In Malaya the course of national movement was rather unique. The rise, growth and fulfillment of the movement was compressed in one decade after the second world war.... It was the cooperation between the colonialism and the Alliance of distinct groups of communal nationalism, against communist insurrectionary forces professing to fight for national independence, which finally brought about liberty and national unity to Malaya. (1)

Unlike many other newly-independent countries, Malaya did not have to wage a long-drawn struggle against colonialism for its political emancipation. Born of its early 20th century imperialist intransigence, British statesmanship saved Malaya from turning into another Indo-China. In the wake of independence of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, British intention to transfer power to Malaya rendered the Communist guerrillas politically very weak. But that intention could not totally stop their activities in the jungle. Only a grim and prolonged battle for ten years (2) (continuing even after independence), which began with the adoption of the revolutionary struggle thesis by the Communist parties of Asia in 1948, (3) could put

(1) D.P. Singhal, "Nationalism and Communism in South East Asia", Journal of South East Asian History (Singapore), 3 (March 1962) 62-3.

(2) Emergency was declared in Malaya by the British Colonial Government on 16 June 1948 under the Emergency Regulations Ordinance 1948 and it came to an end on 31 August 1958, Malayan Constitutional Documents (Kuala Lampur, 1959).

an end to it. Notwithstanding British participation in the battle against Communists, transfer of power to Malaya in 1957 made it impossible for nationalism and communism to converge. The Communists were left with no other alternative but to fight to finish. (4) However, owing to the overwhelming strength of the three-party alliance led by Tunku Abdul Rahman, (5) they could not make any headway.

Colonialism had left few harsh memories in Malaya. Malayan nationalism was tamed by the tradition of constitutionalism. Unlike other colonial Powers, the British chose to extend a helping hand to resurgent Malayan nationalism to fight the war against communism. (6) Any further delay in independence to

(4) "They the Communists realized...that the Malaya nationalist movement had fallen into the hands of their opponents, and that, once independence had been achieved, it would be more difficult to build up an anti-imperialist United Front", Brimmell, n. 3, 332.

(5) The Alliance between the United Malaya's National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) crystallised in the early months of 1953, and by 1955 the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) stepped in. The Alliance (UMNO-MCA-MIC) fought the election of July 1955 and won 51 of the 52 seats in the Federal Legislative Council.

(6) General Sir Gerald Templer, the High Commissioner of Malaya after arriving in Malaya in January 1952 announced the British Government's policy of promoting self-government in the Federation. The directive given to him by the British Cabinet stated: "The policy of the British Government is that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation. The Government confidently hopes that that nation will be within the British Commonwealth", quoted in Harry Miller, Prince and Premier (London, 1959) 115.

On 31 August 1955, Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for Colonies, in his speech in the Federal Legislative Council of Malaya said: "...I repeat to you again that Her Majesty's Government are sincere in their intention to guide and help the people of Malaya, along the path to full self-government, within

(Contd. on next page)
Malaya would have given the Communist guerrillas an opportunity to exploit the situation in their favour. (7)

**Confrontation with the Communists**

Even before Malayan nationalism could attain its consummation in independence, it was faced with an indigenous offshoot of international communism. Communist movement in Malaya was largely racial in composition. (8) This was the reason for its success (howsoever limited), as well as, its failure. If successful, it would have cut the multi-racial Malayan nationalism at its root. Hence, the battle against communism in Malaya was a problem of life and death for the Malayan nationhood. Britain seemed to have realised the potentialities of nationalism to give a successful fight to communism, in the containment of the Commonwealth, we all hope and believe - not only in this field of constitutional development but what changes there have been in many other paths of the world. Many great problems lie ahead.... Perhaps the greatest is the danger of subversion from within - for we must never forget that the aim of world Communism has not changed even though its tactics may change from time to time.... But I have, and so have the British Government...confidence in the future of this great country; and...I have confidence also in the way in which they are approaching these vital problems", *Federation of Malaya Weekly News Summary*, D. INF. 9/55/36, 3 September 1955, 6-8.

(7) Speaking in the Federal Legislative Council of Malaya, on 31 August 1955, the Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman said: "We are entrusted with the task of building a new nation.... We feel it is not unreasonable to expect that independence can be achieved within that time (of four years). If it is delayed beyond this period you will help spread communism, since communism thrives and flourishes on colonialism", *Ibid.*, D. INF. 9/55/36, 3 September 1955, 2-6.

