



# REBELLION IN BRUNEI

THE 1962 REVOLT, IMPERIALISM,  
CONFRONTATION AND OIL

I.B. TAURIS

Harun Abdul Majid

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Imperialism, Confrontation and Oil*

by  
Harun Abdul Majid

**I.B. TAURIS**

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For  
Pehin Datu Pekerma Dewa Dato  
Paduka Haji Abdul Rahim,  
my grandfather,  
a close friend to  
Sultan Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin  
during those turbulent years.





# Glossary

**Mentri  
Besar:** Chief Minister

**Dato:** A title conferred for life by the Sultan for services to government; the equivalent of a British knight-hood. There are various classes of Dato and people may be advanced through the ranks. Foreigners can be made a Dato. Major General Walter Walker and Sir Dennis White, the High Commissioner, were made Datos for their contribution to Brunei's survival after the rebellion. The female title is Datin.

**Pehin:** A life peerage for services to the Sultan and, as with a Dato, there is a hierarchy. The title is open to men and women and can be awarded to foreigners. A Pehin can also be awarded a Dataship.

**Pengiran:** The title Pengiran is used by men who can trace their bloodline or ancestry back to the royal family; so unlike the other two titles, this is a birthright rather than a conferred honour.

## *Glossary*

Among quite an extensive list of Pengirans, there are some who are active in government and who can be awarded a Datoship. Some become Cheteri: advisors to the Sultan. Lastly there are Wazirs: Cheteri who are the closest advisors or confidantes to the Sultan and who are usually members of the immediate royal family.

Map of Brunei Darussalam





## CHAPTER ONE

# Brunei: The Dawn of Modern Times

### **This is Brunei**

The Sultanate of Brunei occupies a small section of the north coast of Borneo, and is surrounded on the landward side by the Malaysian state of Sarawak. The land area of Brunei is 5,270 square kilometres, of which three-quarters is still pristine rain forest. The population (2002 estimate) is 343,700. The population comprises Malays (between 64% and 67%) and Chinese (between 16% and 20%). In terms of religion, Muslims make up 63% of the population, Buddhists 14%, Christians 8% and indigenous and other beliefs 15%. In 1990 a Malay Muslim Monarchy was proclaimed, to promote Islamic values.

In theory Brunei is a constitutional sultanate; in practice it is an absolute monarchy. A Constitution was adopted in 1959, but since the rebellion of 1962 a state of emergency has been in force and the Sultan had ruled by decree. There is no legislature and until recently political parties have been banned. Currently there are two political parties: one is Partai Kesedaran Rakyat (PAKR), established in 2002; a second is called Partai Perpaduan Kebangsaan Brunei (PPKB), or the

Brunei People's Party. But neither are important political forces in the land. The Sultan consults four advisory bodies: the Religious Council, the Privy Council, the Council of Cabinet Ministers and the Council of Succession, all of which he appoints.<sup>1</sup>

Brunei has an imperial history of conquest and the subjugation of other peoples in the region, a history based on maritime trade and extensive naval power. Three empires can be distinguished: the First, which was pre-ninth century and stretched into the southern Philippines; the Second, between 1000 and 1350 AD, covering northern Borneo and the southern Philippines and backed by a navy of 100 warships; and the Third, in the fifteenth century, following the decline of Javanese power and where there were close trading links with China.

Brunei's influence reached its peak early in the sixteenth century, during the reign of Sultan Bolkiah, when it could claim to be paramount in almost the whole of Borneo, the Sulu Archipelago and part of the southern Philippines. Once the European powers appeared on the scene, however, the strength and extent of the empire began to decline. The Portuguese and the Spaniards appeared in the sixteenth century, the Dutch in the seventeenth and the British made contact in 1774 through the East India Company.

The early Anglo-Brunei contacts were not particularly auspicious. The East India Company tried and failed to establish a profitable trade with Brunei, in return for which it would protect the state from the ravages of piracy. By 1803 it had withdrawn, and Brunei was left alone and increasingly defenceless. It is interesting to note, and difficult to explain, that although these first contacts were not successful, when Brunei needed a protector it showed no real interest in looking elsewhere. Possible clues are the British presence in

Singapore and the growth of the port after 1819, and British dominance of the developing trade with China by the early nineteenth century.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Brunei was in serious decline, and its influence and control were restricted to northern Borneo, to what today are Sarawak, Brunei, Labuan and Sabah. The situation worsened from the 1840s onwards when the territories controlled by the Sultan were wracked by internal strife and rebellion. A British adventurer, James Brooke, who arrived on the scene in 1839, was used by the Sultan to help quell a rebellion in Sarawak. His reward was to be made governor of Sarawak in 1841, and in 1842 he was declared by the Sultan to be the Rajah of Sarawak. The link with Brooke was a success story in the early 1840s, but for the next 50 years it was to have disastrous consequences for Brunei. James Brooke, and then his nephew, Charles, who succeeded him, did their best to take over the whole of northern Borneo. By the 1880s they had gained control of an enlarged Sarawak. In 1890 Charles Brooke seized Limbang, thus splitting what was left of Brunei into two parts, and in 1893 he came close to taking North Borneo.

North Borneo was also the object of a claim by the Sultan of Sulu – the origin of the Philippine claims to Sabah in the 1960s and after – and at various times in the mid- and late nineteenth century it provoked the interest of the United States, Spain, Germany, France and the Netherlands. It was, however, taken over by the British North Borneo Company and granted a royal charter in 1881. In 1884 the British Colonial Office recommended that what was left of the Sultanate be divided between Sarawak and the North Borneo Company. Fortunately for Brunei a mission was sent – the Weld Mission – to study the situation first, and this returned with the recommendation that the ancient Sultanate was



worth preserving and that it be made a full British protectorate with a Resident.

Despite what had happened and was continuing to happen in Sarawak and North Borneo, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II, who reigned from 1828 to 1853, and his successors continued to see the British as the potential saviours of Brunei. An American offer of protection in 1845 in return for a trade treaty was rejected in 1846. Labuan was ceded to the British and in 1847 a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce was concluded between Britain and Brunei. The Treaty provided for action against piracy and the Sultan agreed not to cede any territory to any other state without British consent.

The next step, following the report of the Weld Mission, was the British-Brunei Protectorate Treaty of 1888. By the treaty, Brunei retained internal independence but the British became responsible for foreign relations. Article III provided that relations between Brunei and all foreign states (including Sarawak and North Borneo!) should be conducted by the British Government. The Weld recommendation that a Resident should be appointed – the system being introduced to various sultanates on the Malaya Peninsula – was not part of the Treaty. The Sultan was unwilling to give up his power, and, in any event, there was apparently no money available to pay for the implementation of such a proposal.

The Treaty of 1888 proved to be inadequate in resolving the problems that beset Brunei. In 1890, as mentioned previously, Charles Brooke seized Limbang. Within what was left of Brunei, the Sultan of the day appeared to be unable to control unruly nobles and the result was further bloodshed in the 1890s. There was some feeling in Brunei itself, and occasionally in London, that it might be advantageous for the people to be ruled from Sarawak. It was discussed in London that the Sultan and his family might be pensioned off.

It was a combination of factors that led to the conclusion of the British-Brunei Supplementary Agreement of December 1905. First, the Sultan appealed to Edward VII and was clever enough to make a good public case about the weakness and shortcomings of British policy. Secondly, several British officials took a more sympathetic line. Thirdly, and possibly most critical, the discovery of oil in Brunei was reported in 1903. And fourthly, there were hints and rumours that Brunei might turn to the United States or Turkey.

It must also be remembered that the early 1900s were the high watermark of pre-1914 imperialism. Britain's ally, Japan, had just defeated Russia. Relations between Britain and France had improved, but they were beginning to deteriorate with Germany. The United States was now established in the Philippines. A favourable agreement with Brunei, together with British control of North Borneo, Labuan, Sarawak, Singapore and Malaya, would mean British domination of the southern and western portions of the South China Sea.

The preamble to the Supplementary Agreement of 1905 stated that the Treaty of 1888 did not give the Sultan sufficient protection. Paragraph One then spelled out that there would be a British Resident in Brunei who would be the representative of the British Government under the High Commissioner for the British protectorates in Borneo. The advice of the Resident

*must be taken and acted upon on all questions in Brunei, other than those affecting the Mohammedan religion, in order that a similar system may be established to that existing in other Malay States now under British protection.*<sup>2</sup>

A British Residential System was thus finally established in Brunei and this was to last until the Agreement of September 1959.

There was always some doubt as to the precise status of Brunei after 1905 in the British colonial empire. Was it a protected state or a protectorate? Protected states enjoyed internal autonomy as Brunei did between 1888 and 1905. After 1905 it was closer to a protectorate. As has been pointed out:

*Because the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office and, later the Commonwealth Relations Office, had not clearly specified the status of Brunei, this created confusion in their policies and dealings with the distant Sultanate. ... In the 1950s, when Brunei was being guided towards internal autonomy, Colonial Office authorities, being at a distance, were still not sure if the Brunei situation was akin to their protectorate sheikhdoms in the Gulf or whether Brunei was a Commonwealth state or not. In short this reflected the ambiguous nature of a quasi-colonial relationship to which Brunei was subjected by British policies.<sup>3</sup>*

Whatever the doubts about Brunei's precise status after 1905, the Agreement lasted until the Second World War and after. The Sultanate appeared to be safe and secure under the protection of the United Kingdom. In retrospect, the safety and security were probably more the consequence of Brunei's occupying something of an international backwater until the late 1930s, rather than the result of any positive security commitment from London. The First World War had very little impact on Southeast Asia, and until the late 1930s the major happenings in East Asia – growing nationalism in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, the Nationalist Revolution in China, the Nationalist-Communist struggle in China and the increasing threat of Japanese imperialism – did not intrude onto the northern shores of Borneo.

The period between the two World Wars saw the beginning of the economic transformation of Brunei, the change from rags to riches. In 1903 British officials could talk about the problem of how to provide funds for the administration of Brunei. After 1929 this was no longer a problem. Oil exploration began as early as 1899, but no significant progress was made until the 1920s. In 1923 a newly formed company, the British Malayan Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, bought prospecting rights and became the largest company exploring for oil in Brunei. In 1929 a large oilfield was discovered at the western end of the Sultanate near Seria. Within a few years oil revenues were flowing into Brunei. After Trinidad and Burma, Brunei became the third largest oil producer in the British Commonwealth.

### **Brunei: The Small State Factor**

A study of the defence and security of Brunei must take account of one very important fact, arguably the most important fact: that it is a very small state. By today's definitions it fits easily into the category of a microstate. Its land mass is a tiny 5,270 square kilometres, its population a mere 343,700.<sup>4</sup>

It is not of course alone. An analysis of global population figures for 1999–2000 shows that there are 30 states with a population of between 5 and 10 million, there are 44 states with a population of between 1 and 5 million and there are 42 with a population of under 1 million. Over half the states in the world have a population of 10 million or less.<sup>5</sup>

Smallness does not automatically mean weakness. Brunei's neighbour, Singapore, has a landmass of only 610 square kilometres and a population of 4.02 million. But its world GNP ranking is 35th, and it spends US\$ 4.11 million on defence.<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing particularly new about questions regarding small states, but there were fewer around in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, since the end of empire, there has been something of an explosion of small, very small and microstates. They vary enormously. There are the continental states, part of a larger landmass, sharing land frontiers, usually with much larger and more powerful neighbours. And then there are the small island states. Brunei comes into the former category along with such states as Bhutan, Luxembourg and Kyrgyzstan. Again, some very small states only seem to exist because of what are described as the interplay of geopolitical forces: the decline of imperialism, the development of world trade or standoffs between larger states. Belize, Laos, Kuwait and Macedonia come into this category. Brunei, following its experiences both in the nineteenth century and in the 1960s debate over joining Malaysia and the confrontation with Indonesia, belongs to this category as well.

The defence and security problems of small states involve at least three major questions – territorial security, political security and economic security – and these should be considered in relation to Brunei.

First, the issue of territorial security. A state like Brunei cannot defend itself against external threats by its own strength. It must rely largely, in some cases totally, on external help. Threats to territorial security are not just the possibilities of direct invasion or occupation of territory. They include such issues as assistance given to dissident nationals of the state living abroad or the assistance given to mercenaries or internally based guerrillas or secessionist groups. Brunei's experience with its protecting power, the United Kingdom, is a mixed one. Britain did not protect Brunei from an external threat in 1941–2, but it did protect Brunei from an internal challenge and possibly an external threat between 1962 and 1966.

An important aspect of the question of territorial security is access to weaponry. Small states are unable to sustain an indigenous defence manufacturing industry – a possible exception is Singapore – and therefore have to rely upon outside sources for supply. Because of its links with Britain, Brunei has access to the latest state of the art weaponry. It can afford this because of its economic resources. The problem it has is that of finding enough manpower to use it. One possible solution is of course the employment of mercenaries.

Although the territorial security of small states is obviously vulnerable, their proliferation in the past 50 years and the fact that few have disappeared – South Vietnam and South Yemen are two that have – suggests that the maintenance of the territorial integrity of such states is a matter of considerable importance to the international community. The international community, for example, came to Kuwait's assistance against Iraq.

Secondly, the issue of political security. Small states have a dilemma of political security. On the one hand they may need the support if not the protection of an external power, but on the other hand they must avoid too much interference and unwanted involvement by that power. They must avoid becoming a satellite. Larger powers will help maintain regimes in small states that they see as favourable to their interests, whether political, financial or economic. The larger power is more likely to act with the government of the small state against subversion than it is to promote it.

A small state may need the support of the larger power against assassins, terrorists, separatists and would-be coup organisers. In attempting to deal with these threats to political security (and regime stability) on its own, a small state faces a serious dilemma. The necessary expenditure of money and resources may prove to be too great a strain for the

country's limited resources. This expenditure may weaken the state and create a climate of resentment in which subversive activity is more likely to succeed.

A small state must have effective civilian and military institutions. If not, disturbances, however small, whether political, social, ethnic – especially if supported from outside – will threaten stability and security. Brunei has done well so far on the question of political security. It has avoided the fate of a satellite (like Lesotho, for example) but Britain has provided the necessary backing. The presence of the Gurkha battalion is important; the presence of the Gurkha Reserve is more doubtful.

Thirdly, the issue of economic security. It is desirable that small states should be able to control effectively all economic resources within the territory. With the dominance of multinationals and increasing globalisation this is becoming more and more difficult. Even more difficult is the problem of controlling exclusive economic zones (EEZs) if these are in any way contested or the subject of dispute. Small states – lacking the appropriate sea and air power – are in a weak position to defend a contested claim. The best option for EEZs for a small state is probably a powerful ally; the second best is international agreements that are enforceable. Neither option is available to Brunei.

In the light of the three issues discussed above, is there a best possible security strategy for a small state like Brunei? It is difficult to put together such a strategy. Small states face problems of security at many levels. Small in size and population and with at best a limited economic base, they are vulnerable to pressure not only from other states but also from transnational non-governmental actors and from the multinationals. There may also be pressure from international organised criminal groups. These may be richer and more

powerful than the small state. Small states are vulnerable to problems of internal order and it may be difficult for them to resolve those problems from their own limited resources. Yet in seeking the support and cooperation of other states in security matters or in seeking the protection of a major regional or global power, the small state may create further security problems for itself. Such are the security dilemmas for small states.

In thinking about a security strategy geography is a very important consideration. The security dilemmas of Luxembourg, surrounded by friends in Western Europe, or of Vanuatu, a relatively isolated island in the Pacific, are very different from those of Tajikistan or Israel. Brunei's position is much closer to that of Luxembourg than it is to that of Tajikistan.

The best possible security strategy for a small state is probably membership of an alliance led by a superpower. If that is not possible, then a powerful ally with no conflicting or competing interests. Failing that, membership of a flourishing regional organisation, for multilateral agreements with neighbours can enhance security. The first option, to date, has not been offered to Brunei. The second option, in the guise of the United Kingdom, was available until independence, although it can be called into question after Britain withdrew from east of Suez in the 1960s. The third option, with membership of ASEAN, is in favour at present, although there are increasing question marks over whether the Association is still a flourishing regional organisation.

But, leaving the larger and more general issues for the present, this thesis is primarily concerned with how the small and apparently defenceless territory of Brunei, moving towards independence in a very dangerous environment, achieved and maintained defence and security after 1945. And what part did the United Kingdom play in this process?



## CHAPTER TWO

# Brunei in the Second World War and After

Brunei endured almost four years of war and occupation.<sup>1</sup> Rather unexpectedly the country found itself in the front line in December 1941. The war had already been in progress for over two years, and had not gone well for the United Kingdom, Brunei's protecting power. Empire manpower and resources had had to be concentrated in the European, Atlantic and Middle Eastern theatres and there was little to spare for Southeast Asia. The relationship with Japan began to deteriorate from the summer of 1940, but a Japanese threat to Malaya, Singapore and the Indies only began to be taken seriously after Japan moved into southern Indochina in July 1941. There was some build-up of forces and material – from the United Kingdom, India and Australia – into Malaya and Singapore from the spring of 1941 onwards, but little was available for the defence of British Borneo.<sup>2</sup>

One unit of the hastily expanded Indian Army, the 2/15 Punjab Regiment, was sent to Borneo in the winter and spring of 1940–1, but from the report in the Cabinet papers it is clear that it was not the best-trained or best-equipped of the forces available in the region. An attempt was also made, very much at the last minute, to recruit volunteers in

Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo. The report refers to a possible 200 Brunei volunteers in 1941, but it goes on to add that 'The Brunei Volunteer Force ... after its promising beginning virtually ceased to exist before the War began.'<sup>3</sup>

War came to Borneo on 16 December 1941. General Kawaguchi commanded the invading force, the initial objective of which was to seize the oilfields at Miri and Seria. The retreating British forces managed to do a fair job of destroying the oil facilities, but apart from that the Japanese had a clear run. Brunei Town (as it was then called) was occupied on 22 December, Labuan on 1 January 1942 and Jesselton on 6 January.

Accounts of the Japanese occupation of Brunei and neighbouring Sarawak and North Borneo leave rather conflicting impressions. The first commander of the Borneo Defence Forces, Marquis Maeda, was something of a liberal, whereas his Chief of Staff, Major General Yoshinobu Manaki, who remained in the job until March 1945, is described as upright, stern and highly disciplined. According to one account, 'he had no patience with Maeda's liberal and cosmopolitan values. Nevertheless he shared his love of golf, ballroom dancing and Scottish whiskey.'<sup>4</sup>

With one or two exceptions, all those White persons who had not fled were rounded up and interned, and life was particularly harsh and fearful for the Chinese population. The dominant ethnic Malay community remained generally passive during the occupation and there was what might be described as low-key cultural and educational collaboration with the invader.<sup>5</sup>

For much of the period of Japanese occupation and at least until 1945 when communications became more difficult for the enemy, Borneo was treated as a single administrative unit. The main instrument of coercion, the notorious Kempetai, the

Japanese military police, had its headquarters for Borneo at Jesselton under Colonel Machiguchi. There are few documents available that cover this period and it is understandable that this is a time that people in Brunei prefer to forget.

In October 1943 the Japanese created the North Borneo Volunteer Corps and this absorbed some earlier units which had been established to recruit and train natives. The purpose of this unit, which came under command of the Japanese 37th Army, was to train future village chiefs 'to accept the Japanese occupation, absorb Japanese ideals and ideas and to work in harmony with the Japanese.'<sup>6</sup>

Natives applied to the Japanese Resident who now sat in the house once occupied by the British Colonial Service, and these applications were given careful consideration. There is no record of how many citizens of Brunei 'volunteered' for this organisation, but trainees were drawn from all native inhabitants of British Borneo with the exception of the Chinese. But the Japanese records did show how many were accepted for training.

The basic unit was a company and, according to Japanese records that were later captured by the liberators, the totals were:

Kuching Company	had 350 men;
Sibu	300;
Miri	180;
Kenpingau	300;
Sandakan	150. <sup>7</sup>

The training was intended to last for two years and the curriculum included basic military skills, literacy in Japanese and specialist training in farming, construction, hygiene and field work. But the indications are that no-one completed the full training programme and instead the men were sent at an

early stage to work for the Japanese troops as drivers, farmers and maintenance workers. The organisation was disbanded in August 1945 on the order of the 37th Army.

Under interrogation, Japanese officers admitted that the purpose of the North Borneo Training Unit was propaganda and to compensate for the shortage of manpower.

Captain Ikeno Ryuji, the Company Commander of the Miri Company, under interrogation admitted that the organisation had not been a success and he cited the following reasons:<sup>8</sup>

- (a) 'The dislike of the natives for the Japanese.
- (b) The unpleasant character of some of the Japanese soldiers in charge of training.
- (c) On both sides the language difficulty was an ever-present obstacle.
- (d) The period of training was too short.
- (e) The unfavourable situation of the Japanese at the end of 1944 caused the native recruits to lose interest on the course and they ran away whenever they could.
- (f) Gradually, owing to air raids causing dislocation of communications and lack of food, duties became more and more arduous, education was neglected and discipline languished.'

So in one sense British Borneo territories were no different to other lands conquered and occupied during the Second World War. Like many of the places there was no serious internal resistance until almost the end of the war when Tom Harrisson and several other operatives were parachuted into northern Borneo. The personnel recruited for operations against the Japanese came mainly from the minority tribes.<sup>9</sup>

The Sultan, Ahmad Tajuddin II, remained in post, collaborated, and was awarded a pension and Japanese honours. The former British Resident in Brunei, E. E. Pengilley, after his release following the Japanese surrender, called on the Sultan, 'whom I found to be in reasonably good health and who expressed his pleasure at my survival.' Pengilley went on to describe him as 'a physically insignificant and mentally somewhat colourless and inadequate individual.'<sup>10</sup> A report to Brigadier C. F. C. Macaskie, appointed Chief Civil Affairs, British Borneo in 1945, added another perspective on the Sultan. The report enclosed a copy of an extract from the speech made by the Sultan to the State Council – the first to be held since the end of the war – on 6 July 1946. The Sultan expressed his most sincere thanks to His Majesty's Forces for liberating Brunei from the Japanese yoke.<sup>11</sup> Three years later the Sultan put in a War Damage Claim to the Government in London for \$64,000 for the destruction and looting of his palace in the Allied attack on Brunei Town in 1945!<sup>12</sup>

Brunei, along with the rest of Borneo, came under MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Command, and it was liberated not by the British but by Australian and American forces. It was the Australian 9th Division that took the Japanese surrender in Brunei.

For the Australians this was their final campaign of the war. The first phase of the operation was an amphibious landing on the island of Tarakan, off the east coast, on 1 May 1945. The 26th Australian Brigade conquered the island, but only after two months of vicious fighting. The remains of the 9th Division landed in Borneo Bay on 10 June.

The Australians hated the Japanese with a passion, largely because of what they did to enemy dead and wounded. On Borneo, appalling treatment of the local population was very apparent. The Australians also encountered the catastrophe

that had occurred to their own prisoners of war sent to Borneo. That hatred did not diminish in the last and strategically insignificant campaign in MacArthur's theatre of operations.

As we have seen, the Japanese defenders formed part of the 37th Army. This army was created, with the headquarters at Jesselton, in October 1944 from Borneo Garrison Army. It controlled North Borneo as far south as Kuching on the west coast and Tawau on the east coast.

In May 1945 the 37th Army, previously under direct command of the Southern Army at Saigon, came under command of the 7th Area Army at Singapore, where it remained until the surrender. Jesselton had by this time become untenable through Allied bombing; the headquarters moved to Sapong, a rubber estate 185 miles south of Jesselton which was thought unlikely to attract Allied attention. Sapong was also nearer to Labuan and Brunei.

In tactical terms the defence of the Borneo coastal regions was the responsibility of the 56th Independent Mixed Brigade. It was commanded by Major General Akashi Taijiro and arrived in Borneo from Japan in October 1944. It comprised six infantry battalions and had support troops. The Brigade was initially deployed to Tawau in Dutch Borneo. In early March elements of the brigade marched by way of Lahad Datu, Sandakan, Ranau and Jesselton to the Brunei area. Brigade headquarters together with 366 and 367 Infantry Battalions, constantly attacked by Allied air power, were ordered to hold Brunei.

In Brunei at the time was an artillery unit and a harbour No. 62 Anchorage headquarters under Colonel Tohara Kanji, with a small support base force and a military hospital.

Australian troops landed in Labuan and Brunei on 8 June and 366 Infantry Battalion disintegrated; 367 Battalion had

suffered more than half of its number killed on the march and had not even deployed properly before the Australians landed. After suffering another 50% in fatalities, the survivors and brigade headquarters retreated inland across the mountains to Tenom.

The Sultanate then came under Australian Military Administration until 1 January 1946, when the 32nd Indian Infantry Brigade arrived to take responsibility for Borneo. British Military Administration lasted until July 1946.

Brunei emerged from the war with its regime in place and its territory intact. The oil industry was largely destroyed and Brigadier Macaskie, in a letter of 23 March 1946, described the devastation in North Borneo and Brunei as 'appalling'.<sup>13</sup> The United Kingdom does not come well out of the story. Preoccupied and overstretched, it did not sustain let alone enhance its role as the protecting power. It did little to help Brunei resist a Japanese attack in 1941-42, and it played a minor role in the liberation of Brunei in the summer of 1945. It failed to meet the first real challenge to the defence and security of Brunei since the Agreement of 1905.

The paradox is that the British returned and took up where they had left off in 1942 almost as if nothing had happened. The arrogance displayed by London and the assumptions made, without any thought as to what the people of Brunei might have desired, is quite unbelievable. What might be described as 'normal conditions' were resumed. Britain, which, as the protecting power had totally failed in its responsibilities, returned in 1945 as the protecting power. The Australians and Americans soon departed followed in due course by the British and Imperial troops. Brunei had no garrison; it was as defenceless in 1947 as it had been in 1941.

Were there any longer-term political and security consequences for Brunei of the war and the Japanese occupation?

Why did Brunei not go through the upheaval and conflict that affected its neighbours – Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and Indonesia – after 1945? It differed from its neighbours in three important ways. First, there was no history of nationalist, anti-colonial sentiment in Brunei as there was in Indochina, Malaya and the Indies. This existed in these countries long before 1941. The Japanese might try to encourage it, but they did not create it. Some attempt was made to arouse Malay national consciousness in Brunei between 1942 and 1945 but it was not very positive. Second, Brunei did not have the ethnic and cultural tensions such as existed in Malaya – Malay versus Chinese versus Indian – which affected the struggle against the Japanese invaders after 1943 and set the stage for the post-war struggle against the British. Third, Brunei was not seriously affected by what might be called the Communist factor, which dominated the post-war struggles in Malaya, Indochina and the Philippines and affected developments in Indonesia in the 1950s. There was some Communist Party activity in Brunei after the war but it never amounted to anything. Indeed the only incident of note occurred on 1 October 1950 when members of the Chinese Youth Movement raised the Chinese Communist flag on the Shell Oil Company headquarters building at Seria, but it was quickly removed. Brunei did not figure in the post-1945 global ideological contest.

However, although it is clear that the post-war situation of Brunei was very different from that of its neighbours, there are several links between what happened during the Japanese occupation and people, movements and ideas that affected Brunei's security and stability in the years after 1945. During the war, for example in Malaya, there were several groups promoting Malay nationalism and in some cases union of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies in a large



Indonesia. These groups included the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), a Japanese-sponsored army, Pembula Tanah Ayer (PETA), and on the larger Indonesian front, Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (KRIS). A key figure in the first two organisations was Ibrahim Yaacob, who, when things went badly wrong after Japan's defeat, took refuge in Indonesia. Tokyo's attitude towards Malay independence and to a greater Indonesia was ambivalent as long as Japan was winning, but at the very end of the war Japan did give some encouragement to the idea of Indonesia Raya or Greater Indonesia; that is, incorporating Malays in one nation-state for all Malay peoples. It is not clear that there were any direct links with Brunei during the war, but in January 1950 the Monthly Political Intelligence Report for Sarawak and Brunei refers to a report from Brunei, from the Lutong Refinery area, that there was activity among Malays who may be in league with local KRIS elements.<sup>14</sup>

In 1946 a Brunei branch of the North Borneo Barison Pemuda (BARIP) or Youth League was established. This reflected the first stirring of a wider nationalism for Brunei, Labuan and North Borneo. It is claimed that by 1947 some 7,000 people were involved in BARIP activities in Brunei. The activities and objectives of BARIP were many and varied, and at times contradictory. It made use of the red and white Indonesian flag, it implied support for independence – although it never clamoured for it – it wanted white-collar jobs to be reserved for Malays and not to go to Chinese and it did, in 1947, receive some support from the Sultan. Its importance was short-lived. Support began to fade in 1948, although it was still capable of staging a riot in Brunei Town in 1953.

## **Brunei after 1945**

Recovery from the effects of the war and Japanese occupation took time, but by 1950 was well under way. A Colonial Office report, undated but from internal evidence probably originating in 1950, describes the rehabilitation process and spells out the prospects for development. It explains that recovery in the towns has been slow, much slower than in Malaya, largely due to the lack of materials for rebuilding purposes which is 'due to Brunei's isolated geographical position.' On the downside, the report emphasised the 'crying need' for technical expats, especially in the Public Works, Agricultural, Education and Medical Departments. The report also highlighted the progress made in the reconstruction of the oil industry: the production of oil had risen from 696,000 tons in 1938 to 3,302,879 tons in 1949. And the report concluded that the Government of Brunei was in the happy position of being able to afford to undertake or assist with any proposals in the various departments.<sup>15</sup>

In 1950 Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II died and was succeeded by his younger brother, Pengiran Bendahara Omar Ali Saifuddin. The new Sultan was to reign from 1950 to 1967. After his abdication he continued to be a major factor in Brunei development and politics until his death in 1986. He has been described as the 'Architect of Modern Brunei Darussalam'.

There is some controversy about the circumstances of the death of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II and about the succession of his younger brother. The Sultan died suddenly in Singapore on 4 June 1950 on his way to London. He was going to London for what promised to be some fairly complicated negotiations with the British Government over increased oil royalties and several other complex issues. He was also threatening to bring American oil interests

(Standard Oil) into Brunei to break the existing British Malayan Petroleum (BMP) monopoly if he did not get increased royalties.

The controversy revolves around two issues: how the Sultan died and who was to succeed him. He was only 36, but his health had been poor for some time, he drank heavily according to some accounts, and there were also suggestions of syphilis. There have also been rumours over the years of poisoning by groups in Brunei – and possibly in the United Kingdom – who wanted him out of the way. Malcolm Macdonald described the Sultan as ‘tragically debauched’ and blamed his mother for his condition. The official cause of his death is recorded as cerebral haemorrhage, although Carol Reed, the film director, who met him in Singapore just before he died, was told by his secretary that he died of a kidney disease.

On the issue of succession, the Sultan apparently wanted his daughter, Princess Tengku Elisian, to succeed him, having first sought confirmation that neither Brunei law nor the law of Mohammed was contravened. But within two days of his death, his younger brother, Omar Ali, was declared the new Sultan, with the full support of the British Resident in Brunei, Eric Pretty. It was widely believed at the time in Brunei (and still is) that the new Sultan came to power by the Divine Will of God. There was also more than a suggestion of anti-Malaya feeling about what happened. The outgoing Sultan had a Malayan wife and the daughter, whom he wanted to succeed him, had Malayan advisers. The new Sultan fought off the Malayan threat, created a new Council of Advisers, and canvassed and won popular support by touring the kampongs and meeting the village headmen.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding the death of the Sultan, it seems clear that the British Government and its

representatives on the ground in Borneo welcomed the accession of the new Sultan, Omar Ali Saifuddin III. But if they thought that they had a more compliant leader they were soon in for a shock. The Commissioner General in Southeast Asia, Malcolm Macdonald, was concerned as early as September 1951 about some public statement attributed to the new Sultan, laying claim on behalf of Brunei to Labuan and Limbang.

