

# 1

## China-Related Public Gatherings and Their Participating Groups

Among the Chinese residents of Malaya were people who actively supported Dr. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement, and the Kuomintang (KMT) that he formed began establishing branches throughout Malaya as early as 1912. However, its supporters did not form a very large group. The predecessor to the KMT, the Revolutionary United League (est. 1906), had set up branches in Malaya and by 1911 had enlisted only 2,000–3,000 members, or about 0.3 per cent of the total Malayan Chinese population. By comparison the KMT in the early postwar years was able to muster a much larger number of supporters. As of 1948 the KMT Malayan membership had grown to 45,000, or about 1.75 per cent of the total Chinese population in the region. Sun Yat-sen supporters among the Malayan Chinese tended to come from a segment of the upper class which included wealthy merchants, large-scale plantation owners, lawyers, and physicians.<sup>1</sup> The educational efforts of the KMT carried out through mass education and primary/middle school programs was intended to foster a sense of Chinese nationalism among the community; however, these activities invariably faced suppression under British colonial policy and were not very effective up through the late 1930s. The fact that the number of Malayan-born Chinese was increasing acted to restrain feelings within the general Chinese population of affinity towards China. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which was founded in 1930, was made up mostly of Chinese members and received its greatest support from the Chinese community. However, since the MCP did not originally openly support Chinese nationalism in its activities, choosing instead to concentrate its efforts in the labor

movement, its influence on the Chinese community as a whole was limited. Also, the clashes that arose in the early 1930s between the KMT and MCP over affairs outside of Malaya became one more problem obstructing the involvement of the general Malayan Chinese population in China-oriented political movements.

On the other hand, Japan's series of incursions into Chinese affairs and the eventual invasion of China stimulated a sense of patriotism and attachment to China among Malayan Chinese. Such events as Japan's "Twenty-One Demands" during World War I (1915) to insure its vested interests in China, the advance of the Japanese army into Shandong Province in 1928 to block the northern advance of the KMT forces, the Manchurian Incident of 1931, and the Shanghai Incident of 1932 caused a pro-China reaction among Malayan Chinese in the form of resistance movements and the boycott of Japanese products. All of these actions were quelled within several months; but when total hostilities broke out between China and Japan in 1937, a very large and long-term wave of reaction began. Following the collaboration between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1936, the MCP and KMT in Malaya promised to collaborate among themselves in resisting the Japanese invasion, and this contributed to an upswell of activity. Both parties led the resistance movement in Malaya as part of a similar movement in China, and as a result both were able to increase their influence and support. During the late 1930s various resistance and China aid organizations sprung up all over Malaya, and eventually banded together into the Southeast Asia Federation of China Relief Funds (Nanyang Geshu Huaqiao Chouzheng Zuguo Nanmin Zonghui).

The MCP, which up until now has been regarded as having been interested only in Malayan political affairs, reminisced after the war,

We thought China's resistance against the Japanese invaders would guard the Malayan national liberation struggle and called upon all the peoples of Malaya to support China in its efforts. We promoted and led a movement of the Malayan Chinese people to save the "fatherland" from destruction, formed the Malayan Chinese Anti-Enemy Backing-Up Society (Malaiya Huaqiao Kangdi Houyuanhui) and supported the efforts of the Relief Fund Associations (Chouzheng Hui).<sup>2</sup>

The MCP had also come to realize that the defense of China had to be given top priority in its own agenda.

As the MCP could not include the Malayan national liberation struggle within its vision of the situation at that time, it had to exploit the defense of China for its own purposes, and in the process was able to strengthen its influence within the local Chinese community.

In this way Chinese nationalism was combined with a China-oriented identity consciousness. This situation continued into the war when the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA; *Malaiya Renmin Kangrijun*), which drew members mainly from the Chinese community, fought against Japan's occupation of Malaya. For both the Chinese resistance fighters and the Chinese in general, the struggle against the Japanese was not only a struggle for Malayan national liberation, but also one linked to the war of resistance going on in China. Moreover, because they believed that victory against the Japanese in China was the ultimate objective, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army ceased their armed struggle in Malaya when that objective was achieved.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of "why should we as nationals of China risk our lives for the sake of revolution in Malaya?"<sup>4</sup> was a deep-rooted perception in the Malayan Chinese consciousness at the time, making it very difficult for even the relatively influential MCP to recruit from the Chinese community on any large scale to carry on the armed struggle for Malayan national liberation.<sup>5</sup>

Probably the best indications of the continuation of a China-oriented identity consciousness among Malayan Chinese in the post-World War II era are the public gatherings that assembled to celebrate the "Double Tenth" commemorating the beginning of the revolution on October 10, 1911 that resulted in the establishment of the Republic of China. The first postwar Double Tenth celebration was held in 1945 within an atmosphere of victorious euphoria and adulation of China as "one of the world's five great powers." Similar celebrations would be held until 1957 despite restrictions placed on them by the colonial authorities and the separation of venues sponsored by the KMT and CCP factions. During that time, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established on October 1, 1949, giving rise to celebrations beginning the following year commemorating this event, known as "National Day." However, the British authorities stepped in to scale down the celebration of 1950 and thereafter refused to issue permits allowing any more. For this reason, this chapter will be forced to limit the discussion of the nature of public gatherings mainly to Double Tenth celebrations, despite the overall emphasis of this study on CCP- or PRC-oriented factions. However, I think that the following discussion will contribute to understanding the transition that took place within the Malayan Chinese community from a China- to a Malaya-oriented identity consciousness.

Public gatherings related to mainland Chinese politics held during the early postwar years for purposes other than celebrating the Double Tenth included demonstrations against the KMT-CCP civil war and Chiang Kai-shek's "dictatorship," and the commemoration of Sun Yat-sen's birth and death. Appen-

dix 2 provides a listing of the main gatherings of this type held until 1957, after which all vestiges of them disappeared from the Malayan scene. I would like to single out the Double Tenth celebration first, before dealing with the others.

## **I. The Celebration of National Day**

The first postwar celebration commemorating the Double Tenth was held on October 10, 1945 with gala public gatherings all over Malaya. With the exception of the festivities in Kuala Lumpur, all were jointly sponsored by the CCP and KMT factions. The gathering held in Kelang, which hoisted the portraits of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Mao Zedong, best characterizes the solidarity and unity as Chinese nationals that the Malayan Chinese felt at the time. The fact that large contingents of British officials participated in Rawang and Kuala Selangor also indicates a perception among the British colonialists that the Malayan Chinese were overseas “citizens of the mainland.”

However, the most important aspects of the celebration were (1) the MCP and its affiliated organizations played the central role, as typically seen in the case of the gathering in Kepong on the outskirts Kuala Lumpur, where the People’s Representative Congresses (Renmin Daibiao Dahui), which had just been instituted under the auspices of the MCP, were also honored; and (2) organizations like the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which would cease having any relations with China later, came forward to sponsor the event. (The Chinese Chambers of Commerce would become increasingly involved as growing tension between the CCP and KMT compelled it to step in as a mediator.)

The People’s Representative Congresses were legislative bodies established in each state to help the MCP govern postwar Malaya. At these congresses, People’s Committees were elected as their administrative organs usually with an MCP leader acting as the chairperson. (The Double Tenth celebration in Malacca was actually sponsored by the local congress.)

While the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army was the military force organized by the MCP during Japan’s occupation of Malaya, Anti-Japanese Unions (Kangri Lianhehui or Kangri Tongmenghui) had been their mass civilian participation and united front counterparts. The groups that appeared at the local Double Tenth celebrations, like the Literators’ Union (Wenhuaren Lianhehui), the Youth Union (Qingnian Lianhehui, Qing Lian), and Workers’ Union (Gongren Lianhehui, Gong Lian), were all MCP-associated mass organizations and were looked upon as participants in the Malayan democrati-

zation movement under the MCP's leadership. From this type of widespread participation of the Malayan Chinese masses in the Double Tenth celebrations, we can gauge the degree of China-oriented identity consciousness that had permeated the Chinese community in general. Unfortunately we know nothing about the celebration scheduled for the following year, 1946, due to a lack of relevant source materials.

Before the 1947 celebration, both the People's Anti-Japanese Army and the Anti-Japanese Unions were disbanded, and in their place the MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association (Renmin Kangrijun Tuiwu Tongzhi Hui) was formed and acted as the MCP's rank-and-file working force. At the time of its formation on December 1, 1945, the association boasted a membership of 6,800.<sup>6</sup>

As to the other major leftist groups that participated in the 1947 Double Tenth gatherings, there was the Pan-Malayan General Labour Union (GLU), an organization that was formed in February 1946 to encompass all of the MCP-affiliated workers' unions born in the midst of the lively postwar labor movement. Due to the strengthening of control by the colonial authorities on nationwide general unions, the GLU was reorganized into the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) at its general congress held in February 1947, but remained under the influence of the MCP. At the time of its formation, the GLU had 465,000 members, which decreased to 264,000 when the FTU was inaugurated;<sup>7</sup> but in either case this organization was the dominant force in the labor movement of the time.

