

Chapter III

Robert Michels has pointed out that the party, regarded as an entity, as a mechanism is not necessarily identifiable with the totality of its members and still less so with the class to which these belong. The party, according to Michels, is created as a means to secure an end. Having, however, become an end in itself, endowed with aims and interests of its own, it undergoes detachment, from the teleological point of view, from the class which it represents. In a party, it is far from obvious that the interests of the masses which have combined to form the party will coincide with the interests of the bureaucracy in which the party becomes personified.¹

Max Weber has also pointed out that in practice, parties may be officially or merely in fact solely concerned with the attainment of power for their leaders and with securing positions in the administrative staff for their own members. The attainment of positions in the administrative staff for their members is however, almost always a secondary aim and objective programs are not infrequently merely a means of persuading outsiders to participate.²

According to Michels, every party is destined to pass from a genetic phase, in which the organization is entirely dedicated to the realization of its cause to a later phase in which - the growth of the party's size, its bureaucratization, the apathy of its supporters after their initial participatory enthusiasm, and finally the leaders' interest in which the real end is organizational survival.³ In the previous chapter, we have discussed in detail UMNO's original aim and its nationalization process. In the

¹ See Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy translated by Eden & Cedar Paul (Gloucester, Mass. Peter Smith, 1978) p.389.

² Max Weber, "The Concept of Parties and Their Features" in The Theory of Social and Economic Organization translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947) p.407.

³ Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy p. 371. Ibid.

present chapter, we will discuss the consolidation of UMNO – the phase in which the organization stabilizes and develops stable survival interest. These developments, according to Panebianco, marks the party's passage from a system of solidarity oriented to the realization of its official aims to a system of interests oriented toward its own survival. The party goes from a phase in which collective incentives – related to the formation of organizational identity prevail (involving participation of the social movement type), to a phase in which organizational ideology is latent (the objectives being vague, implicit, and contradictory).⁴

UMNO After 1951

It should be recalled that Onn's resignation as UMNO's first president was the result of the party's unwillingness to open its membership to all ethnic groups. In a sense, UMNO had wanted to remain as an "exclusionist" party, that is, the party still held to its original manifest aim – Malay solidarity. The party had decided that the members' **identity** (one participates because one identifies with the organization) and **solidarity** (one participates because one identifies with the cause of the organization) should prevail. As such, when Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj came to power as UMNO's second president after defeating Tuan Haji Ahmad Fuad Hassan and Datuk C.M. Yusof, gaining fifty-seven votes to the eleven and seven respectively of his rivals⁵ - he (Tunku) reaffirmed the party's commitment to its original aim:

This is a Malay country, and privileges should be given to the Malays.... What will become of the Malays if we concede every time to the insatiable demands of the other races? Siam, Ceylon, Indonesia, and the Philippines are independent nations. Why are we not getting our independence? Some people say independence should be handed to

⁴ See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.16-24.

⁵ See Harry Miller, Prince And Premier: A Biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj First Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1959) p.107.

Malayans. Who are these Malaysians? The Malays should decide who the Malaysians should be...⁶

With the passing of time, however, UMNO developed both a growing tendency towards self-preservation and a growing diversification of aims on the part of the actors. Michels above-mentioned theory of "substitution of ends" illustrates precisely this passage of the party from being an instrument for the realization of certain aims to a system in which the survival imperative and the actors' particular objectives predominate.

In the case of UMNO, when Onn b. Jaafar decided to quit as the party's first president, he had already formulated plans for organizing the Independent of Malaya Party (IMP) with the object of getting Malaya her independence. The membership of IMP, according to Onn, was opened to "others" loyal to Malaya. At his farewell address to UMNO, Onn invited all Malays desiring independence and ethnic cooperation to join him in his work. According to Mauzy, Onn evidently did not consider that he was severing all links with UMNO.⁷ However, in his first unequivocal statement of his view about the IMP, the Tunku, as the new UMNO president declared that he "will have nothing to do with IMP and that Dato Onn proposed IMP was a destructive move."⁸ The Tunku also called on the Malays to avoid the IMP, saying that its policies were not in the best interests of the Malays because Onn's policy of urging equal rights to every person no matter how recent his residence in the country was detrimental to the Malays.⁹ Later he announced that any UMNO member in sympathy with the IMP would be expelled citing that it would be

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Diane K. Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons, 1983) p.14.

⁸ *The Straits Times*, September 13, 1951.

⁹ *The Straits Times*, October 31, 1951.

in their interest and the interest of UMNO for these people to resign as UMNO cannot afford to have a split in its ranks and that the policies of UMNO and IMP were in opposition.¹⁰

In order to form the base for a mass “non-communal” nationalist party, Onn solicited support from as many prominent community leaders as possible. For instance, the first president of the Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association (MCA), Tan Cheng Lock, also called for the formation of a new political party which supercede ethnic boundaries, and he quickly agreed to be the chairman of the inaugural meeting of the IMP, and he urged the Chinese to give their full and active support to the new party.¹¹ The IMP was inaugurated on September 16, 1951 in Kuala Lumpur and the array of the distinguished political leaders who expressed their support for the IMP gave the impression that this new party would soon dominate the Malayan political scene.¹²

If Weber’s contention that the end of political parties activities are devoted to securing power for their leaders is correct then the inauguration of IMP had in one way or the other posed a challenge to UMNO’s existence. Whereas prior to the introduction of elections most political activity in the Malay States was limited to that of making representation to the government or organizing public demonstrations in protest over various issues - the introduction of elections made political parties the primary vehicles to political success and power. As Gordon P. Means has pointed out, the first elections in the Malay States was the Municipal Council of George Town on

¹⁰ *The Straits Times*, September 18, 1951.

¹¹ See R.K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971) pp.56-64.

¹² Ibid.

Penang Island, and were held December 1, 1951.¹³ He went on to say that although the George Town elections were watched with much interests – they were not a test of strength between major political parties organized on a national basis and thus provided very little evidence of future trends in the Malay States politics.¹⁴ On the other hand, the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Councils elections of February 1952 had attracted much more national interests due to the fact that Onn's IMP would try to make a strong showing in that elections as evidence to the British that the Malay States was on the road to independence and that a non-communal approach to politics could unite the country for such independence.

Because of the serious threat posed by the IMP in the Kuala Lumpur elections, the UMNO Kuala Lumpur chairman Yahya b Abdul Rahman was vested with full authority to do anything reasonable he considered necessary to assist UMNO to win seats.¹⁵ Yahya met Tun H.S. Lee, the influential president of the Selangor MCA for financing and Lee told the former that the MCA would finance the elections if an UMNO-MCA election pact was created. On January 8, 1952 a joint declaration was made by Kuala Lumpur division of UMNO and the Selangor MCA announcing that these two parties would contest the Kuala Lumpur elections in a common front.¹⁶ This *ad-hoc* alliance between UMNO and the MCA could be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it should be noted that at this juncture, the UMNO-MCA alliance was simply a temporary coalition, which took place in order to benefit the parties concerned in the elections. Secondly, the UMNO-MCA alliance was created as a

¹³ The radical party of Penang, the Labor Party and UMNO were the three parties that contested in the elections. The Penang Radical Party captured six out of the nine seats. See Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970) p. 132.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See Harry Miller, Prince And Premier: A Biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj First Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya p.113 *ibid*.

