

Chapter II

UMNO as a political party has undergone many phases which denotes an evolution from a communal movement to a political party, did UMNO follow the traditional path taken by political parties in Europe or was UMNO different? To gain some insight into the evolution of UMNO we would like to refer to Max Weber who state in his famous essay ("Politics as a Vocation") the three stages which in his opinion have marked the development of political parties. At first parties were "pure followings of the aristocracy," changing their allegiance as the "great noble families" which led them changed theirs. The second stage was the "parties of notables." These arouse with "the rising power of the bourgeoisie" and consisted of informal local associations of the propertied and cultured circles, held together in the nation as a whole not by a formal party machine but by members of the party with seats in the legislature. The framing of election programs, the choice of leaders and candidates, and the general control of the party rested with these circles of notables, above all the parliamentary party.

With this structure, Weber sharply contrasted the modern forms of party organization – "the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses, and develop the utmost unity and direction and the strictest discipline." In these forms there is a large, formally organized machine whose power rests not with the parliamentary party as such or with the formal party conventions and assemblies but with the party bureaucrats, organizers, and especially the party leader who has shown the capacity to win the support of the mass electorate. The party organization outside the legislature disciplines the party members in the legislature; in turn the leader, because of his demagogic ability, tends to dominate the

machine while using it to rally the masses behind him. This is the stage, in Weber's terms, of "plebiscitarian democracy."¹

In order to understand the stages of UMNO's organizational development and the subsequent shift in the balance of power in favor of the central leadership, I will use two essential concepts in this analysis – genetic model (the factors that, when combined, give an organization its marks, define its genetic characteristics²) and nationalization.³ According to Panebianco, a party (like any organization) is a structure in motion which evolves over time, reacting to external changes and to the changing "environments" in which it functions. He suggests that the important factor explaining its physiognomy and functioning are its organizational history (its past) and its relations with changing external environments. In this chapter, I will attempt to explain UMNO's genetic model and its nationalization – how the party originated and how it consolidated.

UMNO and the Malayan Union

According to Panebianco, a party's organizational characteristics depend more upon its history. In other words, all political parties are to some extent conditioned by the circumstances giving rise to their birth, and by experiences during their initial formative years.⁴ The formation of UMNO must be traced back to the reawakening of the politically conservative pre-war Malay associations whose efforts to form a

¹ See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in The Theory of Social and Economic Organization translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947) pp. 350-375.

² On the concept of "genetic model" see Cf. D. Silverman, Sociology of Organizations (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1970).

³ See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 49-59.

⁴ Ibid.

national organization had been interrupted by the Second World War.⁵ A.J. Stockwell has pointed out that there were three main elitist groups that emerged within the Malay society in the years before World War II. The first was composed of the religious reformists who sprang mainly from the urban Muslim bourgeoisie of the Straits Settlements and were of Arab and South Indian stock rather than pure Malay. This movement, however, failed to arouse the mass of Malays since it was centered on the towns and had little appeal in the rural areas. The second group was that of the radical Malay intelligentsia. They were of rural origins and most of them were educated in vernacular schools and at the Sultan Idris Training College for Malay school teachers. Their aim was to use Islam as a vehicle for Pan Malayan nationalism. During the 1930's this group became increasingly political as it attacked colonialism, the forces of capitalism and traditional Malay society. In 1938 the Kesatuan Malayu Muda (KMM; union of young Malays) was founded which aimed at unity with Indonesia. Nevertheless, like the religious reformists, these Malay radicals failed to gain a mass following from within the Malay community. Finally, the third group was composed of the English-schooled sons of the Malay ruling house, who enjoyed the advantages of traditional status and modern education. According to Stockwell, this group was represented in the state governments, in the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) and, to a lesser, in the more rarified Malayan Civil Service (MCS). The aim of this group was to preserve Malay society against the encroachments of the non-Malay world, and in this, despite particular grievances, it favored co-operation with the British government. Members of this group had established Malay associations on a state basis. Despite holding several pan-Malayan conferences – for example that of

⁵ See John Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980) p.75.

August 1939 and in December 1940, this group also failed to assemble a mass following or to establish a significant peninsula-wide organization.⁶

Immediately after World War II, Britain announced a new policy for Malaya. In essence, the thrust of the British pre-war policy – the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, the autonomy of the Malay states and the privileged position of the Malay community were to be demolished. According to Ariffin Omar, in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation, the Malays who were divided politically among the nine Malay Sultanates were leaderless, demoralized, and politically unprepared for the kind of changes that the British had drawn up for the Malay Peninsula.⁷ This was due to the fact that some Malays had assumed that with the Japanese surrender, the pre-war social-arrangement would prevail. Fear of Chinese domination was also uppermost in the minds of Malays connected with the ruler's courts and it was reported that immediately after the Japanese surrender "in all villages throughout the Malay states, the Chinese Resistance Forces are in command".⁸ The Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) – a mainly Chinese resistance force that was set up as an Independent Anti-Japanese Regiments - received military training, and were ideologically indoctrinated. Immediately after the war, the MPAJA expanded their operations against the Malay community, paraded their military power, abused Malay cultural heritage, and mocked the Muslim faith. It was clear that the MPAJA was not content to assume a commanding role among the Chinese in Malaya. It also had

⁶ This discussion is based on the introduction of A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No: 8, 1979). For a discussion on Malay Nationalism see W.R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967). Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu : Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950 (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁷ Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu : Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950 (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993) p.34.

bolder objectives. It was evidently determined to lay foundations of its own Malayan Republic before the arrival of the British. Malay sovereignty and Malay leadership, no less than Chinese businessmen and merchants, were its targets. This in turn had provoked a violent Malay reaction. As the historian Cheah Boon Kheng pointed out, the violent Malay reaction to the Chinese was due, among other factors, to the fear that their identity, culture, and political institutions would be supplanted by Chinese culture and political dominance. Particularly alarming was the rapturous welcome the local Chinese gave the MPAJA units in their triumphal entry into the main towns and villages.⁹

The Malays (particularly the English-educated Malay aristocrats, as well as those Chinese and Indians who were fearful of the MPAJA) who recently experienced with MPAJA terror came all too vividly to mind and fearing that Malay culture would be driven out by Chinese had welcomed the arrival of the British and their determination to re-establish law and order.¹⁰ What the British planned to do, however, was to implement a Malayan Union in the Malay states.¹¹ A preview of the new arrangement was given in the British Parliament on October 10, 1945. In answer to a question the Secretary of State for the Colonies revealed plans for the establishment of a Malayan Union composed of the nine states on the Peninsula and two Straits Settlements, Malacca and Penang. All persons regardless of their racial background born in Malaya or meeting born in Malaya or meeting a residence

⁸ B.MA./TS Com No. 58/9, "Report on the Military Government, 12-30 September 1945" by the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer of Malaya.

