I. Introduction

To the Malays, the Federation Agreement of 1948 was a stepping stone toward Malaya's eventual self-government. Compared to the White Paper of 1946, there was no doubt that the new Agreement entailed a clear call for Malay political independence. This promise could be regarded as a reward for the Malay victory in the struggle against the Malayan Union. Nevertheless, on some points, the Federation Agreement was less than explicit. In particular, no firm target date for Malaya's self-government was set in the Agreement. Instead, it vaguely declared "as soon as local circumstances and conditions will permit ...". Obviously, as long as local circumstances and conditions did not permit, political progress toward eventual self-government would be slow in coming. And who would judge when conditions were right?

In the British view, permissible local circumstances and conditions would be possible only if the following difficulties explained by the new High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, could be overcome.

Any forecast of the political future of the Federation must start with some hypothesis as to the likelihood of the Chinese and Malays forgetting their differences to the extent of political integration of the two races ... it [is] difficult to discern any common object capable of actually achieving this miracle [author's emphasis] unless it is, conceivably [sic], the pursuit of independence on an anti-British platform.

As indicated above, the political future of the Federation virtually depended upon the political integration of the Malays and the Chinese through inter-racial harmony. Obviously, as long as this condition was not met, political progress toward eventual self-government would be slow in coming. Given the fact that the growth of Malay national awareness had progressed principally at the great cost of racial tensions, doubtlessly, the creation of inter-communal unity loomed as a miraculous task to the British who would not consider their early departure. Meanwhile, the communist insurrection of June 1948 made this formidable task even more unlikely, since it intensified the racial enmity between the two major communal groups in Malaya. Nevertheless, the two great Malay architects of statehood, Dato Onn bin Jaafar and Tunku Abdul Rahman, managed to handle this seemingly miraculous task and eventually succeeded in carving out independence for Malaya in 1957.

In this context, it is a vital task to understand hidden dynamics behind the Malay struggle for Independence, largely concerned with ideological warfares of the two
preeminent Malay national leaders, both within Malay society and against the British from 1948 to 1957.

II. Dato Onn bin Jaafar's Vision

When the negotiations with the British on the Federation entered the final stages, Dato Onn bin Jaafar (hereafter Dato Onn) already envisioned an ideal for the achievement of Malaya's self-government. In his speech at the General Assembly of the United Malays National Organization or UMNO held on September 2, 1947, Dato Onn implicitly expressed the ideal.

Though the task of fighting the Malayan Union is nearly complete, the Malays must be aware of the fact that it is only the beginning of our struggle. There are many other things that the Malays must do ... The UMNO has been formed not only for the purpose of opposing the Malayan Union, but also to fight against the Malays themselves. We have to find ways and means of how we shall change the habits and way of life of the Malays in order to enable them to realise their duties and responsibilities.

In this address, "the beginning of our struggle" signified that UMNO would continue its struggle after its confrontation against the Malayan Union was over. If so, how would the organization fight for its ultimate goal? As far as the attainment of Malaya's independence was concerned, Dato Onn believed that the Malays could not achieve that goal without the cooperation of the non-Malays. Accordingly, "to fight against the Malays themselves" and "[w]e have to find ways and means of how we shall change the habits and way of life of the Malays" implied that the Malays should strive for the integration of the three major communities of Malaya into the struggle for the ultimate goal. In these efforts, "their duties and responsibilities" were to foster a change from a Malay outlook to a true sense of Malayan outlook within the Malay community under the guidance of UMNO. In short, Dato Onn intended to establish the ideal of inter-communal unity as the solid ground on which to strive for independence, restructuring Malay society in the process.

After the successful struggle against the Malayan Union came with the inauguration of the Federation on February 1, 1948, the UMNO became stagnant. When the Emergency was declared, its political activities became even more lethargic. Everyone's attention was directed from politics. Together with the UMNO leaders who held important public appointments, the Malays were forced to put all their energies into the pressing needs of the moment. The British government was deeply engrossed in the battle against the communists. As a result, political progress toward self-government lost its central importance. Furthermore, the communist insurrection made the inter-racial enmity in Malaya more aggravated. Compounding these socio-political problems, the existence of no political links between UMNO and non-Malay organizations prevented Dato Onn from embarking upon his quest for Malayan political unity, despite his strong desire to do so. On November 26, 1948, the Straits Times reported his desire.

Just one sentence uttered in Singapore ... has had a magical effect upon the political atmosphere of Malaya. That was Dato Onn's statement ... that in his discussion in London he had spoken for Malayans, and not only for Malays .... Dato Onn's prompt assurance was a further manifestation of that political intuition and judgement which brought Dato Onn to the position of racial leadership which he holds today.... As a
result, the domiciled non-Malay communities are feeling distinctly happier about the problem of reconciling Malay nationalism with their own future.

However, the communist insurrection turned out to be a mixed blessing for Dato Onn's ideal for the achievement of independence when the British government introduced a new administrative approach to combat the communists more effectively. At the end of 1948, Sir Henry Gurney observed that the British battle against communism in Malaya was a political war in which the "hearts and minds" of the people should be won over. Accordingly, he concluded that by waging only a strict military campaign, they could not effectively tackle the war. Based upon this analysis, Sir Henry Gurney intended to introduce a new administrative approach to the Chinese by which, with Government backing, the Chinese leaders would be encouraged to form a political organization to help bridge the gap between the British administration and the Chinese community, and consequently to serve as a rallying point for the community against the threat of the communists. According to the High Commissioner's idea, the Malayan Chinese Association or MCA, led by its first president Tan Cheng Lock, came into existence on February 27, 1949.

In the mean time, with a similar political motive to that of Sir Henry Gurney, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, Britain's Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia proposed a suggestion to set up the communities liaison committee in which a group of influential representatives from the different communities would join and solve various political problems of Malaya. This suggestion prompted the formation in January 1949 of the Sino-Malay Goodwill Committee, whose membership consisted of five Malays and four Chinese including Dato Onn and Tan Cheng Lock. This committee expanded with the participation of leaders of other communities and turned into the Communities Liaison Committee or CLC in April 1949.

