

## **THE MALAY NATIONAL CONGRESS 1957: PROTEST AGAINST THE LOSS OF MALAY POLITICAL POWER ON THE VERGE OF MALAYAN INDEPENDENCE**

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The Malay National Congress of 1957 was very significant as a manifestation of dissatisfaction among a faction of Malays regarding independence, which had yet to be achieved in Malaya. It was also of great interest mainly because it attracted a combination of veteran nationalists which included Dato' Onn Jaafar, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy and Ahmad Boestamam. Together they opposed the UMNO (United Malays National Organization) leaders whom they believed had sidelined Malay interests, which they themselves had long fought for. Their presence added to the number of groups opposing the Alliance prior to Malayan Independence in the year 1957.

The Alliance Party,<sup>1</sup> comprising UMNO, MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and MIC (Malayan Indian Congress) had won the 1955 election with a landslide victory, which enabled them to form a government. A few months later, it started a series of negotiations with the British for Malayan Independence.

Through a series of negotiations between August 8th and August 23rd 1955, Tunku Abdul Rahman managed to convince the British to grant independence to Malaya. Further talks were carried out in London in early 1956.<sup>2</sup> An independent Commonwealth constitutional commission was formed to draft the constitution for Malaya. This commission, later known as the Reid Commission, consisted of five members each from Britain, India, Pakistan, Australia and Canada.<sup>3</sup> This was necessary as the Alliance needed external opinion to avoid unrest in the party. The Alliance did not reach an agreement on certain matters relating to citizenship, the status of the national language, Malay special rights and Islam due to individual parties interest. Hence, to avoid independence being hindered, this problem was presented to outsiders with the hope of getting a balanced deal.<sup>4</sup>

This action on the part of the Alliance demonstrates two important points. Firstly, it depicted the capability of Alliance in dealing with the basic problem of the country before independence, i.e. the communal politics of Malaya. Secondly, it showed the immaturity of the Malayan nation to decide their own fate as an independent nation.

This situation differed from that of 1948 (when the British was able to accept UMNO's proposals concerning the constitution of Federation of Malaya). Even though not all the terms were accepted, basic matters in relation to citizenship<sup>5</sup> the status of the Malay states,<sup>6</sup> special Malay position,<sup>7</sup> the position of the Malay rulers,<sup>8</sup> the menteri besar, power of the Federal Council, State Council<sup>9</sup> and others were accepted by the British. This agreement was sealed in Kuala Lumpur between UMNO, the Malay rulers and the British.<sup>10</sup> This indicates that the local people were firm in their stand without the intervention of outsiders. At that time UMNO was able to determine the form and type of constitution that they wanted.

This view was voiced by two important parties in Malaya. The Labour Party expressed the view that:

The Alliance's desire to pass the buck to an independent commission is understandable, but our view is that Malayan problems must be solved by Malaysians themselves.<sup>11</sup>

This was further supported by Ahmad Boestamam, leader of the Peoples Party (PP)

The constitution of an independent country should be framed by the people of the country through an elected constituent assembly and not by a commission imported from a foreign country.<sup>12</sup>

The Reid Commission carried out its duties from June to December 1956 and held 118 negotiations with interested bodies and accepted 131 proposals from political parties, commercial institutions and individuals. This led to the Commission's meetings in Rome and London. In February 1957, the draft of the constitution was revealed to the public.<sup>13</sup>

Thirteen political parties and organizations had sent their proposals to the Commission. UMNO and Alliance, as the government, had more influence on the commission since almost all their suggestions were accepted. To the rival political parties, it looked as if the proposals of the Reid Commission were the proposals of the Alliance. In short, all the weaknesses of the Reid Commission were also considered to be the Alliance's weaknesses. So the Alliance became their target.

The main opposition came from two angles. From the non-Malays, the opposition was very basic. They wanted Chinese and Indian languages also to be recognised as official languages. They rejected the special status given to the Malays. The Labour Party urged that all Malayan citizens be given equal rights. It also rejected the maintenance of the system of monarchy in an independent Malaya.<sup>14</sup> This stand was shared by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) under its leader, Dr. Seenivasagam. The PPP demanded an equal policy relating to citizenship, national language and basic human rights.<sup>15</sup>

A group of MCA members also disagreed with their leaders on the above matters, thus causing a crisis in the MCA leadership. Even though it did not cause the MCA to break up, the issue remained as the source of the party's disunity until 1959.<sup>16</sup> These MCA members were further supported by the Federation of Chinese Guilds who in turn were ready to send a mission to London under the leadership of Lau Pak Khuan.<sup>17</sup> Thus the Chinese opposition outside MCA was obvious.

Opposition from the Malays to UMNO and Alliance and the Reid Commission was just as strong. It came from UMNO members itself. They protested UMNO's compromise on citizenship. They objected to the use of *jus soli* as the basic policy of the Alliance and criticized the Reid Commission's proposals for granting citizenship.

Other UMNO members were equally dissatisfied because the General Conference Council had applied the mandate system to avoid pressure from UMNO members against the UMNO Supreme Council. UMNO members did not have the opportunity to discuss openly the proposals of the Reid Commission.<sup>18</sup> In a way they were forced to accept the proposals without much knowledge of them. *Malaya Merdeka* and *Merdeka*, the official voice of UMNO, purposely did not publish any information about the proposals of the Reid Commission.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, a few of the UMNO members who were aware of the situation questioned the Reid Commission's proposals openly. They resigned from the party as a sign of their dissatisfaction. The first to take this step was UMNO of Negeri Sembilan, under the leadership of Datuk Haji Muhamad Hanifa.

Apart from UMNO members, the other section of Malay society which went against the proposals were Malay political parties like Parti Islam Setanah Melayu (PAS), Party Negara (PN) and Peoples' Party (PP). These parties, led by their leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin, Dato' Onn Jaafar and Ahmad Boestamam strongly criticized UMNO and the Reid Commission's proposals.

They were very much against citizenship by *jus soli* and other matters which did not benefit the Malays. They made use of the weekly press to air their grievances.

Among them, Dato' Onn was a firm critic of UMNO and the Reid Commission. Through the weekly *KRITIK*,<sup>20</sup> Dato' Onn discussed, commented on, analyzed and proposed matters which were of importance and which should have been undertaken by UMNO. As a result *KRITIK* gained the public's attention mainly due to the fact that it gave a totally different opinion from that of *Utusan Melayu* which was pro-UMNO. As for Ahmad Boestamam, he expressed his views in *Mingguan Pedomam*<sup>21</sup> owned by his friend. Dr. Burhanuddin, who was not supported by any newspaper, made press statements from time to time to show his discontent with the weaknesses of the Reid Commission's proposals. The three of them later joined forces to oppose the UMNO/Alliance and the Reid Commission.

The union of these Malay political figures was very interesting. For the first time these Malay leaders, who had differed in ideology and had been at loggerheads in their political activities since 1946, were now united as friends. With that, the political disagreements and accusations of the last decade vanished. Together, they opposed UMNO, their common foe.

For Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam, their opposition to UMNO was an ordinary matter. UMNO had been their bigger rival since 1946.<sup>22</sup> The case with Dato' Onn was different. In 1946 UMNO was his party and he was its leader.<sup>23</sup> But in 1957 UMNO became his main target enemy<sup>24</sup> and Party Negara (PN) became his party.<sup>25</sup> Therefore Dato' Onn opposed the party that he originally developed and used in his political career.

The cooperation between the dissatisfied UMNO members and anti-UMNO political parties was expected. They could do this because both faced the same enemy, i.e. UMNO, and both were dependent on each other for the strength and power to oppose UMNO.

## THE 1957 CONGRESS

The 1957 Congress was held on 4th May at the Sultan Sulaiman Club, Kampung Bahru, Kuala Lumpur. It was held at the same place as the 1946 Congress. Its purpose was to reflect the importance of 1957 Congress to Malay political power. Moreover, it was meant to show continuity with the

1946 Congress since the struggle against the abolishment of Malay political power had not ended.

Through the 1946 Malay Congress, the Malays had opposed the Malayan Union which destroyed and ended the preferential status of the Malay states, the Malay rulers and the citizenship of the indigenous Malays. Citizenship of the Malayan Union was opened to whoever was born in Malaya and Singapore without any earlier connection with Malaya. This was rejected by the Malays at the time but the same policy was accepted by UMNO in 1956 in the memorandum to the Reid Commission which accepted it totally without any changes. So the supporters of the 1957 Congress continued their struggle not only in the same place and for the same reason but also to acquire the same vigour and force. This was important as it showed a continuity in the Malay political struggle.

The 1957 Congress was held with two important aims. Firstly, it was to provide a counter reaction to the Reid Commission and secondly to criticize UMNO, which was said to have deviated from the original task of UMNO i.e. to defend the Malay political rights in Malaya. UMNO had lost its dignity and objectives as a fighter for Malay interests.

