Democracy without Consensus

Democracy without Consensus

COMMUNALISM AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN MALAYSIA

Karl von Vorys

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Published by Princeton University Press
Princeton and London

Library of Congress Cataloging In Publication
Data will be found on the last printed page of this book

Composed and printed in the United States of America
by Princeton University Press at Princeton, New Jersey

Dedicated to

KHALIL IBRAHIM

a man of art, a man of peace

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS

Tables

Maps

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I welcome the opportunity to express my gratitude to Philip E. Jacob. Without his support my assignment in Malaysia and this study would not have been possible.

In the development of the data base I have received invaluable help from senior political leaders of all parties. Their understanding for my academic objectives, their courtesy under at times very tense circumstances, and their candor throughout made my research feasible. Essential too was the information provided by Charles Schumacher and the special insights generously contributed by Kamarul Ariffin, Abdullah Ahmad, Mokhzani bin Rahim, Yeo Beng Poh, Yip Yap Hoong, Baharuddin bin Musa, Margaret Roff, Chin Fook Kiong, Stanley Kuppusamy, Faridah Merican, and, of course, the incomparable Puthuchearys: Rosalie, James, and Mavis.

In the analytical framework I was most fortunate to have had the advice of Ungku A. Aziz. In every phase of this work I benefited from the intellectual companionship, wise counsel and the personal loyalty of Milton J. Esman.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ACCC	Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce
AMCJA	All Malaya Council of Joint Action
AP	Auxiliary Police
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police
CLC	Communities Liaison Committee
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DAU	Development Administration Unit, Prime Minister's Department
DNU	Department of National Unity
EPU	Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department
FAMA	Federal Agricultural and Marketing Agency
FAO	United Nations, Food and Agricultural Organization
FLDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FRU	Federal Reserve Unit
FMS	Federated Malay States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOC	General of Command
IBRD	International Bank of Reconstruction and Development
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
INA	Indian National Army
ITC	Investment Tax Credit
MARA	*Majlis Amanah Ra'ayat* (Council of Trust for the People)
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
MCA	Malaysian (earlier Malayan) Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian (earlier Malayan) Indian Congress
MIDF	Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Berhad
MISC	Malaysian International Shipping Corporation
MP	Member of Parliament
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MRD	Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation
NAPRA	National Padi and Rice Authority
NCC	National Consultative Council
NOC	National Operations Council
NUPW	National Union of Plantation Workers
OCPD	Officer-in-Charge of Police District
PAP	People's Action Party
PERNAS	*Perbadanan Nasional Berhad* (National Corporation Limited)

PESAKA	*Party Pesaka Anak Sarawak* (The Heritage of the Sons of Sarawak Party)
PFF	Police Field Force
PMIP	Pan Malayan Islamic Party
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PUTERA	*Pusat Tenga Ra'ayat* (People's United Front)
PVR	Police Volunteer Reserve
RIDA	Rural and Industrial Development Authority
SEDC	State Economic Development Corporation
SF	Socialist Front
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UMNO	United Malays' National Organization
UMS	Unfederated Malay States
UMSU	University of Malaya Students Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WAC	Women's Auxiliary Constables

Democracy without Consensus

INTRODUCTION

HARDLY anyone believes anymore that viable democratic systems can be established in Asian and African states which emerged from colonial rule since World War II. It is a sudden, radical reversal. Just two decades ago scholars rhapsodized about the magic powers of popular participation and predicted with confidence that democratic politics would through compromise successfully manage human conflict and by contributing to a dynamic balance between order and change would assure the viability of the political system.

Political leaders perhaps were not as sanguine. Some, of course, had neither understanding nor appreciation for democracy. They simply exploited the tactical advantages which an appeal to democratic values offered to them during the struggle with the colonial power, but once they had gained control, for ideological reasons or just personal aggrandizement, they quickly abandoned even the pretense of them. They unhesitatingly disbanded legislatures, arrested judges, and proclaimed themselves supreme rulers. Most others though were intrigued with the argument of popular sovereignty and impressed by its practical political utility. Products of traditional norms but recognizing a decisive trend toward a secular society, they could think of no other generally accepted basis for legitimacy. Possibly by default they adopted Western models in which (1) political decision-makers were elected from two or more candidates in regular, periodic elections, (2) the contests were conducted without restraint on political expression and association, and (3) all adult citizens were eligible to record their preferences through a secret ballot.

One reason for the sudden pessimism is the recognition that the social, economic and political conditions under which their models had proved their long-term persistence were very different from those which now exist in newly independent states. Indeed some of these differences are worth recalling. First, at the time democratic governments emerged in Great

Britain and the United States, their social systems were both stable and flexible. A broad normative consensus, substantive and procedural, assured a popular predisposition to conform. The hierarchy of roles was well established; authority was effectively exercised. In each, moreover, opportunities for social advancement were available, and a regular circulation of *elites* did occur. No less important, both in Great Britain and in the United States, the salience of social cleavages was declining. Although ascriptive elements persisted in the definitions of personal identity, more and more individuals could and did choose to relate to the social structure through a variety of groups among which some measure of mobility and interchangeability was possible. Second, economic relations were a positive sum. Rapidly improving technology and widespread entrepreneurial activity produced self-sustained growth. Steady and substantial increments in personal material rewards assured the rich that they would become richer, but also made it possible for the poor to become richer as well. And all along, vast *Hinterlands* offered a further dimension of fresh opportunities. A colonial empire and "the frontier," respectively, were available for persons (or groups) who preferred new and more favorable economic terms. Finally, in both Great Britain and the United States, political processes were limited. A full range of "inalienable" individual rights were explicitly (or implicitly) placed beyond government regulation. Issues involving minimum (non-negotiable) personal and group interests were by general consent kept out of political controversy. A constitutional contract (written or unwritten) defining the parameters and basic rules of politics was recognized as the supreme law, and except in most unusual circumstances was excluded from election campaigns.

Conditions in newly independent states, however, are not at all similar. In most the social system is far from stable. On the contrary, it is subject to strong and accelerating anomic pressures. Social control is steadily declining without an alternative pattern of order taking hold. The small-scale (traditional) hierarchies fiercely resist integration into a larger structure, while their authority within their own limited sphere is visibly diminished. Even in rural areas the capacity of vertical mobilization for political purposes is now progressively impaired by more direct and horizontal (egalitarian) appeals.

Nor is the social system flexible. Ascriptive definitions severely inhibit both vertical and horizontal mobility. Stubborn residues of traditional world-views militate for a pattern of order made in heaven. God's role assignments on earth, many fervently believe, become manifest at the moment of birth, and once they do, they remain fixed and controlling for life. Horizontal mobility faces similar handicaps. Even though traditional kincentric loyalties have recently lost some of their vitality, most citizens still shun an overriding commitment to a heterogeneous national community with free interchangeability among the members of the component groups and on the whole prefer the solidarity of their own, more exclusive communal groups. They continue to rely upon it for the definition of individual identities and for the terms of interpersonal relations.

Meanwhile, in most newly independent states economic relations have remained zero-sum. Traditional values always were a handicap. They encouraged neither organizational nor technological innovation. Poverty and misery were seen as punishments of God. Wealth and power were perceived as His rewards; they might or might not result from moral behavior, but as an article of faith they could never be earned through enterprise.

The colonial experience, of course, also left some unfortunate marks. It disrupted the small scale traditional units but provided no impetus toward a "national" economy. Public policy was generally motivated by the most efficient exploitation of material resources for the benefit to the consumers of distant "metropolitan" areas and was singularly disinterested in domestic capital formation. Only in communication and transportation was technology vigorously introduced. It achieved its intended purpose–improved access to more remote resources, but it also produced the unintended result–a rampant international demonstration effect. Cities were built, and in them some flourished as servants, clerks, interpreters, intermediaries, or merchants who provided comfort for a mostly alien middle class. Most others though did not find their standard of living improved, nor did they see a need to revise their attitude toward innovation. Independence produced a more favorable atmosphere. Public and private capital formation was encouraged, public services were improved, and the standard of living was beginning to rise. Yet in spite of much effort and considerable external assistance, changes in attitudes, increments in resources, and improvements

in organization have not been fundamental enough to generate confidence in an "increasing economic pie." Significant gains by an individual or a group are still attributed (especially by those advancing at a more modest rate) to a commensurate loss by others. Not even a *Hinterland* offers an escape. If one ever existed, with the rapid rise of populations it had vanished years ago.

One final comparison. In sharp contrast to their Western models, there is no predisposition in newly independent states for limiting the range of issues to be submitted for settlement by the political process. Traditional elements of the population, who consider all authority linked to extra-mundane power, have never really conceded a reserved private sphere which was out of bounds for a legitimate ruler. More modern members, for their part, are inclined to extend similar terms to the new, secular government. All conflict, they usually conclude, including the full range of economic and social conflict, could be appropriately settled by the government. Indeed, not even the procedures are above political contests. Rules, laws, the constitution, are always fair game. Rarely are they perceived as symmetric norms to be observed voluntarily by all parties; more often they are considered tools to be used or obstacles to be removed in the service of group interest. Not surprisingly, few constitutions outlast a decade.

Pessimism about the prospects of democracy in Asia and Africa, moreover, is reinforced by a growing conviction that while each of the situational differences may be significant; their aggregate effect is probably decisive. Democratic systems apparently managed an optimal balance between order and change when social, economic, and political conditions all tended to promote moderation. They proved to be viable when (1) the parameters of the political process were effectively delimited, and by consensus all conflict which involved fundamental political norms and non-negotiable interests were excluded from the political arena, and when (2) the operations of the political process did not become the prime instruments of personal aggrandizement, when private ambitions for increased status and steady increments in material rewards could be amply satisfied through *social* mobility and positive sum *economic* relationships, but in *political* contests both the gains of winning and the costs of losing were quite limited. Even so, it should be remembered,

contemporary British and American leaders considered it necessary to temper democratic politics with a substantial and only gradually reduced admixture of non-egalitarian elements. Parliament was proclaimed supreme, but for over a century no serious consideration was given to universal suffrage, and for another century it was not fully accomplished. All along, Britain remained a monarchy, and until 1911 at least, the House of Lords played an important legislative role. Similarly in America, electoral qualifications at first were strictly defined in terms of property, race, sex, and even religion. Jefferson was filled with anxiety when he considered a future in which the "mechanics of Philadelphia" would enjoy the right to vote. It was not until very recently that as a practical matter all citizens were actually assured the opportunity to participate in the electoral process. The Founding Fathers, moreover, made it perfectly clear that they wanted a republican form of government, not a democracy. The President was elected by the Electoral College, the Senators for a century and a quarter by state legislatures. In fact, the whole paraphernalia of checks and balances had only one purpose: to prevent not only any individual or any group but even the popular majority of the moment from gaining control of the political system.

The prospects of democratic systems, however, are far more problematical when social, economic, and political conditions combine to radicalize its processes. The politicization of practically the full range of human conflict, for one, might induce excess. The fact is that some problems, ethical issues generally, cannot be solved by political compromise, not even in the twentieth century. When they are raised, they produce intense, nonnegotiable conflict which tears the polity apart. In the past, perhaps wisely, moral questions were left to priests and theologians. There are also other matters, the constitution for instance, which ought not to be subjected to constant political bargaining. If citizens are not assured stable expectations regarding the basic rules of the political process, their anxieties about their minimum interests will become controlling.

Second, the communalization of politics tends to induce excess. It is easy to see that as long as ascriptive criteria are preeminent, majority rule is tantamount to condemning some individuals and groups to the position of permanent minority. Easily outvoted in any show of hands, they are wholly depen-

dent upon the good will and tolerance of the majority community, the very group which they have traditionally feared and distrusted. Since the full range of conflict of interest is subject to political resolution moreover, they will be condemned to a minority not only permanently, but also on every conceivable issue.

One thing though will almost certainly induce excess: democratic political processes which provide the only avenues for significant personal advancement. Their vulnerability to demagogues, always pronounced, can then become fatal. For given the decline of social control and the absence of stable political rules, nothing but a self-imposed restraint by the candidates themselves can set any limits on campaign practices. Such restraints, however, become all too rare when gains through the inflexible social order and zero-sum economic relations are slow and meager, while electoral victories bring an immediate and spectacular rise in status and wealth. Few can be expected to resist for the sake of some abstract principles the chance to move out of the masses exposed to exploitation and to enter a special group with opportunities to accumulate. If indeed there are such persons moreover, they will be increasingly at a disadvantage to those who are prepared to use any means at all to win office, men who systematically arouse discontent, irresponsibly inflate expectations, and callously exploit communal tensions.

Perhaps the most important element in the prevailing gloom, however, is the disappointment that the strategies so confidently designed at the time of independence have not so far produced suitable conditions for viable democratic systems. It now seems that they never will. Their main feature, it should be recalled, was usually an economic development program. Plans were drawn up to mobilize resources, to manage private investment and to stimulate public capital formation. A "take-off" into self-sustained growth, it was assumed, would produce ever-increasing quantities of personal material rewards. The constraints of zero-sum relations would be broken; tension among communal groups would "naturally" be de-escalated. More than that, it was hoped, production patterns and income distribution would be changed and with them the pattern of social organization. New, economically defined classes within which and among which mobility and interchangeability were common would emerge re-

placing in salience ascriptive communal groups. It would, of course, take time, but governments were quite ready to accelerate such progress by at times vigorous efforts to homogenize society. Regularly through public exhortations, cultural programs, military parades, and the invocation of external threats, governments sought to generate solidarity on the national scale. Traditional values and institutions, indeed practically all smaller scale units and intermediary groups, were considered obsolete and in need of replacement. Time and again communal boundaries were dismissed as irrelevant, and communal loyalties were condemned as "fissiparous tendencies" approaching the subversive. As cleavages would be dissolved, a new social system could be built, one which would be stable and yet flexible enough to provide the basis for the management of conflict through democratic politics.

Economic development and social homogenization, the strategy confidently assumed, were quite sufficient to provide a secure base for a democratic system. Political leaders in newly independent states never had any enthusiasm for imposing parameters on the political processes. It was, most thought, an entirely unworthy, reactionary idea. After all, the direction of development in the West itself was quite the opposite. Besides, constraints imposed on government might well impede and possibly imperil their programs of economic development and social homogenization.

Most political leaders, moreover, were not even interested in making significant adjustments in their political models. They were committed to the democratic system in its most advanced, egalitarian form. Somewhat like the founders of the German Weimar Republic, they would recognize special governmental powers at times of exceptional emergencies. They were unprepared to concede to any *elite* the right (even the transitional privilege) to manage incremental social, economic, and political advance. And they were wholly unprepared to impose restraints on popular political participation. Whenever elections were held, all citizens were exhorted to exercise their right to vote. Thus there was little time for an expansion of literacy and education before universal suffrage, little time for political experience and learning the act of government before wholly elected legislatures, and little time for the conversion of mass *movements* dominated by a single, ideologically defined cause into broadly

based political *parties* responding to a variety of issues and appealing to diverse populations.

It was perhaps not a well-thought-out strategy. For one thing, it seriously over-estimated the potential for economic development. Admittedly, the early days of independence were dominated by the heady atmosphere of confidence and pride. Still the assumption that self-sustained growth was within the reach of any new state endowed with a sufficiently determined leadership should have been recognized as altogether too risky to become the central focus of public policy. The weight of historical evidence was certainly against it. Economic development had occurred so rarely and under such special conditions as to be regarded as almost an aberration. Modern technology and organizational skills could conceivably make a difference, technical assistance and foreign aid might help, but available empirical data were still inadequate and theory all too rudimentary to support anything but the most cautious and tentative experimentation. Even if in the end a take-off into self-sustained growth were to be accomplished, it would take a long time, not decades, but generations. In the meantime, a frail and fledgling democratic system would have to survive a radical inflation of expectations (and demands), and when these were not nearly met, a rapid rise in popular frustration.

There was, however, another problem as well with the orthodox strategy: It seriously under-estimated the propensity for ascriptive solidarity. In this, of course, democratic leaders in newly independent states were not alone. Scholars and statesmen in the West were similarly deluded. Intense kinship, caste, tribal, racial, or religious loyalties, it was generally believed, may have characterized traditional societies, but with the expansion of integrated diversity and an improved standard of living, they become obsolete and lose most of their appeal. In a modern society, economic motives dominate human personality. The point was well illustrated by the national development of industrialized societies, they insisted, and it will soon be confirmed everywhere else. Actually it was not entirely clear that ascriptive solidarities had become obsolete in Western countries. Their visibility probably declined somewhat, but when they surfaced, and they did so with stubborn persistence under varied and unexpected circumstances, their virulence seemed as high as ever. And it was altogether unclear that in newly

independent states they would lose their appeal in the near future. Ascriptive ties were prized in traditional societies, as through stable expectations they provided a means for coping with overwhelming and to them unfathomable physical forces. They were valued later when traditional order began to disintegrate, as through stable expectations they offered a means to cope with uncontrollable social and economic upheavals. And they may still be deeply desired in the future when through stable expectations they would offer the means to cope with the psychological stresses produced by the advance toward an industrial mass society. Indeed ascriptive ties could be the very thing. They might provide the personal satisfaction of secure, non-competitive relations, which in a complex, highly integrated and achievement oriented world are so rare and are at such a high premium.

Political leaders of newly independent states really should have realized that the policy of social homogenization was dysfunctional. It was bound to violate minimum group interest. Many would perceive it as a nefarious conspiracy by members of other, hostile groups. Worse still, in a very fundamental sense governmental attacks on communal loyalties threatened the personal identity and security of all citizens. Authoritarian governments could contemplate committing to the fullest their coercive capacity, but how democratic systems expected to survive so profound a level of alienation is somewhat of a mystery.

As a matter of fact, in a remarkably large number of newly independent states, democratic political systems did not survive for long. In some instances they were abandoned outright as inappropriate alien schemes. In many others they were merely "suspended." Entirely due to a temporary emergency, the leaders (or *the* leader) would announce, it was necessary for the government's dependence upon the periodic judgment of the electorate to be held in abeyance for the time being. The constitution was suspended and martial law proclaimed. The façade of democracy was retained to mask an essentially authoritarian process. If elections were held, either the *range* of choice was controlled (only one party was permitted to campaign), or the *effect* of choice was controlled (the voters elected relatively small intermediate bodies—presumably more easily manipulated than electorates—which had as their only function the selection of the head of government).

All the same, there are still some newly independent states where the democratic system has survived. Their political leadership, at least so far, has resisted an authoritarian shelter, permanent or temporary, overt or disguised. Mostly though they have been drifting, captives of momentary expedience. Indeed their confidence in democratic politics has been wearing thin, but the appropriate correctives escaped them. Conceding the political character of all conflict of interest and the popular right to participate in public decisions, they moved to distract the electorate through statistical claims of achievement, by glowing reports of international prestige and occasionally by throwing a scapegoat at them. In turn, while vehemently rejecting the legitimacy of communal cohesion, they proceeded to appease such groups by provincial boundaries drawn along communal lines, by language and cultural concessions in public processes, or communal quotas in the public services. Quite frequently economic development programs were adjusted to accommodate communal pay-offs. Time, however, is running out on these *ad hoc* arrangements. Electorates are rarely distracted for long. Piecemeal concessions scarcely satisfy; they only whet the appetite. The idea of a totalitarian dictatorship, communist or fascist, is gaining ground among previously devout demoratic leaders.

Even so, conceding all this and more, the fact remains that it is altogether too early to give up hope about democracy in Asia and Africa. All that has actually changed so far is that there is now a more realistic estimate of a very difficult task and that one hastily designed strategy has proven itself inadequate. Surely there are alternatives; possibly a more sophisticated version of the orthodox strategy might be made to work. In countries where the democratic system is still muddling through, political leaders have not altogether abandoned their original vision. Meanwhile those which had embraced the "authoritarian solution" have developed doubts about the wisdom of their course. Their assumption that the political system would become more effective once it was liberated from short-term (parochial) pressures turned out to be rather naive. After a short interval the government's control had actually declined. Nor did their assumption prove correct that the steady inflation in the level of expectations would be halted once it was no longer stimulated by ambitious candidates competing for the favor of the

electorate. As it turned out, in the absence of genuine electoral contests those governments which had sought to maintain a façade of democratic politics invariably found themselves compelled to appeal for popular approval by promises of rewards in excess of previous records. Others, who had decided to ignore popular demands or had attempted to undermine communal solidarity, promptly discovered an urgent need for massive coercive capacity, so urgent and so massive that it could be met only by heavy external input. Undoubtedly there will be some which will choose to rely even more heavily on coercion and follow the route to a totalitarian dictatorship. But conceivably there may be others which will decide to make one more attempt at democracy.

Indeed the time may be at hand when political leaders in a large number of states search for new and successful strategies which would lead to viable democratic systems. If so, they will find a variety of sources useful. Detailed examinations of the political records of Western countries are likely to provide not only basic data, but also a relatively extended time framework for analysis. Naturally, the record of democratic politics in all newly independent states will be essential information. Probably the most useful insights, however, will come from the experiences of those rare countries which adopted democratic systems only after they themselves made substantial revisions in the Western models. Among them, few were as innovative as Malaysia. Indeed this is the rationale of the following case study.

Malaysian (Malayan) leaders like most of their colleagues in other newly independent states accepted the central doctrine of the orthodox strategy for a viable political system. The take-off into self-sustained economic growth was their primary policy goal. But unlike most of their colleagues they had little use for social homogenization. In Malaya, they were convinced, the single most critical fact with which a viable political system would have to come to grips was the dominance of profound communal cleavages, a fact, which quite apart of many other differences, radically distinguished it from its Western counterparts. These cleavages, they were further convinced, were so well established in society and so deeply ingrained in human personality that they would persist and dominate for the foreseeable future. No economic development program, however brilliantly executed, nor available coercive capacity, however

vigorously applied, could loosen significantly ascriptive solidarity. Accordingly, the only reasonable course to follow was to recognize communal groups as essential, legitimate components of the political system.

Their views, of course, may have been unduly influenced by their own positions. The men who guided the movement for independence in the 1950's were themselves primarily communal leaders. They were born into communal groups, were raised within them, enjoyed the comforts of communal solidarity and were proud of their communal heritage. They gained the opportunity to design the new political system when they demonstrated their capacity to mobilize popular support—and they could do this mainly because of their communal appeal.

The Malaysian (Malayan) leaders, however, had also another notable predilection, a preference for democratic politics. They knew, of course, the tactical value of such a posture in negotiations with British authorities and even recognized the strategic advantages in relations with the indigenous, traditional rulers, the Sultans. They had deeper convictions as well. Almost without exception, they all considered the use of violence bad form and poor judgment, and coercion only the last resort of public policy. Educated in English schools–some had actually studied in Britain—they learned to appreciate the utility of democratic politics in resolving political conflict and, more important, in providing legitimacy for the political system. They realized that a simple transplant of a Western system would not be suitable for their own specific conditions, but they were quite confident that they could devise the necessary adjustments.

Thus by necessity and choice, Malaysian (Malayan) leaders set out to establish a viable, democratic system not based on a national community, but on the cooperation of discrete communal groups. These were its main features. First, the relationship of citizens within the same group would continue to be managed through a semi-autonomous communal hierarchy. Second, the relationship of citizens across communal boundaries or to the government would be regulated through terms agreed to by an inter-communal Directorate at the highest level. Third, the terms of inter-communal relations would be promulgated in a constitutional contract, then implemented and when necessary augmented by policies secretly negotiated. Fourth, the members of the Directorate would have to possess dual qualifications.

They would have to be the leaders of the political organization (party) of their community most capable of mobilizing mass support behind the government in democratically conducted elections. No less important, they would also have to be men who could maintain the confidence of their colleagues by keeping negotiations within the Directorate secret and by refraining from *ever* mobilizing their external communal mass-support to bring pressure on the secret negotiations.

The formula designed by the Malaysian (Malayan) leaders is no longer merely a theoretical construct. For more than a decade and a half it has been tested by practice. Unexpected stresses and strains were revealed, some so fundamental as to bring about a violent crisis in 1969. Adjustments were made but the basic approach was not abandoned. As yet, the formula has not proven itself completely successful in Malaysia, nor can it be considered a "solution" for any other newly independent state. A detailed examination of its record, however, can provide scholars and decision-makers with important lessons about the possibilities and constraints of a democracy without consensus.

PART ONE

A Political System Established

PREFACE

FEBRUARY 15, 1942: a historic day in Southeast Asia. Late that afternoon in Singapore a car flying the Union Jack and a white flag crossing each other brought Lieutenant-General Arthur E. Percival, G.O.C. British Forces in Malaya, to the Ford car factory. Five minutes later, General T. Yamashita, of the Imperial Japanese Army arrived. There were formal handshakes, then followed this exchange:

"Does the British Army surrender unconditionally?"

"Yes."

"Are there any Japanese prisoners of war?"

"Not even one man."

"Are there any Japanese men held prisoner?"

"All Japanese civilian prisoners have been sent to India. The guarantee of their position is being entrusted to the Government of that country."

"Do you agree to this document [instrument of surrender] unconditionally?"

"Please wait until tomorrow morning for the answer."

"Then, in that case, up till tomorrow morning we will continue the attack. Is that all right, or do you consent immediately to unconditional surrender?"

"Yes."

"Well then, there will be a cessation of hostilities from 10 P.M. Japanese time. The British Army, using a thousand men as a police force, will please maintain order. In case of any violation of these terms a full-scale attack on Singapore will commence. . . ."

For General Percival undoubtedly a difficult experience; for the people in Malaya, the total collapse of British military power was a stunning surprise. Even when the day after Pearl Harbor the Japanese landed in Kota Bharu, even when shortly thereafter, off the coast of Kuantan, they sank the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, the two capital ships of the British Far Eastern

Squadron, even when in January they occupied Kuala Lumpur, it seemed inconceivable that they would succeed. Sooner or later—certainly before they reached Singapore—the Japanese would be stopped and then driven out. Few bothered to consider the heavy numerical superiority of the invading forces, the total absence of British armor in the face of some 300 Japanese tanks, or for that matter the fact that the "fortress" of Singapore so impregnable from the sea, had practically no rear-defenses against attack from across the Johore Strait.

A century and a half long record of military preponderance had contributed to the confidence in the success of British arms. Yet, that was not all. People had become dependent on British administration. By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Malaya had emerged as an aggregate of very diverse and discrete communities all of which were in the process (at various rates) of transition from their own respective traditional patterns to more modern norms and organizations. And in this process, Britain played an essential role. Its policies stimulated economic growth. They encouraged the improvement of land, and the importing of labor; they fostered capital investment and entrepreneurial activity. No less important British control helped to improvise and maintain a political framework within which the various communities could coexist peacefully. British authorities provided not only the administrative machinery but also a political liaison, thus relieving each community of having to cope at all levels with the stress of regular horizontal interaction. Most members of each community could maintain a measure of insulation from strangers, and if they were so inclined could even gain some comfort from the pretense that the "others" did not exist at all. Insofar as inter-communal contact was necessary, British authorities served as stabilizers. They so defined the parameters of legitimate conflict that no community's minimum, non-negotiable interests were jeopardized; and in case of a stalemate in negotiations they stepped in and arbitrated.

When on February 15, 1942, suddenly the whole structure collapsed, the economic future of the Peninsula became doubtful in the extreme. Worse still, no one had the least idea just how the various communities could continue to coexist peacefully. It took fifteen years and several attempts before a system with some stability was devised.

CHAPTER ONE

A Society Dominated by Communal Cleavages

By the time the Second World War was approaching its shores, the Malayan Peninsula had become the homeland of three major communities. On the Peninsula proper, Malays had a plurality of the population, 46.4 percent; the Chinese accounted for 37.5 percent; and the Indians 14.4 percent.

All three of these communities included a variety of more or less autonomous sub-units. (See Table 1-1.) The Malays, for example, represented an extraordinary conglomeration of antecedents. Some descended from "native settlers" arriving with Parameswara in the fourteenth century; most others (for example the Bugis or the Menangkabau) entered much later. They were joined by Muslim immigrants from India and the Middle East and individuals from other communities who had converted to Islam. The Chinese, in turn, had their own cultural subdivisions. Their arrival in Malaya also spanned centuries, accounting for fundamental differences between the Baba Chinese, descendants of early settlers in Malacca and the later immigrants. They came, moreover, from different parts of China. Hokkein was the largest dialect group, followed by the Cantonese, Hakka, Toechew, Hainnanese, Kongsai, and several others. Finally, the Indians also represented a variety of elements: Tamils, Telugus, Malayalis, as well as such North Indian groups as Sikhs, Punjabis, Bengalis, Pathans, and Gujaratis.

Within the communities these cultural sub-units, as well as traditional kinship groups, regularly served as primary sources of identity in daily routines and in most interpersonal relations. When it came to individual contacts across communal lines or to the appropriate posture toward a common polity, then they promptly merged into communal solidarity. That they did so quite readily was probably due to the fact that each communal group was the product of a great Asian civilization with a comprehensive *Weltanschauung*. Each had its own outlook on its physical and human environment, and, at least in the case of Malays and Chinese, a belief system which made monopolistic

TABLE 1–1
Estimated Population of Malaya
(June 30, 1941)

Governments of	*Local Registration Area*	*Malays*	*Europeans*	*Eurasians*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Straits Settlements (SS)	Singapore Island	77,231	14,585	8,321	599,659	59,838	9,582	769,216
	Penang Island	41,853	2,464	2,374	166,974	31,916	1,879	247,460
	Province Wellesley	78,060	369	308	63,705	28,587	558	171,587
	Malacca	111,907	599	2,481	92,125	28,282	693	236,087
	Christmas Island	149	27	1	1,192	71	–	1,440
	Cocos Island	1,087	23	–	29	3	–	1,142
	Total SS	310,287	18,067	13,485	923,684	148,697	12,712	1,426,932
Federated Malay States (FMS)	Perak	335,385	4,113	1,590	450,197	196,056	5,350	992,691
	Selangor	152,697	4,978	2,654	339,707	193,504	8,021	701,552
	Negeri Sembilan	106,005	1,430	865	125,806	59,270	2,633	296,009
	Pahang	128,539	628	177	73,925	17,226	1,305	221,800
	Total FMS	722,626	11,149	5,286	989,635	466,056	17,300	2,212,052
Unfederated Malay States (UMS)	Johore	302,104	1,264	352	308,109	58,498	4,178	675,297
	Kedah	341,294	671	141	108,445	60,898	14,009	525,458
	Kelantan	369,256	209	40	23,363	7,591	7,522	407,981
	Trengganu	186,580	53	17	16,956	1,409	728	205,743
	Perlis	46,441	3	10	8,227	1,127	2,042	57,850
	Total UMS	1,245,675	2,200	560	465,892	129,523	28,479	1,872,329
Malaya		2,278,588	31,416	19,331	2,379,211	744,276	58,491	5,511,313

Source: Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 296.

demands upon its members. All along, the solidarity of Malays and Chinese was unquestionably reinforced by the historical development of their communities on the Malayan peninsula.

Three World Views: Parallels and Divergences

Throughout the full range of value structures, nowhere were the similarities greater than in the attitudes toward the physical environment. Malay, Chinese, and Indian tradition all showed a profound predisposition to mysticism, and even in the middle of the twentieth century most people in Malaya, regardless of communal affiliation, perceived the world they lived in as an arena of enormous and mysterious powers, with the fate of the individual, even his existence, constantly at their mercy. The Malays had remained determined (albeit not necessarily orthodox) Muslims. They believed in a single, all-powerful God, who ruled the universe by His, at times unfathomable wisdom. He was, they insisted vehemently and at times forcibly, the only true God and all others were false and evil. Nevertheless, *kampong* (rural) Malays and to a lesser extent some of the more educated in the urban areas, were also convinced that other supernatural beings were present on this earth. Most of these spirits were invisible, but some like Pontianak, the vampire, did occasionally take on human form (generally that of a beautiful woman). They could not, of course, participate in the management of the universe or the evaluation of the conduct of men —that was clearly the exclusive prerogative of God—but spirits did at times play pranks and when provoked by human behavior could take revenge.

Chinese and Indians in turn were polytheistic. Indians worshipped "a thousand gods," while the Chinese perceived themselves practically surrounded by innumerable deities whose miraculous powers were vouched for by tradition and by masses of ghosts (including the spirits of departed ancestors) who invisibly congested the atmosphere and determined man's daily life. They watched over good fortune, but also caused grief and tragedy.

Capriciously confronted by cataclysms, monsoon floods, plague, pestilence, fire, and regularly exposed to the nearness of death, Malays, Chinese, and Indians naturally assigned highest priority to their relationship to extra-mundane powers. Malays

with their faith in and fear of God Almighty were prone to consider personal planning toward the future not only a sinful challenge to His authority but also altogether futile. The terms of their relationship to Him were fixed through the laws revealed by the Holy Prophet. They had to be obeyed and otherwise a *tidah apa* (no matter) acceptance of the vicissitudes of fate was indicated. Their attitude toward the spirits inhabiting the universe was similar. Malays, especially *kampong* Malays, relied primarily on *pantang larang*, a set of rules designed to keep away misfortune and to avoid conflict with the spirit world. These included, for example, an injunction against children playing at dusk, the time when an especially large number of devils were supposedly in the neighborhood. A child throwing a stone could inadvertently hit one of these errant spirits in the eye and thus provoke his ill will and wrath. In the same vein, Malays, even educated Malays, continued to observe *mandi safar*, in order to wash themselves of misfortunes.

The Indians and especially the Chinese responding to very similar cues were apt to take a more positive posture toward their gods and spirits. Through sacrifices they hoped to gain favor with the divinities. On the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth moon, for example, Psao Chun (or Psao Wun), the "kitchen god," was the focus of considerable attention. He was believed to be preparing for his annual visit to heaven, in order to deliver a report on each family. Other gods were approached as the need arose. The Temple of Toh Peh Kong in Perak Road, Penang, was considered an especially appropriate place for prominent businessmen to visit in order to gain supernatural intercession on behalf of their affairs. "Contracts" pledging contributions to worthy causes once a deal was successfully concluded were frequently offered. Most Chinese families also tried to manipulate the spirits by trying to please them. They were careful to leave out food (often tangerines) just in case one of them would be passing by, and took good care that the food was always fresh. Some Chinese were prepared to take the initiative with the bad spirits. At times they even sought to deceive them. Chinese mothers, for example, were known to pretend that their son was a girl. The spirits were less inclined to harm daughters and could be misled by the simple expedient of giving the boy a girl's name and by publicly referring to him

as "she." Similarly, an Indian mother whose child was born under an unfavorable sign often resorted to the subterfuge of donating it to a priest. He in turn changed its name, sold it to the child's relatives, who then returned it quietly to the parents. At other times Chinese considered it appropriate to threaten bad spirits in most extravagant language, or during their New Year celebrations to explode fire-crackers at all hours to scare them away.

Mysticism, however, also regularly pervaded more mundane relationships. Most Malays, Chinese, or Indians in Malaya at the time of the surrender of Singapore did not approach their physical environment with the rules of logic or in such scientific terms as time and space continua. They had little difficulty, of course, differentiating between past, present, and future, but a more accurate calibration was another matter. Among Malays for example, a person's age was still mostly an approximation. When in rural areas a young man asked his elders for his age, he regularly received a reply in such comparative terms: a little older than your cousin, or, as old as the coconut tree over there which was planted at your birth. The sequence of events in the past—even dramatic events—was frequently confused. For the present there was "Malayan time" which was more or less related to chronometric measurements. And the future remained a mysterious, unstructured mass. Similarly, there was only a vague awareness of spatial relationships. Few of the rural people knew or cared whether China or India was north or west. Opinions on distances were generally no more definite than "far" or "near." If specific mileage was offered, it was quite often vastly inaccurate, sometimes more, at other times less, without a pattern. Request for directions in the countryside produced a variety of opinions, and an extended discussion.

Instead, most Malays, Chinese, and Indians regularly sought guidance in their daily lives by attempting to discover the will of the mystical forces of the universe. For this they relied partially on manifestations read by men claiming occult powers (palmists, mediums, astrologers, and *bomohs*). A horoscope was cast for many a newborn (especially Indian) child. When marriages were arranged among a Chinese or Indian couple, the criterion regularly overriding all others—social status or financial position, not to mention ability, appearance, and love—was the reputed

compatibility of the signs or astral positions under which the proposed partners were born. In case of illness, *kampong* Malays sent for their own *bomohs*, but if their charms did not seem sufficiently efficacious, they often turned to Chinese medicine men. Even fully trained medical practitioners in the cities, when dealing with less educated patients, at times felt compelled to include "mystical" components in their treatment. If a girl eloped (or was kidnapped), her parents consulted a *bomoh* who was expected to define her exact whereabouts. His resources also included potions which made a girl fall in love or which kept a husband faithful; potions which assured fertility and which kept women under the control of their mothers-in-law. Even educated and prominent people turned to a *bomoh* before moving into a new house. Chinese mediums were consulted by anxious students about examination questions. University lecturers regularly consulted horoscopes; many were careful to get married on an "auspicious" day. Palms and special fortune cards were read for wealthy Chinese businessmen and at times for Malay administrators before they made major decisions. When pleasant weather was needed for a royal wedding, *bomohs* were hired to keep the rain away.

In addition, the Chinese, more than the Malays and Indians, also looked for more direct and clear manifestations of the will of occult forces. Most were inveterate gamblers, determined to utilize fully their fates by staying up till all hours behind Mah-Jongg tables, betting on the races, and regularly playing the numbers. Priests were always helpful, especially those who could foresee the name of a winning horse. Temporary altars in red boxes were set up, and prayers were offered in the hope that they would elicit numbers that paid off. Dreams or anything unusual were interpreted as divine indicators, and promptly acted upon.

Rather more pronounced, however, were the differences in the attitudes of Malays, Chinese, and Indians toward the human environment. The Chinese for their part were by tradition decidedly kincentric in their views. What mattered most to them was the family. Their personal identity was defined not only by the individual's performance but also by his antecedents, by the behavior of his relatives, and by the future accomplishments of his progeny. Thus ancestors were revered, dishonorable conduct was avoided lest it besmirch the reputation of the whole family, and the future was safeguarded by a singular determination to assure

a male offspring. Families were extended but unilateral; only the paternal relatives were included. As a matter of fact, women were not valued very highly. Mothers had to apologize for baby daughters. In some instances husbands upon hearing that their wives had given birth to a little girl simply walked away without any inclination to see either. Quite frequently, in fact, daughters were given away or sold to Malays who were delighted to adopt them. Often as they grew up, young women with some ability had to take jobs to pay for the education and at times the leisure of their brothers.

Internally, the Chinese family in Malaya was not perceived as the hub of happiness, but rather as an instrument of ambition. Duty, not love, was its principle of cohesion. The wife had a duty to give birth to sons, raise the children, and in general serve her husband. All children had a duty of unquestioned obedience. The sons had a duty to succeed and bring honor to the family, the daughters had to avoid disgracing themselves and in general to serve the family. The duty of the husband was to advance family fortunes, and to assure that his wife and children performed *their* duties. Fathers periodically "laid down the law" and firmly maintained discipline. Their sanction (and at times the expression of their personal frustration) was physical punishment. They did not teach their offspring and certainly did not dispense affection. Mothers after the most initial care tended to neglect their children. It was not unusual for the younger ones to be raised by the elder, and the latter often had to fend for themselves. Yet, in spite of this tradition the internal cohesion of Chinese families remained extraordinarily potent. Genuine sacrifices (even financial ones) by one member in favor of another were not unusual. Chinese in Malaya worked very hard to earn some money, most of which they sent back to their relatives in China. There were few divorces and "affairs" were rare. Sex outside of marriage was generally restricted to "massage parlors," which men managed to visit quite regularly, but which did not jeopardize family integrity. Illegitimacy of birth marked indelibly mother, child, and the mother's family. Paternal decisions on schooling, on the appropriate profession to select, or on the marriage of sons and the fate of daughters were accepted as final. Even when they were blatantly arbitrary few dared to rebel. Faced with failure or an intolerable decision of the father,

some sought escape in suicide. In rare instances when one did choose to resist, he or she was promptly and effectively ostracized.

Kincentric as the Chinese were, they also recognized another, even more radical boundary: race. By tradition only Chinese could be civilized. Others were not only different, they were plainly inferior. They hardly existed at all. In an environment where "the others" in fact predominated, following a recognized syndrome, their conviction of racial superiority was easily exacerbated.

The Malays (and Indians) too had a very high regard for the family. It was primarily within its confines that they expected to satisfy their emotional needs, and it was through the family that they hoped to meet their economic needs. One consequence of family solidarity was remarkably widespread inbreeding. While prohibitions against mother-son, brother-sister, and to a lesser extent, father-daughter combinations were observed, first cousin marriages (*sa-pupu*) were quite frequent and a source of pride. A Malay introducing his wife would declare: "This is my wife, she is not an outsider, she is a relative" (*Ini isteri saya, bukan orang lain, saudara saya juga*).

All the same, among Malays kinship boundaries were far from clear. The family was defined bi-laterally; both paternal and maternal relatives were included producing rather large and overlapping units. The relationships were further complicated by easy divorces and by polygamy, and were confused by the absence of family surnames. The young man had his own name to which was attached his father's; there remained, however, no indication of his grandfather's name. In fact, few Malays could be quite certain that the stranger they encountered—provided he too was a Malay—was not after all a distant cousin.

Still, perhaps because of the somewhat loose family pattern, but also because of the more universalistic tenets of Islam, kinship limits were not the critical discontinuities; ethnic and religious boundaries were far more decisive. Babies (even Chinese girls) were freely adopted, educated in Malay tradition and Islam, and then treated as natural offsprings. Strangers traveling through the countryside with only the vaguest of explanations were generally invited for meals and asked to stay overnight—provided they were fellow Muslims. In case of financial peril Malay friends and acquaintances would risk their hard-earned savings to remove the threat. Malay merchants regularly went bankrupt because they would not refuse credit to any of their Malay customers.

Different as their traditional focus of orientation may have been, Malays and Chinese (as well as Indians) in Malaya held very similar attitudes toward the "others," including each other. Malays were generally kinder; even so they were inclined to disassociate themselves from all "non-Malays" and infidels. Westerners could be barely tolerated, but as Christians could at least be accepted as people "of the book."[1] The Chinese and Indians, however, they saw as people totally devoid of any ideologically redeeming characteristics. Malays in the presence of "others" were particularly shy, loath to express themselves freely lest they be contradicted or criticized by "them." Among themselves, however, they regularly vented their hostility toward "them." In *kampongs*, for example, comic sketches publicly performed often included a Chinese, who because of his strange ways and imperfect pronounciation of Malay was roundly ridiculed. Indeed, lasting friendships between Malays and "others" were very rare, and inter-marriage was rarer still. The choice Malays offered to anyone else was assimilation (conversion) or dissociation.

The Chinese, for their own part, were even less generous. No one could "become" one of them. One had to be born Chinese. And all along, their kinship boundaries were vigorously safeguarded. Occasionally, Chinese families adopted male (legitimate) children after having purchased them at very high prices from other Chinese families. The most significant entry into the kinship, however, was through matrimony. Powerful taboos against marriages between persons with the same family name (even those most distantly and nebulously related) controlled such access. Needless to say, daughters-in-law were meticulously screened, and even after the wedding, they were on probation at least until they gave birth to a healthy son. The question of inter-racial marriages, of course, did not arise.

Social boundaries, moreover, coincided with radical normative discontinuities. On one side the rules of duty applied, on the other the tests of gain. In external relations the monkey,

[1] Referring to the Muslim acceptance of the significance of the Old and New Testaments.

a symbol of cunning and ruthless cleverness, served as inspiration.[2] The "others" were considered fair targets for hostility, exploitation, and violence. Strangers looking for shelter were treated not with hospitality, but suspicion. Sinister motives were attributed to them: they were trying to discover where the family savings were hidden, they had dishonorable designs on the women, or they were government spies. For a Chinese businessman his word given to another businessman was sacred, but in his dealings with customers he was often less scrupulous. Shopkeepers had acquired the reputation of providing the very best commodities or services the first time, and then to unload goods of inferior quality or to perform shoddy work. Similarly, in the countryside, Chinese middlemen saw nothing wrong in being most helpful and solicitous in arranging loans for Malay farmers and fishermen and then charging them exorbitant interest. Nor did they think it improper to facilitate refinancing these loans until their clients had become totally dependent upon them for both the sale of their product and the purchase of their necessities. As the Chinese New Year approached, those who were too short of funds to manage an appropriate celebration considered it quite fair to mobilize the required sums by robbing "others." Toward enemies under their control, they were notoriously cruel, but all others could easily intimidate them with the threat of force.

In short, attitudes toward the outgroup underscore a principal point: in 1942 Malays, Chinese, and Indians could not rely upon their separate and more or less symmetric traditions to provide the base for a common polity. Many of their traditions were different. Yet even those which were similar were not much help. All believed in supernatural power, but each insisted on its own orthodoxy. The Chinese had little respect for Islam, and for the Malays there was only one true God, Allah. Similarly, all believed in the primacy of ascriptive social boundaries, and the more deeply they were committed to this notion, the more unbridgeable became the cleavages separating them. Worse still, the historical development of the two major communities, the Malays and the Chinese, moved them steadily toward confrontation.

[2] Many worshipped the monkey-god, and Chinese lore is rich in presentations depicting the monk being protected by the pig (sensuality) and the monkey.

Malay Historical Development: Political Authority and Economic Deprivation

Not much is known about the early Malay settlers. *The Malay Annals* (*Sejarah Melayu*) written around 1540 include an account of the first settlement of Malacca by Sultan Iskandar Shah (Parameswara), as well as other stories of kings and magicians, but the *Annals* really belong to mythology with a kernel of historical fact wrapped in the colorful products of rich imagination. Other written sources of the times tend to be contradictory and confusing. Even so, this much is clear: when they arrived on the Peninsula nearly six centuries ago, the Malays did not come as single individuals or as small groups of immigrants. They came in organized communities led by their established leaders. As they settled down, they enforced their control over the area and imposed their political system upon the other inhabitants (mostly aborigines). Later, other Malays followed from the neighboring islands and melted easily into the community. Gradually, they spread across the Peninsula, and then extended the authority of the hierarchy.

There is little dispute about the kind of community the Malays established.[3] It was strictly hierarchical. At the apex of the pyramid was the Ruler (*Yang di-Pertuan Besar*) who in most instances assumed the Arabic title of Sultan. He was surrounded by his royal office bearers including not only an heir apparent (*Raja Muda* or *Tengku Besar*) but also a commander-in-chief (*Tengku Penglima Besar*), an admiral (*Tengku Laxamana*), and a set of ministers (*Menteri*) among which the greatest was called *Raja Bendahara.* Below the ruler and his court were area and district chiefs (*Orang Besar Empat, Orang Besar Lapan*) complete with their own entourages, who directly controlled substantial portions of territory. At the base were village leaders (*penghulu* or in Kelantan, *panghawa*) assisted by a constable (*Mata Mata*) and perhaps by extension the heads of families and clans (*ibubapa, lembaga*). The entire structure was sup-

[3] Several major studies are available. Among the most recent: M. G. Swift, *Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu* (New York: Humanities Press, 1966); Rosemary Firth, *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants* (New York: Humanities Press, 1966); J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: Athlone Press, 1958); and William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

ported by Muslim religious functionaries (*khadis, imams, bilals*) and regularly by magicians (*bomohs, pawangs*).

In so highly structured a community each person had his place, and he knew it. His status and role was, for all intents and purposes, decided by ascription. At the moment of birth the infant's parentage indelibly classified him. Born to aristocrats he immediately became a member of the ruling class; born to the people (*ra'ayat*) he remained forever a subject. The separation was deep and quite unbridgeable. There was really nothing a man of noble birth could do to deprive him of his status. In turn for their services commoners could be rewarded with orders of distinction; they could be honored with the title "dato." They could never be admitted into the aristocracy. Only one group of subjects was considered worthy to associate with the ruling class and could marry one of its members without scandal: those who claimed direct descent from the Holy Prophet (*Syed* and *Sharifa*). For others it was quite improper. A bean, so conventional wisdom insisted, must not forget its pod (*kachang lupakan kulit*).

Ascriptive criteria were also decisive in specific role assignments. This is not to say that other considerations were precluded. Village headmen were designated by district chiefs who in some instances even called for local elections to guide their decision. District chiefs held office by a commission from the Ruler who was rarely insensitive to the size of the following mustered by the contenders. The Ruler in turn was elected by district chiefs who at times were influenced by the relative ability of the claimants as well as by the prospects of future favors. Yet in a most fundamental sense—in defining the range of eligible alternatives and in favoring specific individuals with the "best chance" status—kinship, generation, sex, and sequence of birth were determinant. Patrilineal descent of a village headman always was an advantage in the selection of his successor. Imams were almost always recruited from a leading family in the village. Most district chiefs were succeeded by their sons, or at the very least by another of their kin. Rulers, of course, could only be selected from the royal lineage, and more particularly the heirs of the state (*waris negri*). In all cases the first born son was assured a significant advantage, and a daughter was disqualified.

Prospects of advance beyond the place ascribed were negligible.

Only a fool would be ambitious.[4] His efforts would be futile. "One's lot of a quart will never become a gallon" (*Rezeki sachupak tak akan jadei sa-guatang*). His chances, according to the proverb, were those of a soft cucumber fighting a prickly durian (*bagai mentimun dengan durian*). Those who tried to improve themselves faced condemnation as upstarts. They would be suspected of gross snobbery, of dissociation from friends and kin. There was no prospect of cheers in case of success. Public recognition would produce no respect, only trigger envy and resentment. But every setback would be greeted with unrestrained joy and glee.

Closely related was another feature of the traditional Malay community: authority was closely tied to the supernatural. Religion and magic joined in wrapping the hierarchy, and more specifically the aristocracy into an elaborate mystique. The Ruler by definition was "heaven-born"; some held that white blood ran in his veins. At the time of his installation he was vested with majesty (*daulat*) elevating him even above his previous status and those of his royal kinsmen. His person was sacred; to touch it was a grievous offense. At public ceremonies he sat impassively, emulating presumably divine detachment. The color of his clothing (yellow) was a royal monopoly. His weapons, his personal and household adornments were reserved for him alone. A special vocabulary (*bahasa dalam*) was required for the discussion of his activities. Any action which possibly could be considered in the slightest degree disrespectful was perceived *lèse majesté*. The Sultan of Pahang fined a subject for forgetting to bring the Sultan's dagger, another for marrying without his consent, and a third for permitting a dove to escape, his own present to the Sultan.[5] To be sure, others—royal ministers, district chiefs, village leaders—also held offices and their orders were also carried out. Yet legitimacy, an ingrained respect and a predisposition to obey, was not conceded *to them* by either the ruling class or the Malay community in general without further extra mundane verification: a royal commission, or a pilgrimage to Mecca (*haj*).[6]

[4] There is the story of Mat Janin who as a result of his ambition found himself up a coconut tree—and then fell off.

[5] Excerpts cited by T. H.. Gullick from dispatches from the Governor of the Straits Settlements to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

[6] Interestingly, most village magicians were *hajis*.

Religion and tradition moreover were decisive in the definition of political values. Democracy with its doctrine of popular sovereignty could not have been more alien to the Malays. The rules of the community were derived from Divine Will, not dependent on the consent of the governed. The overriding criterion was the moral order. The needs and interests of the individual were structured by universal imperatives, not by a person's subjective perception. Laws were revealed through Islam (*Holy Qur'ān* and *Sharia*) and through Malay tradition (*adat*), certainly not made through legislation by popular representatives. Interpretation and application of laws were the prerogatives of the Ruler. His decisions were binding; his decrees and orders had to be obeyed, even when they seemed patently unjust. In this world his subjects had no right of appeal or redress. To revolt meant infamy. Folklore was quite emphatic on this point. Malay children learned and adults did not forget the legend of Tun Mutahir. A *Bendahara* of the Malacca Sultanate, he was unjustly sentenced to death. Yet when his son sought to protect him from the Sultan's executioners, he reprimanded him in no uncertain terms: "For shame, Hasan, would you be disloyal to the Sultan and spoil the good name of your ancestors? It is the wisdom of Malays that they should never be disloyal to their Rulers."[7] The same point was made perhaps even more dramatically by another popular story. Hung Tuah, it seems, was a prominent young man in Malacca. He was handsome and brave. Although he served his Ruler faithfully, he nevertheless incurred the royal wrath. When his execution was announced, his close friend, Hung Jebat, provoked beyond endurance by so unjust an act revolted. He invaded the palace itself, drove out the Sultan and threw out his furniture. As it turned out Hung Tuah had not been executed after all and when the Sultan learned of this, a pardon was promptly granted. Hung Tuah, the hero, then rejoined royal service and without hesitation or qualms accepted and carried out the assignment of killing Hung Jebat, his friend and a man who revolted only because of the blatant injustice done to Hung Tuah.

These values, and more specifically, the authority of the traditional hierarchy of the Malay community persisted over the centuries without any significant investment in physical force.

[7] Ann Cyril Parkinson, *Heroes of Malaya* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1964), p. 47.

Actually the Rulers themselves had only a modest capacity to coerce; they were simply not in a position to maintain substantial armed forces. In theory, of course, they were entitled to revenue from all parts of their domain. For its collection, though, they had to rely upon the area and district chiefs whose zeal in such matters was very uncertain to say the least. Mostly, they had to depend upon trade duties, levied in the royal capital, which as it usually happened was strategically located at the mouth of the river. The sums thus collected could fairly cover royal household expenses, including some of the luxuries befitting their royal dignity, but not very much else.[8] Apart from some royal guards the Rulers had no troops. They may have liked to have some, but apparently not sufficiently to curtail their expenses for ceremonies and personal amenities—symbols of their "dignity." Indeed, the post of royal commander-in-chief was and remained a sinecure.

If coercive capacity was concentrated anywhere in the Malay community, it was with the area and district chiefs. They controlled their territory directly, collected taxes and maintained a large personal following of able-bodied men. Their inclination to use military forces for purposes other than a demonstration of prestige, however, was definitely limited. In their relationship with their Ruler, area and district chiefs were prepared to commit troops in defense of their autonomy, or to parade them in order to influence royal succession. Some at times were willing to reduce their Ruler to a figure-head and to block his sanctions by force. They would not, however, use their coercive capacity as a means to advance claims of their own to the throne, nor would they ever try to destroy the Sultanate itself. They relied on it too much to legitimize their own position. Regularly, at the installation of the Ruler, on the first appointment of the chief and on major festivals of the Muslim year, they formally demonstrated their submission through ceremonies of obeisance (*menghadap*).

Area and district chiefs also exercised restraint in the use of force in their relationship to their subjects. There was no need

[8] The magnitude of such revenues may be inferred from the fact that after British intervention the Sultan of Selangor was granted a personal allowance of M$15,000, a sum which presumably matched, if not exceeded, his previous income. Other aristocrats rarely received allowances reaching M$6,000.

or appreciation for its application. Law and order were not primarily their responsibilities but those of local leaders. Sanctions, where applied, were generally those of shame and guilt, not physical punishment. Of course, there must have been instances of oppression and capricious sanction. The arrival of a chief and his followers was popularly likened to the incursions of a wild elephant. But quite apart from a chief's inclination for justice or his desire for popularity, there were also countervailing forces. One of these was the recognized right of the oppressed to run *amok* (*mengamok*). Anyone with an intense sense of grievance could properly resort to indiscriminate and murderous violence against the community (or any specific group) without any concern whether his victims had anything at all to do with his grievance. No area or district chief was anxious to create a law and order problem for himself by pushing his people quite so far. The Malay population, moreover, had another safeguard against the coercive power of their chiefs. They could simply move away. As long as there were sparsely populated areas on the Peninsula—and for centuries there was enough *Hinterland* —such mobility was feasible, if not inviting. No area or district chief could afford to lose substantial portions of his people.

The relatively low premium on coercive capacity, however, had one very serious consequence. Traditional Malay society was especially vulnerable to external predatory initiatives. The Malacca Sultanate lasted only a century and a half. The town fell to the Portuguese in 1511. Acheh, a state in northern Sumatra, had its own ambitions. Periodically (and unsuccessfully) it attacked Malacca. In 1564 it invaded Johore, destroyed the capital, Johor Lama, and captured the Sultan. The Achinese also built a port in Perlis and in 1575 conquered Perak. Then followed the Dutch, who defeated the Portuguese and captured Malacca in 1641. Other invaders came from Janiki and were repulsed by the Sultan Ibrahim of Johore only with the aid of the Bugis, mercenaries from Celebes. The latter returned to Johore on their own in 1722 and continued to dominate the state throughout the eighteenth century. They proceeded to intervene in Kedah (1724–1726), later in Perak (1742), and to establish a new Sultanate in Selangor (1742). All along, the Siamese dominated Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu. In 1770, due to some reverses in their perennial conflict with the Burmese, they intensified their control and more particularly their collection of

tribute of golden flowers (*bunga emas*). And then came the British. In rapid succession they established a trade center in Penang (1785–1786), they occupied Malacca (1795), and they founded Singapore (1819). That, however, was only the beginning. Faced with unrest in Penang and civil war in Perak, they "intervened" and imposed the Treaty of Pangkor (1874), an arrangement which was extended to Selangor and later by the systems of the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) and the Unfederated Malay States (U.M.S.) through the entire peninsula.

The persistence of external incursions took a heavy toll in life and property in the Malay communities, but significantly it did not vitiate the authority of the traditional hierarchy. The Portuguese and the Dutch were primarily interested in real estate. They wanted Malacca as a base for their commerce in the Far East. Apart from most perfunctory attempts to colonize and some modest initiatives to trade, they were not concerned with the Malay communities. The latter, in turn, could always resort to their marvelous safety-device: withdrawal. They could simply move away to Johore, Perak, and Pahang. Other invaders, the Achinese and Bugis, came from nearby islands. They shared a common religion and a common cultural heritage with the Malay communities. They did indeed intervene in local processes; at the same time they were always careful to observe the formal aspects of legitimacy. They never challenged the prevailing value structure and only slightly compromised the authority of the hierarchy. When Bugis sought to impose policy on Johore, they introduced under-kings (*Yang di-Pertuan Muda*) whose advice could be decisive, but they worked through the Sultan and publicly paid deference to him. When the Achinese or the Bugis advanced rival claims for the throne, they were careful to limit their selection to those "eligible," and went to some pains to explain the superior ascriptive qualifications of their candidates. When the Bugis decided to establish a state of their own on the Peninsula, they created a Sultanate.

The British too were apparently disinclined to break with precedent. In the early stages of their colonial involvement they, like the Portuguese and the Dutch, concentrated upon building commercial bases and were not interested in the indigenous people and their social structure. Then, after formal intervention, they seemed to be following the Bugis' example of indirect

rule. The Pangkor Agreement, which became a model for British relationships with all Malay states, provided the Ruler with a British Resident whose advice "must be asked and acted upon," but the latter was to hold no executive powers, and "questions touching Malay religion and custom" were specifically excluded from the purview of advice.

Nevertheless, British intervention affected the integrity of Malay communities far more deeply than any previous invasion. For one thing, it was more penetrating and more efficient. Residents proceeded to establish administrative structures which controlled law and order, administered justice, collected taxes, and built public works. In doing so they gradually eliminated the role and the power of a crucial link in the Malay hierarchy, the area and district chiefs. Residents, moreover, moved beyond their proper advisory position and, at times, intervened with royal succession, and even sought to adjust Malay custom to English social mores and judicial standards. The impact of these initiatives upon the cohesion and solidarity of the Malay communities, however, was carefully cushioned by relying primarily on persuasion, by introducing innovations cautiously and, above all, by formal deference paid to Rulers and the punctilious observance of ritual prescribed by Malay tradition.

No less important was another aspect of British intervention: the loss of the *Hinterland*. Their efforts to develop the natural resources of the Peninsula encouraged the inflow of foreign capital and facilitated the massive influx of Chinese (and later Indian) labor. Land previously left fallow was cultivated. Thousands of acres were reclaimed from the jungle. Mineral deposits when discovered were vigorously exploited. Vast rubber plantations were established. Rapidly the country was filling up with "other" people. When pressed or when it was to their advantage, "they" acknowledged the Sultan's sovereignty but otherwise exhibited little concern for the indigenous people. The cherished option of the Malays to move out faded from reality. By the twentieth century Malay migrations declined substantially.[9] Worse still, Chinese merchants appeared in the *kampongs*, while investors bought up land which for decades previously had been cultivated by Malays. More and more their community was constricted.

[9] Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 11. At least part of the reason for this may have been the improved level of law and order.

Slow as the process may have been, British pressure and policies induced far-reaching normative reorientations and the emergence of three new leadership groups outside (though overlapping) the traditional Malay hierarchies. The first of the initiatives came within a generation after the Pangkor Engagement and were generally led by some of the Arab and Indian Muslims who were either involved in commerce or were teaching in religious schools. Their concern was introspective with a religious focus. Through *Al-Imam*, a periodical established in 1906, the "Young Faction" (*Kaum Muda*) called upon all true Malays (and faithful Muslims) to cleanse their custom and belief of alien impurities. They confronted the traditional hierarchy by demanding that rival religious functionaries be "brought to a sense of their errors and obligations."[10] Predictably, the ruling class was rather less than sympathetic to the reformers. Its opposition, in fact, went as far as condemning their ideas as *kafir* (infidel), proscribing their publications and preventing them from speaking at mosques and at public places. By the 1920's *Kaum Muda* abandoned its campaign for internal revision and turned to agitation for Pan Malay, Pan-Islamic and anti-colonial, that is, external and political causes.

It was the direction which the second, far more important, newly emerging leadership group, the Malay school teachers, had set for itself. Ever since the British administrators introduced free, public elementary education into the countryside, their numbers had been rising steadily.[11] Initially, their qualifications were quite rudimentary, as the curriculum required only instruction in the basic skills of literacy. Malay custom and heritage, and some conventional wisdom on agricultural practices. Plainly, the intention was "to teach Malays so that they do not lose their skill and craft in fishing and jungle work," while carefully avoiding "the trouble which has arisen in India through over-education."[12] In any case, Malay schools were not designed to acquaint students with logical processes or scientific analyses. Standards, however, were gradually improved and by 1922 Sultan Idris Training College (S.I.T.C.) was established in Tanjong Malim. It was to become an institution where promising

[10] Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

[11] From 1900 to 1920 the number of Malay vernacular schools in the F.M.S. increased from 168 to 400 and enrollment rose from about 6,000 to 20,319. (See Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 127.)

[12] Quoted in Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

students from village schools, many from families with modest circumstances (members of the *ra'ayat*), would be provided formal, professional (teacher's) training. In fact, however, SITC turned out to be much more than that. Within a few short years it generated a veritable cultural renaissance. Students and faculty sustained several publicatons (*Chendera Mata, Majallah Guru*) which, while often devoted to general news items, also included significant literary efforts. Short stories depicting contemporary Malay life came off the presses, rather fundamental departures from the old-fashioned folk-tales and magical fantasies. In 1930 an alumnus, Harun bin Mohamad Amin, published a full-scale novel, *Melor Kuala Lumpur* (*Jasmine of Kuala Lumpur*). There were others to follow.

Sultan Idris Training College, moreover, was rapidly becoming a training ground for political mobilization. Although emphatically discouraged by the school authorities from concerning themselves with controversial subjects, students regularly discussed current events and through their writings exhibited a keen awareness of existing political and social conditions. They were especially preoccupied with what they perceived to be the extraordinary vulnerabilities of the contemporary Malay community. Its hierarchy, they feared, was antiquated and its members "cut poor figures in every department of life."[13] Surely something had to be done, and the answer was beginning to take shape: the unity of all Malay groups forged into a Malay nation dedicated to the exclusive interest of the Malay people. Then these trainees, rather extraordinary men, returned in large groups—the capacity of their college was close to 400—to the villages to teach the younger generation Malay nationalism and to build a broad base of influence for themselves.

All along, another new leadership group, this one sponsored by British advice, was also on the ascendancy: Malay administrative officers. As public functions and services expanded, indigenous bureaucratic cadres were developed. In deference to the constitutional and juridical legitimacy of the "Malay monarchies" eligibility for the senior services was limited to Malays (and British).[14] The young men recruited were sent for training to the

[13] Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, "The Poverty of the Malays," *Malay Mail*, December 1, 1923.

[14] The High Commissioner, Sir Shenton Thomas, in 1936 responded in the following rather characteristic manner to requests that Malayan born Indians be also admitted: "This is the sixth country in which I have served, and I do not know of any country in which what I might call a foreigner—that is to say a native not a native of the country or an Englishman—has ever been appointed to an administrative post. . . ." (Quoted in Roff, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–110.)

Malay Residential School established in Kuala Kangsar, the royal capital of Perak, in 1905. As it turned out, many were direct descendants of royal houses, most others were sons of the nobility (area and district chiefs). Only a handful in the beginning came from the ranks of commoners (*ra'ayat*).[15] Social distinctions moreover were carefully observed and even nurtured at the school. Students were classified ranging from Class I boarders living in the headmaster's own house and receiving an allowance of M$20.00 a month to Class III boarders quartered in unused railway bungalows and entitled to M$7.00 a month. The language of instruction was English, the curriculum patterned after British "public" schools.[16] What emerged was a group of young men accustomed to hereditary privileges, acquainted with western ideas of social organization, trained in functional administrative processes, and devoted to the lifestyle of English country gentlemen. In politics they were inclined to be cosmopolitan: sympathetic to centralized government and a united Malaya, while at least comprehending the rationale of a multiracial state. They were not inclined to associate freely with the Malay masses, but they did have some traditional legitimacy. No less important, they had the skill to manage a large-scale political organization (party as well as administration), and they did enjoy excellent connections with the British government. All these were significant advantages in any future political tests.

In short, as the twentieth century moved along its crisis-laden decades, external challenges were beginning to erode the legitimacy of the traditional hierarchies in the Malay communities. Fortunately enough, new groups were emerging, but they were doing so mainly in two separate columns: those endowed with the *charisma* of Malay custom and acquainted with modern technical skills, and those imbued with the *élan* of Malay culture and in a strategic position for mass mobilization. Individually they had little in common, but their objectives were convergent. The graduates of Kuala Kangsar (Malay College) took it for granted, those of Tanjong Malim insisted on it: Malaya was and must remain a Malay country.

[15] Total enrollment until the 1930's was slightly less than 1,210.

[16] Kuala Kangsar was frequently and fondly called the Malay Eton.

Significantly, while the cultural dynamism and political vigor of the Malay community was definitely on the ascendance, its economic position was not improving. In the countryside, no progress was made against disease and poverty. Whether fishermen or cultivators, they continued to operate in small units and relied primarily on few, primitive instruments. Among fishermen *panching* (hard-line fishing) remained popular and so did the use of scoop nets. Those who went to sea operated in groups of three and four, their main equipment being a sampan of fifteen to twenty feet long and a floating net (*Jarang Kechil*), two hundred by ten feet. Meanwhile, cultivators continued to work on padi-farms of a few acres with implements consisting mostly of knives, axes, hoes, rakes, and handcarts. They were not particularly energetic, subsisting as they did on a diet dominated by rice, an inadequate staple, and averaging 1,600 calories. One meal a day was not uncommon and at times, during the monsoons or before the harvest many had to go hungry. They rarely had a chance to enjoy meat, or consume protein in any form. Not surprisingly, Malays in the countryside (which means, of course, nearly all Malays) more than any other group were vulnerable to early death and disease. Rates of malaria, cholera, beri-beri were somewhat reduced, but intestinal infestations and anemia, especially among young women, remained widespread. The incidence of enlarged paratoid glands among Malay children and severe hyperkeratosis of the skin among Malays in general was not significantly curtailed.

As a matter of fact, there were some indications that the lot of rural Malays had become more difficult. Increasingly they had become entangled with middlemen who were quite prepared to take advantage of them. An example was the widespread use of the *padi-kuncha* system described in one study.

> The householder in the survey group approached the shopkeeper with regard to a loan and agreement was reached on the terms of the repayment. For example, some of the loans were made on the agreement that they would be repaid in padi at the time of the harvest at a price which was almost always considerably below government controlled price. Meantime the shopkeeper supplied goods up to the value of that sum and when the time of reckoning came he produced a list of what had been supplied. This might be in Chinese, Tamil or Malay and frequently it was not possible for the peasant to read it or add up the cost of the various items. Even if he could do so, he rarely had any means of checking it beyond what little he could remember. Some of these householders were only able to give us an approximate figure for their indebtedness and referred us to the shopkeeper for the exact detail. We found that in certain shops the price of food went up when we started to weigh it and we were satisfied that if there was no check light weight was frequently given.[17]

Indeed indebtedness among Malay cultivators increased rapidly, and so did the transference of land (the collateral) to the middlemen. Alarmed by the latter, and by the rate by which rice cultivation declined, the British administration felt compelled to introduce the Malay Reservation Enactment in 1913. It authorized setting aside certain areas for exclusive Malay ownership and imposed severe restraints upon the option of Malays to mortgage or lease land held within such reservations to non-Malays. Widely evaded at first, an amendment to the law in 1933 designed to make "dealings in land on Malay Reservations as unhealthy as possible,"[18] did succeed in closing a number of loopholes. It helped in the sense that progressive deprivation was halted, but it certainly did not generate agricultural development.

Whatever the facts may have been, whether the economic position of Malays was stagnant or declining, the situation was becoming volatile. Malays were becoming aware that "others" controlled their economic fate, and were becoming more and more resentful that "others" were visibly improving their standard of living. The "others" were Chinese, and it would not take long before *the* Chinese were collectively blamed or before Malay political powers would be called upon to eliminate the economic disparity.

[17] R. C. Burgess and Laidin bin Alang Musa, *A Report on the State of Health, The Diet and Economic Conditions of People in The Lower Income Levels in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Division of Nutrition, Institute of Medical Research, Federation of Malays, 1950), p. 69. While this study was conducted in the late 1940's, there is no reason to assume that the conditions it found were significantly different from those of a few years earlier at the time of the surrender of Singapore.

[18] The Legal Adviser of F.M.S., speaking to the Bill. (Quoted in Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 23.)

Chinese Historical Development: Economic Advance and Cultural Deprivation

Chinese presence on the Malayan Peninsula had its beginning with a small group of traders in Malacca early in the eighteenth century.[19] Gradually, they extended their interests into neighboring Johore, and their activities to agriculture: specifically the cultivation of pepper and tapioca. Meanwhile, other Chinese commercial groups were established in Penang and Singapore, and then in collaboration with those in Malacca responded with alacrity to new investment opportunities throughout the Peninsula. Attracted by successful tin explorations, they moved into Perak and Selangor during the second half of the nineteenth century. The number of tin mines in Larut, the chief mining center of Perak, increased from 27 in 1862 to 273 in 1888. In Selangor, where there were only a few small mines in 1844, no less than 103 large mines were in operation by 1887.[20] When it became profitable they opened sugar estates in Province Wellesley and the Krian district of Perak. In 1877 only one sugar estate (102 acres) in Krian was in Chinese hands. By 1888 there were 21 occupying a total of 16,414 acres.[21] A few years later, a Malacca Chinese, Tan Chay Yan, was the first in Malaya to plant rubber as a commercial enterprise. Suddenly plantations of gambier, pepper, tapioca, even of cane were converted. By 1932 there were, dispersed throughout the Peninsula, 977 rubber estates accounting for 348,000 planted acres owned by Chinese.[22] All along, as they moved into the countryside to plant or to mine, they gradually penetrated the villages and their traditional economies. *Towkay's* (proprietors) offered services, provided credit, increased the scale of the market, and often established their monopoly.

Of course, not all ventures were successful and progress toward control of some sectors was thwarted either by European competition or government intervention. Nevertheless, it is fair

[19] In 1766 there were some 1,390 Chinese in Malacca, none in Singapore and none in Penang. (Purcell, *op. cit.*, pp. x, xi.)

[20] Lim Chong-Yah, *Economic Development of Modern Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 44.

[21] James C. Jackson, *Planters and Speculators* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 156.

[22] Lim Chong-Yah, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 333.

to say that by 1942 much of internal commerce and through it to a large measure the rural economy had come under the control of Chinese. In urban areas Chinese artisans produced most basic, non-food consumer items. Other Chinese provided the necessary maintenance and repair services. Finally, Chinese businessmen owned a large portion of mines and estates and about one-third of the international trade.

So impressive an expansion of Chinese control over the economic processes of the Malayan Peninsula had many causes. One was the support of the British colonial administration. Interested in developing the resources of the area for their own home market, they regularly offered tax-incentives to investors and until 1929 encouraged immigration, including the importation of indentured labor. The traditional Malay elites were also helpful. Pressed by the mounting costs of their feudal skirmishes, but all the same attracted to luxury, even ostentation, they were quite prepared—for a consideration, of course—to grant licenses, rent-free land, and even titles to practically anyone.

Still, Chinese economic expansion was propelled by more autonomous factors. They included the capital resources and entrepreneurial skills of Chinese businessmen. The combination of their considerable liquid assets and their high propensity to invest persistently provided credit to alleviate temporary business reverse (and crop failure) and to utilize fully all favorable market conditions. Contributing to this expansion were the technological innovations and some of the more efficient instruments (e.g., the chain pump) brought along from China. A further salient factor was the access to and *control* by Chinese businessmen of cheap labor. Whenever required, on short notice, a heavy stream of immigrants could be recruited. In 1850 Larut is said to have had only three Chinese inhabitants. After the discovery of tin, in 1889, the number of mine workers alone reached 47,000. In Kinta the Chinese labor force rose from 900 to 45,000 within a decade.[23] The rate of immigration increased steadily until in 1929 the total of male laborers entering Malaya reached 195,613.[24] Strict hierarchical discipline was enforced by *Kangchus* (lords of the river) and through elaborate and ruthless

[23] Lim Chong-Yah, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[24] Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 203.

secret societies (including the Ghee Hin and Hai San operations).[25] Last but not least important to the economic successes of the Chinese was their lack of commitment to the land and its people. Pioneer planters passed "quickly across the landscape making use of unoccupied hillslopes between Malay valley settlements, and leaving nothing in . . . [their] wake but abandoned land."[26] They managed to remain aloof from local customs and to avoid abiding loyalty to the place of their residence.

As a matter of fact few, if any, Chinese came to the Malayan Peninsula with an intention to stay. Most were determined to take advantage of the unique opportunities offered: the unexplored resources and the markets in a context of a remarkable level of public order and generally passive governments. They came to make their "fortune," to remit most of their earnings to their families in China, and then to return to their homeland. Many, according to some estimates no less than 20 million, did just that.

There were others, though, who in increasing numbers decided to remain. They settled down in Malaya; and when they did so, they permanently separated themselves from the native milieu in which Chinese culture had thrived for millennia. However fondly they contemplated the distant land of their ancestors and however energetically they were committed to the traditions of the past, those who chose to remain could observe, could perhaps imitate, but could not affect the growth and direction of Chinese cultural development. That was the prerogative of a vast mass of humanity which was living and struggling on the mainland. In a most fundamental sense, there could be no Chinese community on the Malayan Peninsula. Indeed, as a practical matter the only course that remained for the satisfaction of the belongingness needs of the immigrants was the development of a special community of Chinese. It was the solution of the "ghetto" with its psychological comforts and its cultural isolation—an isolation aggravated by at least two circumstances which crippled any potential cultural achievement.

One such circumstance was the composition of the community.[27] In terms of the pattern of traditional China, it was distorted. For one thing, it did not contain a peasantry, the most *numerous* element in China. There were some, of course, who cultivated the soil, but they were more accurately described as laborers. They went into the countryside, lived as agricultural workers, but certainly did not form a group of cultivators who owned and were committed to the land. Nor did the community of Chinese in Malaya contain scholar-administrators, the most *prestigious* element in China. There were some teachers who instructed children, mostly the children of the affluent, but of the vast literary and artistic culture of China they knew very little. They themselves were only semi-literates. After 1911 some men who had gained political experience, either as administrators of the Manchus or as revolutionaries plotting against them, came to Malaya, but they had no power or influence and were treated not much better than clerks. Indeed, there were only two significant groups in the community of Chinese: the merchants, the class accorded lowest esteem in the ideal hierarchy (though not in the real pattern) of Chinese civilization, and the clerks, artisans, and workers who aspired to become merchants.

The other notable circumstance which contributed to the arrest of cultural development in the community of Chinese was the incredibly harsh existence of the masses of workers. Most were brought to Malaya as indentured laborers. They were recruited by "collecting agents" (generally and appropriately called "crimps") who received a capitation fee for each emigrant they delivered[28] and who were quite prepared to resort to a variety of means—enticements, lures, even kidnapping—to fill their quota. Transportation was in the form of coolie ships where each person was confined to a total area of some eight square feet for the entire, arduous voyage. Upon landing in Malaya the new arrivals (*sin-khehs*) were sold as "little pigs" to masters who were determined to ensure a generous return on their investment.

[25] Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16 and Wilfred Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 46–48, 118–125.

[26] Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[27] Wang-Gungwu, "Traditional leadership in a New Nation: The Chinese in Malaya and Singapore," in G. Wijeyawardene, ed., *Leadership and Authority, A Symposium* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1968), pp. 209–221.

[28] In 1853 this fee was M$3.00 per person.

They were compelled to work extremely hard and for extraordinarily long hours. Day after day, many had to endure the stifling heat of open-cast mines, some hundred feet deep without a breath of air. "If the Athenians who were defeated with Nicias in Sicily, and died while laboring in the stone-quarries of Syracuse had been forced to work in our open-cast mines," a British visiting scientist remarked, "they would have realized that it was ridiculous to make such a fuss about the stone-quarries."[29] Workers, moreover, were compelled to live under indescribably primitive conditions. "The housing of Chinese indentured laborers on estates in Krian leaves much to be desired," recorded an official report, "the lines or *rumah kechil* in which the majority of laborers live are mere hovels and sanitation is conspicuous by its absence."[30]

Possibly the most crippling handicap imposed upon the vast masses of Chinese workers, however, was that they had to live their lives deprived of any personal associations. Few, very few, had an occasion for family life. There were, according to the records, only 2,239 Chinese females to 25,749 males in Singapore in 1850. At the turn of the century the sex ratio in the Malay Federated States was still no more than 1:10.[31] Actually, the figures included the ladies, wives of rich merchants imported from China and their daughters, who were quite beyond the reach of the workers. If they, together with infants and old women, were to be subtracted, for all practical purposes, only prostitutes remained.[32] Thus, at least until the influx of women labor for the plantations well in the twentieth century, most Chinese workers had the practical choice of marrying a retired prostitute or foregoing family life altogether. Generally they preferred the latter.

Nor was there an occasion to establish personal relationships, let alone friendships in their other contacts. Their fellow workers showed no disposition toward comradely solidarity. Their

[29] J. B. Scrivenor, *A Sketch of Malayan Living* (London: Timing Publications, 1928), p. 22.

[30] R. N. Jackson, *Immigrant Labour and The Development of Malaya, 1786–1920* (Kuala Lumpur: Federation of Malaya, 1961).

[31] Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

[32] William A. Pickering, British Protector of the Chinese in the Straits Settlements estimated that this remainder "the sole feminine comfort available to 55,000 of the males in 1884 amounted to approximately 2,000 prostitutes." (James C. Jackson, *Pickering, Protector of Chinese*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 92.)

masters were thoroughly ruthless in regimenting their lives. Meals were provided at fixed times; bathing was strictly required. Each evening at 6:00 P.M. the coolies were locked up to be released only next morning in time for work at 6:00 A.M. Any disobedience was brutally punished. "Enquiries on 25th February had elicited the fact," the colonial government reported, "that this sinkheh was made to eat human excrement on the day before he was sent to the hospital, in addition to a long course of cruelty because he was too ill to go to bathe."[33] Workers were constantly bullied and routinely had to endure the indignities of being targets of the unnatural proclivities of their guards and masters.

Masses of Chinese accepted these extraordinarily harsh terms partially because they considered it the proper thing to do. Most had received funds from their masters for their transportation, for provisions, or to overcome some personal exigency of their families. Some sold themselves to pay off gambling debts; others were sold by their families. While the financial obligation lasted, that is until it was paid off by cash or labor, their traditional morality held them duty-bound to meet the conditions of their servitude. The British government, which was concerned about practices bordering on slavery, and which in 1877 even appointed a Protector of Chinese, was not significantly appreciated for its high principles.[34] The contracts were, after all, generally drawn up in China and in any case were made among Chinese. No foreign custom could invalidate such arrangements; no foreign government could be approached for relief. Such things, the Chinese workers admitted, were simply not done.

Related was another reason: cultural commitment. Indeed, the Chinese worker, like the Chinese in general, has always been inordinately proud of his heritage. He relied upon it as a constant source of reassurance and as the essential base of his identity. In times of adversity—and these were both constant and ubiquitous in recent Chinese history—his nearly unshakable faith in his own super-race offered him consolation, and incidentally some pleasures derived from the scorn and disdain he felt entitled to heap upon others. Far from his homeland, with his personal identity more precarious than ever, and gradually confronted with the realization that he might never return, his feeling of guilt must have been aggravated into chauvinism.

[33] Lim Chong-Yah, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

[34] Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–105; Purcell, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–203.

Though denied the last vestiges of human dignity, he held on tenaciously to his ethnic pride. He would not give up being Chinese for all the tin in Malaya.

There were, however, more mundane reasons as well. Gambling was available and encouraged (until 1912 the colonial government did not seek to prevent it) dangling the bait of "get rich quick." Opium (*chandu*) was freely dispensed in shops and dens. On coolie lines it was generally provided with the evening meal.[35] It cushioned the sharp edges of reality and facilitated illusions of escape. Finally, prostitution was widespread offering cheaply and readily other forms of escape.

Yet only partially obscured by the distraction of vice stood a stark fact: the workers really had no choice in the matter. Conditions in China were worse still, and few thought otherwise. Most did not have enough savings to finance a return trip; on the contrary they were still indebted to their employers. They had no place to go, and had they tried, they would have been prevented. When the merchants began to import workers from China, they also proceeded to import their own coercive capacity, secret societies. These at times engaged in jurisdictional conflicts with each other, extorted money from rival or uncommitted merchants, and occasionally challenged British and Malay authorities; but their main function was the maintenance of order in the community of Chinese. They enforced labor discipline and effectively ensured that the *sin-khehs* met their obligations to their masters. A worker who was predisposed to be individualistic or original to the point of attempting unilateral emancipation was, as a matter of course, physically assaulted, cruelly tortured, and when considered necessary (which was not infrequently), put to death.

Information about life within the community of Chinese as it was emerging during the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries is, of course, quite incomplete. None of the contemporary written sources are by Chinese, a phenomenon which in itself suggests a lack of cultural vitality. Most are official reports of the colonial government or of commissions of inquiry appointed by it. Some are treatises by European (generally British) scholars and travelogues of visitors. Since the research techniques of the social sciences were not yet

[35] The peak of consumption may have been reached in 1928 when 1,344,301.07 *tahils* were sold. (Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 191.)

available, most accounts were basically impressionistic. Nevertheless, if such information is to be credited at all, it heavily supports the contention that the conditions of life tended to brutalize the masses of workers, and when this circumstance is added to such others as the absence of intellectuals and the pre-eminence of merchant morality, then the picture which emerges is that of a culturally deprived community.

As a matter of fact, it was merely a question of time before the community of Chinese would be confronted by an inevitable crisis of identity. To be sure, its accustomed pattern still had some appeal. The masses of workers were no less proud of their cultural heritage, and recognized its traditional rules. The businessmen too maintained their ties with China. They sent their eldest sons to Chinese schools, partially as an expression of cultural solidarity, but also because the Chinese language was to them a significant commercial resource. All the same, the physical separation of the community from China became more and more complete. As its numbers increased, so did the share of those who by fate or by choice made Malaya their permanent residence. In 1921 about 80 percent were immigrants of some kind; twenty years later, more than a half were native born.[36]

As World War II approached, traditional patterns of hierarchy remained dominant. Merchants, artisans, and businessmen, with their chambers of commerce and their guilds, still controlled the internal decisions of the community and represented its interests with the government and the other communities. Always sensitive to the demands of social responsibility, they had, however, little interest and few skills in political mobilization. They accepted the government (Malay and British) and were content with manipulating it through indirect methods. "They tend to be smug in their belief," observed Professor Wang Gungwu, "that money and organization are the roots of all politics and they have both."[37] The times, however, were changing, and the hold of established elites over the masses of workers was weakening noticeably. Gradually, two new leadership groups emerged. The first represented a neo-orthodox reaction. Its members were

[36] K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and The Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 9.

[37] Wang Gungwu, "Chinese Politics in Malaya," *The China Quarterly*, July–September, 1970, p. 5. The trichotomy of the community of Chinese is developed in some detail in this article.

determined to link the fate of the community to China and other Chinese communities more firmly than ever. Most of them were neither prominent nor wealthy, but they did have unyielding cultural commitment and political fervor. They saw themselves as the vanguard of a new Chinese Empire to be achieved by the force of arms and supported by a fifth-column-type subversion in Malaya.

The other leadership group was rather different. In 1942 it was still small in number, but its influence was rising rapidly. Its members were mostly the younger sons of prominent businessmen designated to serve as liaison with the British government and Western ways. They were educated in English schools and trained in the professions. They were cosmopolitan in orientation, greatly impressed by the democratic ideals of the West, and genuinely committed to Malaya as their homeland. China did not lose for them its nostalgic appeal, but when it came to ultimate priorities they felt intensely that they had a stake in Malaya. These English educated Chinese did not expect or seek a Chinese state, but neither were they content with one in which they were not equal participants. Justice, they were certain, demanded no less than full citizenship.

In 1942 few in Malaya realized that the community of Chinese was losing its traditional equilibrium; fewer still appreciated the point that the new leadership groups which were emerging, whether motivated by cultural chauvinism or political justice, were on a collision course with the rising new leadership groups in the Malay community.

CHAPTER TWO

The Failures of Extreme Designs

IT WAS not a propitious time for developing a new viable political system. World war was raging and even after it was over, for a while at least, legitimacy was a function of military power. Soldiers enjoyed an inordinate measure of influence and being specialists in organized coercion typically overvalued its utility for public policy. Invariably they were attracted by simple, straightforward formulas, which they were convinced only had to be imposed with firmness to be made to work. Indeed, for about five years the people of Malaya had to endure political systems in which first one then another community held total power over all others, and finally one where all communities were to be absorbed into a single homogenized polity. They proved to be ephemeral and collapsed promptly when military relationships changed. Unfortunately, such experimentation (and reliance on coercive capacity) imposed a heavy cost in lives and property; it also intensified the internal cohesion of the communal groups and aggravated the cleavages separating them.

The Japanese Occupation: A Malay Malaya

As the Japanese forces approached Singapore, British administrative functions ceased. Immediately, law enforcement collapsed.[1] Looting of government warehouses, European homes, or Chinese shops was widespread. Men and women were tortured if they sought to protect or hide their possessions. Old scores were settled. Buildings and entire blocks were set ablaze. The perpetrators included Malays, Indians, even colonial troops, but "Chinese gangs were foremost in the looting and then in rioting and terrorism."[2] Clashes among rival groups brought bloodshed. Significantly, Malays and their property remained immune from

[1] For a detailed description see Chin Kee Onn, *Malaya Upside Down* (Singapore: Jitts and Co., 1946).

[2] Purcell, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–248.

becoming targets. Their own people would not, and apparently Chinese gangs dared not, attack.

The arrival of the main Japanese forces put an end to anarchy. Occupation authorities dealt with looters and robbers summarily and brutally.[3] They were determined to maintain order but showed no interest whatever in the complicated role of fostering inter-communal cooperation. They insisted that their own total authority be unquestioned, but otherwise they relied on the Malay community to manage the government.

Malaya, the Japanese left no doubt, was a Malay country.[4] As a matter of policy they were openly favored. The Rulers were generally treated with deference. Administration and the police force remained predominantly Malay and continued to function. Talented or otherwise distinguished young men were offered scholarships at Japanese educational institutions.

Still, the Malays did not exactly have an easy time. Local leaders were harassed and abused; villagers were reduced to a diet of tapioca and near starvation. Administrators and policemen, in turn, were constantly berated for incompetence and inefficiency. At times they were threatened with severe punishment. The Rulers were reduced to heads of the Bureau of Religious Affairs and left with little authority. They were summoned to Singapore, harangued by the Japanese officials, rebuked, and then had their stipends cut. On January 21, 1943, the Chief of the Military Affairs Department explained to the assembled Sultans: "In consideration of the financial stringency brought about by the reduction in taxes, coupled with the fact that the people are still suffering from the horrors of war, and *as a fine gesture on your part to share joys and sorrows with Nippon*, your remuneration will be on a lesser scale than before."[5] The Malaya the Japanese had in mind, moreover, was somewhat reduced in size. Four of the northern states, with the largest concentration of Malays, were peremptorily transferred to Thailand. The remainder of the Peninsula was to become part of the

[3] Generally by decapitating the offender and then impaled on sticks displaying his head publicly.

[4] It was officially named Malai.

[5] Quoted in F. C. Jones, *Japan's New Order in East Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 382. Italics added.

Japanese Empire,[6] and its people "the newly absorbed subjects of Tenno Heika—citizens of Dai Nippon."[7]

The fate of communities with antecedents in India and Ceylon during the same time was a record of contrasts. Indian prisoners-of-war—some forty to fifty thousand—who were prepared to swear allegiance to Japan were released on parole.[8] Sikhs and Pathans were recruited into the police force and used heavily in anti-guerrilla campaigns.[9] All were invited to join and support Indian Independence Leagues. The Occupation authorities sponsored mass meetings for Rash Behari Bose and later for Subhas Chandra Bose, Indian nationalists who found political refuge in Tokyo and Berlin. They encouraged mass recruitment campaigns for the Indian National Army (INA) which was called upon to liberate side by side with the Imperial Army the Indian peoples from British colonialism. When Premier Tojo visited Singapore (July 6, 1943), the INA was invited to participate in the military parade. Three months later Chandra Bose formed a "Provisional Government of Free India" and was promptly recognized by Japan and its satellites.

Such favors, however, were accompanied by severe sacrifices and harsh treatment. Plantation workers (mostly Tamil) were exposed to extraordinary economic privations; malnutrition and undernourishment were rampant. They were called upon to offer massive financial contributions, and if they were not forthcoming, a systematic levy up to 25 percent on property was imposed and collected. Indians faced personal peril when the Occupation authorities decided to conscript them for such distant projects as the Siam Railway. By one estimate over 150,000 men were thus removed from their families—some 30,000 never to return.[10] Worse still, members of all Indian communities were subjected to constant degredations; they were treated in a man-

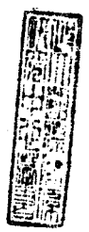
[6] On November 5, 1943, the Assembly of Greater East Asiatic Nations convened in Tokyo. Representatives from Japan's "independent" allies, including Thailand, Burma, and the Philippines, attended. "Malai" was not invited.

[7] Statement by Wateru Watanabe, President of the Military Administration, April 28, 1942. (Quoted in Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 383.)

[8] Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

[9] F. Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle Is Neutral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), pp. 230, 290.

[10] F.S.V. Donnison, *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943–46* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), p. 281.



ner the Japanese considered appropriate for coolies. This was true for the educated, the lawyers, doctors and clerks. It was true for those serving the Occupation Forces,[11] or its "ally," the Indian National Army. Officers and enlisted men by gesture and word communicated their disdain. They would not want to be soiled by personal contact or relationship.[12]

Far, far worse, however, was the fate of the community of Chinese. A special target of the Japanese, they were persecuted in every conceivable manner. Three days after the surrender of Singapore Japanese soldiers with fixed bayonets moved from house to house in the city and herded all Chinese in the streets. They were assembled in concentration zones where "anti-Japanese" elements could be screened out. Suspected Kuomintang supporters, Communists, and secret society members were removed. So generally were school teachers, students, sturdy men, and attractive young women. Girls who had cropped their hair and dressed in men's clothes for safety were also definitely suspect. The process—the Japanese called it *Sook Ching* (Purification by Elimination)—was slow and uncertain. In the meantime, men, women, and children were exposed to suffering and indignities. In the wealthier sections of the city, merchants, after some hours of standing in the sun and a lecture by a Japanese officer, were permitted to return to their homes. In other neighborhoods the process of screening lasted for days while people were compelled to stand around without food and without facilities. Often they were denied rest and were regularly abused by guards. When ultimately they were released, they carried along the memory of "scenes of refuse, dirt and litter scattered all over the place; the drains choked up with silt, excrete, and urine; the smell of dead rats, dead cats, unburied corpses; the sight of people collapsing from sun-strokes, hunger, thirst, and overexposure; the sight of people bleeding, of people being bullied, slapped, kicked, and tumbled about as if they were chunks of wood."[13] Still they were the lucky ones. Most of those "removed" simply disappeared. Many were summarily executed, others tortured to death. Estimates of total casualties range from 40,000 to 100,000.[14]

[11] Cf. Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

[12] Japanese soldiers with a reputation for imposing their passion upon all females within reach exhibited a singular restraint toward Indian women. (Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, p. 12.)

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

After Singapore, *Sook Chings* were conducted in other towns and cities, but always concentrating on the Chinese. In addition, their leaders were informed that as "a mark of appreciation and a sign of readiness to cooperate," a free gift of M$50,000,000 was decided upon.[15] Allotments for each state were arbitrarily designated, and the deadline of April 20, 1942, was set. Other details were left to the "State Peace Maintenance Associations." Meeting this demand imposed further severe difficulties in Selangor, Penang, and Malacca, but especially in Perak. As contributions there seemed to lag, a hundred and twenty of the largest property owners were summoned to Taiping for an interview with the Chief Police Officer. When they appeared (for the alternative meant immediate arrest), a number were ordered to kneel in the corner for "non-cooperation" or the "sins of their ancestors." At the end of the investigation thirty of them were sent to jail where they remained with common criminals until bail was paid. Intimidated by this example large and small businessmen gave up their savings, even sold their property at incredible loss,[16] and still could not raise enough. Not until June 20, 1942, could the Chinese leaders present the gift: M$29,000,000 collected through contributions and M$21,000,000 raised from loans from the Yokohama Specie Bank. It was received without gratitude. The Japanese had no intention of abandoning their discriminatory position. "This gift," declared General Yamashita at the formal ceremony, "in no way redeemed the previous acts of the Malayan Chinese in having supported Britain and Chungking."[17] In fact, all through the war the communities of Chinese remained the targets of open hostility and harassment. Chinese women were molested; Chinese property was seized. Periodically the police would cordon off areas and force people to walk past hooded informers. A nod from one meant certain death.[18]

Such practices engendered a mood of deep resentment and hostility. Frightened and helpless, the Chinese obeyed regula-

[14] Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 251; Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

[15] Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 386; Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–83.

[16] For example, rubber estates which before the War were worth M$500 per acre, were sold for M$40 to M$60 per acre.

[17] Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[18] Blythe, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

tions and endured humiliation. At formal occasions community leaders regularly pledged their "undying homage and absolute cooperation." Some actually collaborated, informed on friends, offered their daughters, even betrayed their parents.[19] Most Chinese, however, stored their hatred, nursed their bitterness, and yearned for the time of their revenge. Some elected to fight. Secret society members fled into the jungle only to re-emerge periodically as raiding parties.[20] Others joined a small group of Kuomintang guerrillas located along the Thai border or more often the rapidly growing Communist forces in the jungle. The latter were organized into eight Independent Anti-Japanese Regiments, received military training, and were ideologically indoctrinated.[21] Collectively they were called the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), and a measure of coordination between the different and somewhat diverse units was accomplished under a Secretary-General located at a general headquarters near Kuala Lumpur. In January, 1944, the chief representative of the Allied Commander-in-Chief "agreed to supply arms, finance, training and medical facilities,"[22] a commitment which after some delay was carried out. Communist-led guerrilla units were successful in systematically infiltrating the Occupation authorities. In addition, they carried out hit-and-run raids on Japanese installations and regularly kidnapped or assassinated Chinese leaders who were, or appeared to be, guilty of collaboration.

Resistance, however, was growing in the other communities as well. The Indians who at first served with enthusiasm (some 80,000 volunteered for the Indian National Army), donated money (the INA had a monthly budget of M$5,000,000), and informed on others and on each other, were definitely developing doubts. Increasing economic hardships, the miseries of forced

[19] It is not quite clear, for example, just how the idea of a M$50 million gift was originated, and just how the allocation between the states was decided upon. The collusion of Singapore businessmen was considered a definite possibility. The incidents with the Chief Police Officer at Taiping were almost certainly abetted, if not inspired, by some Chinese business leaders. (Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–77.)

[20] Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 207–211; Blythe, *op. cit.*, pp. 229–230.

[21] For a detailed account see Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–181.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 248. Allied support for Kuomintang guerrilla forces, however, was denied. The Supreme Commander Admiral Mountbatten considered them to be too closely linked to China. (Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 383.)

labor, the pathetic performance of the INA,[23] the persistent degradation and the growing certainty of Allied victory and British return, produced a gradual disenchantment with the cause of Japan. Still, the Indians in Malaya were not known for any dramatic resistance.

The Malay community too was soon disillusioned with a Malay Malaya made in Japan. Many, such as Harun bin Idris, left the towns to find refuge in the country. Villagers abandoned their *kampongs*. Some joined resistance groups. The British-trained "Force 136" included several Malay units. Serving with them was an energetic young man of noble birth, Abdul Razak bin Hussein. In August, 1944, Captain Ibrahim bin Ismail and four other Malays attempted to land from a submarine off the coast of Kedah.[24] In December a party of Malays (under Major Dobree) jumped-in by parachute and established an operational base in Upper Perak. Others moved in from the East Coast. The Sultan of Pahang agreed to serve as Colonel-in-Chief of these Malay guerrilla forces.[25]

Nevertheless, resentment against the Japanese Occupation forces, though ultimately shared by all the communities of Malaya, did not develop common loyalties. On the contrary, it reinforced inter-communal suspicion and hostility. The various Indian communities were drawn together, but their common cause "had little or no relevance to Malaya."[26] They demonstrated an overriding loyalty to a distant land. When Malayan Indian Muslims dissolved their "All India Muslim Club of Malaya" in order to be absorbed in the Independent Leagues, the message seemed clear for all to see. Their bonds to India were paramount. They held stronger than any others, even those which tied them to their Malay Muslim brothers. Worse still, Japanese occupation set the communities of Chinese against the Malays. Malay rulers, administrators and policemen offered no signs of solidarity to the Chinese; they showed no inclination to protect the minimum interests of the community of Chinese.