In the wake of the communist armed revolt, these new British administrative approaches gave great momentum to the implementation of Dato Onn's ideal to create an inter-communal unity for Malaya's independence, building a political bridge between the Malays and the non-Malays. The CLC was viewed by Dato Onn as a reliable political body in which it might be possible that the Malays and the domiciled non-Malays would create a true sense of Malayan outlook especially through their united front against the communists and their subsequent cooperation in the struggle for Malaya's independence.

Inspired by the formation of this political bridge, Dato Onn embarked upon his ambitious attempt to instill a true sense of Malayan outlook into the Malay community. He touched on some sensitive issues, such as the opening of UMNO's door to the non-Malays, the position of Malay rulers in a single sovereign and independent State of Malaya and the amendment of the Federal citizenship. However, from the beginning, Dato Onn's move toward inter-communal unity was questioned within the Malay community. In general, the Malays feared that Dato Onn might trade away their rights and privileges which had been reconfirmed in the Federation Agreement of 1948 in return for their struggle against the Malayan Union.

Despite such general suspicion of his ideal among the Malays, Dato Onn vigorously argued the cause for a new national identity.

The time has come to formulate a single nationality .... This would be in keeping with the practice prevalent in other countries. We must accept as nationals all those who
are prepared to give their all to this country. This must be considered of we aspire to achieve independence... We must unite the people of this country into a single nationality if we are to achieve self-government and independence.

In an effort to imbue the Malay community with a Malayan outlook his first move was to put forward the opening of UMNO's associate membership to non-Malays. However, there was strong opposition to Dato Onn's move within the 11th General Assembly of the UMNO held at Arau, Perlis. In particular, the criticism of Dato Onn was raised by Pateh Akhir of Selangor, Osman of Perlis, Mahayidden of Kelantan and Tunku Abdul Rahman of Kedah. They argued that "[His move] is illogical, unconvincing ... he makes every issue a personal matter instead of discussing it on its merits". In the face of such criticism, Dato Onn vehemently argued that in order to achieve independence, the Malays would have to abandon their communal outlook.

It is absolutely important for the Malays to obtain closer relations with the other people in the country. It is time for us to take the view wider than the kampong view. Let it not be said that the Malays are narrow-minded and suspicious .... I ask of you which will you choose - peace or chaos, friendship or enmity?

In the heat of debate, a new Constitution for UMNO including the acceptance of the non-Malays as its associate members won approval. Dato Onn's first attempt to reconstruct the Malay community with a Malayan outlook achieved access. The adoption by the General Assembly of Dato Onn's proposal signified the continued strength of his leadership within the UMNO.

In Dato Onn's attempts to instil a Malayan outlook into the Malay community, as well as to achieve Malaya's independence, the position of the Malay rulers as traditional religious and political heads among the Malays loomed as a major obstacle. On this question, Dato Onn took a very definite stand. "We must find ways and means to end feudal rule and replace it with a constitutional form of government". In order to implement this firm stand, Dato Onn proposed the appointment of a Malay Deputy High Commissioner. Suspecting that Dato Onn coveted such a new post, the rulers opposed the proposal on the grounds that "the appointment of a Malay to be a Deputy High Commissioner would place a Malay over the heads of the Rulers".

Dato Onn's quarrel with the rulers soon developed into a breach between the rulers and UMNO. Dato Onn's stand against the Malay rulers on the issue of appointing a Malay Deputy High Commissioner won the support of the various divisions of the organization like the Johor Bahru division and the Penang division. Also the Kaum Ibu UMNO and the UMNO Youth Organization expressed their support of Dato Onn's stand. In particular, at the Youth Organization meeting the following resolution rallied to his cause.

This assembly resolves that members of the UMNO Youth Organization renew their determination to put their faith in the leadership of Dato Onn and to renew their royalty to him. The Youth Organization is ready to support whatever steps he may take from time to time for the progress and welfare of the Malay people.

When the 12th General Assembly of UMNO took place at Butterworth, Province Wellesley, on August 27 and 28, 1949, Dato Onn again raised the question on the position of the rulers.

The days of Feudal Rule are over; we are now in the age of Democratic and
Constitutional rule. We shall not tolerate any repression of our liberty of full participation in the government of our country .... The foremost aim of UMNO is to see that the wishes of the people are met. This aim is laid down in the Constitution of UMNO for the realisation of independence for Malaya.

Following his address, the representatives in the Assembly passed a strong resolution to affirm confidence in Dato Onn as president of UNMO and to endorse his stand in the quarrel with the rulers. Despite his challenge against the Malay rulers, the confidence that UMNO had in his leadership was unquestionable.

Confident of his popularity among the members of UMNO, Dato Onn continued to push his program within the CLC as well as within the Malay community. At the meeting of the CLC held at Johor Bahru in September 1949, he emphasized the importance of the creation of a true sense of Malayan outlook for achievement of Malaya's independence. The meeting agreed that as the first step toward self-government and a Malayan nationality, elections of the several legislatures of the Federation and a broader citizenship should be introduced as early as possible. In October, Dato Onn made his first public speech since he resigned from the post of Mentri Besar, Johor before a crowd of five thousand supporters at Batu Pahat. In the speech, he argued the Malays to adopt a Malayan outlook.

We can no longer remain isolated and aloof from the changes which are taking place around us. We must get into action and wholeheartedly co-operate with the other communities in order that the aims of UMNO - one nationality speaking one language - can be achieved.

