

Egret Books
The UMNO Drama

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The UMNO Drama: Power Struggles in Malaysia

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The UMNO Drama

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To my late sister Wai Fun, my friend the late Saminder Singh, and my childhood friends Kaliluddin and Ismail who taught me so much about the beauty and spirit of this country, I would like to dedicate this book.

Fan Yew Teng

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Power Struggles

Both stories start with a dispute over the succession to a kingdom. In fact both epics are based on the resolution of that problem. In the Ramayana, the turning point of events is the abduction of Dewi Sinta, which leads to the victory of the good, *alus* forces personified in Rama, Leksmana and Anoman over the negative, *kasar* forces inherent in Dasamuka and his kingdom.

In the *Mahabarata*, the dispute over a kingdom is much more complex, being a conflict between two warring groups of cousins, the Pendawa brothers who are *alus*, and the Kurawa brothers, who are generally on the *kasar* side. The *Mahabarata* is believed to be older than the *Ramayana*, reflecting a time of tribal society and intra-familial feuds. The very fact that the feud is between cousins probably accounts for the Javanese emphasis on this epic, as the complex interrelation between the opponents allows for an exploration of the *alu-kasar* in fine detail.

Edward C. Van Ness & Shita
Prawirohardjo, in *Javanese
Wayang Kulit: An Introduction*,
Oxford University Press,
Kuala Lumpur, 1980.

502296

5 JUL 1988
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Present & Future

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, UMNO President and Prime Minister of Malaysia; also the Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Justice.

Ghafar Baba, UMNO Deputy President, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Land and Regional Development.

Datuk Abdullah Badawi, UMNO Vice-President, former Defence Minister.

Tan Sri Haji Wan Mokhtar, UMNO Vice-President, Menteri Besar of Trengganu.

Anwar Ibrahim, UMNO Vice-President, Education Minister.

Datuk Mohmamed Rahmat, UMNO Secretary-General, Information Minister.

Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, former UMNO Secretary-General, Agriculture Minister.

Tan Sri Muhyiddin, Johore Menteri Besar.

Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin, UMNO Treasurer, Finance Minister.

Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz, Wanita UMNO Leader, Trade and Industry Minister.

Datuk Musa Hitam, former UMNO Deputy President and Deputy Prime Minister; also former Home Affairs Minister, was with the Semangat 46 group until he rejoined UMNO on 31 January 1989.

Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, former Minister of Social Welfare, was with the Semangat 46 group until he rejoined UMNO on 1 March 1989.

Tun Hussein Onn, former Prime Minister and UMNO President; was with the Semangat 46 group until November 1988 when he became mediator.

Tengku Razaleigh, former UMNO Treasurer and Finance Minister; now leader of the Semangat 46 group.

Datuk Rais Yatim, former Foreign Minister, now a leader of the Semangat 46 group.

Dato Harun Idris, a former UMNO Vice-President and Selangor Menteri Besar; now a leader of the Semangat 46 group.

Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin, MP for Bagan Serai, Perak; a Semangat 46 group leader.

Hajjah Marina Yusof, a former UMNO Supreme Council member; now a leader of the Semangat 46 group.

Tan Sri Othman Saat, former Menteri Besar of Johore; now a leader of the Semangat 46 group in Johore.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, first Prime Minister of Malaysia and second UMNO President; now a patron of the Semangat 46 group.

The Past

Dato Onn bin Jaafar, first President of UMNO until he resigned in 1951.

Tun Abdul Razak, third President of UMNO and second Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Tun Dr Ismail, deputy to Tun Razak, both in UMNO and in the government.

Tan Sri Syed Albar Jaafar, known as the 'Lion of UMNO'.

.....and a cast of thousands throughout Peninsular Malaysia.

SCENE: For the greater part of the time, at Kuala Lumpur, for sometime in Johore Baru, Parit Raja and Ampang Jaya, and other parts of Malaysia.