⁹ For a complete account of MPAJA and its activities during and after Japanese occupation see Cheah Boon Kheng, Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict during and after Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946 (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983).

¹⁰ Cheah, Red Star over Malaya, pp. 170-94.

¹¹ For further readings on the Malayan Union see Mohamed Nordin Sopiee, From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: political Unification in the Malaysian Region 1945-1965 (Kuala Lumpur:

requirement would become eligible for a common citizenship in the new state. Then, to explain the plan, a special emissary, Sir Harold MacMichael, was dispatched to the Malay states. In just three months MacMichael reported that he had “successfully concluded with each Malay Rulers, after consultations conducted with friendliness and good will, an agreement with supplementing the existing treaties, grants full jurisdiction in each State to His Majesty, the King of England.”¹² A White Paper issued on January 22, 1946, announced the terms under which civilian administration was to be restored.

First, it proposed to put an end even to the formal sovereignty of the Malay rulers. They were to be subordinated to a central government headed by a Governor assisted by Executive and Legislative Councils designed to be broad based and representative. State and local government would operate through powers delegated by the central government to administrative officers and local councils. The Sultan would have to be content with legislative powers on matters involving Muslim religious questions and with presiding over Malay Advisory Council, the members of which they themselves could select (with the governor’s approval).

Second, the White Paper revealed British intentions to redefine the political community. No longer could its boundaries be considered congruent with the Malay community. “All those who have made the country their homeland,” the document declared, “should have an opportunity of a due share in the country’s political and cultural institutions.” Regardless of communal affiliation, all those born within the territory of the Malayan Union and Singapore, as well as those who had resided there for ten out of the preceding fifteen years and were prepared to affirm their allegiance

University of Malaya Press, 1976) See also Albert Lau, Malayan Union Controversy, 1942-1948 (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1991).

would become citizens of it.¹³ For the British government to achieve these aims, it was necessary to reorganize citizenship qualifications whereby 83 per cent of the Chinese and 75 per cent of the Indians would qualify for the citizenship under very liberal laws.¹⁴ Specifically, all had a right to serve in the government (the British intended to open up the Civil Service-hitherto a British and Malay preserve –to all communities), and as institutions became more and more representative, all had an equal right to elect the government. As such, the immediate aim of the Malayan Union Scheme was to integrate the large Chinese community and the smaller Indian one into a Malayan polity. In addition, the British also wished to do away with the cumbersome pre-war administrative structure which comprised ten government units consisting of the Federated Malay States (FMS) of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang; the Unfederated Malay States (UMS) of Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu; and the Straits Settlements comprising Penang, Singapore and Malacca. The British wanted to integrate them into a single, centrally controlled state with Singapore as a separate entity.

As the historian A.J. Stockwell pointed out, the vigor of the Malay opposition to the Malayan Union astounded all those convinced of Malay apathy. He argued that its Malay opponents had been mobilized from England by retired Malayan Civil Servants and that the Sultans, fearing the growing hostility from below the throne to the proposed constitution, chose to revoke their agreements and pillory MacMichael for foul practice. Many Malays on the other hand, saw the Malayan Union as a “blessing in disguise” because it forced the different Malay groups into a peninsula-

¹² Sir Harold MacMichael, Report of a Mission to Malaya (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946), Colonial No. 194.

¹³ For details see: Great Britain, Colonial Office, Malayan Union and Singapore: A Statement of Policy on Future Constitution (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946.)

wide political movement.¹⁵ The important perception was that sovereignty had continued to reside in the Malay rulers during the colonial period, but it was now to be entirely transferred to the British monarch. The conservative viewpoint was that the Malay states were not colonies but protected states. As stated by the conservative mouthpiece *Maljis*:

According to Malay history, the Malay states and the Malay peoples of the Malay peninsula were under British protection (*naungan*) starting from 1874, that is about 71 years ago. Since then, it has never been heard that the pure-bred indigenous Malays of the Peninsula have shown any sign of wanting self government, that is a Malay *kerajaan* that is *merdeka* (independent), probably because the Malays of the Peninsula are naturally aware that they do not have the qualifications or ability to administer themselves. What is needed by them are justice, tight protection, peace and quiet, and education that is good so that they will be qualified to rule themselves when the time comes in the future.¹⁶

As such, the conservatives viewed the signing of the Malayan Union Agreements by the rulers as a disaster. According to Ariffin Omar, the recurring themes in the conservative arguments against change to the *status quo* and the introduction of the Malayan Union were that they wanted protection (*naungan*) and that Malays – from rajas to commoners did not want self-government. The concept of *naungan* had been prevalent way before the war – in treaties signed between the British and the rajas, it was agreed that the British would protect Malay interests. The Malays also considered the Malay states to be the domain of the Malays, whereas the foreign races were just lodgers. The terms “Malaya” and “Malayan” were anathemas to the conservatives. The Malayan Union and its consequences were deemed a victory to the “foreign races”,

¹⁵ K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process In Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965) p.75.