[23] Many deserted to the British; the bulk of the "army" surrendered in June. Sinnapah Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 107.

[24] Due to technical difficulties—the outboard motors of their landing boat failed—the mission was unsuccessful.

[25] Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 410–419.

[26] Arasaratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

In fact, many betrayed a sympathy for communal discrimination and systematic persecutions. Among the masses of Chinese workers the demand for political participation had already been kindled both by the neo-orthodox and the English-educated new leaders. Now increasingly businessmen, the traditional elites of their communities, were becoming convinced that government as a Malay prerogative was synonymous with the prospect of exploitation and repression. Bitterly resentful toward the Malay police and diverted from the Communist character of the MPAJA, a rapidly growing segment of these traditional leaders was united with most workers in their pride for the guerrillas and behind a post-war Malayan Republic, a Republic in which all communities shared political power,[27] and which as a matter of course would be dominated by the Chinese.

The MPAJA Interlude: A Chinese Malaya

Just as suddenly and unexpectedly as it appeared, Japanese control of the Peninsula was terminated. Only three years after the surrender of Singapore, radio contact was established between Allied headquarters and its representatives in Malaya. British-trained and British-led resistance teams were arriving, and arms were delivered regularly. On March 17, 1945, the agreement between the Representative of the Supreme Allied Commander (Major Davis) and the Communist leader of the MPAJA (Chang Hong) was formally reconfirmed. Two months later with operations in Burma proceeding satisfactorily, the proposed date of the Allied landings in Malaya was advanced from November to mid-August. In June the Chief-of-Staff approved the Allied Supreme Commander's plans for cooperation with the MPAJA and Malay guerrilla forces emphasizing that "the most important requirement from the military point of view was the greatest possible degree of internal security should be achieved after reoccupation."[28]

Before Allied landings could take place, however, in fact even before large scale guerrilla operations were undertaken, Imperial Japan was defeated. On August 15, 1945, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten proclaimed a British Military Administration

[27] The MPAJA symbol was three (equal) stars, one for each race in Malaya.

[28] Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 382; Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

over the Straits Settlements and the states of Malaya. At first local commanders appeared to continue resistance on their own, but they yielded after (on August 21) a member of the Japanese Imperial household arrived to confirm the Imperial rescript which announced acceptance of Allied demands of surrender.[29]

Meanwhile Major Davis, the Supreme Commander's representative in Malaya, came out of the jungle to the nearest telephone to establish direct contact with the Japanese Military Governor of Selangor. As a part of the surrender terms Japanese forces were instructed by him to concentrate in the main urban centers.[30] It was hoped that managed by British liaison officers, who by August exceeded three hundred, they could maintain and restrain the irregular resistance elements.

In some instances they could not. The hard core MPAJA, of course, was a disciplined lot; but they had their own loyalties and political objectives. The rest were embittered and hostile men with an intense sense of grievance and determination to settle a whole list of personal accounts. Toward the foreign invader they were outright pusillanimous. The single exception occurred at the end of August when MPAJA units ambushed a Japanese convoy at Slim, Perak. Their record, however, was very different with respect to the local populations.

Indeed when the guerrilla forces came out of their jungle hideouts, it seemed that the social transformation of the community of Chinese was about to be completed. Leadership would pass from the traditional businessmen and merchants to the men in uniforms and three-starred caps. They had become the heroes of the masses of workers; few others dared to offer resistance. Taking advantage of the opportunity, MPAJA units proceeded with a "cleaning up of traitors and running dogs." The accused were given a trial, and if the verdict was: "worthy of death," they were executed.[31] Cruelty as well as murder was the hallmark of these procedures. Some of the condemned were, for

[29] The word "surrender," however, was not mentioned once. A sentence which in the original draft read "the war situation went daily from bad to worse" was modified at the insistence of the War Minister to: ". . . the war situation had developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, ..." (Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 474.)

[30] Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 414; Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

[31] It was estimated that altogether some 2,542 persons were executed by traitor-killing squads. (Edgar O'Ballance, *Malaya: Communist Insurgent War, 1948–60*, London, Faber and Faber, 1966, p. 59.)

example, "put into pigs' cages, carried round the town, and then butchered before the crowds."[32] Women accused of being mistresses of Japanese officers were massacred after an elaborate public ceremony of derision and torture. Those found "guilty, but not amounting to death" were publicly given the "third degree." The assembled crowds were greatly amused. Soon the genuine MPAJA units were joined by others, roving bands of hoodlums and gangsters, wearing MPAJA uniforms and proclaiming themselves "Guerrillas of the Resistance Army." Duplicating the "acts of vengeance" of the Communists, they committed countless atrocities and instituted a reign of terror of their own. Businessmen, merchants, and artisans who were generally the targets of the attacks turned to their accustomed source for protection: the secret societies. These also emerging from hiding put up a fierce struggle in Perak, Selangor, and Penang. The Ang Bin Hoey, for example, captured a prominent MPAJA leader whom they exchanged for the leading trader of Kuala Kurau and his brother. The Yen Hai (Coastal Triad Group) pushed the Communists out of Kuala Gula and Matang back to Taiping. In general, however, the MPAJA proved too strong for the secret societies, and many members had to flee again into the jungle where they joined the Kuomintang guerrillas. But they did buy time, thus preventing the complete annihilation of the traditional leaders of the community of Chinese before British control was reestablished.

The MPAJA, however, was not content to assume a commanding role among the Chinese in Malaya. It had far bolder objectives. It was evidently determined to lay the foundations of its own Malayan Republic before the arrival of Allied power. Malay sovereignty and Malay leadership, no less than Chinese businessmen and merchants, were its targets. Behind the cover of righteous retribution it proposed "wreaking vendetta on Malays who had stirred up anti-Chinese hatred. . . ."[33] Armed Chinese promptly seized police stations, disarmed, and terrorized Malay constables. "Vicious policemen" marked down on their blacklists were tortured and executed. The Malay population, which saw no harm in the police during the Occupation persecuting Chinese because they were Chinese, was horrified to witness the "revenge of the Chinese" directed at policemen because they

[32] Chin Kee Onn, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

were Malays. The MPAJA units meanwhile expanded their operations against the Malay community. They paraded their military power, proclaimed their political control, abused Malay cultural heritage, and mocked the Muslim faith. They carried their reprisals into the rural *kampongs*. They tortured their victims, mutilated corpses, and imposed non-Muslim burial rites.[34] The villagers who witnessed the atrocities were shaken, but not intimidated. They carried such news from *kampong* to *kampong*—probably embellishing it further with each new telling—rousing the Malay populations to self-pity, then hatred, and finally to "retaliatory" massacres of Chinese—practically any Chinese accessible.

British troops finally landed in Penang on September 3 and two days later in Singapore. They fanned out quickly, but in some rural areas their control was not established for several months. There were victory parades in the cities with speeches and formal awards of military decorations. Chinese spectators were courteous to British units. Union Jacks and some American flags were displayed, but the loudest cheers were reserved for MPAJA contingents, and the greatest honor was invariably accorded to the Chinese flag. In their communal pride most apparently were quite convinced that the war had been won by China, and expected re-occupation by Chinese troops.[35] There followed negotiations with the MPAJA regarding final disarming and disbandment. A gratuity of M$350 was agreed upon, and by December about 6,800 men were disarmed and 5,497 weapons (some 800 more than were originally issued) were surrendered.[36]

Unfortunately for all, the MPAJA was not disbanded formally until it had raised the level of communal strife to heights not known before on the Peninsula. There were violent clashes in Pahang and Kelantan, but perhaps the most serious occurred in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Johore. On November 6, 1945, the Chinese settlement at Padang Lebar in Negri Sembilan was attacked by a Malay band. Those murdered included thirty-five women and five children. The next day another encounter at nearby Batu Kikir cost six Chinese and some Malay lives. Around Batu Pahat, Johore, Penghulu (village chief) Sal-

[34] Goh Kim Guat, "Sino-Malay Relations in Malaya 1945–1955" (Unpublished Graduation Exercise, Department of History, University of Malaya, 1960), p. 8.
[35] Donnison, *op. cit.*, p. 385.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

leh organized para-military units, conducted invulnerability rites and led a series of mass executions of Chinese and the burning of their property. On December 30, 1945, about a hundred Chinese descended upon the *kampong* of Lambor Kanan in Perak. They left behind three Malays dead and fourteen injured. Their own casualties were estimated as twenty-five.[37]

In fact, the MPAJA did not cease to operate in December. Its cadres were not disrupted. The arms it surrendered could be easily replaced. Of the more popular automatic weapons it already had good stores. The goal of a Malayan (People's) Republic remained its foremost objective. Above all, it still held the admiration and loyalty of most Chinese workers.

The Malayan Union: A Malayan Malaya

The British government, of course, also held strong views about the future of Malaya. As early as 1943, well before the generals seriously considered any prospects of Allied landings, the Colonial Office was already preparing recommendations for a revised pattern of governance after victory. For advice it turned to two prominent Malayan Chinese leaders, Tan Cheng Lock and H. S. Lee, in whom it had full confidence and who were easily accessible, as at the time they were in India.

No other Malayan leaders were consulted, certanly not the Communist guerrillas. The British knew all about their political goal and wanted no part of it. Discussion of post-war policy was avoided by Allied representatives negotiating with the MPAJA in 1943 and 1944.[38] As late as May 11, 1945, when Admiral Mountbatten seeking instructions from the Chiefs of Staff on policy regarding the Resistance forces in Malaya suggested an early publication of post-war intentions, he was informed that such action was as yet premature.[39]

Nor did the British government feel constrained by special obligations to the other groups. Obviously, it owed no gratitude for the conduct of the Indian communities. More important, it had no reason to be impressed by either the wartime solidarity or the political responsibility of the Malay Rulers. Hence, Colonial Office planners expecting after victory unprecedented

[37] Goh Kim Guat, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–10; Purcell, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–269.
[38] Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 249, 375–376; Donnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 380–381.
[39] Donnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 381–382.

military capabilities in the area saw an opportunity to institute a new constitutional arrangement most in line with their ideals, one which was democratic in form and centralized in structure.

A preview of the new arrangement was given in Parliament on October 10, 1945. In answer to a question the Secretary of State for the Colonies revealed plans for the establishment of a Malayan Union composed of the nine states on the Peninsula and two Straits Settlements, Malacca and Penang. All persons regardless of their racial background born in Malaya or meeting a residence requirement would become eligible for a common citizenship in the new state. Then, to explain the plan, a special emissary, Sir Harold MacMichael, was dispatched to Malaya. In just three months he reported that he had "successfully concluded with each of the Malay Rulers, after consultations conducted with friendliness and good will, an agreement, which supplementing the existing treaties, grants full jurisdiction in each State to His Majesty, the King of England."[40] A White Paper issued on January 22, 1946, announced the terms under which civilian administration was to be restored.

First, it proposed an end even to the formal sovereignty of the Malay Rulers. They were to be subordinated to a central government headed by a Governor assisted by Executive and Legislative Councils designed to be "broad-based and representative."[41] State and local government would operate through powers *delegated* by the central government to administrative officers and local councils. The Sultans would have to be content with legislative powers on matters involving Muslim religious questions (but excepting collection of tithes and taxes) and with presiding over a Malay Advisory Council, the members of which they themselves could select (with the Governor's approval).

Second, the White Paper revealed British intentions to redefine the political community. No longer could its boundaries be considered congruent with the Malay community. "All those who have made the country their homeland," the document declared, "should have an opportunity of a due share in the country's political and cultural institutions." Regardless of communal affiliation, all those born within the territory of the

[40] Sir Harold MacMichael, *Report of a Mission to Malaya* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946), Colonial No. 194.
[41] For details see: Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Malayan Union and Singapore: A Statement of Policy on Future Constitution* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946).

Malayan Union and Singapore, as well as those who had resided there for ten out of the preceding fifteen years and were prepared to affirm their allegiance would become citizens of it.[42] Specifically, all had a right to serve in the government, and as institutions became more and more representative, all had an equal right to elect the government. Perhaps to symbolize these intentions with the somewhat cryptic statement that it had "fulfilled its historic function" the Chinese Protectorate was abolished.

Given overwhelming military power—and Britain did have overwhelming military power in the area at the time—the Rulers could be "persuaded" to give up their sovereignty. To create a community by definition, however, was another matter. Predictably the reaction among Malays was hostile. The Rulers somewhat belatedly protested the manner in which their consent was obtained by the Special Representative of His Majesty's Government. "I was presented with a verbal ultimatum with a time limit," lamented the Sultan of Kedah, "and in the event of my refusing to sign the new agreement, which I call the Instrument of Surrender, a successor, who would sign it, would be appointed Sultan . . . I was told that this matter was personal and confidential, and was not allowed to tell my people what had taken place."[43] Then, under the leadership of the Sultan of Perak they proceeded to formulate more specific demands directed toward the exclusion of as many Chinese and Indians from the polity as possible and to retain as much power to themselves as was available. They insisted, for example, that residents of Singapore must not be eligible for Malayan Union citizenship and that land alienation, state finance, as well as other local matters should properly fall within the control of State Councils. They announced their opposition in local newspapers; through friends and acquaintances in London they carried their case to the British government. Captain Gammans, a Conservative Member of Parliament, received letters from most of the Rulers. The Sultan of Johore went to London to personally channel the protests to the appropriate British authorities. On February 10 the Sultan of Kelantan cabled to the Secretary of State and requested modifications in the Malayan Union proposals. On the twenty-first, the Sultans of Kedah, Perak, Pahang, Selangor, and the *di-Pertuan Besar* of Negri Sembilan pleaded for an independent commission to investigate the situation. In a few days the Sultan of Trengganu followed suit.

[42] Persons of Japanese ancestry were specifically excluded from citizenship, and the years of Japanese Occupation were disregarded in the calculation of the residence requirement.

[43] Quoted in K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 45n.

The response of Malay nationalist leaders was neither so specific nor so restrained. Britain, they felt, was guilty of perfidy, pure and simple. That the Sultans were to be deprived of the last vestiges of political authority was, of course, disappointing. Still, never burdened with unalloyed devotion toward their traditonal elites, the nationalist leaders would have accepted it as a sacrifice for a centralized new Malay state. What they could never forgive was that those they considered their protectors now asserted the anathema that *in Malaya* Chinese and Indian cultures were equal to Malay culture and the political rights of immigrant Chinese and Indians were equal to those of the indigenous Malays. Indeed, Malay nationalist leaders never had much respect for democratic values or for the rights and interests of their Chinese and Indian neighbors. In turn, they saw no reason to assume that the Chinese and Indians given a chance would not seek to subjugate and exploit them. The recent experience with MPAJA terror came all too vividly to mind. Equality and political participation may have yielded maximum benefits to all in Britain; they may or may not have produced a just society in Britain. In Malaya, Malay nationalists feared, they would lead promptly and inevitably to an unmitigated catastrophe. Malay culture would be driven out by Chinese or English; Malays would become strangers in their homeland. Their dignity, even their identity, would come to rest upon their capacity to assimilate into an alien society. Worse still, their very survival was in doubt. Free competition in an environment of political equality would grant decisive advantages to the Chinese. The Malays generally less aggressive and less skilled would have little chance to earn a decent livelihood. Certainly, not in an economy thoroughly controlled by the Chinese. If that was democracy, it certainly was not justice.

Driven by an acute sense of impending disaster, Malay schoolteachers, religious leaders, and folk-heroes set out to mobilize their people to prevent the implementation of the Malayan Union scheme. They called mass meetings of protest after mass

meetings of protest. No less important, they forged an alliance with the British-educated administrators. The latter, of course, were in a very strategic position. Ascriptive ties linked them to the Rulers, personal accomplishment earned them the respect of the British officials. They were no more moderate than the nationalists on issues of Malay communal interest. But unlike the Malay nationalists, they knew the uses of moderation. So when the time came, they assumed the initiative. On May 11, 1946, the United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO), headed by the Chief Minister (*Mentri Besar*) of Johore, Dato Onn bin Ja'afar was formed, and with it a mass political party capable of mobilizing the Malay communities, representing a clear majority of the population. If under these circumstances Britain would persist in its Malayan Union plan and seek to introduce democracy over their objections, it would make a mockery of the concept.

That, indeed, the British government was not prepared to do. Especially because the response of the community of Chinese to the Malayan Union scheme left much to be desired. Press reaction was, to say the least, apathetic. *The New Democracy* (*Sin Min Chu*), a Communist daily in Singapore, objected to the separation of the island from the union.[44] Others questioned the propriety of Sir Harold MacMichael's approaching only the Malay Rulers and ignoring the other elements of the population. Traditional community leaders were silent; presumably they had their hands full with the Communist challenge. The Communists, of course, were something else. Mr. H. B. Lim, Secretary of the Malayan Democratic Union, characterized the proposed Union as a "constitutional swindle."[45] The Party itself moved rapidly toward rebellion. On October 21-23, Communist demonstrations at Ipoh developed into sit-down strikes. Troops had to open fire to disperse the strikers. On the same day at Batu Gajah a Senior Civil Affairs Officer had to be rescued from a Chinese mob. Then came the case of Soong Kwong. Chan San Meng accused the General Secretary of the MPAJA in Selangor (Soong Kwong) of extortion. The MPAJA, he charged, had captured him and then released him only after he signed a promissory note for M$300,000. Soong Kwong was arrested on October 12, 1945, and brought to trial in November. The result was a

[44] Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

[45] H. B. Lim, "Malaya's 'Constitution,'" *Labour Monthly*, Vol. 28 (1946), p. 382.

split decision: The President of the Court found him guilty of extortion, the Assessors found him not guilty. After a new trial with a similar result on January 3, 1946, a third court consisting only of British officers convicted him and imposed a sentence of four years rigorous imprisonment. On review, Admiral Lord Mountbatten was inclined to be lenient and to remit the sentence entirely provided two persons would be prepared to guarantee his good behavior by M$1000 bond each. Before he could act, however, the Union declared a general strike in Singapore. Perceived as a challenge to British authority, it was broken,[46] but within two months another confrontation followed. The General Labour Union requested the Military Administration to authorize a public holiday for February 15. Ostensibly, it was to be a day of mourning to commemorate the British surrender of Singapore, but there was little doubt that the occasion would be turned into a joyous event. Accordingly, permission was denied. Even so, on February 14 all Chinese newspapers carried "A call to the Public" exhorting people to participate in the rally and procession next day. In Singapore, at Mersing and Labis in Johore, in Malacca, and in Penang serious clashes occurred, resulting in arrests and the police opening fire.[47] Subsequently, some of the agitators were convicted and a few deported.

Admittedly, these public challenges to British authority were instigated by Communist elements, and it is true that in most instances the response among the masses was somewhat disappointing to the instigators. Still, the substantial numbers who did demonstrate their support when added to those who preferred to stay out of all political contests of the day raised a serious question about majority support for the Malayan Union proposal even within the community of Chinese.

Evidently there was very little popular support for a homogenized polity. Not among the Malays, not among the Chinese, and not among the Indians. The latter for once were politically

[46] Donnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 389–391.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 391–396. The British Military Administration would have proceeded more vigorously against the ringleaders had Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, not refused his consent. In South East Asia and later in India the Admiral exhibited an extraordinary commitment to the procedural norms of democratic government and a singular lack of appreciation for the preconditions necessary for the establishment and maintenance of such a government.

cautious. Many had not yet forgotten the disappointments of Japanese Occupation. Others were emotionally involved with the struggle for independence on the Indian Sub-continent quite some distance away. Besides, the Indian communities all together represented only a relatively small minority in Malaya, and in any case they had proven to be rather uncertain allies.

Actually the British government had very little choice. It had to proceed with its plan to re-establish civil government, and a new Governor of the Malayan Union, Sir Edward Gent, was duly installed on April 1, 1946.[48] Some three weeks earlier, however, it announced that the implementation of the proposals regarding Malayan Union citizenships would be postponed.

[48] The ceremony was boycotted by the Malay Rulers; other Malays refused to serve on any council or board.

CHAPTER THREE

The Federation of Malaya: The Beginning of Compromise

It is remarkable how radically the relationship among the various communities changed in less than five years. Gone was the confidence that the minimum interest of each would not be violated at the hand of another, and so was the comforting illusion that except for the most prominent members of each community, most everyone could indulge himself in a casual indifference toward the existence of other groups inhabiting the Peninsula. The experience of direct contact during the Japanese Occupation and the MPAJA terror left in its wake an intense awareness of the presence of others and the unlimited threat they presented. Fear, suspicion, and hostility raised the condition of radical discontinuity between the communities, previously a prominent fact, to the predominant consideration.

Gone too was any realistic prospect of returning to the prewar definition of stability. British troops had returned victoriously, but not before the frailty of British control was exposed. Faith in Britain's role as an insulator among the communities with an effective capacity to impose even-handedly the parameters of their relationship was critically undermined. Clearly, a new political formula was called for.

The first attempt, the Malayan Union, fell rather short of the mark. It decreed political equality before the existence of a political community; it envisaged democratic politics without a consensus on basic norms and where the allocation of rewards was perceived in zero-sum terms. Such theoretical flaws were apparently overlooked due to the unusual conditions. The design, after all, had been drawn up during the War in London after all contact with Malaya was lost. Hence, there was not any opportunity to sense or appreciate the radical changes. The plan was implemented moreover precipitately under a timetable imposed by the exigencies of the military, ignoring in general the demands of statesmanship. But even granting the best intentions, which many Chinese and most Malays were disinclined to do

the flaws were there, and they aggravated inter-communal tension. Inter-communal boundaries were now more sharply drawn than ever. Indeed, a new, more viable political design had become an imperative.

This time the British government was taking no chances. The political realities of Malaya would be fully recognized. First, a Working Committee charged with preparing a draft for a new Constitution was appointed. Sitting with British officials were the Malay Rulers and the leaders of UMNO, the popular representatives of the recently mobilized Malay community. Subsequently, a consultative committee composed of prominent members of the other communities was also organized. There would be a broadly based expression of views and an opportunity for the Government to gauge the political salience of each.

The British government, however, had no intention of abdicating its pre-eminent role in the new political definition. Most of all, it was determined to reorganize the political structure. The existence, side by side, of Federated States, Unfederated States and Straits Settlements was demonstrably cumbersome and wasteful of scarce personnel resources. If Malaya was ever to take her place in the international community, she needed an effective central government. The only question that remained was just how much authority could be conceded to local (provincial) units. Practically nothing was the answer of the Malayan Union experiment. Not much more, the revised position.

Almost as firm was the British position for the need for a redefinition of the polity. The dichotomy of Malays and "immigrants" was, they were convinced, no longer a viable arrangement. It was time to recognize this fact, for if ever a Malayan nation was to emerge, the various communities would have to be integrated. Unfortunately, satisfactory terms had not yet been found. Experience with the Malayan Union scheme suggested that a relationship based on political equality was, at least initially, not the correct approach. The British government hoped that the communities themselves might find the appropriate formula.

For this, the Malays were definitely in the strongest position. They could, as in the past, claim the legitimacy of the traditional order. Now, however, they could also demand recognition under the democratic principle of majority rule. The United Malays

National Organisation (UMNO) was remarkably successful in mobilizing (Malay) masses. When in June two Members of Parliament visited Malaya, it demonstrated its resources quite convincingly. "In every hamlet, village and town that we visited we were met by what appeared to be the whole population," wrote Lieutenant Colonel Rees-Williams.[1] Communal as its appeal was, given the disproportionate politicization of the Malays, UMNO could easily carry an election by any show of hands.

UMNO leadership, moreover, had fairly clear ideas about its objectives. Centralization may have disturbed the Rulers but posed no problem to them as long as the dignity of the Rulers was not violated. A national government firmly in Malay hands presented a far better defense against Chinese control than a loose aggregate of sultanates. The key to stable government, they thought, was the optimal definition of the terms of inter-communal relations.

The emergence of a single national community based on the principle of personal equality may have intrigued Dato Onn bin Ja'afar, the Party's president, but was anathema to most Malays. As long as in the foreseeable future communal lines were so clearly drawn, any Malayan "nation" would have to be based on the cooperation of the communities rather than on individual consent. And the cooperation of the Malay community could be realistically expected only—and they were quite firm on this—if (1) Malay cultural dominance of the new "nation" would be established and (2) Malay political control would be assured for some time ahead. To those who found such terms excessive, even chauvinistic, UMNO leaders advanced a variety of arguments. To begin with, it would not be fair to deprive the Malay community of its sovereignty, which for generations had been uncontested, without some form of political compensation. Second, the Malays simply would not stand for it. Their dignity, even identity, was deeply involved in their culture, and they were quite determined to defend it with their lives. Whether Britain was prepared (even with Chinese help) to pursue a prolonged effort of massive coercion extending into all distant *kampongs*, or indeed if it had the capacity to do so would certainly be put to the test. In any case, without a general acceptance of

[1] D. R. Rees-Williams, "The Constitutional Position in Malaya," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (June, 1947), p. 174.

these minimum demands there could be no real prospect of the integration of communities into the Malayan "nation." All the inspiring perorations about man's innate equality would not hide the very real disparity in the economic position of the communities of Chinese and Malays. Given the easy facility with which economic control can be converted into political power, total control of the former would be only a matter of time—a very short time. The masses of Malays, already objects of exploitation and derision, would have no chance at all. Britain, UMNO leaders implied pointedly, really ought to have learned from its Palestine experience.

Actually, UMNO contentions received some confirmation by the absence of serious challenges from the other indigenous elements. The Indians continued to be fully absorbed in the political developments on the Sub-continent. More important, the community of Chinese was preoccupied with its own intra-communal struggles. The hold of the Communists over the Chinese workers remained profound, but they were more interested in overthrowing British rule than in negotiating political terms with the Malay groups. *The New Democracy*, a Communist daily in Singapore, merely remarked that it was "meaningless to debate the minute details of citizenship and election when the restoration of civil rights mattered most."[2] The traditional leaders meanwhile were still in the process of trying to recover from the Japanese Occupation and to re-establish commercial links disrupted by the Second World War.

There was only one element within the community of Chinese which was prepared to take a constructive initiative: the English educated. Socially a diverse group, culturally *déraciné*, they were particularly anxious to establish a national community through which they could gain a new identity, but they had also acquired an appreciation of compromise and had learned the art of turning it to one's advantage. Tan Cheng Lock—son of a wealthy family which had settled in Malacca several generations before, Member of the Consultative Assembly in the 1930's, head of the Chinese Oversea Association in India during the War—was in a particularly strategic position to make a political move. A firm supporter of the Malayan Union scheme, he organized the All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) to combat any revisions. His goal, he declared, was to prevent

[2] Quoted in Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

"cleaving the population in two antagonistic groups, viz., Malays and non-Malays."[3] Indeed like the MPAJA, the Council claimed to be a multi-communal alliance, and like the MPAJA it took for granted the hegemony of the more vigorous (if not culturally superior) Chinese. But there the similarities ended. Unlike the MPAJA, the Council included genuine (even if not mainstream) Malay elements such as the Malay Nationalist Party and the Angkatan Permuda.[4] Similarly, some objectives designed to appeal to the Malays were included in the resolutions unanimously adopted by the first Council session on December 22, 1946. After setting the goals of a United Malaya including Singapore, a fully elected Central Legislature, and equal political rights for all who regarded Malaya as their home and the object of their loyalty, the Council also endorsed the Malay Sultans as sovereign though constitutional Rulers, Muslim religion and custom under the exclusive control of the Malays, and finally, somewhat condescendingly, advocated the advancement of the Malays.[5] Unlike the MPAJA, moreover, whose ambition was a Malaya under the leadership of Chinese workers forged into a culturally, if not politically, chauvinist working class, Tan Cheng Lock had in mind the pre-eminence of middle class professionals with cosmopolitan tastes and an aversion to violence. Democratic politics, not revolution, was their preferred method for nation-building.

What Tan Cheng Lock needed most, of course, was massive popular support. Conceivably, the masses of Chinese workers could have supplied this, but it seemed that the Communists had gained too much of an advantage there. Besides neither he nor his colleagues were quite comfortable amid proletarian camaraderie. The only alternative was to make common cause with the traditional leaders of the community of Chinese and hope that they, through the remnants of their prestige, could still mobilize sufficient numbers of supporters to give at least the impression of massive following.

The AMCJA during its short existence accomplished two things. First, it persuaded traditional leaders of the mutual

[3] Quoted in Goh Kim Guat, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[4] It also included such Chinese dominated groups as the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and the MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades Association.

[5] Arun Kumar Banerjee, "Constitutional Development in Malaya since 1945" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Calcutta, 1970).

benefits of close cooperation. Second, it convinced the British authorities that it offered them a resource of enlightened Chinese leaders who were prepared to be reasonable toward the other communities as well as to the colonial power. The Council, however, never really impressed anyone as a vanguard of popular aspirations. After only a few months the Malay components withdrew to form the more exclusive (Malay) organization PUTERA. The Communists, in turn, ended their nominal support and turned to terror and the preparation of an organized uprising. Tan Cheng Lock and the Council remained content to send a cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies urging him to hold firm in support of the Malayan Union, and other cables demanding that Britain reject all previous agreements with the Sultans and UMNO and deal directly with the AMCJA. The cables were generally ignored. When later the Council in conjunction with the Chinese Chambers of Commerce called for a boycott of Legislative and State Councils, it was rather a fiasco. Response was thin but violent and benefited only the extremist elements. In less than a week Tan Cheng Lock felt compelled to reverse himself.

Formal negotiations on the terms of a new political definition meanwhile proceeded with all deliberate speed, and reflected the existing power relationships. On June 1 the Governor-General, Sir Malcolm MacDonald, arrived in Kuala Lumpur to take personal hand. His reception was in marked contrast to the inauguration just two months earlier. UMNO agitation had become muted. Dato Onn was counseling moderation and restraint. At a rally in Penang expressing his confidence in the forthcoming developments, he warned against rash action. This time all the Rulers attended the ceremonies.

The following day the negotiations "on the highest level" commenced. Their immediate result was an announcement of "substantial modifications" in the Malayan Union. In fact, the whole arrangement was scrapped. Instead, a federation was envisaged within which the historical identity of the Malay states and the traditional dignity of the Rulers would be recognized. For discussions of other issues and for recommendations on specific details, a "Working Committee" was appointed. It was composed of eleven members and brought together five British officials with six Malays, who represented the Rulers and UMNO. The Committee met for the first time on August 6; by October

the main features of the new federation were settled; by the middle of November the final draft of the report was agreed upon; on December 11, 1946, after personal consultations with the Governor-General, the Secretary for the Colonies reassured Parliament that new proposals would overcome "the objections of the Malays"; finally some two weeks later the report of the Working Committee was published.

According to its *Report*[6] the Working Committee in its deliberations was guided by five principles: (1) the requirement of a strong central government; (2) the need for maintaining the individuality of each Malay state and each Settlement; (3) the necessity of new arrangements leading ultimately to self-government; (4) the goal of a common citizenship for all who regarded Malaya as their "real home and as the object of their loyalty"; and (5) the recognition that "subjects of Your Highnesses . . . occupy a special position and possess rights which must be safeguarded." To accomplish these objectives it proposed a federation of nine Malay states and the Settlements of Malacca and Penang.

As a matter of fact, most of the document was addressed to institutional arrangements (i.e., the first three principles). The role of the chief executive (High Commissioner) was to remain pivotal. He would represent the British monarch on matters of defense, external affairs and appeals to the Privy Council; on all other executive matters he would act on authority jointly delegated by the British monarch and the heads of states (Malay Rulers and Governors of Settlements). He would be assisted by an appointed Executive Council and an appointed Legislative Council. The latter composed of the High Commissioner, fourteen official and thirty-four unofficial members—with the membership designed to afford fullest representation to the entire range of communities and economic groups—would be granted the power to make laws on the most important subjects. The states, in turn, would be formally headed by the Rulers, or in case of the former Straits Settlements by Governors, who were entitled to splendid ceremonial honors and endowed with ex-

[6] Malaya (Federation of), *Report of the Working Committee Appointed by A Conference of His Excellency The Governor of The Malayan Union, Their Highnesses The Rulers of The Malay States and The Representatives of The United Malays National Organization* (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Government Press, 1947).

travagant perquisites. Each was also provided with a State Executive Council supervising local administration but dependent on personnel from the central civil service, and a Council of State which could legislate on the relatively few and insignificant matters not reserved to the central government. The advice of the High Commissioner (and his agent, the Resident Advisor) was to be accepted in all matters except those in the case of the Malay states which related to Muslim religion and Malay custom. In order to facilitate contact among the Rulers themselves and to afford them an occasional opportunity to meet with the High Commissioner, periodic meetings to be institutionalized as the Conference of Rulers were proposed. At least three times a year they would gather to discuss common problems and to be briefed on policy by the central administration. Indeed, the federal system the Committee proposed was remarkably like a unitary system. On this point, the British position prevailed.

The results were somewhat different on the second focus of the report: citizenship. Malay views did not win out, but Malay determination forced substantial changes in the earlier Malayan Union formula. First of all, the Committee specifically rejected any linkage between citizenship and nationality. "It was explained," the *Report* stated unequivocally, "that it [i.e., citizenship] was not a nationality, neither could it develop into a nationality." The point was illustrated by the examples of British subjects in the Settlements and the subjects of Malay Rulers, but the implications were directed against the Chinese and Indians. By becoming citizens of the proposed federation they would not be required to sacrifice their previous nationality; but, in turn, they could not expect to gain a new, common Malayan nationality either. All that citizenship could mean to persons of Chinese and Indian antecedents was some access to the political process. "It could be a qualification for electoral rights, for membership of Councils and for employment in Government service. . . ." And even this prospect was limited to relatively few of them. Unless they had become British subjects in the Settlements (Malacca or Penang), were born in the territories to comprise the proposed Federation from parents who were also born in these territories and had resided continuously for at least fifteen years, or were born to a father who was himself a Federal citizen—and there were very few who met these tests—Chinese

(as well as Indians) would have to acquire citizenship through naturalization. That meant a somewhat extended administrative process involving proof of residence "at least ten out of fifteen years preceding the date of application,"[7] testimonials of good character, a demonstration of "adequate knowledge" of either Malay or English, a declaration of permanent settlement, and an expression of willingness to take an oath of allegiance to the Federation. In stark contrast, Malays were spared any of these complications. For them there would be no questions on terms of residence, no need for loyalty oaths. As subjects of their rulers, the Committee proposed, they would become citizens automatically, by operation of law.

Related was the third major focus of the *Report*, the special position of the Malays. Here again Malay negotiators made a profound impression and gained major concessions. One justification for preferential treatment was implied in the introduction to the document which dwelt in some detail on the historical continuity of Malay sovereignty over the area. Another was explicitly stated later in the *Report*. "The Malays live in a country in which they, owing to the influx of *foreign immigrants*, are already numerically inferior. It is important to emphasize that the Malays have no alternative homeland, while the remainder of the population, with few exceptions, retain in varying degrees a connection with their country of origin, and, *in very many cases* regard that country and not Malaya as the primary object of their loyalty and affection."[8]

Responding to these, basically political justifications, the Committee was prepared to support a preferential role for Malays in the political processes. In the elite cadres of the civil administration the Malays already held heavy numerical preponderance. Nothing would even be implied or hinted to change this. The advantage, however, was to be carried over to the newly proposed Legislative Council. At least eighteen of the thirty-four unofficial seats would be held by Malays.[9] And the advantage was to be further enhanced by so structuring the electoral base that the Malay popular plurality would emerge as a political majority.

[7] Or if the applicant was not born within these territories, fifteen out of twenty years.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 23. Italics added.

[9] The Malay majority included the nine Chief Ministers (*Mentris Besar*) of the Malay States, but not the Chief Ministers of the two Settlements who could also be Malays.

The Chinese and Indian portion was to be held to a minimum by disincentives, a catalogue of restrictive regulations, and the "strict interpretation" of citizenship requirements. In contrast, the Malay component was to be maximized. Anyone regardless of previous origin or length of residence on the Peninsula who (1) habitually spoke the Malay language, (2) professed the Muslim religion, and (3) conformed to Malay custom was to be considered a Malay. As a pattern for "ultimate self-government" all this added up to political control by Malays.

The most important accomplishment of the Malay members of the Working Committee and more specifically the UMNO representatives was not as clearly spelled out. During the negotiations, however, Britain abandoned the cherished aspiration of a political system based upon a homogenized polity, and had given up the Malayan Union which had posited the citizen as the basic political unit whose interest would be aggregated and whose rewards would be allocated presumably through democratic processes. Instead, it accepted a political system which was formally a federation of territorially defined units, but most fundamentally was a coalition of communal leaders.

The essential redefinition of the foundations of the political system was not lost on the various communities in Malaya. Interest in the specific structural arrangements through which power was distributed—interest which was never exactly acute —was clearly subordinated to a determination by each community to gain most favorable access to the political power levers wherever in the system they may be located. In this vein negotiations continued.

Concerned as the British government had become with Malay popular opinion, it had evidently no intention of ignoring the sentiments of the Chinese and Indians. All along while the Working Committee was deliberating, its spokesmen in public statements and private assurances emphasized that no final decisions would be taken until all elements were given an opportunity to express their views and to participate in the procedures.[10] In fact, promptly after the Working Committee had

[10] See, for example, broadcast of Governor-General before his departure to London with the Working Committee recommendations and the statement of the Secretary of State for Colonies in Parliament after the receipt of these recommendations. (Banerjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–26.) See also the Governor-General's private assurance to Tan Cheng Lock and other Chinese leaders. (Goh Kim Guat, *op. cit.*, p. 28.)

submitted its recommendations, a Consultative Committee composed of nine members was appointed. Chaired by H. R. Cheesman, Director of Education, it contained prominent persons from all previously unconsulted communities. In addition to its deliberative sessions, the Committee held six meetings at which representatives of various groups voiced their views. It also received some eighty letters from such diverse sources as the Malayan Sikh Union, Five Clerks from Ipoh, and the Persatuan Melayu Ulu Trengganu commenting on the Working Committee report and/or suggesting alternatives. On March 31, 1947, the Consultative Committee submitted its report.[11]

With all the appendices it formed a fairly heavy volume. Yet significantly it spent little time on the major focus of the Working Committee's Report, i.e., the distribution of power between the central and state governments and the institutions to be established. Instead, it concentrated on maximizing the role of communities other than Malay in the political process. The Consultative Committee took issue with the exclusion of Singapore from the Federation. It recommended somewhat easier tests for naturalization and more stringent requirements for disloyalty and revocation of citizenship. Above all, it recommended a different distribution of seats in the future Legislative Council. The Consultative Committee felt that the Council should be expanded to twenty-three official and fifty-two unofficial, a total of seventy-five, members. Among the unofficial seats the Malays would receive twenty, the largest, but definitely less than a majority. The Malay voting strength, however, would be improved by the inclusion of the Chief Ministers of States and Settlements among the official members.

The two Chinese members of the Committee (H. S. Lee and Leong Yew Koh) filed dissenting opinions. On the two most salient issues identified by the Committee, they wanted to go further than their colleagues. They decried the "discriminatory" qualifications for citizenship and insisted on criteria which would radically reduce the disincentives for Chinese (and Indians). They also sought a further reduction of Malay component in the Legislative Council by including the Chief Ministers not

[11] Malaya (Federation of), *Report of The Consultative Committee Together with Proceedings of Six Public Meetings, A Summary of Representations Made and Letters and Memoranda Considered by The Committee* (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Government Press, 1947).

among the official members, but among the twenty Malay representatives.[12] With the Chinese and Indians (including Ceylonese) entitled to twenty-one representatives, the Malays could expect to be consistently outvoted by "foreign immigrants." It was a bargaining bid presumably, but it was perfectly clear that the Chinese members of the Committee (just as the Malay members of the Working Committee) were not reluctant to advance the interests of their own community without any great regard to the interests of the others. A zero-sum game, pure and simple.

It was not an entirely wasted effort. On April 17, 1947, the Working Committee was reconvened to formulate the final proposals. They were transmitted to London and after acceptance by the British government published as a White Paper in July, 1947. To the end the recommendations of the Working Committee on structural arrangements and the distribution of power between the central and state governments remained largely intact. Nor were there any significant alterations in the proposals for citizenship requirements. The only substantial change affected membership in the Legislative Council. After the White Paper recorded the British government's conviction "that the Malays certainly form an absolute majority among those in the country who regard Malaya as their permanent home and object of their loyalty," the size of the Council was expanded to one hundred with Malay representation reduced to an expected twenty-two, about the same proportion as recommended by H. S. Lee and Leong Yew Koh.

As Malcolm MacDonald promised, none of the communities received "everything it wanted." The Federation of Malaya was a compromise. Moreover, in the light of approaching independence, it was an incomplete compromise. British (external) authority still could be expected to enforce the parameters of legitimate conflict among the communal groups (and more specifically the Malays and Chinese) and arbitrate when necessary within the parameters. Once that stabilizing factor was removed, as it had been during the Japanese Occupation, only rules generally respected could serve as effective substitutes. Those rules were still to be determined through hard bargaining between communal groups.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 181–182.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Emergency: Rebellion and Retrogression

NEARLY an impossible challenge: to discover generally acceptable terms of inter-communal relationships. No reliable blueprints were available, no guidelines how to proceed. Even at the highest levels of British administration there was a notable lack of agreement. The High Commissioners—and there were four in rapid succession—were generally fascinated by the ideal of a homogenized polity. Their momentum had been restrained; nevertheless, they still were motivated by a desire to accomplish, perhaps in the distant future, a political system where the individual or at least non-ascriptive groups would serve as the salient components. The Commissioner General for South East Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, meanwhile pursued a different line. He was prepared to recognize the legitimacy and long-term persistence of communal groups. He wanted to bring their leaders together, to get them talking and perhaps negotiating. Both approaches were pursued, but both were soon overshadowed. All political planning had to be subordinated to the exigencies of the State of Emergency.

Communist Insurgency

Indeed the MPAJA cadres had not disbanded; they had not given up their political goals nor the methods of violence they believed so efficacious. Rapidly, their challenges to government escalated from chronic industrial violence[1] and widespread banditry to a systematic intimidation of urban and rural workers, a program of assassination against (Chinese and European) businessmen and plantation owners, and a series of attacks in company strength on police stations as well as other government installations, all culminating dramatically in the ambush

[1] During 1947 there were some 300 major strikes at a loss of 696,036 working days. (Harry Miller, *The Communist Menace in Malaya*, New York, Praeger, 1955, p. 74.)

and murder of the High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney on October 7, 1951.[2]

Neither the Federation nor Britain had any intention whatever to concede the country to the Communists. Confronted with accelerated challenges to public order, they were determined to restore the full authority of government. First, the government moved decisively to expand its capacity to control by a build-up in its coercive resources. The relatively modest police force of 10,223 officers and men, and the army garrison of eleven undermanned battalions and a Field Regiment[3] were rapidly augmented both through the development of internal and by the infusion of external resources. In less than three years the regular police force was more than doubled, including some new "hunter-killer" platoons[4] and a Special Constabulary of 39,000 Malays was established. Meanwhile, the Malay Regiment was expanded to five battalions; two more were planned in 1952. Home Guard units were organized, their total membership targeted at 420,000. The formation of a Federation Armoured Corps was authorized and a Ferret Force comprised of former Force 136 officers with a special jungle training was established. As though this were not enough, the British government decided to despatch further military reinforcements: first a battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and in an unprecedented call, the 2nd Guards Brigade;[5] then, Australian and New Zealand detachments, a Fiji battalion, two battalions from the Kings African Rifles,[6] and finally units of Iban trackers from Sarawak.[7] They were supported by additional air force and naval units. At the height of the Emergency, the Security Forces exceeded 350,000 men; the Communist insurgents at any time probably numbered less than 12,000 men and women.[8]

[2] For a detailed account of the sequence of events see: Miller, *op. cit.*, and O'Ballance, *op. cit.* For a study of the motivations and common characteristics of the insurgents see: Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

[3] The British Infantry battalions, six Gurkha Rifle battalions, three battalions of the Malay Regiment and the 26th Field Regiment, R.A.

[4] By the end of 1950 the police force included 418 gazetted officers, 617 inspectors, 400 British lieutenants and 23,656 rank and file—a total of 25,154. (Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 199.)

[5] Composed of the Scots Guards, the Grenadier Guards and the Coldstream Guards.

[6] The 1st (Nyasaland) and the 3d (Kenya) Battalions.

[7] Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–98 and 198.

[8] O'Ballance, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Second, the government moved to expand its capacity to control by further centralizing its organizational structure. In April, 1950, all decisions regarding the Emergency were concentrated in a newly appointed Director of Operations (Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs). He, in turn, promptly established a Federal War Council, a high level policy-making body joining together the heads of civil administration, the police and military commanders. Coordination on lower levels was to be maximized by State War Executive Committees and even District War Executive Committees. And, in order to assure that decisions of the Federation would be promptly and efficiently implemented, plans were announced to double, even triple, the number of officers in the central civil service assigned to duties in the states and districts. Although the supremacy of the civil authority was formally maintained, it was perfectly clear that the new centralized structure, though ostensibly limited to Emergency operations, was for all intents and purposes the government of the Federation. General Briggs himself was fully convinced that the Director of Operations was "at liberty to direct anybody to anything."[9] When nearly two years later General Templer arrived on the scene, he did so both as High Commissioner and as Director of Operations. One of his first acts was a terse directive to government officers: "Any idea that the business of normal civil Government and the business of the Emergency are two separate entities must be killed for good and all." He then consolidated unitary control by merging the Federation Executive Council with the Federal War Council. "There can be but one instrument of policy at the Federation level," General Templer decreed.[10]

Third, the government proceeded against the Communist insurgency by applying vigorously its expanding coercive capacity. Communist guerrillas were pursued relentlessly. Substantial cash rewards were posted for any captured dead or alive.[11] Police raids and army ambushes harassed their movement. Planes spraying chemicals defoliated the jungle and exposed

[9] London, *Times*, April 18, 1950, p. 4.

[10] Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–205.

[11] In April, 1952, the price was practically tripled. For Chen Ping, the Secretary-General of the Party it was set at M$250,000 if captured alive and at half as much if killed. Smaller sums, in decreasing scale, were offered for lesser officials. (O'Ballance, *op. cit.*, p. 123.) The rewards were withdrawn in 1953.

their hidden trails. Air and naval forces bombarded suspected base camps and guerrilla force concentrations. Paratroopers and helicopter units carried the attack to their most concealed hide-outs. In order to deprive the guerrillas of their supply base among the civilian population, Regulation 17D was invoked. Under its provisions persons suspected of supporting the insurgents were detained and some were banished.[12] Under the same regulation "collective punishment" for entire towns was imposed. A month after the High Commissioner's murder, all 2000 inhabitants of Tras were detained and the town was obliterated. The "collective punishment" of the 20,000 inhabitants of Tanjong Malim was an even larger-scale operation. After a detachment sent to repair a water pipeline was ambushed, General Templer addressed an assemblage of community leaders. "This is going to stop," he declared. "It does not amuse me to punish innocent people, but many of you are not innocent. You have information which you are too cowardly to give."[13] Then he personally announced the sentence: a strict twenty-two hour curfew, all inhabitants restricted to the town, all schools closed and the ordinary rice ration reduced to less than half. There were other instances of collective punishment: Permatang Tinggi and Pekah Jabi, but the most dramatic application of coercive capacity involved a massive program of resettlement.

Indeed, soon after the emergency was proclaimed, the government concluded that while some support for the insurgents was forthcoming from urban collaborators and fence-sitters, their main logistical base was formed by hundreds of thousands of squatters. Living off marginal land at the edges of the jungle these people had sold food to the anti-Japanese guerrillas during the war. Many were prepared to continue their commercial arrangements with the insurgents—in fact, some were willing to join their ranks—but since they lived in small groups and in remote areas, even if they had not been so inclined, they could be easily intimidated into cooperation. As a counter-measure, the government proceeded to resettle them in specially constructed "New Villages." The "squatters" were permitted to take along their belongings; they received better housing and

[12] Between June, 1948, and March, 1953, a total of 29,828 persons had been so detained.

[13] Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 89.

some land. Their communities were protected by barbed wire from Communist predatory initiatives. The barbs on the wire, however, pointed both outside and inside. The movement of villagers was strictly controlled. They were subject to a curfew and even when they were permitted to leave their compounds, they could travel only short distances and were prohibited to take along food or other provisions. At the gates and on the roads they were regularly and meticulously searched.

The gains in coercive capacity and its vigorous application soon had its intended effect. By 1954 some 680,000 squatters were resettled in 600 new villages.[14] Their contact with the insurgents was practically severed. In the first few years of the Emergency (June, 1948–June, 1952) moreover, the Communists lost about half their effective forces: 3,149 killed, 915 captured, 752 surrendered, and an estimated 1,643 wounded.[15] Gradually, more and more areas were declared free of insurgents; the Communists were forced to withdraw further and further into the jungle.

Beaten as they were, the insurgents did accomplish one thing: they accelerated political development. As early as January, 1952, the Commissioner General for South East Asia (Malcolm MacDonald) proclaimed that "self-government is an unalterable aim of Britain's policy in Malaya."[16] Later the same month when General Templer arrived as the new High Commissioner he brought along a directive from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, which stated the official policy "that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation."[17] Toward the end of his assignment, the General himself assured a press conference that Britain's intention to grant independence was absolutely firm.[18] All along, such declarations were accompanied by tangible moves toward self-government. Indigenous participation at all levels of decision-making was rapidly increased. First, in March, 1951, the "Membership" system was introduced through which executive departments were to be headed by members of the Legislative Council. Three of the eleven "members" appointed were Malays, one was Chinese and another Ceylonese. The following year elections were held to fill seats on newly established village (mostly new village) com-

[14] Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

[15] O'Ballance, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[16] Banerjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–187.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[18] Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

mittees, and then in just a few months for those on municipal councils.[19]

Insofar as the Emergency substantially accelerated the rate of development toward independence, it also contributed to a significant reduction of the time available for the gaining experience in political leadership (as well as administrative expertise) and for a comprehensive exploration of the terms of cooperation among the communities. The most serious consequence of the Emergency, however, was this: it seriously distorted inter-communal *and* intra-communal power relationships.

Those with antecedents in India and Ceylon were perhaps least affected. The growing number of professionals (lawyers, doctors, teachers) among them continued to be oriented toward external political arenas: India and Singapore. The trade union movement was in a state of shock and in any case was in no position to engage in vigorous political activities. The estate workers were still primarily absorbed in social and economic matters.

In contrast, for the Chinese in Malaya the experience of the Emergency was frought with far-reaching consequences. As a community their position in political negotiations was substantially weakened by its less than general and rather ambiguous commitment to peaceful and orderly political processes. Some were Communist insurgents;[20] many more were Communist collaborators (*Min Yuen*),[21] most others were fence-sitters awaiting convincing evidence which would identify the ultimate victor in the military struggle. This, at least, was a generally held view. "Terrorism in Malaya is solely the work of the Chinese Communists and . . . it could be easily crushed if the rest of the Chinese population would cooperate more fully with the authorities. The blame for continued activities of these terrorists

[19] Suffrage, however, was still woefully limited. Only 7,000 eligible voters were carried on the municipal roll of Kuala Lumpur, a city with a population at that time of 300,000 persons. (Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free*, *op. cit.*, p. 103n.)

[20] In 1950 the Communist forces were organized in ten regiments. Only the 10th based in Pahang and with a maximum strength of 300 included substantial numbers of Malays and Indians. By the end of the year, however, it had suffered such heavy casualties that the regiment had to be reformed—this time as a predominantly Chinese unit. (O'Ballance, *op. cit.*, p. 100.)

[21] According to "a conservative, very conservative estimate" their number was around 500,000. (Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 104.)

must therefore be attributed indirectly to the other Chinese," wrote a prominent Malay law student in London to the *Times* in September, 1948.[22] His name was Tunku Abdul Rahman. Some corroboration for this judgment, moreover, could be found not only in the difficulties the authorities consistently encountered in gaining information on the insurgents but also in two other indicators. The first of these was the response within the community of Chinese to government efforts to recruit them into the Security Forces. Shortly after his arrival, General Templer, in his first address to the Federal Legislative Assembly announced that in addition to the Malay Regiment, some seven battalions strong, a Federation Regiment, "an entity open to all communities" would be created.[23] His initiative was greeted with applause in the Assembly. "If out of a population of three million Chinese we cannot recruit between two thousand and three thousand into the police," observed Tan Cheng Lock, "then we deserve to have conscription placed on us."[24] By any standard the results were disappointing. During the period of April 1, to October 31, 1952, only 505 Chinese were enrolled in the Police Force, i.e., 0.089 percent of the whole Chinese population of the age of nineteen and over. A year later enlistments in the Federation Regiment totalled 434, of which only 75 were Chinese.[25]

Another indicator of Chinese aloofness was found in the singular lack of alacrity with which they responded to the citizenship provisions of the Federation Agreement. According to the *Annual Report for 1950* the total number of Federation citizens reached 3,275,000 of which in round figures 2,500,000 were Malays, 500,000 Chinese, and the remainder Indians, Pakistanis and Ceylonese. Some 350,000 of the Chinese acquired their citizenship by "operation of laws" and 150,000 by application. Nearly three years later, after further relaxation of qualifications there still remained 433,000 Chinese who, although they met the birth qualifications, did not bother to register[26] and another substantial group which did not wish to apply. Indeed, as many saw it, and Malays were inclined to point out, the record was hardly

[22] Quoted in Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[23] Quoted in Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[24] Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

[25] Quoted in Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free*, *op. cit.*, pp. 215, 255.

[26] Ratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 92–93.

conclusive to support the claim that the Chinese saw in Malaya their new homeland.

The effects of the Emergency upon the power distribution *within* the community of Chinese, however, was no less far-reaching. The masses of workers were emerging as a potentially powerful political force. No longer were they a hapless aggregate of transient *sin-khehs*. Nearly 75 percent of the Chinese in Malaya were native born. Their savings had been growing steadily, but after 1949 when remittances to the Mainland ceased they rose rapidly. Politically, however, they were in a quandary. They saw the Communist leadership which gained ascendance during the Japanese Occupation decimated and discredited by the Security Forces, but the time had passed when they could return to the pre-war pattern. No longer were they willing to accept unquestioningly the legitimacy of the traditional elites; nor were they easily intimidated by secret societies.[27] Indeed the most they were prepared to do was to grant temporary tactical support to the combination of English-speaking professionals and traditional leaders epitomized by the newly formed (February, 1949) Malayan Chinese Association. The new party after all offered to the masses of workers some access to the unusual entrepreneurial skills and impressive material resources of traditional leaders.[28] Through the articulateness and personal connections of its formal leaders (Tan Cheng Lock was MCA president) moreover, the party evidently provided the best access to government. Hardly a profound commitment as far as the Chinese workers were concerned, and the MCA leadership must have recognized that their popular support was tenuous in the extreme. They spoke for the community of Chinese only by default.

It was the Malay community, unquestionably, which gained most politically from the Emergency. The powerful central

[27] The latter (for an appropriate fee, of course) still provided pretorian services to the merchants and bankers; they even enjoyed some "commercial" monopolies; but clearly they no longer served as the enforcers of the legitimate norms of the community of Chinese. There were some instances, as in the case of the Kinta Valley Home Guard (1951), where the government supported anti-Communist campaigns by the secret societies, but mostly it shied away from official support of the Triad. (Blythe, *op. cit.*, p. 441.)

[28] The latest expression of such special entrepreneurial skills combined with material resources was the MCA's operation of lotteries whose profits, some M$2.5 million, were distributed in new villages.

government which was being built was dependent on Malay civil administrators, police, and military personnel. At the height of the conflict, they seemed to be the only elements to be trusted by the Federation, lending fresh credibility to the Malay contention that the "immigrant races" were capable at most of flimsy and transitory loyalty to the country. And all along, Malay solidarity behind UMNO was steadily fortified. To be sure, nationalist elements were inclined to distrust the secular leadership of the English-speaking Kuala Kangsar graduates, even if the traditional ruling class had stamped them with its mark of approval. Still as a matter of tactics, at least, many local school teachers and religious functionaries were willing to continue the coalition which had proved so successful in the fight against the Malayan Union. They were reassured by UMNO's firm insistence upon a rapid evolution toward independence. The British, they were convinced, were all too lenient with the Chinese. They also watched with some approval the rapid rise of folk-heroes to positions of prominence within UMNO. They saw, for example, Aziz bin Ishak, once he incurred the severe disfavor of General Templer, move from an *Utusan Melayu* reporter to a close associate of Tunku Abdul Rahman.[29] The confidence which the Malay school teachers had in their English educated allies, however, had definite limits. It could not tolerate any fancy multi-racial "statesmanship." Not even UMNO's founder and first President could cross this line with impunity. Indeed, Dato Onn had already impaired his position somewhat with his cavalier treatment of the Sultans.[30] By 1949, however, he seemed prepared to trifle with other cherished Malay traditions. At the UMNO General Assembly in August he endorsed the goal of a single nationality for all Malayans. A few months later, he supported in the Legislative Council an educational policy based on two languages—Malay, the language of the country and English, the language of international commerce. He was soon called to task. At an Emergency General Assembly meeting of UMNO in June, 1950, a number of speakers openly accused him of selling out the interest of the Malay

[29] Summoned to the office of the High Commissioner, he stood by while the latter roundly berated him as a "rat, and a rotten journalist whose name stinks in South-East Asia." (Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free, op. cit.*, p. 128.)

[30] His dismissal as *Mentri Besar* by his own Ruler was only one expression of resultant royal displeasure.

community in his concessions to the Chinese. Offended, he sought to regain the initiative by submitting his resignation. In the end he was persuaded to change his mind, but the cleavage between UMNO and its President remained there for all to see. Dato Onn himself continued to press his own views of integration, persuading his party's executive committee to replace the slogan *hindup Melayu* (Long live the Malays) with *Merdeka* (Freedom) and to admit other than Malays to UMNO as associate members. His days were numbered. Within a year he decided to abandon UMNO and to form a new non-communal party (IMP). He called upon all Malayans, and especially upon his fellow Malays, to join him. He expected a mass exodus from UMNO and support from the MCA leadership. He received Chinese support only initially; and not even that from the Malays. The message was indeed loud and clear. The English educated Malays, however influential and powerful they might have been, could not afford to be separated from the rural, traditional hierarchy. In spite of their resources and talents, in spite of all their eloquence (in English), politically the former was, in fact, the captive of the latter.

The Policy of the High Commissioners

The British government for its part, however, would not concede total control of the political system to the Malays. Although it had retreated from the Malayan Union scheme, it apparently did not altogether lose confidence in the approach of building a single national community integrated at the level of individuals with common citizenship providing the fundamental principle of cohesion. According to the underlying theory, all permanent residents—Malays, Chinese, Indians or others—would feel bound together by their right of political equality and the guaranteed opportunity of full participation. Then conflicts of interest could be resolved and disputes could be settled through the unfettered democratic electoral process. It was an approach inherent in the government's policies while Sir Henry Gurney was High Commissioner; and it was made quite explicit in a directive to General Templer upon his appointment. "To achieve a united Malayan nation," Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote, "there must be a common form of citizenship for all who regard the Federation or any part of it as

their real home and the object of their loyalty. It will be your duty to guide the peoples of Malaya towards the attainment of these objectives and to promote such political progress of the country as will, without prejudicing the campaign against the terrorists, further our democratic aims in Malaya."[31] Following this line, the General in his first address to the Federal Legislative Council defined as his primary goal "to do all in our power to develop and give expression to . . . [the] Malayan ideal," and pledged: "I myself will govern all my thoughts and energies in the future towards bringing about this truly united Malayan nation on which alone the future of this country must depend."[32] Specifically, he moved to implement these objectives by eliminating the monopoly of Malays in the Security Forces and then the Civil Service. Most important, citizenship requirements were significantly relaxed. Under General Templer's direction the Citizenship Ordinance of 1952 amended the Federation of Malaya Agreement and thus liberalized its provision.[33] In fact, in less than seven months after the Federation Agreement the new Act enfranchised 30 percent additional Chinese, 20 percent Indians (and Pakistanis) but less than 0.5 percent more Malays.

British efforts toward a common citizenship, however, were accompanied by parallel initiatives toward a common cultural denominator. Malay (perhaps in tandem with English) was to be established as the national language. It would take some time, of course, but the government was ready to proceed toward this goal through its education policy. As a first step, a committee composed of nine Malays and five European members, under the chairmanship of L. J. Barnes, Director of Social Training at Oxford, was appointed in 1950. After some delibera-

[31] Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free, op. cit.*, p. 86.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186.

[33] There were three major revisions. First, in contrast to earlier provisions by which a person born in the Federation could become a citizen only if his father was also born there, the new requirements extended eligibility to those whose either parent was native born. Second, while the original clause permitted departures from the principle of *jus soli* only in the cases of Malays, under the new ordinance "any person of full capacity . . . being a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies," could under some circumstances become a citizen of the Federation irrespective of his place of birth. Finally, in contrast to the previous strict definitions imposed upon federal citizenship gained by being a "subject of a Malay State," it now fell within the jurisdiction of state enactments to provide for specific, possibly more congenial, rules for members of the communities with antecedents in China and India.

tion it concluded "that primary schooling should be purposely used to build up a common Malayan nationality. . . ." In case there was any doubt at all about the proposed direction, the committee proceeded: "Our scheme would be seriously weakened if any large proportion of the Chinese, Indian and other non-Malay communities were to choose to provide their own primary classes independently of the National School."[34]

As the Malays were opposed to the extension of citizenship to the Chinese, so the latter in turn resisted any movement toward a single school system with Malay as the language of instruction. Indeed the pressures from the community of Chinese had become so intense that the Government (in January, 1951) felt compelled to invite Dr. William Fenn, an American associated with education in China, and Dr. Wu Teh-yao, a U.N. official to study Chinese schools in the Federation. Predictably, their conclusions challenged practically point by point the Barnes report. "To most Chinese in Malaya, Malayanization is anathema, in view of the absence of a culture, or even a society which can as yet be called Malayan. . . . A new culture can come only," the report continued, "from the national mingling of diverse cultural elements for generations." Chinese schools, Fenn and Wu declared in no uncertain terms, "cannot be eliminated until the Chinese themselves decide that they are not needed, which will happen only when there is a satisfactory alternative. That day may never come, for it is quite possible that Chinese schools form an integral part of any educational programme of the future Malaya."[35]

Even so, the British administrators were not to be deterred from their objective. They let the Chinese have their say, but then proceeded, more cautiously perhaps, toward establishing Malay as the common cultural denominator through the educational system. A Central Advisory Committee on Education,[36] after considering both the Barnes and the Fenn-Wu reports, generally supported the former. And so did the report of a Special Committee appointed by the Legislative Council of the Federation,[37] which among others, declared: "We consider that

[34] Quoted in Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free, op. cit.*, p. 155.

[35] Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 156–158.

[36] The Committee consisted of twenty members, including four Chinese.

[37] This Committee was composed of eleven members, including two Chinese.

the language of instruction [in national schools] should be the official language of the Federation [Malay and English]." All it conceded to other cultures was optional language instruction in "Kuo Yu [Chinese] and Tamil to those who desire when there are at least fifteen pupils in any standard who wish to take advantage of the facilities."[38]

Notably, the High Commissioners' concern with political equality and cultural integration was not matched by vigorous efforts to ameliorate—let alone eliminate—economic disparities among the communities. Admittedly, on the initiative of Sir Henry Gurney the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) was established in 1950,[39] and was formally assigned the tasks of introducing new technology to the rural population and restructuring the old market system. Through coordinated public initiatives, it was hoped, the agency would generate an attitude of self-help among the villagers and thus reconstruct village life and substantially improve their standard of living. General Templer, upon his arrival, made it perfectly clear that it was "one of our main concerns to see that the Rural and Industrial Development Authority and all it stands for, gets the full support of everyone in the country today at whatever level they stand or work. . . . It will have my own personal and full support. . . ."[40] Still, against all this fanfare the actual effort behind RIDA was very modest indeed. At first, total expenditures rose sharply from M$698,000 in 1951 to M$8,543,000 in 1954 only to be gradually cut back again. In any case the sums were less than 1 percent of the Federation Budget, nowhere near the amounts that would be required to make even a dent in the problem.[41] Rural Credit made available by RIDA reaching a high of M$2,500,000 in 1954, but dropping sharply below M$1,000,000 by the end of the decade, had no prospect whatever to liberate Malay farmers and fishermen from the control

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[39] For a detailed examination of RIDA see: Gayl D. Ness, *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 125–133.

[40] Quoted in Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free, op. cit.*, p. 190.

[41] One study suggested: "It is fairly clear that the order of magnitude involved to get the Malays economically on a par with the Chinese would be a sum equal to the whole present Federal Revenue (about $400-$700 million) levied every year from the Chinese and devoted wholly to Malay welfare." (T. H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, in W. L. Holland, *Asian Nationalism and the West* [New York: Macmillan, 1953].)

of (Chinese) money-lenders and middlemen. Nor were significant funds made available for technological improvement. Instead a major category of the authority's budget was "physical amenities." At least in the first years these included the construction of a mass of village halls throughout the countryside which afterwards were generally left unused and fell into disrepair. And always a major chunk went for administration: nearly 29 percent in 1951 and up to 42.5 percent in 1960.[42]

Innovations by the Commissioner General

While Gurney's and Templer's efforts to build a Malayan national community were pressed on through official policy, an alternative approach was beginning to take shape. The idea that a new independent state perhaps could be based on communal groups as the salient elements of the political system, provided they could negotiate among themselves a constitutional contract, was given an impetus late in 1948 when Britain's Commissioner General for South East Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, sponsored the formation of the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC). It was an unofficial organization, without any "power to reach decisions binding on any organization, council of authority," and its members attended in an individual capacity. Nevertheless, the Committee did bring together some of the most prominent members of the various communities, including Dato Onn and Dato Tan Cheng Lock. Membership was divided equally between Malays and Chinese with six seats each, plus one member from the Indian, Ceylonese, the Eurasian, and the European communities. Finally, the meetings were attended, and at times actively guided, by the Commissioner General himself.[43]

[42] Ness, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[43] For over a year the Committee met regularly, at times for several days. The specific dates were February 9 and 10, 1949 (Johore Bahru); February 18 and 19, 1949 (Kuala Lumpur); March 14 and 15, 1949 (Ipoh); April 1 and 2, 1949 (Kuala Lumpur); April 19 and 20, 1949 (Kuala Lumpur); May 12, 1949 (Kuala Lumpur); August 13 and 14, 1949 (Kuala Lumpur); September 14, 15, and 16, 1949 (Johore Bahru); December 29, 30, and 31, 1949 (Penang); February 10 and 11, 1950 (Kuala Lumpur); February 21, 1950 (Kuala Lumpur); and May 6, 1950 (Kuala Lumpur). No transcripts of the meetings are as yet available in published form. Copies of Tan Cheng Lock's private set of the Minutes and Notes of the meetings of the Committee are in the possession of Charles Schumaker of New York City, former Principal of a private (Methodist) school in Malacca, and most of this discussion is based upon his unpublished manuscript "The Formative Years of Malaysian Politics: The MCA and the Alliance, 1950–1954."

Malay leaders, generally resentful of the political role granted to the Chinese by the Federation Agreement, moved quickly to demand a *quid pro quo*. The Chinese owned a major share of the economy and the Malays wanted part of it. Led by Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang of Perak they detailed at some length evidence of Malay economic woes. The Chinese, he insisted, were not content with their pre-eminence and profits in the modern sectors, but were rapidly gaining control of the economic life of the countryside. Rural transport was passing into their hands; they were even pushing the Malays out of the fishing industry. By their "strangulation methods" they seized hold of retail trade in the *kampongs*; by illegal timber felling they produced soil erosion and irrevocably injured the Malay farmer.[44] It was only fair then that some compensatory measures be offered by the community of Chinese. As discussions continued other Malay leaders chimed in, generally supported by the eloquence and supplementary evidence of Sir Sidney Palmer, a European member of the Committee. "Up to now," the latter stated in his summary, "the Malay population has consisted in the main of small peasants with a poor standard of living and a small number of high Malay officials largely of or connected with the Ruling Houses. There are very few middle class trading and professional people capable of educating their families and giving them a good start in life. The low standard of living results in a very high infantile mortality rate, a high death rate of women in child birth, general under-nourishment with its inevitable results of lack of energy and ambition and a low expectation of life."[45]

The Chinese leaders were not entirely sympathetic. Tan Cheng Lock, at one point, noted on the back of the Minutes: "Those who, while desiring what others possess put no energy into striving for it, are either incessantly grumbling that fortune does not do for them what they would not do for themselves, or overflowing with envy and ill will towards those who possess what they would like to have."[46]

[44] Minutes of CLC meeting, February 9–10, 1949, pp. 2 ff.

[45] Minutes of CLC meeting, April 19–20, 1949, p. 7.

[46] Minutes of CLC meeting, March 7, 1949.

All the same, Malay demands of a greater share in the control of the economy presented a vexing dilemma for the Chinese business leaders. They could not very well ignore it; there was too much evidence of poverty in Malay *kampongs* and of the rapidly expanding Chinese ownership of property (and capital). Besides, the Malay community leaders could be expected to press the point vigorously, if for no other reason to solidify their own communal support. On the other hand, conceding the legitimacy of the demand would rather unfairly neglect the problem of Chinese workers and in consequence impair severely the prospect of enlisting their political support. Perhaps no less important, it would jeopardize the possessions and future acquisitions of Chinese businessmen, as the benefits of expanded Malay participation in the economy was expected to be accomplished primarily at their cost. As long as Britain controlled the Federation, the sanctity of private property was safe enough, but with independence approaching and Malays controlling the administrative machinery and the Security Forces, confiscatory governmental initiatives could not be realistically ruled out.

Almost totally isolated on this issue in the Communities Liaison Committee, the Chinese members did occasionally engage in spirited verbal ripostes, but in the end conceded the legitimacy of a communal explanation of income disparities. It became the "agreed view of . . . [the] Committee that in the common interest of Malaya, it is of paramount importance that the non-Malays shall make every endeavour to cooperate amongst themselves and with the Malays to improve the economic position of the Malays so that the Malays can take their rightful and proper place and share fully in the economic life of Malaya."[47] The discussions then proceeded to implementation. The specific remedial measures *unanimously accepted* were considerably short of the radical. Only in the category of road transport through the introduction of communal quotas was a significant transfer of ownership envisaged. Existing companies serving predominantly Malay areas would have to be controlled by Malays with the others owning not more than 49 percent of the stock. Newly licensed firms would have to be entirely in Malay hands. In areas where the Malays were in minority, Chinese and other stockholders would hold 51 percent of the shares, but

[47] Minutes of the CLC meeting, February 9–10, 1949, p. 4.

no more. The rest would have to be transferred to Malays.[48] In mining, rubber and textile industries, the Committee was content with a request to the government to subsidize Malay ventures. And when it came to the problem of the control of the rural economy by middlemen-moneylenders, all it would do was to recommend a "closer liaison" between Malays and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce.

Modest as these economic concessions were, in one respect the Chinese leaders on the Committee had given a great deal. They had not only conceded the legitimacy of the definition of income disparities in communal terms, but had assumed the responsibility of enlisting the support of their community behind their commitment.

Having made concessions, however, which ostensibly increased future Malay participation in the Chinese dominated economy, the Chinese leaders then pressed for further expansion of Chinese participation in the Malay dominated polity. It was not merely a matter of principle; the English educated professionals, the keystone of their support, demanded nothing less. From the very moment the question was raised in the Committee, however, it faced stiff opposition.[49] It was widely felt that any further relaxation of citizenship qualifications would have to await some visible economic progress by the Malays. Sir Roland Braddell, the European member of the Committee, put it quite plainly: "I hope when we come to this [i.e., broadening of citizenship laws] we should regard this and the economic development of the Malays really as one matter—the *quid pro quo*. . . ." Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil of Kelantan promptly elaborated on the theme. He firmly believed, he said, that until the *kampong* Malays were confident that their interests are protected "the people would not accept, let alone full nationality, any form of citizenship."[50] Then Dato Zainal Abidin of Selangor put his finger on a persistent Malay fear. If the door to citizenship was opened wider, the Malays would be swamped politi-

[48] Minutes of the CLC meeting, February 19–20, 1949, p. 13.

[49] In Tan Cheng Lock's view: "With the *usual strong and unqualified support and encouragement of the British Commissioner General, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, practically all the Malay members of the CLC, with the exception of Dr. Mustafa of Kedah, throughout kept a running fire of the hostile and unjustifiable criticisms of the Chinese Community as a whole.*" (Letter to Yong Shook Lin, January 17, 1950.)

[50] Minutes of the CLC meeting, December 29–31, 1949, pp. 9, 10.

cally in the same manner as in the economic field. As the debate grew more intense, and the Chinese leaders held firmly to their position, Dato Onn focused on the criterion of "undivided loyalty to Malaya" as a minimum test for citizenship. After all, the Commissioner General himself had some doubts about the loyalty of the Chinese. At an earlier meeting he stated, rather bluntly, that while declarations of loyalty to Malaya were valuable in some instances, "but does that apply to every section of the community —for instance the Chinese? However willing they might be, Chinese have a doubtful loyalty when pressed upon to do something to help somebody somewhere else. . . ."[51] Sir Roland Bradell spelled out the terms: three basic conditions must be met as prerequisites for any revision of the citizenship laws. First, the significant improvement of the economic position of the Malays; second, the complete cessation of immigration of Chinese; and third, the assumption of obligations and duties of future federal citizens. As if this were not enough, the assault continued. Sir Roland proposed that a policy of repatriation should be carried out against all who were reluctant to become federal citizens. He received widespread support. Suddenly the Chinese leaders in the CLC were confronted with a situation where, far from having achieved equal citizenship rights for all members of their community, they saw many of them exposed to the grave danger of remaining in the country purely on the sufferance of a government which after independence would surely be dominated by Malays. At this critical juncture Tan Cheng Lock proposed a compromise: "In view of these circumstances," he declared, "our Malay friends strongly feel that if the Chinese are sincere, and want to be loyal and give their allegiance to this country, and to be on equal footing with the Malays, so as to be regarded by the Malays as their true brothers and sisters, the Chinese should prove their sincerity by being willing to be also the subjects in the same way as the Malays, of the Malay Sultan of the State in which they are born or in which they reside and want to settle down."[52] It was a masterstroke. Most Committee members were quick to accept it. The Chinese leaders had after all managed to get a major concession, one that many of them wanted but which had eluded them for so long a time: citizen-

[51] Minutes of the CLC meeting, August 13–14, 1949, p. 24.

[52] The CLC minutes do not include the full quotation. The above is reported by Tan Cheng Lock as his statement in his letter to Yong Shook Lin, dated January 17, 1950.

ship for all those born in Malaya regardless where their parents were born. The "agreed view" in February, 1950, included the following declaration: "It is considered that the *jus soli* should be declared forthwith in each of the Malay States so that all persons of Asian or Eurasian parentage who are born in the State shall become natural-born subjects of the Ruler of that State."[53]

This accomplishment, however, did not come cheap. The same "agreed views" included as its first item the conclusion that it was "urgent that practical steps should be taken to improve the social and economic well-being of the Malays and that an organization and programme to achieve this purpose be set up without delay." It also accepted as "essential" the severe limitation on immigration. Perhaps even more important, the Chinese leaders, on the defensive on the question of loyalty, felt compelled to add some cultural concessions.

All through the debate on citizenship qualifications, the one indicator of Chinese lack of loyalty to Malaya most often cited was their devotion to their own culture and tradition. Dato Onn remarked that "it was also the fault of the Chinese that they had done so little to assimilate themselves to the country of their adoption."[54] Tuan Haji Mohammad Eusoff of Selangor was perhaps even more explicit. "Those who liked to claim rights in the country," he declared, "had to give up some of their culture." Much was made of the American example where school children were taught to sing the national anthem, salute the flag, and were instructed in the meaning of the Constitution and the American way of life. Accordingly, it was agreed that royal portraits, the national anthem, and the observation of Malayan memorial days might help to inculcate a love of Malaya in Malayan children.

The Malay members pressed for more. They were strongly convinced that Malayanization was synonymous with a policy of assimilation of the Chinese into Malay culture. They were generally supported by the European members. An illustration is the following exchange within the Committee:

> *Mr. Khoo Teik Ee*: "What I am trying to make out is this; the tendency is that as the years pass all the domiciled people in this country will have their spiritual home here. Many

[53] Minutes of the CLC meeting, February 10–11, 1950, Appendix B.

[54] Minutes of the CLC meeting, May 6, 1950, p. 4.

families who have settled in this country for generations do not know of any relations in China; they are absolutely cut off."

Sir Roland Braddell: "The Chinese have their religion, customs, ceremonies which are all Chinese and the Malays have theirs which are Malay."

Mr. Khoo Teik Ee: "Cannot a man identify himself with the country unless he adopts its religion? He can be as much a Malayan."

Sir Roland Braddell: "He can feel a Malayan–I quite agree, but not to the same degree as a Malay."[55]

Actually, religion was not so much the problem: the Malays were not altogether anxious to convert the Chinese to Islam. But language was. The Malay members without exception insisted on Malay as a "national" language and to this end they sought to control educational policy.

The Chinese leaders perceived a pernicious trend. Tan Cheng Lock led the rebuttal. He hoped and presumed, he declared, that "Malayanization does not at all imply that the government has the least intention in view, however remote, ultimately to attempting the mixing ethnologically of the various races living in Malaya, so that the product of this race mixture will be a homogeneous amalgamation of the component races in whom the Malay characteristics will predominate, or to make non-Malays adopt the Malay language as their own and assimilate the so-called Malay civilization and culture. If there was any suspicion that such an attempt was going to be made, it would be most energetically resisted by the non-Malays as something most obnoxious and baneful to their well-being and would be foredoomed to failure."[56]

Indeed, the Committee was moving on extremely perilous ground. Neither the Malay nor the Chinese leaders in CLC could make significant concessions without fatally alienating key segments of supporters within their communities. The commitment of Malay schoolteachers to the English educated Kuala Kangsar type administrators' leadership was never wholly unreserved. Their suspicion that Malays who associate too much with foreigners (whether Chinese or British) would become

[55] Notes of the CLC meeting, September 8, 1949, p. 9.
[56] Notes of the CLC meeting, September 14–16, 1949, Appendix A.

déraciné and in fact traitors to their "race" lingered on. Any deviation from the primacy of the Malay language in Malaya, their most fundamental interest which they felt extremely keenly, would rekindle fears of being betrayed. Politically, the consequences would be disastrous. The leadership would lose its most effective ally in mass mobilization, and mass mobilization had been their main claim for legitimacy.

The English educated Chinese professionals in the Committee had no more flexibility. The masses of Chinese workers would hardly be attracted by the somewhat cavalier manner in which their economic interests were treated. Now even if the free exercise of their cultural tradition would be denied to them as the foundation of their identity, they could turn easily into proletarians without a country, and there would not remain the slightest prospect of enlisting their support. Worse still, Chinese businessmen too, with the notable exception of the *Babas* who had been residing in Malacca for centuries, held a deep commitment to Chinese ways of life. They found any suggestion that their culture—a culture which was part of the civilization of the "Middle Kingdom"—should be subordinated to any other (and especially one which in their view had its antecedents in the Indonesian jungle) droll in the extreme. Moreover, since they relied on the Chinese language not merely as a cultural medium, but were dependent upon it as an essential tool of their trade, they deeply resented any attempt to restrict the legitimacy and the free use of Chinese. Any concessions on this issue made in the Committee they would perceive as a sell-out and a cause for termination of their support.

There was no occasion to compromise. In the end, a perfunctory "agreed view" conceded that "the teaching of the Malay and English languages should be compulsory in all Government and Government-Aided schools."[57] In practice, it did not affect the community of Chinese much, as the vast majority of Chinese schools were private. The Malays did gain one point though: the appropriateness—if not the legitimacy—of their demands.

Indeed, in little over a year the Communities Liaison Committee became moribund. It became quite apparent that the Chinese leaders in the Committee could not (or would not) help to improve significantly the income level of the Malays. The Commis-

[57] *Ibid.*, Appendix A, p. 2.

sioner General himself expressed his disappointment, perhaps with more sorrow than anger: "One of their declared objects, which was very sincere, was to promote good relationship. It was clear that one of the ways in which the Malayan Chinese Association could help was to see how it could be possible to bring the Malays into economic activities with the agreed principles which were unanimously agreed to by the Committee. . . . It was obvious that, if they could not do anything, he did not know who would."[58] By the following spring the agreement on citizenship also collapsed. Most of the Malay leaders were unwilling to move further on the extension of citizenship as long as no visible progress was made on income disparity. In the February, 1950, meeting, Dato Onn declined to implement the "agreed view" by opposing its adoption by the Council of Rulers. The Federal Secretariat meanwhile moved to emasculate it by amendments, imposing special requirements of (1) language proficiency, (2) good character, (3) a declaration of intention for permanent residence, and (4) an oath of allegiance.[59] In turn, the Chinese leaders were disappointed in the renewed Malay opposition to broader political participation by their community, and they would not accept the amendments.

The Committee, however, was far from a total failure. It defined the most salient categories of outstanding issues between the communities: (1) the pre-eminence of the Malay language and the protection of Chinese and Indian cultures; (2) the full and effective access of Malays to the economy; and (3) the full participation of Chinese (and incidentally, Indians) in the polity. Obviously, there could not be a viable relationship among the communities without a settlement of these issues. The Committee, moreover, made another contribution as well. Its own internal procedures—the informality yet seriousness of the discussions, the atmosphere of hard bargaining, but a willingness to compromise—rather persuasively suggested the method through which a definitive settlement of the terms of intercommunal relations in the future could be reached.

[58] Minutes of the CLC meeting, December 29–31, 1949, p. 3.

[59] See Tan Cheng Lock, "Confidential Memorandum on Malaya to the Right Honourable James Griffiths, Secretary of the Colonies and the Right Honourable John Strachey, Secretary of State for War," May 19, 1950, Appendix VIII.

CHAPTER FIVE

Independence: A Constitutional Contract among Communal Groups

ACTUALLY the plans and designs of British administrators, even those formulated at the highest level, were becoming less and less determining. To be sure, Britain still controlled a formidable coercive capacity, one perhaps more massive than ever before. It could, if it chose, define government policy. In terms of guiding long range political development in Malaya, however, its effectiveness was visibly declining. Unmistakably, the initiative was passing to indigenous political leaders, and no less unmistakably the appeal of a homogenized polity, never especially potent, was fading fast. Political parties catering to communal interest and solidarity were demonstrating with some regularity their superior advantages in political mass mobilization, while their leaders were becoming increasingly aware of the unique benefits offered by an inter-communal coalition. Indeed, the momentum was building rapidly first toward an alliance among communally oriented political parties and then toward a constitutional contract among the communities.

The Emergence of the Inter-communal Coalition: Independence of Malaya Party vs. The Alliance

British administrators, of course, had not given up their efforts to influence long-range political development in Malaya. They were convinced that more than the indigenous leaders, they knew the right political formula for the future independent state. Most, led stubbornly by General Templer, fervently believed that such a formula had to be based at all costs upon a national community. With independence forthcoming, however, they were inclined toward a low profile. Their English educated friends, they hoped, could be relied upon to provide the vanguard for their program.

Tan Cheng Lock for one was open to suggestions. As his party was improving its credibility within the community of Chinese,

he was consolidating his own organizational control. Under rule 19 (ii), April 3, 1949, the General Committee handed over all of its powers to the Working Committee which in turn, under rule 17 (ix), September 16, 1951, granted all powers needed to reorganize the MCA to its President. The President then on June 22, 1952, appointed a Cabinet, and not quite four months later (October 3, 1952) he further appointed an Inner Cabinet and an *ad hoc* Committee on Reorganization.

For advice Tan Cheng Lock turned to an old friend, Sir George Maxwell. The former Chief Secretary of the Federated States was happy to oblige. Believing Dato Onn to be the key man in Malayan politics and sympathetically inclined he recommended a joint venture. To be sure, Sir George had his reservations about the Malay leader. "I doubt," he wrote with some prescience, "that he [Onn] is wise enough to realize that he must consolidate his own position by securing first the confidence of the people and then their backing. . . ."[1] Nevertheless, he urged that Tan Cheng Lock attempt to persuade Dato Onn to abolish UMNO and then they both together organize a non-communal All-Malayan Association.

It is not clear why Tan Cheng Lock accepted much of the advice—whether it was his personal deference for his British friend, his own political estimate that the venture would succeed, or merely as a further demonstration for the British of his community's reasonableness. In his presidential address to the General Committee less than three weeks later he called for "a national and non-communal organization in order to pave the way for Malaya's racial unification and national freedom." Specifically, he proposed the formation of a new party, one which would supersede such communal organization as UMNO and the MCA and within which a political arrangement congenial to all communities could be worked out.

Dato Onn was receptive to such overtures; presumably, he had similar advice from his own set of British friends. In any case, he was becoming restless within what he began to perceive as the narrow constraints of communal interest. His preeminence in UMNO was progressively impaired by the growing hostility of the Rulers, Malay schoolteachers and religious functionaries. They had never quite trusted him and the cavalier

[1] Letter from Sir George Maxwell to Tan Cheng Lock, March 28, 1951.

attitude he habitually exhibited toward them only made matters worse. Dato Onn was noticeably developing pretensions of supra-communal statesmanship. He was about ready to try something dramatic when he received Tan Cheng Lock's invitation. In July, 1951, he announced his intention to leave UMNO and help organize a multi-communal Independence of Malaya Party. Much of August he spent trying to persuade other Malay leaders, especially the English educated administrators, to follow his example. On September 19, 1951, the inaugural meeting of the IMP was held in Kuala Lumpur; Tan Cheng Lock was its chairman.

It soon became apparent, however, that the new party was not going anywhere. Few Malays followed Dato Onn out of UMNO, and practically none of the intermediate level leadership groups were inclined to lend their support. They were disturbed by his advocacy of more liberalized citizenship laws, and alarmed by his position of a multi-lingual society where Malay retained priority but was not guaranteed supremacy. They were skeptical about glowing promises of economic rewards shared equitably by all, and not sufficiently distracted by the pledge of pressuring Britain for prompt and total independence.

The MCA watched with some anxiety Dato Onn's political maneuvers. They wanted an independent Malaya to be sure, but not precipitately, without an opportunity for settlement of terms for inter-communal relationships, nor were they inclined to sever all ties with Britain. Malaya, they felt, should remain in the Commonwealth. Whatever their views were on citizenship, multi-lingualism, and economic integration, they recognized within a few months that Dato Onn was in no position to deliver popular Malay support behind his commitments. And with this recognition, the MCA promptly lost interest in the IMP. They turned to look for alternative arrangements.

Indeed, a new opportunity was already at hand. Under General Templer's policy of building democracy from the ground up, municipal elections were announced for the city of Kuala Lumpur. While Tan Cheng Lock remained discreetly in the background, Colonel H. S. Lee, President of the Selangor Branch of the MCA, included in his party's election manifesto (January 3, 1952) a not too veiled invitation to UMNO. "In view of the large Chinese population resident in the municipality,"

the statement read, "who will contribute the major portion of the rates and taxes, the Chinese community should be adequately represented [in the Municipal Council]. But, the MCA Selangor Branch are also of the opinion that the interests of members of other communities should also be represented."[2] The response of the UMNO Elections Committee was immediate. On the following day, its chairman, Dato Yahawa bin Abdul Razak approached the MCA leaders. The paragraph excerpted above, he declared, opened the way for cooperation between UMNO and the MCA. Colonel H. S. Lee, in turn, proposed a round-table conference between the two organizations, a meeting which was indeed promptly arranged for January 7.

Throughout the day the negotiations, at first cautious then friendly and informal, were marked by two major assumptions: first, that the pursuit of communal interest was legitimate, or at least not necessarily repugnant to the viability of a Malayan state; and second, that the leaders of UMNO and the MCA were the only effective (and legitimate) political leaders who could make bargains on behalf of their respective communities. Based on these assumptions, in a few hours, agreement was reached not only on a joint declaration of policy but also on a common list of candidates. In all constituencies with Chinese majorities the MCA nominations were automatically accepted and supported by UMNO; in turn, in Malay areas the UMNO candidates were assured of Chinese votes mobilized by the MCA. In three constituencies with Indian majorities, UMNO suggestions (two Malays and one Indian) were discussed and then jointly approved.

The campaign itself was only loosely coordinated. One general theme, however, was persistent: a vigorous challenge to the IMP and its non-communal pretensions. The IMP program, it was widely asserted by UMNO and MCA candidates, was altogether a bad tendency. A concerted drive toward some form of conglomerate Malayan identity shared by all citizens was inspired by British, i.e., foreign imagination. Unless it were checked by a massive popular rejection, it might well mean intensified governmental efforts leading to the deculturation of Malays and Chinese alike.

The results of the campaign were perhaps somewhat surprising, but decisive nevertheless. Of the twelve seats contested nine, i.e., all those with Malay or Chinese majorities, were captured by the UMNO-MCA coalition. Only constituencies with Indian majorities favored others (two IMP and one Independent). But this was only the beginning. For practically two years municipal contests throughout the country continued. The results were wholly consistent and impressive (see Table 5–1).

[2] Singapore, *Malayan Mirror*, June 14, 1953.

TABLE 5–1
Results of Municipal Elections, 1952–1953

Town	*Date*	*Seats*	*Alliance*	*IMP*	*Prog.*	*Ind.*	*Labour*	*Muslim*
Kuala Lumpur	Jan. 52	12	9	2	–	1	–	–
Johore Bahru	Dec. 52	9	9	–	–	–	–	–
Batu Pahat	Dec. 52	9	5	–	–	3	–	1
Maur	Dec. 52	9	7	–	–	2	–	–
Malacca	Dec. 52	3	2	–	–	–	1	–
Kuala Lumpur	Dec. 52	4	3	1	–	–	–	–
Seremban	Aug. 53	12	10	–	–	1	1	–
Alor Star	Aug. 53	9	7	–	–	2	–	–
Sungai Patani	Aug. 53	9	7	–	–	2	–	–
Kuala Bahru	Aug. 53	9	6	–	–	3	–	–
Segamat	Nov. 53	9	9	–	–	–	–	–
Kluang	Nov. 53	9	9	–	–	–	–	–
Muar	Dec. 53	3	3	–	–	–	–	–
Malacca	Dec. 53	9	4	–	3	–	2	–
Kuala Lumpur	Dec. 53	4	4	–	–	–	–	–
Total		119	94	3	3	14	4	1

Source: Charles Schumaker, "The Formative Years of Malaysian Politics: The MCA and the Alliance," unpublished manuscript, p. 154.

The Perseverance of the Inter-communal Coalition: The High Commissioner vs. the Alliance

The results, however, quite clearly were not at all in line with British intentions. The persistence of communal parties was bad enough, but the rise of a coalition among them was definitely a movement in the wrong direction. Still, the High Commissioner had at his command considerable administrative resources which could be used as balancer of communal formations and he counted on the Rulers to help block their further expansion.

General Templer assumed the offensive. First, he cut off MCA's main source of revenue. On June 12, 1953, the Financial

Secretary of the Federation notified the party that "in the future, no political organisation or association engaged in political activities will be granted a permit under the Lotteries Ordinance, 1952."[3] Then he challenged the Alliance performance in mass mobilization by inspiring—or perhaps more accurately, by instigating—the convening of a National Conference on constitutional changes leading to "a united, free, independent Malayan nation," by seven Chief Ministers and nine other prominent personalities.

Neither was a successful enterprise. The MCA was indeed forced to discontinue its massive welfare and some of its cultural programs; even so, its capacity for political activity was scarcely affected. Worse still, the Chief Ministers' Conference was a fiasco from beginning to end. When on April 27 it actually met, not only the UMNO and the MCA, but two other parties[4] also refused to send delegates. In fact, apart from a generous representation of Indian organizations—i.e., the Malayan Indian Congress, the Malaya Indian Association, the Ceylon Federation of Indian Organizations—the IMP, which recently lost every popular (municipal) election, presented the most substantial participating group. And by the time its deliberations and extravagant oratory were completed, the Conference had dissipated even the minimal credit it initially enjoyed. Most people have come to perceive it as an officially inspired attempt to prolong as long as possible the existing *status quo*. For one thing, the leaders assembled appeared to be singularly dilatory on the issue of independence. The most they would do was to endorse "the preparation of the necessary legislation and the creation of the necessary machinery for the holding of elections to the Federal Legislative Council by the latter part of 1956."[5] Whether the deadline referred to "the holding of elections" or merely to "the preparation of the necessary legislation," however, they left purposely ambiguous. Somewhat in the same vein, the Conference recommended the increase of the membership in the Legislative Assembly from 75 to 90, but no change in the process of selection. All would continue to be appointed. Finally, it proposed that the role of "Leader of the Government" be assigned to the Chief Secretary of the Federation, a paid civil

[3] Kuala Lumpur, *Malayan Mirror*, July 31, 1953.
[4] The Pan-Malayan Labour Party and the Peninsular Malays Union.
[5] Kuala Lumpur, *Malayan Mirror*, September 15, 1953.

servant, with his deputy being the Member for Home Affairs—none other than Dato Onn bin Ja'afar.

The Alliance leaders, meanwhile, were not idle. Both parties were busily engaged in consolidating their influence in their respective communities, first by accentuating their commitments to communal solidarity and second by dramatizing the overwhelming political potential of an inter-communal coalition. UMNO, perhaps, had the more difficult task. The independent initiative of seven (Malay) Chief Ministers coming so soon after the less than amicable departure of its founder could not be taken lightly. The party was singularly fortunate, however, in the selection of its new leadership: a partnership arrangement between Tunku Abdul Rahman, a younger son of the Sultan of Kedah, and Dato Abdul Razak bin Hussein, a descendant of Pahang nobility. Both enjoyed high credibility not only with the Rulers and traditional intermediaries of village elders and religious functionaries but also with the more modernized intermediaries, the Malay schoolteachers. The former also proved to be an astute politician, the latter an effective administrator. Together they moved decisively to crush any challenge to UMNO's exclusive prerogative of representing the Malay communities. Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang, *Mentri Besar* of Perak and the principal convenor of the Conference, was expelled from UMNO. A joint UMNO-MCA Convention was organized which demanded that elections to the Federal Legislative Council be held in 1954, i.e., within a year; and roundly condemned the resolutions of the Chief Ministers' Conference. They represented, the Convention concluded, "a brazen effort to delay for many years the establishment of popular government in the Federation of Malaya. This retrograde step denies to the people their genuine desire for constitutional progress. If accepted and put into effect, the recommendation will entrench more firmly the bureaucratic rule of a favored few in order to perpetuate colonialism."

The MCA had a somewhat different problem. Since its president was instrumental in organizing the IMP, it now had to disentangle itself from this embarrassing tie. But since the party leadership was reluctant to offend the British High Commissioner, it had to proceed cautiously and cleverly. Gradually, Tan Cheng Lock began to move away from advocating the blessings of a homogenized polity and began to tilt his speeches

in favor of the merits of communal solidarity. "I don't advocate that the MCA should encourage a spirit of communalism as racialism," he declared, "but I see people using words like communalism without being precise or understanding the real implications and significance of the term. . . . For instance, a form of communalism exists in Switzerland with a great deal of success and yet Switzerland remains a single, successful and harmonious national state."[6] Then he waited patiently for the appropriate opportunity to make the formal break. It came within a year. A frustrated Dato Onn in an address to the IMP declared in ringing tones that the MCA was under the control of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, who were attempting to seize political power in Malaya and to turn the country into the twentieth [sic.] province of China. Ninety-eight percent of the Chinese in Malaya, he said, were loyal to Taiwan and the rest were Communists.[7] This was not only a clear affront to the party but also a slander of Chinese in Malaya. On May 6, 1953, Tan Siew Sin, son and political heir to Tan Cheng Lock rose in the Legislative Assembly and introduced a motion of censure against Dato Onn. He was joined in this by Tunku Abdul Rahman, President of UMNO.

From then on there were regular demonstrations of the firmness of Alliance ties. At the joint UMNO-MCA Convention,[8] for example, Tunku Abdul Rahman in his opening address pictured the coalition as the essential nucleus through which independence would be accomplished and around which the new political system would be built. "We are determined," he pledged, "that no power or factions shall succeed in breaking up the unity so found."[9] Later amid a series of speeches expounding on the theme of inter-communal harmony, rose Enche Hashim Ghani, a delegate of the Peninsular Malays Union. Looking straight at Dato Abdul Razak bin Hussein, leader of the UMNO delegation, he voiced bluntly the doubts of many Muslim religious functionaries and Malay schoolteachers. "If the Chinese are not prepared to share their economic position to the Sons of the Soil willingly at this premature stage of achieving Self-Government, I am quite afraid that the UMNO had done a big blunder of making meaningless alliance with a race in which his sincerity to this country has not been challenged." Accusing the Chinese of participating in a coalition with UMNO for the single devious purpose of pursuing a monopoly of political power to protect their wealth, he "urged my own countrymen, especially UMNO, to work first with his own people and try to understand them more fully rather than to jump to other races without consulting his younger brothers. The result of leaving his brothers behind may bring a gloomy picture for the Independence of this country in days to come."[10] Tan Cheng Lock, as expected, responded vigorously. "Nobody outside bedlam," he declared with some feeling, "would suggest that a man of my experience and record of public service would make such monstrous, criminal, atrocious issue of suggesting that the Chinese should monopolize political power in this country." More important, however, was the Malay response. Whatever their personal sentiments or private suspicions, they subordinated them to their determination to demonstrate that the communities could live in harmony. Not a single Malay delegate took the floor in support of Enche Ghani.

