malaya the Malays would rather maintain the *kerajaans* with such changes as were necessary to safeguard Malay interests. Since the *kerajaans* were viewed as an emblem and cement of Malay society, they were maintained as a symbol of Malayness. Such a state of affairs was brought by the presence of large numbers of non-Malay immigrants who

were seen as a threat to the Malay polity and hence to Malay political culture. It must also be stressed that at no time did the Malays clamour for independence from the British. On the contrary, they were demanding continued British protection (*naungan*) against the non-Malays. The argument put forward by both conservative and radical Malays for popular participation in government, as we have noted in the previous chapters, was because of the need to protect Malay interests vis-a-vis non-Malays.

The peninsular Malays were not motivated by the ideals of the American and French Revolutions, with their slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity inspired by the notion of change. Neither the *Majlis* nor the *Utusan Melayu* at any stage mentioned these Revolutions and what could be learnt from them. The changes discussed in the peninsula remained circumscribed to that extent. However, if we accept that before the war, public demands for democracy would have invited the charge of *derhaka* (treason), it would be fair to state that despite the perceived absence of a notion of revolution in Malaya, Malay political culture did undergo profound and irrevocable changes.

In East Sumatra, the reasons given for the Malay *kerajaans* to change from absolutism to *kedaulatan rakyat* were in many ways similar to those given in Malaya. However,

there were important differences. Firstly, East Sumatra was within the Republic of Indonesia which had declared its independence on 17 August 1945. Since these *kerajaans* were petty monarchies existing within a republican structure, they were already at a considerable disadvantage. Secondly, to the republicans, the Dutch were not considered as liberators but as colonisers who should be resisted. Thirdly, there was no influential conservative group that could moderate the demands of the people for *kedaulatan rakyat*.

In East Sumatra, the translating of *kedaulatan rakyat* into Malay with all its revolutionary implications and anti-*kerajaan* flavour as well as the continuous use of negative terms such as *kolot* (archaic), autocratic and feudal to describe the *kerajaans* created a deep chasm between the Sultans and the people. The eulogising of the American and French Revolutions, which were rebellions against monarchies, created an atmosphere which justified the same course of action as a means to obtain the rewards of the revolution. The description of the *kerajaans* as feudal showed an understanding of a notion of change as the *kerajaans* were considered to be anachronisms that should give way to the peoples' sovereignty. The argument that *daulat* (power) resided in the people and could be exercised encouraged gardeners, farmers, refuse collectors, street sweepers as well as clerks to exercise this *daulat* during

the 'social revolution' of March 1946 and destroy the Malay *kerajaans*. The net result was the radicalization of Malay political culture and the republicanising of the Malays.

In the East Sumatran context there was no ground for compromise between ruler and ruled. In analysing the radicalisation of Malay political culture in East Sumatra, it must be noted that the destruction of the *kerajaans* was a fundamental change in Malay political culture which had hitherto placed the *kerajaans* as its apex. In this respect, the Malay community of East Sumatra went even further in revolutionising Malay political culture by placing the *rakyat* as the pivot of Malay political culture.

CHAPTER 7

COMMUNITY

It is the aim of this chapter to analyse Malay perceptions of communal loyalty and identity in the immediate post-war period. In particular we will examine the way in which the focus of loyalty shifted away from the *kerajaans* and how Malay political writers sought new bases of political allegiance.

With the end of the war, the Malays had a problem which was common to most other Southeast Asian peoples. The old loyalties to the rajas, chiefs or petty settlements were no longer workable or convincing. What became important within Malay society was the "imagined community". The central problem facing the Malay community was redefining identities and loyalties within the "imagined community" during the transition to the nation state. What form was the "imagined community" to take? What would be the position of the *kerajaan* and the *rakyat* in this community? What kind of identity would emerge in a multi-ethnic community where indigenous and non-indigenous groups struggled to safeguard their own interests? Questions such as these became pertinent.

In analysing the shifts in the foci of loyalty and community, important quotations will be chosen and analysed.

Because some of the most important changes are relatively subtle, it will be necessary to examine the formulation and, in particular, the language of our texts in considerable detail.

We shall begin by looking at the Malay radicals in Malaya. In their struggle we encounter a real, though unsuccessful, attempt to promote a nationalist spirit of the type familiar elsewhere in Southeast Asia. An analysis of the P.K.M.M views - which stand at the periphery of the political and social discussion of the 1940s - provides a helpful context for discussing the terminology and views adopted by the more mainstream Malay ideologues. Here we note the importance of the terms *bangsa* and *kebangsaan*. *Bangsa* as pointed out in an earlier chapter could mean people, race, community, nationality, state or nation.

The P.K.M.M. held its inaugural congress on 30 November, 1945 at Ipoh in Perak. As has been shown the party's eight point programme included an aim to "unite the *bangsa Melayu* and plant *kebangsaan* [nationalism] in the hearts of the Malays with the aim of uniting Malaya into a big family i.e. the *Republik Indonesia Raya*."¹ The P.K.M.M. stressed that the party was based on *kebangsaan* and

¹ See U.M.N.O./S.G. no.96/1946. Mempersatu padukan bangsa Melayu, menanamkan semangat kebangsaan dalam sanubari orang-orang Melayu dan bertujuan untuk menyatukan Malaya didalam keluarga besar iaitu Republik Indonesia Raya.

desired freedom for the *bangsa* and the *tanah air*.²

The very name *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* is significant. It implies that there were also other *Melayu* communities that existed in other countries. In fact the P.K.M.M. viewed the Indonesian territories and the Republic of the Philippines as areas inhabited by the *Melayu Indonesia* and the *Melayu Filipina* respectively as can be seen in the following:

After the rise of a sovereign *kebangsaan Melayu*, from that time onwards there arose three large divisions of Malays and Malayness i.e. Philippines, Indonesia and Melayu.³

In this quote, the P.K.M.M. used the term *bangsa Melayu* in a wide sense to include Filipinos, Indonesians and Malays. Their idea of *bangsa Melayu* would embrace the Malayo-Polynesian ethno-linguistic group. There was no mention of accomodating the Chinese and Indians in Malaya as these *bangsa* would be marginal to the vast numbers of "Malays" as defined by the P.K.M.M. in its *Melayu Raya*. *Melayu Raya* could mean a greater Malay unity as well as a Malay nation. In the context used by the P.K.M.M. there is

² *Ibid.*

³ Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy as quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, p.114. Setelah terwujud kebangsaan Melayu yang berdaulat, maka pada masa itu terdirilah tiga bahagian Melayu dan kemelayuan yang besar iaitu Filipina, Indonesia dan Melayu.

an appeal to build a greater Malay unity as well as nation. These P.K.M.M. views were put in writing by Burhanuddin Elhulaimy in a pamphlet entitled *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oktober 1945 - 17 Oktober 1946*.⁴

According to Dr. Burhanuddin Elhulaimy, the principal ideologue of the party, the focus of loyalty and identity was Indonesia because it was seen by him as the fulfilment of Malayness. He saw the old empires of Sri Vijaya, Majapahit and Malacca as Malay empires. All the various ethnic groups inhabiting the Indonesian archipelago were branches of the *bangsa Melayu*. His aim was to build a Malay state (*Melayu Raya*) based on Malayness:

We intend to establish a Malay state based on *kebangsaan Melayu* and a state that will be in conformity with justice and humanity which are all encompassing. It will be a state which possesses equal rights and justice and which has none of the narrowness and taint of racism and other outdated and archaic sentiments.⁵

His view that all ethnic groups inhabiting the Indonesian archipelago are branches of the *bangsa Melayu* was not accepted by all ethnic groups he classifies as Malays.

⁴ *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oktober 1945 - 17 Oktober 1946*, Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya, Singapura.

⁵ Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy as quoted in Kamaruddin Jaafar's Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, Yayasan Anda, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, pp.110-111. Kita hendak mendirikan negara kebangsaan Melayu diatas dasar kebangsaan, menuntut keadilan dan kemanusiaan yang luas sama berhak dan adil, bukan sekali-kali yang sempit, sejauh-jauhnya dari berbau perkauman dan perasaan yang kolot dan kuno.

It has been demonstrated in an earlier chapter that most of these groups did not see themselves as *Melayu*. The *kebangsaan* they had chosen for themselves was not *kebangsaan Melayu* but *kebangsaan Indonesia*, that is an Indonesian nationality in which they could retain their distinct cultural characteristics.

Undaunted by this possible flaw in his conception, we note that Burhanuddin distinguished between *bangsa*, used to describe the Malay community and *kebangsaan*, which had a broader meaning of Malayness. This difference is important because it suggests that non-Malays could be a part of *kebangsaan Melayu* even though they were not from the *bangsa Melayu*. It is significant that the nationalism advocated by Burhanuddin did not have a precise territory or country.

While Burhanuddin may claim that his concept of *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu* was not racial, it was still exclusive.

Kebangsaan Melayu does not exist simply because the individual is [from the] *bangsa Melayu* or his father is Malay, grandfather is Malay, his grandmother is Malay, his descent or heredity is Malay. The individual must also imbibe the meaning and aim of *kebangsaan Melayu*...¹

¹ Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy, p.111. *Kebangsaan Melayu* bukan dibina kerana semata-mata seorang itu bangsa Melayu atau bapanya Melayu, datuknya Melayu, neneknya Melayu, keturunannya Melayu, bakanya Melayu jika ia belum mengisi

Thus it is possible for a Malay to be excluded from *kebangsaan Melayu*, if he chose to opt out, just as a non-Malay can be a part of *kebangsaan Melayu* if he severs his links with his original *kebangsaan* and adopts *kebangsaan Melayu*. In *Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu*,¹ Burhanuddin pointed out that the focus of loyalty ought to be not the *bangsa Melayu* (Malay community) but the *kebangsaan Melayu*.

According to him *kebangsaan Melayu* was not premised on individuals belonging to the *bangsa Melayu* or a Malay ancestry and descent. The focus of loyalty that was being advocated by Burhanuddin and the P.K.M.M. was not overtly ethnic. His understanding of *kebangsaan* was based on an aim and purpose that went beyond race. It was premised on the acceptance of certain basic Malay characteristics which included culture, language, political and social values, all of which were mentioned in passing without any detailed explanation of what these characteristics were.

...but *kebangsaan Melayu* is based and erected upon *kebangsaan Melayu* which is moulded by the natural circumstances of the land, hereditary descent, cultural traits and the right of the inhabitants of this land

erti dan tujuan *kebangsaan Melayu*...If one follows the logic of his statement, it implies that a Malay can leave *kebangsaan Melayu* and still be a Malay. This view is confirmed on page 113 of his book where Burhanuddin states that a Malay of his own free will can leave it. However what it actually means in a practical sense for a Malay to leave *kebangsaan Melayu* is not pointed out.

¹ Burhanuddin AlHelmy, Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu, Pustaka Semenanjung, Bukit Mertajam, 1954.