¹⁶ Malay Mail, January 9, 1952.

reaction to the IMP. Thirdly, as Means has pointed out, Onn and the IMP had charted a course that threatened to undermine the political support of UMNO among the Malays and the new president of UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman, wasted no time in trying to purge the party of those elements that still supported Onn as he realized if the IMP were to expand its power, UMNO would suffer proportionally. Consequently, UMNO was looking for the means to deal the IMP a decisive blow.¹⁷ As a result of this *ad-hoc* alliance, the UMNO-MCA won 9 of the 12 seats, and the pre-election favorite, the IMP, won only two seats with the remaining seat going to an independent.¹⁸ This development corresponds to Panebianco's theory which states that political parties transform from a system of solidarity oriented towards the realization of its official aims to a system of interests oriented toward its own survival. In order to ensure its survival, the leadership of UMNO was willing to establish relationship with MCA, an organization founded in 1949 by some of the most vociferous spokesman of the community on citizenship. Obtaining *jus soli* (citizenship as a birthright) was a major goal of MCA while UMNO was established to oppose the new citizenship provisions set out by the British in the Malayan Union proposal. As such, two weeks after the Kuala Lumpur polls, Tunku Abdul Rahman was quoted as saying that UMNO "will cooperate with other organizations, but we certainly want to preserve our identity".¹⁹ The upshot of the UMNO-MCA alliance at the Kuala Lumpur polls was the continued supremacy of UMNO. The alliance

¹⁷ Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* p.133. The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) also had reasons for joining a common front against the IMP. Even though Onn's IMP was much more liberal with respect to non-Malay rights on citizenship and voting requirements than UMNO, it was still not above suspicion as far as the MCA was concerned. Perhaps the most adequate explanation of the sudden turn-about of the MCA could have been that although Tan Cheng Lock could have supported a non-communal political party, he could never been an enthusiastic supporter of such a party if it also would have given Onn an unassailable position of political supremacy in Malaya.

¹⁸ *Malay Mail*, February 15, 1952.

¹⁹ *Malay Mail*, February 22, 1952.

between UMNO and the MCA made it difficult for the IMP to campaign against communalism in politics. All three parties contesting the election came out in favor of communal harmony, although admittedly the “communal harmony” of the UMNO-MCA was not quite the same as IMP’s professed ideal of non-communal politics.

The political agreement between UMNO and the MCA at the Kuala Lumpur elections had been negotiated only between the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor branches of the two parties as a temporary political maneuver which did not involve the central organs of either party. Their victory at the polls prompted both the MCA and UMNO to begin exploring the possibility of expanding their alliances to other municipalities. At their conference in March 1953, the two parties reached definite agreements on setting up a National Alliance Organization, and this was formally instigated on August 23, 1953. Liaison committees consisting of two representatives each were to be set up at the local levels to provide institutional links, and in September 1954 a 30 member National Council was established as the supreme body. The then UMNO president Tunku Abdul Rahman was named leader of the Alliance.²⁰ An Indian component was supplied when the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) joined the Alliance in 1954.

IMP’s failure at the Kuala Lumpur Municipal elections deserves some scrutiny. It should be noted that Malaya in the early 1950s was a society dominated by communal cleavages. On the Peninsular proper, Malays had a plurality of the population, 46.4 percent; the Chinese accounted for 37.5 percent; and the Indians 14.4 percent. All three of these communities included a variety of more or less autonomous sub-units; for instance, Chinese could be split into the main dialect groups. However, sub-groups, such as Cantonese or Hokkien, might be too small for

²⁰ See Diane K. Mauzy, Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia p. 17.

a party to direct its appeal to just one, or two or three of them. This might not appeal to a sufficiently large number of electors. When dealing with ethnic politics in Malaysia, it is usual to speak of broader groups, conventionally Malays, Chinese and Indians. Given the prominence of ethnicity in the early 1950s, it was only to be expected that most of the effective parties formed would be ethnically based. It is not too far fetched to say that, at that point in time, both the Malays and the Chinese community were very conscious of their ethnic and cultural identity. One general theme mounted against Onn's IMP was its non-communal pretensions. The IMP program, it was widely asserted by UMNO and MCA candidates, was altogether a bad tendency. A concerted drive toward some form of conglomerate Malayan identity shared by all citizens was inspired by British, hence it was a foreign imagination. Unless it were checked by a massive popular rejection, it might well mean intensified governmental efforts leading to the deculturation of Malays and Chinese alike.²¹

Substitution of Ends and Compromises

In March 1951, largely through the persuasion of its Youth Movement, UMNO decided to change the party's slogan from *Hidup Melayu* (long live the Malays) to *Merdeka* (Independence). Here we could see UMNO's diversification of aims from an ethnic party *par excellence*, having been formed in 1946 principally to resist the Malayan Union proposals aimed, it seemed, at the heart of Malay power and status to winning elections and towards securing independence. The party leadership at least had started thinking in terms of independence, and towards this end had moved towards an accommodation with non-Malays. Failure to persuade the rank and file on the correctness of this course led to the exit of Onn and most of the executive committee in August 1951, and the accession to the presidency of Tunku Abdul

²¹ See K.J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965) pp.55-60.

Rahman. Initially, as we have seen in the previous section, this led to a reversal of UMNO's policy, the new leader rejecting co-operation with non-Malays. This changed, however, in January 1952, when for the purpose of defeating the IMP in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections, UMNO concluded an electoral pact with the major Chinese political organization, the MCA. We have also seen that the formation of the Alliance had initially been arrived at by the state rather than national party leaders and there was considerable caution on both sides until overwhelming success in the election demonstrated the potentialities of such an arrangement. For UMNO president, Tunku Abdul Rahman, this resolved the problem of how Malays might co-exist politically with non-Malays, and it led him to advocate early independence through the co-operative efforts of the two groups:

Countries which were formerly under the British rule such as India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma have already gained their independence helped by the British government only after those countries have fulfilled the conditions laid down by the British government. The condition is that the people of those countries must cooperate and live in peace. We it is said have not yet fulfilled that condition and it is for that reason we were not given our independence. In 1952, with the object of cooperating with other races in this country, UMNO formed an alliance with the MCA in accordance with its constitution. In this way we believe that we could gain independence immediately...²²

Whereas Onn could be described as an assimilationist in wanting to form a non-communal party that transcends ethnicity, the Alliance formula of co-operation without the constituent parties losing their own identity, as we shall see, prove a success. Nevertheless, it is not without UMNO making adjustments to its original manifest aim of protecting the Malay interests. It is these new circumstances that we must now turn to for they had a tremendous repercussion on UMNO's "substitution of aims". At this juncture UMNO's foremost goal was the desire for *merdeka*