(8) Membership of the Malayan Communist Party was mainly Chinese. See the sections dealing with the Malayan Communist Party in Brimmell, n. 3, Chapters 16 and 21.
of which she had global commitments. The Communists, who were active in the jungles of Malaya, earlier espoused the cause of nationalism to gain support of the masses and declared that their struggle was directed against British colonialism. (9) However, the triumph of constitutional nationalism in Malaya brought into relief the underlying motives of the Communists who refused to lay down arms not only when Malayans obtained "control of internal defence and security", (10) but even after Malaya achieved full independence. (11)


(10) After the 1955 elections, the Chief Minister of Malaya Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister of Singapore David Marshall and Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan, President of the Malayan Chinese Association met Chin Peng, the underground Malayan Communist Party leader, on 28 December 1955, to work out an agreement for the surrender of the Communist guerrillas. Amnesty for the Communists who surrender, had already been declared by the Chief Minister of Malaya on 9 September 1955. Although the talks proved infructuous the Communist leader Chin Peng promised to "lay down arms", as soon as the Federation obtained control of internal security and local armed forces. Following the signature of the "Merdeka agreement" on 8 February 1956 at London according to which independence was to be granted by Britain to Malaya by 31 August 1957, the Malayan Chief Minister made a broadcast calling upon Chin Peng to honour his pledge and surrender. However, his appeal was fruitless. See Miller, n. 6, 185-202. And also The Times (London), 9 February 1956.

(11) "On 31 August 1957 the Federation of Malaya became an independent member of the British Commonwealth. The MCP (Malayan Communist Party) made the claim that this achievement was largely due to their efforts in fighting imperialism. To justify their continued fighting, they produced the hoary old Leninist line that Malaya's independence was not complete, as the country was tied by a defence agreement to Great Britain, was under the continuing domination of Western capital and continued to employ British personnel", Brimmell, n. 3, 336.
This confrontation with the Communists greatly conditioned Malayan attitude towards military alliances. It can possibly be argued that in the absence of her experiences with the Communist guerrillas, Malaya would have tried to adhere to the "forms" of non-alignment policy. The decision to enter into military agreement with the United Kingdom, after the transfer of power to Malaya took place, was made while negotiations for independence were going on at London in 1956. This was done not with a desire to subserve the global interest of containment of communism of the Western bloc, but to free Malaya of the weeds of dissensions. It was basically a question of Malaya's survival. Malaya was not in a position militarily to carry on the battle against the guerrillas, as well as to defend herself against external aggression single-handedly. (12) The Communists having spurned the offer made by the Tunku to surrender in the event of effective control of "internal defence and security", the Alliance was left with no other alternative but to fight or delay independence. The latter choice would have given the impression that the Alliance Government was fighting other people's battles. (13) Hence,

(12) Speaking in a debate on Malaya's "External Defence and Mutual Assistance Agreement" with Great Britain on 2 October 1957, the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman said: "It was realised by the representatives of the Federation Government that the resources of the Federation would not be sufficient to maintain an army which is strong enough to defend ourselves against aggression and at the same time carry on the fight against Communist terrorists which has menaced our territories for the last nine years.... Our total income is £761,000,000 out of which £70,000,000 could be mustered for allocation for defence purposes", Legislative Council Debates, Federation of Malaya (1957) col. 3269.

independent Malaya had to agree to the stationing of foreign troops in its own territory.

**External Defence and Mutual Assistance Agreement**

One disquieting feature of the treaty was the Malayan agreement to "co-operate" with the British in case of any attack not only on its own territory, but also on Singapore, Borneo, and Hongkong. (14) But the commitment with regard to Hongkong does not, *prima facie*, seem to serve Malaya's interest, unless it was deemed necessary to ensure a British commitment in her own defence. This commitment on the part of the Malayan Government exposed her to the criticism of the opposition in Parliament, (15) as well as outside, (16) that indirectly


(15) An opposition member Thaver of the Legislative Council participating in the debate on External Defence and Mutual Assistance Agreement on 2 October 1957, said: "Art. III... goes far beyond... and the Agreement now provides for acceptance by the Federation of Britain's international and Commonwealth obligations.... Without specific mention of SEATO, the Federation is however committed to SEATO, which is both a Commonwealth and international obligation of Britain", n. 12, col. 3299.

(16) "The Malayan Labour Party considered that in view of the present home and international situation, it is against the interests of the Malayan people to permit the stationing of foreign troops in Malaya.... An independent Malaya should follow a neutral course in its foreign policy, as only so could the happiness of the Malayan people be safeguarded", *Daily News Release* (Hongkong), 23 February 1956.