In August 1956 Brunei's (and British Borneo's) first political party, the Partai Rakyat Brunei (PRB), was formed under the leadership of Sheikh A. M. Azahari, and formally registered by the Government. Azahari, a Brunei student who had been sent by the Japanese for technical training in veterinary science to Bandung, had returned to Brunei from Indonesia at the beginning of 1952 and rapidly acquired a large following. He was beginning his significant and rather meteoric career that was to take him to the leadership of the Brunei Revolt in 1962 and the long years of exile that followed. There is more than a touch of 'all things to all men' about his political views in the mid- and late 1950s. At times he shared common ground with, and was close to, the Sultan. They met frequently and it is not clear who was using whom! At times he had far closer links with Malaya and had contact with the Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. At times he was in contact with Sukarno. At times he promoted socialism. He was generally critical and suspicious of the British presence and commitment.

Late in 2003 a book was published in Brunei entitled '*8 Disember: Dalangnya Siapa?*' [*8 December: Who is the Culprit?*].<sup>16</sup> This is the latest work to be written on the rebellion of 1962, and is worthy of some closer examination and in particular the author's view of Azahari. He describes Azahari as a very ambitious man who wanted to be Prime Minister of Brunei and then of the Federated States of Borneo. The first

time that Azahari made his intentions clear was on 14 April 1957 in a press release in Singapore.

Azahari was quoted as saying that the threat of Communism in Asia was great and it would go beyond Malaya into Borneo and the Philippines. Therefore the answer was to give the Borneo states independence, but Britain refused. So Azahari would not be responsible for the outcome.

Pehin Dato Jamil claims in his account that Azahari then answered questions from the press, all that is except one: he refused to acknowledge whether or not he was a Communist. All that he would say was that he did not want to be identified as a Communist.

Pehin Jamil makes the point that for Azahari to achieve his ambition he was prepared to work with the Communist Party of Indonesia, which he saw as the natural enemy of Imperialism. He also claimed that Azahari turned against the British because they saw Brunei's future as part of a greater Malayan-led federation.

There were at this time long and tortuous negotiations with the Colonial Office in London. The Sultan went to London on a regular basis. Azahari travelled to London later in 1957. In August Azahari had sent a telegram to London asking for a meeting with the Secretary of State for the Colonies late in September. There was subsequently a meeting in the Colonial Office in London on 26 September 1957. This was followed by a second and more important meeting in the Colonial Office on 30 September 1957 chaired by the Secretary of State.

Zaini was at those meetings and he was interviewed for this book on several occasions. He stated that after the second meeting in London had concluded they were contacted privately for Azahari to attend a private dinner party with the Secretary of State.

Zaini claimed that they discussed this invitation at some length but in the end decided to refuse the invitation. Azahari was convinced that the British would poison him. A similar fate had befallen an ancestor – Sheikh Abdul Hamid, who was Azahari's grandfather – who, earlier in the century, had been entrusted with a mission by the then Sultan, to seek the support of the United States (rather than Great Britain) but who had died in very mysterious circumstances.

In discussion, Zaini still believes that Azahari was paranoid over this issue and as a result missed a great opportunity. Had he met with the Secretary of State and won his support for a Brunei-led North Borneo Federation, the history of Brunei could have been vastly different.

That is not the view of Pehin Dato Jamil, however. In the 1950s Azahari had tried to lure some leading figures away from the Sultan to join the PRB, including Pehin Dato Jamil. In *8 Disember* the author maintains there was a link between Azahari and the Indonesian General Abdul Haris Nasution. The latter admitted that he advised Azahari by letter – there was no personal contact – to bring about change in Brunei by constitutional means not by violence.

However, the author states that the main contact was with Indonesia's Foreign Minister at the time, Subandrio, who had Communist sympathies. This was confirmed by Zaini according to the author. The book therefore makes the case that Azahari was a Communist and used his contacts with the British, the Sultan, the Tunku and in his PRB to that end.

The 1950s ended with significant political changes in Brunei – at least on paper – and the reinforcement of its links with the United Kingdom. On this latter point, what happened to Brunei is in sharp contrast to what was taking place in some of Britain's other protectorates. Bechuanaland, for example, gained independence as the

Republic of Botswana in the early 1960s as did Swaziland. Brunei, after long and often difficult negotiations, gained its first written Constitution and a new Agreement with Britain replacing the 1905 Agreement. The granting of independence to Malaya in 1957 and the question of the future of the Borneo territories provide something of a backdrop to the Brunei Constitution and Agreement of 1959.

The constitutional talks culminated in meetings in London in April 1959. As a result of the talks the Sultan promulgated on 29 September the first written Constitution. Under the Constitution there was to be an Executive Council presided over by the Sultan and consisting of seven ex-officio members, the High Commissioner and seven unofficial members. There was also to be Legislative Council comprising eight ex-officio members, 16 elected members and three nominated members. The Legislative Council was to be presided over by a *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) appointed by the Sultan. The various ex-officio members were to be appointed by the Sultan. Elections were to be introduced gradually within a period of two years and in the meantime the elected members would be appointed by the Sultan.

At the same time as the Constitution was promulgated, the Brunei and Sarawak administrations were separated. Brunei was given a new separate High Commissioner (Mr D. C. White) with effect from 29 September. He was to be the direct representative of Her Majesty's Government in Brunei. The old post of British Resident was to be replaced by that of *Mentri Besar*, the Chief Minister, a Bruneian.

A new Agreement to replace the 1905 Agreement was also signed on 29 September 1959. This Agreement provided for Her Majesty to have 'complete control of the external affairs of the State' (Article 3(1)) and

*Her Majesty shall have complete control of the defence of the State and agrees at all times to protect the State and the Government thereof and to the utmost of her power to take whatever measures may be necessary for the defence of the State ... (Article 3(2)).*

The Agreement covered internal security and regarding this there was a provision for the constitution of a Standing Advisory Council composed of representatives of Her Majesty and of the Government of the State of Brunei to consult on internal security matters as necessary.<sup>17</sup>

The new Agreement confirmed Brunei's status as a Protectorate. The big questions of course concerned whether Britain would honour its obligations if there were external or internal threats, and if so how? Was Britain's position better or stronger than it was in 1946 or had been in 1941?

### **Britain, Southeast Asia and Brunei after 1945**

Britain seemed to take up its role as the protecting power for Brunei in 1945 almost as if nothing had happened in the years 1941–5. The public stance of ministers and officials in London and their representatives on the spot carried on the traditions of the 1920s and 1930s: silence, indifference, complacency. How was Brunei viewed in London, if it was viewed at all? How did successive British governments after 1945 regard their commitment to the Sultanate?

The first point to note is that the United Kingdom's overall position in 1945 was very different from what it had been before the Second World War. Britain was victorious, but the costs of the victory were enormous. At home, the Government



faced a mass of urgent economic and social problems; abroad, Britain's global imperial position and interests faced serious challenges and threats.

Secondly, Britain's position in Southeast Asia as a whole would take time to restore. Britain, along with the other colonial powers in the region – the United States, France, the Netherlands – had been humiliated between 1941 and 1945. There were few signs, if any, of any British comeback during the war. It was the United States and Australia that took the lead against Japan, except in Malaya. Britain took over its old colonial responsibilities in Malaya and Borneo in 1945 and for a time added to them with its assistance to the French in Indochina and the Dutch in the Indies. But it was by no means clear that the United Kingdom would be able to carry on as a major power in the region.

A third point, and probably the most significant, is that Britain's perspective changed dramatically after 1947 with the onset of the Cold War. The global confrontation, with Britain playing a major supporting role to the United States, affected the policies and priorities the United Kingdom pursued everywhere in the 1950s and 1960s: in Europe, the Middle East, East and Southeast Asia.

Fourthly, Britain had to give priority to several European issues after 1945. There was the problem of what to do about Germany and the Cold War challenge, leading to the formation of NATO in 1949. In the 1950s there was the issue of German rearmament, the troubles in Eastern Europe after the death of Stalin, and the Polish and Hungarian uprisings in 1956.

A fifth point is that a whole series of crises and breakdowns in the Empire (more properly the Commonwealth) demanded the attention of the already overstretched British Government after 1945. In the 1940s it was independence for

India, Pakistan and Burma, accompanied by the ending of the mandate in Palestine. In the 1950s, there was a sequence of events in the Middle East that threatened to undermine and indeed destroy key British economic and strategic interests: there was the oil crisis with Iran, tensions with Egypt, the Suez crisis of 1956 and the revolution in Iraq in 1958. Happenings in other parts of the Empire demanded attention and resources.

Decolonisation was not always a peaceful process. At various times in the 1950s, Cyprus, Kenya and Central Africa occupied the headlines and demanded the attention of the policymakers. From 1948 to 1960 there was, on Brunei's doorstep, the emergency in Malaya. It is against this background of post-1945 weakness, global conflict and continued challenges to her interests and territories that the United Kingdom continued to play a major role in East and Southeast Asia. It is clear that the Middle East was given a higher priority in London, but nevertheless, partly from choice and partly of necessity, the Far East remained a key area in British policymaking from 1945 through to the 1950s. Brunei was situated close to the heart of the region.

Much of this was hardly a matter of choice. Britain chose to go back to Hong Kong in 1945 despite the opposition of the Chinese Government. With the triumph of Communism in China in 1949, London had to face a Communist threat to Hong Kong. When the previous phase of the Chinese Revolution triumphed in 1927, Britain was able to send troops to Shanghai to protect her interests; now in 1949 the only serious policy was to try and hold on to Hong Kong. While Communism was triumphing in China, a Communist-led insurgency was threatening Britain's position in Malaya and Singapore. The United Kingdom had little choice but to embark on a long and demanding struggle, which a decade

later had a successful outcome. At the same time as there was concern about Hong Kong and as the insurgency was developing in Malaya, Britain was obliged to pick up another gauntlet – of a very different kind – in Korea in 1950.

The long decade from 1945 to 1957 brought tension and trouble for Britain in East and Southeast Asia but also success: Hong Kong remained under British control; the Malayan Emergency ended in 1960, Malaya having achieved independence in 1957; and Britain was part of the team that won a limited victory in Korea in 1953. It was not of course all good for the United Kingdom. In September 1951 the ANZUS Treaty was concluded, an indication perhaps of Britain's waning influence and weakening position in the region. Australia and New Zealand remained in the Commonwealth, but now looked for security to the United States, rather than to the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom continued to see itself as a major player in Southeast Asia, East of Suez, in the second half of the 1950s. Britain took a prominent position at the Geneva Conference in the summer of 1954, which attempted to settle the Indochina question, and was a signatory of the Manila Pact in September 1954 which led to the formation of SEATO. From the perspective of the present day, with the advantage of 50 years of hindsight, it can be seen that there were huge elements of bluff and illusion in all this. Geneva did not settle Indochina and SEATO remained at best an anaemic alliance. It did nothing of any consequence between 1954 and 1976 when it was wound up. Meanwhile a massive struggle developed in Vietnam, which spilled over into Laos and Cambodia and there was a lesser struggle in the mid-1960s with confrontation in Borneo.

The 1950s ended on something of a high note in terms of British policy and commitment in Southeast Asia, East of

Suez, and although the beginning of the debate that led to the reduction of forces and commitments in the next ten years can be seen, the outcome of the debate was by no means certain by 1960.

The Defence White Papers in 1957 and 1962 were contradictory. Both reaffirmed a continuing global role for Britain, but both made that role more difficult with substantial cuts in manpower and conventional weapons. The Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson, declared in the House of Commons in February 1961 that 'the Government have no intention of backing out of our world obligations.' He went on to say, 'I am proud that the nation still had some responsibilities in the world.'<sup>18</sup> The following year, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Carrington, speaking in the House of Lords, could talk of Britain as a benign and stabilising factor in the world and express his firm belief that this presence was vital and should not be weakened. In that same debate in the House of Lords in March 1962, no less a military pundit than Viscount Montgomery would say:

*The Atlantic is safe, Europe is safe, the Mediterranean is safe, the potential danger spots lie somewhere else, in the Near East, the Middle East and the Far East and in Africa. It is to these areas that we should direct our gaze.*<sup>19</sup>

It was in the region East of Suez, therefore, that a major British commitment was needed. The outlook was to change quite significantly in the next decade, not least because of events in Southeast Asia, involving Brunei.

Against this backdrop of the changes in Britain's position since 1945, the weakening of British power, the succession of crises in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East, how did

successive British governments view the Sultanate and their commitments to Brunei? How did they see the future of Brunei politically? What about the defence of Brunei? It is not easy to present clear answers to these questions, as what comes through from the documents is the confusion and contradiction that seemed to affect Government thinking about Brunei. What is clear, however, is that Brunei was always on the margins of British policy. Firstly, it was never near the centre of British thinking about her commitments in Southeast Asia, and secondly questions about Brunei were examined in a Malayan context. That is, the future of Brunei was usually seen in association with the other Borneo territories and Malaya.

With regard to the political future of Brunei, the thinking in London was to see it in terms of closer relations with the other Borneo territories and possibly Malaya. In January 1949, for example, the Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, hosted a conference at Bukit Serene of senior British officials in Malaya, Brunei, North Borneo and Sarawak. There was discussion of closer administrative cooperation of the various Borneo territories, including Brunei, and of the desirability of the Customs and Postal Unions. The minutes of the conference listed several agreed decisions, the first of which was:

*It was confirmed that the ultimate policy in the three Borneo territories should be the unification or other form of very close association of the administrative systems, preserving the individual identity of the three territories.*<sup>20</sup>

MacDonald's successor as Commissioner-General, Sir Robert Scott, in a note on 'The Future of the Borneo Territories' dated 11 December 1956, argued that the only satisfactory long-

term solution for the Borneo territories – including Brunei – was ‘political partnership between the territories on the one hand and with H.M.G. in the United Kingdom on the other.’ He also argued that sovereignty over Labuan should be transferred from North Borneo to Brunei, and in an Appendix to the note stated that: ‘The aim should be to create between the three territories the closest political union which they are willing to accept.’<sup>21</sup>

In a follow-on Memorandum, also entitled ‘The Future of the Borneo Territories’, Scott and the Governors of North Borneo and Sarawak (the latter also being High Commissioner to Brunei) emphasised the need for closer political association of the three Borneo territories in partnership with the United Kingdom. It was described as necessary for Brunei and Sarawak and highly desirable for North Borneo. It was necessary for Brunei because:

*In Brunei the danger lies in extreme Malay nationalism. This already exists and is being encouraged by left-wing elements both inside and outside the country. If unchecked it will develop into a rabid opposition to the Monarchy and to the British connexion, and it could bring about the overthrow of the Sultanate, with grave prejudice to the whole stability of the State including the security of the oilfield at Seria. After the Federation of Malaya becomes independent many in Brunei are bound to look more and more to Kuala Lumpur. The danger to Brunei could grow quickly under pressure from extremists in the United Malays National Organization.*<sup>22</sup>

On the issues of the defence of Brunei and of Britain’s obligations as the protecting power, the references are few and thin. Given Britain’s other problems in the late 1940s and 1950s as mentioned previously, this is perhaps not surprising. The

conference held at Bukit Serene recommended the need to exchange defence proposals between the three territories of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo, and that combined Defence Committees should be held from time to time. A 'Review of the World Situation' by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff in July 1957, in the section on the Far East, discussed in some detail the problems facing SEATO, the defence of Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong, but perhaps – not unsurprisingly – made no reference to Brunei. Articles VI and VII of the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement of October 1957 did involve a commitment to Brunei. Article VII:

*In the event of an armed attack against any of the territories or forces of the Federation of Malaya or any of the territories or protectorates of the United Kingdom in the Far East or any of the territories or protectorates or within the Federation of Malaya, the Governments of the Federation of Malaya and of the United Kingdom undertake to cooperate with each other and will take such action as each considers necessary for the purpose of meeting the situation effectively.<sup>23</sup>*

Towards the end of the 1950s with Malaya now independent and the Emergency about to end, there was considerable discussion in British official defence circles about British bases in Southeast Asia. In February 1959 a report was prepared on 'The Prospects of Retaining our Present Bases in Southeast Asia.'<sup>24</sup> Later in the year (July), the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Planning Staff, circulated a report on 'Future Deployment Policy in the Far East.'<sup>25</sup> Both reports dwelt at length on existing bases and force deployment in Southeast Asia. Alternatives to Malaya and Singapore were mentioned, including Labuan, Sandakan (North Borneo) and bases

outside the region (Australia). But there was no reference to possibilities in Brunei.

And finally, and ominously for Brunei, the Annex to a Chief of Staff report, dated 24 June 1959, on United Kingdom Military Intentions in the Far East set out the principles on which United Kingdom policy in Southeast Asia was based as far as military action was concerned. The principles included:

- (a) The United Kingdom does not intend to get involved in large scale land operations on the mainland of Southeast Asia.
- (b) The United Kingdom will not act alone but only with the support of at least ANZAM countries and the United States....
- (e) Priority will be given to Malaya and Thailand. The security of the latter indirectly assists in preserving the security of Burma, Malaya and Singapore where United Kingdom interests are greater than in other countries on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

In view of what was about to happen, it is interesting that another principle states:

- (c) The United Kingdom will be prepared to provide air and naval support and a small land force to support indigenous forces in the SEATO area against an external threat or against an internal threat which is clearly Communist.<sup>26</sup>

To sum it up, Brunei emerged from its Second World War experiences and then survived, apparently untouched in a most turbulent region, surrounded by war, violence and



crisis. Defence and security do not appear to be significant issues. Britain resumed the role of protecting power and appears to have carried on in the 1940s and 1950s the approach and the policies that it had pursued before 1941. In Britain's defence it can be accepted that she was preoccupied elsewhere: in Europe, the Middle East and in other parts of the region. But there also seems to be a casual and indifferent air about the British approach.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Malaysia and the Background to the Rebellion, 1960–62

Brunei faced two challenges in the early 1960s. One can be described as external: the formation of Malaysia and what part, if any, the Sultanate should play in that process. The other can be described as internal: the Rebellion of 1962–3. The four years from 1960 to 1963 are probably the most critical years in the history of Brunei since 1945, or indeed since the middle of the nineteenth century. If a different decision had been made on the issue of membership of Malaysia, and this was certainly possible, then the story of Brunei from 1964 onwards would be very different. If the Rebellion had been successful, admittedly a less likely possibility, then again the story would be very different, and much more difficult to predict.

The two challenges were not separate and self-contained affairs, but were very much interlinked. The issue of whether or not to join Malaysia was arguably one of the causes of the Rebellion. What happened in the Rebellion helped to influence the final decision over Malaysia. The role of the United

Kingdom was important in the debate over the first challenge and was crucial in meeting the second. In addition, other states were involved, the governments in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta had major roles, and other governments, such as that in Manila, were minor actors.

## **The International Context**

The global situation was generally uncertain and at times appeared to be extremely dangerous in the period 1960–3. These years can be described as one of the more critical periods of the Cold War. At the beginning of the period, the United States–Soviet Union summit meeting in Paris in May 1960 broke up in disarray, partly because of the shooting down of the American U-2 spy-plane. The same year a major and ongoing confrontation developed in Central Africa with the coming of independence to the Belgian Congo. During the earlier part of the period (1960–1) the Americans became very alarmed at what they thought to be ‘a missile gap’ between themselves and the Soviet Union. A crisis over Berlin led to the building of the Wall in the summer of 1961, and 1962 saw the extremely dangerous confrontation over Cuba. To complicate the situation further there was increasing evidence in the period of a split between the Soviet Union and its major ally in Asia, the People’s Republic of China.

The regional situation was more mixed in the period 1960–3. On the side of peace and stability, the Malayan Emergency was over and one British military historian actually described the period 1960–2 in Southeast Asia as ‘A Few Quiet Years’.<sup>1</sup> Also on the side of peace, and possibly stability, a potentially dangerous crisis over Laos was resolved at the Geneva Conference in 1962. But much was happening on

the other side, demonstrating how fragile the prospects were for peace and stability in the region. The situation in Vietnam was causing the United States increasing concern from 1960 onwards and the foundations were being laid for the massive involvement of the Americans in the struggle in that country from 1964 onwards.

More important for Malaya, Singapore, Brunei and the British Borneo territories, the United Kingdom and Australia were the disturbing developments in Indonesia. Towards the end of the 1950s, President Sukarno announced that Indonesia was moving to 'Guided Democracy'. The Indonesian Communist Party (the PKI) was becoming more assertive and important. From 1960 onwards, relations between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China began to improve significantly and in 1961 Sukarno visited Peking and concluded a Friendship Treaty. Later in the year he put forward the idea that the world was divided into two conflicting and irreconcilable camps, the New Emerging Forces (NEFO) and the Old Established Forces (OLDEFO). Indonesia and the People's Republic of China were of course very firmly located in NEFO. In July 1960 Indonesia adopted a policy of confrontation towards the Netherlands over the issue of the future of West Guinea, a leftover from the old Dutch empire in Southeast Asia and a bone of contention between the two states since 1954. Limited hostilities began early in 1962. The dispute was settled in August 1962 with Indonesia's acquisition of the territory, which in future was to be called West Irian or Irian Jaya. The Australian Government was worried as to where the Indonesians would go next. One possible target was Portuguese Timor. In response to a query from the Australian High Commission in London, James Cable of the Southeast Asia Department in the Foreign Office wrote in July 1962:

*We also discussed possible Indonesia attitudes towards Malaysia, on which I suggested that the Indonesians would tread warily ... I said that I doubted whether the Indonesians would make any move against Australian New Guinea in the foreseeable future. ... As I saw it, the Indonesians had no genuine territorial ambitions at all. Their real problem was economic chaos and popular disillusionment at home. It was to distract attention from this that they worked up claims abroad, but Dutch New Guinea had been an obvious objective for this purpose. Australian New Guinea was not.<sup>2</sup>*

By the early 1960s Indonesia was becoming increasingly unstable internally, but disturbingly for its neighbours, more aggressive in its foreign policy. Indonesian nationalism was on the march with the support of China.

### **The Creation of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces: The Early Days**

There is very little by way of published material written about the history and development of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces either in primary or secondary sources,<sup>3</sup> though several former senior officers in the RBAF were interviewed about their life and experiences during the course of research into this thesis.

One can be fairly certain that the astute and worldly wise Sultan Omar was very concerned about both the deteriorating international situation in the region and beyond and that Brunei had no means of protecting itself from hostile foreign forces. A third consideration was undoubtedly the question of whether and what form a continued British presence would take in the region now that Malaya had gained its

independence. It was common knowledge that there were tensions between Kuala Lumpur and London over Britain's continued military presence in Malaya and the purpose of these garrisons, though it must be said that no-one in 1960 could contemplate the British leaving their base in Singapore.

Further, there were considerations over Brunei's future relationship – along with the other British possessions in North Borneo – with the Malayan Federation. But Brunei was different. It was a protectorate under the British crown but, since 1959, with a very large measure of autonomy over its domestic affairs; so any possible merger would need to take note of this constitutional distinction. If Brunei at some stage in the future was to contemplate some form of union with Malaya, would it make a difference if it already possessed its own armed force? Definitive answers are not possible, but it does seem clear that by 1960 the Sultan had reached the conclusion that Brunei should, if only by way of added insurance, assume some measure of responsibility for its own defence and internal security.

It is not just a question of soldiers and their weapons but the full supporting infrastructure of barracks and housing, supplies, training and military philosophy, tactical manuals and a Ministry of Defence to support, sustain and direct it. Brunei had none of these nor the knowledge or experience to create them. And there was the whole question of costings and finance which needed to be addressed.

Brunei had a scouting movement and several Bruneians had received scout leadership training while attending the Sultan Idris Teacher Training College in Malaya. The Sultan proposed to High Commissioner White that Brunei should approach Malaya to train their new force while a barracks and other military facilities were being built at home.

The High Commission would not give permission outright but instead advised that there should be further consultation and advice from London. There are no documents available that record these developments, and the secondary sources do not cover this in any depth. However, late in 1960 the Sultan went to Malaya to discuss his plan with the military authorities in Kuala Lumpur. Upon reflection it was a very bold step to take. The Sultan had no military experience whatsoever and had no military personnel to advise him. He probably had no clear idea of what sort of armed force he was trying to create, leave alone whether it should include naval and air components. Neither is there any evidence to suggest that he was embarking upon a longer-term plan with independence as the final objective – in which case a professional military force would be essential. Nor did he consult or even inform his countrymen as to whether they wanted to have an armed force; there are no articles in the *Borneo Bulletin* that explain the purpose of his visit.

In the spring of 1960 the Sultan flew to Kuala Lumpur and met with the Tunku and officials from the Malay Federation's Ministry of Defence. Again there is no way of knowing how the Malaysians reacted to this request for assistance with an armed force for Brunei. Would Kuala Lumpur have welcomed a Bruneian military contribution? One does know from later discussions over Brunei's membership of the future federation that Kuala Lumpur would have welcomed some financial contribution: but a separate armed force?

In the event the Malayan federation authorities despatched a military mission to Brunei led by two brigadiers (Brigadiers Taib and Abas) to produce a budget proposal for an armed force. The records are not very forthcoming, but all that is known from secondary sources is that they failed to complete the task. Why is not clear. Were they under orders from Kuala

Lumpur to kill the initiative? Was it a matter of inexperience on both sides?

The end result was that the Minister of Defence of the Malayan Federation suggested to the Sultan that he should approach the British Ministry of Defence in London. He did not. Instead he sustained the pressure on Kuala Lumpur. It is known that when the Sultan was in the Malayan capital in June 1960 attending an official reception celebrating Her Majesty The Queen's birthday and 'largely because of his persistence, with Allah's Blessing, it was at last accepted.'<sup>4</sup>

This, however, does not explain why the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment began life officially on 31 May 1961 when Sultan Omar signed a decree bringing the force into existence. The Sultan must have been superbly confident that the Malayan authorities would agree to assist because a recruiting campaign had already been held throughout the country following an advertisement that first appeared in the *Borneo Bulletin* – published on Saturday 22 April. Further, if everything was only given the final approval in June, it is strange that from 10 May 1961 a small recruiting team from the Federation of Malaya's armed forces, comprising an officer and three sergeants, were in the country selecting the first batch of recruits. Of course there are no records that reveal how much the Sultan paid the government in Malaya for their assistance.

The Sultan had also made his own first selection of future officers. Three officer cadets had already left for the Malayan Federation's Officer Training School at Port Dickson to begin their training.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the month the recruiting team had selected 60 men out of the 102 who had volunteered. These left Brunei on 31 May aboard a Royal New Zealand Air Force Bristol Freighter and a Royal Air Force Hastings for Port Dickson via Kuala Lumpur.



In July 1961 a Malayan Army Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tengku Ahmad bin Tengku Besar Barhanuddin, a cousin of Malaya's first Yang di Pertuan Agong, British-trained, was seconded to command the Royal Brunei Malayan Regiment.

In August 1961 further recruiting notices appeared in the national press – again a call for both officer cadets and enlisted men, and on Monday 16 August a further 70 recruits left Brunei, this time by sea to Singapore and Port Dickson.

In the meantime a site at Berakas had been selected as the first home of the regiment and plans were drawn up to house a battalion strength of some 650 men and their families.

Fifty-nine soldiers, the first intake of recruits, having completed their training – which was exactly the same as the Malayan recruits – held a passing out parade on 4 November 1961. They returned to Brunei in a Royal Air Force Beverley transport on 8 November with the Malaya Regiment officers and non-commissioned officers who had been their instructors.

To mark this occasion the Pipes and Drums of the 5th Battalion Royal Brunei Malaya Regiment led a parade on the Brunei Town Padang where the salute was taken by the Sultan.

The soldiers, once they had passed out of recruit training, changed from wearing the Royal Malay Regiment cap badge and shoulder flashes to the first pattern cap badge and shoulder flashes of the Brunei Malay Regiment.

The first soldiers held several parades throughout the Sultanate to speed up recruiting. Indeed, on 15 December 1961 the largest batch of recruits – 200 men – sailed to Singapore and thence on to Port Dickson, which was the Royal Malay Regiment Depot. After a period of leave the first recruits returned to Port Dickson and were sent to join active

units of the Royal Malay Regiment to gain further experience.

By the end of 1961, 325 men had been recruited by the Regiment, of whom just seven had been discharged for various reasons. There were five Brunei cadets at the Federation's Military College.

There was no Ministry of Defence in Brunei at this time. The Regiment came under the administrative control of Deputy State Secretary of Brunei, Dato Setia Pg Haji Mohammed Yusof, and Inche Saad bin Marzuki, the Commissioner for Development. They made several visits to Kuala Lumpur to arrange for the Brunei Regiment to take over Siginting Camp at Port Dickson while Berakas was under construction. The new barracks was overseen by Inche Talib bin Derwish, the Deputy State engineer.

On 5 May 1962 a further 263 soldiers had passed out on a parade where the salute was taken by the Prime Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman Alhaj. After a month's leave the troops returned to Port Dickson to join other soldiers of the Brunei Malay Regiment at Siginting Camp, destined to be their home for the next two years.

The soldiers' weapons were the British self-loading rifles (SLRs), but the webbing was the old British pre-war 1937 pattern.

The officer cadets of the Regiment continued their training at the Federation Military College and at Siginting Camp. Specialist training was introduced for the usual trades of drivers, signallers, clerks, physical training instructors and military police. The brighter young men went on additional courses to become junior non-commissioned officers. Everyone was given further educational instruction following the British/Malay pattern of the Armed Forces Certificate of Education Grade III as the basic qualification. This raised the standard of education and literacy.

On 8 December 1962, on the eve of the Brunei rebellion, the first three officer cadets were commissioned at the Federation of Malaya Military College or Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur.

The Regiment was not recalled to Brunei during the rebellion or the subsequent counterinsurgency phase, although (according to interviewees) there was some concern over the risk of subversion with the ranks.

## **Membership of Malaysia: The Background**

The notion of a larger Federation, including Malaya, Singapore and some or all of the British territories in Borneo, emerged in the late 1950s and became a serious proposition in the early 1960s after Malaya achieved independence in 1957 and following the ending of the Emergency in 1960. There was at the time, and remains to this day, a lot of controversy about the attitudes and motives of the various rulers and politicians involved, both those in favour and those against. This applies both to the politicians in the region and the policymakers in London. The signals coming out of Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, London, Brunei, the Borneo territories and indeed Jakarta and Manila were not always clear or consistent.

The main impetus for a larger Federation – what became Malaysia – came from Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaya from 1957 onwards. He was not always clear on exactly what he and his government wanted. The Tunku's general line was to advocate the inclusion of Singapore and all the Borneo territories – Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo – in Malaysia. Occasionally, however, his remarks and his approach appeared to be contradictory, especially in relation to Singapore and Brunei. The Malay approach must be seen against the background of the

uncertainties produced by the Cold War in the region, mentioned briefly earlier in the chapter. It must also be seen in the context of what was viewed as the emerging threat of Indonesia, especially when associated with the People's Republic of China. It made a lot of sense for Malay defence and security to include Singapore and the Borneo territories in Malaysia, rather than face the possibility of those territories falling under Indonesian influence or control. A large Malaysia would certainly enhance Malaya's influence and status in the region. Moreover, the inclusion of the Borneo territories was very important as a counter to any suggestion of Chinese dominance of the new Federation, based on Singapore.

Ultimately Singapore did not become part of Malaysia, but initially the attitude of Lee Kuan Yew and several other key politicians was supportive. Again the Cold War factor was important, together with British influence and a fear of a Communist threat in Singapore if it remained isolated and tried to go it alone. In November 1961 Singapore joined Britain and Malaya in agreeing that Malaysia was 'a desirable aim'.

Indonesia's approach to the proposal for Malaysia was initially restrained and even mildly supportive. Ultimately, however, it was very hostile. In this latter stance it had the support of the governments in Hanoi and Peking. It seemed willing to accept some kind of larger Malay state in 1961 and its sharp hostility dates from 1962. It was arguably preoccupied with what was happening to West New Guinea until the summer of 1962. The Philippines was on the fringe of the Malaysia issue, but Manila did have views on what should happen to North Borneo, or Sabah as it was soon to be called. There was nothing, however, in the approach of the government of the Philippines to match the bitter hostility towards Malaysia that eventually characterised Indonesia's approach.