¹⁶ See A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No: 8, 1979) p.64.

giving rise to the emergence of a “Malayan race” that was not indigenous to the land and which would deprive the Malay race of their rights.¹⁷

Initially, the Malays were at loss as to what should be done in order to oppose the Malayan Union scheme. It could be argued that the internal politics of the Malay community were partly responsible for this uncoordinated reaction to the Malayan Union. Local rivalries and parochial concerns had in some way hampered a united action. For example, in Kedah a group of young radicals in Saberkas¹⁸ was countered by another youth organization, Pemuda Melayu Kedah (Kedah Malay Youth) and by the older and more conservative Malays of the Kesatuan Melayu Kedah (Kedah Malay Union). As such, though the Malays reacted vigorously against the Malayan Union scheme, local rivalries and parochial concerns had threatened to deepen the divisions within the Malay society. This was made evident by the revival of the state-centered pre-war association alongside many new Malay organizations that were founded specifically to protest against the Malayan Union. For example, the pre-war Persatuan Melayu Perak (Malay Association of Perak) was now matched by the new Perikatan Melayu Perak (The Perak Malay League); the Persatuan Melayu Pahang (Pahang Malay Associations) by several new Pahang associations; while in Selangor the Persatuan Melayu Selangor (Selangor Malay Association) now found the rise of parallel associations throughout the state.¹⁹

¹⁶ Majlis, 24 October 1945.

¹⁷ See Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu p.50.

¹⁸ Saberkas was the abbreviation of the original name which, according to some ex-members of Saberkas, read Sharikat Bekerjasama Raayat Kedah Alor Star (People's Co-operative Company of Alor Star, Kedah) or Sharikat Bekerjasama Kebajikan Arn Saiburi (General Welfare Co-operative of Saiburi - Saiburi being the name given to the state during the Siamese occupation. Later the title Saberkas acquired a nationalist overtones viz. Sayang Akan Bangsa Ertinya Redza Korban Apa Segalanya (Love of the nation/race means a willingness for total sacrifice. See A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No: 8, 1979) p.122.

¹⁹ A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.64-65.

The Malayan Union controversy also witnessed a “revolutionary change in the ties between Ruler and subject”²⁰ in Malay society. In particular some Malays had regarded the MacMichael Agreements as a surrender of their birthright. For example Mohamed Yunus Hamidi, the secretary of the Persatuan Melayu Selangor, was openly critical of the Malay Rulers’ record in the treaty negotiations, and, as editor of the conservative mouthpiece *Majlis*, Hamidi published a series of articles by Ayob Bin Abdullah of Kedah which discussed the Malay rulers’ position in society. Ayob put forward the argument that the authority of the Malay rulers rested on the people according to Islam, Malay custom and all world principles; that by signing the MacMichael Treaties, the rulers had failed their subjects; and that without the agreement of the people, the new treaties were invalid. Ayob also urged Malays to establish political associations, since they could no longer rely on their Rajas to defend their society.²¹

It could be argued that “the first Malay reactions to the Malayan Union were diffuse and tended to increase the divisions within the community rather than to improve the prospects for a pan-Malayan Malay movement.”²² In order to overcome the problem of local and state rivalries, it was imperative that all of the state associations should be incorporated within an umbrella organization. The editor of the conservative mouthpiece *Majlis* suggested that of all the states, the greatest political progress had been made in Johore and that Dato Onn b Jaafar, founder of the

²⁰See Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu* p.50.

²¹ *Majlis* Januari 4, 1946. The historian A.J. Stockwell has pointed out that the most notable case of opposition to the Sultans was the Johore conspiracy. Sultan Ibrahim of Johore had voluntarily signed the MacMichael agreement without consulting members of his state council. His action had stirred up resentment amongst Johore leaders. The latter had claimed that by signing the new treaty (which was a flagrant breach of Johore constitution) the Sultan had failed to do his duty to his subjects. In so doing, the Sultan had committed derhaka (treason) against his throne and the state and people of Johore. For further readings see A.J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948* pp.65-68.

²² *Ibid* p.68

Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung was the most suitable Malay to preside over a pan-Malayan congress. The editorial went on to say that the secretary of the Persatuan Melayu Selangor would take the necessary steps to ask the Malay associations throughout the peninsula to adopt Onn as leader of the Pan-Malayan Malay congress.²³ Onn b Jaafar whose grandfather, father and two elder brothers were *Menteri Besar* (chief minister) of Johore was then himself a *Menteri Besar* of the state. It could well be said that Onn, a Malay of aristocratic background, might have been chosen due to what Weber has called “traditional authority” – the object of obedience is the personal authority of the individual which he enjoys by virtue of his traditional status.²⁴

Due to his personal standing, Onn was able to shift the Malays antagonism towards the sultan to that of the Malayan Union. As such, his call for a Pan Malayan Malaya congress was received enthusiastically. And On 1 March 1946 “some 200 Malays from 41 associations gathered at the Sultan Suleiman Club, Kampong Bahru Kuala Lumpur to witness the Sultan of Selangor open the four-day Pan-Malayan Malay Congress.”²⁵ According to the historian Stockwell, the congress considered two matters: firstly the organization of the Malay National Movement (Pergerakan Kebangsaan Melayu) and, secondly, the campaign against the Malayan Union. Once the opening ceremonies were over, Onn was elected chairman of the Congress and a debate on the question of organization ensued. It was decided that the proposed movement be named Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu or United Malays National Organization (UMNO). A working committee that comprised of Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang (Perak), Dato Nik Kamil (Kelantan), Dato Hamzah b.

²³ Majlis as quoted in A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.68.

²⁴ See Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947) p. 341.

