

Student Essay on Why Did the Tunku Agree to a Merger with Singapore ?

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Essay

Malaya was at first very disinterested in the merger with Singapore because they have everything to lose. The Tunku regarded Singapore as a "little China." If Malaya were to merge with Singapore, the percentage of Malays will decrease, thus reduce Malays political power. Also, many of the Chinese in Singapore (which is 75.2% of the whole Singapore population) are pro-communists, and as Malaya is anti-communist, the Tunku was afraid that communism may spread to Malaya. However, that was not the case during and after 1961.

The Tunku was shocked when PAP (People Action Party, leading party in Singapore at that time) lost a by-election in the Hong Lim constituency in April 1961 to Ong Eng Guan. This shows internal weakness within PAP. The party is further weakened when they lose another by-election in Anson July 1961 to David Marshall of the Workers' party. The Tunku thought that if the PAP government lost in the next election, the communists may be the next government in Singapore so he decided to merge with Singapore.

As for the fear that Malays will be outnumbered, the Tunku solved the problem by including Sabah, Sarawak into the proposed Federation of Malaysia.