(independence). In order to achieve this, the leaders of UMNO knew that *merdeka* would only be granted if there was some basis for communal harmony. In his presidential address to the UMNO 1953 general assembly, the Tunku stressed the need for the Malays to consider working together with the non-Malays since they formed 60 per cent of the population at that point in time. The Tunku also asked the Malays to think it seriously if they could win independence on their own. According to the Tunku:

Do you feel that they (non-Malays) with their intellectual and economic power would be content to accept the position of under dogs? I am afraid they would not. They would naturally protest. And if trouble comes as a result of this, how are we going to settle it? Winning independence is not difficult. But to keep Malaya happy and peaceful after independence would prove much more difficult. Therefore I say it would be better for us to try and work out together a plan for Malaya which would give a proper share to everyone and make for the happiness of all the people. We must not only start well; we must end well too. We have lived in peace with the other races all these years. Everybody has his own pursuit. The Malays are the first to patronize a Chinese shop and the Chinese are the first to approach a Malay policeman. So why cannot go on in future as happily as we are doing at present?²³

However, the UMNO-MCA alliance did receive criticisms from some segment of the Malay community. For example, at a meeting sponsored by UMNO which was held in Johore Bahru in August of 1953, and attended by nine Malay political bodies, several delegates attacked UMNO for failure to consult other Malay political bodies before forming an alliance with the MCA on the question of independence. This UMNO sponsored meeting of Malay organizations was an attempt to win the support of dissident Malay organizations for the UMNO-MCA sponsored "National

²² The Tunku made these comments while he was addressing the UMNO 1953 General Assembly. See *Straits Echo and Times of Malaya*, April 4 1955.

²³ The Tunku as quoted in *The Malay Mail*, 13 September, 1953.

Convention".²⁴ On the contrary, the delegates were critical of UMNO's policies. This was due to the fact that after Onn's resignation from UMNO, the Malay communal nationalists had expected that UMNO would revert to a militant form of Malay nationalism such as that expounded by UMNO during the height of the Malay opposition to the Malayan Union. However, the expectations of these Malay nationalists did not materialize since UMNO entered into an alliance with the MCA shortly after Onn's resignation. The ultra-communal Malays were in a quandary and vacillated between support for UMNO as the strongest Malay political organization, and opposition to UMNO for its close association with the MCA. Some of these Malays were active within UMNO, particularly its ancillary Youth Movement. The Peninsular Malays Union (PMU) became the center of Malay communal chauvinism, attracting both public attention and the active support of ultra-communal Malays, including many members of UMNO. The PMU argued that national independence was strictly a question to be decided between the Malays and the British since Britain's power in the Malay States depended upon treaties with the Malay Rulers as the heads of the Malay States. The delegates were also dissatisfied with details in the UMNO made resolutions and suggested amendments to it. The UMNO made resolutions pledged that all-democratic Malayan political party to work by peaceful and constitutional means to attain a sovereign independent state, comprising the Malay States and settlements in the federation within the British Commonwealth. It also pledged to protect and uphold the principles of a fully democratic self-government and to minimise the conflicting claims of various communities and to

²⁴ The UMNO-MCA sponsored National Convention to counter the National Conference which had been organized earlier under the leadership of the Mentris Besar. Just as the Mentris-Besar sponsored National Conference invited all parties to join, so too did the Alliance-sponsored National Convention. Likewise, the representation in both was weighed in favor of the sponsors. For the National Convention the MCA had fourteen votes, UMNO had fourteen votes and all other parties who were willing to

protect the rights of minorities. The delegates said that these resolutions indicated that UMNO was unwilling to set a target date for independence. They suggested that 1957 be made the target for full-independence and that national election be held in 1954 as a first step towards this goal. The delegates also attacked the UMNO proposal in the resolution that free Malaya should remain within the Commonwealth. Most of all, the delegates deplored the UMNO-MCA alliance's failure to invite all Malay political bodies to the national convention whereas other non-Malay minority parties had been invited.²⁵ These criticisms leveled at UMNO by some segments of the Malay community, the ultra-nationalists in particular, demonstrated that UMNO was slowly taking accommodative steps toward working together with other races in an attempt to maintain the fiction that its policies were the authoritative representation of nationalists sentiment in Malaya. As a result of its accommodative stance, at the UMNO general assembly in October 1954, the party president Tunku Abdul Rahman came under sharp criticism for being too vague on policy matters and for not insisting upon a more positive program to preserve and promote Malay interests. His critics within the party wanted him to demand that the Alliance draft a concrete program committed to Malay special rights and the adoption of Malay as the official language of the country.²⁶ In this context we can put into perspective Michels' thesis that in well-established organizations, a process of "substitution of ends" comes about:

participate were given two votes each. See The Straits Times, August 5, 1953. For further readings on the National Convention see Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics pp.143-149.

²⁵ Nine Malay political bodies met in Johore Bahru to discuss Malaya's independent and the future of Malaya. It was an historic meeting because it was the first time so many Malay political bodies have got together to discuss their national future. It was also unusual because no decision was taken at the meeting. Suggestions made will be tabled before a meeting of the UMNO-MCA Alliance on August 15, 1953. Parties attending the meeting included the All-Malayan Islamic Association, The Peninsular Malays Union, The Gabongan Persekutuan Pemuda Melayu Kelantan, The Lembaga, Kesatuan Melayu Johore, The Selangor Malay Union, The Malay Graduates Association, and The Persekutuan Persetian Melayu Kelantan. See The Straits Times, August 15, 1953.

²⁶ The Straits Times, October 18, 1954.

whereas the official aims of the party may give way to other official aims (a process usually defined as succession of ends) as a result of consistent organizational transformation, no party can effect a genuine substitution of ends without such transformation. In this case UMNO had substituted its original aim of Malay communal solidarity to another official aim of gaining independence – from a phase where organizational identity prevail to a phase where organizational objectives are vague and often contradictory. While UMNO's independent struggle may not be at the expense of its Malay communal solidarity, one can only speculate on the reasons for the contradiction between UMNO's official goal (ideology) and its subsequent stance of practical accommodation on gaining independence. It is doubtful whether UMNO's leadership had wanted the Malay community to be elevated to the position of a Malay nation. It may have been that UMNO leaders valued practical ideology more highly than pure or that the emphasis on Malay nationalism was a shield for not emphasizing it in practice.