The main impetus for a larger Federation came from Malaysia. The other major player in the exercise was of course the United Kingdom which, apart from its other commitments in the region, controlled or protected the Borneo territories. Britain's approach to the issue was a complicated one and, despite the work of several scholars, there are many questions still to be answered. The East of Suez debate had barely begun in 1960, but there were questions being raised in Whitehall about what to do with territories like Sarawak and North Borneo. The question of access to bases – in Singapore, possibly in North Borneo – given Britain's commitments in the region was important and there are indications of differences between the military and the Foreign Office. The issue of the influence of the Brunei Shell Petroleum Company on British policy-making remains controversial.<sup>6</sup> It does seem clear, however, that although there were controversies and differences of opinion, the British Government on the whole welcomed the concept of Malaysia and did what it could to make it work and bring it into being. It certainly saw Malaysia as a way of dealing with the question of what to do about the Borneo territories over which it had direct control, namely Sarawak and North Borneo. Its approach to the protected state, Brunei, can be described as more sensitive.

What is also controversial is whether Britain saw Malaysia as a first step in disengagement from Southeast Asia. Historians are divided on this. Chin Kin Wah argued that the proposal to establish Malaysia was a first step in Britain's disengagement from the region.<sup>7</sup> John Darwin, in contrast, argued that Malaysia, strongly bound to Britain by a defence treaty and economic ties, was intended to strengthen British influence in the region.<sup>8</sup> A similar view, that Malaysia was not intended as a means of substantially reducing British commitments East of Suez, is put forward by John Subritzky.<sup>9</sup>

At this stage, which is before the Rebellion in December 1962, and whatever the arguments about Britain disengaging from Southeast Asia, the issue of defending Brunei did not loom large as far as British policy-makers were concerned. The issue of what was described as 'irredentist pressure' from either Indonesia or the Philippines on the Borneo territories was raised in a Note by the Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia in December 1956. The solution advanced was vague in the extreme: a political partnership between the three territories on the one hand and Her Majesty's Government on the other; Brunei to be wholly separated from Sarawak; Brunei to take over Labuan, and a new treaty guaranteeing United Kingdom support for Brunei. An Appendix went on to talk about developing 'unobtrusively in Labuan the installations and other facilities which would make it convertible into a valuable naval and military base in time of emergency.'<sup>10</sup>

In February 1959, with the Malaya Emergency moving to a successful conclusion, the Defence Coordination Committee for the Far East met in Singapore. The question of a possible two-company exercise in Brunei was Item 9 on the agenda. The view of General Sir Richard Hull, the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces, was that such an exercise was not desirable at this time:

*Should there be internal security trouble in the future it would be handled quite easily. What was needed was some form of reconnaissance to get the lie of the land and acquire local knowledge.*

*He suggested therefore that a party, ostensibly composed of sports teams, should be air transported to the oilfield and whilst engaged on its sporting activities could glean what information was needed. For the present, training exercises should be confined to North Borneo and Sarawak.*

The Minutes record that the Committee took note of the views of Sir Richard Hull.<sup>11</sup>

In October 1960 the Joint Defence Advisory Committee (Borneo) met at Kuching in Sarawak. The issue of a denial policy for the oilfields and refinery at Seria, Miri and Lukang was raised. It was agreed to continue with existing plans and retain a stock of explosives in Singapore. It was pointed out that this policy was to some extent at variance with the opinion held by the Shell Oil Company! Sir Richard Hull, Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces, referred to internal security planning and said that he advised against the holding of internal security exercises in Brunei. There would be 'familiarisation visits' by key personnel instead. He went on to say that there was no close defence plan for the Borneo territories in major war and added that 'Long range defence would take place on the mainland of Southeast Asia.' There are more than echoes of the indifference towards the defence of Brunei that distinguished British thinking and planning before 1941 and in the years after 1945. Evidence for any 'familiarisation visits' is negligible, and as to long-range defence on the mainland of Southeast Asia, what price a threat from Indonesia? The Committee also recorded an interesting comment on the position of the Sultan:

*In discussion the point was made that Internal Security in Brunei was now the responsibility of the Sultan who had full control of the police force. When the subject of an internal security plan was raised the Sultan had shied away from it and refused to accept any arrangements. General opinion was that the Sultan would be likely to take action in the event of civil disturbance in which Chinese were involved.*<sup>12</sup>

The latest thinking on the defence of Brunei, that is before the

Rebellion in December 1962 and the outbreak of Confrontation in 1963, is contained in a brief note of the Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. He recorded:

*The Colonial Office has been informed by the High Commissioner for Brunei that, in view of the Sultan's attitude to internal security problems, it is not proposed to prepare any formal defence scheme for the territory. It is intended instead to rely on familiarisation exercises by British troops and the retention by Headquarters, Far East Land Forces, of sufficient stocks of explosives to put the oilfield out of action if necessary.*<sup>13</sup>

Overall the evidence suggests that whatever determined the British view of the desirability of Malaysia, or whatever was critical on the controversial subject of disengagement in Southeast Asia, the issue of the defence of Brunei was not high on either agenda. The British view was determined by other factors; reality did not begin to kick in until December 1962.

Before looking at the Malaysia debate in 1961–2 and particularly at how Brunei fitted in, it is important to say something about the two key players in Brunei, the Sultan and Shaikh Ahmad Azahari bin Shaikh Mahmud, the latter more usually known as A. M. Azahari. In any review of the Sultan's words and actions before the Rebellion in December 1962, it is often difficult to accept that this is the same man who receives all the compliments and accolades subsequently from journalists, politicians and historians. Admittedly much of the comment at the time about his performance is from outside observers such as British representatives in Southeast Asia who were not particularly sympathetic to Brunei's position. Furthermore, compared with seasoned campaigners



such as the Tunku or Lee Kuan Yew or Sukarno, he was very much a novice in the international political game. But he remains something of an enigma over the issue of joining Malaysia in 1961 and 1962. His approach was – to put it mildly – not easy to follow.

D. C. White, the High Commissioner in Brunei, provided a useful thumbnail sketch of the Sultan as he was seen by the British at the beginning of a report that he produced for Lord Lansdowne, entitled *Political Situation – Brunei*, in August 1962. White began:

*Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin – 28th in line of succession of Muslim Rulers – born 1916 – succeeded elder brother June 1950. His elder brother was a degenerate, died of drink, leaving the prestige of the throne at a low ebb. Administration was completely in the hands of the British Resident and the State Council was a 'rubber stamp'.*

*The new Sultan, who was not expected to succeed, had no training and an indifferent education, had, at least, escaped the debauching influence of his mother. He has intelligence and charm, but is unpredictable, ungrateful though not ungenerous and, deeply religious, is convinced that he has Allah's personal approval of his actions ...*<sup>14</sup>

In a previous letter (August 1961) to the Colonial Office, White referred to the Sultan as 'conceited and obstinate', and went on 'he is incapable of understanding the real meaning of the term a "constitutional ruler" and though he pays lip service to democracy, he has a very low opinion of the democratic party here and would like to crush it.' Later in the letter White mentioned 'an outburst of hysterical laughter from the Sultan which made me wonder for the moment whether or not the family trouble was beginning to affect him.'<sup>15</sup>

White was not alone in his critical view of the Sultan. Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, visited Brunei in late August 1961 and sent a rather unflattering impression of the Sultan in a letter to Iain Macleod, the Colonial Secretary. He described the Sultan as 'alert but I fear a shock might reveal some of the mental instability of his ancestors. Moreover his contacts are very narrow ... His own people will not say anything he does not like.' Selkirk continued: 'The Sultan is frightened and wants help, but is inhibited from asking for it ... I find it hard to believe the Sultan has the personality to become an acceptable constitutional monarch of Sarawak again unless he can make himself more forthcoming and less self-centred.'<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to reflect on these critical and rather scornful views of the Sultan by British observers when considering his approach to the first stages of the Malaysia debate in 1961–2.

Shaikh A. M. Azahari is a much more controversial figure than the Sultan, and there seems to be doubt and argument about all aspects of his life. For example, Hussainmiya states that he was born on 28 August 1928 in Labuan, but goes on in a footnote to say that Azahari himself claims that he was born in Brunei Town in a house on the site where the Churchill Museum was later built. There is an agreement that his father was of Arab descent and that his mother was a Brunei Malay. He spent the years after the Second World War in Indonesia, moving to Brunei in October 1952. By the early 1960s he was the obvious focus of any popular opposition to the government in Brunei.

British comments on Azahari in the early 1960s tended to reflect two things: first, criticism of his associates; and second, criticism of his business activities. With regard to the first, a report from the British representative in Kuching in 1957 stated:

*I do not believe in Azahari's sincerity. One must believe some of the Special Branch's reports and from them it is clear that he associates when away from Brunei with all the doubtful trash which might be useful to him if he wished at any time to make trouble.*<sup>17</sup>

His two brothers, who later attacked a Malay official serving in Brunei in 1962, were described as 'thugs' by a Malay diplomat.<sup>18</sup> On the second point, D. C. White, in his report for Lord Lansdowne on the political situation in Brunei, went into some detail on Azahari's business problems:

*... Azahari had for some years been engaged in business; he has consistently borrowed money from Government with, inevitably, great reluctance or inability to repay. His methods are little short of blackmail ... loans or political trouble. His financial affairs are now hopelessly entangled. He owes Government about \$150,000 and is trying to force the 'Straits Times' to buy him out at an exorbitant price in return for favours to come.*<sup>19</sup>

### **Membership of Malaysia: Debate and Process**

What might be described as a prologue to the debate as to whether or not Brunei should become part of Malaysia occurred in 1959–60. All the main protagonists expressed views or took up positions that foreshadowed the arguments and events of 1961–2. In September 1959 the Sultan promulgated Brunei's first written Constitution. Among other things this provided for a 33-man Legislative Council, of which 16 members were to be elected. It was agreed in the London

talks that preceded the adoption of the Constitution that elections would be introduced gradually within a period of two years from September 1959 and that in the meantime the Elected Members would be appointed by the Sultan. As early as July 1960 the High Commissioner in Brunei, D. C. White, reported to the Colonial Office that there were doubts in Brunei as to whether it would be practicable to introduce elections within the specified period of two years.

White reported in April 1960 that the Sultan had gone to Kuala Lumpur and added that: 'I think one must be prepared for a move on the Sultan's part, perhaps encouraged by the Malayan Government, towards closer association with them.'<sup>20</sup> A Colonial Office paper, Brunei/Malaya Relationships, dated 12 July 1960, and prepared for the Secretary of State, reported that:

*For some time His Highness the Sultan had been showing a definite desire for a closer link with the Federation of Malaya and this has been particularly marked since September 1958. He has endeavoured to staff his administration as far as possible with Malays supplied by the Federation Government.*<sup>21</sup>

On the other side in Brunei, White, in a further letter in June 1960, wrote that: 'I think it can now be stated categorically that there would be opposition in Brunei to any attempt by the Sultan to a link-up with Malaya.'<sup>22</sup> The Colonial Office paper, Brunei/Malaya Relationship (already referred to) added that:

*The High Commissioner for Brunei has indicated since his arrival here that if the Sultan attempted to rush through alignment with the Federation of Malaya he might well come up against extreme opposition from the local Brunei population.*

Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Malayan Prime Minister, was in London in June 1960 and there he discussed – in talks at the Colonial Office – his plans to make Brunei a full partner in the Federation of Malaya. The Tunku issued a statement denying that there had been any formal talks on this matter, and added that he had been asked by a Brunei student in London at a party what he thought about Brunei joining the Federation. He said that it might be a good thing if Brunei joined the Federation. He was also reported as saying, at the same party, that the day was not far off when Malaya would merge with Brunei. He added that Brunei was too small to be an independent nation or a member state in the Commonwealth.<sup>23</sup>

The British perspective in 1959–60 is reflected in a letter from Denis Allen, the United Kingdom Deputy Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia. He thanked Sir John Martin, the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, for his views on the future of relations between Brunei and Malaya and added:

‘Although I realise that what you say has not been formulated as official policy, it is extremely helpful for us to have general guidance on these three points:

- (i) our ultimate goal should be the association, within the Commonwealth, of Malaya, the three Borneo Territories and, if possible, Singapore;
- (ii) meanwhile we can regard political association between Brunei and Malaya with benevolent neutrality but preferring it to happen later rather than sooner;
- (iii) close association between North Borneo and Sarawak should be pursued by every reasonable means that offers, but without forcing the pace.’<sup>24</sup>

The proposed association of Malaya, Singapore and the

Borneo territories in a new Federation of Malaysia took centre stage in the summer of 1961. On 27 May, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Malayan Prime Minister, in an address to the Foreign Correspondents Association of Southeast Asia in Singapore, said:

*Malaya today as a nation realises that she cannot stand alone and in isolation. ... Sooner or later she should have an understanding with Britain and the peoples of Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak.... It is inevitable that we should look ahead to this objective and think of a plan whereby these territories can be brought closer together in political and economic cooperation.*<sup>25</sup>

On 26 June, the Tunku wrote to his United Kingdom counterpart, Harold Macmillan, thanking him for an encouraging statement he had made in the House of Commons, and enclosing a memorandum giving 'our further thoughts on the subject which I hope may serve as a basis for discussions.' On the issue of Brunei, the Memorandum stated:

*3. The history of the Federation of Malaya is interrelated with the history of the Sultanate of Brunei which was formerly a powerful state with authority over those other two Borneo territories and territories of the Malay archipelago... Racially the various indigenous peoples of these territories are related to the Malays, in fact they come of the same stock...*

*4. It is proposed therefore as a first step that the territories of Brunei, Borneo and Sarawak be brought into the Federation as units of the Federation, enjoying the same rights and privileges as the State which presently forms the Federation of Malaya... Brunei being a Sultanate, would have a Sultan as Head of State...*<sup>26</sup>

The issue of Brunei's response to the idea of joining Malaysia was almost immediately affected by what happened in early July. The Tunku accompanied the Malayan king, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, on a four-day state visit to Brunei from 1 July 1961. The Tunku made some injudicious remarks both in Sarawak en route to Brunei and in Brunei itself about those opposed to the Malaysia proposal. He compounded these by some patronising comments about the Sultan and about the people of Brunei. According to newspaper reports he described the Sultan as 'a very enlightened Ruler and one who feels that Brunei is identified with other States of the Federation,' and added that if the Brunei Government were asked 'if they wanted to join, they would say "Yes".'<sup>27</sup> To complicate matters further the Tunku then became involved in the issue of an assault on a Malay Forestry Officer, Yakin bin Haji Long, seconded for service in Brunei. He was assaulted by two of Azahari's brothers. The case was settled in court but the Tunku, in a series of statements, criticised the police in Brunei and threatened to withdraw all the Malayan officers. The upshot was a vitriolic attack on the Tunku by the Party Rakyat of Brunei (PRB) and he was accused of being 'the tool of a Great Power, anxious to retain foreign troops in Southeast Asia.' He was also accused of 'Colonialism: he has inherited the Colonialist spirit – anyone who disagrees with him is accused of evil-doing.'<sup>28</sup> Interestingly enough, when the Tunku had a longish conversation with Geofroy Tory, the British High Commissioner in Malaya on 4 August 1961, he was very upbeat about the prospects of Brunei joining Malaysia. Among other things:

*He said he was convinced that the bulk of the Brunei Malays were well disposed towards Malaya and would gladly follow the Sultan's lead if he were to decide in favour of association*

*with the Federation. The Party Ra'ayat in Brunei, the Tunku said, was very small and completely unrepresentative. Much too much attention was being paid to Azahari, who really should not be allowed to influence Brunei's future. He very much doubted whether Party Ra'ayat were strong enough to start any significant trouble in Brunei. He was sure there was no need to woo the Brunei Malays.<sup>29</sup>*

What added to the tension in Brunei in the summer of 1961 was the Sultan's decision to postpone the first democratic elections which were due to be held by September 1961, two years after the promulgation of the Constitution. The position of the Government was that a Nationality Enactment had to be settled first in order to decide who would be eligible to vote and this Enactment would not be ready until the end of 1961. The PRB, reacting to the postponement of the election, organised several rallies in Brunei Town from 17 June onwards, culminating in what was described as a mammoth demonstration on 6 August. The PRB also presented a petition to Dennis White, the High Commissioner, asking for the United Kingdom to intervene to ensure that the election would be held according to the original schedule. White sent the petition to the Secretary of State in London and, in a letter of 16 August, set out his views on the situation. He underlined the linkage between the issue of elections and the question of the Federation of Malaysia. He also added that his sympathies were largely with the PRB, although he hoped that he had not given the Sultan any inkling of this!

*As you know I am convinced that the Party Rakyat is a force to be reckoned with. As I have said before, the great imponderable is the Sultan's personal influence. I believe it to be considerable, but I doubt if it is strong enough to avoid a head*



*on clash if he tries to merge before elections are held. I have sent you a copy of a letter I have written to Geofroy Tory, seeking his assistance in disabusing the Tunku on this score ...*

*HM Government is now in the position that I foresaw; the line up being the Sultan, the Palace Party and Tunku Abdul Rahman versus the people of Brunei. The Sultan is Allah inspired, so I suppose we must add Allah to the Sultan's team and the Party Rakyat are appealing to HM Government to preserve democracy in Brunei; they are, of course, perfectly well aware that such a thing has never existed in Brunei and doubt if the Sultan ever intends that it shall...<sup>30</sup>*

White followed up this letter with a further letter to the Colonial Office on 29 August after Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General, had visited Brunei and had talks with the Sultan. He said that while he now had the impression that the Sultan was a little apprehensive of the result of trying to bulldoze a merger:

*I am satisfied that the Sultan is unshaken in his desire to merge; his motives are several; he is undoubtedly anxious to get into line for the post of Agong and sees security for the dynasty in becoming a member of the Sultans Club, but he is also a Malay nationalist at heart and wishes to see Malay becoming an important language in Asia. He is also deeply concerned with the standing of Islam in the area.*

White went on to examine the position of the Party Rakyat and added:

*The only obvious solution to the problem is to persuade the Sultan to change his attitude to the Party Rakyat, to grant*

*Azahari an interview and to give him assurances about elections and point out the advantages to Brunei which would result from a merger and enlist his support. If the Tunku gave his backing and was conciliatory, I feel that there is a good chance that the Party would agree to a merger.<sup>31</sup>*

Selkirk sent his own appreciation of the situation in a letter to Iain Macleod, the Secretary of State, dated 12 September 1961. He was generally in agreement with the views of White and supportive of his position. He suggested that it was vital for the Sultan to establish a relationship with Azahari:

*I have not met Azahari but all reports indicate he is on the whole of a reasonable frame of mind. But clearly he could if permanently alienated become fertile soil either for Communists or Indonesians to work on ... If we cannot reconcile the Sultan and Azahari, there is almost certain to be a clash both inside Brunei and outside in relation to the Tunku's Greater Malaysia. I have no doubt Azahari is strong enough to prevent any move the Sultan may make towards the Federation.<sup>32</sup>*

The net result of the events in the summer of 1961 – the Tunku's visit and the issue of the elections – was to throw Brunei into turmoil. This continued through the autumn and into the winter of 1961–2. There was something of a breakdown of administration within the country, and the Sultan was forced to replace several senior officials. The new deputy Mentri Besar, Marsal bin Maun, and the new deputy State Secretary, Pengiran Yussof, had had close contacts with the Party Rakyat. Now they appeared to be firmly on the Sultan's side, and, according to Dennis White, did a good job in cleaning up the administrative mess. The Sultan announced that

elections would be held no later than October 1962; he welcomed the prospects of Malaysia in his speech from the throne at the meeting of the Council but he undertook to consult the people first before any attempt to join. There was also some attempt to conciliate the *Parti Rakyat*: one of the more violent members was made State Welfare Officer and Azahari was invited to serve on a Committee to study the Malaysia proposal. The internal security situation did not improve and there were fears that the imminent departure of the Royal Malayan Police force contingent would make things worse. There was little faith in the inadequately trained Brunei Police Force with its one British officer.<sup>33</sup>

In the winter of 1961–2, on the issue of whether or not Brunei should join Malaysia, the Sultan's attitude can best be described as equivocal. Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General, reported in February 1962 that in December 1961 the Sultan had set up an internal Commission to assess and report on public opinion on the issue of whether or not Brunei should join. The five-member Commission ended its investigation in January 1962 and recorded what was described as 'stiff opposition' from all sections of the population to any notion of Brunei joining a Federation of Malaysia. The Commission noted a 'decided preference' for a Federation with Sarawak and North Borneo. White, in his letter of 13 March, reported that the Sultan had called a meeting for 22 March to discuss the Commission's report. In a further letter, on 24 March, White reported that it had been decided to scrap the Commission's report, which was the work of Marsal, its Chairman, and had not been seen by the other four members of the Commission! Another Committee was to be appointed to look into the situation. White added:

4. *The Attorney-General tells me that the Sultan seems to be swinging back to his previous support of Malaysia. The Secretary of State's letter may have had an effect on him. There is talk of putting a resolution in favour of Malaysia to the Legislative Council and it may be significant that the meeting scheduled for 18 March has been postponed till 16 April.*

*It is difficult to predict what exactly will happen if such a resolution was agreed in a nominated and official legislative council. My view is that there will be trouble, but the Sultan's personal influence is strong and a great many of the Party Rakyat members might well jib at an outright attack on the Sultan's decision. Nevertheless, we must be prepared for a situation arising beyond the ability of the Brunei Police Force to control.<sup>34</sup>*

It was agreed in Anglo-Malayan talks in the Autumn of 1961 to set up a Commission of Enquiry to survey opinion in Sarawak and North Borneo. The Commission was chaired by Lord Cobbold, a former Governor of the Bank of England, and comprised four other members, two official British appointments and two Malay. The Cobbold Commission began its work early in 1962, flying into Kuching, Sarawak, on 19 February. Lord Cobbold delivered his final report to the British and Malayan Prime Ministers on 21 June 1962. The Commission, on paper, did a very thorough job in assessing opinion in the two Borneo territories, and all five members were united in the opinion that Federation with Malaysia offered Sarawak and North Borneo the best prospects for the future. The Commission received 2,200 letters and statements from district councils, trades unions, political parties and other organised groups, and also met with some 4,000 people. Its report concluded that about one-third of the people in the

two territories favoured Malaysia without too much concern about terms and conditions, another third were favourable to Malaysia but did want some safeguards, and the remaining third either wanted independence first or preferred to retain the status quo, that is continued British rule.<sup>35</sup>

There remains some controversy about the work and conclusions of the Cobbold Commission. A contemporary observer suggested that its findings were somewhat flawed 'as it did not concern itself with the depth of understanding of those supporting Malaysia' and 'it failed to question the representative character of the meeting of chiefs who purported to speak for 112,000 Ibans.'<sup>36</sup> Greg Poulgrain claims that one of the two Malay representatives on the Commission had close links with British Intelligence.<sup>37</sup> Archana Sharma, in his study of British policy towards Malaysia, suggests that Britain had already decided in favour of Sarawak and North Borneo joining the Federation and the Cobbold Report 'was almost a forgone conclusion.' He also quotes Sukarno as observing in 1963, 'What the British have done is merely to assemble some of the chieftains and ask them whether they want Malaysia. Of course, because of their relationship with the British, they naturally say yes.'<sup>38</sup> Most recently, Dr Zaini Haji Ahmad, in 1962 Vice President of Party Rakyat and one of the leader Azahari's most trusted supporters, asserted in an interview in 2002 that the Commission was a fraud, that the results were a foregone conclusion and that the British were hoodwinked. Zaini's argument turns on the issue of the translation from English into Malay of the questions put to various people and groups in North Borneo and Sarawak.<sup>39</sup>

The Cobbold Commission did not directly concern Brunei and there was never any question of the Sultanate being included in its remit. However, its work and its findings were of intense interest to both supporters and opponents of

Brunei joining the new Federation. There were elements on both sides who saw Brunei's future in terms of relations with the two Borneo territories – both part of Brunei little more than 100 years ago – and on a more limited level claims were entertained with regard to Labuan and Limbang. Cobbold and the Commission paid a courtesy visit to Brunei and met with the Sultan on 11 March. White reported this to the Colonial Office, commenting:

*Although I had stressed to him that it was a courtesy call, he (the Sultan) had his advisers out in force and pressed Lord Cobbold on his terms of reference and on progress in their investigations. Lord Cobbold stressed that HM Government had welcomed the Tunku's proposals, but were otherwise uncommitted. ... The Sultan was not asked for, nor did he volunteer, any views on Brunei's reactions.<sup>40</sup>*

White had a long private talk with the Sultan on 12 June. The latter wanted to know if the Cobbold Report was ready and he asked whether the Brunei Government would be given a copy. White replied diplomatically that he did not think that the Report would be made available to other governments until it had been considered by the governments in London and Kuala Lumpur and the authorities in Sarawak and North Borneo. The Sultan then asked when it was to be published. White said that he did not know. The Sultan added that his Government could take no steps until he knew the terms and conditions suggested for Sarawak and North Borneo. He then quoted the Malay proverb that literally translated means 'Travel slowly and arrive safely.' White promised to find out, in confidence, what he could for the Sultan.<sup>41</sup>

After the presentation of the Cobbold Report to the two governments in June there were further discussions, and an

agreement was reached on the way forward at talks held in London in July 1962. The Malayan delegation to the talks was led by the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and included the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Tun Abdul Razak. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, joined in the last stages of the talks. The talks began on 17 July and continued until 31 July. On 1 August, Duncan Sandys, the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, announced to the House of Commons what had been agreed and gave information about the publication of the Report of the Cobbold Commission. There were some 17 points in the Agreed Proposals, but the main one (Number One) was that Malaysia 'will be brought into being by 31st August 1963 with the simultaneous transfer of British sovereignty over Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak to Malaya.' One of the other points agreed was the setting up of an Intergovernmental Committee to be chaired by Lord Lansdowne, with representatives from Britain, Malaya, Sarawak and North Borneo. This would concern itself, among other things, with working out detailed constitutional and administrative arrangements. The 17 proposals agreed made no reference to Brunei, but the Telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office, dated 10 August, to the various High Commissions around the world added the following paragraph:

*The Legislative council of Brunei passed a resolution on 17 July approving a message from the Sultan supporting the principle of Malaysia with the proviso that the terms of entry negotiated 'should not diminish the status of Brunei as a constitutional state.' It was agreed in our discussions with the Tunku that the inclusion of Brunei in Malaysia would be welcomed and separate negotiations on conditions for entry of Brunei are expected in the autumn.<sup>42</sup>*

## **Elections and the Run-down to the Rebellion**

The Report of the Cobbold Commission, the London meetings in July – which obviously Brunei did not attend – and the decisions taken at those meetings left the Sultanate in what could be called a dilemma or a state of limbo. How should the Sultan respond to the new situation? How should he approach negotiations in the autumn or whenever? The issue of what to do about Malaysia was now real and urgent.

How did Brunei view the proposed Federation and approach the issue of whether or not it should become a member? It can be argued that Brunei should have been ideal material for Malaysia. The issues of race, language, religion and custom, which burdened Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo, were absent in Brunei. The Sultanate had the highest percentage of Malays of any component state in the proposed Federation, Malay was the official language, Islam the official religion, and the people were accustomed to a Sultan as head of state. The two major external factors affecting the attitude of the Sultan and his government were the opinions of the United Kingdom and Malaya. The official British line in 1961–2, at least publicly, was endorsement of Brunei's entry, although that endorsement was not always clear-cut or enthusiastic. The support for entry grew stronger following the outbreak of the Rebellion.

The official Malayan line was that of a warm invitation to enter the proposed Federation. The assumption in Kuala Lumpur initially seems to have been that Brunei had no other serious option. Perhaps because of this there was an arrogance about the Malayan approach, whether over the question of control of oil or over defence issues or over the relative position of the Sultan in the new Malaysia royal hierarchy.



This arrogance was personified by the Tunku, both in his disastrous visit to Brunei in 1961 and in his treatment of the Sultan on a later occasion when the latter visited Kuala Lumpur. In addition to their resentment of what was seen as Malayan arrogance, there are also hints that the Sultan and his advisers were uneasy at the possibility of some kind of hidden agenda between the Tunku and Azahari. The latter made several visits to Malaya in the late 1950s.

While the Sultan was always the key decision-maker, the public debate in Brunei about the issue of joining Malaysia was generally dominated by Azahari and his Party Rakyat Brunei (PRB). Azahari, as we have seen, was a very complex character: nationalist, zealot, failed businessman, charismatic leader, and completely unscrupulous. Despite his business failures he seemed to have limitless funds by the end of the 1950s and there were always rumours that he had 'borrowed' from the Sultan.<sup>43</sup> Azahari and the PRB took the lead in 1961 and 1962 in vigorous opposition to Brunei – and indeed to Sarawak and North Borneo – joining Malaysia. There were demands for the return of Sarawak and North Borneo to their rightful owner, Brunei. The proposal flattered the Sultan. On the other hand, the Sultan may have been using Azahari. Despite their differences, the Sultan may have been tempted by Azahari's agenda. White, in a letter of 20 December 1962, suggests this and goes on:

*We know that Azahari had told the Tunku of his plan to reunite the Borneo Territories under the Sultan and then take them into Malaysia. I suspect, in fact, I am almost sure that Azahari discussed this with the Sultan.*<sup>44</sup>

The enigma over the issue of joining Malaysia in 1961 and 1962 was, and remains, the Sultan. His attitude was – to put

it mildly – not easy to follow. Initially enthusiastic – apparently – then wavering, then mildly enthusiastic and so on. He was certainly upset by the attitude of the Tunku. There is more than an element of controversy – and mystery – about his relationship with Azahari.

The postponed elections, when they came in August 1962, resulted in a landslide victory for the Party Rakyat Brunei. An attempt was made earlier in the year to bring together two small parties, the Brunei People's Party and the Brunei National Organisation, in an alliance to support the idea of Brunei joining Malaysia and to counter the PRB.<sup>45</sup> However, the somewhat belated strategy failed completely. The result was a foregone conclusion even before polling day, as on the day of nomination 32 of the 55 seats returned PRB candidates unopposed. This ensured that whatever happened on polling day, the Party would control three of the four District Councils.

Polling day itself passed off without incident, and indeed without much enthusiasm. There seemed to be an almost fatalistic acceptance of the fact that the PRB was invincible, and the only defeat for the Party was in a small outlying district that had a strong independent local candidate. The PRB thus won 54 of the 55 seats, gained control of all District Councils and were certain of all 16 elected seats in the Legislative Council. Incidentally the one victorious independent candidate from the Temburong district joined the PRB immediately after the election! White's comments on the result show the problems and indeed confusion that followed the elections:

*The elections were a triumph for the Party Rakyat over the established leadership... I believe that the Party would like to pursue a moderate line and avoid a clash, but this may not*

*suit the ideas of the present Government leaders and the Palace Party, some of who undoubtedly would like to pursue a militant policy to try to crush the Party Rakyat. The Party themselves are in a difficulty, as they must realise by now that their platform of a reunification of the three territories is a non-starter.*

*It will be interesting to see what attitude the Sultan will adopt in nominating the unofficials from [sic.] the Legislative council, and what attitude the unofficials will adopt when confronting their Ruler across the table in Council. The Sultan gives no sign of apprehension on this score and may, with some justification, be confident in his ability to keep them in order.*

*The issue is now reasonably clear: –*

*Consultation with the Party Rakyat on Malaysia and attempts to win their support or a unilateral decision taken by the Sultan and his advisers; if it is to be the latter, there may well be a clash.*

In a subsequent comment, White said that intimidation was rife and tension was increasing. 'It may be difficult to find nominated members resistant to Party Rakyat intimidation.'<sup>46</sup>

The landslide victory for Azahari and the PRB did not of course mean that they could take over the Government, for the Legislative Council did not have a majority of elected seats and had no constitutional authority over the Executive. Whatever the formal constitutional position, however, the result was a public setback for the Sultan. Azahari and the PRB had fought and won the election on an anti-Malaysia ticket and the result made it difficult for the Sultan, in the short term, to go ahead with any negotiations on the

Malaysia question. This did not prevent some negotiations from taking place. White reported on the work of a committee in Brunei that was drawing up a 'shopping list' to take to Kuala Lumpur on 25 September to begin informal negotiations.