In the meantime, as another possible means to kill communalism within the Malay community, Dato Onn in the CLC prepared to touch the most sensitive issue among the Malays. On April 17, 1950, the Committee issued new citizenship proposals, strongly recommending that Part XII of the Federation Constitution of 1948 should be replaced. According to the CLC's suggestion, the Malays should concede political rights to the non-Malays in return for the help of non-Malays in improving their economic conditions. This suggestion was opposed by the Malays as unacceptable on the grounds that whereas political rights could be transferred by a stroke of the pen, the same could hardly be done in economic matters.

The real motive behind Malay opposition to the CLC's citizenship proposals was related to other reasons, however. First of all, the Malays were by and large doubtful of the non-Malays' loyalty toward Malaya. Secondly, they feared that if the number of non-Malay Federal citizens increased, the existing Malay majority in the Legislative Council and in other governing bodies would be endangered. In addition, there was no doubt that such concessions would renege on the promises made in the various State Agreements "to provide for and encourage the education and training of Malays so as to fit them to take a full share in the economy, social welfare and government of the State". Finally, more than anything else the Malays were afraid of the deprivation of their special rights. If they accepted the CLC's citizenship proposals, "Malaya would degenerate into an international settlement (against which idea the Malays had fought the Malayan Union) in which the Malays themselves would be found only among the unprivileged class".

With a view to discussing the CLC's proposals and persuading the UMNO's members to accept them, Dato Onn called an Emergency General Assembly of the
organization on May 29, 1950. In general, the Assembly were divided into those who were in favor of any proposal that would improve Malay economic conditions or hasten self-government and those who were against the early adoption of a single nationality on the grounds that despite the other benefits to the Malays, it would cause the non-Malays to submerge them. The opponents maintained that although the promises made in the Federation Agreement to protect Malay interests and privileges were not fully implemented, the adoption of the proposals would be too hasty. After a very heated debate, the Assembly decided to postpone their discussion of the proposals until another meeting to be held in June 10 and 11 in order to allow enough time for each UMNO division to examine the proposals thoroughly.

As scheduled, another Emergency General Assembly sat again on June 10. Despite Dato Onn's strong arguments emphasizing various difficulties in achieving self-government without the help of non-Malays in Malaya, strong opposition to the CLC's proposals was expressed by many of the delegates. In particular, there was a lengthy clash between Dato Onn and Che Sa'adon bin Haji Zubir, president of the Singapore Malay Union. Arguing that it was not yet time to give the non-Malays equal rights with the Malays, Che Sa'adon added that "if they were adopted, the Malay race will fade into obscurity as it has done in Singapore".

In the face of the strong opposition during the debate on the afternoon of June 11, Dato Onn tendered his resignation from the leadership of UMNO. The members of the Central Executive Committee individually would resign also. After some confusion in the Assembly, there was a clamoring among the majority of delegates for Dato Onn and the Central Executive Committee to remain in their offices. At this juncture, Dato Onn suggested that a new Committee be formed consisting of outspoken opponents like Sa'adon Zubir, Abdul Kahlid bin Osman, Sanusi bin Baki and Abu Bakar. Soon they were asked if they accepted Dato Onn's suggestion. When they refused, the Assembly was fully occupied by Dato Onn's sarcastic comments on the subject. This Assembly finally broke up amid general confusion.

Shortly after the Assembly, various reactions to Dato Onn's resignation appeared throughout the country. The UMNO divisions all over Malaya held emergency meeting and sent numerous petitions to request Dato Onn to resume his office. Furthermore, in an attempt to convince Dato Onn to return to his leadership of the organization, a mass rally attended by UMNO's representatives from every state in the Federation was planned at Johor Bahru in July 28. Confronted by the confidence of the overwhelming majority in the resigned leader, his opponents were convinced that they could ill afford to lose Dato Onn's leadership within the Malay community. The principal opponents including Che Sa'adon decided to request Dato Onn to withdraw his resignation.

At the annual General Assembly of UMNO held in August, 1950, Dato Onn was reelected president by a vote of sixty-six in favor and three against. Based upon such overwhelming confidence that the majority of UMNO's representatives had in his leadership, the CLC's citizenship proposals, which had been slightly revised by Dato Onn, passed without much difficulty at the Assembly. Indeed, instead of becoming a divided community, the Malays decided to give up their exclusive privileges, in spite of their dissatisfaction. Now, in Dato Onn's view, the Malay community seemed to be ready to accept a Malayan outlook.

Encouraged by the outcome of the citizenship debate, Dato Onn attempted to
advance a step further. He suggested an even more open proposal regarding the question of non-Malay membership in UMNO at the end of 1950. He argued that if the Malays would not offer equal membership rights and privileges in UMNO to the non-Malays, it would be very contradictory to their approval of the new citizenship proposals. Also, he suggested that the body change its name from the United Malays National Organization to the United Malaya National Organization. Through its abbreviation would remain UMNO, the change of "Malays" into "Malaya" implied that the organization was to discard its communal outlook and turn into a non-communal or national political body to fight for the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Malaya. In addition, another consideration that prompted Dato Onn to change the framework of his party lay in his desire to transform the UMNO into the first non-communal political party in Malaya. Indeed, he was apprehensive that if the organization failed to open its door to the non-Malays, other progressive parties would do so. If so, in Dato Onn's view, it was obvious that the UMNO would be branded a pusillanimous communal party that hindered the political progress and development of Malaya. At the biannual General Assembly of UMNO in March 1951, Dato Onn warned his colleagues of the danger of being left behind.

There are strong rumours that the Progressive Party of Singapore, which opens its door to all persons irrespective of race and creed, intends to spread its wings into the Federation .... Instead of being followers, let us be initiators. Instead of dancing to the tune of others, let us make others dance to our tune.

Dato Onn's new proposal would be brought before another Emergency General Meeting of UMNO to meet at the Majestic Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on June 27, 1951. From the beginning, it was presumed by Dato Onn that certain divisions of UMNO would strongly oppose his proposal. However, unexpectedly, the Perak division which had most actively supported the Dato Onn's reelection in June 1950 took an unfavorable attitude toward the opening of the UMNO to the non-Malays. The division argued that its door should not be opened to non-Malays until the position of the Malays would be stable economically, educationally and politically.