Prologue

"All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players."

— Shakespeare, *As You Like It*,
Act II, Scene 7, Line 139.

"The Devil enters the prompter's box and the play is ready to start."

— Robert William Service, *The Harpy*,
Stanza 12.

"People can believe in many things that are not right. History is indeed the story of liberation from wrong beliefs, of struggle against stupidity, against ignorance."

— Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Child of All Nations*.

Two years after the fateful UMNO General Assembly in April 1987, the drama of power struggles in UMNO still dominates the political scene and coffeeshop talk in Malaysia. Preparation for this book was started in early October 1988 in the belief the crisis in UMNO, the dominant party in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, had implications and consequences far beyond the confines of UMNO itself. That belief has been confirmed in the course of researching for and writing the book.

There has been a profusion of books, booklets, pamphlets and newspaper articles, almost entirely in Bahasa Malaysia, which carry the polemics of the opposing camps. The Bahasa Malaysia

weeklies like *Watan*, *Mingguan Express*, *Mingguan Kota*, *Harakah* and, lately, *Mingguan Politik* have been saturated with news and views of the UMNO controversy. To a slightly lesser extent, so have the monthlies like *Aliran Monthly*, *The Rocket* and *Mimbar Sosialis*.

Another dimension of the pervasiveness of the subject is reflected in the readiness of the ordinary citizens to offer opinions on it, though often in an anonymous manner. A Chinese taxi driver told me, while we were travelling from Petaling Jaya to Kuala Lumpur on 16 October 1988: "If the two camps unite again, it would be easier for them to eat others". A Chinese school teacher thought that the "objective of the two factions is the same" (30 October 1988). And then there was the Malay taxi driver who said to me on 19 January 1989: "They have all gone mad; they are all greedy". These are just a sample of bits of conversation on the subject which seems to have preoccupied, rightly or wrongly, the attention and concern of many Malaysians. Inevitably, there are others who do not condemn both sides; instead, they take sides.

And then there are the interviews, mostly informal, with Malaysians from all walks of life and racial and religious groupings. Apart from that, conversations were had with foreign Press correspondents, diplomats and visitors.

The end result, together with all the relevant newspaper and foreign and local magazine clippings, articles and books, is a mountain of material. The main problem became one of sifting out the transient and pedantic from what was thought to be the more enduring, and sorting out the enormous heap of verbiage on the personalities involved together with their occasional twists and turns, and on the issues – real or contrived – which were supposed to be at stake.

The next problem was to decide on the suitable cutting-off-point for an exercise of such a nature, when the drama is still far from over. I finally decided, after some agonising, on the interlude between the verdict of the Ampang Jaya by-election and the return of Musa Hitam's group to UMNO Baru on the one hand, and the emerging battle of the next general elections, on the other.

Apart from being a narrative of the history of UMNO since 1946 as well as of the country to some extent, this study has also been an exercise in demythologization of our politics. The myths

that some Malaysians hold of our history, our politics and some of our politicians are often amazing. They disregard facts, evade certain questions deemed to be uncomfortable, embrace false rumours, and accept the distortion of our history, often with a smiling face. They remind us of George Orwell's assertion that "the most intelligent people seem capable of holding schizophrenic beliefs". Or of the lament by Melvyn Bragg about the problem of writing the biography of Richard Burton, the late famous actor:

The obstacle I faced was that Burton's life was so well known and so wrapped in myth.

How one shifts the myth, I don't know. Look at the potency of the Kennedy myth, of the brilliant man struck down before he could change the face of the world. We know that's not true now, but you can't dislodge the myth.

At another level, I am absolutely convinced that any study of the history of UMNO provides students of organizational behaviour and theories, stretching from Niccolo Machiavelli in the 15th Century to Handy, Bailey, Graeme Salaman and Kenneth Thompson and Etzioni in our time, a tremendously rich field for fruitful exploration. And, by way of conclusion, some of us may agree with Hobbes who says: "I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death", or with Vernon Van Dyke's statement that "Political actors rarely, if ever, struggle for power alone. They pursue other purposes, too".