The second aim made a greater mark on the congress. The leaders of PN and PAS boldly accused UMNO of 'selling the Malay race'. Dr. Burhanuddin in his speech said that the coalition of UMNO and MCA since 1952 had caused political damage to the Malays. The Malays were no longer the 'sons of the soil' of this country. Malaya now belonged to all races. They had equal political rights with the Malays.

He said :

What has happened to the Alliance's struggle for Malay nationalism? Is it true that there is still honesty in UMNO leaders struggling for the ambitions of Malay nationalism? Wouldn't then UMNO's struggle in the Alliance that is much hoped for be destroyed? UMNO's struggle would then benefit others while his own race fight against each other and suffer in the end.<sup>26</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam and the PP also welcomed the 1957 Congress. Ahmad Boestamam, the chief editor of *Fikiran Rakyat* in his editorial column viewed this as beneficial to the Malays.<sup>27</sup> In fact Ahmad Boestamam and his party supported the Congress when Tunku Abdul Rahman, President of UMNO

criticized the 1957 Congress as the cause of the break up of Malay solidarity. Ahmad Boestamam, on the other hand quoted many political instances in Malaya that encouraged the Malays to hold congresses. He also stated that the Chinese, especially the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and other Chinese associations united outside MCA and opposed it.<sup>28</sup> The MCA also demanded a Chinese and Indian governor for Malacca and Penang Island.<sup>29</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam saw UMNO as having failed in creating an independence constitution beneficial to the Malays especially on the question of special Malay status. UMNO could only protect the Malays for only 15 years.<sup>30</sup> To Ahmad Boestamam this was too weak on the part of UMNO because a country which practiced a capitalist economic system would cause the Malays to be left far behind. Protection had to be continued as long as this type of economic system was practiced in Malaya. Despite the fact that the PP wanted a fair and just society, it believed that protection for the Malays had to be given for the sake of their survival.<sup>31</sup>

The Congress committee of 1957,<sup>32</sup> in their invitation letter to the Malays, openly stated UMNO's deviation as the main reason why the 1957 Congress had to be held. To them, Tunku Abdul Rahman had broken the promise that he had made during his takeover of Dato' Onn leadership in 1951. Tunku had promised that :

Some people said Independence ought to be surrendered to the 'Malayan', but who are the Malays? This country was obtained from the Malays so it should be given back to the Malays. And if what is said to be 'Malayan' has not been identified, the Malays themselves should decide who the Malays are. Don't let us be over excited about independence so much that we sell our pride because of it. Be aware of what will happen to our race. So I say this to you. We must first be strong and firm in Malay spirit before we could claim independence.<sup>33</sup>

Dato' Onn Jaafar's involvement in this Congress however was not for the above reason but because he could not accept UMNO as the political representative of the Malays. To him, UMNO was just a party in the Malay society and he saw the necessity of a congress that combined other Malay parties to negotiate for independence. To him, 'the approval of the constitutional laws is not only for one party or the Alliance only as what seems to happen'.<sup>34</sup>

His insistence on this was based on the structure of the 1946 Congress which combined all Malay organizations including both the rightists and leftists. The MNP, an important leftist party in Malaya with 39 other parties and societies got together to discuss the position and fate of the Malays.<sup>35</sup> It was only with this joint effort that the Malays managed to force the Malay rulers and the British to change their opinion. But in 1957, the decision concerning the political position of the Malays was decided only by UMNO alone. So the bigger portion of the Malay people's views were not deliberated, thus reducing Malay strength as compared to 1946.

The 1957 Congress met for 3 days with 500 participants. They were mainly members from the PN, PAS, PP and Malays who wished to get new views and opinions that could be used as a guide and comparison to UMNO activities. This group of observers also included UMNO members who wished to see just how far the 1957 Congress differed from the proposals of the Alliance.

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF AHMAD BOESTAMAM AND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY (PP)**

The meeting of the Congress did not run smoothly. On the third day problems began to surface. For instance, Ahmad Boestamam and his Parti Rakyat withdrew. His excuse was that he and his party did not support the Congress of 1957, even though he had previously shown his support to the Congress openly.<sup>36</sup> In fact, he and his party forwarded a proposal for the use of Malay and other languages as official languages within the period of ten years after independence. After the grace period the use of languages other than Malay, as the official language, should be abolished.<sup>37</sup>

In *Fikiran Rakyat*, Ahmad Boestamam stated that the reason for withdrawal from the 1957 Congress, was that PP wanted to take a neutral stand, since the 2nd Congress was a split up of the Malays, because UMNO was not in it.<sup>38</sup> But Ahmad Boestamam had to bear in mind that UMNO and the 1957 Congress would not cooperate due to their political differences. UMNO would not surrender its opportunity to be the representative of the Malays as accepted by the British in the independence negotiations. On the other hand, the Congress was dissatisfied because they were not chosen as the representative. Ahmad Boestamam just could not accept both of them as 'the absolute representative of the Malays'.<sup>39</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam also said that he was not given the mandate to support the 1957 Congress. He rejected the Congress as a constituent assembly.

Furthermore, the PP did not send any memorandum to the Reid Commission. So there was no necessity for PP to support the Congress which made use of the Reid Commission's suggestion as their guidelines.<sup>40</sup>

A. Samad Ismail, editor of *Utusan Melayu* was doubtful of Ahmad Boestamam's sincerity.<sup>41</sup> Under his leadership, the question of mandate did not arise. All the time his decisions were based on his personal discretion and usually received support from his followers.<sup>42</sup> This was admitted by Ahmad Boestamam's himself.<sup>43</sup> Ahmad Boestamam was also aware of the limited power and authority of the 1957 Congress. It could only voice out the selected proposals of a section of the Malays as was admitted by Ahmad Boestamam himself in his editorial column on 26 April 1946.<sup>44</sup> The third argument was also not acceptable because all opposition either from the Chinese, Indians or Malays was based on the Reid Commission's proposals and it was through this commission that they could forward their aspirations. Samad Ismail thought that PP's presence in the 1957 Congress could at least lend support to the Congress and 'to determine a common attitude relating specifically to the country's constitution and generally to the country's independence.'<sup>45</sup>

A member of PP was also not happy with Ahmad Boestamam's attitude. Yusuf Yatimi from Selangor, raised the same question. In fact, he took a bolder stand in criticizing PP's actions, contributions and sincerity in striving to affirm the sovereignty of Malay politics. But the leader of Selangor PP believed that Ahmad Boestamam was acting with full responsibility when he withdrew from the Congress.<sup>46</sup>

Later Ahmad Boestamam was questioned by PP members at a special meeting on the 29th and 30th June 1957. Mansor Tobing, a prominent PP figure from Perak was the chairman. Ahmad Boestamam was given the opportunity to defend himself. He gave the same arguments as discussed above. Ahmad Boestamam was asked to leave as soon as he finished his clarification.

Even though there were not many PP members present, the discussion became heated because of the different opinions voiced. Some openly criticized Ahmad Boestamam while others supported him especially the state supreme leaders and those from the Daily Council, the executive council of PP who were close to Ahmad Boestamam. Despite these differences they were united when the question of finding a replacement for Ahmad Boestamam as head of PP arose. In their opinion it was difficult to find a substitute because of the leadership and popularity of Ahmad Boestamam as a political strategist. Moreover, there were others who thought that Ahmad Boestamam's mistake was a minor one

compared to the survival of PP, which depended wholly on the strong leadership of Ahmad Boestamam. So they unanimously gave a vote of confidence to Ahmad Boestamam.<sup>47</sup>

However, there was a personal reason as to why Ahmad Boestamam withdrew from the 1957 Congress. This was mentioned by Ahmad Boestamam in his proposals after the Congress. He proposed the establishment of a socialist congress to create a Socialist Front aimed at winning the election and also to achieve independence with its own brand of political ideology and also to avoid clashes among the leaders.<sup>48</sup>

It was his intention to promote only one leader who would eventually become a socialist 'hero'. This matter was evaded at the 1957 Congress but was raised in the People's Socialist Congress. The leader would have been undoubtedly Ahmad Boestamam himself because in Malay society it was only Ahmad Boestamam who was both a socialist and the undisputed leader of PP.

This proposal certainly added a new dimension to Malay politics. As it was, there was UMNO, the 1957 Congress and the Socialist Front and this would deepen the split among the Malays. This was against Ahmad Boestamam's stand of not supporting the 1957 Congress which he considered as 'not representing all the Malays and too many blocks'.<sup>49</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam was also dissatisfied because the Congress was dominated by PN and Dato' Onn Jaafar. Ahmad Boestamam remarked:

'Even though there were 3 representatives from PN many Congress members were PN members. So everyone of their proposals won ... The Congress Chairman was also a PN guy and he would vote if there was a tie between the PN and PAS proposal. It was clear that Dato' Onn and PN had prepared their proposals before the Congress met. Their proposals were prepared in March 1956'.<sup>50</sup>

This showed that Ahmad Boestamam and PP could not effectively offer any suggestions in the 1957 Congress. All the resolutions of the 1957 Congress were those of the PN under Dato' Onn Jaafar's leadership. The PN's proposals ranging from the form of government to the question of citizenship<sup>51</sup> were accepted as the resolutions of the 1957 Congress.