There was also the Malayan New Democratic Youth League (Malaiya Xin Minzhu Qingnian Tuan) founded in September 1946 and organized on a state-by-state basis with a total of 23,000 members.<sup>8</sup>

It was reported that as of the beginning of 1946, the MCP itself, which controlled the above leftist groups, had a membership of 10,000.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the Malayan branches of political parties active in China, the Malayan branch (Malaiya zhibu) of the China Democratic League (CDL; Zhongguo Minzhu Tongmeng) was set up at the end of September 1947 and proceeded to form sub-branches (fenbu) all over the region. At its peak of popularity the CDL's membership numbered around 2,000,<sup>10</sup> a scale much smaller than the MCP-affiliates; however, its de facto organ, the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (first published in November 1946), boasted a circulation of 22,000 (according the *Straits Times*, May 3, 1950) and thus exerted tremendous influence upon the Malayan Chinese community. The CDL was involved in sponsoring public gatherings throughout the region for the purpose of supporting the CCP and opposing the KMT. Those who actually planned and organized the meetings were the above-mentioned MCP-affiliated organiza-

tions, an activity that would have been impossible if the MCP and its affiliates had not felt it their duty to get involved in Chinese internal political affairs.

Another mainland import was one of China's non-partisan political organizations, the Zhigong Party (Zhigongdang), a group of democratic factions which actually leaned toward the CCP. A directly controlled branch of the Zhigong Party was set up in Selangor in March 1947 and became one of the sponsors of the local Double Tenth celebration that same year. Participating in the celebration in Singapore was the Comrades' Association of the CNLVC (Minxian Tongzhi Hui), a revival of the Chinese National Liberation Vanguard Corps (CNLVC; Zhonghua Minzu Jiefang Xianfeng Dui), an anti-Japanese resistance group formed in the late 1930s that had fallen into disarray during the war.

CDL-, CCP- and MCP-affiliated groups formed an alliance called the Federation for Peace and Democracy in China (Cujin Zuguo Heping Minzhu Lianhehui). In the Chinese name for the group, the term "fatherland," *zuguo*, clearly designates mainland China. We know that this organization existed in Singapore, Negeri Sembilan, Keluang (Johor State), Muar (Johor), Tangkak (Johor), and Bentong (Pahang State),<sup>11</sup> but Muar is the only place where we find it participating in Double Tenth festivities.

What is interesting about the federation is the alliance formed between China-oriented and Malaya-oriented groups, no doubt for the purpose of involving themselves in the politics of mainland China. However, the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* covered its activities only up to May 1948 indicating that it may have been forced to cease operations when MCP-affiliated organizations were outlawed.

Independent Malayan organizations with no headquarters in China nor direct affiliation to the MCP included the Chinese Chambers of Commerce (Zhonghua Zongshanghui), Chinese Associations (Zhonghua Gonghui), Chinese Assembly Halls (Zhonghua Dahuitang), various clan organizations, Chinese schools, cultural groups, the Mutual Aid Association of Demobilized Drivers and Mechanics (Fuyuan Jigong Huzhuhui), and the Singapore Women Mutual Aid Association of Victims' Families (Xingzhou Beijianzhe Jiashu Funu Huzhuhui).

The Mutual Aid Association of Demobilized Drivers and Mechanics was made up Malayan Chinese youths who had acted as lorry drivers and mechanics carrying provisions and necessities on the so-called "Trail of Supporting Chiang" (Dianmian Gonglu) from Burma to Yunnan during 1939-41. They joined in the anti-Japanese activities in China, and finally came back to Malaya soon after the end of the war. Altogether 3,193 Chinese youths from

Southeast Asia participated in this volunteer corps organized by the Southeast Asia Federation of China Relief Funds. Of these youths, 75 per cent was from Malaya. The organization was formed after its members returned to Malaya. It is said that one-third of the volunteers died in the field, one-third stayed in China, and the rest returned to their homes in Southeast Asia.<sup>12</sup> Those who returned to Malaya, with only the shirts on their backs, found it difficult to find jobs. After forming their mutual aid association, they petitioned the Chinese consulate to be paid the per diem allotments due them during active duty. Despite being separated from China, China-oriented identity consciousness and interest in mainland Chinese internal affairs no doubt remained strong within this group of war veterans.

The Singapore Women Mutual Aid Association of Victims' Families was organized by the families of persons who had been slaughtered in the "cleansing" (*shukching*) or "screening" (*jianwen*) perpetrated just after the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Many of the victims had been under suspicion as anti-Japanese resistance members loyal to the Chinese (Chongqing) government, but the association itself had no direct affiliation to mainland China.

Probably the most representative of the cultural groups was the Mayfair Musical and Drama Society (Aihua Yinyue Xiju She), formed in 1934. After the war the society took a stance in favor of the CCP and CDL, but the "group marriage ceremonies" the society held several times a year possessed a definite Chinese nationalist flavor with such symbols as the portrait of Sun Yat-sen on display; and up until April 1948 the group invited Singapore's Chinese Consul General Dr. Wu Paak Shing (Wu Bo Sheng), to these weddings as the "marriage witness" indicating a certain proper solicitude toward KMT partisans during the early postwar years and also indicating the consul's symbolic role in the "belonging to China" identity consciousness so popular at the time. On the occasion of the May 1948 marriage ceremony, however, the invitation for the Chinese consul general to stand as witness was for some unknown reason canceled in favor of the presence of a KMT intellectual, Dr. Lim Boon Keng (Lin Wen Qing). From that time on until the Mayfair Society was outlawed, its "marriage witnesses" included, among others, Lim Keng Lian (Lin Qing Nian), vice chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (Qiaowu Weiyuanhui), and Hsue Yung Shu (Xue Yong Shu), principal of Hua Chiao High School.

One example of how the Mayfair Society placed mainland China within its philosophy is its 1950 offer to all of the students attending Singapore's kindergartens, primary schools, and middle schools inviting them to the city's fifteen cinema theaters and handing out a booklet entitled "For all the Children of Singapore," in which we find the words,

We overseas Chinese are all nationals of the People's Republic of China sojourning abroad. Overseas Chinese nationals must all love their fatherland and obey its laws. The People's Republic of China changed Children's Day to June 1. As its nationals, we think it only right that we observe the holidays our country has designated.<sup>13</sup>

Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the first of which was founded in Penang in 1903, existed in all the states and major cities in Malaya. Originally Chinese Chambers of Commerce functioned as quasi-consulates for the Qing Dynasty, indicating a close connection to the Chinese government at the time. Following World War II, they tended to lean politically toward the KMT, but they were not die-hard supporters of the nationalists and often sought compromise between CCP and KMT factions in their localities.

The Chinese Associations and Chinese Assembly Halls were established in some fairly large Malayan towns and states as groups crossing both regional and kinship lines. Many were KMT supporters, but there were a few that favored the CCP, including the Yong Peng (Johor), Kuala Pilah and Tampin (both Negeri Sembilan State) Chinese Associations, which participated in the anti-KMT gatherings to be discussed later.

Regional organizations like the Fujian Association (Hokkien Huay Kuan), Guangdong Association (Kwang Tung Huay Kuan), Khek (Hakka) Association (Keshu [Kejia] Gonghui), Qiongzhou (Hainan Island) Association (Khengchew Hwee Kuan), and Fui Chiu Association (Huizhou [Guangdong Province] Huiguan) all enthusiastically participated in the Double Tenth celebrations when jointly sponsored by the KMT and CCP, but many tended to hesitate when separate gatherings were held along party lines, indicating differing responses according to region. For example, the Guangdong Association of Teluk Anson (present-day Teluk Intan, Perak State) participated in the CCP-sponsored gatherings, but there is no evidence that the Guangdong Associations of other places did. We also find the Qiongzhou Associations of Teluk Anson and Temerloh (Pahang) in the CCP camp, while that of Segamat (Johor) participated in the KMT-sponsored events. Here we are presented with a thumbnail sketch of one source of confusion and headache for the overseas Chinese community of the early 1950s.

The remarkable contrast between the unified 1945 Double Tenth celebration and the separate public gatherings organized along party lines that took place in Singapore, Penang, and Selangor, and many regions in 1947, clearly reflected the growing opposition between the KMT and CCP in China. The core of the CCP-supported gatherings were the MCP and CDL, while the nationalist-oriented events centered around the KMT Malayan branches and the San Min Zu Yi Youth Corps (the KMT's youth organization that was



absorbed into the KMT proper in the summer of 1948), the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, and the Chinese Associations; however, the latter two organizations were not necessarily in perfect unity with the KMT. Rather, they acted to the end as mediators everywhere, promoting discussions that would hopefully avoid separate venues for the celebration. They were successful in negotiating jointly sponsored events in the state capitals of Ipoh (Perak), Alor Setar (Kedah State) and Kuantan (Pahang), and in the statewide celebration held in Kelantan. In all four of these locations, the major sponsors for the events were the local Chinese Chambers of Commerce. Only after the negotiations failed, resulting in separate CCP and KMT venues, would the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Chinese Associations choose to participate in the KMT-sponsored festivities, one exception being the Temerloh (Pahang) Chinese Chamber of Commerce which participated in the CCP-sponsored events on the strength of the leftist influence of its chairman, Yan Jin Di.<sup>14</sup>

The largest single point of dispute that arose between the CCP and KMT factions tended to be whether or not a reverential telegram would be sent in the name of all gathered to President Chiang Kai-shek. Generally speaking, if a compromise were reached not to send such a message, a jointly sponsored celebration would result; otherwise separate venues would be held.

