

Notes on Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra  
Prime Minister of the Federation  
of Malaya

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Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was born at Alor Star, capital of the State of Kedah, on February 8, 1902. He is the seventh child of the reigning Sultan and is a member of one of Malaya's oldest royal families, which traces its ancestry back over 1000 years. The Tunku was educated in Malaya and Thailand prior to obtaining his Bachelor of Arts degree from Cambridge University in 1925. He later studied law in England. While he was in the United Kingdom the Tunku served as the first Secretary and later as the President of the Malay Society of Great Britain. At the age of 27, the Tunku joined the Kedah Civil Service. He remained in Kedah during the war, when he formed a welfare organization to care for refugees.

In 1949, the Tunku accepted the chairmanship of the Kedah Branch of the United Malays National Organization (U.M.N.O.), which was primarily responsible for the pressure of public opinion which resulted in the formation of the Federation of Malaya on February 1, 1948. Two years later he became President of the U.M.N.O. In 1952 he was appointed an unofficial member of both the Executive and the Legislative Council of the Federation.

An advocate of co-operation among all the races in the country, the Tunku fostered the political alliance of the United Malays National Organization with the Malayan Chinese Association. The alliance, joined by the Malayan Indian Congress, won 51 of 52 seats in the first Federal elections of July 1955, following which the Tunku became the Chief Minister and Minister of Home Affairs. After the party's victory in the 1959 elections, he became Prime Minister for a second time.

The Tunku led the Malayan "Merdeka (Freedom) Mission" to London in January 1956 to negotiate for self-government and independence for Malaya. Malaya's independence was declared on August 31, 1957, and the country then became a full member of the Commonwealth and signed a defence agreement with the United Kingdom.