(*ibu pertiwi*). One desire and one aim, united in an ideology of *kebangsaan*. This is the basis of *kebangsaan Melayu* which is broader than that stated by Renan: *Le desir d'etre ensemble* (the desire to be united within one national unity) with conviction and clarity and according to Otto Bauer, "A nation is a community of conduct arising out of a community of destiny," because people who have one understanding and one ideology in *kebangsaan* will not move their loyalty to another state. Arising from that in Malaya *kebangsaan Melayu* is the only foundation [for a] *kebangsaan* that is healthy and genuine. On the basis of this *kebangsaan* whoever severs his loyalty to whatever nation and who displays the qualifications and proof of loyalty then he is a person who is equal to all members of the community and has the same rights and responsibilities.⁸

The long and difficult quote indicates something of the breadth and scope of Burhanuddin's definition of *kebangsaan Melayu*. Though this definition does not give ethnicity as the main basis it involved a severance of all other focus of loyalty to other lands. Burhanuddin was familiar with Sukarno's writings and borrowed some of his ideas on

⁸ Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy as quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy, p.111. ...tetapi *kebangsaan Melayu* itu diasaskan dan dibinakan diatas *kebangsaan Melayu* yang mengikut tabiat semula jadi kedudukan bumi, keturunan pusaka, kebudayaan baka dan penduduk hak mutlak bumi pertiwi ini. Yang bersatu hasrat dan azamnya, bersatu padu dalam ideologi *kebangsaannya*, inilah asasnya *kebangsaan Melayu* ynaglebih luas dari yang dikatakan oleh Renan [seorang penulis Peranchis] Le desir d'etre ensemble (bagi kehendak hasrat bersatu kedalam suatu persatuan *kebangsaan*) dengan tegas dan nyata dan sebagai menurut kata Otto Bauer, "A nation is a community of conduct arising out of a community of destiny," kerana orang yang telah satu faham dan ideology dalam *kebangsaan* tiadalah kepada lain negeri lagi ia akan menumpahkan taat setianya. Kerana itulah di Malaya ini *kebangsaan Melayu* itulah sahaja asas *kebangsaan* yang sehat dan tulin. Maka diatas *kebangsaan* inilah siapa sahaja yang telah memutuskan taat setianya daripada negeri-negeri yang lain ia berkait dengan kelayakan dan bukti kesetiaan dan menumpahkan taat setianya kepada ideology *kebangsaan Melayu*, maka samalah ia daripada suatu bahagian anggota untuk semua dan untuk hak ramai bagi hak bersama dan sama berhak.

nationalisme Indonesia, but here he was applying them not to *nationalisme Malaya* but to *kebangsaan Melayu*.

He stressed that acceptance into *kebangsaan Melayu* involved an acceptance of the need to become *Melayu*. Burhanuddin put this point clearly when he discussed the problem of integration of the other non-Malay *bangsa* who had settled in Malaya as well as the acceptance of these non-Malays into the Malay fold.

Because many foreign races came to Malaya, therefore how are these foreign races to change their *bangsa*? They will not be accepted as Malays unless they are *mualaf* [muslim converts]. Because of this, the foreign races who really want to settle in Malaya or those who are two faced chose to change their respective *bangsa* to a Malayan *bangsa*, a term that is never used by the Malay people or race.⁹

In the past they were only accepted when they became *muslim* converts. To claim membership of a *bangsa* Malayan would not lead to their acceptance by the Malays because the *bangsa* Malayan was perceived as unnatural and usurpation of the rights of the *bangsa Melayu*. Their focus of identity and loyalty, Burhanuddin argues, should be *kebangsaan Melayu*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.107. Kerana banyak bangsa-bangsa yang datang ke Malaya, maka bangsa-bangsa dagang itu bagaimanapula hendak mengubah bangsanya yang tak dapat biasanya diterima menjadi Melayu selain daripada lebih dahulu menjadi *mualaf*. Maka bangsa-bangsa asing yang betul betul hendak berwatankan Malaya atau pun bertalam dua muka memakai penukaran bangsanya masing-masing itu kepada bangsa Malayan. Iaitu satu sebutan yang tak pernah dipakai oleh orang atau bangsa Melayu sendiri.

What exactly is the relationship between *kebangsaan* and *bangsa* in Burhanuddin's argument? It is clear that *kebangsaan* is not synonymous with *bangsa*. Burhanuddin explains for instance:

Nevertheless that change in *kebangsaan* is not followed by a change in hereditary traits and racial descent of a particular group because those aspects are in the realm of feelings and characteristics of a person but *kebangsaan* is within the ambit of law and politics.¹⁰

If the non-Malays change their *bangsa* it is important to note what this implies. According to Burhanuddin:

Just as a certain group and inhabitants of a state become constituents in the building of *kebangsaan Melayu*, so can every individual from whatever group or race which has broken or severed its ties and links with its original *kebangsaan* do so. If (he or she) has taken an oath of loyalty and fulfils the rules and requirements of *kebangsaan Melayu* therefore that individual adopts the Malay nationalism according to that political tradition.¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.114. Bagaimanapun penukaran kebangsaan itu tidaklah turut bertukar darah baka dan bangsa keturunan sesuatu kaum, kerana perkara itu termasuk dalam kuasa perasaan dan tabii seseorang, tetapi kebangsaan itu termasuk dalam kuasa undang-undang dan politik.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.113. Sebagaimana sesuatu puak dan penduduk suatu negeri jadi anggota atas binaan kebangsaan Melayu, maka demikian jua tiap-tiap seorang daripada apa puak atau bangsa pun yang telah putus atau memutuskan pertalian dan perhubungannya dengan kebangsaan asalnya, lalu menumpahkan taat setia dan memenuhi syarat dan kehendak kebangsaan Melayu maka seseorang itu jadilah berkebangsaan Melayu menurut istilah politik.

It was therefore the *kebangsaan*, not racial descent, which would be changed. Presumably in Burhanuddin's view, non-Malays, Chinese and Indians, who choose *Melayu* as a *kebangsaan* would not cease to be Chinese or Indians in racial descent. Nevertheless this still meant that they would have to accept *kebangsaan Melayu* and accept Malay culture and to live and die as Malays. In short they must *masuk Melayu* [become Malays].¹² While it may seem strange to modern ears to advocate an ethnic term (*Melayu*) as also the name of the nationality of a multi-ethnic state, this is what happened to terms such as Thai, Lao and Vietnamese. These "ethnies", like the Malays, did not wish to accept any other name for their nation-state (even though each contained numerous minorities) than the historic and emotive term by which they had been known as a people and a kingdom. Burhanuddin's aim was to convert an ethnic identity to an all encompassing nationality that could absorb non-Malays.

The P.K.M.M.'s reasons for rejecting *bangsa Malayan* were:

All the foreign *bangsa* who wish to become Malayan cannot immediately become Malayan but still use their original *bangsa* as Malayan Chinese, Malayan Indian and so on. And the emergence of the term "Malayan" will lead to the rise in each *bangsa dagang* of the secret

¹² *Ibid.*, p.115. His statement makes it clear that they will have to change their *bangsa* to be accepted into *kebangsaan Melayu*. They will be *Melayu* but *berketurunan Cina* or *India* (of Chinese or Indian descent).

and evil of racism, communalism or groupism and from then onwards even the *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu* (everything that is Malay) will be viewed by the politics of divide and rule as one community or group in Malaya. In short it will make the *bangsa Melayu* which demands its right to be a sovereign *bangsa* among other *bangsa* in this world to become a community in its own homeland.¹³

The statement above reveals the fear on the part of the P.K.M.M. that if the *bangsa Malayan* became a political reality, the *bangsa Melayu* would be seen merely as a part, a group of the *bangsa Malayan* and not as a sovereign *bangsa* in its own homeland. Furthermore, Burhanuddin suggests that even if the term 'Malayan' were used, it could not serve as a focus of loyalty and unity because the term promotes ethnic separateness. From this we can see why the P.K.M.M. insisted that the non-Malays must accept *Melayu* as their *kebangsaan* even though ethnically they still remained Chinese and Indians. Their unwillingness to accept the term *bangsa Malayan* was because it was foreign to the Malay people, who should not be expected to lose their established identity in their own land and accept a new *bangsa Malayan*.

¹³ Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam, pp.107-108. Segala bangsa bangsa asing yang hendak menjadi Malayan ini, tidak pula terus jadi Malayan sahaja, tetapi masih merangkapkan bangsa asalnya, seperti Malayan Chinese, Malayan Indian dan sebagainya. Dan dengan banyaknya timbulnya perkataan "Malayan" dari tiap-tiap satu bangsa dagang itu maka timbulnya rahsia dan momok perkauman, community atau puak-puak. Dan semenjak itu maka bangsa dan kebangsaan Melayu (apa juga yang bercorak Melayu) telah dipandang oleh siasah pecah-pecah dan perintah itu sebagai suatu kaum atau puak juga di Malaya ini. Lebih tegas, ialah menjadikan bangsa Melayu yang menuntut hak menjadi suatu bangsa yang berdaulat di antara bangsa-bangsa di dunia ini ialah sebagai suatu kaum ditanahair sendiri.

According to the P.K.M.M. the term 'Malaya' was a British creation and therefore had no roots in the culture and history of the land and people, which was always known as *tanah Melayu* and *bangsa Melayu*. The use of the term 'Malayan' created an unnatural name for the *tanah Melayu* and gave an opportunity for the non-Malays to agitate for the recognition of a *bangsa Malayan* through which the non-Malays can keep their racial identity and *kebangsaan* without any need to accept the *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu*. Ultimately there will come a time when the *bangsa Melayu* and *kebangsaan Melayu* will be an insignificant part of the *bangsa Malayan*. This would lead to a distortion of the historical evolution of the *bangsa Melayu* and *kebangsaan Melayu*.¹⁴

Burhanuddin's view of *kebangsaan* was opposed by the Malay conservatives in U.M.N.O.. They gave the term *kebangsaan Melayu* a far narrower connotation and considered the P.K.M.M.'s use of it as a mask for destroying the *bangsa Melayu*. According to the *Majlis*, the P.K.M.M. was promoting internationalism under the guise of *kebangsaan Melayu*. The conservatives felt that the P.K.M.M. was undermining the purity of the *bangsa Melayu* by giving the non-Malays an opportunity to be a part of the *bangsa*.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.105-109.

¹⁵ *Majlis*, 15 December 1945.

To the Malay conservatives in U.M.N.O., *bangsa Melayu* referred exclusively to the Malay community residing in the Malay states. They did not accept Indonesians and Filipinos as being branches of the *bangsa Melayu*. Non-Malays whether Chinese or Indians were categorised as *bangsa dagang* or *bangsa asing* and were perceived as lodgers (*penumpang*) in the Malay states.¹⁶ For some of the conservatives *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* became a potent symbol for the Malays as a result of the introduction of the Malayan Union which,

...will give citizenship and equal rights to the foreign *bangsa* who are able to consider the Malay states as their homeland.¹⁷

The Malayan Union would also create a *bangsa Malayan* that had the potential to challenge the *bangsa Melayu* because it would be based on a Malayan nation, which would appeal more to non-Malays than would *kebangsaan Melayu*. This *bangsa Malayan* would not involve giving up their Chinese and Indian characteristics. In short *bangsa Malayan* was a nationality that could encompass Malays, Chinese and Indians and yet allow them to retain their ethnic characteristics as individual communities. In introducing the Malayan Union, the British were creating a Malayan nation as well as a *bangsa Malayan*.

¹⁶ *Majlis*, 25 October 1945.

¹⁷ *Majlis*, 17 September 1945. ...memberi hak kerakyatan dan hak persamaan kepada bangsa-bangsa asing yang boleh menganggapkan negeri-negeri Melayu sebagai tanah air dan watan mereka.

From the evidence presented in earlier chapters, it was clear that though there was the idea of a *bangsa Melayu* among the Malays, the community saw the Malay states as so many *negeri* (settlements) and not as one *negara* (state). The *bangsa Melayu* opposed the Malayan Union because it gave the other *bangsas* the same right as the Malays, and also because they wanted to maintain their separate state identities. The foreign *bangsa* are said to view Malaya as one single homeland which, from the Malay viewpoint, will benefit only the Chinese and Indians. At this stage the concept of a united Malay nation had yet to become the focus of loyalty.

Tanah Melayu is our right as Malays. It cannot be doubted that these foreign *bangsa*, are only visiting here.¹⁸

Tanah Melayu expressed not so much the idea of a *negara* (state) as the physical property of a particular community. In this quote, it is the *bangsa* not the *negara* which is the focus of loyalty and identity.

