



Unveiling the Expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia (1963-1965)

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Abstract- Since the formation of Malaysia, the Federation under the Tunku Abdul Rahman-Tun Razak leadership had to deal with the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation and also issues in Singapore that were stirred up by Lee Kuan Yew. Continual provocation and pressure from Lee Kuan Yew on the Central Government subsequently led to the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia. Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, one of the core leaders of the Federation, viewed Singapore as a ‘thorn in the flesh’ when it was part of Malaysia. Questions were raised about cause his negative views on Singapore. This paper unveils the events which led to the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia (1963-1965), especially the roles of Tun Razak in resolving issues with Singapore when it was part of the Malaysia Federation.

Keywords: Federation leader; Tun Razak; Singapore; Lee Kuan Yew

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the formation of Malaysia, the Federation government had the challenging tasks of resolving the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation and issues in Singapore. Continual provocation and pressure from Lee Kuan Yew on the Central Government subsequently led to the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia (Mohd Sohaimi, 2020). Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, one of the core leaders of the Federation, viewed Singapore as a ‘thorn in Malaysia’s flesh’. It raises questions about the cause of his negative views on Singapore. This paper unveils the events which led to the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia (1963-1965), especially the roles of Tun Razak in resolving issues with Singapore when it was part of the Malaysia Federation. For this purpose, this study adopted a historical materials analysis method which is commonly used in history research. According to Ahmad Tarmizi, Romzi and Nurul (2017), the purpose of this qualitative research method is to discover past events related to various aspects such as leadership roles. In addition, Romzi (2017) explains that this method is able to present a clearer picture of an event and to obtain richer information from a research. Therefore, the historical materials analysis method is suitable for the purpose of this study to explore the reasons behind the expulsion of Singapore from the Malaysia Federation.

II. THE ROLES OF TUN RAZAK IN RESOLVING ISSUES IN SINGAPORE

Tunku Abdul Rahman had to deal with the country’s internal matters when Singapore stirred up conflict with Kuala Lumpur, the Central Government. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s provocation was due to his objection to postpone the declaration of Malaysia from 31st August to 16th September 1963. The original date had to be postponed in order to allow the entourage from the United Nations Secretariat led by Lawrence Michelmores to sign a referendum with the people of Sabah and Sarawak. The decision to send the entourage was made in order to fulfil the signed agreement between Tun Razak with the Indonesia and Philippine Foreign Ministers at the Manila Conference (Means, 1970). Lee insisted that the declaration of Singapore’s independence should proceed on 31st August 1963, which was decided at the London Negotiation. Tun Razak refused to attend the declaration ceremony despite being invited. Also absent from the ceremony was representative of the British government, Duncan Sandys (Lee, 2000). Lee Kuan Yew admitted that he self-declared Singapore’s independence on 31st August 1963. Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak were reportedly shocked by the unilateral declaration of independence made by Lee Kuan Yew (PREM 11/4351, Kuala Lumpur – Singapore, 2 September 1963). Tun Razak’s uneasiness with and suspicious towards Lee

Kuan Yew since the London Negotiation were finally substantiated through Lee Kuan Yew's action. Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia Chinese Association leader Tan Siew Sin also shared similar feelings as Tun Razak even before the declaration of Malaysia (DO 187/30, Talks in London on the Establishment of the Federation of Malaysia, June-July 1963).

Subsequently on 2nd September, Tun Razak attended the Federal Government Cabinet meeting to discuss Lee Kuan Yew's premature declaration of Singapore's independence. The Cabinet opined that the Singapore government's action was invalid and unconstitutional; it decided to submit a letter of objection pertaining to Lee Kuan Yew's action to the British government (PREM 11/4351, Kuala Lumpur - Singapore, 2 September 1963). Lee Kuan Yew ignored the objection and viewed the Federation Government's action towards Singapore as "regretful" (Lee, 2000; Straits Times, 4 September 1963).