All this could scarcely reassure General Templer. In the face of Alliance successes he continued to regard an inter-communal coalition as a most undesirable development. The example of Switzerland—no one mentioned Canada—he considered wholly beside the point. Malaya, the High Commissioner was convinced, needed more time for independence, at least until some significant progress was made toward the dissolution of communal boundaries. Until then, with the help of the Rulers and the English educated administrators he saw it his duty to slow down any rush toward representative institutions.

It was getting late, however. Pressures from the national political leadership visibly supported by (mostly Malay) popular masses, not to mention London, compelled movement towards self-determination. On July 15, 1953, a month before the UMNO-MCA Convention and the Chief Ministers' Conference, the High Commissioner appointed a committee "to examine the question

[6] Singapore, *Standard*, June 24, 1952.

[7] Paraphrased in Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free, op. cit.*, p. 106.

[8] The Convention was attended by 14 delegates from both UMNO and the MCA plus two delegates each from three other communally oriented Malay organizations. Communal balance was scrupulously observed in the selection of the officers. UMNO provided the chairman and the assistant-secretary (Aziz bin Ishak), while the Vice-Chairman (Tan Cheng Lock) and the Secretary (T. H. Tan) were members of the MCA.

[9] Minutes of the first National Convention held under the joint sponsorship of UMNO and MCA at Kuala Lumpur, August 23, 1953.

[10] *Ibid.*

of elections to the Federal Legislative Council and constitutional changes in the Federal Government arising therefrom."[11] Fully half the membership was Malay with ten Chinese, seven Europeans, and six others. Five "officials" and eleven (official) representatives of the States and Settlements were included, but the majority was appointed from outside the ranks of the government. They included the leaders of UMNO and the MCA. Altogether it was a very clever move by General Templer. It placed the Alliance, which carried all popular elections by vast majorities, on a Committee deciding the appropriate formula of popular representation, where it was definitely in the minority.

Tunku Abdul Rahman and his colleagues, however, had no intention of being out-maneuvered quite so easily. With a great show of responsible statesmanship they cooperated in every stage of the Committee's deliberations and supported most of its conclusions. They dissented on just six issues,[12] and only on two were they adamant. But on two carefully chosen issues they were very adamant indeed. While the majority was reluctant to "unduly hasten elections," the UMNO-MCA members saw no reason why voting for the federal legislature should be postponed beyond November, 1954. Most important though was the other issue. The majority was satisfied with an interim Legislative Council where the elected members were in a minority (44 out of 92). Malay communal leaders, such as Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil, Dato Haji Mohammad Eusoff, Dato Zainal Abidin, as well as the Chief Ministers of seven Malay states and Dato Onn all voted for a majority of appointed members. So did Yong Shook Lin, a former Secretary of the MCA who determinedly opposed the centralization of the party, all European members and all but one Indian member. The Alliance, however, was de-

[11] Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, *Debates* (1st Legislative Council, 6th Session), cols. 438–440.

[12] The six issues on which the Alliance provided the core of minority opinion were: (1) the disqualification of civil servants from candidacy in elections; (2) the right of only citizens (not all permanent residents) to vote; (3) the limitation of ministerial office to members of the legislature; (4) the requirement of popular majority for election even in multi-member constituencies; (5) the timing of legislative elections; and (6) the composition of the transitional legislature.

For details see *Report of the Committee on Elections to the Federal Legislative Council* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, Federation of Malaya, 1954).

termined to resist the formula. It demanded not only that the majority of legislators be elected but also that this majority be at least three-fifths of the total membership. They explained somewhat later: "A three-fifth majority is the minimum based on the necessity of providing a sufficient majority of elected seats if the party or parties who command the majority among the electors, are to have a sufficiently effective voice in the councils of government, bearing in mind that they are unlikely to be able to command all the elected seats."[13]

Outvoted in the Committee, the Alliance leaders moved the issues to a broader, political arena. One forum which conveniently offered itself was the Third National Convention of the Alliance. Dr. Ismail bin Abdul Rahman of Johore, the leader of the UMNO delegation bitterly attacked those who in the Committee opposed an elected majority. Specifically, he confronted the English educated in Malaya in the civil service who in the past had cooperated with UMNO, but who more recently had tended to look to Dato Onn for leadership. "Election to the Federal Council," Dr. Ismail proclaimed, "is not an 'experiment' to the ordinary people in this country. It is an 'experiment' to those who fear the face of the electorate, to those who would prefer the *status quo* in order not to lose what they have, and afraid to fight for what they may not get; to those who could hinder the march of Malaya to Independence." At the end of its deliberations the Convention approved a petition restating the Alliance position on all six disputes in the Committee on Election and forwarded it to the High Commissioner, the Malay Rulers, and some members of Parliament. Then followed a massive, country-wide campaign to enlist visible public support. In fact, by the end of February more than 200 Malay and Chinese organizations endorsed the Alliance petition. The friendly press found further reason for prompt elections in a calculation that in the existing Legislative Council, the Alliance party which swept practically every local election, was represented by only 14 votes, while Dato Onn and his supporters who just as consistently lost electoral contests, numbered 34. "Another year of this anachronistic form of government is about

[13] Quoted from the *Petition to His Excellency the High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya and to Their Highnesses, the Rulers of the Malay States.*

as much as the politically-advanced people of Malaya can tolerate," declared the *Malayan Mirror* editorially.[14]

In the meantime, the High Commissioner who obtained much of what he wanted from the Committee proceeded to reinforce his position by enlisting the support of the Malay Rulers. On March 27 they jointly endorsed a set of "agreed proposals" to be submitted to Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies. These included some concessions, most notably a slight elected majority.

Tunku Abdul Rahman was not in the least taken in by such a "compromise." Obviously if the Alliance lost as few as three of the fifty-two contests, it would still have to face a stalemate, and he had not spent some two decades in Britain without learning to appreciate the tactic of divide and conquer. On its part, the Alliance offered the challenge: let the popular judgment, whatever it was, be decisive. It would insist on the three-fifths formula or else. And to underline its determination UMNO convened an emergency assembly in Malacca (April 18, 1954) and passed a resolution demanding a wholly elected Legislative Council. More than that, it decided to carry the matter together with the MCA directly to London.[15]

In the British capital, however, General Templer had a clear advantage. For three weeks the Alliance delegation was kept waiting and when it was finally received by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the meeting seemed hardly worth the journey. The full range of the UMNO-MCA position was discussed, but Tunku Abdul Rahman clearly focused on the sixth point of the Alliance dissent. He pleaded earnestly for a legislature with three-fifths of its members popularly elected. Without it, he argued again and again, party government (and responsibility) had no chance to emerge. Oliver Lyttelton, however, was unmoved. Less than a month earlier (while the delegation was practically enroute), he had approved the "agreed proposals" of the High Commissioner and Malay Rulers with their 52:46 formula, and saw no reason, even if he had the constitutional authority, to revise them. It was an impasse, and the meeting

[14] Singapore, *Malayan Mirror*, March 15, 1954.

[15] The delegation was composed of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dato Abdul Razak bin Husein and T. H. Tan. Tan Cheng Lock was expected to join the delegation in London, but was unable to do so.

was terminated with the Secretary's promise to state his views in writing.

Two days later the letter arrived.[16] It emphasized agreement on practically all points the Alliance chose to contest—except the two most important ones:

> (e) There is no difference between us in our anxiety that the first Federal elections should be held as soon as possible. It is a practical impossibility to hold them before the end of this year, but they will be held as early as possible next year; and
>
> (f) Above all, your desire that the majority party in the Legislative Council should be able to function effectively in government will be fully satisfied by my assurance that if it were prevented from doing so by deliberate obstructiveness, I should at once ask the High Commissioner to consider with the Conference of Rulers how the situation might be remedied and that I should be prepared, if necessary, to agree to the amendment of the Federation Agreement in order to apply a suitable remedy.

As a matter of fact, the Alliance delegation was anything but fully satisfied by Lyttelton's assurance. On landing at Singapore (May 23, 1954) it issued a statement conceding to London an earnest desire to avoid a political crisis in Malaya, but emphasizing that the concessions were granted on subsidiary points. Their main demand, a substantial majority of elected members in the Legislative Council, was unfortunately rejected.[17] The next day, in Kuala Lumpur, the Executive Committee of the Alliance met, and after the report of the delegation passed a resolution requesting the appointment of a special independent commission "to report on constitutional reforms in the Federation." Then after proclaiming "its fullest cooperation to the Government in all respects," it warned, that if it would proceed to implement the "agreed proposals . . . the Alliance with great regret will have no choice but to withdraw all its members from participation in the Government."[18] Next day,

[16] Letter by Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 18, 1954. Reprinted in Great Britain, House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 528, cols. 10–16.

[17] London, *The Times*, May 24, 1954, p. 5.

[18] Federation of Malaya, Council Paper No. 21 of 1954.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, in an answer to the Secretary of State for the Colonies once again repeated his case, then left no doubt of the consequences if Britain proved insensitive. "No responsible party," he warned, "will willingly form a government in these circumstances."[19]

The British government stood its ground. Lyttelton was not prepared to treat the UMNO-MCA Alliance with special deference. There were other, important political groups within the Federation, he hoped, and thus "the degree of support given by public opinion to one view other than another cannot be clearly determined until the first federal elections have been held." In any case, "the present proposals meet nearly all your wishes," the Secretary wrote, "and I frankly consider it incumbent upon you to cooperate in making a success of them."[20]

The Alliance also remained firm. Its leaders would not concede to Britain any special expertise in defining the road to independence. Upon receipt of Lyttelton's letter (June 14, 1954) they played their trump card: "The UMNO-MCA Alliance, after the meeting of the MCA General Committee and the UMNO Central Executive Committee at Kuala Lumpur today, announces with regret its decision to withdraw all unofficial members of UMNO and MCA from active participation in the governments in the Federation."[21]

Clearly, the country witnessed a test of wills. The Legislative Council continued to operate—only fourteen of its members had withdrawn—and the Federation Government, undaunted, proceeded to introduce the bills designed to prepare for federal elections. Some members of the Legislative Council, moreover, used the opportunity to roundly attack the UMNO and MCA leaders. The latter were compared to the Communists, being disloyal, initiating a "turncoat action." Inevitably, Dato Onn added his own views. The "Grand Alliance," he declared scornfully, "was playing a grand game of bluff . . . and they continued to bluff with a couple of knaves."[22] Part of the press, especially the English segment, was also unfriendly. "Resignation before

[19] Letter by Tunku Abdul Rahman to Oliver Lyttleton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 25, 1954.

[20] London, *The Times*, June 12, 1954, p. 5.

[21] Kuala Lumpur, *Malayan Mirror*, June 15, 1954.

[22] Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, *Debates* (1st Legislative Council, 7th Session), cols. 339–340.

this momentous debate on the constitutional proposals," editorialized *The Straits Times*, "appears peculiarly cowardly."[23] The *Malay Mail* in turn questioned the political maturity and stability of the Alliance. "What guarantee is there," it asked, "that had the Alliance gained their point on the elected majority issue that similar action [walk out] might not be taken when other contentious issues arose in later stages?"[24]

In response, the Alliance issued its own broadsides. "If there has been any cowardice at all," the party declared, "it has been evinced, firstly by the British Government which is not bold enough in giving us real democracy—the British Government agrees to the principle of elected majority but does not make the application of the principle possible; secondly, there is a cowardice on the part of the IMP, *Party Negara* and other reactionaries in facing the electorate—they do not want elections at all; and thirdly, there is a cowardice on the part of British papers like *The Straits Times* and *Malay Mail* in coming out with a forthright confession that the British Government is afraid—rather unjustifiably, in our view—to grant us effective self-government in view of possible consequences of the loss of the Commonwealth's biggest Dollar Earner to Britain."[25] The Alliance also sent delegations to call on all Malay Rulers, except the Sultan of Perak. Large-scale demonstrations spread throughout the country, while some thousand office-holders withdrew. In 1946 a Malay boycott had proved effective; now following the joint lead of the UMNO and MCA, Chinese and Malays demonstrated a solidarity of impressive proportions.

As the confrontation visibly intensified—and both sides fostered the appearance of their own resoluteness—the predisposition to compromise also increased. The Alliance did not want to alienate totally the British government, especially at the time when its troops were quite evidently destroying the Communist insurgents. The High Commissioner in turn was under enormous pressure from his advisors, including his civilian deputy and the Attorney General. Pointing to the severe impairment of civil administration and a possible breakdown of the anti-insurgency campaign, they counseled concessions. General Tem-

[23] Singapore, *The Straits Times*, June 14, 1954.

[24] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, June 14, 1954.

[25] Singapore, *Malayan Mirror*, June 15, 1954.

pler himself was reaching the end of his term and was getting ready to leave Malaya. Thus after some preliminary exchanges the Attorney General, M. J. Hogan, flew to Johore Bahru where Tunku Abdul Rahman and Dr. Ismail were staying, and when Colonel H. S. Lee joined them they all proceeded to Singapore. At the naval base on board HMS *Alert*, General Templer, with whiskey and soda in front of him, received the Alliance leaders. Tunku Abdul Rahman had won.

With communications restored, the question to be settled was the new formula of membership in the Legislative Council. A solution had already been offered by Mohammad Sopie, a member of the Legislative Council. The appointment of seven nominated members was reserved to the discretion of the High Commissioner. If the latter, Enche Sopiee proposed, would make these appointments after the election and in consultation with the majority party, then for all practical purposes the "elected" contingent would increase to 59 out of a total membership of 98, and the demand for a three-fifths ratio would in fact be met. After some negotiations this formula was indeed adopted. The new High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray, in a letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman, explained "the course I intend to pursue when appointing the nominated reserve members." It was his intention, he declared, "to consult with the leader or leaders of the majority amongst the elected members before making appointments to these seats." Thereupon the Alliance members who had withdrawn were re-appointed and resumed their position.

Thus the stage was set for the decisive determination by the will of the citizens. Should the new, independent Malayan state depend upon a homogenized polity, or some working arrangement among communal groups. Officers were appointed to conduct elections, to assign symbols, to take deposits, and to arrange for polling stations. Boundaries of fifty-two constituencies were established. The registration of eligible voters commenced in October. Ultimately the electoral lists included 1,280,000 persons.[26] Some 84 percent were Malays, 11 percent Chinese, and the remainder mostly Indians. Only in two constituencies were

[26] T. E. Smith, *Report on the First Election of Members to the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1955), p. 10.

the Malays in a minority, in thirty-seven they held at least 75 percent of the eligible vote. Early in March 1955 the nomination day was set for June 15 and the first federal elections for July 27.

The campaign itself was short. Seven parties participated. The Alliance which in order to round out its multi-racial image, was now joined by the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), entered candidates in all constituencies.[27] Numerically its closest rival was Dato Onn's latest party, the *Party Negara*—organized this time along Malay communal lines—with thirty candidates. Then followed the orthodox Muslim and radically communal Malay party, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) with eleven candidates.[28] Eighteen independents also contested.

In terms of issues, no clear distinctions could be made. The PMIP emphasized the orthodox imperatives of Islam, warning against the machinations of the infidel (the Chinese, of course, but also presumably the British). No one explicitly espoused secular norms. The Pan-Malayan Labour Party demanded the introduction of truly democratic processes (guaranteed civil liberties and political parity between the Malays and the Chinese). No candidate advocated authoritarian rule. The Alliance pledged independence within four years and pleaded for a large majority. No one was prepared to prolong British control indefinitely. In the final analysis, all parties and all candidates asked for a vote of confidence.

When the results were in it was clear that the Alliance held the confidence of the masses; it had won fifty-one seats. The only one it lost went to the PMIP, not to the Party Negara. Dato Onn himself could muster no more than 2,802 votes out of 11,547 in his constituency in Johore. Tunku Abdul Rahman in contrast swamped his opponent in Kedah by a margin of 22,226 to 1,239 votes. There could be no doubt about it: the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance was able to mobilize the vast majority of citizens, the masses of Malays, Chinese, and Indians. If the independent state of Malaya was to be endowed with democratic institutions, it was this coalition that would determine its form and its procedures.

[27] The Alliance entered 35 Malays, 15 Chinese, and 2 Indians as candidates.

[28] The communal division of Party Negara candidates was 29 Malays and 1 Chinese. All PMIP candidates were Malays.

The Achievement of the Inter-communal Coalition: A Constitutional Contract

The new political realities were clear enough to the Alliance leadership. Even before the last election results were announced, Tunku Abdul Rahman was already advancing further. He proposed to open talks regarding a fully elected legislature with the Secretary of State for the Colonies promptly after the latter's imminent arrival. Furthermore, he suggested, the time was rapidly approaching for the appointment of a special commission charged with the responsibility of preparing a draft constitution for independent Malaya. Then he added with a certain wry satisfaction, that in view of the changed situation the High Commissioner's veto power in the Legislative Assembly be eliminated and his functions should be made purely advisory "within two years or one year if possible."[29] And he did not have in mind the kind of "advisory function" which was exercised in the past by British Residents.

Nor did the emergence of the new political realities escape the attention of the British government. It recognized the Alliance as the ruling party and perhaps reluctantly conceded their approach to an independent and viable Malayan political system. Within a week Tunku Abdul Rahman was installed as Chief Minister, and his Cabinet, composed of six Malays, three Chinese, and one Indian, assumed control of the executive departments. Four members of the Cabinet also sat in the War Executive Committee which was in charge of anti-insurgency operations. The Colonial Secretary—A. Lenox-Boyd had meanwhile succeeded Oliver Lyttelton—upon arrival in Kuala Lumpur met with the new Executive Council in an atmosphere of amity. He accepted the proposal that a Malayan delegation should visit London to discuss the continued advance toward independence, insisting only on the caveat that the delegation should not be perceived as a Commission empowered to settle constitutional details. Three months later (November 30, 1955) followed a formal announcement of the High Commissioner, speaking on behalf of the British government, that not even the continued State of Emergency would prevent or delay plans for the introduction of self-government.[30]

[29] London, *The Times*, July 30, 1955, p. 5.

[30] Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, *Debates* (2nd Legislative Council, 2nd Session), cols. 156–159.

Finally, the Malay Rulers also recognized the new political situation. Most had already sympathized with the movement which at least partially was led by their own kin.[31] Nor were they particularly apprehensive about being deprived of power —in practical terms they had very little left anyway. A fresh opportunity to cement relations presented itself early in January, 1956, during the preparations for the London Conference. By agreement, the Malayan delegation was to be composed of four representing the Malay Rulers and the same number representing the ruling party.[32] Shortly before departure, Tunku Abdul Rahman proposed that the delegation should proceed together to London, and that it should do so in a somewhat leisurely manner. Instead of flying directly, they could travel by ship to Karachi, where they could board a plane. The time together could thus be used to thrash out any possible differences of views within the delegation. The Rulers promptly accepted the suggestion, and on board the *Asia* their representatives generally agreed to present a united position in the British capital.

The London Conference itself lasted for nearly three weeks, from January 18, to February 6, 1956. It discussed a number of matters, some related to the final period of transition, others to the anticipated future relationship between Britain and independent Malaya.[33] It was agreed that until independence, responsibility for external defense and external relations should be reserved to the British government through the High Commissioner. Even after independence, the Federation government would grant Britain the right to maintain in Malaya forces necessary to meet its Commonwealth and other international obligations. In matters of internal defense and security, however, even during the transitional period a Malayan Minister would be re-

[31] One exception was the Sultan of Perak. T. H. Tan, Secretary of the MCA described the situation during the Alliance boycott in mid-1954. "The Ruler of Perak," he wrote to a friend, "was advised by his anti-Alliance *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) not to receive the Alliance delegation. I think the Perak Ruler has regretted his acceptance of that advice ever since, for he (alone among the Rulers) showed himself as unwilling, undemocratic to identify himself with the people. He even gave the impression that he sided with the colonial power. Too bad for him." Letter from T. H. Tan to Charles Schumaker. See Schumaker, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

[32] Specifically the delegation included the *Mentris Besar* of Perak and Selangor, the deputy *Mentri Besar* of Johore, a former *Mentri Besar* of Kelantan, as well as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Colonel H. S. Lee, Dr. Ismail and Dato Abdul Razak.

[33] Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Conference* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956).

sponsible. Under him an Armed Services Council and a Police Service Commission would function, and also under him the British Director of Operations would hold operational control over the anti-insurgency campaign. Regarding financial matters, it was agreed that Malaya would after independence remain in the sterling block, and Britain in turn would provide economic assistance toward the expansion of the Federation army and the successful conclusion of the Emergency. In the meantime, a Malayan Minister of Finance would be appointed, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry would replace the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and an Economic Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister would be established. Most difficult perhaps was the question of public services. Clearly the delegation was determined to Malayanize the administrative structure.[34] The British government, on the other hand, felt strongly that its citizens who served the Federation should either be given a fair chance to continue to do so, or alternatively be granted a reasonable compensation. A compromise formula was finally adopted which met both requirements, rapid Malayanization and generous compensation. Except for this one overriding consideration, the public services would continue to remain independent. To make sure, a Public Service Commission was envisaged whose "executive powers" would require even the High Commissioner to be bound by its recommendations. In political matters it was agreed that British advisors to Malay Rulers be withdrawn in about a year, at the convenience of the individual Ruler. Most important though was the agreement that the constitutional commission requested by the Malayan delegation would be appointed forthwith and that a target date for independence and self-government was set for August, 1957.

The London Conference was undoubtedly a victory for the Alliance. In a very real sense, also a personal triumph of Tunku Abdul Rahman. Taking the helm of UMNO, shaken by the resignation of Dato Onn, and persistently confronted by a British political formula he considered disastrous, he succeeded not only in re-unifying his own party but also in building largely personal bridges to the three other critical elements of the Malayan political scene: the British government, the Malay Rulers and the non-Communist leadership of the community of Chi-

[34] On September 20, 1955, Tunku Abdul Rahman appointed a Malayanization Committee under his own chairmanship.

nese. His style was leisurely, his manner benevolent, and his attitude flexible. He used political power gently, always sensitive to the interests of others. Yet, all along he was determined to concentrate final authority in his own hands. In his first address as Chief Minister to the Legislative Assembly he spoke confidently of "my government." The Secretary of State for Colonies objected to this. "You cannot yet call the Federation Government your government. It is not yours. It is a government formed by agreement between the Queen and the Malay Rulers." "Is that so? I am glad to know that," the Tunku replied. "I must make it my government as soon as possible then."[35] Indeed, the London conference concentrated in his hand control of internal security and the chairmanship of the Economic Committee. Even the Constitution Commission was in the first instance to report to him. Through this combination of speaking softly and carrying a big stick, he brought to the Alliance victories in electoral contests and success in negotiation sessions. While he perplexed many a friend and foe, his personal hegemony expanded and his reputation as a shrewd and clever leader was being established. London was only the first step.

Indeed the agreements worked out by conference were promptly approved by the Queen and the Malay Rulers and then the process of implementation began. The principle of ministerial responsibility was introduced in the Federation. As one consequence, the High Commissioner was obliged to act in accordance with the advice of the Federal Executive Council, except in those cases where he felt it necessary to disregard such advice in the interest of "public order, public faith or good government of the Federation." But even then he was required to seek the advice of the Chief Minister, and in case of dispute refer the matter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. At the same time, the various Councils contemplated at London were set up under Malayan control. Negotiations on the compensation of non-Malayan civil servants proceeded and ultimately were resolved by an agreement setting the total amount at about M$74 million.[36] Agreements were also reached on the withdrawal of British advisors. Meanwhile, it was announced in London that Lord Reid, a Lord of Appeal-in-Ordinary, was appointed chair-

[35] In Harry Miller, *Prince and Premier* (London: Harrap, 1959), p. 181.

[36] It was the price for freedom and self-determination, Dato Abdul Razak asserted in the Legislative Council.

man of the Constitution Commission. The other members selected were: Sir J. Jenning, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Sir W. McKell, a former Governor General of Australia; B. Malik, a former Chief Justice of the Allahabad Court; and Justice A. Hamid of the West Pakistan High Court.

The Commission's first meeting in Malaya was held on June 30, 1956. Following the pattern which led to the Federation Agreement, it immediately set out to undertake a massive research effort. Its members traveled to each of the Malay States and the Settlements of Malacca and Penang. They conferred with the *Mentris Besar*, the British advisors, the Resident Commissioners and other officers. They also met with the members of the Legislative Council, the State and Settlement Councils and representatives of various political, economic and communal groups. All in all, the Commission held 118 public hearings in Malaya. It also read some 131 memoranda, some quite extensive. By October it was ready to prepare its recommendations and to do so it assembled in Rome. Three months later, on February 11, 1957, the Commission presented its *Report* together with a dissenting opinion of Justice Abdul Hamid.[37]

The result of its efforts was a relatively short document; 109 pages including appendices. At the very beginning it spelled out in detail the terms of reference agreed at the London Conference. The Commission was directed by Her Majesty the Queen and Their Highnesses the Malay Rulers:

> To make recommendations for a federal form of constitution for the whole country as a single, self-governing unit within the Commonwealth based on Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature, which would include provision for:
>
> (i) the establishment of a strong central government with the States and Settlements enjoying a measure of authority (the question of the residual legislative power to be examined by, and to be the subject of recommendations by the Commission) and with machinery for consultation between the Central Government and the States and Settlements on certain financial matters to be specified in the Constitution;

[37] Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957).

> (ii) the safe-guarding of the position and prestige of Their Highnesses as constitutional Rulers of their respective States;
>
> (iii) a constitutional *Yang di-Pertuan Besar* (Head of State) for the Federation to be chosen from among Their Highnesses the Rulers;
>
> (iv) a common nationality for the whole of the Federation;
>
> (v) the safe-guarding of the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities.

There was, incidentally, a rider attached by the Conference of Rulers to the agreed formula. It stated that "Their Highnesses wish it to be understood that they do not wish the word 'nationality' in paragraph (iv) to be interpreted by the Commission in a strict legal sense but to be used widely enough to include both nationality and citizenship so that, if the Commission so wishes, it can preserve the combination of nationality and citizenship which is expressed in the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948, but naturally without any restriction on the expansion of citizenship so as to produce what in effect would be 'a common nationality.' "

Then followed a chapter entitled "historical introduction," which scanned the sequence of political developments from 1874 onward, but which left no misunderstanding that the only indigenous authority, one which negotiated and signed treaties with the British monarch, was that of the Malay Rulers. The first substantive chapter which came next was devoted to citizenship. Quite obviously, the Commission did not wish to avail itself of the option offered by the Rulers' addendum to the terms of reference.

On the contrary, it went considerably beyond the provisions of the Federation of Malaya Agreement and its later amendment. All those, the Commission recommended, who were citizens of the Federation on independence day (*Merdeka*) "should continue to have such rights." All those eligible for citizenship before independence should remain eligible. Persons born in the Federation after independence should be citizens "by operation of law." Those born in the Federation before independence should "without undue difficulty" be able to acquire citizenship provided (1) they resided there during five of the preceding seven years; (2) have an elementary knowledge of Malay—

a requirement which could be waived for those who would apply within one year after independence; (3) intend to reside in the Federation permanently, and (4) are prepared to take an oath of allegiance and refrain from exercising any right or privilege which they may have under the nationality laws of any foreign country. In addition, nationalizaton processes should be available to all immigrants who met the same requirements except for a slightly higher residence requirement (ten out of twelve preceding years). In short, citizenship of the Federation after independence should be far, far easier to acquire than ever before under British protection. In turn, it should be more difficult to lose. For those who have gained it by birth or descent only the voluntary acquisition of foreign citizenship or the exercise of privileges reserved for foreign citizens in the land of their origin should be considered sufficient ground for expatriation. In addition, only fraudulent naturalization, demonstrated disloyalty, imprisonment for no less than two years within five years of naturalization, or trading with the enemy at time of war should be considered sufficient ground for denaturalization. One further recommendation in this category is noteworthy: citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies or other Commonwealth countries (including India, of course) should not "be required to renounce such citizenship as a condition of obtaining citizenship of the Federation."

With this the Commission turned to propose a blueprint of a highly centralized government. It recommended a bicameral legislature: a fully elected House of Representatives enjoying approximately equivalent rights with the British House of Commons, and an Upper House, a much smaller institution of thirty-three, composed of indirectly elected and nominated senators serving primarily as a revising and delaying body. The central executive would be formally headed by a constitutional monarch (*Yang di-Pertuan Besar*) elected for a five-year term by the Malay Rulers. He would choose the Prime Minister—one, however, who enjoyed the confidence of the legislators—who would confer honors, grant commissions, and be entitled to be kept informed of public affairs. He would act on advice of the Prime Minister, who would have to be a member of the House of Representatives, and his Cabinet, who in turn would be responsible to the legislature. Once the Prime Minister "ceases to command the confidence of the House of Representatives," the Commission recommended, he "must either vacate his office or ask for a dissolution. If the Prime Minister asks for a dissolution and the *Yang di-Pertuan Besar* refuses this request, then the Prime Minister must vacate his office." For policy implementation the Cabinet would rely upon public services whose integrity would be constitutionally guaranteed and operationally ensured through independent commissions. Finally, on the third branch of the national government, the Judiciary, the Commission departed from the British model and turned to the American example. The Supreme Court, according to its *Report*, should in addition to its appellate jurisdiction have jurisdiction in conflicts between the Federation and a State or in those between states. Moreover, the Supreme Court should also possess the power of judicial interpretation and judicial review. Judges should be appointed until the retirement age of sixty-five, to be removed only by the *Yang di-Pertuan Besar* after two-thirds votes in both houses of the legislature.

Government on the state level with some exceptions would reflect the national pattern. The Commission proposed State Legislative Assemblies which would be unicameral and wholly elected. The Ruler of a Malay State or the Governor of a former Straits Settlement would head the executive branch, but in a major departure from the Federation Agreement, the *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) rather than the Sultan would preside over the State Executive Council. He and his Council would be collectively responsible to the legislature just as the Cabinet is responsible to Parliament.

In the distribution of power between the central government and the state governments, the latter were to be at a definite disadvantage. Three lists were prepared by the Commission to identify federal, state, and concurrent jurisdiction. The federal list contained twenty-three items, including External Affairs, Defense, Internal Security, Finance, Trade, Commerce and Industry, i.e., items which were routinely considered federal subjects, but also a number of subjects which were usually in the category of local jurisdiction: civil law, criminal law, labor and social security, unincorporated societies, medicine and health, maternity and child welfare, fishing and fisheries, and places of public amusements. The state list composed of ten items included Muslim law, land, agriculture and forestry, local government and state holidays. Ten subjects—for example,

scholarships, protection of wild animals and wild birds, animal husbandry, vagrancy, and public health—were assigned to the category of concurrent jurisdiction. Any assumption moreover that the imbalance between federal and state authority was somewhat redressed by a recommendation "that any residual powers that may exist have been retained by the States" was dispelled by the Commission itself when it declared that "it is unlikely that the residual power will ever come into operation because the Legislative lists . . . appear to us to cover every foreseeable matter on which there might be legislation." On the contrary, the imbalance was further aggravated by the recommendations on constitutional amendment procedures: they did not involve the states at all, only two-thirds of the members voting in the houses of the federal legislature.

A more real restraint on federal power than that of the state governments was the proposed justiciability of fundamental rights to be embedded in the Constitution. Practically copied from the Indian Constitution, they were broad in scope, ranging from personal liberty, freedom of speech and freedom of religion through the right to due process to "provisions against discrimination by law on the ground of religion, race, descent, or place of birth and discrimination on those grounds by any Government or public authority in making appointments or contracts permitting entry to any educational institutions, or granting financial aid in respect of pupils and students." These rights, moreover, were subject solely to the imperatives of the most extraordinary conditions. Under normal circumstances they would be limited only by "the interests of security, public order or morality or in relation to incitement, [be restricted] by defamation or contempt of court."

There was, however, one other limitation, one that vexed the Commission greatly: provisions for the special position of the Malays. The Commission agreed quickly on making Malay the official language. But then it began to hedge. The English language should be granted equivalence, the Commission recommended, for at least ten years, after which a review would be appropriate. During the same period, moreover, Chinese and Indian should in some cases be recognized as working languages in the legislatures. Above all, there should be no language qualifications for holding elected office. Providing full participation for the Malays in the economy was quite evidently something else again. Had it not been for the terms of reference imposed upon it, the Commission would just as well have ignored the entire question. As it was, all but the Pakistani member saw the age-old Malay privileges an anachronistic aberration. They wanted it to be frozen at the level of 1957, and after fifteen years reviewed and hopefully abolished altogether.

The publication of the *Report* as expected stirred considerable controversy throughout the land. There was, actually, very little discussion of the political structure proposed—even the reduced role of the Malay Rulers provoked scarcely a comment. On the two critical points of intercommunal relations, citizenship and Malay privileges, the storm broke with full force.

Only the main English language newspaper tended to be supportive. *The Straits Times* spoke of the recommendations as "inspired by a noble vision that all should share."[38] Two days later it concluded a long editorial discussing "Malay privileges" and supporting the time limit imposed with the "sombre thought . . . that if the question of racial divisions has not yet ceased to trouble men's minds long before 1972, then disaster will already have overtaken us."[39] Three weeks later, however, the newspaper took a "second look at Reid," and then concluded that, after all, on the issue of Malay privileges "the majority recommendations of the Commission . . . [were] unsuitable."[40] The Malay language newspapers never had any doubt of it. *Warta Mingguan* promptly expressed its reservations about all the concessions to the Chinese.[41] Rather more directly an editorial in *Warta Negara* insisted that the country had one sovereign nation—the Malays. Therefore, independence and sovereignty under British protection would have to be handed over to the Malays, who in turn rather than depending on "privileges" would define the terms of citizenship of others.[42] *Utusan Melayu*, perhaps the most influential Malay newspaper, trying to take a moderate line was still puzzled by what it feared to be a pro-Chinese bias in the *Report*, and found it "hardly comprehensible" why the Commission saw any merit in imposing a review of Malay privileges in so short a time as fifteen years. Yet, these were still only moderate responses. Some political

[38] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, February 21, 1957.
[39] *Ibid.*, February 23, 1957. [40] *Ibid.*, March 13, 1957.
[41] Penang, *Warta Mingguan*, February 24, 1957.
[42] Penang, *Warta Negara*, February 27, 1957.

groups felt no similar restraints. Dato Onn, erstwhile founder of the multi-racial IMP now proclaimed (as an initial impression, at least) that "the Malays have been sold down the river."[43] His current party, *Party Negara*, joined with two others, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party and the *Party Ra'ayat* in a pledge to try to prevent the *Report* from being accepted. More determined was the Malay Chambers of Commerce, Perak, which at a special meeting demanded that the *Report* be amended so as to recognize the Malays as the "master race" in independent Malaya.[44] Even the Malay Society of Great Britain felt compelled to send a cablegram to the Chief Minister informing him of its rejection of the recommendations.[45] Meanwhile in Kuala Lumpur, 60 delegates representing twenty Malay organizations met in the presence of 200 observers and decided to send a delegation to London to appeal directly to the British government.

If some Malays felt that the Commission had unduly circumscribed their privileges, a segment of Chinese opinion considered the *Report* excessively generous toward the Malay community. A Penang Chinese daily, *Kwong Wah Jit Poh* warned that it was improper in a democratic country to divide people of various communities into different grades,[46] while the *Nanyang Siang Pau* considered even a fifteen-year term for Malay privileges too long a period.[47] The *Singapore Standard* was even more openly negative. "The greatest defect in the psychology of the Malays," its editorial proclaimed, "is their innate fear that they are unable to stand on their own feet within the 15 year period during which they would enjoy special privileges. They want this period to be for all time. This is tantamount to an admission that they will never be able to compete with other races for a proper place under their own Malayan sun. This is also an admission that they are not prepared to work hard enough for what they want in this world."[48] Meanwhile, some Chinese associations and guilds were also threatening to send delegations to London.

[43] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, February 22, 1957.
[44] Singapore, *Utusan Melayu*, March 16, 1957.
[45] *Ibid.*, March 26, 1957.
[46] Penang, *Kwong Wah Jit Poh*, February 28, 1957.
[47] Quoted in Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, February 23, 1957.
[48] Singapore, *Singapore Standard*, March 2, 1957.

Actually, on the two critical points in the definition of inter-communal relations, neither the opinion of foreign jurists, however erudite, nor the expressions of domestic groups, however vociferous, was permitted to be controlling. The Alliance was in power and after the London Conference Britain was prepared to accept its decision. And significantly, the Alliance was developing a method of its own in settling inter-communal issues. There were no projects of survey research to determine popular views, nor any bureaucratic procedures. The heads of the communal parties worked things out privately, informally, and secretly. Not that the members of this Directorate always agreed. On the contrary, the Malays and the Chinese within the Alliance councils could not have presented their views more vigorously nor bargained harder. But, the leadership of UMNO, MCA, and MIC agreed that to carry on negotiations in public on such communally sensitive issues as citizenship and Malay privileges would trap them in a rigid pattern and place the communities on a path of polarization which would inevitably lead to confrontation and communal violence. And, however democratic the means might be, the end would be neither a common nation nor a stable political system.

Interestingly, the inter-communal contract hammered out within the Alliance councils was very similar to the formula proposed some five years earlier by the Communities Liaison Committee. The Chinese would be granted access to the political system through a liberal extension of citizenship. Their property would be protected from expropriation, their culture tolerated, and the private use of their language assured. In turn, the Malays would be guaranteed that their language would serve as the official language of the state and that they would share proportionately in economic rewards.

The cultural autonomy of the Chinese (and Indians) was, of course, already a fact, and full participation in the political system could be extended promptly and very easily to the Chinese. Essentially, all that was required was the unrestrained operation of democratic politics. No similar self-regulating mechanism, however, offered much hope toward the attainment of the other side of the bargain. Malay as the official language and a proportionate Malay share of economic power would have to be gained over some time and as a result of persistent public

initiatives. In order to correct the imbalance in the time schedule, the Alliance leaders agreed that during the transition the community of Chinese should exercise the power they would enjoy in democratic politics with considerable restraint and circumspection, and that some procedural mechanisms, for example, the delimitation of constituencies, which would facilitate a Malay majority in the legislatures, should be legitimate. Moreover, in order to advance decisively toward the time when the constitutional bargain was wholly fulfilled, the government was expected to pursue vigorously the goal of establishing Malay as a national language through its educational policy and the goal of increasing the Malay share of income through its economic policy. To assure that there would be no diversion from these goals nor a flagging of ardor by the government, it was agreed that these tasks should transcend the criteria of democratic politics. Finally, it was agreed that the Alliance leadership should assume the responsibility of being guardians of the constitutional bargain. They would guide compliance and assure that regardless of communal pressures upon the leaders, there would be no arbitrary moves against the other communities: no seizure of private property, not even behind the legal façade of "nationalization"; nor would there be a radical politicization of the masses of Chinese voters, even under the excuse of election campaigns.

The constitutional bargain was introduced to the Reid Commission in the party's formal memorandum. Throughout the procedures following the publication of the *Report* it was forcefully pursued. The appointment of an official Working Party headed by the High Commissioner[49] to consider the *Report* was paralleled by the establishment of an Alliance Ad Hoc Committee under the chairmanship of Dato Abdul Razak to serve as a resource group in support of the Federation government representatives in the Working Party. Quite possibly it was an unnecessary effort. The point of no return had long since been passed. Neither the British government, nor the Malay Rulers were inclined to argue. On whatever issue the Alliance decided to take a stand, it had its will.

It chose to go along with most of the major institutional rec-

[49] Other members included four representatives of the Malay Rulers, four representatives of the Federation government (now under the control of the Alliance), the Chief-Secretary and the Attorney-General.

ommendations.[50] Minor revisions adopted by the Working Party included the change in the title of the constitutional monarch to *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, the increase from eleven to sixteen of the nominated members of the Senate, a reduction in the monarch's power to pardon convictions in court-martial cases, and the requirement of a two-thirds majority of the total membership of both houses, instead of merely those voting for a constitutional amendment. Rather more important were four other sets of revisions involving institutional arrangements. One of these extended the discretionary power of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* to "any other case mentioned in this Constitution." Another decreased his discretionary power. He would no longer be free to dismiss the Prime Minister, even if the latter had apparently lost the confidence of Parliament. The third set of revisions reduced the power of the courts by dropping any provisions for judicial review. Still another appeared to increase the authority of the states. The Rulers' discretionary power was expanded from three—the appointment of a *Mentri Besar*, the dissolution of the State Legislature, and the right to obtain information—to a list of others involving the arrangements of the meetings of the Conference of Rulers, the regulation of Malay custom and religion, appointment of an heir to the Ruler, Malay customary ranks and honors, and the regulation of royal courts and palaces. According to other provisions several items on the three legislative lists were shifted; "Cooperative societies" was moved from the concurrent list and became a federal subject; "Sanitation" was transferred from the state to the concurrent list; but "Turtles" moved in the opposite direction, from the federal list to the last heading on the states' list. It was hardly a balanced shift, not even with a new provision by which laws passed by Parliament involving matters on the states' list could not be enforced in the states where the legislatures had not specifically approved these laws.

The most important revisions, however, were normative rather than institutional. They affected the fundamental rights of the citizen. While the broad headings proposed by the Reid Commission were retained, the language of the articles was so altered as to subordinate them to the terms of the political settlement

[50] For details of the final draft see: Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Constitutional Proposals for the Federation of Malaya* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957).

among the communal leaders. Most fundamental rights would not be enforceable by the courts. Parliament was authorized to impose restrictions on freedom of speech and equality as it deemed necessary for a particular public purpose. Admittedly, the most salient public purpose was harmony among the communal groups.

Few changes were made in the recommendations on citizenship. In a further concession to the Chinese, it was agreed that physical absence from the Federation for educational purposes approved by the appropriate Minister would not be considered an interruption of residence in citizenship cases. Some other amendments related to the right of British and Commonwealth citizens to Malayan citizenship. More dramatic were the changes regarding the national language and the special position of the Malays. First, no ambiguity would be permitted regarding the primacy of Malay. English, for practical reasons, would be tolerated as co-equal in official business for ten years after independence "and thereafter until Parliament otherwise provides," but Chinese or Indian would not be accepted in official councils. They would be practically restricted to private use. Second, on the issue of Malay privileges, the recommendations of the Reid Commission were even more significantly reversed. To begin with, the entire subject was moved out of the framework of democratic politics. His Majesty, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, was to be personally responsible. Then the time limit of fifteen years was removed. Finally, the scope of these privileges —land reservation and quotas in the services, in permits and licenses as well as in scholarships and other financial aids in education—which the Reid Commission froze at the 1957 range, was opened up to permit additional programs to be brought within the purview of His Majesty's special responsibility. The very same article, however, also guaranteed that in the implementation of Malay privileges no person, presumably Chinese or Indian, would be deprived "of any right, privilege, permit or license accrued to or enjoyed or held by him . . . "; and the Constitution was to make His Majesty responsible for this as well. On a related subject, the Working Party also reversed the Commission's recommendation against a state religion and designated Islam as the religion of the Federation. Other religions, however, would have the constitutional right to practice "in peace and harmony" in any part of the Federation.

At the conclusion of the Working Party's deliberation the revised version entitled, "Constitutional Proposals for the Federation of Malaya" was submitted for approval in the Legislative Assembly. The debate was lively, somewhat irritating the Alliance leadership which considered all the negotiations to have been concluded, and it was clearly focused on the issue of the special position of the Malays. Tunku Abdul Rahman after remarking that "there has been very nearly as much discussion and comment on this particular matter as there has been on the other parts of the Constitution put together,"[51] sought to present a balanced picture, pointing to some Malay apprehensions and emphasizing that the same article also protected the other communities. Then S. M. Yong rose to debate. The provisions, he warned, were creating two classes of citizens. Thus, "the second class citizens may say that since we are only entitled to three-fourths of the special privileges, therefore, we in like proportion will bear only the three-fourths of the responsibilities. I say that in time to come it will create discord and dissatisfaction. . . . I think that all the Chinese or the non-Malays will agree that a greater share of the privileges must go to the Malays until they reach parity of wealth with the non-Malays . . . [but] if this provision is put in the permanent part of the Constitution it will tarnish the fair name of our country. The world would say that in this country you have one law for one race, another law for another race."[52] Mr. K. L. Devaser joined the attack. "First of all, I wish to say that I am not aware of any constitution in the world where the natives of the country seek protection. I am not aware of any constitutional law where a majority seeks protection. . . . The third point is that the protection should not be on a racial ground. It should be on an economic ground. . . . May I with respect and due humility point out," he continued, "that this special position of the Malays has acted to the detriment of the Malays—not the non-Malays. The non-Malays have improved because they are not given a special position. . . . I think if the Malays had had competition, keen competition, from the other communities, they will be as much forward economically as the other races."[53] Abdul Ghafar Baba

[51] Federation of Malaya Legislative Council Debates, *Official Report*, July 10, 1957 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1957).

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*, July 11, 1957.

one of the few Malay educated senior members of UMNO supported the revisions. He spoke in some detail on the historical background, but his major thrust was political. "It should be noted that even the above proposals by the Alliance have not satisfied the entire Malay masses of the Federation. There are sections among them, who have claimed that as natives of this country they deserve things far greater than what have been decided by the Alliance, but to be fair to the other races the UMNO had to steer a middle course; . . . Sir, I am surprised to learn that some sections of the population are demanding for equal rights in addition to their demand for relaxation of the present citizenship law. . . . To these people I would say that their action is nothing but merely directed to arouse the anger of the Malays. . . . What would happen if the citizenship law is further relaxed? I am sure that this relaxation, if carried out, would reduce the Malays to a minority in their own country in a few years time. I do not think the Malays would accept the proposal. . . ."[54]

But Ghafar Baba and other Malay legislators did not have to stand alone. The leaderships of their Alliance partners stood firmly at their side. Tan Siew Sin, his friend from Malacca, had already answered S. M. Yong. Malay privileges, he said, had been part of the Federation of Malaya Agreement. "The Malays, therefore, cannot be expected to give up what they already have in the same way that they do not expect the other communities to give up their existing rights. Far more important, however, is the indisputable fact that as a race the Malays are economically backward and well behind the other races in the field. . . . It has also been asked why it has not been explicitly stated that this provision is only temporary. I would remind our critics that the Malays are a proud and sensitive race. They are also an intelligent race, and I know that they appreciate the significance and implications of this provision far better than most people realize. I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever that when the time comes, the Malays themselves will ask for its abolition, but this is a matter which we must obviously leave to them to decide."[55] And V. T. Sambanthan, head of MIC, unhesitatingly took on his Indian colleague in the Assembly. "We hear it spoken, Sir, of first class and second class citizenship. Is the first class

[54] *Ibid.*, July 10, 1957.
[55] *Ibid.*

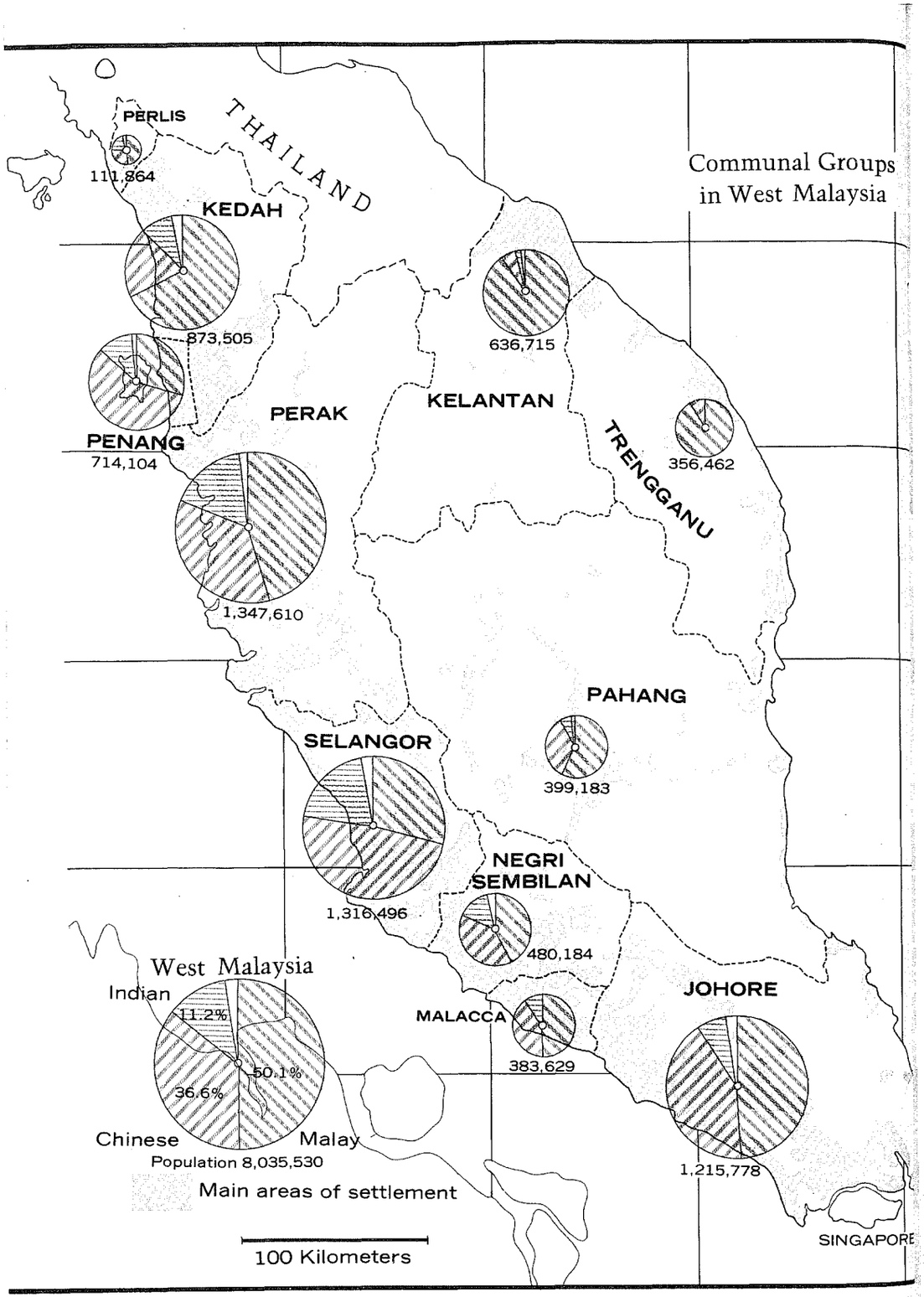
citizen," he asked pointedly, "one who is badly provided with roads, has a leaky roof over his head, cannot even get a doctor on a rainy-day even if his child is badly ill? Is that person, be he in the *kampong* or estate or new village, the first-class citizen or is it he who has a bungalow in the Federal Capital, one possibly in the Cameron Highlands and a couple more at a seaside resort who is a first class citizen, I ask. . . . An unbalance exists and it exists for various reasons. It may be that colonial rule, with all its defects, its sins of omission, has rendered these things so. Freedom with its new outlook and an economy based for the purpose of helping the people will certainly solve most of these problems. . . ."

The debates may have offered spirited forensic encounters, but the conclusion was never in doubt. Amid cheers of *Merdeka* the Legislative Assembly of the Federation of Malaya overwhelmingly approved the recommendations of the Constitution Commission as revised by the (Alliance dominated) Working Party. In London, Parliament promptly passed the Federation of Malaya Independence Act. Then a new agreement was concluded between the Queen and the Malay Rulers, and the Federation of Malaya Order-in-Council was issued by the British Crown. On August 31, 1957, in the presence of the Duke of Gloucester who represented the Queen, General Templer and the widows of his two predecessors, Lady Gent and Lady Gurney,[56] Tunku Abdul Rahman finally proclaimed that the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* "is and with God's blessing shall be, forever, a sovereign independent and democratic state founded upon the principle of liberty and justice ever seeking the welfare and happiness of its people and the maintenance of a just peace among all nations."[57] The acid test of the Alliance approach to building a viable democratic system in a multi-communal state was about to begin.

[56] The last High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray, however, was absent.
[57] Singapore, *The Straits Times*, September 1, 1957.

PART TWO

A Political System in Action



THERE was still no blueprint. The constitutional contract which was largely the product of intuition defined the goals of political development and set the parameters for legitimate means. It offered little guidance regarding either long-term strategy or immediate political tactics. In return for broad Chinese (and Indian) political participation Malay would have to become the national language without destroying the cultural fabric of the communities of Chinese and Indians. No less important, Malays would have to gain genuine access to the economy and a proportionate share of its products without, however, depriving Chinese of their property or imposing crippling handicaps on their economic opportunities. The question remained: just how could this be accomplished?

The Alliance leaders were quite confident that they would find the answer. Through bargaining within the small, exclusive Directorate composed of UMNO, MCA, and MIC leaders the necessary formulas would be developed and the new policies would be devised. Their approach, they thought, had already proven itself when they accomplished simultaneously (1) the *vertical* mobilization of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities and (2) the *horizontal solidarity* of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian political leaders.

Indeed, the Alliance leaders could take pride in the success of the approach which produced the constitutional contract among the communities. Still, the fact remained that however hard their task may have been before, after independence it became more difficult still. The British administration was no longer present; and although at times it had vigorously opposed the Alliance approach, it had also contributed heavily to its success. Independence, in fact, deprived the communities and their political leaders of a convenient, common target which could distract from their own conflicts of interest. It also deprived them of any possibility of an external intermediary who would reduce the number of inter-communal contacts, and

in cases of confrontation could conceivably serve as an arbitrator. Perhaps most important though, independence deprived the English educated Malay and Chinese political leaders of a significant ingredient of their appeal: their special connections with the British government and their special skill of negotiating with British administrators.

Thus, as the Alliance set out on its task of managing conflicts of interest among the communites, the disruptive pressures upon its system were intensifying. The members of the Directorate were no longer able to maximize simultaneously both their capacities of vertical mobilization and horizontal solidarity. Trade-offs would have to be made; that much was quite evident. Their compromises within the Directorate were bound to reduce the party leaders' support within their communal constituencies. Their efforts to maintain popular (communal) support, in turn, would necessarily escalate and rigidify their negotiating position in the Directorate and impair mutual confidence and solidarity. To be sure, the Alliance leadership did enjoy some positive margins in both categories; their reputation as engineers of independence, for example, was a formidable asset. Still, there was always a danger that faced with the necessity of compromises, either vertical support or horizontal loyalty would drop below a critical minimum level and then the system would collapse.

For the first twelve years of independence, it did not. In two elections, 1959 and 1964, the Alliance won substantial majorities in Parliament and most of the state legislatures. Its Directorate retained its internal cohesion; if anything its members enhanced their mutual trust and confidence.

This did not mean, however, that the system—the Alliance approach—was operating well. On the contrary, the first twelve years (at least in retrospect) demonstrated certain very fundamental weaknesses. The Directorate tended to temporize on the crucial inter-communal issues which were left unsettled by the constitutional contract. When it acted, the compromise which it negotiated, however fair, was far more unpopular in *all* communal groups than it realized. Finally, some problems it had to face were frankly staggering (e.g., Chinese acceptance of Malay language dominance, or improved Malay access to the economy) and probably beyond the time constraints and possibly beyond the intellectual resources of the Directorate.

Thus behind the façade of political stability signs of strain could be perceived. The coalition of English educated administrators (and politicians) and Malay school teachers and other more communalist elements in UMNO—in fact, the intermediate leaders who were responsible for Malay mass-support for UMNO—was in peril. Fissures were developing among English educated Chinese, while the masses of Chinese workers temporarily supportive of MCA were rapidly becoming alienated. The MIC leadership was holding its own, but made little progress with the urban Indian element. Meanwhile, there were candidates for the Directorate who were quite determined to get in, and party leaders on its periphery who were frivolous with its integrity. Thus, as 1969 approached, the Alliance system was still in control, but obviously in some peril.

CHAPTER SIX

Vertical Mobilization: Popular Support for the Directorate

If election results are decisive tests of the confidence of the population, then the Alliance approach was vindicated. During the first dozen years of independence, the electorate went to the polls twice to select federal and state legislators, and indirectly federal and state executives. Both times the Alliance won overwhelmingly.

The Election of 1959

Within two years, the first general election of the Federation of Malaya was called. The Alliance was still basking in its achievement of *Merdeka*, and some undoubtedly preferred independence on practically any terms. Even so, in a fundamental sense, the elections of 1959 were a referendum of the constitutional contract. For one thing, the electorate reflected more accurately the communal distribution of the population than it did in 1955 (see Table 6–1). Moreover, although the Alliance campaign sought to perpetuate a general state of euphoria, its approach and the terms of settlement came under direct organized political attack.

TABLE 6–1
Communal Composition of the Electorate in the Federation of Malaya, 1955, 1959

	Electorate	
Community	*1955*	*1959*
Malays	1,078,000 (84.2%)	1,217,000 (56.8%)
Chinese	143,000 (11.2%)	764,000 (35.6%)
Indians	50,000 (3.9%)	159,000 (7.4%)
Others	9,000 (0.7%)	4,000 (0.2%)
Total	1,280,000	2,144,000

Source: K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1965), pp. 187, 200.

The most formidable challenge came from the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Formed under a different name in 1948, it was later fashioned into an effective political instrument by Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Hemy, a free-lance journalist by profession and a former President of the Malay Nationalist Party. He recognized the strategic position of Muslim religious functionaries and Malay school teachers in the rural areas, and he shrewdly concluded that their support for British-trained UMNO politicians was precarious to say the least. Accordingly, Dr. Burhanuddin and his party set out to woo these men with a two-pronged appeal: Muslim orthodoxy and Malay nationalism. The PMIP shunned public debates in English; it did not even try to make inroads in urban areas. In the *kampongs*, however, their organizers explained with infinite patience that for Muslims there was no separation between the spiritual and the secular realm; thus the test of legitimate authority and legitimate public policy was its conformity to the Supreme Law, the *Holy Qur'ān*. Applying this test, they felt compelled to fault the Alliance government. It was not only guilty of the sin of secularism; worse still, it sanctioned and abetted expansion of infidel religion and culture. To obey unconditionally the dictates of a Malay Ruler was one thing; to preserve in office the morally tainted and *parvenu* UMNO politicians was an entirely different matter. To do so risked punishment in the next world, if not in this one. But the argument did not stop there. In private homes, at *cheramas* (village gatherings usually in private homes), and in barber shops, PMIP organizers accused UMNO of giving away their birthright. The country belonged to the Malays alone, they asserted, not to immigrants regardless how many of them there were or how long they had lived in Malaya. The concessions made by UMNO on citizenship were unnecessary, improper, and a betrayal of the interests of Malays. Malay "special rights" should have been more extensive and more permanent than was agreed to in the Constitution. The PMIP for its part would be uncompromising on these issues. It demanded, among other things, (1) that citizenship laws should be more stringent in the case of "non-Malays"; (2) that the establishment of Islam as the state religion should have more practical consequences favoring the Malays; (3) that immigration laws should be more restrictive in regard to "non-Malays"; (4) that the posts of

Mentris Besar, ministers, governors, and heads of the armed forces should be reserved for Malays; (5) that Malay should immediately be made the country's national and only official language, and that educational policies should be substantially changed so as to produce a far more pronounced Malay orientation; and (6) that a Malay nationality should be introduced.[1]

At the same time the constitutional contract was also assailed from the opposite direction. While the PMIP argued that it granted too many rights to "non-Malays" in a Malay country, another opposition group, the Socialist Front, insisted that it reserved too many privileges to the Malays in the newly independent *Malayan* state. Actually, the Front was a coalition of the *Party Ra'ayat* (People's Party) and the Labour Party. The former was primarily a Malay party, relying upon the support of fishermen and rural workers. In contrast, Labour Party support came from urban areas, particularly from Chinese workers who earlier found the Malayan Communist Party attractive and now were looking for an alternative. The *Party Ra'ayat* was led by Ahmad Boestaman, a left-wing journalist and a founding member of the Malay Nationalist Party. The Secretary-General of the Labour Party was Lim Kean Siew, son of a wealthy Penang family "with a taste for polo, and, for a time, an American wife."[2] He was closely associated with Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, a medical practitioner in Kuala Lumpur with a reputation for personal integrity and almost inexhaustive charity. Boestaman was a Malay nationalist, and the Labour Party leaders were generally sensitive to Chinese communal interests. What they shared was a common socialist ideology. Communal groups existed, they admitted freely, but should never be recognized as the basic components of the political system. The constitutional contract was a travesty. Communal cleavages were fostered by the political leaders of all the major communities of the country in order to distract the masses from a realization that they were being exploited. Indeed, the real issue was class differences. The masses of rural Malay farmers and fishermen had a common cause with the masses of Chinese urban workers. Together they were separated from their natural antagonists, the handful

[1] Ratnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 167–168.

[2] Sir Richard Allen, *Malaysia: Prospect and Retrospect* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 114.

of Malay traditional leaders, and Chinese capitalists. Malays could share in prosperity if the working classes of all communities joined together and gained control of the government.

Other opposition parties also entered the contest. There was Dato Onn's latest effort, the *Party Negara*, appealing now somewhat like the PMIP, to Malay communalism. Also the Malayan Party, the *Semangat Permuda Melayu*, the Province Wellesley Labour Party and the People's Progressive Party (PPP). Only the last of these had any long term prospects. It was founded by two Ceylonese Tamil brothers, S. P. and D. R. Seenivasagam. An off-shoot of the Labour Party, initially its appeal was directed to the class solidarity of workers. In the face of electoral setbacks—their candidates lost decisively in 1955—the party decided to concentrate upon urban laborers, and its theme turned decisively communal. The four most salient items of its Election Manifesto were: (1) the acceptance of Chinese and Tamil as official languages (with Malay recognized as the national language); (2) equal citizenship laws for everyone, based on the full application of the principle *jus soli*; (3) equal privileges for all Malayans; and (4) the amendment of immigration and education laws, in order to give equal treatment to all communities.[3]

The Alliance in its response, condemned the PMIP as divisive and fanatical, the Socialist Front as pernicious and Communist inspired, and the PPP as idealistic and alternatively a ruse for Chinese chauvinism. It appealed to the voter to resist being taken in by cheap campaign promises. The Alliance offered a proven formula for achievement. Just a few years ago the people wanted independence; the Alliance had brought it about. Now the people want economic progress; if given the opportunity, the Alliance would accomplish that too. Most important, the people want to avoid communal conflict and violence. Only the Alliance could assure that.

On election day, 73.3 percent of the eligible voters went to the polls.[4] When the ballots were tabulated, the Alliance had carried 74 of the 104 federal constituencies and held majorities in nine out of eleven state assemblies. The PMIP had won 13

[3] Ratnam, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[4] As contrasted to 84.9 percent in 1955.

federal seats and control of the state legislatures of Kelantan and Trengganu. The Socialist Front carried 8 and the PPP 4 federal constituencies.[5]

The Alliance had the tools for the continuation of its approach to government. It held enough seats to legislate the necessary inter-communal bargains made within the Directorate; in fact it had more, it had the two-thirds majority required for constitutional amendments. As long as UMNO and the MCA could agree, revisions even in the basic contract—the supreme law—could be made constitutionally, however much the opposition objected.

Insofar as a general referendum on the constitutional contract was concerned, the results were if not compelling, nevertheless quite convincing. In 1955, campaigning on the program of independence, the Alliance received 79.6 percent of the valid votes. To be sure, this dropped precariously to 51.5 percent in the federal elections of 1959. Also the Socialist Front had gained some adherents; the PPP almost doubled its support (3.9 percent to 6.4 percent); and a most spectacular improvement was made by the PMIP. Its electoral support jumped from 3.99 percent in 1955 to 21.2 percent in 1959. Still, the Alliance not only won in most constituencies but also did so with the support of all three communities (see Table 6–2). Where the Malay

TABLE 6–2

Intercorrelation Matrix between the Share of Communal Groups and the Share of Votes Cast for Political Parties in Parliamentary and State Constituencies, 1959

	Alliance		*PMIP*		*SF*	
	Parliament	*State*	*Parliament*	*State*	*Parliament*	*State*
Malays	0.14	0.1	0.79	0.73	−0.53	−0.46
Chinese	−0.17	−0.16	−0.80	−0.72	0.53	0.46
Indians	−0.05	−0.07	−0.50	−0.39	0.39	0.19

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections, 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1960) and Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Zaman*, April 6, 1969.

communal challenge of the PMIP was particularly strong, the Alliance received heavy Chinese support. Where the Chinese (and Indian) communal challenge of the Socialist Front and

[5] The remaining five seats were captured by three independents, one by the *Party Negara* (Dato Onn in Trengganu) and one by the Malayan Party.

the PPP was intense, the Alliance could count on solid Malay support. Thus, in the aggregate, in both federal and state elections there was no significant correlation between the communal composition of the constituency and the votes cast for the Alliance! Evidently, vertical mobilization was still quite effective. Intermediary groups in all communities demonstrated their capacity to deliver the votes, and their support for the political leaders who negotiated the constitutional contract remained firm.

The Election of 1964

Five years later, the electorate went to the polls again. Much had happened in the meantime. Trengganu, the state captured by the barest of margins by the PMIP, was again under Alliance control. In 1960, defections from the Opposition, abetted and quite probably subsidized by the majority party, created a sufficiently ambiguous position in the state assembly to warrant a call for new elections. It was still a tight race in 1961, but the Alliance managed to get a majority. On the federal level, the government used its two-thirds majority to pass a series of constitutional amendments. In 1960, Constitutional Amendment Act No. 10 covered no less than twenty different items, ranging from provisions regarding disabilities of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, through the appointment of presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives (*Dewan Ra'ayat*) to restrictions on preventive detention. Two years later another amendment (Act No. 14) covered sixteen different subjects. The following year, came two amendments dealing with five, and another in 1964 ranging over seven different areas. Most of the provisions in the amendments served as clarifications of the Constitution; some spelled out specifics which had been left unclear. They did, however, remind the Opposition and the country that the Alliance was the guardian of the terms of the constitutional contract. By far the most important political event of these five years, however, was the birth of Malaysia with its twin consequences, the federation with Singapore (as well as with Sabah and Sarawak) and the military challenge of Indonesia, called the Confrontation.

Given the facts of regional and international politics, the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia was probably in-

evitable. In Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had succeeded in containing Communist influence over the masses of Chinese (and Indian) workers and was embarking on a massive program designed to enlist their support behind his government.[6] His position, however, was still precarious as was evidenced by his party's by-election defeat in Hong Lim, and another rather more dramatic one in Anson where his political rival, David Marshall, engineered what was advertised to be a public vote of no-confidence in the Prime Minister. In any case, his program of economic development rested on easy access to the raw materials and markets of Malaya, while for his political plans he could use the support of Alliance, not to mention the potential deterrent effect of the Federation security forces in Singapore.

Across the causeway, the Federation no longer had a serious problem with Communist subversion. Indeed in 1960 it was possible for Malaya to terminate the state of emergency. Having chased the insurgents up into the northernmost jungles of his country, however, Tunku Abdul Rahman viewed with some concern internal security problems south of its border. He was aware, moreover, that the aspirations of many Malayan citizens —mostly those of Chinese origin—included the hope of a political union with Singapore. Finally, the Prime Minister of the Federation was not oblivious to a substantial increment in the public revenue were the tax base to include prosperous Singapore. His difficulty lay in the fact that the population of the city was heavily Chinese, which meant that any such union would give the Chinese a numerical advantage over the Malays —a condition which was quite unacceptable to UMNO. It occurred to the Prime Minister, however, that one way of resolving his dilemma was to expand further the proposed limits of the new state to include the British holdings on adjacent Borneo, where the combination of Malays and native tribes would considerably outnumber the resident Chinese.[7] In such an expanded combination, the communal proportions of the Federation could be more or less preserved. The idea was all the more tantalizing, as Britain's interests seemed to move in the same direction.

[6] Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–149; and Alex Josey, *Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Donald Moore Press, 1968), pp. 161–209.

[7] In Sarawak the total population of 744,529 included 229,154 Chinese; in Sabah their share was 104,542 out of 454,421. See Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 149–150.

Engaged in a course of global withdrawal, the government in London was seeking a stabilizing arrangement in the area.

The project first indicated by Tunku Abdul Rahman on May 27, 1961, gained momentum rapidly. Negotiations progressed well, but it soon became apparent that the new state of Malaysia would be constitutionally closer to a confederation than a federation. The central government in Kuala Lumpur would control external defense, foreign affairs, and internal security, but on domestic matters it would depend for its major initiatives in Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak (unlike in the other eleven states) upon the positive concurrence of the respective state governments.[8] The governors of these states like those of Malacca were not eligible for election to *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, but unlike those of Penang and Malacca could not be appointed without the concurrence of the state governments. Most relevant perhaps, Singapore accepted a much lower rate of representation (only fifteen members of Parliament) and the conditions that its citizens while Malaysians, could not as a matter of course exercise citizenship rights if they were to move across the causeway. It even accepted, after some rather intense and acrimonious bargaining, a disproportionately high tax contribution to the national government in exchange for the condition that the terms of the inter-communal contract of Malaya would not be applicable within its territory. It would be, Lee Kuan Yew explained to the Legislative Assembly, only a limited merger.

Even so the idea of Malaysia was not without opposition. In the Borneo territories, especially in Sarawak, resistance was being organized. The Chinese oriented Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP) was most vociferous and for a while was supported among others by the *Party Negara* of Sarawak, and the Sarawak National Party (SNAP). Still, however eloquent some of their spokesmen, there was no real prospect of significant organized opposition in either of these territories. It was different in Singapore. The PAP had just lost eight assemblymen (including three Parliamentary Secretaries) who formed the *Barisan Socialis*; they also lost a by-election (Anson), thus reducing the government's majority in the Assembly to one single vote. Ostensibly the Opposition did not resist the merger. On the contrary, they argued for Singapore becoming unconditionally

[8] Singapore, for example, retained autonomy in the two subjects crucial to her: Labor and Education.

the twelfth state of the Federation. They were quite prepared to sacrifice local autonomy for a good prospect to gain control of the central government. They maintained that if Singapore would hold a proportionate number of Parliamentary seats, from 25-33 percent, and all (Chinese dominated) Singapore parties would form a coalition with the (Chinese dominated) Socialist opposition in the Federation, they could form a majority. That would be the end of the Alliance and the Alliance approach. It was all quite simple. Except, of course, that the Alliance had no intention of falling into this kind of a trap. Nor was Lee Kuan Yew willing to be their pawn. He called for a popular referendum offering the various alternatives to the electorate, and after a short campaign his own position won.[9]

In the Federation too there was opposition. The *Party Ra'ayat* and the Labour Party generally followed the lead of the *Barisan Socialis* demanding a full merger. The PMIP, however, was vehemently opposed to any kind of an expanded federation. Dr. Burhanuddin insisted that the people of Indonesia were much more closely related to the Malays than those in the Borneo territories. In any case the latter would not counter-balance the massive increase in the Chinese. Malaysia, his party organization in the villages told everyone, was a sell-out of Islamic values and Malay privileges by the Alliance. In this the newly formed National Convention Party agreed with the PMIP. In fact, for a while its leader, Aziz bin Ishak, served as the unofficial spokesman of the anti-Malaysia opposition in Parliament. Tunku Abdul Rahman, however, was firmly in control. Before leaving for his talks with the British Prime Minister, he easily secured the approval of Parliament, the General Assembly of UMNO, and the National Council of the Alliance.

Finally, there was opposition from two neighboring countries. By the end of 1961, a segment of the Philippines press

[9] His plan received 397,626 against 17,333 votes for the two alternatives. 2,370 ballots were spoiled; 144,077 left blank. Much has been made of the fact that all three alternatives on the ballot approved the merger, thus those opposed had no choice. It can also be said that no major political group had formally opposed the formation of Malaysia. Another criticism of the referendum points to a government's demand that all qualified voters go to the polls, or lose their eligibility to vote in the next election, but no apparent attempts were made to violate the secrecy of the individual ballot. Finally, the government had announced that all blank ballots would be counted as the Legislature (PAP controlled) would decide, thus presumably in support of the government plan.

mounted a campaign urging the government to assert a title to North Borneo based on the alleged section of the territory by the Sultan of Brunei to the Sultan of Sulu. In June, 1962, the claim was formally presented in London. The British government had no intention of entertaining any doubt about its authority in one of its possessions, but was nevertheless willing to discuss the general question of Anglo-Philippine relations. President Macapagal, in turn, was encouraged to believe in the validity of his government's claim by "an American expert in Anglo-Saxon law at George Washington University."[10]

More serious was the Indonesian belligerence. At first the government expressed a benevolent attitude. It did not last long. In February, 1963, President Sukarno declared his opposition to the Malaysia plan. If it was pursued, he promised, Indonesia would face it with political and economic "confrontation." His determination was symbolized by the capture of a Malayan fishing vessel, and an anti-Malayan propaganda campaign over Indonesian radio stations. President Sukarno was determined to have his way, and to do so dramatically, even if it meant the use of force.

Malaysia was established just after midnight September 16-17, 1963. The delay permitted the U.N. Secretary-General to report that a sizable majority of the people of Sabah and Sarawak wished to join the new Federation. It also provided Singapore with an opportunity to announce its independence from Britain (August 31) *before* joining Malaysia. The Philippines did not recognize the new arrangement, but for the time being let the matter rest with a break in diplomatic relations. Not so Indonesia. Mobs inspired and condoned by the government attacked Malaysian and British Consulate offices and even embassies. British and Malaysian private property was seized and looted. A total economic boycott was imposed on Malaysia. Military operations, moreover, were also set in motion. Already on September 21 a special "Operational Command for crushing Malaysia" was announced. Then followed raids by regular units of the Indonesian Army into the Borneo territories and threats to invade the peninsula as well.

All of this did not seriously threaten the integrity of Malaysia. Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were staunch allies. The

[10] Quoted from his State of the Nation Address to the Joint Session of the Congress of the Philippines, January 28, 1963, in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

United States was quite sympathetic. And, of course, the Malaysian security forces were themselves formidable. Confrontation did emerge, however, as the foremost issue of the 1964 campaign superseding a possible referendum on the merger with Singapore and, of course, an evaluation of Alliance stewardship of the constitutional contract. One example of the determination with which the Alliance pressed the issue was indicated by the following campaign controversy recounted by Professors Ratnam and Milne.

> A piece of evidence produced against the SF was that its symbol contained the eagle found in the Indonesian emblem, and that the bull's head which was incorporated in it belonged to a type of bull found in Indonesia and not in Malaysia. Dismissing this as 'a lot of bull,' a spokesman for the SF replied that the head was that of a Malayan bull, the seladang, which was well known for its strength and endurance. Another spokesman found this attempt to link his party with Indonesia 'rather pathetic,' and went on to point out that in any case the Alliance was not in a position to make such accusations since the UMNO's flag had the same red and white design as the Indonesian flag, while that of the MCA resembled the Kuomintang emblem. But this failed to put an end to the bull. The game warden was brought into the fray by the Alliance and solemnly pronounced that he had not seen a single seladang with horns similar to those of the bull found in the SF's emblem. His verdict was that the bull was definitely Indonesian.[11]

UMNO's primary target remained the PMIP. No opportunity was lost to discredit it. A point was made of Dr. Burhanuddin's conviction of a somewhat technical offense under the Companies Ordinance. When a prominent PMIP leader was found guilty of *khalwat* (close proximity with a member of the opposite sex other than a spouse) and another of outraging the modesty of a young midwife, UMNO campaigners made the most of it. In the villages they spread stories and innuendoes about the vices of PMIP leaders—among other things they were supposed to drink alcohol and entertain "wild women"—then echoed the general condemnation they read in *Utusan Melayu*:

[11] K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, *The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 113.

"To promote a nation of God is not within the capacity of the present personalities and leaders of the PMIP, who themselves are ignorant of Islamic philosophy and who cannot control their desires."[12] Indeed so corrupt was the PMIP, that it was prepared to do anything for money. Five days before the election UMNO accused the (PMIP) government of Kelantan of planning to lease one fifth of the total acreage of the state *to a Chinese company* interested in logging and mining. "Because of this PMIP treachery," an Alliance leaflet proclaimed, "the Malays of Kelantan will suffer humiliation for 33 years. . . . Because of money and because the PMIP is power mad, it is willing to leave the Malays in poverty and hand over Kelantan to the Chinese."[13] The worst crime of the PMIP, however, according to UMNO was its collaboration with an external enemy. All along, UMNO campaign workers reminded the electorate that Dr. Burhanuddin at one time had been at the head of the Pan-Malayan movement advocating union between Indonesia and Malaya. Now, it was charged he was receiving money from Jakarta. When Radio Indonesia called on the voters to support the PMIP and the Socialist Front (*Party Ra'ayat*) and when it was reported that Indonesian gunboats were attempting to intimidate fishermen in the Straits of Malacca to vote for the Socialist Front, the charge of foreign intervention in Malaysian affairs gained further credence. Then arms were found on the beach near Bachok, a PMIP stronghold, and in a *Party Ra'ayat* office in Johore. The Deputy Prime Minister made the most of it. "The Ammunition," he declared, "and the ship came from our enemy, Indonesia. It is now clear that PMIP leaders have connections in this matter. The PMIP leaders have often been the champions of President Soekarno and his colleagues in our country. Now we have found deadly weapons in Kelantan—probably for their plans to resort to violence."[14]

The PMIP leadership vigorously denied any such intention. They were satisfied, its national Vice President explained, to overthrow the Alliance "politically and constitutionally,"[15] but allegations of subversion and sabotage became the chief Alliance weapon. Traditionally oriented Malay masses were not entirely indifferent to external intervention in their politics; and their negative attitude to violence used against their own

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 123. [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Malay and Muslim government, while not quite as intense as their reluctance to resort to force against a Sultan, was still quite profound.

The MCA and the MIC fully endorsed this strategy and in their own communities added another element. Time and again they reiterated that the opposition was a tool not only of Indonesia, but unwittingly at least, of the Pan-Malayan movement. If Indonesia was appeased now, it would invite future development toward an Indonesian-Malay combination in which the Chinese (and the Indians) would be reduced to a singularly vulnerable, permanent minority. The prospect was intended to disturb the masses of Chinese (and Indian) workers, as well as the English educated professionals. Chinese businessmen in turn were reminded, not always tactfully, of the prominence of Chinese Communists in Indonesia and the easy flair with which the government there seized private property.

Still, confrontation with its problems and political opportunities did not weigh nearly as heavily on the minds of MCA strategists as did the other major consequence of Malaysia, the entry of Lee Kuan Yew into the political arena of the Malayan Peninsula. Indeed by 1964 the Prime Minister of Singapore decided to separate the English educated Chinese from the businessmen, and the masses of workers from MCA. He was convinced that the "traditional" authority which businessmen had established in the "overseas" communities was rapidly and irreversibly disintegrating. It had never been particularly firm, certainly not as sturdy as that of the traditional elites on the Mainland. Unlike the latter, "overseas" businessmen were never really perceived as divinely ordained leaders, and the confidence they enjoyed for meeting feudal, reciprocal obligations in the face of commercial distractions had always been precarious. With industrialization, the collapse of the traditional hierarchy in China, and perhaps the "plausibility" of British political norms, the old ways of vertical mobilization were gone forever. For the English-educated political leaders to form an alliance with businessmen and to rely upon them as intermediary elements of political organization (as indeed the British colonial leaders did so well in the past) was in the mind of Lee Kuan Yew sheer folly. The alliance could never succeed, instead it would force the masses of workers into the arms of the Communists. Indeed, he explained at one point, the "Chinese educated world—[is] a world teeming with vitality, dynamism and revolution, a world in which the Communists had been working for the past thirty years with considerable success. . . . We, the English-educated revolutionaries went in trying to tap this oil-field of political resources."[16] What was needed was an entirely new political approach directly appealing to the masses of Chinese workers. Thus, Lee Kuan Yew set out to demonstrate his point in his campaign. His party workers attacked the MCA as effete and corrupt and the organization chiefly responsible for Chinese votes going by default to the anti-Malaysia Socialist Front. On specific issues, including the communally sensitive ones, the PAP did not take a stand. It did not have to, the record of Singapore with its Chinese dominated multi-racial society was there for all to see, and to fill all overseas Chinese with pride.

The MCA leadership, of course, fought back. They branded Lee Kuan Yew alternatively a Communist and a Fascist. The following press interview with Lee San Choon, MCA youth leader, was a typical example:

> Nobody knows what medicine Lee Kuan Yew is selling. He is singing the high notes of democracy, imposing Hitler's dictatorial measures and harbouring the ill intention of socialism, but he has not made it clear to the people whether his socialism is the same as the ultimate aim of communism. During the formation of Malaysia he went to pay homage to Moscow. Before he went to Africa he wrote to Chou En Lai. . . . But now he has started to sing anti-communist tunes. What can Lee Kuan Yew and his fellow-travellers do for the the people and for society? Can we be assured that when he captures political power he will not establish a second Cuba in Asia?[17]

The MCA, moreover, challenged Lee Kuan Yew's achievements in Singapore. He could not have survived, they claimed, without the help of the Malayan government (and Britain) in maintaining law and order in the city. Nor were his economic accomplishments as sound as advertised. To cite an example: the Singapore government was paying only 2.5 percent interest on employees' contributions to the Central Provident Fund

[16] Quoted in Josey, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[17] Quoted in Ratnam and Milne, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

while the Malayan government was paying 5 percent. Finally, the MCA rejected outright any contention that there was dissatisfaction with the MCA within the community of Chinese. The "so-called protest votes," which Lee Kuan Yew claimed without the PAP would go to the anti-Malaysia Socialist Front, were according to the MCA workers a "myth created by the PAP."[18]

When the election results were tabulated it appeared that the Alliance strategy had paid off (see Table 6–3). It gained fifteen

TABLE 6–3
Results of the Elections in West Malaysia, 1964
(seats won)

	Parliament						*State Legislature*					
State	*All.*	*PMIP*	*SF*	*PPP*	*UDP*	*PAP*	*All.*	*PMIP*	*SF*	*PPP*	*UDP*	*PAP*
Perlis	2	–	–	–	–	–	11	1	–	–	–	–
Kedah	12	–	–	–	–	–	24	–	–	–	–	–
Kelantan	2	8	–	–	–	–	9	21	–	–	–	–
Trengganu	5	1	–	–	–	–	21	3	–	–	–	–
Penang	6	–	1	–	1	–	18	–	2	–	4	–
Perak	18	–	–	2	–	–	35	–	–	5	–	–
Pahang	6	–	–	–	–	–	24	–	–	–	–	–
Selangor	12	–	1	–	–	1	24	–	4	–	–	–
N. Sembilan	6	–	–	–	–	–	24	–	–	–	–	–
Malacca	4	–	–	–	–	–	18	–	2	–	–	–
Johore	16	–	–	–	–	–	32	–	–	–	–	–
Total	89	9	2	2	1	1	240	25	8	5	4	–

Source: Malaysia, *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat)* and *State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1965).

seats in Parliament (*Dewan Ra'ayat*) and thirty-three in the state legislatures. The PMIP strength was reduced by four in Parliament and by seventeen in the state legislatures. The Socialist Front and the PPP also lost heavily. Lee Kuan Yew's PAP could win only in one Parliamentary constituency.

Yet, behind these results there lurked some danger signals. In parliamentary constituencies the Alliance support was still multi-communal, but in state constituencies the picture was changing. Increasingly, Alliance candidates, whether UMNO, MCA, or MIC, became dependent on the Malay electorate (see

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Table 6–4). Chinese voters in rapidly rising numbers were not only voting against the MCA in its contests with the more chauvinist Chinese parties but also against UMNO in its contest against the more chauvinist Malay party. A trend away from the Alliance's broad-based, multi-communal support was already in motion and the time available to the Directorate to negotiate specific compromises on the national language, the economy and other issues of inter-communal conflict was running out. The trouble was that distracted—indeed mesmerized—by a spectacular electoral victory, hardly anyone recognized this fact.

TABLE 6–4
Intercorrelation Matrix between the Share of Communal Groups and the Share of Votes Cast for Political Parties in Parliamentary and State Constituencies, 1964

	Alliance		*PMIP*		*SF*	
	Parliament	*State*	*Parliament*	*State*	*Parliament*	*State*
Malays	0.15	0.44	0.78	0.72	−0.62	−0.62
Chinese	−0.21	−0.46	−0.79	−0.70	0.67	0.62
Indians	−0.04	−0.03	−0.12	−0.11	−0.11	−0.15

Source: Malaysia, *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections 1964* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1965), and Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Zaman*, April 16, 1969.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Horizontal Solidarity: Cohesion of the Directorate

ALL the same, whatever stresses and tensions were building within the political organizations of UMNO, MCA, and MIC, the mutual trust and confidence among their top leaders did not weaken. The Directorate composed of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, and Tun (Dr.) Ismail of UMNO, (Sir) Dato Tan Cheng Lock, Colonel (Sir) H. S. Lee and T. H. Tan initially, then Tun Tan Siew Sin and T. H. Tan of the MCA, and all along, Tun V. T. Sambanthan of the MIC formed a stable core.[1] Around it, in the immediate proximity of the fulcrum of power were Aziz bin Ishak. Abdul Mohammad Khir Johari, Abdul Rahman bin Talib, Abdul Ghafar bin Baba, Ong Yoke Lin, Khaw Kai Boh, Lim Swee Aun and V. Manickavasagam. This is not to imply that there were no challenges or internal difficulties; there were—some of them very serious.

Dr. Lim Chong Eu

Almost immediately the MCA faced a monumental crisis. Its top leaders, Dato Tan Cheng Lock and Colonel H. S. Lee, were getting on in years. The former, the President of the organization, had already substantially reduced his political schedule before the achievement of independence. The time had come for succession. Indeed a group of young and energetic men was already waiting in the wings. Their leader was the thirty-eight-year-old Dr. Lim Chong Eu, chairman of the MCA political subcommittee. He had spent World War II in China fighting the Japanese, thus demonstrating a visible link to the ancient homeland of the Chinese; he spoke the language fluently and established quickly and easily a close relationship with the masses

[1] All members of the Directorate, except the Prime Minister, of course, were made *Tuns*. First Tun Razak on August 31, 1959, then Tun (Dr.) Ismail on June 8, 1966 and finally, Tun Tan Siew Sin, and Tun Sambanthan on June 7, 1967.

of Chinese workers. In the party he was supported among others by Too Joon Hing (Secretary-General) and Tan Suan Kok (Chairman of the Youth Section). They were ready to challenge the coalition of businessmen and English educated professionals who had controlled the party, at the annual meeting of the Central General Committee on March 23, 1958. When the ballots were counted the challengers had carried every major contest. Dr. Lim Chong Eu defeated the venerable Dato Tan Cheng Lock by 89 to 67 votes. Then they set out "to protect more strongly the interests of the Chinese."[2]

The UMNO leadership was watching developments with some concern. They saw the Alliance itself threatened by an MCA partner led by a group of men who were neither initiated into the political bargains which preceded independence nor were apparently prepared to abide by them. Indeed, the new MCA leadership saw little purpose and no virtue in exercising restraints. They would press the advantages of Chinese political participation to the fullest regardless of any progress in economic integration, or in establishing Malay as the national language. "Firstly, we want equality in this country," declared Dr. Lim Chong Eu. "Secondly, we are for an assurance of our way of life, our language and our schools."[3] To translate their demands into practical terms, the MCA Central Working Committee promptly laid claim to forty seats in the forthcoming federal elections and then insisted on fundamental modifications in the Alliance campaign stand on educational policy.[4] In case anyone missed the point the MCA publicity chief, Yong Pung How, spelled it out. "The question of Malayan Chinese Association breaking with the United Malays National Organization and leaving the Alliance is a very, very grave one because of the national issues involved. It is clearly the last thing we want to do. But if the MCA is left in a position within the Alliance in which it can get little support of the people it claims to represent, then the situation is completely different."[5]

[2] For a detailed description of the MCA crisis based on MCA primary documents, see R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society, A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 23–24.

[3] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, December 1, 1958.

[4] Vasil, *op. cit.*, p. 28n.

[5] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, July 10, 1959.

Undoubtedly, Dr. Lim Chong Eu's position had a certain measure of merit, and the Alliance leadership did appreciate it. Neither UMNO nor MIC was very much interested in a partnership with an organization which was unable to mobilize political support within its own community. On the other hand, there could be no effective, secret bargaining in the Directorate—the very essence of the Alliance approach—unless the members enjoyed each other's confidence. Continued mutual trust, however, involved not only a measure of personal intimacy but also the acceptance of the basic rules (1) not to cross certain boundaries (some explicit like the constitutional contract, others implicit) in the pursuit of communal interest within the Alliance councils, and (2) not to bring conflict into the open by attempting to mobilize communal mass support behind a particular position.

The new MCA leadership had few personal ties to the inner circle of the Alliance, and they certainly appeared to be breaking its rules. Given UMNO's willingness to freely concede 29 percent of the Alliance nominations to the MCA in the 1955 federal elections when only 11 percent of the registered voters were Chinese, the escalation of demands to nearly 40 percent of the nominations in 1959 seemed to transgress the parameters of bargaining between the Alliance partners. By publicizing their demands, moreover, the MCA leadership was apparently willing to inflame communal passions and thus to jeopardize not only the Alliance approach, but quite possibly public order.

The crisis highlighted one deficiency of the Alliance approach, the need for a supra-communal authority to arbitrate the cross-pressures of communal conflict within the Directorate and to enforce fairly the parameters of bargaining. Britain at times in the past had played this role. Now a new balancer, and supra-communal arbiter, was about to emerge. Tunku Abdul Rahman, a Malay Prince, assumed the role of guardian of the constitutional contract. He moved, not as a Malay communal leader, but as head of the national coalition, to protect the Alliance approach. He refused to withdraw support from the MCA ministers in the Cabinet, even after their formal role in their own party was sharply curtailed. He then issued a letter announcing that the Alliance would contest in all the 104 constituencies without the MCA leadership group, and that he would assume all the functions of the Alliance National Council and thus personally select all Alliance nominees. On July 12, 1959, Dr. Lim Chong Eu called on Tunku Abdul Rahman and was told that the MCA under his leadership could remain within the Alliance only if it formally abandoned both of its publicized demands: the quota of forty Alliance nominations and a revision of the education section of the party's Manifesto. When Dr. Lim Chong Eu reported the conversation to his Central General Committee, he concluded:

> The question now is no longer a simple question of allocation of seats, of candidates or of conditions in the manifesto or so on. It is only a question of the reiteration of your faith in the Alliance. What will happen with regard to the seating and allocation and manifesto and so on, I do not know. But I have every reason to believe that if confidence is restored in the Alliance then what we have gained so far in the negotiations can be sustained. This is only my belief.
>
> That, gentlemen, is the position. I am very sorry that the Central Working Committee cannot give you any clear guidance in this matter.[6]

By a narrow margin of 89 to 80 the MCA accepted Tunku Abdul Rahman's terms. It then received thirty-one nominations for federal seats. Many of its top leaders (including Too Joon Hing and Tan Suan Kok) resigned. Dr. Lim Chong Eu remained for a while but was rarely consulted. Full confidence was reestablished only in 1961 when Tan Siew Sin was elected President of the MCA. The lesson was clear: the top UMNO leadership had a virtual veto in the selection of the highest MCA leaders.

Lee Kuan Yew

If the Directorate was prepared to protect its MCA members from challenges within their own party, it was certainly willing to protect them from challenges from another (Chinese oriented) party. Such a need arose with the establishment of Malaysia and more specifically with the merger with Singapore. For Lee Kuan Yew, the head of the city-state, a brilliant intellectual and superb political organizer, held ambitions which deeply involved the

[6] Minutes of the Central General Committee meeting, July 12, 1959, quoted in Vasil, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Directorate. He was too dynamic a man to be voluntarily confined to so narrow a political arena as Singapore. *Per aspera ad astra*; along the way a decisive role in Malaysia seemed definitely indicated. Thus, Lee Kuan Yew and his party entered the 1964 (Malayan) elections determined to replace the MCA and more specifically Tan Siew Sin in the Directorate. Throughout the campaign, the Singapore Chief Minister was extremely careful not to challenge the main elements of the constitutional contract. His party, for example, did not campaign against the gradually unfolding education policy. He championed heavy public investment in rural (Malay) areas. He was especially careful not to offend the UMNO. The PAP contested only in nine urban constituencies. Lee Kuan Yew explained: "It is true if we wish to demonstrate the desire of the urban population of Malaysia to support the economic and social policies designed to provide more equal opportunities, we should field as many candidates as there are seats in urban areas. We will not do this for very compelling reasons. We believe that any massive intervention in the election can easily be misinterpreted and will be presented to the rural Malays as an attempt to challenge UMNO."[7] He even went so far as to instruct two PAP candidates not to proceed with their campaigns once it was learned that they would be facing UMNO, and not MCA candidates as expected. And most particularly, Lee Kuan Yew was careful not to offend the top leadership of UMNO. Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak were called "vital to the survival and success of Malaysia," and "to insure . . . the overriding interest of Malaysia demands that the Tunku and Tun Razak be supported. . . ."[8] But Lee Kuan Yew made no secret of the fact that he set out not only to discredit the MCA, but to replace it in the Alliance. The PAP manifesto observed: "The UMNO can deal with the PMIP in the rural areas. In the urban areas, because of the ineffectiveness of the MCA, the PAP has to help in the battle against the anti-Malaysia Socialist Front."[9] The "Chinese leadership in the Alliance as represented by the MCA," Lee Kuan Yew declared, "was replaceable."[10] A new combination, he implied, would make the Alliance and its approach impregnable. By relying upon the PAP for spokesman of the community of Chi-

[7] Josey, *op. cit.*, p. 296. [8] *Ibid.*, pp. 294–295.
[9] Quoted in Ratnam and Milne, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
[10] Josey, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

nese, the constitutional contract of 1957 could be ratified not only by an effete hierarchy of the past but also by a new and vigorous leadership which could make effective deals for the future.

Whatever the intellectual merits of his argument, and Lee Kuan Yew tried very hard to demonstrate his sincerity toward the UMNO leadership, Tunku Abdul Rahman was not convinced. Possibly the distorted and untrue quotations of the Singapore Chief Minister which some MCA leaders fed him had poisoned the atmosphere.[11] In any case, the UMNO leadership had a shrewd suspicion that Lee Kuan Yew as the leader of the community of Chinese comprising nearly 40 percent of the population of the states on the Malayan peninsula might assume a decidedly revisionist posture, and destabilize the internal distribution of power of the Alliance. Explaining his views, the Prime Minister did not mince words. "The PAP wants to teach us what is good for us," he declared. "We know what is good for us, and what is bad. What the PAP really wants is to discipline the MCA. They say they want to join the UMNO, but we don't want them."[12]

The rebuff notwithstanding, Lee Kuan Yew was firm in purpose: Just before election day he observed: "If all the nine [parliamentary candidates] win, an agonizing reappraisal will have to be made. In the heat of the elections, it is said that even though there are only five MCA MP's left, UMNO will carry on with the MCA. That may well be. But can UMNO leadership go through the awful predicament of pretending for the next five years that these five MCA MP's really represent the urban Chinese? . . . The Tengku knows that good leadership is the reconciling of ideal solutions with the realities of life. If the urban areas, constituting more than half the people of Malaya give their verdict for the winds of change, no leader can afford to ignore it."[13]

[11] In Chinese constituencies, it was alleged for example, that Lee Kuan Yew was denigrating the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Tunku Abdul Rahman, he was supposed to have declared, was not of the calibre to run the nation. It was a charge Lee Kuan Yew vigorously denied. Yet, it was a fact that the Prime Minister of Singapore was a man known more for his independence than his personal loyalty and he did publicly state "we must help Kuala Lumpur to succeed, in order that we may succeed even more. *Ibid.*, p. 295, 297.
[12] Ratnam and Milne, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–147.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

The election results must have been a shock to Lee Kuan Yew. In eight out of nine parliamentary constituencies, the MCA candidate won. Whatever the underlying realities (for example, that *Malay* votes were decisive in the contest) it was hardly a record which could plausibly argue for the replacement of Tan Siew Sin in the Directorate with Lee Kuan Yew. It all called for a new strategy.

If you cannot join them, you must beat them, was evidently the Singapore Chief Minister's answer. Suddenly the whole Alliance approach became his target. The PAP proposed its own solution: horizontal mobilization in an homogenized polity. He called it democratic socialism. It had failed as the Malayan Union scheme, but it was proclaimed a success in Singapore. "Would a multiracial Malaysia be achieved more quickly and better through communal bodies meeting at the top," Lee Kuan Yew demanded to know at Seremban, "or through inter-racial political organizations meeting at all levels . . . the political structure of the segregated communal parties is brittle and unstable, because cooperation is only at the top between a few individuals, and it is an unequal cooperation. The leaders of the dominant communal party are unlikely to have the same regard for the views of the leaders of other communal parties when they are in effect appointees of the dominant communal party. But, even worse, if communally organized parties were genuinely so organized and all leaders of the various groups were leaders as of right of the different communal bases, it would still be a dangerous and unstable arrangement, fraught with constant strife, because the three different communal bases would be kept separate and distinct, having different attitudes and values, and being fed different and often conflicting communal sentiments. In the end only multiracial politics, in which the ground is integrated not along racial, religious or language lines but along economic and social group interests will provide a permanent basis for sound popular government in Malaysia."[14] An intellectually most interesting point of view, but in terms of the constitutional contract of Malaya, it was subversion plain and simple.

Lee Kuan Yew's challenge was no longer directed at the MCA —he felt nothing but contempt for it—but at the integrity and political privileges of the Malay community, not to mention the

[14] Josey, *op. cit.*, pp. 352, 354–355.

Directorate and UMNO. And Malay leaders were beginning to respond. Dato Harun bin Idris, *Mentri Besar* of Selangor, described Lee Kuan Yew an enemy of Malaysia. His colleague in Perak called on all Malays to note that "Lee Kuan Yew is not only our enemy, but he is also the most dangerous threat to the security of Malaysia."[15] On July 9 the *Utusan Melayu* observed editorially: "Now it is known who are trying to cause a clash between the Malays, and the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese. . . ." Only those who wished to cause disorders shouted against the special rights of Malays. About the same time Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar, Secretary-General of UMNO speaking in Singapore, declared that there were reasons for putting Lee Kuan Yew in jail. "Whether he will be kept inside or not, only time will tell."[16]

All along, inter-communal tension was increasing. Many Chinese—English educated professionals and workers—saw Lee Kuan Yew a hero. Indeed, he alone seemed to satisfy their needs of modern leadership since the Communists were defeated. The Malays in turn—especially those living in urban areas—perceived him as a villain. They were very much afraid that somehow (for he was considered a clever and crafty man) Lee Kuan Yew would get his way and then, as in Singapore, the Malays would be dominated by the Chinese. Tensions rose in fact to a point where inter-communal violence was flaring up. One riot occurred at Labuan, another at Bukit Mertajam. The worst broke out on July 21 when a procession of Malay youths attacked a Chinese policeman who was alleged to have pushed a Malay steward. The trouble lasted eleven days and cost the lives of twenty-two people.