The 1947 Double Tenth celebrations exhibited three important points. (1) Gatherings organized by the CCP factions mobilized far more of the Chinese masses than did the KMT factions thanks mainly to the support of the MCP and its affiliates. (2) This was the last Double Tenth in which the MCP-affiliated organizations participated because almost all of them were banned in June of the following year. Because of this, (3) 1947 witnessed the largest Double Tenth celebrations in all respects, whether viewed from the number of places that events were held, the number of organizations that were sponsors or participants, or from the numbers of those who attended the rallies.

The Double Tenth celebrations of 1948 were held just four months after a nationwide state of emergency was declared on June 18. The colonial authorities imposed severe restrictions on the events, causing all festivities to be greatly down-scaled and held completely indoors, thus eliminating the traditional public marches.

The declaration of the MCP as an illegal organization and the de facto cessation of CDL and Zhigong Party activities (see Appendix 1) resulted in the cancellation of almost all CCP-related events, as in Singapore where only the Mayfair Society gathering and the Fujian Association-sponsored events were held.<sup>15</sup>

The Double Tenth celebration of 1949, held just after the establishment of

the People's Republic of China, was the last "national day" to be commemorated commonly by Malaya's CCP and KMT supporters. The restrictions on the events that could be held were slightly relaxed due to (1) a slight stabilization in Malaya's internal political situation, (2) the support and cooperation shown by KMT factions concerning the suppression of leftist Malayan Chinese, and (3) repeated statements by the CCP/CDL factions that they did not intend to intervene in Malayan internal affairs. The resulting festivities turned out to be more diversified than the previous year, but outdoor gatherings continued to be banned, and the Chinese flag was allowed to be unfurled only side by side with the British flag.

Many of the gatherings were KMT-sponsored and these sent reverential telegrams to Chiang Kai-shek; however, at the gatherings sponsored by the Mayfair Society and the Fujian Association in Singapore, as well as a few in Penang and Malacca, the flag of the People's Republic of China was displayed and the new national anthem of China sung. Both the Singapore gatherings and the Youth Association of Sibul, Sarawak, then a British crown colony, sent congratulatory telegrams of support to the PRC government and its leaders.

On October 1, 1950, the first, and what turned out to be the last, celebrations in Malaya of the PRC's National Day were held. The colonial authorities would not allow the official Chinese name of the holiday, *guoqing*, to be used. According to the *Straits Times* (October 2, 1950), the musical concert held by the Mayfair Society was attended by an audience of 3,000, and several groups and schools hoisted the Five-Starred Red Flag at their respective premises to celebrate the PRC's first year of existence. However at the end of 1950, before the next National Day could be celebrated, the Mayfair Society was declared illegal, and its chairman, Wu Sheng Yu, arrested and deported to China. What had become the last bastion of the CCP factions in Malaya following the cessation of Zhigong Party activities on July 27, 1948 and the banning of the CDL on May 12, 1949 was finally torn down completely, leaving no organization behind to sustain PRC National Day celebrations in the region. The Singapore Fujian Association was already in transition toward Malayanization, and in the process had ceased all its pro-CCP activities, and would never again celebrate China's National Day.

The Double Tenth celebrations of 1950 which took place throughout Malaya were attended only by organizations supporting the KMT. The festivities in Singapore were attended by 206 such groups, a little less than two-thirds of the attendance of two years before. That number would never again reach 300.

On November 17, 1950, the Federation of Malaya (established on Febru-

ary 1, 1948) prohibited Chinese schools from taking “political holidays” and limited holidays they could take to Qing Ming Jie (day of reverence of ancestors), Commonwealth of Nations Day, the British Monarch’s Birthday, Teachers’ Day, and Sun Yat-sen’s Birthday. The *Straits Times* (November 18, 1950) stated that the ban on political holidays was aimed directly at eliminating the celebration of the national days of the two Chinese republics. Despite their wariness concerning any strengthening of China-oriented identity consciousness in Chinese schools, the colonial authorities no doubt judged that it would have been impossible to rid Malayan Chinese schools of all China-related holidays in one fell swoop.

On the occasion of Double Tenth in 1951, all of the Chinese schools and Chinese shops took the day off in Singapore, while in the Federation of Malaya, though Chinese shops were also closed, schools were open as usual in almost every region. The first shot had been taken in the effort to Malayanize the Chinese schools.

That year the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce made halls available and chamber representatives attended the festivities, but it did not sponsor them. It was the first step in the Malayanization of the organization. According to Chui Kwei Chiang of Singapore National University, in February 1951 the Singapore Chamber of Commerce submitted a petition to the colonial authorities requesting a relaxation of the conditions necessary to obtain citizenship in the colony and began voter registration activities.<sup>16</sup> There is no doubt that both actions were steps on the road to Malayanization.

At gatherings in Singapore to celebrate the Double Tenth in 1952, “God Save the Queen” was sung in deference to the colonial authorities and the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, in Malaya, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), which had that January formed an Alliance Party in conjunction with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), a conservative Malay political party, called upon all of its branches to obey what was called “a cabinet decision” to stay away from Double Tenth gatherings. The KMT faction in the MCA bitterly opposed the action,<sup>17</sup> but was unable to reverse the decision. This move on the part of Malaya’s largest Chinese political party signified one giant step toward the Malayanization of Chinese attitudes in the region.

While the Chinese schools in Singapore were again closed for the holiday, their counterparts in the Federation of Malaya remained in session in compliance with the Department of Education’s decision on the matter, and in a few cities shops did not take the day off.

Double Tenth 1953 showed very little difference from what had happened on that day the previous year, and in 1954 we have no reports of shops closing

and school holidays, probably due in part to the fact that October 10 landed on a Sunday. However, October 10, 1955 saw Chinese schools in Singapore holding classes as usual, and it may just be that the coincidence of Double Tenth 1954 being a Sunday made it easier to bring about the abolition of the occasion as a school holiday.

A significant change did occur in 1956 in the way the Double Tenth was celebrated in the Federation of Malaya's capital city of Kuala Lumpur. The Chinese Assembly Hall, which up until that time had sponsored public gatherings on the occasion, announced that "our decision to conduct a campaign for obtaining Malayan citizenship is not compatible with any sponsorship on our part of Double Tenth day," and the festivities were turned over to local Chinese who did not hold Malayan citizenship. However, there were still Chinese shop closures in many Malayan cities.

In 1957, the Double Tenth came in Malaya just after Merdeka (independence) was attained on August 31. While in Singapore the day was commemorated as usual by KMT-related groups, no events were scheduled in Malaya at the request of the newly formed independent government. All public gatherings disappeared in Singapore the following year. A local autonomous government was set up in Singapore in 1959. Therefore the attainment of political independence in both Malaya and Singapore and the disappearance of Double Tenth gatherings coincided as if a trade-off were negotiated beforehand. It could also be said that while political independence would not have been possible without such a change in identity consciousness; at the same time the formation of an independent state played the decisive role in fostering a Malaya-oriented consciousness within the local Chinese community.

## **II. Other China-Related Public Gatherings and Activities**

The anti-Civil War rallies that were held in May and June of 1946 were not as much protests against the armed hostilities that had broken out in China between the communists and the nationalist as opposition to the attempts by the KMT to suppress the CCP, indicating strong support for the communist cause. The major participants in the rallies were from MCP-related organizations; but in Kampar, Perak, the MCP was joined by the Chen Long Association (Zeng Long Huiguan) of the Hakka community and the Guangxi Association (Kwongsi Wooi Koon).

The gathering held on July 7 of that year commemorating the ninth anniversary of the war of resistance against Japan was centered around the CDL which had already formed several state sub-branches and city/district-level

chapters, but was also supported by the MCP organizations. The gathering in Johor Bahru was also attended by the Malayan Democratic Union (MDU), a political party that was formed in December 1945 as a MCP united front organization and was completely unrelated to the CDL. Its membership consisted mainly of Malayan Chinese, though not as overwhelmingly as in the MCP.

The fact that Chinese consul Hsu Meng Hsiung (Xu Meng Xiong) took part in the Kuala Lumpur events certainly symbolized the strong ties between China and the participating organizations and their members. Hsu, who served as consul from March 1946 to June 1947, was very active in defending the rights of Malayan Chinese, causing the British to claim that he was exceeding his authority, while at the same time upsetting the KMT for being too friendly with the local CCP-affiliated organizations.<sup>18</sup> As a result, he was replaced, an action that gave rise to protests from Malayan Chinese all over the region, including some involved with KMT branches, calling for his reinstatement. After the final decision was made to transfer Hsu to India, going away parties to wish him well were held in every part of Malaya (see Appendix 2). In a telegram sent on May 5, 1947 to Chiang Kai-shek himself by twelve organizations in the state of Perak requesting Hsu's reinstatement, we find the names of the KMT together with the MCP-affiliated New Democratic Youth League and MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association side by side, suggesting that the MCP was very strongly China-oriented during that time.