On 3rd September 1963, Lee Kuan Yew once again agitated the Federal Government by dissolving the Singapore Legislative Council and declaring 12th September as the election nomination day. Lee Kuan Yew's audacious contrivance was to consolidate his and the PAP's position in the Singapore politics (Ratnam & Milne, 1967). His haste decision to hold the election was said to have been linked to Tun Razak's recommendation to restrict Lee Kuan Yew's influence. A few months prior to the formation of Malaysia, Tun Razak had suggested to Lord Selkirk about "elections producing an alternative government to replace Lee" (DO 169/19, No. 33/45/1, Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies, (Telegram no. 402), 13 June 1963). This news had evidently worried Lee Kuan Yew who had been waiting for the opportune time to hold the Singapore election (Lee, 2000).

The British government's concern with Singapore's action had led to Geofroy Tory holding a discussion with Tun Razak and Tun Dr. Ismail in Kuala Lumpur on 5th September. Tun Razak and Tun Dr. Ismail assured Britain that the formation of Malaysia will proceed despite all of Lee Kuan Yew's actions. Geofroy Tory later conveyed the assurance to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (Lee, 2000), which was precisely what Britain had been expecting.

Unfortunately, the results of the Singapore election on 21st September had shocked Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak and other Alliance leaders. Every UMNO-Singapore Alliance nominee was defeated by PAP nominees, who succeeded in securing a majority vote of 37 out of 51 seats while Barisan Sosialis secured 13 seats and one seat for the United People's Party (UPP) (Mohamed Noordin, 1974; Ratnam & Milne, 1964). Tun Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak's hope for UMNO-Singapore Alliance to govern the island was dashed (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001). This event served as a wake-up call for the Federal leaders and the Central Government about the arduousness to control and lead Singapore politics, as Lee Kuan Yew pursued his political acts.

As expected, Lee Kuan Yew continued to stir up provocation when he announced his intention to collaborate with United Malay National Organization (UMNO). However, he refused to join the Alliance if Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) were still part of it. Tunku Abdul Rahman chastised Lee Kuan Yew's announcement, which the former deemed it as irresponsible with the intention to break up the Alliance. Tunku Abdul Rahman assured that UMNO will forever remain an ally with MCA and MIC (The Sunday Times, 29 September 1963; Malay Mail, 30 September 1963; Muhamed Noordin, 1974; Lau, 1998; Chan, 1971). This event has further strengthened the bond between UMNO, MCA and MIC in the Alliance.

Tun Razak was reappointed as the Chairman of the Alliance Election Committee after five years. As the Chairman, Tun Razak was responsible to strategise measures to ensure the success of the Alliance in the Federal election in April 1964. The present scenario differed from the last general election, whereby the Alliance would now be contesting against existing opposition parties and also Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP.

Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party (PAP) continued to cast their shadows on the Alliance leaders. After his failure to collaborate with UMNO, Lee Kuan Yew decided to expand the PAP in Peninsular Malaysia, which was announced by PAP Chairman, Toh Chin Chye on 1st March 1964 (The Straits Times, 2 March 1964; Muhamed Noordin Sopiee, 1974; Lau, 1998). The announcement was made as part of the PAP's preparation for the upcoming general election (Ratnam & Milne, 1967). Prior to the announcement, Tun Razak had been informed unofficially by Goh Keng Swee about the PAP's intention to contest in the election on 29th February 1964. Feeling disheartened, Tun Razak objected to the plan and predicted the failure of the PAP's attempt (Lau, 1998). Nevertheless, the PAP was determined to contest in the election and made the official announcement through its Chairperson Toh Chin Chye on 1st March. Fundamentally, this action went against the agreement with Malaysia, whereby the PAP had agreed not to contest in the election in Peninsular

Malaysia (Lau, 1998; Chan, 1971; Muhamed Noordin, 1974; Turnbull, 1977). Lee Kuan Yew's action had undoubtedly stirred up uneasiness amongst the Federal leaders.