In an effort to offset these serious challenges within the Malay community, Dato Onn attempted to take advantage of the loyalty of the Youth organization of UMNO and other young students. At the biannual meeting of Youth organization held in Kuala Lumpur on February 4, 1951, Dato Onn stated that "he was not at all satisfied with the progress made by the League [the Youth organization], ... lack of interest in the League's affairs was bringing disunity and ... for this the Malay Rulers and senior Malay government officials were largely to blame". In the meeting, the following resolutions were passed:

- that UMNO Youth should be graded according to their abilities.
- that the UMNO slogan "Hidup Melayu" be changed to "Merdeka".
- that the League should have a representative on the Federal Legislative Council for 1951.
- that Dato Onn's proposal to form a National Army of 50,000 men has the League's support.

Indeed, the Youth Organization was a pressure group within the UMNO. Suggesting that the UMNO slogan "Hidup Melayu" be changed to "Merdeka", the Youth section implied that it would be strongly support Dato Onn's ideals.

Under the auspices of UMNO, another meeting designed to support Dato Onn's cause took place at Johor Bahru on February 18, 1951. On the subject "Malaya is now
fit for self-government", about 150 persons including Dato Onn and Sa'adon Zubir were involved in the debate. Two main groups of speakers were from Malay students of the University of Malaya and UMNO members. In general, whereas the former was in favor of the motion, the latter was against it.

In June 1951, when a new Constitution with the clause to assure that the UMNO would confer equal membership rights and privileges to those enjoyed by the ordinary Malay members to the non-Malays was ready for a vote, Dato Onn threatened that if his proposal failed to pass, he would form a new political party called the Independence of Malay Party or IMP that would embrace all races in Malaya and strive to attain Malaya's independence within ten years.

At this juncture, it is necessary to understand the reason why Dato Onn made such an inflammatory announcement before he brought his proposal to the Emergency General Meeting which was scheduled on June 27, 1951. Dato Onn was by then very suspicious of the British attitudes toward Malaya's independence. On April 13, 1949, when Prime Minister, Attlee pronounced the policy of his government toward Malaya in the House of Commons, he strongly emphasized that Britain had no intention of a "premature withdrawal" from the country. The Utusan Melayu described Attlee's statement as "a disappointment to the masses". It further commented that "the bulk of the people desired the Malaya be given self-government, ... as long as Britain did not set a target date for Malayan self-government, she would not be able to gain public confidence".

The Prime Minister's announcement was reaffirmed by a Tory M. P., Walter Fletcher, when he declared in May 1950 that Britain might get out of Malaya after 10 years. He further said that "I am saying that ten years is the minimum period in which we would leave Malaya". As a member of the Federal Executive Council, Dato Onn knew that the British did not have any intention to set a target date for Malaya's independence as long as their colonial interests dictated remaining in the country.

This suspicious political climate seemed to make Dato Onn more impatient with the strong communal outlook within the UMNO. He did not believe that the UMNO would approve the opening of its doors to the non-Malays. Furthermore, he was surely convinced that the organization had no choice but to adopt a progressive outlook in order to achieve Malaya's independence within ten years. Discouraged by the narrow and communal attitudes of UMNO, and doubtful of cautious British attitudes toward Malaya's self-government, Dato Onn gave up his further attempt to soften the strong communal outlook of UMNO and decided to leave the organization in order to establish a healthy non-communal political organization suitable for the struggle for constitutional reforms leading toward the achievement of Malaya's independence by September 1961.

Toward this proclaimed aim, together with most of the former members of the CLC, Dato Onn launched the IMP on September 16, 1951. One of the principal reasons why he could not achieve his ideal within the Malay community can be attributed to his choice of unrealistic tactics to create an inter-communal unity. Dato Onn's principal strategy for the establishment of a true sense of Malayan unity was to instill a Malayan outlook among the Malays, thus replacing their communalism. In this drive, the Malays were urged to give up their traditional rights and privileges and merge with the non-Malays. This move by Dato Onn alarmed many leaders of UMNO as too hasty a step.
They thought that it lacked the right timing. It was obvious to them that if they accepted Dato Onn's ideal, the Malays' security as a race was at stake. By and large, the leaders believed that the Malays were not yet prepared to adopt his method of gaining independence in light of their economic and educational weaknesses. Furthermore, given the strong conviction among the Malays that their special privileges were a valuable return on their struggle against the Malayan Union, Dato Onn's tactics, which offered no immediate benefit to offset their disadvantages, were not easily acceptable. To overcome all these obstacles, his bold strategy for inter-communal unity could have been achieved only through a revolution in Malay thought.

Without a doubt, Dato Onn himself, who made a great contribution to the development of a Malay national outlook during the protest against the Malayan Union, must have known how strongly communalism had taken root within the Malay community. Nevertheless, perhaps combined with his individual political ambition as a national leader, his strong suspicion of the reluctant British attitudes toward Malaya's independence prompted Dato Onn to play high stakes for this unattainable prize. Also, it is possible that, to a certain degree, he was overconfident of his popularity among the Malays. At any event, Dato Onn's drive to create a true sense of a Malayan outlook within the Malay community turned out to be futile. As long as he stuck to the ideal in the IMP, Dato Onn could not gain strong support among the Malays.

Though Dato Onn failed to fathom the depth of Malay communalism, his dream of the achievement of independence did not fade away. Indeed, the ideal of inter-communal unity was first generated and implemented by him as an instrument to achieve Malaya's independence. Since Dato Onn left the UMNO without any concrete results to show for his various efforts, this trend continued to be pursued by the UMNO under the new leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, but by different ways and means.