The commemoration of the anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's passing that was held in Singapore in March 1947 was divided into separate KMT- and CCP-sponsored venues, and we have no reports from other regions that any joint celebrations were held. From what we are able to ascertain, one major bloc of participants consisted of MCP-affiliated groups.

At the rallies against the three evils of famine, civil war, and dictatorship in China held in May and June of 1947, which were ultimately anti-KMT demonstrations, in attendance along with the CDL-, Zhigong Party- and MCP-affiliated groups we find such future influential Singapore entrepreneurs as Lee Kong Chian (Li Guang Qian) and Ng Aik Huan (Huang Yi Huan) rubbing elbows with MCP leaders Lau Yew (Liu Yao) and Chow Yam Peng (Zhou Yang Bin), amidst such clan organization (hometown groups) as the Fui Chiu Association of Kulai (Johor), the Khék Association of Sungai Patani (Kedah), and the Fujian Association of Alor Setar (Kedah). Here we discover the existence of clan associations in the leftist camp.

The second victory anniversary gatherings were held on September 3, 1947 in commemoration of China's successful war of resistance against the Japanese, since the anniversary of Malaya's war victory was celebrated on Sep-

tember 12. These occasions were celebrated in 1946 and 1947 only, and were probably not held in 1948 due to the state of emergency that had developed. The main sponsors of the victory celebrations on September 3 were Chinese Associations, among which the Tampin Chinese Association clearly demonstrated an anti-KMT posture.

From a check of the organizations (including the MCP) that were invited as guests to the CDL congresses held at the end of September 1947 for establishing its Malayan branch, we can see the involvement of the MCP in Chinese political affairs.

The last large-scale public gatherings held before the declaration of the state of emergency and the outlawing of MCP organizations were the CCP-sponsored congresses to disavow the appointment of Chiang Kai-shek as president of the Republic of China and the KMT-sponsored celebrations of the event, both held all over Malaya during the month of May 1948. Participating in the former were such CCP-affiliates as the CDL, Zhigong Party, and such MCP-related organizations as the New Democratic Youth League, MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association, labor unions, and the farmers' unions. However, the Chinese clan associations, with the exception of the Fujian Association in Singapore, balked at the purpose of the gatherings, seemingly due to increasing disinterest in Chinese politics and stronger orientation toward Malayan affairs. It was at this time<sup>19</sup> that the MCP announced the change in its strategy from peaceful means to an armed struggle in order to attain its objectives. The Chinese clan associations were undoubtedly unable to stay in line with such a strategy.

The main sponsors of the presidential celebration events were as usual the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and the Chinese clan associations who had nothing to fear from the crack down measures of the British due to their publicly avowed anti-communist positions.

During September and October 1949 congratulatory telegrams of support were sent from this region to the newly established PRC government and leaders; however, we know of only three that were sent from Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. These telegrams, which represented a large number of people, were sent from Sabah and Sarawak. Particularly in Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, the senders of one telegram included the Khék Association, which was the city's largest Chinese clan group, labor unions, youth associations, women's groups, and cultural societies. It seems that at the time the colonial authorities were not very worried about the connection of either Sabah or Sarawak to the CCP or the PRC government.

This point is also evident in the events held in early 1950 to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UK and the PRC. In order

to avoid suppression that was anticipated by praising the PRC outright, these gatherings were probably held in the name of the diplomatic accord of January 6 (although some took the opportunity to jointly celebrate the establishment of the new Chinese regime). The British, as one of the principals being celebrated, were obviously in no position to ban the events. However, with the exception of Singapore, the Malayan gatherings did not turn out to be all that enthusiastic or jubilant; and in Singapore the gathering planned to be held by the local leftist labor unions was refused a permit from the authorities.

The gathering that was held in Singapore was sponsored by the clubs led by Tan Kah Kee (Chen Jia Geng), pro-Tan Kah Kee entrepreneurs like Tan Lark Sye (Chen Liu Shi), Lee Kong Chian, Ng Aik Huan, and Soon Peng Yam (Sun Bing Yan), CCP-affiliated businessmen like Ong Guan Hin (Wang Yuan Xing), who would later return to China, and the Mayfair Society, the Singapore Chinese School Teachers' Association (Xingzhou Huaxiao Jiaoshi Gonghui), the Journalists' Association (Jizhe Gonghui), and the New Teochew Society (Xin Chao She). These latter four groups were known as "the big four overseas Chinese leftist/CCP groups." The same people gathered again in March to welcome Tan Kah Kee back from a China trip that began in May 1949 and ended in February 1950. Tan left Singapore for good on May 21 of that year. Fearing a large gathering on the occasion, Tan departed for China secretly three days before originally scheduled, thus avoiding the notoriety of a gala send-off.<sup>20</sup> As it turned out, the diplomatic accord celebration, the welcoming back of Tan Kah Kee, and the CCP's Youth Day held on May 4 would be the last hurrah for the Malayan Chinese CCP supporters.

The Fui Chiu Association, which sponsored the events in Selangor to celebrate the British-Chinese diplomatic pact and provided office space in its head office building for the Zhigong Party's Malaya General Branch and the MCP Kuala Lumpur headquarters, was a stronghold of leftist/CCP activities; but this gathering would be its last.

Meanwhile, in Kuching and Sibü large-scale celebrations were held that included almost the entire Chinese population of these localities, no doubt made possible by the authorities' looser restrictions.

However, the story changed between 1951 and 1953, a period during which the Sarawak government outlawed Kuching's pro-CCP Youth Society and Sibü's pro-communist Youths' Co-Progress Association, Chinese Athletic Club, and Chung Hwa Alumni Association, and then ban the publication of Kuching's *Chung Hua Kung Pao* (published between 1945–51) and Sibü's *Chiao Sheng Pao* (published during 1950–52), newspapers that were editorially favorable to the CCP. At the same time, many people were deported.

From that time on no CCP-related events or gatherings were permitted.<sup>21</sup>

In Api (Jesselton, now Kota Kinabalu), Sabah, the Chinese Youth Society, one of the signers of the previously mentioned congratulatory telegram, sponsored a celebration of the UK-China diplomatic agreement; however, for some unknown reason no large-scale public gathering of the city's Chinese population materialized. It is quite possible that the wave of stiffened British rules and regulations had already washed ashore there as well.

Exactly from what time CCP-related gatherings in Sabah were banned cannot be ascertained due to a lack of documentation; however, given the fact that it was a British Crown Colony, such a ban was not far off.

From October 1949 restrictions were strengthened on how foreign flags were to be flown. The Chinese flag was permitted to be displayed only indoors and had to be accompanied by the British flag. Particularly in Singapore, the Emergency (National Emblems—Restriction of Display) Regulations of 1949 were proclaimed, stating that any flag other than the Malayan and British flags could not be publicly displayed, nor could the portrait or photograph of the chief or sovereign of any foreign state.<sup>22</sup> These restrictions no doubt presented significant barriers to the holding of public gatherings in Malaya and Singapore, since in Sabah and Sarawak, which had no such restrictions until 1950, public gatherings continued as before.

We do not know what form the gatherings sponsored by CCP-affiliated groups took after these restrictions were imposed, in part due to the ban imposed in September 1950 on the publication of the CDL's *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* and *Xian Dai Ri Bao* (Penang), newspapers that reported what happened at CCP-related events. However, probably a more important reason may be that such gatherings no longer took place, as the result of not only stiffer restrictions, but also the fact that the leftist organizations that sponsored the events had been outlawed and forced to operate underground.

From that time up through 1954, the only event reported was the KMT-sponsored Youth Day celebrated every March 29. Previously Youth Day had been celebrated by the Malayan Chinese on May 4 to commemorate the anti-Japanese student demonstrations held all over China on that day in 1919; but from 1947 on, the KMT preferred to celebrate Youth Day in conjunction with the Huang Hua Gang uprising of 1911. (For more details see Chapter 2, second section.)<sup>23</sup> However, these celebrations in Malaya soon disappeared, and did so even more quickly than the Double Tenth celebrations, as the Chinese youth of Malaya became more and more engulfed in the wave of Malayanization that was spreading over their community.

Finally, in response to the bombing of Fujian Province by KMT forces at the end of 1949, the CCP-affiliated Fujian Association and the KMT-affili-



ated Guangdong Association sent a joint telegram to Chiang Kai-shek deploring the incident. Anger over the destruction of their home province was strong enough to override any political differences and allegiances they may have normally held.

### III. The Pro-CCP Chinese Organizations

In this section, we will look at such organizations as the Chinese clan (home province) associations, friendship bodies, Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Chinese Associations, and outstanding entrepreneurs who supported the PRC and the CCP.<sup>24</sup>

One group we have already seen was the Mayfair Musical and Drama Society, one of the main organizations supporting the CCP in Singapore with 300 members (as of the end of 1946),<sup>25</sup> and which was declared illegal at the end of 1950.