During the campaign, the Alliance leaders urged the people of Malaya not to vote for the PAP. The leaders sternly reminded the, that supporting any race-based policies will trigger detrimental upheavals (Shaws, 1976. In this election, the PAP put forward nine nominees to contest against the MCA. As the Chairperson of the Alliance Election Committee, Tun Razak was unnerved the number of PAP nominees. In fact, it made his job easier because the current campaign favoured the Alliance compared to the election in 1959. The Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation became the core campaigning model for Tun Razak and other Alliance leaders. Patriotism was instilled in the people, and they were urged to reject an opposition party that was anti-Malaysia, which supported and collaborated with Indonesia (Mohd Sohaimi, 2011).

In summary, the Alliance achieved a major victory by winning 89 of the 104 parliamentary seats. The total votes for the Alliance had also increased to 58 percent from 52 percent or 74 seats in the 1959 election. The Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, PAS) won nine seats only compared to 13 seats in 1959. Two opposition parties also witnessed a decline in their popularity including the Socialist Front (won two out of eight seats) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) (won two out of four seats). Meanwhile, first-time contenders in Peninsular Malaysia namely the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the People's Action Party (PAP) had won one seat. Parti Negara failed to win any seat and none of the independent candidates had won (Malaysia, 1965; Ratnam & Milne, 1964). In summary, the election result was considered a major victory for Tun Razak.

It was a proud moment for Tun Razak when the Alliance won back the 15 parliamentary seats that were previously owned by the opposition parties or independent candidates. In addition, none of the Alliance candidates lost their bets. In contrast, a total of 49 candidates had lost their bets due to failure to secure one out of eight of the total votes namely 14 UDP candidates, 11 PAS candidates, nine Socialist Front candidates, six PAP candidates, three Parti Negara candidates, two People's Progressive Party (PPP) candidates and four independent candidates (Shaws, 1976; Ratnam & Milne, 1964). Meanwhile, Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP had only managed to secure one parliamentary seat in Bangsar (Devan Nair was the PAP candidate for the Bangsar parliament area). PAP also failed to win any seats in the state level election. As a result, Lee Kuan Yew had failed in his effort to expand the PAP political influence in Peninsular Malaysia. Tun Razak and the other Alliance leaders remained distrustful towards Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001; Gullick, 1969).

III. REASONS FOR THE EXPULSION OF SINGAPORE FROM MALAYSIA

After the election, Tun Razak perceived the problems brought about by Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore seemed never-ending. The situation became more complicated when tensions arose between the Malay people and Lee Kuan Yew's government. UMNO Singapore tried to champion for the rights of the Malay people in the island due to their displeasure towards Lee Kuan Yew's administration. In early May 1964, UMNO voiced its strong objection to the government due to the eviction order to the Malay people from their settlements, including Java Road, Palembang Road, Kallang West Coast and Kampong Bendong. On 27th May, the Singapore Natives National Association submitted a letter to Lee Kuan Yew requesting the government to act justly towards the Malay people in order to avoid detrimental chaos (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001).

On 12th July, UMNO Singapore invited Malay and Islamic organisations from all over Singapore to discuss "The Position of the Singapore Malay People" at the New Star Theatre at Pasir Panjang Road. Various leaders who were invited speakers at the session had strongly criticised Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP's government policies. They included Syed Ja'afar Albar (former UMNO Chief Information), Hassan Adli (PAS Vice President) and Ali Haji Ahmad (UMNO Deputy Secretary) (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001). More than 1000 attendees at the assembly pleaded to Lee Kuan Yew to defend the Malay people as native residents and not to exclude them in the country's development. Four days later on 16th July, Lee Kuan Yew organised a gathering to respond to the accusations that were made against him and the PAP (Lau, 1998).