Increasingly, Ahmad Boestamam and PP came under pressure. It was as if he and his party were of not much use to the Congress. Furthermore, their only

proposal was rejected by Congress, which preferred to accept the PN's proposals. PP proposed the usage of other languages for a period of ten years after independence. But the Congress opted for the PN's proposal which wanted the Malay language to be the national language. As for the English language it was to be used only for a period of ten years, mainly for administrative purposes.<sup>52</sup>

It was also evident that Ahmad Boestamam was uneasy with Dato' Onn's leadership of the Congress. The 1957 Congress showed Dato' Onn's ability in explaining and presenting ideas which became the Congress's resolutions. The capability of Dato' Onn with respect to the constitution exceeded that of Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam due to the former's vast experience in drafting the Federation Agreement 1948, the Constitution of UMNO, IMP, PN and his administrative experience as the Chief Minister of Johore, President of UMNO, Johore State Councillor and a Member of Home Affairs. His long association with British officers was also useful to him in drafting a new constitution. Dato' Onn's predominance in constitutional matters was seen by PP observers as an attempt by Dato' Onn to control the 1957 Congress.<sup>53</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam's protest against the control of Dato' Onn was derived from the fear that Dato' Onn might become an 'idol' worshipped by the Malays, as in the Malayan Union protest episode of 1946.<sup>54</sup> In his own statement Ahmad Boestamam remarked :

Dato' Onn is a very mature politician. Don't play around with him; he knows everything. The entire constitution of the Malay States is at his fingertips .... In his oration be it in the Malay language or in English, he is beyond comparison. Without an LL.B. degree he is able to make a person change his opinion and be on his side.<sup>55</sup>

Ahmad Boestamam's fear proved to be true when Dato' Onn and Dr. Burhanuddin were selected by Congress to represent it in negotiations with the Alliance. The other Congress members also urged that these two be made a part of the Malayan delegation to negotiate for independence in London.<sup>56</sup> Ahmad Boestamam felt offended that he was not chosen. So he withdrew from the 1957 Congress.

In actual fact, Ahmad Boestamam was still harbouring ill feelings towards Dato' Onn whom he considered responsible for his arrest during the Emergency, leaving him in prison for 7 years (1948-1955).<sup>57</sup> For this, he could not forgive Dato' Onn. According to him it was Dato' Onn who had jailed him

in his capacity as a Member of Home Affairs.<sup>58</sup> Ahmad Boestamam did not want anybody to overshadow him. As can be seen, it was both Dr. Burhamuddin and Dato' Onn Jaafar that he had been trying to overshadow since 1946. Dr. Burhanuddin bypassed him in MNP and PUTERA while Dato' Onn eclipsed him with UMNO. There was no room for Ahmad Boestamam as long as these two figures were very active in the Congress. He was only assigned to dealing with correspondence, that is as a secretary. Ahmad Boestamam felt his leadership potential was crushed between a leftist and a rightist. His statements reflected his envy and frustration.

## **THE RESULTS OF THE 1957 CONGRESS**

The Congress met and discussed all aspects of the structure and content of the proposals concerning the Alliance-Reid Constitution. The Congress came up with proposals which were no different in many aspects from those of the Alliance and the Reid Commission especially in relation to the form of government, formation of parliament, councils, the appointment of the Sultan for the federation, state and federal authoritative power and their relations, the position of the constitutional ruler, the formation of the State Legislative Council, the appointment of Chief Minister, judiciary and budget matters.<sup>59</sup>

The only vast difference between the 1957 Congress proposals and the Reid Commission and Alliance was on the question of the special position of the Malays and citizenship. This difference arose from the fact that the 1957 Congress, Alliance and the British all had different policies. For the 1957 Congress, the interests of the native Malays ought to have been better protected. The Malays also wanted to be considered the indigenous peoples of Independent Malaya. On the other hand, the Alliance and the British considered equal citizenship rights as basic to the formation of Independent Malaya. The question of the protection of the Malays was only for a period of 15 years. This will be discussed later in this paper. It was this that gave rise to the differences in political attitude and responsibilities among the politicians.

Regarding the citizenship issue, the 1957 Congress had its own proposals which were different than those of the Alliance and the Reid Commission. The aim was to form a common citizenship for Malaya. For the 1957 congress, all types of citizenship, for example the Rulers Citizen<sup>60</sup> for the Malay states, British Citizens<sup>61</sup> for the Straits Settlements and citizens of former British colonies were to be abolished. The 1957 Congress only proposed the existence of a Federal Citizen. This was vital as it not only abolished status differences but also created an undivided loyalty among the peoples of the Federation of

Malaya. A British citizen who was also a Commonwealth citizen would look to the King of England as his or her King. A Malay Ruler's Citizen, would show his loyalty to the ruler of the state. Thus with a common type of citizenship, the 1957 Congress hoped that each and every citizen would be loyal to the country and the Ruler of the Federation of Malaya.<sup>62</sup>

Congress also suggested that the nationality of Malaya be change to *MELAYU* (MALAY) with the aim of giving an identity to the citizens of Malaya after independence.<sup>63</sup> In fact this proposal bore a resemblance to the proposal from the People's Constitution of 1947 between AMCJA and PUTERA.<sup>64</sup> This idea was rekindled by Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam to replace citizenship by *jus soli*. Pressure to reuse this name was not surprising because the aim of *PUTERA* in 1947 was similar to that of the 1957 Alliance. Both parties accepted *jus soli* as the basis for citizenship in Independent Malaya. Furthermore the Alliance did not determine any national name for the citizens of Malaya. So the 1957 Congress headed by former *PUTERA* leaders tried to furnish them with a name. This was solely to avoid abolishing the Malay identity as the basis of Malayan identity. But for the Alliance and the Reid Commission, the national name was not necessary as citizenship was similar to nationality.<sup>65</sup> Actually the Alliance and the Reid Commission tried to avoid raising problems among UMNO, MCA and MIC. The MCA and MIC would never accept the national name *MELAYU* (MALAY) which in a way symbolized the sovereignty of Malays over Malaya.<sup>66</sup>

The 1957 Congress accepted *jus soli* in a limited sense, which was different from the Reid Commission which accepted *jus soli* as the main basis for citizenship. According to the Reid Commission anyone born before, on or after independence would legally become a citizen.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the 1957 Congress only accepted those born before 1956 and those confirmed as Federal citizens in 1948 and 1951 as legal citizens. As for the Malay ruler's citizens, if they were born after 1956, they would automatically become citizens of Malaya. For the non-Malays born after independence, Congress proposed that the constitution lay down certain conditions that ought to be passed by the Senate.<sup>68</sup>

As for citizenship through registration, Congress proposed that those accepted through the 1948 and 1951 agreement should reregister within 12 months from the date the constitution was enforced. They should also pass a simple Malay language proficiency examination. Those aged 18 years could only register on the request of their parents who were already federal citizens.<sup>69</sup>

In this regard, the Reid Commission was very much different from the Congress. According to the Reid Commission, any one residing in Malaya for a period of 5 to 8 years and who affirmed allegiance to Malaya could be registered. For those over 45 years of age, a pass in the Malay language was not necessary. So it clearly shows the proposals of 1957 Congress were more stringent because it stated that only those accepted by the 1948 Constitution and there after continuously residing in Malaya were eligible to apply.<sup>70</sup>

The proposal of the Congress, especially those relating to citizenship, clearly shows a policy and a political ideology which sided with the interests of the Malays. Members of the 1957 Congress could not avoid but fight for the status of the Malays in Malaya because for them, UMNO seemed to be neglecting their interests. According to them, UMNO had forgotten their basic responsibility as protector of the Malay race, which had started in 1946.