Another group was the Singapore Chinese School Teachers' Association (CSTA) formed in 1905.<sup>26</sup> In April 1946, when the association was under the chairmanship of Lu Xin Yuan, 145 members, mainly school principals including Hsue Yung Shu, headmaster of the Hua Chiao High School, dropped out of the organization,<sup>27</sup> but decided to rejoin at the CSTA annual conference held that June. At that time, the association's membership totaled 500.<sup>28</sup> Lu, who had been a member of the CCP since 1927, was deported back to China in 1949. Hsue, who became the leader of the CDL Malayan branch in March 1948 after his predecessor, Hu Yu Zhi, returned China via Hong Kong, was arrested in 1951 and died in prison.<sup>29</sup>

The CSTA edited part of the June 4, 1950 issue of the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* which was entitled "Special Teachers' Day Issue," and then on the 6th held a Teachers' Day celebration attended by over 200 members representing over forty schools (*Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, June 7, 1950). However, after this event the association disappeared without a trace. From the fact that in 1953 a group calling itself the Federation of Chinese School Teachers, Singapore, with a membership of 1,000, filed a petition with the local government demanding "the same wages as English teachers,"<sup>30</sup> we may assume that the CSTA had been declared illegal by that time.

The time around 1950 marked a period when the colonial authorities in Malaya and Singapore stepped up their regulation of the Chinese schools with two purposes in mind: controlling leftist elements in the community and Malayanizing the school curriculum. In the process some schools were actually closed. It was also a time during which a shortage of Chinese teachers

occurred due to educators returning to China for the purpose of assisting in the building of the new PRC state, causing Hsue Yung Shu to announce a crisis in Singapore's Chinese education.<sup>31</sup>

It may have been this complex set of circumstances marked by colonial repression, the return of pro-CCP teachers (who formed the core of CSTA) to China, and a growing Malayanization of the Singapore Chinese identity consciousness that resulted in the disappearance of the CSTA.

It is still uncertain when the Singapore Chinese Journalists' Association was founded, but from the fact that it selected its third term board of directors on November 4, 1947, we may assume that it was founded sometime in late 1945. For the third term, the Journalists' Association replaced its former chairmanship style with a three-member standing committee style of leadership, to which Luo Ruo Xue of the *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and Hu Wei Fu of the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* were elected. The next level was the general manager, Peng You Zhen of the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*. These four leaders then joined an executive committee totaling twelve members. The assistant executive committee consisted of three members, namely Zhang Ming Lun of the *Nan Yang Siang Pau*, and Zhu Qi Zhuo and Li Gong Yi (also known as Li Wei Gang) of the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*.<sup>32</sup> Six of the journalists listed above would return to China: Hu, Peng, Zhang and Zhu being deported, Luo and Li leaving voluntarily. All were CDL members except for Luo; and Li was also a member of the MCP. Given that at least six of the fifteen Journalists' Association executive committee members including their assistants returned to China and at least five of them belonged to the CDL, it would not be at all surprising that the association led by them actively participated in Chinese politics.

The six who left Singapore seem to have done so between 1948 and 1950; and during that time as well, the Journalists' Association was probably disbanded by the local authorities. Although we do not know the exact date of disbanding, Lee Khoo Choy (Li Jiong Cai), a reporter for the *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and later a member of parliament, then ambassador to Japan, in a book touching upon the Singapore Chinese Journalist Club that was active from around 1947 into the early 1950s, mentions that the president of the club was Hu Wei Fu, that the Singapore Federation of Journalists (a pro-People's Action Party [PAP] organization) was formed in 1956 and headed by future Foreign Minister Rajaratnam, and that after the PAP took power in 1959, the Journalist Club, on the occasion of Chinese Newspaper Journalists Day on September 1 of that year, invited Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to speak before it. In his speech, Lee Khoo Choy recalls, Prime Minister Lee urged the Chinese journalists in Singapore not to remain as nationals of China for-

ever; and to start fostering a more Malaya-oriented consciousness. After this speech the club disbanded and all of its members joined the Singapore Federation of Journalists.<sup>33</sup>

The “club” that Lee Khoon Choy mentions may just be the Chinese Journalists’ Association; and if so, it would mean that it disbanded in 1959. Chinese Newspaper Journalists Day, which was marked by a publication holiday, was traditionally celebrated both in China and Malaya. According to Table 2-2 in Chapter 2, the holiday disappeared from the Malayan Chinese community after it was celebrated in 1960. Both this holiday and the Chinese Journalists’ Association had stopped playing a useful role at the time when newspaper reporters were deepening their orientation toward a Malayan identity. However, we must not forget that in the background of such a development there was much mental and physical anguish that occurred, as exemplified by the large number of association members who were separated from their families and forcibly deported with nothing but the shirts on their backs.

According Lee Khoon Choy, the Journalists Federation of Penang began operations just after the end of the war (no mention is made of its formation period) and had a membership that spanned the political spectrum. Leftist members included Fang Tu, Fang Jun Zhuang, Peng You Zhen, Zhu Qi Zhuo, Ang Shih Shih (Hong Si Si), and Cai Chu Kun (actually Cheong Choo Kun [Zhang Chu Kun]), all of the *Xian Dai Ri Bao*.<sup>34</sup>

The Journalists Federation of Penang should actually be the Penang Chinese Journalists’ Association. As of 1947 the Penang Association was led by the Fang brothers, Tu and Jun Zhuang, but the other leftist journalists moved to Singapore to work for the *Nan Chiau Jit Pau*. The Fang brothers were arrested in September 1950, when the *Xian Dai Ri Bao* was banned, and then deported to China. It is not clear when the Penang Association was disbanded.

The New Teochew Society was formed on October 20, 1946 by people with Teochew (Chaozhou) origins. Its first term executive committee included CDL members Xu Xia and Cai Gao Gang. On October 27 the first executive committee meeting unanimously decided to participate in the Federation for Peace and Democracy in China (Minlianhui).<sup>35</sup> An introduction to Chinese clan associations published in Singapore in 1975<sup>36</sup> makes no mention of the New Teochew Society. It was probably forced to disband in the early 1950s.

The Fujian Association, the Ee Ho Hean Club, and the Goh Loh Club were organizations operated by Tan Kah Kee and the entrepreneurs in his group, like Tan Lark Sye. All three organizations were taken over by Tan Lark Sye as chairmen when Tan Kah Kee returned to China. Therefore, the Malayanization of these three organizations became synonymous with group members like Tan Lark Sye. Such businessmen will be dealt with in more detail later, but it

should be mentioned here that as of 1948 there were still many CDL members associated with the Fujian Association. Of the one hundred “representatives” that were elected at the association’s 1948 annual conference held on March 8, twelve (other than Chairman Tan) can be identified as CDL members. They included Lee Tiat Min (Li Tie Min), Cheong Choo Kun, Lu Xin Yuan, Ang Shih Shih, and Zhuang Xi Quan. Among the ten “assistant representatives,” we find three CDL members, including Wu Sheng Yu and Guo Rui Ren, the latter later becoming the governor of Fujian Province in 1988.<sup>37</sup> Given the nature of its leadership, in all likelihood the Fujian Association’s identity consciousness was very China-oriented at that time.

Exactly when MCP-affiliated agricultural and women’s organizations were ordered to disband has not been documented. The All-Malayan Federation of Farmers’ Unions (FFU) held a convention during July 6–10, 1947.<sup>38</sup> The federation’s chairman was Musa Ahmad, who would later become chairman of the MCP. At the meetings of the federation’s central committee on the 18th and 19th of April 1948, it was decided to protest the Malayan authorities’ move to forcibly relocate Chinese farmers as part of the government’s program against pro-communist elements.<sup>39</sup> At FFU regional conventions held all over Malaya, the resolutions passed were mainly focused upon protesting forcible relocation and the protection of farmers’ rights.<sup>40</sup> We can observe from these resolutions that the most serious problems to the FFU were related to everyday life, and that the Malayanization of its identity consciousness was already progressing. It is unclear exactly when the FFU was declared illegal, but it was probably sometime during the latter half of 1948, not long after the MCP was outlawed. We do not know anything about the FFU leadership, with the exception of the MCP member Musa, but we can be fairly sure that many of its members were arrested and deported along with tens of thousands of Chinese farmers during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In contrast to the strong China-orientation among the intellectuals in the cities, the FFU fully realized that at least the basis of its supporters’ livelihood was rooted in Malaya. The fact that many Chinese farmers were deported to China, a country with which they had no real ties, is evidence of the senseless, cold-hearted nature of colonial policy at the time, making it clear that the “Malayanization” sought by the British authorities was only of the type that would protect their vested interests in the region.