The Negri Sembilan division of the Rayyat Party criticising Malaya's defence treaty with Britain said: "It makes Malaya a member of SEATO and if Britain fights against some Asian country, under the treaty Malaya would have to follow Britain in its military adventures", *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 30 October 1957.
Malaya has been drawn into the South East Asia Defence Treaty Organization. The critics argued that this kind of military alliance promoted 'cold war' or served the interests of the colonial Powers, and hence, they pleaded for neutrality or complete non-alignment as a policy for Malaya. (17) But when the negotiations for independence were in progress and afterwards, when Malaya became free Tunku Abdul Rahman refused to read any such implication into the treaty provisions. (18) The treaty was defended on the ground that it involved nothing more than mere "consultation" and that notwithstanding the stationing of foreign troops in Malaya, their use for any offensive purposes was not permissible. (19) Besides, with the meagre income that Malaya had, Prime Minister Rahman argued, "it will be too much of a risk to take no steps after independence for the defence of the country". (20) He believed that the pact would also give a sense of economic security and thus would ensure the inflow of foreign capital, which was indispensable for the economic growth of the country. The Tunku held the view that it was incomprehensible for Malaya, while pitted

(17) See n. 12, cols. 3297-8, 3319.

(18) See Tunku Abdul Rahman's statements, The Times, 9 February 1956; 29 August 1957. See also the Tunku's speech in the Parliament on 2 October 1957, n. 12, cols. 3277, 3281.

(19) See the speech made by Dato Abdul Razak, the Defence Minister of Malaya on 3 October 1957 in the Legislative Council, Ibid., cols. 3349-50.

(20) See Prime Minister Rahman's speech in Parliament on 2 October 1957, Ibid., col. 3269.
against Communist danger, to do "without a single vessel to patrol our shores, without a single plane to patrol from the air". (21)

Malaya in and out of SEATO

Malaya's position vis-a-vis SEATO was a little ambiguous in the beginning. Malaya was reported to have been represented at the SEATO conference at Manila in 1954 by the Chief Secretary of the Federation, D.C. Watherston, as part of the United Kingdom delegation, when she was a dependency. (22) Commenting on this, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister of Malaya said, that "Malaya was a member of the South East Treaty Organisation, not out of her own choice, but because she was a colony. But after independence Malaya would decide whether to continue or to withdraw". (23) However, before 31 August 1957 Malaya could have had no independent existence as a member of the SEATO excepting as a part of the "treaty area" as described in the Article VIII of the Treaty. Since, Malaya was a part of the British colonial territory, and south of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude, she could fall within the defence responsibility of the signatories of the treaty. But with the lapse of British sovereignty over Malaya, the area could have remained anymore a

(22) The Straits Times (Singapore), 9 September 1954.
(23) The Hindu (Madras), 19 February 1956.
part of the "treaty area", only in a general way, with or without her being a member.

But opinion in Malaya, even in the days of dependence, was quite unfavourable to any kind of association with the SEATO. In a memorandum to the Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Malayan Trade Union Council urged him "to ensure that in any agreement to be drawn up, Malaya should avoid being used as a pawn in the game of power politics" and "that Malaya should have nothing to do with SEATO". (24) Similarly, the Malayan Indian Congress advocated a "dynamic neutral attitude" for Malaya, instead of taking sides in "foreign camps" alien to her own interests. (25)

Opposition to the SEATO was shared also in Singapore. The then Chief Minister of Singapore, Marshall, expressed himself against the use of Singapore as a military base. He also welcomed Malayan opposition to joining the SEATO, which according to him, "sought to shackle the people of Singapore to colonial slavery in the name of the free world". (26) The Peoples Action Party Chairman Lim Yew Hock categorically declared that "the people of Singapore do not wish to take part in any military pact which will jeopardise our friendly relations anywhere". (27)

As the day of independence was drawing nearer, the decision to keep out of the SEATO was gaining wider allegiance.