III. Tunku Abdul Rahman's Vision

After Dato Onn resigned from the presidency of UMNO, the post was entrusted to Tunku Abdul Rahman (hereafter the Tunku) on August 25, 1951. As soon as the Tunku, a loyal prince who was an untried man in the sphere of politics, took charge of UMNO’s presidency, his immediate task was to revitalize the disoriented party. Indeed, shortly after Dato Onn's departure, most branches suffered from low morale. In addition, many members of the organization left and joined Dato Onn in his new IMP. Many remaining members were sympathetic to the ex-president. In an effort to elevate the organization from its political nadir, the new leader blasted his predecessor's non-communal outlook, reviving the historical claim of special privileges for the Malays in Malaya. In his inaugural speech, the Tunku defended his Malay outlook.

This is a Malay country, and privileges should be given to the Malays. . . . What will become of the Malays if we concede every time to the insatiable demands of the other races? . . . Some people say independence should be handed to "Malayans". Who are these "Malayans"? The Malays will decide who the "Malayans" should be . . . The Malay Rulers should consider what will happen if this country is handed to "Malayans"; it is certain that their places will be torn down . . . The independence of this country must be handed over to us with all possible speed . . . We shall destroy the Federation Agreement in the same way we destroyed the Malayan Union five years ago, and establish instead freedom of our people.
In the meantime, the Tunku could not ignore the possibility that Dato Onn's IMP might attract the support of a large portion of the people in Malaya. Thus he did not entirely rule out the importance of cooperation between the Malays and the non-Malays.

For two hundred years, the Malays had lived in harmony with their non-Malay neighbours. If there were any misunderstandings, it was the work of outsiders ... [the greatest wish of the Malays was] to secure and to safeguard the peace of the country and to guarantee the safety of all communities residing therein, as well as to strengthen the bond of friendship and goodwill of the communities living here.

Based upon these remarks, one can trace the Tunku's ideal for the achievement of Malaya's independence. He ensured that the UMNO would never give up its communal outlook as a Malay political organization, protecting the traditional interests and privileges of the Malays. He also declared that its main goal was to drive for Malaya's independence, and that sovereignty should be handed over to the Malays because Malaya was their country. At the same time, the Tunku did not forget to include that the Malays needed the cooperation of non-Malays to achieve independence. However, given his strong communal attitude, the cooperation would have a precondition, namely non-interference of the non-Malays in the rights and privileges of the Malays. Therefore, although the Tunku also intended to take advantage of the rhetoric of inter-communal unity in the demand for independence, his methods to secure the ideal differed from Dato Onn's.

Whereas Dato Onn sought to achieve the ideal through a complete fusion of the Malays and non-Malays, the Tunku attempted it by way of an alliance. Dato Onn's fusion aimed at the creation of a true sense of Malayan consciousness and implied that a nation must be created first before independence. In his view, it would be possible only when the Malays were willing to give up their traditional rights and privileges. On the other hand, the Tunku's alliance aimed at the establishment of the peaceful co-existence of all communities living in Malaya and implied that independence must come first before a nation can be formed. The Tunku firmly believed that at all events, the Malay historical claim must not be sacrificed in the course of the achievement of independence because Malaya originally was a Malay country. Compared to Dato Onn's approach, despite its less complete inter-communal unity and less appeal to the non-Malays, the Tunku's tactics seemed to be based upon a more realistic appraisal of the Malayan situation.

On September 16, 1951, twenty-one days after he left the UMNO, Dato Onn launched the IMP in Kuala Lumpur. At the inaugural ceremony, attended by one thousand people, Tan Cheng Lock, president of the MCA, promised to support the task of uniting all races in Malaya in a common loyalty.

To a certain extent, the birth of the IMP as an inter-communal party posed a new threat to the UMNO. However, from the beginning, the Tunku did not take the threat seriously. He was convinced that Dato Onn overestimated the receptiveness of the Malays to the creation of a Malayan outlook, particularly through their merger with the non-Malays. Thus, in his view, it was not likely that the new party could organize a majority of the Malays under its banner. Nevertheless, the Tunku could not afford to ignore completely the IMP's potential appeal to the Malays. Indeed, Tunku's strong communal attitude alienated a large group of Malays who believed in the necessity of some form of inter-communal unity in striving for independence and prompted them to
leave the organization. Furthermore, his vehement historical claim for Malay special rights and privileges made Dato Onn's new party more attractive to the Chinese and Indians. To meet the threat posed by the new party, the Tunku attempted to make use of a statement Dato Onn had once made: "The Malays are the key to the politics in this country". In Tunku's view, this statement signified that no political party in Malaya could not thrive without the support of the Malays. It was obvious to him that if the UMNO succeeded in securing a majority of Malay support, the future growth of the IMP would be in jeopardy.

Accordingly, in an attempt to steer Malays away from the new party, the Tunku decided to put "practical advantages for the Malays" on the top priority in the UMNO's new program.

While I naturally had to talk about independence to satisfy some of [my] followers, I had no intention of making this a main feature of the new UMNO programme, which would aim rather at getting practical advantages for the Malays, such as land in the towns on favourable terms.

Subsequently, he bitterly attacked the slow speed of the implementation of the British pro-Malay policy promised by the Federation Agreement of 1948.

The Federation of Malaya, which replaced the Malayan Union, was brought about with the help of UMNO and the united effort of all Malays, but it has done nothing for the rakyat. The only people who have benefitted from the Federation Agreement are a small and influential minority.... The Malays were in a worse position today than had been ten or 20 years ago....

In addition, when the IMP launched its vigorous campaign for membership, the Tunku immediately reacted to the move with numerous tours throughout the country. He visited villages and appealed to Malay dwellers to support the UMNO. The Tunku suggested that UMNO's Central Executive Committee visit the mosques every Friday and "talk politics" to the Malays.

As another means to unite the Malays under UMNO's banner, the Tunku suggested that the Malay rulers align themselves with the people as they did in 1946. He urged them "never ever to let themselves be made instruments of outside powers to break ... aspirations of the people and to destroy their own subjects".