Abdullah (Selangor), Zainal Abidin b Ahmad (Za'ba) (Selangor) and Dato (Onn) (Johore) was appointed to draft a charter for UMNO and the next Pan-Malayan Malay Congress held in Johore Bahru on 11-12 May 1946, the UMNO charter was approved and UMNO was officially born with Dato Onn as its official President and the Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang as its acting secretary.²⁶ The man who was elected President of UMNO, as we shall recall, Dato Onn b Jaafar came from the administrative class. So did the leaders of the number of delegations like Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil, Dato Nara, Haji Abdul Wahab (Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang) Wan b Md Yusoff (Panglima Kinta, Perak). More significant, however, is the manner in which the Malay community was mobilized. The Malays were harnessed for political action without disrupting the traditional order. The Sultans and the *Menteri Besar* at one level, the *Penghulu* and *Ketua Kampung* at another, were all maintained in the offices that they has held in the old feudal setting and right through the colonial period. UMNO, it should be emphasized, was created within this structure. Chandra Muzaffar has pointed out that UMNO had inherited the relationship of authority and influenced that has always existed between the Sultan and his subjects, the *Menteri Besar* and the *Penghulu*. These relationships were reinforced through new political roles and new political goals. He went on to say that UMNO's strength in 1946 could be explained partly through this factor; because UMNO leaders were also the elites of traditional Malay society they earned support for their movement. In this context we could put into perspective Max Weber's thesis that at first parties were "pure following of the aristocracy," changing their allegiance as the "great noble families" which led them changed theirs. In a society where there has been no revolution or any other type of decisive break with the past, these historical continuities tend to be valuable for

²⁵ See A. J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.69.

political mobilization. In the case of the Malay society, the position of the traditionalist was never in any danger. This could be attributed to the fact that the Malays, at this point in time, still did not have a notion of nation and nationality and as A.C. Milner has argued decisively, in traditional Malay society, the Malays had perceived their political condition in terms of the *kerajaan*, that is, they considered themselves to be living in a community oriented around a raja who was not only the focus of what is today called political life but also the endowment of religious and psychological significance.²⁷ Given the history of the Malay States, the system of indirect rule and the perpetuation of the traditional society, no other group – apart from the traditional elites could have mobilized and galvanized the Malay community into such a strong and dynamic force. It was this strength that persuaded the British to withdraw the Malayan Union in deference to UMNO and decided to restore the sovereignty of the Sultans, and the concept of the Malay State – in short, the old protectorate system.

UMNO's motto was "*Hidup Melayu*" (long live the Malays). The *kebangsaan* that the conservatives who founded UMNO were fighting for, according to Ariffin Omar, cannot be interpreted as nationalism but as a form of communal solidarity. He went on to say that term *kebangsaan* is itself derived from the Malay word *bangsa* which can mean race, people, community, or even nation, depending on the context.²⁸ In rejecting the Malayan Union, one such resolution stated that the Malayan Union was not constitutional and does not respect the inheritance, the customs and practices of every one of the Malay States. Another resolution argued that the Malayan Union

²⁶ Ibid. p.70

²⁷ See A.C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

²⁸ See Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu* p.55.

has destroyed the concept of Malay States, of Malay peoples with their own nation and rulers and Malay rights down through generations.²⁹

The British was, nevertheless, adamant in its stance and on March 30 1946, the British government announced that it was going ahead with the Malayan Union, but it would delay implementing the citizenship regulation. And on 31 March, the day the Malayan Union was to be inaugurated, leaders of the Pan-Malayan Congress held an emergency meeting in which they planned a total boycott of the new constitution. The Congress also adopted the following resolutions; Malays to wear white headbands as a sign of mourning, Malays to boycott the Malayan Union Advisory Councils, Dato Onn to request the rulers not to attend any ceremony or official function of the Malayan Union government, and finally Malay associations to refuse recognition to the Malayan Union Governor or his officers.³⁰ As such, the Malayan Union witnessed a bold demonstration of Malay unity and Malay opposition to the new constitution. By end of May 1946, it was clear that Britain would retreat, and towards the end of July the Sultans, UMNO representatives and the British sat down to negotiate the terms of the new federation agreement.³¹ For a moment it seemed that the UMNO's main *raison d'être* had ceased to exist.

The conclusion that one can draw from the Malayan Union episode is that through UMNO's effort, the position of the Malay community as the indigenous community with certain inalienable rights was restored. The Malayan Union also witnessed the heightened consciousness of *bangsa* in the Malay community. A Malayan nationality was unacceptable to conservatives and radicals alike because the

²⁹ See Chandrasekaran Pillay, Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position and Opposition Attitudes – Master of Social Science thesis submitted at Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang, 1974.

³⁰ Maljls, 3 April 1946.

Malays saw themselves as *Melayu*. The term “Malayan” was rejected for it was seen as distinctly anti-Malay.³² Both parties felt that it was a British creation to legitimize non-Malay citizenship in Malaya and to relegate Malays to a minor position in their own states. It was in this context that the Malayan Union cut across state boundaries and UMNO was founded on the traditional hierarchy of Malay society – a hierarchy that bound the lowest Malay peasant to the monarch at the very apex.³³ As such, UMNO was different from most nationalists parties movement in other parts of Southeast Asia. Nationalism in both Indonesia and Vietnam, for instance assumed strength and structure outside the traditional structure and what is more significant, resulted in sharp conflicts between the emergent class of nationalists and the traditional elite. UMNO, on the other hand, saw no need to fight for independence rather, UMNO fought for the maintenance of continued British “protection” of “independent” Malay entities under which the *bangsa Melayu* would progress.³⁴ As far as UMNO was concerned, it merely associated itself with the British pledge that the Federation of Malaya agreement which replaced the Malayan Union “should on a long view, offer the means and prospects of development in the direction of ultimate self-government.”³⁵

The withdrawal of the Malayan Union and its substitution by the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* (Federation of Malaya) did not mean the attainment of political power for the Malays, and it was seen by some Malay Nationalists as a hollow victory. The British government, however, had no intention of abdicating its pre-eminent role in the

³¹ The most detailed exposition of this process is given by Allen J. de V., The Malayan Union. Monograph Series No. 10, Southeast Asian Studies, (New heaven: Yale University, 1967).

³² Majlis April 13, 1946.