(25) Ibid., 21 April 1956.
(26) The Times, 7 June 1956.
(27) Christian Science Monitor (Boston), 13 June 1956.
What intrigued most, however, in the meanwhile, was a news report (which originated from Karachi), quoting diplomatic sources, said that Britain had unofficially advised Malaya not to join the SEATO. Two reasons were put forward for this "strange advice". "First, the United Kingdom with her big stakes in that country would not like Malaya to slip into the fast-expanding orbit of American influence. Second, because the British Government in their own interest want to keep alive a neutral bloc to sustain their waning influence in the international field". It further said: "This Anglo-American rivalry for supremacy in South East Asia is proving a hindrance to the growth of a strong robust SEATO". (28) The report was promptly denied by Tunku Abdul Rahman and the United Kingdom Colonial Secretary. (29) Although, the authenticity of the report could not be established in the face of open denials, still, if Britain were to advice the Malayans against joining the SEATO, the reasons mentioned above, would be the most compelling ones. Later on, the Tunku took pains to impress upon his people that the decision to opt out of the SEATO was entirely uninfluenced by the SEATO members. (30)

After independence, opinion against joining the SEATO had further crystallised and the earlier policy with regard to the SEATO was continued. It was appreciated that subversion was the

(28) The Hindu, 16 April 1957.
(29) The Straits Times, 18 April 1957, and 20 April 1957.
(30) Ibid., 29 August 1957.
real danger and that the defeat of subversion was an economic, rather than a military task. (31) Even Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaya, who had been very favourably disposed to the West, could not help admitting, that the SEATO was unpopular with his people and that he had to do as they wanted. (32) Moreover, while referring to the ties that Malaya has with Britain, he envisaged that "one day the time may come, when these pacts may be abrogated". (33) Again in 1960 the Prime Minister declared that "Malaya does not consider it necessary to be a member of SEATO" and expressed satisfaction with the existing arrangement with Britain for security purposes and his faith in the United Nations to keep peace. (34) Furthermore, he described the SEATO (using familiar non-aligned terms) as "ineffective, negative, out-moded and labouring under the stigma of Western domination". (35)

No Base for SEATO

Although, Britain and two other Commonwealth countries, Australia and New Zealand stationed their troops in Malaya, (36)

(31) See editorial, The Straits Times, 10 April 1959.
(33) The Straits Times, 18 November 1959.
(34) Ibid., 28 July 1960.
(36) For a discussion of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve in Malaya, see chapter on "Australia and the SEATO".
the Malayan Prime Minister had repeatedly affirmed that the territory of Malaya could not be used as a base for SEATO. He also suggested that if "nuclear weapons were required by SEATO countries it was only right that the base for them should be within the countries in the SEATO pact". (37) While talks for the merger of Malaya, Singapore and British Borneo territories were taking place in London in 1961 Tunku Abdul Rahman emphasised that the basis of discussion was "that Singapore base should not be used for SEATO purposes". (38) Accordingly, the Malayan Prime Minister assured the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew that "with the creation of Malaysia Britain would no longer have the right to use her Singapore base as she pleased". The agreement reached between Britain and Malaya on the use of Singapore base was only "an extension of the existing agreement" and it permitted the use of the base "only with the agreement of the future Malaysia Government - but not as a right", asserted the Prime Minister of Malaya. (39) The British authorities, however, did not agree with this interpretation. They held, that according to the treaty, Britain had a "right" to use the base in Singapore for the defence of the proposed Malaysia. But they admitted, that Singapore was not a base for SEATO. (40)

(37) The Times, 29 August 1957. See also Dato Abdul Razak's speech made on 3 October 1957 in the Legislative Council, n. 12, col. 3350.


(40) See the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Duncan Sandy's reply to questions in the House of Commons on 28 November 1961, UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 650 (1961) cols. 242-7.
Opposite Pulls and Pushes

Apart from the fact that the Defence and the Mutual Assistance Agreement between Malaya and Britain offered the former substantial and sufficient guarantee for security, there were other vital reasons which weighed heavily against any decision to participate in the SEATO. Malaya could not have risked a permanent antagonism of its most populous community (the Chinese) by associating herself with an organization avowedly directed against the country of its origin - China. Moreover, because of the multi-racial composition of its population, the Malayan decision could not have escaped the various and even opposite pulls and pushes. Opposition to any anti-China alliance of the Chinese was matched by the Indian community's preference for a policy of non-alignment, while the local Malays were not united on the issue. The present Malayan policy of military alliance with Great Britain, as well as non-participation in SEATO, has sought to resolve this dilemma.

Surprisingly yet, both the critics of Malayan foreign policy and Western commentators seem to agree on the point that Malaya is indirectly connected with the SEATO. The reason

(42) See n. 18 and 19.
(43) See editorial, New York Times, 15 February 1961. See also the SEATO Secretary-General, Pote Sarasin's statement that because of the treaty of mutual assistance between Malaya and Britain, Malaya is "indirectly affected by SEATO", Dawn (Karachi), 15 January 1959.
advanced is her alliance with Britain and her grouping with Thailand and Philippines in the economic and cultural spheres, which are full-fledged members of SEATO. In the light of the categorical assertions made to the contrary by the spokesmen of the Malayan Government and the later unfolding of her (Malaya's) policies, the argument appears to be based on loose foundations.