We know nothing about the Singapore Agricultural and Horticultural Association (Nongyi Xiehui), except that it was formed in November 1945.<sup>41</sup>

There also existed a Women’s Federation made up of a coalition of women’s associations which included statewide bodies in Johor, Perak, Kedah, Singapore, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Terengganu, and local bodies in

West Pahang, East Pahang, North Kedah, Taiping (Perak), Sungai Patani (Kedah), Keluang (Johor), Tangkak (Johor), Segamat (Johor), and Lembing (Pahang).<sup>42</sup> The Women's Federation of Singapore consisted of seven associations in all, including the aforementioned Singapore Women Mutual Aid Association of Victims' Families, the Women's Fraternal Society (WFS), and the Thompson Road Women's Mutual Aid Society (TRS).<sup>43</sup> The Women Mutual Aid Association was founded in late March 1946 and was chaired by Li Poay Keng (Li Pei Qiong).<sup>44</sup> Li was from time to time a contributor to the monthly journal, *Xin Funu* (New Woman), which was published by Shen Zi Jiu (Mrs. Hu Yu Zhi), a female leader in the CDL. Li's viewpoints were very similar to those held by the CDL. From the large number of Singaporeans (reported locally as in the tens of thousands) who were "cleansed" by the Japanese army, the Mutual Aid Association must have included a very wide cross section of the city's Chinese women. And the fact that such a group was led by an influential associate of the CDL also suggests that this Chinese-based political group was well known and supported by the city's Chinese women at the time.

An essay published in the July 8, 1946 special issue of the *Min Sheng Pao* devoted to the "Ninth Anniversary of the Beginning of the War of Resistance against the Japanese on July 7"<sup>45</sup> touched upon the Malayan women's movement, arguing that "By protesting against the civil war and promoting the establishment of a coalition government in the fatherland and joining the democratic movement here in Malaya, Malaya's Chinese women would be able to improve their social position." At this time as well, the women's movement affiliated with the MCP was, at least in part, strongly oriented towards Chinese affairs.

Lee Khoon Choy relates that the Singapore "Women's Association (Funu Xiehui)" was declared illegal around the middle of September 1956;<sup>46</sup> he was probably referring to a group in the above-mentioned Women's Federation.

Turning to the question of how leading businessmen in Malaya's Chinese community gradually drifted away from interest in Chinese affairs, let us first look at Lee Kong Chian and Tan Lark Sye, two of the most influential leaders of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Chui Kwei Chiang tells us that Lee, the son-in-law of Tan Kah Kee, served as the twenty-fourth chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce during 1946–48, while Tan Lark Sye served as its twenty-sixth chairman during 1950–52. Lee also served as the first chairman of the Associated Malayan Chinese Chambers of Commerce, founded on February 23, 1947.

Lee and Tan Lark Sye were also leaders in the Fujian Association, Singapore's largest Chinese clan association. By tracing the changes that took

place in the orientation of their identity consciousness, we can measure how the Fujian Association, a group that had become actively involved in Chinese internal political affairs under the guidance of Tan Kah Kee, lost interest in China and became Malayanized. What follows is based on the conclusions reached by Chui.

From 1947 Lee Kong Chian became a pioneering activist for relaxing conditions for obtaining citizenship and strongly opposed the proposed draft of the Federation of Malaya constitution. During the 1950s he became alienated from China's political scene. Soon after the end of the war, Lee called for cooperation with Malays, saying, "Political affairs in China should be put aside because they are causing divisions among overseas Chinese. We should be getting more involved in local politics." He was one of the founders of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) that was formed in February 1949.

Tan Lark Sye, who had supported the communist cause during the CCP-KMT civil war, began to call for "hometowns here in Malaya" during the 1950-51 voter registration drive carried out by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Also at the time Tan called for the active support of the colonial authorities' plan to register Chinese for the military draft as an effective anti-MCP guerrilla measure, and scolded those Malayan Chinese youth (already some 10,000 according to the *Straits Times* of August 2, 1951) who were returning to China in order to avoid the draft. (The *Straits Times* goes on to say that many of these draft dodgers had not adapted well to Chinese life and were trying to return to Malaya, but the British authorities would not allow them back into the country.) With Tan Lark Sye's rubber enterprises reaping gigantic profits during the Korean War, along with Singapore's smooth transition toward autonomy, a transformation in his sense of national attachment from China to Malaya was only a matter of time.<sup>47</sup>

The clear disinterest in Chinese affairs developed within Lee Kong Chian, a middle-of-the-roader, during the late 1940s, and within Tan Lark Sye, who was very close to the leftist sentiments of Tan Kah Kee, during the early 1950s. However, in Chui's view, this was only a beginning in the localization of the Singapore Chinese community's identity consciousness. The most significant transformation occurred on the occasion of Singapore's independence in 1965.<sup>48</sup> The conversion of these businessmen was only a harbinger of what was to occur within the whole community ten to fifteen years in the future.

Actually, we have an account by Tan Lark Sye himself concerning his conversion to a Malayan identity consciousness. At a charity performance given by the Beijing Drama Circle of Shanghai (Shanghai Tongle Jingban) at the Fujian Association on September 9, 1950, after calling for the establishment of a Chinese University in Malaya, Tan, then the association's chairman, added,

When I left our country twenty years ago, I wanted to make a lot of money, then triumphantly return home to the fatherland as a rich man, raise a prosperous family and enhance the fame of my ancestors. I don't think like that anymore. Since the end of World War II, I have come to think of Malaya as my home. . . . There are many Chinese residents in the South Sea area and many children of high school age. We should build for them a university in the region's center, Singapore, as soon as possible.<sup>49</sup>

This speech was reported in the CDL's Penang sub-branch organ, *Xian Dai Ri Bao*. The same paper also covered the speech in the "short commentary" section which put the existence of a "Chinese University" in the following context.

Tan Lark Sye's call for the establishment of Chinese University in Singapore is evidence of his overflowing patriotism, a sentiment that should be praised.

However, even if he were to raise ten million or twenty million Straits dollars to build such an institution, it would be very difficult to achieve the goal of *weiguo xingue* [promotion of education for the sake of China]. The reasons are fivefold. First, from where would the faculty be hired? Secondly, the education policy of the local government is promoting English-language education in the Chinese community, while de-emphasizing Chinese-language education and *a strong sense of patriotism towards China*. Next, on the occasion of the recent incidents involving the Hua Chiao and Nanyang Girls' High Schools [in which communist-related activities on the part of many of their students resulted in school closures], despite the long and arduous negotiations between the Chinese community leaders, including Lee Kong Chian, and the local authorities, the chains have not yet been removed from the school doors. What would be the consequences if [anti-government] pamphlets were found in the Chinese University's lavatory? Could closure be avoided in that case? . . . Mr. Tan's determination to promote education in the community is very gratifying, but a university is not a pressing issue for the time being.<sup>50</sup> (*italics added*)

It has been stated that Tan Lark Sye made his Nanyang University proposal in January 1953<sup>51</sup> but from the above sources we know that the plan for a university was being publicly discussed some two and a half years earlier.

More important, however, is the fact that the editors of the *Xian Dai Ri Bao* interpreted Tan's university proposal, which had been made from the standpoint of Malaya as his home country and human resource development among the Chinese of the South Seas, as a plan to foster and strengthen patriotism toward China among the local Malayan Chinese community. Within less than ten days the publication of the *Xian Dai Ri Bao* would be banned. We can observe at this fairly early point in time that Tan Lark Sye was beginning to distance himself from the CCP factions and from the CDL which was represented by the *Xian Dai Ri Bao*.

It can also be said that the growing disinterest in Chinese affairs of Lee Kong Chian and Tan Lark Sye and their Malayanization symbolized a similar change taking place in the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Fujian Association, and which opened the way for the Malayan Chinese community in general to begin changing its identity consciousness from a Chinese to a Malayan orientation.

The Fui Chiu (Huizhou) Association of Selangor, one of the most powerful leftist/CCP-affiliate Chinese clan associations on the Malay Peninsula, provided offices for the MCP and the Zhigong Party at its headquarter's building located in central Kuala Lumpur, until these groups were declared illegal in July 1948.<sup>52</sup>

The Selangor Fui Chiu Association in 1939 formed the Dongjiang Overseas Chinese Returning Home Service Troop (Dongjiang Huaqiao Huixiang Fuwutuan) which enlisted young natives of Huizhou, Guangdong and sent them back to China as a battalion of Malayan Chinese to fight for the army of resistance against the Japanese. After China's victory, the battalion roamed Guangdong Province, refusing to join forces with the KMT, and was sent monetary aid by the Fui Chiu Association in June 1946.<sup>53</sup>

According to the association's yearbook of 1961, its main activities were in the fields of "philanthropy, physical education, music, and social welfare," with absolutely no influence from mainland China. This agenda shows a big change of the association's activities which took place in the 1950s. The facts concerning what exactly happened in the transformation experienced by the association in the 1950s are not clear; however, according to a brief history of the group, from 1954 on there was an organizational reform effort to expand its membership, and in 1957 "innovations" were made in its bylaws. Thus by opening its doors to wider groups of people, the association claims it was able to contribute to the good of not only natives of Huizhou, but also to society and the nation in general.<sup>54</sup> One can also read inferences here to the association having been manipulated by certain political factions before the reform. Judging just from their timing, the "reforms" and "innovations" that were made by the association were probably part of a process of growing disinterest in China and increasing Malayanization.