In 1946, the Malays in UMNO had rejected the use of *jus soli* as the Malayan Union basis for citizenship. This was because UMNO was worried that the number of Malays would be overshadowed thus affecting their political status. It is well known that UMNO succeeded in pressing the British to abolish this policy. UMNO also succeeded in stopping the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC)<sup>71</sup> from using this policy for the citizenship of Malaya in 1949. The CLC, formed by the British, had persuaded Malay leaders like Dato' Onn to accept the *jus soli* policy and to amend Section 12 of the 1948 Federation Agreement. UMNO only accepted the policy after some strict amendments and after Dato' Onn resigned as UMNO' president. UMNO made sure that only non-Malays born in Malaya, from parents also born in Malaya and who were citizens of the Malay ruler and the Federation, were accepted legally as citizens. It was clear that UMNO did not want to given up citizenship by *jus soli* in 1951 so easily without imposing any conditions.<sup>72</sup>

UMNO's policy in 1956 under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman had clearly changed. UMNO now accepted *jus soli*. This change really annoyed Dato' Onn Jaafar. This was because when Dato' Onn Jaafar was President in 1950 and the CLC proposals were discussed during the UMNO's General Assembly on 10 June 1950, he was strongly opposed by the members. Dato' Onn Jaafar was accused by Saadon Zubir,<sup>73</sup> Dato' Abd. Razak,<sup>74</sup> Dr. Ismail<sup>75</sup> and Hashim Ghani,<sup>76</sup> together with Saberkas leaders, Sabak Bernam Malay Society and the Malay Graduate Association University Malaya Singapore<sup>77</sup> of being a 'traitor of the Malay race'. Dato' Onn's authority as an experienced leader was challenged. From 1946 onwards, the trust and the confidence of the Malays in his leadership was never the same.

The fate of Dato' Onn was not the same as that of Tunku Abdul Rahman in 1956. The *jus soli* policy was easily accepted by some UMNO members. The Tunku was given full authority, that is *carte blanche* and even though there were some UMNO members who disagreed with him the Tunku managed to use independence as the main policy of UMNO. So citizenship by *jus soli* in 1956 became secondary.

So Dato' Onn had the more reason to criticize UMNO. He aired his disappointment with the UMNO leaders especially those who opposed him in 1951 and who now had made matters worse than he did. Dato' Onn, at least, was honest with UMNO members when he openly discussed the CLC proposals and was ready to accept criticisms. He also opened the way for UMNO members to put forward new proposals. But those UMNO leaders who used the mandate system to avoid opposition from members were considered by Dato' Onn to be 'blinding the eyes of the Malays'. These UMNO leaders were said to have deceived the Malays.<sup>78</sup>

Congress and its proposals received strong opposition from UMNO which openly asked the Malays not to be influenced by the 1957 Congress proposals as this could impede efforts to gain independence.<sup>79</sup> UMNO was worried that the proposals would influence the public against them. It could also create tension among the Malays. They feared that the Malay opposition in 1946 would repeat itself. In fact UMNO members were barred from attending the Congress and those who did would have to face consequences.<sup>80</sup>

Dr. Burhanuddin as the President of the Congress did not give any comment on the Congress resolutions. In fact in discussing the resolutions of the Congress, very little was said by him. He listened to the arguments and suggestions made by Dato' Onn and accepted them. He respected Dato' Onn and Dato' Onn's experience as an administrator superseded his humble background. Dr. Burhanuddin was only a leader of radical parties and he lacked the administrative and legal experiences of Dato' Onn. The latter knew about the technicality of the Western-influenced administration that was practiced in Malaya at that time. Because of the above reasons, Dr. Burhanuddin allowed Dato' Onn to take control of the meeting.

Dato' Onn strongly defended the Congress. To him the Congress did not show any sign that the Malays would have to use force to obtain their rights as was claimed by UMNO. According to him, this would never happen as those bearing the loss of lives and property would be the poor villagers. Leaders of the Congress would not so easily dismiss this matter from their minds. Dato' Onn himself had seen how killing, the destruction of houses and property

between the Malays and Chinese took place in Batu Pahat. This would surely have prevented him from taking any violent action. Thus the Congress was not a Malay extremist movement.<sup>81</sup>

An UMNO member wrote in *Utusan Melayu* stating that Congress's proposal on citizenship was more relaxed than the proposals of the Alliance and the Reid Commission. He accused the Congress of conveniently granting citizenship to foreigners without their swearing allegiance to Malaya. Congress also did not state the period one had to stay in Malaya before obtaining citizenship while the Reid Report stated very clearly that a person had to reside in Malaya for at least 8 to 12 years. According to this anonymous UMNO member, the Reid Commission stated that anyone born in Malaya before the date of independence but who was already a resident for five out of seven years, had sworn to reside permanently in this country and pledged allegiance, could become a Malayan citizen.<sup>82</sup>

Dato' Onn denied this writer's allegations. To prove him wrong, Dato' Onn made a comparison between the decisions of the 1957 Congress and those of the Reid Commission. This was to show that the Congress's proposals were constructive and useful to the Malays and Malayan independence. Among these comparisons were :

- (1) 1957 Congress stated that only Rulers' citizens, British citizens born in the Federation of Malaya and Federal citizens could become citizens of Independent Malaya.

The Reid Commission suggested that anyone who was a federal citizen either automatically or through registration could become a citizen of the Independent Federation of Malaya.

- (2) Congress also stated that those who became federal citizens through registration were not automatically citizens of Independent Malaya unless they applied to be reregistered within a period of 12 months from the date the law took effect. They must also pass an oral Malay language test.

On the other hand, the Reid Commission proposed that this category be automatically accepted as citizens of the Federation of Malaya. This Commission also proposed that whoever had the right to become a citizen through registration but had not registered could do so without any condition.

- (3) Congress also specified that whoever was born in Malaya after Independence could become a Malayan citizen with the condition that both parents were also born in Malaya.

On the other hand the Reid Commission proposed that whomsoever was born in Malaya after the day of Independence would automatically become a Malayan citizen without any condition.

- (4) Congress decided that whomsoever was born in Malaya before Independence day or who had resided in Malaya but was not born there and was excluded from the above group could become Malayan citizens if they fulfilled the conditions of the citizenship laws passed by the senate.

The Reid Commission proposed that this group could become Malayan citizens by registering, if they were 18 years of age, had good behaviour and had resided in Malaya continuously for 5 years. These people could register within 12 months. They were exempted from the Malay language test.

- (5) As for those residing in Malaya but had not become Malayan citizens, Congress determined that they could become Malayan citizens through naturalization.

The Reid Commission proposed that these people could only become Malayan citizens if they fulfilled conditions similar to those born in Malaya.<sup>83</sup>

From this comparison Dato' Onn wanted those who belaboured the Congress to evaluate just how much good the Congress had brought to the Malays. As far as Dato' Onn was concerned, the Congress not only criticized but also forwarded some constructive proposals.

Dato' Onn looked upon the accusations of Hj. Hassan Hj. Yunus from Johore that the 1957 Congress was a distraction in the struggle for independence, as being baseless. This was because Dato' Onn saw the outcome of the Congress as a means to further strengthen the claim for independence.<sup>84</sup> Dato' Onn saw that without criticisms from the opposition party, Tunku Abdul Rahman would not have gone to England to discuss several issues that brought shame to independent Malaya such as Commonwealth citizenship,<sup>85</sup> the position of Malacca and Penang<sup>86</sup> and the defence system in Malaya.<sup>87</sup> For Dato' Onn, the Congress's attitude was very clear that it was to obtain complete independence.<sup>88</sup>

The Congress defended the special status of the Malays which was treated lightly in the Alliance and Reid Commission proposals. According to the Alliance proposals the special status of the Malays would be placed under the responsibility of the Yang Di Pertuan Agong and would include matters concerning Civil Service posts, business licenses and scholarships.<sup>89</sup>

According to 1957 Congress, this protection could be continued as long as there were no changes in both the Legislative Council and State Council but would be threatened if the two Councils were controlled by a non-Malay majority. To strengthen this, the Congress proposed that special Malay status be placed under the human rights section of paragraph 8 (3) in the Reid Commission. In this section, it was stated that a citizen could not be barred from working or holding any post or prevented from the possessing or selling of property or doing business. Also included here was the provision that no one could prevent the government from creating a special allocation on the basis of Malay ancestry.

So to Dato' Onn, the Congress did not place the responsibility of safe guarding Malay special rights solely on the Yang Di Pertuan Agong but also on a stronger body that is the state government and this was within the context of basic human right. Dato' Onn believed that this method was a more meaningful way of protecting the position of the Malays.<sup>90</sup>

Obviously, Dato' Onn was completely on the side of the 1957 Congress because he believed that the decisions of the Congress reflected the needs of the Malay people who did not want to achieve incomplete independence on 31st August 1957. In his opinion, the final task of the Malays was to strive for their status and rights before the proposals of Reid Commission were accepted completely by the State Legislative Council and the Federal Legislative Council on August 1957.<sup>91</sup>

### **UMNO'S CRITICISMS OF DATO' ONN JAAFAR<sup>92</sup>**

Due to his involvement in and full support of the Congress, Dato' Onn and PN became the target of UMNO attacks. Dato' Onn was looked upon as the activist and prominent figure of the Congress 1957 even though leaders like Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam were also involved. This was solely because UMNO was worried that Dato' Onn's influence over the Malays would resurface as in 1946.<sup>93</sup> Dato' Onn's criticisms of UMNO were stronger than other leaders. He made use of the daily *KRITIK* which was a special edition intended to criticize and analyse the independence that was being championed

by UMNO and the Alliance. His strong criticism was a threat to UMNO and the Alliance.