Since the conservatives viewed the Malays as the sole owners of the *tanah Melayu*, it was not unnatural for them to consider the Malays as the true *bumiputra* (lit: sons of the soil). Since the *bangsa Melayu* was the focus of identity and

¹⁸ *Majlis*, 3 October 1945. *Tanah Melayu* ialah hak kita orang Melayu. Tidak syak lagi padanya bangsa asing semuanya menumpang.

loyalty, some Malay conservatives saw no need to define a Malay nation, a definition which would involve such thorny issues as nationality, nationalism, democracy and the accomodation of the non-Malay population of the Malay states in this new framework.

The Malayan Union chapter dealt with the tension that had resulted between the conservative Malays and their rajas when the rajas were no longer viewed as being capable of protecting the *bangsa*. The speeches and newspaper editorials of the period suggest that the rift was serious enough to undermine the traditional position of the rajas in Malay society. By December 1945, it would seem the Malay community was seeking another focus of identity and loyalty as they shifted away from the rajas. The conservative *Majlis* declared the Malay chiefs were on the same plane as the majority of the Malays and would not be able to protect the *bangsa*.¹³

To understand the emphasis on *bangsa* as a potent symbol in the Malay community, we had noted in earlier chapters that it displaced the sultans and rajas without doing away with the institution of the monarchy. In January 1946, Ayub Abdullah of Kedah was calling upon the Malays to depend on their associations and unions to defend the rights of the

¹³ *Majlis*, 8 December 1945.

bangsa and *watan* [birthplace, fatherland].²⁰

Bangsa was not of course a new concept in the Malayan Union period; it had developed for instance before the war. Ayub's statement that there was a need to plant the seeds of *kebangsaan* indicates that even at this late stage the concept was by no means firmly embedded in the wider Malay community. They needed to push the notion of *kebangsaan* because, for many Malays, there was little sense of a Malay race. As we have seen earlier in the thesis, a large proportion of Malays continued to be more familiar with, and to focus their loyalty upon the *kerajaans*. Although Malays like Ayub Abdullah are described here as conservative, they were nevertheless faced with the problem of developing new and different concepts. Ayub's use of the term *watan* shows how some Malays perceived their states. The term denoted loyalty to the place of birth and not to a *negara* (state). *Watan* can be translated as birthplace or homeland. By contrast the term *negara* was seldom used by conservative Malays.²¹

²⁰ *Majlis*, 7 January 1946.

²¹ From interviews conducted by the writer in Malaya, it was explained that the term *negara* was not commonly used by the Malays in the Malay states for two important reasons. The more radical Malays saw the Malay states as a part of *Melayu Raya* and thus *negara* would not apply to them, and the conservative Malays were unwilling to use the term because they wanted to retain the separate identities of the various Malay states.

The conservative Malays with western education did of course have an understanding of what the term 'state' meant, particularly as the Malayan Union explicitly attempted to treat the *tanah Melayu* (Malay lands) as states to be united in a Malayan nation. The majority of the Malay community during the Malayan Union crisis probably did not have an understanding of what a modern state was. It appears that they were less comfortable with terms such as state or nation than with *umat* and *bangsa*. When the Malays held their demonstration outside the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur in April 1946 and voiced their support for their sultans, in the same breath they also invoked love for the *bangsa* and *tanah air* (homeland), not the *negara* (state).

...the Malay *rakyat* from all levels have united to affirm [their] loyalty to their respective rajas and also to prove their feeling of love to the *bangsa* and *tanah air*.²²

A quick reading of this particular quotation might convey the impression that this was another manifestation of Malay loyalty to the rulers. We can see the difficulty of the Malays in developing a concept of *bangsa* and *tanah air* that was totally separate from the *kerajaans*. But the subtle distinction between ruler and ruled is seen in the

²² *Majlis*, 2 April 1946. ...*rakyat* Melayu segenap lapisan telah bersatu padu menzahirkan taat setia kepada Raja-raja mereka masing-masing dan juga membuktikan perasaan cinta kepada bangsa dan tanah air.

use of the term *rakyat* which suggests that separateness. The emphasis on the *bangsa* became even more pronounced at the time the Malayan Union was to be officially inaugurated on 1 April 1946, when the sultans were unable to decide whether to attend the inauguration or not. It was made clear to them that in the interests of the *bangsa Melayu* they should not attend, that is to say, the interests of the *bangsa*, not the sultans, were held to be supreme.

From this point onwards the emphasis on the *bangsa* as a focus of loyalty and community became clearer and more marked. In the next quotation, the ascendancy of the *bangsa* was no longer in any doubt. Here Dato Onn warns the sultans, as well as any other Malay, not to assist in the setting up of the Malayan Union:

...if the rajas attend and also take part in any ceremony connected with the Malayan Union those rajas will be overthrown (*dibuang*) immediately by the people (*rakyat*)...a Malay who takes part [in the Malayan Union]...a Malay like that is not a person who can be counted as a member of the Malay *bangsa*.²³

Here *bangsa* as a focus of identity and community is so firmly established that the rajas themselves could be

²³ *Majlis*, 2 April 1946. ...sekiranya Raja-raja hadir juga mengambil bahagian dalam sebarang istiadat yang berhubung dengan Malayan Union, maka Raja-raja itu akan dibuang terus oleh rakyat...maka orang Melayu yang mengambil bahagian maka orang Melayu yang demikian bukanlah ia daripada jumlah orang yang berbangsa dengan bangsa Melayu.

punished by rejection (*dibuang*) from the *bangsa*. It must be stated that traditionally the term *dibuang* could also mean kill. At the same time the quote indicates the developing gap between the Malays and their rulers.

A later *Majlis* article suggests that a new definition of the raja's position was emerging. It was explained in *Majlis*:

But it must be remembered that the institution of the sultans [is] important...as a guarantee and emblem of Malay *kebangsaan* vis-a-vis the foreign *bangsa* in Malaya.²⁴

The implication of this quotation was that it was a threat outside the Malay community that led to the emphasis of the *bangsa Melayu* as a focus of loyalty and identity while the sultanates were perceived as being unable to protect the *bangsa Melayu* and were now to be seen as emblems. Since it was no longer possible for the rajas to return to their traditional roles in Malay society, a new role had to be invented for them. They were no longer above the *bangsa* but a part of it.

²⁴ *Majlis*, 13 April 1946. Tetapi hendak diingatkan bahawa pertubuhan sultan-sultan itu mustahak...sebagai jamin dan cogan kebangsaan Melayu melawan bangsa-bangsa asing dalam Malaya.

The *Majlis*, quoting a speech from Dato Onn, explained that "the rajas have become [a] bond or cement to unite and strengthen the *umat Melayu* as a whole."²⁵

Having redefined the Sultans as emblems of Malay *kebangsaan*, and a bond to strengthen the *bangsa*, it was no longer difficult for Dato Onn to put the *bangsa* in the forefront. It may be more than coincidence that in April 1946 the Malay crowds were chanting "*Daulat Tuanku*" outside the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur but in May of that year Dato Onn declared that "...our national (*kebangsaan*) cry now is '*Hidop Melayu*,'"²⁶

This suggests that what mattered in the hour of struggle against the Malayan Union and the foreign races was the *bangsa*. The call of "*Hidop Melayu*" epitomised this shift in focus from *raja* to *bangsa*.

The stress on *bangsa* can be seen in the choice of Malay name for the Malay states following the Malayan Union crisis. The legal name for the Federation of Malaya was *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*, which avoided the term *negara Melayu* (Malay state) but stressed instead Malay lands (*tanah*

²⁵ *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. Adalah Raja-raja itu menjadi ikatan atau 'cement' mengikat dan menguatkan umat Melayu seluruhnya.

²⁶ *Majlis*, 14 May 1946. ...saranan kebangsaan kita sekarang ialah "*Hidop Melayu*."

Melayu). However in confronting the question of the federation, the Malays were compelled to consider the concepts of state and nation and their implications.

While it was necessary for the conservative Malays in U.M.N.O. to accept British pressure for the setting up of the federation, their foremost concern continued to be the *bangsa Melayu*. They rejected the term 'Malaya,' which also implied a state. We had noted in an earlier chapter that the Malay conservatives succeeded in avoiding a nationality for the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* so that there would not be a "Malayan nationality." This meant that there could not be a *bangsa Malayan* nor by extension a 'Malayan nation.' On the other hand the Malay conservatives celebrated the existence of a *bangsa Melayu*, with the unavoidable implication of a *Melayu* nation. In the view of Dato Onn this was a very recent phenomenon. Dato Onn declared that with the formation of the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*:

...the various states had been brought under one constitution which for the first time will enable Malays to think of themselves as a single nation.²⁷

This indicated that the nation being contemplated would be confined to Malays only. Even in the context of Onn's speech, 'nation' appears to have been seen not in

²⁷ *Malaya Tribune*, 11 January 1947.

geographical terms but as a community, like the biblical nation of Israel.

If we turn to the P.K.M.M., we encounter a very different ideological perception of nation. Before the AMCJA-PUTERA alliance, the P.K.M.M. held fast to the idea of *Melayu Raya* which was seen as an appeal for greater Malay unity. However from 1947 onwards when it became clear that *Indonesia Raya* in whatever form was unattainable, the P.K.M.M. revised drastically its perception of *bangsa* and nation. Its alliance with the predominantly non-Malay AMCJA forced the P.K.M.M. to put forward *Melayu* as a nationality which could embrace Malays and non-Malays in the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*. They thus argued that the non-Malays be brought not only into a Malay *kebangsaan* but within the Malay *bangsa* as well.

In this they had the reluctant agreement of the non-Malays in the All Malaya Council For Joint Action (AMCJA). A Peoples' Constitution was drawn up by both groups in which the concept of *Melayu* as a nationality and as a nation was put forward. This *Melayu* nationality would not have any religious implications.²⁸ The P.K.M.M. explained its case in these terms:

²⁸ AMCJA-PUTERA, Peoples' Constitutional Proposals, Kuala Lumpur, 1947, p.11. In agreeing that *Melayu* would not have any religious implications, the P.K.M.M. made a major concession because in the past it was insisted that for any non-Malay to become *Melayu*, they must also embrace Islam and accept Malay culture.

Concerning the constitution that is sponsored by PUTERA...we wish to make clear we state to the non-Malay *bangsa* that if they really love this country (*negeri*), then in order to demonstrate the truth of this [it] is not sufficient to take an oath or to know the Malay language but these things must be accompanied by a willingness to change their *bangsa* in order to become *bangsa Melayu*.²³

Unlike the Malay conservatives the P.K.M.M. was advocating a nationality (*bangsa*) for the Federation with the intention of setting up a *negeri*. By calling the non-Malays to change their *bangsa* to become *Melayu*, the P.K.M.M. was asking for a change in nationality. In promoting their version of *Melayu* nationality, the Malay radicals encouraged non-Malays to become *Melayu*. While *bangsa* could be translated as race, community or nation, the P.K.M.M. now used the term to mean nationality and void it of the racial and ethnic characteristics. If this suggestion were accepted it would mean the Chinese and Indians could belong to the *bangsa Melayu* but would still remain and retain their Chinese and Indian characteristics. This was vastly different from what the P.K.M.M. had advocated in their *Melayu Raya*. It showed how much they had to revise their stand on *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu*.

²³ *Utusan Melayu*, 23 August 1947. Berkenaan dengan Perlembagaan yang ditaja oleh PUTERA...dengan terus terang kita katakan kepada bangsa-bangsa yang bukan Melayu bahawa jikalau mereka sebenar-benar cinta kepada negeri ini, maka syarat menunjukkan kebenaran itu bukan hanya cukup dengan bersumpah atau tahu bahasa Melayu, tetapi hendaklah disertai redha menukar bangsanya jadi bangsa Melayu.