Some readers might question my justification for holding UMNO responsible for governmental policies and actions of the last thirty-four years when UMNO was only one among many parties in the Alliance and Barisan Nasional regimes. For this we must always remember that UMNO was, and is, the dominant partner, not just any component party. Someone has put this fact succinctly in the letters column of the October 1984 issue of *Aliran Monthly*:

A look at the Cabinet, Federal Parliament and State Assemblies and the hundreds of committees at Federal, State and District levels will suffice to convince anyone that UMNO is the government and the government is UMNO. The prejudices of UMNO leaders become policies and the wishes of UMNO members become laws.

Another point that must be made is that the intense power struggle in UMNO should not give the wrong impression that power struggles are peculiar to the Malays as a people. True, for

instance, there were the Selangor Civil War of 1866-73 and the Civil War in Kelantan in 1839, and, of course, the legendary conflict between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat in the days of the Malacca Sultanate. However, most of these conflicts were essentially problems of the elites over territory, status, power, money, women and fancies. The Malays as a people - gentle and generous but often misunderstood, maligned and underestimated - were, and often still are, willy-nilly drawn into the games and schemes of the elites. Moreover, conflicts and disunity are not race-specific, as can be seen from the troubles in recent times of the MCA, the chair-throwing competitions of the MIC, and the problems of also opposition parties from time to time. The history of Humankind of at least the last 7,000 years also attests to the fact that conflicts are universal. The question is over what and in what manner are they conducted.

A Multidimensional Saga

Thus, like many other human dramas, the story of UMNO is a saga of faith and idealism, of hard work and loyalty, of duplicity and betrayal, of money and power, greed and abuse, of facades and charades. There are platitudes, slogans and, at least on one occasion, even mayhem and murder, and almost everybody seems to be wearing a mask. The politics of gesture and indirection of today may be merely the dress rehearsals for the dramas of the future. Some have had leadership thrust upon them; some lust after leadership. There are different and opposing or flirting cabals. There are the Rasputins and the Brutuses, after their Tsars and Caesars. And in all this continuing hullabaloo, the catalyst for the whole drama could be some political Swengali or a Machiavelli of the UMNO theatre of the absurd, which, when placed on the whole human scale of things, is not that totally unique after all.

At the more sordid and unedifying level, the UMNO Drama exposes for us the underbelly of Malaysian politics, revealing quite starkly the cant and hypocrisy, the sham and the sycophancy, and the often ridiculous and the outrageous aspects or qualities of those in power in this fair land of ours. And in this seemingly titanic war, there have been some political doddering ninnies and rapsCALLIONS who have tried to transform the Constitution of Malaysia into the Constipation of Malaysia. And then there are those who tried to politicise everything and every-

one including our institutions, our Malay Rulers and our armed forces. For these political yahoos nothing is off-limits, everything is part and parcel of their nightmare or wet dream, depending on what stage of the power struggle they happen to be at. And most of the time, an elliptical ironic code runs through this carnival of absurdity where the spicks and the loopy mix in mutual drolleries, with conundrums galore and where political inamorata seem to keep on changing partners.

And now, why, some might ask, have I chosen the title of **The UMNO Drama**. Well, actually 'Melodrama' first came to mind. But my faithful Concise Oxford Dictionary reminded me about the finality and certainty of a melodrama, for it says:
melodrama (-rah-), n. Sensational dramatic piece with violent appeals to emotions & happy ending

"Sensational dramatic piece with violent appeals to emotions" yes, but only an unashamed pundit would dare predict about the nature of the ending. So, I settled for 'Drama', which according to the same old faithful dictionary of mine, stands for:

the dramatic art, composition and presentation of plays; set of events having the unity and progress of a play & leading to catastrophe or consummation.