UMNO did not see Dr. Burhanuddin as a threatening factor. To UMNO, Dr. Burhanuddin had no great influence on the Malay society, especially on the conservative Malays. PAS was also still in the lead. Dr. Burhanuddin also was not active in airing his opinions about the Congress. There was only one statement from him about the Congress. It seemed that all the newspapers, even the public had considered Dato' Onn as the leader for the Congress even though Dr. Burhanuddin was the President. It was obvious that Dato' Onn's leadership among the moderate Malay groups such as the Congress, was still dominant.

Various accusations were targeted at Dato' Onn by UMNO. Among which was the angling for votes in the coming elections. This was voiced by Dato' Sulaiman Abdul Rahman, the brother of Dr. Ismail. According to Dato' Sulaiman, Dato' Onn held the 1957 Congress with the purpose of garnering influence and gathering followers so that Parti Negara would win a seat in the 1959 elections.<sup>94</sup> To Dato' Onn, this accusation was incongruous because the elections were still a long way off.<sup>95</sup>

Parti Negara and Dato' Onn were also accused of monopolising the Congress. According to UMNO's Singaporean observers, PN representatives had controlled the Congress from the very beginning. Furthermore, representatives from other bodies were mostly PN members, making it easier for PN to obtain support for proposals it forwarded.<sup>96</sup> Dato' Onn denied allegations that PN had long prepared for this Congress. Dato' Onn admitted that PN wanted to hold a national seminar in April 1957, well before plans to hold a Congress. Since the Congress was on, the PN had to postpone its seminar to 3rd May 1957. The proposals for the seminar were prepared and were in fact PN's decisions. With these proposals, PN's representatives already possessed a guideline to debate in Congress more effectively. They were said to have controlled the discussions.

Accusations from Singapore's UMNO observers could have been due to PN's objection to the proposal from the Malay Peninsula Party that the inclusion of Singapore in the Federation of Malaya be recorded in the Constitution. The PN opposed this because according to them, this clause should not be included except with approval from the government and both the Legislative Councils of both countries. The PN also felt this clause was not necessary because the Reid Commission had proposed an act that the Federation of Malaya Legislative Council could accept any other territory into Malaya.

According to Dato' Onn, this was the opportunity for Singapore to be merged with the Federation in the near future. PN's opposition was looked upon by a writer of *Utusan Melayu* as a sign of currying favour with the British because it was a British policy not to give up Singapore to the Federation of Malaya.<sup>97</sup> To Dato' Onn, this was unfair because it was not the PN alone who rejected that Singapore merge with Malaya at that time but also the Alliance.<sup>98</sup>

Dato' Onn's best friend, Dato' Syed Abdul Kadir, Chairman of the Congress was also accused of taking sides with PN members because he himself was also a PN member. To Dato' Onn this was not true because throughout the discussion 'the chairman did not direct his judgements and guidance to PN members'. During that time the Chairman used his vote only once, that was when the People's Party member asked for various languages to be used as national languages after ten years of independence. The chairman objected to the proposal because personally he disagreed with this policy. The PN and other parties also objected to this proposal. The chairman's action did not necessarily mean that he supported the PN. He made use of the vote because he was sure that the proposal would ruin efforts to uphold the Malay language as the official and national language of Independent Malaya.<sup>99</sup>

UMNO went a step further. Through the *Utusan Melayu* a pro UMNO paper, Dato' Onn was said to have been asked by the PN of Johore Bahru to resign as President of PN. This was because Dato' Onn's involvement in the Congress had tarnished the name of PN. Dato' Onn was also accused for not being able to withstand the abuse from UMNO, and his resignation was inevitable.<sup>100</sup>

Dato' Onn denied this, He considered the news as slanderous and a dirty technique of UMNO and others who were uneasy with his criticisms. He said :

I am like a piece of meat waiting to be bitten and eaten by those who are unsuitable with PN but this does not disturb me because to me whatever I claimed or criticized hits right on the nail of those concerned and from that I believe that if I take a rest and stay away from the country's personal problems, it would bring great gains to them.

In other words, Dato' Onn knew that this news item was circulated purposely to weaken Malay support of him and especially of PN. Dato' Onn's desire to continue to be active in politics was disliked by UMNO. If possible UMNO wanted Dato' Onn to retire and not to cause any problems regarding UMNO's programmes or undertakings. Nevertheless UMNO's technique was not effective because Dato' Onn was not only stubborn but continued to receive

support from his followers. The denial of the chief of the PN branch in Johor Bahru about Dato' Onn's resignation showed that Dato' Onn's influence in the PN was not affected.

Dato' Onn also rejected *Utusan Melayu's* reasons about him being humiliated such that he was forced into retirement. To Dato' Onn this reason was impossible because humiliation directed at him occurred not only during that time. He had been criticized and accused since his involvement in politics in the 1930's. To him, this accusation and humiliation would subsequently be proven wrong and truth would prevail. This was already apparent in certain events in Malayan politics. For example in 1951, he proposed that UMNO be made into one national Malayan party offering ordinary membership to non-Malays. His proposal was rejected and he was forced to resign as UMNO's president. Nevertheless, another set of proposals in the same vein were raised by Mohd. Khir Johari,<sup>101</sup> the Information Chief of UMNO. He believed that there would soon be a national party combining UMNO, MCA and there would soon be a national party combining UMNO, MCA and MIC because the people of Malaya were already united. Mohd. Khir Johari further elaborated that the organization would be named the United Malayan National Organization with members having the same status and with every member bound by the policy and aims of that national party and hence the Alliance would cease to be a racial organization.<sup>102</sup> The same idea also came from Tan Cheng Lock. This proposal was meant to abolish signs of racialism in the Alliance.<sup>103</sup> Dato' Onn's proposals also showed that he had the ability to foresee racial political problems in Malaya much earlier than any other political leader in Malaya. His far sighted ideas failed to be carried out because of the prejudice and racialistic feelings of the people of Malaya.

UMNO and Alliance, as expected rejected the Congress proposals. To them the proposals were too racist especially with respect to the citizenship issue, special Malay status, the national language and the Islamic religion.<sup>104</sup> The Congress proposal on the appointment of the Yang Di Pertuan Agong for life<sup>105</sup> was regarded as illogical. The Alliance did not see it necessary to have different agreements for Penang and Malacca to obtain independence. This was an early sign of rejection. Basically UMNO and the Alliance would not accept the Congress proposals as they were against the principles of the Alliance. The Alliance would never accept the proposals from a body which only represented one race because the policy of the Alliance was political cooperation among the races. The Alliance would not accept proposals from other bodies because it was the party that was given the mandate during the 1955 Elections to be the negotiator for Malayan Independence. From the point of view of self-respect, the acceptance of the 1957 Congress proposals would have lowered the dignity

of the Alliance as the administrative authority in Malaya. This would also have been a disgrace especially to UMNO leaders for surrendering to the ideas of its political adversaries. This might indicate that they were not as capable as opposition leaders, especially Dato' Onn Jaafar.<sup>106</sup>

As the last resort for the Congress, Hj. Ahmad Hussein, PAS Parliamentary representative for Krian district,<sup>107</sup> raised the same issue in the Federal Legislative Council during the discussions of the Reid Commission proposals on 10 July 1957. As a PAS opposition member of the Council, he raised many basic questions. Among them, he saw the proposals as being lop-sided, since it only involved three groups. It was not a proposal drafted openly for all the people of Malaya. Secondly, the proposals showed signs of colonization because it clearly showed British interest such as in matters of citizenship. Thirdly, the nationality of Malaya was not mentioned at all. This shows that Independent Malaya did not have an identity. The question of the position of the Malays was too narrow and limited. Hj. Ahmad Hussein also urged that Penang be returned to Kedah because Penang was the former colony of Kedah.<sup>108</sup>

Haji Ahmad Hussein's views were not far from the Congress's stand. As a PAS member and a Congress supporter, Haji Ahmad would have been requested to criticize the constitution even though he was aware of its insignificance. Nevertheless, for the purpose of historical records it showed the final opposition of a group of Malays to the independence Constitution.

In conclusion, it can be said that the 1957 Congress failed in its efforts to amend the proposals of the Alliance constitution and also those of the Reid Commission. The failure was not because the proposals were not constructive, but because there was a lack of unity in the Congress. Ahmad Boestamam, in withdrawing his party from the Congress had weakened its solidarity and strength as the frontline of Malays outside UMNO. This also gave UMNO the opportunity to show their low opinion of the 1957 Congress. The Congress was not considered a political representative recognized by the British and the Malay rulers. This meant that the 1957 Congress was out of the political grouping that was responsible for Malayan Independence. But as Malayan citizens, members of the 1957 Congress felt that they should have a say in determining the form and direction of Malayan Independence. So even though it was not accepted by Alliance, its proposals could be said to have represented the Malays outside of UMNO, those who did not accept the handing over of equal political power to the non-Malays.