During that period, Tun Razak felt the ongoing tension in Singapore. On 21st July, the birthday celebration of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (*Maulidur Rasul*) in Singapore turned into racial riots, which resulted in hundreds of fatalities and injuries, and the government imposing a curfew (Turnbull, 1977; Means, 1970). Tun Razak, who was acting Prime Minister, flew to Singapore in the morning of 22nd July as soon as he received the devastating news. At the time of the incident, Tunku Abdul Rahman was in the United States after attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London. In his absence, Tun Razak

was forced to bring along the Alliance leaders for any decision making. The leaders included Federal senior ministers Tan Siew Sin, Mohammed Khir Johari and S. Manikavasagam. Their decision to travel to Singapore was seen as a 'display of unity' (Lau, 1998).

While in Singapore, Tun Razak and the Federal leaders were briefed on the riots by the chief of security and the political leaders including Lee Kuan Yew. Tun Razak also visited the victims at the Singapore General Hospital and also Kampung Melayu at Geylang, where the riots took place. He later organised a gathering session with the Malay leaders at the Federal House (Lau, 1998).

During the press conference, Tun Razak informed that the post-riots situation was under control but serious, and the curfew would continue to be temporarily imposed. He linked the source of the riots to a troublemaker who threw a bottle towards the procession (The Straits Times, 23 July 1964). The incident started when a Malay police officer who was controlling the *Maulidur Rasul* procession was attacked by a PAP member. In addition, the distribution of illegal brochures by the Islamic Development Association around Kampung Gelam was also linked to tensions that erupted the riots. The brochures urged the Malay people to unite and destroy the PAP dictatorship party (Lee, 2000; Lau, 1998). During his speech at Radio Malaysia, Tun Razak expressed his disappointment of the incident and urged all races in Singapore and Malaya to unite in order to ensure a harmonious nation.

"I can't help but think that there must be an insidious enemy responsible for all this. The procession to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet has been held year in and year out but never has there been anything untoward which has marred the procession. So why must it happen now? It is more than a coincidence that while we are having confrontation from Indonesia these communal clashes should have suddenly flared up" (Lau, 1998).

However, the racial riots had left a huge impact on the credibility and prominence of Tun Razak as a leader and politician. He was also accused by Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP government of conspiring to start the riots (Shaws, 1976). Lee Kuan Yew rejected Tun Razak's opinion on the actual cause of the riots. On the contrary, Lee Kuan Yew stated the cause of the riots as follows:

"A Federal Reserved Unit officer (a police officer sent from Peninsular Malaysia) had requested a group that had wandered off from the procession line to re-join the main flow of the procession. His request was ignored, and he was instead attacked by the group. Subsequently, a series of disturbance started occurring when more groups became uncontrollable and attacked passers-by and innocent bystanders who were watching the procession. The disturbance quickly spread around Geylang and reached the city by 7.30 p.m." (Lee, 2000).

In addition, Lee Kuan Yew also blamed Tun Razak for failing to control the UMNO extremists, specifically Syed Ja'afar Albar, and the *Utusan Melayu* newspaper for fuelling racial sentiments which led to the riots. Similarly, Foreign diplomats in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were more inclined to blame UMNO for the cause of the riots. This was evident in the reports that were submitted to the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) for the British Chief of Staff Committee, the United States General-Consul in Singapore, Arthur H. Rosen, the Ambassador of United States in Kuala Lumpur, Donald McCue, and the Deputy Commissioner of Australia in Singapore, W.B. Pritchett (Lee, 2000; Lau, 1998). In fact, a report by the New Zealand Department of Foreign Affairs clearly linked the weaknesses of the UMNO leaders as follows:

"It appears to us that Razak and other UMNO leaders did not act soon enough to curb the excesses of extremists like Ja'afar Albar and we (were) left in even more disturbing doubt by the reaction of the Federal Government to the riots" (Lau, 1998).

Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee, who was absolutely certain about Tun Razak's direct involvement in the riots, also issued a similar but more critical statement:

"This is equivalent to a confession that he was fully involved in the campaign to ignite racism and religious sensitivity among the Malay people in Singapore. Razak fully supported Albar's entry into Singapore, his campaigns in Singapore and Utusan Melayu. It couldn't be the other way...Whatever the impacts were, the riots had happened, Razak was involved, he clearly intended to eliminate Mr Lee from his position. That was the purpose of Albar's campaign" (Goh, 1982 in Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001).

In Goh Keng Swee's review of his meeting with Tun Razak a week after the riots from 28th to 29th July 1964, he claimed, "...he (Tun Razak) thought that the disruption would not erupt. He admitted that he made an error of judgement. If he had known the effect, he would have acted" (Lee, 2000).

Questions arise as to whether Goh Keng Swee's statement was factual. What was the extend of Tun Razak's involved in the racial riots? Based on the above excerpts, they were merely Goh Keng Swee's interpretation or assumption, which might not be accurate at all. The riots could not have happened if only a single party was responsible. In other words, it was certain that Goh Keng Swee had his own political agenda in the PAP and Singapore against the Central Government and UMNO. This was apparent when we link the riots to the actions and tensions between both parties since the formation of Malaysia. Although Tun Razak had his own political strategies in solving the problems in Singapore and in eliminating Lee Kuan Yew, he was not the culprit behind the racial riots. The riots were caused by internal problems in Singapore, as discussed previously. Hence, Tun Razak and the other Federal leaders remained displeased with Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP administration.

Tun Razak's displeasure was evident during his meeting with Goh Keng Swee in Kuala Lumpur from 28th to 29th July 1964 (PREM 11/4904, Kuala Lumpur - CRO, 22 July 1964). Tun Razak proposed two alternatives to resolve the problems between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. First, form a mixed government which consisted of a PAP representative in the Federal cabinet, with the condition that Lee Kuan Yew surrendered his Prime Minister post. It was proposed that Lee Kuan Yew would hold a post at the United Nations and his position would be reviewed after three years. Second, both governments would come to a political consensus to not interfere in the other's state or federal political matters. Tun Razak requested the PAP to manage the Malay people's welfare in Singapore through the UMNO Head of Information, Muhammad Khir Johari. The PAP was reminded not to entice the Malay people to support PAP. Meanwhile, the PAP rival Syed Ja'afar Albar will not be expelled or charged, and *Utusan Melayu* will be fully controlled by Tun Razak. However, Tun Razak's proposals were rejected by Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP due to their impracticality (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001; Lee, 2000).

Tensions between the Central Government in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore became a concern for the British government. In its effort to save Malaysia, Britain became the "middleman" to resolve the issues between the Central Government and Singapore. This was initiated by British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas Home who held a discussion with Tunku Abdul Rahman and Lee Kuan Yew (Lee, 2000; Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001; Lau, 1998) Unfortunately, all efforts failed, as tensions between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore was exacerbated when Lee Kuan Yew announced his intention to form his own alliance party to contest against the Federal Alliance in the fourth general election in 1969. Subsequently, the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC) was established on 9th May 1965. The United Democratic Party and the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) organisations were also involved in the establishment of the MSC (Muhammed Noordin, 1974; Lau, 1998). The slogan 'Malaysian Malaysia' became fundamental campaign for MSC. Lee Kuan Yew vowed to form a fair and just administration based on the spirit of 'Malaysian Malaysia' (Dayu, Mohd Sohaimi, Budi & Yusten, 2015). The Federal Constitution would be reviewed to abolish any allocations that discriminated against certain races. Tun Razak seriously viewed the establishment of the MSC as not only to topple the Alliance but to eliminate the special rights of the Malay people that has been set out in the Federal Constitution (Mohamed Noordin, 1974; Fletcher, 1969).