³³ See Ariffin Omar, Bangsa Melayu p.56

³⁴ Ibid.

new political definition. Most of all, it was determined to reorganize the political structure. The British gave up the Malayan Union but many of its essential features were retained such as the requirement of a strong central government and the goal of a common citizenship for all who regarded Malaya as their real home and as the object of their loyalty. Nevertheless, the Federation of Malaya agreement recognized the need for maintaining the individuality of each Malay states and each settlement and the recognition of the special position of the Malays – this is where the UMNO's negotiators made a profound impression and gained major concessions.³⁶

UMNO after the Malayan Union: Organizational Structure

As we have already seen, UMNO was, at the very outset, by no means a unitary political party – it consisted in the amalgamation of numerous state and local associations. This corresponds to Maurice Duverger's conception of the indirect structure of political parties. According to Duverger, in the unitary state there is a direct link between the citizen and the national community: in the same way, in the direct party, the members themselves form the party community without the help of other social groupings. On the other hand, in a Confederation, the citizens are joined to the nation through the intermediary of the member states; similarly the "indirect" party is made up of the union of the component social groups.³⁷ At its birth, UMNO fell into the second category because at that time, the Malays were then divided among the

³⁵ Constitutional Proposal For Malaya, Report of Working Committee (Government Printer: Kuala Lumpur, 1946) chapter 2.

³⁶ See Malaya (Federation of), Report of the Consultative Committee Together with Proceedings of Six Public Meetings, A Summary of Representative Made and Letters and Memoranda Considered by the Committee (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Government Press, 1947). For a useful analysis see Ariffin Omar "Sultans: Guardians or Figure Heads? Constitutional Monarchy: Theory vs Practice 1948-1993" Aliran Monthly 1993: 13 (3) p.3.

³⁷ See Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State translated by Barbara and Robert North (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1954) p.6.

nine Malay Sultanates and among their grievances against the Malayan Union were the Malays, the conservatives in particular, had wanted the maintenance of the individuality of the Malay Sultanates. It could also be argued that, at that time, the Malays had not envisaged themselves as belonging to a unitary nation-state with fixed boundaries as the Western conception of a nation-state implies. Rather, UMNO was a collection of local and state associations linked to the co-coordinating institution as a form of communal solidarity by their opposition to the Malayan Union. As such, UMNO came into existence through what Panebianco has termed as territorial diffusion – local elites construct local associations that are only later integrated into a national organization.³⁸

Bearing this in mind, one could surely see that UMNO was somewhat a loose alliance of many local and state associations. Hence, the UMNO charter that was approved on May 11th 1946 at Johore Bahru impeded decisive action by the central organization because of the many autonomous leaders who control their own state associations. The main items in the charter provided that – any Malay association with membership exceeding one thousand and whose objects included the advancement or betterment of Malays could be admitted to membership, there would be a General Assembly comprising two representatives from each organization with the responsibility of electing a President, establishing departments; the President had the power to appoint his own executive committee, subject to ratification by the General Assembly. The General Assembly was also responsible in the appointment of the secretary general. Executives committee members were placed in charge of

³⁸See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 50.

departments which were expected to play a major role in implementing UMNO's policy.³⁹

With such loose provisions, the central organization was unable to exercise much control over its affiliated members and because the terms of the UMNO charter specifically prohibited the interference of the central organization in the local affairs of member associations. For example, in the aftermath of the Malayan Union crisis, the Federation of Malaya Proposals were discussed at the peninsular level while the Model State Constitution was referred to each state so that local Malay leaders might draft constitutions to suit their particular circumstances. In Kedah⁴⁰, for instance, Haji Mohamed Sheriff (the Sultans's close advisor) declared that the Sultan was the source of all power and that any concessions which the Sultan might think fit to grant his subjects would be the fruit of a generous disposition. The Kesatuan Melayu Kedah (KMK, Kedah Malay Union), on the other hand, argued that according to Muslim law and democratic principle, the ruler was responsible to his people and that he should accommodate himself to their demands. The political associations in Kedah (KMK, Saberkas, and Pemuda Melayu Kedah) drafted a proposal stating that they wished to be consulted on two matters – in drafting of the State Constitution and in the appointment of officers who would serve as *Mentri Besar* and State Secretary under the future constitution. The Sultan, however, rejected the proposals concerning the appointments of *Mentri Besar* and State Secretary. Although, in retaliation, the KMK boycotted the celebrations surrounding the inauguration of the Federation and more seriously disputed the legitimacy of the Sultan, the KMK never stood a chance in its

³⁹ See Charter of United Malays National Organization UMNO Charter, Supplementary Charter & Regulations —Senarai fail UMNO siri Setiausaha Agung Tahun 1946-1961, 1963, UMNO/ED/No.3/46 Arkib Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

⁴⁰ The working Committee for the Federation of Malaya Proposal had drafted in addition to the Federal Proposal a Model State Constitution based on the pre-war Johore constitution. This was due to the fact

tussle with the Malay establishment of Kedah. Although Onn was concerned with the divisions between UMNO associations in the state constitutional crisis, help from UMNO headquarters was impeded by both the terms of UMNO's charter and by the political sense of UMNO's leaders⁴¹

At that point in time, the loyalty of the individual Malay was to his local association and political control rested not so much with UMNO headquarters but with affiliated associations, which were numerous, and sometimes at loggerheads with each other. By the end of 1947, 33 associations were members of UMNO, although 41 had sent delegates to the Pan-Malayan Congress of March 1946.⁴² As party president, Dato Onn was keen to create a unitary political party - "all these splitting up into more and more separate bodies are detrimental to the unity that is required, but they appear inevitable as long as associations already do not work together. The amalgamation of associations would help both politically and financially for if only the smaller associations would realize the benefits of affiliations or merger into another smaller body and become a big body, there would be no requests for reconsideration of the \$1 subscription".⁴³ Hence, during its formative years, UMNO, a party that developed through diffusion, was a federation of different local groups, which had given rise to decentralize and semi-autonomous structures.

According to Ramlah Adam, with the advent of the Federation of Malaya in 1948, the political reality was that UMNO - as a loose alliance of various locals and state associations, was not able to carry out its program effectively. This was due to

that before the war, only Johore and Terengganu had a written constitution. See A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.101.