Some Malay leaders promptly blamed Lee Kuan Yew for the violence. The *Utusan Melayu* featured such attacks. Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar was reported to have charged: "There is a devil in Singapore who sets the Malays and the Chinese against each other." Then perhaps carried away by his own eloquence he added: "Lee Kuan Yew hid himself during the riots in a steel trunk . . . after peace had been restored he came out as a cowardly leader." At another occasion he demanded an Inquiry Commission "so that the world may know that Lee Kuan Yew's hands are stained with blood."[17] In response Lee Kuan Yew

[15] Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 388–389. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 359.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 361.

brought suit against the *Utusan Melayu*, Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar and Melan bin Abdullah, the editor of the newspaper. The matter was settled two months later when the defendants admitted that there was "no foundation for any of these disgraceful allegations and they are here today . . . to apologize to Lee Kuan Yew for having made them, and unreservedly to withdraw all imputations upon him and thus the office which he holds."[18]

In any case, it was too late by then. Even before the riots, it had become evident to the Prime Minister that something drastic had to be done. Several UMNO leaders were convinced that the best thing was to arrest Lee Kuan Yew and install a new government in Singapore. Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar was particularly fond of this "solution." Among Malays it would have been perceived as an inter-communal victory of Malays over Chinese, and incidentally he personally would have received some credit for slaying the dragon. All moreover would have been accomplished without depriving Malaysia of the attractive financial resources of Singapore. Tunku Abdul Rahman, mindful of recent Alliance defeats in Singapore elections, wanted to know two things before he would decide on the course of action: (1) the consequences upon public order and (2) the consequences for the MCA. The first question was directed to Tun Razak and Dato (Dr.) Ismail; the second to Tan Siew Sin. None of the responses rejected the idea of arresting Lee Kuan Yew; all implied it was unwise. It would create a very difficult law and order situation in Singapore (as well as in Malaya); it would alienate Britain which still had substantial forces in the area; it would grant a serious advantage to Indonesia in its confrontation, especially in East Malaysia; and finally, it would not only not strengthen the MCA, but further discredit it. The alternative suggested was the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia. The Prime Minister, who was at the time in London for medical treatment, decided on one last try. He wrote to Tun Razak asking him to have a talk with Lee Kuan Yew to determine whether there was any prospect for the PAP to call off its "heavy politicking." The conversation took place on June 29 at Tun Razak's residence. Its details are still secret, although several and contradictory versions are available. One thing seems clear. Lee Kuan Yew was not prepared to make any pledges to keep out of Malayan politics. In the following days Tun Razak

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

was subjected to considerable political pressure from Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar and the UMNO Youth led by Senu bin Abdul Rahman urging the arrest of the Singapore Chief Minister and other PAP leaders. Later some security forces were alerted (although this may have been *at least* partially motivated by rising inter-communal tensions). By July 22 Tunku Abdul Rahman received Tun Razak's reply. All the Cabinet Ministers, he reported, agreed that no accommodation was possible with Singapore. On August 2 Tun Razak instructed the Attorney-General to draw up an amendment to the Constitution removing Singapore from Malaysia, and a week later Tunku Abdul Rahman himself introduced it in the Parliament. It was, he explained, a choice between separation or repressive measures. It was "odious for us to take repressive measures against the Singapore Government, for such action is repulsive to our concept of parliamentary democracy."[19] A few hours later Singapore was proclaimed by Lee Kuan Yew "forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation," and the crisis was over. There would be no more direct intervention of Lee Kuan Yew into Malaysian politics.[20] And another lesson was there for all to see: UMNO would go to great lengths to protect the MCA from Chinese leaders who appealed to the masses of workers directly, thus by-passing established intermediary groups.

Abdul Aziz bin Ishak

Yet, the challenges from Chinese sources were not the only problems the Directorate had to face. Internal difficulties in UMNO too had to be handled. As in the case of the MCA some members transgressed Alliance rules; but unlike in the case of the MCA, they never gained control of UMNO. Their leader was Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, a Malay folk-hero since his confrontation with General Templer. For a while he participated in IMP organization efforts, but well before independence he was back fully in UMNO. Tunku Abdul Rahman appointed him the first Minister of Agriculture of the Federation and one of the three Vice-presidents of his party. In that post gradually and de-

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 407.

[20] In an aftermath Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar was forced to resign his post in UMNO. His opposition to the Directorate's decision on Singapore required such a decision, but as he did not personally and publicly attack its members, no disciplinary action was taken.

liberately he built an image of being the champion of the rural Malays. In October, 1958, he announced plans to form rural cooperatives which would be granted monopoly over the rice trade.[21] In Selangor he actually accomplished it. He accused Singapore *towkays* (merchants) of exploiting the Malay fishermen on the East Coast.[22] He banned fishing stakes which, he claimed, damaged fishing nets—Chinese in general used stakes; Malays relied on nets.[23] In a broad indictment at a meeting in Sungei Kembong, he told his Malay listeners that they had an average income of M$60 to M$70. "Why should this be so," he asked, "the reason is that you work hard and your actual earnings are being exploited by the 'middle-men.' What you should therefore do is to do away with them."[24]

Aziz bin Ishak was somewhat of an idealist. He had a propensity to espouse causes and then to pursue them relentlessly. At one point he was quoted as recommending that all hotels in Malaya serve Malay cakes.[25] Later he announced a project to produce "wonder hens" with a very tender meat and a capacity to produce 150 eggs a year. He proposed to distribute about a million of them in the *kampongs*.[26] Similarly, he spoke glowingly of seeds which would help achieve self-sufficiency in rice by 1965.[27] And all along he cherished the thought of some 30,000 cooperatives spread throughout the countryside.[28]

Aziz bin Ishak also had a mercurial temperament generally triggered by an injury to his pride. On August 30 he wrote the Prime Minister insisting that the Acting Commissioner for Cooperative Development was hostile to him and demanded his removal. ("The situation is impossible if he remains in this Ministry for a day longer," he insisted.) On November 16 he wrote to Tun Abdul Razak objecting to some adverse comments on the cooperative movement by Haji Khalid, Assistant Minister of Rural Development. Ten days later Aziz bin Ishak wrote requesting that "the development money for [rural development programs] be controlled by this Ministry. . . ." On March 10, 1961, he complained to Tun Razak that the State Development

[21] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, October 11, 1958.
[22] *Ibid.*, June 11, 1959.
[23] *Ibid.*, January 11, 13, 1961.
[24] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, Nov. 14, 1961.
[25] He claimed to have been misquoted. *Ibid.*, January 7, 1956.
[26] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, March 16, 1960.
[27] *Ibid.*, July 12, 1960.
[28] *Ibid.*, December 11, 1958.

officer of Selangor instructed one of his subordinates "that as soon as some of the schemes are ready, he wanted them to be officially declared open by you including those schemes in my constituency. This information much upset me as I feel that officers in your Ministry are doing their best to spread out their tentacles into the work and responsibilities of other Ministries." Less than a week later in another letter to the Deputy Prime Minister he sought to enlist his intervention against some state governments. The latter, he complained,

> have encouraged the growth of private mills which run counter to the interests of the cooperative mills. . . . There should be no doubt that Cooperative rice mills are the things to encourage and establish in the interest of our padi farmers. Private mills would benefit only a few at the expense of the many. It is, therefore, distressing to see that some States are very lukewarm in their support while a few are encouraging capitalists to compete with Cooperative mills, I need hardly stress that such an attitude is contrary to the spirit and terms of our Alliance Manifesto and to the promise that we would work predominantly in the interest of our people. . . .[29]

Politically, Aziz bin Ishak was independent. Responsibility to his party's leadership or to his country's government rarely, if ever, interfered with what he considered his duty to his people, the Malays; neither, as some suggested, did it interfere with his private interest. In 1960 the UMNO leadership sought to increase central control of the party. An amendment was introduced in the General Assembly to downgrade state organizations by replacing state executive committees with state liaison committees. Aziz bin Ishak, head of the Selangor Executive Committee, opposed the move because, he said, it removed party decision even further from the people. The amendment carried 83 to 14, but Aziz bin Ishak, a senior officer of the party, abstained.[30] The following year he went even further. He brought to the floor of the General Assembly a particular policy difference he had with the Prime Minister. When it came to the customary motion of thanks for the presidential address, he moved to amend it to exclude the government's position on the construc-

[29] Letter from Abdul Aziz bin Ishak to Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato Hussein of March 16, 1961 (MA.322/10).
[30] *The Straits Times*, April 18, 1960.

tion of a Urea factory. He regretted, he said, that on this issue Tunku Abdul Rahman was in conflict with Malay public opinion. In the end the amendment was defeated 99 to 44, but only after Abdul Ghafar bin Baba, Chief Minister of Malacca and the only Malay educated senior UMNO leader, warned that to do otherwise was tantamount to a no-confidence vote.[31]

If by his conduct Aziz bin Ishak sorely tried the patience of the UMNO high command, his policies totally alienated the MCA leadership. Some, committed to sound fiscal policies, looked askance at his flamboyant spending habits and somewhat unorthodox accounting methods. All deeply resented his persistent attack on Chinese middlemen and fishermen.[32] He transgressed, they felt, the terms of the constitutional contract, as he not only established cooperatives to aid the rural Malays but also granted them monopoly and thus for all practical purposes expropriated Chinese businesses. Worse still, Aziz bin Ishak did this on his own, by-passing the decision-making authority of the Alliance Directorate. And the MCA lost all patience with him when he pushed his campaign of cooperative rice mills into northern Perak and then in clear violation of the Constitution began to revoke the licenses of some 350 Chinese middlemen. To stop him Dr. Lim Swee Aun, himself from Perak and a member of the Cabinet, led the campaign to remove Aziz bin Ishak from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Before this frontal conflict with the MCA leadership, both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were inclined to be patient and forgiving. Tun Razak was prepared to restrain the personnel of his own Ministry of Rural Development. Tunku Abdul Rahman, though plainly annoyed, wanted very much to avoid a formal break. When the opportunity arose, he assigned to his Minister of Agriculture the portfolio of Cooperatives as well. As late as January, 1962, he accepted an invitation pressed on him by Aziz bin Ishak to open the FAO Conference on Haemorrhagic Septicaemia as a gesture of goodwill.[33] The challenges

[31] *Ibid.*, May 8, 10, 1961.

[32] On the issue of the banning of fishing stakes, Dato Syed Omar Shahabudin, *Mentri Besar* of Kedah, appealed to the Prime Minister for intervention against the way in which the ban was imposed. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1960.

[33] In the letter of invitation Aziz bin Ishak wrote: "This is only a meeting of technical people and is not really of high importance. As a result of this I had not considered it to be of sufficient level for the official opening to be done by you. But in view of recent developments it will indeed be a good thing if you would now agree to do so." A note at the bottom of the invitation in the Prime Minister's handwriting: "Just to show that everything is ok between us I am happy to accept—Give me a few talking points."

to the Alliance approach, however, were becoming more and more blatant, and if the system was indeed to have a supracommunal arbiter, here was a clear case to prove his even-handedness.

To make matters worse, Aziz bin Ishak would not leave well enough alone. Undaunted by the Prime Minister's (and UMNO's) rejection of his Urea project during the previous year, he was determined to get his way. From Cairo, where he attended the Afro-Asian Conference on Rural Reconstruction, he informed the Prime Minister that he would go ahead with his plans: "in view of your past feelings on the project . . . it would seem invidious to ask for a Government guarantee. . . . I will do my best in this matter but if I am stuck, the course I have in mind, as a last resort, is to open the selling of shares to the Cooperative Movement as a whole, whether Malay or non-Malay. . . . Things are coming to a head and I would not wish you to be unaware of developments that will take place in this connection. This project has evoked the interest of the *ra'ayat* [people] and whatever happens connected with it is likely to have repercussions on a national basis particularly amongst the Malays in our country."[34]

Shortly after his return from Cairo he entered the General Hospital, and there that evening the contract for the fertilizer plants was signed. "The Prime Minister Tengku Abdul Rahman," he assured everyone, "gave us the green light to go ahead this morning."[35] Next day the Prime Minister issued an official denial. The fertilizer factory, he said, was "a risky venture which does not merit Government support."[36] Aziz was "too ill" to respond in public[37] but quite able to despatch a three-page letter to the Prime Minister. "I am surprised and shocked to see your statement," he wrote. "This makes me very sad as I have always looked upon [sic] as my leader and as a close and trusted friend

[34] Letter from Abdul Aziz bin Ishak to Tunku Abdul Rahman, March 20, 1962.

[35] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 19, 1962.

[36] *Ibid.*, April 20, 1962.

[37] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, April 21, 1962.

with whom I have had the privilege and pleasure to work in these very crucial years of our country's history dating from those dark and very difficult days before Merdeka. . . . I had not brought up with you the subject of financial support by Government. This had been cleared between us before when it was understood that if the Cooperatives wanted to proceed you would have no objection, though there would be no financial assistance from Government. So when I mentioned that you had given the green light it was purely on this basis. . . . I personally feel that this is a matter of great regret and unnecessarily makes my task harder still when all that I wanted was for difficulties not to be put in my way. . . ."[38]

The Prime Minister expressed his own surprise at Aziz bin Ishak's letter.

> . . . That morning of 18th April, when I arrived from Penang you told me that you had changed your mind and suggested that you would go ahead with your project as that was the wish of your Directors, and to cut the whole story short I said go ahead if you want to and the Cabinet will therefore refuse the application for pioneer status from ESSO, and that was exactly what was decided in the Cabinet, and the parting words to you from me, I repeat, were (without any trappings) that "you are going to fail," and when instead you suggested that I had given you a green light, it was naturally untrue in substance and in fact done perhaps without regard to the consequences of what such a statement would have in the minds of the people.
>
> I have always tried to be very careful in what I say or do because so many people of all races, creeds and colours look to me for leadership and guidance, and as such I must be fair, impartial and just in what I do and be accurate in what I say. I therefore cannot say at one moment one thing and another thing at another moment. This is one of the weaknesses I detected in you. You are your own worst enemy, and this is quite clear to me. . . .
>
> We work as a body of men dedicated to the nation and on the principle of collective responsibility. Therefore when you say or plan anything, it is absolutely necessary to take counsel

[38] Letter by Abdul Aziz bin Ishak to Tunku Abdul Rahman, April 20, 1962.

> of your colleagues, and if you accept me as your leader it is only correct and proper for you to consult me, but unfortunately you do everything first and then whenever you find it necessary you tell me about it. This is not good enough if we accept the fact that it is our responsibility as a united body of men to serve the Party and the nation. . . .[39]

Tunku Abdul Rahman quite evidently was prepared to act in his role as supra-communal arbiter even against a senior UMNO colleague and a Malay folk-hero. The warning was unmistakable. Aziz bin Ishak acknowledged the letter on May 1, 1962. "I have expressed my feelings to you," he wrote, "and will not persist in this very unhappy correspondence between us. As regards to what took place between us, shall we leave it to God and our individual conscience." Then he left the hospital for a rest in Penang and "a bit of cruising along the coast stopping at fishing villages en route to Melaka."

He was back in Kuala Lumpur by May 10, and promptly dispatched another missive to the Prime Minister. This time he pleaded the cause of monopoly for Cooperatives in rice marketing in northern Perak. "The impression was also given to you," he complained, "that this was a hasty measure and that such action might affect adversely present goodwill and close relationship between the major races in this country." The fact was that in Selangor and in Malacca where private middlemen were eliminated, rural income increased. "Is therefore the MCA middlemen a group of people who should forever be placated," he demanded, "whilst the padi planters in Krian remain perpetually in poverty and economic slavery? . . . Now that we have after great trouble worked out a solution which can be the panacea to their [rural Malays] economic ills, it will be most distressing if Government in the face of its promises to the people decides to throw its weight on behalf of the few middlemen. . . . What about the Malay privileges about which so much noise is made inside and outside Parliament? Are these just something to dangle before the eyes of the Malay people while in practice we do something else? . . . How much longer can the people be dazzled by the construction of fine roads, magnificent buildings in Kuala Lumpur and such things as wells and com-

[39] Letter from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, April 26, 1962.

munity halls? Empty stomachs and crying children will soon open their eyes to the true state of affairs and then it may be too late."[40]

It was Aziz bin Ishak at his most eloquent and his most provocative. The time had come when the authority and solidarity of the Directorate demanded that he should be removed from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The Prime Minister, however, was still reluctant to take extreme measures. Aziz would be given another portfolio, Health, and could retain his position in UMNO. Accordingly on July 15 the Cabinet re-shuffle was announced.[41]

Aziz bin Ishak refused to accept the decision. The Prime Minister was in London at the time, so he cabled him requesting that his transfer to the Ministry of Health be deferred. Then, before any reply could be received, he held a press conference at which he announced that "after careful consideration I regret that I cannot accept the offer by the Prime Minister to go over to the Ministry of Health until I have seen him and asked for the reasons. . . . The people themselves especially the farmers and fishermen will want to know the reasons for the change, whether or not it will be to their interest. The hundreds of thousands of cooperatives all over the country which include in the main such farmers and fishermen and in addition salaried workers in the urban areas are entitled to a full explanation as they have been working very closely with me over the years and fully support my projects and schemes. They and their families represent a substantial proportion of our population and it is only right that we should tell them. . . ."[42] He also encouraged public protest. During his visit to the *Kampong Matant* Road Malay School near Port Weld, some three hundred padi farmers passed a resolution regretting his transfer.[43] After an emergency meeting the Cooperative Union of Malaya announced that more than 200,000 cooperators would send a letter to the Prime Minister expressing their deep regret over the transfer. They proposed to organize further protest meetings.

[40] Letter from Abdul Aziz bin Ishak to Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 10, 1962.

[41] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, July 16, 1962.

[42] Press statement by Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, July 19, 1962.

[43] Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, July 22, 1962.

Learning of all this in London, Tunku Abdul Rahman concluded he had quite enough of Aziz bin Ishak. On July 24, he wrote:

> It came as no surprise to me to see your statement at the Press Conference given soon after your telegram to me asking for the deferment of your transfer to the Ministry of Health, because you have always been inclined to say one thing to me and another thing to the public. . . .
>
> Throughout your career as a Minister of the Alliance Government, you appear to treat the Party as a convenient tool for your own ends, and your colleagues as your excuse. Your attitude all along has been that you are doing everything for the people, and if you will look again at what you said you will realize its full implications. It has now got to stop. I shall have enough on my hands without having to worry about your antics.
>
> Throughout your term of office as the Minister of Agriculture, you have done many things without consulting your colleagues, most of whom including myself, are in the dark as to what goes on in your Ministry. Recently millions of dollars of public funds which had been allocated for cooperative development, according to the Treasury memorandum which is now under study by a Government Committee headed by Dato Ahmad Perang, have been spent to no useful purpose. Further, a sum of nearly one million dollars allocated for one purpose has been misappropriated for another. This is a very serious matter because it involves public funds. You may think that when money is voted for cooperative development, it is for you to do what you like with it. But it is the Government, headed by me, which has to account for it.
>
> Another instance is your urea project. This was never brought up to the Cabinet because you felt that you might not get the support of the Cabinet, and from the moment you conceived the idea of launching that project you have used it as an issue to create suspicion in the minds of the people against the Government and your colleagues. I had to come out openly in opposition to the project and have staked my personal reputation in doing so. I was not afraid to do so because I believe that the project would be a flop and the money invested by the small people would be lost. . . .

> Truly I have been disappointed in you and unless you are able to change your ways I cannot see how you can make any useful contribution towards the wellbeing of the Party, the Cabinet and the nation. If you feel you cannot work with the members of the Cabinet and cannot give your loyalty to me, then I say there is no point in your being there. It is up to you now to make up your mind whether you will accept the new Ministry. If you feel you cannot, then I have no choice but to accept your resignation. That is all I have to say and it is for you to decide.[44]

Aziz bin Ishak's response was rather extensive, covering some six single spaced pages. It was a highly personal expression, but it did present a point of view which received sympathy, if not massive support, among the rural Malays.

> I note all you have to say about me in this letter with a heavy heart. But my conscience is clear and I hope the same can apply to you. As you will remember in those dark and difficult days before the first general election of 1955 I was your close and constant advisor. The others were not yet in Kuala Lumpur. We had our arguments and sometimes bitter but more often than not you conceded to my points of view. In fact we included many of these in the Alliance manifesto and formulated plans to implement them.
>
> But now the situation is different. You have other close advisors and I know I was becoming more and more of a nuisance and a hindrance to what you and the others really want to do. I would like to see the Government and the Party tackle the very roots of the problem of chronic poverty and indebtedness which now prevail amongst our people especially those in the rural areas. This objective is in fact implicit in our Alliance manifesto. I do not feel that it is enough if we merely waste time and effort on the things which are not really basic and fundamental. To do this needs courage because we will come up against vested interests which already have a stranglehold on the economy of our country. As a result I have become the number one enemy to these people and to the Press which are in sympathy with them. I am now

[44] Letter from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, July 24, 1962.

> to be sacrificed so that they can continue to reap the harvests whilst our people continue to be given only the crumbs of our country's wealth and economic potentialities.
>
> If this must be so and since you have chosen to support them I will be forced to resign. But I am very sad to hear you accusing me of doing things for my personal glory. Whatever you may think this is never my intention. . . .
>
> I only wish that what I have to say will make you realize what you are doing and where you are leading our country. I hope you do so before it's too late. You lately asked me to pray to God so that my spirit would change and that I would be amenable to discipline. Taking your advice I have prayed to God and I pray regularly but I am afraid it has not affected me in the way you wanted. On the contrary I have become more convinced that you are leading the country astray. . . .
>
> The people want something concrete and tangible as fruits of the support they had given in achieving Merdeka, such as the extra income they can get from cooperative padi marketing. They want full shares of the profits of their toil and labour in the processing and marketing of their produce and in the export and import of consumer goods which you propose to allow others to have control of but not the Malays in the kampongs. Under existing conditions a few perhaps would enrich themselves and a few leaders would benefit in the way of holding posts in several Boards of Directors of Joint Stock Companies accumulating directors' fees and profits at the expense of the rural people. I am afraid you cannot stop the tide that is flowing fast and what you can do now is to be realistic, to face facts and to change your policy before it is too late. . . .
>
> In your letter you referred specially to the "misappropriation" of one million dollars. The full facts in this case had been submitted to the Treasury in which Che Mohamed Sanusi who was then Commissioner for Co-operative Development was shown to have deliberately consorted in the misapplication of these funds. As a Minister I had to rely on this officer who is a head of department for the proper disbursement of funds but when he himself decided to act irresponsibly without my knowledge how could I be blamed for this? I had asked that action be taken against this officer and since then apparently

no such action had been taken. I therefore object very strongly to your implication that I was involved with the "misappropriation."

In your letter you accused me generally of wasting money on Cooperative schemes and projects. This is an unfair accusation. I also realize that public funds have to be wisely spent. But we are dealing with farmers and fishermen who are the most depressed members in our community. All that we can do is take calculated risks as otherwise we will do nothing at all for them. They may not be paying back their loans very satisfactorily but this is also the case in other countries. . . .

You may have given other reasons for wishing to remove me from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to the Ministry of Health. You and I know the real reason i.e. my persistence in trying to change through the Cooperative movement the trend of your present economic policy. This is a challenge to your policy and as such I have to be removed. Do you really feel that the people particularly the rural people do not see this? Your advisors are also aware of this but they do not dare tell you. You have now forced me to resign and unless you change your mind I will have to go. . . .

Meanwhile in order to avoid the embarrassment of seeing you before you read this letter, I am taking one month's leave from 8th August, 1962 to which I believe I am entitled under the provision of 2(1) (b) of the Minister (Remuneration) Ordinances, No. 63 of 1957. . . . If you want to see me before the expiry of the one month I will come and see you. Meanwhile I shall be glad if you can inform me whether I am to stay on as Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives until the forthcoming F.A.O. conferences are over and then I can adjust my programme accordingly. . . .[45]

Aziz bin Ishak had his answer from the Prime Minister. He was granted one month's leave and the opportunity to act as Minister until the conclusion of the F.A.O. conference in early September, but that was all. In August at the UMNO General Assembly he was elected to the party's executive committee

[45] Letter from Abdul Aziz bin Ishak to Tunku Abdul Rahman, August 8, 1962.

barely, with the second lowest number of votes. He failed altogether in his attempt to be re-elected vice-president.[46]

Another crisis was over. That the challenge to UMNO leadership and the Alliance approach was weathered with relative ease was at least partially due to Aziz's somewhat volatile interpersonal relationships and perhaps the freshness of the patina of independence which protected the Alliance leadership. The terms in which the challenge was formulated, however, highlighted the ambivalent position of UMNO leaders. On one hand, tradition and the pressures of their constituencies pushed them toward a maximization of Malay interests. On the other hand, their loyalty to Malaysia and commitment to the constitutional contract drew them toward a recognition (and perhaps appreciation) of the aspirations of the other communities. The members of the Directorate had made their choice: they accepted as the goal an optimal balance in the interests of all communal groups. Other UMNO leaders, even senior leaders, could be tempted and at times did succumb to Malay chauvinism.

Abdul Rahman Talib

Yet scarcely had the excitement aroused by Aziz bin Ishak subsided, when the Alliance and UMNO were confronted by a new and wholly unexpected crisis. This time it was not a matter of internal dissension, but a charge of official misconduct. Its focus was Abdul Rahman Talib, Minister of Education, a close ally of the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak.

The trouble started when on August 18, 1963, Zulkiflee

[46] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 24, 1962. Another folk-hero, Syed Nasir bin Ismail, received the most votes, 429; Aziz bin Ishak only 156. The end of his political career was approaching rapidly. The following month he was removed as Chairman of the Selangor Liaison Committee. In one more desperate move he appealed for public sympathy (and support). He revealed to the press that he was "sacked" from the Cabinet. Although offered lucrative and prestigious alternatives had he agreed to resign, he rejected them, as "the policies and attitudes of the present Government are not really in the interest [of the people] particularly in the rural areas." The Prime Minister and the Finance Minister responded by detailed charges alleging incompetence and irresponsibility. Then Aziz was expelled from UMNO. He tried organizing his own party but was never again elected to public office. During the confrontation with Indonesia he was arrested. After his release in January, 1966, Aziz bin Ishak announced that he had given up politics.

Muhammad, opposition (PMIP) member of Parliament, handed D. R. Seenivasagam, another opposition (PPP) member, a set of documents regarding a license dispute in Pahang. Four days later Seenivasagam moved the adjournment of the House with an allegation of corruption against Abdul Rahman Talib. Replying immediately orally, and on September 5 in writing, the Minister challenged Seenivasagam to repeat his allegations outside of the privileged halls of Parliament. When the latter did just that during a public meeting at the Chinese Assembly Hall on September 11, Rahman Talib sued for libel and slander.

The actual facts were not easy to unravel, but the accusation that a central Minister used his influence to gain financial favors for himself and relatives was persuasively presented in court as part of the case for the defense. In 1958, as the evidence indicated, Abu Bakar bin Ismail, second cousin of Rahman Talib's wife, Che Rahman binte Musa, applied to the Pahang state government for a license to extract bat *guano* from caves at Kota Gelanggi, Pulau Tawar, and to sell it as fertilizer. In April, 1960, the license was granted; the royalty to be paid to the state government was set at M$5 a month for each worker employed. Sometime toward the end of 1961, Abu Bakar heard that the Pahang government was considering a change in its policies, restricting such licenses to limited companies and denying their renewal for such individual proprietorships as his own. He was prepared to meet this problem by forming a company, the Malay Natural Fertilizer Company, with Sabri bin Haji Dhalan. Then he proceeded to apply for a fifteen-year lease of the land and a license to extract *guano*. When little progress was made on the application, Bakar and Sabri enlisted the support of Musa bin Abdul Rahman, father-in-law of the Minister of Education. Together they went to see the *Mentri Besar* of Pahang, who, however, remained non-committal. By March, 1962, Abu Bakar's financial situation approached the critical. His family was forced to move in with the Minister. In May he approached Messrs. R. Hughes, H. G. Warren and D. M. A. Corkett. For a right to remove *guano* from Kota Gelanggi, they agreed to make (1) an immediate payment of M$3000; (2) a further installment of M$50,000 upon the receipt of a fifteen-year lease; and (3) a tribute of M$8.40 per ton. In June Abu Bakar's daughter became engaged to Rahman Talib's younger brother.

On July 24, 1962, Warren, Corkett and Hughes registered a company known as Malaya Phosphate Company. There was, however, still no action on the license by the Pahang government. Bakar and Sabri decided to help things along: they went to see Rahman Talib. There were two meetings. During the second, on August 10, 1962, the Minister of Education called the *Mentri Besar* of Pahang personally to inform him that he had received a complaint about the delay in the granting of the lease and license. At this meeting, moreover, according to some testimony, Rahman Talib requested that as part of the emergent arrangement, his wife should be a co-signatory of the company's checks. No sooner said than done. On the same day the Malay Natural Fertilizer Company passed a resolution to open an account with the local branch of the Bank of America with Che Rahman binte Musa (Mrs. Rahman Talib) and Abu Bakar as co-signatories.[47] On August 21 the *Mentri Besar* wrote to Rahman Talib that indeed the state government had already on June 26 accepted in principle granting the license for three years. The wedding of Bakar's daughter to the Minister's son took place as scheduled on September 30, 1962.

By October, 1963, the Company was in a position to move ahead with the extraction of *guano*. At this point, so some testimony suggests, Che Rahman called Abu Bakar on the phone inviting him to Rahman Talib's house. When he arrived, the Minister was not only present, but allegedly made further demands. His father-in-law, Musa bin Abdul Rahman, he suggested, should be made a director of the old company and receive payment of M$200 per month; his wife, Che Rahman, should be employed as a temporary secretary with an allowance of M$200 per month; a nephew of the Minister should be employed as a clerk at a salary of M$160 per month; and as though this was not enough, the office of Abu Bakar's company should be installed in the room at the back of Rahman Talib's house. Abu Bakar, according to his *own* testimony, rejected *all* these "suggestions."

In any case, the arrangement was quite evidently breaking down. Bakar and Sabri concluded that a new agreement was indicated all around, as the state government did not grant a fifteen-year lease, only a temporary occupation license of three

[47] In American terms, a joint account.

years. Sometime between October 15 and November 26 a meeting was arranged at the home of Enche Osman in Kuala Lumpur. An attorney from Kota Bharu, Ishak bin Abdul Hamid, was also present, and during the discussion, according to the testimony, he demanded that out of the tribute of M$8.40 which Warren, Corkett, and Hughes paid per ton, M$3 should be passed on to Rahman Talib. Abu Bakar resisted this demand, offering instead M$1.05 per ton.

Presumably, the counter-offer was considered to be inadequate. On November 26 Che Rahman, the Minister's wife, informed the Bank of America that she would no longer sign checks drawn on the company's account. She also told the *Mentri Besar* of Pahang that Bakar had demanded money from Warren for himself and also for the state UMNO organization. Bakar's partner, Sabri, evidently decided that he had had enough, and resigned as a director, leaving Bakar virtually alone.

Worse still, the competition on December 19, 1962, was already forming another company; the *Sharikat Perusahaan Malaysia Ltd.* was registered. Remarkably, among its first directors was Musa bin Abdul Rahman, Rahman Talib's father-in-law. Within a month this company applied to the Pahang government for a license to extract *guano* from three areas in Kota Gelanggi, one of which was the very place for which Bakar's company already held a license. Coincidentally, there had been a decided change in the attitude of the Pahang government toward Abu Bakar. When the latter tried to pay the 1963 license fee, the District Officer, Jerantut, refused to accept it. Instead on February 16, 1963, the *Mentri Besar* notified him that the extraction of *guano* was not conducted to the satisfaction of the state. A copy of this letter was sent to Rahman Talib and Musa. Then on May 27 the District Officer, Jerantut, officially notified Abu Bakar that his company's license was withdrawn. Finally, on August 7, a new license was issued to Musa's company to extract *guano* at Kota Gelanggi.

The public trial with its revelations, charges, and countercharges was a source of embarrassment to the Alliance. While Rahman Talib, like Aziz bin Ishak, was not at the center of its leadership, he was in close proximity. All through the process, the Prime Minister and his colleagues gave him the benefit of the doubt and publicly expressed their confidence in his ultimate vindication. After a year, on December 5, 1964, the

verdict was delivered. Although the court found no conclusive evidence that Rahman bin Talib received money, it did find that he received favors. Accordingly D. R. Seenivasagam (and his client Abu Bakar) were found not guilty of the charges on the grounds of justification.

Demands from Opposition members for his resignation, which were persistent during the pre-trial period, now became vociferous.[48] After a slight delay, at Tun Razak's gentle urging Rahman Talib resigned. "I am sorry that my libel case," he wrote the Prime Minister, ". . . was decided against me. I have, however, filed notice of appeal against that decision, but it will take some time before the appeal can be heard. In the meantime I can assure you that I am blameless and I shall endeavor to the best of my ability to establish my innocence. However, in order not to cause you, my leader and my colleagues in the Government embarrassment, I consider that, in the best interest of the Cabinet, you will allow me to resign from the Government."[49]

Tunku Abdul Rahman's answer was characteristic and highly revealing. He accepted his Minister's resignation but would not turn his back on his loyal friend. "I very much regret," he declared, "that you consider it necessary to take this step pending the hearing of the appeal of your case. However, I appreciate the reason you gave as the Court, in this instance, has made its decision. I would like to assure you that your colleagues and I are convinced of your innocence, having known you for this number of years. . . . I would like to take this opportunity also of thanking you for the services that you have rendered to our party, our people and our country and for the loyalty and cooperation that you have given me and your other colleagues. . . ."[50]

Fifteen months later the Federal Court of Appeal affirmed

[48] See for example, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon's statement in Parliament. Malaysia Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report*, December 7, 1964, cols. 3788–3790.

[49] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, December 8, 1964.

[50] The letter when published (Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, December 8, 1964) caused a stir in Parliament. D. R. Seenivasagam objected to the Prime Minister's expression of his confidence in Rahman Talib's innocence and charged him with "willfully and deliberately attempting to pervert the course of justice, knowing there was an appeal in this case. . . ." (Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report*, December 19, 1964, cols. 5171–5178.) To clarify his statement, the Prime Minister explained: "by innocence, I meant that I had known Inche Abdul Rahman for a long time, and I believed in him as a good chap." (Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, December 12, 1964.)

the decision. Abdul Rahman Talib was a broken man. The Prime Minister appointed him Ambassador to Cairo, where in 1969 he died. For the government, however, there was a sequel to the affair. In November, 1965, while the appeal was pending, D. R. Seenivasagam discovered in the budget the item, "additional sum required $88,323.00 [Malaysian dollars]: Legal expenses, fees and retainers," which, apparently disguised, was to be allocated to pay for the former Minister's costs of litigation.[51] The Opposition members immediately moved to make the most of it. Lim Kean Siew demanded to learn whether in the case when "one Cabinet officer is criminal . . . he must be defended by the rest of the Cabinet Ministers?"[52] The storm would have raged for some time had the Opposition not made a fundamental tactical error: Stephen Yong Kuet Tze, Member of Parliament from Sarawak, tried to bluff the Home Minister, Dr. Ismail, and to put him on the defensive. Speaking in Parliament, he recklessly asserted that "I am reliably informed that the judge [Mr. Justice Hepworth] who heard this [the Rahman Talib] case, earlier on had applied for citizenship, which would have been given as a matter of course to most people in that position, suddenly found that his application was shelved."[53] When pressed to identify his "reliable" source, Mr. Yong insisted that it was the Justice himself. He was really pressing his luck when he imagined that the Home Minister could be intimidated—and by a bluff at that. Dato (Dr.) Ismail first cautioned the speaker then flatly contradicted his charges. The same evening Mr. Justice Hepworth himself issued a statement: "I was the judge who tried the Rahman Talib case, and I became a Federal Citizen long before I was asked by the Chief Justice to take up the case," he declared in direct conflict with Mr. Yong's allegations.[54] Then Dr. Ismail took the offensive and introduced a case of breach of privilege of the House. His action successfully distracted public opinion and Parliament from the issue at hand, and even recouped some of the Alliance losses in reputation—but not nearly all.

[51] Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report*, November 17, 1965, cols. 2835–2837.

[52] *Ibid.*, col. 2855.

[53] *Ibid.*, November 18, 1965, col. 2976.

[54] *Ibid.*, November 29, 1965, cols. 3195–3196.

Khaw Kai Boh

Quite possibly there was also another reason for the Opposition's loss of interest in the financial entanglements of Rahman bin Talib; they thought they had discovered misconduct by a senior MCA officer, Khaw Kai Boh Minister for Local Government and Housing. On October 22 the Singapore newspaper, *Straits Echo*, in a front page report alleged that Khaw Kai Boh was "unfit to retain the office of Minister." Although the next day it printed an apology, the Minister proceeded to bring a suit of libel. Two weeks later Dr. Tan Chee Khoon (Socialist Front) Member of Parliament from Batu, rose in the House to ask some questions regarding a low-cost housing project at Jalan Pekeliling (Circular Road), Kuala Lumpur. Specifically, he wanted to know whether a contract had been "awarded to the firm of K. C. Boon and Cheah and Citra without tenders being called; and if so, the reasons for this departure from usual practice. . . ."[55] Khaw Kai Boh was prepared; he read a ten-page statement in reply.[56] The construction of low cost, prefabricated (also called industrialized) housing, he said, was very new and required experience which could be had only in Western European countries. To find out the details he personally had undertaken several visits to West Germany, Denmark, France, and the United Kingdom. As a result, it was concluded that "in this age of technological advancement, and considering Malaysia's leading position in this part of the world, the Government should welcome progressive ideas such as Industrialized Housing to improve the building industry." In line with Western European practice, moreover, no tenders were called for in the first pilot project at Jalan Pekeliling. Instead negotiations were to be conducted with companies which met such special conditions as (1) "having come to arrangements with one or more firms in possession of Industrialized Housing technique now extensively used in Europe . . ." and (2) having "past experience in construction work of a magnitude commensurate with the pilot project." It appeared that the only firm with these qualifications was Boon and Cheah and Citra—a joint Malaysian and French operation. Negotiations, however, had not been concluded, and no contract had been awarded.

[55] *Ibid.*, November 15, 1965, col. 2537.

[56] *Ibid.*, cols. 2538–2548.

More and more the opposition moved to the attack. They insinuated a very special tie between the Minister and the construction firm. Lim Kean Siew (Socialist Front) of Dato Keramat wanted to know, among other items, whether the requirements were intentionally so defined as to exclude all other local firms from competition.[57] Dr. Tan Chee Khoon pressed further: "if negotiations have not been completed, is the Minister aware that the boards in Jalan Pekeliling are already up by K. C. Boon and Cheah and Citra?"[58] Lim Kean Siew then observed that while the government delegations were visiting France, so was the representative of the firm of Boon and Cheah. "Therefore," he charged, "they had an advantage knowing that a certain type of prefabrication would be acceptable to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing."[59] On a further point, the Member from Dato Keramat, charged that the architect from the Public Works Department, Hisham Albakri, who went to France on a United Nations scholarship, was the son of a share-holder in the construction firm, and who within six months of his return resigned his government post.[60] Finally, the Member from Bangsar, C. V. Devan Nair (PAP) called upon the Minister to resign.[61]

Khaw Kai Boh remained unmoved. He met the charges and insinuations. The conditions for the contract specified, he said, were defined by the requirements; they were not "tailor-made" for Boon and Cheah and Citra. They were publicized throughout the country, and if any firm would present more favorable terms they would be accepted.[62] As far as the sign-boards erected by the construction company were concerned, they reflected the fact that Boon and Cheah and Citra were conducting boring tests on the site in connection with their estimates.[63] Turning to the next item, the Minister admitted that a representative of the firm was visiting Paris at the same time as did the official delegation—but there were representatives of other Malaysian firms there at the same time as well.[64] Finally, there was the matter of Enche Albakri. "This, Mr. Speaker, Sir," declared Khaw Kai Boh, his temper flaring, "I consider a despicable abuse of Parliamentary privilege." He challenged the Opposition to repeat their insinuation outside of the House, so they could be

[57] *Ibid.*, cols. 2548–2549.
[58] *Ibid.*, col. 2554.
[59] *Ibid.*, col. 2838.
[60] *Ibid.*, col. 2852.
[61] *Ibid.*, cols. 3008–3009.
[62] *Ibid.*, cols. 2560–2561.
[63] *Ibid.*, col. 2556.
[64] *Ibid.*, col. 3039.

sued for libel. All that the Public Works Department architect did was to go on a study tour in the Soviet Union and France and upon his return reported favorably on the utility of industrialized housing as a system. He "had no part to play in the choice of any system by the Ministry . . . he did not recommend the adoption of any . . . system. I do not know," continued the Minister, his anger now in full rage, "what relevance Enche Hisham Albakri's resignation from Government service had to do with the negotiation. As far as I am aware, he resigned to go into private practice. The question of Dato Mustapha Albakri being a shareholder, or a Director, of K. C. Boon and Cheah had absolutely no relevance. This is an absolutely dirty 'below the belt' smear. I would like to remind the Honourable Member that 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing,' and it is most unbecoming of a Parliamentarian to dump such trash in this honourable House. . . ."[65]

Khaw Kai Boh was definitely on the offensive. Personal abuse he would answer in kind, and demands for his resignation he would answer with a demand that the Opposition "instead of going around the bush" specifically enumerate its allegations. The Alliance top leadership, however, saw no advantage to continued forensic fireworks and decided to put a stop to it. Tun Razak intervened in the debate. Khaw Kai Boh, he declared, was unfairly treated. All the same, he announced that a Cabinet Committee would make the final decision on the contract. Next day it was explained that the Cabinet Committee had already been set up in the preceding June.[66]

There, for all practical purposes, ended the affair. Some six months later a letter to *The Straits Times* signed for the Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Housing, marked its formal conclusion. It explained that the negotiations with K. C. Boon and Cheah and Citra had broken down due to the high rates quoted for piling. As a result, a new advertising effort had been undertaken, and of the ten firms which responded five had submitted eligible tenders.[67] Meanwhile, Khaw Kai Boh won his suit against the *Straits Echo*. The paper agreed to print another

[65] *Ibid.*, col. 3044.
[66] The Committee was composed of Tan Siew Sin as Chairman, Dr. Lim Swee Aun and Khaw Kai Boh. Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, November 20, 1965, and Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, November 21 1965.
[67] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 30, 1966.

apology and to pay an undisclosed sum of damages which the Minister, as a report stated, would donate to charity.[68]

Still, whatever merits the industrial housing controversy may have had—and some aspects remain obscure—coming as it did on the heels of the Rahman Talib affair, it tended to feed the impression that at least some of the Alliance leaders were getting rich at an immodest rate and perhaps in an improper manner. To be sure, no hint of scandal touched the very core of leadership, but rumors about kick-backs for licenses and other special financial arrangements between senior officials and individual or corporate applicants surrounded Dr. Lim Swee Aun, Minister of Commerce, Dato Ibrahim Fikri, *Mentri Besar* of Trengganu, and Ahmad bin Said, *Mentri Besar* of Perak, to mention a few examples. Such a state of affairs created some measure of tension between the Prime Minister and his Deputy. Tun Razak reflecting certain bureaucratic orthodoxies had always set the maintenance of an incorruptible government as a primary task and showed little tolerance or sympathy for any violator. The Prime Minister, on the other hand, held rather more pragmatic political views. Intermediary leaders capable of mass mobilization, he had always felt, were essential to a stable democratic system in Malaysia. Intermediary leaders who performed their task well ought to be permitted differential rewards. Moreover, as long as their capacity of mass mobilization rested heavily on ascriptive and ideological criteria, charges of corruption would not discredit such leaders in their communal constituencies; rather, their dismissal would generate local resentment and an invitation to apply their capacities against the government. Fairness aside, political realism argued for a broad-minded attitude toward their lapses in the face of materialistic temptations—provided always that they remained loyal to the political system and, of course, to him personally.

Tunku Abdul Rahman

Indeed, the Prime Minister's easy-going attitude toward the personal weaknesses of political leaders was only one aspect of his general predisposition of kindness and compassion. Anyone who could reach him—and most could—found courtesy and understanding. He showed empathy to those in trouble; he even

[68] *Ibid.*, February 10, 1966.

had mercy on those guilty of serious crimes. And so, perhaps inevitably, the road led to one of the most fateful decisions of his career: his decision to intervene in the *cause célèbre* of thirteen men convicted of treason.

At issue was, at least originally, the fate of six young men, all former residents of Pontian and citizens of the Federation of Malaya, who were air-dropped by the Indonesian army together with Indonesian paratroopers near Labis, Johore, in September, 1965. They were met by Malaysian security forces and surrendered. After a trial and conviction for treason, they were sentenced to death by the Johore High Court. Appeals to the Federal Court and the Privy Council[69] were denied. Then adroitly the matter was moved into the political arena. On June 25, 1968, Miss P. G. Lim, a prominent attorney, sister of Lim Kean Siew and the counsel for the condemned men, filed a well publicized petition for clemency emphasizing that at the time of their crime all six were under 21 years of age and contending that the young men had been grossly misled and lured to Indonesia. They were, she asserted, "brought back against their will and surrendered meekly or were on the point of surrendering when confronted with Malaysian security forces." At this point, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon decided to take a hand with a direct appeal to the Prime Minister. "Pray," Dr. Tan cabled to him in London, "save lives of six young people due to be executed for consorting with Indonesians during Confrontation. Request stay pending re-appeal for clemency."[70] Hardly had Tunku Abdul Rahman had time to receive the cable, when Dr. Tan Chee Khoon released it to the Press.

The government in Kuala Lumpur took a very dim view of the whole matter. Tun Razak, the acting Prime Minister, ruled out any official intervention to stop the execution. The Attorney-General, Tan Sri Abdul bin Yusof, explained that the central government had no power to reprieve or pardon the men; only the Ruler or Governor of a state could do that. Then he took issue with the defense's central contention. "It is not true to say," he insisted, "that the six men were misled by their ignorance, when they went to Indonesia. Nearly every one of them admitted in statements to the police that they were recruited by members

[69] Under the Constitution some cases would be appealed to the Privy Council of Britain which could exercise ultimate jurisdiction.

[70] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 3, 1968.

of the Socialist Front in Pontian in 1964 and sent to Indonesia. They were taken to Sumatra and trained in parachute jumping and the use of firearms and grenades for months before they came over to Malaya. The defense that they had been forced to undergo armed training was not accepted by the judge at the trial."[71] The *Mentri Besar* of Johore was even more annoyed. It would have been more appropriate for Dr. Tan, he said, to appeal to the Communists and subversives to become law abiding citizens and to lay down their arms. The cable was a cheap publicity stunt to curry favor with left-wing elements. Undeterred, Dr. Tan and the People's Progressive Party sent telegrams to the Sultan of Johore and the State Secretary appealing for pardon. The same day the Prime Minister from London and the following day the Acting Prime Minister in Kuala Lumpur asked the Attorney-General to restudy the cases.[72]

In the meantime, it became apparent that five other men convicted for the possession of arms and ammunition during the Confrontation were awaiting execution in Johore. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, moved purely by humanitarian motives he said, proposed that the issue of pardon for the convicted men be kept above politics. D. R. Seenivasagam (PPP) expressed the view that "the matter is now completely out of the hands of the judiciary. . . ." He had no doubt that if the Prime Minister concluded that the men should be pardoned, this would carry the greatest weight with the Pardons Board.

Thus within a few days Tunku Abdul Rahman found himself at the center of intense cross pressures. Government officials and Malay leaders pressed him to hold firm. Speaking at the general meeting of UMNO Johore Bahru division, State Assemblyman Syed Mohamed Edros urged resistance to Dr. Tan's plea. The convicted men had committed treason in wartime. Their actions led to the deaths of several members of the Armed Forces. If they were pardoned, others would be encouraged to commit treason too. The *Mentri Besar* of Johore expanded on the argument. "We should also not forget," he said, "that it was such Communist elements who had brought a lot of hardship and killing to the nation during the Emergency. And recently again they showed their menace when 16 of our policemen were killed and 17 others wounded in an ambush near Kroh."[73]

[71] *Ibid.*, July 4, 1968.
[72] *Ibid.*, July 6, 1968.
[73] *Ibid.*, July 8, 1968.

At the same time, the Opposition, supported by the dominant opinion of the community of Chinese and the Indian elements, barred no hold to engage his personal intervention. Dr. Tan Choo Khoon sent another cable to Tunku Abdul Rahman and another telegram to the Sultan of Johore. The DAP also wired the Sultan; its president, Goh Hock Guan, demanded that all cases related to the military operations during Confrontation should be reviewed. On July 11 the Johore Pardons Board rejected the plea for clemency.[74] The pressures then intensified further. D. R. Seenivasagam proposed intervention by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* and requested the Speaker to call an immediate meeting of Parliament. The parents of the eleven convicted men sent a cable to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Six relatives picketed the Johore Chinese Chambers of Commerce for thirty minutes. Goh Hock Guan demanded the appointment of a new Board, as the *Mentri Besar* had improperly expressed his feelings before the Board had met. His party sent a telegram to a Johore High Court judge requesting that the date of execution be deferred indefinitely and yet another telegram to the Sultan. It also launched a signature campaign to rally public support. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon announced that he would not "allow the decision to go unchallenged."[75] The Pardons Board, he claimed, was improperly constituted, as it included the *Mentri Besar*. Accordingly, its decision was null and void. In any case, he would introduce in Parliament a bill pardoning the eleven. The parents of the convicted men then sent cables to Pope Paul, U Thant and General Suharto. The Transport Workers Union sent a cable to the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*.

The government stood firm. The Attorney-General explained that the Constitution specifically provided that the *Mentri Besar* should be a member of the Pardons Board. Tun Tan Siew Sin, President of the MCA, resisted an appeal by three fathers and three mothers of six of the convicted men. Khir Johari, Minister of Education, declared it to be a bad principle to use political pressure in a purely judicial matter. On July 15 the Johore Bahru High Court rejected an application for an injunction for a stay of execution.

No one in the Cabinet favored intervention, but several Ministers were apprehensive that the Prime Minister would do just

[74] *Ibid.*, July 12, 1968.
[75] *Ibid.*, July 13, 1968.

that. Tun Razak, who had assumed the portfolio of Home Affairs after the resignation of Tun (Dr.) Ismail, was very much concerned that the issue was turning into a sharp communal conflict,[76] but perhaps even more, that a pardon at this stage would produce intense disappointment and even hostility among the Malays. He wished Tun (Dr.) Ismail had remained in the Cabinet and helped him persuade Tunku Abdul Rahman to remain aloof. Tun Tan Siew Sin felt much the same. He was sensitive to the advantages which would accrue to him and his party if he could demonstrate that he was a firm champion of Chinese interests. Yet he too was fearful of a Malay backlash should the condemned men be pardoned. Above all, he was anxious that in spite of a consensus to the contrary within the Directorate, and all the warnings that the issue had far-reaching inter-communal implications, Tunku Abdul Rahman might decide to act according to his own personal inclinations, and as a kind and compassionate man, intervene on behalf of the convicted men. By so doing, the Prime Minister would not only create the impression that the Opposition parties were more committed to the communal goals of the Chinese and more successful in attaining them than the MCA, surely an unkind cut, but that in the process he would violate the implicit rules of decision-making within the Directorate.

As it happened, both Tun Razak and Tun Tan Siew Sin had good reason to be apprehensive. The Prime Minister was already wavering. Some saw a clue to this in the latest issue of the official publication of the Alliance which supported the plea for a stay of execution. Encouraged, the campaign rose to a crescendo. On July 19 Amnesty International cabled the Prime Minister and the Sultan of Johore. Goh Hock Guan declared that the DAP was prepared to call off its signature campaign if the Alliance would take over the effort. V. David cabled to the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization. On July 24 it was "discovered" that two more men, this time two Malays in Perak who had parachuted into the Sitiawan area in 1964, were in a similar position. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon appealed to the Conference of Rulers. V. David promised to bring the matter before the Ninth World Assembly of Youths in Belgrade. Then, a local MCA group, the Bintang Ward, joined the chorus, calling for a

[76] The eleven convicted men were all Chinese.

stay of execution and a review of the case "as a gesture to our Indonesian friends."[77]

Three days later Tunku Abdul Rahman was ready to obtain clemency for the thirteen convicted men. In his appeal to the Sultan of Johore, the Regent of Perak and the two state Pardons Boards, he generally echoed the Opposition leaders' contentions. The men were mostly young; confrontation had ended; and they had been kept in an agony of suspense for nearly three years while their appeals were being considered. Nonetheless, his first initiative failed. The Sultan of Johore, then the Perak Pardons Board rejected his personal intervention.[78] Dr. Tan Chee Khoon thereupon urged the Prime Minister to obtain a stay of execution from the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* and then to proceed in Parliament. The DAP proposed a "mercy-march" for August 7 by thirteen volunteers who collected 100,000 signatures. When the police prohibited it, the party asked the parents of the thirteen to write letters to all federal and state legislatures requesting a nation-wide referendum. P. G. Lim filed an appeal of the Johore High Court decision in the Federal Court. On August 10 Dr. Tan Chee Khoon called on Tunku Abdul Rahman and urged him for further effort. So generous an act would endear him to the masses of citizens. The Prime Minister expressed his sympathies but otherwise did not commit himself. Preparations proceeded for the execution. In Johore prison authorities sent letters to the parents, asking them to call at the prison by August 15 to sign the necessary documents if they wanted their sons' bodies. A message from the Pope reached the Malaysian government urging mercy.

Perhaps more important, signs of communal conflict and public disorder were spreading. In Kuala Lumpur a hundred people demonstrated in front of the Majestic Theater. Thirteen youths were arrested. Other larger demonstrations were also planned. In a police raid on the Labour Party headquarters, three party officials were arrested.[79] Tunku Abdul Rahman made another try. This time he spoke not so much as an individual moved by humanitarian motives, but as Prime Minister con-

[77] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 25, 1968.

[78] *Ibid.*, August 2 and 3, 1968.

[79] The party's Deputy Secretary-General; Liew Yen Fa, the Chairman of its Women's Front, Miss Tan Siew Eng, and Selangor Assemblyman, Woo Hon Kong.

cerned with the unity of his country. He warned of the perils of communal violence and raised the spectre of insurgency. Constitutionally, the Sultan may have had a choice, but not in practice. On August 16 after a hastily convened special meeting of the Johore Pardons Board, the executions were postponed. A week later the Sultan commuted the sentences to life imprisonment. Early in September the Regent of Perak followed suit.

Tunku Abdul Rahman had indeed prevented communal violence. The Pope expressed his gratitude. At home Dr. Tan Chee Khoon rhapsodized: "The Tengku has done it again. By his humanity and magnanimity the Tengku has shown that he is really *Bapa Malaysia* (the father of his country).[80] Whether this would win him or his party votes in the forthcoming election was another matter. In any case, his decision to intervene imposed the severest strains upon the cohesion of the Alliance Directorate. His unilateral action violated at least the spirit of its implicit rules. He went far beyond his role of arbitrating conflicting communal contentions within the secret councils. He embarked, at least for the moment, on a course, one hauntingly reminiscent of Dato Onn, of becoming a truly non-communal leader. In the process he neglected his responsibilities to the Alliance approach and to his colleagues as well. To be sure, there were some Ministers who were satisfied that "the Tunku" knew what he was doing. The "old fox" always came out on top, didn't he? Tun Tan Siew Sin, however, was left pondering the prospects of his party when the Prime Minister had just lent credence to the charge that the MCA was not vigorous enough to press for the interests of the community of Chinese. The true champions of Chinese communal causes, the case seemed to imply, were Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, Dr. D. R. Seenivasagam and Goh Hock Guan. Tun Razak and Abdul Ghafar bin Baba on the other hand could not help but wonder how UMNO could counteract the prevalent impression created by its opponents that the Prime Minister was outmaneuvered by a couple of fast-talking Chinese and Indians, and more important still, just how UMNO could allay the growing fears of the Malays that Tunku Abdul Rahman had gone too far in making concessions to the other communities. Still, neither Tun Razak nor Tun Tan Siew Sin hesitated in their loyalty to the Prime Minister. Their solidarity was firm.

[80] *Ibid.*, August 17, 1968.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Implementation of Cultural Terms: Slow and Halting Progress

WHETHER the cohesion of the Directorate would remain firm, and for that matter whether the vertical pattern of mobilization of UMNO, MCA, and MIC would continue to win elections, however, was yet to be seen. More than anything else, the answer would depend upon the Government's implementation of the constitutional contract. To be sure, the Chinese and Indians had already received the fruits of the compromise. Nearly all were citizens, their properties were protected, they were eligible to vote. Even so, they were not entirely satisfied. Their access to the political system was still less than completely equal and unrestricted. Many had a shrewd suspicion that in the end the cost of it all would be higher than they had bargained for. The Malays, in turn, were waiting for their benefits. Most, with scarcely disguised impatience, were looking toward their language becoming the national language, when Malay alone would be used in official government transactions and as the medium of instruction in schools.

The Alliance leadership hoped to approach the cultural terms of the Constitution with care and consideration, guiding a gradual evolution without offending or depriving anyone. The constitutional position recognizing the concurrent official status of the English language "for a period of ten years after *Merdeka* day, and thereafter until Parliament otherwise provides," offered something of a breathing spell. Perhaps to gain a little more time, the government as early as 1956 established a language and literature department to enrich and to promote the growth of Malay. Some elements hoped, and according to one report the last British Chief Justice expected, that if continued lip service for the principle of Malay as the national language was given while at the same time its implementation was postponed, "then in 10 to 15 years time the issue [would] be dead and the political and communal pressure for the use of Malay as the only

national language will have passed naturally and peacefully from the scene."[1]

The National Language Act, 1967

Most Malays could not have disagreed more. They did not understand the Constitution to authorize a fairly open-ended commitment to the English language with a *minimum* guarantee of ten years, but on the contrary, a purely temporary delay in the paramount position of the Malay language for a *maximum* of ten years. Many resented the subsidiary use of other languages as a provocation to Malay nationalism. Some firms, it was charged, "had put their names in imposing Chinese characters outside of their offices and . . . up till now no effort had been made to replace those 'sickening' signboards."[2] Most were convinced that only if all other languages were excluded from the communications process would Malays have a chance to hold their own in discussion and debates with their fellow citizens. And nearly all were anxiously anticipating the Chinese to press for further communal gains at the cost of Malay interest.

It was not long before a new folk-hero emerged who persistently championed and eloquently articulated the Malay communal position. Syed Nasir bin Syed Ismail, the first full time Director of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*[3] (Language and Literature Department), in less than ten years transformed a small organization composed of a couple of educators and a few clerks engaged off and on in translations and designing new Malay words and located in modest quarters in Johore Bahru, into a semi-public corporation with national influence employing more than 180 officers fully complemented by extensive staffs and occupying a new, attractive and spacious building in the capital. Under his leadership secondary school textbooks in Malay were printed, standard English works were translated, courses in the national language were instituted, research on Malay cultural heritage was conducted, and new Malay words were formulated.[4] The accomplishments of his

[1] Quoted in Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, January 13, 1963.
[2] *Ibid.*, March 16, 1962.
[3] He had succeeded Ungku Abdul Aziz, who for less than a year served as a part-time Director.
[4] See *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Ten Years* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1967), pp. 21–39.

agency were perhaps inflated by his supporters and at times denigrated by his opponents, but they were certainly not inconsequential. They were, moreover, not limited to the cultural and academic. Syed Nasir had political ambitions as well. He disowned those who sought to obliterate English street signs by red paint,[5] but for his own part he did everything to hasten the day when Malay would become unquestionably the (only) national language. Time and again he swept away any doubt. "Due to its flexibility and assimilative spirit, reinforced by the humane and universal outlook of Islam," he declared, "Malay culture in the future is certainly capable of meeting the requirements of the time.[6] In fact, he argued, "if the government goes about it in the proper way, and the people are serious about it, I am confident we can do it [Malay as the sole national language] in four years.[7] He regularly sponsored national language months and used the opportunity to maximize his own personal exposure. He publicly (sometimes dramatically) proclaimed his loyalty to the Alliance leadership, but he was constantly engaged in building his own power-base in UMNO. In this too he was successful. Masses of people attended the rallies, many returning home to their villages afterwards reporting their excitement at their experience of cultural self-confidence. When it came to election to the Executive Council of UMNO, Syed Nasir rarely had any problems. After 1962 he was regularly among those receiving the highest votes.[8]

As the end of the first decade of independence approached, Syed Nasir accelerated the tempo of his political initiatives. His regular addresses at National Language Months or the openings of libraries and exhibits carried the constant theme: Malay will necessarily become the only official language on September 1, 1967, and the country was ready for it. Malay was a language with tradition. One early inscription found in Trengganu went back as far as February or March, 1303. Malay was a language with practical utility. Except for a handful of non-Malay offices, "there was . . . no major obstacle to implementing the national

[5] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, July 9, 1964.
[6] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 20, 1959.
[7] *Ibid.*, February 6, 1960.
[8] Headline reporting the results of the elections of 1962: "OUT–A Minister, MP's, Assemblymen, ex-Chief Minister and 3 *Mentris Besar:* IN–Top language man." In fact, Syed Nasir received the highest number of votes. *Ibid.*, August 25, 1962.

language in the government service."[9] He called on all citizens to "accept the national language wholeheartedly as the language of their birthplace; and [to] show their loyalty and sincerity."[10] His movement was not one of extremists, he insisted. "The development of the Chinese and Tamil language will never be curtailed," he declared, "On the contrary greater attention will be paid to them."[11]

The general consensus in the community of Chinese and Indians was that Syed Nasir was either a fool or a knave. They did not believe his protestations of goodwill and would not accept his interpretation of the Constitution. Some derided his inflated claims of achievement.[12] Many decided to ignore him (and incidentally the constitutional contract). The Municipal Council of Malacca, for example, simply proclaimed Chinese and Tamil official languages and then treated with some levity Syed Nasir's demand that the Council be "taken over" by the state government.

The Alliance leadership found itself in a quandary. They recognized the vitality of Syed Nasir's thrusts. He not only articulated Malay *communal* opinion very convincingly, but in a curious but fundamental way he also adhered to the constitutional contract. All the same, they were repelled by his single-minded determination. For their part the MCA and MIC leaders tried to be discreet. One exception was the MCA Penang Branch which in October, 1966, passed a resolution "that Chinese should be respected and accepted as a language for official and extensive use throughout the country." The Central Working Committee meeting a few days later, however, promptly rejected the recommendation and satisfied itself with endorsing a "more liberal use of the Chinese language in selected fields and in government notices, forms and so on."[13] It was, the MCA felt, a responsibility of UMNO to mobilize *and* restrain the Malay community. As it happened, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Senu bin Abdul Rahman, already sought to counteract the rising crescendo of agitation by assuring all, and

[9] *Ibid.*, May 24, 1965. [10] *Ibid.*, July 23, 1965.
[11] *Ibid.*, September 6, 1965.
[12] Charge by Lim Kean Siew, Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, August 14, 1960.
[13] Quoted in Margaret Roff, "The Politics of Language in Malaya," *Asian Survey*, Vol. VII, No. 5 (May 1967), p. 323.

especially the Malays that nobody at present opposed the move to implement [Malay] as the sole official language. Some months later Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister himself, added that "at an average of 75 percent in their day-to-day administration," the state governments were actually using the national language.[14]

Even so, the Alliance felt compelled to accept Syed Nasir's conversion of a minimum guarantee for the concurrent status of English into a maximum tolerance. In fact, it was just in the process of drafting the appropriate legislation. Conceivably, Syed Nasir did not know this; if he did, he either did not believe it, or had decided to turn it to his own political advantage.

In any case, early in October, Syed Nasir decided to take the offensive. First, he made a public issue of a signboard with Chinese characters outside the office of Bernard Lu, Political Secretary to MCA President Tan Siew Sin. To the explanation that these signs were for the "guidance of those who are only literate in Chinese" and in no way impaired the official status of Malay, Syed Nasir retorted scornfully that he was "fed up with the argument that signboards in other languages are supposed to be mere translations of the national language." When the news of his response was not reported on radio and television, an official of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* announced that in retaliation the organization would "boycott" the media.[15]

More important within a fortnight Syed Nasir also dispatched a confidential memorandum to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, all Cabinet Members, all *Mentris Besar* (Chief Ministers) and all members of the UMNO Executive Council. It was an extended (13-page) statement, somewhat reminiscent of the pronouncements of Aziz bin Ishak. It opened with a claim to speak for the Malay community in general and a definition of "its aims and objectives" as bringing to the notice of the government the constitutional commitment on the national language and the dire consequences if the "demands by a group of Chinese for a more liberal use of the Chinese language" should be considered. Then Syed Nasir proceeded to outline once again the historical origins and development of the Malay language, to discuss in some detail the terms of the constitutional

[14] Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, August 21, 1966.
[15] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, October 18 and 20, 1966.

contract (even citing the definition of "official language" by UNESCO) and the appropriate role for the English language. With that he reached the heart of the matter.

VI. The Malays' Sacrifice (*Pengorbanan Orang Melayu*)

1. *For the importance of national unity and racial harmony, the Malays who are sons of the soil (bumiputeras), have agreed to compromise with non-bumiputeras, especially the Chinese, on the question of their language, one of their few remaining properties. They agreed to compromise and allow citizenship rights to these non-Malays and agree to uphold the status of the Chinese language and other non-official languages*, where the question of compromise need not arise at all, because, . . . the question of Malay becoming the National language and the official language of this country is a logical fact and a right of the language [*Yang paling lojik dan hak bagi bahasa itu*].

2. *After Independence* what do we see? Not only is the status of Chinese preserved, it is now more widespread than before Independence. The government does not close down Chinese schools; the government does not prohibit the teaching of Chinese up to university level. Instead the government has spent millions of dollars to assist and build additional buildings to Chinese schools and pay the salaries of their teachers.

3. In several places in this country, not only in big towns, but also in the villages, the Chinese language is often roundly displayed on sign-boards and name plates of shops.

4. The Malays do not object to this comfortable status of the Chinese language; they have not once taken the law into their own hands [*mereka tidak sa-kali pun melakukan tindakan2 yang terkeluar dari undang2 negeri ini*].

5. The position of the Chinese in this country is very comfortable. They are allowed to do business freely; they are allowed to collect property extensively; they are rich, they hold the country's economy without any disturbance. They had a heavenly life in this country compared to the Chinese in other places. What else do they want from the Malays?

6. The Malays do not benefit in any way by having their language become the National Language and the official language of this country, in fact, non-Malays do not lose anything at all by this move. . . .

After a section on the "demands for a more liberal use of the Chinese language" which was considered to violate the constitutional contract and otherwise was pernicious in intent, Syed Nasir defined the responsibilities of the Alliance leaders. They "must not be indecisive . . . *The language policy of this country is one and final: to replace English with the National Language as the sole official language in this country.* There are no other questions, problems or issues on this, and cannot be raised. . . ." The Communist danger was then raised, and finally Syed Nasir closed with this warning: "Our national leaders must be careful of the feelings of the Malays which now show restless tendencies as the result of the Chinese language claim."

Syed Nasir was not without allies in UMNO. Another member of the Executive Committee, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, a prominent physician from the Prime Minister's home state, held strong Malay views on the constitutional contract, the distribution of income and on the education policy. So did Dato Harun bin Haji Idris, *Mentri Besar* of Selangor, and Abdul-Rahman bin Ya'kub, Minister of Lands and Mines. In fact, most members were sympathetic with the thrust of the memorandum: Malay must become the sole national language with no further concessions to the other communities. It was constitutional; it was only fair. They were, however, not entirely convinced about the wisdom of the timing or the selflessness of Syed Nasir's motives. Above all, they looked for leadership to their senior colleagues.

By 1966 Tunku Abdul Rahman, President of UMNO, was fully functioning in his role of a supra-communal Bapa Malaysia. He had no intention whatever of making further concessions on the language issue, but he was concerned that due to Syed Nasir's initiatives the establishment of Malay as the sole official language would be perceived not only as a national event but also a Malay communal victory. Following these lines he foresaw the disturbing prospect of communal passions unnecessarily inflamed, and the MCA becoming even more vulnerable to charges by the Chinese communal elements of having sold out to the Malays.

In order to counteract such seriously destabilizing pressures, the Prime Minister decided that the form of the National Language Bill was to be balanced. While it would in any case grant a slight edge to the Malays by reinterpreting the ten-year minimum to that of a maximum provision, the previously accepted

protection of secondary languages also would have to be restated. "We want everyone to accept the [national] language of his own free-will," he explained.[16] In his approach, moreover, he was supported by the two senior UMNO officers, Tun Razak and Dato (later Tun) Dr. Ismail. Like Tunku Abdul Rahman they hoped to avoid dramatic victories in constitutional matters by any of the communities lest they trigger public intercommunal confrontations. They were also concerned, however, that the day-to-day operation of the government, and especially that of the courts, would be seriously impaired by the total elimination of English. When they explained their position in some detail to their colleagues in the Executive Committee, some were persuaded; others were discouraged from open opposition.

The National Language Bill was introduced in Parliament on February 24, 1967. First, it provided that the national language would become the sole official language; second, that "translations of official documents or communications in the language of any other community in the Federation" may be used by the federal and state governments "for such purposes as may be deemed necessary in the public interest"; and third, that "the Yang di-Pertuan Agong may permit the continued use of the English language for such official purposes as may be deemed fit."[17] Clearly, it was the compromise worked out within the Directorate. It was so recognized by the English language press which received it with acclaim. The Chinese papers were cautious. So was *Utusan Melayu*. In its first editorial comment four days later, it merely observed that "it would be far better to wait until Tengku has given an explanation." By March 1 Melan Abdullah, the editor, apparently had been fully briefed. Always a staunch Malay nationalist but also a supporter of the Alliance approach, he concluded that the Bill deserved support and those who still oppose it must be "motivated by a desire to cause trouble."[18]

Syed Nasir and many of his supporters, however, saw no occasion for compromise on an issue which, they insisted, had already been settled in a previous constitutional contract. Malay

[16] Quoted in Margaret Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

[17] Other clauses dealt with specific provisions involving languages in the courts, Parliament, the State Assemblies and in the text of laws.

[18] Margaret Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

teachers' associations, national writers' associations, and at the University, the most powerful Malay student organization, the Malay Language Society, all were opposed to the Bill and united behind the National Language Action Front to get it changed. Students of Muslim College picketed their institution. A rally at the *Dewan Bahasa* heard speaker after speaker condemn the Bill: Syed Nasir in tears proclaimed: "I am not a coward but am overcome with emotion in thinking of the fate of my race."[19] Copies of *Utusan Melayu* were ritually burned, and only with some difficulty was a march on parliament prevented.

Debate in the House took two days (March 2 and 3). First, the Prime Minister, speaking in the national language outlined the intentions of the different clauses, emphasizing repeatedly the overriding goal of inter-communal peace.[20] He was followed by Tan Siew Sin who began in Malay but toward the end of his remarks switched to English. He too went through the Bill clause by clause, emphasizing that its provisions were in no way detrimental to the interests of the Chinese. The MCA had "pledged that it would do what it could to ensure a fair deal for the Chinese community of this country. Not only have we kept this promise, what is equally important we have kept this promise and strengthened our bonds of friendship with our Malay and Indian brethren at the same time." Indeed, the Finance Minister felt pride in the process through which the Bill evolved. It was "an achievement of some significance for the Alliance. It underlines once again, if further underlining is needed, the efficacy of the Alliance method of solving a difficult problem. We have always maintained that controversial issues are best resolved around a table in a committee room and that the surest way of not resolving a controversial issue is by shouting about it from the house tops or through the medium of the public press."[21] Then V. T. Sambanthan, the head of the third Alliance partner, rose to speak. Other countries may have difficulties in coping with serious problems, but in Malaysia, he proclaimed, "we have a genius for finding simple solutions to complex problems. . . . Here, indeed, is a nation in which there can be trouble, and

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

[20] Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. III, No. 45, March 2, 1967, col. 6004.

[21] *Ibid.*, cols. 6010–6011.

trouble in plenty too. But we have considered the existence of a multifarious people in our nation as a challenge to our genius for finding solutions and we have, with the emergence of the Alliance not only been able to unite the people so that we obtained freedom for our nation but we have also been able to unite the people towards common allegiance to the nation and common allegiance has been achieved by a very simple formula—the simplicity of this formula being based on three words—goodwill, tolerance, and brotherhood. . . . Today, when we replace English with the Malay language as the official language, it is well-known that it is being done not by compulsion but by the process of free acceptance—acceptance willingly and voluntarily by the non-Malay races in this country."[22] If anything beclouded the MIC leader's blue horizon that day, it was his concern that a "section of the Malay public" may have been unduly worried that the continued use of other languages would lead ultimately to the establishment of multi-lingualism. He brushed the cloud away: "Let me state clearly and categorically that this is not the intention and we do not seek and we do not want multi-lingualism in this country."[23]

The pledge delivered with characteristic pathos was applauded by some though not nearly all Alliance members. It was singularly unappreciated by the Opposition. The PMIP did not credit it. Its leader, Dato Mohamed Asri bin Haji Muda, was the next speaker. Indicting UMNO for a series of policies which allegedly disadvantaged Malays in their own country, he proclaimed the Bill to be the latest step on the road of perfidy. With all the tolerance for the other languages, the national language had no economic value and thus the rural Malays, the most economically underprivileged in the country, would continue to remain so. In turn, the Chinese oriented opposition disassociated itself from Sambanthan's pledge. D. R. Seenivasagam (PPP), speaking English throughout, saw no glory in the day. On the contrary, he said, the "duly elected Representatives of the people of West Malaysia, . . . [were] asked to commit one of the greatest acts of treachery and betrayal on one half almost of the population of West Malaysia. . . ."[24]

Faced with attacks from two sides charging the Alliance with betrayal for not following a revisionist course, the government's

[22] *Ibid.*, cols. 6013–6014.
[23] *Ibid.*, col. 6017.
[24] *Ibid.*, col. 6059.

most effective spokesman was the Minister of Home Affairs Tun (Dr.) Ismail. About to retire, he contradicted the rumor cherished by some Malays that he disagreed with the Bill. On the contrary, he not only supported it, he "played a major role in . . . [its] formulation." Then he demonstrated that his ill-health in no way impaired the agility of his mind or the firmness of his purpose. "This Bill, Sir," he admitted, "on the one hand, will not convert those who are wedded to the policy of establishing languages other than the national language to be the official language, or those who are strongly convinced that the national language should be not only the sole official language but it also should be the only language of communication between government and the public. On the other hand, Sir, this Bill will appeal to those Malaysians—Malays, Chinese, Indians and others—who take a national pride in the national language to be the sole official language while at the same time realising that at the present stage of Malaysia's history the languages of other communities too must be used for translations of official documents and communications, so that all citizens can understand what is going on in their country." In a short but effective speech he pre-empted the ("reasonable and moderate") middle ground and exposed the opposition as totally unreasonable and impractical extremists. He attacked the PMIP vigorously, then dealt scornfully with the PPP and other Chinese oriented parties. "Of course, if it gives satisfaction to the Honorable Member for Ipoh [D. R. Seenivasagam] and his party to keep on playing this battle for multi-lingualism among their followers, we have no objection, being democratic people . . . when it comes down to brass tacks, it is the Alliance that can deliver the goods in this multi-racial society."[25]

The climax had passed. Other opposition leaders, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon and Dr. Lim Chong Eu, offered only moderate criticisms. Alliance leaders, Tun Razak, Dr. Lim Swee Aun, and V. Manickavasagam responded to specific points and sought to reassure public anxieties. But it was all over. The Prime Minister summed up, and then came the votes on the second and third readings. Though the outcome was never in doubt, the Alliance performance was convincing. Syed Nasir's allies, Abdul-Rahman bin Ya'kub and Dr. Mahathir voted for the Bill; such prominent Opposition leaders as Dr. Lim Chong Eu and Tan

[25] *Ibid.*, March 3, 1967, cols. 6137–6138 and 6144–6145.

Chee Khoon preferred to be absent. Only 11 nos, mostly PMIP, were cast against 95 ayes.

There remained one bit of unfinished business: Syed Nasir. Angered by what he considered disloyalty to the Alliance and a violation of bureaucratic norms, Tunku Abdul Rahman was at first inclined to expel him from UMNO and to proceed against him through the Public Services Commission. He was even prepared to have the government take over the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*. But Syed Nasir wrote another letter. This time it was to the Prime Minister alone and much humbler in tone. While it did not make any concessions on principle, it did contain a personal apology, a resignation from the Executive Council and an expression to leave his fate "happily" in the Prime Minister's hands.[26] More important, Tun Razak had interceded for him. Thus, Syed Nasir, the Malay folk hero, was permitted to remain in the party and for some time retain his post in the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*. Unlike Aziz bin Ishak, he had made his point and managed to survive.

National Education Policy

The designation of Malay as the sole *official* language with all its concomitant drama (and dramatics) was a relatively easy matter. It really involved only a single bill, a few months of negotiations within the Directorate and a short burst of political activism. The full implementation of the cultural terms of the constitutional contract, i.e., the establishment of Malay as the *national* language, however, posed a very much more difficult problem. It required a series of policies through which the complex, expensive and long drawn-out process of organizing an entirely new, comprehensive educational system would be telescoped into an orderly development of a couple of decades.

The baseline of such a development in 1955, when the Alliance took office, was provided by a conglomeration of public elementary schools in the countryside with Malay as a language of instruction, privately and publicly supported elementary schools in the towns with English, Chinese, or Tamil as the language of instruction, and private secondary schools with English or Chinese as the language of instruction. Malays were entitled to attend elementary grades free of tuition. Relatively few

[26] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, March 27 and April 5, 1967.

did, and fewer still learned anything beyond the conventional wisdom of Muslim rural societies. Only the most exceptional students, who in addition to extraordinary talent were reasonably affluent *and* could speak English quite well, could continue their studies to the secondary level. Chinese and Indian children, in turn, had access to fairly vigorous instruction in their respective cultures and traditions through primary, and in the case of the Chinese, secondary schools as well. But modern, quality education at all levels was the exclusive trademark of English language schools to which only a very select fraction of students distinguished both in intellectual capacity and financial ability were admitted and where English literature and Western history shared the hard core of the curriculum.[27]

It was not an entirely satisfactory arrangement for the Alliance leadership preparing for independence, and it was an altogether unacceptable condition for Malay nationalists and orthodox Muslims who considered English education a cultural affront and the persistence of Chinese and Indian cultures a mortal threat to Malay identity. Thus one of the very first acts of Tunku Rahman as Chief Minister of the Federation was to appoint an Education Committee to develop a new policy, one which was in line with the emerging Alliance inter-communal compromise. Accenting his priorities further, the chairmanship of the committee was assumed by the number two man in UMNO, and Minister of Education Dato Abdul Razak, and its members included two prominent MCA leaders, Assistant Minister of Education Too Joon Hing and Dr. Lim Chong Eu, as well as V. T. Sambanthan, head of the MIC.

Work commenced promptly. It soon became apparent that seven of the nine Malay members, though not particularly vocal, were determined to press for a single, integrated educational system with Malay the language of instruction. None of the other members formally and directly challenged this objective, but it appeared quite obvious to all that the government had neither sufficient control over the schools, nor did it possess even the minimal technical resources to move immediately and

[27] In 1955 enrollment figures in the various schools were approximately the following: Malay medium elementary schools: 400,000; Chinese medium elementary schools: 200,000; Indian (Tamil) medium elementary schools: 30,000; English medium elementary schools: 80,000; Chinese medium secondary schools: 30,000 and English medium secondary schools: 30,000.

overtly in that direction. Chinese leaders were confident that practical difficulties would compel any advance to be very gradual. Their culture had survived for millennia against rather more formidable odds. During the Second World War, Dr. Lim Chong Eu reminded his followers, the Occupation Forces "cracked heads" to force learning of their language. "Do you know anyone now who speaks Japanese?" he then inquired. For their part, the Malays—perhaps concerned that Britain would be offended and slow down the tempo toward independence—were not too insistent.

Dato Abdul Razak would not compromise on the ultimate goal. First though he thought it would be necessary to establish the government's control over the educational system. Until then he proposed to move softly. "We believe," the Committee under his guidance declared, "that the ultimate objective of educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognize that progress towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual." Specifically, the next decade for which its recommendations should be applied would have to be considered "transitional. . . . We have not looked into the crystal for a vision of our far posterity."[28]

Primary school facilities, the report proposed, should be expanded rapidly until all children in the Federation between six and thirteen years of age could be assured a place. On the secondary level a new system of "national type" schools was recommended in addition to the existing English and Chinese medium institutions. On the question of the appropriate language of instruction the *Report* was noticeably gentle. All schools were to be required to teach Malay, but it allowed for "the development of [public] primary schools . . . in which the language of instruction may be English, Tamil or Kuo-Yu [Chinese]." Moreover in the case of the "national-type" secondary schools, the Committee insisted "the language medium of instruction . . . is not a matter of first importance. . . ." The question of government control was a matter of first importance: "these recommendations involve certain fundamental changes," the Razak Committee freely admitted, "and we consider that the

[28] *Federation of Malaya, Report of the Education Committee, 1956* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1966), pp. 2, 3.

time has come when these must be boldly made."[29] All schools, independent and assisted, should be integrated into a single system. At the top the Ministry of Education should be generally responsible for the educational policy of the Federation, the chain of organization running through area education boards, local education authorities to the Boards of Governors of individual schools. Common syllabi for all schools should be introduced; all teachers should be organized into a single professional service and be paid according to one national salary scale. A newly established and well-staffed inspectorate should assure compliance with government policies.

The Committee's work, and especially the performance of its chairman, was widely popular. When the *Report* was approved in principle by the Legislative Council (May 16, 1956), Malay school teachers, influential leaders of their communities, were generally pleased with the expansion of Malay educational opportunities and their prospects for rapid promotions and improved incomes. Most Chinese and Indians for their part were satisfied. The latter had not yet focused on the education issue, and the former were impressed that the policy agreed upon did not involve immediate, substantive concessions. The Chinese school systems and cultural programs did not appear to be in danger. If further changes were planned in the "far posterity," they could handle them in good time. In fact, many Chinese mistook flexibility of method for uncertainty of goals.

All the same, engineering multi-communal support through an intentionally ambiguous document was on the whole a risky business. Had it been only a routine policy question in ordinary times, it might still have had the negative effect of legitimizing conflicting aspirations. But these were not ordinary times, and it was not a routine policy issue. The constitutional contract was being negotiated at the time, and its cultural terms were for all communities of special importance. Consequently, an agreed formula on education policy could be reasonably construed to represent the terms of constitutional settlement, and ambiguity under these circumstances would invite the awful prospect of Malays and Chinese righteously accusing each other of bad faith in the negotiation and/or implementation of the supreme law of the land.

Perhaps sooner than expected that is exactly what hap-

[29] Ibid., pp. 3, 5.

pened. In less than two years the Federation of Malay School Teachers' Association (FMSTA) became disaffected by what it considered to be an excessively slow implementation of the Razak Committee report. Specifically, it was distressed by the fact that Malay secondary schools had not yet been established. They gave the government until February 1, 1958, to get moving. The Prime Minister tried in vain to explain that the government had to wait for the return of teachers sent abroad for training, as the simple promotion of Malay primary school teachers or the withdrawal of teachers of Malay in English medium secondary schools would be neither in the students' nor in the country's interest. FMSTA instructed its 10,000 members, most of whom belonged to UMNO, to resign their party membership. The crisis eased when the Minister of Education pledged that Malay secondary classes would be started within three months.[30]

Chinese leaders watched the development with some alarm and a growing sense of grievance. Those who had never supported the MCA quickly declared the constitutional contract to be violated and turned to argue the "justice" of the multi-lingual state. MCA leaders themselves were becoming restless. Within three years of the *Report*, and less than two years after the constitutional contract, a meeting sponsored jointly by the party's Central Committee on Education, the all-Malaya Chinese School Management Committee Association and the United Chinese School Teachers Association demanded a "fair and equitable" deal for Chinese education. Specifically, they insisted (1) that the mother tongue (rather than the national language) be both the main medium of instruction and the medium of examination in the "vernacular" schools, and (2) that allocation of public funds to schools be equitable and the pay scale of teachers be equal without regard to the medium of instruction of their school. Perhaps to dramatize the latter demand the meeting concluded that government grants to Chinese schools should be increased by a hundred percent.[31] *The Straits Times* was moved

[30] In an interview Mohammad Khir Johari, the Minister, explained that the Malay school teachers were "concerned more for their pockets than for the good of education, for they hoped that by forcing the immediate conversion of secondary schools to the Malay medium of instruction such would be the shortage of teachers that they (mere primary teachers) would be able to benefit from secondary wage scales." (Quoted in Margaret Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 321.)

[31] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 27, 1959.

to observe editorially: "the real issues which continue to divide the Government and the Chinese schools have little to do with the physical problems of education. These arise generally from different interpretations of accepted policy. . . ."[32] Apparently, the difference was one of emphasis. The government (i.e., the Alliance leadership) insisted on movement toward the national language becoming the primary language of instruction, but was prepared to tolerate some instruction in Chinese and Tamil. In turn, many Chinese insisted on the maintenance of instruction in Chinese, but were willing to tolerate some gradual—very gradual—movement toward Malay as a language of instruction.

Indeed, Chinese anxieties were not unfounded. Shortly after the elections of 1959, a new education committee was appointed. Headed by Abdul Rahman bin Haji Talib, who had succeeded Tun Razak as Minister of Education, it contained four other Malays (including Mohammad Khir Johari, Minister of Commerce and Industry later to succeed Rahman bin Talib) three Chinese (including Tun Leong Yew Koh, Minister of Justice and Dato Wong Pow Nee, Chief Minister of Penang) and Assistant Minister of Labour V. Manickavasagam of the MIC. It was "to review . . . implementation so far and for the future. . . ."[33] In its procedures it followed the previously established pattern, but in function it differed significantly from its predecessor. The Razak Committee was essentially a deliberative body within which fundamental inter-communal issues were debated and *settled*. The Rahman Talib Committee, for all practical purposes, was limited to the task of formulating intellectual justifications and to designing procedures for the implementation of a policy which already had been determined. As a matter of fact, the members of the Directorate knew all along that the Malay interpretation of the Razak Committee *Report* was closest to the mark. Just before the Committee was appointed, they had agreed that the time was propitious to publicly establish this fact. Chinese education would not be permitted to prosper: instruction in Chinese culture would be discouraged, instruction in Chinese language would be limited.

The *Report* met Directorate expectations. Public primary schools with Chinese as a language of instruction, it concluded,

[32] *Ibid.*, April 29, 1959.

[33] Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Education Review Committee 1960* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1964).

should be tolerated—at least "for the time being." But not secondary schools. "It would be incompatible with an educational policy designed to create national consciousness and having the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country," the Committee asserted, "to extend and perpetuate a language and racial differential throughout the publicly-financed educational system."[34] Evidently the conclusion of the Razak Committee that the medium of instruction in these institutions was not "a matter of first importance" was singularly ephemeral. The medium of examination in all public secondary schools, the Committee recommended, should be English or Malay. If schools wanted to continue to receive public subsidy, a subsidy on which many had become dependent, they would have to comply. Alternatively, they would have to become wholly private institutions. Two other conclusions of the Committee were noteworthy. The first, in line with the trend of expanding educational opportunities (and improving the employment prospects of the communally influential Malay, Chinese, and Tamil teachers) recommended the extension of free public schooling up to fifteen years of age and the automatic promotion of all students for at least the first six years. The second, in line with the trend of centralization, urged the suspension of Local Education Authorities, and the requirement that members of Local Governing Boards be confirmed by the Minister.

Predictably, the Rahman Talib *Report* generated intense resentment within the community of Chinese. There were widespread disturbances, especially in Penang. When Mohammad Khir Johari became Minister of Education, he felt that at times he had to conduct a military operation. In the end, most Chinese secondary schools closed their doors. Only a few private schools[35] in Johore and Penang with less than 20,000 students had survived. The government, however, did not want to press its luck, and for the next eight years no further moves toward establishing Malay as the sole language of instruction were made. Top priority was assigned to building schools, training teachers and educating students.

By any standard it was a monumental effort. Public expenditure for education rose in a decade from M$136 million to M$470 million, or well over 30 percent. During roughly this same period the number of primary schools increased from 4,214 to 4,367 and classrooms from 18,698 to 28,024. Even more impressively some 523 new secondary schools were built, and the 1,980 available classrooms tripled to no less than 7,801. Similarly, the number of primary school teachers increased from 29,874 to 44,060, and those of secondary teachers from 2,909 to 16,903. All along, the number of students rose steadily: from 789,267 to 1,315,590 (66 percent) in primary schools and 72,586 to 416,359 (473 percent) in public (or publicly supported) secondary schools.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[35] By 1968 there were only 50 left. *Educational Statistics of Malaysia 1968* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1970), p. 35.

Even so, the program was not altogether successful. Though vast sums were expended, many new schools built, classrooms provided, and teachers appointed, the quality of education did not improve significantly, if at all. In Malay schools especially standards were lax, and student motivation remained low.[36] Public instruction left much to be desired. A Royal Commission in 1968 discovered that no more than 563 teachers, or 9 percent of the total in the entire school system of West Malaysia held an Honors degree from college plus a Diploma in Education and another 409 teachers or an additional 6 percent held a pass degree and a Diploma. The Commission was "staggered to find that there . . . [were] 25,329 (i.e., 41 percent) primary and secondary teachers without the minimum qualification. . . ."[37]

No less important, educational policy did not visibly improve inter-communal relations. English educated Chinese and Indian professionals whose Western oriented self-respect demanded full, "first-class" membership in a national community felt aggrieved. The masses of Chinese workers imbued with ethnic pride, who cherished their Chinese schools, felt threatened and became increasingly hostile. And the Malays were not all that satisfied. The government was not moving fast enough to establish their cultural preeminence for their taste. Indeed, the number of Malay school teachers was rapidly increasing, and so was their income. But not their confidence. Altogether too many

[36] In 1967 students leaving school for non-academic reasons amounted to 173,022.

[37] Malaysia, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Teaching Services, West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1968), p. 7.

of them by Western standards were "without minimum qualification"; they knew it, and resented the criteria of evaluation. Their increased numbers and improved income tightened their hold over the rural (Malay) population. They were getting ready to use their communal appeal to advance their class interests.

All this spelled political peril for the Alliance leadership.

CHAPTER NINE

The Implementation of Economic Terms: Rapid Growth of Production, Little Change in Distribution

FEW Malays expected the cultural terms of the constitutional contract to be fully implemented within a decade of independence. The vast majority of Malays, however, did anticipate spectacular progress toward its economic provisions. The Chinese had gained their citizenship and their almost free access to the political system. It was the turn of the Malays to collect their rightful *quid pro quo*, and they were not fussy about how they got it. The government's position, of course, was rather more complex. UMNO, MCA, and MIC leaders recognized that existing economic disparities aggravated communal cleavages, but they also realized that hasty and coercive remedial initiatives would only worsen the situation. The constitutional contract obliged them to improve the Malay share in the economy and they were committed to it. But they were no less committed to the constitutional mandate to proceed without arbitrary and confiscatory policies. Under these conditions, the government concluded, success would become possible only in an economy which was capable of persistently generating additional quantities of reward. Given a visibly expanding "collective pie," gains by one group would not depend on deprivation of another. In short, the priority of inter-communal redistribution, the uppermost objective of economic policy, was linked with a strategy of economic development.

It was not a policy easily implemented. One problem was, at least for a while, that the country was in a State of Emergency. About a fourth of the total public expenditure—i.e., the aggregate of federal, state, and development spending—and a considerably larger proportion of the current budget of the Federation was committed to the security forces. Further sums, moreover, were quite obviously required if the government with independence expected to build up an adequate coercive capacity entirely (or even primarily) from indigenous sources. As is so

often the case, funds available for the development depended upon a direct competition with funds needed for internal (as well as external) security.

More awkward, however, was the normative dissonance between the political leadership and the administrative officials. Indeed, for some time after the Alliance gained power in 1955, there still remained in high administrative positions men who were unsympathetic to the constitutional contract and especially to the idea that economic disparities be remedied by political initiatives visibly favoring one community over another. And for some time after 1955, the men at the Treasury, the very men who made economic policy, had their own view of economic priorities.

Senior officers and technical staffs in the Treasury were trained in finance, and their normative orientations were shaped accordingly. Expertise in economics was rare and Lord Keynes apparently had made little impression on them. Not surprisingly they were firmly committed to the orthodoxy of a balanced budget.[1] At times of national emergency with some trepidation they were prepared to accept a temporary deficit, but to incur public debt for any other purposes, and for an extended period of time, they could view only as the height of fiscal folly. This is not to say that they were against development. Not at all, but they were convinced that private rather than public investment was the more effective vehicle toward this goal. In building an economy with a capacity of self-generating growth, government, they concluded, was at a disadvantage. Its bureaucratic managers would have neither the skills nor the incentives for innovation found among private entrepreneurs.

Governments committed to democratic processes were especially vulnerable. Hard as they might try to apply strict criteria of productivity, they would regularly subordinate these to the demands of their electorates with a consumer bias, an aversion to unequal distribution of rewards, and a penchant for inefficient and obsolete processes. Under the circumstances the very wisest course government could adopt was to severely restrain its own economic initiatives, and to concentrate its efforts to ensure through demonstrated political stability *and* fiscal responsibility maximum incentives for private enterprise. Indeed, so firmly did the technical staff hold their convictions that they opposed

[1] Ness, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

any suggestion designed to increase political sensitivity. In a case in point, O. A. Spencer, Economic Adviser, resisted the proposal for an Economic Affairs Advisory Committee to the Legislative Council which would among other things provide for the "formulation of long-term plans for the public benefit," on the grounds that there were already sufficient committees and, in any case, he himself was quite close to public opinion.[2] In 1955 when an Economic Committee was established, it was a committee of the Executive Council, its Secretariat was headed by O. A. Spencer and it was staffed by personnel generally oriented to Treasury norms.

The Strategy of Economic Development

The *First Five Year Plan* drafted in 1956 epitomized these constraints. Although the security forces were definitely driving the insurgents into remote jungle areas, the planners were still very much preoccupied with the allocations for military expenditures. The vigorous conduct of the Emergency would still require substantial funds, and besides with independence approaching it was highly desirable to build up an indigenous capacity to coerce in order to cope with internal disruption as well as external predatory initiatives. Accordingly, the planners concluded that even though annual allocations under the headings of the security forces could decline from M$130 million in 1956 to M$92 million in 1960 (i.e., 19 percent to 12 percent of expenditure) additional sums under different headings would have to be channeled to them: M$100 million from the "capital programme" and M$60 million from the Public Works Department.[3] Second, the planners continued their characteristic concern for a balanced budget.

As a matter of fact, Malaya's finances were fundamentally sound and when compared to other countries in Asia, they were outright enviable. Projections for 1955 called for a deficit of M$149 million, but in fact there proved to be a surplus of M$65 million. In 1956 the total national debt amounted to M$627 million (or 13 percent of the GNP), and the Treasury could claim about M$365 million in available Surplus Balances. Ex-

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[3] "Federation of Malaya, Economic Secretariat, A Plan of Development for Malaya, 1956–60" (Unpublished), September, 1956.

penditure on the Ordinary (administrative) budget was proposed to be M$690 million with an expected surplus of M$20 million.

Nevertheless, the *First Five Year Plan* drawn up by the Economic Secretariat was the epitome of caution. So concerned was it with a prospect of future deficits on the ordinary budget that it recommended (1) a subsidy from Britain amounting to half of the cost of the Emergency; and (2) additional taxation reaching M$75 million a year by 1960. Moreover, given the tight budgetary position, the experts in the Secretariat argued, little money could be spared for development. Armed with international comparisons of public revenue, expenditure, and debt, they warned that any substantial increase in public borrowing would leave serious detrimental consequences. In only eleven of forty-two countries surveyed did annual charges on account of public debt exceed 10 percent of revenue.[4] "It is no coincidence," they pointed out, "that nearly half of these are Latin American States which have a notoriously bad record for overborrowing and defaulting on their debts."[5] Under the circumstances they felt compelled to conclude that the government "*cannot from its own prospective resources and without external assistance confidently commit itself to further major programmes of development either on Capital or Recurrent account or for Civil or Defense needs beyond those already approved and voted in the 1956 Estimates and the subsequent supplementary Budget. . . .*"[6] Indeed, for all practical purposes allocations for development would have to be restricted to those already committed to the Armed Forces (M$62 million) and those needed annually for the implementation of the Razak Education Committee Report (M$58 million). Under no circumstances should they exceed over a five year period the sum of M$1,100 million,[7] and even that figure could be excessive as it was projected on the basis of (1) external financial assistance in the range of M$425 million, preferably from London and in the form of outright gifts and (2) the probability that some projects be completed only after the plan period.

Faced with the recommendations of his economic advisers,

[4] Actually there were twelve, including the United Kingdom and United States. (*Ibid.*, p. 15.)

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 14. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 7. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Colonel H. S. Lee, Alliance Finance Minister, faced a difficult choice. He tried to resolve it in favor of the constitutional contract. In his statement to the Legislative Council he announced: "we set ourselves two pillars of economic and financial policy, namely a basically sound economy and a balanced budget. We have based our plans on an expanding economy. In order to achieve it, we accept for the time being the deferment of our second aim. We are budgeting for a deficit in 1957."[8] A year later, however, when a world-wide recession suddenly reduced foreign exchange earnings, the Finance Minister was evidently converted to caution and public investment in development projects lagged.