In the meantime, a tragic event in the wake of the communist war in Malaya gave an impetus to political development toward independence. When Sir Henry Gurney was murdered by terrorists in October 1951, Oliver Lyttleton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies visited the country in order to reappraise the Malayan political scene. Accordingly, in Tunku's view, his visit was a good chance for the UMNO to press the British policy makers to make a commitment to the political, social and economic well-being of Malaya. On December 2, UMNO delegation including the Tunku himself met Lytteltonm. At this meeting, the delegates proposed that the Secretary of the State for the Colonies introduce an interim government in Malaya. They argued that a popular government would promote political and economic stability, giving the people a great incentive for fighting against the communists.

This argument must have been impressive to the British colonialists. However, the British government stressed as a precondition that all races in Malaya must join together before the British implemented serious steps toward political development. For
many British colonialists, who would never consider an early withdrawal from Malaya, the inter-communal unity was conceived as an insurmountable barrier within the near future. The task had been once described even as a "miracle." This notion had been well substantiated by the failure of Dato Onn's attempt to transform the UMNO into a non-communal organization. However, contrary to this British conviction, the inter-communal unity as a solid ground on which demand independence began to materialize when local elections at municipal and two board-levels were introduced in December, 1951. To compete in the municipal elections of Kuala Lumpur which would be held in February, 1952, the leaders of the local branches of the UMNO and the MCA announced a joint declaration with regard to the formation of an electoral alliance.

In vigorous election campaigns, the Tunku and the UMNO leaders strongly appealed to the Malays, emphasizing the basic difference between the UMNO and IMP on how to foster inter-communal unity. The IMP violently attacked the new alliance and described it as "an artificial alliance". The party also accused the UMNO of having "sold the Malays to the Chinese". The result of the municipal elections of Kuala Lumpur proved that the UMNO's appeal to the Malays was successful. It was also clear that the IMP failed to attract the Malays. In the elections, the electoral alliance of the UMNO and the MCA obtained eight out of the twelve seats, whereas the IMP gained only two seats.

Encouraged by such a successful trial, the Tunku decided to forge a strong alliance between the UMNO and the MCA. He approached Tan Cheng Lock and suggested to him that they form an alliance of the two political parties on a pan-Malayan scale. After their meetings with the leaders of the MCA in September, 1952, the members of the UMNO Executive Committee agreed to hold a round table conference of the two political organizations. The first round table conference took place in February, 1953. At this conference, the representatives discussed the questions of demanding the introduction of the general elections and the tactics necessary to strengthen the relations between the Malays and the Chinese so that they might strive for the attainment of independence in a cooperative way.

At this juncture, it is interesting to note how the Tunku persuaded Tan Cheng Lock to withdraw his support from Dato Onn who championed the Chinese rights in the country. Like Dato Onn, for the future of Malaya, Tan Cheng Lock had a strong desire to integrate the several races of Malaya into a single political community. However, as far as the means to create a sense of Malayan consciousness were concerned, it seemed that from the beginning, Tan Cheng Lock intended to take a gradual course. When Dato Onn forced a conflict with the Malay rulers over his approach to the question of Malayan nationality, the Chinese leader thought that Dato Onn had acted too hastily. Like most political leaders of Malaya, Tan Cheng Lock was well aware of the deep-rooted communalism within the Malay community.

I thought it would be wiser to proceed by stages. The Malays have yet to concede the all-important point that Federal citizens must process all the rights of citizenship, including entry for non-Malays into the Administration. Some of them still think that they might find it possible to open the citizenship door and so to wean the Chinese away from China and Chinese Consulates, while still conflicting certain privileges of citizenship to Malays only.

While Tan Cheng Lock worked together with Dato Onn in the CLC for inter-
communal unity, the Chinese leader worried that the split among the Malays due to Dato Onn's hasty or radical move might have a disastrous effect on their efforts in the CLC. Thus, in an attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the sultan of Johor and Dato Onn, Tan Cheng Lock sent a letter to the sultan. Therefore, it was possible that as Dato Onn more aggressively sought inter-communal unity, Tan Cheng Lock developed deep misgivings toward this push. Nevertheless, the Chinese had no other prominent Malay partner in the common cause at that time.

When Dato Onn announced that the formation of an inter-communal party and the UMNO was reorganized under Tunku Abdul Rahman, the position of Tan Cheng Lock as the political leader of the Chinese community became crucial. As long as the Malay community alone was not able to achieve independence without the cooperation of the non-Malay communities and the two prominent Malay leaders attempted to pursue the inter-communal unity as an instrument for independence, Tan Cheng Lock presumed that his cooperation might be decisive to the political future of both the IMP and the new UMNO. Now he had the power of the deciding vote in the inter-communal politics of Malaya as it moved toward independence.

However, Tunku Abdul Rahman's strong communal attitude against the Chinese community forced Tan Cheng Lock not to take a "wait and see" attitude. Thus when Dato Onn launched the IMP, the Chinese leader, together with the former members of the CLC, decided to support the newly born inter-communal party. Nevertheless, partly because of his personal animosity toward Dato Onn that had developed during the political disputes over the Malayan Union and the Federation of Malaya and partly because of his uneasiness with Dato Onn's hasty methods in the question of the Malayan nationality, by then the personal relationship between the two politicians was too unstable to cement the alliance of the MCA and the IMP. When Henry Gurney was murdered in October 1951, one political observer noted the bad chemistry between the two leaders.

With his own high standing among the people, Gurney could probably have afforded to lay before the people a new idea of unity and get them to accept it. As it happened, when Gurney died, Onn and Tan Cheng Lock were not yet close enough to be able to come together permanently.