⁴¹ For a full account of the Kedah constitutional crisis see A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.102-105.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ UMNO/SG no 48/46.

the fact that the various state and local associations had their own agendas and goals.⁴⁴ Attempts to create a unitary political party were opposed by several state organizations anxious to preserve their state identity.⁴⁵ First moves towards consolidation were made in Selangor where nearly a dozen affiliates of UMNO had sprung up. On September 8 1946, a meeting which was chaired by Onn and assisted by the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang as its secretary, considered three courses: to make no changes, to federate the Selangor associations, or to amalgamate the associations and establish "UMNO Selangor". The meeting, however, opted for a **federation**.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, throughout September 1946 the conservative mouthpiece *Majlis* had emphasized the need for alteration in the existing UMNO structure so that the intervening tier of associations between UMNO headquarters and individual Malays might be dissolved and replaced by the direct registration of Malays and the creation of UMNO state branches.⁴⁷

Late in 1946 UMNO members in Penang and Seberang Prai and in Negeri Sembilan were convinced that there should be a revamp of the structure of UMNO and the need to replace the system of UMNO affiliates by a network of state branches.⁴⁸ At the next UMNO General Assembly in March 1947, the Persatuan Melayu Selangor presented a pamphlet on the advantages of direct membership and state branches, and at the next UMNO General Assembly in Kota Bahru, which met on the first's UMNO's inauguration, a resolution in favor of the principle of reorganization was

⁴⁴ Ramlah Adam, UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik (Kota Bahru: Mohd Nawi Book Store, 1978) p. 43.

⁴⁵ Opposition to attempts to amalgamate all the state organizations will be discussed later.

⁴⁶ See John Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS p.81.

⁴⁷ *Majlis* editorials on 11, 13 and 16 September 1946.

⁴⁸ UMNO/F no 7/47.

adopted by 20 votes to 5 and a sub-committee was set up to consider the practical implications.⁴⁹

As Stockwell has pointed out, the re-structuring of UMNO was by no means plain sailing. A certain amount of unwillingness, apathy and ignorance amongst UMNO members had delayed the realization of the new scheme for a further two years. Three Malay associations namely Persatuan Melayu Sabak Bernam, Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS) and Saberkas of Kedah had refused to surrender their autonomy. These associations have resented the power of the UMNO leadership which, they claimed, rested largely in acquiescence of the bulk of Malay associations of the bulk of Malay associations, and they criticized the process whereby the original confederation was being converted into a monolithic structure. The then President of Kesatuan Melayu Singapura Sardon Jubir, worked both as a lawyer and politician both in Singapore and the peninsula was an assistant to Onn before the war. Sardon, however, did not become an "Onn man" but he was a thorn in the side of UMNO's president. As president of KMS, Sardon pursued an individualistic course within UMNO often being critical of its leadership and he opposed the creation of an UMNO branch in Singapore because UMNO's communal nature and mainland orientation would aggravate the problems of the already weak Malay community in Singapore.⁵⁰ Saberkas, on the other hand, was started by a group of English-educated Malays and they form the most articulate opposition association within UMNO. Saberkas was founded on social justice and sovereignty of the people and demanded civil liberties, the preservation of Malay society, and finally, the political unity of the Malays and

⁴⁹ UMNO/F no 7/47

⁵⁰ Tun Sardon Hj Jubir as quoted in A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.122.

their ultimate federation within greater Malay/Indonesia entity.⁵¹ More importantly, Saberkas argued that the confederation of associations provided by UMNO's original charter allowed differences of opinion on specific matters while preserving harmony over general principles. Whereas the introduction of direct registration and UMNO branches would in its view, undermine the Malay unity that it sought to reinforce.⁵²

At this juncture, UMNO, which was a Confederation of Malay associations, had very little autonomy vis-a-vis its member associations and the central organization must bargain with them on an equal basis. For instance, the KMS case illustrated that even though Onn had made moves in 1950 to set up an UMNO branch in Singapore, it was not until December 1951 (after the Tunku has assumed the leadership of UMNO) that a branch under the Johore Bahru division was established on the Island.⁵³ Saberkas, on the other hand, chose to remain an affiliated member of UMNO when the new constitution was ratified in May 1949 (see appendix I for UMNO's organizational structure). Nevertheless, at the General Assembly which met on 28-29 May 1949 the new regulations for direct membership were ratified – a constitutional amendment incorporating changes and also providing for internal discipline came into being giving UMNO the form of a Western-style political party a little over two years after its leaders had set out to achieve this.⁵⁴

UMNO, as such, went through certain phases towards a monolithic party: its development initially takes place through diffusion that is, a number of local associations autonomously sprang up through out the Malay states and later they unite

⁵¹ Wan Din b Mohd Hashim ex-Saberkas member as quoted in *ibid*.

⁵² Ex-members of Saberkas Mohamed Khir Johari and Senu b Abdul Rahman as quoted in *ibid*.

⁵³ UMNO/SG no 179/50.

⁵⁴ See John Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980) p.81.

to form a national organization. The national organization then went on to develop its branches through penetration. Initially, the central organization was not able to exercise much authority over its member associations. When the members decided to form a monolithic party, as we shall see, a form of territorial penetration will occur because the “central organization” could control, stimulate or direct the development of the “periphery” – in this case the various Malay states’ UMNO.⁵⁵

UMNO as a Monolithic Party: Bureaucratization and Centralizing Tendencies

According to Maurice Duverger, the leadership of parties tends naturally to assume oligarchic form. He went on to say that a veritable “ruling class” comes into being that is more or less close; it is an “inner circle” into which it is difficult to penetrate and this phenomenon is just as true of titular leaders as of the real leaders, of autocratic as of democratic rulers. In the case of UMNO, some five months after its inception, Maxwell made the following observation on UMNO – “with its secretary general, treasury and seven departments, it is a system of government and the President will be a perpetual dictator”.⁵⁶ Indeed, Robert Michels had noted that the political party possesses many traits in common with the state.⁵⁷

During its early days, the direction of UMNO lay with the President and his executive committee. This was due to the fact that the party president was then vested with the power to appoint his own executive committee, the members of which would be responsible to him rather than the General Assembly.⁵⁸ During the period of 1946-

⁵⁵ See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power p.50

⁵⁶ See Maxwell Papers 17: Maxwell to Jarrett (draft), 25 September 1946 as quoted in A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p. 116.