Therefore, 'drama' seems to suit the situation and prospect better. We are yet unsure whether there will be a catastrophe or a consummation, if not for all of us, then at least for the power-seekers.

Our Faith in Government

The American wit H.L. Mencken once wrote:

The government consists of a gang of men exactly like you and me. They have, taking one with another, no special talent for the business of government, they have only a talent for getting and holding office. Their principal device to that end is to search out groups who pant and pine for something they can't get and promise to give it to them. Nine times out of ten, that promise is worth nothing. The tenth time it is made good by looting A to satisfy B. In other words, government is broker in pillage, and every election is a sort of an advance auction of the sale of stolen goods.

Now, some of us might not have chosen to put things the way Mencken did, direct, cutting and merciless that he sometimes was. But I am prepared to bet my last ringgit that must have been the way many of us felt over the last three decades and more. And

who is to know exactly how we still feel today or are likely to feel tomorrow, or the day after? For in this great democracy of ours, it often pays to keep our feelings under raincoats or umbrellas.

But then, didn't someone somewhere some time ago warn us that we get the government we deserve? Now, maybe we should read this:

"Having appealed to our blood and won themselves a term of office, their betrayal continues."

"If our duly elected representative discovers that he can increase his power (i.e. the opportunity to make more money) he will without a moment's consideration for his electorate join the party that will give him this power."

"The voters over the last 30 years have grown wise and cynical. They still hope the vote they cast, and the promises they hear on the stump, will indeed change their lives. But mostly to little avail, for the politician is quick to betray them."

Who is the Malaysian journalist fearless enough to write this about our human condition here? What Malaysian newspaper has at last found the guts to publish such painful but necessary home-truths about our political culture? Before we get too excited about the answers, let us be assured that the country the writer refers to is not Malaysia, but India. The above are extracts from an article written by T.N. Murari, a columnist with *The Hindu* in Madras, and published in the September 1984 issue of the London-based **SOUTH** magazine.

But, make no mistake about it: Murari's angry words are only all too familiar to us in Malaysia. But before we congratulate ourselves I would like to ask, if I may: we have grown cynical, but have we really grown wise as a people? For in the larger perspective, the UMNO Drama is not merely about UMNO alone, but is also about all of us in Malaysia. And having said that, may I leave you to ponder over the following poem entitled 'Galley Oars' by Ali Ben Hariq of Valencia, a Medieval Arab poet:

Below deck
There must be serpents
There since Noah's day
Fearing the Deluge

So now sensing
A rise in the water level
Out through the holes
They push their tongues

Fan Yew Teng
Kuala Lumpur
April 1989.

1. UMNO is Dead! Long Live UMNO!

"So in Malay politics now, the issue of unity does not arise. What has become the issue now is wanting to become the leaders."

- article entitled 'Unity to Become Leaders', in *Dunia Islam (The Islamic World)*, Kuala Lumpur, 15 December - 15 January 1989.

"But as the days passed, and calumny got countered by nothing more than cowardly calculation, the issue ceased to be moral. Between two immoral adversaries, the first strike is no sin. Between sins of commission and sins of omission, virtue has no choice."

- Rajinder Puri, on the split of the Congress Party of India, in *A Crisis of Conscience*, 1971.

"What camp is better? Both camps are crooks. How can I choose?"

- a Malay fisherman in Trengganu, interviewed on 14 October 1988.

The fallout of the 24 April 1987 leadership contest in UMNO has given birth to a hectic train of events in Malaysia over the past two years. These events encouraged assorted and sometimes strange responses from antagonists from both UMNO camps as well as from others. There were plenty of sound and fury, harrying and hurrying, and comings and goings in what often degenerated into a theatre of the absurd. The UMNO drama was soon to spill over to other areas of Malaysian national life.