In the meantime, when the local leaders of the UMNO and the MCA attempted to form their alliance for the municipal elections of Kuala Lumpur in early 1952, Tan Cheng Lock had a chance to reconsider his own political future in particular and the future of the Chinese community in general. While the central regime of the new UMNO and the MCA did not yet possess any firm control over their branches throughout Malaya, the UMNO-MCA alliance was formed under the initiative of the local branch leaders of the two organizations. Indeed, it had nothing to do with the Tunku and Tan Cheng Lock. At the very beginning, Tan Cheng Lock was somewhat surprised with this political development. However, he soon decided to wait and see the result of the alliance in the elections. In his view, the UMNO-MCA alliance provided an opportunity to experiment with the popularity of the alliance and of the IMP among the voters of Malaya. When the experimental alliance produced a remarkable victory, Tan Cheng Lock decided to shift his support from the IMP to the UMNO. When he withdrew his support from the inter-communal party, Dato Onn's remarkable presence gradually faded into obscurity, as did the IMP.
In the subsequent local elections, Tan Cheng Lock was convinced that Dato Onn was overconfident of the IMP's possible appeal to the Malays. There was no doubt that Dato Onn's ideal of inter-communal unity was much more favorable to the Chinese community than that of the Tunku. However, given that no significant political development could be easily implemented without the support of the majority of Malays, in Tan Cheng's view, Dato Onn's move to create a complete sense of Malay consciousness seemed to be too idealistic. It did not seem to be attainable in the near future. In spite of the UMNO's vehement historical claim for the Malay special privileges, the shrewd Chinese leader still thought that an UMNO-MCA alliance based upon political co-existence emerged from a realistic appraisal of the Malayan socio-political situation at that time. When the Tunku proposed the pan-Malayan alliance with the MCA for their common goal, Tan Cheng Lock saw no pressing reason to reject the proposal.

As the coalition of the UMNO and the MCA became stronger, the constitutional struggle for independence in Malaya took a new turn in the beginning of 1953. In the midst of fierce competition between the UMNO-MCA alliance and the IMP, the struggle for independence began to gain more steam. Early in 1953, the UMNO-MCA alliance began to make very specific demands in the form of constitutional reforms. The alliance set a deadline in 1954 for the elections to the Federal Legislative Council. At the annual General Meeting of the UMNO in April, 1953, the party leaders threatened that if the British government would not accept this demand, all the UMNO and the MCA representatives would resign from their positions in the government councils.

Meanwhile, in early 1953, the IMP also began to make vigorous efforts to proclaim itself the vanguard in the fight for independence. After their defeat in the municipal and town council elections, it was imperative for the IMP's leaders to reconsider their strategy to secure Malay support. To this end, the IMP decided to hold a national conference under the sponsorship of Mentri Besars on April 27, 1953. The IMP leaders expected that if the Mentri Besars sponsored the conference, it might be effective in securing significant Malay support. In the second national conference held in August, 1953, the IMP's working committee proposed that "Federal elections should only be held towards the end of 1956".

Compared to the proposal made by the General Assembly of UMNO in April, 1953, there was one striking difference in the IMP's proposal. Whereas the former demanded the Federal elections by 1954, the latter hoped to hold the elections toward the end of 1956. Obviously, the difference stemmed from the fact that since the IMP was defeated at the municipal and town council elections, the party had witnessed its continually waning position. Thus the IMP needed time to strengthen its position with the people, possible through the delay of the election.

In the face of these demands advanced for constitutional reforms as preludes to independence, the British government found itself in a quandary. When the demands came from the alliance, the inter-communal unity which had been alleged by the British to be a salient requirement before considering independence was no longer a logical excuse to check the desire of the Malayan people. Furthermore, given that the unity was vitally needed to eliminate the communist threat, they could not ignore the demands. Therefore, to dodge the alliance's demands, it was imperative for the British government to design a more sophisticated maneuver. To this end, the British
government tried to take advantage of the fierce rivalry between the UMNO-MCA alliance and the IMP over the pace of establishing self-government.

In May 1953, the British government attempted to outmaneuver the alliance's demands by forming a Legislative Committee to "examine the question of elections to the Federal Legislative Council and future constitutional changes arising therefrom; and to make recommendation". When the Elections Committee of 46 members first met in August, 1953, as expected there was a sharp dispute between the two political rivals over several vital issues with regard to the elections, such as the number of elected members in the new Federal Legislative Council and the date for the first election. Without any concrete decision, their differences over these vital issues between the IMP and the UMNO-MCA alliance were outlined in two reports called the Majority Report representing the former's views and the Minority Report representing the latter's.

The UMNO-MCA alliance members reacted angrily to the British maneuvering through the Elections Committee. The Tunku said, "We are bitterly disappointed with the election report". Tan Cheng Lock attacked the Majority Report by saying that it would only help to "maintain the autocratic system of colonial government". The alliance felt that they needed to act swiftly in order to force the British to adopt their report. Two weeks after the Elections Committee, the alliance reconvened its national convention and discussed ways to force the British to adopt its demands. At the convention the participants decided to press the British through mass demonstrations. In addition, the alliance representatives would go to London for direct negotiations with Oliver Lyttelton.

When the UMNO-MCA delegation arrived at London, they discovered that Lyttelton left for Uganda and would not return to London until May 10. In the meantime, at the secret meeting between the High Commissioner and the Malay rulers held at the end of April, they made an agreement that was "halfway" between the Majority and Minority Reports. Based upon the agreement, the new Legislative Council would have fifty-two elected members and forty-six nominated members. A reserve of seven seats would be filled with men chosen by the High Commissioner himself. On May 14, the UMNO-MCA delegation met with Lyttelton. At the meeting, the Tunku urged him to accept the Minority Report. However, the Secretary of State for the Colonies denied the Tunku's demand, replying that he himself was in no position to change the proposals already announced.