Not surprisingly there was little support from the majority of the Malays for the P.K.M.M.'s campaign for a *Melayu* nationality. Dato Onn attacked the idea of *Melayu* as a nationality in the following terms:

If the Constitution is studied carefully then [we see] the representatives have endeavoured to obtain as many benefits as possible for the Malay people. The opposition of those groups that do not agree includes Malays...One matter which has been mouthed by them from the beginning has involved an attempt to destroy the name *Melayu*, change the name *Melayu* and every custom of the *Melayu*. We are called *Melayu* but the other side now proposes is that we live like "Malay," dress like "Malay," and be "Malays." We have been renowned for hundreds of years as *Melayu*. In the past every person wanted to become *Melayu* (*masuk Melayu*) but now we are asked to enrol or be enrolled to become *Melayu*.³⁰

This quote showed that the Malay conservatives wanted the term *Melayu* to remain exclusive. They felt that the P.K.M.M. was changing the nature of the term *Melayu*. By 'proposing' a new *bangsa*, UMNO felt that the P.K.M.M. was implicitly undercutting the *bangsa Melayu* as it existed. It was this accusation that cause the P.K.M.M. to lose the

³⁰ *Utusan Melayu*, 4 September 1947. Jika dihakusi keadaan Perlembagaan ini maka wakil-wakil telah berikhtiar sedapat-dapatnya dan beberapa banyaknya bagi mendapat keuntungan-keuntungan kepada orang Melayu. Bantahan pehak-pehak yang tidak setuju termasuk orang-orang Melayu...suatu barang yang terbit daripada mula dan dahulu, berkerja hendak menghilangkan nama Melayu, mengubah nama Melayu, tiap-tiap adat-istiadat Melayu. Diri kita dikata Melayu tetapi cadangan pehak sebelah berkehendakan supaya berhidop seperti Malay, berpakaian Malay, berbangsa Malay. Kita telah megah beratus-ratus tahun lamanya bernama Melayu. Dahulu tiap-tiap orang hendak masuk Melayu tetapi sekarang kita diminta supaya masuk atau dimasukkan menjadi Melayu.

emotive quality of their struggle. Onn's use of the anglicised 'Malay' instead of the Malay term *Melayu* showed that he deliberately wanted to ensure that the term 'Malay' was rejected as negative. To Onn the boundaries of the *Melayu* community were clear and non-Malays were excluded. He appeared however to leave open the possibility of non-Malays becoming *Melayu* i.e. *masuk Melayu*, but only on the established terms of religious as well as cultural conversion. To the Malay conservatives, the attempt by the P.K.M.M. to have *Melayu* as a nationality was an attempt to destroy the *bangsa Melayu* and thus had to be rejected. We must also note that the struggle between the P.K.M.M. and UMNO on the issue of *Melayu* was also a struggle to show which of the two was more *Melayu* than the other. From an objective viewpoint, both of them were strongly *Melayu* oriented and it would be unfair to assert that the P.K.M.M. was less *Melayu* because it cooperated with the non-Malays. The P.K.M.M. ideas were more enlightened and modern in the sense that they accepted a nationality which went beyond the primeval consciousness of "ethnie" towards a modern state identity. U.M.N.O. won the support of the Malay majority because it was able to present this to Malays as a threat to the *Melayu* identity which had become the central feature of their consciousness. As the majority saw it, whatever the emotively charged term *bangsa Melayu* meant, it could not include Chinese (and Indians).

What constituted Malay identity was extremely difficult to define precisely, unless in cultural terms as was agreed to in the twelve man Working Committee representing the British, UMNO and the representatives of the Malay rulers. Their definition of a Malay was one who:

1. habitually speaks the Malay language
2. professes the Muslim religion;
3. conforms to Malay custom.³¹

This definition of a Malay was porous enough for a non-Malay who had become a muslim and had mastered and habitually spoke the Malay language to *masuk Melayu*. On the other hand the Malay conservatives had required a definition which would prevent the entry of non-Malays into the Malay *bangsa* unless they were willing to become muslims.

Since *bangsa Melayu* did not develop into a nationality and non-Malays could not easily gain entry into it one can surmise that it was a form of an exclusive communal identity that one had to be born into. In this respect it was almost an exclusive tribe.

³¹ See Malayan Union, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee Appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization, Kuala Lumpur, 1946, p.25.

Burhanuddin had made the cogent point that:

The word *kebangsaan* or national which is used in political terminology today originates from the root word *bangsa* and according to the term [that was] used...since the Malay *kerajaan* of Malacca, the term *bangsa* meant *kebangsaan* today and it also meant Malay descent.³²

The terms *kebangsaan* and *bangsa* were indeed closely linked to Malay ethnicity. Though the term *nasional* existed in the Malay language it did not appeal to the Malay community which felt more comfortable with the term *kebangsaan* which was closely associated with *bangsa* and which had a greater emotional appeal.

In the East Coast of Sumatra the terms frequently used for defining the focus of loyalty and belonging were the same - *bangsa*, *kebangsaan*, *negara* and *negeri*. However belonging to the unitary Republic of Indonesia gave these words different meanings. The declaration of Indonesian independence stated clearly that independence was declared by the *bangsa Indonesia* which was composed of the various ethnic groups (*suku*). *Bangsa Indonesia* as an imagined

³² Article of Burhanuddin AlHelmy as quoted by Kamaruddin Jaafar in Dr. Burhanuddin AlHelmy, p.115. Perkataan kebangsaan atau nasional, yang dipakaikan dalam istilah politik hari ini, ialah daripada asal kata "bangsa" dan menurut istilah yang terpakai dalam bahasa Melayu...dari semenjak kerajaan Melayu Melaka, bahawa perkataan "bangsa" itu bermakna kebangsaan hari ini, dan juga bermakna keturunan Melayu ini.

political community had existed before the formal setting up of the Republic of Indonesia. With considerable success, it focussed loyalty and identity at a national, archipelago-wide level. In the East Coast of Sumatra, attempts were made to focus loyalty, community and belonging on the *bangsa Indonesia* and the *negara Indonesia* and to subordinate *suku* as a focus of loyalty.

In an article entitled *Apa Negara Itu?* (What is a state?) the *Soeloeh Merdeka* made the following point:

The conditions necessary for a state are:

1. a group of inhabitants
2. a definite area or territory
3. an organization that unites the people and is called the government.
4. external sovereignty³¹

The emphasis in defining a state here is not on *suku* but on territory, government and population. The paper goes on to state that:

...there will be no state if it has no people at all...Now there arises the question that is always asked, that is, what is the difference between *rakyat* and *bangsa* and in connection with this another question is raised [which is] should the *rakyat* of a country be of one *bangsa* [race] only? Both questions can be

³¹ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 16 April 1946.

answered at once. The *rakyat* of a country in general is called a *bangsa* also; for example the Swiss *rakyat* is called the Swiss *bangsa*. The Italian *rakyat* is called the Italian *bangsa* and so on. But then if we mention the Swiss *bangsa* it does not mean that the Swiss *rakyat* originate from a common ancestry or from one place only.³⁴

This quote above tries to show that the term *bangsa* need not necessarily have an ethnic connotation and that it was possible to build a community out of various ethnic groups and focus its loyalty on a *negara* (state). This was pointed out by the paper:

Therefore the *rakyat* of a country is able to be the *bangsa* [of that country] not because [they] have a common ancestry or even a common culture but because of a situation which led to the creation of such a society.³⁵

This argues that the focus of identity was the *negara* and it was the *negara* that caused the emergence of the

³⁴ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 16 April 1946. ...tidak akan ada suatu negeri yang tidak mempunyai rakyat sama sekali...Sekarang timbullah pertanyaan yang seringkali dimajukan, iaitu apakah bedanya rakyat dan bangsa itu dan berhubung dengan ini dimajukan pula pertanyaan apakah rakyat sesuatu negeri itu harus terdiri dari satu bangsa sahaja. Kedua-dua pertanyaan ini dapat dijawab sekali gus. Rakyat dari suatu negara itu pada umumnya disebut bangsa pula; misalnya rakyat Swiss disebut bangsa Swiss. Rakyat Italia disebut bangsa Italia dan begitu seterusnya. Akan tetapi kalau kita meyebut bangsa Swiss itu tidak berarti rakyat Swiss adalah berasal dari satu keturunan atau berasal dari satu tempat sahaja.

³⁵ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 16 April 1946. Jadi rakyat dari sesuatu negara itu bisa menjadi bangsa tidak kerana mempunyai turunan yang sama ataupun kebudayaan yang sama pula, tetapi dari keadaan-keadaan yang menyebabkan terbentuknya masyarakat itu.

bangsa. Here *bangsa* was not used in an ethnic sense. Implicitly it was referring to the Indonesian *negara* and the Indonesian *bangsa*, neither of which could be defined racially as the *negara* and the *bangsa* Indonesia were supposed to transcend racial and ethnic as well as parochial sentiments. Ideally it was hoped that the *bangsa Indonesia* as a nationality would encompass all the various *sukus* and groups that inhabited the area known formerly as the Netherlands East Indies.

Before March 1946, the Republican made serious attempts to inculcate a sense of belonging to the Indonesian community (*bangsa Indonesia*) as well as to make it the object of loyalty and focus that was linked to the Indonesian state. We can discern this in the *Soeloeh Merdeka*, which stated that:

A people (*bangsa*) that is already united and has obtained independence is called a people of a nation and the place of residence of that people is a state (*negara*). The state is the house of a people that is mature, is able to stand on its own and is already able to put its house in order by itself. We now possess our own state...The new state of ours takes the name Indonesia. The term "Indonesia" had been used for years by the *pergerakan* [(nationalists)]: it replaces the despicable name "Netherlands-Indies." Therefore we are all citizens from a new nation which is called the Indonesian nation.³⁶

³⁶ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 28 January 1946. Bangsa yang bersatu-padu dan mendapat kemerdekaan dinamakan "bangsa senegara" (natie) dan tempat kediaman bangsa itu terpakai dan tersusun menjadi Negara (staat). Negara itu ialah perumahan sesuatu bangsa yang sudah matang, yang sudah sanggup berdiri dan

Here the term *bangsa* was used to describe not race but people. *Bangsa* as used above could be composed of many races. The use of the term in the quote was not to focus on race but on the state (*negara*) as the object of loyalty and identity.

Here *bangsa* (people) assumed importance in so far as it was united, independent and possessed a state. Of importance was the stress that the term "Indonesia" had been in use many years before the emergence of the Indonesian state. Indeed, the state derived its name from this imagined political community. Thus the impression given was that the state was owned by the Indonesian people who were all citizens (*warga*) of the Indonesian state. The use of the term *warga* was another manner of downplaying ethnicity as it was a neutral term that could apply to Malays, Javanese, Bataks or any other ethnic group that considered itself Indonesian and thus became a *warga* of the Indonesian state and could identify with *bangsa Indonesia* and *kebangsaan Indonesia* (Indonesian nationality). However, it is quite possible that ethnic Chinese could be a part of the *warga negara Indonesia* but still could not be considered as part of the *bangsa Indonesia*.

sanggup mengatur rumah tangganya sendiri. Kita sekarang telah mempunyai Negara sendiri pula, jadi kita muncul dilapangan dunia sebagai bangsa yang bernegara...Negara baru kita mengambil nama Indonesia. Kata Indonesia ini telah puluhan tahun dipakai oleh kaum pergerakan: pengganti nama hina "Netherlands-Indies" itu. Jadi kita semuanya menjadi warga (anggota) dari satu Negara baru yang dinamakan Indonesia.