The situation changed quite dramatically in Brunei at the end of the year when the security situation deteriorated. By the beginning of December the stage was set for the Rebellion that was soon to break out, although the reports coming out of Brunei were sometimes contradictory. On 1 December the High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur reported on a meeting that day with the Tunku. The latter talked of clear evidence coming out of Brunei of plans for an early insurrection organised by the Party Rakyat. Arms were being dumped near the border and some potential Brunei leaders had been sent for training to Indonesian Borneo.

Police and former Special Branch officers who are now retired, but who have memories of this period, stated that in fact some 20–30 people were sent by TNKU to Kalimantan, in Indonesian Borneo, for training. But even this episode had some of the black comedy that is later associated with the mistakes made by the rebels during the uprising. When these trainees reached the customs point on the border with Kalimantan they had no documentation; neither did the Indonesian Military know that they were coming. So they were sent home again to get the proper documents. They then turned around again and walked all the way back to the border. This time they were expected, and were housed in an Indonesian military base. However, nobody had prepared a training programme and so, instead of receiving practical training in all the skills of guerrilla warfare and terrorism, they spent their days on the parade ground being drilled by

an Indonesian sergeant major. They were not even given any training on weapons.

Even so, the Sultan of Brunei was reported to be in a state of terror for his own life and in daily fear of abduction or worse.<sup>47</sup> On 3 December, Dennis White's deputy, W. J. Parks, wrote to White (now on a visit to London) about reports of the activities of the Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara (TNKU) or North Kalimantan National Army. This was believed to be a militant group of extremists within the Party Rakyat.<sup>48</sup> On 5 December there was a report to the Colonial Office from North Borneo about activity by the TNKU in the Limbang and Lawas districts of neighbouring Sarawak. The TNKU were connected to the Party Rakyat in Brunei 'and there seems also to be some link with Indonesia.'<sup>49</sup> And finally, Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, reported on 7 December on a recent visit he had made to Brunei. He met with the Sultan and his senior officials 'and found a general air of complacency.' Obviously the Sultan had recovered from the state of terror reported only a week earlier by the Tunku! Selkirk sought to dispel this air of complacency by referring to the size of the TNKU, now reported to be 1,000 strong on Brunei's soil alone. Selkirk continued the report of his meeting with the Sultan and his officials and it is important to remember that this was sent the day before the Rebellion broke out:

*4. The meeting considered the recall of the Brunei regiment from Malaya to reinforce the police but doubts were expressed as to its reliability and experience and the Sultan wished to know about the availability of British armed forces if required. I said I hoped the latter would not be necessary but that we would, of course, be ready to fulfil our treaty obligations.*

5. *Brunei is potentially in a dangerously revolutionary condition. The loyalty of the police is very open to question and their discipline is reported not to be at a high level ...*
6. *The Mentri Besar regards all this simply as a move to gain power in Brunei and thereafter to divide up the money invested. He has no doubt of the association between Party Rakyat and Azahari with TNKU, and his immediate reaction is to take repressive measures ...*
7. *The movement appears to extend from Miri through Brunei to Beaufort West on the border of North Borneo ...*
8. *As I left Brunei reports came in of an armed attack on oil installations in Miri planned for 2 a.m. on Saturday morning December 8 ...*<sup>50</sup>

Brunei was now about to face the second of the two challenges of the early 1960s – the Brunei Rebellion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Brunei Rebellion Part One: The Popular Uprising

In any league tables of rebellions, the events that took place in Brunei between December 1962 and May 1963 are somewhere near the bottom of one of the lower divisions. The critical period of the Rebellion can be measured in days rather than weeks, the numbers involved were small, the scale of the activity was low-key, the effects on people's lives and livelihoods were limited, and the effort needed to put down the Rebellion was not great.

Things might to some extent have been different if the planning had been more efficient and if more support had been forthcoming from neighbouring Sarawak and North Borneo. Even so, it would still be a fairly minor sequence of events, in a region riven since 1945 by major wars, revolutions and rebellions. A cynical observer, of course, might well argue that big countries like China have rebellions and revolutions that last for decades; small countries like Brunei have small rebellions.

If, however, we look at the consequences of the Rebellion, the perspective changes quite significantly. George McTurnan Kahin, one of the most eminent of American Asian scholars, put it rather dramatically in his memoir of 50 years of study of the region:

*... it was the rebellion that broke out on 8 December 1962 in the Sultanate of Brunei – slated at the time to be a component of the Malaysian federation – that precipitated the opposition of the Philippines and the Republic of Indonesia to it. Prior to the Brunei rebellion there was no clear indication that Indonesia or the Philippines would oppose Britain's evolving plan for the creation of Malaysia, even if that federation incorporated the northern Borneo territories. But the Brunei uprising and its quick suppression by British troops flown in from Singapore and Malaya were clearly critical in sparking the open opposition of both Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>1</sup>*

Without necessarily going all the way with George Kahin, there is no doubt that the Rebellion had significant consequences within the Sultanate on the position of the Sultan, on the issue of whether or not to join Malaysia and on the prospects for any form of democracy in the country. On the bigger or wider stage, it changed the nature of the British connection to Brunei, it was a prelude to confrontation and it certainly helped to precipitate it.

## **The Outbreak of the Rebellion**

There is still a good deal of confusion as to what happened in the early hours of 8 December 1962 and why it happened then and not earlier or later. The latest account on the subject,



the book published recently entitled *8 Disember: Dalanguya Siapa? [8 December: Who is the Culprit?]*<sup>2</sup> is able to fill in some of the details on the events, and I am most grateful to our national historian Pehin Dato Jamil for his permission to quote from his work.

Dr Greg Poulgrain, both in his book<sup>3</sup> and in private discussions, claims that there was a very close relationship between the Shell Oil Company and both the Colonial Office bureaucracy and the intelligence services in the Far East. Dr Poulgrain asserts that the Shell Oil Company had access to all despatches to and from London to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Brunei Town.

What is clear, however, is that some of the accounts of what happened on 8 December, despite a mass of evidence to the contrary, still emphasise how completely unexpected it all was. Thus Peter Harclerode talks about the 'insurrection suddenly exploded without warning in Brunei' and Tom Pocock, Walter Walker's biographer, writes that: 'No hint of trouble in Brunei had reached Walker.'<sup>4</sup> Walker's own comment on the outbreak of the Rebellion is a little obscure: 'It was while I was on one of my treks in Nepal in December 1962, that the Brunei Revolt blew up.'<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of record, there were plenty of hints, rumours and reports of possible trouble in the British Borneo territories, including Brunei, for some months before December, some of which have been referred to in the previous chapter. In early 1962 there were reports of small, armed bands training in the jungle. *The Borneo Bulletin* reported in May 1962 that:

.... A mysterious Indonesian-led Borneo 'Liberation Army' of about 1,000 men may be hiding in the jungle near here – or may be encamped on Indonesian territory close to the Sarawak border, ready to march into British Borneo.<sup>6</sup>

Information about this irregular armed force, which became known as the Tentara Nasional Kalimantan Utara (TNKU) or North Kalimantan National Army, continued to emerge and circulate in the months between May and December. In an interview with the author B. A. Hussainmiya, in Brunei in April 2003, he maintained that Special Branch had a source, a 'mole', inside the PRB. Dr Hussainmiya suggested it was Pehin Salleh, the party ideologue and long-time associate of Azahari who ended up as Vice President of the PRB. This was a bitter and disappointed man who believed he should have been leader. This is a private view and is not included in Dr Hussainmiya's authoritative book.<sup>7</sup>

Yassin Affendi was the General Secretary of the PRB in 1962. He was interviewed in 2003 in Brunei. He also commented that on several occasions Azahari had complained that there was a traitor in their group. Yassin Affendi recalled one such occasion just a month before the Uprising when Azahari broke down and wept. He was convinced that the British knew all their plans and intentions.

Rumours and speculation have always pointed to Pehin Salleh as the traitor, but there is no hard evidence to incriminate him. However, it would appear that Pehin Salleh took no active part in the Uprising, and Yassin Affendi maintains that he was not arrested afterwards. He was a schoolteacher, and later under His Majesty Sultan Bolkiah was made Head of Information Services in Brunei.

In November there was apparently something of a run in Brunei shops on jungle-green cloth, knapsacks, knives and parangs. D. C. White, the High Commissioner for Brunei, in his report on 20 December 1962, talked of:

*Reports over the last few months have been received of parties of Brunei youths proceeding through Sarawak to Indonesian*

*territory for some form of military training, but investigation failed to substantiate the rumours...*

And later in the same report:

*A few days before the revolt, arrests were made in the Lawas district of the Vth Division (in Sarawak) of men with the Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara uniform and insignia; one uniform was found in the Temburong enclave, which is part of the State of Brunei.<sup>8</sup>*

The arrests were a matter of great concern to the War Committee of the TNKU, who feared that their secret plans for an uprising would be revealed under interrogation.

There was no agreement in the report at the time of the possible numbers of the TNKU and there has been no agreement since among the various commentators and authorities. Kahin talks of approximately 400 men from Brunei, who crossed into Indonesian Borneo before the Rebellion and received some military training, and that between 100 and 150 of them returned to fight.<sup>9</sup> Harclerode speaks of 4,000 men in the TNKU in the latter part of 1962 of whom only 2,250 were fully trained. They were poorly armed. He does not distinguish between Bruneians and non-Bruneians in the TNKU. He refers to Indonesia providing 'guerrilla warfare training for TNKU officers.' Philip Towle<sup>10</sup> suggested that the TNKU numbered some 2,000 in all and invaded Brunei in December 1962. Another speaker at the Symposium, Brigadier E. D. Smith, however, took issue with Dr Towle. Smith had declared that the Brunei Rebellion was:

*... about 95% local people and during October and November 1962, training and recruiting were carried out throughout the*

*State. By December, there were about 8,000 people on the roll. Few had any training and few had any arms but their idea was to take over the State.*<sup>11</sup>

If there was and is confusion about the numbers and status of the TNKU in the months leading up to the Rebellion, there was also doubt about the motives of the possible rebels. What did they want? Much of this has to do with the enigmatic performance of Azahari. In September 1962, *The Borneo Bulletin* had two statements on the front page from Azahari. In one he talked about a meeting with leaders in Sarawak and North Borneo to press for the creation of 'an independent federation of Borneo.' In the other, in an interview with the Sultan, he pledged the support of his party to the ruler's acceptance in principle of the proposed plan for Malaysia.<sup>12</sup> Early in December, Azahari announced that three motions would be proposed at the first meeting of the new Legislative Council:

- (i) rejecting Malaysia;
- (ii) requesting the restoration of Brunei sovereignty over Sarawak and North Borneo;
- (iii) calling for a British grant of independence to a Borneo federation not later than 1963.<sup>13</sup>

On the afternoon of 8 December 1962, immediately after the Uprising in the small hours, Azahari announced at a press conference in Manila that the Sultan of Brunei had declared an independent state of the three British Borneo territories and had designated him (Azahari) as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Azahari issued a Proclamation of Independence at the Press Conference.<sup>14</sup> There is no reference to this in documents in the PRO in London. Dato Pehin Jamil in *8 Disember*

produced the document in translation: this is an important document and is reproduced in Appendix One.

Among other things, Azahari claimed that a North Borneo national army of seven divisions and 20,000 men, all local and without foreign infiltration, had taken over the towns.

In addition to the problems of assessing the strength of potential rebel forces in the run-up to the outbreak, and the confusion as to what they were after, there was also considerable controversy at the time, which persists today, over the timing of the Rebellion. As early as August 1962, D. C. White would report on concerns about what he called 'Party Rakyat tactics' and would comment that:

*Intimidation is rife, and tension is increasing.*<sup>15</sup>

On 1 September, Tunku Abdul Rahman at a meeting with the High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur would report on:

*... clear evidence in Brunei of plans for an early insurrection organised by Party Rakyat... Goode in Jesselton is said to have evidence of dumping of arms near the border and it is suspected that Brunei Malays are receiving arms from known illegal Philippines/North Borneo arms traffic ... we should be prepared to take emergency action.*<sup>16</sup>

W. J. Parks, who was Dennis White's deputy in Brunei, wrote to White on 3 December (White had returned to the United Kingdom for a brief visit) that the Brunei Police had very little information about the ramifications of the TNKU in the State:

*From time to time, scraps of information come in about drilling and the existence of 'parade grounds' but so far only about four possible 'parade grounds' have been discovered ... So far there*

*has been no statement whatsoever from the Brunei Government about what is going on ... The result of this is that wild rumours are flying around and will increase so long as the Government remains silent ...*<sup>17</sup>

It is important to say something at this stage about the Brunei Police. Again there are no records or documents. The few books on the subject are commemorative features more concerned with photographs and uniforms than any historical account.

At the outbreak of the rebellion there were fewer than 200 men in the Brunei Police Service. The first police were introduced into Brunei in 1906 when the head office for the police was at Labuan. This early police force comprised officers seconded from the Straits Settlement at Singapore. Their prime task was routine general duties at the office of the Resident and Government buildings.

On 1 January 1921 the Brunei Police Force was separated from the Straits Police Force under a Royal Decree. The first phase was recruited from ex-Indian Army soldiers such as Pathans under a British Inspector. In 1923 the responsibility of the Brunei Police was extended to cover the fire brigade, prison warders, immigration officials, permits and municipality stores, registration of aliens and resident permits. And this was how it remained through the war years (when the police force was absorbed into the Japanese military occupation) until 1960, when separate Customs, Marine and Immigration Departments were established. But the fire brigade, prison warders and permit facilities remained with the police. So at the time of the Rebellion a fair guess would be that about 200 men were actually serving on police duties. Most of the senior officers were British or Rhodesian. Most had come from the Malayan Police Service and were

ex-Second World War soldiers who had begun their colonial police experience in Palestine.

The point to make is that those heads of department, all with the rank of Superintendent, such as Coster and Outram, were hugely experienced in counterinsurgency.

Several policemen were Malaysians but there are no figures available. The Special Branch, under Superintendent Coster, comprised Malays and Bruneians but was a small force and vastly inexperienced. That mattered less at the time because of the Shell Oil Company, which not only had its own armed guards and watchmen but had a small department devoted to political affairs in Brunei. This was the best source of intelligence in the Sultanate. Dr Poulgrain, in his book<sup>18</sup> and in private discussions, saw this organisation as a very sinister force, but there is no evidence to support this claim.

The ordinary police officers served within the main police station in Brunei Town or in one of the seven other police stations located throughout the country. They were recruited from the Kampongs, usually on personal or family recommendations, and by the time of the Rebellion 30 had been to Malaya for training. Every policeman was trained to fire the ex-British army Lee Enfield 303 rifle; a small armoury was kept at each station, with a central armoury in the police station in Brunei Town. This would explain why the police stations came under attack in the opening phase of the Uprising; the rebels were after the weapons. For their daily duties the police were unarmed except for a baton. Policemen who guarded the Sultan's Istana, however, did carry rifles but usually no ammunition.

There is reference to both the Sarawak Field Police Force and the North Borneo Field Force. These were special units under some youthful British Inspectors who were trained and armed to operate, as the name suggests, in the field.

A complicating factor in the timing of the Rebellion was possibly the date of the first meeting of the new Legislative Council. It was to have been in September 1962, but it was postponed by the Sultan – on the advice of the British – to October, then November and finally to December. It was scheduled to meet on 5 December and then postponed again, first to the 13th and then to the 19th of the month.

On 23 November, Richard Morris, the British Resident responsible for the 5th Division of Sarawak, learned that an uprising would occur in neighbouring Brunei after 19 December. On 6 December, he sent a further report that the Rebellion was now due to begin on the morning of the 8th.<sup>19</sup> The following day (the 7th), John Fisher, the Resident in the Fourth Division of Sarawak in Miri, learned of impending trouble and sent the information on to – among others – the Police Chief in Brunei. This information was passed on to Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General, who was visiting Brunei. He was able to send a telegram to the Foreign Office on 7 December that an armed attack was planned on the oil installations in Miri for 2.00 a.m. on Saturday 8 December.<sup>20</sup> White, in his report on the Rebellion for the Colonial Secretary, would add:

*Two or three days before the revolt started, Pengiran Dato Ali, Deputy Mentri Besar, and the Sultan's confidant, started to feed reports to the Police of the storing of uniforms and arms in the villages. Police searches failed to confirm this ... On Friday (7th) at about mid-day, Mr Parks, my A.D.C., was informed on the 'safe' telephone by Mr Linton, the Shell Managing Director on Seria, that the Resident, Miri, Mr Fisher, had received what he regarded as reliable information that a revolt was timed to start in the early hours of Saturday morning. This information was conveyed to the Earl of Selkirk*



*... to the Sultan and Mentri Besar, and Police precautions were taken ...*<sup>21</sup>

So Fisher, Parks, Morris, Linton and Selkirk got it right, although as we shall see, it did not seem to have much effect on the perceptions of the authorities in Singapore. There is some speculation that the Uprising was premature and that a date on or after 19 December (Morris's report on 23 November) was the intended 'D-Day'. This was supported by Dr Zaini in an interview.

With the Sultan prevaricating over the meeting of the Legislative Council, Zaini, like others in the Party Rakyat, wanted to take their cause on to the international stage. His story is that he met up with Azahari in Singapore and together they flew on to Manila. They hoped for Philippines support. He intended to fly on to New York to present their case before the United Nations.

Since the United Kingdom was responsible for the Sultanate's foreign relations, Azahari and his team, like all Bruneians who travelled overseas in those days, travelled on British passports.

But it was the case that with the net closing, Azahari and his top advisers had to get beyond the reach of the British. They could not remain in Brunei, neither Malaya nor Singapore were safe, but Manila was beyond the jurisdiction of the British.

I remain convinced that Azahari knew that the Rebellion had been brought forward and that it would succeed. Zaini has said that while they were in Manila, Azahari was tremendously optimistic. So there was every reason, with a successful uprising in Brunei, for him to reach the United Nations and present their case to the General Assembly before the British could launch a counter-operation from Singapore.

What Azahari did not count on, as will become apparent, was the speed of the British response, the blunders of his own people or indeed the failure of the population to rise in revolt. But there still remains one intriguing question. If the intended date had been 19 December and the Rebellion was therefore premature, why did the Shell Oil Company have their launch waiting in the river close to the Istana from the beginning of December? After all, they were credited with the finest intelligence department in Brunei.

Zaini knew of the TNKU, and that some members had gone across the border into Indonesia for training. Nevertheless he claims that it came as a complete surprise when, late in the afternoon of the 7th, he was summoned to Azahari's room at their hotel in Manila to be greeted by his leader with the words:

*Son, tonight there will be an uprising in Brunei, the PRB and its military wing will rise in revolt against the British influence.*<sup>22</sup>

Zaini's argument is that the police and Special Branch in Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei had seized uniforms and documents, and it was feared that information about plans for an uprising, planned for after 19 December, had been uncovered. This account is confirmed by Pengiran Roslan whose father, Pengiran Metussin bin Pengiran Lampoh, in 1962 was a 24-year-old teacher and a party activist. When the Rebellion broke out it came as a complete surprise. He had spent the evening in the local cinema with his wife. On the night in question the Sultanate's one and only cinema, which was owned by the Ong family, a wealthy Chinese entrepreneur, was showing a Malay film entitled *Korban Fitnah*, ironically a family story about deception.

Pengiran Roslan maintains that the letter, which was delivered to the Sultan by his father, was a letter of independence that the Sultan refused to sign. Later his father was caught with the rebels at the police station. He was sentenced to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years in prison. His grandfather had the letter in his possession for some time after the Rebellion but he later burned it.

So it would appear that the Party Rakyat had no choice: if it did not act at once the movement could have been destroyed. They had assurances of support – and money – from the Government of Indonesia and from the Communist Party in that country.<sup>23</sup> Azahari, in an interview published in *Asia Week* on 6 January 1984, rather goes along with this, and states that the Uprising forced him to declare prematurely Brunei's independence. He went on:

*I was shocked and cried when I learned the revolution had started.*<sup>24</sup>

This hardly squares with Azahari's statements at the Press Conference in Manila on the afternoon of 8 December, referred to earlier in the chapter.

There were no British or other troops in Brunei on 7/8 December, so the immediate response to any attack or rebellion would have to come from the police. The numbers were not large, and there were serious doubts about the loyalty of the locally recruited men. W. J. Parks, White's deputy, in his letter to White on 3 December, wrote:

*I have been in close contact with the Commissioner of Police, who is not too happy about a head-on collision with local mobs ... He has under his hand 67 Malayan Police and 50 M.R.U. who could be relied upon, but the remainder of the*

*Force might adopt a passive attitude when confronted with their kith and kin.*<sup>25</sup>

Lord Selkirk, in his report on his visit to Brunei immediately before the outbreak of the Rebellion, made similar comments:

*Brunei is potentially in a dangerously revolutionary condition. The loyalty of the police is very open to question and their discipline is reported not to be at a high level.*

In the same report of his meeting with the Sultan and his senior officials, Selkirk said that they considered the recall of the newly formed Brunei regiment from Malaya to reinforce the police, but doubts were expressed as to its reliability and experience.<sup>26</sup>

In the event the doubts of Parks, Selkirk and the Police Commissioner, A. N. Outram, were not realised. Outram comes well out of the crisis. He was helped by the last-minute arrival on the 7th in Brunei Town of a platoon of the Sarawak Police Field Force (PFF), flown in by the Royal Air Force from Jesselton. When information reached him on the 7th of a possible uprising in the early hours of the 8th, he had time to rush a few police to guard the Sultan's palace and the residence of the Mentri Besar. He also warned all other police stations throughout Brunei of the likelihood of imminent attack.

One small postscript on the events leading up to 8 December: whatever the previous contacts between the Tunku and Azahari and the Sultan and Azahari, by December 1962 he was viewed in both Kuala Lumpur and Brunei as something of a public enemy. The Malay authorities learned on the 8th that he was in Johore, and promptly issued instructions for his arrest. The bird of course – or rather birds, for he was accompanied by Zaini – had already flown, on Flight

PA818 at 10:15 hours to Manila from Singapore on 7 December. On the 8th a telegram from the Mentri Besar Brunei was received in Kuala Lumpur requesting the arrest of Azahari and Zaini on the charge of instigating an armed insurrection. The issue now was whether anything could be done about Azahari and Zaini, safe in the Philippines.

In December 1962 it would appear that Brunei Town (see map on page 90), together with the water village – the *Kampong Ayer* – numbered, at the maximum, no more than 30,000 people. The numbers were inflated by those who worked as fishermen on the river and the newly educated elite who had jobs in the government service. In addition there were secondary-school children who attended the Sultan Oman Al Saiffudin College (SOAS), the country's main secondary school.

But most people still regarded their homes as in the kampongs. Brunei Town was small and alien to them: you could count the number of cars. The Sultan had a Rolls Royce but officials travelled in Humbers, whereas others had Morris Minors or Hillmans.

Once the shooting began most Brunei Town residents fled back to their kampongs.

It is extremely difficult to construct an accurate chronology of events on that critical first day. However, from all the various sources available, it would appear that on the evening of 7 December the War Committee of the TNKU met in Padang Village. They decided that if they went onto the attack immediately the Government would not have enough time to launch a counterattack.

The National Historian, in the course of numerous meetings, maintained that Azahari was fully aware of this intention. On 5 December, while he was in Johore Bahru, he had a message to this effect from his brother, Sheikh Othman. The

coordinator of TNKU, Yassin Affendi, was also afraid that the Uprising was premature because they had no weapons and would have to attack the police stations first.

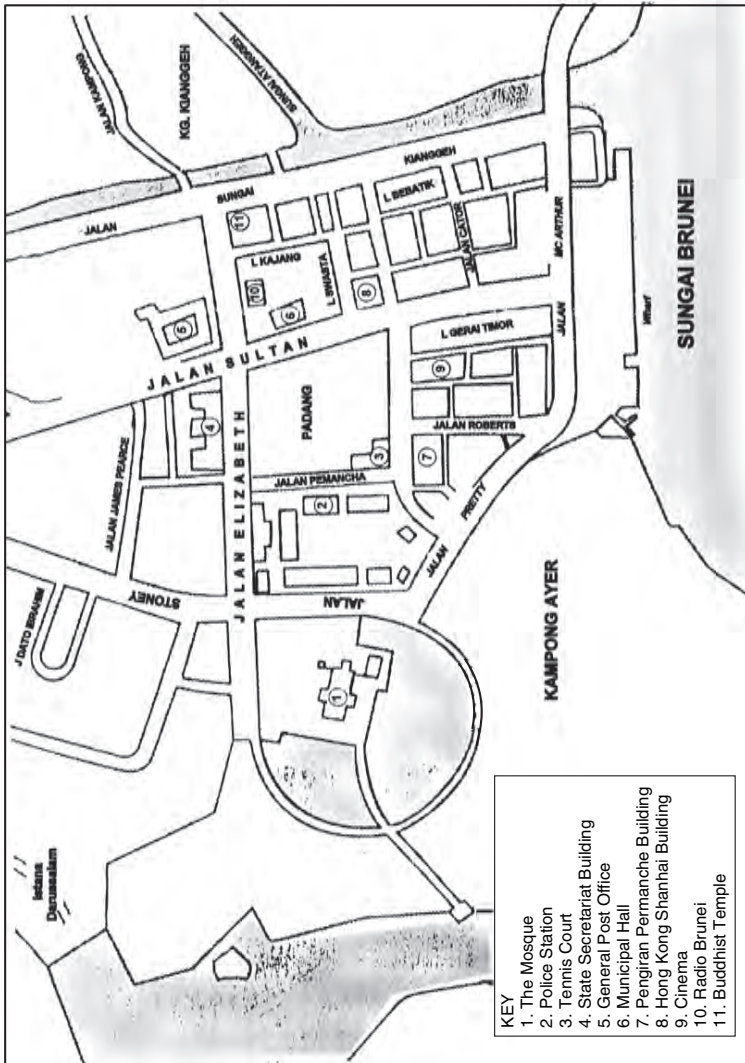
The War Committee concluded the meeting and launched the Uprising at 2.00 a.m. on the morning of 8 December. A Proclamation of Independence was read in Bukit Sumur (a well-known place, a hill), attended by Yassin Affendi, Sheikh Othman, Mesir bin Keruddin (a leading militant) and a few TNKU members. This was a shortened version of that prepared by Azahari. The intention was that the full text would be presented to Sultan Omar so that he could proclaim it from the 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque' in Brunei Town.

Once the uprising was underway, rebels cut the power supply in Brunei Town. The main targets in the capital were the Sultan's Istana, the residence of the Chief Minister and the main police station. By taking the Sultan hostage, the TNKU would force him to declare a North Kalimantan Federal State.

The attack was launched against the Police Headquarters soon after 2.00 a.m. At first, both sides were rather hesitant. It seems that the police officers recognised their relatives among the attackers. However, once the rebels tried to climb the walls such constraints rapidly disappeared.

At about the same time, rebels attacked the residence of the Chief Minister in Kambang Pasang Road, Gadong, and overcame the police guard. Chief Minister Dato Setia Awang Marsal telephoned the police headquarters for help. The headquarters sent six officers led by Inspector Ahmad. After they arrived, the rebels attacked and surrounded the police. The police formed a defensive circle and called on the rebels to surrender. After a few moments the rebels agreed to surrender and were taken immediately back to the police station which, though under some attack, they were able to enter safely. The Chief Minister went with them.

Map of Brunei Town in 1962



There are numerous versions of the 'confrontation' (all sources agree there was no attack as such) at the Istana.

The National Historian's account described a delegation of TNKU who went to the Istana in a car and a captured jeep. The Sultan refused to see them and instead asked that they should present their petition to the Chief Minister who was then at the police station.

This they did, and when they arrived at the police station not only did the Chief Minister refuse their petition but he called upon them to surrender. The rebels fled, were pursued by the police and arrested.

Later, the Sultan was, as we know, at the police station. However, matters then become a little confusing. At 6.00 a.m. the Assistant Chief Minister and the Assistant Secretary of Government went to see the Sultan to arrange for him to make a radio broadcast. After that meeting they returned home to pack and then brought their families to stay in the Istana.

On the morning of 8 December the Sultan sent a cable to Lord Selkirk asking for help and invoking the 1959 Treaty. Lord Selkirk (who was in Singapore) immediately sent a cable to the Secretary of State in the Colonial Office in London.

Earlier, the Acting High Commissioner in Brunei, W. J. Parks, cabled British Headquarters in Singapore for assistance. Shortly afterwards he was attacked in his house by rebels who tied him up and then left. Mr Parks was rescued later that day by police.

The first reinforcements to reach Brunei arrived at about 10.00 a.m. that morning. This was a platoon of the North Borneo Field Force which was flown in from Labuan, presumably to the airport in Brunei Town, whence it then reported to the police station.



The major incident of the day began at about 10.30 a.m. At least 200 TNKU members marched from Residency Road to Sultan Road. En route they encountered and captured a Mr Clark, who is described as the Store Officer. He was taken hostage and forced to walk in front of the rebels. When they reached Sultan Road, Police Commissioner Outram was waiting with a police force in front of what is now the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank. Commissioner Outram called upon the rebels to surrender. There were shots fired but there is no record of what happened to Mr Clark. The encounter lasted for some time and one account says that the rebels surrendered at 6.00 p.m., although I believe it was earlier.

Earlier that morning the Sultan broadcast on Radio Brunei. He called the TNKU uprising illegal and warned that all collaborators would be punished severely. He accused the rebels of trying to steal the powers of government and said their actions would be punished by God. He declared that the Government would take stern measures to suppress the threat and denied that the TNKU's actions had received his support.

Later that same morning Chief Minister Dato Setia Awang Marsal also made a radio broadcast. He declared a curfew in the whole country and ordered that all those who possessed firearms were to surrender those weapons, together with their certificates, to the police.

The critical factor was the lack of popular support.

The Party Rakyat appear to have been genuine in their belief that the findings of the Cobbold Commission, discussed in the previous chapter, were fraudulent and had hopes of popular support in Sarawak and North Borneo. However, little if any was forthcoming. A telegram from the Colonial Secretary to Sir W. Goode in North Borneo on 10 December stated that:

*The only support for Azahari from Sarawak or North Borneo has been from Brunei Malay elements in population in adjacent areas to Brunei. Sarawak political leaders (including Leader of S.U.P.P.) have unanimously condemned this resort to violence.*<sup>27</sup>

As will be discussed later, the only serious military action in the critical stage of the Rebellion (that is, the week beginning 8 December) outside of Brunei was in the 5th Division of Sarawak where rebels captured the town of Limbang. In Sarawak, several so-called extremists were detained and others (a figure of 1,500 is mentioned) fled into Indonesian Borneo. From Manila, Azahari could issue a Proclamation of Independence on 8 December (see above).

The Rebellion did not begin well and it soon went horribly wrong. Brigadier E. D. Smith, in his paper to the Indonesian Confrontation Seminar, talks of going 'off at half-cock, possibly the leader flapped a bit when Mr Outram took some precautions.'<sup>28</sup>

The assessment is that the aims of the rebels were to seize the Sultan and proclaim him titular head of a Confederation of North Borneo; to capture the main police stations, because this was where any organised resistance would come from and they had arms and ammunition; and to seize and capture the oilfields in Seria with the European managers as hostages to bargain with the British Government and the oil company.

