

Name: _____

Class

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METHODIST GIRLS' SCHOOL

Founded in 1887



PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026 Secondary 4

HISTORY

Paper 2 Developments in the post-World War II world: The Cold War and decolonisation in Southeast Asia, 1940s-1991

Friday
28 August 2026

2174/02
1 hour 50 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Login to Student Learning Space (SLS) under e-Assessment and key in your responses there.

Section A

Answer **all parts** of Question 1.

Section B

Answer **two** questions.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question.

Section A: Source-Based Case Study

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully and then answer **all** the questions.

You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions, you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1 (a) Study Source A.

What does Source A suggest about how the Malay rulers agreed to the Malayan Union treaty? Explain your answer. [5]

(b) Study Sources B and C.

Having read Source B, how useful is Source C as evidence of the way the British secured the Malay Rulers' agreements? Explain your answer. [6]

(c) Study Source D.

Why did Utusan Melayu publish this photograph in 1946? Explain your answer. [5]

(d) Study Sources E and F.

How similar are the sources about responses to the Malayan Union? Explain your answer. [6]

(e) Study **all** the sources.

'The Malayan Union was unfair.' How far do these sources support this view? Use the sources and your knowledge to explain your answer. [8]

Was the Malayan Union fair?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Read this carefully. It may help you to answer some of the questions.

After World War II, Britain wanted to reshape how Malaya was governed. This was partly in response to rising nationalism stoked earlier by the Japanese. The Malayan Union proposals were announced in the British Parliament on 10 October 1945. The plan merged nine Malay states with Penang and Malacca to prepare them for self-government within the British Commonwealth. It offered citizenship to Chinese and Indian immigrants. Singapore was excluded and became a separate British crown colony.

When the details were published in January 1946, protests erupted across Malaya, with opposition even from former British administrators. Native Malays feared being outnumbered once citizenship was granted to non-Malays. The Sultans boycotted the installation ceremonies of the new British Governor and Governor-General. Despite the resistance, the Malayan Union began on 1 April 1946, placing the Malay states under direct British rule.

Was the Malayan Union fair?

Source A: *Adapted from a 2013 British historian's account of Sir Harold MacMichael's mission in late 1945, as Special Representative of His Majesty's Government, to secure the Malay rulers' agreements to the Malayan Union treaty.*

The first engagement took place in Johor on 18 October 1945. Much depended on Sultan Ibrahim. The British were certain that once he signed, the other Malay rulers would follow. His agreement was critical. The sultan was, as before, openly agreeable. MacMichael presented him with English and Malay versions of the proposed Malayan Union treaty. "These are all right by me," he declared, but wanted time to think it over. A disappointed MacMichael agreed to a delay of two days, but no longer. At the second meeting, "there was no hitch or awkwardness," MacMichael reported. Sultan Ibrahim signed.

In Kedah, the sultan also agreed to sign the treaty but then he said that it was the most distressing and painful moment of his whole life. He would lose the loyalty, respect, and affection of his subjects, and be pursued with curses towards his grave by the ill-informed.

Source B: *An extract from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a secret memorandum* about plans to create the Malayan Union to the British Cabinet, 4 October 1945.*

We cannot allow ourselves to be deterred by an obstinate attitude on the part of any or all the Malay Rulers with whom Sir Harold MacMichael will have to deal in his forthcoming mission. It is very essential that we should now affirm our intention to carry through our approved plan, despite obstruction on the part of any Malay Ruler. All our plans for the Malay States depend upon the success of Sir Harold MacMichael's efforts to secure authority and power in each and all the States. It is essential that his hand should be strengthened by the firm assurance that he can, if necessary, make it clear to any recalcitrant Sultan that we intend to carry our proposal through.

memorandum*: A short internal note sent to staff to share new information or an agreement

Source C: *An extract from the British Colonial Secretary, denying in the United Kingdom (UK) parliament on 6 March 1946 that the Sultan of Kedah had been threatened with deposition or detained during the Malayan Union negotiations, 6 March 1946.*

It will be seen from Sir Harold MacMichael's report, in which he gives an objective statement of his discussions with the Sultan of Kedah, that no threat of deposition* was used. Nor is it a fact that His Highness is being detained in Malaya.