Ethnic and racial feeling in East Sumatra emerged with the 'social revolution' of March 1946 which saw the destruction of the indigenous political institutions. With the first Dutch military action of July 1947 which led to the establishment of the *Negara Sumatera Timur*, a different focus of identity, loyalty and community took place in East Sumatra. Basically the establishment of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* represented an attempt to create a *negara* and a nationality that could effectively challenge the Republic of Indonesia and Indonesian nationality. Serious attempts were made to inculcate among the indigenous peoples of East Sumatra a focus of loyalty. This focus of loyalty, which took the form of *bangsa Sumatera Timur*, already had its roots in the *Panitia Kebangsaan* that was proposed by the *kerajaans* immediately after the war.³⁷ But the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* took a more concrete form with the establishment of the *Negara Sumatera Timur*.

According to the Renville Agreement, the *Negara Sumatera Timur* was supposed to be one of many federal states in an independent Federal Republic of Indonesia. With a federal system, conflicting foci of loyalties and identities would come to the fore. While conservatives in Malaya shrank from the term *negara*, the East Sumatran leaders felt obliged to create their own *negara* to balance the *Negara Republik*

³⁷ See Chapter Three, p.105 in quotation 7.

Indonesia, which by the terms of the Renville Agreement had become only one constituent of a Federal system.

We noted in chapter five that during discussions to set up the *Negara Sumatera Timur*, Tengku Dr. Mansur pointed out that there was no one from the *golongan Indonesia* in the *Comite Daerah Istimewa Sumatera Timur*. The exclusion of the *golongan Indonesia* represented an attempt to define the East Sumatran native inhabitants without the *bangsa Indonesia*.³⁸ At this stage serious attempts were made to define the indigenous East Sumatrans as distinct and different from Indonesians.

This can be readily discerned in an article in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat*:

We in this region are desirous of owning our own state, ruled by our own *bangsa* and not interfered with by other people...we will not retreat if others say that we are promoting provincialism at this time...the *anak Sumatera Timur* had become victims in an extremist administration.³⁹

³⁸ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, p.217

³⁹ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 6 December 1947. Kita didaerah ini sangat ingin hendak mempunyai Negara sendiri, diperintah oleh bangsa sendiri, dengan tidak dicampuri orang-orang lain...Kita tidak akan mundur kalau dikatakan orang kita mengambangkan rasa kedaerahan atau provincialisme pada masa ini...Anak Sumatera Timur telah menjadi korban dalam pemerintahan yang lampau-lampau...

Here the focus of loyalty was the state, clearly seen as exclusive to the *anak Sumatera Timur*. The term *bangsa sendiri* is synonymous with the term *anak Sumatera Timur* (sons/natives of East Sumatera). It was the region that gave the identity to the native inhabitants. Terms such as *bangsa Sumatera Timur*, *bumiputra Sumatera Timur* were in the same bracket. Were the term *bangsa* identified with any ethnic group, it would lead to serious conflicts as Bataks could not identify with a term like *bangsa Melayu* and neither would Malays identify with the term *bangsa Karo*. This being the case, *bangsa Sumatera Timur* was a term used to identify the indigenous multi-ethnic polity in East Sumatra. However, this term was not emotionally satisfying to any of the ethnic groups which it covered.

The East Sumatran political parties that were set up had among their aims a programme to inculcate within the *orang asli* communities a different focus of loyalty and orientation. The *Partai Nasional Soematera Timoer* which was set up on 8 September 1947 by a group of Malay aristocrats had as its aims "to unite the natives of East Sumatera within a single party" and to "withdraw *Sumatera Timur* from the Republic."¹⁰ The P.N.S.T. saw the 'social revolution' as a movement that:

¹⁰ *Riwayat Partai Nasional Soematera*, Medan 1947.

...seized government power, killed, kidnapped, robbed, raped and carried out other illegal actions against thousands of the Native inhabitants of East Sumatra (*Boemipoetra Soematera Timoer*)...we got the impression that this movement had been organized for the purpose of seizing our motherland *Soematera Timoer*...¹¹

The statements of the P.N.S.T. present an impression of "we" (East Sumatrans) against "them" (the Indonesians Republicans), and also attempt to define the East Sumatrans as victims of injustice who now needed to focus their loyalty on their motherland and unite. The idea of East Sumatra as a motherland emerged only in the wake of the 'social revolution' and the establishment of the N.S.T. In 1939 the *Persatuan Sumatera Timur* tried to build an East Sumatran identity but was not very successful in its aim.

An article in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* asked:

What is the reason a *bangsa* desires independence?...Nations and peoples (*bangsa*) that are independent throughout the whole world recognise special rights (*hak*) for their *bangsa* in their nation. There is no country anywhere that gives the same rights (*hak*) in all fields to every inhabitant of a different community (*bangsa*). Every nation that is independent is based on its *kebangsaan* [raceness]...Because whenever nations that are independent give the same rights to every kind of inhabitant in all fields, certainly the importance of its own *bangsa* will be pushed aside and finally that nation will not reflect its *kebangsaan*.¹²

¹¹ "Riwayat Partai Nasional Soemater Timoer Didirikan," typescript, Medan, September 1947.

¹² *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 29 January 1949. Apakah sebabnya sesuatu bangsa itu berkehendak akan kemerdekaan? ...Negara dan

This passage by Tengku Nikmatullah was an attempt to focus loyalty on an independent state, the *Negara Sumatera Timur* as well as the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. To him *kebangsaan* meant 'raceness' as well as a communal policy that served the interests of the native inhabitants. His statement showed some similarities with the use of *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* by Malay conservatives in Malaya. However, the Malay conservatives were more ethnic oriented in their use of *bangsa* and *kebangsaan* as they were not willing to concede any rights to non-Malays while the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* would encompass the Karos and the Simalunguns.

Loyalty to the state arose because its chief function was to provide and ensure that the native inhabitants were given special rights and privileges vis-a-vis the other non-indigenous inhabitants. In short the state pursued a discriminatory policy with the primary aim of ensuring the well being of the indigenous population. This was certainly an argument that would have found favour with the Malay conservatives in Malaya. *Bangsa Sumatera Timur* was seen as a nationality since it could not be viewed in a purely

bangsa yang merdeka diseluruh dunia ini mengakui hak-hak yang istimewa bagi bangsanya didalam negaranya. Tidak ada suatu negara dimanapun juga memberikan hak yang sama rata dalam segenap bidang kepada tiap-tiap penduduk yang berlain lainan bangsa. Tiap-tiap negara yang merdeka bercorak kebangsaannya...Sebab apabila negara-negara yang mereka itu memberikan hak-hak yang sama kepada segala rupa penduduk dalam tiap-tiap hal, nescayalah bangsanya akan terdesak kepentingannya dan akhirnya negara itu tidak lagi bercorakkan kebangsaannya.

racial definition. As in Malaya, the Malay elite wanted to exclude many of the inhabitants of *Sumatera Timur* from the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. The *bangsa Sumatera Timur* could not be defined as a single race because that term necessarily encompassed three *sukus*.

The *bangsa Sumatera Timur* needed a state in order to protect its interests against the *bangsa Indonesia* which had the *Negara Republik Indonesia*. For most East Sumatrans, a term with more emotional force was *anak Sumatera Timur* (son of East Sumatra). Therefore we note from the following quotation:

...Whereas *Sumatera Timur*, the rightful property of the *anak-anak Sumatera Timur*, was recently returned to its original inhabitants (*bumiputranya*). Therefore, they together with all the other *bangsa* who live there will in a cooperative way use this opportunity to sail together to safe havens for its inhabitants.⁴³

The term *bumiputra* is seen here as synonymous to *anak-anak Sumatera Timur* and complementary to it. It would cover the three *sukus* native to East Sumatra, the Malays, Simalunguns and Karos on a basis of equality. *Bumiputra* could be translated as sons of the soil and it was very apt

⁴³ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 22 November 1947. ...Bahtera Sumatera Timur hak milik anak-anak Sumatera Timur, barulah sekarang kembali pada bumiputranya, maka sekarang jualah mereka dengan segala bangsa-bangsa lain yang menjadi penduduknya dengan cara kata mufakat, memakai kesempatan ini bersama-sama melayarkan menuju pelabuhan-pelabuhan tempat kesejahteraan zahir dan bathin penumpang-penumpangannya.

in describing the identification of the three East Sumatran *sukus* with the area. This term could be used as a focus of belonging and loyalty as it did not elevate any *suku* over the others since all three could claim to be *bumiputra*. It was also useful as a term that separated the East Sumatrans from the other Indonesians who were not perceived as *bumiputra*.

Just as in Malaya where the Malays claimed the *tanah Melayu* to be their property, similarly the *anak-anak Sumatera Timur* considered East Sumatra to be their property. In the *Negara Sumatera Timur* the *anak-anak Sumatera Timur* were willing to cooperate with some other *bangsa* in East Sumatra. The reason for such an attitude could be that these *bangsa* were the marginal Chinese and Menadonese communities who were not perceived as threats to the *anak-anak Sumatera Timur*. The *bangsa Sumatera Timur* considered the pro-Republican Javanese, who were the largest of any Indonesian community in East Sumatra, as a greater threat. At the same time the Malays harboured some suspicion about Batak political intentions. Though *bangsa Sumatera Timur* was a compromise between the Malays, Simalunguns and Karos, it could not be defined along ethnic lines without destroying the unity they needed against what they perceived as the greater threat of the immigrant Indonesians. In contrast to Malaya, the East Sumatrans were under greater pressure to conciliate the immigrant communities.

Even among the three *sukus*, the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* had yet to develop firm roots. The *bangsa Sumatera Timur* as an imagined political community had to acquire an emotive power over the Karo, Malay and Simalungun *sukus*. The term *bangsa Indonesia* did have emotive power and was able to transcend the ethnic loyalties because the idea of the *bangsa Indonesia* developed out of pre-war nationalist movement, the wartime propaganda of the nationalists and the sacrifice and struggle of the Indonesians against Dutch colonial oppression.

Since *bangsa Indonesia* had an emotive pull, the three *sukus* had to resort to calling themselves Indonesians inspite of their aversion to what it implied. This was evident in the following quotation from the *Soeloeh Ra'jat*:

Bit by bit we come to know that administration in this area will be given over to our *bangsa*. From the events which we see now are sufficient enough to make the conclusion that administration in our area will be carried out by us for us. Like other *bangsa Indonesia* who originate from Java and Sumatra or even from Kalimantan and Sulawesi, therefore the *bangsa Indonesia* from East Sumatra are not lacking in their desire to obtain independence in full."

" *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 29 November 1947. Demi sedikit kesedikit dapat kita ketahui, bahawa pemerintahan didaerah ini akan diserahkan penyelenggaraannya ketangan bangsa kita. Dari kejadian-kejadian yang nampak kita sekarang ini telah cukup untuk diambil menjadi suatu kesimpulan bahwa pemerintahan didaerah kita ini akan diselenggarakan oleh kita untuk kita. Saperti bangsa Indonesia yang lain, yang berasal dari Jawa dan Sumatera ataupun dari Kalimantan dan Sulawesi, maka bangsa Indonesia dari Sumatera Timur, tiada juga kurang keinginnya untuk beroleh kemerdekaan yang penuh.

The use of the term *bangsa Indonesia dari Sumatera Timur* implies a recognition of the reality of the imagined political community known as the *bangsa Indonesia* while the dropping of the term "*bangsa*" to the native inhabitants of East Sumatra underlies the difficulty of creating that imagined political community known as the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. This quotation also revealed that attempts to create a distinct *bangsa Sumatera Timur* separate from the *bangsa Indonesia* were not successful.