Discussions were held with several now elderly men who had participated in the Rebellion, on condition that their anonymity was guaranteed. All made the same points: namely, that they were very young and had no guerrilla warfare experience let alone military training in tactics. Looking back at the events of those first crucial hours, they are horrified at the very simple errors that were made in planning. They had

no experienced seniors to guide them and one made the telling comment:

*If I knew then what I know today we would have succeeded. Brunei Town was ours for the taking and we could have secured the air field properly long before the British came with their troops.*

There is no definitive answer to the condition and status of the local airport. In 1962 the airport was located close to Brunei Town. There is no sign of it today and the land is now used to house some major Government ministry buildings. Brunei Shell had first launched a regional operation called Percival Prime Services out of an airstrip at Anduki, which was close to the oil facilities at Seria.

The airport in Brunei Town was a Second World War airstrip that was resurfaced in 1959. By the time of the rebellion two airlines flew there. Malayan Airways flew between Brunei Town, Anduki, Miri, Labuan and Singapore using Dakotas. Borneo Airways also flew in Dakotas and a Norman Islander to some of the more remote towns along the Borneo coast. In 1959 the airport handled 4,300 passengers; there may not have been much of a significant increase in three years, but there are no figures available.

There were also some privately owned aircraft. Research has revealed that a few of the wealthy Chinese families chartered aircraft the day before the rebellion and flew to the island of Labuan. The Chinese community has always had its own intelligence and the wealthy members feared race riots – or at least ethnic violence – in the aftermath of an uprising being successful.

In Brunei Town itself, the rebels captured the power station but failed to take over the radio station and the telegraph

office. The only serious fighting in Brunei Town was the launching of what was described as 'a heavy attack' on the police station at about 2.00 a.m. The attack was repelled with some casualties to the rebels. Dennis White, in his report to the Colonial Secretary on 20 December, pays tribute to the 'personal gallantry and leadership of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Alan Outram.' White goes on:

*A party of rebels went to my house at about 3.15 a.m. and arrested and tied up Mr Parks. They were not particularly aggressive and appear to have been looking for me, though it is difficult to understand why it was not known that I was out of the country. At about 9 a.m. Mr Outram with Mr Glass, an officer of Her Majesty's Overseas Service, and a party of police came up to my house; the rebels surrendered and Mr Parks was released. It is interesting to record that Miss Petrie, my confidential secretary, drove unmolested through bands of rebels in uniform to the house, was allowed to talk to Mr Parks, who was tied up, and to go away again.<sup>29</sup>*

White goes on to say that the rebels who went up to the Istana withdrew after an exchange of shots, and he adds that 'It can hardly be considered more than token attack.' There remains some controversy as to what happened at the Istana. One account states that armed forces surrounded the Palace, but when the Sultan appeared on the verandah in answer to their summons, alone and armed with a sub-machine gun, they withdrew quietly. Zaini, who was of course not there, says that there was 'an air of mysticism', a magical quality to his appearance that overawed the rebels.

Was the letter ever delivered? According to an anonymous source, a group of rebels tried to deliver the letter, but Pehin Dato Abas, ADC to the Sultan, told Pengiran Matussin and

Awg Hafiz, two rebel leaders, to go away and refused to accept the letter. The delegation never even saw the Sultan.

It would appear that the Sultan was not afraid for his life. He saw the Uprising as a rebellion against joining the Federation. In this sense the popular mood contrasted sharply with the views of the Sultan's closest advisors. Many of the appointed members of the Legislative Council were happy in principle to be part of the new Malaysia; though some voiced doubts and concerns over the concessions demanded by Kuala Lumpur.

Abu Bakar Haji Halus was very close to the former Chief Minister, Dato Marsal; he had married his adopted daughter. Abu Bakar revealed in an interview that Dato Marsal was the only advisor who had publicly spoken out against joining Malaysia. Others remained silent; it was popularly believed that many had been bought in one way or another on the promise of appointments, etc.

Newspaper and other accounts undoubtedly dramatised the events at the Istana that evening and there is no definitive report that accurately relates the sequence of events. But it is clear that the Sultan was convinced that no-one would physically harm him. Abu Bakar related that the Shell Oil Company had their own motor launch standing by in the Brunei river and close to the Istana's jetty for a couple of days, ready to take the Sultan to safety. The Sultan refused, partly because he did not believe he was in any personal danger and partly because it would appear unseemly to leave the country under such circumstances. He feared too that the British would take him away into an enforced exile. Dr Poulgrain maintains there was an elaborate plot hatched by the UK Government, MI6 and the Shell to take the Sultan out, and replace him with his eldest son (the then 16-year-old Prince Hassanal Bolkiah) and his brother Prince Mohammad,

who were at public school in Malaya, under a guardianship that would ensure Brunei joined the new Federation.

The young princes attended the Victoria Institute, in those days considered the best school in Malaya. They lived in the Istana Brunei in Ampang Road, Kuala Lumpur; they were brought to school each day in a limousine and a bodyguard attended. The school took other stringent but discreet security measures to protect them from would-be kidnappers and the organised gangs that caused trouble at the time. Once the Rebellion occurred, the young princes were flown quietly by the Royal Air Force to Kuching for their safety and protection.

The Sultan had no intention of surrendering his sovereignty to the PRB by fleeing the country. The Sultan and the people shared one thing in common: they were fed up with the protracted negotiations over the new Federation. The people feared their country would be coerced into joining; the Sultan believed that whereas Brunei was a Protectorate with very considerable control over its affairs, Malaya was a former colony.

Then again, there is the Sultan's own version of events, which is slightly different. On 14 December he appeared at a press conference at the Brunei Secretariat, looking relaxed and wearing a 'sterling revolver' in an open holster at his waist. The sub-headline of the report in *The Straits Times* on 15 December was 'Pistol-packing ruler meets the Press ... '

The press conference was attended by 20 journalists, which in itself is a fair indication that in Brunei Town there was a return to normality. The Sultan had called the press conference because on 12 December *The Straits Times* had published rumours that he had given support to the rebel cause.

The Sultan confirmed that there was shooting at the Palace, and that he took command of the counter-fire. He had not shot back himself, but he directed the policemen and his three

personal bodyguards. He added 'rather nonchalantly' that he had always been interested in firearms and possessed three guns!<sup>30</sup> The forces around the Istana began to move away and they were passed by the Sultan and his family on their way to the police station, where Outram locked the gates to the compound and prepared for a siege. The rebels did subsequently lay siege to the police station, but the effort was half-hearted and the police had no difficulty in holding out until British troops arrived. The police had already assumed that the reason for the half-hearted behaviour of the rebels was that they had been instructed not to harm the Sultan. But just to be on the safe side Mr Outram placed the Sultan and his family in the prison cells well away from the action.

## **The People of Brunei and the Rebellion**

How did the Rebellion affect the lives of the people of Brunei? There are estimates that about 80% of the country's young men – many of them unemployed – were involved in the Uprising. If this is true, then almost every family participated in one way or another. Estimates of the numbers of the TNKU vary considerably, as we have seen earlier in the chapter, and estimates of the numbers of prisoners taken vary between 2,000 and 6,000. Almost all of them were young Brunei Malay males – there was absolutely no Chinese participation – and most were released promptly after pledging loyalty to the Sultan. Some, who refused to take the pledge, and some suspected of being hard-core rebels – a figure of 200 is often quoted – were held for longer periods. More than 30 rebels remained in prison for over 20 years. Some took part in the Brunei version of the *Great Escape*, which occurred in July 1973 and will be discussed in a later chapter. In the military

action between 9 and 20 December, 20 rebels were killed in Brunei and neighbouring Sarawak, and seven members of the security forces died. The total number of rebels killed between December 1962 and May 1963 probably exceeded 100.<sup>31</sup>

The Rebellion broke out on a Saturday. In Brunei this was a school day and the schools were immediately closed. Many of the people interviewed were youngsters at the time. What they remember is the holiday. Some thought the firing was fireworks – Chinese crackers – and that it was the Chinese New Year. This turned out to be the longest school holiday in Brunei's history because with Christmas and the Chinese New Year the schools did not reopen until the middle of January.

There were rumours. One was that the rebels had poisoned the water supply and there was water rationing. There was a curfew in Brunei Town which lasted for 24 hours a day. After two days the curfew was lifted between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon to allow people to buy food, etc.; it was then progressively lifted. The Chief Minister, Dato Setia Awang Marsal, declared that the PRB was banned.

The tennis courts in the Padang (the field) were used initially as a holding area for the captured rebels. They were right in front of the police station. After the rebels had been processed and interrogated, some were then taken to the Teachers' Training College at Barakas which was requisitioned as a Detention Centre. From these, the hard core were taken to Jerudong Prison.

Beyond the limits of Brunei Town and besides the oil facilities, the main focus of violence was the police stations. Smaller police stations such as the one at Tutong and those elsewhere were easily captured. These were wooden buildings, not built for defence, and the few police on duty were no match for a determined attack.



But the police did resist. In the south of the country, Panaga and Kuala Belait police stations held out. The station at Temburong was eventually captured; the officer-in-charge-of-station, a sergeant, was captured, tortured and later killed by the rebels. Four police officers lost their lives during the Uprising.

I feel that I can add some valuable personal information. My father was a primary school teacher in Brunei Town at the time of the Rebellion. I was one of five small children. We were woken on the morning of 8 December with a message from my uncle, who was an official in the Immigration Department, that a rebellion had started. We packed our bags and moved as a family – grandmother, mother, father, children – to my uncle's flat in a high-rise block near the river. This was a very tight squeeze because we travelled in my uncle's Morris Minor. My family lived in a wooden house. My uncle's apartment was in a stone-built property and therefore reckoned to be more secure. This movement took place against a background noise of small-arms fire.

In the next few days we were aware of the arrival of British troops, the use of school premises as accommodation for soldiers, and the imposition of a police curfew. There was the handing round of leaflets headed 'Wanted', and listing the names of Azahari and his main associates. My father was not a supporter of Azahari, whom he described as 'a radio for Sukarno.'

Meanwhile, over in Temburong, my grandfather, Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Rahim, a Royalist and an Imam at the mosque, was kidnapped by rebel forces but then managed to escape. He was attacked while at prayer by his brother-in-law, using a parang. He was left for dead. The brother-in-law, who by all accounts was an obsessed, indoctrinated fanatic, then ran amok, was captured and killed. My grandfather was

taken to hospital by British forces in a helicopter, recovered but never talked about the incident. Apparently my grandfather had been identified as hostile by PRB intelligence. What happened to my family is a typical Brunei experience: there was division, often serious conflict, within families; we were all affected. Like most Brunei families thereafter, we never talked about the Rebellion. I found it extremely difficult for many years to find out what had happened.

For most people in Brunei, the Sultan, by the way he behaved in the critical first few days of the Rebellion, greatly enhanced his status and reputation. Reports of his appearance at the Istana to challenge the rebels, his dignified behaviour throughout, his move to the police station and then to the office of the State Secretary, his Press Conference – referred to earlier – and his links with the arriving British forces, all suggested that he was very much in charge and that he could behave well in a crisis. In retrospect there was a tendency to see him in almost Churchillian terms! Maybe it should come as no surprise that he was a great admirer of Churchill and established a Churchill Museum in Brunei.

There is of course another version of the Sultan's role in the events of December 1962. White, who always had doubts about the Sultan, expressed some reservations about that role in his long letter/report to the Colonial Secretary on 20 December, which has already been referred to:

*I find it difficult to acquit the Sultan and the ruling clique of some pre-knowledge of what was going on. I think it possible that the coup d'état was planned for later this month, perhaps Christmas Day, and that the revolt may have been accelerated by the progress of Special Branch investigations, and perhaps the visit of Lord Selkirk..... I suspect that the rebels in Brunei expected little resistance other than that of the*

*British-led Police because they had been told that the Sultan himself was well-disposed to the plans and, indeed, would head the new Federation ... Was he tempted? Did he procrastinate and temporise at the last moment as he does on issues great and small? We know that Azahari had told the Tunku of his plan to reunite the Borneo territories under the Sultan and then take them into Malaysia. I suspect, in fact, I am also sure, that Azahari discussed this with the Sultan. Whether or not the Sultan was attracted and had promised to consider the proposal, but thought he had more time to procrastinate than he had, in fact, got, I have little doubt that the rebels thought the Sultan was with them ...*<sup>32</sup>

Mahmud Marshidi Othman<sup>33</sup> is a nephew of Azahari and organised the Great Escape in July 1973. He stated that when the Rebellion occurred, groups were told to protect the Sultan, the Party Rakyat headquarters and Azahari's house. There was some fear that anarchists might make use of the situation to cause trouble.

Brigadier E. D. Smith, in his paper to the Indonesian Confrontation Seminar, referred to previously in the chapter, argued that the rebels had three aims on 8 December 1962, the first of which was:

*The first was to seize the Sultan himself, because by the 1959 treaty the Sultan could ask for British help against any aggression – so if they had the Sultan in their hands he couldn't do that.*<sup>34</sup>

If Smith is correct, and he gives no source for his statement, then the rebels failed badly. The position of the Sultan vis-à-vis the rebels was probably much more complicated, and indeed confused!

## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Brunei Rebellion Part Two: The British Counter-offensive

By early afternoon on Saturday 9 December 1962, the Brunei Uprising was already doomed to failure. The rebels had failed to take control of Brunei Town, take control of the person of His Majesty The Sultan or defeat the police forces in the capital. More importantly they had failed to arouse a mass popular uprising in support of their insurrection. As far as one can ascertain, most Bruneians, other than the mostly young men who had taken up arms, did what people the world over do in these circumstances: they sat on the fence and awaited events.

It is important at this stage to recognise the rather special circumstances that attended the Brunei Uprising. This insurrection, unlike those that occurred elsewhere in the British Commonwealth, was a political event. It was not motivated by absolute poverty, or social disadvantage. The people were not hungry, neither were they suppressed. They had expressed their political views, and overwhelmingly so, in the recent elections for the Legislative Council. The Council

had still to meet but there had been few demonstrations of popular agitation against the delay. In Brunei, then as now, the timescales are different to those in the west.

The Rebellion was all about how Brunei should be ruled within a context of a North Borneo political entity. There was no great demand in the streets for Brunei to return the glories of former days and reunification with the neighbouring territories. So the most popular reaction in Brunei Town, for example, was for people to return to their kampongs and stay behind closed doors to await the outcome.

So everything was down to the British. Would they have the political will to despatch an expeditionary force to restore the situation in Brunei? There were the forces available in Singapore, and the rebels in Brunei had failed to secure the airport, so the gateway into the country was wide open.

The outline of events is as follows: By the evening of the 8th the first British emergency force from Singapore had landed. Within five days the rebellion in Brunei Town, Seria and other troubled spots in the Sultanate had been crushed. The Sultan appealed to the rebels to lay down their arms and most of them obeyed. By 12 December, the British were able to concentrate on the relief of Limbang in neighbouring Sarawak. By the 17th it was clear that the rebellion, to all intents and purposes, was over in Brunei and it would have little serious impact on Sarawak and North Borneo. By the New Year of 1963 what was left of the TNKU was split into small groups and was on the run, desperately trying to evade capture. It was not until May 1963, however, that the surviving rebel force commander, Yassin Affendi, was captured, and this brought something rather less than a dramatic end to the affair. It was certainly not a bang, much closer to a whimper.

## The British Response

There is something very odd, almost mysterious, about the position of the United Kingdom, the protecting power, with regard to the outbreak of the Rebellion on 8 December. There had been, as we have seen, reports and rumours of possible trouble in Brunei for some time, but what happened in the early hours of 8 December seems to have taken the British military authorities in Southeast Asia completely by surprise. Even the local police force, with all its limitations, seems to have been more aware of what was about to happen.

Government spokesmen in London, when challenged in the House of Commons on 20 December, denied that they had been taken by surprise. The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Nigel Fisher, responding to a question from Dennis Healey, the Shadow Defence Secretary, said:

*The Hon Member says that we were caught unprepared, but in these areas it is very difficult to get accurate intelligence much in advance. We had been told so often that there was to be trouble, which never materialised; 'wolf' was being cried so often that it was somewhat discounted. Hon Members will have appreciated that we were not unready. Our forces were there quickly, and did an extremely good job ...*

Another Labour member, R. T. Paget, pushed the question, saying that 'we were taken rather seriously by surprise.' Fisher replied:

*I do not think that we were taken seriously by surprise. As a matter of fact, the Tunku saw Lord Selkirk and expressed some concern about the situation in Brunei on 2nd December, and*

*Lord Selkirk immediately visited North Borneo and Sarawak and Brunei. Security forces in Singapore had been reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief on 7th December and that they were at 12 hours notice has now been proved. There is no substance in the charge that we were taken by surprise.<sup>1</sup>*

The Government's bland assurances may look good in the House of Commons, but the situation on the ground in Southeast Asia calls the accuracy of those assurances into question. As mentioned previously, Richard Morris, the Resident in the Fifth Division of Sarawak, passed on information on 23 November that an insurrection was planned for 19 December. When his information reached Singapore, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir David Luce, did ask his Chief-of-Staff, Major-General Wyldbore-Smith, to look at the contingency plans for Brunei. The 1953 contingency plan – Plan Ale – was brought out and the paper amended and upgraded. A small headquarters, two rifle companies and small detachments of supporting arms would be flown into Brunei in an emergency. But no need was felt to declare any form of alert for Brunei or to place troops on readiness, or to inform the various service Commanders-in-Chief or Major General Walter Walker, the commander of the 17th Gurkha Infantry Division. As mentioned previously, when the Rebellion broke out Walker was in Nepal. The three service Commanders-in-Chief were also out of town, as they had gone to the Philippines.<sup>2</sup>

Just weeks before the Uprising the British military command structure had been reorganised. During the Second World War Lord Louis Mountbatten had fought the Japanese with forces controlled by a single headquarters, with himself as supreme commander, based then on the island of Ceylon.

Since 1945 the three services – army, navy and air force – had been allowed to command and administer themselves with orders from the Ministries in Whitehall. This had worked well during the Malayan Emergency under the direction of the High Commissioner and Director of Military Operations, especially when this had been Gerald Templer. But since 1960 the three services had drifted apart. All three headquarters were located on Singapore but were geographically separated, and this produced the inevitable duplication.

In 1962 Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten was Chief of the Defence Staff in London. He decided to streamline the headquarters' structures in the Far East. While the three services were to maintain their own separate headquarters, there would be imposed upon them a unified supreme headquarters for the operational control of all air, land and sea operations. The new headquarters would have a joint staff and the Commander-in-Chief would be provided by the three service Commanders-in-Chief in rotation. All three would retain their titles of Commander-in-Chief but would, for operational matters, be subordinate to the Joint Commander-in-Chief, in effect a new Supreme Commander.

This reformation was not at all welcomed by a conservative-minded, status-conscious military hierarchy. In order of seniority the first overall Commander-in-Chief was Admiral Sir David Luce, currently the Commander-in-Chief Far East Fleet. He, however, was due to become First Sea Lord early in 1963, so after only a few months he was to be succeeded by Admiral Sir Varyl Begg, currently Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.

The Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces was Lieutenant General Sir Richard Hull, who was due to return to London to become Chief of the General Staff. His successor was Lieutenant General Sir Nigel Poett, who could, in the course of time, expect to follow General Hull.



The headquarters in Singapore covered an immense expanse of territory from the central Indian Ocean, the China Sea, the Asian Rimlands, Hong Kong and South Korea, down to Australia and New Zealand. It was hardly surprising that little Brunei did not loom large on their radar.

Although the relative strengths of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force tended to fluctuate, the Army was always the strongest force in the region. And within the Army formations, the principal weapon and instrument of British policy in Southeast Asia was the 17th Gurkha Infantry Division. By 1962 this was the one British major military formation, outside of Europe, that was maintained in readiness for war. There were other high-readiness forces available too; in theatre at the time was a Royal Marine commando with its own command carrier, indigenous helicopter and other support.

The divisions comprised two Gurkha Brigades, the 99th and 63rd, each of two Gurkha battalions and one British, and the 28th Commonwealth Brigade (descended from the Commonwealth Division which had fought in Korea) composed of a British, Australian and New Zealand battalion. The divisional commander in 1962 was Major General Walter Walker, one of the British Army's foremost experts in jungle warfare and counterinsurgency.

The first test of this new operational command structure was to be the Brunei Uprising. It was to be the rebels' great misfortune that stationed just a few hours flying time away from the island of Borneo was one of the most formidable fighting machines in the whole of Asia.

How did the British respond to the news of the insurrection in Brunei in the early hours of 8 December? There is an important general point to be made before we look at the detail. Unless the British walked away, which was extremely

unlikely, the struggle was always going to be an unequal one. The insurgents were, with perhaps the odd exception, essentially amateurs, and were in any case poorly trained and not very well armed. The British were, at the time, arguably among the best, if not the best, in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. They were used to handling colonial revolts and insurgencies and since 1945 had been almost continually engaged in a series of overlapping campaigns that included Palestine, Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya. The greatest success had been achieved in neighbouring Malaya. Experience did not make success inevitable, but confronted by the Brunei rebels, it made it likely.

In London, High Commissioner D. C. White was despatched back immediately to Singapore.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned previously, much of the high command was not in residence in Singapore on 8 December when hostilities began. More than that, however, what comes through from the military accounts is the chaos and confusion that the news of the outbreak caused. The 8th was of course a Saturday and as Brigadier Smith put it, 'As we all know in Singapore on a Saturday most people have other things to do!'

The film *The Longest Day* was showing in Singapore on the night of Friday 7 December and most of the officers of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Gurkha rifles (1/2GR) – based at Slim Barracks in Singapore – were at the cinema. Meanwhile, Headquarters 99 Infantry Brigade had a mess guest night. One of the guests was the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, the Queens Own Highlanders (1QOH), the stand-by unit of the 99th Gurkha Infantry Brigade. Shortly after the meal, the duty officer came in with an urgent despatch from army headquarters. The Brigade Major saw that it was an operational code for immediate deployment to Brunei. The signal was passed to the 1QOH Commanding Officer, who commented:

*But my battalion is training on the West coast of Malaya. I don't have enough troops in Singapore to makeup even one company, leave alone two.*

Brigadier Patterson, the Brigade Commander, immediately tasked 1/2GR for the mission; the battalion was in the midst of its Annual Administration Inspection. At 05:00 hours the Commanding Officer of 1/2GR was aroused and ordered to prepare his forces. Many of his officers at first thought that it was an exercise as part of the annual inspection. Four vehicles were sent to the Central Ordnance Store in Singapore to collect live ammunition. They were at first told to come back on Monday morning. The Intelligence Officer went to the map store, only to find that the store man had a weekend pass, and the store was closed until Monday. He shot the lock off the door. He need not have bothered; there were no maps of Brunei. There were no Royal Air Force aircraft immediately available. They were all up-country and nothing would be ready before 16:00 hours. That really did not matter as there was no military transport available to take the Gurkhas to the airport until the school run had been completed at 13:00 hours.

Plan Red Ale, the code for immediate action, had been ordered as of 09:30 hours, but nobody was anywhere near ready even by midday. Had the rebels acted with more vigour and decision, particularly in Brunei Town, they could have secured the capital, the Istana, the Sultan, leading members of the administration and – perhaps most important of all – seized and blocked the small airport, Brunei's international outlet to the world, which lay just a couple of miles outside the town.

The failure of the rebels to deny the British forces access to the airfield was their single biggest blunder. There was a

smaller airstrip at Seria to service the oil field but that was in rebel hands. In December Brunei experiences the northeast monsoon. With the airport in the rebels' hands, the British could only have restored the situation through an amphibious and carrier-borne operation and even then, apart from the time it would have taken to prepare, even with a commando carrier in Singapore, a beach assault into an offshore monsoon would have been a hazardous undertaking.

Brunei was an unknown quantity to the British military forces. As mentioned previously there were no maps and had an amphibious assault been planned there would have to have been a very thorough reconnaissance, probably by the Royal Marines Special Forces, of the beaches and coastal waters. When this issue was raised with some British naval contacts, they said it would have taken weeks to undertake the preparation. And by that time the rebels might well have been able to starve the police into submission. The resolve of the Sultan might have faded and the Indonesians furnished arms and supplies. Faced with that political and military prospect, London may have chosen to negotiate with the rebels.

Mr Outram and the small police force must also take some credit for the failure of the rebels in those critical early hours. Outram put a guard on the Istana, he made it clear that the Police Headquarters would be resolutely defended, and he warned all police stations throughout the country to take precautions, as an attack was imminent.

At 12:30 hours on the Saturday, the Initial Force Headquarters, led by the Battalion's second-in-command, Major J. A. Lloyd Williams, and C Company 1/2GR arrived at Seletar airfield in Singapore. At about the same time D Company was ready at Changi, the main airport on the island. At 14:45 hours the first aircraft, a Hastings, took off from Changi. At

15:00 hours, Lloyd Williams took off in the slower but tactically more suitable Beverley. Two more Beverleys followed, and the remainder of D Company was lifted from Changi in a Britannia.<sup>4</sup>

All five aircraft flew in the first instance to Labuan Island, a Royal Air Force base and very much adjacent to Brunei. There was doubt about what was happening at the airfield at Brunei Town; in any case the runway there could not accommodate the Hastings or the Britannia. Word was received that the Brunei Town airfield was back in Government hands, and the Beverleys airlifted C and D Companies into the town. There is some controversy as to whether the Brunei Town airfield was ever out of Government control. Zaini, in interviews with him, was positive that the insurgents had blocked the runway. If so, one can only assume that either they had not done this properly or that Government employees and/or the police had removed the obstacles. It was possible of course for the Beverleys to avoid the runway and land on the grass. Some British sources are clear that the TNKU insurgents never seized the airport. White, in his report to the Colonial Secretary on 20 December, says:

*At midday on the Saturday, a detachment of North Borneo Police arrived, and played an invaluable part in holding Brunei Airport which up till then had been guarded by British and Malayan civil servants only.*

Brigadier E. D. Smith, in his paper to the Indonesian Confrontation Seminar, states that when the first lot of Gurkhas arrived in Brunei they found 'to their delight that the airport had not been seized by the TNKU.'<sup>5</sup>

By midnight on the 8th the Gurkhas were in action, D Company in Brunei Town, where at least 24 rebels were

killed. In the fight for Brunei Town the Gurkhas suffered two dead and 11 wounded. One platoon moved to secure the Istana and the remainder patrolled the town and reinforced the police station. In the early hours of the 9th an urgent appeal for assistance was received from the Shell staff at Seria, some 57 miles west of Brunei Town. C Company was ordered to move quickly to their assistance. The Company Commander commandeered a land rover and four tipper trucks from the Brunei Public Works Department and set off. They encountered opposition beyond Sengkurong, brushing aside some ambushes, until they reached the market town of Tutong about halfway to Seria. A more effective ambush was in place: the road was blocked with bulldozers from the public works department. In the ensuing fight at least seven rebels were killed, 20 were wounded and 100 captured. The Company Commander decided to wait for daylight before resuming his advance. One young British officer was killed and seven Gurkhas wounded in the engagement.

The airlift from Changi continued throughout the night of 8/9 December and on the day of the 9th. The remaining two companies of 1/2GR were flown in on the 9th, together with elements of the Royal Air Force Regiment, to guard the airfield and other installations. Also on the 9th, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Shakespear and his Battalion Headquarters flew in. On the following day, the 10th, the Headquarters 99 Infantry Brigade arrived in Brunei Town and units of the 1st Battalion, Queens Own Highlanders, began to come in.

Lieutenant Colonel Shakespear met with the Sultan and offered to have His Majesty and the royal family flown out of the country, but the Sultan refused. The Army's headquarters had been established in the police headquarters temporarily and Colonel Shakespear advised that the Sultan and his family should lodge there for safety. This may account for the

confusion over when the Sultan took cover at the police station.

Colonel Shakespear decided for the moment to postpone the Seria operation and C Company was recalled from Tutong. A Company was flown ten miles down the coast of Sarawak, where it secured the oilfield installations and airfield at Lutong, and the oilfield at Miri. Throughout the 9th, control of Brunei Town and the airfield was consolidated by energetic patrolling and the tactical disposition of troops on rooftops, at road junctions and at bridges. Several rebel attempts to infiltrate the town were severely dealt with, particularly during the night of the 9th/10th. The security of the Sultan was felt to be all-important, but it needed too many troops to guard the Istana, so he and his immediate entourage were persuaded to stay in the police station, occupying two cells! On the 10th, Brigadier Glennie arrived to take overall command and he too established his headquarters at the police station.

Brigadier Glennie's orders were simple:

*You will proceed to Brunei, take command of all land, sea and air forces in the Borneo territory and you will restore the situation.*

Apparently he later remarked, 'Surely the clearest order any soldier ever yet received since Caesar invaded Gaul.'<sup>6</sup>

In outline, by the morning of the 10th, some 50 or so hours after the Rebellion had begun, the British were beginning to gain the upper hand. Brunei Town itself had been cleared of the rebels by the end of Sunday 9 December. This was a remarkable achievement by a small force of Gurkhas against an unknown enemy and on the streets of an unknown town. The main problem now in Brunei was the relief of Seria and

the recapture of Kuala Belait, a small town to the west of it. The rebels at Seria had taken several European hostages: some accounts put it as high as 50. Elements of the 1st Queen's Own Highlanders and B Company 1/2GR accomplished their objectives on the 10th and 11th. The 1st Queen's Own Highlanders landed at the Shell airfield at Anduki, recapturing it from the rebels and moving on to Seria. B Company regained control of Kuala Belait. The European hostages – most of them oil company employees – were freed unharmed.

The relief of Seria and the recapture of Kuala Belait were remarkable and daring operations. The Commanding Officer of the Queen's Own Highlanders, Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Machardy, flew in a Twin Pioneer to make a personal reconnaissance of the situation in Seria and Kuala Belait. While in the air he was radioed with the news that both these police stations were in rebel hands and that there were Europeans held hostage. After a brief practise on Brunei Town airfield, one Beverley and five small Twin Pioneers (all aircraft had their doors removed to facilitate a speedy exit) took off for the southern part of the country. Between them they carried a company, about 100 soldiers, of the Queen's Own Highlanders. The Beverleys came in low over the sea and taxied along the runway at Anduki strip while the soldiers rapidly de-planed, before climbing away rapidly while under fire from rebels who held the control tower. The troops assaulted the control tower and secured the airstrip. In the meantime the Twin Pioneers landed on rough ground about ten miles away, further to the west of Seria. By late afternoon they had relieved the police station at Panga. Over the next two days the combined force captured rebels caught in the Sultan's country palace, the Istana Kota Menggalela, and moved on to clear Kuala Belait. Also on 12 December, the commando



carrier HMS *Albion* had arrived off the Brunei coast and was providing invaluable helicopter support. On 12 December the small force captured the police station at Seria, which was a rebel stronghold, and rescued the 40 European hostages, all unharmed. It was on that day too that four Hunter aircraft from RAF Changi were deployed to Brunei Town airport.