In June 1965, tensions between the Federal Government and Singapore reached its climax during a debate at the House of Representative (*Dewan Rakyat*). Lee Kuan Yew forwarded an unprecedented proposal by requesting for an amendment on the King's speech. He expressed his regret over the King's failure to mention about the importance of the champion for 'Malaysian Malaysia'. He also voiced his dissatisfaction over the King's address about 'threat from within'. He assumed the threat came from him and the PAP. At this point, the Dewan Rakyat session turned into a heated debate that involved sensitive issues and racial sentiments, including the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore relationship, the future of the PAP and Alliance, and the positions and rights of the Malay and Chinese people in Malaysia (Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, 2001).

In his closing debate, Tun Razak refuted every point made by Lee Kuan Yew in a mature and rational manner. He started off by rejecting Lee Kuan Yew's accusation that the 'threat from within' was in reference to the PAP. He explained in length that the internal threat came from the Communist influence and Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia. He also rejected Lee Kuan Yew's accusation that the Federal

Government was trying to form a Malay government in Malaysia by oppressing other races or considering other states as inferior.

“That was why he came to see the Prime Minister some time ago and put forward a proposal that his party should share in the administration of this Government in place of the MCA. This idea was wholly unacceptable, in fact, most objectionable to the mind of an honest and loyal leader. The MCA has been our true friends indeed and, together with the MIC, we have worked for the independence of Malaya, which led eventually to the independence of the other States, which now make up Malaysia. It is unthinkable that the Prime Minister could discard the MCA for the PAP. He has always regarded the MCA as a true friend of UMNO and as a partner who, together with the MIC, has worked for the well-being, prosperity and happiness of this country... This cannot be said of the PAP. As has often been said in this House in the debate, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, in fact, thinks in terms of the Chinese, or a small section of the Chinese in Singapore, and the only Government which will be acceptable to him is one in which he can have a big say and a big share, and ultimately a Government which he alone can have a say without resort to parliamentary democracy. Now, sir, since his proposal to replace MCA is not acceptable to the Prime Minister, he has switched on to his new insidious plan of a Malaysian Malaysia. In other words, a breakup of Malaysia as constituted under the Agreement signed in London” (Penyata Perbahasan Dewan Rakyat, 3 Jun 1965).

Besides the issue on ‘Malaysian Malaysia’, Tun Razak also highlighted Lee Kuan Yew’s ploy behind the campaign to destroy the Malaysia Federation:

“His plan is insidious. Now, sir, Honourable Members can now understand the imputation, when he said that there are some who want secession. We have never talked about secession, at least not by the Prime Minister and members of the Government. He also said that probably the people of Penang, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore and Malacca could come together. This is what we read in the newspaper, and this is what we heard Radio Singapore said. In short, he has suggested that Malaysia must be broken up into two: one is, as he stated, Malay Malaysia, and the other one Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Malaysia, or Straits Settlement Malaysia – whatever he wants to call it. It is clear” (Penyata Perbahasan Dewan Rakyat, 3 Jun 1965).

Tun Razak also questioned Lee Kuan Yew’s accusation that the Central Government was adopting a discriminating and undemocratic policies. One of the interesting arguments from Tun Razak when refuting Lee Kuan Yew’s statement was as follows:

“We have them six weeks in which to campaign throughout the country and put their views to the people, while in Singapore, the PAP only allowed other political parties nine days to prepare for the elections. Is this following the true spirit of democracy?” (Penyata Perbahasan Dewan Rakyat, 3 June 1965).

Tun Razak was displeased with the MSC for questioning Article 153 in the Federal Constitution. On the issue of the national language that was raised, he firmly responded:

“He said, ‘How could the Malay language help to uplift the standards of living of the Malay?’ Of course, he knows as well as we do that language has nothing to do with the standards of living of the people. Language is the soul of the nation – ‘Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa’. This is not a matter which can be measured in terms of wealth, or of the standard of living or of material advantage. He knows this, and we all know this. Why make such a remark, if one sincerely believes in promoting the National language, in making it the language for unity of our people?” (Penyata Perbahasan Dewan Rakyat, 3 June 1965).