Creating a South East Asian Consciousness

A further study of the Malayan foreign policy in general is necessary to spell out the untenability of this argument. Malaya's advocacy of closer co-operation between the countries of South and South East Asia did not confine itself within the range of defence alone. Although, definitely committed to anti-communism in Malaya, she wanted to "fight communism successfully with food and clothing, not with bullets and uniforms". (44) Even before independence, Rahman had envisaged the creation of a "permanent body" in Malaya "to help dependent countries achieve independence". Of course, in the beginning, he wanted to confine this idea only to the Commonwealth, but eventually, he thought countries outside the Commonwealth might also join. (45) This "mutual self-help" scheme in achieving independence was not motivated by any desire to promote or extend

(44) See Tunku Abdul Rahman's statement, Malaya Mail (Kuala Lumpur), 21 May 1960.

the sphere of the 'cold war' into these areas. The same idea of regional co-operation has permeated her subsequent policies. Malaya proposed early in 1960 a meeting of the top national leaders of South East Asia "to form a new area-wide organisation for greater cultural and economic co-operation". The idea was presented in the letters sent by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman to seven non-Communist nations, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos. It was supposed to be "strictly non-political and non-military". The idea of a political bloc was considered neither to be the question nor the need in South East Asia. All sorts of economic possibilities were held out, such as a common international airline, shipping agreement, rice distribution, commodity prices etc. (46) But this proposal was received with little enthusiasm (47) which, otherwise, if worked out successfully, could have led to the emergence of a form of a South East Asian "common market". Malaya regarded the creation of a "common market" in this region more necessary than it was in Europe. But the countries invited appeared to be 'touchy' about it. (48) However, Malaya continued to pursue this idea, and a limited amount of success was achieved, when three of them (Malaya, Thailand and Philippines) agreed on February 1961, to combine in an Association of South East Asian States (ASAS). (49) Creation

(47) Malaya Mail (Kuala Lumpur), 21 May 1960.
(49) The Straits Times, 28 July 1960.
of a "South East Asian consciousness" has been the corner-stone of Malayan foreign policy. This is inextricably linked with her long-range security and prosperity. In this respect, she felt greatly disappointed at the outcome of the Asian-African conference in Bandung in 1955, as it "failed to lay ground work for effective co-operation" and as "its net result", according to Tunku Abdul Rahman, "was to give Communist China a prestige boost". (50) In spite of the initial setbacks in her attempt to bring the countries of this region in a closer union, Malaya holds high the possibility of an eventual emergence of some form of organization for economic and cultural co-operation. (51)

An Independent Policy

In the realm of international politics and relations, Malaya claims to follow an independent and neutral policy. (52) There has been no mincing of words by her Prime Minister, so far as her (Malaya's) opposition to communism was concerned. He believed that Communists "cannot co-exist with any Government". He said: "I would be deceiving myself if I were to think they would tolerate the Government of Malaya and treat us differently". (53) It has been largely borne out to be true in


(52) See Tunku Abdul Rahman's statement, Malaya Mail, 6 March 1961.

(53) Miller, n. 6, 206.
the context of her experiences with Communist guerrillas. This, in its turn, resulted in the following of a policy of "non-cooperation with the Communist countries". (54) Therefore, when the Soviet Government declared its view in favour of non-interference and co-existence, (55) the Federation Government wholeheartedly welcomed it. (56) During the early days of independence, the Prime Minister felt that it was impossible for Malaya to remain neutral when they continued to be at war with international communism within the country. (57) Thus opposition to communism in the external field became a projection of her overwhelming preoccupation with the internal Communist menace.

Malaya is a member of the Commonwealth and has no inhibition about her preference for the 'free world'. Nevertheless, it never hesitated to criticise what it considered "wrong" in the Western foreign policy. Malaya had been against the "invasion of the Middle East by the British and the American troops". (58) Malaya subscribed to the "spirit of Bandung" and would have opted for its membership, had there been a permanent


(56) Miller, n. 6, 215.

(57) See n. 54.