The Chinese Associations were organizations that attempted to go beyond regional and kinship ties in order to unite all Chinese in the local community. The presence of CCP influence in the Chinese Associations of rural areas was fairly strong. The Kuala Pilah Chinese Association (Negeri Sembilan),<sup>55</sup> established under the auspices of the MCP,<sup>56</sup> and those in Tampin (Negeri Sembilan)<sup>57</sup> and Yong Peng (Johor)<sup>58</sup> often participated in anti-KMT gatherings sponsored by the Federation for Peace and Democracy in China, a CCP-



affiliated united front organization. (These gatherings were attended by not only CCP factions, but MCP groups as well.) In fact, the Chinese Associations in Kuala Pilah and Tampin were members of the federation. Similar activities are reported up through 1949 concerning Chinese Associations in Muar,<sup>59</sup> Keluang,<sup>60</sup> Tangkak<sup>61</sup> (all in Johor), and Jerantut (Pahang).<sup>62</sup>

While participating in MCP-supported democratization and independence movements, such as opposing the draft of the Federation of Malaya constitution that refused Malayan Chinese civil rights, the Chinese Associations also participated along with MCP-affiliated organizations in supporting the CCP. Here we can observe a strengthening and expansion in the postwar period of a China-oriented identity consciousness among the Malayan Chinese in general.

Unfortunately, what became of the Chinese Associations during and after the 1950s is unknown. A business directory entitled *Malaxiya gongshang zhinan* [Malaysia business guide], published in 1990, lists Chinese Associations in Johor Bahru, Batu Pahat, and Muar (all in Johor), and Rantau (Negeri Sembilan),<sup>63</sup> but almost all of the above-mentioned CCP-affiliated associations have disappeared, probably due to closures during the 1950s and 1960s.

## Notes

- 1 C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912–1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), pp. 16, 209. Ouyang Chengda, *Xinjiapo huaren dui Xinhai gemin de fanying* [Response of the Singaporean Chinese to the Xinhai Revolution], in *Xinjiapo huazu shi lunji* [Anthology of historical articles on Singaporean Chinese], ed. Kua Bak Lim and Ng Chin Keong (Singapore: Nanyang University Alumni Association, 1972), pp. 107–9, 118.
- 2 Chen Yan, *Zhandouzhong de Malaiya* [Malaya in battle] (Shanghai: Dongfang Shushe, 1951), p. 141.
- 3 On this point see, Fujio Hara, “Maraya Kyōsantō to kō-Nichi sensō—‘Sokoku kyūen’ ‘Maraya minzoku kaihō’ no kōsaku—” [The Malayan Communist Party and its anti-Japanese war—Blending the salvation of China with the liberation of Malaya—], *Ajia keizai* 19, no. 8 (1978)
- 4 From an interview on August 26, 1991 with a Malayan Chinese who returned to China.
- 5 The MCP organ, *Min Sheng Pao* (March 12, 1948) laments, “The majority of Malayan Chinese still do not understand that Malaya is their permanent home,” indicating that even three years after the war, the Chinese community in Malaya was still strongly oriented towards mainland Chinese affairs.

- 6 Edgar O'Ballance, *Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War, 1948–60* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 66.
- 7 Fujio Hara, “Maraya ni okeru Chūgoku-ha kajin soshiki no keisei to shōmetsu” [China-oriented organizations in Malaya: Their emergence, development, and demise], *Ajia keizai* 31, no. 12 (1990).
- 8 Hara, “Maraya ni okeru,” pp. 16–17.
- 9 This figure was made public at the Eighth Enlarged Plenum of the Central Working Committee of the MCP held during January and February 1946, and reported in *Zhan You Bao* (Combatants' Friend), October 17, 1947, the organ of the MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association.
- 10 Hara, “Maraya ni okeru,” pp. 10–12.
- 11 Hara, “Maraya ni okeru,” pp. 13–14.
- 12 Concerning the activities and plight of workers, see Khoo Shin Min, *Jiannan de xingcheng* [Difficult journey] (Singapore: Wenxue Shuwu, 1985); Lin Shao Chuan, “Huiguo canzhan, gongzhao riyue—Jinian nanqiao jigong huiguo canzhan wushinian (1939–89)” [Return to the home country to participate in the war: Days and months of distinguished services—Commemorating the 50th anniversary of returning home and participation in the war by the Chinese drivers and mechanics of Southeast Asia, 1939–89], vol. 3 of *Huaqiaoshi yanjiu lunwenji* [Anthology of articles on overseas Chinese history] (Quanzhou: Huaqiao Daxue Huaqiao Yanjiusuo, 1990); and Chui Kwei Chiang, “Huanxiang xinyuan yechang mengduo—Zhanhou chuqi Xin Ma fuyuan jigong” [Repatriation of Singapore and Malayan Mechanics after the Second World War], *Nanyang xuebao* (Journal of the South Seas Society) 42, pts. 1–2 (1987).
- 13 *Xian Dai Ri Bao*, April 4, 1950 (evening edition).
- 14 *Min Sheng Pao*, November 4, November 5, and November 12, 1947.
- 15 While Singapore Fujian Association chairman, Tan Kah Kee, remained a loyal supporter of the CCP throughout his career, his influence did not extend to Fujian Associations outside of Singapore.
- 16 Chui Kwei Chiang, “Cong Xinjiapo Zhonghua Zongshanghui kan huaren guojia rentong de zhuanxiang” [A view of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce on the change of national identity of the Chinese], in *Zonghui sannian* [Three years of the federation], ed. Xinjiapo Zongxiang Huiguan Lianhe Zonghui (Singapore Federation of Clan Associations) (Singapore, 1989), pp. 95–99.
- 17 Concerning the reaction of KMT supporters in the MCA, see Heng Pek Koon, *Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 91.
- 18 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, April 18 and April 23, 1947, June 16, 1947, and November 21, 1949. *Min Sheng Pao* (June 15, 1946) reported that Consul Hsu had attended a CDL dinner in Selangor accompanied by his wife. See also May 28, 1946 and July 16, 1947 edition.

A British document concerning Hsu states that he “would see anyone from KMT leader to the most rabid communist, and would go anywhere to clear up

- trouble. He was most active in trying to prevent Chinese home politics in Malaya and as a worker for Sino-British friendship. His methods were far too unorthodox for the Consul General [sic] and he was sent to the Embassy in India. I believe that the deciding factor was his quarrel with and attempt to expose a local Chinese, Lee Hau Sik (H.S. Lee now a O.B.E. [a note in original]), for what he is, but he was not left time to complete his investigations.” (“Memoir of O. H. Morris, para. no. 52,” in “Chinese Affairs and Correspondence with Mr. H. T. Pagden,” PRO, CO 537/3757, 1948.)
- 19 Fujio Hara, “Liberation of Malaya and Liberation of China,” in *Emergence, Development and Dissolution of the Pro-China Organizations in Singapore*, by Chui Kwei Chiang and Fujio Hara, J.R.P. Series, no. 87 (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1991), pp. 85–86.
  - 20 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (May 22, 1950) reported that Tan Kah Kee had said “I will return at the end of this year [1950] or early next year,” but Tan would never return to Singapore.
  - 21 Niew Shong Tong and T’ien Eng Seng, eds. *Shalao Yue huazu yanjiu lunwen ji* [Selected articles on Sarawak Chinese] (Sibu: Shalao Yue Huazu Wenhua Xiehui [Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association], 1992), p. 199; John M. Chin, *The Sarawak Chinese* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 108; and Craig Alan Lockard, *From Kampung to City: A Social History of Kuching Malaysia, 1820–1970* (Athens, Ohio: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 1987), p. 169.
  - 22 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, October 7 and October 8, 1949, November 11, 1949, and September 6, 1950; *Xian Dai Ri Bao*, November 11, 1949 and September 7, 1950.
  - 23 *Min Sheng Pao*, March 27 and March 28, 1947 and March 23, 1948.
  - 24 Hara, “Maraya ni okeru,” p. 17.
  - 25 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, December 23, 1946. The Mayfair Society had celebrated its twelfth anniversary the day before during which Consul Kuang Da called for efforts in realizing a democratic political system in China.
  - 26 Wang Shiow Nan, *Xin Ma jiaoyu fanlun* [On education in Malaysia and Singapore] (Hong Kong: South East Asia Research Institute, 1970), p. 163. Probably the year 1905 is a misprint of 1945.
  - 27 *Min Sheng Pao*, May 6 and May 15, 1946.
  - 28 *Min Sheng Pao*, June 18, 1946.
  - 29 Concerning Hsue Yung Shu, see Hu Yu Zhi, *Wode huiyi* [My recollection] (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1990), p. 71.
  - 30 Wang Shiow Nan, p.167.
  - 31 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, June 7, 1950. During the early 1950s, at least several thousand young men in Malaya traveled to China for the purpose of either higher education or avoiding the military draft (initiated by the British to combat the MCP armed struggle). In the first three months of 1951, a total of 10,100 certificates of admission had been applied for in order to leave Malaya and return at some future date (*Straits Times*, April 11, 1951). Also, between 1949 and 1952 at least