The federal election of 1955 was another occasion where UMNO had to side step its pro-Malay policies in order to accommodate the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance. In order to prepare for the federal elections of 1955, the power of the Alliance was dependent upon the cooperation and agreement among its three partners because all in all seven parties had participated in that election. Numerically, Alliance's closest rival was Onn's latest party – Party Negara-organized this time along Malay communal lines with thirty candidates then followed by the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) with eleven candidates. Eighteen independents also contested.²⁷ Tunku and the Alliance had two objectives: to win by a large enough majority to avoid the consequences of having to form a coalition government, probably with their chief

²⁷ Sunday Times, June 5, 1955.

rival, Onn's Party Negara, and to avoid any break up of the Alliance which could result in an alternative alliance of Party Negara-MCA-MIC. As such, internal party discipline and cohesion became the major task of the leadership of the three parties comprising the Alliance.²⁸ The intra-Alliance tension was greatest when its National Council set about the task of allocating seats on the ticket to each respective party. As such, heated debate on the allocation of seats to the MCA dominated the UMNO general assembly in June 1955. The UMNO rank and file had asked their representatives to allocate only 10 seats to the MCA, threatening a revolt if more seats were given.²⁹ For the 52 seats to be contested, the Alliance National Council was reported to have selected 40 Malay candidates, 12 Chinese candidates, and no Indian candidates. Despite the favorable ratio of Malays on the Alliance ticket, the dissident elements in UMNO demanded that Malays should be nominated for at least 42 of the 52 positions.³⁰ In his response to the dissenting groups, the Tunku spoke out vigorously against those who were leaning toward a "Malay only policy" and were attempting to revive the "Malaya for the Malays" policies which had been characteristic of UMNO in its pre-Alliance days.³¹ According to Tunku:

Some of our own people have been influenced by certain elements that we must have all the seats in the council. All the seats must be for Malays. Some other had suggested that only 10 percent of the seats contested should go to MCA and MIC. At the general assembly in Penang last year there was no mention of this. It is something which has cropped up of late now that we are very close to the elections. There has been an opinion expressed that if the

²⁸ For a complete account of the 1955 of the federal legislative council elections see Diane K. Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons, 1983). See also Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970) pp. 153-167.

²⁹ *The Straits Times*, June 6, 1955.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *The Sunday Times*, June 5, 1955.

MCA disagreed with the Malays' suggestion, we will break the Alliance. They say let the Chinese contest the election alone.³²

The Tunku justified the compromises that the leadership had to make on the question of seats allotted to the MCA on the grounds of independence. He reminded the Malays in UMNO that if they want independence, they must not think on the question of seats alone stressing that the appearance of independence was within their grasp but any false moves could see it vanish.³³ At this juncture, one could clearly see that the leadership of UMNO had placed great emphasis on gaining "independence". In other words, we can say that independence was used to cloud the issue about the nation being a Malay or Malayan entity as the Tunku was not willing to commit himself on this. In order to achieve independence, UMNO's pro-Malay policies had to give way to the environmental conditions in which the party exists. As such, the party had to placate the political demands of the non-Malays. Being a political party set on assuring its survival, balancing the demands of its numerous actors and thereby guaranteeing the interests of organizational continuity, the party must reach a compromise with its external environment and must adapt to it. The party leaders, from this perspective, have no interests in jeopardizing organizational stability with offensive strategies that might provoke equally offensive strategies from threatened groups.³⁴ In order to maintain the viability of UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance, the leadership of UMNO was forced to take disciplinary action by expelling several disappointed UMNO members who filed nomination papers as independents. At least one of these expelled UMNO members had been leading critic of UMNO's cooperation with the MCA and had been

³² The Malay Mail, June 4, 1955.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power p.11

attempting to persuade Malay voters not to vote for any non-Malays even though they might be running on the Alliance ticket.³⁵ Since the party is also an instrument for the realization of its official aims – upon which the loyalties nourished by collective incentives (one participates because one identifies with the cause of the organization) – UMNO cannot passively adapt to its environment, but must inevitably develop domination activities. UMNO was, moreover, pushed in this direction by its organizational “official aim” which defines its specific portion of the environment in which the party stakes its claims, and with respect to which UMNO’s organizational identity was defined both “internally” (in its members’ eye) and “externally” (in the eyes of the electorate).³⁶ It was with respect to this same domain that UMNO’s conflictual relationships (based on competition for the same resources) and cooperative relationships (based on exchange of different resources) with other political organizations were established. UMNO, as we have seen, was formed to protect Malay power and status – the party’s stake lies in the fact that it should be seen as fighting for the Malay cause as the participation of much of the rank and file in the party could be persuasively explained in terms of their adherence to the party’s official goals, in terms of adherence to party’s official goals, in terms of organizational identification and solidarity. However, it is apparent from the previous discussions that a sudden desire for independence and the need for electoral success of the Alliance did much to foster, brought about this change in UMNO’s policy. If the policy was not quite one of independence whatever the cost – as indeed it appeared to many Malays within and outside UMNO – it allowed UMNO a quite extraordinary flexibility in its relations with Malays and non-Malays. Nevertheless, as Panebianco

³⁵ The two expelled members were Haji Abdullah Abbas and Idris bin Hakim, both of Kedah. See The Straits Times, June 17 1955 and June 14, 1955.

³⁶ See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power p. 11

has pointed out, the first internal function of the official organizational aim is that of maintaining the identity of the organization in the eyes of its supporters.³⁷ As such, UMNO's relationship with the non-Malay political organizations should not obscure the fact that UMNO sought not merely to perpetuate the symbols of Malay supremacy but also to portray the image that the Malays as a race distinct from other races in the country. This has already been illustrated in noting the Tunku's reluctance to use the word "Malayan" or accept that citizenship should be based on nationality. Even though the Tunku has been justly acclaimed for his preparedness to work together with non-Malays, his views on Malay nationalism have tended to go unrecognized. In 1954 he expressed his regret at the publication of a book that referred to Malays as a community rather than a nation,³⁸ and in a book he asserts categorically that Malaya "is a Malay country..."³⁹ John Funston has aptly phrased the basis of UMNO's struggle:

The theory of nationalism pursued by UMNO is a broad concept, in accord with the methods of democratic government and international acceptance, that is, while striving for the privileges, sovereignty and priority (*hak, kedaulatan, keistimewaan*) of Malays as the owners of this country, UMNO also acknowledges that members of other races who have already become citizens, those who have severed all connections and loyalty to their country of origin, also shall receive specified rights as citizens of Malaya.⁴⁰

In the case of UMNO, the organization's original aims are never abandoned, nor do they become a mere façade. Rather, they were adapted to the organizational needs; the rule seems to be that goals were somehow maintained but lose a little something in

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Warta Negara*, December 20, 1954 – This claim was made by Dato' Senu bin Abdul Rahman in "Falsafah Perjuangan UMNO" in *UMNO 20 Tahun*, p.55.

³⁹ See Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13 Before and After* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Utusan Melayu, 1969) p.149.