The third major action in quelling the Rebellion – Brunei Town and Seria/Kuala Belait being the first two – actually took place at Limbang in the 5th Division of Sarawak. Limbang was thought to be held in strength by the rebels (reports speak of 150 insurgents). There were no convenient airstrips so 89 marines from 42nd Royal Marine Commando disembarked from the commando carrier HMS *Albion* and sailed up the river, the Sugei Limbang, in two unarmoured cargo lighters. The marines reached their objective at first light on 13 December. There was a short, vicious fire-fight and the rebels were routed. Fifteen were killed and eight wounded. Five marines were killed and eight wounded. A junior officer in the commando, Mr Paddy Ashdown, was subsequently a UK Member of Parliament for the Liberal Party and parliamentary leader of the Liberal Democrats. Richard Morris, the Resident, his wife and six other hostages were set free. Morris's release was dramatic. He had been sentenced to be hanged, already had the rope around his neck and the rebels were looking for a suitable tree from which to hang him. At that moment four Hawker Hunters flew low over Limbang. The rebels ran off and Morris was left with the rope still around his neck. Shortly afterwards the commandos arrived. Morris sent 'warmest thanks' for saving his life to the four Hunter pilots.<sup>7</sup>

White, in his long letter to the Colonial Secretary on 20 December, was warm in his praise of the 1st QOH and

42nd Royal Marine Commando. He had the highest praise for 1/2GR:

*One cannot overemphasise the value of the Gurkhas, and the part they played, with their limited forces, in holding essential points till further reinforcements arrived. They are splendid troops.*<sup>8</sup>

Azahari, from the safety of Manila, had a different view of the Gurkhas. He described them as 'savage and merciless British mercenaries.' He added, 'The British will have a taste of our strength when our forces attack Kuching.'<sup>9</sup>

In just under a week the Rebellion had been crushed and British forces were in control both of Brunei and of neighbouring areas of Sarawak and North Borneo. Speaking in the House of Commons on 20 December, Nigel Fisher, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, would say:

*... I am glad to say that the rebels' attempted coup has already been frustrated, organised resistance has ceased and order has been largely re-established. A sufficient security force is now in the territory to deal with remaining rebel pockets ... Rebel activity is now virtually confined to certain rural areas. The oil installations at Seria are undamaged and all hostages throughout the area have been released.*<sup>10</sup>

Fisher went on to give the immediate casualty figures. British service casualties were seven killed and 28 wounded. There were no British prisoners in rebel hands. Two civilians had been killed and seven wounded. It was estimated that between 50 and 60 of the rebels had been killed and 600–700 taken prisoner. He had no information on police casualties.<sup>11</sup>

In his statement to the House of Commons on 20 December 1962, Fisher outlined future plans for operations in Borneo:

*Since the rebellion in Brunei spilled over into some adjacent areas of North Borneo and Sarawak it is obviously essential to secure the efficient coordination of civil and military measures in all the three territories. With the approval of the Governments concerned, Major General W. C. Walker has been appointed Director of Operations and Commander of British Forces in Borneo. The Commissioner General, Lord Selkirk, and the Commander-in-Chief Far East, are also in the closest touch with the situation.*

In Brunei in the meantime, on 31 December, the Sultan decided to suspend the Constitution and dismiss the State Level Committee and District Level Committees. In their place he established an Emergency Committee which he chaired. Other members were the High Commissioner, the Chief Minister of Brunei, the State Attorney General, the Chief Financial Office and ten other nominated members.

A very tightly policed curfew was imposed on Brunei Town once the British forces were established. I can remember that this caused confusion and humour but also tragedy. The people had never heard of, let alone experienced, a curfew. And when the troops first moved about the streets and shouted, 'Curfew', the people said, 'Curfew? What is this curfew?' Some thought they were asking for 'coffee' and came out with steaming mugs of Camp coffee!

There was tragedy. An announcer for Radio Brunei came out of the building that housed the radio station after completing a late shift and in the darkness was shot dead by a patrol of British troops.

## THE BRUNEI REBELLION, PART TWO



1. Men of the 1/2 Gurkhas Rifles board a Britannia of RAF Transport Command at Changi airport bound for Brunei. The Gurkhas were the first troops to arrive in Brunei and were involved almost immediately in fighting with rebel troops.



2. Green Jackets going up river in a follow-up operation after their success at Bekenu, where they attacked the enemy-held police station and cut off the fleeing rebels.

## *Rebellion in Brunei*



3. Iban tribesmen, Union Jack flying proudly from their canoe, bring in rebels they had captured 40 miles upriver from Limbang. They handed the prisoners over, unharmed, to the 42nd Marine Commandos who had retaken Limbang a few hours before.



4. A lean-to outside Brunei town where the rebel leader was captured.

## THE BRUNEI REBELLION, PART TWO



5. Men of the 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, leaving a Belvedere helicopter which has brought them in from a forward position in Borneo.



6. A patrol of the Queen's Own Highlanders searches for rebels in the jungle in Brunei, in September 1963.

## *Rebellion in Brunei*



7. Armoured cars of the 4th Royal Tank Regiment constantly patrol the roads nearest to the border between Indonesian Borneo and Sarawak. Here they are shown firing at targets along the jungle tracks on the Sarawak side of the border, in support of ground troops of the Security Forces.



8. After the Brunei Uprising was quelled, the troops patrol the beaches past the huge gas-burners which throw flames hundreds of feet into the air.

Walker had arrived back from Nepal and took over in Brunei on the 19th as Commander British Forces Borneo (COMBRIT-BOR). It had taken him eight days to return. After an audience with King Mahendra of Nepal and various meetings with Nepalese military authorities, Walker, accompanied by a small team, had set out to trek through some of the villages from which the Gurkhas were recruited. On 8 December he and his party heard of the revolt on his ADC's transistor radio. He had no radio transmitter and was three days march from the nearest airstrip. He and his party made it to Katmandu, where an RAF Dakota took him to Seremban (the Gurkha headquarters) and then on to Singapore. Without delay he boarded a Canberra jet bomber, for the flight to Brunei. By the time the plane landed Walker had jotted down notes for a directive he planned to issue immediately when he arrived. He wrote:

*The ingredients of success shall be five fold. 1st – Jointmanship. 2nd – Timely and accurate information; i.e. a first class intelligence machine. 3rd – Speed, mobility and flexibility of security forces, particularly Army. 4th – Security of our bases, whatever they may be, wherever they are; whether an airfield, or patrol base, or whatever. 5th – Domination of the jungle.*<sup>12</sup>

In Brunei a State War Executive Committee, such as had been established during the Malayan Emergency, met first on 13 December under the Chairmanship of Sir Denis White. Other members included the Governor of Sarawak, senior police officers and Brigadier Glennie. Walker took over from Glennie who returned to Far East Headquarters.

Walker was extremely fortunate in the troops and equipment under his command. The Gurkhas, according to the various Regimental Histories, 'took to the jungle with zest



and enthusiasm', while the presence of the commando carrier *Albion* was a vital contribution with her squadrons of Whirlwind and Wessex helicopters, which provided much needed mobility in the jungle. Then there were the Royal Marine commandos, among the best fighting troops in the world. Against such formidable forces maybe one should spare a thought for fugitive Bruneians: young, untrained, friendless and ill-prepared to live through the hardships of flight in the jungle.

With General Walker as COMBRITBOR, the chain of command was through Commander-in-Chief Far East Land Forces to Commander-in-Chief Far East. Walker was tasked to clear TNKU from Brunei before August 1963, the target date for the formation of the New Federation of Malaysia. No other general in the British Army at the time could match Walter Walker's experience in both counterinsurgency operations and jungle warfare. He had fought the Japanese in Burma, commanded a battalion and a brigade in the Malaya Emergency, and he was the Army's jungle warfare expert.

Commissioner White and General Poett can be called 'casualties' of the rebellion. The same could not be said about General Walker. As Major General Brigade of Gurkhas and with little experience in Europe or NATO, his career may well have reached its peak. The Brunei Uprising was to be the making of Walker, and his reputation was further enhanced during the Confrontation with Indonesia which was to follow. In General Walker's eyes the Brunei revolt was the opening move to a more serious challenge from Indonesia. This view was not shared among the British High Command, some of whom were later to suspect that Walker 'talked up' the threat in Borneo to secure the future of his Gurkhas.

The build up of British forces continued and by the end of December was formidable. Apart from supporting arms there were five major infantry units available for land operations: 1 QOH, 1/2 Gurkha Rifles, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Green Jackets, and 40th and 42nd Royal Marine Commando. In addition there were local forces: the Sarawak Rangers, the police constabularies in each territory and something like an irregular force of 4,000 tribesmen.

Even so, there is no escaping the conclusion that in the initial phase, and despite a contingency plan in place, the British response was very impromptu and unplanned. According to one eye-witness account from a British Company Commander with the Gurkhas:

*It wasn't our area, nobody had heard of Brunei, we didn't have any maps ... so there were a lot of people caught napping.*<sup>13</sup>

By the New Year of 1963 what was left of the TNKU was split into small groups and was on the run, desperately trying to avoid capture. The Ministry of Defence in London also despatched two Troops of the 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment from their base in Hereford. They travelled incognito and when they arrived in Singapore were left to kick their heels for some days because nobody knew quite what to do with them. Eventually, by the end of January, they were flown into Brunei and settled into what they did best, which was long-range jungle reconnaissance in pursuit of the remaining bands of TNKU. The Sultan was most taken by the presence of the SAS. He gave them a property known as 'The Haunted House', once used by the Japanese Secret Police as an interrogation centre (hence its name), as their base.

For a while, continuing to hunt down the fleeing rebels, Walker could not begin to think about the bigger picture. There was concern about the Chinese Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) in Sarawak, reports of some 6,000–8,000 Indonesian regular troops in the border region and the provision of safe havens for what was left of the fleeing insurgents across the border in Kalimantan. Yassin Affendi, their military commander, had a price of 15,000 Malayan dollars on his head.

Thereafter it was a slow, methodical and patient campaign of counterinsurgency; the sort of operation at which the British excelled and the rebels were hopelessly outclassed. It took a long while to complete because in February parts of Brunei were devastated by tropical storms and heavy flooding. These were the worst storms in living memory. General Walker immediately shifted his main effort to disaster relief. In what is commonly referred to as 'hearts and minds', the British forces won many friends in the kampongs and small towns by help and assistance in the reconstruction of the houses.

Earlier, on 21 December, apart from establishing an Emergency Committee, the Sultan also created an emergency action committee (JKD) to be responsible for rehabilitation and local administration in the outlying areas. The JKD distributed food and other assistance and moved quickly to launch development projects in rural areas once the situation allowed.

At the same time the Sultan decided to give humanitarian relief of US\$2.5 for every wife and family member of any detained or killed rebel. Some British newspapers described this as 'blood money', proof that the Sultan sympathised with the rebels, but this was not the case.

In the detention camp in the Brunei Malay Teacher Training College, the Sultan was taking no chances. The guards and warders came from the Malayan Federation.

On 18 May 1963, troops of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Gurkha Rifles, led by an informer, attacked a rebel camp, killing or capturing ten rebels. Among those taken prisoner was Yassan Affendi, the rebel military commander. His capture brought to an end the five-month affair. The British protecting power, after a poor beginning, had performed well in putting down the insurgency. Confrontation would now take over from rebellion.

### **The Broader Picture**

Were the events of December 1962 confined to Brunei and the immediately adjacent territories or was there a broader picture? Was there, for example, a Southeast Asian context? There are some bits and pieces of information which, if added together, do suggest something of a wider plot. However, there is no evidence that can point to any serious links, and what may be simply coincidence can easily become the basis for a conspiracy theory! For example, in December 1962, the authorities in Singapore arrested over 100 people; further north the Malaya Railway Staff went on strike on 22 December through to the New Year and some postal services were disrupted. There were rather vague Special Branch reports of plans for an incursion of Chin Peng's forces into Malaya from their refuge in Thailand. Incidentally Chin Peng's recently published memoirs do not mention the Rebellion, although he does refer to plotting to sabotage the Malaysia Plan.<sup>14</sup> Trades Union leaders in Singapore were reported to have expressed solidarity with the 'patriots' in Brunei. All this, however, and it is not much, smacks of coincidence rather than a broader regional plan.

In Borneo, there were fears and rumours of a wider rebellion spreading from Brunei through Sarawak. But again the evidence is slender. White, in his letter of 20 December, referred to support from a particular group in Brunei for the rebels:

*It is interesting to note that the Kedayans, one time slaves of the Brunei nobility, have played such an active part, both in the Limbang district, in Sibuti and Berkenu, as well as in Brunei. I believe that their hostility was directed against the nobility of Brunei, who have spent the whole period holed up in the Palace with their wives and children ... With the Party Rakyat in control, they could hope for a happier future, freed for ever from the rapacious nobility.*<sup>15</sup>

In Sarawak, the by-now legendary figure of Tom Harrisson came out of retirement to rally support among the Kenyahs, Kayans and Ibans of Sarawak, and a red feather, the traditional call to arms, was sent up the Baram River.<sup>16</sup>

Tom Harrisson was the Curator of the Sarawak Museum in Kuching who had been flown to Brunei as a Government observer. He was a truly remarkable man. In the 1930s he had come to Borneo as an undergraduate member of a university expedition. In 1944 he returned as a member of Force 136 (British-trained guerrilla warfare leaders who were infiltrated into Japanese occupied territories to organise the resistance movement). Since then he had become a leading authority on the ecology and archaeology of Borneo and spoke several dialects.

Tribesmen answered his call to arms in their hundreds. They were formed into company-sized teams led by British civilians and deployed in pursuit of the fleeing insurgents. What became known as Harrisson's Force numbered close on

2,000 men, and their local knowledge of the jungle paths proved to be invaluable.

In North Borneo the British Governor, Sir William Goode, moved quickly. The police were very active and, on 10 December, 73 rebels and some weapons were captured at Sipitang. The State Assembly condemned the Uprising. In Weston, police forces managed to capture a further 60 rebels including a large cache of weapons. In Miri, the TNKU seized the Niah police station near Sibuti. There were reports of the TNKU red and white flag flying at Sibuti and Bekenu. According to the Resident at Miri, John Fisher, Sibuti was occupied by 300 rebels. Gurkhas and several Field Force Police were despatched to control Miri itself. John Fisher reported that although the atmosphere was tense, everything was under control. Fisher, however, took extra precautions and had some 3,000 of the aboriginal forces sent to Miri in support.

As far as immediate international reaction to the Rebellion was concerned, the only state to actually do anything to help the cause was Indonesia.<sup>17</sup> The attitude of the Philippines was unclear, and there was almost a sense of embarrassment that Azahari and Zaini were holed up there. North Vietnam declared its support for the Brunei people in their struggle in December 1962, and in January 1963 the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, expressed his support for the 'national liberation war' in Brunei. However, neither North Vietnam nor the People's Republic of China were members of the United Nations at this time, and so could not have supported Azahari if he had managed to make it to New York. In any event neither North Vietnam nor China was in a position geographically to provide any help to the rebels.

The position of Kuala Lumpur is less clear. On 9 December the Chief Rulers in Malaya sent a cable to the Sultan expressing their shock at the treason of the PRB. The Prime Minister

of Malaya also told reporters in Kuala Lumpur that he was prepared to despatch 150 police to help restore order.

But at some later stage, perhaps a few days or so – there is no date but High Commissioner White was certainly back in Brunei – Dato Othman (an emissary for Kuala Lumpur) had an audience with the Sultan. Family contacts tell me that he presented him with a letter from Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman that laid out preconditions for Malaya's support: namely that Brunei must become a member of the new Malaysia Federation. Because the letter was more a demand than a negotiation, the Sultan called a meeting with the High Commissioner and his ministers. Mr White suggested the letter should be given to Neil Lawson, QC, who had been invited to Brunei as legal counsel to advise on some of the legal aspects of the Uprising.

The Sultan refused to accept the Malayan Prime Minister's precondition.

Azahari had fought to win the propaganda war from the first day of the outbreak, but within days he had outstayed his welcome in the Philippines capital. At one stage he proudly proclaimed himself Prime Minister of the United States of Kalimantan Utara! This alienated any potential popular support in either Sarawak or North Borneo.

As early as 11 December he claimed that the Sultan was on his side. Speaking of his 'beloved' Sultan he declared that 'The sultan is in our hands and supports our revolution ... we have half a battalion protecting him.'<sup>18</sup>

Azahari's call for help went unheeded. U Thant, the UN Secretary General, refused to respond. Eventually Azahari boasted, 'I will go into the Borneo jungle and lead the fight to my death.' Instead he went to Jakarta and exile.

There remains the problem of the real objectives of the Rebellion. On paper it was all very straightforward and much

of the speculation is close to conspiracy theory. The proclaimed objectives of the rebels were an independent Brunei, together with Sarawak and North Borneo. The rebellion was therefore directed against the British colonial and protecting power and against plans for Malaysia; certainly against the immediate joining of Malaysia. But where did the Sultan fit in? And was there a possible goal for joining Indonesia? Was there a long-term Communist objective? It is easy to speculate on these issues, impossible to resolve them. Much of the discussion turns on enigmatic and sometimes contradictory statements and actions at the time or made subsequently by some of the local principal actors in the story: the Sultan, Azahari, Sukarno and the Tunku. The main winner to emerge from the events of December 1962 was the Sultan. Therefore to some commentators he must be the driving force behind everything; Azahari, the British and the Tunku were all in varying degrees and different ways merely stooges. The most serious of the conspiracy theorists seek to show that British Intelligence or the oil company or even the CIA was the driving force behind the Rebellion with separate but overlapping agendas.<sup>19</sup>

By the spring of 1963, Brunei had emerged a little bloodied but certainly unbowed from the ordeal of the Rebellion. The Sultan's position was stronger and the United Kingdom after a shaky start had done its duty as the protecting power; the system this time around worked. The issue of whether or not to join Malaysia was unresolved. As Sir Denis White, the High Commissioner, put it in the much-quoted report to London on 20 December 1962:

*The Sultan himself is still vacillating. He may want to join Malaysia but harps on the 'benefits' for his people from entry. He is clearly most concerned for his own safety and security of tenure and is thinking in terms of independence with a*



*British garrison. He shows no sign of appreciating our own position in the area, defensively or politically.*

White went on to say that we (the British protecting power) appeared to have three choices:

1. to support, as we are doing, a discredited Government;
2. to repudiate the Treaty, in spite of our Shell interest, in view of the distastefulness of our present position; or
3. to insist, in conjunction with the Government in Kuala Lumpur, an immediate acceptance of Malaysia.

He added, 'Of these, I favour the last.'<sup>20</sup>

Mr White's report is a long, detailed and remarkably candid paper. But then Mr White was to be a casualty of the Uprising. In the Colonial Office White's failure to predict – let alone prevent – the rebellion, and his absence from the country, made him the prime candidate as the sacrificial lamb. He was to remain in post until March 1963 when a suitable replacement was found.

Nor did the military escape for their incompetence. General Poett, the Commander-in-Chief, FARELF, who had been expecting to go to the Ministry of Defence on promotion to full General, instead returned home to retirement.

It was inevitable that once the British troops were seen to be the masters in Brunei, any popular support for the PRB and the rebels quickly disappeared. There is a little more detail about the final campaign against the rebels in *8 Disember: Dalanguya Siapa? [8 December: Who is the Culprit?]*.

Sheikh Othman, the brother of Azahari and a self-styled Brigadier in the TNKU, attempted to reach the village of

Kilanas to make contact with some supporters he believed were there. On 17 April 1963 he was killed in an ambush set by British troops in Kampong Bunut, but whether that was because of good Special Branch work or that he was betrayed is not known.

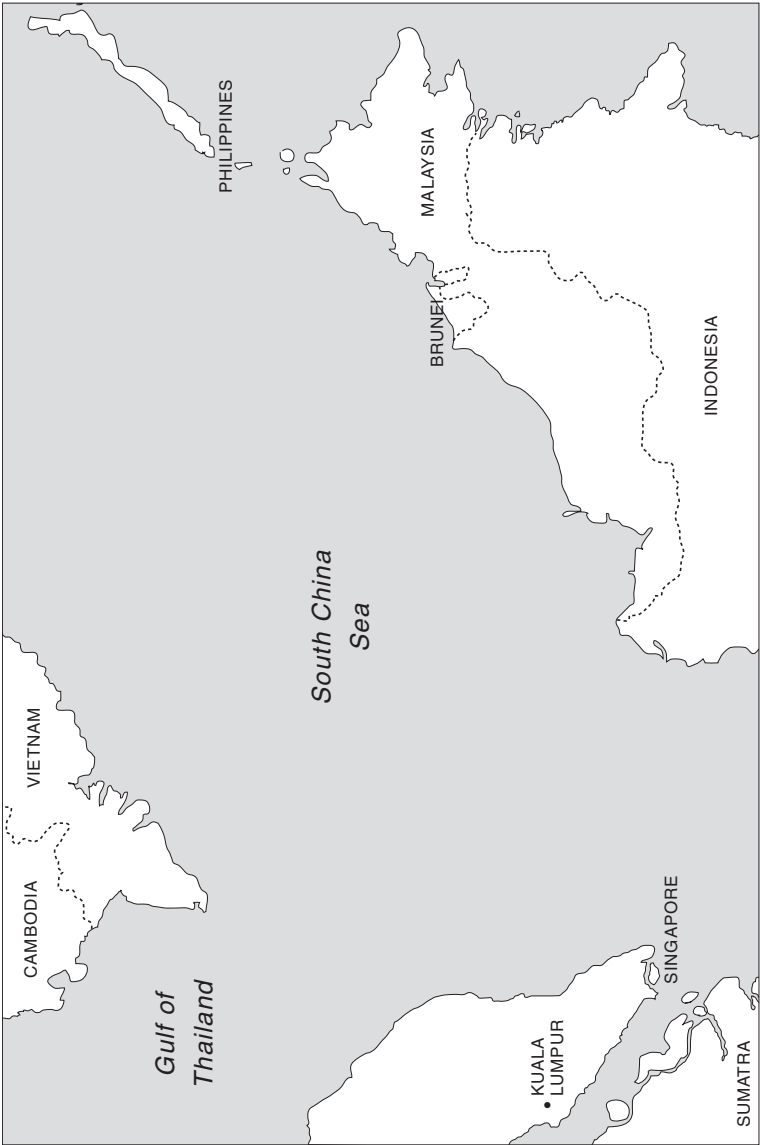
Two days later Sheikh Salleh, Azahari's youngest brother, was caught in the Kelans village. A month after Sheikh Salleh's arrest the other rebel leaders, such as Yassin Affendi, Lalim Seruddin, Awang Abdullah and Mesir bin Keruddin, were surrounded in a joint operation by British troops and Brunei police.

There was some fighting. Awang Hidup and Awang Mantel were killed, Yassin Affendi was severely wounded and Lalim Seruddin was slightly injured. The insurgency was over.

In the defeat of the Rebellion the people of Brunei played no significant part. Other than the Sultan refusing to capitulate on the first day the subsequent effort was almost exclusively British. As with the fall of Brunei in 1942 the people of Brunei (other than Harrisson's indigenous tribesmen, who in any case came mostly from Sarawak) in these momentous events in 1962-3 were passive onlookers: an audience rather than participators in their nation's destiny.

All these issues – Britain's responsibilities to Brunei, the overall Anglo-Brunei relationship, the question of joining the federation and the position of the Sultan – must now be looked at in a different context or be seen against a different background, namely that of the emerging international crisis with Indonesia over confrontation in which one of the prizes was Brunei.

**Map of Brunei and its Neighbours in the South China Sea**



## CHAPTER SIX

# Confrontation, 1963–66

Confrontation, or Konfrontasi, is the shorthand term – English and Indonesian versions – for the challenge launched in early 1963 by Indonesia to the establishment of Malaysia, and particularly to the inclusion of Sarawak, Sabah and possibly Brunei, in the new Federation.

What did Confrontation mean for Brunei: for the Sultan, for the people, for Azahari and his associates, for the issue of whether or not to join Malaysia, for the British view of the future for Brunei?

Confrontation may be seen as a play with a prologue and two acts. The Brunei Rebellion was the Prologue, beginning in December 1962 and ending as a serious conflict by May 1963. Act One began in April 1963 and lasted for approximately a year. Indonesia sponsored raids from its part of Borneo (Kalimantan) into British-controlled and protected Borneo. The general plan was to raise guerrilla forces and to establish bases. The early raiders were irregulars, Indonesian-trained guerrillas and some volunteers. The plan – to raise guerrillas and establish bases – failed to work and the goal of the raids changed to the destabilisation of the border areas. Some regular units of the Indonesian Army began to take part. Act Two began in May 1964 and lasted

until the summer of 1966, although the Indonesian Army became much less involved after October 1965. Regular Indonesian Army units conducted most of the raids. Indonesian troop strengths involved in the operations rose from just over 2,000 in mid-1964 to around 30,000 in the summer of 1965.

The Australian Official History, in a very interesting approach, provides an alternative plan. It puts the Brunei Rebellion in 'The context of Confrontation' and then discusses Confrontation itself in three stages: 1963–4, *living dangerously*; August 1964 to January 1965; and 1965–6.<sup>1</sup>

## **What was Confrontation?**

Before looking at the causes or motives for Confrontation and at what happened, there is a problem of definition. Dr Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, was believed to be the first person to use the term in a speech in January 1963, and he was not very precise.<sup>2</sup> This may have been deliberate. Confrontation was probably always less than a war but certainly more than a quarrel or dispute. It gave to the Indonesian Government considerable room for manoeuvre and freedom of action as it pursued its offensive against Malaysia. It was also important for what was happening on the domestic political scene in Indonesia. General Suharto, Sukarno's successor, provided a full if not very clear definition.

Confrontation, he said, brought:

*... all the national potentials to face up to the enemy with the aim of achieving a particular objective, both in a defensive as well as an offensive context. Because the Indonesian*

*Revolution recognises both friends and foes, confrontation is an instrument to defend and secure victory for the Revolution over all its enemies, whether of ideals or in concrete form.*<sup>3</sup>

Dr Jeffrey Grey, in the Australian Official History, says that probably the best term to define the military dimension of Confrontation is low intensity conflict. He adds that it was certainly more than an armed dispute and:

*Low intensity conflict refers to the nature of the activity not its scale, duration, technological sophistication or the numbers involved. While Sukarno's aim, 'ganyang Malaysia' (crush Malaysia) was total, the means employed, even in the most severe period of military operations in 1964-65, were always limited.*<sup>4</sup>

## **The Motives for Confrontation**

There are various views about the motives and intentions of Indonesia in launching Confrontation. These range from the near-contemporary opinions of Cold War analysts, like Brian Crozier, to the more measured judgements of historians like John Subritzky and Matthew Jones and, at the further extreme, the revisionist approach of Greg Poulgrain.<sup>5</sup> Brunei has an important place in the discussions although its role is not central. There is a general consensus that the Rebellion and Confrontation were linked; this is particularly the view taken by General Walter Walker and his biographer, and by the Australian Official History, but not every historian takes the view of George Kahin, mentioned in the previous chapter, or of James Lunt, that:

*The Confrontation between Britain and Indonesia began on 8th December 1962, with a rebellion in the Sultanate of Brunei ...*<sup>6</sup>

or of Srikant Dutt, that:

*The Brunei uprising became in retrospect the first shot in Indonesia's Konfrontasi strategy towards an emerging Malaysia.*<sup>7</sup>

Several reasons have been suggested for Indonesia's decision to embark on the policy of Confrontation. A major one was its imperialist ambitions in Southeast Asia, particularly as embodied by Sukarno. Another was its determination to curb any Malay-Singapore tendencies to dominate the region. A third was the role Indonesia saw itself playing in the early 1960s in the Cold War struggle in East and Southeast Asia, and its relations with the People's Republic of China and with North Vietnam. A fourth, and in some ways arguably the most significant, was the three-cornered struggle going on in Indonesian domestic politics in the early 1960s. A fifth, and controversial one, was possibly the attitude of the United States.

Indonesia's ambitions to dominate Southeast Asia had been the subject of attention and concern for some time before what happened in December 1962 and the events that followed. As early as 1957 the Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia had concluded that British Borneo would become a target for Indonesian irredentism.<sup>8</sup> In early 1963 the Foreign Office, seeking to gain military support from Australia, claimed that Sukarno's intentions were:

*... To seize not only the three Borneo territories and Portuguese Timor, but also Malaysia and the Philippines;*

*furthermore he would seek the remaining half of New Guinea, then the whole of Melanesia and thus become a major Pacific power.<sup>9</sup>*

Harold Caccia, writing from the Foreign Office to Sir David Ormsby Gore, the British ambassador in Washington, in January 1963, said:

*Whatever Sukarno may say publicly, his territorial ambitions do not seem to have been satisfied by the acquisition of West Irian..... He is looking for new adventures.<sup>10</sup>*

The determination to curb Malay-Singapore ambitions in the region is more complicated. In November 1961, for example, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, in a speech at the United Nations, welcomed the idea of a Malaysian Federation, put forward by Tunku Abdul Rahman earlier that year:

*We are not only disclaiming the territories outside the former Netherlands East Indies, though they are on the same island – more than that – when Malaya told us of its intention to merge with... Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo as one federation, we told them we had no objections and we wished success with this merger so that everyone might live in peace and freedom.<sup>11</sup>*

Again, as late as July 1963, with Confrontation underway, when the heads of government of Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia met together in Manila, they signed an Accord in which Indonesia and the Philippines stated that:

*... they would welcome the formation of Malaysia provided the support of the Borneo territories is ascertained by an*



*independent and impartial authority, the Secretary-General of the UN or his representative.*<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, immediately after the outbreak of the Brunei Rebellion, Sukarno announced his full support for the 'independence struggle' of the Brunei people which he identified with his New Emerging Forces. In the same month (December 1962), the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) denounced Malaysia as 'a new concentration of colonial forces on the very frontiers of our country.' In February 1963, the temperature was raised even further when Sukarno described Malaysia as 'a neo-colonialist design for the protection of imperialistic economic privilege.'<sup>13</sup> Harold Caccia had no illusions about Indonesia's intentions in his note to Sir David Ormsby Gore on 9 January:

*Sukarno is strongly opposed to the formation of Greater Malaysia and will do what he can to prevent it. He is jealous of the economic and administrative 'success story' of Malaya and does not wish to see it extend its influence. But the basic reason for his opposition is that he wishes eventually to take over Malaya as part of a Greater Indonesian Malaysia.*<sup>14</sup>

There was at best something unpredictable about Sukarno's approach to Malaysia. In February 1963, the policy was to 'Crush Malaysia.' In May, he invited the Tunku to meet him for discussions, which were surprisingly amicable, and led to a meeting of foreign ministers in Manila in early June. The foreign ministers signed the Manila accord, which called for greater regional cooperation between the signatories, leading on to a confederation between them, 'Maphilindo'. At the summit meeting of heads of government in Manila at the end of July, Sukarno appeared to abandon his all-out opposition

to Malaysia signing the accord mentioned in the previous paragraph. U Thant, the UN Secretary-General, would visit the two British territories in Borneo and conduct his own study as to whether the people there truly supported federation with Malaya and Singapore. Throughout these spring and summer meetings the British remained intensely suspicious of Sukarno's motives and goals. They viewed his support for 'Maphilindo' as bogus. British officials emphasised that the insurgency in Borneo had continued throughout June and July despite his talk of peace; and Sir Andrew Gilchrist, the ambassador to Indonesia, reported that General Nasution, the Indonesian Minister of Defence, had privately asserted that Confrontation would continue regardless of 'Maphilindo' until Britain was forced to vacate its base at Singapore. The British Government was determined that, despite U Thant's mission, the setting up of Malaysia would go ahead. Duncan Sandys, the Commonwealth Relations Secretary, in a joint statement with the Tunku announced in late August that it would be established on 16 September. Sukarno reacted angrily.

A third reason suggested for Indonesia's decision to embark on a policy of Confrontation was the change in the role it saw itself playing in the early 1960s. From 1961 onwards there was an increasing desire to work with Communist China. Early in that year, Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi visited Jakarta to sign a Treaty of Friendship. Later in the year, Sukarno described himself as a leader of the 'New Emerging Forces' – of nationalism and communism – which were opposed to the 'Old Established Forces' – of capitalism and imperialism. In January 1963, Foreign Minister Subandrio visited Peking, where he and Prime Minister Chou En-lai expressed their support for the 'national liberation war' in Brunei. On his return to Indonesia, Subandrio denounced Malaysia as an

accomplice of 'neo-colonialists and neo-imperialists pursuing a policy hostile towards Indonesia.' The moral support of the People's Republic of China for Indonesia increased in the spring of 1963. In April, for example, Chairman Liu Shao-chi visited Indonesia and declared that Indonesia and China were 'comrades in arms.' He and Sukarno jointly announced their support for the people of *North Kalimantan* in their struggle for independence against 'neo-colonialist' Malaysia.