While the situation had forced the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* to acknowledge themselves as Indonesians, they still saw themselves as distinct. One writer sought to explain why the loyalty had to be an East Sumatran one:

Even so in Indonesia, the feeling of groupism or *bangsa* sentiment is due to the lack of closeness in our way of life at present or the ease of communication from one island to another is not there or from one area to another is not extensive or pronounced. In other words the feelings of *bangsa* identity or group identity are able to defeat political beliefs which are held by the *bangsa Indonesia* at present. The understanding of socialism, communism and other political beliefs is not implanted firmly and has not become a source of awareness for us. In connection with that, individual group feelings are still strong within the *bangsa Indonesia*.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Soeloeh Ra'jat, 6 December 1947. Akan tetapi kita di Indonesia rasa golongan atau rasa bangsa itu disebabkan pergaulan hidup pada kita dewasa ini belum begitu rapat atau lancarnya perhubungan dari satu pulau kepulauan lain, atau dari satu daerah kedaerah lain, tidak begitu luas dan pesat. Dengan kata lain, bahwa rasa golongan bangsa dan golongan puak-puak dapat mengalahkan faham politik yang dianut bangsa

This was an argument that the process of building the *bangsa Indonesia* as an identity was still at an early stage. For the moment the focus of many groups in Indonesia was their *suku* and not even political beliefs could overcome this primordial loyalty.

While Achenese, Minangkabaus and other ethnic groups clung strongly to their identity, these ethnic groups found the *bangsa Indonesia* identity a useful and satisfying cover with which to fight the Dutch colonial power and sometimes other non-Indonesians such as the Chinese. Unlike the indigenous East Sumatrans they were secure in their respective areas. For example the Achenese in Aceh or the Minangkabaus in West Sumatra did not feel immediately threatened by other Indonesian ethnic groups. In East Sumatra, the three ethnic groups felt threatened more by immigrant Indonesian groups than by the Chinese or even the Dutch. Therefore, we can see the reasons why there was a serious attempt to bring into existence an East Sumatran *bangsa*. But the success of this attempt can be gauged in the words of Muhammad Saleh Umar when he stated that:

Indonesia dewasa ini. Faham sosialisma aliran komunisme dan faham politik yang lain lain belum tertanam betul, belum menjadi keinsafan bagi kita. Berhubung dengan itulah maka rasa golongan sesendiri masih kuat berpaut pada bangsa Indonesia.

There was no *bangsa* in it. The N.S.T. made the Malays more Malays and the Bataks more Bataks. The only way out of this problem was the destruction of the N.S.T. and the reassertion of *bangsa Indonesia* as the sole identity of the region.⁴⁶

The term *bangsa Sumatera Timur* could not inspire any loyalty, since the three *sukus* who were encompassed by that term were distrustful of one another. We noted in chapter five that the very existence of the N.S.T. was undermined by interethnic conflict between the three indigenous groups who had called themselves the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*.

An article in the *Soeloeh Ra'jat* conceded this point in the following terms:

Whenever we look at the *orang asli* in *Sumatera Timur* [it is] divided into three big *suku*. The Malays, Karo and Simalungun...Even though the situation is like that, we regret very much that between the three groups there is no strong unity. The Karo group can be stated to be quite strong in its unity. The Simalungun group is not yet strongly united. The Malay group is the most divided group...Even though at one time in 1946 the three groups have received a bitter lesson by being victims of the revolution, interned at Raja or murdered, this is not seen to be a strong reason to unite. The three groups are the *anak asli Sumatera Timur* [and] according to history have one origin. Even so at this time it can be seen that each one wants to go its own way.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Interview with Saleh Umar, Medan, February 1985.

⁴⁷ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 29 January 1949. This article was written by Tengku Muchtar Aziz under the name Tamzil Aziz. Apabila kita perhatikan di Sumatera Timur penduduk aslinya adalah terbahagi pada tiga puak (*suku*) yang besar. Puak Melayu, Karo dan Simalungun...Walaupun keadaan sudah begitu, sangatlah kita sesalkan diantara tiga puak tadi tidak ada

This admission that what existed in *Sumatera Timur* was not one *bangsa* but three *sukus* going their own way was an acknowledgement that there could be no viable *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. Even though the writer makes the startling claim that the three groups now known as the *anak asli Sumatera Timur* had one origin, there was little hope for unity.

It became more and more difficult to sustain a sense of identity that was meaningful in East Sumatra as attacks were made on the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* as parochial and divisive. Some N.S.T. leaders themselves rejected the concept of *bangsa Sumatera Timur* as they found it indefensible, though political opportunism no doubt played its part. They were under increasing pressure to merge with the unitary Republic of Indonesia and identify with the *bangsa Indonesia*. During a stopover at Medan on his way to India President Sukarno demolished the argument for a separate *bangsa Sumatera Timur* and construed any reference to it as anti-national.

persatuan yang kuat. Puak Karo adalah yang dapat kita lagi bersatu kuat. Puak Melayu adalah puak yang sangat berpecah belah...Walaupun pada satu masa tahun 1946 ketiga puak tadi telah mendapat pelajaran yang sangat pahit kena revolusi, di rajakan oleh orang ataupun dibunuh, nampaknya ini belum lagi menjadikan sebab yang kuat bersatu. Ketiga puak tadi adalah anak asli Sumatera Timur, menurut sejarah adalah satu asal, walaupun begitu waktu ini nampaknya masing-masing hendak membawa jalannya sendiri.

We are one nation, not three, not four, but one *Indonesian bangsa* even though we number 75 million. Still we are one. There is no *Kalimantan bangsa*, there is no *Minangkabau bangsa*, there is no Javanese, Balinese, Lombok, Sulawesi or other such *bangsa*. We are all *bangsa Indonesia*. There is no *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. We are all part of a single *bangsa* with a single fate. And this *bangsa* which is one with one fate has aspirations that are national. What are these aspirations? That this *bangsa* which is one with one fate lives as a *bangsa* that is free (*merdeka*). United in a nation that is free. Governed by a central government that is free ...under one flag (*Merah-Putih*) that is free...not two, not three.¹⁸

This speech marked the victory of the *bangsa Indonesia* as an imagined political community over that of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. Sukarno's speech was received with wild enthusiasm by the East Sumatrans who were at the airport. By asserting that there was just one Indonesian nation, Sukarno attacked the existence of the N.S.T.

N.S.T. leaders had to come to terms with this reality and make the necessary adjustments to their way of thinking. O.K. Ramli, the Head of the N.S.T. Department of Information, celebrated the fourth anniversary of Indonesian independence by stating that "we the *bangsa Indonesia* are no longer divided" but "together celebrate the 17th. of August with untold joy."¹⁹

¹⁸ Propinsi Sumatera Utara, pp.386-387.

¹⁹ *Waspada*, 18 August 1949.

There was no longer any mention of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. Ramli's speech was an acceptance of the stability and strength of the *bangsa Indonesia* as a concept that was able to capture the loyalty and identity of the majority of the Indonesian peoples including the East Sumatrans. O.K. Ramli was not the only one of the N.S.T. elite to realise that the *bangsa Indonesia* as a focus of identity and loyalty was unchallenged. Tengku Bacharoedin who help found the P.N.S.T. stated that:

The leaders of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* recognised one *bangsa Indonesia* also and we desire to be one *bangsa*. Generally the nationalist movement recognises one political nationalism that is directed towards ending links of social colonisation. Arising from that, every Indonesian administration has an obligation to give leadership concerning political and social revolution and our obligations are very difficult.⁵⁰

Coming in the wake of President Sukarno's statement that there was only one Indonesian *bangsa*, this admission on the part of Tengku Bacharoedin revealed the end of the attempt to advocate a *bangsa Sumatera Timur* as viable challenge to *bangsa Indonesia*. Still Bacharoedin alluded to the possibility of the submergence of the indigenous East

⁵⁰ *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 18 September 1948. Pemimpin-pemimpin di Negara Sumatera Timur mengenal satu bangsa Indonesia juga dan keinginan kita menjadi satu bangsa. Umumnya pergerakan kebangsaan mengenal satu politik kebangsaan yang ditujukan untuk menghentikan perhubungan sosial jajahan, dari itu maka tiap-tiap pemerintahan Indonesia haruslah mempunyai kewajiban untuk memberi pimpinan tentang revolusi politik dan revolusi sosial dan kewajiban kita amatlah susah.

Sumatrans by outsiders from other regions in Indonesia by stating that the administration must end social colonisation.

We had noted how initially the leaders of the N.S.T. were determined to create an East Sumatran nationality via the creation of a *negara*. This nationality was to be in opposition to the existing Indonesian nationality and state. Unfortunately due to historical forces, the situation they were in did not favour such a move as they could not overcome the deeply entrenched Indonesian consciousness that had developed for decades. Their existence depended upon the continuance of a federal system for Indonesia.

Once it became clear that the federal system would not prevail, the N.S.T. leaders shifted their stance and reverted back to the Indonesian identity though they did try to preserve an East Sumatran identity in that framework. When even this failed they finally gave up the struggle and accepted Indonesian nationality completely.

In conclusion, *bangsa* was a potent symbol in the search for a national identity. In Malaya, *bangsa Melayu* emerged as a narrow and exclusive "ethnie" because of the strength of the Malay conservatives and the support of the British authorities while *bangsa Malayan* was unaccepted. In Sumatra, the *bangsa Indonesia* which stood for equality for

all and an end to Dutch colonialism triumphed because it served to unite the diverse ethnic groups. The *bangsa Sumatra Timur* developed as a nationality for the Malays, Karos and Simalunguns in the area, but was meant to cater to the needs of these *sukus* only and was dependent on Dutch support. As such, it lapsed into oblivion.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The ending of the war was a significant factor as far as the Malay communities in Malaya and Indonesia were concerned. It ushered in a situation where important choices had to be made.

We have seen that *bangsa* was a critical concept within the Malay community. However *bangsa* had to compete with rival concepts such as *kerajaan*, democracy, nation and nationality.

These contending loyalties came about as a result of the emergence of new states after the war. In the Malay Peninsula, the Malayan Union inaugurated with the 'agreement' of the Malay rajas galvanized the Malay communities to define *bangsa* not only in cultural terms but also as politically imagined communities. In the struggle to protect the *bangsa*, the Malay communities felt compelled to force the Malay rajas to submit to the *bangsa* and to subordinate their *kerajaans* to it. In Sumatra the use of *bangsa* was pre-empted by the nationalist concept of *bangsa* Indonesia.

The period immediately after the war was one of political turmoil and ideological experimentation that was unique in Malay history because this period raised the issue of the need for a state (*negara*). This was something Malays had thought little about before as they felt that they had no need for it.¹ Prior to this, the Malays lived under *kerajaans* which were not states in the modern sense. Debates focussed on the role of the monarchy within society, and these threw light on many aspects of Malay culture and politics which had been assumed to be unchanging. The focus on the monarchy (*kerajaan*) occurred because of its centrality to Malay political and social values. There were discussions to try to do away with it as there were too many monarchies. This was an obstacle to Malay unity.

Nobody could escape the sense that times had changed and that new concepts were required. The vocabulary used reflected a notion of change as can be seen in important political and cultural terms which were given radical interpretations. On both sides of the Straits, Malay communities grappled with the need to change and adapt to a new political environment, more oriented towards popular participation in government.

¹ Tan Malaka had suggested that in the 1920's, some Malays had considered the need for a state. See his Menudju Republik Indonesia, Jajasan Massa, Djakarta, 1962.

Terms like *setia*, (loyalty) *kedaulatan*, (sovereignty) and *derhaka* (treason) which had been central to the ideology of the *kerajaan* and which strengthened their position were now reinterpreted in favour of the *bangsa* over the *kerajaan*. Undoubtedly the *kerajaans* suffered a decline in their prestige and this influenced some Malays into questioning the role of the rajas in Malay societies.

In East Sumatra, the *kerajaans* were even more on the defensive. The rajas were perceived as sympathisers of Dutch colonialism and were alienated from the majority of East Sumatran society. East Sumatra was a part of Indonesia that was undergoing a revolution to free itself from the Dutch. While some of the terms mentioned earlier were also found in East Sumatra, the charged atmosphere brought forth new terms into Malay political culture such as *demokrat*, *kedaulatan rakyat*, *kolot* (archaic), *sedar* (aware), *maju* (progress) and *feodal* (feudal) as a pejorative term. These terms came into common usage in the ideological debates against the *kerajaan*. The pressures against the *kerajaans* were stronger than in Malaya and there was no meaningful moderating influence between them and the radicals.