The 1957 Congress also saw the personal interests of veteran Malay leaders in their continuous support of a political ideology which they had held on to since 1946. The rejection of the 1957 Congress by itself shows the denial by the majority of Malays of these leaders' political contributions so far. They became outcasts in the critical moments of Malayan political history in the 1950s. They were looked upon as agitators by UMNO and the Alliance and as extremists by the British and the non-Malays. Nevertheless, from the historical point of view they were obviously the ones who played an important role in the revival of political interests of the Malays as the original inhabitants of Malaya until the final moments of independence.

#### NOTES :

- <sup>1</sup> The Alliance comprising of UMNO (United Malay National Organization), MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) and MIC (Malayan Indian Congress) swept to victory by capturing fifty-one of the 52 seats allocated by the British. The remaining seat went to PAS (Pan Malayan Islamic Party) in Krian, Perak. Other parties that contested in the first federal election included Parti Negara, Perak National Association, Labour Party, Perak Progressive Party and the Malayan Party. For further information on the 1955 election see: T.E. Smith, *Report on the First Election of Malaya to the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1955; G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1976 (second edition) pp. 153-167, and R.K. Vasil, *Politics in Plural Society*, OUP, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.
- <sup>2</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *Looking Back*, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1956, pp. 132-135.
- <sup>3</sup> G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 170.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
- <sup>5</sup> In the Malayan Union, citizenship was open to whoever was born in Malaya, Singapore and other British territories. Citizenship was also extended to those interested and had resided in Malaya for at least 5 years. Anyone above the age of 18 with good behaviour and who was willing to pledge loyalty to the King of England was eligible to become a Malayan Union citizen. But in the Federation of 1948, citizenship was open to subjects of a Ruler and to British subjects. Citizenships through request

was open to outsiders who had resided for not less than 8 out of 12 years or 10 out of 15 years, who were of good character and had adequate knowledge of Malay or English. As a result only 10 per cent of the outsiders were eligible to become Federal citizens in 1948. for further information see K.J. Ratnam, *Faham Perkauman dan Proses Politik di Malaya, UMP, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, pp. 84-88.*

- 6 In the Malayan Union, the Malay states were abolished diminishing them to districts under the Malayan Union government. All these districts were to be established under a Malayan Union governor who was directly responsible to the King of England. But under the Federation of 1948, these states were recognised as states having autonomous power in certain fields and also having state borders similar to those of pre 1941 and having their own rulers. See *Preface, The Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, Government Gazette, 1949, pp. 1-2.*
- 7 Before the Malayan Union was introduced, the British had their own policy in protecting the interests of the Malays in matters relating to government civil service, Malay reserve land, state scholarship, security and police force. In the Malayan Union equal treatment became the policy. This was opposed by the Malays. So in the Federation Agreement of 1948, the policy of giving protection to the Malays was maintained and placed under the power of the High Commissioner. See *The Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, Section III(C) p. 19.*
- 8 In the Malayan Union, the Malay rulers who had surrendered their sovereignty to the King of England, lost their status as Sultans. Instead they were only advisors on the Malay Advisory Council dealing only with religious matters, of which the Chairman was the Governor of the Malayan Union. But in the 1948 Federation, the Malay Rulers were recognised as heads of the Malay states through their position as Ruler-in-Council and also as head of religion and customary traditions in the state. For further information see *Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, Section x, pp. 58-67.*
- 9 Before the Malayan Union in the Federated Malay States administrative and legal matters were under the control of the British Resident who was also the chairman of the State Council. In the Unfederated Malay states, administration was in the hands of the Menteri Besar and State Government Council. In the Malayan Union, the post of Menteri Besar was abolished. Instead, control by a British Resident was introduced in

the Unfederated Malay States. Federal Council and State Council remained as legal bodies controlled and administered totally by the British. In the 1948 Federation, the post of Menteri Besar was revived in all the Malay states. The Menteri Besar was given executive power and he became the Chairman of the State Council which drafted laws at the state level and represented the State in the Federal Council. Thus the Malay States had a bigger say in the daily administration and legal matters in the Malay States and Malaya. See *Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948*, Section IX, pp. 58-61.

- <sup>10</sup> CO 537/1531, 1548, 1529, 1530, 2141, 5665.
- <sup>11</sup> *Straits Times*, 21/1/56
- <sup>12</sup> *The Malay Mail*, 16/7/56
- <sup>13</sup> G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, pp. 172-173
- <sup>14</sup> This was the opinion of the Peoples Progressive Party, Labour Party, Peoples Party and Malayan People's Socialist Front. See R.K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia*, OUP, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, Ch. III, p. 116, Ch. V, p. 184, Ch. VI, p. 229.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184 and 229
- <sup>16</sup> G.P. means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 21.
- <sup>17</sup> Margaret Clark, "The Malayan Alliance and its Accommodation of Communal Pressures, 1952-1962", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Malaya, 1964, p. 106.
- <sup>18</sup> All representatives of UMNO Negeri Sembilan under Haji Dato' Raja Hanafiah withdrew as a sign of protest. John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia, A Study of UMNO and PAS*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., Singapore, 1980, p. 49.
- <sup>19</sup> This newspaper discussed *jus soli* and its effects only after the proposals of the Reid Commission were accepted by the Malay Rulers, British and Alliance. *Malaya Merdeka* 19/4/56, 26/4/56.

- <sup>20</sup> *KRITIK* was published by the Warga Publishing Company owned by a Kuala Lumpur Malay businessman by the name of Haji Ahmad, a supporter of Parti Negara and also a friend of Dato' Onn. This press had its headquarters in Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur and Dato' Onn Jaafar was its only writer. This press was published mainly to help Dato' Onn who had ceased to be in government service as a member of Home Affairs (*Ahli Dalam Negeri*) and after losing in the 1955 elections. With the existence of this press, Dato' Onn not only made full use of his free time but most of all he could continue his political activities and also activate the Parti Negara.
- <sup>21</sup> The *Mingguan Pedoman* press was published in Batu Road near the headquarters of *KRITIK*. Similar to *KRITIK*, it was in Jawi and medium sized. Ahmad Boestamam was its writer and often he helped Dato' Onn in the *KRITIK* when Dato' Onn returned to Johor Bahru. For further information, see Ahmad Boestamam, *Dato' Onn Yang Saya Kenal*, Adabi Press Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1986.
- <sup>22</sup> Both Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam were leaders of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) who were against UMNO in the year 1946 due to many ideological differences. MNP which demanded immediate independence in Melayu Raya together with Indonesia, was a radical political party and was anti-British. UMNO, on the other hand was just the reverse. Later MNP joined forces with other political parties like Hizbul Muslimin, BATAS and GERAM to portest against UMNO and the Federation Agreement of 1948. With the declaration of the Emergency in 1948, MNP and PUTERA were banned. Ahmad Boestamam was arrested in 1948 and imprisoned till 1955. For further information see, Ahmad Boestamam, *Meritis Jalan Ke Puncak*, Kejora, Kuala Lumpur 1976 and Ahmad Boestamam, *Tujuh Tahun Malam Memanjang*, Amir Enterprise, Kuala Lumpur, 1976; Firdaus Abdullah, *Malay Radicals, Its Origins and Development*, Pelandok Publication, Petaling Jaya, 1987.
- <sup>23</sup> The role of Dato' Onn as the founder and leader of UMNO and his ability to lead the Malays has become the main topic of academic research. Many books touched on this topic. Among the important ones are R.J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-48*, pp. 87-107. Ramlah Adam, *UMNO 1946-1951 Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik*, Kota Bahru, 1967, pp. 1-24, G.P. means, *Malaysian Politics*, pp. 99-102.