There was no time limit, nor was there a threat about deposition or that someone else would be appointed in place of the Sultan. I would point out that in some of the communications which we have seen, there are certain misrepresentations of fact on the question of being held up. The alleged fact that a time limit was placed on the negotiations, for instance, is completely untrue. Further, the suggestion that there would be a successor to the Regent, as he then was, is another untrue assertion.

deposition*: removal of a leader from a position of power

Source D: *A photograph published by Utusan Melayu, a Malay-owned newspaper, of a Malay mass rally in Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 1946. It shows Malays wearing white mourning bands on their songkok to protest the loss of native sovereignty.*



Source E: *Adapted from a 2014 Malaysian Chinese historian's account of non-Malay press reactions to the Malayan Union in 1946, reflecting the voices of literate and politically aware communities.*

Chinese newspapers welcomed the Malayan Union's equal citizenship for all. Reactions ranged from scepticism about its practicability to satisfaction over the proposed citizenship rights. The Penang Chinese press was cautious, saying the Chinese had to decide about citizenship. Malaya was their "second mother country," but before applying for Malayan citizenship, they had to accept Malaya as their only mother country. The proposals were favourable to the Chinese and sparked real interest, though there were mixed feelings over what "Malayan Union citizenship" meant. The local Indian press reacted similarly.

However, all Chinese newspapers resented the separation of mostly Chinese Singapore from the Malayan Union.

Source F: *Adapted from a 2013 British historian's account of post-war conditions and Chinese responses to the Malayan Union in 1946.*

The Malayan Union replaced the "Chinese Protectorate" with a "Secretary for Chinese Affairs". The secretary was said to have a "head without tail" and "no face with the Chinese". With official channels weakened, many young Chinese were drawn to the Malayan communists.

Meanwhile, many other Chinese—businessmen, shopkeepers, stallholders, taxi drivers, and others—were simply trying to make ends meet in desperate times. They had no single political voice. They were, as Sun Yat-Sen, the revolutionary founder of the Kuomintang, put it, "like a

plate of loose sand". This helps explain why so many Chinese took little interest in the arguments over the Malayan Union and citizenship rights.

Section B: Essays

Answer **two** questions.

- 2 'World War II in Europe ended because of the entry of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10]

- 3 'Viet Minh's success in the First Indochina War, 1946-1954, was mainly due to the support of the peasants.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10]

- 4 'The decline of the USSR before Gorbachev came to power was mainly caused by weaknesses of the Soviet economy.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10]

END OF PAPER

Acknowledgements:

- Source A © Hale, C. (2013). *Massacre in Malaya: exposing Britain's My Lai*. The History Press.
- Source B © Colonial Office. (1945). *Policy in regard to Malaya* (Secret Cabinet Memorandum, CO 273/675/50823). Sejarah Melayu Library.
<http://www.sabrizain.org/malaya/library/malayapolicy.pdf>
- Source C © Malaya, HC Deb vol 420 cols 315–406 (1946, March 6). Hansard.
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1946-03-06/debates/478ae2ac-888d-4178-a815-c9644ed5dccc/Malaya>
- Source D © Malayan Union. (2017, August 18). In *Alchetron: The free social encyclopedia*.
<https://alchetron.com/malayan-union>

- Source E © Cheah, B. K. (2014). *Red star over Malaya: Resistance and social conflict during and after the Japanese occupation, 1941–1946* (4th ed.). National University of Singapore (NUS) Press.
- Source F © Hale, C. (2013). *Massacre in Malaya: exposing Britain's My Lai*. The History Press.