After independence and even more unmistakably after the elections of 1959, the approach to economic planning had changed fundamentally. For one thing, Communist insurrection was no longer a clear and present danger. British military presence was still significant, but Malayan forces had already established themselves as the bulwark of internal security. It was no longer necessary to choose between guns and butter. Coincidentally, the Directorate assumed control of the planning process. A National Development Planning Committee composed of representatives of the major departments and agencies was established. It was authorized to coordinate economic policy on the highest administrative level. The Ministry of Finance retained much of its technical capacity for analytical policy support, but the Economic Secretariat was shifted to the Prime Minister's Department and a Malayan, Thong Yaw Hong, was placed in charge. Under his leadership economic planning rapidly advanced to highly professional sophistication. Aided by the Ford Foundation, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) with an international staff of professional economists was organized in 1961. A few years later a coordinate agency, the Development Administration Unit—again with substantive Ford Foundation support—was established in order to improve the government's capacity to implement policies.[9]

Perhaps most important of all, the priority of a balanced budget was replaced by a dynamic equilibrium between fiscal

[8] Ness, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

[9] For definitive study of the DAU see Milton J. Esman, *Administration and Development in Malaysia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

responsibility and political exigency. Tan Siew Sin had become Minister of Finance, and in this capacity (as well as through his MCA hegemony) he assumed the role of guarding the private sector. To stimulate foreign and domestic investment, he sought to maintain interest rates, to assure price stability, and to protect the international value (and convertibility) of the Malayan dollar. Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister, in turn, became the indefatigable exponent of the public sector, always pressing for more and more allocations and constantly crisscrossing the country to inspect the efficient implementation of the projects. Although they applied at times conflicting criteria, their close personal relationship in the Directorate permitted a dynamic balance. In the relatively few instances where a significant difference of views emerged, both accepted the arbitral decision of the Prime Minister.

The *Second Five Year Plan* (1961–1965) and the subsequent *First Malaysia Plan* (1966–1970) clearly reflected the new balance between normative orientations.[10] The private sector continued to be regarded the driving wheel of economic development. Both plans emphasized an essential need to assure a congenial environment for private investment, domestic and foreign. "Perhaps the basic contribution that government can make to industrial growth," the 1961–1965 Plan stated, "is the preservation of a sound and stable monetary and financial climate, free from all the restrictions, controls and uncertainties which are the inevitable accompaniments of financial instability and inflation."[11] The *First Malaysia Plan* in turn declared unequivocally: "It is expected that private investment will be the main dynamic element producing economic growth during the next five years. . . . The government will maintain and adopt financial policies which will encourage investment and maintain an adequate flow of savings into productive domestic uses. Indeed, the desire to avoid a tax burden so heavy as to have a detrimental effect on private investment opportunities and finance was one of the main reasons for the adoption of a government revenue growth target which is roughly equal to the target growth rate of the economy. . . . The mobilisation of resources for public investment through taxation and domestic borrowing will therefore be limited so as to leave ample means for the financing of the private investment which is crucial for Malaysia's economic progress."[12] These were not just expressions of the pious hopes of planners; they were implemented by policy.

[10] For details see: Federation of Malaya, *Second Five Year Plan 1961–1965* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1961); and Malaysia, *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1965).

[11] *Second Five Year Plan 1961–1965, op. cit.*, p. 19.

There was, however, another basic element of the five year plans which was pursued with determination: the rapid expansion of public investment. The *First Five Year Plan* projected a goal of M$1,148.7 million and, in fact, achieved M$1,007 million. The second plan target was about double this figure (M$2,150 million) and that of the *First Malaysia Plan* not too much less than its quadruple (M$3,713.6 million for West Malaysia).

Expansion of such proportions, of course, required some deficit financing. It was no longer accepted as an article of faith that fiscal responsibility was synonymous with a meticulously balanced budget; all the same, the limits of public investment were carefully and conservatively set. The designers of the second plan were confident that the M$1,810 million deficit could be met without turning to the central bank. Other domestic sources of credit (e.g., the Provident Fund, the Currency Board, and postal savings) were expected to yield M$750 million and borrowing from commercial banks at least another M$150 million. Of the remainder, M$50 million could be secured from foreign grants and M$535 million from foreign loans. Foreign debt service charges, they observed with undisguised pride, would rise to less than 3 percent of the annual export receipts, a most manageable sum. Nor did they worry too much about the M$325 million which still remained uncovered. "This amount could well be met from the government's foreign balances . . . ," they had concluded, and since these funds in 1960 had reached M$760 million, few could find fault with their logic.[13] Five years later in the *First Malaysia Plan*, EPU planners were no less cautious. They had a M$4,550 million deficit to handle and did not want to commit more than 14 percent of revenue to debt financing. The package they worked out included the following calculations:[14]

[12] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, pp. 48, 55 and 72.

[13] *Second Five Year Plan 1961–1965, op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

[14] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, pp. 75, 77.

Government surpluses	M$200 (million)
Public authority surpluses	425
Domestic non-bank borrowing	1,025
Bank credit and government accumulated assets	1,000
Foreign borrowing (net)	1,000
Foreign grants	900
Total	M$4,550

Along these lines they felt certain that the necessary funds could be "reasonably mobilised" without jeopardizing "financial stability."

The Strategy for Inter-Communal Redistribution

Economic development, however, it must be remembered, was not considered an end itself. The Directorate perceived it as a means by which the constitutionally mandated goal of full participation by Malays in the control of the economy was to be accomplished without violating the constitutional guarantee against the arbitrary deprivation of Chinese citizens of their possessions. The real test of economic policy remained its ability to reduce inter-communal income disparity between Malays and "non-Malays."

For decades Malay leaders protested it, but by 1957 empirical evidence began to reveal the full dimensions of the disparity. For example, the *Household Budget Survey of the Federation of Malaya 1957–1958*[15] produced the following facts: 75 percent of Malay households in rural areas received a total monthly income of M$150 or less, but only 23.5 percent of Chinese households in rural areas and 24.5 percent in urban areas.[16] In contrast, no more than 2.5 percent of the Malay rural households, but 22.5 percent of the Chinese rural households, 29.0 percent of the Chinese urban households, 11 percent of Indian rural households and 19.2 percent of Indian urban households had incomes of M$300 or more.

Just why so glaring a disparity should exist between the "indigenous" Malay sons of the soil (*bumiputras*) and the "immigrant races" was a subject of controversy. Predictably, some blamed it on the insensitivity of British policies, the "deviousness" of Chinese merchants, and/or the travesty of the capitalist system. The most consistently advanced diagnosis, however, was motivational deficiency. Malays, especially those in the *kampongs* it was argued, seemed to lack a need for achievement or a capacity for persistence in purpose. Indeed, in the decade after independence two theories elaborating on the syndrome, explaining its causes and proposing remedies, were directed to the attention of the Malay community and the Alliance leadership.

[15] Prepared by the Department of Statistics, H. Fell, Chief Statistician.

[16] The corresponding figures for the Indian community were 29.5 percent for rural and 45.0 percent for urban households.

The first of these was formulated by Ungku Abdul Aziz. An aristocrat by birth, an economist by profession and currently the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya, he was widely considered the most prominent Malay intellectual of this entire period. The motivational deficiencies of Malays, Ungku A. Aziz insisted, were due not only to poor diet—and there was ample evidence of this—but institutional constraints as well. Rural Malays were helplessly trapped in a market characterized by *both* monopoly and monopsony: the only buyer for their rice or fish was also the trader who was the sole accessible seller of consumer products they required. It was he who controlled prices, kept accounts, extended credit (on his own terms), and received all the benefits the fluctuating supply and demand offered. Cultivators and fishermen could gain little, while bearing the brunt of the adversities of nature.[17]

Professor Ungku A. Aziz was ready with his own prescription: First, eliminate the private middleman; let the government perform his functions at cost. Then increase public investment in the rural economy. The income of the *padi* farmer and fisherman would rise immediately. His diet would improve and so would his energy, initiative, and skill. It could be as simple as that.

Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, a prominent physician from Kedah, did not think it would be quite so simple. Developing his views a few years after Ungku A. Aziz, he freely conceded some of the points made earlier. Malays in rural areas indeed had little opportunity for education; they were subject to various debilitating, endemic diseases, and in general nothing was done

[17] The process was later designated and further developed as the M and M system. (Ungku A. Aziz, "Poverty and Rural Development in Malaysia," *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. I, No. 1 [June, 1964], pp. 70–96. See also "Poverty Proteins and Disguised Starvation, *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. II, No. 1 [June, 1965], pp. 7–48.)

to improve their earning capacities. But then he added genetic reasons as well. "First cousin marriages," wrote Dr. Mahathir, "were and still are frequent and the result is the propagation of poorer characteristics, whether dominant or recessive, originally found in the brothers or sisters who were parents of the married couple. Another factor that affected the physiological development of the Malays, again especially in the rural areas, was the habit of marrying early. It was, and still is, common to see married couples of thirteen or fourteen. These early marriages mean reproduction takes place before full maturity of the parents. Perhaps the most deleterious effect is that the parents are not ready to take care of the children. The parents, in fact, remain dependent on their own parents who, exulting in their early attainment of the status of grandparents, happily undertake the care of their children's children as well. In this society, enterprise and independence are unknown. The upbringing of children is distorted by the well-known excessive indulgence of grandparents and the incapacity of the parents to take care of the children. . . . Malays abhor the state of celibacy. To remain unmarried was and is considered shameful. Everyone must be married at some time or other. The result is that whether a person is fit or unfit for marriage, he or she still marries and reproduces. An idiot or a simpleton is often married off to an old widower, ostensibly to take care of him in his old age. If this is not possible, backward relatives are paired off in marriage. These people survive, reproduce and propagate their species. The cumulative effect of this can be left to imagination."[18]

Dr. Mahathir saw the solution in a social "revolution." To be sure, some things could not be "done away with." The Rulers, for example, or Muslim religion. Malay traditional custom (*adat*) should be recognized, he felt, though "the revolution . . . should not be unduly bound by it."[19] What must be changed was the rural orientation of the Malays. They must be urbanized through positive inducements. Development projects located in towns and cities, whether private or public, should be required to employ Malays and to pay wages in excess of incomes they could earn through agricultural activity. Government itself should assume the responsibility of training rural Malays in

[18] Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma* (Singapore: Pacific Press, 1970), p. 29.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

industrial skills. Once settled in their new urban environments, they could avoid inbreeding, gain in self-confidence and enterprise until they would emerge as effective competitors of their Chinese and Indian fellow citizens in the economy. "To complete the rehabilitation of the Malays," Dr. Mahathir asserted, somewhat contradicting his earlier statements, "there . . . [was a] need for them to break away from custom or *adat* and to acquire new ways of thinking and a new system of values. Urbanization will do this to a certain extent, but there must also be a conscious effort to destroy the old ways and replace them with new ideas and values."[20]

The government tended to concur with Ungku A. Aziz—Dr. Mahathir did not publicly formulate his theory until the mid 1960's—that remedial action should, at least initially, be concentrated in the rural sector. Thus, for example, the *Second Five Year Plan* specifically defined as its first objective the task "to provide facilities and opportunities for the rural population to improve its levels of economic and social well being."[21] More than a fourth (M$545 million) of the total was earmarked for "Agriculture" while substantial amounts under other headings such as "Social Services" and even "Transport" also were channeled to the rural areas.[22] Although five years later the goal of increased "well being of Malaysia's rural inhabitants and other low-income groups" was relegated to third position after the goals of "the integration of the people of Malaysia," and of "steady increases in levels of income and consumption," the planned investment pattern changed very little. Agriculture's share was still the largest (about 25 percent for West Malaysia) and under the headings of Education, Health, Social and Community Services as well as Transport, further substantial sums continued to be made available for rural projects.[23]

The government, however, could not accept the core of Ungku A. Aziz's program: institutional reform. To replace private middlemen with a public monopoly would have required expropriation of the property of Chinese *and* Malay businessmen, a course which would have either meant the violation or a substantial revision of the constitutional contract. The Alliance

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[21] *Second Five Year Plan 1961–1965*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
[23] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970*, *op. cit.*, p. 2 and pp. 69–70.

Directorate did not want to do the first and could think of no suitable bargaining terms for the second.[24] The most the government was prepared to do in this direction was to support the establishment of cooperative societies which could serve as alternatives to middlemen. Accordingly, the portfolio of Cooperatives was added to that of Agriculture, and a budget for administration and for financing rural credit was allocated.[25]

The first Minister holding both portfolios, Aziz bin Ishak, either did not understand the restrictions imposed upon him, or he chose to ignore them. He promptly threw himself into a massive organizational effort. He traveled, exhorted and promised. Then carried away by his own momentum, he committed funds in excess of his Ministry's resources or Cabinet clearance. More than that, he moved to eliminate the private middleman. In northern Selangor first, then in Malacca, and finally in northern Perak, he tried to establish public control over rice marketing. In fact, he was successful in his first attempt, somewhat less so in the second, and when he insisted on transforming private (mostly Chinese) rice mills into cooperatives and pressed the state government of Perak to restrict milling licenses to cooperatives, the Alliance Directorate intervened. Tunku Abdul Rahman personally revoked a number of his Minister's initiatives as violations of the Constitution and a little later Aziz bin Ishak left the Cabinet.[26] Thereafter the thrust of his innovations lost some momentum, but it was never quite spent. The cooperative movement received new support from the *First Malaysia Plan* which projected a public investment of M$19.5 million for rural credit from 1966 to 1970, of which M$16.5 million would be channeled through cooperative societies.[27] In 1967 some 3,098 societies—some 641 in Kedah and 546 in Perak—were operating with 508,734 members and M$307,733,152 total funds.[28] Meanwhile, the government itself established the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) and assigned it the responsibility of coordinating public and private marketing.

[24] At the 1962 UMNO General Assembly Ungku A. Aziz, who delivered a report, was informed that if his proposals were accepted the Alliance Government would have to resign. See Ungku A. Aziz, "Pembangunan Ekonomi Nasional," UMNO Seminar Pemuda, Kertas Kerja D.

[25] The total for rural credit and marketing during the Second Five Year Plan was a modest M$1.3 million. *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*

[26] *Supra*, pp. 171–183.

[27] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, p. 119.

[28] Malaysia, *Penyata Dan Petangkaan Gerakan Kerjesama di Malaysia Barat 1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Kementarian Pertanian dan Sharikat Kerjesama, 1967), p. 23.

As a matter of fact, when the government rejected Ungku A. Aziz's remedy of basic reform in rural institutions, it did so not merely because it violated the constitutional contract—the Directorate could have agreed to amend it—but also because sometime earlier it had already devised its own strategy. By 1958 the major outlines of a program which promised to improve decisively the economic condition of rural Malays at a modest risk of provoking inter-communal confrontation was already agreed upon by Abdul Razak and Tan Siew Sin, and approved by Tunku Abdul Rahman.

As Dato Razak saw it, the solution required a three-pronged attack. First, something had to be done about the scarcity of agricultural land. The enforcement of Malay Reservation Enactment (1913) more or less halted the voluntary transference of title from Malay to Chinese owners, thus assuring that the total area of land held by Malays at least did not decline. In view of the persistent rise in the population,[29] this, however, could be scarcely considered sufficient. The backlog of land applications in each district rose into the thousands. Since the demand could not be met through a coerced transfer of land owned by Chinese to Malays—a course which was not only a violation of the Constitution but practically impossible—Dato Razak saw only one alternative: reclamation. Accordingly, shortly after the Alliance gained control of the government, a Federal Land Development Authority (FLDA) was created with the express purpose to assist the states through financing and technical expertise in projects of reclaiming large areas from the jungle and developing them into new settlements. Once the Ministry of Rural Development was fully established, the tempo of FLDA efforts noticeably quickened. Specifically during the *Second Five Year Plan* (1961–1965), some 145,000 acres were opened up as a result of FLDA operations, providing for new settlement of 12,000 families.[30] The *First Malaysia Plan* was to carry the

[29] The number of rural Malays rose from 1,740,280 in 1931 to 2,227,896 in 1947 and to 2,701,038 in 1957. Hamzah Sendut, "Some Aspects of Urban Change in Malaya 1931–1957," *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. II, No. 1 (June, 1965), p. 93.

[30] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, p. 103. The settlements were almost always populated entirely by Malays. Only in two, one in Malacca and another in Pahang, was there a significant portion of Chinese and

momentum further. An additional 141,000 acres were to be developed by the end of the period, and work on a mammoth undertaking, the Jenka Triangle Project in Pahang covering 150,000 acres, was scheduled to begin in 1968.[31]

In addition to opening up lands in order to provide fresh opportunities in new settlements for Malays, the government was determined to bring a new deal to those masses remaining in their old environments. It was the Prime Minister's wish that the gap between amenities enjoyed by urban and rural citizens be closed and Abdul Razak was confident that he knew how to proceed. He would consult the rural population directly on their needs. Requests for roads, bridges, schools, and other improvements would be encouraged, they would be seriously considered, and if at all practicable, they would be implemented. Detailed instructions for the evaluation of applications and for their integration into a single general plan were combined in the "Red Book," a large loose-leaf folder. After priorities were established, federal funds were made available, and the projects were implemented. All along, progress was reported and charted in the National Operations Room, where at regular monthly meetings it was reviewed and supervised personally by the Deputy Prime Minister. And just in case some problem might escape his attention, or a project did not advance at an acceptable rate, Dato Razak traveled throughout the country for, at times, unannounced field inspections.

In short, massive public investment was moving into the rural areas not only for education and land reclamation but also in locally initiated projects (see Table 9–1). And all along through social and welfare grants to rural communities the government built 1,800 mosques (M$27.6 million), 1,669 suraus (M$5.7 million), 742 religious schools (M$7.8 million), and 644 temples and churches (M$7.4 million).

There was, however, a third element in Abdul Razak's strategy: initiatives designed to assist the increasing number of Malays

Indians. James F. Guyot, "Creeping Urbanism and Political Development in Malaysia" (Unpublished monograph), Bloomington, Indiana, Comparative Administrative Group, American Society for Public Administration, 1968. In the State of Selangor on December 31, 1968, sixteen land development schemes were in operation; the settlers included 879 Malay, 87 Chinese, and 29 Indian families. Ten settlements had no Chinese or Indian families at all.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118.

who moved to the cities and towns.[32] He appreciated their plight. Removed from their ancestral neighborhoods they were inclined to be insecure; unaccustomed to the complex diversity of urban life and unskilled for industrial or commercial employment they were apt to be frustrated; surrounded by a sea of Chinese they were prone to be hostile.

TABLE 9–1
Minor Rural Development Schemes, 1961–1967

Project	*1961-1965*	*1966*	*1967*	*Total*
Community Halls	M$11,579,201	M$ 590,800	M$ 461,400	M$12,631,401
Rural Roads	12,765,356	3,132,151	1,405,174	17,302,681
Rural Bridges	4,694,811	1,725,206	596,330	7,016,347
Playing Fields	4,331,794	378,210	330,410	5,040,414
Wells & Water Supplies	5,558,953	600,180	185,937	6,345,070
Jetties	1,092,567	183,610	145,820	1,421,997
Drainage & Irrigation Works	2,790,858	353,676	229,764	3,374,298
Total	M$42,813,540	M$6,963,833	M$3,354,835	M$53,132,208

Source: Mavis Puthucheary, "The Operations Room in Malaysia as a Technique in Administrative Reform." Paper delivered before the Fifth General Assembly of EROPA, Kuala Lumpur, June 20–27, 1968, p. 32.

In order to defuse this potentially explosive situation, the government, proclaiming the rationale of Malays as sons of the soil (*bumiputras*) being entitled to special (economic) privileges, provided first of all, special opportunities for Malays to be *trained* in the skills needed in an urban environment. The Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) created by the British controlled administration in 1950 had already established a College of Business Studies. When in 1966 the agency was reorganized under the new name of Majlis Amanah Ra'ayat (MARA),[33] the College was converted into an Institute and its curriculum was vastly expanded. Each year several hundred of its students were sponsored for overseas training.[34]

[32] In 1931 only 123,592 Malays lived in urban areas. This number rose to 199,938 in 1947 and further to 425,668 in 1957. Hamzah Sendut, "Some Aspects of Urban Change in Malaya, 1931–1957," *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. II, No. 1 (June, 1965), p. 93.

[33] Freely translated: Council of Trust for the People.

[34] There were, in addition, a number of awards—122 to Malays and 88 to others in 1968—granted to scholars by the Federal government, and

No less important, under the government's strategy *bumiputras* were to be provided with special opportunities to apply their newly acquired skills. Some were mandated by law. The Road Traffic Ordinance, 1958, for example, required that taxi licenses be issued only to Malays until their numbers would reach their proportion of the total population in each state. In the words of the *Second Malaysia Plan*, "during the period of 1966–1970 MARA provided about 4,800 loans totaling M$31 million for various projects. It established a number of companies in manufacturang and commerce producing such products as *batek* and *batek* garments, leather goods, handicrafts, sawn timber and timber products, tapioca starch and pellets, and processed rubber. It built shophouses for Malay businesses, and entered into wholesale supply and contracting of construction materials. MARA also initiated bus services, and by 1970 MARA operated 360 busses covering routes totaling 2,000 miles. Earlier MARA had transferred six of its bus services to private Malay firms."[35] Meanwhile, Bank Bumiputra, established in 1965 "to assist Malays in commerce, industry and other economic activities," was giving loans and advances, and the government through licensing pressured private (mostly foreign) corporations to hire more Malays, and, of course, to appoint more Malay directors.

The Performance of Economic Policy

Certainly the Alliance cannot be fairly faulted for a lack of planning, or a lack of effort. And it can be said that the accomplishments of economic policy in terms of most development criteria were impressive. Public sector investment targets were generally met and in some instances even overfulfilled (see Table 9–2).

Annual increase of gross domestic product (at constant prices) exceeded 5 percent, per capita income was rising on the average at about 2.5 percent each year, and per capita consumption by about 2.3 percent.[36] Agricultural output, though somewhat fluctuating, rose quite steadily at a rate of 8 percent. Manufacturing output meanwhile (in terms of value added) increased from M$425 million in 1960 to M$1,044 million in 1969.[37]

many more by the states. Selangor, for example, financed 13 Malays, 4 Chinese, and 4 Indians in 1965, and 43 Malays, 10 Chinese and 4 Indians in 1969 at foreign and domestic institutions of higher learning.

[35] Malaysia, *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975* (Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press, 1971), p. 15.

TABLE 9–2
Public Development Expenditures, 1961–1968

	Second Five Year Plan		*First Malaysia Plan*	
	Targets 1961–1965	*Expenditure 1961–1965*	*Targets 1966–1968*	*Expenditure 1966–1968*
Agriculture	545.3	467.9	1,086.6	556.0
Mining	–	–	1.3	0.4
Transport	362.0	524.9	546.0	332.5
PWD Plant and Equipment	68.7	63.6	–	–
Communications	72.9	112.8	205.4	103.2
Utilities	402.0	535.4	786.3	453.6
Industry	27.0	59.1	114.5	90.4
Social Services	491.0	413.6	945.4	473.4
General Government	88.1	167.1	126.2	87.7
Security	93.0	307.3	739.0	411.9
Total	2,150.0	2,651.7	4,550.7	2,509.1

Sources: First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, pp. 28–29; and *Malaysia, Mid-Term Preview of the First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1969), p. 8.

Although annual current surplus declined from the M$300 million-plus level of the late fifties and the early sixties, it never dropped below M$87 million (1965) and by 1968 it had climbed back to M$271 million. All along, gross domestic savings increased from M$1,143 million in 1961 to M$1,718 million in 1968 (50 percent), and gross investment averaged about 17 percent of the gross national product. External confidence in the economy was demonstrated by a long term private capital inflow (net) which during the period totaled M$1,620 million. It was presumably further enhanced when in November, 1968,

[36] *Second Five Year Plan 1961–1965, op. cit.*, p. 20; *Mid-Term Review of the First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, p. 14; and *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, op. cit.*, 1971, pp. 19 and 31.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 148.

Malaysia formally adhered to Article VIII of the International Monetary Fund Agreement.[38]

Even so, the achievements of development targets were marred by some unpredicted costs. Try as hard as it might, the Government could not manage without additional revenues. Several upward revisions of the income tax tables, the latest in 1967, were necessary. Nor was price stability wholly accomplished. The retail price index rose from 99.7 in 1962 to 108.2 in 1968.[39] Worse still, the government was unable to cope with unemployment. The rate of jobless which was estimated at 6 percent for 1960 failed to improve.[40] Even in the rural sector of West Malaysia, unemployment rose from 5 percent of the labor force in 1962 to 5.3 percent in 1967. In urban areas it rose from 8.09 percent to 9.73 percent; and in metropolitan towns from 9.58 percent to 9.98 percent. A rather grim picture emerged, moreover, if the comparisons were refined according to age groups (see Table 9–3). Rates of unemployment among the young were both colossal and rising. One of two young men between the ages of 15 and 19 and one of four between the ages of 20 and 24 actively sought but could not find employment in 1967.

TABLE 9–3
Comparative Unemployment of Selected Age Groups, 1962, 1967
(% of labor force)

	Rural		*Urban*		*Metropolitan*		*Total*	
Age Group	*1962*	*1967*	*1962*	*1967*	*1962*	*1967*	*1962*	*1967*
15–24								
Males	62.4	80.5	61.2	73.2	58.6	74.7	61.4	77.6
Females	63.8	76.2	72.2	72.0	67.5	69.0	65.9	73.6
Total	63.1	78.6	65.4	72.6	62.3	72.0	63.2	75.8
25–39								
Males	18.8	11.5	18.2	13.6	20.8	13.5	19.2	12.4
Females	21.6	18.4	18.1	21.9	23.9	25.8	21.7	21.0
Total	20.0	14.5	18.2	17.3	22.1	19.2	20.2	16.2

Source: Compiled from the files of Jabatan Perangkaan (Department of Statistics), Malaysia.

[38] *First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, op. cit.*, pp. 25, 31, 32, and 33 and *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, op. cit.*, pp. 26, 32, 34, 35.

[39] *Statistical Handbook of West Malaysia 1969* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1969), p. 180.

[40] Malaysia Socio-Economic Sample Survey of Households 1967/1968; *Provisional Data on Employment and Unemployment in West Malaysia 1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Perangkaan, 1968).

Most vexing perhaps were doubts that the development momentum could be sustained for long. Capital formation was visibly slowing down (see Table 9–4). Gross investment increased from 1965 to 1966 by 6.2 percent; from 1966 to 1967 by 6.5 percent; but from 1967 to 1968 only by 0.4 percent. Private savings remained at about the same level or actually declined. Private investment rose sharply until 1967 then declined. Evidently substantial sums were moving out of the country.[41]

TABLE 9–4
Savings, Investment, and Resource Balance, 1965–1969
(M$ million)

	1965	*1966*	*1967*	*1968*	*1969*
Public Sector:					
Savings*	300	386	449	520	627
Investment	630	594	592	623	652
Balance	−330	−208	−143	−103	−25
Private Sector:					
Savings	1,238	1,153	1,148	1,198	1,642
Investment	781	904	1,003	978	930
Balance	+457	+249	+145	+220	+712
National Economy:					
Savings	1,538	1,539	1,597	1,718	2,269
Investment	1,411	1,498	1,595	1,601	1,582
Balance	+127	+41	+2	+117	+687

Source: Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, p. 34.
* Includes net accruals of EPF.

It is possible, of course, even probable that the need for additional taxes, rising unemployment, and the declining propensity to invest were not flaws of the EPU planned development program, but the price to be paid for the politically dictated goal

[41] Transfers to relatives abroad, at one time mostly to China but more recently primarily to India, have always amounted to substantial sums. In addition, however, another item in the balance of payments, that of "errors and omissions," may also suggest the outflow of capital. In 1961 this amounted to M$142 million, by 1965 it rose to M$238 million, and by 1967 to M$496 million. After a drop to M$388 million in 1968, the following year the figure was back to M$470 million. In consequence the balance of payments showed a capital account balance of M$127 million in 1965, M$41 million in 1966, M$2 million in 1967, then M$117 million in 1968 and an unprecedented M$687 million in 1969. *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, op. cit.*, p. 34.

of inter-communal redistribution. This leads to a further evaluation of economic policy specifically in terms of its effects upon the Malays: their economic position, their orientation toward achievement, and politically most important, their perception of the Alliance approach as a means to satisfy their demands and to alleviate their economic grievances.

By the first of these criteria, progress was disappointing. To be sure, Malays in general had improved their standards of living somewhat. In the countryside they found new amenities and new opportunities. Possession of transistors and even television sets became widespread; the wealth of Malay school teachers (and to a lesser extent that of Muslim religious functionaries) was visibly accumulating. Meanwhile, in the urban centers the administrative elite was engaged in consumption sprees, building homes and buying cars, stereo sets, movie projectors, and tape recorders. They were joined by a growing number of other Malays who moved up rapidly (some due to *Bumiputra* privileges) in politics and the professions. All the same, movement toward a parity of Chinese and Malay incomes was subliminal. In 1962, according to one estimate, "there was a productivity and income differential favouring the non-Malays by 1.9:1 or by an absolute differential of [M]$1,650 per annum."[42] In five years income in Malay dominated industries increased by 8 percent, while income in industries dominated by non-Malays rose by 16 percent, suggesting that the latter "continued receiving roughly two-thirds of the increases in the GDP."[43] By the spring of 1968 income disparity between Chinese and Malays was still in the range of 1.8:1.

No less important, economic policy was not successful in significantly improving Malay access to economic controls. Most Malays continued to live in the countryside accounting in 1962 for 77.8 percent of employment in the traditional, less productive industries of agriculture, livestock and fishing. Although this figure declined somewhat to 74.4 percent by 1967, rural ownership patterns did not change much. A considerable area—some 9,810,183 acres in 1968—was still "reserved" for Malays. Much of it, however, was uncultivated or uncultivatable land. In fact,

[42] Lim Lin Lean, *Some Aspects of Income Differentials in West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Faculty of Economics and Administration, 1971), p. 64.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

the total (reserved and unreserved) area under all crops did not exceed 7,062,000 acres.[44] The land under *padi*, 1,003,000 acres, was mostly held by Malays, but only one-third of the larger area where rubber trees were planted. And when it came to land used for mining their share dropped to about 6 percent (see Table 9–5).

West Malaysia also included substantial forest areas yielding better quality timber. At the end of 1964 some 1,230 licenses and permits were issued authorizing timber exploration on 1,357,416 acres. The Malay share was roughly one-third: 428 licenses covering an area of 496,901 acres.[45] Actually Malay participation may have been even less, as according to contemporary wisdom, many, if not most, of their licenses were "sub-leased to non-Malays."

With respect to the racial composition of middlemen, perhaps the key element in the economic control of the rural sector, no definitive and comprehensive data were available. They continued to form a mixed group of money-lenders, shop-keepers, landlords, merchants, and others. One authority, Mokhzani bin Rahim,[46] however, estimated that no more than 30 percent were Malays. Among the money-lenders, for example, the Indians formed a heavy majority, 1,471 out of 2,001 officially listed by the government in the spring of 1969.[47] There were also 496 Chinese and 1 Malay. The remainder included three racially mixed companies, but dominated by Chinese directors, one whose ownership generally would be classified as "other" and 29 companies whose names gave no indication of racial composition. If the Selangor component of this latter group was a representative sample, then probably 28 of these companies were Chinese controlled and one was Indian. Rice mill owners were mostly Chinese. There were two exceptions, monuments to Aziz bin Ishak, Tanjong Karang in Selangor and Bachang in Malacca, where the purchase of *padi* was officially the monopoly

[44] S. Selvadurai, *Padi Farming in West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1972), pp. 10–11.

[45] *Kongerres Ekonomi Bumiputra Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1965), p. 120.

[46] Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya.

[47] Malaysia, *His Majesty's Government Gazette*, Vol. 12, No. 24 (November 14, 1968), Vol. 13, No. 2 (January 16, 1969), Vol. 13, No. 15 (July, 1969).

TABLE 9–5
Communal Composition of the Ownership of Rubber and Mining Land in West Malaysia, 1969
(in acres)

State	Rubber				Mining			
	Malay	*Chinese*	*Indian*	*Other*	*Malay*	*Chinese*	*Indian*	*Other*
Perlis	4,565	3,775	506	173	354	2,851	–	–
Kedah	148,576	150,721	35,864	159,372	822	2,373	175	188
Penang	10,000	30,000	2,000	16,000	–	–	–	–
Perak	221,830	177,066	48,604	163,136	9,364	95,085[a]	926	76,213
Selangor	62,256	173,145	34,751	224,295	2,410	32,890	–	22,864
Negri Sembilan	140,604	171,637	36,572	199,097	286	3,975	–	–
Malacca	53,079	110,979	5,488	65,490	529	677	–	–
Johore	312,388	244,203	43,000	285,608	2,000	13,000	–	3,968
Pahang	141,807	206,015	6,506	41,718	4,007	31,371	657	8,812
Trengganu	119,236	36,753	629	10,209	2,686	5,818	–	4,194
Kelantan	188,688	40,969	1,345	37,775	100	51	–	1,430
Total	1,403,029	1,345,261	215,265	1,202,873	22,558	188,091	1,758	117,669

Source: Compiled from the files of the Ministry of Rural Development.
[a] Including 3,691 acres held jointly by Malays and Chinese.

of cooperative milling societies. Yet even in these areas there remained localities, as for example Pasir Panjang in Kuala Selangor, where a substantial portion of *padi* (60.5 percent) was sold to shops and "other" middlemen.[48] In the case of rubber, all aspects of processing, that is packing, grading, milling, transport, storage, insurance and sale, were dominated by Europeans, but a share was owned by Chinese. One sterling rubber company (out of 83) and six dollar rubber companies (out of 28) operating in West Malaysia in 1965 had a majority of Chinese directors; none were controlled by Malays.[49] In the case of processing lumber, 45 saw mills were controlled by Malays, 8 jointly held by Malays and Chinese and 389 owned by Chinese.

In urban centers, where most of the Chinese citizens of Malaysia lived, the Malay role in the economy was still less. In 1962 only 25.8 percent of the labor force in modern industries and about 22 percent in commerce were Malays. By 1967 these percentages reportedly increased to 27.9 and 25.0, but much of the increment was due to an expanding Malay dominated public administration, recruitment of Malays for relatively low level jobs and the token appointment of Malay directors and management personnel.[50] In any case, even with government reservation of some urban land for Malays—such as sections in housing developments—their share in total holding remained modest to say the least. In the Municipality of Kuala Lumpur, for instance, one which includes the federal capital with an unusually high concentration of Malay administrative officers and publicly subsidized Malay establishments, the value of private property held by Malays did not even reach 5 percent of the total (see Table 9–6).

In commerce and industry heavy foreign investment was reflected in European ownership of a number of the largest units. Yet even on this level there was a significant Chinese participation. They provided practically the only Malaysian representation. As the scale declined moreover Chinese control became more pronounced. Among the commercial banks registered in

[48] Udhis Narkswasdi and S. Selvadurai, *Economic Survey of Padi Production in West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 1968), pp. 89, 193.

[49] Compiled from *Handbook of Malayan Stocks and Shares* (Singapore: Lyall and Evatt, 1966), pp. 207–365.

[50] Malays tended to refer to such arrangements as "Ali Baba companies," Ali Baba, that is, and the forty thieves.

1965 twenty-two were foreign, including seven European and three American, three Indian, and one Pakistani. They also included five registered in Singapore and one in Hong Kong, all controlled by overseas Chinese capital. There were also sixteen Malaysian banks; all but the state subsidized Bank Bumiputra were in Chinese hands (three of them with substantial Singapore capital). International scale *entrepôt* trade located mostly in Penang was practically monopolized by Chinese.[51] In the industrial sector the total of thirty-one companies incorporated in Malaysia in 1965 included twenty with a majority of foreign (mostly European with some Australian and American) directors, while the remainder was Chinese dominated.[52] A good indication of the extent of this domination was a sample of five non-foreign owned public property companies listed on the Stock Exchange. In these the Chinese possessed a total share holding value of M$31,130,642 (89.2 percent) in marked contrast to the Malays' total of M$458,400 (1.3 percent). Another sample of eight private property companies revealed Chinese share-holdings of M$2,094,800 (91 percent).[53]

TABLE 9–6
Communal Composition of Land Ownership in Kuala Lumpur, 1968

Communal Groups	*Number of Properties*	*Value M$*
Malays	2,875	4,619,487
Chinese	13,398	66,223,890
Indians	2,447	7,318,936
Others	1,063	14,204,526
Total	19,783	92,366,839

Source: Compiled from the files of the Kuala Lumpur Municipal government.

Aggregate data for limited companies in 1969, moreover, revealed substantially the same pattern (see Table 9–7). In the smaller and smallest scale of businesses Chinese numerical preponderance was practically overwhelming. The city of Kuala Lumpur issued 2,613 licenses for small businesses in 1968. They

[51] Lim Chong Yah, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

[52] Compiled from *Handbook of Malaysian Stocks and Shares*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–109.

[53] Low Saw Lui, "Ownership and Control of Property and Development Corporations Formed in Malaysia" (Unpublished Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1969), pp. 30–33.

covered some 57 categories ranging from Aerated Water Factories through Ice Cream Factories and Massage Parlors to Vermicelli Factories. Chinese owned 2,146 (82.1 percent), Malays only 40 (1.5 percent).[54] Even among street vendors the Chinese predominated. There were in 1968, for example, 1,210 licensed hawkers on the streets of Kuala Lumpur. Six hundred seventy-four were Chinese, only ten Malay.[55]

TABLE 9–7
Communal Composition of Share Capital Ownership in Limited Companies in West Malaysia, 1969

Community	*All Industries (M$ million)*
Residents	
Malays	49,294
Malay interests	21,339
Chinese	1,064,795
Indians	40,983
Federal and State Governments	21,430
Nominee companies	98,885
Other individuals and locally controlled companies	470,969
Foreign controlled companies in Malaysia	282,311
Non-residents	1,235,927
Total	2,285,933

Source: Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, p. 40.

Particularly relevant was the situation in transportation. Indeed as early as the Communities Liaison Committee's deliberations, all conceded special public initiatives to improve Malay participation. The railroad, of course, was publicly owned, and 80 percent of the stocks in the only domestic airline (MSA) had been equally divided between the governments of Malaysia and Singapore. Road transport, however, remained in the private sector. To be sure, relatively few taxi licenses were held by Chinese. It was not entirely clear though whether this was due primarily to the Road Traffic Ordinance, 1958. Its terms were met in all states but Kelantan, Perlis, and Trengganu. In general, the racial composition of licenses granted appeared to be about the same as the racial composition of licenses requested. Thus,

[54] Compiled from files of Kuala Lumpur Municipal government.

[55] Compiled from files of Kuala Lumpur Municipal government.

for example, in Selangor 354 applications were filed by Malay and 169 by non-Malay petitioners in 1968. Licenses were issued to 37 Malay, 16 non-Malay and 13 multi-racial groups.[56] In other forms of road transport Chinese dominance was quite clear. In spring, 1969, out of a total of 4,847 buses 3,975, and out of a total of 36,933 trucks 34,797 were owned by non-Malay (i.e., mostly Chinese) or joint companies. (See Table 9–8.)

TABLE 9–8
Communal Composition of Road Transport Ownership, June 1969

Vehicle	*Malay*	*Non-Malay*	*Mixed*	*Total*
Taxi	2,470	2,237	–	4,707
Bus	872	3,975	–	4,847
Trucks				
Class A	239	3,025	395	3,659
Class B	401	1,699	44	2,144
Class C	1,495	29,445	168	31,108
Class D	1	21	–	22
Total	2,136	34,190	607	36,937

Source: Ibu Pejabat, Jabatan Pengangkutan Jalan, Negeri2 Tanah Melayu.

Finally, in the professions, except for an impressive representation of Indians, the pattern was very similar. Shortly before the 1969 elections medical practitioners included 65 Malays, 808 Chinese, 771 Indians, and 249 others, presumably mostly Europeans.[57] The total of 570 West Malaysian lawyers included 92 Malays, 241 Chinese, 190 Indians, and 47 others. Incidentally some 67 of the Malays but only 14 of the Chinese were in the government's legal service.[58] And the last item: the racial background of the University of Malaya teaching staff in 1969 included 51 Malays, 143 Chinese, 75 Indians, and 119 others.

All along, the lack of progress in the relative economic position of Malays was matched by the absence of any visible change in their attitudinal posture. There were no signs of a nascent drive for achievement, let alone a "revolusi mental." In rural areas the resistance to double cropping of *padi* did not decline. Nor did the reluctance of rubber planters and fishermen toward

[56] These and all other data on road transport were compiled from files of the Commissioner of Road Transport.

[57] Malaysia, *His Majesty's Government Gazette*, Vol. 12, No. 20, Supplement No. 2, September 26, 1968.

[58] Malaysia, *Senerai Pagawai Persekutuan*, 1 hb. Januari, 1968.

afternoon or extra-seasonal labor. In towns and cities Malay enterpreneurial activity was hard to find. In Petaling Jaya, for example, in a newly built market area ten stalls were reserved for Malays. Even though this was a small fraction of the total, few were actually used and *all* passed over to Chinese management within a few years. Finally, if the sample of available data is representative, Malays everywhere seemed to have unusual difficulties meeting their financial obligations on time. The vast majority of loans granted to Agricultural Cooperatives were within a few years seriously overdue (see Table 9–9).

TABLE 9–9
Loans Granted by Agricultural Cooperatives and Amounts Overdue by Members, 1959–1964

Year	*Loans Granted*	*Loans Due*	*Loans Paid*	*Loans Overdue*	*Percentage of Overdues to Loans Due*
1959–1960	7,570	4,697	2,717	1,980	42.1
1960–1961	10,750	9,327	5,174	4,153	44.5
1961–1962	8,250	14,128	6,107	8,021	56.8
1962–1963	3,150	14,959	4,504	10,455	69.9
1963–1964	Nil	12,985	2,213	10,772	83.0
Total	29,720	–	20,715	–	–

Source: M. C. Agarwal, "Rural Cooperative Credit—A Malaysian Case Study," *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, Vol. II, No. 2 (December, 1965), p. 17.

In Selangor public housing projects meanwhile the rate of defaulters among Malay tenants was consistently and significantly higher than among the Chinese (see Table 9–10).

It was, of course, hardly reasonable to assume that within five years or even a decade, fundamental revisions in the distribution of income or in the control of the economy, let alone changes in basic attitudes, could become discernible. The government, however, did fervently hope for some signs that its economic policy was appreciated by the Malay masses and that they accepted it as an effective process through which the terms of the constitutional contract was implemented. Yet, in spite of all the sincerity of the Directorate and the indefatigable energies of Tun Razak, there were few, if any such signs. Instead of a satisfaction with progress, Malays throughout the 1960's gave indications that their demands for material rewards

had intensified, that these demands were to be processed as claims for a "rightful share," and that they held the government responsible for anything less than prompt and total fulfillment. The Second Bumiputra Economic Congress in 1968 found cause for no less than 83 resolutions. They included a request to increase the capital of the Bank Bumiputra to M$5 million; a reservation of 50 percent of general company shares to the Malays; (government) support and financial provisions to enable MARA to operate all training projects with more vigor;

TABLE 9–10
Communal Composition of Defaulters in Public Housing Schemes in Selangor, 1969

Project	*Defaulters (%)*	
	Chinese	*Malays*
Medium Cost Terrace Houses		
Petaling Jaya (Section 17)	31	23
Ulu Klang (Phase 2)	39	19
Low Cost Terrace Houses		
Petaling Jaya (Phase 5)	25	19
Sungei Way (Phase 1)	37	3
Low Cost Flats		
Petaling Jaya (Section 17)	66	39

Source: Compiled from the files of the State Government of Selangor.

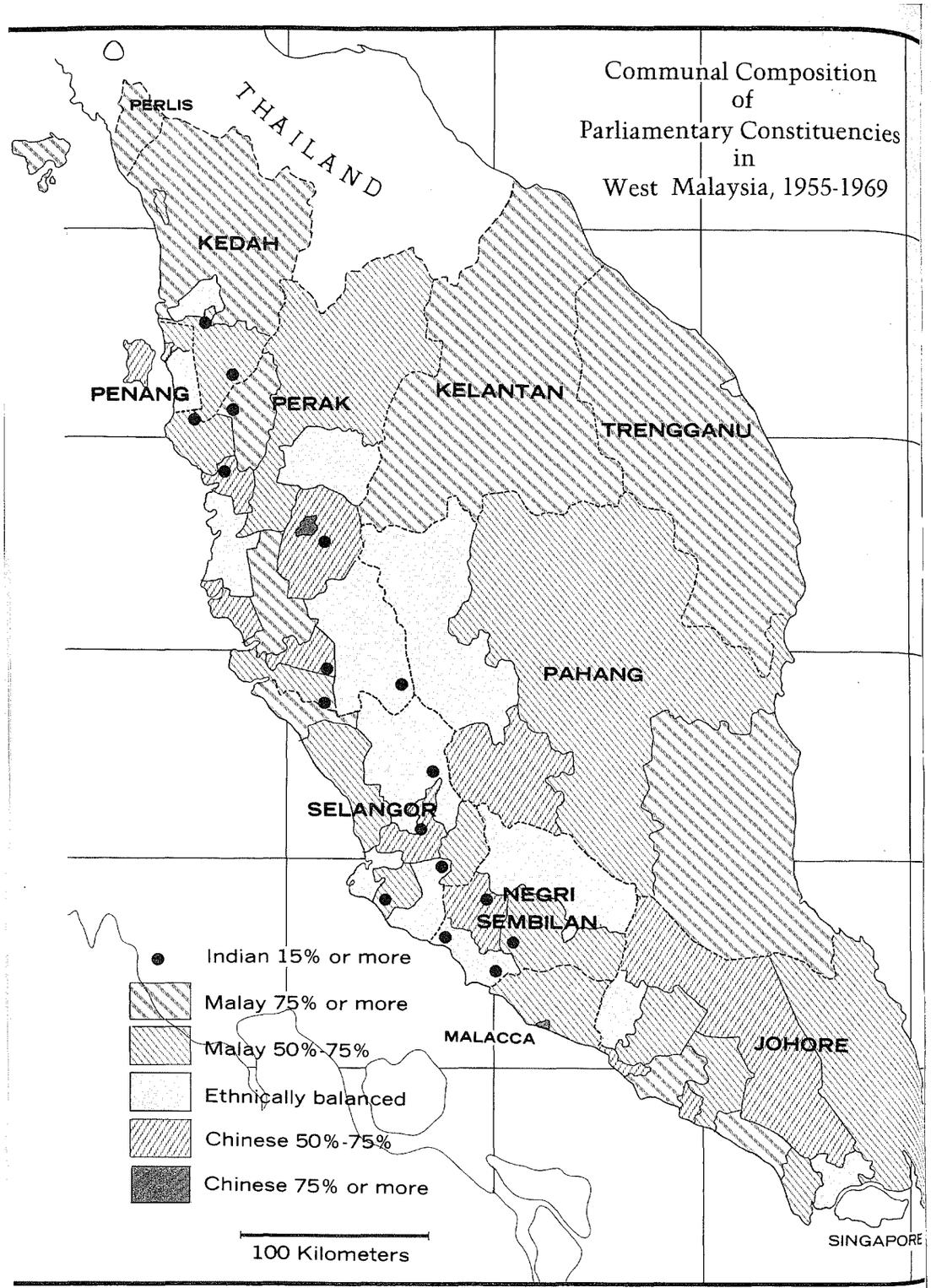
the public control of fish marketing; and many, many more. In order to mollify the delegates, the Deputy Prime Minister felt compelled to promise that he would see to it personally that their demands were met.

The question was: To what extent would the absence of visible progress toward redistribution reduce Malay political support for the Alliance? And there was another, no less crucial question: To what extent would the persistent rhetoric of redistribution reduce Chinese and Indian support for the Alliance?

The answers came soon enough—in the general elections of 1969.

PART THREE

A Political System in Peril



PREFACE

EXPERIMENTATION and sagacity had produced a system of some originality. British example inspired the salience of democratic politics, but Malayan ingenuity adapted it to a polity dominated by communal cleavages. For twelve years the system appeared to be stable enough within expanding boundaries. It was able to control a variety of challenges: from the voters, from within the political leadership, from Communist insurgents, or from Indonesian military forces. It also managed inter-communal conflict. Although occasional clashes did take place, they were small and localized in scale. Order was quickly restored; communal violence was not permitted to become a widespread challenge.

And yet the first twelve years of independence did not establish the viability of the Alliance approach. The system was not fully tested in elections. Special kinds of issues—the freshness of independence in 1959 and the external military threat of Confrontation in 1964—tended to distract from the terms of the constitutional contract and the method of the Directorate. Opposition parties, which relied on appeals to uncompromising communal passions, had lacked organizational structure or financial resources. Nor was the system tested by the stability of its leadership. Men at the highest political echelons persisted in power, but there was little evidence that they either had the inclination or the capacity to assure an orderly succession, let alone a dynamic circulation of the elite. Actually, the system was not even fully tested in terms of the effectiveness of its security forces. For some time British and other Commonwealth troops had played a major role in Malayan military operations against Communist insurgents. They were still present to discourage Indonesian aggression. Just how the security forces would have performed without foreign support, and more importantly how they would perform in cases of large scale communal violence, was far from clear. Finally, the system was not tested in its capacity to manage politically inter-communal con-

flict of interest. On the cultural and economic terms of the constitutional contract, only little visible progress had occurred, and where significant compromises had been made—for example, the National Language Act or in economic policy—not only the majority of members but also intermediate leadership elements in both the Malay and Chinese communities were left unsatisfied and increasingly alienated.

As the country moved into a second decade of independence, the time for a critical test was approaching. The Alliance had been weakened by a somewhat lackluster political record, by rigidifying structures and strategies, and a growing insulation of its leadership from political reality. It was besieged by well organized and generally well financed opposition parties which were prepared to go to any length in order to win at the polls. There were, moreover, no longer any serious political distractions; efforts to emphasize the Philippine claims to Sabah, for example, made little impact. The legitimacy of the constitutional contract and the Alliance method was clearly at stake.

It proved to be a fantastic confrontation. The campaign was conducted with little regard for either the substantive or the procedural terms of the Constitution; it deteriorated into communal intransigence. Election results were inconclusive: public support for the Alliance declined considerably, but not sufficiently to jeopardize its control of the central and most state governments. Even so, euphoria moved a number of Opposition leaders to public declarations of their intention to liquidate the Constitution and to impose new terms of inter-communal relations. For its part, the Alliance was deeply disturbed. The MCA high command felt compelled "to teach the Chinese a lesson" by withdrawing from the Government even though this meant crippling the Directorate. In turn, several younger UMNO leaders were determined "to assure the attainment of Malay rights" by imposing Malay rule and set out to destroy the (inter-communal) Directorate and its head, the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, in the streets communal passions rose to a crescendo. Some Chinese and Indians indulged in provocations; many Malays could hardly contain their rage. When some did not, the Malaysian political system was confronted with the most critical test of its life: large-scale communal violence in the Federal capital.

CHAPTER TEN

Preparing for Elections (1969): The Parties

THE time for a new mandate had arrived. On March 20, 1969, Parliament was dissolved by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*. The Rulers and Governors followed suit, and thus the terms of the state legislatures also came to an end. The specific date for new elections was left to the discretion of the Election Commission, and after a relatively perfunctory discussion it selected May 10 as the time for the expression of popular sovereignty in West Malaysia (Malaya) and May 17 for Sabah and Sarawak.

The Alliance

The Alliance leadership thought they were ready. Unlike in the past, discussions among UMNO, MCA, and MIC regarding the number of seats each was to contest had gone smoothly. There would be no changes in the relative distribution: in West Malaysia UMNO candidates would stand in 68, those from the MCA in 33 and from the MIC in 3 constituencies. Nor was there any disagreement at the highest level on candidates to be nominated. No one proposed by UMNO was resisted by the MCA or MIC leadership; the Prime Minister automatically accepted the candidates put forward by Tun Tan Siew Sin. The Alliance leaders' confidence was bolstered moreover by their own conviction that they had done a good job governing the country—certainly better than any other group would have—and by what they saw as evidence that the electorate shared their estimate. In four by-elections held in 1968 the Alliance lost only one in the parliamentary constituency of Bachok (Kelantan), and that by a reduced margin.[1] In the parliamentary contest for Segamat Utara (Johore) Musa Hitam won handily in a constituency with only 40 percent Malays. And the Alliance won in the state constituencies of Tampoi (Johore) and Serdang Bahru (Selangor). The latter victory seemed especially auspicious. It occurred in a Chinese dominated Labour Party stronghold scarcely five

[1] From 1,724 to 473.

months before the General Elections. When the Alliance candidate, Thuan Piak Phok, not only defeated a strong (though divided) opposition but also increased the Alliance share of total votes from 41.5 percent to 46.6 percent, it was generally assumed that the capacity of UMNO and MCA to mobilize support in their respective communities for a common candidate remained steady and may have improved.[2] They saw further evidence of this when nominations closed on April 5 without any Opposition entries in 19 parliamentary and 11 state constituencies.[3] Some seats had gone uncontested in the past, but never quite so many.

The Alliance organizational structure, which for over a decade had proven itself so effective, was intact and seemed ready to perform once again. There was, of course, not very much structure at the highest, inter-communal level. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Sambanthan had established personal relationships in the Directorate which made informal consultations and decision-making in party matters easy and appropriate. Bonds among them and with other party leaders, moreover, were strengthened by a generous distribution of patronage and the attitude of the Prime Minister. Tunku Abdul Rahman could be firm and unrelenting with Aziz bin Ishak or others whom he thought disloyal to himself or the Alliance approach. He could be kind and intensely loyal to friends and supporters in need. Rahman Talib was one example; Lim Yew Hock was another.[4] In any case, very few policy decisions on party matters were made at the highest, inter-communal councils of the Alliance. What mattered most from the point of view of political mobilization was the organizational structure of the three component parties.

[2] One factor was missed, however. In 1964 almost 74 percent of the constituents voted, in 1968 less than 58 percent.

[3] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 6, 1969, p. 1.

[4] The founder and chairman of Singapore People's Alliance, Lim Yew Hock was created Tun for his services. In 1963 he was appointed Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand. Three years later he suddenly disappeared from Canberra, and a giant operation to locate him was started. Australian security and intelligence organization was alerted. On a nationwide television program his wife, Poh Puan Lim, and her two daughters appealed to him amid effusion of tears to rejoin his family. (The Australian Broadcasting Commission publicly apologized for the performance.) Interpol was also requested to help. In the *Sydney Mirror* the Tunku himself appealed to Tun Lim to return "from wherever you are." Finally, after a week of this Tun Lim suddenly reappeared in Canberra claiming physical and nervous illness. Rather a different explanation, however, was making the rounds in Kuala Lumpur. According to the most widely accepted story Tun Lim, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia and Ambassador designate to Italy, was having an affair with a night club entertainer, Saundra Nelson. His wife, taking a dim view of the proceedings, threatened to shame him publicly, then called in the police when he did not return one night. Stunned by the prospect of public exposure, Tun Lim went into hiding. In any event, all this embarrassment notwithstanding and in the face of a veritable storm of public protest, the Prime Minister stood by his friend and appointed him to a senior post in the Foreign Ministry. Only after continued public scandals in Kuala Lumpur and Malacca would he agree to Tun Lim's removal and the eventual withdrawal of his title.

UMNO was the senior partner. It was a broadly based political party: Over three hundred forty thousand members had paid their M$1 annual fee and were loosely held together by some 6,000 district branches. Possibly, some of them were interested in the aspirations of their fellow citizens of Chinese origin and had a moderate tolerance for them. Most, however, in the *kampongs* or in urban enclaves were inclined to be Malay nationalists firmly convinced that "this is a Malay country." The Chinese had come to help and they were paid for it well enough. On those terms they could stay. Otherwise, they should be forced to leave. They could possibly be "admitted" into the "national community," but only if they were assimilated into the "national," i.e. Malay, culture. Significantly, these views were encouraged by local opinion leaders, the traditional village hierarchy, neo-orthodox religious functionaries and nationalist Malay school teachers. They were held and held widely among the membership moreover without a serious, organized effort by the national leadership to change them.

Indeed, between the grass-roots units exclusively oriented to Malay interest and the highest level with some propensity for inter-communal bargaining, there were only tenuous structural links. The UMNO General Assembly met annually bringing together national leaders and delegates from local branches. In recent years, however, the meetings had become heavily ritualized, with Ministers assuming lofty, authoritative stances, and most members mutely, but resentfully, accepting the official party line. Nor was the National Executive Council much help in reducing normative dissonance. Partially appointed, but largely elected by the General Assembly, it was at one time a forum of vigorous debates with only two limitations imposed on the con-

duct of its members; public disassociation with party policy and personal attacks on the party leadership were considered inexcusable. Lately though, it too felt severely constrained by the Prime Minister's views and much of the discussion became perfunctory. Meanwhile, on the state level party organization had atrophied. Since 1960 state chairmen were replaced by liaison officers (*Terhubongan*) who quite often were national and not state leaders.[5] This left the task of coordinating the district branches and linking them to the highest levels of the party to some 103 divisional branches, and far more important, to Tun Razak.

To preside at the openings of new mosques, schools, and public buildings, to examine the expansion of industries and the progress of land development schemes, or to settle intra-party disputes the Deputy Prime Minister had traveled the length and breadth of West and East Malaysia. Few, if any, issues escaped his regular personal supervision. On the spot he had the power and the ability to make decisions.

The approach of the campaign brought no significant changes in the party organization. The most important decisions were made by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. On the selection of candidates and appointments to high offices the Tunku exercised final authority. On policy and strategy Tun Razak made final decisions. Operational control was entrusted to the Secretary-General, Enche Khir Johari, and to Executive Secretary Musa Hitam. Enche Senu through the organization of rugged youths (*Pemuda Tahan Lasak*) was expected to spearhead the campaign in the rural areas.

The selection of UMNO standard bearers in parliamentary and state constituencies, however, was not accomplished without controversy. Two cabinet members, the Minister of Justice Inche Bahaman and the Minister of Health Tan Sri Haji Abdul Hamid Khan, "decided not to contest the election."[6] Twenty-one members of parliament and many more state legislators were not renominated. In Kelantan alone UMNO nominated sixteen

[5] In West Malaysia only in Perlis, Pahang, Selangor, and part of Trengganu was this post held by the state's Chief Minister. The Prime Minister was state liaison officer for Penang and Kedah, Tun Razak for Kelantan, Perak and part of Trengganu, Enche Ghafar bin Baba for Malacca, Enche Senu for Negri Sembilan and Tun (Dr.) Ismail for Johore.

[6] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 2, 1969.

new candidates and indicated that it would carry the state; Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, a young and successful businessman of noble birth, would become Chief Minister. In Kedah ten incumbents of the state legislature failed to receive UMNO's endorsement. A last-minute appeal by the *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) to renominate some of these men was rejected by the national leadership. Most vexing, however, was the situation in Negri Sembilan. There the Chief Minister himself was the focus of controversy. Tan Sri (Dr.) Mohamed Said, a man of somewhat independent disposition, had become rather less than popular with the *Yang di-Pertuan Besar* and several influential Cabinet members. Personalities aside, the national leadership sought to introduce more vigorous and articulate initiatives into the state, and they thought they had just the right candidate for it, Enche Mansor bin Othman, MARA's director of training. They saw in him a worthy colleague (and useful competitor) to Dato Harun bin Idris, the energetic and popular Chief Minister of neighboring Selangor, and even a potential candidate for a senior national post. Accordingly, although the local and state branches recommended Tan Sri (Dr.) Mohamed Said for his previous state constituency (Linggi), suddenly his name was transferred to a parliamentary contest, and he was offered a Cabinet appointment. Disconcerted by the unwelcome shift, he refused the new assignment, whereupon at an emergency meeting of the state Alliance he was removed from its chairmanship.[7] In the end he withdrew from politics, but not without rancor and not without disenchantment among his followers toward UMNO. On the surface though when nominations closed, the party seemed united.

Less structured than UMNO was its political ally the MIC. As a party its position was extraordinary. It had no chance whatever to gain control of the government or even to elect unaided a single legislator. Only in 2 parliamentary constituencies out of 104 and in 20 state constituencies out of 282 in West Malaysia did the Indian population reach 20 percent. Thus, the most vigorous espousal of the parochial interests of the Indian community would have been dysfunctional. The MIC could gain access to patronage and could win seats in the legislature only through an uncertain mix of support among Malaysian

[7] *Ibid.*, April 4, 1969.

citizens of Indian descent *and* the confidence of the national leaders of its Alliance partners.

Within the party the leadership pattern was traditional, not so much because of its values, but rather because they reflected the historical sequence of immigration into Malaysia: the Jaffna Tamils were clearly in control. Business especially on the local level was habitually conducted in their language, support was generated by their communal cohesion, and leaders were selected from the top of their social hierarchy. Groups which arrived more recently would, of course, be welcome but could never feel quite at home.

In 1969 there were 311 MIC branches with a total paid membership of 75,000. Most were located in the main estate towns and relied heavily upon the highly structured discipline of the estates, enduring considerable friction between Tamil, Malayalee, and Telegu elements. Others appealed with considerable success to members of the National Land Finance Cooperative Society, an organization founded in 1960 by Tun V. T. Sambanthan. Finally, in urban areas the party sought to enlist the support of Indian railroad, communications, and public works personnel. With a much larger share of North Indians, Sikhs, and Hindus, and with the ethnic criteria somewhat less decisive, MIC prospects were not favorable. And when it came to the growing number of urban professionals (mostly lawyers and teachers), the party made barely an effort.

In any case, the party structure was notably loose and basically dependent on two personalities. Once a year the Conference of Delegates assembled, and after some glowing oratory and extended questions from the floor, it predictably elected a carefully preselected Working Committee to which it voted a virtual *carte blanche*. Throughout the year the latter held regular meetings, but major decisions including the selection of candidates were generally made informally by a small group, and in effect by Tun V. T. Sambanthan and V. Manickavasagam. The former counted upon support among estate workers and the members of cooperatives, the latter among the railroad and urban workers. Both enjoyed the confidence of the Prime Minister.

Among the Alliance partners the MCA was perhaps most organization oriented. In the late 1960's it made a massive effort to enlist through formal membership the masses of Chinese voters. Evidently, it did have some success as enrollment rose from

137,120 in 1965 to 208,542 in 1969.[8] Mostly they belonged to the same social group, the traditional elite of the community of Chinese: members of the guilds and the Chambers of Commerce. They shared a common ideology of *laissez faire* in business and hands-off in politics, but had little in common with the masses of workers and had less understanding for the aspiration of achieving personal dignity by belonging to a national community they could call their own. Together through 674 ward branches, 97 division branches, and 11 state branches they formed a monolithic structure with a Central Working Committee at its apex.[9] The highest levels were generally reserved for men of wealth, community leaders with well established reputations for philanthropy. Some English educated professionals (university lecturers, physicians, lawyers, architects), intellectuals without wealth, were admitted to the top echelon—a special Maju Ward was established in the University of Malaya area—but their influence on policy matters remained tenuous (see Table 10–1). Finally, there was at least one party "technician" in the Working Committee, a specialist with broad experience in the subtle (and not so subtle) blends of persuasion and coercion.

They formed a pragmatic group, unencumbered by total devotion to particular political formulas or great political causes. Instead they were tied together by economic and political interest, by the national chairman, Tun Tan Siew Sin, who alone enjoyed the confidence of *both* the business elite and the top Malay leadership; but most of all they were tied together by a common commitment to the code of honor of the Chinese businessmen.

The MCA approached the campaign of 1969 with a formidable organizational structure. Dato Foo See Moi, a Senator and Speaker of the party's General Assembly, was—as in 1964—

[8] Just how reliable these figures were was another question. It was possible for individuals to purchase multiple memberships, and consequently the only difference between the 1965 and the 1969 figures may well have been that in 1969 some wealthy supporters were persuaded to buy more memberships.

[9] Composed of the President, the Deputy President, 6 Vice-Presidents, the Speaker, and 12 members elected by a General Assembly meeting annually. In addition, the Committee included 1 member each elected by the 11 state branches, 1 delegate elected by the Youth Delegates Conference, and 1 by the Women Delegates Conference; finally 5 members appointed by the President. *Constitution of the Malaysian Chinese Association*. Section IV, 323 and Section V, 324 (Kuala Lumpur: Solai Press, 1967).

appointed Director of Election Operations. Together with his deputy, Bernard T. H. Wang, they were to supervise nine special sections, including an Operations Room, the special responsibility of Y. S. Chang. Supporting them were no less than two "brain trusts" supposedly planning grand strategy, their membership being a highly classified secret. Similarly, the selection of candidates involved a most elaborate process. Those ultimately nominated had to be first of all supported by the community leaders, endorsed by local party branches, and proposed by the state organizations. Then they were screened by a national committee headed by Dr. Lim Swee Aun and were approved only after a complex evaluation involving a "security check" and a personal interview by Khaw Kai Boh. Finally, they had to be sanctioned by Tun Tan Siew Sin. In the process, incumbents in six parliamentary and ten state constituencies[10] were not renominated, and the MCA organization in Negri Sembilan was severely disrupted.[11]

TABLE 10–1
Occupational Background of the Central Working Committee Members of the Malaysian Chinese Association, 1968–1969*

Businessmen (Planters, Mining Company Owners, Bankers, Land Developers)	*Professionals*				
	Lawyers	*Physicians*	*Engineers and Architects*	*Teachers*	*Party Organizers*
23	6	3	1	2	1† (Lee San Choon)

Source: Compiled from the files of MCA Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur.
* Chan Chong Wen, who left MCA during his term, is not included.
† Khaw Kai Boh, MCA Vice President, lawyer and former police officer, could to some extent also qualify under this heading.

The new organizational paraphernalia, however, did not significantly modify the previous pattern. For all practical purposes Cabinet members continued to conduct their own campaigns with little coordination by the Director of Elections Operations. The brain trusts offered no new dynamic approaches but produced the conventional (and respectable) defenses, of the *status quo*. The roster of candidates remained generally the same familiar list. The MCA produced relatively fewer new names than UMNO. Most important, all the comprehensive organizational blueprints did not facilitate access to the Chinese workers. The MCA presented a cohesive but small elite political group without much capacity for mass mobilization.

[10] One additional replacement in a state constituency was due to the death of the incumbent, Cheah Seng Kim (Tanjong Bungah).

[11] No less than four state leaders, including the state chairman, resigned when their demands that their list of candidates not be amended by the national leadership was rejected–*Malay Mail*, April 3, 1969, p. 1.

The Opposition

The Opposition had its own reasons for feeling optimistic. Looking at the Sardang by-elections, they concluded that since the Labour Party's boycott proved ineffective even in one of its strongholds, it was not likely to drain off crucial votes in a general election. Hence, the Opposition had a good chance of making very substantial gains simply by uniting and thus avoiding the previous practice of competing for anti-Alliance votes.[12] And this is exactly what they proceeded to do. Shortly before the campaign was to begin, all Opposition parties except the PMIP agreed on a pattern of allocation of seats and pledged not to contest in the constituencies where one of them was already represented.[13]

Certainly the DAP exuded confidence. The successor to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's political movement in Malaysia after the separation of Singapore, it was officially registered in early 1966 and under the guidance of Lim Kit Siang immediately plunged into a most vigorous and extraordinarily ingenious organizational effort.

Ostensibly, the DAP sought to enlist *all Malaysian citizens*. Actually, its efforts were far more sharply focused. Not that they formally discriminated against any group, but they did champion with special ardor the interests of urban Chinese—interests with which the urban Indians could identify but which were perceived as inimical by the masses of Malays. Accordingly, as the membership grew, it reflected a most decided imbalance among the communities, a point which did not remain unnoticed (see Table 10–2). When a final year student at the University of Malaya (as part of his Graduation Exercise) sought to discover the popular image of the DAP, he found in his admittedly

[12] At Serdang Bahru the DAP polled 5,928 votes and the Gerakan 1,330 against the Alliance's 6,535.

[13] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, February 26, 1969.

limited sample (n = 120) that the majority of Malays considered the DAP "anti-Malay" (54 percent, with 26 percent having no opinion) and a communal party (82 percent), while the majority of Chinese disagreed (86 percent and 80 percent).[14]

TABLE 10–2
Communal Composition of DAP Membership in the States of West Malaysia

*State**	*Total*	*Malay*	*Chinese*	*Indian*	*Others*
Selangor	320	11	261	43	5
Perak	323	95	188	40	–
Johore	290	54	216	20	–
Negri Sembilan	318	13	281	22	2
Penang	55	–	47	5	3
Malacca	59	7	39	6	7
Pahang	11	1	10	–	–
Total	1,376	181	1,042	136	17

Source: Chin Fook Kiong, "An Analysis of the Democratic Action Party in the 1969 General Election," Unpublished Graduation Exercise, Public Administration Division, University of Malaya, 1969, p. 19.
* No members in the predominantly Malay states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu.

Nor was the DAP apparently interested in a mass party. Each and every application for membership had to be approved and was thoroughly screened by the all-powerful Central Executive Committee. Hence the total of 1,376 members in all of West Malaysia, tightly organized into 63 branches. When it came to the selection of candidates, even more rigorous tests were applied; the final list was dominated by young, English-educated professionals (see Table 10–3).

Yet there was an even more important element that differentiated DAP candidates from those of the MCA: they were men dedicated to their cause. Many contributed substantial portions of their income to the party's trust fund;[15] most paid their own deposits and financed their own campaigns. In short, the DAP was not really a political party in the sense of democratic politics, but rather a structure of cadres designed to advance a political movement.

[14] Chin Fook Kiong, "An Analysis of the Democratic Party in the 1969 General Election" (Unpublished Graduation Exercise: University of Malaya, 1970).

[15] Dr. Chen, the party chairman, reportedly donated M$15,000 and Mr. Devan Nair, M.P., donated M$21,000.

The same could be said about the PMIP. It too was dedicated to an overriding cause: Malay supremacy. Intensely sensitive to the ethnic and social cleavages among the communities and possibly even more so to the deep religious chasm between Muslims and infidels (*kafir*), the PMIP saw little prospect for the assimilation of the Chinese and viewed with alarm any effort of national integration. Under the circumstances they could concede only one legitimate course: the imposition of Malay culture on all "non-Malays" without their admission into the "national" Malay community. The party's basic aim, explained its

TABLE 10–3
Comparison of Age and Occupational Background of MCA and DAP Parliamentary Candidates

		Age		*Occupational Background*			
	Total	*Under 40*	*Over 40*	*Business-men**	*Profes-sionals†*	*Clerks*	*Others‡*
DAP	24	20	4	2	12	4	6
MCA	33	11	22	16	13	2	2

Sources: Chin Fook Kiong, "An Analysis of the Democratic Action Party in the 1969 General Election," Unpublished Graduation Exercise, Public Administration Division, University of Malaya, 1969, pp. 29, 31 and data compiled from MCA Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur.
* Including planters and mine owners.
† Including lawyers, physicians, dentists, university lecturers, architects, accountants, teachers.
‡ Including journalists, labor union leaders, bus ticket inspector, electrician.

Secretary-General shortly before the campaign, "is to establish 'through constitutional means' an Islamic State for the benefit of the Malays."[16]

In contrast to the DAP, however, the PMIP was not inclined toward centralized organization. Once a year the party did hold its General Assembly, which in turn elected national officers and a Central Executive Committee. Even so, important decisions for the state or local level were made by the State Commissioners, senior men with traditional local legitimacy. When it came to national issues moreover, policy was decided by all the State Commissioners collegially without anyone, not even the party President and *Mentri Besar* of Kelantan, Dato Mohamed Asri, dominating the proceedings.

In any case, it was not organization that gave cohesion to the

[16] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, April 13, 1969.

party but its ideology. Masses of religious leaders and many Malay school teachers in rural areas believed deeply in it and disseminated it in their daily lives or at *cheramas* (small discussion groups). The substance may not have been orthodox or consistent, but the theme was persuasive and persistent: fierce Malay nationalism and deep Muslim commitment. Their dedication provided a sharp contrast and represented a serious threat to UMNO's rural organization. Moreover, as the campaign approached, it became increasingly clear that the PMIP's appeal was rapidly spreading to the urban enclaves, where Malay youths and workers, as well as a growing number of Malay intellectuals, found it attractive. The PMIP leadership was aware of this, indeed counted on it. They too were confident about their prospects in the Elections.

The Opposition also included several smaller parties. The PPP remained a family enterprise. Party organization continued to be controlled by S. P. and D. R. Seenivasagam; business was conducted in an informal somewhat cavalier style. All officers were their personal friends; most members were their personal followers. One illustration is a report of a participant of the Annual General Meeting held in a dance hall in Ipoh on September 13, 1964.

> There were about 200 members in attendance. Most of them were young men; there were no women. About two-thirds of the members present were Chinese and the remaining were either Indians or Ceylon Tamils. There were only two or three Malays in the whole gathering.
>
> The meeting opened with a short speech by D. R. Seenivasagam, Chinese translation of which was provided. As the Secretary of the party he read no formal annual report. But generally discussed the state of the party. Following his speech, election for the officers and for the Central General Committee were held. Election went very smoothly. D. R. Seenivasagam relinquished his position as the Secretary-General and was elected President unopposed. Six names were proposed for the four positions of Vice-Presidents. Election was carried out by the show of hands. The acting President, S. P. Seenivasagam, requested the members to raise their hands only four times and no more. There was lack of any interest in ensuring that members did not cast more than four votes. . . . [In the election S. P. Seenivasagam received the most votes.]
>
> At the conclusion of the election, D. R. Seenivasagam moved two resolutions which were accepted unanimously without debate. The first resolution increased the subscription of membership of the party from Malayan dollar 1 for three years to 2 dollars per annum. The second resolution required all members to re-register themselves which was necessitated because of the first resolution.
>
> The meeting ended with a short speech by the new secretary [Chan Yoon Onn] who outlined his plans for the reorganization of the party. And everybody was handed a bottle of a soft drink by the sister of Seenivasagam brothers.[17]

S. P. Seenivasagam, as Mayor of Ipoh, was noted for efficiency and a reluctance to raise local taxes. In Parliament D. R. Seenivasagam, his more eloquent and energetic brother, nettled the government and thus created an image of a fearless defender of right. At times, he pressed for investigation of corruption and thus built a reputation of a man of integrity. Suddenly, early in 1969, D. R. Seenivasagam died. His family and the PPP pledged to carry on the tradition.

The *Partai Rakyat*,[18] which initially was under the control of a dominant personality, was substantially reorganized in the meantime. Ahmed Boestaman was replaced by a new, collective leadership with links to Malay urban workers in Penang, Malay fishermen in Pahang and Trengganu and Malay students in Kuala Lumpur. Its ideology, however, did not change much; it continued to be among the most radical in Malaysia.

Potentially more interesting for the future development of party politics in Malaysia, however, was the emergence of the *Parti Gerakan Rakyat* (*Gerakan*). Not only concerned about what they considered the absence of creative initiative in government but also alarmed by the increasingly communal tone of the major opposition parties, a number of opposition leaders and uncommitted intellectuals joined to form a new party in March, 1968.

[17] This report was cited (pp. 318–319) in the Ph.D. dissertation of R. K. Vasil entitled "Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in Malaysia," and submitted to the University of Malaya in 1968. When in three years the manuscript appeared in published form under the same title (*op. cit.*), this citation was edited out.

[18] Earlier spelled *Party Ra'ayat*.

They were dedicated to the development of a Malaysian nation through the social and economic integration of the various communities but conceded cultural preeminence and at least for an undefined transitional period special political rights to the Malays. Thus, they hoped to fashion a national appeal and to present a viable alternative to the Alliance.

From the very beginning the *Gerakan* was a constellation of strong personalities. The axis of Dr. Lim Chong Eu in Penang and Dr. Tan Chee Khoon in Kuala Lumpur, two veteran political leaders, was joined and complemented by labor leaders V. David, V. Veerappen, and Tan Phock Kim, as well as such outstanding intellectuals as Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, Chairman of the Malay Studies Department, University of Singapore, and Professor Wang Gungwu, Chairman of the History Department, University of Malaya. Each had his own personal following and style. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon probably enjoyed the widest political reputation, Dr. Lim Chong Eu the most comprehensive political organization, and Professor Alatas an exceptional talent for political strategy. They sought to establish their collective identity (as well as the non-communal reputation) dramatically in a formal debate with the DAP leadership on November 24, 1968. From 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. in a crowded MARA auditorium the speakers matched their forensic skill over a full range of subjects. By the end the *Gerakan* had indeed demonstrated that its goals and approach were essentially different from the DAP's. All the same, it was rather less successful in generating mass appeal. There were few Malays in the MARA auditorium that day. Continued and somewhat sporadic membership drives did not change the picture. The party prided itself in a joint, non-communal list of members, but those who enrolled were mostly English-educated Chinese moderates and English-educated Indian professionals.[19] Only in Penang in Dr. Lim Chong Eu's organization could one find large groups of Chinese-educated workers and in Kuala Lumpur among Dr. Tan Chee Khoon's supporters substantial elements of Indian urban laborers. The Malays generally stayed away. Still the *Gerakan* offered a potential for a genuinely national party.

[19] Its 14 parliamentary candidates included 2 Malays, 8 Chinese, 3 Indians, and 1 European; 6 were businessmen with considerably smaller holdings than the average MCA businessman, another 6 were professionals, 1 a trade unionist, and 1 a security officer in the Straits Trading Company.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Political Confrontation: A Battle for Votes

FOLLOWING the custom of democratic politics, the first formal act of the election was the publication of formal public statements. Through them the parties sought to present an appealing image of their goals and accomplishments. More important, they tried to define the issues and thus to force the electoral debate upon the other contestants in terms most favorable to their own purposes.

The Party Manifestoes

The task proved to be no easy one for the Alliance. Given the cleavages which separated the communities, the electorate was particularly vulnerable to unabashed appeals to parochial sentiment. The leadership could ignore such obvious political realities only at its peril; yet it was simply not in a position to espouse the aspirations of any *one* community. Such a strategy would have violated the most rudimentary requirements of the constitutional contract, and this for the government party would have been irresponsible. Such a strategy, moreover, would have discredited some of the Alliance partners, and this for a coalition of Malay, Chinese, and Indian political organizations would have been disastrous.

Faced with this dilemma the leadership evidently saw its options limited to two. It could claim to have *simultaneously* maximized the interests of all communities, and that no other group would or could do so. This line of argument, however, turned first on a general understanding that the best interests of each community required a balance between the satisfaction of its own aspiration and gains freely conceded to all others, and second on the perception by each community of a steady flow of specific rewards. There were problems on both counts. The zero-sum view still dominated inter-communal relations, and the flow of rewards was not all that clear. In evaluating the accomplishments of economic policy few people read statistics on the

marginal rate of growth in the gross national product or appreciated the benefits of price stability at home and the strong international position of the Malaysian dollar. What most Chinese and Indians saw and resented was the constant rhetoric of redistribution; and what most Malays knew and found unsatisfactory was that they were not making much progress toward a greater share of economic rewards. At the same time, the political accomplishments of the government were difficult to dramatize. Its most important achievement, the maintenance of public order and the absence of communal strife, was all too easily taken for granted. There were other achievements as well, but in general they were achievements in the art of compromise where no group lost, but neither did any gain the full measure of their goals. They were, moreover, generally seen as *responses* to extra-systemic demands, not brilliant political initiatives by the leadership.

The only alternative strategy to this rather rocky course was to avoid sensitive issues altogether, either by ignoring them or by promptly soaring to the lofty heights of oratory. With a politically alert electorate or with one which harbored deep grievances this was indeed a very risky position. If successful, however, it could gain time for the government. Indeed, the Alliance leadership was a great believer in gaining time, until the administrative capacities of the government improved (Tun Razak) and until a better understanding among communities developed (Tunku Abdul Rahman). Not quite confident in either course, the government tended to vacillate between them.

Specifically, the Alliance Manifesto was entitled "An Even Better Deal for All," and ran on in a flowing literary style for some forty-eight pages.[1] Its first portion, dedicated to "policy," set the tone. The political system, it proclaimed, was enshrined in the Constitution. "We accept the popular franchise, the dictation of the ballot box. Our conviction in the democratic process is a primary political faith with us. This process to which we subscribe has been applied under the most trying circumstances, in the face of individuals who have abused it, against forces that have sought to dismantle it. Yet it has survived—and struck firmer roots among our people." The Manifesto continued: "We have had a full share of tensions—racial prejudice, religious

[1] Published by the Alliance Headquarters and printed by Kum Printers, Kuala Lumpur, 1969.

bigotry and an armed insurrection," and then proceeded with admirable verve: "these tensions are still present, though in a much mitigated form. The policies of the Alliance are designed to bring about their eventual elimination. We now confidently look forward to this eventuality within the life span of our generation." There followed then an extensive discussion of economic goals, internal security, and foreign policy. Finally, under the ominous subtitle racial nemesis, the Manifesto turned to communal issues. There were some, it proclaimed, who "with calculated mischief sought to misinterpret the assistance the Government has been giving to the Malays in West Malaysia and the natives of East Malaysia." In point of fact, the Manifesto explained, the government was merely attempting to eliminate disparity between urban and rural standards of living and was simply trying to "properly and correctly [discharge its] obligations under Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia." Then again there were also those at the other end of the spectrum "who condemn [the party] for selling out the interest of the Malays. On the strength of their advocacy of a one-race Government they have gained control of a State and run it into a state of economic chaos. Every opposition party without exception," the Alliance continued with some flourish, "has sought to play on racial emotions. Some have done it crudely, others go about it in varying degrees of disguise. But each and everyone of these parties is in the control of its craven core of racial bigots." In contrast the Alliance "with deliberation opted for a more arduous course, for the more tortuous and trying effort towards a national consensus. . . . We held steadfast to the belief born out of experience and conviction that for the survival of a multi-racial community such as ours, the values of a stable, liberal and tolerant society must be nurtured and made to flourish as an animating force among our people." A viable alternative to these policies, the Alliance proclaimed emphatically, simply did not exist.

When it came to a specific party program, the second part of the Manifesto, much of it read like the Five Year Plan. It projected an annual growth of "at least 6 percent" and a per capita income of M$1,500 by 1985. It promised stable prices and a strong international position of the Malaysian dollar. Under continued Alliance leadership the electorate could expect further agricultural diversification, a better yield and return for the

small-holders and other producers, more extensive exploitation of timber resources, intense research into the planting, processing and marketing of palm oil, paper, and new crops, security of tenure, education in modern technology, self-sufficiency in rice "by the early seventies," additional rural credit facilities, greater mechanization of fishing boats and gear, accelerated land development, intensified prospecting for mineral deposits, further development of the manufacturing sector, expansion of road mileage, improvement of harbor facilities, more telephones, improved radio broadcasting, electricity, water supply, health, and housing. All this and more the Alliance promised.

On communally sensitive questions, however, it was rather more reticent. It did not have much to say on the problem of unemployment. Next to the last page—as an afterthought, as it were—the party repeated its standard line that with sustained economic development the problem would resolve itself. The questions of economic preferences for the *Bumiputra* was framed in non-communal (i.e., economic and geographic) terms and then was passed over lightly. The less prosperous elements in the country (especially in the relatively underdeveloped east coast of West Malaysia) "would receive priority attention" within the framework of economic opportunities for all Malaysians. The question of cultural supremacy of the Malays was covered by the assertion that "we have given our nation a common identity by making Malay the sole national and official language" and the assurance (printed in bold type) "to maintain the policy of making available the opportunity for the study of other languages and other cultures." The question of special political rights for Malays was simply ignored. Then in the final note of the program of specific action came the rousing assertion: "through our educational, cultural, sports, youth and other programmes, there has steadily developed a national consciousness among all our people and a firm, ready and purposive commitment to a national outlook." It was a lofty approach to a political campaign. Whether such a definition of issues could be imposed upon the opposition parties, the Malaysian electorate, or even the Alliance state and local organizations was of course an entirely different matter.

The *Gerakan* for one was not prepared to concede so critical an advantage. To be sure, its leadership too was sensitive to the perils of communal agitation and sought to avoid any challenge to the constitutional contract, but it was determined not to be deterred from disputing the Alliance claims for accomplishments or from offering alternatives of its own. Accordingly, the *Gerakan* Manifesto, a terse, single-page statement entitled "Equality, Justice and Equal Opportunities for All Our Aims,"[2] first found fault with the economic policy. As correctives it advanced some relatively specific measures such as (1) the protection of collective bargaining for workers and peasants and (2) social security and national assistance for both urban and rural people. It also resorted to flowing generalities and promised to eliminate exploitation of man by man; to eliminate the causes of poverty, suffering, ill health, and inertia; to review the system of taxation; and "to take whatever other measures are necessary to ensure social justice, democracy and human welfare." Significantly, on the question of *Bumiputra* privileges the Manifesto equivocated. It committed itself to abolish discrimination of every kind, but then it clouded the implication by adding a distraction, "and in particular against women."

It was rather more forthright on alternatives to the government's cultural policy. Unhesitatingly, the *Gerakan* pledged to uphold the status and position of the national language and to support its study and rapid development. It was firmly opposed, however, to the monopoly of Malay. Accordingly, it promised to press for the legitimate use of all languages, for the parallel development of the different media of instruction in educational institutions, for examinations in the main medium of instruction, for the just and equitable treatment of all schools, and for the establishment of both National and Merdeka Universities "in order to preserve the use and study of Malay, Tamil and Chinese up to and including university levels."

Finally, the *Gerakan* found serious fault with the political posture of the Alliance. Corruption and malpractices, it proclaimed, were widespread; arbitrary powers were usurped by the government, and Malay privileges were being abused by unscrupulous leaders. Worse still was the Alliance attitude toward political development. Time had not been gained; on the contrary precious opportunities had been lost. There was no mysterious process which, given time, would without specific governmental initiatives by itself bring the communities closer

[2] Manifestoes of all parties were reprinted by The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur.

together. Such explanations were desperate efforts to distract from the intellectual bankruptcy of the Alliance leadership. This fact was all the more tragic since the ruling party by its exuberant optimism about Malaysia as a multi-racial paradise persistently discouraged, and through its capacity to amend the Constitution at will effectively deterred the emergence of constructive suggestions on the part of the Opposition. Indeed the *Gerakan* was quite convinced that neither through evasion by silence or by fancy generalities, but only through frank and open discussion of the pressure points of communal conflict would a Malaysian nation be built. To make this goal of an integrated society possible through democratic processes (and through an effective and intelligent Opposition) the Manifesto appealed for popular support.

The other opposition parties went even further. They would not even concede the legitimacy of the constitutional contract. They proposed entirely new (mostly more communal) terms which, if victorious at the polls, they promised to impose. Each, except the *Partai Rakyat*, expected to harvest rich electoral rewards by championing parochial interest. The DAP General Elections Manifesto hit at the core of the constitutional contract by insisting on a homogenized polity. The Alliance, it charged, was guilty of racial discrimination. Official policies and practices had divided the country into two unequal classes of citizens. In fact, the Alliance had managed to give a racial twist and bias to social, economic, and educational programs. As a result it had generated deep feelings of cultural insecurity on the part of non-Malay Malaysians. Genuine national unity, however, could only be accomplished if these policies and practices were eliminated and all groups in Malaysia were henceforth treated politically, economically, socially, and culturally as equals. "Towards a Malaysian Malaysia" was the title of this document, and "democracy" was its theme. It advocated such economic goals as the elimination of unemployment, a more equitable distribution of wealth, revision of labor laws, land for the landless farmers, state social security, and low-cost housing as well as such foreign policy objectives as strengthening regional cooperation and developing an effective defense capacity. The core of the DAP program, however, was its political demand for a review of the Internal Security Act and a development of multi-

racial national defense forces, and, even more important its cultural demands for official status for Chinese, Tamil, and English languages, the free use of these in legislative debates, public notices, and government correspondence, their use as media of instruction in schools, together with government support not only for the National University but also for Merdeka University with Chinese as a medium of instruction. In its Manifesto the DAP vigorously protested against charges of being anti-Malay and cited its genuine concern for the eradication of rural poverty as evidence. This may have been true enough. But it was no less accurate to observe that the Manifesto very shrewdly articulated all the salient demands of the communities of Chinese and Indians and saw accommodation with the Malays only at the cost of the Alliance approach and the constitutional contract.

The PPP did not issue a lengthy statement. It simply reiterated its previous positions, most of which were very similar to the DAP's. "A Malaysian Malaysia," the Manifesto emphasized, "is the anti-thesis of a Malay Malaysia. They cannot co-exist."

The PMIP for its part could not have agreed more, but unlike the PPP it was committed to the latter formula. It utterly rejected the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia as an unmitigated evil. It was moreover an evil which not only imbued the DAP and its electoral allies but also corrupted the Alliance *and* the constitutional contract. Appealing to the basic convictions of Malay school teachers, the very group which in the past played a key role in the mass mobilization of Malays for UMNO, the PMIP Manifesto first proclaimed the Alliance approach a failure since (1) "racial harmony is only skin deep"; and (2) "90 percent of the nation's wealth is still in the hands of the non-Malays." It then moved in on the constitutional contract. It proposed to establish a "sincere and healthy Constitution." More specifically, the PMIP platform promised among other things: "to see that the present constitutional provision concerning citizenship is reviewed so that it will ensure the rights of the natives, . . ." "to fight for justice by revising the laws so that they are in line with the teachings of Islam, . . ." "to strive for the nationalization of industries, . . ." "to review and revise land legislation so that the livelihood of the farmers will be safeguarded." It also proposed that "there should be only one national education policy, . . ." and "one national school system, . . ." that "lessons

on Islam should be a compulsory subject of all schools and institutions of higher learning," not to mention other items such as support of "Muslims in their fight for the repossession of Jerusalem" and the withdrawal of Malaysian recognition of Israel.

The challenge of the *Partai Rakyat* was, as in the past, of a different sort. Its Manifesto categorically rejected a communal appeal and concentrated instead on class solidarity. "Exploitation recognizes neither race nor creed," it asserted. One problem with the government was that it was totally devoid of any originality. All of its policies were merely continuations of colonial policies. "The Malay feudalists and the big Chinese and Indian capitalists who unite within the Alliance Party, with the support of international capitalists, have always and continue to exploit the peasants, workers, fishermen, petty officials and traders, etc., of all races in this country." The Manifesto promised a new approach directed toward four objectives: (1) the destruction of "the Anglo-American neo-colonial systems"; (2) the establishment of "a new democratic form of government representing all races"; (3) the organization of "a new national and progressive economic system . . . "; and (4) the development of "a new national, democratic and progressive culture. . . ." A new approach based, of course, on a new constitution.

The Campaign

The issues were certainly firmly drawn; all parties exuded confidence, and yet the actual campaign was slow in starting. Perhaps the most notable skirmishes during the first two weeks involved charges of external dependence. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon of the *Gerakan* demanded to know whether it was true that one Alliance Member of Parliament was not renominated because he provided information for the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Meanwhile, Dato Kampo Radjo, *Partai Rakyat* candidate from Malacca Tengah, charged that two Cabinet ministers had received money from the CIA. Other similar accusations were more general in character. All were firmly rejected by the highest Alliance leadership. "Opposition parties have started this rumor," the Prime Minister explained, "[in order] to smear our good name." Indicating his shock at such goings-on, Tun Razak added later: "They now go for underhand tactics

to discredit us. They have criticized the Tunku and myself."[3] The United States Embassy took the unusual step of denying Dr. Tan Chee Khoon's allegation. "We say the charge is completely without foundation," a spokesman stated.[4] Retaliating in kind the Alliance charged that the DAP was loyal to "a foreign country" (presumably Singapore) and that the PMIP accepted DAP funds. Both were promptly contradicted by Opposition leaders.[5]

Otherwise for the first two weeks the electoral contest remained low key. Tunku Abdul Rahman was in a jovial mood. Launching his campaign in Ipoh he recalled that ten years earlier at a similar rally loudspeaker wires had been disconnected, while shouts and boos and other disturbances made it impossible for people to hear him. Now the crowd listened quietly and patiently. "This," he said with some satisfaction, "was democracy."[6] In Petaling Jaya he pointed with pride to the emergence of a new society dominated by a new middle class. In Kajang with evident pleasure he spoke of Malaysia's peace and prosperity "which had no parallel except Japan." At Seremban he voiced his conviction that loyalty to Malaysia would grow and future generations would be true Malaysians. More in sorrow than in anger he warned his audience at Kuala Pilah that the DAP was not merely attacking Malay rights but was, in fact, challenging the Constitution. Nevertheless, in Port Dixon he expressed his confidence that "the right-thinking Chinese would never support the opposition parties because they had enjoyed a good life under the Alliance Government."[7]

Tun Razak meanwhile projected an image of activity. He would, it was announced, travel by train, road, air, and sampan at least 5,000 miles until he brought the campaign to every part of the country. His tone seemed reasonable and moderate. Addressing the MCA Maju Ward leaders he declared: "We are going to win this election and let us win it through sincere means and not through resorting to power." In Kota Bharu he appealed for the rejection of such "grand illusions" as a "one-race govern-

[3] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Time*, April 15, 1969; April 16, 1969; and April 17, 1969.
[4] *Ibid.*, April 19, 1969.
[5] *Ibid.*, April 11, 1969; April 15, 1969; and April 16, 1969.
[6] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, April 7, 1969.
[7] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 10, 1969; April 15, 1969; April 17, 1969; and Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, April 14, 1969.

ment." They would only bring chaos and destroy the country. The Deputy Prime Minister challenged allegations that the Alliance was a "capitalist" party. On the contrary, it was genuinely interested in the have-nots. Indeed, wherever he went he delivered promises of future economic well-being—provided of course that the government be returned with a suitable majority. Malacca was assured that workers need not worry about being unemployed after British withdrawal and the closing of Camp Terendak. Penang was told it could count on better ferry service to the mainland, even a bridge between the island and Province Wellesley. Kelantan, in turn, could expect over M$500 million in development funds. In short, the states could not afford to reject the Alliance. If they were so misguided as to do so, Tun Razak quite frankly stated in Penang, "then they should not hope for any development which will be beneficial to them."[8] The implication that the national government would withhold public funds from states controlled by an Opposition Party could not have been more clear.

The leadership of the MIC was not threatening anyone, at least not publicly. V. Manickavasagam was fully engaged in negotiating with some trade union leaders and settling the dispute with the Malacca branch over the nomination of C. M. Seth. Tun Sambanthan expounded on the peace and harmony theme. When Malaysia gained independence, many critics "predicted that we would go to the dogs," he said at a rally in Kuala Kurau. "But far from doing so, we have not only been living in peace, but have also made tremendous progress."[9] The reason for this is the wise leadership of the Prime Minister.

The most direct and specific attacks on the Opposition came from the MCA. Tun Tan Siew Sin evidently saw no advantage in personally rushing about the country. He relied on the intermediate level of leaders. Except for visits to his own constituency in Malacca he stayed mostly in Kuala Lumpur. He was, however, in no mood to mince words. He took direct aim at the DAP. If it was to succeed at the polls, Tun Tan asserted in Petaling Jaya, the first casualty would be the workers and the trade unions. That was not all. The DAP, he charged in Malacca, was "a destroyer of Chinese unity." Worse still, it provoked direct confrontation with the Malays. A case in point was their agitation for Merdeka University, a public institution of higher learning dedicated to the promotion of Chinese culture. The whole issue was an election stunt. "Merdeka University is a futile dream," Tun Tan declared. "It would be easier for hell to freeze over than for Merdeka University to be established under prevailing circumstances in Malaysia."[10] He had little doubt, the MCA president insisted with deep anxiety, that by the time the elections were over, dislike of Malays for the DAP would be equivalent to that of the non-Malays for the PMIP. It would be a volatile situation, he added prophetically, as it would mean the polarization of Malaysian politics into two extremes—Malay racialism and Chinese chauvinism.[11] His MCA colleagues evidently agreed with his approach, but added other dimensions as well. Tan Sri (Dr.) Lim Swee Aun at Ipoh documented economic progress by statistics on private ownership of motor vehicles and yield of rubber. He assured his audience that it was the aim of the government to provide a house for each family. Mr. Khaw Kai Boh, speaking in the same town, emphasized the stability of the currency. While in 1957 M$100 could only be exchanged for 150 Indian rupees, the same amount now could be exchanged for as much as 250 rupees, he explained.[12]

The Opposition for its part appeared at first to be holding its fire. Dato Asri responded mildly by pointing out that good Muslims considered the spiritual values of Islam and Malay culture to be more important than the material blandishments of Tun Razak. In any case, the people of Kelantan would reject financial support which the central government could afford only through dependence on foreign aid.[13]

Dr. Lim Chong Eu was "sad" that Tun Razak had nothing to offer the people of Penang except threats. It was the *Gerakan* which introduced the idea of a bridge linking the island with the mainland as a constructive campaign issue. When the Alliance insisted that the central government would support the project only if it retained control of the state, then it engaged

[8] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 10, 1969; April 11, 1969; April 12, 1969; April 16, 1969; April 17, 1969; and April 19, 1969.
[9] *Ibid.*, April 9, 1969.