- <sup>24</sup> Dato' Onn withdrew from UMNO on 28 August 1951 due to his failure to gain acceptance for his proposal to open UMNO to non-Malays. Dato' Onn's intention was to make UMNO a party for all races and a national party in Malaya in order to achieve independence. The Malays rejected this because they wanted UMNO to remain a Malay political party. For further information see Dato' Onn's last speech in *UMNO 10 Tahun*, pp. 75-78.
- <sup>25</sup> Parti Negara (PN) was established in February 1954 in Kuala Lumpur. It was the third party for Dato' Onn after UMNO and IMP. PN was formed as a party for all races to replace the Independence of Malaya Party which failed to achieve similar aims. This was because Dato' Onn refused to compromise on the *jus soli* citizenship issue which was insisted upon by non-Malay members of IMP. Dato' Onn also failed to obtain full co-operation from Tan Cheng Lock, Chairman of MCA and H.S. Lee, Chairman of the Selangor M.C.A. in the Kuala Lumpur town election in February 1952. For further information on PN and IMP see R.K. Vasil, *Politics in Plural Society*, pp. 40-92, Ramlah Adam, *Dato' Onn, Pengasas Kemerdekaan*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1992, pp. 264-324.
- <sup>26</sup> *KRITIK*, 20/3/56
- <sup>27</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 16/4/57
- <sup>28</sup> A group of Chinese headed by Lau Phak Kuan were sent to London to press their claims for Chinese language to be made the official language and for the abolishment of special Malay status. The same goes for the All Malayan Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Malaya Communist Party, Malayan Democratic Union which emerged to form AMCJA. See *Malaya Tribune* 1946-1948, *Singapore Free Press* 1946-1947.
- <sup>29</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 26/4/57.
- <sup>30</sup> This was the agreement achieved by the Alliance in the first joint statement in April 1956.
- <sup>31</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 26/4/57.

- <sup>32</sup> The Committee Members of the 1957 Congress were:  
Haji Yahya Sheikh Ahmad - Chairman  
Dato' Mohd. Zakaria b. Malim Kundang - Secretary  
Hj. Dahlan Masaod - Committee Member  
Mohd. Simin b. Bondak - Committee Member  
Hj. Ahmad Mohd. Said - Committee Member  
*Fikiran Rakyat*, 19/4/57.
- <sup>33</sup> *UMNO 10 Tahun*, p. 144
- <sup>34</sup> *KRITIK*, 24/4/57.
- <sup>35</sup> See Congress Conference 1946 and state parties involved in Mohamad Yunus Hamidi, *Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjung*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1961.
- <sup>36</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 17/5/57.
- <sup>37</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 12/7/57.
- <sup>38</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 10/5/57
- <sup>39</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 14/5/57, stated that, 'PP must be day dreaming if it wants Congress to achieve unity among the Malays.'
- <sup>40</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 10/5/57
- <sup>41</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 7/6/57.
- <sup>42</sup> AB was ridiculed: 'meaning his powers were actually restricted'. *Utusan Melayu*, 14/5/57.
- <sup>43</sup> AB stated: 'to join congress was my own decision and similarly to withdraw from Congress was made with the knowledge of my friends from Kelantan'. *Fikiran Rakyat*, 5/5/57
- <sup>44</sup> AB stated: 'It was the base to create a bigger Congress'.
- <sup>45</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 14/5/57.
- <sup>46</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 31/5/57

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 5/7/57

<sup>49</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 17/5/57

<sup>50</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 17/5/57

<sup>51</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 10/5/57. The proposals of the 2nd Malay National Congress on citizenship were the proposals of PN agreed upon by Congress. The proposals were:

- i) one type of citizenship only - i.e. Ruler's Citizens.
- ii) those accepted to be Federal Citizen under the 1948 Agreement

By Legal Enforcement:

- a) those residing permanently and who were citizens of the Malay Sultan on independence day.
- b) those residing permanently in Malaya and who were British subjects on independence day.
- c) those permanent residents in Malaya and who were citizens of the Federation of Malaya according to the Conditions of the Federation Agreement of 1948.

Citizen by Registration:

- a) those residing permanently and are PTM's citizens through registration according to the Federation Agreement 1948 and under the condition if they apply within 12 months after independence and passed a simple test on Malay language proficiency.
- b) Anyone born in Federation of Malaya on or after independence whose father was already a Federal citizen.
- c) Anyone born in Federation of Malaya after Independence whose father had been a citizen.
- d) Women married to a Malayan citizen can be accepted under the condition if their marriage is legal according to state's laws.
- e) A child under 18 years of age on or after Independence can be a citizen with the condition that the father supports the application.

- f) Other applicants must obtain approval from the Senate.
- g) Anyone who is a citizen of Federation of Malaya cannot hold 2 citizenships or obtain foreign citizenship.
- h) He or she must swear allegiance to the King and is responsible to the state.

<sup>52</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 10/5/57

<sup>53</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 17/5/57. UMNO observers too have the same opinion, *Utusan Melayu*, 20/5/57.

<sup>54</sup> This was raised by Ahmad Boestamam in his editorial column in *Fikiran Rakyat* on 25/4/57 and *Mingguan Pedoman* on 26/4/57. He stated, 'He hoped that Congress II (1957) did not produce a Malay idol as in Congress I (1946)'.

<sup>55</sup> Sidek Jamil, Transcript Interview with Datuk Ahmad Boestamam, 17 Mac - 14 April 1977, Arkib Negara, Kuala Lumpur, 1979.

<sup>56</sup> *Fikiran Rakyat*, 10/5/57

<sup>57</sup> Ahmad Boestamam was arrested by the British for his activities in Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) which was radical and militant. API, which was formed as a youth department of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) in 1945, became a separate body by itself in 1946. Its policy 'Independence through bloodshed' raised anxiety among the British. CO 537/2151 - Activities of the organisation known as API.

<sup>58</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, *Datuk Onn Yang Saya Kenal*, Adabi Publication Sdn. Bhd., 1979, p. 42. Ahmad Boestamam's accusation was baseless because Datuk Onn became the Member of Home Affairs only in 1951, 3 years after Ahmad Boestamam's arrest. See Ramlah Adam, *Dato' Onn Jaafar, Peranannya dalam Politik dan Pentadbiran Tanah Melayu*, Gateway Publishing House, Kuala Lumpur, 1987, pp. 51-61.

<sup>59</sup> 1957 Congress in its proposal on these matters stated that its proposal was similar to that of the Reid Commission. For example on the question concerning basic rights, Congress states, 'It must be conditioned in the law as stated in Section 3(1) Reid's Constitutional proposal'. *KRITIK*, 8 Shawal 1376.

- <sup>60</sup> Ruler's citizens comprised the Malays and Aborigines in any Malay state. They obtained citizenship through legal enforcement in the 1948 Federation. See *The Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948*, Section IIX(3), p. 74.
- <sup>61</sup> British subjects were those born in Malacca, Penang and Singapore. They were citizens of the King of England and were subject to the British Nationality Act 1948.
- <sup>62</sup> *KRITIK*, 8 Shawal 1956
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> In the Peoples Constitution of 1947 are stated 10 policies. One of the policies was Malay nationality imposed on AMCJA by PUTERA in exchange for PUTERA's agreement to accept AMCJA *jus soli*, see AMCJA-PUTERA, *The Peoples Constitutional Proposal for Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, 1947.
- <sup>65</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Parliamentary Debates Dewan Rakyat*, Vol. III, Part III, The Nationality of the Federation of Malaya, 2nd Dec., 1960, p. 3197.
- <sup>66</sup> It was clear from speeches by MCA members in their discussions of Dato' Onn's proposals in 1960 on the nationality of Malaya. Dato' Onn proposed that Malay's citizenship be named *MELAYU*. This was a continuation of Congress 1957 leaders' fight. MCA member, Dr. Lim Swee Aun (South Larut) rejected the implementation of *jus soli* solely for the Malays because since 1946 the British had used *jus soli* as the basis for citizenship in Malaya. Dato' Onn's proposals seems to be against the spirit of solidarity in Independent Malaya. See *Parliamentary Debates, Dewan Rakyat Official Report*, Vol. II, No. 50, 11 February 1961, pp. 5432-5438.
- <sup>67</sup> K.J. Ratnam, *Faham Perkauman dan Proses Politik di Malaya*, pp. 108-109.
- <sup>68</sup> 1957 Congress's proposals were noted down completely in *KRITIK*, 8 Shawal 1376.

- <sup>69</sup> 'Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission' Appendices II, III, IV, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1957, pp. 128-133. Articles 14-23: G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 175.
- <sup>70</sup> For information on this, see Ramlah Adam, *UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik*, pp. 2-25. Ibrahim Mahmod, *Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa Melayu*, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1981.
- <sup>71</sup> The CLC was formed in 1949 in Kuala Lumpur. It comprised 10 committee members consisting of heads of parties from various races residing in Malaya such as Tan Cheng Lock, E.E.C. Thuraisingham and J.S. Goonting. The CLC's duty was to make proposals on politics and economy to overcome racial problems in Malaya. For further information see Thio Chan Bee, *The Extraordinary Adventure of an Ordinary Man*, Grosvenor Books, London, 1977, pp. 63-68; Ramlah Adam, *Dato' Onn Jaafar, Peranannya di dalam Politik dan Pentadbiran Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, 1895-1962*, Gateway Publishing House Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, 1987, pp. 38-47.
- <sup>72</sup> UMNO/KL, 27/50, UMNO/SG, 124/1950
- <sup>73</sup> Saadon (Tun) Zubir at that time was the head of the Singapore Malaya Union which was an associated member of UMNO. He later became an ordinary UMNO member in 1951. From here he became head of UMNO youth and stood for election in 1955 in Johor. He then became a Minister in the Alliance Government after Independence.
- <sup>74</sup> Dato' (Tun) Ab. Razak who opposed Dato' Onn was then the Secretary of Pahang State. He was a prominent figure of UMNO later on.
- <sup>75</sup> Dr. (Tun) Ismail was an important Minister of the Alliance after Independence. In 1950 he was not a politician but merely a businessman. His portest was made in the Johor State Conference Council and also through the Johore Malay League which was under the leadership of his father Dato' Ab. Rahman Mohd. Yassin, the first Speaker of the Lower House.
- <sup>76</sup> Hashim Ghani was the president of Peninsula Malay Movement specially formed in 1950 as a protest against the CLC proposals and Dato' Onn. Nevertheless it had no influence on Malay society as UMNO and PAS

already existed. This movement died a natural death. For further information see John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, pg. 41.