⁴⁰ See Jun Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980) p.139.

being translated into organizational requirements.⁴¹ UMNO continually engaged in certain activities related to these aims, for it was precisely upon these activities that the party's collective identity and leadership's legitimacy were based. The party aims were always, however, pursued *sub condicione*, that is, they were pursued only on the condition that their pursuit did not jeopardize the organization. In the course of their articulation, official aims become – with respect to the genetic phase of the party (chapter 2) vaguer. The organizational official aims, which was manifest (involving explicit and coherent objectives) always becomes latent (involving implicit and contradictory objectives).⁴² More importantly, a permanent gap opens between official aims and organizational behavior. The relationship between aims and behavior never completely disappears; it attenuates.⁴³ The correspondence of a party's behavior to its official aims is constantly reaffirmed by its leaders, but only these courses of action – amongst the many possible that the party may choose to achieve its official aims – which were compatible with the organization's stability were selected.⁴⁴ For instance, the recurrent pattern we find in UMNO during the 1950s is better understood as the result of an articulation of aims: on the one hand the original goal (Malay solidarity/rights) was constantly evoked as it is the basis of the movement's collective identity but on the other hand the chosen courses of action, pragmatic and guarantee organizational stability without taking credibility away from the notion that one was still working towards the official aims. This explains the Tunku's contradictory statements toward communal issues. On the one hand, Tunku Abdul Rahman made a communal appeal for the support of the Malays, stressing such issues as the "alien

⁴¹ See T.J. Lowi, The Politics of Disorder (New York, Norton Co. ,1971) p.49.

⁴² See Angelo Panebianco, Political Parties: Organization and Power p. 16.

⁴³ Ibid.

danger” and the threat to the Malays posed by the immigration of “foreigners”. On the other hand, he defended the Alliance manifesto which attributed the “alien danger” to the restrictive citizenship requirements which made it difficult for non-Malays to acquire full status as citizens of the Malay states (the legal and accepted name of the country was Persekutuan Tanah Melayu). Thus, the leadership of UMNO tended to utilize the “foreign threat” issue in appealing to the Malays, but hastened to explain to its MCA and MIC members that the loyal Chinese and Indians in these two organizations were not a part of that “foreign threat”. In addition, the Malays, UMNO members in particular, were constantly reminded that they must realize that they had the power and right to govern the country and had much more to gain from independence. As such, they (the Malays) should not be worried about working together with other races because the non-Malays will not submerge them.⁴⁵ The Alliance impressive victory at the 1955 federal elections⁴⁶ was a testament of UMNO’s image of safeguarding the Malay interests and its independence stand, and its past electoral successes for the registered electorate in 1955 comprised approximately 84 percent Malays, 11 percent Chinese and less than 5 percent Indians.⁴⁷ As such, too few non-Malays were eligible to vote for it to be regarded as a real test of non-Malay support. However, it did provide a test for UMNO discipline and support and the Alliance concept because “enough Malays voted for Alliance non-Malays, often competing against Malay candidates, for all 17 non-Malays to win – the Malay voted for Alliance because UMNO told them to do so.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The Straits Times, 15 August 1953.

⁴⁶ Means records that the Alliance won 51 of the 52 elected positions on the council enabling Tunku Abdul Rahman to serve as chief minister until 1970. See Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics, p.153.

⁴⁷ These figures were obtained from R.K. Vasil, Politics in a Plural Society (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971) pp. 56-64.

⁴⁸ Quoted from Diane K. Mauzy, Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia p.26 .

UMNO and the Citizenship Proposal

In the Alliance manifesto entitled *The Road to Independence* promulgated for the first federal elections of 1955, the Alliance promised independence within four years.⁴⁹ The overwhelming victory of the Alliance in the elections of July 1955 can be attributed to a large extent to their ability to identify themselves more successfully than their opponents with the struggle for independence. The British had recognized that Alliance attitudes toward ethnic relations and electoral practices were probably best that could be cultivated, particularly as their own tutelary influence was waning. The drafting of a constitution for independent Malaya was therefore left almost completely to bargaining among Alliance members,⁵⁰ a task merely formalized by the British and Commonwealth officials who sat on the Reid Commission.⁵¹ The blow by blow account of how the bargaining process for independence was conducted between the Malayan delegation, the Colonial Secretary, the High Commissioner and the United Kingdom Minister of State need not be repeated here. What is more important for us to consider for the purpose of this study is how UMNO as a political party that was born as a social movement opposing the creation of Malayan Union because it was seen as a threat to the *bangsa* and *kebangsaan Melayu* as it would give the non-Malays citizenship rights in the Malay states come to terms with the citizenship

⁴⁹ *Menuju K arah Kemerdekaan*, (Kuala Lumpur: Alliance National Council, n.d.).

⁵⁰ When the Colonial Secretary, Mr. A. Lennox-Boyd, visited Malaya a month after the elections, the Alliance Government informed him of its desire to send a delegation to London to discuss constitutional reform. At the inauguration of the newly elected Legislative Council, Tunku Abdul Rahman reiterated the Alliance request for negotiations between an Alliance delegation and Whitehall to consider the terms of reference for a review of the constitution by an independent commission. Meanwhile, Mr. Lennox Boyd had discussed this proposal with the Malay Rulers, who indicated their willingness to consider the problem of further revision of the Federation Agreement. However, the Rulers were unwilling to have negotiations conducted by a Malayan delegation composed only of the Alliance members. Ultimately, agreement was reached on an eight-member delegation four representing the Rulers and four representing the Alliance Government.

⁵¹ The five members of the Commission were Sir Ivor Jennings from the United Kingdom, Sir William McKell from Australia, Mr. B. Malik from India, Mr. Justice Abdul Hamid from Pakistan, and the Chairman, Lord Reid from the United Kingdom. See *The Straits Times*, July 18, 1956.

proposal proposed by the Reid Commission. The proposal would give citizenship to all persons born in Malaya after independence and non citizens might attain citizenship by the following requirements: (i) residing five to eight years in Malaya (ii) taking oath of allegiance (iii) renouncing foreign citizenship, and (iv) passing an elementary examination in the Malay language.⁵² It could arguably be said that the citizenship proposal would give rise to what Benedict Anderson has defined as the new nation of our imagination as a sovereign but limited community, an essentially abstract mental construct because it had given birth to a Malayan identity. According to Anthony D. Smith, historically the nation and nationalism were Western concepts and Western formations. The first steps, the first trajectories, towards nationhood, were also Western.⁵³ To the Malays, however, the Malay States (*Tanah Melayu*) belong to the Malays and the non-Malays were seen as *bangsa asing* (foreign races) who could be given citizenship rights but on the other hand, could never be accepted as *anak negeri* (sons of the state).⁵⁴ The Reid Commission citizenship proposal had in actual fact envisaged “a common nationality” that presupposed the sense of solidarity and fraternity upon attachment to the land and an affiliation with the community, a sense of brotherhood, which could only be found among those whose parents (and perhaps grandparents or even ancestors) had done so.⁵⁵ In other words, as Anthony D. Smith has argued convincingly, the newly arrived, though formal citizens, could never be part of the *pays reel* of the solidarity community of residents by birth; and just as in ancient Athens, laws had been passed to limit citizenship to those whose parents had been Athenians, so the first revolutionary impulse in France to grant citizenship on the

⁵² Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission, Appendices II, III, and IV (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1957) pp. 128-133, Articles 14-23.

⁵³ See Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations (Great Britain: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1986) p. 144.