(58) See Tunku's statement on the landing of American and British troops in Lebanon in 1958, Ibid.
machinery for the Asian-African conference. (59) Malaya's UN delegation has taken active part in the Asian-African group. (60) However, what Malaya resented was the attitude of those neutral countries "who overlooked armed Communist aggression in other countries, but were quick to criticise similar lapses on the part of the Western bloc countries". Instances of Communist attacks on Tibet and Hungary were cited, when the neutral countries kept quiet, but when it was claimed that the United States had helped in the invasion of Cuba, then these neutral countries came out in opposition. The Malayan stand on these questions was different. As the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman stated: "We do not bother with bloc politics. Whenever any country commits aggression we condemn it, regardless of whichever Power bloc it belongs". (61) In consonance with this attitude, Malaya sponsored the Tibetan case for discussion in the United Nations in 1960. (62)

On the question of recognition of China, Malaya followed a policy of "recognition - without - relation". (63) The Malayan Prime Minister categorically stated that "China must be recognised". He remarked that, "We cannot deny the existence


(60) Ibid.

(61) Malaya Mail, 6 March 1961.


of 600 million people in China.... Formosa is not China". At the same time he pleaded for the recognition of Formosa as an "independent country", (64) and felt that it "could be recognised in the same way as Cyprus". (65) Malaya also lent its support to China's admission to the United Nations. (66) The policy of recognising 'two Chinas' apart from being realistic, was dictated by the conditions existing in Malaya. Malaya has a large population of Chinese origin and "on the one hand there are Communist Chinese and on the other, there are nationalist Chinese". (67) It will be, therefore, erroneous to surmise that Malaya's China policy was influenced by 'cold war' considerations. Rather, Malaya did not want its own Chinese population to be either anti- or pro-Communist for Chinese reasons.

Notwithstanding its anti-communism, Malaya rejected an invitation to participate in an Anti-Communist conference in Manila in 1961. The participants in the conference were the Foreign Ministers of Nationalist China, South Korea, South Vietnam and Philippines. The conference was supposed to be a "prelude" to a new "Free Asian Treaty Defence Organization" and "a counter to the paralysis of the SEATO in the Laotian crisis". However, the Tunku still laid emphasis on the economic and cultural co-operation among various countries of South East Asia.(68)

(64) Malaya Mail, 20 January 1960.
(65) Ibid., 14 June 1960.
(67) Ibid.
Conclusion

Thus, it would appear from the study of her attitude towards SEATO, that Malaya has been striving hard to build up a most "outspoken and independent foreign policy". (69) There had been several factors which contributed to the moulding of this policy. Dr. J. Norman Parmer described them as "membership of the Commonwealth, the Emergency, the plural society, the country's dependence on trade, and its strategic position in South East Asia". (70) There had been an additional factor too, which was indicated by Malcolm MacDonald when he emphasised that, to a large extent the political prospects in South East Asia depended upon the foreign policy of China. (71) Malaya has refused to behave as a camp-follower of any big Power. Her efforts were aimed at safeguarding her own legitimate interests without being inhibited by the considerations of either alignment or non-alignment. In spite of her military alliance with Great Britain, which was "more a partnership necessary to both sides than a gesture of ideological commitment in the cold war", (72) Malaya has tried to demonstrate through her attitudes on various issues that have confronted

(69) Times of India (New Delhi), 13 July 1960.
(71) Malcolm MacDonald, Malaya's Place in South East Asia, Malayan Affairs, Part II, Broadcasts from Radio Malaya on 19 March 1950.
world politics from time to time, a definite inclination for a kind of policy which is not obsequious to any bloc interests. Nevertheless, diplomats have failed to class Malaya into any of the group combinations in the world. As one un-identified Western diplomat had put it: "You just can't tell where to fit in Malaya, except it usually seems to make sense". (73) But other critics of Malayan foreign policy suspect her to be a "tool of Western plotting". To those, who would like to call Malaya a camp-follower of the Western bloc and to those who find it difficult to fit Malaya in the current alignment of power blocs, officials in Kuala Lumpur say: "We don't want to be tied to anybody's group or to lead another one. We are happy to be members of the Afro-Asian group but we make our own policy. You might say that the key to our policy is 'realism plus a great concern for individual human rights'". (74) The Malayan attitude towards the SEATO reflects an attempt to strike a balance between alignment and non-alignment, the two prevailing moods in this region. Being a part of the new emerging forces, she could not have subscribed to the bloc interests. And to have remained completely non-aligned, like some other nations, would have meant compromising her vital national interests.

(73) Times of India, 13 July 1960.
(74) Ibid.