[10] The Chinese language press translated "hell to freeze over" as "an iron tree to bear flowers."
[11] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 9, 1969; April 10, 1969; April 11, 1969; April 13, 1969; April 17, 1969; and *Malay Mail*, April 17, 1969.
[12] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 8, 1969; April 17, 1969; and April 18, 1969.
[13] *Ibid.*, April 19, 1969.

in a "kind of autocratic political blackmail [which] can destroy the concept of a federation of states. This kind of mailed-fist central politics can lead to disaster." He contented himself with reading to his audience paragraph ten of the Ninth Schedule of the Federation Constitution pertaining to roads, bridges, ferries, and other means of communication and assured them: "The Alliance may try to stop us from building the bridge, but if the people of Penang want the bridge, we shall build it."[14] His colleague, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, also conducted his campaign in a low key. He appealed for support so that Alliance strength in Parliament could be reduced below the two-thirds of membership and the Government be prevented from passing constitutional amendments at will. Mostly though he concentrated on government claims of economic development. The public debt had risen to M$4,082 million since 1955, which meant that by his calculations "each Malaysian will have to pay M$25.30 on the interest alone." Besides, Alliance development programs favored the rich, or were at any rate non-productive. It could not find money to prevent flooding of Jalan Bangsar—a route used by many commuters to the capital—"but strangely the Government has the funds when it comes to building a M$4 million golf course at Subang and renovating the Banquet Hall of Istana Negara [royal palace] at a cost of M$1.5 million." The Alliance, moreover, had offered to the people of Kelantan M$10 million to build religious institutions, if it was voted into power. "What economic returns," asked Dr. Tan, "would these institutions bring?"[15]

The *Partai Rakyat* was more direct and more radical in its attack. It accused the Prime Minister and the Alliance not only of glorifying feudal institutions and paraphernalia but also of encouraging the capitalists and imperialists to prop up the Sultans. "Let it be emphasized for the ninth time," Syed Husin Ali, its secretary-general stated, "that the Party [sic] Rakyat is against all exploitative systems. That is why we have always been and will continue to be against imperialism, capitalism, and feudalism so long as they still exist."[16] As usual, however, the party avoided communal issues.

Not so the PPP and the DAP. Still, in these first weeks their public statements too were somewhat restrained. The PPP leader-

[14] *Ibid.*, April 14, 1969; April 17, 1969; April 19, 1969.
[15] *Ibid.*, April 11, 1969.
[16] *Ibid.*, April 10, 1969.

ship was strangely subdued, perhaps due to the tragic passing away of D. R. Seenivasagam. The DAP promised to wipe out poverty among all races and advocated "democratic socialism." Dr. Chen Man Hin, party chairman, quite candidly admitted in Malacca: "We can't form the Government." Communal issues were generally approached gingerly. Dr. Chen advocated accelerating the country's economic and social development through multi-racialism, a multi-lingual modernized educational system, and an honest and efficient government. Goh Hock Guan spoke of "flowering of all talents" from every race.[17]

Yet all these charges that the government was dictatorial, corrupt, and a tool of special interests, contentious as they may have been, were not particularly unusual for a democratic campaign. Nor were the assertions of the majority party of political and economic accomplishments coupled with dire warnings that those dissenting on policy were dividing the country, however accurate or inaccurate, exactly unprecedented. Even Tun Razak's recurrent theme of an Alliance central government being less than generous with public funds toward a state controlled by an Opposition Party revealed more a lack of understanding of the implicit assumptions of a federal system than a lapse in constitutional processes.

Those, however, were early days, and public speeches by major political leaders provided only superficial evidence of the substance and direction of the campaign. They may have influenced a small section of the urban population and perhaps impressed international opinion, but political activity with the deepest impact upon the electorate was already taking shape behind this façade in face-to-face encounters on the grass-roots level. Barber shops, especially on the east coast, doubled as centers of lively political discussion. School teachers, religious leaders, party workers, members of women's auxiliaries, as well as the candidates, all were already busily canvassing from house to house and addressing small discussion groups (*cheramas*) or local political rallies. Generally, they formulated their appeal in communal terms. Increasingly, their tone turned strident; their message became radical.[18]

[17] *Ibid.*, April 10, 1969; April 12, 1969; April 17, 1969; April 19, 1969; and *Malay Mail*, April 9, 1969.
[18] All campaign speeches were taped, then were reviewed by a police officer. If they included either communist appeals for the violent over-

In a few weeks the Alliance had lost control of the campaign, and any prospect of keeping communal issues out had become an idle hope. Communal antagonisms were rising rapidly, punctuated by sporadic outbursts of violence. Enche Ghafar bin Baba, popular former Chief Minister of Malacca, at times had to face unfriendly crowds in his home state. On April 20 faint boos greeted Tun Tan Siew Sin in Ipoh. On April 21 young people chanting obscenities and hurling rocks disrupted an Alliance rally in Brickfields.[19] Worse still, on April 24 Enche Kassim Omar, an UMNO worker, was murdered in Penang, and his body was smeared with red paint.[20]

Relentlessly, the PMIP and the DAP pressed their agitation. Addressing rural Malay groups PMIP campaigners developed their theme. The country, they insisted, belonged to the Malays. It always did and it must do so forever. The British colonials, *kafirs* as they were, had sought to undermine Islam and to debase Malay culture. They brought in the Chinese and turned the economy over to them. The real tragedy was, that after independence, the government had persisted in such policies. The Alliance was betraying Islam. "To promote opposing religions," an illustrated PMIP handbill proclaimed, "the Alliance government, besides building mosques and prayer houses, has spent ten million dollars of the people's money for building houses of prayer for opposing religions. . . . God says: 'Whoever seeks other than Islam as his religion of adoption, therefore he will never be received, that in the next world he will be included amongst the lost ones.'" As if this were not enough, the Alliance was also betraying the Malay race. Their economic policy helped to enrich the Chinese, with only a few Malays in the capitalist class benefiting. The constitutional commitment to establish Malay as the official language was not adequately implemented. The national education policy was a sham, with English continuing to dominate as a language of instruction and Chinese and Tamil also being permitted. Above all, political power, "the only thing that was left to the Malays . . . was now

throw of the government or personal abuse they were passed on to the Special Branch. Otherwise the tapes were erased and re-used. Thus, in fact, even the crassest communal provocations were generally erased.

[19] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 21, 1969; and *Malay Mail*, April 22, 1969.

[20] Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, *May 13: Before and After* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press, 1969), p. 46.

being eroded by the Alliance."[21] The PMIP was even prepared to offer a scapegoat: the Prime Minister. It was all his fault. He was too soft on the Chinese. He was too easily influenced by his Chinese cronies.

Meanwhile, speaking to urban Chinese electorates, the DAP had its own communal song to sing. Malaysia, its candidates and party workers proclaimed, was not the country of Malays, but a country of all Malaysians. Citizenship and fullest equality was not merely a political privilege; it was the birthright of indigenous Chinese and Indians. Malay economic privileges were intolerable; Malay political hegemony was a travesty; and Malay pretensions for cultural pre-eminence was a banal joke. The Alliance government served the interests of the Malays. Chinese ministers were corrupt, and worse still they were traitors to the Chinese race.[22] As such they were callously throwing away their birthright. The Malays must be handled firmly and resolutely. This the MCA could never do. Hence, they must be thrown out —the whole pack of them.

The PPP joined the communal chorus of the DAP. Not so the *Partai Rakyat*. Their candidates agreed with the PMIP that Malay should be the official language and that public education should be conducted in it. They were inclined to concede the DAP argument that *Bumiputra* policy was a disservice to the country. All these, however, were secondary issues. Communalism was a distraction from the most horrendous exploitation which the people had to endure—the exploitation by an unholy alliance of the capitalist (foreign as well as domestic) and feudal classes. Only after this fundamental fact was generally understood was there a prospect for a viable and multi-racial Malaysia. To audiences in such urban states as Penang, Perak, and Malacca and others in the more rural areas of Pahang, *Partai Rakyat* candidates and workers were determined to redefine the enemy.

A campaign which exploited communal antagonisms did not appeal to the *Gerakan* either. To be sure, there were lapses. The leadership, except perhaps in Penang, did not have much control

[21] Speech by Dato Asri in Johore Bahru, cited in *The Straits Times*, April 19, 1969.

[22] Tun Tan Siew was the only senior MCA officer whose reputation generally protected him of the charge of corruption, but as a Baba-Chinese [who spoke only English and Malay] he was vulnerable to insinuations that he was too assimilated into Malay.

over local party workers. Some indeed could not resist slipping occasionally into communal diatribes and at times resorting to outright deceit. In a number of instances apparently *Gerakan* supporters in unfriendly neighborhoods pretended to be something else and advised people to put an X beside the *Gerakan* symbol on the ballot. The triangle (i.e., the *Gerakan* symbol) was a bad symbol, they explained; it should be eliminated by marking it with an X. More frequently *Gerakan* supporters were advised to pretend to vote for the Alliance on election day and thus be able to use Alliance transportation to and from the polling stations.

All the same, the *Gerakan* did resist the temptation of radical communal appeal successfully. Mr. V. David, possibly the most vociferous among the *Gerakan* top leadership, regularly complained that the Alliance was hostile to the Indian minority which they accused of disloyalty. The cause he claimed to have espoused, however, was not of any community, but that of all workers who were exploited.[23] At rallies alternating in three languages—Malay, English, and Tamil—he spoke of the education policy as confusing, unfair, and excessively expensive to the parents. He spoke of the economic policy which ignored the needs of the workers in income and housing. They, his campaign slogan insisted, were treated worse than animals.

Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, the most colorful *Gerakan* standard bearer in Selangor, concentrated his attacks on corruption and the arbitrariness of government. Dr. Lim Chong Eu in Penang was determined to engage the Alliance, he proudly asserted, on their "home ground," economic policy. At the Esplanade on April 19 he assailed Tun Razak and "his cronies" (Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Sambanthan) and attributed to them the belief "that they can buy, browbeat or bully the true representatives of the masses to support them." Two days later he castigated the "Alliance ideology of political favoritism and political blackmail." Then on April 28 at Alor Star he described the education policy as a "madhouse." This notwithstanding he was not distracted from his strategy. The overriding themes of all nineteen of his major speeches delivered between April 19 and May 9—everyone of them carefully prepared and written out

[23] Koh Sek Tee, *"Constituency Study of Pantai in the 1969 General Election"* (Unpublished Graduation Exercise: University of Malaya, 1970), pp. 47–58.

beforehand—were two: Alliance economic neglect of Penang and the failures of the national economic policy. Very carefully he avoided communal issues, and whenever the occasion required it—as the night after the murder of the UMNO worker in Penang—he steadfastly proclaimed his support for "the principles of our Constitution and the Rule of Law." In the closing days he deplored what he considered "racialism" in the Alliance campaign. It allegedly had resorted to the twin lies, one, that the *Gerakan* was anti-Malay prepared to take away Malay special rights and two, that it had sold out the Chinese by becoming a tool of the PMIP.[24]

Significant as the PPP, *Partai Rakyat* and *Gerakan* positions were in the face of PMIP and DAP communal agitations, the main question was the Alliance response. The senior leaders of UMNO, MCA, and the MIC were mostly in the field campaigning. Occasionally, when their paths crossed, they exchanged impressions. Regularly, the Prime Minister and Tun Razak conferred on the telephone. There was little possibility for a new, general strategy conference. Nor was there, at the highest echelon, an awareness of a need for one.

Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak with their hectic schedules were speaking to thousands of people. Other federal ministers at a rather more leisurely pace were doing the same. None was inclined to listen. When UMNO executive secretary Musa Hitam warned of a serious PMIP threat in the northern states, especially Kedah, he was reprimanded. Tun Tan Siew Sin was more prepared to listen, but the intermediaries he relied on—Chinese businessmen—no longer enjoyed the same access to electoral opinion as they had in the past. When his "braintruster" Tai Kon Chin presented a secret position paper predicting only fourteen MCA seats in the *Dewan Ra'ayat* (Lower House), it was so dissonant from other reports that it was simply disregarded as an intellectual's fantasy.[25]

Indeed, most of the information reaching the Alliance leadership was reassuring. Political reports from the field were generally optimistic. And so was the press. *The Straits Times* gave special prominence to the Alliance's Manifesto and the speeches

[24] Speech at Bukit Mertajam, May 7, 1969.

[25] As it turned out, Mr. Tai, a University of Malaya lecturer, proved almost wholly accurate in his projections which incidentally included his own defeat in a Seremban constituency.

of its high command. The *Malay Mail* sent reporters to interview the candidates and voters in "star-constituencies." Their stories did not openly support any party, but they did imply that the Alliance had a chance to capture such opposition strongholds as Bangsar, Kinta, and even the state of Kelantan.[26] The Chinese language newspapers followed the same pattern. Most clearly partisan, however, was the Malay press. The *Utusan Melayu* (which with its Jawi script had greatest access to the rural masses) and the *Utusan Malaysia* day after day reported support for the Alliance by traditional leaders and defections by PMIP officials or their relatives. During the campaign (April 5–May 10) they devoted more editorials to the election than did any other newspaper: The *Utusan Melayu* twenty-six and the *Utusan Malaysia* thirty-six.[27] Pretending objectivity by not formally endorsing the Alliance, these newspapers nevertheless "spared no effort to discredit the PMIP" and other opposition parties.[28]

Given their confidence in a strategy which had worked so well in the past and the atmosphere of optimism generated by their subordinates and the press, the Alliance leadership responded with patience and restraint to provocations and violence. When the Prime Minister was heckled at Petaling Jaya, Alliance managers turned the lights and cameras upon the disorderly elements. During the unrest at Brickfields Dato Harun ordered his bodyguard to holster his gun. When Khaw Kai Boh was heckled and booed at an Ipoh rally, he invited the leaders of the noisiest elements to share the platform with him. And when the UMNO worker was murdered in Penang, the government arranged for a quiet funeral and encouraged resumption of the campaign.[29]

They were also inclined to respond with patience and restraint to the DAP and PMIP charges. The MCA preferred to ignore accusations of corruption and to dramatize instead the "picture in the minds of the Chinese voters as to what would in fact

[26] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, April 13, 1969; and April 20, 1969.

[27] In comparison, the number of editorials on the election campaign in *The Straits Times* was thirteen, in *Malay Mail* seven, in *Berita Harian* eighteen.

[28] Samsudin bin Marsop, *"The Alliance and the 1969 General Elections"* (Unpublished Graduation Exercise: University of Malaya, 1970), pp. 2, 4ff.

[29] Koh Sek Tee, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–73; Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 46; and *The Straits Times*, April 25, 1969; and April 26, 1969.

happen if in the unlikely event MCA is outvoted by the chauvinistic opposition parties, which all purport to fight for Chinese rights. "This," wrote Bernard T. H. Wang, Political Secretary to Tun Tan Siew Sin, "would help the voters to realize how serious the consequences could be and that such fear and uncertainty could be avoided if they solidly support MCA and strengthen Chinese representation in Parliament and State legislatures." To reinforce the argument Tun Razak publicly warned of the danger which would arise if "the Chinese voted for Opposition Chinese candidates instead of MCA candidates . . . all the Chinese Opposition candidates, even if all of them win—which really is not possible—will not be of much help to the Chinese because they are in the Opposition and this situation would further aggravate racial tension."[30] Tun Tan Siew Sin himself visited Penang and after a vigorous discussion with businessmen and other community leaders reminded people that "the Alliance was likely to form the next Government at the centre . . . no greater tragedy could befall Penang than for it to come under *Gerakan* rule."[31]

One concession Tun Tan Siew Sin and the MCA leadership wanted to avoid: Merdeka University. Originally, they opposed a Chinese medium university for the strategic reason that it would intensify Malay resentment and trigger Malay chauvinist demands. In the midst of the campaign, however, they opposed it on tactical grounds as well. Having stated their firm rejection earlier, by giving in, they felt, they would lend credence to DAP charges that the MCA was at least "too soft" on the Malays, if they were not selling out Chinese interests altogether. The pressure from local party units and the business community (articulated by T. H. Tan), however, was becoming unbearable. Some candidates, including Lew Sip Hon of the prestigious Bangsar constituency, already had broken party discipline and endorsed the project. A delegation bypassing Tun Tan Siew Sin even went to see the Prime Minister and requested his intervention. Most reluctantly, Tun Tan gave in, and on April 30 accepted the idea. Khaw Kai Boh agreed to initiate the arrangements.[32]

For its part, the UMNO leadership was determined to avoid cultural issues. Malay was the national language, and public

[30] *The Straits Times*, April 23, 1969.

[31] *Ibid.*, April 25, 1969.

[32] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, May 1, 1969.

education was adopting it just as fast as feasible. The Education Commission report was proof enough for that. Nor was it inclined to engage in arguments on the erosion of Malay political power. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the majority of the Cabinet, even the majority of Alliance candidates were Malay. Meanwhile, economic progress and tangible material rewards for Malays were there for all to see. Besides the PMIP was hardly in a position to cast any stones. Their government in Kelantan was subsidized by Chinese businessmen; their campaign was financed by the DAP.

The attack on Tunku Abdul Rahman, however, cut deeply. The Prime Minister was profoundly hurt by allegations that he was disloyal to the Malay community, and he was totally distressed by suggestions that he was unfaithful to Islam. The charges, he felt, were not only absurd, they were blasphemous. Things had gone too far. He hoped that the Malays would not permit themselves to be so cruelly deceived and that the democratic processes would not lend themselves to such gross abuses. "I am a servant of God. I am 66 years old and whatever strength I have in carrying out my responsibilities to the nation is given me by God," he poignantly declared in Kota Bharu.[33] Then Tunku Abdul Rahman assumed the offensive. Keeping in mind repeated PMIP assertions that it would not accept aid from abroad, he declared: "I know that the PMIP has received financial support from a foreign country. . . . I challenge the PMIP to swear on the Koran and deny that it did not receive funds from a foreign country."[34] When Dato Asri agreed to comply provided the Prime Minister did the same, it seemed a good opportunity to discredit dramatically any insinuations about his devotion to his faith. All the newspapers would be naturally expected to carry the picture of Tunku Abdul Rahman at this solemn occasion.

Yet all the patience and restraints of the Alliance high command and all the efforts of *Gerakan* and *Partai Rakyat* leaders notwithstanding, communal agitation by candidates and local workers was moving toward a crescendo. The campaign became vulgar and brutal. In Kedah Dr. Mahathir advised his Chinese constituents not to vote for him, as he would not represent their interests in Parliament. At house-to-house canvasses MCA la-

[33] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 24, 1969.
[34] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1969.

dies pleaded for support so "we can be strong enough to counter the demands of extremists in UMNO."[35] An Alliance candidate in Johore warned that if ever the PMIP were to get into power, the Chinese would not be able to live in peace because the ways of Asri were similar to those of Sokarno. In turn, speaking to a Malay audience he alleged that the PMIP nomination papers were typed in the DAP office.[36] Other UMNO candidates assured their audiences that though it would be the Prime Minister's last election, continued Malay pre-eminence would be guaranteed. These were only mild examples. One DAP candidate in Selangor promised that if his party were to win he would make the Malays learn Chinese in two months. PMIP workers suggested a solution to the Chinese problem could be found only if they were all converted to Islam or sent to China. The Chief Minister of Selangor pleaded for "reason": "I agree with you that they should be converted, but how can we circumcise all the Chinese [a requirement of conversion]" "I agree with you that they should leave, but how can we ship them all back to China or put them back into their mothers' bellies?" "Put them on a slow boat and pray for a typhoon or shoot them all," came the answer from the crowd. And all along the DAP obligato: "Teach the Malays a lesson; they are primitives. We must gain political power."

There was no question: the campaign had broken the bounds of constitutional restraint. Simultaneously, from several quarters the government faced a revolutionary challenge. Indeed, when confronted with a radical communal initiative even its own ranks broke. And two events which must have had a profound effect on the campaign were yet to come. First, came the release of some pictures by the PMIP. One showed Khir Johari and his wife dressed in mandarin clothes. It had been used as a greeting card for Chinese New Year and may have seemed clever or cute to the Minister of Education. Two days before Election the PMIP flooded the *kampongs* with reproductions, distributing some 50,000 in Kedah alone. The other circulated more surreptitiously depicted the Prime Minister eating with chopsticks with a roast suckling pig in the middle of the table.[37]

[35] Koh Sek Tee, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
[36] Samsudin bin Marsop, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[37] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–33.

It was, to be sure, a composite, but few knew that, and it provided a sharp counterpoint to Tunku Abdul Rahman's picture in the mosque taking his oath.[38]

Far more momentous was the second event: the funeral of a Labour Party member. Early Sunday morning, May 4, according to the official spokesman, a detachment of three police constables came upon a group of eight to ten youths painting anti-election slogans on the main road at Kepong, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. "On being confronted by the policemen, the youths turned round and attacked them with iron pipes, iron spikes and sticks. The constables retreated and took cover at the old market about 100 yards away. They identified themselves and shouted warning to the youths. The youths, however, continued to attack them with catapults. One of the policemen then fired a shot and hit a youth. The others fled."[39] The young man died later in the hospital. He was Lim Sun Seng, a construction worker; he became an instant martyr.

Contrary to custom, he was not buried quickly. Although he lived in Kepong, his body was brought to a mortuary twelve miles away in Kuala Lumpur. The Labour Party took charge of the arrangements and promptly requested a permit for a funeral procession on May 10, Election Day. The police refused, but after consultation with Tun Razak they approved the application for May 9. The day before the procession a small delegation arrived at police headquarters to make the final arrangements. They demanded that "in order not to provoke those who were taking part in the procession the Police had better not allow any of their men in uniform to be around, especially the F. R. U. [riot police] boys." They also demanded routes which would pass through the heart of the capital city. "They insisted on these routes and said that whether the Police agreed with them or not they were going through all the same. I, therefore, had to agree," reported Enche Mansor bin Mohamed Nor, the officer-in-charge of Traffic, Kuala Lumpur Police District, "on the condition that the number of people following the procession should not exceed one thousand."[40] The unusual pusillanimity of the police was due, the Prime Minister later explained, to their conclusion

[38] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 9, 1969.
[39] *Ibid.*, May 5, 1969.
[40] Quoted in Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–52.

that "in the national interest it was essential that nothing should occur to mar the elections."

In point of fact, many more than a thousand persons turned up and the "funeral procession" lasted practically a full day. It started at 9:55 A.M. somewhat behind schedule at the House of the Dead on Jalan Sultan. As it moved through the city, the crowd swelled into a mass of about ten thousand:[41] waving red flags and carrying banners with "Mao Tse Tung's Thoughts," other revolutionary slogans and demands "to repay blood debt with blood and to return violence with violence." They chanted provocations to the police and the government. Practically all were Chinese.

Order was strictly maintained with all demonstrators confined between two lines of ropes covered with red cloth and carried by a long formation of party workers. Some fifty to a hundred youths on motorcycles and motor scooters led the procession and raced up and down alongside it.[42] Defiantly they departed from the approved route, shouted insults to Malays at the MARA Building, and directed traffic on the way. By mid-afternoon a heavy rain began to pour down, but most of the crowd remained and continued its slow progress to the cemetery. Halfway there soft drinks were distributed. At Kepong the procession halted to reorganize. Loudspeakers blared the "Internationale" with a few people chiming in, then curiously the American "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with somewhat more success. They resumed the march, past the police station where security forces were massed, but discipline held on both sides. Finally, there was a short ceremony at graveside.

The effect of the funeral was inestimable. Lined along the route were thousands of Chinese spectators, mostly workers. They spoke little, but their eyes reflected defiance—and pride. They must have been impressed by Chinese power. First, they had compelled the MCA to concede Merdeka University long before hell froze over (or the iron plant blossomed forth); now *they* turned out in mass, regulated traffic, and apparently controlled Kuala Lumpur. For the moment at least the ideal of Malaysian Malaysia merged into the vision of Chinese control.

[41] Government of Malaysia, *The May 13 Tragedy, A Report* (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 1969).
[42] This number is my own estimate. The official figure was listed as 500.

Relatively few Malays witnessed the procession, but stories and rumors about it spread like wildfire. In urban enclaves and *kampongs* they heard about the "Chinese defiance" and the "Chinese arrogance." All through the campaign they had heard PMIP candidates speak of the erosion of Malay political power. Events that day apparently verified their contention. That night in Dato Keramat at an Alliance rally no speaker but Dato Harun, Chief Minister of Selangor, dared address the hostile Malay crowd. Even he had a difficult time.

Next day, as the daily newspapers carried reports and pictures of the "funeral," the Malaysian electorate went to the polls.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Judgment of the Electorate

It almost seemed an ordinary day: Saturday, May 10, 1969. The skies were clear; the weather was pleasant. Shops were open for business as usual. In *kampongs* and towns work was going on; the routines continued unbroken. Almost, but not quite an ordinary day. Indeed, it marked a milestone in Malaysian political processes, a regularly recurring test of the government's commitment to democratic institutions and of its capacity to sustain them. Early morning election officials and party observers arrived and the polls were opened. Throughout the day voters lined up in small groups, presenting in unison as it were the rich mosaic of the country's population: men, women, Malays, Chinese, Indians, persons of all ages. Noticeably young people predominated. Many had stopped at the party-booths seeking instructions about election procedures or about their own selections. Their progress was occasionally interrupted by the arrival of a prominent personage complete with an entourage of journalists and photographers. The sensation passed and then the democratic process returned to its undramatic routine: long lines of people, one by one, casting secret ballots.

All along, arrangements had proceeded to ascertain and to announce the judgment of the voters. At central locations halls were being prepared for the tabulation of ballots. On the *padang* in front of the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur, work on a large, well-illuminated signboard was about completed. It was designed to carry election results easily visible for the expected multitude. Radio and Television Malaysia were ready to stay on the air all night and to continue, if necessary, until a parliamentary majority entitled to form a new national government did emerge.

It almost seemed a calm and tranquil day. There were no demonstrations and practically no incidents.[1] At the polling

[1] In one of the few exceptions, three young men were arrested in Kepong and were charged with obstructing the presiding officer of the Sungei Buloh polling station. Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 13, 1969.

places friends greeted each other joyously. Some of the ladies giggled; the men chatted with careless gaiety. Almost, but not quite a tranquil day. The security forces were discretely deployed, and the General Hospital in the capital had set up fifty beds—just in case of an emergency. Traffic in all towns was unusually light. Few were inclined to discuss politics or hazard prognostications. Indeed, beneath the façade of calm—not very far beneath—there was a mood of rapidly rising apprehension. The communal tension and hostility recklessly exacerbated by the campaign was rushing toward a climax.

The political leaders themselves, of course, were far from relaxed. Remarkably, practically all not only pretended to be, but actually were, optimistic. Dato Asri (PMIP) was quite confident that any Alliance gains would fall short of those necessary to wrest control of Kelantan from the PMIP. Shrewdly, he suspected some rather unpleasant surprises for the government party in the Malay majority states of Perlis, Kedah, and Trengganu. Across the peninsula Dr. Lim Chong Eu (*Gerakan*) at his campaign command post became convinced by mid-morning that his secret electoral "formula" was indeed a success. His party would certainly carry Penang; and with that he shifted his attention to the progress of his political allies in Perak and Selangor. Lim Kit Siang (DAP) continued his characteristically intense tempo in Malacca, but was already planning the DAP campaign for East Malaysia. His colleague, Goh Hock Guan, was no less sanguine. Most confident of all was the Alliance. On election day *The Straits Times* headline blazed: "It's 10-to-1 on another Alliance sweep."[2] Meanwhile, a record number of voters were brought to the polls by the party's automobiles and buses. They visited the party's electioneering booths and received political guidance (and in some cases incentives). If only they would cast Alliance ballots, the party indeed would win by a landslide.

Tun Razak, having returned from a most vigorous effort in Kelantan, was inclined to think that the PMIP control of that state may well have been terminated. Possibly, just possibly, the Opposition might capture one state, but he was hard pressed to decide just which one. Certainly, not his home state of Pahang. Perlis or Kedah? Most unlikely. Penang? Well, not really. About

[2] *Ibid.*, May 10, 1969.

the same time in Johore, under the leadership of Tun (Dr.) Ismail, the party exuded self-assurance. Its candidates included not only the Minister of Transport, Tan Sri Sardon, but also such impressive Malay folk-heroes as Syed Nasir and the young and energetic Musa Hitam. Musa pressed his campaign to the very end, but he never doubted success. Tun (Dr.) Ismail himself was not so sanguine. He suspected that UMNO was losing its appeal to the Malays. He recalled that Dato Asri's visit to Alor Star was greeted with a spontaneous outpouring of thousands of evidently avid listeners, a feat which the Alliance could match only with a maximum organizational effort. And in the last few days of the campaign a University of Malaya lecturer endorsing PMIP policies received a hero's welcome in Kota Bharu.

The President of the MCA, Tun Tan Siew Sin, at his home in Malacca, was in a contemplative mood. He felt no anxiety about his own constituency. It was his party's future that troubled him. To be sure, he was pleased that once again after some initial difficulties the leaders of the guilds and the Chambers of Commerce were united behind him. He had implicit faith in the word of a Chinese businessman and felt certain they could deliver the votes. He knew also, no doubt, of the support of the major secret societies and particularly the most powerful ones in Ipoh.[3] What worried him deeply was the sharpening of communal cleavages. His whole low-key approach toward inter-communal cooperation seemed in jeopardy. He did not mind bargaining with the Malay community, but he foresaw only disaster from a confrontation with it. Something had to be done—soon after the elections. Close-by his Cabinet colleague, Enche Ghafar bin Baba, was also considering the future with some concern. The rural Malays were increasingly restive. He had taken great pains to explain the problems to them, and gradually their regard for him again exhibited itself in its accustomed warmth; but clearly

[3] There were three prominent and powerful secret societies in the Ipoh area: the "108" gang or "08" gang, the "Wah Kee" gang and the "Siew Pat Hung," the last one being the combination of the three minor gangs, the "Siew Ying Hung" ("Small Heroes"), the "Pat Sin" (Eight Immortals), and the Hung Hup T'ong (Triad United). Other less prominent gangs were the "Double Tiger Mountain," "Woh Kee," "Flying Tiger" and the "21 Brothers." Secret societies generally offered their services of protection to politicians and parties; they occasionally "persuaded" influential Chinese, but they did not get directly involved in the mobilization of voters.

a major effort to reassure the Malay community by action, not by promises, was definitely indicated. As the only Malay educated Cabinet member, he would have to take the initiative in this—just as soon as the campaign was over.

Tun V. T. Sambanthan had no doubt of his own re-election either. With the enthusiastic support of his wife, he tried to maintain a close personal relationship with his constituents in Sungei Siput, Perak. He was convinced that he could count on Indian estate workers and his Malay constituents. That would be enough. But surely, the MCA could mobilize some additional votes—though, quite frankly, he did have some qualms about the effectiveness of the MCA.

The Chief Minister of Selangor, Dato Harun bin Idris, had just completed his grueling campaign schedule which took him throughout his state. His own constituency was safe enough, but he hoped to help some of his colleagues. His own staff was encouraging. The Alliance would win in at least 25 out of 28 state constituencies, they assured him, and even a clean sweep was not beyond reach. On election day he returned to his own constituency in Kuala Langat and hoped for a chance to rest. After the results were announced, he would visit and thank his supporters and celebrate his victory.

Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman did not share fully in the atmosphere of optimism. His home state of Kedah seemed firmly in control of UMNO. Two Ministers, Khir Johari and Enche Senu, as well as Dr. Mahathir confidently expected re-election. Indeed he himself had assured the country of 89 Alliance seats from West Malaysia in the Parliament. "With a little luck, we may even win one or two more seats," he added.[4] All the same, he was troubled. The day before election Tun Razak had called him on the phone from Kelantan relaying Dr. Mahathir's complaint that Chinese voters (conceivably on his own advice) would not support him. They might even vote for the PMIP candidate. Worse still, a memory was haunting him. . . . "On Friday, May 2nd, the night of the full moon," the Prime Minister recounted later, "I had a most unusual dream."

> In the dream I found myself in a back lane between two rows of houses. The lane was narrow, slimy, sloshy, dirty—

[4] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 8, 1969, p. 1.

> the filth was such as I had never seen before. As I stood there not knowing what to do, sewer rats as large as medium-sized cats, swarmed out from the drain on the left side, coming up the middle of the lane, and started to eat the dirt.
>
> They appeared quite ferocious, gnawing away at the filth. I tried to make my way out to the other side of the lane not infested by them, when all of a sudden dirty blue flies buzzed out from a drain on the right covering the free area. It appeared to me that my way was blocked altogether.
>
> More rats and flies came out from both sides, so I decided that the only thing to do was to go through them. Thinking that the rats would attack me, and with my arms before my eyes and face, I tried to push my way through the swarm of blue flies, rather than go among the rats. The blue flies winged and buzzed all around me and pursued me for a little distance, but finally I managed to steer clear of them and walked out on to a clean road and into clear fresh air, and sighed with relief.[5]

This was not all. On the morning of Election Day rising from his prayers, the Prime Minister saw his chain of prayer beads (*tasbeh*) break and roll over the floor. Decidedly another bad omen. Restless he drove from polling station to polling station with his friend, Dr. Foo, a socially prominent Alor Star physician. What he saw was a break-down of Alliance local organization. Party offices were left unattended; some did not even display the party's symbol (the sailboat). He was confronted moreover by an incomprehensible sight: groups of Chinese voters entering the PMIP electioneering booths. Understandably, the Prime Minister was deeply troubled.

So passed the day. The polls closed, and the count began. In the streets, at private clubs and in private homes groups gathered to await the returns. Nearly everywhere, the politically most articulate were rooting, as it were, for the Opposition. Many though expressed no interest at all.

Initial returns were slow in coming and suggested nothing to doubt the publicly predicted Alliance landslide. Still the wait intensified tension. Somehow or other the interminable interludes on Television Malaysia of second-rate features failed to

[5] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 197–198.

amuse or distract. Many turned to food and to drink. A group of supporters at Dato Seenivasagam's house became unruly and threw rocks at the police.[6]

Then about an hour before midnight a *Gerakan* victory in the Cameron Highlands, a rural state constituency in Pahang, appeared amid the trickle of Alliance triumphs. Puzzling perhaps, but certainly not innocuous. Indeed, it was an omen for the rest of the night. Soon a series of PMIP successes on the East Coast and the *Gerakan* sweep of Penang was announced. Then followed the defeat of Dr. Lim Swee Aun, Minister of Commerce, by his *Gerakan* opponent in Perak and massive gains by the PPP in the state. After midnight came the news that Enche Senu, Minister of Information, also had lost his seat in Kedah. And so did Dr. Mahathir. Suddenly the picture had changed.

Tragically, the mood changed as well. It turned radical and communal. The cheers which greeted Opposition gains at the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur became more unrestrained, their tone shrill and vehement. The lines were more sharply drawn than ever before. The cleavages were never deeper. Chinese and especially Indians spoke of a new political arrangement, the repeal of the *Bumiputra* privileges, amendments to the National Language Act, revision of the Education Policy, in fact a new constitutional contract. "We won," they gloated. The elections meant, some shouted exuberantly, that not only the government but also the entire political system was finished, finished, finished. The Malays, in turn, fell into gloomy silence. Only hours earlier many had joined in the merriment occasioned by Alliance reverses. No longer. Even PMIP successes had apparently lost most of their flavor. They were sullen; their depressed fury hardly containable. They considered the conduct of their Chinese and Indian fellow-citizens unbearable and provocative. Some had wished to teach the government a lesson for ignoring or neglecting their communal interests. But now they were terrified of the political consequences. Many, even the Malay intellectuals, were extraordinarily susceptible to the most ranting boasts of the Chinese and Indians and accepted uncritically assertions of the government's collapse. They conjured up with rare facility a future marked by constant torments of

[6] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 12, 1969, p. 2.

strange devils and mysterious alien forces. Specifically, they were very much afraid that the spectre which had haunted them for some years had turned into reality: the political system, their last pillar of safety and security, had crumbled before their very eyes.

As a matter of fact, nothing so catastrophic had taken place.[7] To begin with, in spite of some dire predictions the election results did not reveal massive extra-systematic opposition. For all intents and purposes the Labour Party boycott of the elections had fizzled. Admittedly, the percentage of eligible voters who went to the polls declined, but it did so generally, in rural and urban areas and in constituencies with heavy Malay majorities as well as in others where the Chinese predominated. Thus, the change may well be accounted for by an attitude of complacency induced by the passing of the Indonesian confrontation, a widely and intensely perceived threat or alternatively by the confidence which the Alliance radiated. Only in 5 out of 31 parliamentary constituencies where the Labour Party entered a candidate in 1964 was there a marginal reduction of more than 10 percent.

Similarly, the strategy of defiance by spoiled ballots had, at best, a most modest success. Here again, most variation could plausibly be attributed to other causes, the most likely, a procedural fiasco. The government had decided to hold for the first time federal and state elections simultaneously. This presented a special problem for the functionally illiterate who relied on party symbols (pictures) rather than personal names (printed word) for their selection. Some in their puzzlement apparently misunderstood the instructions and marked one ballot twice and

[7] All data on election results were compiled from the Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1960); *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perlis*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kedah*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Melaka*, June 5, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pahang*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perak*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Trengganu*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Johore*, June 19, 1969. See also: Ibu Pejabat Perikataan, "An Analysis of the General Elections in West Malaysia, 1969" (unpublished report by Alliance Headquarters).

discarded what they considered the spare copy. In fact, the rise in the percentage of disqualified was a country-wide phenomenon. In only one-third of the parliamentary constituencies which the Labour Party contested did the number of disqualified ballots in 1969 exceed the national average (5 percent) and only in one of them (Jelebu-Jempol) did it exceed 10 percent (14.5 percent).

Second, the elections did not reveal overwhelming intra-systematic opposition. There were reverses to be sure. Prominent opposition leaders won by quite unprecedented majorities: Goh Hock Guan by 27,402; Lim Kit Siang by 11,216, and Dr. Tan Chee Khoon by 13,918. Apart from Tan Sri (Dr.) Lim Swee Aun and Enche Senu, the only other Minister defeated was Dr. Ng Kam Poh, a very recent appointment. All other Cabinet members were re-elected by reduced margins. For Tun Razak the reduction was slight—from 10,147 to 8,925, and for Tun Tan Siew Sin, noteworthy though not serious—from 13,327 to 7,300. For their colleagues, the decline was rather more substantial. The Prime Minister won by 3,504; Khir Johari by 2,375; Khaw Kai Boh by 1,523; and Tun Sambanthan by 146. Still the fact remained that when all the results were tallied, the Alliance retained a comfortable, by Western standards luxurious, majority in Parliament. The party held sixty-six of the West Malaysian seats and could expect to capture one additional seat where elections were postponed due to the sudden death of its candidate. Admittedly, compared to the Alliance accomplishment in 1964, the results suggested a sizable decline in support. But that year may not have offered an altogether appropriate standard. For purposes of comparison the elections of 1959 were probably far more relevant. If so, the difference though marked and not to be discounted, proved to be less impressive (see Table 12–1).

In the evaluation of popular votes, perhaps a more sensitive index of public support, the same caution was required. The Alliance polled 1,016,989 votes or some 183,329 less than five years earlier. The Opposition's share, on the other hand, increased by 224,949 to 1,076,694. The sharpness of the contrast, however, was considerably clouded not only by the probability that the 1964 data over-represented Alliance support but also by a near-certainty that the 1969 vote totals under-represented it. Indeed, they omitted the electorates of no less than ten parliamentary constituencies.[8] Nine of these were uncontested and thus it was not unreasonable to assume that they would have produced substantial Alliance majorities. Presumably the Opposition thought so. In the tenth (Melaka Selantan) where the election had to be postponed due to the death of a candidate the Alliance had always won, in the last election specifically by 11,499. Unlikely as it might have been that even with contests in all constituencies the Alliance would have reached, let alone

TABLE 12–1
Results of Parliamentary Elections in West Malaysia since Independence

	1959		*1964*		*1969*	
Party	*Seats*	*% of Votes*	*Seats*	*% of Votes*	*Seats*	*% of Votes*
Alliance	74	51.8	89	58.5	66*	48.5
Opposition	30	48.2	15	41.5	37	51.5

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1960), Malaysia, *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Chetak Kerajaan, 1965), and Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette] 19hb June, 1969.
* Not including results of the Melaka Selantan constituency.

exceeded, its 1964 record, if the probable electoral turn-out in these ten constituencies had been interpolated, the results almost certainly would have shown an excess of Alliance voters over the combined total of all Opposition parties.

Reverses in state elections were somewhat more serious for the Alliance but still quite a long distance from the critical level (see Table 12–2). The only Chief Minister defeated was Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee of Penang. Most other state leaders won though they saw their majorities dwindle, in the case of Dato Ibrahim Fikri, *Mentri Besar* of Trengganu to 324 votes.[9] Dato Harun, the Chief Minister of Selangor, was among the few who improved their margin (from 1,937 to 2,116), a pleasure that was generally reserved to the Opposition. For example, Dr. Lim Chong Eu of the *Gerakan* who won by 4,865 votes instead of the 1,128

[8] In 1964 these ten states drew 131,317 Alliance and 41,716 Opposition votes. In 1969 in the 27 out of 29 state constituencies which were congruent with the 10 parliamentary constituencies, the Alliance polled 116,265, the Opposition 48,581 and Independents 25,036 votes. In 2 state constituencies the Alliance candidate was uncontested in 1969.

[9] He won by 1,323 votes in 1964 but only by 299 in 1959.

in 1964 and his colleague, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon by an impressive 7,019 instead of the razor thin edge of 2 five years earlier. Dato Asri's margin, however, declined somewhat from 2,236 to 1,609.

Undeniably the Opposition's gains were impressive. The *Gerakan* with its 16 votes even without the support of the DAP (3) and *Partai Rakyat* (1) quite decisively controlled the Penang assembly. The Alliance retained only 4 of its 18 seats.

TABLE 12–2
Results of State Elections in West Malaysia since Independence

Party	*1959*	*1964*	*1969*
Alliance	207	240	167
Opposition	70	42	112
Independents	5	–	3

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1960); *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette] *Negeri Perlis*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kedah*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Melaka*, June 5, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pahang*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perak*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Trengganu*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Johore*, June 19, 1969.

In Perak, the Opposition wiped out the comfortable Alliance position, reducing their seats from 35 to 19, and raising the prospects of the combined seats of the PPP (12), *Gerakan* (2), DAP (6) even without the addition of the lone PMIP assemblyman forming a majority. The picture was similar in the Selangor State Assembly where the Alliance representation dwindled from 24 to 14 and was now confronted by 9 DAP, 4 *Gerakan* and 1 Independent member. Potentially a very tricky situation. Trengganu saw the Opposition seats rise from 3 to 11. Even in Kedah, the Prime Minister's home state, where since independence no Opposition member sat in the State Assembly, 8 PMIP and 2 *Gerakan* candidates were successful.

Kedah and Trengganu, however, did remain under Alliance control. With a margin of 4 and 2 respectively it was a close call, but still enough. (It should perhaps be recalled that Trengganu had a PMIP majority in 1959.) And so did comfortably Perlis, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore. Even in

Kelantan the Alliance could claim a victory of sorts. It had gained 2 seats reducing the PMIP margin in the Assembly to 8. In any case there was no rational basis for the exuberant boast or the terrified alarm of the government's collapse. It remained quite safe.

Far more serious was the evidence generated by the elections that the foundations of the political system, the capacity of the Alliance to mobilize inter-communal support, was seriously impaired. State elections in 1964 had already suggested an increasingly significant correlation between the communal composition of the constituency and the Alliance vote total. In 1969 the same became true of parliamentary elections as well. The scores were, of course, still too low to draw analytical conclusions; nevertheless the possibility of a trend emerging which positively related the share of Malays and negatively the share of Chinese in constituencies with the percentage of Alliance votes certainly required some consideration (see Table 12–3).

TABLE 12–3
Intercorrelation Matrix between the Share of Communal Groups and the Share of Votes Cast for Political Parties in Parliamentary (P) and State (S) Constituencies, 1969*

		Malays	*Chinese*	*Indians*
Alliance	(P)	0.48	—0.53	—0.22
	(S)	0.54	—0.55	—0.21
PMIP	(P)	0.84	—0.88	—0.60
	(S)	0.85	—0.83	—0.49
DAP	(P)	—0.51	0.54	0.49
	(S)	—0.48	0.45	0.33
Gerakan	(P)	—0.35	0.40	0.12
	(S)	—0.38	0.38	0.16
PPP	(P)	—0.32	0.30	0.14
	(S)	—0.29	0.28	0.18
Partai Rakyat	(P)	0.01	0.03	—0.13
	(S)	—0.03	0.07	—0.11

Sources: Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perlis*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerjaan Negeri Kedah*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Melaka*, June 5, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pahang*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perak*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Trengganu*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Johore*, June 19, 1969.

* The PPP and Partai Rakyat did not enter sufficient candidates to make the coefficients significant. Nor were there sufficient constituencies with significant Indian populations.

The first question which needed clarification was this: had the MCA lost its capacity to mobilize Chinese votes on its own behalf? The answer came in two parts. First, there was no evidence that the Opposition succeeded in an accelerated politicization of the community of Chinese. Certainly, a comparison of the average percentages of eligible voters who had actually cast their ballots classified according to the communal composition of the parliamentary constituencies suggested nothing of the sort (see Table 12–4). If anything there has been a general

TABLE 12–4
Average Rate of Registered Voters Casting Ballots Classified according to Communal Composition of Parliamentary Constituencies, 1964, 1969

	1964		*1969*	
Communal Composition	*%*	*No.**	*%*	*No.**
Preponderant Malay majority (in excess of 70%)	79.4	34	75.4	34
Heavy Malay dominance (in excess of 60%)	79.4	11	73.6	10
Balanced constituency (each community less than 60%)	78.0	33	72.2	27
Balanced constituency (electorate more than 20% Indian)	76.7	2	71.6	2
Heavy Chinese dominance (in excess of 60%)	79.9	12	72.8	11
Preponderant Chinese majority (in excess of 70%)	78.7	7	70.5	7

Sources: Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969, and Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Zaman*, April 16, 1969.
* Does not total 104 due to uncontested seats and the unavailability of communal composition in three Trengganu constituencies.

decline in the exercise of suffrage, and the gap in the rate of participation between constituencies with preponderant Malay majorities and those with preponderant Chinese majorities widened somewhat.

Second, the election did not produce sufficient evidence for a trend of *massive desertion* of the MCA by the Chinese electorate throughout the country. Once again, the results contrast sharply with those of 1964, but not nearly so impressively with those of 1959 (see Table 12–5). A closer examination reveals that the thirty-three parliamentary constituencies which the MCA contested in 1969 included seven where the Chinese voters

TABLE 12–5
Comparison of MCA Performance at the Polls, 1959, 1964, 1969

	1959		*1964*		*1969*	
	Contested	*Won*	*Contested*	*Won*	*Contested*	*Won*
Parliament	32	17	33	27	33	13
State Assemblies	78	58	82	65	84	30

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1960); *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perlis*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kedah*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang*, *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Melaka*, June 5, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pahang*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perak*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Trengganu*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Johore*, June 19, 1969.

exceeded 70 percent of the electorate and another ten where they exceeded 60 percent. The former seats were always quite hopeless for the party. They lost them all in 1959 and even under the most favorable conditions of 1964 could carry only one. The MCA's record in the second group of constituencies was not much more reassuring: in 1969 they won only two. Five years earlier, in contrast, they carried all ten, but four only

TABLE 12–6
Comparison of Popular Vote for MCA Parliamentary Candidates in Chinese Dominated (60%-70%) Constituencies, 1959, 1964, 1969

Constituency	*1959*	*1964*	*1969*
Alor Star	10,730	14,749	9,016
Kulim Bandar Bahru	11,317	15,077	14,381
Larut Selentan	11,218	18,906	10,774
Tanjong Malim	8,038	9,983	7,882
Sepang	4,992	9,438	8,450
Ulu Selangor	6,537	9,412	8,278
Seremban Timor	2,061	9,604	8,073
Kluang Utara	5,985	9,138	8,937
Muar Pantai	8,997	16,578	13,755
Segamat Selantan	7,828	11,355	14,470

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1960); *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969.

by a plurality. In 1959 the MCA won seven, but again four of these victories were due not to a majority vote polled, but to a division in the Opposition. To put it simply, only in one out of seventeen Chinese-dominated constituencies did the MCA receive more than 50 percent of the ballots cast in 1959 and less than that ten years later. In this sense the evidence supports the sagacity of the Opposition in forming an electoral pact, but hardly a significant political shift of the Chinese voters. Finally, the MCA contested fifteen mixed constituencies and one with a heavy Malay majority. In these as well the party generally polled fewer votes in 1969 than it did in 1964. A comparison with the 1959 record is possible only for ten constituencies, as in two (Bentong and Batu Pahat) the MCA was unopposed in 1969, and in three others (Bruas, Setapak, and Seremban Barat) it did not present a candidate in 1959.

A review of the record (see Table 12–6) indicated growing support in six constituencies but an increase in the aggregate MCA votes by only 33 percent (from 77,700 to 103,756), somewhat below the 41 percent increase in the total valid votes cast in these constituencies (that is from 144,442 to 203,748). Indeed in 1969 the party lost 5 such seats, but the main contributing factor for this may well be found outside the community of Chinese. It was suggestive—to say the least—that in each and every one of these instances the number of ballots cast on behalf of the MCA fell appreciably below the number of eligible Malay voters (see Table 12–7). Although the MCA did carry ten mixed constituencies and the one with heavy Malay majority, it seemed probable that in some urban areas Malay voters were rather less willing to support UMNO's political partners.

TABLE 12–7
Chinese Dominated (60%-70%) Parliamentary Constituencies Lost by MCA, 1969

Constituency	*Eligible Malay Vote*	*MCA Vote*
Larut Selantan	16,415	10,774
Bruas	12,068	7,900
Setapak	24,039	13,871
Seremban Timor	8,224	8,073
Seremban Barat	9,894	7,227

Source: Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969, and Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Zaman*, April 16, 1969.

Another question which needed investigation in view of the possibility of an impaired Alliance capacity for multi-communal mobilization involved the effectiveness of MCA in managing Chinese support for UMNO candidates. Here an answer came from the calculations of Professors K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, foremost authorities of the Malaysian elections (see Table 12–8). If correct, the UMNO in fact had been outpolled by the PMIP in the Malay community, and its electoral majority was assured by Chinese votes. Hence, the MCA had not lost its political utility to the Alliance altogether.

Parallel questions directed at UMNO produced the following sets of answers. First, UMNO was always much more popular among Malays than the MCA was among Chinese—and this continued to be true. Nevertheless the election results also indicated that UMNO was finding it increasingly difficult to mobilize Malay support. The PMIP was apparently making significant headway (see Table 12–9). It securely controlled the state of Kelantan, and as the result of the elections it also held a strong position in the assemblies of Trengganu and Kedah. In parliamentary contests it accounted for about one-third of the Opposition victories, and this did not include the instances when it served as a spoiler by draining away votes from the Al-

TABLE 12–8
Performance of UMNO in Direct Confrontation with PMIP for Seats in Parliament, 1969
(n = 43)

A.	UMNO votes	516,718
	PMIP votes	410,640
	Total valid votes	927,358
B.	Malay electorate	1,066,832
	Non-Malay electorate	230,198
	Total electorate	1,297,130
C.	Assuming that the spoiled vote rate was the same for all communities but that Malay turnout was 4 percent higher than non-Malay turnout:	
	Malays who cast valid votes	770,287
	Non-Malays who cast valid votes	157,071
D.	Assuming that 5 percent of valid non-Malay votes went to the PMIP:	
	The PMIP got 402,787 Malay votes and 7,853 non-Malay votes.	
	The UMNO got 367,500 Malay votes and 149,218 non-Malay votes.	

Source: K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, "The 1969 Parliamentary Election in West Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1970), p. 219.

TABLE 12–9
Share of PMIP in Opposition Seats in Parliament and State Assemblies, 1964, 1969

	Parliament		*State Assemblies*	
Party	*1964*	*1969*	*1964*	*1969*
PMIP	9	12	25	40
Others	6	25	17	72
Total Opposition	15	37	42	112

Sources: Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perlis*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kedah*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Melaka*, June 5, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pahang*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Perak*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan*, June 19, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Trengganu*, June 26, 1969; *Warta Kerajaan Negeri Johore*, June 19, 1969.

liance candidates thus assuring the election of other (non-Malay) opposition candidates. Direct confrontations with UMNO were not particularly profitable to the PMIP, at least as far as parliamentary seats were concerned. In 1959 it won 13 out of 52 contests; five years later 9 out of 47; and in 1969 12 out of 51. If, however, its record of attracting popular votes had been examined more closely a new dimension of the election results would have become apparent.

Over the 1959–1969 decade popular support for the PMIP rose more rapidly than that for other opposition parties (see Table 12–10). Unquestionably it extended its appeal to urban Malays

TABLE 12–10
Share of the PMIP in Ballots Cast for the Opposition in Parliamentary Elections, 1959, 1964, 1969

	1959		*1964*		*1969*		*Marginal Increment*	
Party	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*1959–1969*	*1964–1969*
PMIP	329,070	44	301,187	35	495,641	46	51%	65%
Others	417,255	56	551,977	65	580,056	54	39%	5%
Total Opposition	746,325	100	858,164	100	1,075,617	100		

Sources: Federation of Malaya, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1960); *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964 of the States of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Election Commission, 1965); and Malaysia, *Warta Kerajaan* [Government Gazette], June 19, 1969.

at a rate well surpassing the parallel performance of the DAP with the urban Chinese and Indians. Beyond that the PMIP apparently made substantial progress with the rural Malays. In fact, if the election results pointed to any specific conclusion with special clarity, it was this: For the first time since independence the coalition of westernized Malay leaders with ascriptive authority and Malay folk-leaders with a capacity of political mobilization, which spearheaded the attainment of independence and was the keystone of the political system, was in trouble.

These difficulties, moreover, were further reflected in a second point, one already indicated. In some instances UMNO was having difficulties in mobilizing Malay votes behind the MCA. By one estimate, 20,000 Malay votes were cast on behalf of the *Gerakan*, and curiously another 30,000 for the DAP and PPP combined (see Table 12–11). Still, these difficulties could not have been all that critical—even though at times they did cost the MCA candidate his election—as UMNO delivered nearly 140,000 Malay votes, i.e., just about the same amount that the MCA could mobilize for itself from the community of Chinese. Moreover, to rely once more on the calculations of Professors Ratnam and Milne, even when the MCA faced both the DAP and the PMIP, the MCA received vastly more Malay votes than

TABLE 12–11
Communal Composition of Party Support in Parliamentary Elections, 1969

	Malay Votes		*Non-Malay Votes*		*Total*	
Party	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
UMNO	501,779	41.4	201,080	23.0	702,859	33.7
MCA	138,016	11.4	143,800	16.4	281,816	13.5
MIC	16,964	1.4	8,879	1.0	25,843	1.2
Alliance	656,759	54.2	353,758	40.4	1,010,518	48.4
PMIP	486,950	40.2	8,685	1.0	495,635	23.8
DAP	24,389	2.0	262,217	30.0	286,606	13.7
GRM	22,840	1.9	156,127	17.8	178,967	8.6
PPP	5,785	0.5	74,971	8.6	80,756	3.9
PR	8,659	0.7	17,126	2.0	25,785	1.2
UMCO	–	–	1,808	0.2	1,808	0.1
Independents	6,496	0.5	613	–	7,109	0.3
Opposition	555,119	45.8	521,547	59.6	1,076,666	51.6
Total	1,211,878	100.0	875,306	100.0	2,087,184	100.0

Source: K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, "The 1969 Parliamentary Election in West Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Summer 1970), p. 220.

the PMIP (see Table 12–12). There remained, in short, definite advantages for the MCA to belong to the Alliance.

The conclusion therefore could be drawn: in spite of the electoral reverses and the emerging internal strains, the reduction in the Alliance capability of vertical mobilization had remained above the critical minimum and the electoral rationale for the coalition of UMNO, MCA and MIC had not been vitiated.

TABLE 12–12
Performance of the MCA in Parliamentary Contests Involving both the DAP and the PMIP, 1969
(n = 4)

A.	MCA votes	31,984
	DAP votes	49,856
	PMIP votes	6,498
	Total votes	88,338
B.	Malay electorate	35,892
	Non-Malay electorate	93,495
	Total electorate	129,387
C.	Assuming that the spoiled vote rate was the same for all communities but that Malay turnout was 4 percent higher than non-Malay turnout:	
	Malays who cast valid votes	25,543
	Non-Malays who cast valid votes	62,795
D.	Assuming that 95 percent of DAP votes were non-Malay and that all PMIP votes were Malay:	
	The DAP got 2,493 Malay votes and 47,363 non-Malay votes.	
	The PMIP got 6,498 Malay votes.	
	The MCA got 16,552 Malay votes and 15,432 non-Malay votes.	

Source: K. J. Ratman and R. S. Milne, "The 1969 Parliamentary Election in West Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Summer 1970), p. 219.

There was, however, one further consideration which the examination of election results should not have neglected: the government's evident commitment to democratic processes. In the face of some strain and at some considerable cost elections were held and were conducted with integrity. When election officials disqualified ballots, they did so fairly without consideration for the party it would benefit. By all reports in all the many close races they acted with utmost honesty. A cynic may account for Alliance victories in hotly contested Kelantan by margins of 97 (Pasir Puteh Tenggara) and 15 (Pasir Puteh Tengah). Yet no one could offer an alternative conclusion for Alliance defeats in the same state by 85 (Bachok Selantan), 68 (Tanah Merah Timor) and 11 (Kuala Kelantan) votes, or for the defeat of

Enche Senu, a cabinet member and personal friend of the Prime Minister by a margin of 88 in a contest where no less than 589 ballots were disqualified.

Three hard-fought general elections with a genuine and vigorous opposition and administered impartially was a phenomenon practically without equal in the newly independent states of the world. All Malaysians could have derived satisfaction from this accomplishment.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Armed Confrontation: From Polls to *Parangs*

It cannot be said truthfully, however, that on the morning after elections many were particularly concerned with the government's evident devotion to democratic processes. The country was in no mood for detached objectivity, nor had it the patience to wait for a comprehensive factual assessment. People were convinced that the hegemony of the Alliance had ended and that the political system was in crisis. It was only a matter of time before both would collapse. The atmosphere had become absolutely volatile, especially so in the federal capital and the state of Selangor.

At the end of an arduous election night vigil, some, mostly Chinese and Indians, were in a high state of excitement. Around Jalan Chow Kit, in Pudu, Sentul, and Setapak they celebrated with gusto what they thought to be their hour of victory. Their mood carried them along. Oblivious to the sensitivity of others, their fantasy of power was their only reality. And yet they felt no reassurance. More perhaps than ever before, their political future appeared unclear, their security precarious. The very thought of their success seemed deeply disturbing. Underneath all the ecstasy and bravado they were afraid.

Others, mostly Malays, were appalled and perplexed. They huddled with grave foreboding in their urban enclaves in and around the federal capital. Those in Gombak, Kampong Dato Keramat and Kampong Pandan were registered in the state constituency of Ampang, one in which the Malays held a majority.[1] Many had felt deeply that the Alliance was "too fair" to the Chinese and that the incumbent (UMNO) did not champion Malay communal interests vigorously and uncompromisingly enough. They were determined to teach the Alliance a lesson and cast their ballots for the PMIP candidate. When the results were announced, the full measure of their accomplishment was

[1] Unofficial records show 16,482 Malays, 13,608 Chinese, 1,586 Indians and 247 others. Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Zaman*, April 6, 1969.

revealed. The Alliance lost the Ampang seat not to the PMIP but to Wong Swee Oy of the DAP. The Alliance also lost its majority in the State Assembly. Not a single PMIP candidate in Selangor was successful, but what they considered the "Chinese Opposition" (DAP, *Gerakan* and an Independent) together won half of the seats. Definitely this was not what they had had in mind. Something had gone wrong. Quite unexpectedly their political future, even their personal security, suddenly appeared very precarious indeed. They were simply terrified.

The next three days alas did nothing to reassure anyone.

Sunday, May 11

Most political leaders accepted the myths of the moment. They were tired, exhausted from the campaign. They needed time for sleep and for reflection. Riding the crest of events they could afford time for neither.

Prominent Alliance leaders were inclined to be diffident. They easily credited the assertion that their party had suffered crippling reverses, and most of them were prone to blame Communist influence or more generally, Chinese disloyalty. When Dr. Mahathir was confronted by his own defeat at 11:00 P.M. the preceding night, he concluded that the Chinese had "betrayed" him. It was after all as simple as that. Refreshed by a short rest he spent Sunday with crowds of his supporters, consoling them but also articulating a new posture for the Alliance, one more sensitive to Malay communal interest and less concerned about the MCA. He was prepared to bury the latter altogether.

Several members of the Johore parliamentary delegation tended to agree with him. Quite pleased by their own performance, they quickly perceived a power vacuum at the top. The MCA, in their view, was dramatically discredited. The Prime Minister himself evidently lost most of his prestige. The failure of his policy of "concessions" to the Chinese, they concluded, was there for all to see. It was the time for new initiatives and a more determined pursuit of Malay interests and aspirations. Syed Nasir who won without contest was already in Kuala Lumpur. Ja'afar Albar and Musa Hitam rushed back to the capital. So did Tun (Dr.) Ismail, former Home Minister, a man of formidable reputation for integrity and talent in all communities. He too saw

that the national leadership required reinforcement, but his views were more cautious and more sophisticated than those of his younger colleagues.

Paradoxically members of the MCA high command were thinking along similar lines. Tun Tan Siew Sin was distressed. He saw in the campaign and election results a terrible omen. To the Press he declared: "It is essential that communal feelings generated during the campaign should be damped down because this is one thing the nation cannot afford. The success of parties which played on communalism during the campaign may be significant, but we hope that these tactics will be discontinued now that the election is over."[2] Worse still, he felt betrayed. It was not so much that the Chinese did not vote for his party, and that thought rankled; what hurt him most deeply was that they had pledged their word that they would. It was yet too soon to recognize that the "Chinese" who promised to vote for MCA candidates and the "they" who did not do so were generally not the same. At about the same time Tan Sri (Dr.) Lim Swee Aun was reflecting on the reasons for his own defeat. The reputation for corruption of one of his running mates (candidate for the State Assembly of Perak) was admittedly a serious handicap. But his defeat, he concluded, was not an isolated phenomenon. It represented a national trend. In fact, a trend so general and so consistent that it raised the suspicion of an integrated plan and a single, clandestine guiding strategist. In short, the spectre of a Communist conspiracy. His colleague, Khaw Kai Boh, meanwhile was busy designing strategy. The Opposition campaign, he concluded, was a gigantic fraud; the community of Chinese in Malaysia had been misled. They needed a dramatic demonstration of the genuine accomplishments of the MCA. To advocate further concessions on language and education or to seek a reduction of *Bumiputra* privileges would be suicidal. The UMNO leadership simply could not make any additional accommodations. They may already have gone too far for their own good. Besides, the MCA was hardly in a positon to make demands just now. One alternative that presented itself—and he began to like the idea more and more—was a withdrawal from the Cabinet. Let the Chinese see exactly where they would stand without the MCA participating in political decision-making. Ready to take new, daring initiatives Khaw Kai Boh returned to

[2] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 12, 1969.

Kuala Lumpur. Other MCA leaders, some reluctantly, did the same.

The Prime Minister remained in Kedah. He tried to rest but it was not easy. He was deeply distressed. Not even the disappointing inspection tour on election day prepared him for what he now considered "a major set-back" for his party.[3] He was grieved by Opposition successes in his own state. He himself was barely saved from defeat by the loyal fishermen of Langkawi. He was disappointed with the Chinese, whose lack of support for the MCA he thought to be gross ingratitude. He was also concerned about the future of UMNO. Most of all, however, he was worried about his Cabinet colleagues who had become victims of the election. Enche Senu had called on the phone and was clearly depressed. He must not be given the impression of being deserted. What he needed was reassurance and a dramatic expression of confidence. Obviously, a Cabinet post was not possible, but then and there Tunku Abdul Rahman offered to the just defeated Minister of Information the post of Executive Secretary of UMNO.[4] A kind act and a shrewd one at that. The same evening UMNO leaders from Kedah were gathered at his Merdeka House to celebrate the twenty-third anniversary of their party. Dr. Mahathir was unusually quiet; he was thinking deep thoughts. If UMNO was to survive, it must reunite in its ranks all Malays. This was a task of highest priority and had to be accomplished at all cost. At a cost to the Chinese, and even at the cost of the Prime Minister. Indeed, Tunku Abdul Rahman was in need of a stalwart in charge of the party organization.

Tun Razak concentrated on more immediately pressing matters. He found Alliance parliamentary losses regrettable but tolerable. The situation on the state level was another matter. The loss of Penang was, of course, unfortunate, but after all it was a former Straits Settlement. The limited gains in Kelantan were disappointing, but political power remained in the hands of Malays. Perak and Selangor, however, were critical. They were Malay states with reigning Sultans. The Malays would not peacefully accept the passing of political control of these states to the Chinese and the Indians of the Opposition. In a race to

[3] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 13, 1969.

[4] He had the post of Ambassador to the United States in mind for Dr. Lim Swee Aun.

prevent violence, with the Prime Minister's consent, Tun Razak promptly returned to Kuala Lumpur and proceeded to arrange a meeting with the Chief Ministers of Perak and Selangor. He then sought contact with the *Gerakan*'s Dr. Lim Chong Eu.

After a sleepless election night at his home in Morib, the Chief Minister of Selangor was also apprehensive about the prospect of violence. His position, he realized, was now precarious. To be sure, he still had a plurality in the Assembly, but if he were to form a government, one of the Alliance Assemblymen would have to serve as Speaker reducing his voting strength to 13. If the Opposition were to combine on any issue at any time, his party would be out-voted, and the DAP might demand the right to form a new government. It was, of course, as yet only a possibility, but Dato Harun was fearful that even as a possibility it might terrify Malays and provoke widespread riot. In any case, his plans to visit party headquarters in Banting and other centers throughout the state to express his gratitude for support and to celebrate victory would have to be canceled. He could not take the risk of assemblies of large groups of Malays in their current, most dangerous mood. His own presence could spark an explosion. Thus, after seeing more friends he drove back to Kuala Lumpur. He had already decided that he must try to form a government in order to reassure his supporters and especially the Malay masses that the Alliance had not lost control of the state. Late into the night he harangued his frightened and disconcerted visitors, attempting valiantly to exude an air of confidence. It was not an easy task, and he was not entirely successful.

The Opposition leaders were no less active. They too needed rest and reflection, but few could find the opportunity. Dato Asri was somewhat of an exception. He was quite at ease, giving interviews and chatting freely with his supporters. Later he could discuss seriously party strategy with PMIP commissioners and successful candidates in other states. He had expected to win and now that he had, he saw no reason for a sudden outburst of activity. The state government of Kelantan would continue to function on Monday, the same as it had throughout the last decade.

On the Island of Penang, the newly elected Chief Minister, Dr. Lim Chong Eu was quietly confident. Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, President of the *Gerakan*, had joined him. Both were

surrounded by jubilant supporters and ubiquitous reporters. Refreshed by a short nap in the morning, they turned to future plans. For the past several weeks, Dr. Lim had concentrated upon his campaign in Penang, but now as his party's vice-president, together with Professor Alatas he had to consider the national picture. They recognized the perils of communal appeals, and were sensitive to the rising tide of anxiety among the Malays. Unless voluntary restraints would now be applied, at least at this eleventh hour, democratic politics, not to mention the country itself, would be destroyed in a communal conflagration. They agreed that it was now necessary to tone down the exuberance of victory and to reassure the central government as well as the Malay community. In this frame of mind Dr. Lim declared to the press his party's determination to use "the art of statesmanship and constitutional logic to establish 'correct and cordial' relations with the Federal Government."[5] And in this frame of mind he responded to Tun Razak's emissaries. Frankly, he said, he did not see their political problem in Perak and Selangor. With the patronage and persuasion available to the Alliance, it should not be too difficult to convert at least a few Opposition members and thus assure continued control of the Assembly.[6] In any case, by his own and Professor Alatas's estimate the *Gerakan* would not join a coalition of the Opposition but would remain neutral on the question of organization of the legislatures. Before a definite, formal decision, however, this question would have to be discussed by his party's leadership and especially with Dr. Tan Chee Khoon in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr. Tan Chee Khoon meanwhile had some difficulties restraining the manic mood of his massive following. At the University of Malaya, in front of the Selangor Club, at his headquarters, and in the streets his presence was demanded. Though physically exhausted he felt obliged not to disappoint his supporters and moved among them. The victory celebrations went on and on. Most were spontaneous; none could be called mass demonstrations. Some, however, became increasingly exuberant and decidedly communal. The government report recounted: "At about 10 o'clock that night, about forty *Gerakan* supporters were seen

[5] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 12, 1969.

[6] The Alliance did just that after the 1959 elections in Trengganu. Incidentally, Dr. Lim actually named the most likely converts in Perak and was confirmed by later events.

in cars and riding on scooters along Jalan Changkat Dollah near the Pudu prison. Amidst jubilant shouts, they were heard shouting 'Kuala Lumpur sekarang China punya' (Kuala Lumpur now belongs to the Chinese)."[7] Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, of course, was not present at this occasion, nor did he know about other provocative excesses.

The DAP leadership was rather less interested in restraint. They had won a victory, they felt; it was their right to celebrate. Lim Kit Siang preparing to leave for Sabah, felt moved to proclaim to everyone that "the overwhelming victory of the DAP parliamentary and state candidates in Malacca and elsewhere was a 'victory for the concept and ideals of a Malaysian Malaysia.' "[8] His colleague, Goh Hock Guan, in Kuala Lumpur was already planning to consolidate the DAP's position in the State Assembly by enlisting the support of the Independent member and by forming a coalition with the *Gerakan*. He announced a meeting with the party's lawyers "to discuss the implications of the tie."[9] All along, he found time to join his supporters who had already taken their celebration into the streets. At 8:30 A.M. Goh Hock Guan led a march from the University of Malaya.[10] Another DAP group leaving at 6:30 A.M. from Technical College (Jalan Gurney) paraded in the eastern section of town, then moved to the Selangor Club (7:00 A.M.) and proceeded to the DAP's Sultan Street Branch (9:00 A.M.). As the five cars and some fifteen motorscooters passed the Brickfields Police Station they shouted taunting slogans: *Buang semua Polis Melayu* (Fire all Malay policemen!).[11] Later roving bands indulged in obscene gestures and chanted: *Mati Melayu, sakai pergi masok hutan!* (Death to the Malays, aboriginies go back to the jungle).[12] Other such parties were also roaming throughout the capital. They were spontaneous outbursts of men who thought their cause had prevailed. They were unrestrained by reason or tact.

[7] *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, p. 30.
[8] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 12, 1969.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Their route led through Jalan Bangsar to Brickfields, through Jalan Davidson, Jalan Shaw, Jalan Loke Yew to Jalan Chan Sow Lin and then back to Petaling Jaya dispersing near Sri Jaya Bus Company at 1:30 P.M. Details on the routes of processions are given here as evidence that contrary to some assertions later they did in fact take place.
[11] *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, p. 29.
[12] *Ibid.*

Unmistakably, their target of disdain was the police and the Malay community.

The latter just stood by and watched—helplessly and with growing despair.

Monday, May 12

For a change the Prime Minister had a restful day in Kedah. Late in the morning he drove to the Pudu dam of the M$228 million Muda irrigation project where he presided over the valve closing ceremonies. In his address he explained that the project would not only assure self-sufficiency in rice but also provide a surplus that could be exported at a good profit. Afterward he discussed politics with the press. "As a leader of the party in power, I have to carry out my duty and shoulder my responsibility in helping the people to sit up and understand what is going on in the country. If the people still lack faith in my government," he added significantly, "I will go."[13] They were not words calculated to calm anxieties. Raising the possibility of his resignation was scarcely reassuring to his Malay supporters; emphasizing that such an event would be necessarily accompanied by the fall of the government was disturbing to his Malay opponents.

At his home in Penang the newly elected Chief Minister was wondering about the government's plans for his installation. All morning he had had no official communication on the subject, yet he never considered the possibility that the central government would somehow try to delay or even prevent him from assuming office. "There are, of course, two ways of getting in the saddle," Dr. Lim mused. "You can jump in quickly, or you can run along the horse a while." He thought he knew the particular horse in question rather well. Were he to run alongside it, the horse, he suspected, might get away altogether. His mood, however, did not persist. Early in the afternoon news came of plans for his immediate installation. A few hours later (4:50 P.M.) he took the oath of office, and in a simple ceremony the state government was transferred from the Alliance to the *Parti Gerakan Rakyat*.

In Perak meanwhile Dato S. P. Seenivasagam, President of

[13] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 13, 1969.

the PPP, the largest Opposition group in the new State Assembly, announced that he was opening negotiations with the DAP and the *Gerakan* for the purpose of forming a coalition. He promised further to seek an audience with His Highness, the Sultan, to discuss the formation of a new government. Quite evidently the PPP was determined to end peremptorily Alliance control of the state. The Sultan, though somewhat less than enthusiastic at the prospect, declared that "in view of the circumstances, the new government will be a coalition."[14] The implication seemed encouraging to the Opposition but was depressing to the Malays who watched from neighboring Selangor.

Kuala Lumpur indeed had become the focus of intense political activity. Goh Hock Guan announced that Lim Tuan Siong, the Independent member of the State Assembly, "was joining the DAP."[15] Moreover, he would meet with Dr. Tan Chee Khoon to discuss a coalition. The best solution, however, he suggested, was new elections. For his part Dr. Tan Chee Khoon left the door open for negotiations with the DAP. For the Alliance, however, he clearly had no use. "I have said many times," he declared, "that I will not sleep with the Alliance partners. Now more than ever when they are castrated, how can I do so?"[16] These phrases perhaps understandable in the excitement of the moment, but still unnecessarily provocative.

Dato Harun was busy in search of a path out of the impasse. New elections did not exactly appeal to him. He had just gone through one traumatic surprise. Clearly, democratic politics had some unsuspected pitfalls. Moreover the announcement of new elections dictated by the Opposition would not alleviate his most pressing problem, the explosive insecurity of the Malay community. Somehow he had to reassure the Malays of his state, and especially those in the urban enclaves of the capital. He had to present them with some credible evidence that while Penang was lost and Perak might yet be lost, Selangor would remain in Alliance control. He offered to consider a coalition with the *Gerakan*, and that was turned down. He suggested a round-table conference, and that gained no positive response. All that remained was to put a good face on a pretty sticky situation and to proclaim over and over again that he would form a government. "No matter how weak the Government is, I intend to put

14 *Ibid.* 15 *Ibid.* 16 *Ibid.*

it to a test," he declared with some bravado, but perhaps with a somewhat counter-productive introductory clause.[17]

Political maneuvering on the national level was considerably less visible, but had nonetheless even more far reaching consequences. Having lunch together to evaluate election results was a group of young UMNO leaders, including Syed Nasir, Musa Hitam, and Tengku Razaleigh. There was broad anti-constitutional consensus among them. The contract had failed. The government and the country must be "returned" to the Malays. The MCA was too influential in decision-making; its role would have to be radically curtailed. The Prime Minister was too congenial; he must be made to resign. A call went out to Dr. Mahathir asking him to come to Kuala Lumpur. Appointments were made with Tun (Dr.) Ismail and Tun Razak. Dr. Mahathir promised to drive down with some friends next day. In the meantime, Tun (Dr.) Ismail received the informal delegation. He listened courteously to Musa Hitam's clear and eloquent presentation and indicated appreciation for the perceptiveness of several aspects of the analysis. He was also sympathetic, however, to the MCA's difficult position and counselled against rash action. As to the Prime Minister's resignation, Tun (Dr.) Ismail insisted, that can come only through proper, constitutional means. He for one would not be a party to any ultimatum to Tunku Abdul Rahman, and most emphatically he would not participate in any *coup*. He did say one thing, though, which may have led to a misunderstanding of his position. He encouraged his visitors, who included some of the probable leaders of the next generation, to discuss the election results within the UMNO Executive Council, and he did imply that if the Prime Minister could be asked to resign, it would have to be done by the same body. Receiving the delegation later, Tun Razak was also quite friendly and listened with interest. He was prepared to support the convening of the Executive Council. But any suggeston for and any implication of a demand for the Prime Minister's resignation, he turned down flat.

As a matter of fact, by this time Tun Razak was also confronted by MCA initiatives. Tun Tan Siew Sin was under great pressure to adopt the Khaw Kai Boh strategy of withdrawing from the Cabinet. He considered it a very high risk proposition. It

17 *Ibid.*

would mean the apparent destruction of the Directorate system, and what that would do to the constitutional contract would be anyone's guess. Still he had to admit that some remedial action was indicated. Somehow the Chinese masses must be made to understand political reality and the advantages that *only* the MCA could provide, and had in fact provided. If the strategy of ostensible withdrawal would make the Chinese voter realize what he would lose without the MCA, it just might be worth the gamble. Of course, no such action could be taken without the consent of the leadership of MCA's Alliance partners. So Tun Razak was approached. He agreed to take the matter up with the Prime Minister.

A very difficult position. MCA withdrawal could easily be misunderstood and ultimately it could badly misfire. Yet, the election results did rather suggest that the party must somehow sort out its relationship with both UMNO and its own constituents. After some misgivings but in tribute to Tun Tan's judgment, his senior UMNO colleagues concluded that if the MCA was really sold on this strategy they would agree to it. Accordingly, a meeting of the Central Working Committee of the MCA was called for 11:00 A.M. on the next day.

Far more dramatic though was the activity in the streets. In the morning Dr. Tan Chee Khoon had applied for a police permit for a *Gerakan* victory procession scheduled to originate at his headquarters at 4:30 P.M. the same afternoon. It posed a dilemma, and ultimately Tun Razak was forced to resolve it. There was always the danger of a demonstration getting out of hand, of communal fights breaking out and leading to widespread violence, a danger which in the past weeks and especially past days had become extraordinarily acute. On the other hand, having granted just a few days earlier a license to the Labour Party, the most radical in the Opposition, the government could not very well refuse a similar request to the most moderate and responsible. A simple demonstration, moreover, might consolidate and end the sporadic excesses of exuberance by smaller roving groups. In any case, this was scarcely the time to alienate the *Gerakan*, now that it might remain neutral in Perak and Selangor and thus help preserve Alliance control. So the permit was issued authorizing a procession of about 1,000 strong, although the time was moved back an hour to avoid traffic congestion. There was, Tun Razak remembered, apprehension at the time of

the Labour Party procession that violence would be provoked, but none actually broke out. He fervently hoped that none would occur now. Unfortunately, provocation has a cumulative effect.

The DAP did not request a police permit. Nevertheless, it continued to bring its celebrations into the streets. At 4:00 P.M. it held an assembly of DAP members in Setapak (a low-income residential cluster a few miles northwest of the capital). From there a motorcade moved to Chan Sow Lin Road for a reception in honor of Goh Hock Guan. Another DAP motorcade started out at 6:00 P.M. from Sentul (an Indian working class neighborhood a few miles northeast of the capital) and was led by Lee Bang Cheang, the successful candidate from that constituency. It proceeded along Setapak Main Road, Dato Keramat Main Road and back through Setapak to Sentul where it arrived at about 7:00 P.M. Part of it, that is. A sizable portion joined the *Gerakan* procession which was just about to get started.

Not as large as the Labour Party funeral procession, the *Gerakan* victory demonstration was still a massive affair. It was attended by five elected candidates, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon (Batu), Yeoh Teck Chye (Bukit Bintang), V. David (Pantai), Mrs. Ganga Nayar (Serendah) and Chow Yew Koh (Kuang), and by some 4,000 supporters.[18] Nor was it nearly as well organized and as well disciplined. The procession did not get under way until well after 7:00 P.M., some two hours behind schedule. It moved from Pasar Borong (a wholesale market by Ipoh Road in the northern part of Kuala Lumpur) down Ipoh Road toward the center of the city. After circling the area the procession returned to the Jalan Raja Muda "round about," where Dr. Tan Chee Khoon left the procession. Most others, however, were not yet prepared to abandon euphoria. A small segment marched through town again past Jalan Travers and the quarters of Indian railroad workers to Brickfields, then on to the satellite town of Petaling Jaya up Jalan Gasing, the NUPW Building, down Klang Road, United Garden, Hock Ann Estate and back to the *Gerakan* Branch office at Brickfields. At 11:30 Yeoh Teck Chye, then V. David and Mrs. Ganga Nayar addressed the exuberant, but much smaller crowd of several hundred. After the intervention by the FRU (riot squad) they dispersed by 12:30 A.M. Other elements of the demonstration moved into the commercial area of Bukit

[18] V. David actually joined the demonstrations some two hours late after Dr. Tan Chee Khoon had left.

Bintang where shortly after 10:00 P.M. at the approach of the FRU they broke up into smaller, roving bands.[19] Still others were cruising in Pudu, the southern section of the town, and in the northern sectors around Sentul. For much of the evening the demonstrators were practically all over the city. Their behavior was dramatically visible—and extraordinarily provocative.

In the streets communal lines were glaringly sharp. Practically no Malays participated in the demonstrations, only Chinese and Indians. Some Malays, impelled by curiosity, caught by traffic jams, or assigned as police constables, watched the motorcades and were roundly abused as processions of roving groups moved by. By gestures and slogans their manhood, their character and their virility were questioned and ridiculed.[20] Their culture was derided; their person threatened with assault. *Melayu keluar* (Malays get out), *Semua Melayu kasi habis* (Finish off all Malays), *Pergi mati-lah* (Better go and die), and *Orang Melayu balek kampong* (Malays go back to the villages) were some slogans leveled at them, often accompanied by obscene gestures. They were singled out by the demonstrators; not because of anything they had done, not because of their political views, but for one reason and one reason alone; because they were Malays. What might have started out as a celebration of victory was rapidly reduced to a vivid expression of communal arrogance and a rampage of communal intransigence.

Most Malays preferred to avoid the demonstrations. They fearfully withdrew into their urban enclaves and brooded over the news and rumors. They were especially upset about the insults which Malay policemen endured and worried about a government which was supposedly controlled by Malays but which would tolerate such outrages. If it could not protect the Malay police they wondered, how could it protect them in their small Malay islands in the Chinese and Indian urban sea? When late Monday night some roving demonstrators on their motor-scooters moved into Kampong Bharu and Kampong Pandan revving their engines and taking aim at Malay pedestrians to taunt them in their own communities, the answer seemed clear enough. Mem-

[19] One such group invaded the Chief Minister's compound, leveled imprecations and even threatened to eject him forcibly from his house.

[20] Both the Prime Minister's account and the official White Paper contain allegations of specific incidents. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–84, and *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, pp. 30–35. Private accounts increased their number manifold.

ories of cruelty and mutilation of Malays and the desecration of Muslim religious places which marked the days immediately following the Japanese surrender rushed to mind. Their fear and hatred bubbled over. Some could stand it no longer. On the verge of blind rage they were determined to take action—come what may.

The tragedy, of course, was that all the excesses were committed by a small minority. True, many Chinese were not quite satisfied by the knowledge that some of the established leaders of the community of Chinese were making ample profit, and they felt resentful for what they considered second-class citizenship. Many Indians who desperately needed employment were constantly irked by oratory about *Bumiputra* and special opportunities for Malays. Still, the fact remained that the vast majority, however emotionally aroused they may have been by the campaign, did not take their grievances to the streets or make personal and indiscriminate assaults on the police or the Malay community. They went about their work as industriously as in the past and spent their free time in relaxation and recreation. These people of integrity and innocence were in mortal peril of the blows of retaliation.

Their peril, moreover, was compounded by the fact that by this time the Opposition leaders themselves had lost control of many of their supporters. Admittedly, some did not try very hard. They were carried along by the heady experience of power and adulation. Still, though culpable for the communal accent of the campaign, few excesses occurred in their presence. Instead, these were committed by small roving groups, some idealists, some thugs, and some drunks. In the case of *Gerakan* demonstrations, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon was almost certainly unaware of the provocations. Slogans were chanted at the tail of the procession where he could not see them, and after he had left it. Even had he been aware of them, he could have done little. The crowd was too aroused to listen to reason, and he was still quite tired. He was riding a tiger.

Dato Harun, Chief Minister of Selangor, was in a somewhat similar predicament. He was struggling for control, but each new event made his propects more and more remote. Early in the evening he held yet another meeting with the Alliance members of the Assembly. He sought to calm them and to infuse confidence. Again he was only moderately successful. The group

adjourned. On their way home his guests ran into the *Gerakan* demonstration, and there and then whatever little assurance they had gained from Dato Harun promptly left them. Arriving home they called up their Chief Minister demanding immediate action. At about the same time, two houses away at the home of Haji Razali, political secretary of the Chief Minister and Assemblyman for Kampong Bahru, some 300 traditional leaders of his constituency were gathered. They, too, demanded immediate action. At 8:30 P.M. Haji Razali brought the leaders to see Dato Harun. Their grievances were forcibly stated. The Chinese had insulted their people and were determined to make pariahs of them in their own country. Was UMNO really spineless (*dayus*) as the PMIP charged or castrated as Dr. Tan Chee Khoon asserted? If so, the Malay community would rise and set matters right. They could not stand the humiliation any longer. If the Chief Minister was telling the truth and the Alliance would remain in power in the state, they too deserved a demonstration. With the support of the government it could be a celebration. Otherwise, on their own they would present a show of power.

Dato Harun really did not have much choice. An outright refusal would not prevent the Malays from demonstrating. It would only increase the chances of violence by further intensifying their insecurity. Besides their demands did have some merit. There certainly appeared to be a singular lack of symmetry in the official treatment of the Alliance and the Opposition during the campaign. When an UMNO party worker was brutally murdered by Labour Party supporters in Penang, the government for the sake of public peace urged restraint and the victim was buried quietly. But when a Labour Party member was shot by the police, *he* was buried with a massive demonstration. When the Opposition requested a permit for victory processions, this was granted. Could the government again claiming concern for public peace urge restraint and refuse permission for a demonstration by UMNO, the government party, and after all the victor in the elections? Could it do so and retain any support at all in the Malay community? Obviously not. Whatever its hazards, there would be a demonstration. Period. The Chief Minister's only hope was that by personally participating in it he might exercise some restraint. Accordingly, he agreed, provided it would be a happy procession with singing and dancing (*gendang*), and provided a police permit could be secured. The community leaders

left and at 11:30 P.M. called back to say a permit had been approved.

Dato Harun could not sleep. He worried about the future. He knew of the increasing provocations by the demonstrators and the menacing mood of the Malay community. Late at night a friend, Dato Murat, had called him on the phone to say that announcements about the forthcoming UMNO demonstrations had used his name. He was also worried about the State Government. How could Alliance control be maintained and the Malays be quickly reassured with only half the votes in the Assembly? He did not know that by 11:00 P.M. the *Gerakan* had formally decided to remain neutral on the organization of the legislature.

Tuesday, May 13

Half the night and much of the morning arrangements were being made for the UMNO procession. Sound trucks from the Kampong Bharu branch moved into Malay neighborhoods inviting all and especially the young to festivities which were scheduled to start at 7:00 P.M. in front of the home of the Chief Minister. They were called upon to proclaim their support for the party, but also to demonstrate the solidarity of the Malays. The informal communications network was also operating at a high intensity spreading the word to more distant Malay communities in Kuala Langat and Kuala Selangor. The news of the planned demonstration certainly galvanized the depressed and brooding masses into action. Community elders, religious functionaries, and other traditional leaders urged their people to teach the Chinese a lesson. Their time had come. They advised taking along some weapons, purely for defensive purposes, or so they said. There was, to be sure, an ample supply of agricultural implements, including razor sharp *parangs* (machete-like heavy blades with wooden handles), and most of the young men knew how to use them in the rice field or anywhere else for that matter. In Malay communities moreover there were always *pendekars* who were training the young in *bersilat*, the art of self-defense. As it happened, in Kampong Bahru there were also at this time two Indonesian *ki-ai's* who claimed to bestow upon their pupils the power of invulnerability.[21] Throughout the in-

[21] Interestingly the initiation-rite includes in addition to the recital of religious verses, the inhaling and spreading over the body of a special kind

struction major emphasis was always placed on self-defense. The weapon could be legitimately used only when a man was certain that his life was in danger or perhaps his religion or his community.

Dato Harun himself was at his office for yet another, this time more formal, session with the Alliance State Assemblymen. They were weighing the feasibility of a new election, but mostly the discussion turned to reports of "Chinese provocations" and the explosive mood of the Malay community. Later the Chief Minister called on Tun Razak. He reported on the situation in Selangor including the plans for a forthcoming UMNO procession. Naturally the latter was no surprise to the Deputy Prime Minister who agreed that whatever the academic alternatives, in terms of political reality there was simply no choice. He did stress, however, the need for utmost caution and the meticulous avoidance of any inflammatory language. Dato Harun must use all his personal authority and influence, Tun Razak insisted, to nip in the bud any potential excesses.

Musa Hitam and his revisionist colleagues did not know of the preparations. Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar Albar was getting ready for a technical conference and exhibit. Tengku Razaleigh was working at his office at the Bank Bumiputra. Syed Nasir was engaged at his home. They were awaiting the arrival of Dr. Mahathir, who was expected to start down from Alor Star by car in the afternoon.

The MCA, of course, was fully occupied. Shortly after 11:00 A.M. as scheduled the meeting of the Central Working Committee got under way. Khaw Kai Boh argued persuasively for MCA's strategic withdrawal. There followed a heated debate with several members expressing serious reservations. Dr. Lim Swee Aun, the last speaker, warned that unless the matter was very carefully thought out, not only the MCA and the community of Chinese might suffer, but by bringing about a total polarization it would be to the detriment of the country at large. Specifically, he pointed to the prospect of the ascendance of Malay extremists

of incense and a bath in lime water, the smashing of a heavy stone upon the back of the initiate who is upon his hands and knees, and a powerful blow with the *parang* upon his stomach when standing up. All in all a most impressive ceremony, though it should be noted that the *parang struck* the stomach; it was not drawn across the skin.

and warned of the possibility of communal violence. At 12:45 P.M. Tun Tan Siew Sin received a telephone call from the Prime Minister who had just returned to the capital.[22] Tunku Abdul Rahman formally agreed to the arrangement but let it be known that he did so only as a temporary expedient and because it was the MCA's own wish. He had no intention to preside over the dissolution of the Directorate. He also agreed to see some of the MCA leaders later in the afternoon (4:30 P.M.) for a detailed discussion on the situation. Thereupon the committee approved the announcement of withdrawal, and Tun Tan Siew Sin "with his voice charged with emotion" spoke to the Press. "The Chinese in this country have rejected the MCA to represent them in the Government, if the results of the general election reflect their wishes. As politicians practicing parliamentary democracy, the MCA must accept this to be the case. Under the circumstances the MCA has no alternative but to refrain from participation in the Government in that no representative will accept any appointment in the Cabinet or in the Federal Government or in the executive councils of the respective State Assemblies. . . ."[23]

While the MCA was deliberating, by sheer coincidence Mrs. Lim Swee Aun happened to meet Tun (Dr.) Ismail's wife at the market. She confided in her about MCA plans, and the latter promptly informed her husband. To put it bluntly the former Home Minister was furious. He immediately phoned Dr. Lim and then went to see Tun Tan Siew Sin. The burden of his most vigorous remonstrances was the danger of further polarization. It would only play into the hands of the extremists—Chinese and Malay—and would sooner or later, probably sooner, end in heavy bloodshed. He appealed to Tun Tan to swallow his pride and revoke the announcement. The Chinese of this generation, Tun (Dr.) Ismail argued, were not likely to understand the wisdom of his leadership, but the Chinese of the future, as well as all Malaysians, would genuinely appreciate his contributions. By this time, however, it was too late. The news was already on the air together with Tun Razak's statement saluting the MCA as men of "principle and courage." He added, presumably

[22] Actually, he had planned to get to Kuala Lumpur earlier, but a storm prevented his plane from landing before noon.

[23] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 14, 1969.

in an effort to support the strategy: "This means that there will be no Chinese representation in the Government, but the Government itself will go on."[24]

Dato Harun meanwhile had returned to his residence and applied himself to the detailed plans of the evening program. First, he sought to reduce risks by avoiding as much as possible physical contact between UMNO demonstrators and Chinese populations. In fact, there was no way to stage a demonstration in Kuala Lumpur without passing through some Chinese neighborhoods, but he was determined to avoid Bukit Bintang and the downtown commercial areas. Accordingly, he revised the proposed route of the procession. Then he sought to reduce risks by avoiding as much as possible inflammatory speeches to the demonstrators. Addresses before his house would be short and designed to generate a happy mood. He even drew up the speech his political secretary, the State Assemblyman from the area, was to deliver. Finally, he hoped to reduce risks by trying to retain personal control of the procession. The demonstrators could assemble in front of the UMNO branch office two houses down Jalan Raja Muda but must promptly move over to his residence, where he would address them, assure them that the State Government was safe and then march at the head of the column. At about 3:00 P.M. he called Enche Mansor, the Kuala Lumpur Police Traffic Chief, to inquire whether security arrangements were progressing satisfactorily. He was told that everything was under control. According to the plan by 7:00 P.M. (i.e., one-half hour before the procession itself would get under way), six mobile police vehicles would be at strategic positions, with ten units of Police Light Strike Forces deployed along the route. These forces should suffice for the protection of the demonstrators and to guard "sensitive areas," but in order to be doubly sure the Kuala Lumpur Military Garrison was alerted at 3:30 P.M. Dato Harun was indeed encouraged by this report. What he had feared most was an attack on the demonstrators as they marched through Chinese neighborhoods. That would certainly erupt in a communal riot. But the security forces seemed to have the situation well in hand. So he spent the rest of the afternoon with a steady stream of visitors who came to express their good wishes on his re-election, offer advice on the political situation or just ask favors. His mood improved further when around 5:00 P.M. through agents first and then through phone calls by Mr. V. David and Dr. Tan Chee Khoon he was informed of the *Gerakan* intention to remain neutral. When the *Gerakan* leaders agreed to release the decision for immediate public announcement, he felt that his assurances to the demonstrators that the state as well as the federal government was safe would gain added credibility and hopefully defuse the tense situation. Perhaps, just perhaps, they might after all have a happy celebration.

[24] *Ibid.*

In the streets, however, a different mood prevailed. In spite of Tun Razak's reassuring words and an MIC statement that it would remain in the Cabinet, the MCA announcement caused confusion and concern. Rumors of the impending UMNO procession produced an atmosphere of near panic. Shops were closed; people called relatives urging them to stay indoors; parents rushed to the schools to take their children home. Many Chinese feared serious "trouble," but more, including most secret society members, were only concerned with self-protection. The idea of attacking the demonstrators or invading Malay communities could not have been further from their minds. There were some though, subversives, irreconcilables, and just plain thugs, who were alert to the advantage the intense tension offered for their own purposes.

Into this environment late in the afternoon descended thousands of Malay youths. They came from the country and from urban communities. MARA students came, clerks, drivers, field hands, and unemployed. They came by bus, car, motor-scooters, or on foot. Most came to demonstrate their support for UMNO or to proclaim Malay solidarity. Some came to "teach the Chinese a lesson." Many came unarmed, others brought *parangs* or *kris* (Malay daggers) wrapped in newspaper.[25] Most were average young people, overexcited and scared for their lives. The idea of attacking Chinese and massacring innocent people could not have been further from their minds. There were, however, among them also a few irreconcilables, fanatics and plain thugs just waiting and hoping for their opportunity.

[25] It is most doubtful that the Police could have prevented the weapons being brought in. There was simply not enough manpower to block-off all the streets and lanes leading into Kampong Bharu. Still the fact remains that they did not even try. Even the Special Branch had no inkling that the weapons were being brought in—or at least that was their testimony.

For both the Chinese in the city and the Malays arriving and moving about the danger was acute. As always under high tension groups were determined by their lowest common denominator, and the basest elements rose to lead. A spark would trigger a holocaust. And the spark came sooner and at a place other than expected.

Much of the afternoon small groups of Malays were walking to Kuala Lumpur from Gombak, a northern suburb. They had to walk because the Len Seng Bus Company had suspended service. Later in the afternoon a group of about a hundred Malays carrying banners and accompanied by motor-scooters set out for the Chief Minister's residence. For all practical purposes, unknown to the police, this became an unlicensed demonstration. They had to pass through Setapak and other Chinese areas, in fact the very areas where the night before the *Gerakan* and DAP demonstrations had originated. They were a boisterous group laughing and shouting perhaps to keep up their courage. They were unarmed. According to official reports[26] as this group approached the Alhambra Theatre at about 6:00 P.M. they were taunted by Chinese youths and some fist fights broke out. This quickly escalated into a bottle-and-stone throwing contest, and some were already looking for more lethal weapons. The Chinese and Indians who lived near-by rushed home and emerged with iron pipes, sticks, and *parangs*. The Malays, for their part, turned to the merchants and demanded weapons from them. The latter refused and promptly closed their steel shutters. Thwarted again, the Malay mob hurled rocks at the shops and passing cars until they reached the Len Seng Bus depot, where they were met by some eighty armed men. Faced with such superiority from the opposing forces and already shaken by the fights earlier down the road, most Malays returned to Gombak for arms. Some on motor-scooters, however, broke through and between 6:15 and 6:30 P.M. brought the news *Setapak sudah kena langgat* (Setapak has been attacked) to Jalan Raja Muda in front of the UMNO branch office where the demonstration was already forming.

Indeed it was already a massive and highly overwrought gathering. The Police permit had limited the demonstrators to 3,000. By 6:30 P.M., however, when Troop 5B of the Federal Reserve Units passed by, its commander, Assistant Superintendent Tham Kong Weng, according to the official *Report* radioed to Selangor

[26] *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, pp. 44–49.

Police Control Centre that " 'a crowd of four to five thousand' was swamping the roadside. . . . Some of the Malays carried sticks and banners and 'a few were seen to be armed with *parangs* and *kris*.' " He concluded that there would be real trouble if the scheduled demonstration was attacked and, mindful of this possibility, made a careful survey of the Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Chow Kit area as he arrived there a few minutes later. He even checked the overhead pedestrian bridge for any likelihood of persons throwing things at the procession when it passed below it.[27]

The crowds were growing steadily, their anxiety and anger fed by a stream of rumors. Among the most lurid was the assertion that Malay women and children had been killed by the Chinese while the men were on their way to Kuala Lumpur. Just where this atrocity was supposed to have been committed was not quite clear. Some "knew" it was in Gombak; others heard different places. It was, of course, not true, just as most other rumors were later proved false. But the crowd in feverish excitement and in deep fear of being attacked by the "treacherous" Chinese avidly accepted them as statements of fact. At this critical point a bus passed by, and as it did some of the occupants, evidently Chinese and Indians, jeered the assembling demonstrators. Infuriated, a group gave chase, but the bus driver gained speed and left them behind. Thwarted again, shamefully they returned to the main group, and as they did so encountered two Chinese riding toward them on motor-scooters and a panel-truck slowly weaving its way through the crowds. Then they went *amok*.