In winding up his debate, Tun Razak boldly blamed Lee Kuan Yew for the country’s political fracas and his ploy that benefitted Indonesia. He added that, *“Lee was playing dangerous game and had embarked on neckless adventure. If despite alliance government’s belief in, and work for, racial harmony trouble was to break out they must hold him fully responsible”* (Penyata Perbahasan Dewan Rakyat, 3 June 1965). Whatever reasons given by Lee Kuan Yew, Tun Razak was able to deliver a convincing argument to the members of Parliament. This also reflected the bottled-up feelings of Tun Razak and other leaders of the Alliance. It was evident that Tun Razak and the Alliance leaders were deeply upset with the attitude and actions of Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP (Fletcher, 1969; The Straits Times, 11 May 1965).

When Tunku Abdul Rahman attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, Lee Kuan Yew expressed his intention to meet Tun Razak in order to settle the escalating conflict between the Federal Government and Singapore. Although the UMNO Youths urged Tun Razak to postpone the meeting until Lee Kuan Yew 'apologises to the Malay people' (Berita Harian, 10 July 1965), Tun Razak rejected their plea. He explained that as Acting Prime Minister he must be willing to meet any government leaders, including Lee Kuan Yew. In fact, he hoped to understand deeply Lee Kuan Yew's actual intentions from this meeting (Ibrahim Mahmood, 1981). This showed that Tun Razak had his own principles when dealing with internal pressures from UMNO.

On 29th June 1965, Tun Razak flew to Singapore for a meeting with Lee Kuan Yew. Based on Tun Razak's note, Lee Kuan Yew's intention was not to discuss solutions, but to urge for the removal of the UMNO extremists before the relationship between Singapore and the Federal Government could be amended. Tun Razak objected Lee Kuan Yew's accusation and strongly defended UMNO as a reliable and orderly organisation. All UMNO leaders and members abided to the leadership and fundamental champions of UMNO. Tun Razak sternly reminded Lee Kuan Yew that he had to trust the leadership of UMNO, specifically Tunku Abdul Razak, in order secure the cooperation that he wanted (Nik Anwar Nik Mahmud, 2001). Furthermore, Tun Razak requested for Lee Kuan Yew's assurance that neither he nor his colleagues would make any statements that would offend the Malay people and interfere with UMNO's internal matters. Lee Kuan Yew, however, refused such guarantees. In summary, the meeting failed to solve the conflicts between the Federal and Singapore governments.

A few days later, Lee Kuan Yew's assistant, Alex Josey, was expelled from Peninsular Malaysia for his involvement in Malaysia's political affairs and other matters that could jeopardise racial harmony (Berita Harian, 14 July 1965; Nik Anwar Nik Mahmud, 2001). Following the expulsion of Alex Josey from Malaysia, the PAP started spreading propaganda that the Federal Government would be arresting Lee Kuan Yew. Tun Razak vehemently denied the rumour and viewed the PAP's action as irresponsible.

"PAP's accusations are too wild and vile to be commented. The people of this state know that the Alliance is a fair and just government. We do not go around arresting people without justification and sufficient proof. We support and uphold the principles of parliamentary democracy and a lawful governance. Only those who act against the laws of the country will face the consequence of their actions" (Berita Harian, 22 July 1965).

Tunku Abdul Rahman also gave his assurance that Lee Kuan Yew would not be arrested (Berita Harian, 22 July 1965). Tun Razak further reminded the PAP leaders, especially Lee Kuan Yew not to raise any racial issues that could jeopardise the nation's harmony and peace (Mohd. Sohaimi, Dayu & Budi (2011); Dayu, Mohd Sohaimi, Budi & Yusten (2015); Mohd. Sohaimi, Romzi, Suraya, Abang Mohd. Razif, Mohd Azri & Sirahim, 2020; Mohd. Sohaimi, Romzi, Siti, Sirahim, Abang Mohd. Razif & Mohd. Azri, 2020).