An editorial in the official Government newspaper in Peking in September 1964 assured Jakarta of China's continuing strong support in her Confrontation with Malaysia, assurances similar to those given to North Vietnam. Indonesia, for its part, established diplomatic relations with North Vietnam and North Korea and recognised the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Something similar to a 'nutcracker theory' emerged in 1964 with the massing of anti-imperialist forces to the north and south of Southeast Asia. Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese leader, in March 1964 linked Confrontation with the activities of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam as 'Wars of national liberation.'

A fourth reason in this analysis of Indonesia's motives for Confrontation was the power struggle that was going on in the country at the time. By the early 1960s, Indonesia was ruled *de facto* by an uneasy coalition of the PKI (the Communists), the Army and the Sukarnoists. Increasingly Sukarno himself and many of his supporters sided with the PKI against the Army. The PKI was unhappy with what had happened in Malaya in the 1950s where the Communist rebellion had been put down. It saw the new regime – Malaysia – as 'neo colonialists and imperialists' backed by Britain and the United States. Therefore it should be opposed. At the same time, and something of a bonus, continuing

Confrontation would keep much of the Indonesian Army in Kalimantan, thus reducing its capacity to operate against the Communists in Java. Sukarno and the Sukarnoists, for their part, saw Malaysia as 'neo-colonialist' and a threat to Indonesia; they proclaimed themselves as the champions of the peoples of the Borneo territories seeking liberation. The attitude of the Army was more complicated. Confrontation of Malaysia provided a rationale for maintaining a large Indonesian military establishment, a necessary counter to the growing power of the PKI. There were also some in the Army leadership who opposed Malaysia because of a fear that eventually it would be controlled by the Chinese community there, and ultimately would be dominated by Communist China!

A fifth and more controversial point is how and where the United States fitted into the situation. The American position can at least be described as ambiguous. On the one hand there is a good deal of evidence that the United States was endeavouring in the late 1950s to undermine Sukarno. On the other hand the Americans viewed Indonesia's closer links with the Soviet Union and with Communist China with alarm and had certainly given Sukarno some political backing in his claims against the Dutch in West Irian. Moreover, according to Greg Poulgrain, while President Kennedy sought to build a personal relationship with President Sukarno this was not a policy shared by the CIA.

So if Sukarno threatened the proposed state of Malaysia in the same way, would the Americans again back him and what effect would this have on Britain's policy? It is clear that the Foreign Office at the beginning of 1963 was uneasy about the United States' position. In the note, mentioned previously from Harold Caccia to the British ambassador, Caccia began by saying that the Foreign Secretary was

gravely concerned about developments in Indonesia and wanted Ambassador Ormsby Gore to take up several points with Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He wrote:

*We understand that the Americans are about to give a large amount of aid to the Indonesia. It seems to us in the present state of affairs that this will act as a subsidy for the purchase of arms from the Soviet Bloc... Of course, we fully understand that American policy has been to try and keep Indonesia from becoming completely dependent on Russia and China and to support the Armed Forces in Indonesia as a counter balance to the Communist Party. But the further problem is how to contain Indonesian expansion. We are doing so in Brunei, but have the Americans any idea how they can help? As a first step we would like to know whether the United States Administration shares this analysis and what are their own views about the angles ahead of us.<sup>15</sup>*

The West Irian factor probably had some significance for the timing of Confrontation. In December 1961, Sukarno called for volunteers to fight in the Dutch colony of West Irian and many Indonesian volunteers underwent para-military training in 1962. Recruits, both Malay and Chinese, also came from Malaya and Singapore. In August 1962 the Dutch-Indonesian agreement was signed and it is doubtful if any of the volunteers ever saw any action in West Irian. West Irian ceased to be 'a patriotic cause' for rallying the people and the Sukarno Government was interested in finding a new one.

Before leaving the question of the motives for Confrontation, something needs to be said about the most recent, controversial and revisionist view expressed by Dr Greg Poulgrain in *The Genesis of Konfrontasi* and in an interview with him. Dr Poulgrain was interviewed in Kuala

Lumpur in April 2002 and, having read his book, a list of questions were raised with him over two days of taped interviews. In addition, he promised to send some documents from his sources that would support some of his more unorthodox claims, but despite repeated requests, these never arrived.

However, from the transcripts of the interview, Dr Poulgrain makes several points that are significantly different to those from other sources both primary and secondary. First he suggests that Sukarno's objectives were never expansionist. He was a man of the people, a brilliant orator, who wanted the Malay people to be in charge of their own destiny and free of all colonial interference. This included the people of Brunei. It was the British Government, and in particular British Intelligence, that created and propagated the rumours and reports of Sukarno as the ambitious imperialist. Secondly, Sukarno never wanted Confrontation but by 1963 was no longer in complete control over his own country. There were other forces at work. There were those in the Army High Command who wanted Confrontation and Sukarno also had to balance the objectives of the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI. Both the Army and the PKI were trying to outmanoeuvre each other; playing the nationalist card and the reunification of Kalimantan was a convenient platform. But the most sinister figure, according to Poulgrain, was the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio. He had his own agenda – to become President – and his own private army, which formed some of the more vicious troops who took part in the Confrontation.

Thirdly, Dr Poulgrain placed blame on the CIA. He believes that the Americans were running covert operations in Indonesia through front organisations, army separatist groups, and that their man was General Suharto who by 1966

was in command of the Strategic Reserve. (Known as KOSTRAD, this was the concentration of regular army units including the airborne forces. Whoever had command of this formation was a very powerful figure.) There may well be some truth to these claims. Poulgrain goes on to maintain that after his meeting with President Kennedy in 1962, Sukarno had an agreement bypassing the CIA. Kennedy would come to Indonesia, sign a new agreement and make vast American funds available to help ease Indonesia's chronic financial and economic problems. One of the items that Dr Poulgrain promised to send was a letter he had from Dean Rusk with whom he had been in contact for about ten years, which confirms that there was a secret agreement between Kennedy and Sukarno to bypass the CIA. Sukarno no longer had control of the Army and the best he could hope to do was play the generals off against the PKI, in the hope that they would weaken each other.

It only remains to ask where Brunei fits into Confrontation. It is apparent from these arguments that its role is only minor. It is only a small part of a much bigger picture, a small piece in a large jigsaw. However, it can be argued that although it is at most a minor cause, it does have a major role through the Brunei Rebellion as the trigger that set off Confrontation in 1963.

### **Confrontation 1963–66: What Happened?**

The full story of Confrontation, both from the military and political perspectives, has yet to be written. From the military perspective, the accounts and analysis of what was happening on the British-Malay side are much fuller than those

giving the Indonesian point of view. This may be because of the more open nature of the political processes in London and Kuala Lumpur than in Jakarta. It may be because it is always easier for the victors to tell their story.

The tale from the Indonesian perspective is much more obscure and difficult to put together. Most of the studies are more concerned with the ups-and-downs of the Army–PKI–Sukarno relationship rather than with the military strategy of Confrontation.

The key figure on the British-Malay side during Confrontation, who probably made the difference between victory and defeat, was the British commander referred to previously, Major-General Walter Walker. There is something of a parallel here with the role that General Templer played in the Malay Emergency. As shown in a previous chapter, General Walker, at the time commanding the 17th Gurkha Division in Malaya, was flown in to Brunei in December 1962 as the Commander of British Forces Borneo (COMBRITBOR). To this day, General Walker is remembered and honoured as one of the great heroes in Bruneian history who saved the country twice: first from Azahari and his Rebellion, and secondly from Sukarno and his ambitions to control the whole of Borneo.

No other general in the British Army could match Walker's experience of jungle warfare and counterinsurgency operations in the jungle. As 'Birdie' Smith remarked:

*I suppose if you had to have chosen a Major General of the British Army to start off as Director of Operations he would have been the best choice anyway.*<sup>16</sup>

He had served in Burma in the Second World War, both during the retreat and afterwards, winning the first of three Distinguished Service Orders and commanding a battalion.



During the Malayan Emergency he raised and trained Ferret Force, intended to operate in small groups for long periods in the jungle. He went on to command a Gurkha battalion and then a brigade. He made the 1/6 Gurkha Rifles one of the best of the Gurkha units.

Walker believed passionately in a unified system of command. As Director of Operations in Borneo he insisted on dealing directly with the Commander-in-Chief in Singapore, Admiral Sir Varyl Begg, bypassing the various force commanders in Singapore. He saw from his arrival in Brunei in December that his job was to prevent the escalation of the Brunei Rebellion. Despite pressure from his superiors in Singapore to cut his headquarters down and move troops out of Brunei after the successful crushing of the Rebellion, he was convinced from intelligence reports and from the often vicious anti-Malaya and anti-British commentary on Radio Jakarta that the trouble was going to spread in Sarawak and North Borneo. He reasoned that he had to win the opening exchanges of the Confrontation and then maintain his ascendancy. The British forces had to meet even the smallest violation of the border with swift, merciless retaliation. From this basic idea developed one of the most offensive defensive strategies in modern military history.

Walker set out several guiding principles for the prosecution of the war, which he called his six 'ingredients for success.' They were, as indicated previously:

1. Unified operations: joint headquarters and organisation.
2. The domination of the jungle.
3. Speed, mobility and flexibility of the security forces.
4. Security of bases.
5. Timely and accurate intelligence.

## 6. Winning hearts and minds.

In his memoirs, *Fighting On*, he spelled out what he wanted to happen:

*Unlike the American policy in Vietnam of 'Search and Destroy' and then return to base, our technique in Borneo was 'clear, hold and dominate.' Results could not be achieved merely by attacking and shooting the enemy and then returning to base.*

*He had to be played at his own game, by living out in the jungle for weeks on end, by winning the hearts and minds of the people and by planting our own agents in villages known to be unfriendly. ...*

*... We gradually devised tactical techniques and battle skills which would have done credit to a cat-burglar, gangster, gunman or poacher. The soldiers were able to live in the jungle as close to the animal as it was humanly possible to do so, and became so well trained that they were able to fight the guerrillas both in the jungle and out of it, and to kill and harry them until they were utterly exhausted.*

*The type of fighting, the type of country and the climate called for individual stamina and fortitude, stout legs, stout hearts, fertile brains and the acceptance of battlefield conditions almost unimaginable in their demands on human endurance.*

*The solders made great use of deceptions and guile, never doing the same thing twice. Their objective was to dominate and own the jungle and the frontier, week in, week out, day and night ...<sup>17</sup>*

In April 1963 the first raid across the border in Sarawak against a police post marked the beginning of the military

phase of Confrontation. The Indonesian incursions into Sarawak and North Borneo now began to happen on a fairly regular basis. Walker's verdict on the events from December 1962 to April 1963 is important. He argued that because of the Brunei Rebellion there was, by April 1963, a very efficient Tri-Service Operational Headquarters operating in British Borneo. He was the commander on the spot and he was confident that he could 'read the battle.'

Geographical factors did not favour the British-Malay side. Borneo is one of the world's biggest islands, very mountainous and covered in dense rainforest. The border between Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan) and British-controlled Borneo was approximately 1,000 miles in length, running through dense jungle, traversed only by native tracks. Roads were mainly non-existent; much of the twisting border was unmapped:

*Rain falls torrentially and the climate is hot and humid. It is almost certainly some of the most difficult campaigning country in the world.*<sup>18</sup>

In addition there was a sharp contrast with what had happened in the Malay emergency which did not favour the British-Malay side. In Malaya, between 1948 and 1960, the Communist insurgents had no real sanctuaries; they were forced to remain in country. In Borneo, the Indonesians did have sanctuaries. They could move as they wanted in Kalimantan, vary the point of attack across the 1,000 mile frontier and retire to safety if and when they wanted to. Moreover, in relative terms they were better armed than the Malayan insurgents, they had access to more up-to-date weaponry, they were better trained and more offensively minded.

With a 1,000 mile border to defend, in the sort of country described in previous paragraphs, Walker faced a very big problem. In 1963 he had something like five regular battalions under his command. It would have been madness to have spread them thinly in 'penny pockets' along the border. Things did improve in 1964 and 1965 and at the height of Confrontation there were some 17,000 regular Commonwealth forces on the ground. But in relation to the problem the numbers were still small. Walker's solution was small surveillance groups on the most likely incursion routes. The SAS played a major role in this as did the Gurkhas. There were also the Border Scouts, recruited from the Kayans, Kenyahs, Kelabits, Murats and Ibans by Tom Harrisson:

*... Tom quickly moved to the next stage: preparing secretly to move the war into the enemy's camp. Beginning in mid-1963 groups of at most seventy men, but often many fewer, penetrated into Indonesian Borneo to carry out specific aggressive tasks assigned to them by British military intelligence. At first they were all indigenous and thus more easily deniable by the British and Malayan governments ...*<sup>19</sup>

In July 1963 the formidable figure of Major John Cross, a good example of a very unconventional soldier, was brought in to command the Border Scouts.

Brunei was separated from Indonesia by Sarawak and North Borneo, so, in a geographical and conventional military sense, there was no immediate direct threat to the Sultanate when Confrontation began in April 1963 with the attack by a force of 30 Indonesians on a police post and the local bazaar at Tebedu in Sarawak. There was certainly an indirect threat, because the borders between Sarawak and

North Borneo and Indonesian Kalimantan were so long and vulnerable. Moreover, General Walker, from the outset, drawing on his experiences of the Malayan Emergency, where the Chinese communists had posed the greatest threat, saw a similar situation in Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei, despite the putting down of the Rebellion. All three Borneo territories had ethnic imbalances with a significant Chinese component. In Sarawak, for example, 31% were Chinese, in North Borneo 21% and in Brunei 18%.

Sarawak posed the greatest problem as far as Walker was concerned. The Chinese community there had close links with China. Teachers in the Chinese schools, following a Chinese curriculum, were mostly Communist sympathisers, especially after the victory of Communism in China in 1949. The first proper Communist organisation formed in 1951 was the Sarawak Overseas Chinese Democratic Youth League. This became the Sarawak Liberation League in 1954, and in 1956 was absorbed into the Sarawak Advanced Youth Association. This became known as the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) and its policy was to establish 'a new democratic society followed by a socialist society, and finally a communist society.' By the early 1960s the CCO had cells in the schools, in the political party, the Sarawak United People's Party, in the trade unions and among the farmers. Numbers are difficult to establish but there was probably a hard core of about 1,000 in the CCO, with as many as 25,000 sympathisers. There were reports that numbers of young Chinese had crossed into Kalimantan for weapons training. The Rebellion in Brunei had already led to moves against the CCO, such as the closing down of three Chinese newspapers and the deportation of several Chinese.<sup>20</sup>

In North Borneo, in contrast to Sarawak, Chinese Communist influence among the large resident Chinese population

was virtually nil. The problem there was perceived to be 32,000 Indonesians, resident in North Borneo, mainly in the Tawau District. Agents from across the border were known to have been active among them.

In Brunei, in another contrast, the fear was not so much about Chinese or Indonesians but rather that although the Rebellion had been crushed, sympathisers with the rebels might try to take advantage of Confrontation to rekindle an insurgency. Walker was not alone in believing that the Rebellion, rather than being crushed, had just been driven underground. Only the ringleaders were in detention: hundreds of young men had been allowed to return to their homes. Had they really seen the error of their ways or were they simply waiting the call from Azahari, by now in exile in Indonesia? Fears were also expressed over the loyalty of some of the members of the recently formed Brunei Regiment. There were continuing reports of considerable internal discontent. Advertisements in the Borneo Bulletin in November and December 1963, calling for volunteers to apply for short service commissions, had produced very few responses.

From April onwards, most of 1963 was devoted to low-key probes as the forces facing each other along the Sarawak frontier reconnoitred each other's positions and lines of communication. The most serious threat was seen to be against the 1st and 2nd Divisions of Sarawak, where CCO dissidents were reckoned to be numerous and active. An Intelligence assessment was that the CCO was unlikely to embark on a sustained guerrilla campaign. Rather the real concern was terrorism: sabotage and assassinations. The theatre of operations was vast and wild and presented a variety of opportunities and dangers. The Admiralty's Secret Quarterly Intelligence Report in March 1964, approximately one year into Confrontation, commented:

*The tactics of the border raiders have varied and have been unpredictable. Recently they seem to have been concentrating on military targets. They have been well led and equipped and participation by Indonesian Regular Forces has been confirmed. To date, however, the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) within Sarawak has not caused much trouble, but the police and many well informed local people are convinced that active CCO operations will start before long.*<sup>21</sup>

After the proclamation of Malaysia in September 1963, Malay units moved into Borneo alongside the British and the Gurkhas. The immediate concern of the British command was that the Malay battalions were deployed before they were combat ready. The 3rd Battalion was deployed to Tawau in North Borneo, and in December 1963 an infantry company was caught apparently unprepared at Kalabakhan, west of Tawau, by an invading force of Indonesian marines. The Malaysians took heavy casualties and the survivors fled in some disorder. The Indonesian force was subsequently intercepted by troops of 1/10GR and virtually wiped out. Militarily, the Malaysians had experienced a very bad baptism of fire and the Malaysian Military High Command remained very touchy to any British criticism. Politically, the incident was of much greater significance, for Malaysian troops were seen to be fighting and dying for their country rather than leaving it all to the British and the Gurkhas and other Commonwealth forces.

Confrontation was not confined to Borneo but also occurred around Singapore and along the west coast of the Malaysian peninsula. There was a good deal of harassment of Malaysian fishermen in the Malacca Strait in 1963 and several attempts at sabotage in Singapore. There were several minor

landing attempts along the Malayan coast as far north as Penang. The most ambitious attempts to take Confrontation on to Malay soil came in 1964, one seaborne the other airborne. Both were very unsuccessful. One brought more than 100 Indonesian regular soldiers to a beach in southwestern Johore; the second was a bungled parachute drop onto an agricultural area in the middle of the state. Both incidents, however, were given great publicity at the time and there must have been concerns in government circles in Brunei that if the Indonesians were prepared to launch big attacks against the Malaysian peninsula then the Sultan could also be a target.

This may help to explain why, in May 1964, once the construction of Berakas Camp had reached a stage suited to occupation, the decision was taken to bring the Brunei Regiment home from Siginting Camp in Malaysia. This was more than a physical goodbye to Malaysia. By this time it had become clear that Brunei was not going to join the new Malaysian Federation either then or in the near future.

The Malayan Regiment officers and non-commissioned officers were left at Siginteng Camp. There is no evidence available in the sources open to explain whether the decision was amicable or even who initiated it: the Bruneians or the Malaysians. And it would be interesting to know what influence General Walter Walker may have had in the process. For the Sultan decided to use British officers and non-commissioned officers to replace those originally from Malaysia. Was it a coincidence, for example, that the first commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel D. M. Fletcher, was a Gurkha officer who had also served under Walker in the Burma Campaign?

Other British 'loan service personnel' joined. They included an adjutant, a regimental sergeant major and others. At the same time the Sultan had a British officer as his personal



adjutant/ADC and a more senior officer, a colonel, as the Sultan's Defence Advisor.

On Wednesday 6 May 1964 the Regiment disembarked from the Straits Steamship Company vessel *Auby* and, led by their new commanding officer, marched through Brunei Town, proceeding along Jalan Sultan to the front of the State Secretariat Building. An estimated 5,000 people lined the route. At the State building they were greeted by Major General Walter Walker, Director of Operations for Borneo, and by the Dato Marsal bin Maun, the Mentri Besar. Thereafter the Regiment went on a month's leave and then reported to Berakas Camp.

Confrontation was the major security threat and the Regiment embarked upon a series of exercises and training in jungle warfare, with the advice and assistance of officers and non-commissioned officers seconded from British operational units. At the same time, British military forces moved out of Brunei Town (where they had been since the Rebellion) to a new base at Labuan. The process took six months to complete, but the withdrawal did provide the Regiment with an operational responsibility for internal security in Brunei Town and elsewhere. Small detachments were deployed to cover key points; for example, at Labi a detachment was responsible for checking river traffic and patrolling the surrounding jungle. By now the Regiment had eight officers and six warrant officers and senior ranks seconded from the British Army among a total regimental strength of 463 of all ranks. There were three Bruneian officers as lieutenants, three as second lieutenants and six officer cadets undergoing training. This meant that some of the platoons were commanded by British non-commissioned officers.

Attempts by the Indonesians at infiltration into Malaya continued into 1965, but were unsuccessful. The Ministry of

Defence later estimated that four in every five attempted crossings were intercepted at sea. The attempt to open what can be seen as a Second Front did of course contribute to the tying down of a considerable Commonwealth naval force.

For the first 20 months or so of Confrontation the British Government placed severe restrictions on the movement of forces, primarily to keep the conflict from escalating and to demonstrate clearly that Indonesia was the aggressor. However, by September 1964 the situation within British Borneo was generally under control and the security forces had proved to be more than a match for the Indonesians, although there were still ominous threats like the late spring attack in 1964 by the well-trained Black Cobra force, an elite Indonesian unit, in Sarawak. The Indonesians appeared to retain the initiative, because they could continue to attack from safe bases in Kalimantan, most of which were conveniently close to the border.

Walker had been pushing hard for sometime for permission to mount cross-border operations to take the initiative back from the Indonesians. The British Government was reluctant to grant permission, anxious to avoid taking any steps that could be presented to the outside world as 'imperialist aggression.' Following Indonesian sea and parachute landings on the mainland of Malaya, the Malaysian Government now supported Walker's request for cross-border operations and he was able to convince the new Army Minister, Mr Fred Mulley. He was finally given permission to mount operations across the border into Kalimantan.

Walker gave these operations the code name of CLARET and all were graded 'top secret', to be handled with the greatest care by the minimum number of officers on a 'need to know' basis. CLARET operations, in Walker's judgement, changed the fortunes of war. They were designed to put the

Indonesians off-balance and increased their feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. No longer would they feel safe in their border camps and bases, even in Kalimantan, and equally, no longer would the British forces feel so frustrated. Fortified company-sized bases were established and heavily defended, from these fixed bases seasoned and highly trained troops crossed into Indonesia to take the fight to the enemy. There was to be no publicity.

There was a set of very detailed and definite orders governing the CLARET operations, which Walker called the 'Golden rules'. These included:

1. All Raids had to be personally authorised by me as the Director of Operations.
2. Only tried and tested troops were to be used ...
3. All raids were to be made with the definite aim of deterring and thwarting aggression by the Indonesians.
4. No attacks were to be made in retribution with the sole aim of inflicting casualties on the foe. Civilian lives must not be risked ...
5. The depth of penetration had to be carefully controlled, initially up to 5,000 yards ...
6. Every operation had to be meticulously planned with the aid of a sand-table and thoroughly rehearsed for at least two weeks.
7. Each operation had to be planned and executed with maximum security ... Identity discs must be left behind before departure and no traces ... must be left in Kalimantan.
8. On no account must any soldier taking part be captured by the enemy – alive or dead.<sup>22</sup>

The CLARET operations were extremely successful. The initial depth of penetration was limited to 5,000 yards; this was later increased to 10,000 and then to 20,000 yards. The operations accomplished their goal: enemy offensive action into British-controlled Borneo almost ceased; the Indonesians became preoccupied with protecting themselves. The operations remained secret for some years after 1966. The British had no wish to publicise their raids into Indonesian territory. The Indonesians for their part – perhaps from embarrassment, perhaps from ignorance – did not try to make any kind of international issue out of the operations. Walker, rightly, was always proud of CLARET:

*An American general commented that only the British could have conceived CLARET operations and devised the masterly 'Golden rules' that governed them: later he was generous enough to add that only well-disciplined troops such as the SAS and the Gurkhas, under their experienced, capable leaders, could have won the successes that were obtained.<sup>23</sup>*

By the summer of 1965 it is clear that the Indonesians were losing the struggle in Borneo and, perhaps more importantly, there were increasing political problems within Indonesia. By the autumn of 1965 there was little real popular support for Confrontation. It was the deteriorating state of the country's economy and official corruption, both of which had steadily worsened under Sukarno's policy of 'guided economy', that concerned people rather than a dubious threat on a distant frontier. The sustaining factor for Confrontation on the Indonesian side from 1963 to 1965 was a local brand of populist imperialism sponsored by the Sukarno regime. As the regime began to crumble in 1965–6, largely for domestic, political and economic reasons, so support for Confrontation

began to wane. There is something of the 'chicken and egg' situation here. If Confrontation had been more obviously successful in 1963 and 1964 then the regime would probably have remained stronger for longer. Once it was clear that the regime's days were numbered after the political crisis and the controversial events in September and October 1965, then Confrontation was doomed.

The Indonesian Army gradually reduced its support for Confrontation after October 1965, although it continued for a time to pay lip-service to Sukarno's and Subandrio's demands to continue the policy. By April 1966 there were moves within the Government to normalise relations with Malaysia, and in June there were demonstrations for peace. Negotiations with the Malaysian Government began in May and by August it was all over, despite protests from Sukarno. Even at this late stage there was one last infiltration and in this the centre stage was occupied by the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment.

In July 1966 a band of 50 armed infiltrators, led by Lieutenant Sumbi of the Indonesian Regular Army, crossed the border from Indonesian Kalimantan into the 5th Division Sarawak. It later transpired that the guerrillas' mission was to infiltrate into Brunei through Malaysian Borneo. Once in the Sultanate they were to split into smaller groups, and thence recruit new members and perform acts of sabotage.

The raid occurred after a ceasefire had been agreed between Malaysia and Indonesia. The guerrillas refused to heed warnings from an aircraft voice radio and a pitched battle ensued with Malaysian forces. Four were killed and 41 surrendered. There was reliable intelligence that surviving members of the Tentara Nasional Kalimantan Utara had crossed into Brunei.

The Royal Brunei Malay Regiment were immediately put on alert and patrols were despatched to the border areas, but

there were no contacts. Patrol activity continued, but it was not until 7 October that the battalion received intelligence reports of suspicious movements in the Temburong District of the Sultanate near to a settlement called Bukit Belalong. There was a company patrol base, currently operated by C Company under Major J. R. E. Laird, in Bangar.

The Commanding Officer, now Lieutenant Colonel Burrows, flew to Bangar, met up with Major Laird, and two platoons were deployed for a cordon and search operation. After all the years of training the Regiment was finally deployed for an operational role.

The intelligence was remarkably precise. Four guerrillas were reported to be hiding in a small hut near a very prominent tree in a dried up gully; they were apparently armed and in uniform.

It was a textbook operation in counterinsurgency terms. Two platoons deployed, both under command of Bruneian second lieutenants. One was used in a blocking position and the other as a sweeping party. Back at base the two British officers awaited the outcome. The first sweep failed to detect the hut. Major Laird joined the group and prepared to move forward for a second time when a voice cried out in Malay 'Don't shoot we surrender!' Four men emerged from the undergrowth and led the soldiers to the hut. A cache of weapons and ammunition was discovered but there was no fight left in the guerrillas, two of whom were Bruneians. They were half-starved and looking to surrender.

Nothing, however, was going to take away this first operational success for Brunei's young soldiers. The arrests were given maximum publicity. Lieutenants Musa and Husin, the young officers who had led the raid, were decorated by Sultan Omar, as were five other soldiers.

Confrontation was over and the external threat to Brunei removed. What were the costs in human terms of the successful campaign? British and Commonwealth casualties numbered 114 killed and 181 wounded. It is more difficult to work out the Indonesian casualties. Indonesian forces are known to have suffered 590 killed, 222 wounded and 771 captured. But as things started to go wrong for them towards the end, when the CLARET operations across the border were breaking the logistic chain, many more may have died of starvation.

The British and Commonwealth victory in the Confrontation struggle has never received the attention it deserves. As 'Birdie' Smith remarked, 'very few people in this country know what went on and today look blankly at you when you mention Confrontation.' To some extent this was the fault of the governments in London and Kuala Lumpur, who tried to keep the operations as low profile as possible. It was also of course because from 1963 onwards global attention was focused on what was beginning to happen in Vietnam.

The British and Commonwealth performance was nevertheless by the standards of post-1945 conflict very impressive. 'Birdie' Smith said:

*So it was a strange war, an undeclared war and an unknown war. Nevertheless it was a most successful one. It showed that the British Army, and the British Infantry in particular, could fight as well as anyone else in the jungle providing they had time to re-adjust. They had to forget their gadgets and learn to live and fight in the jungle.<sup>24</sup>*

The last word on Confrontation should be left to Denis Healey, Secretary of State for Defence. In his statement to Parliament after the end of the campaign, he said:

*When the House thinks of the tragedy that could have fallen on a whole corner of a continent if we had not been able to hold the situation and bring it to a successful termination, it will appreciate that in the history books it will be recorded as one of the most efficient uses of military forces in the history of the world.*

## Confrontation and Brunei

Whatever the origins of Confrontation and the question of the timing of the outbreak, it was obviously about much more than the fate of Brunei. However, if Confrontation had been successful, Brunei's future would have been very different from what actually happened from 1966 onwards. The goal of Confrontation was to crush Malaysia; an important part of that process was to gain control of the British Borneo territories. When Confrontation began the odds were that Brunei would join the new Federation; consequently, from Sukarno's point of view it was in the same category as Sarawak and North Borneo. In addition, if Azahari's links with Jakarta were as genuine as they appeared to be, then the fate of Brunei would have been the same as that of Sarawak and North Borneo. As we have seen, however, there are always questions and doubts about Azahari's motives and goals which might have complicated the issue.

It is interesting to attempt to assess the impact of Confrontation on opinion in the three Borneo territories with regard to the issue of joining Malaysia. The evidence is by no means conclusive: there are gaps, at times it is thin, and it is often controversial, as with the Cobbold Commission in 1962. The impact of the Brunei Rebellion followed by Confrontation seems to have increased support in Sarawak and North



Borneo for joining the new Malaysia. The reverse appears to be the case in Brunei, although the evidence is thinner and more controversial.

One interesting issue to consider in any discussion of the impact of Confrontation on Brunei is the position and attitude of General Walker. His command remit was initially Brunei, but from the Spring of 1963 it expanded to include the whole of northern Borneo and, as we have seen, he discharged it superbly. But Walker started in Brunei, the Rebellion preceded Confrontation and in some ways his approach was always Brunei-centred. He continued to live in the Lodge at Muara throughout his time in Borneo, commuting to Limbang or Labuan or wherever his headquarters happened to be. He established and maintained throughout a good and firm personal relationship with the Sultan and he was invested with the Brunei equivalent of a knighthood, which was more than he was awarded by his masters in London for his efforts in Borneo!

It still remains unclear, however, where his sympathies lay on the issue of Brunei joining or not joining Malaysia, and speculation on this point verges on conspiracy theory. There are few, if any, clues in his outspoken memoir, *Fighting On*. In his account of his final private meeting with the Sultan, the main topic of conversation seems to have been the question of the security of Brunei against any future internal trouble, where Walker advised the Sultan to raise a special force of retired or redundant Gurkha soldiers. It can be said with certainty that Walker had no problems with Brunei remaining independent, and a case can be made that he and some of the other military commanders on the spot – although not in London – saw good reasons to keep Brunei as it was, with defence issues being decided directly between the governments in Brunei and London without having to go through

Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. One interesting little side-issue that may have some bearing on this is that the Sultan had constructed a barracks complex near to the oilfield installations at Seria, which was presented to the British forces as a gift. London was not amused. What part did Walker play in this?