⁵⁴ See Majlis, 3 Oktober 1945.

⁵⁵ Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations p.136.

basis of an ideological affinity later gave way to a growing sense of historical, even genealogical, community, based long residence and ethnic ancestry.⁵⁶ The Malay states was, at this point in time, a society dominated by communal cleavages with each group (Malays, Chinese, and Indians) having its outlook on its physical and human environment, and, at least in the case of Malays and Chinese, a belief system which made monopolistic demands upon its members. All along, the solidarity of Malays and Chinese was unquestionably reinforced by the historical development of their communities on the Malay Peninsula. In any case, the Reid Commission citizenship proposal would spell absolute membership, and legal equality of rights and duties as befits a resident member and active participant. As a result, citizenship exercised a levelling influence, binding classes and strata into a common community of theoretical equals and insiders.⁵⁷ How does a political party that opposes a creation of a common citizenship as one of its original aims come to terms with the Reid Commission's citizenship proposal? Naturally, there were groups within the Malay community and even within UMNO that could not accept the Reid Commission's citizenship proposal. Ironically, one of the leading critics of the citizenship proposal was Onn b. Jaafar, UMNO's first president who was then leader of Parti Negara – a party opposed to UMNO. Onn said "if this action of UMNO is not stopped (in accepting the Reid Commission's citizenship proposal), the Alliance will in due course, be nailing the coffin of the Malay community. When the Malay community realizes what has happened to it and its country (assuming that the proposals are approved) I believe that not only the Malays who are living today, but also their descendants will weep without end."⁵⁸ In an editorial a Malay newspaper, the Warta Negara argued:

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations p.139.

⁵⁸ Onn b. Jaafar as quoted in Straits Times and Echo of Malaya April 13, 1956.

The Malays should remember that if they could have fought single-handedly against the Malayan Union, there is no reason why they could not fight to defend their rights and sovereignty from perishing. The Malays must ponder and reflect over the consequences of the independence which fulfills these demands (the demands of the non-Malays principally *jus soli*). This is the time when the raayat must either give their support or make their protestation freely and unequivocally. We must raise our hands now or never. Our leaders think that all what they do are good for the raayat and they think that they are the only people who are broadminded. At the moment when Malay leaders had become more influential, the voices of the raayat began to fade, the hands of the raayat got tied up and their lips sealed. While other races who were already better off than the Malays shouting at the top of their voices and hammering the table to emphasize their demands, Malays were being asked by their leaders to adopt a policy of give and take, to keep quiet and be patient.⁵⁹

The opinion that was expressed above was directed to the Malays urging them to speak up and chose to upbraid the leaders in UMNO for trying to gag them. This was due to the fact that the Reid Commission's proposals had incorporated so many of the Alliance recommendations and it was felt that UMNO and the National Council of the Alliance had failed to satisfy Malay interests in their memorandum to the Reid Commission, the body entrusted with the formation of the constitution. The strong voices adopted by the Warta Negara or the views expressed by Onn were by no means isolated voices in the wilderness. The Penang Malays Association for instance fear that "if the demands now being made by non-Malay organizations were fruitful the Malays could no longer regard this country as theirs."⁶⁰ Even within UMNO, in spite of warning from the leaders that disciplinary action would be taken against those who failed to toe the party line, there was a great deal of dissention. For instance, the Selangor UMNO called upon the UMNO headquarters to summon an emergency meeting of the All-Malayan delegates to decide on the stand to be taken on the *jus soli*

⁵⁹ Warta Negara as quoted in Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, April 21 1956.

⁶⁰ Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, September 1, 1956.

issue. The Selangor UMNO was of the view that if *jus soli* was adopted, the special position of the Malays will be affected because its acceptance (*jus soli*) would make an estimated 450,000 Chinese state nationals.⁶¹ Abdullah bin Haji Yassin of the Selangor UMNO pointed out that the Malays were generally opposed to *jus soli* because “fears have already been expressed by the community, I had warn the UMNO representatives at the meeting to go back to their villages and kampongs and tell the people to have faith in the leaders. I made it clear that there is nothing to worry for the time being, they in turn wanted to know the reasons for the *jus soli* demand.”⁶² The Selangor UMNO also disagreed giving the full authority to the UMNO executive committee to make a decision on the report before independence because the members of the Selangor UMNO felt that the Reid issue (the citizenship proposal) should be decided after independence when every detail in the report would have been studied by the Malays as this was only possible after the Malay translation of the report has been available and the Alliance Government should wait for this.⁶³ The Selangor UMNO was not the only state that decided not to give complete authority to the executive committee to go ahead and make the Reid Report as the basis for the constitution of independent Malaya. Negeri Sembilan UMNO put up the same stand as Selangor and even went a step further when at the March 1956 UMNO general assembly that was held to consider the Reid Commission’s report, the delegates from Negeri Sembilan staged a walkout in protest against UMNO’s attitude.⁶⁴ According to the secretary of the Negeri Sembilan UMNO, Dato Raja Mohamed Hanifah, the walkout was a testament of Negeri Sembilan UMNO’s commitment to safeguard the

⁶¹ Malay Mail, April 2, 1956.

⁶² Malay Mail, April 2, 1956.

⁶³ Malay Mail, April 11, 1957.

⁶⁴ Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, April 13, 1956.

rights and special privileges of the Malays in their own country.⁶⁵ As Chandra Muzaffar has argued, it is patently clear that opposition to *jus soli* within the Malay community was severe and serious compared to disagreement over previous attempts to liberalize citizenship in the early fifties. In a sense, this was understandable for the concept of citizenship by birth was the irrefutable right of the indigenous community. It was this that distinguished them from others. It was the Malay badge of loyalty, others had to earn the right to wear it.⁶⁶ As such, certain groups within the Malay community objected vehemently against the *jus soli* proposal, they argued that they have given too much and felt that the Malay leadership in UMNO continued to demonstrate a great deal of tolerance with each new concession, with each new amendment to existing citizenship laws culminating in *jus soli* itself. Some segment of the Malay community felt that while the Chinese and other non-Malays were vehemently demanding the implementation of the principle of *jus soli* and while MCA and MIC branches were allowed to voice their criticism freely, the Malays on the other hand, were not allowed to do so. If the Malays were forced under disciplinary measures to follow their leaders blindly and be subjected to constant scolding, the psychological effect upon the Malays would eventually cause them to be like ancient Jews under the tyrannical rule of the Pharaoh.⁶⁷ We may now put into perspective Michel's thesis that the party regarded as an entity, as a mechanism is not necessarily identifiable with the totality of its members and still less so with the class to which these belong.⁶⁸ In the case of UMNO, its leadership was criticized by the head of Kampong Bahru

⁶⁵ Malay Mail, April 16, 1957.

⁶⁶ Chandrasekaran Pillay, Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position and Opposition Attitudes – Master of Social Science thesis submitted at the Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang, 1974 p.35.