77 This Association sent a letter of objection signed by 20 Malay students in that University, including Mahadir Mohamad. This letter had its effect on the Malays who were opposing Dato' Onn. *Malaya Tribune* 18/5/49.

78 *KRITIK*, 15/7/57

79 *Malaya Merdeka*, 25/4/56

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Utusan Melayu*, 20/4/57; *KRITIK*, 21/4/57.

82 *Utusan Melayu*, 6/5/57

83 *Utusan Melayu*, 20/5/57

84 *KRITIK*, 22/5/57; *Utusan Melayu*, 20/5/57

85 The Congress rejected the Commonwealth citizenship. The Commonwealth citizenship was a type of citizenship open to every British subject in former colonies. This citizenship was forced upon Malaya by the British to safeguard their own interests. The Alliance failed to reject this citizenship even though they had appealed to the British several times. For further information, see *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commissions*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1957, p. 87. See G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, pp. 175-177, *KRITIK*, 110 Dzulkai'dah 1376.

86 The Congress believed that Penang and Malacca should have their own agreements. Malacca and Penang were both British colonies. Penang was taken from the Sultan of Kedah so it should have been returned to Kedah through a special agreement between Kedah and Britain. But in claiming independence, the state became an independent unit. The same goes for Malacca for which a special agreement should have been made with the Yang Di Pertuan Agong by the King of England freeing Malacca as a colony. The other Malay states were protected states, so a general agreement was sufficient. *KRITIK*, i/8/56.

- <sup>87</sup> This was totally rejected by the Congress. The Congress saw this as a big shame to Malaysian independence. The ability to guard and defend Malaya through the Malayan national army was the real test for Malayan independence. The British and the Alliance agreed to station a foreign army from Britain, Australia and Nepal for 25 years after independence in Malaya. This was because, in the opinion of the British, defence in Malaya was very weak and also open to threats from the Malayan Communist party. This meant that Malaya was not totally independent because its defence was still under the British. Thus the British controlled the security and external relations of Malaya. *Straits Times*, 15/3/56, *KRITIK*, 8/8/56.
- <sup>88</sup> *KRITIK*, 22/5/57.
- <sup>89</sup> The Alliance memorandum to the Reid Constitutional Commission, p. 10; Report of the Constitutional Commission, p. 72; Appendix II, III, IV pp. 150-151. Article 82, p. 183, Article 157.
- <sup>90</sup> *KRITIK*, 8/5/57.
- <sup>91</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Proceedings of Federal Legislative Council (Second Session)*, October 1956 to August 1957, "Motion: Constitutional Proposals, 10th July 1957, Clm. 2908.
- <sup>92</sup> Since many of the UMNO's criticisms about this Congress were focussed on Dato' Onn's involvement in Congress, the discussion of this matter is considered necessary. This is to show how UMNO perceived the significance of Dato' Onn's leadership in Malay society.
- <sup>93</sup> See *Malaya Merdeka* for the years of 1956 to 1957. Dato' Onn was seen as a Malay leader who supported the British, a dotard who was anti-independence, through a picture of a child with many cartoon faces. For example in the *Malaya Merdeka* 1/8/54: 'Here? look at my tongue ... do you see it forked like that of Dato' Onn? My grandmother says, it would be better to be without a tongue than to have forked one'. In the *Malaya Merdeka*, 19/4/56, it was stated:

It seems that Dato' Onn tried to revive his position by pretending to help the Malays and giving ideas to the Independence delegation ... but the funny part is that whatever he said were ideas often delivered in the elections

and not acceptable to the people because they were fully aware of their limitations .... They knew Onn well enough as a person who did not give help to his own race, instead giving sovereign rights to foreigners. Dato' Onn proposed a fraudulent *jus soli*, when in fact it was not an agreement to be granted by the Alliance.

<sup>94</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 19/5/57.

<sup>95</sup> *KRITIK*, 22/5/57.

<sup>96</sup> *KRITIK*, 22/5/57

<sup>97</sup> Singapore had been separated from the Federation of Malaya since 1946. It was impossible for the British to release Singapore which was one of its important colonies to Malaya who just obtained independence. Tunku Abdul Rahman, like Dato' Onn was aware of the British attitude towards this because the importance of Singapore to the British was obvious especially in international trade, defence and political strategy in South East Asia. This can be seen in the British policy of placing Commonwealth troops in Malaya for 25 years after independence. *Straits Times*, 18/1/57.

<sup>98</sup> *KRITIK*, 22/5/57

<sup>99</sup> This was raised by *Utusan Melayu*. Most members of UM's editorial board were supporters of MNP who had wanted Malayan Independence since 1945. When they failed to gain independence together with Indonesia, they opposed UMNO until MNP was banned under the introduction of the Emergency Regulations 1948. As an alternative, members of MNP quietly joined UMNO especially after 1950. They managed to change the slogan of UMNO from long live the Malays to independence in 1951 through the proposal of Gherib Raub, former member of API and MNP. Dato' Onn and some leaders of UMNO who were conservative, rejected the proposal. So Dato' Onn became their great enemy when UMNO came under the leadership of Tunku Abd. Rahman, a former member of Saberkas who was in line with the former MNP members who had joined UMNO.

<sup>100</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 21/6/57

<sup>101</sup> As a former member of Saberkas, he became an ordinary member of UMNO after 1951. Later he was appointed Minister of Education in Malaya in the 1960's.

<sup>102</sup> *Malay Mail*, 21/6/57

<sup>103</sup> *Straits Times*, 14/1/57; *KRITIK*, 16/1/57

<sup>104</sup> Congress Resolution on Islamic Religion:

- 1) Islam was to be the official religion of the Federation of Malay States.
- 2) Based on the adoption of Islam as the official religion for the Federation of Malay States, it was set and in the constitution that :-
  - i) Al Quran and the Sunah Rasul were to be the guides and way of life for the Islamic peoples in the Federation of Malay States.
  - ii) A supreme council for Islamic religion was to be set up to manage all Islamic affairs and administration in the Federation of Malay States.
  - iii) An Islamic Court was to be formed and named the Syariah Court in every state and a High Court in the Federation.
  - iv) Islamic High Schools were to be set up to revive and spread the teachings, educational knowledge and philosophy of Islam.
  - v) The study and education of Islam were to be made a basic subject in all Government schools.
  - vi) All expenditure for education and administration in the Malay states was to be borne by each state government.
  - vii) All expenses for educational and administrative management of High Court and Supreme Council for Islamic religion were to be borne by the Central Government.

<sup>105</sup> For this, Congress resolved the conditions in the constitutional laws as follows :-

- 1) There must be a head of state called the Sultan, Yang Di Pertua for Malacca and Penang, and Sultan for the Federated Malay States.
- 2) The Sultan is to be of the Islamic religion and from related descendants of Malay rulers who must not be less than 35 years of age on the date of commencement of this law.

- 3) The Sultan and Yang Di Pertua must be appointed for life and only be sacked with accusation brought to the Senate. *KRITIK*, 5/5/57.

<sup>106</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman refused to meet and discuss with 2 Congress representatives because the 1957 Congress disrupted the negotiations on independence in London which were seen as being complicated. He also rejected Congress's request to send representatives to the final negotiations. *Straits Times*, 8/5/57 and 10/5/57.

<sup>107</sup> His opinion and also that of PAS. PAS sent a separate memorandum from that of 1957 Congress to voice their proposals and protests to the Malay rulers. PAS pressed for the Malay language to be the National Language as soon as Independence was given and not to wait for 10 years. PAS also insisted that Islam be the official religion for the Malay states so as to become the administrative policy of the state. *Straits Times*, 18/4/57,

<sup>108</sup> Federation of Malaya, *Proceedings of Federal Legislative Council (Second Session) October 1956 to August 1957 "Motion - Constitutional Proposals*, 10th July 1957, pp. 2908-2910.