While the Malay communities in Malaya focussed on *bangsa* and communal solidarity as a means of confronting the British and the non-Malays, East Sumatrans were fighting for popular participation within the framework of an all

encompassing Indonesian nationality that could also absorb the *bangsa Melayu*.

This period of ideological experimentation in East Sumatra and Malaya involved fundamental choices about political identity. In Malaya the preservation of the *bangsa* was clearly paramount. *Bangsa* was defined in a very narrow and communal sense which excluded the non-Malays. The Malay conservatives who founded U.M.N.O. battled not only the British and the non-Malays but also the radical Malays in the P.K.M.M. which sought to transform *bangsa* from a signifier of ethnically based communal solidarity to a nationality that could encompass non-Malays. This they tried to do in the context of building a new state. The radicals failed in their attempts to set up *Indonesia Raya* or build a new nation from the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*. Mainstream Malays were unhappy about the idea of nationality as this would give citizenship rights and equality to non-Malays. *Bangsa Melayu* was central to them and *tanah Melayu* was seen as the exclusive property of the Malays.

The *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* was acceptable because it maintained the identities of the separate Malay *kerajaans* which the Malays chose to identify with. Thus Malays would maintain their separate *negeri* and would be known as Perak Malays, Selangor Malays and so on. Probably this could be seen as an expression of modern nationalism in a different

way. The term *warga* (nationality) which was vital in Indonesia was not used in Malaya. However though Malays expressed their identities through their various *kerajaans*, Dato Onn claimed that the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* had the potential of developing into a *Melayu* nation.² He probably meant that the federation would be the first step that would unite the various Malay communities into a single political entity in the future.³ In this political entity, the non-Malays would not have any political role to play.

In East Sumatra, the Malay *kerajaans* were not interested in democratising their states and merely saw the implementation of democracy as an afterthought and requirement of the Indonesian state. The *kerajaans* sought to undermine or delay democratising their states in order to maintain their positions. This plus the belief that they were pro-Dutch led to the 'social revolution' of March 1946 in which the *kerajaans* were destroyed. The Malay *kerajaans* were completely demolished and East Sumatra became a part of the unitary republic with instant democracy and an all Indonesian identity.

² *Malaya Tribune*, 11 January 1947.

³ Though one can speak of a *bangsa Melayu* in Malaya, it must be remembered that in the 1940s, the *bangsa Melayu* was divided into different states which were separate entities. One is almost forced to draw the analogy with the biblical nation of Israel which consisted of 12 tribes which were far from united.

The Malay states in Malaya took a different course. The Malay rajahs were not destroyed but were now perceived as symbols of the *bangsa* vis-a-vis the non-Malays. *Bangsa Melayu* became the potent symbol of Malay communal solidarity. The essential Malayness of the states was acknowledged by the British in their treaties with the conservative Malays to the disappointment of non-Malays and radical Malays.

Attempts by the radical Malays to evolve a nationality from *bangsa Melayu* failed, just as the British failed in their attempt to introduce the Malayan Union which ultimately would lead to the creation of a *bangsa Malayan* as a nationality for both Malays and non-Malays.

Their failure was due to historical circumstances. Though Malaya and East Sumatra were areas with a plural population, the Malays in Malaya never conceded the right of the non-Malays to consider the Malay states as their homeland. Historically the British had recognised the Malay states as the sole possessions of the Malays and therefore could not escape from such a policy. A vital factor to be considered was that unlike East Sumatra where an Indonesian nationalism had developed as an important force, Malayan nationalism hardly existed at all. Thus in the final analysis *bangsa* held the forefront of the political arena in

the Malay states and succeeded in relegating the *kerajaans* to a much reduced role in Malay society.

In East Sumatra, the establishment of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* represented an attempt to create an opposing focus of loyalty to the *bangsa Indonesia*. This alternative identity, the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*, was composed of the three *sukus* considered native to East Sumatra, the Malays, Karos and Simalunguns. This East Sumatran identity was created in order to instil loyalty to the East Sumatran state and to undercut Indonesian nationalism. It failed to achieve its aim. This failure was due to the fact that the state depended too much on the Dutch presence and that it had a discriminatory policy towards other Indonesian communities. But the main factor was the emotional pull of the *bangsa Indonesia* as exemplified by Sukarno's speech at Medan airport that "there was only one nation, Indonesia and one *bangsa Indonesia*".⁴ There was no effective reply to Sukarno's speech by any supporter of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur*. On the contrary his speech dealt a severe blow to the N.S.T..

The viability of the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* was also in doubt because of the serious conflict between the three *sukus* over the issue of sharing power. The East Sumatran

⁴ Propinsi Sumatera Timur, p.386.

state was perceived as an attempt by some of the Malay elite to ensure Malay political dominance without the *kerajaans*. When Dutch colonialism gave way to Indonesian nationalism, the *Negara Sumatera Timur* was no longer viable. With its demise, the *bangsa Sumatera Timur* ceased to exist.

The *bangsa* was central to Malay identity because through it Malay political dominance could be maintained. It also served as a vehicle to bring about a sense of belonging as well as an active solidarity which in time of stress or danger could override class, factional or regional divisions within the community. The ending of the war forced Malays to redefine themselves in a new situation. Would it be possible to effect a transition from *bangsa* to *negara*?

Benedict Anderson had pointed out that with the decline of religion and the rise of the printed word on a vast scale through 'print capitalism', it has become possible and necessary to 'imagine communities' as sovereign and limited, and a focus for identification by anonymous individuals. Such "imagined communities" or nations then come to serve vital psychological as well as economic needs under the peculiar modern conditions of secular capitalism.⁵

⁵ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, pp.17-25.

Did the *bangsa Melayu* follow such a path? From the evidence gathered, it is clear that Anderson's assertion could not apply to the *bangsa Melayu* as there was a clear difference between race and nationalism. The "imagined community" of Malays did not lead to an all embracing nationalism that united the various Malay communities into one nation. Much less did it lead to a nationality that could embrace non-Malays. Malays in Malaya still maintained separate state identities and lived under various *kerajaans*.

The East Sumatran Malays differed in that they accepted Indonesian nationalism and the *bangsa Indonesia*. In that respect there was the inevitable transition from an ethnic identity to a nation. For the Malays in Malaya, that transition is in the process of taking place. With the establishment of the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* and independence in 1957 followed by the formation of Malaysia in 1963, it is a matter of time before *bangsa Melayu* gives way to the emergence of a *bangsa Malaysia*. The success or failure of such a transition can only be gauged in the future.

GLOSSARY

adat	- custom, customary law
adil	- impartial, just, equitable, propriety
bangsa	- rank, caste, sort, kind, stock, family, race, nation, tribe
bumiputra	- sons of the soil
Comite DIST	- Comite Daerah Istimewa Sumatera Timur (Committee for on East Sumatran Special Region)
Comite van Ontvangst	- reception committee
daerah istimewa	- special districts
daulat	- divine power, majesty, sovereignty
derhaka	- treason against the Ruler, God or the State
giyugun	- volunteer soldiers
hak	- rights
hamba raja	- servant/slave of the raja
heiho	- auxiliary soldier
Indonesa Raya	- Greater Indonesia
kenkokutai shintai	- Unit dedicated to upbuilding the Country
kadhi	- Islamic judge
kaum tua	- old orthodox Islamic scholars
kaum muda	- young reformist Islamic scholars
keluar Melayu	- reject Malay identity
kolot	- antiquated, outdated
kebangsaan	- 'raceness', of the bangsa, nationalism
kebangsaan Melayu	- Malay nationalism, Malayism

kedaulatan rakyat	-	sovereignty of the people
kerajaan	-	government of a raja, the condition of having a raja
kesatuan	-	union
madzabs	-	Islamic school of thought
marga	-	clan, tribe
Markas Agung	-	Supreme Headquarters
masuk Melayu	-	become Malay/muslim
Melayu jati	-	purebred Malay
Melayu Raya	-	Greater Malay Union
Mentri Besar	-	Chief Minister
merdeka	-	independence, freedom
muktamar	-	conference
nama	-	name, fame
naungan	-	protection, guidance
negara	-	state
negeri	-	settlement, community
orang asli	-	original inhabitant, native
orang dagang	-	foreigner, merchant
Panitia Kebangsaan	-	National Committee
pemuda	-	youth
penghulu	-	village head
peranakan	-	a person of Indian Malay descent
pergerakan	-	[national] movement
persatuan	-	association
rakyat	-	people
sah	-	legal, valid, proper, correct
suku	-	tribe, clan

tanah Melayu	- Malay land, country, settlement, nation
tengku	- title of a Malay aristocrat
teuku	- title of male members of the Achinese uleebalang families
umat	- Islamic community
Volksfront	- Peoples' Front
wali kota	- mayor
Wali Negara	- Head of State
warga	- citizen
zaman	- era, epoch, age
zelfbestuur	- self-governing districts

Appendix I

TABLE 1
TOTAL POPULATION OF MALAYA, 1921-47

	1921	1931	1947	Percentages		
				1921	1931	1947
Malays (and other Malaysians)*	1,623,014	1,645,516 284,528	2,234,185 309,384	48.8	37.9 6.6	38.20 5.29
Chinese	1,171,740	1,704,452	2,614,667	35.2	39.2	44.70
Indians	471,514	621,847	599,616	14.2	14.3	10.25
Europeans	14,894	17,686	18,958	.4	.4	0.32
Eurasians	12,629	15,999	19,171	.4	.4	0.33
Other Communities	32,904	57,676	52,929	1.0	1.3	0.91
Total	3,262,695	4,347,704	5,848,910	100.0	100.0	100.00

*The term "Malaysian" in the census reports means peoples of the indigenous races including Indonesian Malays and the aborigines.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF CHINESE AND INDIANS BORN IN MALAYA

	1921	1931	1947	Percentages of the total Chinese and Indian population		
				1921	1931	1947
Chinese	258,189	533,205	1,633,332	22.0	31.2	62.5
Indians	58,676	131,474	298,674	12.4	21.1	49.8

Source: M.V. del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population* (London, 1949), pp.40, 84-85.

Appendix II

TABLE 1
INDONESIAN POPULATION ACCORDING TO ETHNIC GROUP 1930

	Sumatera Timur		Tapanuli (including Nias)	
	Total	%	Total	%
Malays	334,870	23.00	16,834	1.62
Karonese	145,429	9.98	8,921	0.86
Simalungun	95,144	6.53	-	-
Javanese	589,836	40.51	13,301	1.28
Pakpak/Dairi	-	-	19,936	1.92
Toba	74,224	5.09	523,524	50.63
Angkola	6,706	0.46	79,849	7.72
Padang Lawas	-	-	65,414	6.32
Mandailing	45,300	3.11	89,475	8.65
Nias	-	-	194,939	18.83
Minangkabau	50,677	3.48	9,868	0.95
Sundanese	44,107	3.02	3,290	0.31
Betawi	8,882	0.61	-	-
Banjarese	31,266	2.14	-	-
Others	29,408	2.01	8,552	0.82

Sources: *Indisch Verslag 1940*; 38.