⁶⁷ These views were expressed in an editorial of Warta Negara as quoted in Straits Echo and Times of Malaya, April 21 1956.

division of UMNO, Tuan Haji Yahya b Sheikh Ahmad, for steering UMNO out of its original course. According to Yahya, he viewed with grave concern the deviation of UMNO from the stand enunciated by Tunku Abdul Rahman in first presidential speech in 1951 namely (i) that in considering the aspiration of the non-Malays, the Malays should realize what will happen to them (ii) that this is a Malay country and Malays must be given special privileges (iii) that the time has arrived when the Malays must realize their position and existence and must demand in full what has been promised to them (iv) that the Malays must realize what will happen to them and must therefore hold fast to their aspirations so that the sovereignty of this country will be returned to them and finally (v) that in demanding independence, the Malays must not sell their honor. Haji Yahya went on to say that UMNO's policy of give and take was far from the one originally set and this has caused grave concern to the Malays. In addition, the proposals submitted by the National Council of the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance and the acceptance of most of those proposed by the Reid Commission were viewed with even greater concern as these were against the interests of the Malays.⁶⁹

Despite the overwhelming protestation over the Reid Commission's citizenship proposal, the UMNO general assembly gave the Tunku and his executive committee complete authority to go ahead and make the Reid's report as the basis for the constitution of independent Malaya, however, at least three states passed a resolution that the Reid Report should be discussed after independence.⁷⁰ We now see UMNO in its course of its organizational development tend to go from an initial period in which certain needs prevail to a subsequent period in which different needs prevail. The

⁶⁸ Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy p.389.

⁶⁹ Malay Mail, April 12, 1957.

⁷⁰ Malay Mail, March 29, 1957.

Tunku had managed to placate the unhappy feelings of UMNO's rank and file by assuring the Malays that they had nothing to lose but on the other hand a lot to gain in independent Malaya – even more striking was the Tunku's reference to UMNO and how it differed to other political organizations “although an all Malay party the UMNO has at heart the interests not only of the Malays but also the non-Malays. It is on this basis that we lay down our policies. Malaya cannot achieve a peaceful and prosperous independence without the co-operation of the various races in the country.”⁷¹ How can one explain this sudden turnabout in UMNO's attitude? We could attribute this to Michel's argument that every party is destined to pass from a genetic phase, in which the organization is entirely dedicated to the realization of its cause to a later phase in which (a) the growth of the party's size; (b) its bureaucratization (c) the apathy of its supporters after their initial participatory enthusiasm; and (d) the leader's interest in preserving their own power, transform the party into an organization in which the real end is organizational survival.⁷² In a society dominated by communal cleavages, UMNO had to make certain compromises for the party to be seen as representing the interests of all communal groups in the country. This was done by forming an alliance with the other two communal base party namely the MCA and the MIC. In order to ensure the viability of the Alliance, UMNO had to tone down its ultra-communal demands and this had enraged some groups within the party. For UMNO to maintain its image as a “protector” of the Malay community the party declared that it will never agree to amend or bargain with the MCA and MIC in their memorandum to the Reid Commission on the following (i)

⁷¹ Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra as quoted in the Malay Mail, April 12, 1957.

⁷² Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy p.389.

Islam as the official religion of independent Malaya (ii) Malay as the only official and national language (iii) the special position of the Malays to be preserved.⁷³

As Gordon P. Means has argued, we may note that the highly explosive issue of citizenship was settled by creating, in effect, a single nationality with provisions to enable all persons in Malaya to qualify for citizenship, either by birth or by fulfilling requirements of residence, language and oath of loyalty. The implications of those provisions were clear. The proportion of citizens from non-Malay communities would steadily rise. It was a major concession by the Malays to agree to such liberal citizenship requirements. UMNO was persuaded to accept these provisions on the understanding that the constitution would contain other sections which would give to the Malays special privileges.⁷⁴

UMNO: Internal Structure and Centralizing Tendencies

Max Weber has pointed out that “active leadership and freely recruited following are necessary elements in the life of any party.” Structure as the mark of party exists as a relatively durable or regularized relationship between leaders and followers. For example, in the United States of America, it has developed as a pattern of stable connections or relations between leaders at the center of government and lesser leaders, party workers or cadremen, and active participants at the outposts in states, counties, and towns.⁷⁵ In the 1950s UMNO had undergone some substantial changes because the party had moved toward the performance of certain critical functions. At a minimum, these functions include nominating candidates and campaigning in the electoral arena. In order to win elections and to win support for

⁷³ Malay Mail, September 18, 1956.

⁷⁴ See Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics p.177.

policies it may espouse, parties operating in a society with a significant measure of pluralism must find formulas of agreement that will bring disparate groups together or play broker in gratifying, adjusting, or compromising conflicting interests.⁷⁶ A major revision to UMNO constitution was done in 1955. The 1955 constitution, in effect, provided for the formation of a central executive for each state called the State Executive Committee. At this juncture, the UMNO central headquarters would deal with more general policies and leave the individual state matters to the state concerned. Under the 1949 UMNO constitution, the various divisions of UMNO was under the direct control of the headquarters. With the 1955 amendments, however, the control of divisional organizations passes into the hands of the respective state executive bodies.⁷⁷ This development demonstrated a continuous tug between the national and state party leaders on the extent of central direction over lower party bodies. For example, the 1955 UMNO constitution gave the central UMNO headquarters direct control over its Youth and Women sections and the overall changes embodied in that constitution were that the UMNO Youth and Women sections would have wider representation in the general assembly.⁷⁸ This acceptance of the new constitution by UMNO youth leaders was seen as a major victory for the UMNO headquarters because the Youth section had criticized the move as an attempt by the parent body to control them.⁷⁹ This was due to the fact that prior to 1955 the

⁷⁵ See William Nisbet Chambers, Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience 1776-1809 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) pp.45-51.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See Undang-Undang Tunoh Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu Malaya – Dipersetuju dan diluluskan oleh Perhimpunan Agung UMNO di-Kuala Lumpur pada 25 dan 26 Disember 1955. Senarai fail UMNO siri Setiausaha Agung Tahun 1946-1961, 1963 UMNO/SG/No.18/49 Arkib Negara Malaysia Kuala Lumpur.

⁷⁸ Malay Mail, December 27 1955.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Youth movement had showed some independence, generally taking a more communal line than its parent body. Its prominent role at this time gave rise to some fear that Sardon b. Hj. Jubir, elected to leadership in 1951, was attempting to use the Youth to further the interests of a communally oriented group within UMNO led by himself.⁸⁰

The move to decentralize UMNO in 1955 should be seen as an attempt to control electioneering at almost all levels by the central body. The UMNO headquarters wanted to set up divisional organizations in the federal constituencies with branches in all polling station areas. It was seemed as a logical order of battle for the 1955 federal elections for by giving the state UMNO greater powers, the central body hoped to overcome the problem of local loyalties.⁸¹ This corresponds to a practice Duverger refers to as the generally accepted notion of decentralization that is characterized by the following factors; the local leaders of the party come from the bottom and they enjoy wide powers. As such the center has little control over them and the fundamental decisions are taken by them. However, this local decentralization sometimes has an important influence on the political attitude of the party because it makes for parochialism, that is to say it directs the party's energies towards questions of purely local interests at the expense of great national and international questions.⁸²

In addition, the extensive powers over state affairs given to the State Executive Committee under the 1955 UMNO constitution stimulated the growth of separate state machines and in some states, resulted in prolonged factional fights over the control of the State Executive Committee. For example, in 1958, steps were taken by the UMNO headquarters to form a special caretaker committee to reorganize Kedah

⁸⁰ See Jun Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS p.176.