- 200 to 300 students departed Sarawak “to return home and participate in building a socialist China” (Niew Shong Tong and T’ien Eng Seng, eds., p. 198). However, because the British would not allow them reentry permits, most of the students were unable to return to Malaya or Sarawak after completion of their studies.
- 32 *Min Sheng Pao*, November 7, 1947. The new executive committee elected at the end of August remained unchanged, with the exception of Zhang Ming Lun and Li Gong Yi who disappeared (*Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, September 1, 1949).
- 33 Lee Khoon Choy, *Zhuixun ziji de guojia—Yige Nanyang huaren de xinlu licheng* [In search of a nation—The personal Odyssey of a Nanyang Chinese] (Taipei: Yuanliu Chuban Shiye Gufen Youxian Gongsi, 1989), pp. 266–69.
- 34 Lee Khoon Choy, p. 103.
- 35 In the “Special Issue Celebrating the First Anniversary of the Singapore New Teochow Society” of the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, November 29, 1947, there is an essay signed merely “Si Ming,” who may have been pro-MCP teacher Shen Si Ming (also known as Guang Ming), Shen returned to China around 1949.
- 36 Ngow Wah, *Xinjiapo huazu huiguan zhi* [Historical record of the Chinese associations of Singapore], 3 vols. (Singapore: Nanyang Xuehui [South Seas Society], 1975).
- 37 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, March 9, 1948.
- 38 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, July 17, 1947 and *Min Sheng Pao*, July 15 and 18, 1947.
- 39 *Min Sheng Pao*, April 14, 1948.
- 40 *Min Sheng Pao*, January 7, 1948 (on the Farmer’s General Union of Penang), March 9, 1948 (on the Farmer’s General Union of Pahang), March 26, 1948 (on the Farmer’s General Union of Perak), April 4, 1948 (on congress of representatives from the six Perak districts).
- 41 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (November 10, 1947) reported the second anniversary of its formation.
- 42 Johor: *Min Sheng Pao*, March 5 and March 21, 1947.  
 Perak: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, March 21 and March 25, 1947; *Min Sheng Pao*, March 22 and March 27, 1947. It was reported that the second convention of the Perak Women’s Federation was held on March 15–18 with forty-five representatives from twenty-seven units attending, and Perak CDL sub-branch director Wang Ting Jun was the guest of honor.  
 Kedah: *Min Sheng Pao* (June 21, 1947) reported the name of the organization as the Women’s Promotion Society (Funu Cujinhui).  
 Singapore: *Min Sheng Pao*, February 4, 1948.  
 Selangor: *Min Sheng Pao* (March 9, 1948) reported that the Selangor Women’s Federation held a gathering on March 8, International Women’s Day, with more than 300 participants in attendance and that the representative of the CDL, He Jia Yu gave an address on the occasion. On the same day, gatherings were held by the Women’s Benevolent Society (Funu Cishanhui, a cultural organization with more than a hundred members) and by the Chinese Women’s Li Chi Association (Funu

Lizhishe]. According to the *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (March 9, 1949), the Selangor Chinese Women's Li Chi Association held a gathering on Women's Day of 1949 with 300 participants in attendance. The association still continues to exist.

Negeri Sembilan: *Min Sheng Pao* (March 6, 1948) reported the second anniversary of the Negeri Sembilan Women's General Federation.

Terengganu: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, February 28, 1948.

West Pahang: *Min Sheng Pao* (February 25, 1948) reported that the fourth convention of the Women's Federation of West Pahang was held on February 21 and 22 with about thirty participants in attendance.

East Pahang: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (July 19, 1947) reported that a general assembly was held and new officers elected.

North Kedah: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, March 3, 1948.

Taiping (Perak): *Min Sheng Pao*, November 6, 1947.

Sungai Patani (Kedah): *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (December 15, 1947) reported the second anniversary of the Sungai Patani Women's Federation.

Keluang: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (August 22 and October 1, 1947) reported that the Keluang Women's Federation celebrated its second anniversary on September 28.

Tangkak: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, October 6, 1947 (a special report commemorating the second anniversary of the organization) and October 14, 1947.

Segamat: *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, March 3, 1948.

Lembing (Pahang): *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, March 17, 1948.

43 *Min Sheng Pao*, February 4, 1948.

44 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, February 12, 1947, March 9, and March 10, 1947; *Min Sheng Pao*, February 13 and March 11, 1947. The association's 500 members petitioned on March 6 to meet with the Chinese consul general to Singapore, Wu Paak Shing, to complain that "In spite of all we have done for the 'fatherland,' why can the 'fatherland' not do anything for us?" They also requested support for the war crimes tribunal trying the Japanese and applied for 50,000 yuan in relief funds from the Chinese government.

45 Wang Jing Ying, *Mahua funu yu qi-qi jinian* [Malayan Chinese women and the commemoration of July 7], n.d.

46 Lee Khoon Choy, p. 291.

47 Chui Kwei Chiang, "Cong Xinjiapo," pp. 93–106.

48 Chui Kwei Chiang, "Cong Xinjiapo," p. 106.

49 *Xian Dai Ri Bao*, September 11, 1950.

50 Ibid.

51 This statement is contained in the section devoted to Tan Lark Sye (on pp. 88–98) in Cai Ren Long, ed., *Dongnanya zhumin huaqiao huaren chuan* [Bibliography of prominent overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia], vol. 1 (Beijing: Haiyang Chubanshe 1989); and is based on *Nanyang Daxue chuanguoxiao shi* [History of the establishment of Nanyang University] (Singapore: Nanyang Wenhua Chubanshe, 1965). The chronology (p. 229) in Lim Lian Geok, *Fengyu shiba*

- nian* [Weather-beaten eighteen years] (Kuala Lumpur: Lim Lian Yu Jijin Weiyuanhui [Lim Lian Geok Fund Committee], 1988) also states the same.
- 52 *Min Sheng Pao*, March 29, 1947 reported that the Zhigong Party offices were moved to the Fui Chiu Association due to a lack of space in their previous accommodations at the Gongshang Julebu (Commercial Athletic Club) on Sultan Road.
- 53 *Min Sheng Pao*, June 13, 1946.
- 54 “Xuelan-e Huizhou huiguan jianjie” [Brief introduction of the Selangor Fui Chiu Association], in *Senmeilan Huizhou Huiguan bainian jinian tekan* [Special issue for the 100th anniversary of the Negeri Sembilan Fui Chiu Association], ed. Senmeilan Huizhou Huiguan Bianji Weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee of Negeri Sembilan Fui Chiu Association) (Seremban, 1971), p. 72.
- 55 *Min Sheng Pao*, June 11, 1947 (on the gathering against hunger, civil war, and dictatorship), June 23 and August 13, 1947 (on joint activities with the Minlianhui), and September 3, 1947 (on participation in a gathering against civil war and mass mobilization). All of the above-mentioned activities concern the internal affairs of China; however, on February 10 the *Min Sheng Pao* reported on the movement opposing the proposed draft of the Federation of Malaya Constitution.
- Nan Chiau Jit Pao* (May 4, 1948) reported that the Chinese Associations in Kuala Pilah and Tampin were members of the Negeri Sembilan Minlianhui.
- 56 *Min Sheng Pao*, July 18 and July 23, 1946.
- 57 *Min Sheng Pao*, May 9, 1946 (on the merger of the South Hokkien Chamber of Commerce [Min Nan Shanghui] with the Overseas Chinese Chamber of Commerce [Huaqiao Shanghui] to form the Chinese Association); June 5, 1946 (on the celebration of the above-mentioned merger marked by display of the Chinese flag by Chinese organizations, schools, shops, and homes in Tampin, the appearance of Consul Hsu, who called for unity of the Chinese nation, a pledge made by the executive committee before Consul Hsu, and attendance at the celebration by the state General Labour Union and the state MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association); June 11, 1947 (on participation in a gathering against hunger, civil war, and dictatorship); June 26, 1946 (on joint activities with the Minlianhui); September 18, 1946 (opposing the CCP-KMT civil war). *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, September 5, 1947 (opposing the mass mobilization order), May 3 and May 4, 1948, and November 21, 1949.
- 58 *Min Sheng Pao*, February 26, 1947 (opposing the proposed draft of the Federation of Malaya Constitution); *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, September 6, 1947 (on gatherings to commemorate China’s victory in the war of resistance against the Japanese).
- 59 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, September 5, 1947 (on gatherings to commemorate China’s victory in the war of resistance against the Japanese), November 21, 1949; *Min Sheng Pao*, March 11, 1947 (on participation in committees to ratify the Malayan People’s Constitution).
- 60 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, September 5, 1947.
- 61 *Nan Chiau Jit Pao*, May 13, 1948 (opposing Chiang Kai-shek).

- 62 *Min Sheng Pao*, September 27, 1946 (supporting Tan Kah Kee's anti-KMT activities).
- 63 Huashe Zhiliao Yanjiu Zhongxin (Chinese Resource and Research Centre), ed., *Malaixiya gongshang zhinan* [Malaysia business guide] (Kuala Lumpur: Xuelan'e Zhonghua Dahuitang [Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall], 1990), p. 47.