Regeringsadviseur voor Politieke Zaken op Sumatra:
"Politiek overzicht van Sumatra, October '45-Juli
'48", Bijlage I. (Archives of the Ministry of
Interior, Hague)

Appendix II

TABLE 2
POPULATION OF SUMATERA TIMUR¹ AND TAPANULI 1900-1930

	SUMATERA TIMUR					TAPANULI				
	Europeans	Indonesians	Chinese & Other Asians	Total	Density per square km.	Europeans	Indonesians	Chinese & Other Asians	Total	Density per square km.
1900	2079	306035	+112976	421090		369		2280		
1905	2667	450941	114809	568417		436	410939	1926	413301	
1917	6270	742215	145655	894140	9.56	723	761844	2671	765238	20.0
1920	7882	1042930	146742	1197554		763	839515	3307	843585	
1927	8263	1077830	141724	1227817		781	899264	5275	905320	
1930	11079	1470395	*211726	1693200	17.90	852	1035382	**6349	1042583	27.48
% increase 1900-30	433.0	380.0	87.0	302.0		131.0	152.0	178.5	152.3	

+ Chinese - 103768, Others - 9208
 * Chinese - 192822, Others - 18904
 **Chinese - 5704, Others - 645

Sources: Yearbook of the Netherlands East Indies 1920; 17.
 Indisch Verslag, 1940; 15.
 Statistisch Jaaroverzicht van Nederlandsch-Indie, 1929; 11-23.
 Deli, Data 1863-1938; 35.

¹Includes the territory of Bengkalis/Siak Sri Indragiri

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Biographical Appendix

Abdul Karim bin Moehamad Soetan (Xarim M.S.), b. 1901-d.1960. Xarim had three years education in the Dutch medium. He worked as a draftsman in the Lhokseumawe branch (Aceh) of the Public Works Dept., and was very active in its union. He first joined the *National Indisch Partij* and was its chairman until he was transferred to Padang (West Sumatra) in 1920. He was also a journalist and a writer and edited the *Hindia Sepakat* (Sibolga) and later the *Utusan Rajat* (Langsa). He joined the *Parti Komunis Indonesia* in Langsa and by the end of 1924 was a member of the party's national executive. He was sent to Boven Digul in May 1927 and was released in 1932. After the occupation he played an important role in galvanising the *pemuda* into active defence of the Indonesian Republic in East Sumatra. He left the P.K.I. in 1952.

Abdul Rahman, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Hamid Shah, b.1902. A prince of Kedah, he was educated at the Penang Free School, Cambridge and the Inner Temple. In 1946 he was involved in organizing demonstrations against the Malayan Union and joined the Pan Malayan Malay Congress. He left Malaya for England to continue his legal studies and returned in 1949. He took over as President of U.M.N.O. following Dato Onn's resignation in 1951. He was leader of the Alliance which was a coalition of the U.M.N.O., the Malayan Chinese Association and the Malayan Indian Congress. He became Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya in 1955 and led the Federation to independence on 31st. August 1957.

Ahmad Boestaman (real name Abdullah Sani bin Raja Kechil), b.1929-d.1983. Of Sumatran parentage, he was educated in Perak at a Malay school and at Anderson School, Ipoh. He worked as a journalist before the war and was a founder member of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* in 1938. He was detained by the British and

was believed to be the leader of a Japanese sponsored youth group. He worked in the propaganda department, Ipoh during the occupation. He started *Suara Rakyat* after the war and was a founder member of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*. He was the founder President of the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaaf* in 1946 and was tried for sedition on account of writing the *Testament Politik Api*. He was detained by the British from 1948 to 1955. He founded the *Partai Rakyat* in 1956 and led the Socialist Front in the Malayan Parliament in 1959. During the Indonesian Confrontation he was detained by the Malayan Government. He ceased being active politically after his release from detention.

Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, b.1911-d.1969. He was educated at the Malay school, Kota Baru, at the Madrasah Al-Mashoor, Penang and at an English school. He is believed to have obtained a degree in hemeopathic medicine in India. He worked as a journalist and teacher before the war, teaching Arabic in Madrasah Aljunied in Singapore. He was a founder member of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* in 1938 and was detained by the British in 1941. He worked with the Japanese administration and assumed the leadership of the *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung* when Ibrahim Yaacob left for Indonesia in 1945. He was the second President of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* and was detained by the British in 1950. He was the founder member and President of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party in 1955 and was elected to the Malayan Parliament in 1960. Among his many writings was *Sejarah Perjuangan Kita*.

Hafaz, Tengku, b.1895-d.1955. He was a grandson of Sultan Osman of Deli and son of the Pangeran of Bedagai, a dependency of Deli. Although appointed *wakil sultan* in Bedagai in 1932 he was not given his father's title of Pangeran. As a result he moved to Langkat where under the Japanese, he was appointed Pangeran of Langkat Hilir. He was appointed Resident of East Sumatra by Governor Teuku Hasan in October 1945 with the aim of democratising the various *kerajaans* of East Sumatra. However the

'social revolution' destroyed the East Sumatran *kerajaans* and he was pushed out of his position as Resident. He was an active supporter of the *Negara Sumatera Timur* and held important cabinet positions within it.

Ibrahim bin Haji Yaacob, b.1911-d.1979. He came from Pahang (Temerloh) and was educated at a Malay school and at the Sultan Idris Training College from 1929-31. He taught in Bentong (Pahang) from 1931-34 and at Kuala Lumpur, 1934-38. He was the founder President of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* in 1938 and was editor of the *Majlis* from 1939-41 and the *Warta Malaya*, 1941 and *Warta Ahad*, 1941. He was detained by the British but was released by the Japanese. He was given the rank of Colonel of the *Giyugun* in Malaya. He was leader of the *Pembela Tanah Air*. He fled to Jakarta in 1945 and remained in Indonesia till his death. His writings include *Melihat Tanah Air, Nusa dan Bangsa* and *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*.

Ishak bin Mohamad was born in Temerloh (Pahang) in 1910. He was educated at a Malay school and at the English school, Kuala Lipis (Pahang). He went to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar in preparation for a career in the Malay Administrative Service. However he left this service to become a writer in 1933, and joined the *Warta Malaya* in 1937. He was a founder member of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* in 1938. He joined the *Utusan Melayu* in 1939 and was detained by the British in 1941. He was editor of the *Berita Malai*, a newspaper published during the occupation, and visited the Tokyo Assembly of Greater East Asia in 1943. In 1944 he was involved in an agricultural scheme in Bintan island. He became a leader of the *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* from 1947-48. He was the third President of the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* from 1947-48. He was detained by the British from 1948-53.

Luat Siregar, Mr.. b.1908-d.1953. He was born in Sipirok, South Tapanuli and was educated in the H.I.S. in Siantar and the A.M.S. in Yogyakarta. He completed his law degree in Leiden in 1934 and practised law in Siantar, Padang Sidempun and Medan before the Japanese occupation. He was a member of *Parindra* before the war. He was a close associate of Xarim M.S. and was brought into the P.K.I. in 1945. He played an important role in the destruction of the *kerajaans* of East Sumatra during the 'social revolution' of March 1946. As Republican Resident of East Sumatra (April-September 1946) he was accused of gambling and corruption.

Mansur, Tengku, Dr., b.1897-d.1955. He was a younger son of Sultan Hoesin of Asahan and was an uncle of Sultan Saibun. He studied at the Batavia Medical School (STOVIA) and became the founding President (1917-19) of the student organization, *Jong Sumatra*. Even as a student he was not particularly sympathetic to the Malay monarchies of East Sumatra. He completed his medical studies at Leiden (Holland), specializing in surgery, and married a Dutch woman. He worked in Sulawesi and Batavia before returning to Medan where he became well known as a surgeon. In 1947 he became *Wali Negara* of the Dutch sponsored *Negara Sumatera Timur*.

Mohamad Khir Johari, b.1929 at Alor Setar, Kedah. He had his early education in a Malay school and from there to the Sultan Abdul Hamid College. He was a member of *Saberkas* which was strongly opposed to the Malayan Union scheme. He was also a radical member of U.M.N.O. and tried in conjunction with other *Saberkas* members to steer U.M.N.O. away from the rulers. He rose from the ranks of U.M.N.O. to become a Minister and held various portfolios.

Mohamad Amir, Dr., b.1900-d.1949. He was a Minangkabau from Talawi. He studied at the STOVIA (1913-23) in Batavia and was a close associate of Dr. Tengku Mansur in setting up the *Jong Sumatera*. He succeeded Mansur as President (1920-23). He was also

the editor of the journal *Jong Sumatra*. He was also interested in culture, philosophy and popular science. He was also associated with the Theosophical movement, which financed his medical studies in Utrecht (1924-28) where he specialised in psychiatry. He married a Dutch woman. He returned to Indonesia in 1928 and Medan in 1934 and entered government service. From 1937 he was personal physician to the Sultan of Langkat. He was committed to Indonesian nationalism and was in a Sumatran delegation in Jakarta during the declaration of Indonesian independence. He acted as governor during Hasan's tour of Sumatra and was supportive of the 'social revolution' in East Sumatra. He fled to the Allies in Medan when he found himself under increasing pressure from Republican extremists.

Mohammad Hasan, Teuku, Mr.. He was born in Pidie and was the eldest son of the ruler of Pineueng. He had his education in the MULO and the A.M.S. in Bandung and the University of Leiden and completed his law degree in 1933. He returned to private practice in Medan until 1938 when he joined the staff of the Sumatran Provincial government as adjunct-referendaris. He was not known to be politically active in the nationalist movement. However he was present during the setting up of the republican government in Jakarta and was appointed as Governor for Sumatra. Hasan was accused of being a weak and ineffectual governor by the *pemuda* and was away on tour when the 'social revolution' took place. He never supported the violence and tried with limited success to maintain some degree of law and order in East Sumatra.

Mohamad Saleh Umar (Surapati) was born in Pengkalan Brandan (Langkat) in 1909. He was actively involved in politics in the 1930s as a member of *Partindo*. He was also a journalist as well as writer. He was actively involved in theatre as a medium of political and social comment especially during the Japanese Occupation. He was critical of the Republican government's handling of the social and political situation in East Sumatra

especially during the governorship of Mr. Teuku Hasan.

Mohammad Yunus Nasution, b.1905-d.1969. He was influenced by Tan Malaka and had a varied political experience in the P.N.I., *Partindo* and *Gerindo*. He did not hold any position in these parties. He worked as a clerk in a soft drink factory and was a part time journalist. His association with Xarim M.S. ensured his rise to prominence after the occupation. He was active in destroying the *kerajaans* during the 'social revolution'. However, he fell from grace and was left in the political doldrums during the breakdown of law and order in Medan

Onn bin Jaafar, Dato, b.1895-d.1962. He was educated at the Malay school, Johor Bharu and also at Aldeburgh Lodge School, Suffolk, and at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. On his return to Johor, he entered the Johor Civil Service but left soon after. He drifted from job to job and was editor of the *Warta Malaya* from 1930-33 and of *Lembaga Malaya*, 1934-36 and *Lembaga*, 1935-36, all of which were published in Singapore. He was an Unofficial member of the Johor Council of State, 1936-41 and was a member of the Johor Executive Council. He was private secretary to the Regent of Johor, 1938 and was in charge of Information and Publicity, Johor during the Malayan campaign in 1942. During the Japanese occupation he was Food Controller and later District Officer of Batu Pahat (Johor). He was *Mentri Besar* of Johor from 1946-50. He was founder and President of the *Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung Johor* in 1946, and of U.M.N.O.. He left the latter to form the non-communal Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) in 1951. He was founder and President of *Parti Negara*, 1954-62. Onn won a seat to the Federal Parliament in a Trengganu constituency in 1959. Till his death in 1962 Onn never regained the prominence he enjoyed in the Malay community since he left U.M.N.O..

Senu bin Abdul Rahman, b.1919-. He had his early education at a Malay school and thereafter at the Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjung Malim. He was a teacher from 1939-41. After the war he was actively involved in *Saberkas* as Secretary-General from 1945-47. He served as Secretary-General of U.M.N.O. when Tunku Abdul Rahman was its President. He was associated with the drafting of Malaya's "Independence Proclamation".