The mission of the UMNO-MCA delegation was not successful. In June, the UMNO-MCA alliance decided to boycott the Federal elections and withdraw their members from all government councils. From the middle of June, the support among the people for boycott movement of the UMNO-MCA alliance spread throughout Malaya. One thousand Chinese middle school students gathered to stage a hunger strike. Many of the State Councils and Town Boards were paralyzed. In early July, the UMNO-MCA alliance held a big protest procession in Johor. Following the procession, the UMNO-MCA delegation visited the sultan of Johor and presented a memorandum to protest the Federal elections. The sultan appeared before the demonstrators and made a short speech regarding the importance of inter-communal unity for the achievement of independence. At the end of the speech, the demonstrators shouted "Daulat Tuanku!" (Long Live the Sultan) and "Merdeka!" (Independence).

When the British clearly realized that the boycott movement of the UMNO-
MCA alliance was supported by a majority of the inter-communal people in Malaya, they could not ignore the alliance's demands. The High Commissioner was convinced that if he insisted on the original proposals for the elections, the alliance might turn into an anti-British force. Added to the communist threat, the potential anti-British alliance might be another serious danger that the British government was not able to control. Thus the High Commissioner decided to make some concessions to the alliance. Eventually, both sides agreed that the elections of the Federal Legislative Councils would be held in 1955. Now the inter-communal unity as the basis for the achievement of independence became a clearly visible political phenomenon in Malaya.

As soon as the High Commissioner and the Malay rulers announced in a meeting that the elections for the Federal Legislative Council would be held in 1955, all the political parties in Malaya began to prepare themselves in order to compete for the 52 seats of the Council. During the contest, several changes occurred in the political scene. The UMNO-MCA alliance gained a new member, the Malayan Indian Congress or MIC in December 1954. The dispersed pro-Indonesian intellectuals under the Emergency were incorporated into a new party, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party or PMIP. More conspicuously, Dato Onn withdrew from the IMP and established the Parti Negara in February 1954. Many leaders of the IMP moved into the Parti Negara. However, Dato Onn's new party differed from the IMPO in some aspects. In particular, unlike the IMP, the Parti Negara was not an inter-communal party. It was a Malay communal party which adopted the prime principle among the Malays during the protest against the Malayan Union - "Malaya belongs to the Malays".

The major contest between the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance and the Parti Negara in the Federal elections held on July 27, 1955 ended in the alliance's landslide victory. It was clear that Dato Onn's communal issues were anachronistic in the political climate of 1955.

As soon as the alliance achieved its electoral victory, self-government and independence became central issue in the politics of Malaya. After the Second World War, the demand for independence in Malaya had been proclaimed by a minority of the Malay populace, usually referred to as the "leftists". Now the demand was from a majority, based upon the inter-communal unity. In the General Assembly of the UMNO held in Kuala Lumpur during the Christmas holidays of 1955, which was the first general meeting of the organization since the alliance took power in the Federation, the assembly resolved that "the date of full independence for this country, if possible, should not be later than 31th August, 1957". Full of hope for "Merdeka" among the great majority of the people in Malaya, four representatives of the Malay rulers and four representatives of the alliance left for London on January 1, 1956. In the "Merdeka talks" in London which began in January and ended in February, vigorous efforts of the Tunku and other alliance leaders succeeded in introducing self-government to Malaya. The alliance now became the government.

In the course of the final phase of gaining independence, a Constitutional Commission called the Reid Commission was formed for the purpose of creating a constitutional framework for an independent Malaya. When the Commission prepared to produce its final report, various controversial communal issues like the special position of the Malays, Language and citizenship generated disputes. In order to not only settle the disputed issues but also recommend their policies to the Reid
Commission, the alliance released a memorandum. In the alliance memorandum, the UMNO managed to secure the special position of the Malays and the adoption of only the Malay and the English Languages as official languages. Meanwhile, according to the principle of *jus soli*, whereby all those born in Malaya after independence would automatically become citizens, and other unrestrictive citizenship requirements, the MCA and MIC enabled most of the Chinese and the Indian population to acquire citizenship upon independence. The Reid Commission adopted nearly all of the alliance's views with regard to the controversial issues. When the final constitutional framework was accepted by the Conference of the rulers in June 1957 and the Legislative Council in August, the alliance government established an independent and sovereign state of Malay within the Commonwealth of Nations on August 31, 1957. Malaya eventually succeeded in her quest for nationhood.

IV. Concluding Remarks

When Malay intellectuals attempted to envision Malaya's independence in more details in 1948, a huge obstacle they had to tackle was inter-racial animosity. Given the fact that the growth of Malay national awareness had progressed principally at the cost of inter-racial harmony, the creation of inter-communal unity loomed as a miraculous, if not possible, task. However, in the wake of the communist armed revolt, the moderate Chinese began to cultivate their loyalty to Malaya, regarding the Malayan communists as their common enemy. When Dato Onn and the Tunku attempted to forge an inter-racial unity as a strong instrument for the achievement of Malaya's independence, a large number of Chinese were willing to devote themselves to the formidable task. In the face of the communist threat, their aspirations for political freedom overshadowed deep-rooted inter-racial enmity. By 1957, when all obstacles to hinder independence had been eliminated, the British could find no other rationalization for further denying Malaya's independence. Eventually, on August 31, 1957 - to the cries of "Merdeka"-Malaya lowered the British Union Jack and hoisted its new flag. Independent Malaya was an epic advance over twelve years since the White Paper of 1946 first announced "eventual self-government of Malaya". It was a great masterpiece skillfully molded by the preeminent Malay leaders, Dato Onn and the Tunku who had personified Malay aspirations for political freedom, which had gradually developed within Malay society since the 1920s.

However, independence in Malaya (later Malaysia) did not automatically bring the emergence of a Malaysian national consciousness. In accordance with Tunku's realistic ideal, independence came first before the nation could be formed, thus assuring special privileges of Malays. Consequently, this new nation was launched with the undercurrent communal threat that would hamper its fragile inter-communal unity. Now, as Dato Onn had once earnestly attempted, the specific problem that serious politicians would face in independent Malaya was how to dilute the deep-rooted communalism and integrate different ethnic communities into a truly united identity.