At about 6:40 P.M. a young man rushed into Dato Harun's living room. "They have already started," he shouted. At 6:47 P.M. Battalion Commander of the Military Garrison learned of the "Security Red" situation. At 6:50 P.M. Reserve Unit Troop 1B arrived in front of the Chief Minister's residence. Several vehicles were already over-turned, pushed aside, or burning. Three dead bodies were lying by the road side.[28]

The Night of May 13–14

For days the Alliance leadership had been preoccupied with the prospect of communal violence, yet when it came no one quite expected it. At about the time that violence swept Jalan

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Raja Muda, Tun (Dr.) Ismail was attending a cocktail party, and Tun Tan Siew Sin after an exhausting day was preparing to retire for the night. Tengku Razaleigh was entertaining at the Federal Hotel, while Musa Hitam was visiting Tun Razak's Political Secretary, Abdullah Ahmed, and hoping that his wife and children would soon join him. Tan Sri Ja'afar Albar was ready to leave for Dato Harun's house and the UMNO demonstration. Dr. Mahathir was driving down through Perak to attend important conferences in Kuala Lumpur. The Chief Minister of Perak was also on his way to see Tun Razak.[29]

The Prime Minister, relaxing at the Residency, sat discussing the political situation with Tun Sambanthan. The MIC leader was aware of the rumors of impending trouble which raced through the city. Earlier in the afternoon Mrs. Sambanthan had taken her daughter out of school. His chief concern, however, was the future of the Alliance and the MIC. Unaware of the strategy behind the MCA announcement, and in any case something less than a devout admirer of its leadership, he feared that the withdrawal could be, and would be, interpreted as a betrayal of the Alliance. He rushed to reassure the Prime Minister that his party would remain loyal. For the MIC, he stated, the question of withdrawal from the Cabinet did not arise. The Prime Minister's response was soothing. Not to worry, everything will be all right. He trusted Tun Tan Siew Sin. Gradually, the discussion drifted to the election. Tun Sambanthan expressed his distress over his own narrow margin of victory and the evident difficulties of MIC candidates. He referred to the hardships which the members of the Indian community had to endure: wretched housing, pitiful income, and the constant and increasing threat of unemployment. All these were factors in the campaign, but the most decisive elements must have been the virulence of the Communist conspiracy and the dramatically declining popularity of the MCA leadership. Tunku Abdul Rahman was inclined to agree that Communism and Chinese communalism were the two most salient culprits—or were they two disguises of the same culprit? Just an hour or so before, he had heard a similar argument advanced by the MCA's Dr. Lim Swee Aun. The conversation continued in an informal, relaxed manner.

Tun Razak was also at home. His Cabinet colleague Abdul

[29] Later both were stopped at Tanjong Malim by the police and informed of the curfew in Selangor.

Ghafar bin Baba had dropped by for a chat. They were recounting campaign experiences, both political and personal. Their mood too was informal and relaxed, i.e., until the call came from Dato Harun. The situation, he reported, was very difficult. Thousands of Malays were crowding around his home and even inside of his house. They came to take part in the procession and had become excited.

Prompt decisions on the highest level were clearly required. Tun Razak, followed by Enche Ghafar, immediately drove to the Residency. They found the Prime Minister being briefed by Enche Mansor, Officer in Charge of Police District (Traffic) on the outbreak of violence. Few facts were as yet available, but it was already clear that some lives had been lost and that the incidents were distinctly communal in character, with the Malays generally taking the initiative.

The Prime Minister was in great distress. His first response was an announcement that he would go directly to Jalan Raja Muda. For a while he was quite adamant about this, but confronted by a determined opposition of all of his advisors he gave up the idea. An alternative suggestion, that Tun Razak respond to the demands for his presence there and visit the critical area, was also abandoned when senior police officials insisted that they could not guarantee his personal safety. In the end it was decided that immediately after the Prime Minister's evening prayer all present should drive to the Policy Control Centre at the High Street police station.

Events in the street, however, respected no man's time-table. As Dato Harun rushed out of his house to assess the situation, a bus loaded with school children rumbled into his compound. He jumped on top and sought to address the growing clusters of Malays. He made all the points he had so carefully prepared for the happy ceremony he had in mind: the victory of the Alliance, the continuation of his own government, the need for restraint and responsibility. He was not, perhaps he could not have been, effective. Somehow, there on top of an unsteady bus, in the midst of swelling crowds, with roving bands already forming stood an obviously anxious man. His speech carried no conviction; it did not soothe and it failed to reassure. Voices in the crowd responded almost plaintively: *Tidah boleh tahan lagi Dato* (We cannot stand it any more).[30] In a little while Haji Ahmad Ra-

[30] *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, p. 51.

zali, who had joined the Chief Minister on top of the bus, saw "two to three hundred Malays leaving . . . and moving towards Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman."[31] From the crowds assembling along the main street and from the innumerable narrow back alleys of Kampong Bharu others, many armed with *parangs*, joined them until their numbers swelled into a formidable and inchoate mass. An explosive mixture of the curious, the frantic, the vainglorious, the hateful, the terrified, and the ribald moved slowly along Jalan Raja Muda impelled by its self-reinforcing collective frenzy. Men were shouting, running, taunting, mumbling, even giggling. The sight of Chinese, or anything that could be identified with the Chinese—cars, motor-scooters, homes or shops—enraged them. They smashed and burned; they slashed and killed.

Close-by another mob was forming, then ventured forth in a different direction, through Jalan Hale toward Jalan Campbell. And all along, the streams of young Malays continued to flow toward the *Mentri Besar*'s residence from neighboring urban enclaves. The men from Gombak were returning after their earlier frustrating encounter. This time they carried arms. From Kampong Dato Keramat and Kampong Pandan other groups were on their way presumably to join the announced UMNO procession. They, too, carried *parangs* and knives wrapped in newspapers or displayed openly. At about 7:00 P.M. they encountered some young men racing along on motor-scooters and shouting *orang kita telah terkorban di-Kampong Bharu* (our people have been slaughtered in Kampong Bharu).[32] In response some groups set up barricades on access roads, stopped all vehicles, pulled out, slashed and killed Chinese occupants. Other groups hunted for Chinese within the *kampongs* and set their homes and stores on fire. At 7:20 P.M. in Kampong Pandan the first in a recently built row of shop houses was set on fire.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 56. A personal note may be appropriate here. At about 6:45 P.M. in response to the urgent pleadings of an off-duty Malay police officer, I was driving him home from Dato Harun's house to Kampong Dato Keramat. The man was obviously terrified repeating over and over again that many people have already been killed *by the Malays*. (He estimated about twenty or thirty. In fact, at that time only three were dead and one feigned death.) Reaching his Kampong and still hysterical with fear he jumped out of the car and running away he shouted that our people (*orang kita*) were being slaughtered. . . . etc.

Still other groups proceeded to Kampong Bharu to help their Muslim brothers.

Across the city some ten miles away in Kuala Lumpur's industrial satellite-town of Petaling Jaya, Malays in their enclaves of Kampong Kerunchi, Kampong Lembah Jaya, Kewahsan Melayu, and Kampong Haji Abdullah Hakom seeing the fires in the distance and apparently concluding that Kampong Bharu was being burned by the Chinese also went on the rampage. By 7:15 P.M. they blocked the four-lane federal highway with logs, massacred Chinese (and some Indians), then burned their cars. Violence was spreading like wildfire.

Not without Chinese response. The first Malay mob which moved toward Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman ventured into the Chinese neighborhood of the Chow Kit Road area. After some initial progress in devastation they were met by armed Chinese secret society elements. There was no battle; the Malays ran.[33]

There was a battle though at Jalan Campbell. Chinese shopkeepers resisted and while they were reinforced by secret society forces, the riot police (FRU) arrived. They separated the groups and dispersed them by firing tear-gas and then shot-gun shells. Performing their duty impartially, they probably inflicted the first Malay casualties.

In other areas the Chinese neighborhoods implemented defense arrangements. They erected road blocks of barbed wire and sharpened spikes. Secret society members patrolled and reconnoitered. They organized twenty-four-hour watches. More than that, they took revenge on hapless Malays found within the confines of Chinese neighborhoods. Malays caught in the massage parlors behind Jalan Chow Kit with Chinese prostitutes were unceremoniously put to death. Movie theatres (Rex, Federal, Capitol) were invaded; Malay patrons were sought out and with iron rods systematically and quite dispassionately beaten to death.[34] At the Rex Theatre one of their victims was an army officer. Finally, in some isolated instances even government installations were attacked. As the most notable example:

[33] The official version is somewhat different. "The main body of Malays were met at the round-about by A.S.P. Tham Kong Weng who, firing tear-gas shells, turned them back . . . as they ran back to Kampong Bharu this group was 'hit' by FRU Troop 1B under A.S.P. Shahriman and dispersed in smaller groups into the sidelanes of Kampong Bharu." (*Ibid.*, p. 53.)

[34] Women at times were spared, however.

the Salak South Police Station was besieged by "a large force of armed Chinese."[35]

The highest government officials meanwhile were gathering at the High Street Police Station. The Prime Minister had arrived, and so had Tun Razak. Enche Ghafar and other cabinet members were also there. Inspector General of the Police Salleh was in command of the tactical situation. Two-way radios were blaring, reporting incidents and relaying orders. There was uncertainty, confusion and some personal recrimination.

With all deference to the Prime Minister, most were looking to Tun Razak for decision. He was, after all, also Minister of Defense and Minister of Home Affairs. At about 7:20 P.M. he ordered immediate curfew for the Federal Capital and the state of Selangor.[36] At 8:00 P.M. he authorized troops to be engaged.

Altogether the Deputy Prime Minister had under his control a formidable array of forces. According to the latest official data the regular police force (at the end of 1967) numbered some 27,430 men and 338 women of which 22,286 men and 151 women were assigned to West Malaysia.[37] He also had under his control special police units including (1) the Police Field Force (PFF) composed of 25 companies, 14 of which were stationed in West Malaysia; (2) the Federal Reserve Units (FRU) composed of 6 units and 1 Independent Troop, all stationed in West Malaysia; (3) the Police Volunteer Reserve (PVR) of 2,639 men; (4) the Auxiliary Police (AP) of 1,167 men; and (5) Women Special Constables (WAC) composed of 69 police women. It was, moreover, a well equipped police force. Over 1,600 motor vehicles provided mobility. Instant communication was assured by telephone and radio links. All police stations in Malaysia could be reached by phone and were interconnected by a Static (radio) Channel. Some 423 vehicles (264 Mobile Patrol, 114 Public Order and 45 General Purpose) were also equipped with radio and connected through a Mobile Channel (UHF) to police stations.

To all this, after 8:00 P.M., May 13, 1969, could be added

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[36] The Curfew according to the Prime Minister's account was imposed at 7:00 P.M.; and according to the National Operations Council at 8:00 P.M. My own records place the first announcement on the radio around 7:25 P.M. *Ibid.*, p. 61 and Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[37] *Royal Malaysia Police Annual Report 1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1969).

38,780 army personnel on active duty organized in 5 brigades, 14 infantry battalions, 3 signal regiments. Standing by were 45,000 trained reservists. In addition there were 3,000 men on active duty in the navy and another 3,000 men in the air force.[38]

There was little doubt in anyone's mind at the Police Control Centre that with all this coercive capacity the riots in the capital could be suppressed. But that was not the main source of anxiety. What concerned Tun Razak most was the very real possibility that communal violence would sweep the country and involve the rural areas as well. Once that had happened the Government would have neither sufficient time nor force to prevent a full-scale civil war. Accordingly he was most reluctant to move massive units to the capital and thus to denude the rest of the country of its security forces. Instead, as a deterrent he first extended curfew and sent reinforcements to such sensitive states as Penang, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, and Malacca. Having thus, hopefully, confined the trouble to the state of Selangor, he turned to select the appropriate police and military units to augment his capacity to coerce in Kuala Lumpur.

While these specific decisions were being formulated, the Prime Minister had returned to the Residency. He was in a state of acute shock. His aspiration to create a politically stable Malaysia was in serious jeopardy. His hope to remain a happy Prime Minister was completely shattered. Distressed he recorded a radio address and then drove to Television Malaysia to speak to the country. No advance arrangements could be made. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Enche Senu) had been defeated in the election; his portfolio was vacant. The second in command, a Chinese, had fled. As the Prime Minister's car approached the studios at Jalan Ampang, it became apparent that the area was controlled by Malay youths. No security forces were in sight. He was passed through unmolested and made his address, as it were, by courtesy of the rioters.

By all standards it was an extraordinary speech. Live on TV, without a prepared text the Prime Minister poured out his feelings. Wiping his eyes frequently, running his fingers through his hair repeatedly, in a voice "choked with emotion"[39] he informed his countrymen that trouble had come to Malaysia. For

[38] Interview with Public Relations Officer, Minister of Defense, by Stanley Kuppusamy.

[39] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

minutes he enlarged on this theme blaming the Opposition parties and the Communists. He sought to reassure by asserting that the situation was under control and declaring his determination to proclaim a state of emergency if necessary. He appealed for public support and understanding. Finally he ended: "I pray to Allah to secure you against all dangers. At the same time, look after yourselves. I will do all I can without fear to maintain peace in this country. God bless you all!"[40]

A kind and compassionate speech, but really not very reassuring at all. Moreover, his explanation of the source of trouble was rather one-sided.[41] Not a word of Malay initiative escaped his lips. Surely extraordinary, but psychologically quite consistent. He was always inclined to place the Communists behind all mischief. Besides was he not told repeatedly the very same afternoon by MCA and MIC leaders that they, the Communists, were responsible for the election reverses and had inspired the provocative demonstrations? Perhaps even strategically his approach was sound. On the night of May 13, the two gravest threats to public security were first, the violence by anxiety ridden Malays and second, the violence by revenge seeking Chinese. For a Prime Minister of Malaysia, who was himself a Malay, to identify publicly "the Malays" or even "some Malay youths" as the cause of disturbances would not have reduced Malay anxiety and would have legitimized Chinese retaliation. Instinctively perhaps Tunku Abdul Rahman knew this would severely escalate the conflict.

Then occurred a most bizarre incident. Leaving the television station, the Prime Minister gave instructions to return to the Residency. Under way he changed his mind and directed his driver to proceed once again to police headquarters. Suddenly the car was surrounded by Chinese youths wearing white headbands. Recognizing his car, they let him pass. For the second time within an hour he was permitted to perform his duties as Prime Minister by the courtesy of illegal, armed bands. In-

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

[41] "I based my opinion," he later explained in a personal note, "on events which led to the outbreak of violence and blame the Communists squarely for what followed–(I) Boycott of election by Labour (Communists Front Party); (II) Intensive effort to wreck the Election; (III) The killing of UMNO worker in Penang; (IV) The funeral procession during which acts of provocation were committed which incensed the Malay feeling; (V) Uncontrolled exuberances and insults hurled at Malays by Opposition; (VI) What happened was inevitable. If the Malays had kept quiet the Chinese Communists and front men would have started it."

credibly, his police escort unaware of the change in orders had raced back to the Residency, where suddenly realizing that they had lost the Prime Minister, sat worrying about his fate.

At the police station the Prime Minister met Tun Tan Siew Sin, who aroused by Dr. Lim Swee Aun after some delay caused by the need to organize an armed escort, joined Tun Razak. He was then briefed on the situation. Violence continued to rage in and around the capital, but apparently it was successfully contained. No major incidents were reported from the other states. It was decided to commit the 5th Malay Regiment together with elements of the 10th Malay Regiment and elements of a Reconnaissance Regiment. In addition, one battalion of the Police Field Force was ordered from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur.[42] Tun Razak remained (until past midnight) to keep an eye on the situation. The radio was still blaring reports. Too many orders had to be countermanded. Tun Tan Siew Sin and other civilian officials went home; there was really little they could do but watch the police and military operations. And the Prime Minister returned to the Residency. For a long time that night he stood on his balcony watching the sea of flames rising from his capital city.[43]

Down below, the communal lines were being reinforced. Chinese neighborhoods became a maze of fortresses. At the perimeter behind barricades young men armed with crude weapons were waiting and watching. They did not move across into Malay enclaves but were prepared to kill any Malay who would force their defenses. Periodically the FRU approached, crushed the barricades, fired tear-gas shells, then moved on. In minutes the barricades were set up again, and the young men were out again in force. Inside the "forts" most Chinese were huddled in their homes, too terrified to move. Around the Jalan Chow Kit area everything was dark. People did not dare to turn the lights on even to cook food. In some instances they were hiding Malays. Many Chinese indeed did not quite know which to fear more, the Malay communal rioters or the Chinese secret society gangs.

In turn, Malay areas were also preparing defenses. After some initial confrontations with Chinese gangs, the roving bands turned inside their enclaves. In high excitement they recounted to each other and to all who were willing to listen wondrous

[42] The latter began to embark at 1:00 A.M., May 14.

[43] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–92.

tales of their personal heroism and grand exploits. They drove around in cars they had seized from Chinese owners while the gasoline lasted and then set them afire. Painted slogans of bravado appeared: "Al-Fatah rides again," or "Silawangi." They scouted for Chinese who were hiding or Chinese property which had escaped the flames. Some sought to incite passions even further. They dragged Malay casualties to the mosque, seized its microphone, and called for a holy war (*jihad*).[44] Violent and dramatic, the acts of brutality and savagery were being committed by a small minority. Most Malays were huddling in their homes too terrified to sleep. By 9:00 P.M. there were some 3,000 refugees including women and children at the mosque; in the Chief Minister's compound several hundred more. Much of the time they were praying. In all the urban enclaves some Malays were harboring frightened Chinese.

Dato Harun had his hands full. Young men rushed into his house incredulously reporting that the FRU actually fired upon the Malays. According to their information twenty-four wounded by police bullets were brought to the mosque. He had to try to calm them down. Then came the rumor that the Chinese had set fire to the mosque.[45] He had to investigate and then reassure. A new excitement swept his compound. Some were agitating to burn down Dr. Tan Chee Khoon's home. They had to be dissuaded. The boys were hungry. Food had to be found. On top of all, suddenly in his personal life a domestic crisis erupted. The Chief Minister, like most of the city, did not sleep that night.

By 10:00 P.M., however, the army was moving in. One company of the 5th Malay Regiment occupied the road control points. Another company first relieved the Salak South Police Station, then some of its elements proceeded to rescue a Police Light Strike Force which at Pudu Lane was under attack from a large force of Chinese.[46] Other units were deployed in Kampong Bharu. At Jalan Perkins they dispersed a "hostile" crowd of Chinese with direct gunfire. They occupied the Jalan Chow Kit area, destroyed the barricades and mercilessly shot at anything they saw move indoors or out. For all practical purposes, the capital was under martial law.

[44] A most unnerving call. Some miles away at his office the head of the Special Branch heard it. The palms of his hands began to perspire.

[45] As a matter of fact, Chinese row houses in the vicinity were burning.

[46] *The May 13 Tragedy, op. cit.*, p. 61.

PART FOUR

A Political System Restored

PREFACE

THOUGH some thought that it never would, ultimately the long night did come to an end. Daylight exposed the dimensions of the debris and destruction. As ambulances entered the affected areas to remove the dead and injured, the human cost also began to become apparent. A twenty-four-hour curfew remained in effect; troops were massed at crucial intersections and patrolled the main streets. In the back-lanes of Kampong Bharu and Pudu, however, young men (Malay and Chinese respectively) ignored official warnings and injunctions. People stranded all night at police stations or hiding in private houses were returned to their own homes or evacuated to refugee centers: the Malays to Stadium Negara, the Chinese to Merdeka Stadium, Chinwoo Stadium and to Shaw Road School. Relief services were being organized. Elements of law and order were beginning to regain the initiative in Kuala Lumpur.

By mid-morning of May 14 cabinet members were gathering at Tun Razak's house to discuss the general situation. Opinions generally favored the formation of "multi-racial" goodwill committees on all levels with the task of visiting and reassuring local neighborhoods. With the arrival of Tun (Dr.) Ismail, who had been invited to the meeting by the Deputy Prime Minister, the tone of discussion changed. He spoke vigorously against Cabinet officers visiting the sensitive areas. Apparently looking at Tun Tan Siew Sin he proclaimed: "They would kill you." Instead, he argued for the prompt announcement of an emergency government and the vigorous use of the security forces to restore order. After some further discussion Tun Razak, Tun (Dr.) Ismail, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Sambanthan drove to the Residency.

It is unclear just who proposed it, but there is no doubt that all present at the conference agreed to it. A new emergency was to be declared. Elections in East Malaysia were to be postponed indefinitely and parliamentary government was to be suspended. Instead, a National Operations Council headed by Tun Razak was charged with controlling the functions of government. Upon

the group's return to Tun Razak's house, other Cabinet members were informed and approved the decisions. In the afternoon the Solicitor General was instructed to draw up the necessary proclamations. His Majesty, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, signed them. Under Article 150 of the Constitution all this was quite legitimate. Constitutional government was not being abandoned.

The immediate problem, of course, was one of security. Tension was high in Penang and Perak; the situation in Malacca was precarious; the government was not wholly in control of Kuala Lumpur. Security forces had to be deployed, order had to be restored, and the public had to be reassured. The difficulties were somewhat aggravated by a sudden deterioration of relations with the foreign press and awkward attempts at news-management impairing the government's credibility. They were further compounded by a crisis within UMNO posing a challenge to the Prime Minister's authority, taking up much of Tun Razak's time, producing heated controversies among Malays and more anxieties among the Chinese and Indians. Nevertheless, the situation was soon stabilized, and the government was able to turn to the more complex task of political reconstruction.

Clearly, the Alliance leaders had no intention of abandoning the system they themselves had designed. More than ever they were convinced of the need for recognizing the legitimacy of communal groups and for satisfying communal interests. Still, given the crisis of May 13, some basic revisions were definitely indicated.

For one thing, the government concluded, there would have to be revisions in the approach to democratic politics. Free speech and assembly admittedly were vital elements of the system, but when these rights were carried to extremes and were used to shield relentless, indiscriminate challenges to the Constitution and/or unrestrained incitements of communal passions, then they become inimical to the system. Indeed, if popular sovereignty was to remain the basis of authority in Malaysia, then in the absence of effective self-restraint the government had no choice but to intervene and through direct action reverse the politicization of conflict and communalization of politics. Accordingly, the Directorate, through the National Operations Council and after some discussions within the broadly based National Consultative Council, proceeded along three lines. First, it composed and widely disseminated a "national ideology" which removed any

ambiguity about the inter-communal contract of 1957 by explicitly spelling out its terms. Second, it formulated and initiated new educational and economic policies designed to accelerate the implementation of those terms as yet unfulfilled. Finally, it passed through the reconvened Parliament laws which prohibited any public challenge to the Constitution or any other "sensitive issue" which was apt to influence communal tensions.

There was, however, another area where Alliance leaders thought basic revisions were indicated: the Directorate itself. Its processes worked well enough while a balance was maintained between horizontal solidarity and vertical mobilization, but the elections and their aftermath seemed to teach two lessons. First, the Prime Minister's efforts to serve as a supra-communal arbiter were disequilibrating. A senior foreign (British) official, a High Commissioner, Governor or Resident Advisor, could conceivably sustain such a role especially when he was provided with foreign (British) military support, but not an indigenous leader, however exalted his status or prodigious his talent. Non-communal behavior by such a political leader was apparently neither understood nor appreciated. To all too many it suggested weakness in character to be exploited by one community and condemned for treason by the other. The choice that seemed to present itself was between (1) a head of government serving impersonal, administrative criteria, or (2) one epitomizing Malay pre-eminence in the polity.

Second, the desire to maximize interpersonal loyalty and harmony within the Directorate—so natural given the common élan developed during the struggle for independence and the close and confidential working conditions within the small, exclusive group—also tended to be disequilibrating. It had, in fact, already reduced cooperation between those who governed and those who actually mobilized public support for UMNO and the MCA to a position perilously close to the breaking point. Such trade-offs were particularly unfortunate for UMNO which had always relied more on popular support than had the MCA and which in the past had been counted on to provide at least two-thirds of Alliance votes. If therefore the equilibrium was to be restored, special initiatives designed to intensify the allegiance of intermediate level leaders were required. Their demands would have to be more vigorously presented and more determinedly pursued even at the expense of the accumulated mutual good-

will and empathy within the Directorate. Several options were available: a dramatic change in the style of existing members, introduction of other UMNO and MCA leaders, preferably men more clearly identified with the interests of their own communities, or perhaps a new partnership arrangement altogether, involving the admission of other political parties with better access to the Malay and Chinese masses either as additional or as substitute allies.

In September, 1970, Tunku Abdul Rahman retired. Tun Razak became Prime Minister, Tun (Dr.) Ismail his deputy. Although practically in operation for a year already, the new decision-making rules in the Directorate formally took effect. Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail had no ambitions to become detached supra-communal arbiters. Nor would they endanger their popularity within the Malay community to maintain mutual confidence within the Directorate. They saw their own senior position in the Directorate and controlling voice in government based on one foundation: they were the top national leaders of the Malay community. The Directorate would continue to implement the constitutional contract. There was still room for bargaining and for a "give and take." But the final decision on cultural integration, the appropriate marginal rates of growth in the Malay access to the economy and Chinese access to government would not be resolved by a compromise among more or less equal parties. They would be decided by what the top UMNO leaders considered fair and in the interest of Malaysia. It was, of course, a very much simpler system.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Barrier to Political Reconstruction: A Credibility Gap

THE Alliance was determined to restore normalcy with all deliberate speed. It would restore order; it would reconstruct the political system. Suggestions by the Opposition and specifically by Dr. Tan Chee Khoon of the *Gerakan* for an all-party cooperative venture was rejected out of hand. The Alliance did not need them, was Tun Razak's decision; besides the Opposition was primarily responsible for all the troubles in the first place. Within the Alliance, moreover, the Directorate remained intact. Thus, when the membership of the National Operations Council was announced, the name immediately following its chairman's was Tun Tan Siew Sin, head of the MCA which just a few days earlier had officially withdrawn from the Cabinet.[1] Tun Sambanthan was also included and so was Tun (Dr.) Ismail who after two years agreed to return as Minister of Home Affairs and strengthen both the government and the leadership's position in UMNO.[2] Tunku Abdul Rahman was not formally a member, but that did not mean that he was excluded. He himself chose the arrangement; had he preferred he could have been the chairman of National Operations Council (NOC). In any case, Tun Razak was in daily communication with him and no major decisions were made by the Council without the Prime Minister's consent.

The National Operations Council promptly settled down to work. During the daily one to one and one half hour meetings

[1] Tun Tan Siew Sin's membership was considered so much a matter of routine that he was not even consulted prior to this announcement.

[2] The newly appointed Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah was the only other political member; the remainder were specialists: General Tengku Oswan bin Tengku Mohamed Jewa, Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff; Tan Sri Mohamed Salleh bin Ismael, Inspector General of the Police; Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, Director of Public Services; and Tan Sri Ghazali bin Mohamed Shaffie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lieutenant-General Dato Ibrahim bin Ismail was named Executive Officer, Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, May 18, 1969.

there were few debates. The Military and police members provided estimates of the situation and at times defined their needs. They were invariably granted. Tun Razak presided; on his right sat Tun (Dr.) Ismail, Deputy-Chairman of NOC. His opinion was regularly sought, and all, even the Deputy Prime Minister, deferred to his opinion. Neither Tun Tan Siew Sin nor Tun V. T. Sambanthan entered the discussion very often. Tan Sri Kadir offered technical advice, while Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah was trying to be helpful. The most articulate member, however, was Tan Sri Ghazali bin Shaffie. He saw his role not only as a close associate of the Prime Minister but also as the leading intellectual in the Council. Always urbane he occasionally sought to project the image of indomitable courage.[3] Indeed, in forensic skill and finesse, he had few equals among senior Malays.

Initially at least, most of the Council's time was devoted to matters of security. Fortunately, the violence had not spread beyond Kuala Lumpur. An incident in Malacca was quickly contained. The Sultan of Perak and the new Chief Minister of Penang (not to mention the secret societies in Ipoh and Seramban) had successfully used their influence for restraint. Even in the capital area armed clashes were rapidly declining both in size and frequency, although arson and looting continued for a while longer.

NOC's strategy called first for a reduction of inter-communal contact to a controllable level through a curfew. On May 13 it was imposed around the clock, but on May 15 it was lifted for two and in some areas three hours. Three days later curfew-free hours were extended from 6:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Post offices reopened for "restricted" business, and on Monday (May 19) the banks resumed business. Then government offices and public services returned to normal operation. Within a month curfew was limited to late night hours. Security forces, however, remained in evidence. In fact, their presence day and night was intentionally dramatized by frequent road blocks and by the bluish-purple lights constantly flashing on police vehicles.

Second, NOC strategy called for exemplary punishment of some of the "culprits." It was, of course, simply impossible to

[3] He was particularly proud of his role in the helicopter supported raid (May 16) upon "the headquarters of Communist terrorists" who allegedly plotted to poison the water supply of Kuala Lumpur.

identify all those who in the past few days had violated the law. For one thing, there were too many, and besides, the government had accepted the explanation that many lost control of themselves (*amok*) due to intolerable provocations. The government did try, however, to round up some of the Opposition leaders, who in its view had incited inter-communal hostility. The *Gerakan*'s V. David and the DAP's Lim Kit Siang were the most prominent of those arrested.[4]

Finally, NOC decided to improve public security by moving against any para-military groups capable of waging organized violence. Military operations along the western border against Communist remnants were intensified. Communist sympathizers throughout the country were warned by Tun (Dr.) Ismail: "If we can detect or prove that these citizens who enjoy the benefits and comforts of our country and also owe allegiance and loyalty to a foreign power, then there is no question but that we must take a very hard look at these people, and where possible deport them."[5] The main targets, however, were the Chinese secret societies in Kuala Lumpur. Although in the past they had shunned inter-communal conflict and most recently generally confined themselves to fending off attacks by Malay gangs upon the Chinese, the prospect of so well-organized a group with access to hidden weapons emerging as the para-military vanguard of Chinese communalism represented, at least potentially, a threat to the Malay community and a challenge to public authority. Accordingly, as soon as Tun (Dr.) Ismail assumed control of the Ministry of Home Affairs—two days before he was named to NOC and nearly a week before the new Cabinet was announced—the police opened a campaign against "secret society thugs" and "other gangsters" in the capital.[6] On Friday, May 16, a raid on the Saw Hock Thuan Flats was carried out by security forces landing on housetops by helicopter. Other less spectacular raids, thirty-three in all, proceeded regularly to the point

[4] V. David was released on July 13, while Lim Kit Siang was formally charged on July 11, 1969. Interestingly, five of the six specifications referred to activities *before* the election campaign, and the last item of communal incitement took place during the campaign in Sabah. By July the number held under the Internal Security Act rose to 368 (from 251 before May 13).

[5] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, June 9, 1969.

[6] Significantly, no similar effort was undertaken either in Perak, or Negri Sembilan where the secret societies were "bought" by the MCA.

where special arrangements for housing of the more than 2,000 such detainees became a problem. Relatively few of them were actually charged;[7] instead, they were sent for "rehabilitation" to a newly constructed camp at Pulau Jerejak (off Penang). Tun (Dr.) Ismail hoped "to see them being trained as technicians and small shop-owners."[8] As a matter of fact, police were able to capture mostly "small-fry"; the heads of societies were affected only in one sense. Their minions continued to provide "protection" to their Chinese businessmen clients, some of the Tiger generals proceeded to "table-talk" and others negotiated mergers with the leaders of other societies,[9] but after the summer they no longer had a significant capacity for concerted political violence. Since actually they may not have had such ambitions anyway, their losses were far from crippling.

The Chinese gangs, however, were not singled out for special treatment. The violence of May 13 revealed, to the surprise of many government officials, the existence of Malay secret organizations as well. Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail both repeated over and over again that they would not hesitate to enforce the law against any challenge from any source, Chinese, Indian *or* Malay. Underscoring their determination to be firm but fair, the police with its newfound popularity among Chinese was placed in control of Chinese neighborhoods, while the army was concentrated in Malay areas.[10] And just to make sure that everyone understood the message, after the initial disturbances units of Malay Regiments stationed in Kampong Bharu were replaced by Sarawak Rangers composed mostly of Iban Tribesmen.

Throughout June isolated incidents continued to occur, quite often by small bands, Chinese and Malay, and the security forces had some difficulty identifying the culprits. The acid test of the firm but fair policy came at the end of the month when a large

[7] Between May 13 and July 31, 1969, a total of 9,143 persons were arrested in connection with the emergency, 5,561 were actually charged but only 382 Malays, 490 Chinese, 114 Indians, and 23 others with offenses other than breaches of curfew orders. *The May 13th Tragedy, op. cit.*, pp. 91–92.

[8] Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, June 22, 1969.

[9] The Minister of Home Affairs charged that "360," "21," and Long Foo Tong societies had joined forces. Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 8, 1969.

[10] The police was an integrated body. On May 13th only 39% of the entire force and 214 out of 723 Assistant Superintendents of police were Malay.

group of Malay youths from Gombak, against the emphatic objections of their elders, decided to march on a community of Indians at Sentul. The Indians, they contended, played a decidedly diabolical role during the May 13 crisis by siding generally with the Chinese. They were, at the time, spared retribution, a position they could hardly enjoy indefinitely. The time was propitious on May 28. Late that afternoon a drunken brawl in Jalan Chow Kit sparked a series of incidents. According to the official statement, "bands of youth threw stones at passing vehicles" at Cheras, while "at Jalan Raja Muda a person was assaulted by a group of hooligans. . . ." Subsequently, "a house at Sentul Pesar was set on fire by person or persons unknown. This aggravated the situation and people panicked. At 8:25 P.M. a male person was seriously injured. He subsequently died at the hospital. Following a report of fire, police assigned to cover the Sentul area visited Sentul Pasar and found a large crowd involved in affray. Police fired into the air to disperse the crowd. At the scene police found two dead and four injured. Meanwhile, in the interior of Sentul Pasar, a row of dwelling houses was set on fire. A fire engine was summoned and attended to the fire. Within the close proximity of this fire was a number of injured persons who were subsequently removed to the hospital. Of these, two died and the rest were admitted to the hospital."[11]

This was no instance of *amok*. The hundred or so young Malays armed with *parangs* crossing through fields were not coming to the aid of beleaguered Malay brethren. They themselves were not in any danger of attack, and with Tun Razak, Director of Operations, and Tun (Dr.) Ismail, his deputy, together controlling the armed forces and the police, even the wildest imagination would have had some difficulty conjuring up an imminent Chinese take-over of the state.

The government dealt with the situation accordingly. While it could not prevent the outbreak of violence on the night of May 28, the police immediately reinforced its units in the area, and by the next day (and night) no further incidents were taking place in Sentul. Moreover, under the personal orders of Tun

[11] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, June 30, 1969. Official reports placed total dead at six, four Indians and two Chinese. Those admitted to the surgical section of the General Hospital on the night of June 28 (seven Indians and one Chinese) included one six-year-old Indian girl with both hands severed and one sixteen-year-old Indian girl with one hand severed.

(Dr.) Ismail, the police conducted a most vigorous investigation leading to the arrest of some 80 culprits. Malays or not, they were "undesirable elements guilty of premeditated acts of violence and arson. . . . Such acts have . . . no mitigating circumstances," declared the Minister of Home Affairs on television, "and they are the more to be condemned and will be rigorously stamped out."[12]

Sentul, or more appropriately the government's firm and fair response, marked the end of the crisis to public order. There were still some inter-communal incidents to come—a policeman was killed in the Jalan Chow Kit area, a man was attacked in Jalan Pudu, four were killed in Malacca—but if ever there was doubt that Tun (Dr.) Ismail was not kidding when he pledged "to take extreme measures against all potential troublemakers, irrespective of their racial origin" it was disappearing very rapidly indeed. And so were overt, inter-communal clashes. During July and August trouble was forecast for several days, some singled out by astrologers for special occult reasons, others were Communist anniversaries and, of course, there was Merdeka Day. Each time a wave of rumor and anxiety swept the capital; each time the security forces were fully prepared and no incidents occurred; and with each time confidence in public safety rose. In a few months Hari Raya and then Chinese New Year came and went without inter-communal violence. The security forces were still on the alert, but were gradually withdrawn to more discreet positions.

The Management of News

While heavily engaged in the restoration of law and order, the National Operations Council was faced with a more subtle problem: just how to handle information about violence. Several considerations were involved. One was world opinion. The Malaysian government had established an extraordinarily good relationship with the international press. The Prime Minister and his colleagues were always accessible and invariably frank. That record was now in jeopardy. If, on the other hand, news were fully reported, its reputation for inter-racial harmony would be severely impaired. More important, however, were considerations of internal security. A comprehensive coverage of communal incidents might encourage other members of the aggressors' community to emulate the example, while it might move other members of the victims' community to just retaliation until the whole country was ablaze. The last thing the government could afford was a spreading of violence beyond the Kuala Lumpur area. All the same, the absence of hard information would give rise to the rash of rumors, and they could be even more incendiary than the truth. Finally, control of information would clearly impair confidence in the government, a confidence which in those critical times was needed very much. The point was a close one; neither the complete repression of news nor its wholly free flow could serve the country well. Somewhere there was a line of pragmatic compromise, and it was up to the national leadership to find it. At first at least, they did not do too well.

[12] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 6 and July 9, 1969.

Radio and television were immediately and totally controlled. Only Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, Tun (Dr.) Ismail and, once he was appointed Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Enche Hamzah were permitted access without prior clearance. Tun Tan Siew Sin, Tun V. T. Sambanthan and Khaw Kai Boh were at times invited to speak, but when Dato Harun taped an appeal for calm, it was not telecast. Requests by Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas that Opposition leaders also be permitted to appear on television were rejected outright. Assurances that the security forces were in full control were repeated regularly, official government decisions were reported fully, but otherwise the country was dependent entirely upon the Prime Minister for information on the situation. For five nights in a row he addressed his countrymen but offered few details. On May 13 he spoke of "trouble" in Kuala Lumpur, the declaration of a state of emergency in the capital and the culpability of the Opposition parties. Wednesday and Thursday nights he referred to continued incidents, the postponement of elections in East Malaysia, the possibility of the emergency being extended to the entire country and the role of the Communists as instigators. Friday he communicated his relief that the security forces had crushed a Communist conspiracy to poison the water-supply of Kuala Lumpur. He also announced the extension of the state of emergency for the entire country. "I have now set-up a National Operations Council with Tun Razak as the Director of Operations," he announced. Just in case anyone was perplexed about

his own continued authority, the Prime Minister explained: "Tun Razak will be immediately responsible to me, which means much of his work will be given first priority." He felt confident of his government's control of the situation and his own control of the government. And yet, he was also defensive. "I am afraid people might criticize and say that because of our small majority, we are forced to embark on this plan. But this is not so. We have a working majority to carry out administration, but circumstances demand that we take effective and strong measures to deal with the terrorist elements."[13] Saturday night, however, Tunku Abdul Rahman was visibly relaxed. He was looking forward, he said, to reading the Sunday newspapers and their comics section. He was even willing to take a broader view of the sources of violence. "Last night," he said, "I blamed the Communists alone, but intelligence reports say paid saboteurs and secret society members were involved too." Indeed, he had "a good idea" where the money for these saboteurs came from, but before disclosing it, he wanted to be completely sure and have more details.[14] There was still no mention of Malay responsibility either as individuals or as groups. Nor did he offer any account of the incidents and the conditions of public order in specific neighborhoods. People in the capital relied on rumor and at night looked to the skies to judge the location and the extent of fires.

Outside the capital, in Malaysia and the rest of the world, people turned to the press for information. *The Straits Times* continued to publish some reports, showing pictures of the damage. So did the Malay and Chinese language newspapers; and, of course, so did the international press. Much of it was dramatic, some of it was lurid, and some of it was misleading and even false.[15] Grasping for control on May 15 the government directed that "all newspapers shall suspend publication with immediate effect for a few days until further notice," and the curfew passes of foreign correspondents were revoked. The following morning though the acting Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah) called a news conference at

[13] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–109.

[14] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 18, 1969.

[15] Perhaps the most frequently cited example of erroneous reporting was the BBC story about communal violence on the campus of the University of Malaya.

which he gave his assurance "that there will be no unnecessary clamping of news. We are only concerned with news items which will make the present situation much more damaging," he explained.[16] And the same evening Tun Razak himself made a special effort. He called local editors, then foreign correspondents to a conference. The first went off fairly well. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed his regrets for the government's action and announced the resumption of publication by Sunday. He then added: "I know that some newspapers have been responsible and have cooperated with us in the past. We appreciate that very much. But we must take every precaution to see that no irresponsible statements are made or pictures published that might influence further the present tense situation. . . ." The conference with foreign correspondents was another matter. Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie, as Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was presiding. He first announced Tun (Dr.) Ismail's return to the government then sketched a scenario of Communist-fomented trouble. Suddenly, the skeptical reporters saw Tun Razak obviously near exhaustion enter, accompanied by two soldiers armed with submachine guns. There followed questions, none actually unfriendly, generally supportive of the police efforts, but repeatedly implying and sometimes asserting that the army was less than restrained, worse still was taking sides in the conflict. Lewis Simons, representing the Associated Press, recounted being shot at by troops while standing by his window. He even offered to exhibit his bathroom tank punctured by bullets. Peter Simms, a correspondent whose personal relationship with Tun Razak was close enough to consider writing his biography, told of witnessing a Malay mob killing a Chinese while the army stood by. Other similar reports followed. The Deputy Prime Minister became visibly agitated. "No, no, lies," "not true," "it cannot be, I was there," he kept repeating. The questions were abruptly terminated. Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie then exhibited weapons captured in the helicopter raid on the secret society headquarters. Most were hand weapons with only a few firearms. It was a bad show altogether. The reporters were stunned; Tun Razak felt betrayed. Why could not the foreign correspondents understand his problem, or at least try to be sympathetic in his country's hour of need? There was, of course,

[16] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 18, 1969.

no question where the Prime Minister stood. The next night during his evening report on television he took foreign correspondents to task. They were too indulgent with subversion, he said. Well, if they liked them so much, let them take these Communist Chinese home with them, to Australia, for example!

Sunday (May 18) the daily papers resumed publication. *The Straits Times* reprinted pictures of its front pages of issues printed during the period of suspension. Reporting of events in the street had become muted, however, if mentioned at all. They were referred to only vaguely as a basis of exhortations for intercommunal cooperation. Most of the domestic news concentrated on the initiatives of the government to restore normalcy. The same evening foreign correspondents were invited to the Deputy Prime Minister's home for a discussion. As so often in the past the setting was informal, but now the atmosphere had become chilly. Tun Razak tried to persuade his unsympathetic audience that some of their information was erroneous and that atrocity reports would simply provoke further violence. He was clearly annoyed that some pictures of the property destruction had been published already by foreign newspapers.[17] After a while the session broke up; no one was satisfied. Charles Mohr of *The New York Times* wondered aloud at the abrupt and total disappearance of mutual confidence.

On May 21 the government officially announced the imposition of censorship.[18] At the same time, a committee under Tun Sambanthan with Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah, Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie, and Khaw Kai Boh was appointed to strengthen and reorganize the Information Services and the mass media. The following day NOC banned all publications of political parties, and the police seized the latest issues of *Newsweek* and *Time* while the Special Branch removed a consignment of British newspapers (*Daily Express, Daily Telegraph, Observer*, the *Financial Times* and the *London Times*) from Subang airport for detailed study. On May 26 the Minister of Information and Broadcasting accused the foreign correspondents of not explaining the situation factually and thus placing Malaysia in a bad light. In the future, Enche Hamzah pleaded, they should "not touch" the sore point of race, though he assured the correspondents that the government had no intention of suppressing their stories.

[17] Uncensored access to international cables including the wire-photo services of the government *Talikom* were not interrupted.

[18] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 22, 1969.

Reporting by the Foreign Press

All the same, at least initially the government's information policy was far from successful. To be sure, the domestic press had become circumspect, or perhaps more accurately docile, but at a severe cost in credibility. This only encouraged rumors and "rumor-mongering." The foreign press, on the other hand, was not intimidated, and went on reporting their own way.

Some of it was extravagant. Most of it, however, was serious and sincere. Correspondents, especially those based in Kuala Lumpur, tried to give an accurate picture. To be sure, there were distortions, some due to a restraint on information, others to the traditional penchant of the journalists for drama. But the heart of the difficulty between the international press and the government was a conflict in criteria. The former, however much it was concerned with accuracy, had to appeal to the curiosity of its readers, which was after all what sold newspapers. The latter, however much it was concerned with accuracy, had to be sensitive to the internal security of the country. Moreover, the interpretation of internal security as the special preserve of the government itself further aggravated the adversary relationship.

A case in point was the reporting of *The New York Times*. It combined a fundamental commitment to objectivity with an attraction for the dramatic and a measure of insensitivity to local, internal security considerations. The newspaper headlined its first story on the outbreak of violence: "Malaysia Race Riot Kills 50 in Capital." It covered the provocative actions of opposition supporters, by implication linked the riots to the MCA's withdrawal from the Cabinet, described some incidents, and observed that the curfew was not effective. It also reported efforts by the Prime Minister, by Tun Razak and by Tun Tan Siew Sin to restore order.[19] The next day, the newspaper reported the suspension of the Constitution, the Prime Minister's speech, and the continuation of incidents. It treated with some skepticism the Prime Minister's assertion that "the [Communist] terrorists under cover of political parties are trying for a comeback" and suggested that "much of the current bitterness between the two

[19] *The New York Times*, May 14, 1969, p. 6.

ethnic communities is a result of . . . [the] successful Chinese challenges to the ruling party's power." At the end were two sentences which offended Tun Razak: "In Malay districts men were seen gathering, armed with bricks, knives and other sharpened weapons. The soldiers appeared to be making no efforts to stop these groups of Malays."[20] The first news analysis by Charles Mohr appeared on May 16, the day curfew passes for foreign correspondents were rescinded. It conceded that the tragedy had deep and complex roots and proceeded to identify some of them. Then came the difficult part. "One ominous sign was an unconfirmed report today that Chinese youths armed with shotguns had murdered four or five Malay students near a Malay technical college. There was another report that Malay troops had fired on Chinese shoppers during the curfew suspension this morning and American tourists reported that policemen stood by while 50 young Malays dragged Chinese out of three cars and beat them." Charles Mohr concluded by quoting "one Malay" as saying that "90 per cent of all Chinese in this country are Communists," and another: "We lived together as brothers for 20 years, but once the rioting began it was Malay against Chinese. Some Chinese ran away and we killed the rest."[21] Indeed, the American reader may have found his curiosity piqued by unconfirmed reports, but in the midst of a violent inter-communal confrontation such rumors were incendiary; and so was the quotation of extreme opinions by a few unidentified individuals, who could conceivably express the views of many, but who might simply be untypical raving maniacs.

The appointment of NOC brought another long report and a sympathetic biography of Tun Razak. The press conference of May 16 was reported. "Dr. [sic] Razak rejected, with restrained anger, assertions by journalists that they had witnessed Malay troops and police tolerating Malay curfew violations, arson and even attacks on Chinese while firing into Chinese neighborhoods." The next paragraph moreover further dramatized this point. " 'What can we do?' one Chinese intellectual said today. 'If we tried to fight back the army would shoot every Chinese they saw.' "[22] On May 18 there was an editorial warning against "the blind suppression of the Chinese" and recommended enlisting the new, young leaders in a broader program of political and social integration. The latest news from Kuala Lumpur, however, did concede that the military units had "begun effectively to discourage Malay violation of the curfew."[23] The report of the following day was focused on arrests made but also contained the "information" (erroneous) that the original Alliance agreement included the rotation of the position of Prime Minister among the three communities and the conclusion that "the Alliance formula has failed. . . ."[24]

[20] *Ibid.*, May 15, 1969, p. 9.
[21] *Ibid.*, May 16, 1969, p. 3.
[22] *Ibid.*, May 17, 1969, p. 10.

A similar pattern of reporting characterized the major Commonwealth dailies, except perhaps that they further accentuated the "plight" of the Chinese, the "culpability" of the Malays and the "collapse" of the Alliance approach. Prominent western weeklies painted a similar picture. *Newsweek* called it "the saddest story" and concluded its first report with the same quote by a Malay about some Chinese running away and "we killed the rest."[25] *Time* magazine gave the matter nearly a page. The "trouble began" when as the result of the election returns it became apparent that "many Chinese were no longer satisfied with just economic hegemony, but wanted a protective share of political power as well." Malay "ultra's" became alarmed and

> began to discuss ways of retaining control. At a Malay post-election meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Chinese onlookers began to taunt those in attendance. Infuriated, the Malays attacked. . . . Malay mobs, wearing white headbands signifying an alliance with death, and brandishing swords and daggers, surged into Chinese areas in the capital, burning, looting and killing. In retaliation, Chinese, sometimes aided by Indians, armed themselves with pistols and shotguns and struck at Malay Kampongs (villages). . . . Firemen drew sniper fire as they attempted to douse the flames, and outnumbered police watched helplessly at times as the street gangs rampaged. One man, trying to escape from his burning car, was thrown back into it by a howling mob and died. By the time the four days of race war and civil strife had run their course, the General Hospital's morgue was so crowded that bodies were put into plastic bags and hung on ceiling hooks. Government officials, attempting to play down the extent of the disaster, insisted

[23] *Ibid.*, May 18, 1969, Section 4, p. 16 E.
[24] *Ibid.*, May 19, 1969, p. 11.
[25] New York, *Newsweek*, May 26, 1969, p. 58.

that the death toll was only 104. Western diplomatic sources put the toll closer to 600, with most of the victims Chinese. . . . Already many Chinese have given up hope: one senior government official spoke of abandoning everything in Kuala Lumpur and returning to his native Singapore.[26]

Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* in an editorial warned against primary reliance upon coercion but concluded that "the initial economic costs of the riots have been marginal, despite serious destruction of private property. . . . The riots have raised a new unknown which potential investors must allow for in estimating their prospects in Malaysia. Yet even after the upsurge of racial hatreds, Malaysia remains a more inviting economy for new investment than most other parts of Asia."[27]

If Tun Razak was angry at the picture which was painted of Malaysia in the foreign press, Tunku Abdul Rahman was personally offended. "In these days," he concluded, "some newspapers are blatantly and outrightly bad, caring not a jot for the truth of the subject-matter they publish. All they seek is headline news, and the more sensational the better. The consequences of their reports seem to cause them no concern. They pretend to be the conscience of the public, yet the sins they commit themselves are exempt, and all this self-importance occurs in the name and profession, self-assumed, of being the voices of public opinion."[28] Disgusted he decided to refuse interviews to foreign correspondents for some time. Even so, the Prime Minister deeply doubted the wisdom of press censorship and especially the seizure of foreign publications by the Special Branch. For one thing, those who were sufficiently internationally oriented to subscribe to these were not exactly the types to resort to communal violence, and in any case, with Singapore so close by they could easily cross the causeway and get hold of the material. Second, he tended to agree with the London *Economist*, that "the wealthy English-educated civil servants, businessmen and diplomats who read them . . . were only persuaded that the government has something to hide," and he was particularly distressed by its *sequitur* that "the main question now in many

[26] Chicago, *Time*, May 23, 1969, p. 30.
[27] Hong Kong, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 29, 1969, p. 479.
[28] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

Malaysian and foreign minds is whether the Alliance or the United Malays National Organisation, its Malay component, connived at or created the post election violence."[29] The Prime Minister deferred to Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail on their judgment that internal security required a government effort to prevent foreign press reports gaining domestic circulation, but once the clear and present danger of renewed violence receded, he concluded that a more liberal press policy was in order. As it happened, both the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs agreed with him.

The Sambanthan Committee of the NOC meanwhile was holding regular meetings. Their initial innovations were modest indeed, revising the format of the evening news on television; changing the phrase *Bahasa Kebangsaan* (national language) to *Bahasa Malaysia* (language of Malaysia) as the designation of Malay; and proposing the use of community centers in rural areas as "civic and information centers." But under its direction and in cooperation with the Ministry of Home Affairs the "Police Control Centre" was converted into an "Information Co-ordination Centre," a revision which administratively provided little change but nevertheless symbolized the acceptance of public relations criteria in the handling of information on internal security. Indeed, by the time of the incidents at Sentul, the official account was detailed and almost accurate.[30]

The crucial test on foreign publications came late in July when *Life* magazine published a six column report on the "Quiet Coup in K. L." by Peter Simms. It contained some of the most provocative material regarding the government's role, part of it not only unfair and misleading but blatantly false. ". . . some Asian and Western observers believe," Simms proclaimed, "that it will take at least a generation and others that the damage can never be undone."

The depth of the wounds owes much to the police and the military. One policeman explained: "We have been told that the Chinese are armed, and the Malays are not. We have therefore been instructed to defend the Malays." The police carried out their instructions literally. Even as the policeman

[29] London, *The Economist*, May 31, 1969, p. 29.
[30] The source of violence was clearly identified, but there was a slight (probably unintentional) under-reporting of casualties.

spoke, armed Malays wandered freely on one side of the road, despite a curfew, while on the other side Chinese houses blazed and Chinese fleeing the flames were shot at for "breaking the curfew." Eyewitnesses testify that the infantry—all ten battalions of the Malay regiment are 100 percent Malay—looted Chinese shops, then set them afire. . . . Under the emergency regulations the police, and presumably the military, have been instructed not to move bodies to mortuaries (where too many people might see them) but to gather identification tags, or fingerprints (if the victims had no hands, footprints are specified) and bury the bodies without informing the relatives. One story confirmed by a number of sources tells of five army trucks arriving at the leprosarium at Sungei Buloh, outside Kuala Lumpur, with soldiers drunk on brandy and cargoes of bodies painted black to make racial identification more difficult. The troops called out the lepers, gave them some of the brandy, then made them dig a huge hole. The leprosarium was chosen, the story goes, because the soldiers were too lazy to bury the bodies themselves and thought no one would go talking to the lepers. Evidence points to other mass graves besides this one. When the missing people's bureau was opened at the end of May, it received 400 inquiries between 10 o'clock and one o'clock. Since then no figures have been available. . . .[31]

The report was so blatantly distorted that in Malaysia (though presumably not in America) it was counter-productive. Tun (Dr.) Ismail made the final decision. *Life* magazine went on sale in Kuala Lumpur newsstands.[32]

The Crisis Explained

Even before the Simms article the Prime Minister had decided to write a book. Most of his friends counselled against it; Tun (Dr.) Ismail objected vigorously, but the Prime Minister remained adamant. He was convinced that his own account of the events surrounding May 13 would not only be widely accepted but was necessary to set the record straight and to restore confidence among the communities. When it appeared in

[31] Chicago, *Life*, July 21, 1969, p. 7.
[32] Peter Simms, however, had become *persona non grata.*

late September,[33] it turned out to be Tunku Abdul Rahman's personal apology to the people of Malaysia.

He had in the past enjoyed the thought of being "the happiest Prime Minister in the world," he said; now suddenly he had become the unhappiest. His Malaysian countrymen "suffered injury and loss" and some "died in innocence through no fault of their own." Moreover his Malay people had turned against him. During the election campaign they were cruelly deceived by the PMIP; since then even some UMNO members engaged in a campaign of persecution against him personally. In sadness and with a measure of self-pity (*kasehan*) the Prime Minister then turned to two vexing questions: (1) who was responsible for the violence of May 13, and (2) what were the casualties.

Regarding the first, Tunku Abdul Rahman had no doubts at all. Immediate responsibility rested with the Opposition parties. During the campaign and immediately after the elections, they had transgressed the limits of democratic politics. They set out to destroy the fundamental component of the Constitution: the terms of the inter-communal contract; to achieve their purposes, they had incited one community of citizens against another. The PMIP insisted that Malaysia was for the Malays; all others were there only on sufferance and could hardly qualify for citizenship. In turn "Speakers on the DAP platform were heard to say that if they got into power they would deprive the Malays of their rights. . . . Many things said by *Gerakan* and DAP members were most provocative, conveying only one possible impression to the Malays, and that was if the Opposition won, the Malays would be put in their 'proper place' in this country."[34] Again and again the Prime Minister returned to the same conclusion. "May 13th is a lasting reminder to us all how dangerous it can be to disregard the Constitution and to play about with the sensitivities, traditions and customs of the various races, especially in our highly mixed society of so many races and creeds."[35]

The chief culprits, however, were the Communists. He vividly recalled his meeting with Chin Peng, the leader of the Malayan Communist Party, and his words at Baling: "It is not possible for the Communists to coexist with the non-Communists."[36]

[33] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.* (Frank Sullivan, his former press secretary and lately the head of a fashionable art gallery in Kuala Lumpur, helped with the editing and some of the writing.)
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 203. [35] *Ibid.*, p. 205. [36] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Nor did he forget his experience with the terrorists shortly after the war. He saw them as a singularly fanatical lot with no appreciation or tolerance for human dignity. Worse still, with their organization and ideological appeal for the masses of Chinese workers and some Malays, he perceived them as the most powerful threat to Malaysia. As a matter of fact, they had subverted some of the Chinese schools and duped political leaders. "The Labour Party in Malaysia was under the control of the Communists, and the Party Ra'ayat has always been influenced by them. . . . Dr. Tan Chee Khoon is not himself a Communist, but can he honestly say that his party is free from their influence. . . ."[37] The Chinese, however, were not the only one vulnerable. Under Soekarno, "according to a report received . . . many of the so-called Malay leaders have been brainwashed and have become ardent and useful instruments. . . ."[38]

Most Malaysians, Malays, Chinese and Indians the Prime Minister absolved from responsibility. "Three-quarters of the Chinese population want to live in peace and in harmony with the other races in this country so that they can carry out peacefully their livelihood or occupation in either trade or business, or the professions as has been customary for them to do for generations past."[39] As far as the Malays who converged upon Kuala Lumpur on May 13 were concerned, they merely responded to intolerable provocations, and "it is true to say that the incidents were sparked off by . . . Chinese Communist youths. . . ."[40]

The book was less expansive on the other question. Asserting that foreign press reports on casualties and physical damage was "highly exaggerated," he quoted official figures since "where else can correct figures be obtained if not from official sources?" As of August 15 there were: "killed, 184; wounded, 356; cases of arson to buildings, 753, and vehicles destroyed or damaged, 211."[41]

Within two weeks after the Prime Minister's book, the *Report* of the National Operations Council was published. In general, it endorsed the conclusion that "racial politics" was the primary cause for the violence. "*The Malays who already felt excluded in the country's economic life, now began to feel a threat to their place in the public services* [*i.e., political control*]. *No mention was ever made by non-Malay politicians of the almost closed-door*

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 189. [38] *Ibid.*, p. 121. [39] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 95. [41] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

attitude to the Malays by non-Malays in large sections of the private sector in this country." And then came the most devastating indictment. "Certain non-Malay racialist election speakers constantly worked up non-Malay passions against Malay policemen and officers, alleging partial treatment in the enforcement of the law. *They contributed directly to the breakdown in respect for the law and authority amongst sections of the non-Malay communities.*"[42] NOC, like the Prime Minister, was reluctant to assign any blame for the inter-communal strife to Malays, but at least it did concede that "trouble turned out to be a communal clash between the Malays and the Chinese . . . ,"[43] rather than an instance of Communist insurgence and it did admit that there were "Malay rioters."

NOC moreover provided detailed data on the human costs (see Table 14–1).[44] In order to reinforce the credibility of these

[42] *The May 13th Tragedy, op. cit.*, pp. 1, 23–24. Italics represent sentences printed in the *Report* in boldface.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[44] The single institution most heavily involved in the processing of the killed and treating of the injured was the General Hospital of Kuala Lumpur. While its administrative capacity was obviously handicapped at the height of the crisis, some records were kept. According to my own investigations the number of dead brought to the hospital during the riots was 129, including 18 Malays, 106 Chinese, and 5 Indians. All Malays were men, but 22 of the Chinese and 1 Indian were females. In addition, 4 Chinese children, 2 boys and 2 girls were under 6 years of age. A total of 42 died of gunshot wounds: 8 Malays, 29 Chinese (26 males and 3 females), and 5 Indians (4 males and 1 female); 10 died of burns: 1 Malay and 9 Chinese (3 males, 2 females and 4 children); 32 died from slashes: 3 Malays and 29 Chinese (22 males and 7 females); 37 died of compound fractures: 6 Malays and 31 Chinese (24 males and 7 females); and 5 died by drowning, all Chinese (3 males and 2 females). For the remaining 3 Chinese bodies (2 males and 1 female) the causes of death could not be identified. Not all of the bodies remained at the General Hospital: 43 were transferred to the University Hospital, 16 to the TB Hospital, 6 to Assunta Hospital and 5 to Lady Templer Hospital. There were, of course, other casualties not brought to the General Hospital which, at least during the first week, served as a clearing house of the victims. Approximately 40 bodies were found in the Klang River, some others in abandoned mineshafts. Casualties outside of Kuala Lumpur, of course, were also not brought to the General Hospital. The number of killed but not officially processed is anyone's guess based at least partially upon the range of human imagination. Given the improbability of Malays burying Chinese dead in Kampong Bharu, and the difficulties of Chinese burying their own dead during the strict enforcement of curfew, it is most unlikely that the number of those privately buried would equal, let alone be a multiple of those officially processed.

On the number of injured, hospital records should be more definitive. Concentrating again on the General Hospital records, the total number

TABLE 14–1
Casualties of Communal Violence, May 13, 1969–July 31, 1969

	*Deaths**				*Injured by Firearms*				*Injured by Other Weapons*			
	Malays	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*
Perlis	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Kedah	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Penang	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–
Perak	1(1)	9(1)	1(1)	–	–	–	–	–	2	5	–	–
Selangor	22(8)	123(34)	12(5)	15(1)†	37‡	125	17	1	82	129	9	15§
Negri Sembilan	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	–	–
Malacca	1(1)	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	5	–	–
Johore	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Kelantan	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Trengganu	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pehang	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	25(10)	143(35)	13(6)	15(1)	37	125	17	1	90	145	9	15

Source: Government of Malaysia, *The May 13 Tragedy, A Report* (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 1969), pp. 88–90.
* Numbers killed by gunshots in parentheses.
† Highly decomposed bodies found in Klang River and in mining pools.
‡ Includes three constables.
§ Includes Eurasians, Pakistanis, and Singaporeans.

casualty figures, the National Operations Council offered an accounting of the fate of 1,019 persons reported missing since May 13. Only 39 were still missing on July 31st; 46 were found dead, 25 injured and 125 detained; 784 "returned safely to their homes."[45]

No less important, NOC addressed itself to a third perplexing question, the evenhandedness of the security forces during the crisis. Its conclusion was an unequivocal vote of confidence. Rumors to the contrary were not logical, the *Report* insisted. "If members of the security forces had in fact been partial on purely racial grounds as alleged by some quarters, considering the dimension of the disturbances and the number of security forces deployed which was in the order of 2,000 Military and 3,600 Police, total casualties amongst the race which was said to be the 'target' would have been enormous."

Indeed, the rumors were due to an unfortunate misunderstanding. Some people assumed that the differential enforcement of curfew in Kampong Bharu was an indication of partiality. Actually, it was due to a simple practical fact: "the area was swamped with several thousands from out-of-town who had come to participate in the proposed procession and those who sought shelter from surrounding areas. The majority of them could not be physically accommodated in Kampong Bharu houses or the mosque. The only possible solution was to cordon off Kampong Bharu and to treat it as one large curfew area." Whenever vehicles were available, police and military trucks ferried non-residents in batches back to their villages. This has been erroneously interpreted as police and military collusion with Malay rioters. Similarly, it was not true that "victims of the riots were buried in secret and unmarked mass graves where they could never be identified," or that "drunken soldiers and lepers

admitted for serious injury by the orthopedic and surgical section during the first week of the crisis was 166, of these 5 died before and another 6 after examination. The 161 who were examined included 41 Malays, 104 Chinese, 15 Indians, and 1 whose communal origins were unknown. Some 103 were treated for gun-shot wounds, and another 20 for *parang* slashes. Almost all were men, generally in the 15 to 30 age group. Only 4 were younger. Another 21 injured were treated at Asunta and about the same number at the TB Hospital. In addition, the University Hospital admitted 22 persons (7 Malays, 13 Chinese, 1 Indian and 1 Eurasian) with riot related wounds.

[45] *The May 13th Tragedy, op. cit.*, p. 96.

were employed as grave diggers." The misunderstanding arose because:

> the majority of bodies could not be handed over to their relatives for burial because of the lack of early identification, the unhealthy and highly decomposed state they were in, the need for time-consuming autopsies, finger-printing, photographing, tagging and other means of identification, as well as the more important consideration of not allowing anything to further inflame an already ugly racial situation. Police and hospital officials worked on the identification and recording of the bodies and buried them in such a way as to enable relatives and friends to either exhume the victims for reburial at some later stage or at least to know where they were buried. . . . The choice of burial grounds was made by the Ministry of Health based on the relative absence of incidents in these areas. Burial of both Muslims and non-Muslims was done largely by General Hospital attendants, the Sungai Buloh Leprosarium staff volunteers, Malay labourers from the nearby Sungai Buloh Oil Palm Estate and Municipal labourers. They were supervised either by Police Chief Inspector Phang Lian Tuck, or Police Chief Inspector Shamsuddin who brought the bodies from the hospital mortuaries in Police trucks. At no time were soldiers involved, let alone drunken soldiers, as alleged.[46]

In any case, rumors of communal partiality, the NOC argued, were not borne out by evidence: 40 out of 45 formally charged with murder or arson were Malays. Regarding allegations of widespread looting by Malay troops, "investigations revealed that from May 13 to July 31, 1969, only 7 persons had lodged reports of looting by persons thought to be members of the security forces. They were isolated cases of relatively minor nature, considering the magnitude of disturbances and the number of security forces deployed."[47]

The Prime Minister's book was an instant "best-seller." Public reaction, however, was limited to Opposition leaders who protested the blame assigned to them. Lim Kean Siew, acting chairman of the Labour Party, declared: "Anyone but the Tunku would be detained under the emergency regulations for publishing such a racially inflammatory work."[48] Dr. Chen Man Hin, President of the DAP, called for a commission, possibly a United Nations commission, to determine "the facts and causes" and to suggest solutions. "Our investigations show that the DAP 'Thank You' processions were orderly and peaceful," he insisted. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon described the book as tendentious. "I complied with all the conditions laid down by the police," he contended, "and at no time did I or any of the participants of my procession say an unkind word to anyone or provoke anyone throughout the procession." His colleague, V. David, took the offensive. The police, he claimed, had failed in their duty to maintain the peace on May 13 and now were trying desperately to "save their own skin by placing the blame on others." For his part the *Gerakan* chairman, Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, promised to write a book "to set the record straight."[49]

Actually, another book contradicting the Prime Minister and NOC was already in the making. The author was not a Malaysian political figure, but John Slimming, a former officer of the Malayan Police Service and a British expatriate residing in Hong Kong. His description of events and his answers to the three questions were fundamentally different. As far as responsibility for the outbreak of violence was concerned Slimming absolved the Communists. The connection between their parade on May 9 "and the savage race rioting which broke out four days afterwards is, at best, tenuous."[50] Furthermore, while the communally charged election campaign and the Opposition victory parades contributed to it, they were not the main causes of the bloodshed. The chief culprit was elsewhere to be found. "Dato Harun bin Haji Idris, the *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) of Selangor together with other local UMNO officials, must be held responsible for encouraging and organizing the UMNO demonstration which started the race riots."[51] The election results had put his political future in doubt; long before the Opposition parades he helped plan a massive UMNO demonstration; when the police refused a permit he announced that he himself would sign it; he remained adamant when during the afternoon of May 13 two

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

[48] *The New York Times*, September 28, 1969, p. 15.

[49] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, September 25, 26, 28 and 30.

[50] John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy* (London: John Murray, 1969), p. 17.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

police officers sought to dissuade him from proceeding; then early in the evening he lost control over his supporters. Once violence broke out, the Alliance national leadership also shared the blame. Tun Razak refused to admit Dato Harun's culpability; worse still, except for two MIC leaders, Tun Sambanthan and V. Manickavasagam, who offered to try to calm the population, most Ministers preferred to stay inside. "At the time when all the Alliance leaders should have been out on the streets, many of them were not to be found."[52]

On the question of casualties, the book contains numerous and detailed ideographic accounts about persons being killed and property being looted and destroyed. Slimming had no doubt that official figures on the total dead were vastly inaccurate. The "rumour in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore" that at least 2,500 died, he thought, was probably too high. His own conclusion: about 800 killed during the first week. As far as the official estimate of property damage was concerned that, too, was "almost certainly, an undercount."

His most serious difference with the official view, however, was on the role of the security forces. "There is no doubt whatsoever that Malay soldiers behaved shamefully," was Slimming's conclusion. Worse still, there was a great deal of evidence, he said, that the army itself was biased in favor of the Malays. To prove his point, he referred to reports by foreign journalists and to some personal interviews with witnesses and relatives of victims.[53] It was an eloquent and most comprehensive indict-

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[53] Recounting isolated incidents where individual soldiers have been guilty of crimes does not, of course, prove that the "army" was communalist in its internal security duties. For that it would have to be shown either that a double-standard was part of military policy (operational orders), or that discipline broke down in so many different units, in so many different places and so often that it was a characteristic (modal) behavior. Absolutely no evidence can be found for the first condition, and without a systematic examination of the frequency and distribution of incidents, no conclusion can be drawn regarding the second. Indeed, it is quite probable that some members of the security forces did exploit the opportunity for their own personal advantages or for venting their communal antagonisms, but it is no less probable that these were aberrations and limited to units of squad size or even smaller. My own examination of some of the alleged incidents revealed the following. Regarding the case recounted by Peter Simms at the press conference on May 16, if it was indeed the one which occurred at about 7:30 P.M. in front of some Chinese shophouses on Jalan Bangsar, then it is true that a band of Malays had intercepted two Chinese on motor-scooters and proceeded to beat them to death. Strictly speaking, it is also true that "the military" was present and did not intervene. But it is also true that the band of Malays was very large (one estimate placed it at more than thirty) and the entire military presence amounted to one jeep of two soldiers who may or may not have been armed. Of three separate instances of alleged atrocities in Kampong Bharu, two appear to have corroborative support. Both involved murder and possibly arson by small groups of men, partially clothed in uniforms. The third accusation was unsupported, as were seven other allegations of atrocities in Jalan Chow Kit area between May 13 and 15. There was some indication that in the latter (Chinese dominated) area the troops were prone to shoot first and then (if at all) ask questions. Yet it is difficult to decide whether their motivation was communal antagonism or just plain human fear. Finally, there was no evidence for the most lurid rumor, four Chinese nurses from Assunta Hospital in Petaling Jaya being assaulted, mutilated, then murdered by their military escorts.

ment. In a postscript Slimming acknowledged that he became familiar with the Prime Minister's book during the preparation of his own. Still he remained unmoved. "After reading the Tengku's account I find there is nothing I have written . . . which I wish to amend or to qualify."[54]

Nevertheless, it may well be true that a comprehensive, independent investigation during or after the crisis would have concluded that the government's version was not radically different from objective reality. If so, such a finding on the long run could have had a salutory effect on inter-communal relations. Its immediate impact, however, would have been negligible. The tension, fear, even paranoia created by the communal violence of May 13 so deeply permeated personal perceptions of reality that the lurid and outrageous were more readily accepted than the normal and benign. Whatever the actual facts may have been, most Chinese and Indians, as well as many Malays, did actually believe the rumors, incidents and interpretations which had wide currency in Kuala Lumpur after May 13 and which later were more coherently articulated by John Slimming. As late as September, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, for example, still seemed to be convinced that the number of dead was around 2,000 and that the Malay Regiment was guilty of frequent and large scale atrocities.

If political reconstruction was to have some popular support, a massive program of inter-communal reconciliation was indicated.

[54] Slimming, *ibid.*, p. 80.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Challenge to Political Reconstruction: Leadership Crisis in the Alliance

A serious credibility gap, however, was not the only handicap the government had to master. If it was to proceed to political reconstruction from a solid base it was also required to establish firmly the position of Directorate members as the senior leaders of their respective parties.

This was, of course, the purpose of the MCA gambit of withdrawing from the Cabinet. Chinese businessmen who had become too passive and the English educated professionals who were moving toward the Opposition were to be taught the political facts of life in Malaysia. In any case, the violence of May 13 had a profound effect upon the attitudes of most Chinese. Both élitist groups were shocked when Chinese shops were burned and property destroyed; and when, in fact, not only Chinese workers but also some professionals and their children were murdered, to use a local idiom, that was a bit much. The MCA did not become more popular, but the lesson was rapidly learned: it was necessary. Dr. Lim Chong Eu was cooperating with the government, Goh Hock Guan was talking about resigning, Lim Kit Siang was in jail, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon was complaining of being ignored, but Tun Tan Siew Sin was still visibly at the power center. He was a member of NOC. The business community was first to recognize the consequences. Within ten days of MCA's withdrawal and the violence on May 13, the Negri Sembilan MCA pledged its faith and confidence in the leadership of Tun Tan Siew Sin and called on him to participate in the government for the sake of the Chinese in the country. In another week the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce (ACCC) scheduled a meeting to discuss ways of persuading Tun Tan Siew Sin and the MCA to rejoin the government. Tan Sri T. H. Tan, its President, the very man who had forced the reversal of MCA's stand on a Chinese University, now personally pressed for such a move. Tun Tan Siew Sin, however, was not willing to move precipitately. The Chinese in

Malaysia first would have to learn that "to knock off the MCA would mean that Malaysia would be under military rule." Then they could demonstrate their confidence in him "by passing resolutions all over the country," and he would consider rejoining the government.[1] The end of May brought the announcement that the MCA Central Working Committee would meet in the very near future to reconsider its May 13 decision. Pleas to rejoin multiplied: The Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce in an emergency meeting, 200 representatives of more than 90 associations and guilds in Selangor, the Chinese Assembly Hall also in an emergency meeting, and finally the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce. T. H. Tan proclaimed, "I am sure every member of the ACCC has great confidence and faith in the MCA and agree that it has served the Chinese community to the best of its knowledge, ability and capability."[2] Evidently, the businessmen were moving back to the MCA. The DAP and the *Gerakan* turned out to be propositions of excessive risk. English-educated professionals remained aloof, and mass popular support continued to be a problem, but by June 1969, Tun Tan Siew Sin had again emerged as the dominant leader of his community.

Tun V. T. Sambanthan, head of the MIC, in turn, seemed to be reasonably secure. Most Indian professionals were pretty much lost to his party and Indian urban workers, in spite of the efforts of V. Manickavasagam, were generally unsympathetic. But his own constituency of rural workers, especially the Tamils, remained loyal. Among them the MIC could still muster a majority.

Crisis in UMNO: Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad

The most serious difficulties were faced by the senior partner. A group of young men, articulate in English and with access to the Malay community, was prepared to take the initiative. They came from various levels of UMNO: Dr. Mahathir, a member of the Executive Committee from Kedah; Musa Hitam, just appointed Assistant Minister to Tun Razak; Tengku Razaleigh, leader of UMNO in Kelantan; and Abdullah bin Ahmad, political secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister. They were allied with

1 Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, May 22, 1969.
2 *Ibid.*, May 24, 30, and 31; June 3, 7, and 10.

some of the established folk-heroes such as Syed Nasir and former party officials like Ja'afar Albar. After the riots their tempo of organization intensified to the point where within a few months they felt ready to challenge formally, if not the constitutional contract, at least the Alliance approach of implementing it.

On May 15 Dr. Mahathir again set out for the capital and this time he made it. Staying at the home of Tengku Abdullah, Alliance MP from Rawang,[3] he promptly contacted Musa Hitam and his allies. He also arranged for an interview with Tun (Dr.) Ismail. Afterward, he apparently genuinely convinced himself that the Minister of Home Affairs was rather encouraging toward a movement which had as its objective an UMNO controlled government and the resignation of the Prime Minister. He had no illusions, however, that any overt support from the senior leadership would be forthcoming; someone else "would have to bell the cat." That, Dr. Mahathir decided, was his own, patriotic duty.

Tension in the capital was still high, but the security forces were firmly in control. The time seemed propitious. On June 5, together with Syed Nasir and Ja'afar Albar, Dr. Mahathir issued a statement in *Utusan Melayu* advocating the continued exclusion of the MCA from the Cabinet. Within a day each had heard from the Prime Minister. "In the name of God," he wrote in Malay, "I ask you to help the government in its task of restoring peace and harmony to our country, and one of the ways is to restrain yourself from issuing statements which can worsen the situation in this country." Tunku Abdul Rahman closed his letter with a curt: "That is all I have to say."[4]

And that was that as far as Syed Nasir and Ja'afar Albar were concerned. Both had had unhappy experiences with their previous challenges of the Prime Minister. For Dr. Mahathir it was only the beginning. His reply was noteworthy not only because it was deliberately offensive but also because it represented the mood of many Malays:

> Your opinions were based on stories you heard from people who surround you, and who tell you only what they think you like to hear or should hear. Permit me to tell you what

[3] Later he was disqualified when election fraud was demonstrated.

[4] Letter by Tunku Abdul Rahman to Syed Nasir bin Ismail, June 6, 1969.

> the position, the thoughts and the opinions of the people are really, so that you can understand my motive for making that press statement.
>
> You yourself told me that you have prevented a riot by commuting the death sentence of the 11 subversive Chinese. In truth this very action sparked the riots of 13 May, which resulted in the deaths of many, many more.
>
> Your "give and take" policy gives the Chinese everything they ask for. The climax was the commuting of the death sentence, which made the majority of the Malays angry. The Chinese on the other hand regarded you and the Alliance government as cowards and weaklings who could be pushed around.
>
> . . . That was why the Chinese and the Indians behaved outrageously toward the Malays on 12th May. If you had been spit in the face, called dirty names and shown obscene gestures and private parts, then you could understand how the Malays felt. The Malays whom you thought would never rebel went berserk, and they hate you for giving too much face. The responsibility of the deaths of these people, Muslim or Infidels, rests on the shoulders of the leader who holds views based on wrong assumptions.
>
> I regret writing this letter, but I have to convey to you the feelings of the Malays. In truth the Malays whether they are UMNO or PMIP supporters really hate you, especially those who had lost homes, children and relatives, because of your "give and take" policy.
>
> They said you wanted to be known only as "The Happy Prime Minister" even though others are suffering. They said that although the country was in a state of emergency you were engrossed playing poker with your Chinese friends. Even the policemen said that you were using official cars and police escorts to contact your poker gang. . . .
>
> Lately, another disturbing factor came to light. The Malays in the Civil Service, from Permanent Secretary downwards, Army Officers and the Malays in the Police Force have lost faith and respect for you. I know that the majority of them voted for the PMIP through mail ballots. . . .
>
> . . . I wish to convey what the people really think, that is that it is high time you resign as our Prime Minister and UMNO leader.

I am fully aware of the powers you still hold and I remember too well the fate of AZIZ ISHAK. But I would be irresponsible if I do not explain what I have said earlier. Even if I am jailed, I have to say what I have already said. . . .

Once more I wish to repeat that the statement I made [on the continued exclusion of the MCA from the Cabinet] is to prevent the Malays from hating the Government more and to stop the Chinese from abusing the dignity of the Malays. A bigger riot will occur if this is allowed. The military itself will be beyond control. . . .

. . . I pray to God it will open your heart to accept the truth bitter though it may be.[5]

Tunku Abdul Rahman did not expect such blatant provocation. After announcing his Cabinet, including the two MIC members with their previous portfolios and three MCA members as Ministers with Special Functions, he chose to remain in the background. Early in June, he entered the University Hospital to undergo an eye operation. He was still convalescing when his secretary somewhat diffidently showed him Dr. Mahathir's letter. He was utterly shocked and took days to prepare his reply. He was, the Prime Minister wrote, aware of what was being said about him by Dr. Mahathir and his friends. The question remained: just who appointed Dr. Mahathir as a spokesman for the Malays? Then he responded to some of the charges. He had commuted the sentence of the eleven condemned men not only because of the high level of agitation but also in response of international appeals, indeed one he had received from the Pope. As far as playing poker was concerned, that was a habit acquired in his youth and a means of relaxation after a long hard day. In any case, he did not play until after the violence was controlled. Tunku Abdul Rahman moreover deeply resented allegations that his leadership was detrimental to UMNO. When he took over the party, it was weak; he had sacrificed much money, time, and energy to make it the strongest in the country. It was not true that the people hated him; only a few of Dr. Mahathir's friends did. They were trying to destroy what he had built in seventeen years. Finally, the Prime Minister offered a

[5] Letter by Dr. Mahather bin Mohamad [*sic*] to Tunku Abdul Rahman, June 17, 1969.

choice: his colleague from Kedah could resign or be expelled from the party.[6]

Dr. Mahathir had no intention of resigning. He was doing what he had to do, and he counted on the help of his friends. Indeed, Musa Hitam and Abdullah Ahmed had carried the campaign to the Deputy Prime Minister and to the staff of NOC. Dr. Mahathir himself explained his position in some detail at institutions of higher learning. At the University of Malaya he found an ally. Raja Mukhtaruddin Dain, a lecturer, distributed a public document entitled "The Struggle of Non-Malays: Our Attitude." According to it "some of the thoughts of undergraduates and lecturers of the University" included opposition to MCA being "reinvited" into the Cabinet, a suspicion that non-Malays were cooperating with the government to restore peace with the hope that through Parliament they can make use of their citizenship status to rule the country, and a conviction that if "their struggle gains momentum, they will be certain to create a revolution." In the meantime, Dr. Mahathir's letter was reproduced anonymously together with the note: "Those who say they are descendants of Malays are requested to copy this letter and circulate it widely so that it may open their eyes and know what kind of man our leader is, the man who is known as 'THE HAPPY PRIME MINISTER.'"

Dr. Mahathir then formally responded to Tunku Abdul Rahman. He was sorry, he wrote, that the Prime Minister's feelings were hurt, but his views had not changed. Indeed, Tunku Abdul Rahman's accomplishments were great—up to April 1969. Past performance, however, was not sufficient for continued leadership. After all, Dato Onn was the chief architect of UMNO, yet he had to go when he was no longer representing the best interests of the party. No one actually asked him to speak for the Malays, Dr. Mahathir admitted, but the men around the Prime Minister did not speak for them either. In fact, all those with independent opinions were eliminated. A Minister recommending a fertilizer plant was dismissed. It was said that there was not sufficient need for fertilizer to warrant a plant, but now two new ones had to be built. An Assistant Minister who objected to the MCA was sent abroad. So, Dr. Mahathir concluded,

[6] Letter by Tunku Abdul Rahman to Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, June 30, 1969.

whatever the consequences, he would not resign. The harm done to him would be small compared to the harm being done to the country.[7]

The Prime Minister was simply furious. He was certain Dr. Mahathir was responsible for the publication of his first letter and considered the second insult heaped on insult. UMNO had no choice but to act and formally expel so treacherous a member. Other members of the Directorate could not have agreed more. Tun Tan Siew Sin was convinced that Dr. Mahathir's attack was only the point of a Malay communal challenge of the constitutional contract and the Alliance approach, but still he remained discretely silent. His MIC colleague, too, was prepared to wait for the UMNO senior leadership to settle the matter.

The last thing that Tun Razak needed those days, of course, was more trouble. He would have gladly avoided a confrontation within UMNO altogether, but if it had to come, he would have very much preferred to postpone it until the country had returned to normal. To gain time he agreed to hold an Executive Council meeting on June 9 and throughout the session tolerated not only a wide-ranging discussion but expressions of extreme hostility toward the Prime Minister, Tun Tan Siew Sin and the Alliance approach. When pressed, moreover, both he and Tun (Dr.) Ismail temporized on the future role of the MCA in the Alliance and the government. His strategy, however, was not altogether successful. Instead of calming tempers and reducing conflict, he only invited further agitations, and Dr. Mahathir was determined to force the pace. Cross-pressured Tun Razak finally saw no alternative but to face the issue squarely at an emergency meeting of the Executive Council.

For a week before the date set (Saturday, July 21) UMNO was in a high state of agitation. The Prime Minister was committed in writing to Dr. Mahathir's expulsion and was determined to make it official. Most of his personal followers, the majority of the Council, agreed with him. Tun Razak after some hesitation and with some regret also accepted the decision. He was, after all, Tunku Abdul Rahman's deputy both in the government and the party, and as such he owed him allegiance. Over the years of close collaboration, moreover, he had also developed a deep personal respect and loyalty. Most important, however, Tun

[7] Letter by Dr. Mahather bin Muhammad [*sic*] to Tunku Abdul Rahman, July 9, 1969.

Razak knew that the attack on the Prime Minister was actually a thinly disguised assault on the constitutional contract and the Alliance approach. In turn, Tun (Dr.) Ismail was approached from all sides. He did not have all too cordial relations with the Prime Minister, but he had no doubt that the latter (and Tun Razak) had to be supported. He saw delegations, met with party leaders and received telephone calls. He remained firm: no *coups* in the country and no *coups* in the party. There were a few, led by Dato Harun, who sympathized with Dr. Mahathir. They knew they would be out-voted, so pressed for a compromise: severe reprimand but no expulsion. All through Thursday (July 10) it seemed that they were making some progress, but that night it became known that Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail could not and would not make any concessions. The compromise was doomed.

Tension was high in the capital when the Executive Council members behind a heavy security cordon gathered at the Deputy Prime Minister's official residence. Some preferred to stay away. Ja'afar Albar found no way to get back in time from Penang. Tun Razak himself went to great lengths to prevent any scenes of personal acrimony. He persuaded the Prime Minister not to attend. In turn, he invited Dr. Mahathir to address the Council on his own behalf but then to withdraw from the room. Finally, he so formulated the charge of "breach of party discipline" that it was not based on a substantive but a procedural violation. Dr. Mahathir was accused of the widespread distribution of his letters which "contained vitally important party matters."

Dr. Mahathir knew what the decision of Executive Council would be. He addressed the group calmly and with a certain amount of eloquence. He did not back down one iota. He expressed his convictions that government must be controlled by Malays, and that it was time for the Prime Minister not only to retire but also to abandon any supra-communal role by an UMNO leader. He did deny, however, the procedural accusation. In no way, he insisted, did he aid and abet the circulation of his letters.[8] On the whole it was a dignified performance, not without legal merit. The debate after his departure was somewhat

[8] Dr. Mahathir maintained that he had typed an original and four copies of the letter. He sent copies to Tun (Dr.) Ismail, Dato Harun and Musa Hitam and kept one in his safe-deposit box in Alor Star. Privately he claimed that it was the Prime Minister's (Chinese) private secretary who in order to incriminate him, with or without instructions, helped distribute copies.

perfunctory. Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail hardly participated at all. There were speeches of condemnation. Dato Harun spoke of moderation and long-term strategy. He put forward his compromise. When the vote came, twenty-two voted for expulsion, but perhaps surprisingly five dissented. In the afternoon the Secretary-General of UMNO announced in a seventeen-line statement that Dr. Mahathir "ceased to be a member of the [Executive] Council as from today."[9] Two days later by order of Tun (Dr.) Ismail the first Mahathir letter and five other "documents" (including "The Struggle of the Non-Malays") were banned. Anyone found publishing, printing, selling or distributing them could receive three years in jail and a fine of M$2,000.[10] Frequent police checks, often concentrating on University students' motor-scooters, put teeth in the ordinance. The *Gerakan* and some PMIP leaders promptly endorsed the ban. Then Tun Razak issued an appeal to his countrymen. "We in the Government," he declared, "stand solidly behind the Tengku and I would like to see all Malaysians—whatever their racial origins—to do the same."[11] Chinese chambers of commerce and Indian dominated trade unions responded with alacrity. Resolutions of support were passed and in one case (the Metal Industry Employees' Union) the membership pledged to defend the Prime Minister "with our lives if necessary."[12] In the Malay community, however, the response was more cautious and in some instances outright hostile. At the University of Malaya, at Islamic College and at MARA Institute especially agitation against the Prime Minister was rising sharply.[13]

The Prime Minister's Counteroffensive

Perhaps to mobilize some visible support among Malays, Tunku Abdul Rahman once again assumed a more public role. He granted a wide-ranging interview to the Malay language Sunday newspaper.[14] Always with a flair for the dramatic, he opened the interview by admitting in sorrowful tones that Dr. Mahathir's

[9] Kuala Lumpur, *The Sunday Times*, July 13, 1969.
[10] *Ibid.*, July 15, 1969.
[11] *Ibid.*, July 19, 1969.
[12] *Ibid.*, July 24, 1969.
[13] The Principal of Islamic College, Tan Sri (Dr.) Abdul Jalil Hassan, however, denied that demonstrations had actually taken place. Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Malaysia*, July 21, 1969.
[14] Kuala Lumpur, *Mingguan Malaysia*, July 20, 1969.

letter "has damaged all my sacrifices toward the country and people which I have carried out for the past 17 years." This was especially tragic, he explained, as Dr. Mahathir himself knew that for the (Malay) race and country "I have sacrificed all my wealth till I became a pauper." In point of fact, he had to sell some of his property to pay his income tax. Having set the mood, the Prime Minister moved to the offensive. He challenged Dr. Mahathir's contention that his leniency toward the 11 Chinese youths who had been sentenced to death was prime cause for the May 13 disturbances. Whatever he had done was motivated solely by a desire to save lives and property. In any case, all that occurred a year before the violence. A far more likely and more direct cause was the funeral procession of May 9, and in arranging for it a major culprit was Syed Hamid Ali, the President of the University of Malaya Students' Union. It was he, alas, who had asked for the police permit for a procession. As far as the campaign against him was concerned, much of it was due to university lecturers who were provoking students to hate him. "They know that I am the strength in the Alliance and I must be beaten first before the downfall of the Alliance," he said. It really was a pity that the young (Malays) who had an opportunity to study only because of government scholarships were so irresponsibly misled.

Many Malays must have seen what turned out to be a four column interview. Among the Malay intellectuals it was perceived as a sign of weakness, quite in line with recent emotional exhibitions on television and newspaper pictures in which he appeared to be crying.[15] He did score heavily though on his charge against Syed Hamid Ali. The UMSU President in a letter to the Prime Minister (July 20, 1969) quickly denied that he had "sought permission from the police in order to hold the funeral procession" of May 9. Declaring that he had "no sympathy for you or your party rivals" and that "malice even in an old man, should [not] be left unchallenged," he threatened "legal action to obtain a full apology." All in all, the Prime Minister seemed to be receiving a rash of insolent letters, something quite unimaginable even six months before. The police, however, backed the Prime Minister's charges, and when Syed Hamid Ali explained later that he had been present at the time of the ap-

[15] Actually, his eyes were still not strong enough for the strain of bright lights, especially flashbulbs.

plication in the capacity of an interpreter only, his credibility became severely impaired.

After the interview the Prime Minister took a decidedly firm line. First of all, he fired Musa Hitam, Tun Razak's Assistant Minister. In a short and formal letter dated July 28[16] the Prime Minister gave as his reason an "unfavorable report about you, particularly in respect of your doubtful loyalty to the Government." To the Press he explained: "We operate on the principle of loyalty—to the Cabinet and to the leaders, and if anyone is found wanting in his loyalty, he must leave."[17] Then Tunku Abdul Rahman left for a "state-by-state" goodwill tour. In Penang, his first stop, he proclaimed that he would not give in to extremists who wanted Malay rule in Malaysia. Indeed, he would be happy to retire if he could only be certain that the country would enjoy permanent peace. For the moment, he announced, there was no possibility of his retirement. In Kajang he categorically denied that a *coup* had taken place. He was still the Prime Minister and his policies remained unchanged. A section of the people, he admitted, was "cursing" him and had accused him of siding with the Chinese. The fact was, however, that he was "first a Malay and naturally I am their leader. But I have to see the interests of the non-Malays too. We just can't throw them into the sea."[18] Then to dramatize further his own continued authority he announced that as "the executive Head of State" he would take his place on the NOC. When he actually attended a meeting, Tun Razak quietly moved over a seat and let the Prime Minister preside.

Tun (Dr.) Ismail meanwhile gave further evidence of his determination to enforce the law. In a carefully worded statement on television the Minister of Home Affairs made it perfectly clear: "I must warn the extremists and others as well, that if the anti-Tengku campaigns or activities are carried out in such a manner or to such an extent as to cause undue fear and alarm among members of any community, or if they are likely to lead to violence or to any breach of security or public order, I will not hesitate to exercise my powers under the law

16 Tun Razak wrote a much longer and warmer letter indicating that after an interim period Musa Hitam would be welcome back in the government.

17 Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 1, 1969.

18 Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, August 7, 1969.

against those responsible for such activities."[19] Later in another statement he dismissed "definitely" any possibility of a *coup*. "The intellectuals and the younger generation will have to accept that the Tengku is the Prime Minister. . . . The Tengku should not step down now because he is the symbol of multi-racial unity in the country. . . . I think it is good for the country that he should continue to lead it."[20]

The intellectuals and the younger people, however, did not accept the conclusion. The Prime Minister, who meanwhile resumed his goodwill tour, found the meetings arranged for him unusually sparsely attended. Most of those who came and signed pledges of loyalty were middle aged or else school children brought out by their teachers. The applause was generally light and scattered. Gone was the massive enthusiasm, and gone was the personal magic. Somehow the youth of the country—Malay, Chinese, and Indian—for varied reasons to be sure, had turned away from him, abruptly and cruelly perhaps, but quite decidedly.

All this was quite evident on the University Campus. A survey conducted in July and August found 23 students out of 205 listing Tunku Abdul Rahman as one of the five symbols which they associated with the Malaysian nation. Eighteen of them were Chinese, and only four were Malay (see Table 15–1). Chinese students apparently, while not entirely indifferent to the issue, were quite calm about the Prime Minister's problems. They were certainly not prepared to take a strong stand on his behalf. In turn, most Malay students led by the Malay Language Society were aroused against him. In the residence halls and at the Speakers Corner in front of the library, agitation for the resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman was being intensified. In the middle of August the Malaysian Students Action Front circulated a bill of particulars: The Prime Minister was responsible for the violence in May; he was not implementing the Constitution in terms of the Malay communal interpretation.

Neither Tun Razak nor Tun (Dr.) Ismail wanted to alienate the Malay Language Society. They were willing to make some allowances for student demonstrations—which after all were prohibited during the emergency—as long as they did not incite communal conflict and as long as they remained within the

19 Kuala Lumpur, *Sunday Times*, August 3, 1969.

20 Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 13, 1969.

TABLE 15–1
Symbols of Nationalism among University of Malaya Students, 1969

	Malays		*Chinese*		*Indians*		*Total*	
	%	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*
Personalities								
1. Tunku Abdul Rahman	6.8	4	11.2	14	4.8	1	9.3	19
2. Yang Di-Pertuan Agong	25.4	15	8.8	11	9.5	2	13.7	28
3. Both	–	–	3.2	4	–	–	2.0	4
National Objects								
1. Bunga Raya	–	–	1.6	2	–	–	2.0	4
2. Parliament House	1.7	1	–	–	9.5	2	1.5	3
3. Malaysian Flag	8.5	5	7.2	9	–	–	6.8	14
4. Mosque	–	–	0.8	1	–	–	0.5	1
5. Rubber and/or Tin	1.7	1	1.6	2	–	–	1.5	3
6. React to at least: 2 of the above	23.7	14	28.8	36	23.8	5	26.8	55
7. 3 of the above	30.5	18	15.2	19	19.0	4	20.0	41
8. 4 of the above	6.8	4	3.2	4	–	–	3.9	8
Intangible Symbols								
1. National Anthem	22.0	13	12.0	15	9.5	2	14.6	30
2. Development	8.5	5	5.6	7	4.8	1	6.3	13
3. Both of the above	–	–	1.6	2	–	–	1.0	2
4. Plural Society	16.9	10	22.4	28	28.6	6	21.5	44
	Malays = 59		Chinese = 125		Indians = 21			

Source: Phang Poke Shum, *A Sample Survey on the Opinions and Attitudes of Students towards the Malaysian Nation*, Unpublished Graduation Exercise, Public Administration Division, University of Malaya, p. 33.

gates of the campus. Their task, however, was very much complicated by two factors. The first was intensified pressure from the Prime Minister. Tunku Abdul Rahman on a goodwill tour in Kedah and Perlis was discovering and publicly revealing plots against the state. The Communists, he said, had sent out letters purportedly signed by Tan Sri T. H. Tan, Secretary General of the Alliance, depicting the Prime Minister as a dictator and including scurrilous attacks on the armed forces.[21] Then a few days later he called Tun Razak to inform him that students from Kuala Lumpur were fanning out to carry a subversive campaign to the countryside. The *Mentri Besar* of Perlis, the Prime Minister reported, was recently confronted by three students from the capital who not only wore shirts with "revolution" printed on the back, but also harangued against the Prime Min-

[21] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 22, 1969. For more details see: Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-194.

ister, his more active role in NOC, and the goodwill committees. This kind of behavior must stop, Tunku Abdul Rahman insisted; Tun Razak and Tun (Dr.) Ismail had better see to it. It was the Prime Minister giving orders, not Tunku Abdul Rahman wallowing in self-pity. A MARA student, the acting President of the National Association of Malaysian Muslim Students, immediately denied that his association was involved in a secret campaign to start a revolution. On the contrary, it had repeatedly supported NOC under Tun Razak, "and our present Government," he added pointedly, "is the NOC."[22]

The other event took place on the campus. The University had arranged to host a Conference on Traditional South-East Asian Music and Drama. It was being held in the Great Hall with socially and politically prominent Malaysians in the audience and artists from Malaysia and neighboring countries participating. For many it was the highlight of social events and dramatic evidence that normalcy was returning to the country. For students it offered an opportunity to remain technically within the limits of the campus, yet to demonstrate before a national and international audience. On the morning of August 28 an unusually large number of mostly Malay students assembled at the Speakers Corner. They had brought along a variety of banners demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. The Vice-Chancellor, Ungku A. Aziz, tried to calm them down, at least to the point of postponing their demonstration until after the conclusion of the Conference. It was no use. The students, about a thousand strong, marched on the Great Hall. They forced a test case on Tun (Dr.) Ismail at the very time the Prime Minister was looking for one himself.