⁸¹ The Straits Times, October 15 1954.

⁸² M. Duverger, Political Parties (London and New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd. , 1954) P.53.

UMNO which faced a domestic crisis. The trouble began when a sub-committee recommended that Kedah constitution should be amended so that nominated officials in the state council would be replaced by Alliance nominees. This in-fighting led to the expulsion of the Chairman of Kedah UMNO Tuan Syed Ahmad Shahabudin, the secretary Johari b Hj Salleh, deputy chairman Mohamed Zahir Ismail and state publicity officer Shaik Osman b Ibrahim by the State Executive Committee. In his turn, the expelled chairman declared that his expulsion and that of the secretary null and void.⁸³ On its part, the UMNO headquarters responded to this crisis first, by dissolving the Kedah UMNO Executive Committee, and second, by forming a caretaker committee that would act as the state UMNO executive committee.⁸⁴ Similarly, Negeri Sembilan UMNO also faced a domestic crisis in 1956 when the Tampin division of UMNO passed a vote of no confidence on the Negeri Sembilan State Executive Committee. The decision followed the rejection by the State Executive Committee the six names submitted to the state ruler for nomination in the Negeri Sembilan State Executive Council as demanded by the Tampin division. The State UMNO Executive Committee, however, maintained that the responsibility to nominate members for the state executive council lies with elected councilors. It said that elected councilors had the right to choose the names without having to consult members of UMNO State Executive Committee, less still Executive Committees of the party's division.⁸⁵

These prolonged factional fights over the control of State Executive Committee prompted the party leadership at the central level to change the UMNO constitution in order to strengthen central control. One of the arguments mooted by the UMNO

⁸³ The Straits Times, September 26, 1958.

⁸⁴ Malay Mail, October 25, 1958.

⁸⁵ Malay Mail, October 30, 1956.

headquarters against the 1955 UMNO constitution was that it decentralizes the party. In addition, it was also argued that the 1955 UMNO constitution had given rise to autonomous power to the state organization.⁸⁶ On his part, the Tunku argued that the 1955 UMNO constitution had resulted in the state leaders adopting provincial policies which were contrary to the UMNO national policies as a whole. For example, the Tunku referred to the decisions made by the various UMNO state organizations on the eighth schedule of the federal constitution concerning the composition of the state executive councils and state legislative assemblies. Some states had chosen the final provisions of the schedule which provided for fully elected state executive council and state legislative assembly. Others had plumped for the temporary provisions which stipulated a partly-elected state executive council and state legislative assembly. According to the Tunku:

Most of the trouble in UMNO recently was because of this. The state organizations referred the matter to the headquarters only after they could not cope with the crisis. This is dangerous, the party will be divided if each state organization is allowed to frame its own policies without reference to the headquarters. Some of the Malay rulers had agreed to the final provision. Some did not. This matter should first be discussed among ourselves before it is submitted to the rulers.⁸⁷

The extreme bickering and factionalism within UMNO must have been an object lesson to the party. As such, in 1960, a six-man committee was appointed by the UMNO headquarters to prepare a blueprint for the party's reorganization. Under the propose blueprint, UMNO would revert to its pre-1956 set-up by having state liaison committees in place of the state executive committee.⁸⁸ This new arrangement would give the UMNO national president the power to appoint chairman of all state

⁸⁶ The Straits Times, February 10, 1959.

⁸⁷ The Tunku as quoted in The Straits Times, February 10, 1959.

organizations. The UMNO headquarters maintained that this new organizational set-up would put an end to party crisis, minimize cliques and most of all, streamline the organization's structure.⁸⁹ The new arrangement had in effect replaced the state organizations with state liaison committees. The state liaison committee would comprise of a chairman (appointed by the national president) a secretary and a treasurer (appointed by the chairman) and chairman of various divisions in the state. Hence, the UMNO post 1960 organizational set-up created a state liaison committee having minimal authority over the lower organs of the party. The Supreme Executive Council of the central organization was given full powers to determine policies, select candidates, supervise the lower organs, and settle party disputes.⁹⁰ This move to restructure UMNO was by no means plain sailing. For instance, the Penang UMNO had directed its delegates to the UMNO general assembly to oppose the amendment to the party's constitution that provide for state liaison committee to replace the state executive committee as Penang UMNO felt that the 1955 organizational set-up was satisfactory.⁹¹ The Selangor UMNO also doubt the effectiveness of the move to restructure UMNO because "the abolition of state executive committees and their replacement with state liaison committees with no power at all does not fall in line with the federal set up of the government. The state executive committees are to help the state government. The Tunku's 'plan is alright if we have a unitarian form of government in this country, However, as it is now the headquarters has direct control over the divisions in financial matters and the inefficiency of the headquarters has

⁸⁸ The Straits Times, January 19 1960.

⁸⁹ The Straits Times, April 4, 1960.

⁹⁰ See The Constitution United Malays National Organization passed by the General Assembly at its thirteenth meeting on April 16 and 17, 1960 – chapter six Article XV composition and functions of State Liaison Committee. UMNO/SG/No.17/60 – Arkib Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

⁹¹ The Straits Times, February 9, 1959.

been responsible for UMNO's financial stringency."⁹² In addition, the Malacca UMNO also opposed the abolition of the state executive committees. However, at the April 1960 UMNO general assembly 84 delegates voted for the amendments while 14 candidates from Malacca and Selangor against.⁹³ In explaining their stance against the amendments, the Malacca and Selangor UMNO maintained that it was the work of the state UMNO organizations' machinery that was responsible for the victory of the Alliance in all the states. They were of the opinion that the crises experienced by UMNO did not originate from the weakness of the state organization but from the selections of candidates for elections⁹⁴

In conclusion, Duverger has pointed out that there are two forms of centralization – one autocratic, the other democratic. In autocratic centralism all decisions come from above, and their application is controlled by representative of the center. Democratic centralism, on the other hand, presupposes that very free discussion takes place at the base before decisions are taken in order to enlighten the center.⁹⁵ What are repercussions of the move to centralize UMNO in 1960? Does it led to an autocratic or democratic form of centralization? These questions will be dealt with in the latter chapters, particularly chapter V.

⁹² A spokesman from Selangor UMNO as quoted in The Straits Times, October 16, 1959.

⁹³ The Malay Mail, April 18, 1960.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ M. Duverger, Political Parties p.52.