Tunku Abdul Rahman was also informed the failed negotiation between Tun Razak and Lee Kuan Yew, while receiving treatment in London, and made the decision to expel Singapore from Malaysia (Tunku Abdul Rahman, 1997). On 1st July 1965, he instructed Tun Razak to discuss with the other senior ministers about his decision. Tun Razak held a closed meeting with his senior cabinet ministers namely Dato' Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, Tan Siew Sin dan V.T. Sambanthan. The meeting decided that the Central Government had two options to deal with Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore. First, adopt emergency power to use forceful actions against the PAP leaders; or two, grant independence to Singapore. The cabinet reached a consensus that Singapore must be expelled from Malaysia (Nik Anwar Nik Mahmud, 2001).

On 13th July 1965, Tun Razak informed Goh Keng Swee, Singapore Minister of Trade and Industry, about the Malaysia government's decision to separate from Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew's cabinet agreed to accept Kuala Lumpur's decision with a heavy heart for the benefit of both parties. The agreement was announced to Tun Razak on 20th July 1965, who then informed Tunku Abdul Rahman about Singapore's decision (Nik Anwar Nik Mahmud, 2001).

When Parliament was in session on 9th August, Tunku Abdul Rahman presented the proposal on Singapore's 'separation' from Malaysia. During the announcement of Singapore's separation, Tunku Abdul Rahman solemnly mentioned about 'a state government that is no longer loyal to the Central Government' (Penyata Sidang Parlimen Khas, 9 August 1965). During the debate of the proposal, Abdul Razak bin Hussein (1966) took the opportunity to sternly clarify that *"We have to remove Singapore from Malaysia – which is a very historical moment. Although we are saddened that the state had to be removed, we are delighted that we are able to remove the thorn from our flesh"*. The 'thorn in the flesh' idiom clearly depicts the significant crisis

that Kuala Lumpur had to endure with Singapore when it was part of Malaysia. The expulsion of Singapore was the best decision made by the Central Government to protect the harmony and prosperity of the nation. Three weeks after Singapore's separation from Malaysia, Tun Razak explained the justifications behind the separation in his speech during the 2nd Anniversary of the Formation of Malaysia, as follows:

"However, just a little more than three weeks ago, it was found necessary by both the Central Government and the Singapore Government that Singapore should be separated from the rest of Malaysia. It was a sad and heart-breaking decision, but the leaders of the two countries were convinced that this was the only solution in the circumstances. Since the establishment of Malaysia, it was found that Singapore could not fit in into the Federation and the Central Government and the Government of Singapore, due to many reasons have found it impossible to work together. Lately there was almost a deadlock and what is more the differences between the political leaders in Singapore and in Kuala Lumpur have brought racial tension. The leaders of the PAP Government in Singapore had accused the Central Government of favouring one race against another and that it was a Malay-dominated Government. These unfounded criticisms spread throughout the country and overseas have led to racial tension and racial troubles" (Special message from the Deputy Prime Minister Commemorating the Second Anniversary of the Birth of Malaysia on 28 August 1965, in *The Speeches by Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein*, 1965).

Despite Singapore's separation from Malaysia, Tun Razak continued to welcome the cooperation between the two countries, especially in security, defence, trade and industry.

IV. SUMMARY

Singapore only stayed on with the Malaysia Federation for less than two years. Singapore's separation from Malaysia was evitable due to rising racial sentiments which led to tensions and riots that could further jeopardise national security. Based on the analysis of historical sources which have been made, it was found that Singapore's joining the Malaysia Federation had contributed to the increase in racial problems in the country. This had resulted in Tun Razak calling Singapore a 'thorn in the flesh' in the Malaysia Federation and the country leaders' increased displeasure towards Singapore, which subsequently led to the proposed expulsion of Singapore from the Malaysia Federation. Singapore's expulsion from the Malaysia Federation was made official in 1965. The most interesting part of this entire event was the significant role of Tun Abdul Razak in the expulsion of Singapore to ensure a sustained harmonious relationship among the races in this country. The decision was indeed necessary for the continuity of the Malaysia Federation.

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