The Minister of Home Affairs, of course, was fully informed on the events at the University. Special FRU units (riot police) were standing by at the campus gates and when the procession moved toward the Conference site, they received orders to enter the campus and disperse the demonstrators with tear-gas if necessary. It was necessary. Next morning another more restrained student demonstration was organized. This time a large number of Chinese and Indian students participated, but the speeches and the signs were directed to the more general right of free expression and were far less focused on the Prime Minister. When after some hesitation they did march

[22] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 26, 1969.

to the Great Hall, the FRU again entered the campus, but this time no tear-gas was used, and the Vice-Chancellor was able to reassert his control over the situation.

There remained the problem of students at other institutions of higher learning. At the MARA Institution, for example, the Principal, Arshad Ayub, found it increasingly difficult to persuade students to cease their agitation and to restrain them from external demonstration. It was time to put an end to all the agitation. Four student leaders at the University of Malaya were arrested. All were Malays. Syed Hamid Ali, President of UMSU, two officers of the Malay Language Society, and a fourth (Yusof bin Embi) who may have been a case of mistaken identity. Student organizations protested and promised to launch a signature campaign; and Ungku A. Aziz publicly appealed for their release. Tun (Dr.) Ismail received a student delegation. The seven young men thought they would talk tough, but were quickly interrupted by the Minister. He rejected outright any claim that the arrests were made improperly. He would terminate the interview if that was the only basis for their visit. If, however, they came to appeal to him on humanitarian grounds, that might be different. He was not personally familiar with the cases in point, he said; indeed, he had many important matters at hand, but he would be willing to look into it. But only on humanitarian grounds. Would the delegation accept these terms? The students admitted meekly that they would. All right then, said Tun (Dr.) Ismail with a bit of a smile, he would see what he could do. Within a week the arrested students were released. Agitation at the University, at MARA and other educational institutions then subsided. Just for good measure, NOC prohibited "any meeting, procession, demonstration or public utterance to get Tunku Abdul Rahman to step down from the Office of Prime Minister as prejudicial to public order."[23]

For all practical purposes the crisis in UMNO was over. Dr. Mahathir returned to his home at Alor Star. He was expelled from UMNO and remained under discreet police surveillance, but continued to maintain his practice undisturbed. Although no longer asked to official functions he was not short of social invitations. At parties he was somewhat of a celebrity, and most

[23] *Ibid.*, September 3, 1969.

prominent Malays were careful to retain their connections with him. In turn, Musa Hitam took his dismissal calmly. Although his views "on Malaysia" remained unchanged, he said, he publicly reiterated his loyalty "to the party and the Government of this beloved country of ours."[24] Then in a few weeks he left for the University of Sussex to study for an M. A. in comparative government. The crowd saying an affectionate farewell at Subang Airport included most significantly Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie, the Prime Minister's confidant, member of NOC and a rising star on the Malaysian political horizon. Thus by mid-September the two most articulate challengers of the Alliance approach (if not the constitutional contract) were silenced. Tun (Dr.) Ismail left for London for a medical check-up on September 10.

A few days later the Prime Minister himself undertook a world tour. In Malaysia he was protected from *ad hominem* attacks, and no one could dictate his retirement. All the same, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who had devised the Alliance approach and who for over a decade and a half had served as its keystone, was never again the final arbiter of government policy. For all practical purposes Tun Razak, a man of different temperament and different decision style, was in complete charge.

[24] Kuala Lumpur, *Sunday Times*, August 3, 1969.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Program of Political Reconstruction: The Return to Democratic Politics

COMMUNAL violence made political reconstruction necessary. A credibility gap and the crisis within UMNO made it difficult. Potent countervailing trends, however, were soon taking hold. If it was a time of troubles, it was no less a time of new opportunities for Malaysia. The popular mood had become more sober, perhaps even more mature. Having once again witnessed the consequences of intemperate speech and provocative behavior, most people wanted no further repetitions. Remarkably, from the time it appeared that the country and its political system was in peril, practically everyone wanted to help. People everywhere became sensitive of the feelings of the "others." No one dared, *or wanted* to suggest, in mixed company anything to offend a member of another community. On the contrary, people argued routinely and at times vociferously that all communities must get along together, practically at all cost. Most political leaders too were trying to do their best.

Dato Asri, the head of the PMIP, quickly visited the capital, conferred with Tun Razak, and then passed the word to his colleagues to cut out the rhetoric. To the government he offered a suggestion. Noting the high measure of cooperation among the communities in Kelantan, he observed somewhat pointedly that the terms guiding the inter-relationships in his home state (where incidentally the Malays accounted for some 90 percent of the population) might serve as a useful model for the whole country.

Dr. Lim Chong Eu also urged restraint and moderation on the people of Penang and his *Gerakan* supporters, while regularly pledging his cooperation to the central government. Indeed, one of his first acts was the appointment of a Malay Deputy Chief Minister. And he too sought to present a model for Malaysia, a model of inter-communal cooperation within a state where the Chinese held a preponderant majority. He set out to build a government which was (1) free of corruption, (2) politically

responsive, (3) administratively efficient, and (4) economically successful. Dr. Lim Chong Eu selected his aides carefully, mostly men whom he had known for years. He spent a great deal of time with his party workers and in the streets with people in general. He proposed to reorganize the state government, but most important he devoted his energies toward establishing Penang as a commercial and industrial center rivaling Singapore. He needed heavy foreign and domestic investment. He also needed some central government support. Dr. Lim Chong Eu set his sights on the ideal of a society of profit and full employment in which the rich would get richer, the poor would get richer and in the process communal antagonisms would fade away.

Dato Harun of Selangor, the Chief Minister most directly affected by the violence of May 13, was not idle either. He moved quickly to prevent a further poisoning of inter-communal relations by decelerating and deterring Chinese economic retaliation. At times he threatened force. Recounting reports that Chinese shopkeepers refused to sell or extend credit to Malay customers and somewhat later that Chettiar (Indian) money lenders were charging exorbitant interest, he promised official investigations, fines and a revocation of licenses.[1] Recounting reports that Chinese industrialists were discriminating against Malay workers, he demanded that 25 percent, 30 percent, or even 50 percent of those hired be distinguished by the single feature that they were Malay. At other times he relied on persuasion. He spent much of his time attending and addressing communally mixed social gatherings. In the rural areas such occasions followed the traditional rather ritualistic pattern. School children were marched in, local officials and dignitaries entered, and finally amid well rehearsed cheers the Sultan or the *Raja Muda* accompanied by the *Mentri Besar* arrived. At the edges of the assembly stood a few curious villagers. The Chief Minister spoke at length in Malay, the theme being invariably the benefits of inter-communal cooperation; the Ruler accepted a gift from

[1] In response the All Malaya Nattukottai Chettiars' Chamber of Commerce issued a memorandum (October 1, 1970) which purportedly demonstrated that the percentage of Chettiars had declined from about 32.4 percent of the total number of licensed money lenders in 1961–1962 to 24 percent in 1968–1969. About the same time when the Selangor government investigation arranged for public testimony of possible complaints, no witness appeared.

a delegation of local Chinese merchants, and then everyone moved to a buffet-style meal. After a few dutiful words to a random sample of guests from another community and some refreshments the meeting dispersed. In Kuala Lumpur, though, such occasions were more relaxed and possibly more useful. Quite often the center of attraction was a truckload of *durian*, the "consensus fruit." Malays, Chinese, and Indians all thoroughly enjoyed its taste. The speeches were less formal, less exhortative, and invariably multi-lingual. The liquid refreshments available, it should be added parenthetically, also facilitated an atmosphere of *bonhommie*. For whatever reasons, the guests usually had a good time.

Actually, the approach of goodwill meetings was the main thrust of Tunku Abdul Rahman's own reconstruction efforts. He was inclined toward that strategy anyway, as it had worked in the past. But after the NOC for all practical purposes became the government, the goodwill initiatives alone remained as ostensibly important functions for the Prime Minister. Wherever he went in Malaysia, and he traveled quite frequently, he attracted a multi-communal crowd. The Chinese and Indians especially came to express their respects and to seek reassurances from this Malay prince. Reporters (especially those from English language newspapers) were dogging his steps; they seemed to be hanging on his every word. In some ways the proceedings were quite unreal, charades, with both the Prime Minister and his audience acting out the rituals and pretending to recapture the mood of the past. And in this spirit the Prime Minister insisted, and NOC gladly conceded, the establishment of a National Goodwill Council with a membership drawn not only from all classes and communities but also from all political parties. Its Executive Council, it was announced, would meet twice a month, "or whenever the Tengku so decides."[2] Although many goodwill efforts were planned, even announced,[3] the Council never really played a significant role and together with the old leader at its head just faded away. And yet the goodwill effort of Tunku Abdul Rahman did provide a vital service to his country and its government. For during those critical times it was through

[2] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, April 1, 1970.

[3] Including the publication of Chinese textbooks for "non-Chinese" to be prepared by University of Malaya and MARA Institute scholars. Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, June 2, 1970.

his efforts that a large portion of the population was spared despair and alienation. He accomplished what at that time he alone could do: he generated some confidence among Chinese and Indians that they were not totally excluded from the polity and that their minimal group interests would not be carelessly or willfully violated.

These and other individual initiatives, however, were only of peripheral significance. Political reconstruction was primarily the responsibility of the NOC, and its members had not the slightest intention to shirk it. Even while it was primarily absorbed in the task of restoring public order and while some of its members were called upon to sort out the crisis in UMNO, the Council and more particularly Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie were already working on the terms for the resumption of democratic politics.

The first point to be settled was one of method, just how to manage revisions in the political system legitimately in the absence of democratic political processes. The precedents of the Federation of Malaya Agreement and, in fact, the Constitution were available. They had established a three-stage pattern: (1) a specially qualified group preparing recommendations; (2) the public consulted through testimony by wide range of individuals and group representatives; finally (3) decisions by the highest political authority. The last was no problem. For all practical purposes the highest political authority was NOC. Some decisions presumably would have to be ratified by Parliament, but that would be only a formality. Parliament would not be allowed to meet until it would be certain to accept NOC's decisions. The first two items, however, presented some problems. A new Constitutional Commission, or anything like it, was considered inappropriate. Recommendations would have to come from within the government, but from where? The existing planning units, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) or the Development Administration Unit (DAU), were all right as far as their qualifications went, but evidently they did not go far enough. A new organization—Tun Razak was a great believer in organizational solutions of problems—one dealing more directly with the political dimensions of national development seemed indicated. Accordingly it was agreed to establish a Department of National Unity (DNU) with the assignment to formulate "a fresh approach in the solution of our national

problems," and to entrust to Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie the setting of parameters for its activity. The DNU moreover was to have two main divisions, the Research Division and the Operational Division. Dr. Agoes Salim from the Ministry of National and Rural Development was named to head the former. It was his responsibility to manage projects which would help discover the economic and social interests of the various communities.[4] No one was designated to head the Operational Division. Tan Sri Ghazalie Shaffie more or less reserved that for himself.

The second procedural tradition presented even more vexing complications. Public hearings with interested individuals and organizations testifying on proposed formulas of political reconstruction were deemed explosive. Yet all agreed that some mechanism for a "dialogue with the people" had to be devised. The compromise finally reached provided for a National Consultative Council to be appointed by Tun Razak but broadly based. Debates within could be freely ranging but not available to the public. Indeed, when in January, 1970, the Council was actually appointed, its membership reflected the full spectrum of social, economic, and political groupings.[5] To emphasize its importance (not to mention to assure control) Tun Razak himself assumed its chairmanship.[6]

Having designed the method, the National Operations Council moved to substance. None of its members in any one of the hundred and more sessions expressed a view that the Emergency should be indefinitely extended. But, all were convinced that certain preconditions had to be met before democratic politics

[4] Actually Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, the Director of Establishment, was placed in operational command of the Department. See: Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie's radio and TV address. Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 18, 1969.

[5] Specifically, the Council included Tun Razak, Tun (Dr.) Ismail, Tun Tan Siew Sin, Tun Sambanthan, Tan Sri Kadir bin Shamsuddin, and Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie of NOC, 7 state government representatives (the *Mentris Besar* of Selangor, Kelantan, Penang, Negri Sembilan, and Sabah, as well as the son of the Federal Minister of Sarawak Affairs), 14 representatives from the political parties in West Malaysia (5 UMNO, 3 MCA, 1 MIC, 2 PMIP, 1 *Gerakan*, 1 PPP, and 1 *Partai Rakyat*), 8 from parties in East Malaysia (3 Sabah, 5 Sarawak), 6 from religious groups (2 Muslims, 1 Catholic, 1 Protestant, 1 Buddhist, and 1 Hindu), 12 professionals, 5 from the press, 1 from the trade unions, 1 from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 3 teachers, and 2 from "minorities." Within a day 2 women were also added. (*Ibid.*, January 13, 1970.)

[6] The DAP, after its nomination of the detained Lim Kit Siang to the Council was rejected, refused to participate.

could be resumed. First, the government's reputation for integrity would have to be established, once and for all. Second, some issues, notably the constitutional contract would have to be depoliticized. Finally, politics would have to be decommunalized.

First Precondition: Integrity in Government

There was not much more the NOC could do about the credibility gap produced by its handling of information in the wake of May 13. It had published a report and had given all the facts it knew; all that remained was to hope that in time the whole unhappy episode would fade from Malaysian minds. The problem about corruption, however, was another matter.

Indeed, Tun Razak, perhaps more than any of his colleagues, was sensitive on this point. He wanted a government which did not harbor men who would take advantage of their public position and turn it into private gain. He could never quite understand Tunku Abdul Rahman's more easy-going attitude. He was deeply concerned about charges leveled against the government during the 1969 campaign, as he suspected that some may have been true. And Tun Razak wanted a government which did not harbor men who were communal bigots, who did not administer the law even handedly. He was most upset by reports which charged that the armed forces under his command had violated his principle and possibly had brought disrepute upon him.

In the past the Anti-Corruption Agency had been performing its responsibilities with uncertain ardor. Now it was given direct and quite specific orders: proceed against the major cases of corruption in government, and start in the state of Perak.

At first the results were less than spectacular. Some forty-five men were arrested in a gambling raid including three policemen and two politicians. In another raid a bookmaker was arrested at Penang Turf Club.[7] The Director, Harun bin Dato Hashim, however, was already investigating in higher places. By February, 1970, he was ready with a report. To be really effective, he said, he needed more power, specifically the authority to freeze and forfeit any "ill-gotten" assets of public officials. Without delay the request was granted, NOC issued Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance No. 22, and Harun bin Dato Hashim was

[7] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, October 31, 1969.

"all set to go after the big fish."[8] Within a week he proceeded to freeze M$500,000 in assets. Most of it belonged to the *Mentri Besar* of Perak, Dato Ahmad Said, who was forced to forfeit M$329,979 out of M$1,138,403 of his assets. They were, the Agency declared, "obtained as a result of, and in connection with, corrupt practices." The Chief Minister then submitted his resignation, which was accepted. Still he retained his seat in the State Assembly. Harun bin Hashim meanwhile had turned his attention to another "big fish," the *Mentri Besar* of Trengganu. Ibrahim Fikri, however, presented some unexpected problems. To be sure, he had a preference for personal comfort and a penchant for impressive structures. He had built on a hill overlooking Kuala Trengganu, state offices which were envied, if not admired, by his colleagues. He had also built a residence which was mostly envied. Apart from that, he had developed certain state-wide contacts and extensive business interests. But he was a shrewd fellow. He enjoyed the confidence of the Ruling House, which had provided the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* from 1965–1970. He successfully mobilized party support and built a strong personal following among Malays in general and appointed public officials in particular. Finally, Ibrahim Fikri kept his money with Bank Bumiputra. He knew and so did the government that were he to demand his deposits back, it could be a bit difficult for the bank. Clearly any replacement of the *Mentri Besar* would be a delicate matter. Undaunted, in July, 1970, Tun Razak personally took a hand in it. After some discussions Ibrahim Fikri announced that he was going on a two month vacation to recover from an illness. The Deputy Prime Minister then visited Kuala Trengganu, and after closed door conferences with party leaders he "launched a new government." Ibrahim Fikri, he declared, would retire after his vacation; Mahmood bin Sulaiman, the government's choice, would, with the consent of Trengganu political leaders, succeed him; and he, himself, would in the future play a more active role in the government and the politics of the state.[9]

Thus within a year the two Chief Ministers with the greatest public image problems with regard to corruption were removed from office. In September, 1970, when Tun Razak became

[8] *Ibid.*, March 1, 1971.
[9] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, August 28, 1970.

Prime Minister, Tan Sri Khaw Kai Boh, the central Minister with a similar predicament, was omitted from the Cabinet.

Then the campaign to improve the reputation of the government turned to the public services. Harun bin Hashim issued guidelines for civil servants to help them avoid becoming "integrity risks." Perhaps to reduce the temptation new salary scales were announced together with a program making government loans available ranging from M$5,000 to M$70,000 so that civil servants could buy their own homes and not be dependent on private sources for their financing.[10] All along, the top men in the government, including Tun Razak, Tun (Dr.) Ismail, Hussein Onn, Tan Sri Ghazali, and Tan Sri Kadir kept up a steady barrage of advice and reminders: be courteous to the public, be helpful to the public, serve the public, try to please the public, be fair to the public, . . . and so on.[11] The message was loud and clear; the public services must earn public confidence through their daily routines.

Progress, however, was soon judged satisfactory. By early 1971 Harun bin Hashim concluded that the backbone of corruption in Malaysia had been broken and the incidence of corruption was now under control. As evidence he offered these statistics. In 1970 ACA conducted 3,265 preliminary inquiries and 319 full investigations, resulting in the arrest of 67 government employees and 115 private individuals. Altogether disciplinary action was taken against 87 public officials. Accordingly, he announced the agency would turn its attention to

[10] Kuala Lumpur, *Sunday Mail*, November 8, 1970.
[11] In his first major speech as Malaysia's Prime Minister designate, Tun Razak chose to address the civil service. A change of mind, he said, was needed. Heads of departments more than in the past should (a) delegate authority, (b) supervise staff and (c) modify or do away with minute writing. It must be recognized that officers on the lowest level were "the eyes and ears of the Government. . . . So, if any officer treats them [the people] badly, they immediately conclude that the Government is not good and not serving their needs. . . . We must bring in fresh air into all government departments, a new image—an image of a dedicated, efficient, and incorruptible civil service." A few days later the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, offered four guidelines to Government officials to improve their relations with the public: understanding the public's problems in terms of their own interest; giving sufficient and satisfactory information on all aspects to the public; trying to find methods and approaches which will cause the least inconvenience to the public; and placing service before self-interest. (Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, September 2 and 5, 1970.)

another target, "the ganging-up by contractors or suppliers responsible for increase in the cost of tenders for public projects."[12] In March as a reward for his efforts Harun bin Hashim was appointed a judge of the High Court, and the *special* anti-corruption campaign had visibly come to its end.[13] The government hoped very much that the first political precondition for the resumption of democratic politics was being met.

The Second Precondition: Depoliticization of the Constitution

Which leads to the core of political reconstruction. As NOC saw it, its strategy required three parallel sets of initiatives: (1) it would spell out clearly and once and for all the constitutional contract; (2) it would visibly accelerate the implementation of the cultural terms; and (3) it would design a credible program for the implementation of the economic terms. The first, the Council hoped, would remove any ambiguity about the legitimacy of the inter-communal bargain, and the second and third, once successfully completed, would eliminate any useful purpose from debating its contents.

Tan Sri Ghazalie Shaffie was convinced that he knew how to proceed. The first essential step to depoliticize an issue was to make it an act of faith, or in more modern terms, to incorporate it into an ideology. Hence, Malaysia would have to be provided with an official, national ideology established for all times to come, one which not even Parliament could change. It would be a declaration in "unequivocal terms based on the Malaysian constitution which clearly reflects the Malaysian way of life."[14] His staff at the DNU prepared a number of drafts; they were submitted to the National Consultative Council (NCC), and more specifically to its subcommittee headed by Tun Tan Siew Sin. There was very little debate in the subcommittee as it composed its formula and not much more at the June 16–18, 1970 meeting of the NCC. The PMIP members were pleased with its Islamic and Malay orientation. The *Gerakan* leaders considered it acceptable, and so did Dato S. P. Seenivasagan (PPP). The most vigorous challenge would have come from the DAP, but

[12] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, February 9, 1971.
[13] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, March 28, 1971.
[14] *Ibid.*, July 18, 1969.

that party chose not to participate in the Council. Indeed most of the discussion was perfunctory, and when the vote came, it was unanimous.

The National Ideology, *Rukunegara*, was proclaimed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* as a highlight of the second National Day (August 31) celebration since the May riots:

> OUR NATION, MALAYSIA, being dedicated to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared; to ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions; to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology.
>
> WE, her peoples, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles:—
>
> Belief in God
> Loyalty to King and Country
>
> Upholding the Constitution
> Rule of Law
> Good Behaviour and Morality

A special preamble including the sentence: "These ends and these principles, acceptable to all and applicable to all, will serve as the nexus which will bind us together," and a commentary spelling out the implications of the "Principles," were also provided by the government. Perhaps most significant from the constitutional point of view were the elucidations of the last three principles. The explanation of number three, "upholding the Constitution," for all practical purposes restated the terms of the inter-communal contract. "The historical development," it stated, "led to such provisions as those regarding the position of His Majesty the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* and Their Royal Highnesses the Rulers, the position of Islam as the official religion, the position of Malay as the national and official language, the special position of the Malays and other natives, the legitimate interests of the other communities; and the conferment of citizenship." Number four specified a commitment to "liberty of the person, equal protection of the law, freedom of religion," and of special concern for the community of Chinese:

"rights of property and protection against banishment." Finally, the principle of "Good Behaviour and Morality focused on two major issues." "Individuals and groups will conduct their affairs" so they avoid "any conduct or behaviour which is arrogant or offensive to the sensitivities of any group," clearly a provision inspired by the post-election (May 1969) demonstrations. The next paragraph, in turn, addressed itself to a persistent Chinese grievance. "No citizen should question the loyalty of another citizen," the government explained, "on the ground that he belongs to a particular community."[15] Even with these explanations, however, the *Rukunegara* remained a general statement. Its significance would ultimately depend less upon the frequency with which people memorized it or invoked it, and far more upon the method and the persistence with which the government could implement it.

As a matter of fact, the implementation of the cultural terms had already received a most decided impetus from the new Minister of Education, *Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'kub*. When the Prime Minister on the advice of Tun Razak moved up this single-minded and highly volatile man from the relatively tame role of Minister of Lands and Mines, he had no inkling of the consequences of his act. From the moment he assumed his new office, Abdul Rahman Ya'kub let it be known far and wide that he recognized only Malay as the legitimate language for official communications. When, for example, John Gurusamy, the General-Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, used English in a letter expressing support for his policies but also requesting an appointment, the Minister had the letter returned with a demand to have it redrafted in the national language. Then on July 10, 1969, less than two months after the violence and before normalcy had returned to the schools in Kuala Lumpur, Rahman Ya'kub announced a new education policy. Beginning with the fall, instruction in all Standard I subjects (including mathematics and science but excepting English and the pupils' mother tongue) would be in Malay. Then one year at a time this condition would be extended upward until by 1978 Form III examinations—the Lower Certificate of Education—and by 1982 all instruction up to Form VI would be conducted entirely in Malay. It was a *tour de force* supported neither by available resources nor by a comprehensive plan, only by his

[15] Quoted in *ibid.*, September 1, 1970.

firm convictions, his indomitable will, and, of course, propitious times. When the teachers' union leaders finally met with the Minister, they were exuding cooperation—insofar as their skills permitted, in Malay, of course. Within ten days Rahman Ya'kub could report "a favourable reaction" to his plans. There was only a "very small percentage of the people who do not like this," he explained, "but such is their attitude there is nothing we can do to please them."[16] Actually he had not the slightest intention of even trying. He made it perfectly clear: "Those who choose to row their boats against the national currents will undoubtedly be swept away."[17] Speaking of his policy to Malay audiences his words were harsher still. "All this while," he declared to a special meeting of *Utusan Melayu* reporters, "the government has been very lenient, persuading certain sectors to learn and use Bahasa Malaysia [the National Language]. . . . But if persuasion still does not provide results, then we must resort to the whip. The human psychology is such that if we leave to their intelligence to choose, they do not make the correct choice."[18]

And Rahman Ya'kub got away with it. The Prime Minister was displeased with him not so much because of the policy he enunciated, but for what he considered his unnecessarily provocative manner. Twice he instructed Tun Razak to warn him, an assignment which the latter carried out with moderate zeal. Tun (Dr.) Ismail was inclined to be pleased by the developments, and the Malay community throughout was altogether enthusiastic. Many Indians, whatever their private views, publicly endorsed the new policy. The community of Chinese was silent. Some of its members were brooding, but most were convinced that there was no point in resisting. In any case, they had confidence that their culture would survive. With noteworthy *sang froid* they accepted the fact that Merdeka University, a concession forced out of the MCA, would not be established. Its sponsors in an almost pitifully plaintive note explained that they were waiting for permission from the Minister of Education.[19] And for that they could wait, as Tun Tan Siew Sin prophesied, until hell would freeze over.

[16] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, July 21, 1969.
[17] *Ibid.*, July 23, 1969.
[18] Kuala Lumpur, *Utusan Melayu*, July 19, 1969.
[19] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 10, 1969.

All this left Rahman Ya'kub unperturbed. Having settled the matter of primary and secondary education, he departed for Indonesia to recruit faculty for the Universiti Kebangsaan (National University).[20] Undaunted by indifferent results, he established the new university in quarters immediately adjacent to the University of Malaya, vigorously raided the latter's faculty (Chinese and Indians included) and then in May, 1970, with 173 "pioneer" students completed his system of national education ranging from grade school to advanced university degrees. With all the flaws which later became quite apparent, it was really quite a remarkable achievement for the man from Sarawak.

The implementation of the economic terms, however, continued to pose a difficult problem. The immediate concern was, of course, that the disturbances of May 13 would adversely affect the private sector. After all, without increased production (and income) there could be no redistribution within the framework of the constitutional contract. Thus in June, 1969, even while the security situation was still precarious in Kuala Lumpur, NOC established a very high-level Capital Investment Committee under the chairmanship of Tun Tan Siew Sin and assigned to it the task of cutting through all the red tape in "the granting of pioneer certificates, investment tax credit, export allowances and other fiscal incentives provided under existing legislation."[21] The results were quick and dramatic (see Table 16–1). Altogether, private investment increased by 40 percent from 1969 to 1970.[22]

In the meantime, Malaysia's international credit was to be protected. External obligations continued to be meticulously honored. Representatives of foreign lending agencies and especially the IBRD mission were extended every possible courtesy and cooperation. And here again Tun Tan Siew Sin was quite successful. When the IBRD mission returned to Washington it filed a report which, although could not be quoted as representing the bank's views, nevertheless did include this quite remarkable conclusion: "The recent political disturbance does not

[20] *Ibid.*, August 4, 1969.

[21] *Malaysia, A New Industrial Development Strategy* (Kuala Lumpur: Lai Than Fong Press, 1969), p. 6.

[22] Bank Negara Malaysia, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Bank Negara, 1972), p. 61.

TABLE 16–1
Applications for Industrial Projects, 1968–1970

	1968	*1969*	*1970 (Jan.–June)*
1. *No. of Applications received*	87	296	180
2. *No. of Applications approved:*			
(a) Pioneer	41	120	88
(b) I.T.C.*	–	4	13
(c) Non-Pioneer†	–	22	60
3. *Proposed Paid Up Capital*			
(a) Pioneer companies	M$104.5 million	M$229.4 million	M$136.7 million
(b) I.T.C.	Nil	$ 6.3 million	$ 17.8 million
(c) Non-Pioneer	–	$ 11.9 million	$ 43.3 million
4. *Proposed Employment Opportunities To Be Created*			
(a) Pioneer	5,500	22,600	16,384
(b) I.T.C.	–	735	994
(c) Non-Pioneer		1,800	5,824
	5,500	25,135	23,202

Source: Compiled from the files of the Federal Industrial Development Authority.
* An investment tax credit entitles a company to deduct from its taxable income an approved percentage of the investment in fixed assets.
† Projects that intend to proceed without any incentives were required to obtain formal approval from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry with effect from June, 1969.

seem to have affected Malaysia's future debt carrying capacity. Malaysia is thus credit-worthy for substantially more external borrowing on conventional terms than its absorptive capacity would make feasible."[23]

Interestingly it was the public sector which was most severely affected by the consequences of May 13. Suddenly Tun Razak, its driving wheel, was overburdened with so many new duties he could not devote the same attention to economic details. He even felt compelled to give up his portfolio of Rural Development, perhaps his favorite. The DAU meanwhile found its élan declining. A Malay dominated group, its young officers saw a special opportunity to take the initiative. Instead they were frus-

[23] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, *Current Economic Position and Prospects of Malaysia*, Report No. EAP-11a, Vol. 1 (February 24, 1970), p. 50.

trated by what they considered the tendency of drifting. They observed much activity in training and planning, but also an attitude of extreme caution toward implementation. They sorely missed dynamic leadership. Admittedly, the Director, Abdul Majid bin Mohamad Yusoff, was never a particularly aggressive personality, but in the past Tun Razak took a special interest in the unit, and he could be approached for guidance or even for arbitration in jurisdictional conflicts with the EPU. Moreover until a few months earlier, Abdul Majid could rely on his senior advisor for innovative suggestions. Professor Milton J. Esman, however, had returned to the United States and was replaced by a retired U.S. AID official with notably modest intellectual and energy levels. And the EPU also had its troubles. The First Malaysia Plan had passed its midpoint, and some indicators, especially private investment and employment, appeared worrisome. The staff moreover was on the defensive. Some of its senior members were Chinese who were concerned just how the heavy emphasis on Malay privileges would affect them. Some of its senior advisors had earlier helped design Pakistan's development policy—proclaimed a model by some economists—which proved to be politically so disastrous. They wondered just how political developments would affect their own reputations. Neither group found comfort in Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie's radio and television address on the establishment of the Department of National Unity (DNU). He announced a new planning agency which unlike the DAU would apparently be superior to EPU and rather pointedly observed: "in the past, whilst plans and programmes were thoroughly studied in terms of their economic implications in the Economic Planning Unit, their financial implications in the Treasury and their administrative implications in the Development Administration Unit, there has been no proper body to study the implications of such programmes in terms of national unity and social integration."[24] Did this imply criticism?

Soon the EPU, as well as the country, was getting some clues about the new priorities through the public statements of Tun Razak. Four months after the May riots, on Radio and Television Malaysia the Deputy Prime Minister, after recounting the return of public order but before mentioning any other topic of political reconstruction, seemed to focus on one single economic problem. "Unfortunately, there is not enough employment opportunity for everyone and this serious unemployment problem could undermine the existence of potential goodwill among our people. . . . We must create more employment opportunities in the shortest possible time." Two months later he explained: "The policy is to give equal opportunity to all Malaysians—equal access to the wealth of the country, equal access to employment." Then in his *Hari Raja* message, the Director of Operations promised a "silent revolution" which would assure abundant wealth to the have-nots.[25] Similar indications could be found in Tun Razak's special visibility at public occasions involving in quick succession among others such Malay oriented institutions and programs as Malayan Banking, the Agricultural Bank, the Malaysian Agricultural and Development Institute, and the National Youth Development Corps.[26] And some clues could be found in the announcement by Tun (Dr.) Ismail that those who had obtained their citizenship under Article 30 of the Constitution—some 250,000 mostly Chinese workers would have to surrender their certificates "for review by the Government," and that non-citizen lawyers would not be permitted to practice in Malaysia.[27]

Meanwhile the Department of National Unity was not idle. If EPU wanted a definitive statement on development strategy, it got one in the DNU paper dated March 18, 1970, and entitled quite unequivocally, "The New Economic Policy." In it economic priorities were set as: "(i) the promotion of national unity and integration, (ii) the creation of employment opportunities; and (iii) the promotion of overall economic growth."

In case anyone, perhaps an economic planner, would consider these coordinate goals, he only had to refer to Development Circular No. 1 of 1969 which declared: "the *overriding* objective of the Second Malaysia Plan will be the promotion of national unity . . ."[28] or to the DNU paper which explained: "employment and growth are only derived objectives," derived from the overriding objective of national unity. And in case anyone at all would wonder about the operational criteria for national unity,

[24] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 18, 1969.

[25] *Ibid.*, November 10, 1969, and December 10, 1969.

[26] *Ibid.*, October 15, 22, and 29, 1969.

[27] *Ibid.*, November 6 and 16, 1969. By October, 1970, the deadline for surrendering the certificates, less than 10 percent—about 25,000 out of an estimated 277,000 citizens obliged.

[28] Italics added.

the DNU was prepared to provide that as well. In Part II the "recommendations" left no doubt. The over-riding objective of the new economic policy was a significant reduction in the income gap between Malays and "non-Malays" to be accomplished by vigorous government efforts to provide special, privileged access for Malays to the modern urban and modern rural sectors of the economy. It was a program remarkably similar to one proposed earlier by Dr. Mahathir, who ironically just about this time was being expelled from UMNO.

Given a clear policy lead the EPU economists set to work. With customary diligence they promptly produced papers on "Malaysian Development Alternatives to 1985" and "Possible Targets for Income, Output and Employment in 1975." The senior advisor personally contributed a study entitled "Racial Disparity and Economic Development," reflecting not only a singular conversion to the doctrine of the transcendental salience of political imperatives but also the inherent contradictions between economic and political criteria.

In his paper Professor Jus Fallon first addressed himself to the dimensions of disparity. He related per capita GDP data of each West Malaysian state to the Malay share of its population. He also proceeded to combine the value added by various types of industries with total employment and its communal composition. His conclusion: The "productivity and income differential in favour of the non-Malays . . . may be expressed by the ratio of nearly 7 to 4 or by the absolute difference of M$1250." Turning to the causes of disparity, the senior advisor of EPU identified two conditions: first, "that the non-Malays—both Chinese and Indians—to a far greater extent than the Malays are participating in the modern urban and rural, higher productivity activities"; and second, that "ownership and leadership in the modern sector are almost entirely in the hands of the non-Malays." On strategy alternatives he was prepared to concede the conflict between growth criteria favored by economic planners in general and the national policy objective of reducing economic disparities among the communities. EPU's argument which hoped to reconcile both, namely that "if only the rate of growth of over-all output and national income could be stepped up and maintained at a high level, then there would be enough resources produced to tackle also the distribution problems," proved to be a failure. "While the high rate of growth is indeed important,"

he observed, "it is now clear from the evidence of the past that it does not bring with it parity or balance between the races." Indeed past efforts at redistribution had been totally inadequate. What the DNU researchers knew by instinct or inspiration (or had borrowed from Dr. Mahathir) Professor Fallon documented with statistical extrapolations and projections. He was rather less convinced, however, by the new strategy advanced by the DNU. The objective of balanced participation by all communities in economic activity and growth was all well and good, but whether the means selected were really appropriate he thought more problematical. On the wisdom of one central feature of the New Economic Policy, the development of industries in rural areas and small urban centers, he was out-right skeptical. Whatever its merits otherwise, in terms of economic balance it would probably be dysfunctional.

> The entrepreneurs for most such enterprises—and indeed for the myriad small market oriented workshops and industries that could be developed—are Chinese. More than the Malays they have the trade links and ability to organize and to mobilize working capital; not having deep roots or even a base in rural life they also have greater incentives to go into these activities. A *general* policy of stimulating industrial growth outside the main centers is therefore misdirected and dangerous. Support to selected industries, which Malay entrepreneurs and workers have at least an equal chance of controlling and operating is a different matter. The trouble is, there probably are very few such special industries. An industrial policy for rural (and small town) areas can, however, be highly favourable in terms of racial economic balance if Malay entrepreneurship and workers are given initial protection from non-Malay competition which has hitherto smothered them.

There would also be problems in introducing Malay management and labor en masse into urban industries. But in any case, even under "rather basic and definitely optimistic assumptions . . . , given strong political will to deal explicitly with racial imbalances, as well as adequate understanding of the issues, determined implementation of policies by the Government, and sheer luck in terms of favourable economic developments in world markets for products and capital," progress by 1985 under

the New Economic Policy would in terms of public perception be far from impressive. The disparity ratio indeed would be reduced from 7:4 in 1967 to 7:5 in 1985. Simultaneously, non-Malay unemployment would increase threefold, while Malay unemployment would "only" double. Yet, in absolute dollar terms, the disparity would increase from M$1250 to M$1475 or 18 percent. "The absolute disparity in favour of non-Malays worsens even more—by M$575 or over 45 percent—if we consider only those who are actually employed, not the total labour force." With that, Professor Fallon concluded his projections. If indeed he was right, the New Economic Policy would at best require generations to succeed, but whether the government had that much time, especially within an environment of rapid urbanization, forced industrialization, high unemployment, and dramatically intensified Malay economic privileges, was doubtful to say the least.

D. S. Pearson, a British advisor, did not believe that the government had time. In a "farewell" essay, "Economic Development and Racial Imbalance" (April 23, 1970), he raised the spectre of Chinese retaliation. "A major inconsistency in the accepted view" he declared, "is that whereas it requires non-Malays to be active and enterprising in economic affairs, it assumes they will be entirely passive and inactive in political affairs, even when political developments directly affect their economic status." Accepting national unity as the over-riding objective, he called for the substitution of economic categories in the place of communal ("racial") ones. It should be the task of government to improve "the economic position of less-favoured groups, regardless of ethnic origin . . ." rather than to concentrate on special support for a particular communal group. Starting from the proposition of a homogenized nation-state and ignoring the constitutional contract, it was not difficult to arrive at his alternative strategy of an "integrated development." Indeed a number of more junior advisors in EPU openly agreed and several members of the staff sympathized with him. Even Tun Razak was beginning to favor (at least publicly) the "haves" and "have-nots" dichotomy.

Within NOC, however, the New Economic Policy, continued to mean intensified efforts to implement the economic terms of the constitutional contract, and a consensus was emerging as to the appropriate strategy as well: a growing Malay urban middle

class, the product of rapid industrialization. When the National Consultative Council met, however, and a Sub-committee on the New Economic Policy was appointed, a counterpoint quickly emerged Mansor bin Othman, *Mentri Besar* of Negeri Sembilan was named its chairman, and one of its members was Ungku A. Aziz.

On the meetings that followed during the first half of 1970, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya had a major influence. He did not frontally challenge the DNU approach but, like Tun Razak throughout the 1960's, he argued vigorously that Malays must have an opportunity to improve their income in their accustomed environment without being uprooted. Hence, to a very substantial extent improvement in the Malay standard of life depended on rural development. And rural development in turn—and here once again he went far beyond the position of the Deputy Prime Minister—required institutional reform. The stranglehold of the middleman in the countryside must be broken. Constrained by his fundamentally zero-sum perception of the economy, he argued time and again: you cannot give anything to one group without taking something away from another. Few were left in doubt just which group he had in mind to take things from. The rural middleman must be nationalized, perhaps FAMA could take over his functions. There could be no compromise on this. For unless a government agency was guaranteed monopoly of marketing at least in such basic commodities as rice and fish, it would be helpless. Private (Chinese) middlemen would run circles around it.

The chairman and most other members of the Sub-committee found these arguments highly persuasive. Practically no one mentioned the constitutional difficulties. The question though was how to reconcile this approach with the official DNU position. The prospect of increasing number of Malays participating in the management of industries or at least sitting on boards of directors had general appeal, although the idea of masses of rural Malays moving to the towns and cities was recognized as political dynamite. In any case, few Sub-committee members were inclined to oppose what appeared to be NOC policy. Draft after draft was submitted, revision after revision considered. The final version offered no integrated formula, but a simple aggregate of two separate approaches. In the traditional rural as well as the modern urban and modern rural sectors Malays

were to enjoy special privileges and hold claims on extensive public resources.

At its August meeting the NCC considered the Sub-committee report. Immediately it became subject to attack. At first this was oblique. Speaker after speaker pointed to the errors in data, to faulty grammar, or to its inelegant style. It was not only shoddy in form, but rash in substance. Tun Tan Siew Sin suggested that in view of what appeared to be some difficulties, the report might be referred back to the Sub-committee for some polishing. Tun Razak in the chair, seemed to consider doing just that. There was silence in the hall, doubtful and expectant. Then Tun (Dr.) Ismail spoke. Whatever the flaws in form, the Council should consider the substance of the proposal. The Malays insisted on a new economic policy and would not tolerate further delay, procedural or otherwise. That was that. The Council moved to debate substance. Not one speaker denied or minimized the existence of the disparity; all admitted that the Malays must be given special consideration. Some, including Tun Sambanthan, along the lines of D. S. Pearson argued, however, that the question should not be communally but economically defined. Indeed, there were poor Indians and Chinese as well, and they too had a right to become beneficiaries of the new policy. Only Dato Asri and one other Malay councillor responded by pointing to the constitutional contract. In the end the issue was not settled, but the report was approved.

It was another year, however, before the New Economic Policy was publicly spelled out. Amid a burst of publicity the *Second Malaysia Plan* was submitted to Parliament in July, 1971. Tun Razak himself could spare no superlatives. The stakes were too high, he declared, to allow the policy to fail. It was the last chance for the survival of the people and the country.[29]

Indeed in terms of a public declaration of priorities, the *Second Malaysia Plan* presented a substantial departure from its predecessors. Fiscal responsibility, so dear to the Treasury, and economic growth, the forte of the EPU, continued to be acknowledged as essential goals of planning, but now they were unequivocally subjected to the political criteria formulated by the DNU. "Under the New Economic Policy," the Plan proclaimed, "development will be undertaken in such a manner that in the process of growth and expansion, it makes the maximum con-

[29] Kuala Lumpur, *Sunday Mail*, August 22, 1971.

tribution to the achievement of national unity."[30] More specifically, it called for a two-pronged approach, one prong being the reduction and ultimate elimination of poverty "by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race," while the other was to be a restructuring of Malaysian society "to correct economic imbalance, so as to reduce or actually eliminate the identification of race with economic function."[31] In short, even at this level of rhetoric the primacy of economic criteria was replaced by a compromise. Economic development was conceded as a legitimate objective because only through such a process could positive-sum relations so essential to political stability be generated. Or to quote Tun Razak in his foreword to the Plan, only the policy of economic growth could form the basis of a polity where "no one will experience any loss or feel any sense of deprivation of his rights, privileges, income, job or opportunity." At the same time, however, it was made perfectly clear that in the view of the government, the accelerated implementation of redistribution was imperative for political stability, and that without the latter, the question of economic development was entirely academic. All the same, when it came to the substantive provisions of the Plan, departures from the previously established pattern were more difficult to find.

As in the past, the prime requisite for the Plan was a sustained advance—in the GNP. Inded, the *First Malaysia Plan* had projected only a 5 percent increase, but notwithstanding several communal disturbances GNP grew at 6.1 percent.[32] A projection of 6.5 percent annual increase during the *Second Malaysia Plan* appeared wholly warranted.

As in the past, the steady advance of the economy was to be sustained primarily by the private sector. Total development expenditure under the Plan was expected to reach M$13,100 million[33] of which the share of the private sector was estimated at 7,101 or 54 percent. In addition, however, the financing of "public sector investment" depended on the government's abil-

[30] Malaysia, *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975* (Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press, 1971), p. 3.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[32] Although the "real gross national income" increased by a lesser, but still most impressive rate of 5.3 percent.

[33] The target, however, was set at 14,350 with the shortfall assigned wholly to the public sector.

ity to meet an "overall deficit" of M$4,190 million (or 70 percent) either through foreign sources or domestic borrowing.

To put it somewhat differently, if these components of projected private and public sector development expenditures which were dependent upon the private sector (foreign or domestic) were aggregated (B1 + B2 + C2 + C3) they formed 76 percent of the total projected development expenditure of the *First Malaysia Plan* and 81 percent of the *Second Malaysia Plan*. If anything, the development program was increasing its dependence upon the private incentive of profit (see Table 16–2).

TABLE 16–2
Financing of Development Expenditure, 1966–1975

	First Malaysia Plan	*Second Malaysia Plan*
A. Total Projected Development Expenditure	M$10,500	M$13,101
B. *Private Sector*		
1. External Investment	1,000	1,150
2. Domestic Investment	4,950	5,951
3. Public Sector Support	210	742
4. Total Private Sector	6,165	7,843
C. *Public Sector*		
1. Current Surplus	625	1,810
2. Domestic borrowing from non-bank private sector	1,025	2,245
3. Domestic borrowing from banking system	1,000	1,285
4. Accumulated assets and other adjustments	–	–250
5. Foreign borrowing	1,000	720
6. Foreign grants	900	190
7. Total Public Sector	4,550	6,000

Source: First Malaysia Plan 1966–1970, pp. 57–77, and *Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975*, pp. 31 and 92.

As in the past, moreover, the largest share of public development expenditure went to agriculture and rural development: 26.5 percent as compared to the target of 23.9 percent and the estimated actual expenditure of 26.3 percent under the *First Malaysia Plan*.[34] There were notable increases in the proportion

[34] *First Malaysia Plan, op. cit.*, p. 69 and *Second Malaysia Plan*, p. 68.

allocated for land development as well as agricultural credit and marketing. Evidently, the New Economic Policy would rely more heavily on these programs to eradicate rural poverty. Neither approaches, however, were exactly "new." The first had been an integral part of Tun Razak's strategy and was more or less accepted for nearly a decade. The second had been advocated by Ungku Aziz (and Aziz Ishak) for even longer. In the past it was implemented only partially, the government resisting institutional reforms which not only established public marketing authorities, but also granted them monopoly (and thus expropriated private, mostly Chinese, middlemen). And if the Plan was an indication, the government was still resisting. A National Padi and Rice Authority (NAPRA) was promised, but its duties were limited to the coordination of the "various aspects of production, processing and marketing of padi and rice." FAMA was to rely primarily on "licensing of market intermediaries," and a "direct involvement in trading and processing of agricultural products." It was to establish "marketing complexes to ensure more efficient fish landing, storage and trading." The Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) established in 1968 was to be developed into a "fully operational research organization." Agricultural education was to be rapidly expanded through the construction of four additional schools of agriculture. The recently authorized Agricultural Bank (Bank Pertanian) was to "progressively increase its role as the central agency for public sector agricultural credit," initially at least working through rural cooperatives. All this and more was promised.[35] Indeed, new government agencies were being established, but no radical institutional reform in the rural sector was on the horizon. Somewhere between the deliberations of the NCC and the drafting of the Plan, Ungku Aziz was once again by-passed.

It was in the urban sector, however, that the convergence of the two-pronged approach of the New Economic Policy was most clearly discernible. Addressing itself to the eradication of poverty, the Plan set a course toward "greater growth in the modern industrial sector," in the hope that it would not only improve productivity and the level of income, but, perhaps more important, it would also provide many new jobs. "The experience of the recent past shows," the planners asserted with a

[35] *Second Five Year Plan, op. cit.*, pp. 136–140.

certain sanguine flair, "that this sector has relatively favourable rates of labour absorption."[36] Their optimism, in fact, carried them along to a point of where they projected no less than three-fourths of the 596,000 *new* jobs to become available in urban areas. The service sectors alone were counted on for an additional 230,000 new positions, and the industrial sector for 138,000 more. If successful, this strategy was supposed to push down unemployment to 7.3 percent by 1975.[37]

Most of the resources for a rapidly expanding "modern industrial sector," of course, would have to come from the private (Chinese dominated) sector. Focusing attention, however, on the very substantial jump in private investment from M$930 million in 1969 to M$1,236 million in 1970 (and more or less ignoring all the reasons why both the 1969 base and the 1970 performance should not be considered useful for predicting trends) the planners claimed confidence. It demonstrated, they said, a "general atmosphere congenial to a strong upward trend. . . ." And then they added once more their solemn assurance: "The Government is committed to the continuation and maintenance of this favourable atmosphere."[38] The government moreover was willing to do more. In case of private sector projects it was prepared to cut red tape and process with singular dispatch ventures with large new employment components. In addition, it was willing to offer a variety of tax and other financial incentives. Finally, the government was prepared to allocate funds through a public authority to facilitate urban development and through semi-public corporations to underwrite (at least initially) new corporations in the "modern urban sector."

As a matter of fact, it was exactly on this point that the two prongs of the New Economic Policy were joined. For government sponsored "urban-type activities" also provided the most significant new feature of the program implementing the economic terms of the constitution ("racial balance") at an accelerated rate. Public policy, the Plan announced outright, would favor projects "with management and ownership by Malays"; and public investment would be channeled through the same govern-

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[37] Which was below the 8 percent estimate for 1970, but above the 6 percent estimate for 1966 and well above the 5.2 percent projected for 1970 by the *First Malaysia Plan.*
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

ment agencies and semi-governmental corporations to new industries which would "offer more opportunities for participation by Malays."

It may appear then that Dr. Mahathir's approach (more than that of Ungku Aziz's) had gained ascendance over development planning. Such an impression, however, is not entirely accurate. For one thing, Dr. Mahathir himself evidently had second thoughts. At an UMNO Youth seminar held just about the time the Plan was published, he warned that rapid industrialization instead of providing new jobs would, in fact, produce increased unemployment. His twelve-page paper included the following neo-orthodox rationales.

> Very often developing countries will look upon developed nations to carry out their development programmes. While idolising the developed countries, economists and planners sometimes tend to believe that whatever is best for developed countries is best for the developing nation. For instance, the case of parking meters which were used recently in Kuala Lumpur and Penang towns. To the officials this is a symbol of progress.
>
> What is the result of this? First, the meter was bought from the West, made by highly paid workers. Apart from the meters being bought with public funds, they also caused considerable unemployment among Malaysians.
>
> Now they have been replaced by parking attendants. The result: They are more efficient and they can tell us where there are vacancies and so on.[39]

His most politically influential allies tended to share his misgivings. Dato Harun had already warned of the dangers of over-industrialization. "Before setting up more factories," he declared to the Selangor Legislative Assembly, "we must find the consumers."[40] And a few days after Dr. Mahathir's paper, Musa Hitam took the floor in Parliament to make a perhaps more sophisticated point. He supported the Plan, he declared, with the proviso that urbanization would proceed cautiously. He did not want change to be so rapid that it would "lead to the deculturisation of our people," and he certainly did not want to

[39] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, July 26, 1971.
[40] *Ibid.*, March 20, 1971.

see a situation arise where Malaysia, as some other South Asian states, would become a "one-city country."[41]

In any case, in spite of the brave rhetoric, the government was not altogether convinced by the proposed panacea of induced urbanization. Most allocations for semi-governmental corporations which were to stimulate such projects were in block sums, without any specific ideas of just how the money would be spent. It is also significant that aggregate allocations to the public sector were set at M$7,250 million, but the Plan projected only an actual investment of M$6,000. Thus the shortfall expected was 17 percent, even though during the previous politically turbulent five years it was actually less than 7 percent.

Still any impression that the government and more particularly Tun Razak were not sincere and wholly determined to make visible, possibly dramatic, progress toward the eradication of poverty and especially toward racial balance could not have been further from the truth. The more than three-fold increase in public sector allocations for the principal instruments of the strategy—federal land development, agricultural credit, agricultural research, and semi-public corporations—"set up primarily to provide more opportunities for participation by Malays," speaks for itself. See Table 16-3.

The Third Precondition: Decommunalization of Politics

Still the labors of the NOC—the efforts to establish integrity in government, the *Rukunegara,* the New Education Policy and the New Economic Policy—all could be wasted if the resumption of democratic processes would expose the system once again to the pitfalls of the politics of excesses. The memories of May 13 were as yet too fresh and too traumatic for NOC to take any chances. In the long run, NOC was confident; the reputation of government for integrity and the full implementation of the constitutional contract would be decisive. In the meantime, they thought, the legal system through some special provisions could hold the line.

Special provisions within the framework of the legal system, however, required constitutional amendments, and these in turn required a two-thirds majority in Parliament. But Parliament had been suspended, and in any case the Alliance did not control two-thirds of its membership.

When the emergency had to be declared in May, 1969, the Alliance had won 66 seats in West Malaysia and 10 in Sabah. There remained 1 uncompleted contest in Malacca, 6 in Sabah and the full contingent of 24 in Sarawak. It was, of course, possible that some Opposition members might be amenable to conversion, but too much activity along such lines would undoubtedly suggest bribery or intimidation to so many people that it would be seriously dysfunctional to other on-going efforts to improve the government's reputation. Thus the drive for two-thirds (96 out of 144) required control of at least 20 of the re-

[41] *Ibid.*, July 30, 1971.

TABLE 16–3
Comparative Public Sector Allocations for Premier Programs of the New Economic Policy, 1966–1975

	First Malaysia Plan		*Second Malaysia Plan*	
	Amount (M$ million)	*Share of Total Public Sector Investment (%)*	*Amount (M$ million)*	*Share of Total Public Sector Investment (%)*
Rural Areas:				
Federal Land Development Authority	363.6	8.6	908.7	12.5
Agricultural Credit	29.6	0.7	155.1	2.1
Agricultural Research	13.0	0.3	50.2	0.7
Urban Areas:				
National Corporation (PERNAS)	10.0	0.2	100.0	1.4
Majlis Amanah Ra'ayat (MARA)	123.9	2.9	158.1	2.2
State Economic Development Corporations (SEDC's)	–	–	45.6	0.6
Urban Development Authority (UDA)	–	–	100.0	1.4
Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Bhd. (MIDF)	16.0	0.4	100.0	1.4
Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation (MRD)	2.6	0.1	35.0	0.5
Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC)	10.1	0.2	46.0	0.6
Other Investment (including Development Bank)	7.3	0.2	45.1	0.6
Total	576.1	13.6	1743.8	24.0

Source: Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975, pp. 68–71.

maining 31 seats. There was a good chance that the Alliance would capture the Malacca seat, and probably those in Sabah. Sarawak, however, was an entirely different matter. The Alliance there was never particularly strong, and this time the combination of the Parti Bumiputra and Sarawak Chinese Association had to face not only the urban based, Chinese oriented and Communist infiltrated SUPP (Sarawak United People's Party) but also its recent allies the PESAKA (Party Pesaka Anak Sarawak) and SNA (Sarawak National Party) both relying primarily on Iban support. Hence, it seemed highly unlikely that the Alliance could capture a majority in the State Assembly or sufficient parliamentary seats to help make up a two-thirds vote. Something had to be done, but it was not clear just what. Until the elections, there was not much point in speculating.

The first tentative moves were made. In June and July the interrupted Sabah and Sarawak elections would resume. Political campaigning and large assemblies remained banned. Nor were there any commitments that the resumption of elections heralded the convening of Parliament. A few months earlier while in London Tun (Dr.) Ismail had stated the position frankly. "The return to the parliamentary democracy will now depend entirely on the results of the general election in Sarawak and Sabah. If the Alliance fails to get the two-thirds majority necessary for approving amendments to the Constitution then we will have to negotiate with the opposition about support in our wish to isolate in the Constitution the several contentious communal problems. If they do not agree, then I do not see how we can recall Parliament."[42]

The results in Sabah as expected were altogether favorable. The Alliance captured all six seats. Sarawak, however, was somewhat of a disappointment (see Table 16–4). The Alliance captured less than one-third of the seats, and there were practically no Independents who, like those in 1963, could be persuaded to see the light. Clearly, a coalition was necessary to run the state, and something of an inspiration was required to mobilize at least 13 votes from Sarawak behind the UMNO–MCA–MIC combination in Parliament.

Conventional wisdom suggested the restoration of the earlier solidarity with PESAKA and SNAP. They were after all generally conservatively oriented, Muslim dominated, and of course, there was already some experience about the terms of cooperation. The cost this time, however, was to be somewhat higher—for all practical purposes the Iban domination of the state government. To the central government this was too much of a risk. The last thing they wanted was the exacerbation of centrifugal tendencies so far from Kuala Lumpur. They had enough to cope with as it was with Indonesia-based infiltrators and Chinese urban dissidents.

[42] Quoted in Syed Hussein Alatas, "The Politics of Coalition in Malaysia," *Current History*, Vol. 63, No. 376 (December, 1972), p. 272.

TABLE 16–4
Results of Sarawak Elections, 1970

	Parliamentary Seats		*State Assembly Seats*	
Party	*Contested*	*Won*	*Contested*	*Won*
Alliance	14	7	32	15
Pesaka	15	2	34	8
SNAP	23	9	45	12
SUPP	18	5	38	11
Independents	24	1	64	1
Total	94	24	213	47*

Source: Malaysia, *Election Commission Report on Federal and State Elections 1969* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1971), pp. 65–69.
* The results in one constituency not available, but won ultimately by the SUPP.

Tun Razak, who personally managed the negotiations in Kuching, did have an inspiration. He would not rely exclusively on the advice of Temenggong Jugah, PESAKA leader, and Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs. He had his own man, a Malay, the Minister of Education. In his current post Rahman Ya'kub had already done all the good he could do. The impetus he gave the educational policy would carry it along; what was needed now was another, less mercurial, administratively more effective personality. In Sarawak his talents could be put to far better use. Tun Razak, moreover, had a new strategy of coalitions in mind. SUPP, he thought, must have concluded by now that massive Indonesian support, however alluring in 1963, would not be forthcoming for the foreseeable future. In any case, given the new government in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur had become the better of two alternatives. It was just possible that SUPP would be open to suggestions.

As it happened, it was. After short but intense negotiations,

SUPP accepted a junior partnership with the Alliance in Sarawak and thus provided Rahman Ya'kub with a majority in the State Assembly. It also agreed to support the Alliance in Parliament. When later in the year Dato Ong Kee Hui was appointed to the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, he explained his party's position. In July, he said, when negotiations revealed "that broad areas of cooperation were possible," the SUPP had joined the state Alliance in a coalition "to serve Sarawak's interests." On the federal level, however, the situation was different. There was no question of joining a "Grand Alliance." Although in Parliament, SUPP members would sit alongside the Alliance, this did not even mean a coalition. They would not tolerate any "roughshod" treatment of Sarawak interests. The most that could be said was that SUPP was, with certainty, not in the Alliance.[43] Whatever the wording, the fact remained that the SUPP contributed critical votes to the Alliance strength in Parliament. By the time the special Malacca election was won by the government party,[44] together with two past election conversions, the magic number of 96 was reached, and the prospects for meeting the third precondition for the resumption of democratic politics were bright.

On the eve of National Day, 1970, Tunku Abdul Rahman addressed his people on radio and television. On a sombre note he set the date of his retirement: September 21, the day the new *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* would take office. Tun Razak, he announced with pride, would succeed him. Then the Prime Minister lifted the remaining (*pro forma*) one hour curfew and the ban on politics. Parliament, he said, would be reconvened on February 17, 1971.

In quick succession the Opposition was promised access to Radio and TV Malaysia; Tun (Dr.) Ismail received their leaders and discussed the question of political detainees; Lim Kit Siang of the DAP and top members of the *Partai Rakyat* were released "unconditionally." The government leaned over backwards to rekindle democratic politics, but not without restraints.

The NCC approved the general principle; it was not asked to consider specifics. Parliament was recognized to be sovereign, but in the future the range of its authority would be carefully

[43] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, December 10 and 11, 1970.
[44] The Alliance candidate polled 14,766 votes compared to 5,482 for his PMIP opponent.

defined. As a matter of fact, whether it had a future at all depended on its willingness to legitimize through constitutional amendments firm parameters of the political process and of its own authority. The inter-communal contract of 1957 would be established once and for all. Parliament could no longer amend it, even by a two-thirds majority, without express consent of the Council of Rulers. Its terms, moreover, would be out of bounds for any discussion outside *or* inside the legislature. And so would be any issue touching communal sensitivities. Members of Parliament would have to follow certain guidelines, the Speaker announced, "to prevent the using of the House's privilege to whip up sentiments."[45]

Practically no criticisms were heard of the proposed limitation on the range of legitimate campaign oratory. DAP invitations to all parties to participate in a forum on *Rukunegara* were generally ignored or rejected.[46] Some objections were raised though about the restraint on debates within the legislature. Parliament must retain the right to discuss even sensitive issues, insisted Lim Kit Siang, at the very least to discuss them *in camera*. In any case, Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, chairman of the *Gerakan* added, it should be Parliament, not NOC, that should set the parameters of free speech in its own halls.[47]

Actually, Tun Razak, unlike Tun (Dr.) Ismail, had considerable sympathy for claims of unrestricted legislative debates. Given the communal cleavages in Malaysian society, however, he believed the potential risks to be so serious that he saw no alternatives. Still, he wanted to be very certain that people understood the necessity of explicit restraints. Thus, three weeks before Parliament reconvened, the government issued a White Paper entitled "Toward National Harmony" spelling out and explaining the proposed amendments. "If important sections of the Constitution—sections pertaining to the delicate compromises among the major races—are attacked," the government argued, "it will certainly arouse fears and emotions. . . . It is obvious that these vital clauses must, in the national interest, be protected from the kind of debate that questions the very principle on which the nation was founded. . . . In order to ensure that in the future the democratic processes will not

[45] Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, November 14, 1970.
[46] *Ibid.*, November 16, 1970.
[47] Kuala Lumpur, *Malay Mail*, November 14, 1970.

be used to arouse racial feelings, it is proposed that Article 10 be amended to give power to Parliament to pass laws prohibiting the questioning of any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III (provisions relating to citizenship), Article 152 (the national language and the languages of other communities), Article 153 (special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities) or Article 181 (the sovereignty of the Rulers). Such laws, however, would not affect the right of any person to raise any matter relating to the implementation of the said provisions." The same restraints would be imposed on Parliament and the State Assemblies as well. As a matter of fact, the White Paper observed, boundaries for legislative debates were not unprecedented. A case in point was Rule 36 of "Parliament's Standing Orders" which stipulated that it shall be out of order to use words which are likely to promote feelings of ill-will or hostility between different communities in the Federation. However, to be certain that such acts did not take place and to remove all such temptations, it was proposed to amend Articles 63 and 72 and thus deprive members of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies of States of the protection they enjoyed under these Articles if they were charged with an offense under any law passed by virtue of the amended Article 10.

The remainder of the White Paper, about half of its total length, was devoted to the third major amendment. It cited statistics to demonstrate that a far less than proportionate share of students specializing in certain "modern" programs were Malays. For example, during 1969–1970 Malay first year enrollment at the University of Malaya included 24 out of 126 in Medicine, 79 out of 307 in Science, 5 out of 114 in Engineering, and only 25 out of 95 in Agriculture. To overcome this kind of disparities, special action was required, the White Paper insisted repeatedly. Specifically, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* was to be authorized to set minimum quotas for Malay representation in "selected courses of study." One ingredient of this amendment was touched on only briefly: it specifically extended *bumiputra* rights to the native tribes of Sabah and Sarawak thus giving them parity with the Malays.[48]

For those, however, who did not find these explanations convincing, Tun Razak reiterated earlier warnings. "I hope the amendments will be approved," he said, "otherwise, I regret we cannot return to parliamentary democracy." Admittedly, the amendments proposed meant restrictions on democracy, Tun Razak added, but this was "healthier" than living in uncertainty.[49]

[48] Quoted in Kuala Lumpur, *The Straits Times*, January 23, 1971.

By this time, of course, there was no longer any real doubt that the government could muster at least a two-thirds majority, but the debate was noteworthy inasmuch as it revealed a basically altered political atmosphere. When Parliament convened, and in the presence of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak moved the amendments:

> . . . There are no simple or text-book solutions to our problems. Indeed there are no solutions which do not take fully into account historical, political and economic realities of Malaysia. We are what we are—a multi-racial nation still imperfectly united. We are a relatively young nation and our experience of parliamentary democracy is less than two decades. We are not yet fully an economically developed country and there exist pronounced economic disparities between the racial groups in the country.
>
> A new generation has grown to adulthood since independence which is unmindful of the delicate and careful compromises agreed upon by the various races before we attained our independence in 1957. There are also unscrupulous individuals who seek to ride to power by inciting and exploiting racial emotions, fears and mistrust. . . .
>
> We must face the facts as they exist in Malaysia today. And with memories of May 13 still fresh in our minds, who can doubt we must show, by our action, that we are determined to preserve the democratic order against the insidious activities of these irresponsible elements? . . . We cannot allow a small minority to misuse freedom and thereby destroy the freedom of us all. . . .
>
> Let us ponder deeply and deliberately where we go from here. Let us remember that the democratic system which we are working has to bear the stresses and strains of a multi-racial society. . . .[50]

[49] *Ibid.*, February 4, 1951.

[50] The Parliamentary Debate was extensively reported by the Malay, Chinese and English language press. See especially *ibid.*, February 24, 25, 26, March 3 and 4, 1971.

Tun Tan Siew Sin rose to second the motion. His speech was short and compact, appealing to reason and realism. The community of Chinese, he said, had nothing to fear from the amendments. They were balanced and very fair. To be sure, Malay rights were spelled out more clearly and overtly than ever before, but so were the rights of the other communities—their rights of citizenship, of property, and cultural integrity. "It will be essential for the Government," he acknowledged, "to ensure that in implementation of the provisions of the law on matters dealt with in this Bill, scrupulous care will be taken not only to ensure justice to all, it must be obvious to all that justice has been done." Then he added, in his usual realistic manner, "It will perhaps be agreed by all right-thinking people, that, in the last analysis, it is better to have something less than 100 per cent democracy than no democracy at all."

Then followed the first speaker for the Opposition, Lim Kit Siang of the DAP. He would not concede the rationale of the government's case, nor was he intimidated by the rhetoric of the Alliance leadership. He rejected outright the Alliance diagnosis for the troubles on May 13 and had no use at all for its remedies. "We are convinced," he declared in ringing tones, "that . . . the Bill will divide, rather than unite Malaysians and will accelerate rather than arrest the advanced racial polarisation in the country." He offered no specific alternatives but proposed an all-party parliamentary commission to study the consequences of the May riots. Then he returned to his main, and possibly most telling complaint: "We are swiftly reaching a stage where the practice of racialism is a virtue, and the criticism of racialism a crime."

He was supported by Dato James Wong of SNAP. The representative from Sarawak was concerned about special rights to be granted to the "natives of Borneo," in what he claimed a violation of the London agreement. But he was most disturbed by restrictions on freedom of speech. "Must we tear off the fundamental rights which we cherish because of irresponsible politicians, and must we make this Parliament a crippled House in order to make it a servant of the Administration," he demanded.

The next major Opposition speaker—after an interlude of oratory by backbenchers—was Dato S. P. Seenivasagam (PPP). It was really too bad, he thought, that so historic an occasion as the resumption of Parliament, was "marred by threat and intimidation. There is the threat to shut down Parliament if MP's do not approve the present Bill. This threat should never have been attempted in any democratic country," he proclaimed somewhat sanctimoniously. In substance he too focused on the restraints on parliamentary debates. "In no other country which practices democracy," he observed, "do we find such repugnant provisions giving power to the executive to arrest MP's for what they speak in Parliament."

Gerakan members Yeoh Teck Chye and V. David were less emphatic. They offered few objections, but emphasized their mistrust in the government's promises for impartial implementation. Their party had already decided that their members would vote in their individual capacities—a clear signal that most if not all would, in fact, support the amendments. When Dato Asri rose to speak, it soon became clear that the PMIP members also would go along. Given the two bad alternatives presented by the government, the resumption of the parliamentary government after the adoption of the amendments or a reversion to NOC rule in case of rejection of the amendments, the PMIP was compelled to choose the first. The fact remained, however, that he basically disagreed with the Alliance policies, and more specifically, the one of "giving too much political rights to one community while the other received nothing in return in economic matters." Then he too introduced a measure of realism into the debate. Inter-racial harmony, he conceded, may be a good and sensible theme to be used in electioneering, but the government should not deceive itself "by saying that Malaysian society was not a communalistic society."

Practically all members of Parliament expressed their views. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon in a wide-ranging statement warned against a cure which was worse than the disease. Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Kadir described the position of those advocating bilingualism as "standing on dynamite." Goh Hock Guan (DAP) pointed to the possibility that through the amendments the government was establishing a "guided democracy." Dr. Lim Chong Eu assured the House of his party's "emphatic support" of the amendments. Tun Sambanthan expressed no surprise that the DAP and PPP were "howling" against the bill, because it sought to curtail their nefarious activities. The freedom of speech the two parties talked about, he explained, was none other than the freedom to curse one particular race, throw insults and breed

hatred and the freedom to kill. Mohamed bin Rahmat (Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education) called for the destruction of the DAP. The party was an enemy of the country, he argued, as it would not support the amendments. There were not many other intemperate words.

The only question that remained: how large a majority? One of the main closing speakers for the government, Ghafar bin Baba called on the DAP and the PPP to change their position "lest they be engulfed by the anger of the people." Let the vote be unanimous. Then Tun (Dr.) Ismail closed the debate. The government, he pledged to Parliament and the people, would not take advantage of any loophole in the bills nor would it conjure up other sensitive issues which might cause racial strife. It would ensure that Alliance members scrupulously interpret the spirit and the letter of the bill. Those who do not do so would be severely punished. In turn, those who attempt to obstruct the government would be dealt with "effectively and mercilessly. We shall do all this because we believe that only by doing so, democracy will be given a chance to survive." When the votes were tallied on March 3, 1971, the results were impressive: 125 to 17—well above the two-thirds actually needed. The *Gerakan* and PMIP members were joined by those of SNAP in support of the amendments. Only the DAP and PPP voted against them. The third, constitutional, prerequisite for a resumption of democratic politics had been met. The reconstruction of the system was complete.

CONCLUSION

SOME thirty years have elapsed since the surrender in Singapore. Remarkably eventful, hectic years. The Malayan peninsula was ravaged by world war, menaced by domestic insurgency, and throughout was buffeted by fundamental shifts in global power relations. Undeterred, political leaders proceeded to develop a democratic system suitable to their conditions.

By 1971 they felt that they had succeeded. There would be no further experimentation, declared Tun Razak. Much remained to be done, of course, but the direction was definitely set and the momentum or reconstruction would carry the system along —at least for a while.

The National Education Policy is now being implemented at an accelerated rate. Rahman Ya'kub left the Ministry to take charge of Sarawak state affairs. He was succeeded by the son of the founder of UMNO, a contemporary of Tun Razak in the study of law and a man with personal ties to Johore royalty. Captain Hussein Onn preferred a low profile; his skills were administrative, not political. In the depth of his convictions, however, he was second to none. He assumed his office quietly, then set out methodically and firmly to follow through on the initiatives of his colorful predecessor. Malay is rapidly becoming the language of instruction throughout the school system and at the University of Malaya as well. Whether in the process academic standards are declining, and if so whether this is only a temporary, transitional phenomenon, of course, remains to be seen.

The New Economic Policy is being pushed without hesitation. Maximizing growth remains a primary objective. Massive efforts to foster private investment continue unabated; public development projects are being designed and implemented with renewed vigor; indices of production and income advance steadily. The most unyielding determination, however, is reserved for the goal of "balancing." In order to reduce disparities between the economic categories of the "haves" and

the "have nots," cabinet members, federal administrators, and state officials—all devote an inordinate amount of time and effort to persuade any likely investor that the prospects of labor-intensive projects are just about ideal in Malaysia. A whole range of incentives has been offered including tax relief based on the number of workers employed rather than on the amount of capital invested. Even so, dramatic progress toward a more egalitarian income distribution or even the reduction of unemployment remains elusive. Meanwhile in order to reduce disparities between the communal groups, administrative procedures have been tilted in favor of Malay-oriented ventures, and vast public funds have been channeled in their direction. In the countryside, credit facilities have been improved, new land has been reclaimed, transportation and communication facilities have been extended, and further amenities have been provided. In the towns and cities, PERNAS is busy organizing new corporations, while MARA helps finance "indigenous entrepreneurs." In consequence, a new group of Malay businessmen is rapidly emerging, and the standard of living of Malay schoolteachers, religious functionaries, public officials, and a few others is visibly rising. Whether in the face of deteriorating world market conditions the momentum will continue, and perhaps more important, whether the masses of rural and urban Malays are also significantly benefiting is not quite so apparent.

All along the new constitutional provisions are being enforced with meticulous impartiality. First, the Editor-in-Chief of *Utusan Melayu*, Melan Abdullah, was charged with publishing a seditious item, more specifically, a headline: *Hapuskan sekolah-sekolah beraliran Tamil atau China di-negeri ini* ("Abolish Tamil and Chinese schools in this country"). Then the headmaster of a Chinese school, Sim Mow Yu, and a hotelier, Koo Eng Huang, were charged with seditious speech. So was the Vice-Chairman of the DAP Penang branch. Fan Yew Teng, Deputy Secretary-General of the DAP and two Petaling Jaya printers, in turn, were accused of publishing prohibited material. Convictions brought fines; in the case of Fan Yew Teng it also cost him his parliamentary seat. The message apparently did get through. From time to time the government deemed it necessary to issue warnings and even to make an occasional arrest, but such occurrences have become rare and have not involved major political personalities.

While public policy moved along tracks established during

reconstruction, the reorientation of political processes which had begun during the uncertain and contentious days of May, 1969, was running its course. The Directorate approach to managing government and inter-communal conflict has been revised markedly; certainly its operational characteristics have changed fundamentally. The patterns of vertical mobilization within the component political parties, for instance, have become more divergent. UMNO, for its part, visibly gravitated toward a more uncompromising championship of Malay communal interest. Just before Parliament reconvened, the General Assembly of UMNO met. Tunku Abdul Rahman after an opening speech withdrew; Tun Razak—with Tun (Dr.) Ismail—was completely in charge. More than ever before, the tone of speeches was communal, and the elections for party positions were carried by those unambiguously identified with Malay interest. The Vice-Presidencies were won by Ghafar Baba, Syed Nasir, and Tan Sri Sardon. Khir Johari and Hussein Onn lost. Tan Sri Ghazali Shaffie had campaigned very hard for the Executive Committee. He won, but by less votes than Hussein Onn and significantly by less votes than Musa Hitam. Senu Abdul Rahman, the head of UMNO Youth for some years, was challenged for that post by Dato Harun. The *Mentri Besar* of Selangor won decisively, then chose as his deputy: Musa Hitam. Indeed, well before the Assembly adjourned, it became clear that Dr. Mahathir would soon rejoin the party. He did and was named Senator. In August, 1974, after he was once again elected to Parliament, he was promptly appointed Minister of Education. In the cabinet he was met by an old friend and ally, the Minister of Local Industries, Musa Hitam. Evidently, Tun Razak had decided that the indispensable requirement of a stable democratic system in Malaysia was the successful mobilization of the Malay community behind his government. He would win and hold all Malay majority constituencies, which together with support from Sabah and Sarawak could assure a two-thirds majority for his party, regardless how the Chinese and the Indians voted.

The MCA, in contrast, exacerbated the ambiguity of its position. Few, if any, of its leaders had any difficulty restraining a desire for a strong communal stand. Some of the younger men though were convinced that the Chinese would have to find some way to match Malay mass mobilization. Mostly English-

educated intellectuals of the Maju Ward, they turned to the son of Colonel (Sir) H. S. Lee. Alex Lee responded with alacrity. He studied Chinese dialects; he spent countless hours courting urban workers; he traveled widely to relate to the new villagers. Then confident in what he perceived his growing influence, Alex Lee organized a mass meeting designed to bring together all Chinese political elements. Tun Tan Siew Sin was invited to address the Assembly, but it was made clear to all that the MCA would not control the organization. The time had come for the senior party leaders to take action. A request to register the new movement as a "non-party" political society was rejected by the government. When upon Khaw Kai Boh's death Alex Lee decided to campaign for the former Minister's seat in Parliament, the MCA nominated Michael Chen and with UMNO's help mobilized a popular majority behind him. Eventually, Alex Lee was expelled from the party.

If senior MCA leaders did agree on what they would not permit, they could find no consensus on a positive action program. Indeed, the common front at the highest level so badly impaired during the campaign of 1969 and its aftermath could not be restored. Tun Tan Siew Sin would not forget Tan Sri T. H. Tan's direct approach to Tunku Abdul Rahman to reverse MCA stand on Merdeka University, nor the only perfunctory efforts of businessmen to deliver Chinese votes to his party. He was willing to forgive—almost. Tan Sri T. H. Tan resigned from the top MCA policy body. Chinese businessmen, in turn, continued to harbor grave doubts about a party leader who, it seemed, so badly misjudged the mood of the Chinese electorate, and who in the moment of crisis was willing to jeopardize his party's influence and its capacity to protect and advance the welfare of Chinese businessmen by withdrawing from the government. So long as the Malays wanted Tun Tan Siew Sin, they were willing to support him, even plead for his leadership. Just so long.

Most turbulent were the affairs of the Malaysian Indian Congress. Deterred from free-wheeling politics in the national arena, members of the various Indian groups turned with zest to intra-communal agitation. Tun Sambanthan moved first, threatening non-repentant members with expulsion. He soon found himself on the defensive. Branch meetings called to ratify the national party line were disrupted by demonstrators. In

some instances the police had to be called to restore order. The cacaphony soon gave way to strident and more focused noises. "Racial" changes in the leadership were demanded. If MIC was to provide the primary input of Indian communal interests on the decision-making levels of government, then this must not be done by men manipulating the support of Tamil plantation workers. The urban elements—doctors, lawyers, even railroad workers—were far more qualified to speak on behalf of the diverse masses with antecedents on the Sub-continent. Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam, not exactly a favorite of Indian workers, was judged more sympathetic than Tun Sambanthan, and when the former responded positively to dissident overtures, the battle was on. Not for long. Disruption of MIC meetings continued; hunger strikes by party faithful were announced. Tun Sambanthan called on his supporters but could not mobilize many beyond those tied to him by patronage. With the writing on the wall for all to see, MIC elections were officially postponed. Then in 1973, Tun Sambanthan was succeeded by Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam as president of his party.

Meanwhile, the loosening of horizontal solidarity within the Directorate also progressed. In January, 1971, Tun (Dr.) Ismail violated an unwritten rule. UMNO's Alliance partners—the MCA and the MIC—he announced publicly, were "neither dead nor alive." Under the system of Tunku Abdul Rahman, this would have been a cause for dismissal, even for Tun (Dr.) Ismail. Not any more. The MCA confessed disappointment and distress; Tun (Dr.) Ismail explained that it was only a helpful suggestion; Tun Razak proclaimed MCA as a partner as long as he was Prime Minister. All the same, the net result was an overt recognition that at the highest level, government was and would be controlled by Malays. Confirmation was soon to be had.

When in 1973, Tun (Dr.) Ismail unexpectedly died, Tun Tan Siew Sin, the epitome of a loyal partner in the Directorate, claimed succession to the post of Deputy Prime Minister. Tun Razak chose instead Hussein Onn, a relatively recent, *Malay* member of the cabinet. Deeply hurt by what he considered an ill-deserved slight and what he knew would be perceived by the MCA as a sign that he was not indispensable to the government after all, Tun Tan Siew Sin withdrew from public life. Gone was the team of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the inter-communal

Directorate which less than two decades earlier had negotiated independence and which had been so confident that it would be able to manage a society dominated by communal cleavages. Only Tun Razak remains in power.

While the internal patterns of the Alliance were being adjusted, a new trend in its relationship to the other parties was also taking place. As the determined de-communalization of politics proceeded, the Opposition had some difficulties finding sufficiently dramatic issues through which it could attract mass support. In turn, the successful maneuver in Sarawak was too tempting a precedent for the government. Khaw Kai Boh was the first to suggest it publicly: Let the Alliance form coalitions with other parties. Ghafar bin Baba's Assistant Minister, Dato Abdul Samad Idris, was more specific: A coalition between the Alliance and the PMIP in Kelantan and Trengganu would benefit the Malays. Dato Asri was quick to express interest. The government needed more time, but by 1973 the details were worked out. The Alliance joined the state government of Kelantan; the PMIP (in the meantime renamed Islamic Party) joined that of Trengganu; and Dato Asri entered the federal cabinet as Minister of Lands and Mines. Meanwhile in Penang, the Alliance joined the Gerakan government, and in Perak the PPP state assemblymen moved to the Alliance side. All of this led to a new National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) composed of the Alliance plus the *Party Islam* (PMIP), the *Gerakan*, the PPP, the SUPP, the *Party Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu of Sarawak*, and the Sabah Alliance. Predictably it also led to new elections in August, 1974.

Indeed, the opposition was in shambles. The *Partai Rakyat*, even after adding the word *Socialis* to its name, did not improve its appeal or organizational capacity. *Gerakan* MP's who preferred to resign from the party rather than follow Dr. Lim Chong Eu's lead into the coalition (or who were expelled, depending on the point of view) were forced to start all over again. Dr. Tan Chee Khoon formed a new party, PEKAMAS. There remained a few, small, insignificant operations (the National Consciousness Party, the Independent People's Progressive Party, the *Party Bisamah* of Sarawak), SNAP in Sabah, and above all the DAP. None alone or all together had any chance to challenge successfully the coalition built by Tun Razak.

The campaign itself was more or less a formality. Manifestos were published, mass meetings were organized, charges were leveled, claims and promises were made, all according to a well-established pattern. As in the past, the police taped all public speeches, but few were passed on to the Special Branch for closer scrutiny. Yet it was hardly a clash of ideas and certainly not a broad-scale debate of policy alternatives. More than ever before, the campaign of 1974 was a contest of machine politics. Party leaders concentrated on reinforcing and expanding their holds on folk heroes and intermediary groups, in turn the latter were fully engaged in demonstrating that they could deliver the votes.

Indeed, party organization was decisive. With UMNO and the *Party Islam* (PMIP) in coalition, and Malay traditional elites, religious functionaries, schoolteachers, as well as government officials specially rewarded, the election produced compelling evidence that the Malay community had confidence in the Malay dominated government. All 62 UMNO and all 13 *Party Islam* (PMIP) parliamentary candidates were elected. In contests for the 11 state legislatures of Peninsular Malaysia, UMNO won 170 seats, losing 2 to independents, while the *Party Islam* (PMIP) carried 48 and lost only 1 seat, also to an independent.

The MCA was not quite so successful. This time, however, Chinese businessmen and even some of the English-educated professionals did work diligently and effectively to mobilize a significant portion of their community. The party contested 23 parliamentary constituencies and won 19. It also contested 56 state assembly seats and won 43. A record very much better than in 1969. Meanwhile, the *Gerakan* once again demonstrated the smooth efficiency of (Dr.) Lim Chong Eu's political machine. In Penang, its home base, it was formidable; in Perak it was impressive. The *Gerakan* contested 5 parliamentary seats in these 2 states and won them all. Only when it pressed its luck in Selangor and the federal capital, (Dr.) Tan Chee Khoon's territory, did it run into trouble, and lost all three of its contests.

The MIC for its part did remarkably well. Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam, admittedly with some assistance from Tun Sambanthan, managed to please the Tamil hierarchy, some of the labor leaders, and even a few of the intellectuals. The MIC won all 4 of its parliamentary and 7 out of 8 state contests. In

sharp contrast the PPP, still relying on its more primitive, family-style organization, suffered sharp reverses. Three out of 4 of its parliamentary and 7 out of 9 state candidates (including Dato S. P. Seenivasagam) lost.

In Sabah, Tun Mustapha's well entrenched and well lubricated (feudal) machine left no room for anyone else. All 16 of its parliamentary candidates, 15 of them unopposed, were elected. Sarawak, however, presented a somewhat more complex picture. The SUPP did deliver most of the Chinese votes, while the *Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu* led by Chief Minister Dato Abdul Rahman bin Ya'kub could mobilize the Malay electorate. Among the Iban tribes, however, neither did very well. The SUPP was not really expected to make any inroads, but *Pesaka* conceivably could have done much better. The vigorous Malay nationalism of Rahman bin Ya'kub, so irritating to the MCA some years earlier, apparently antagonized a sizable portion of the indigenous people.

The premium on party organization also applied to the Opposition. The *Parti Socialis Rakyat Malaysia* with all its fascinating ideology got absolutely nowhere. It contested in 22 parliamentary and 113 state constituencies and lost in every one of them. PEKAMAS relying primarily upon the personal appeal of its leader with some ideological admixture did only slightly better. It won a single parliamentary seat out of 36 and a single state seat out of 93 contested. The campaigns of KITA, IPPP, and *Party Bisamah* in Sarawak were exercises in futility. They entered only a few candidates and every one of them lost. In contrast, SNAP in Sarawak had an organization among the Ibans and surprised the government by winning 9 parliamentary and 18 state seats. And there was the DAP machine tightly managed by Lim Kit Siang. The restraints on political campaigning, notwithstanding, his party successfully mobilized about half of the Chinese electorate. Receiving some 20 percent of the total votes cast in the peninsula, the DAP won 9 parliamentary and 23 state contests. Quite an achievement—and possibly an omen.

That, of course, remains to be seen. For some time to come the Malaysian political system seems safe enough. Student demonstrations are bothersome, the alienation of large segments of Chinese and Indian citizens presents a continuing problem, and economic unrest in rural areas is potentially dangerous. But

unless it becomes mired in administrative incompetence and political indecisiveness, or it is engulfed by personal cronyism, the government can rely confidently upon its overwhelming parliamentary majority and its massive security forces. Just what, if any, further adjustments in the system may prove necessary will, no doubt, be instructive to observe.

In the meantime though, some conclusions already can be drawn. After two decades and four national elections the Malaysian record offers lessons for political development theory, and more specifically to statesmen in newly independent countries. The time has come, I think, to recognize the possibility that in countries dominated by communal cleavages, democratic systems based on communal groups enjoy an advantage in the moderation of politics: they may be better suited for maintaining a balance between their resources and popular demands. Certainly their prospects to contain a radical inflation of demands for personal material rewards throughout society appear to be better. Other systems which guided by conventional (Western oriented) wisdom seek a stable foundation from economically determined social classes or from a homogenized "national" community must cope with accelerating *anomie*. Invariably they contribute to the disruption of the traditional (established) order, confuse the accustomed (comfortable) pattern of personal ties, and undermine the general (reassuring) respect for cultural heritage. Possibly, they may ultimately reach a new social order, a new approach to inter-personal relations, even a new and virile culture. In the meantime though, for generations not just for decades, they will deprive people of essential non-material satisfactions. Indeed, they may survive the "transition" only if they can distract from and compensate for such deprivations by delivering steadily increasing material rewards. Worse still, since during this period they are usually also pressing for a homogenized "national community" and thus accelerating the basic egalitarian trend of democracy, they must deliver steadily increasing material rewards to practically every citizen almost at once. It all adds up to an enormous increment in demand, so enormous in fact that even its contemplation is a truly psychedelic experience.

By conceding the legitimacy of communal groups, democratic systems avoid imposing deprivations of non-material satisfactions and with it the necessity of a compensatory margin of

material rewards. The Malaysian experience confirms that communal solidarity contributes heavily to the satisfaction of personal belongingness needs, and communal pride is a potent source of self-esteem. The elections of 1969 even suggest that such rewards may at times be more highly prized than material benefits. Numerous Chinese businessmen who profited heavily from government protection and contracts withheld their support; some even aided the opposition when they thought their cultural interests threatened. In turn, many Malay administrators and schoolteachers, prime beneficiaries of Alliance economic policies, considered the charge that Malay rights had been bargained away sufficiently convincing to support the PMIP. Indeed, in Kelantan the question was clearly put. The Alliance promised massive economic rewards. The opposition appealed to religious and communal orthodoxy. The PMIP won; the majority evidently preferred virtue over riches.

By conceding the legitimacy of communal groups, moreover, political systems avoid accelerating the egalitarian trend of democracy. The perceived proximity of other communal groups, not just other individuals, tends to support a hierarchical (not necessarily traditional) order. Given a rampart international demonstration effect, the demand for personal material rewards by the elites will in any case be acute. But as long as their gains are not excessive or excessively conspicuous and their authority continues—two admittedly difficult *caveats*—demands for increments in personal material rewards may rise and extend throughout society gradually and for the political system at a more manageable pace. Indeed for generations Chinese communal solidarity in Malaya secured the authority of traditional leaders even though the masses of workers received few material benefits. Rural Malays are still poor, but loyal to the established hierarchy, and do not as yet seem to feel acutely deprived. The only party which since Independence sought to exploit unequal income distribution within communal groups, the *Partai Rakyat*, never made much progress and in the 1974 elections was wiped out.

All along, political systems based on communal groups may have better prospects for maximizing resources than other democratic alternatives. Less in danger that their legitimacy will become a captive of their capacity to produce consumer goods and to distribute them equally, they may offer more favorable conditions for economic development. Personal material rewards precisely because of their unequal distribution can serve as powerful incentives for capital investment and entrepreneurial activity in the private sector. Meanwhile, the government can concentrate on social and economic overhead, i.e., on projects in which the public sector is really most effective. The Malaysian economic performance does not contradict these propositions.

Still, some compromises which homogeneous countries are spared will have to be made in the allocation of public resources. The scale of capital projects may not be as large as a purely economic rationale would demand, nor will they be located necessarily at a site where all economic factors are at an optimum. Most difficult, compromises may have to be made, even corrective actions may have to be taken on the relative share of each community in economic processes and rewards. Even so the costs in economic rationality probably are more modest than those required for efforts of general redistribution.

There is, however, another kind of problem as well. Many are convinced that although the "trickle-down" theory of economic development may indeed maximize economic growth, it does so at the cost of (democratic) social justice. Three contentions are offered in rebuttal. First, that in the past only through the gradual and at least initially uneven extension of personal material rewards was economic development achieved in democratic countries. Second, that more recently where political leaders pressed for egalitarian distribution, all they actually accomplished was an upward surge—some might call it a "gushing-up" effect—of non-development. Third, that the gradual achievement of egalitarian distribution is not a violation of social justice. Time, in fact, is the necessary price democratic systems have to pay if they want to avoid violence. Communist systems, of course, are less squeamish. They can produce egalitarian distribution (and redistribution) much more quickly. Killing and brutalizing people, however, can scarcely be discounted in the consideration of social justice. Moreover, it remains entirely unclear whether after coerced redistribution even the beneficiaries are convinced that now at last they live in a just society. No Communist state has ever dared risk a free election. There has to be a reason. Thus the rebuttal too, it seems, has some merit.

The advantage of political systems based on communal groups in moderating democratic processes by their superior prospects of

balancing resources and popular demands, however, is compromised by a special political handicap. They are particularly vulnerable to pressures for posing all issues in non-negotiable communal terms. Unless some special mechanisms of de-radicalization of politics are perfected—and on this the Malaysian experience is unambiguous—all of its advantages notwithstanding the system cannot survive.

One mechanism designed to de-radicalize democratic politics is a constitutional contract which sets out the terms of inter-communal relations. By formally guaranteeing the minimal interest of each communal group, so the expectations run, it would remove this block of non-negotiable issues from the political arena. Indeed, it might actually do so, if the constitution solemnizes a deal which can be immediately consummated. If, however, it is by necessity an executory agreement (i.e., the obligations of at least one communal group would be met only gradually over an extended period), then its prospects are more uncertain. Serious and sincere as originally the commitment may have been for all, it will be sorely tried with the passage of time. As memories of the circumstances under which the bargain was struck fade, its merits become more controversial. The Malaysian experience suggests that this is especially true when the inter-communal contract involves an exchange of economic access for political participation. One problem is its ideological vulnerability. For in democratically oriented countries there is a bias against a community's seeking economic gain in return for granting to another participation in the political processes. The latter is not seen as a possession of any group to be traded for advantage, but, by axiom, an inalienable right. Wealth, on the other hand, also by axiom, is considered to be more or less a private matter, and the government is expected to protect within limits its unequal distribution.

The other more practical problem with such an executory contract is the conflict in the constraints of economic growth and political time. On the one hand, it is readily apparent that economic processes cannot easily absorb a substantial and accelerated infusion of persons primarily qualified in terms of their communal membership. Inevitably, productivity will decline and so will private capital formation. A single-minded pursuit of redistribution will jeopardize economic development and produce a zero-sum relationship where the community enjoying new and expanding access to the economy does so by imposing personal deprivation on others. An altogether volatile situation. On the other hand, a determined maximization of economic development will prolong the full execution of the constitutional contract beyond the absorptive capacity of the political system. With time, communities which as their share of the bargain instantly gained the "right" of political participation, armed with ideological orthodoxies and economic rationales will be much inclined—and their leaders will be sorely tempted —to use their newly acquired share in political power to revise, and possibly to abrogate, their own as yet unfulfilled economic obligations. In turn, propelled by the self-righteousness of genuine grievances, the communities which have to await the delivery of their share of the bargain (i.e., full access to the economy), will soon suspect perfidy. Their leaders will become targets of rapidly accelerating pressures to use their share of political power either to compel by force the immediate collection of the balance still outstanding or alternatively to rescind their original concessions. All too soon, the constitution which was intended to serve as an instrument of inter-communal cooperation would thus become the focus of inter-communal confrontation.

Whether an optimal balance between the rate of growth and the pace of redistribution is possible will depend on the country's economic resources. Whether the constitutional contract will actually be implemented will depend on the determination of political leaders to proceed with all deliberate speed. It will also depend on the effectiveness of the Directorate.

Indeed, the successful operation of the Directorate may be the keystone of a viable democratic system based on communal groups. It is essential to the negotiation of the constitutional contract and the continued resolution of all inter-communal issues. It is intended to de-radicalize politics by preventing political confrontations along communal lines. Before communal issues could become sufficiently acute to attract mass support within the various communal groups, they would be settled by secret negotiations within the councils of the Directorate. Only then would communal groups be mobilized, not against each other, but led by their own leaders, members of the Directorate, in common support of the bargain.

The Malaysian experience suggests that the Directorate can

serve as a useful instrument of de-radicalization as long as it can rely on an effective structure of intermediary leaders. Since the elections of 1969, however, it should be clear that if the loyalty of such leaders is weakened or their capacity for political mobilization is declining, the Directorate will have some difficulty functioning successfully. The political system then faces the possibility that instead of facilitating the resolution of communal disputes by passing them on expeditiously to the Directorate, these leaders will seek personal or parochial advantage by mobilizing their communal masses against the other communal groups. Alternatively, it may face the possibility that the "settlement" worked out in the Directorate will not be definitive, but within each community constantly vulnerable to chauvinist challenges.

Actually, at least for the present, the traditional social hierarchies still have some authority in many communal groups and can serve as political intermediaries. Their days, however—as the course of the community of Chinese in Malaysia so eloquently illustrates—are numbered. Newer, administrative cadres also try to be helpful to the highest political leadership. Their problem is—as the recent record of Malay administrators demonstrates once again—that while their loyalty is relatively easy to assure, they are most unlikely to meet the second requirement for intermediaries; they will not be able to manage mass mobilization. Thus, unless some new and imaginative initiatives are taken, the long-term viability of the Directorate will be jeopardized by increasing efforts of horizontal mobilization.

One option which undoubtedly will seem most attractive to political leaders in power is to de-radicalize politics by de-communalizing issues. Laws could be passed prohibiting any organization or person from formulating any political issue as a conflict of interest between communal groups. Whether effective sanctions could be enforced, of course, would depend upon the availability of substantial coercive resources and a willingness to use them. Even where it could be done, the costs to the system would be prohibitive. The problem is that total de-communalization of politics in a country where nearly all issues are perceived in communal terms is tantamount to the de-politicization of conflict. Matters of great public concern would be settled by secret negotiations in the highest government councils or by administrative decisions. The remaining issues ranging from

insignificant to trivial would hardly generate enough interest to sustain anything more than a facade of political contests. It is, in short, a prescription for consensus without democracy.

There are, however, alternatives. One strategy has not yet been sufficiently tested in Asia and Africa, but in the light of the Malaysian experience may be worth considering. It is just possible that leaders who combine both requirements of loyalty to national leaders and the capacity for mass mobilization can be generated through a well disciplined party organization. The incentives, of course, cannot be primarily social—a rapid rise in their status would antagonize the traditional hierarchy. They cannot be primarily economic—an inordinate increase in material rewards would create envy and hostility among the masses. Their rewards for loyalty and effectiveness would have to be political. They should be able to demonstrate authority. The party should assure that a gradually expanding range of the electorate recognizes a rising politician's access to power and patronage.

If successful, such a development may help stabilize the Directorate and de-radicalize politics. It would also foster a one-party state. And this is a serious flaw. For in a stable democracy, and this is all too often ignored, legitimacy is less dependent on the majority party than on the opposition. Indeed, the government may offer responsible policies, administrative integrity and efficiency, even economic growth. Yet it will not find its norms institutionalized unless and until a "loyal" opposition voluntarily accepts them, and then having actually gained power, continues to abide by them.

The flaw in this strategy, however, is not one that cannot be corrected. All that may be required is that intermediate leaders who are loyal to the system but can mobilize support for the Opposition be permitted access to power and patronage. In a centralized, unitary state where only one zero-sum political matters, it is probably too much to expect from human nature that leaders of the party in power would assist their opponents. But given a federal system, the possibility of such counter-mobilization is much better. The loss of a state (province) need not be threatening to the central government, and insofar as they can control their own budget and appointments a victorious opposition party may establish a political base. From there it could expand into a national scale inter-communal coalition offering a democratic al-

ternative in electoral contests marked by communal moderation.

There may be other, perhaps better, alternatives for developing intermediary groups as well. In any case, it is a task worth attempting to learn whether a democratic system based on communal groups can survive. If not, this knowledge should not add to the already depressing gloom, but spur on further efforts of political planning. It would be a great human tragedy indeed if statesmen and scholars were to definitely conclude that viable democratic systems are the nearly exclusive privilege of the West.

INDEX

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Von Vorys, Karl.
Democracy without consensus.

Bibliography: p.
1. Malaysia—Politics and government. 2. Minorities—Malaysia. I. Title.
DS597.2.V66 320.9'595'05 74-25609
ISBN 0-691-07571-9