⁵⁷ See Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of The Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies (Gloucher, Mass. Peter Smith, 1959) p.186.

1951, UMNO's central leadership was monopolized by a group of English educated Malays and those of aristocratic birth.⁵⁹ Chandra Muzaffar has also noted that throughout the Malayan Union episode, the leadership of UMNO was dominated by a group of administrators and aristocrats or as he called them the "administocrats" and the latter were the original UMNO elites. In 1949, for instance, 79% members of UMNO's executive committee came from the "administocratic" class – in 1950 61%, 1951 58% and 1952 68%.⁶⁰ On that account, in its early days, UMNO depended on the energies of a handful of men mainly in two centers – Johore Bahru and Ipoh. In Johore Bahru there came to be situated the Presidency under Onn, the UMNO Youth Movement under Onn's son Hussein, the Information Department and the Finance Department. In Ipoh, the secretariat was at first housed in the office of the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang at 21 Hale Street. Here the clerical work of the secretariat, of the Department of Politics and of the *Kaum Ibu* (UMNO's women section) was carried out by a group of Perak Malays who were already friends, relatives or colleagues and who were, in the main, leading figures in the Perikatan Melayu Perak (Perak Malay League) such as Zainal Abidin b Hj Abas, Che Puteh Mariah bte Ibrahim Rashid, Megat Yunus b Megat Mohd Isa and C.M. Yusof.⁶¹ It should also be noted that numerically and also in terms of political influence, Onn's Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung Johore (some 25,000 members) and the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang's

⁵⁸ UMNO Charter UMNO Charter, Supplementary Charter & Regulations --Senarai fail UMNO siri Setiausaha Agung Tahun 1946-1961, 1963. Ibid.

⁵⁹ See Ramlah Adam *UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik* p. 100.

⁶⁰ See Chandrasekaran Pillay, *Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position and Opposition Attitudes* p. 156.

⁶¹ Zainal Abidin b Hj Abas was the first officer in charge of UMNO's Department of Politics and he succeeded Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang as secretary general. Che Puteh Mariah was the wife of Zainal Abidin b Hj. Abas and was the head of UMNO's women section (Kaum Ibu). Megat Yunus succeeded Zainal Abidin at the Department of Politics. C.M Yusof's daughter had married the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang. Like Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang, C.M. Yusof was a conscious aristocrat, who saw the hierarchy of Perak chiefs to be the symbol of Malay political power, and in the late 1950's he

Perikatan Melayu Perak (some 25,000 members dominated the party. As such, the Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung Johore and the Perikatan Melayu Perak were in Stockwell's words the twin pillars of UMNO during Onn's presidency, and even after UMNO's reorganization, when these organizations had submerged their original identities in UMNO state branches. Needless to say, these men had succeeded, consciously or unconsciously, in forming UMNO's "inner circle". Nevertheless, as we have already seen, UMNO's original charter had managed to circumscribe the inner circle's dominance. UMNO prior to 1949 was a party divided into tendencies (loosely organized state and local groups) of geographically concentrated groups .

After its organizational restructuring in May 1949, a new regulation for direct membership was ratified and it seemed that UMNO was placed on a sounder basis as a political party. With it, the most important changes were the inaugural of UMNO's divisions and branches through the Malay Peninsula. The reason given for the creation of a unitary political party was that it was easier for UMNO, as a monolithic party, to advance the cause of the Malays - UMNO members in particular, in matters relating to politics (*siasah*), welfare (*kebaikan*) and culture (*kebudayaan*).⁶² When UMNO was turned into a monolithic political party, the branch designates UMNO's most basic element. According to Maurice Duverger, parties founded on branches are more centralized than those founded on caucuses. This is due to the fact that a branch is only part of the whole, and its separate existence is inconceivable, on the other hand the word caucus evokes autonomous reality capable of living on its own. The profound originality lies in its organization.⁶³ In the case of UMNO, the inevitability of division

became the Dato Bendahara of Perak. These accounts were extracted from A.J. Stockwell, British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948 p.117

⁶² See Ramlah Adam UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik p. 44.

⁶³ See Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State translated by Barbara and Robert North p.23.

of labor within a large-scale organization was very pronounced when the party was turned into a monolithic organization. For the purpose of administration, a supreme executive committee was instituted as a top policy-making body. The committee consisted of an elected president, deputy president, five vice-presidents and several appointed positions. The officeholders were elected by the delegates to the General Assembly, with the exception of the head of UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO (originally kaum ibu), who were automatically party vice-presidents, and who were elected by their own assemblies. As we shall see, the supreme executive council was UMNO's power center.

The administrative set-up of UMNO's divisions and branches were very similar to that of the central body.⁶⁴ There is no doubt that the possibility clearly exists that a special type of hierarchy always emerges in any political parties since a coarchal pattern of perfectly equal power distribution does not exist.⁶⁵ Theoretically speaking, with the existence of UMNO's divisions and branches, it could arguably be said that there should be a considerable degree of diffusion of power prerogatives and power exercise or a general dilution of power because the party must cope with widely varying local milieus of opinion, tradition and social structure, and this encourages the recognition and acceptance of local leadership, local strategy and local power.⁶⁶ Rather, in the case of UMNO, it seemed that a centralized "unity of command" was instituted in its organizational structure. In UMNO's 1949 constitution, it was decided that there should be a state executive committee (*Jawatankuasa Perhubungan*

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the structure of UMNO's division and branches see Ramlah Adam UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik pp.49-54.

⁶⁵ See Samuel J. Eldersveld, "A Theory of Political Power" in Political Parties and Political Behavior (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. , 1971) p.34

⁶⁶ Ibid p.36.