Walker and his wife were given a farewell reception in March 1965, and the Sultan was fulsome in his praise for the General:

*It is now over two years since General Dato Walker arrived in the State to take over the control of the operations then proceeding against the rebels. So successful were his efforts that the forces under his command were quickly able to restore law and order and thus the State and its inhabitants were happily preserved from a long internal conflict with all the suffering that would have entailed for innocent people. It might at first have been hoped that with the restoration of peace and tranquillity to Brunei, General Dato Walker would have fulfilled his mission. Unfortunately that was not to be the case. The deliberate policy of hostility towards the concept of Malaysia, a 'confrontation' which resulted in increasing aggression towards our neighbour Malaysia resulted in a military threat from Indonesia which called for the most determined counter measures. It was here that General Dato Walker, as Director of Borneo Operations, took command of the situation and the manner in which these operations were conducted cannot be too highly praised. The area for which he was responsible is large, the communications difficult and the initiative remained with the aggressor. I do not need to emphasise the difficulties facing General Dato Walker. I would however wish to pay tribute to the manner in which he has dealt with them ...<sup>25</sup>*

Finally, what impact, if any, did Confrontation have on Brunei's decision in 1963 not to join Malaysia? On this issue, the position of the Sultan is obviously critical. The movement towards democracy died with the Rebellion. In 1962 the Sultan was on record as supporting the Federation and Brunei's membership of it. In January 1963, after the Rebellion, he announced that Brunei would join. But it is clear that he had doubts, he was aware of popular opposition, as expressed in the 1962 election, and he was certainly vacillating by the end of 1962. By July 1963 he had changed his mind and he had decided against joining. Was this because of Confrontation? The evidence is by no means conclusive but an interim answer is probably not. More important were factors such as the Sultan's awareness of the popular base for the Rebellion, his opposition to the likely order of precedence among the various Sultans of the Federation who were to provide its kings on a five-year-rotating basis, and the issue of the control and distribution of oil revenues between Brunei and the Federal Government in Kuala Lumpur. It is interesting to note that fresh discoveries of offshore oil in commercial quantities were made in 1963. Personal factors were also important for the Sultan. There was, for example, his uneasy relationship with the Tunku. The British Government was very much in favour of Brunei entering the Federation, and a final factor influencing the Sultan's decision may well have been the brusque manner in which Duncan Sandys, the Minister for Commonwealth Relations, sought his compliance. In all this, Confrontation, following on from the Rebellion, probably made a contribution. It certainly showed that the British Government would honour its obligations, and it brought military forces into the country in significant numbers. The Sultan's position was much more secure and he wanted to keep it that way!

Moreover, by this time his armed forces had come of age. Apart from an infantry battalion of some 650 men, the Royal Brunei Air Force had helicopters and was the first armed force in the world to be equipped with hovercraft. A flotilla and an air wing were to be formed.

Once the Confrontation had ended, the bulk of the British forces left and the Royal Brunei Air Force assumed primary responsibility for national security, visiting all parts of the Sultanate. A Company worked in the Temburong District, and platoons made regular visits to kampongs along the Temburong and Panduruan rivers and along the Labu Besar Road. C Company operated in central Brunei and Muara and sent patrols into Tutong District. These missions were all about showing the flag and helping with local aid projects along the accepted British-taught tactical doctrines of aid to the civil community, as well as acting as a recruiter. At the same time, new training camps were established at Bangar and Kilong Camps, where the companies could exercise their field skills and take part in some live-firing exercises.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Conclusions and Consequences

By the summer of 1966, Confrontation was to all intents and purposes over, and peace and stability returned to the island of Borneo. Brunei emerged with its territory intact and its interests and security improved. The Sultanate now embarked on a path that was to lead to the granting of full internal self-government in 1971 by the terms of the Amended Agreement with the United Kingdom, and the eventual resumption of full independence at the beginning of 1984, after the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in January 1979. After independence, Brunei joined ASEAN, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and later became the 159th member of the United Nations.

There was something of a paradox in all this, with echoes of the 1950s. On the one hand Brunei was on the path to stability, security and prosperity, with generally good relations with its neighbours and could, without too much exaggeration, be described as the 'Abode of Peace'. On the other hand, if the bigger picture in the region was examined, it was all about insecurity and instability. The war in Vietnam took off

in the mid-1960s, there was chaos and then horror in Cambodia, the Chinese threat to Southeast Asia seemed to be growing, the United States was much more involved in the region, there was turmoil in Indonesia and just as an afterthought and generally unnoticed, the security organisation for the region, SEATO, collapsed. Not for the first time Brunei was surrounded by turbulence, but unlike the 1940s and the 1960s, it was not directly involved.

Against this interesting backdrop of what was happening in the region, or was about to happen, we must try to draw some conclusions about how Brunei survived at all during this period and emerged a stronger and more coherent political entity from a turbulent environment; what happened to some of the major characters and why the security and defence of the state, which looked very uncertain when Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III ascended the throne in 1950, looked so different when, at the age of 53, he announced on the night of 4 October 1967 that he was abdicating in favour of his 22-year-old eldest son, Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Makhota Hassanal Bolkiah. How did the events of the early and mid 1960s affect the position of the Sultan? How did those events affect the position of the people of Brunei? How did the relationship with the United Kingdom, particularly in the defence field, evolve? What happened to the main characters? Why and how did Brunei survive the turbulence that affected East and Southeast Asia, particularly in the years of crisis in the 1960s?

The Sultan, Omar Ali Saifuddin III, emerged from the events of the early and mid-1960s with his status considerably enhanced. The somewhat confused and at times rather pathetic-looking figure of the 1950s and early 1960s was transformed. Well might B. A. Hussainmiya give to his very thorough study of the life and times of the Sultan the sub-title

*The Making of Brunei Darussalam.* Thinking long-term, the most important decision he made between 1962 and 1963 was not to join Malaysia. It was not all over in 1963. Discussions and recriminations with the governments in Kuala Lumpur and London continued until his abdication in 1967. However, it is clear with hindsight that the deed was done by 1963. Why the Sultan took the line he did still remains something of a mystery and his approach to joining Malaysia can best be described as enigmatic, or to be very critical, confused: at times he appeared 'pro', at other times he appeared 'anti', and it was the 'anti' that prevailed.

He had at least four options. First, he could accept the suggestions and pressure coming from Kuala Lumpur and London and join the Federation. Secondly, he could go along with one of Azahari's goals and push for North Borneo independence; what might be called the historical option. Thirdly, he could link up with the broader Indonesian imperialism. And fourthly, he could opt for the status quo and preserve Brunei as a British protectorate. In retrospect, although we are still short of official Brunei papers on this matter, it appears that the fourth option was always the preferred one for the Sultan. What was amazing was that the ruler of this tiny, defenceless state, pressured in various directions by London, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and dissidents at home, was able to achieve his objective. More than that, the Sultan and Brunei survived Rebellion and Confrontation and emerged, as mentioned previously, with its status and security enhanced.

Three other points need to be made about the Sultan. First, the events of 1962–3 show that whereas on the one hand he became a popular ruler, on the other he remained very suspicious of and generally hostile to any moves towards democracy in Brunei. He was unhappy about the election result in

1962, and nothing like that was going to happen again. The Legislative Council, as a part-elected body, was quietly removed from the political agenda and became a selected body. The Sultan embarked upon an ambitious programme of education, welfare and housing projects, funded from the oil revenue and intended to give every Bruneian a high standard of living. Economic well-being and social contentment was seen as a substitute for political participation.

Secondly, there seems to be a change in his attitude to the United Kingdom after the events of 1962–3. He obviously had reservations about Britain before 1962 and he did not like the aggressive and at times bullying approach of the Government in London. However, things seemed to change after the very positive and successful British performance in dealing with the Rebellion and with Confrontation. The problem for the Sultan, and after 1967 for his successor, was whether there had been a real change in London in attitudes to Brunei. Where did Brunei fit into the ongoing East of Suez debate?

In part the answer seems to have been as a special case. On balance Britain's preference was to be rid of the responsibilities for this protectorate, and pressure was sustained for Brunei to join the Malaysian Federation. However, after the Sultan's abdication, Malaysia became hostile towards Brunei and provided the rebel exiles with a safe haven. This meant that union could not be pursued as an option by London.

Thus, with a new young and inexperienced ruler on the throne, Britain was committed to maintain a permanent garrison of Gurkhas in Brunei; and as long as that commitment could be sustained through Gurkha units stationed in Hong Kong there was no problem. There was a consistent demand for military loan service personnel, the bill for which, as with the bulk of the cost of the Gurkha garrison, was paid by the Sultan.



After independence more Gurkhas were recruited from the ranks of those who had served, and mostly retired from, British service. These formed a Gurkha Reserve Unit (GRU) tasked to guard vulnerable points throughout the country. In the early 1970s the British special forces relocated their jungle warfare training school from Malaysia and established it in Brunei. The Brunei armed forces also expanded and there was a healthy stream of orders for British defence manufacturers. In 1967 it cost the British Government £1 million for the upkeep of the garrison in Brunei. Precise figures are not available but Brunei 'contributed a fair share.'<sup>1</sup> Loan service personnel were paid for separately. So to the degree that Brunei was not to be a drain on the UK Exchequer, and was to provide British specialist troops with jungle warfare experience and training, it appeared to be a special consideration and not part of the ongoing East of Suez debate.

Throughout this period Brunei had a very important bargaining tool in its negotiations with Britain: the very substantial financial reserves deposited in London. The Sultan resisted the British pressure for Brunei to become an independent state. And to all of this could be added a very powerful friend in court. British governments – Labour or Conservative – listen to oil companies. There can be little doubt that the status quo of Brunei's protectorate suited Royal Brunei Shell admirably.

So despite the disparities in power, it would appear that the Sultan held the winning hand. Ever since he had made a free gift of the barracks in Seria for the Gurkha battalion there was initially little that the Wilson administration could do to rid itself of this responsibility. There were few financial costs incurred by the Exchequer but these were more than compensated for by the service fees earned on Brunei's investments in the City, all of which were administered by the

Crown Agents. Of course, there is no way that it could be proved statistically, but the feeling is that Brunei's status as a protectorate met the Sultanate's needs while it was a profitable enterprise for the British Government. That did not hinder London's attempts to change the status quo but as fears of a second uprising receded, both parties appeared broadly satisfied with the arrangement for the time being.

In 1971, under Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkiah, an Amended Agreement<sup>2</sup> was signed which granted full internal self-government to Brunei, although Britain provided the external protection. Brunei assumed full financial responsibility for the maintenance of the Gurkha garrison.

Thirdly, there is a most interesting point to be made about the Sultan and the circumstances of his abdication. In late April 1967, he left on a world tour to Australia, the United States and Europe, arriving in London in June for talks at the Commonwealth Relations Office. The main item on the agenda was to be constitutional reform. On the night of 4 October 1967 he abdicated. The announcement came, out of the blue, over the radio late at night when the acting Menteri Besar read the statement of the Sultan to his people. He was only 53. Inevitably this sudden abdication led to a variety of questions and suspicions, not all of which have been answered. Was it because of what had happened in the talks in London? Was the outgoing Sultan proposing to enter politics? Was it to escape from several political pledges he had made? The Sultan's explanation was disarmingly simple. He said in an interview in 1972 that it had always been his desire to pass on the throne to his successor when he reached the age of fifty: 'This was not a secret. I had expressed it several times.'<sup>3</sup> And there was a nineteenth century precedent with Sultan Muhammad Tajuddin. Sultan Omar remained enigmatic to the end.

The effects of the events of the Sultan's reign, particularly 1962–3, on the people of Brunei must also be considered. By the early 1960s, after the agreement of 1959, Brunei appeared to be advancing rather slowly towards some form of democracy. On the surface, there appeared to be the prospects of a real choice for the citizens in Brunei in those few months in the late autumn of 1962: constitutional reform, join Malaysia, promote North Borneo independence, follow Azahari? By the spring of 1963 it was all over. The Rebellion ended any prospect of constitutional change or reform in the short term and indeed in the medium and long terms! Azahari went off into exile and many of his followers, after serving prison sentences, rejoined the Brunei establishment. There was certainly a good deal of internal discontent in 1962. It remains something of a mystery as to what happened to it after 1963. There is some evidence that an attempt was made after 1966 to change the political culture in Brunei by promoting a new ruling-elite ideology, and that this worked.<sup>4</sup>

There are some interesting and at times entertaining comments to be made about the fate of the political opposition after the failure of the Rebellion in 1962–3. Mahmud Morshidi Othman is a nephew of Azahari and a former Brunei youth leader.<sup>5</sup> He had a brief period in prison in 1969 and by 1973 he had become a successful chicken farmer. He then became involved (very much the key figure) in a scheme backed by the Malaysians to free some detainees from the detention centre in Berakas. The details of the plot rival those of the *Great Escape* in the Second World War. Some 20 prisoners escaped on 12 July 1973, the Sultan's birthday, and made their way by truck and boat to Malaysian territory. Malaysia apparently remained sympathetic to Azahari, Zaini and the Brunei opposition, and was willing to offer funds and asylum through the 1970s. However, all this changed after 1979. Mahmud

returned voluntarily to Brunei in 1997, was arrested at the airport and spent ten months in prison followed by a year on parole.

An important issue to consider is to what extent the events of the early and mid-1960s affected – possibly changed – Britain's view of its relationship with Brunei and its commitments to the Sultanate. There does not appear to be at the time much change in its view of the Sultan, although there is a shift in perception after his abdication. Britain remained committed to Brunei joining Malaysia and was still pushing for this in 1963. There was perhaps a certain reluctance in London to continue with the political status quo. What did change significantly after the events of 1962–6 was the military situation. Britain, for the first time since its relationship with Brunei began in the nineteenth century, had committed a military force to the Sultanate. The future was by no means easy or clear-cut, and Brunei featured in the margins of the ongoing East of Suez debate. But it was not easy to remove the British military presence, there were forces training the new Brunei military, there was the question of the Gurkha Reserve, there was the obligation to defend Brunei as long as it remained a Protectorate, and, perhaps most significantly, there were the financial implications of closer links with a wealthy Brunei. It would have been a very bold person who would have forecast in 1961 that Britain would maintain a permanent military presence in Brunei and commit herself to an obligation to defend Brunei. However, that remains the case in, despite the fact that Brunei is now independent.

Why did the security and defence of Brunei, which looked uncertain in 1950 when Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III ascended the throne, look so different when he abdicated in 1967? There was a certain factor of luck or good fortune in all this. The main internal threat posed to the Sultanate in 1962–3 was

by Azahari and the PRB. The Rebellion showed them to be badly organised and fairly easy to defeat. The main external threat between 1963 and 1966 came from Indonesia. The strategy and tactics used by the Indonesians were flawed, and of course Confrontation was undermined by the internal struggles within Indonesia. Unlike, say, South Vietnam at about the same time, Brunei was lucky in that both the internal and external threats demonstrated a high level of incompetence.

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, Brunei was a Protectorate, and despite past experience, she trusted the United Kingdom and expected Britain to deliver. Britain, despite her previous track record, did deliver. The goal for Britain in the Rebellion was to protect the regime in Brunei; the goal in Confrontation was to save Malaysia, but in so doing Brunei was also spared.

Brunei and Malaysia were fortunate in that the British performance in dealing with the Rebellion and Confrontation was not far short of superb. With the advantage of hindsight we can see that both the Rebellion and Confrontation were something of a boon for Brunei's defence and security. Britain had committed herself and had won. It was now much more difficult for Britain to pull out, especially given the insecurity and instability elsewhere in the region. It is easy to see why Brunei remained what can be called 'a willing protectorate' until 1984.

## APPENDIX ONE

# Proclamation of Independence 8 December 1962

This document is produced in *8 Dismember Dalangnya Siapa*<sup>1</sup> (*8 December Who Is The Culprit*) in Malay. It has been translated into English.

WHEREAS, in common with other subjected people of Africa and Asia, the People of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo immediately after the end of the last war clamoured for the restoration (sic) of their inalienable rights to National Freedom so long denied to them by the Colonial Powers;

WHEREAS, our determined, yet peaceful struggle for Independence was resisted by the British Colonial Authorities by various tyrannical means including the banning of nationalist organizations and arresting (sic) their (sic) leaders;

WHEREAS, undaunted by thid (sic) stern repressive measures, the leaders of the liberation movement organised the Party Rakyat in 1956 and from that time on this patriotic party was able to unify all the people of Brunei as well as extend its influence in Sarawak and North Borneo;

WHEREAS, the Party Rakyat in pursuance if its avowed policy of obtaining the Indepence (sic) of Kalimantan Utara through peaceful and constitutional means, in January 1957 sent a Memorandum to the Colonial Secretary asking for reasonable political reforms; and this Memorandum was followed by an official delegation which held lengthy discussion with the said Colonial Secretary all to no avail;

WHEREAS, the Party Rakyat in spite of the growing discontentment (sic) among the people, continued to peacefully agitate for political reforms and independence until the British granted to the people of Brunei on September 29, 1959 a semi democratic constitution which guaranteed elections within two years from the date of its promulgation;

WHEREAS, when the date of the promised election came nearer, the British authorities in Brunei suddenly announced that the elections cannot be held as scheduled "due to certain unforeseen circumstances".

WHEREAS, in the face of this treachery, the Party Rakyat continued to voice their protest by means of orderly, popular demonstrations until it succeeded in having the election held on July 21, 1962;

WHEREAS, in the election, the people of Brunei expressed their unconditional support and allegiance to the Party Rakyat by electing their official candidates to 54 of the 55 seats in the District Council and to all the 16 elective seats in the Legislatives (sic) Council;

WHEREAS, when this first elected Legislative Council was about to meet last December 5, the Party Rakyat presented to ... the Government three major motions for inclusion in the agenda, namely: (1) a motion rejecting the concepts of the Federation of Malaysia; (2) a motion asking the British Government to restore the sovereignty of the Sultanate of Brunei over her former territories of Sarawak and North Borneo; and (3) a motion urging the British Government to federate the three territories of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo under the Unitary State of Kalimantan Utara with Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien as its constitutional and parliamentary Head of State and the granting of complete and absolute Independence to this new State not late (sic) than 1963;

WHEREAS, the British authorities knowing that these motions will be carried out because the Party is in control of all the elected seats in the assembly, exerted through a seconded Malayan Attorney General, political pressure on the Speaker of the Brunei Legislative Assembly, who it appointed by the Sultan with the consent of the British authorities, and compelled the said Speaker to reject the inclusion of these important motions from the Agenda;



WHEREAS, not content with this rejection, the British authorities twice postpones (sic) the proposed meeting of the Assembly, first sitting (sic) the date on December 13th and then on December 19th;

WHEREAS, in the main while the Party Rakyat received reliable reports that the British and Malayan Governments have decided to proclaim the Federation of Malaysia before the end of this year even against the wishes of the citizens of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo;

WHEREAS, the forced incorporation of our territories and people into the artificial Federation of Malaysia would be tantamount to replacing the rusty iron chains of British bondage that shackles our people with the new steel chains manufactured by the neo-colonialists, a mere matter of changing masters for the slaves;

WHEREAS, the callous and inhuman disposition on countries and whole nations by the colonial powers is in direct contravention of the principle of self-determination as set forth in the United Nations Declaration of December 14, 1960, which specifically provides in its paragraph 5, as follows: (sic) "Immediate steps shall be taken in Trust and Non-Self Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservation, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom;

WHEREAS, in face of this imminent threat to our people's liberty and to our national security, and before we are sold into a darker and more terrifying bondage, the people of Kalimantan Utara have decided to exercise their inherent and undeniable rights to freedom and self-preservation.

THEREFORE, the acknowledged leaders of the people of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo, meeting in the name of Liberty, Justice and Humanity, have this day, December 8, 1962, solemnly (sic) proclaimed the absolute and complete Independence of Negara Kesatuan Kalimantan Utara with Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien as the constitutional and Parliamentary Head of State, hereby sincerely enjoy all freedom-loving nations to extend to our New State their recognition and assistance (sic) in the name of International friendship and the Universal brotherhood of men."

# Notes

## Chapter One

- 1 Basic information about Brunei can be obtained from the following handbooks: *World Desk Reference*, 3rd edn (London and New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2000), pp.150–1; Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact Book 1997–98*; (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1997), pp.73–4; Stalker, Peter, *Handbook of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.42.
- 2 Supplementary Agreement of 1905 to the Anglo-Brunei Treaty of 1888.
- 3 Hussainmiya, B. A. *Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III and Britain: The Making of Brunei Darussalam*. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.4.
- 4 Population figures from *Asia 2002 Yearbook* (Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review), p.83.
- 5 Analysis of statistics in *World Desk Reference*, 3rd edn.
- 6 Figures from *Asia 2002 Yearbook*, p.193; *World Desk Reference*, pp.516–17.

## Chapter Two

- 1 There is no published account specifically about Brunei in the Pacific War. The following books are informative: Gunn, Geoffrey C., *Language, Power and Ideology in Brunei Darussalam* (Athens, Ohio: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 1997); Reece, Bob,

- Masa Japan, Sarawak under the Japanese 1941–1945* (Kuala Lumpur: Ampang Press for the Sarawak Literary Society, 1998); Keat Gin, Ooi, ed. and introduction, *Japanese Empire in the Tropics: Selected Documents and Reports of the Japanese Period in Sarawak Northwest Borneo, 1941–1945*, two volumes (Athens, Ohio: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 1998); Keat Gin, Ooi, *Rising Sun Over Borneo. The Japanese Occupation of Sarawak 1942–1945* (London: Macmillan, 1999). There is a lot of information in Cabinet Papers, CAB 106/43, CAB 106/124 and CAB 122/490; Colonial Office Papers, CO 537/1629; and in War Office Papers, WO 203/6317, SEATIC Intelligence Bulletin, No. 237, 15 June 1946.
- 2 For the overall situation with regard to British forces in Southeast Asia in 1941 see: Woodburn Kirby, S., *The War Against Japan*, volume I: *The Loss of Singapore* (London: HMSO, 1957); Callahan, Raymond, *The Worst Disaster: The Fall of Singapore* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1977).
  - 3 CAB 106/43, p.70.
  - 4 Bob Reece, op.cit., p.58.
  - 5 Gunn: *Language, Power and Ideology*, pp.98–111.
  - 6 Gunn: *Language, Power and Ideology*, p.12.
  - 7 WO 203/6317 No. 237.
  - 8 WO 203/6317 No. 237, p.13.
  - 9 Harrison is a fascinating and controversial figure. His own account of his experiences in 1945 is contained in: Harrison, Tom, *World Within. A Borneo Story* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959). There is more information in a recent biography, Heimann, Judith M., *The Most Offending Soul Alive: Tom Harrison and His Remarkable Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).
  - 10 CO 537/1629, pp.82–3.
  - 11 Rhodes House Library, Oxford. Macaskie Papers, Report to Macaskie dated 10 July 1946.
  - 12 CO 943/1/20. Letter dated 11 July 1949 from Sultan to Mr A. Creech-Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies.
  - 13 Macaskie Papers. Letter, Macaskie to Brigadier R. F. Johnson, dated 23 March 1946. A Colonial Office report in 1950 (CO 825/87/3) on economic development in Brunei states, 'The State suffered very severely during the War, all towns of any size having been completely obliterated by bombing and shelling.'

- 14 FO 371/84503. Sarawak and Brunei Monthly Political Intelligence Report for January 1950.
- 15 CO 825/87/3. Brunei, Economic Development, undated but probably 1950.
- 16 Pehin Dato Jamil, *8 Disember: Dalanguya Siapa? [8 December: Who is the Culprit?]* (Pusat Sejarah Brunei Kementran Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan Bandar Seri Begawan 2003). The author, Pehin Dato Jamil, was a member of the Legislative Council created after the 1959 Constitution in 1962 and a Privy Councillor. Currently he is the National Historian and he was interviewed on several occasions in the course of this research.
- 17 Text of the 1959 Agreement is in DO 118/189. Comments on the Agreement and the Constitution in CO 1030/937, letter of 12 July 1960. A full account of the negotiations is to be found in Hussainmiya, B. A., op. cit., pp.181–217.
- 18 Archana Sharma, *British Policy towards Malaysia, 1957–1967* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1993), p.60.
- 19 Sharma: *British Policy towards Malaysia, 1957–1967*, p.60.
- 20 CO 954/5/3. Minutes of the Tenth Commissioner-General's Conference held at Bukit Serene on Friday 21 January 1949; Sanger, Clyde, *Malcolm MacDonald, Bringing an End to Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995) has several chapters on MacDonald's role and work in Southeast Asia, pp.269–362.
- 21 FO 109/39. The Future of the Borneo Territories. Note by the Commissioner-General, 11 December 1956.
- 22 FO 109/39. The Future of the Borneo Territories. Memorandum by the Commissioner-General and the Governors of Sarawak and North Borneo, 1 January 1957.
- 23 PREM 11/1767. Letter, Colonial Office to 10 Downing Street, 21 August 1957, enclosing agreed text of the Defence Agreement.
- 24 CAB 21/5128. The Prospects of Retaining our Present Bases in Southeast Asia, 3 February 1959.
- 25 DEFE 7/1722. Future Deployment Policy in the Far East. Report by the Joint Planning Staff, 15 July 1959.
- 26 DEFE 7/1722. United Kingdom Military Intentions in the Far East. Annex to COS 860/24/6/59.

## Chapter Three

- 1 Lee, Air Chief Marshal Sir David, *Eastward: A History of the Royal Air Force in the Far East, 1945–1972* (London: HMSO, 1984). Chapter 15, covering the period 1960–2, is entitled ‘A Few Quiet Years’, pp.177–91.
- 2 FO 371/166510. Minute dated 27 July 1962 by James Cable, recording a conversation that day with Mr Dalrymple of the Australian High Commission. Cable went on to become Head of the Southeast Asia Department from 1963 to 1966.
- 3 Harfield, Major A. G., *The Royal Brunei Malay Regiment 1961–1976* (Bandar Seri Begawan: The Star Press, 1977). This is the main secondary source and was privately published in a limited edition, produced under Royal Sponsorship in 1977. Major Harfield, a Gurkha officer, had served in Brunei and the book was published to mark the first 15 years of service. Much of the information in the next few paragraphs on the formation and early days of the Regiment is taken from chapter one of Harfield’s book, pp.1–10.
- 4 Harfield: *The Royal Brunei Malay Regiment*.
- 5 The first three officers into the Regiments were Officer Cadets Sulaiman bin ag Damit, Awangku Ibnu bin Pengiran Apong and Mohammad bin Haji Mohd Daud. Harfield: *The Royal Brunei Malay Regiment*, p.3.
- 6 See Poulgrain, Greg, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi. Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945–1965* (Bathurst: Crawford House Publishing, 1998), pp.214–5, for something of a conspiracy theory view of the influence of the oil company.
- 7 Chin Kin Wah, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore: The Transformation of a Security System, 1957–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.60.
- 8 Darwin, John *Britain and Decolonisation, the Retreat from Empire in the Postwar World* (London, 1988) pp.283–6.
- 9 Subritzky, John.
- 10 FO 1091/39. *The Future of the Borneo Territories*. Note by the Commissioner-General dated 11 December 1956.
- 11 DEFE 11/126. British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East). *Minutes of the Fifth (1959) Meeting held at Phoenix Park on 7th February 1959*.

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- 12 CO 1030/1358. Joint Defence Advisory Committee (B0). *Minutes of Fifth Meeting held at Kuching on 20 October 1960.*
- 13 CO 1030/825/42/22. Note to the Secretary, British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East) from the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee. The Note is dated 19 January 1962 and is entitled *Preparation of Defence Scheme for Brunei.*
- 14 CO 1030/1038. White to Lansdowne, 15 August 1962, enclosing a four-page report on *Political Situation – Brunei*. Lord Lansdowne was the Minister of State at the Colonial Office and, in the summer of 1962, chaired the Intergovernmental Committee to work out the constitutional and administrative arrangements for the Borneo territories.
- 15 CO 1030/1448. D. C. White to Eugene Melville, Colonial Office, 29 August 1961.
- 16 CO 1030/1448. Lord Selkirk to Iain Macleod, 12 September 1961.
- 17 CO 1030/604. Report from Sarawak to the Colonial Office, dated 9 August 1957.
- 18 PREM 11/3412. Note by M. J. Moynihan, dated 6 July 1961, reporting a conversation with Enche Jamal, a Malay official.
- 19 CO 1030/1038. White to Lansdowne, 15 August 1962, enclosing a four-page report on *Political Situation – Brunei*.
- 20 CO 1030/937. White to the Colonial Office, dated 28 April 1960.
- 21 CO 1030/937. Report for the Secretary of State dated 12 July 1960 on *Brunei/Malaya Relationships*.
- 22 CO 1030/1126. White to the Colonial Office, dated 6 June 1960.
- 23 *Borneo Bulletin*, 25 June 1960; *Straits Times*, 1 July 1960; CO 1030/937. Report for the Secretary of State, 12 July 1960, *Brunei/Malaya Relationships*; Hussainmiya, B. A. has a good account.
- 24 CO 1030/1126. Denis Allen to Sir John Martin, dated 16 June 1960.
- 25 *Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur, Department of Information 1962, 6. The speech is quoted in Hussainmiya, B. A.
- 26 PREM 11/3418. Tunku Abdul Rahman to Macmillan 26 June 1961, enclosing a memorandum, *Integration of British North Borneo Territories and Singapore with the Federation of Malaya*.
- 27 *Straits Times* 5 July, 10 July 1961.
- 28 CO 1030/1147. White, D. C. High Commissioner to the Secretary of

- State for the Colonies, 10 July 1961, reporting on the statement issued by the PRB.
- 29 PREM 11/3418. Geofroy Tory to the Colonial Office, 5 August 1961; Hussainmiya, B. A. has a good account of the Agong's visit to Brunei in July 1961 and of the complications caused by the assault on the State Forest Officer, pp.254–8.
  - 30 CO 1030/1448. White to the Colonial Office, 16 August 1961. The Party Rakyat or Party Ra'ayat (PRB) was formed by Azahari in 1956. In 1960–2 it was Brunei's only real political party.
  - 31 CO 1030/1448. White to the Colonial Office, 29 August 1961.
  - 32 CO 1030/1448. Selkirk to Iain Macleod, 12 September 1961.
  - 33 CO 1030/1012. White to the Colonial Office, 13 March 1962.
  - 34 CAB 21/4626. Selkirk to the Colonial Secretary, 1 February 1962; CO 1030/1012. White to the Colonial Office, 13 March 1962; CO 1030/1015. White to the Colonial Office, 24 March 1962.
  - 35 *Report of the Commission of Enquiry, North Borneo and Sarawak*, 1962 (Cmd1794, London). The report is 105 pages in length; Brackman, Arnold, *Southeast Asia's Second Front: The Power Struggle in the Malay Archipelago*, pp.80–3, and Jones, Matthew, *Conflict and Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1961–1965: Britain, the United States, and the Creation of Malaysia*, pp.80–9, have information and analysis about the Commission and its Report.
  - 36 Chin Ung-Ho, *Chinese Politics in Sarawak: A Study of the Sarawak United People's Party* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.66–7.
  - 37 Poulgrain, Greg.
  - 38 Sharma, Archana, *British Policy Towards Malaysia, 1957–1967*, pp.79 and 86.
  - 39 I had two interviews with Dr Zaini in April 2002. He now works in the National Historical Institute in Bandar.
  - 40 CO 1030/1012. White to the Colonial Office, 13 March 1962.
  - 41 CAB 21/4626. White to the Colonial Office, 12 June 1962.
  - 42 DO 169/272. Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissions, dated 10 August 1962; Jones, Matthew, *Conflict and Confrontation in Southeast Asia, 1961–1965*, gives a useful account of the reception of the Cobbold Report and of the July negotiations in Chapter 3: the Greater Malaysia Scheme II: the Cobbold Commission and the Borneo Territories, pp.79–97.



- 43 Brackman: *Southeast Asia's Second Front*, pp.136–8, provides a brief and very hostile pen-picture of Azahari. Dr Zaini was much more sympathetic and supportive in my interview with him. He described him as 'a charismatic figure'. There is an interesting interview with Azahari (and a rare photograph) in *Asia Week*, 6 January 1984. It is entitled 'Azahari: Why I Lost.'
- 44 PREM 11/4346. White to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 December 1962.
- 45 *The Borneo Times*, 11 June 1962.
- 46 CO 1030/931. *Extracts from Brunei Political Intelligence Reports* – August 1962, White to the Colonial Office; CO 1030/1038. White to Lansdowne, 15 August 1962, enclosing a report on *Political Situation – Brunei*. *The Borneo Bulletin*, 8 September 1962.
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