UMNO)⁶⁷ in between the central organization and the division in states where there existed more than one division. The head of the state executive committee was to be appointed by the president and has to be an individual from the secretary-general's office.⁶⁸ The importance of the state executive committee should be seen in the light of the role played by UMNO's various departments, which were expected to play a major part in determining and implementing UMNO's policy at that time. UMNO was active in drafting programs for Malay progress in education and in the economic life of the peninsula. On July 16 1946 Onn appointed S.M. Zainal Abidin as the first officer in charge of UMNO's Education Department and UMNO's Department of Economics was established in June 1946.⁶⁹ Both the programs for social progress and the arrangements for party consolidation were part of UMNO's bid for the leadership of the Malay community. As such, the restructuring of 1949 was the beginning of the process of nationalization. Nationalization stresses the subordination of state and local parties to the national party. Longley defines nationalization in terms of a redefinition of the "traditional authority relationships between national and state parties" resulting in "a growth in the importance of national party organization over state and local organization", and the circumscription of "the traditional autonomy of state parties."⁷⁰ He suggests the following as critical elements of party nationalization – increasing uniformity of norms for state party participation in national party processes, decreasing range of differences in structure and processes of state parties and finally,

⁶⁷ The state liaison committee was composed of delegates from UMNO division. See Ramlah Adam *UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik* p.50.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948* p.110.

⁷⁰ See Charles H. Longley, "Party Reform and Party Nationalization: The Case of the Democrats," in *The Party Symbol*, ed. William J. Crotty (San Francisco, Calif: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1980), pp.374-75.

greater interdependence between the state and national party organizations. According to Gordon P. Means, the Federation of Malaya Agreement resulted in UMNO becoming the dominant party in government affairs. British policy had been brought into essential harmony with the political objectives of UMNO, and particularly at the state level; the key men in government were either UMNO members or conformed to the party's political ideals.⁷¹

UMNO's First Organizational Dilemma

According to the rational model,⁷² organizations are primarily instruments for the realization of specific (and specifiable) goals. UMNO, as we have seen, was founded to oppose the Malayan Union and it succeeded in doing that. Hence, UMNO was an instrument for the realization of a certain aim and with the passing of time, however, its survival and the actors' particular objective predominate. As Robert Michels has persuasively demonstrated, the true objective of an organization's leaders often is not that of pursuing the manifest aims which the organization was established, but rather that of ensuring the organization's survival (and with it the survival of their own positions).⁷³

Onn's leadership of UMNO made him the dominant personality in Malay politics for a number of years. In its formative years, the party accepted his policies and his political views. Although he was an avowed spokesman of Malay nationalism, he expounded a mild nationalism which stressed gradualism and cooperation with the British provided they remained sensitive to Malay opinion. During the fight against the

⁷¹ See Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1970) p. 102.

⁷² See Talcott Parsons, "Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organization", Administrative Science Quarterly, I (1956), pp. 63-85.

⁷³ See Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of The Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies p. 125.

Malayan Union Onn talked and acted like a narrow-minded Malay chauvinist. In addition, although Onn fought bitterly against the Malayan Union, he was far from being “anti-British”. He realized that the Malays were backward and needed assistance of a sympathetic British administration to protect their interest. Yet, a year or two later, he stressed the importance of inter-communal harmony and appeared genuinely interested in accepting non-Malays into full status in Malaya’s political and cultural life provided that their loyalty to Malaya was undivided.⁷⁴

Onn’s quarrel with UMNO over the citizenship and membership issue is very well documented.⁷⁵ For the purpose of this study, what is important to note is the fact that in expounding that UMNO should open its membership to all ethnic groups and to change its name to United Malayan National Organization, Onn had went a step further in alienating UMNO’s original aim, that is, opposing the creation of a Malayan nation. According to Panebianco, in a well-established organization, the importance attached to the survival of the organization generally prevails over that attached to the pursuit of its original aims. It is also quite clear that organizational actors pursue a plurality of often-contradictory aims, and there remains little doubt that organizational equilibrium depends on the way in which the leaders mediate the particular competing demands.⁷⁶

Onn had regretted that “when I tried to open UMNO membership to others who are loyal to the country UMNO rejected it...”⁷⁷. It is important for us to realize, as Panebianco has pointed out, that the official aims continue to influence the organization and will continue to play an essential role in both in its internal processes

⁷⁴ See Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* p.101.

⁷⁵ See for example, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *Political Awakening* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1986).

⁷⁶ Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* p.9

and in the relationship between the organization and its environment even for a long after the organization's foundation. In the case of UMNO, it could well be said that Onn had tried to transform UMNO from a party defending the status quo to one cautiously looking towards eventual independence. Onn had initially proposed that "those who were born in this country should be given citizenship; and also those British subjects in the former settlement should follow the British citizenship law, 1948". One could surely see that this citizenship proposals that was originally recommended by the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC), an elite multi-racial grouping launched in 1948 at the initiative of the British Commissioner General for Southeast Asia, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald differed very little from the earlier proposals for the Malayan Union. These proposals were accepted by the UMNO executive committee in May 1950, after a "heated" argument. At a special general assembly held late that month Onn presented a series of "counter-proposals" that differed hardly from those of the CLC and it was passed by the general assembly without amendments.⁷⁸

When Onn proposed that UMNO should immediately be fully opened to all races, it became clear that that it would not be acceptable to UMNO generally. In other words, Onn had failed to take into consideration UMNO's original aim. UMNO's official aims have the function of justifying its underlying interests. It is important to understand the implication of the distinction made between nationality (*bangsa*) and citizenship. Citizenship has an almost legalistic connotations. The conservative mouthpiece Majlis had also warned Onn to "go slow" on his proposal to put UMNO on a full national membership by offering equal membership rights to all races. It is undeniable that a section of Malay intelligentsia had recognized the imperative need for a communal unity as a necessary condition for the attainment of a self-governing

⁷⁷ Onn as quoted in The Straits Times, November 27 1950.

Malaya and that they have realized the consequences of communalism. At that moment, however, the Malays had perceived the non-Malays as being superior to the Malays and had a higher birth rate and Onn was initially branded as a “traitor to the Malays and the country” when he had proposed the CLC’s citizenship proposal.⁷⁹ It was clear that UMNO’s main *raison de etre* was still strong at that time due to the fact that a large segment of its members were not able to accept the change from a Malay to a Malayan nation.

⁷⁸ The Straits Times 28.8.1950.

⁷⁹ The Sunday Times June 11 1950.