The purge of dissidents at national and state levels by Mahathir shortly after his narrow victory over Tengku Razaleigh soon shifted the war to the courts of law. A group of 12 'rebels' decided to challenge the validity of the 24 April 1987 UMNO elections; they filed a suit on 25 June 1987, seeking to declare the elections null and void. Not unexpectedly, rumours flew around that Tengku Razaleigh was behind them. However, according to Ranjit Gill, "the truth of the matter is that Tengku Razaleigh did not initially support the proposed move. He had in fact tried to influence them against going to court and suggested instead that they resolve it through the Supreme Council". Only after the Supreme Council seemed unwilling to resolve it did the 'Gang of 12', as they were dubbed by Mahathir's camp, went to law. At least that was what Tengku Razaleigh claimed.

The 12 – soon to become 11 after one dropped out – alleged that there were irregularities and that the presence of illegal or unregistered UMNO branches which could have materially affected the outcome of the 24 April 1987 elections.

Significantly, the Razaleigh camp had claimed that the matter had been brought to the attention of the Supreme Council even before the elections. No action was taken, they said. As Ranjit Gill puts it: "This implied that both factions being aware of the situation chose to use it as the basis for a legal challenge after the elections – depending of course on which side won".

A precedent was set in the 41-year history of UMNO: washing its dirty linen in court.

Despite calls for peace talks by Tunku Abdul Rahman and other Malay leaders, Mahathir seemed to be in no mood for a patching up. Apparently, he took the challenge to his leadership rather too personally. His behaviour at the time reminds us of what Theodore H. White said of Richard Nixon after winning his first American Presidential election in 1968: "But there was to be no generosity in his victory, no reconciliation. His war went on – to a madness of hubris, to a denial of this own promises." Mahathir had won the 1987 leadership contest, but the narrowness of his victory must have been galling.

In the meantime, there were rumours that Mahathir's Team A was beginning to face splits, with Ghafar Baba and Sanusi Junid, Deputy President and Secretary-General respectively, keeping an ever suspicious eye on the ambitions of newly elected

ice-President Anwar Ibrahim. It seemed that Najib Tun Razak, the acting UMNO Youth leader, could face a stiff challenge in the UMNO Youth elections in mid-1988 not only from Team B but also from Johore Menteri Besar Datuk Muhyiddin. And Musa Hitam was distancing himself from Tengku Razaleigh and establishing contact with Mahathir after the Team B 11 had filed their legal suit.

Conjunction of Forces

Mahathir's headaches were caused not only by bitter factionalism in UMNO but also by the fact that his government continued to be scandalised by serious charges of corruption. Soon he was not only challenged legally by the Razaleigh camp but also by Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang's legal suit over the contract awarded for the \$3.4 billion North-South Highway. As Tinta Marwan said in the March 1988 issue of *Inquiry* (London), Mahathir "appeared like a man truly besieged".

Then came the heated controversy over the 100 non-Mandarin trained Chinese school teachers' promotion in October, with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) on one side, and UMNO Youth on the other. Tension rose. Kuala Lumpur was literally on tenterhooks, with many people stocking up essential food items. The wild gunshots of a lone ex-military personnel in Kuala Lumpur on 8 October increased tension further. However, when people realised that the incident was unrelated to the Chinese schoolteachers controversy, tension lessened and calls for inter-racial conciliation began to surface.

It is therefore ironical that in this atmosphere of lessening tension and growing conciliatory postures in the country that Mahathir chose to launch 'Operation Lallang' - the arrest of more than 100 leaders of opposition parties, public-interest groups, trade unions, environment groups and Chinese educationists. Included in the swoop were also some leaders of the MCA, the Gerakan and Team B of UMNO, apparently to present a semblance of evenhandedness, on 27 October 1987.

The mass arrests under the Internal Security Act (ISA), on the argument of defusing public tension, carried all the hallmarks of diversionary exercise by Mahathir's government. Protests over the arrests and subsequent detentions came in fast and thick domestically as well as internationally.

Whatever the motives, Mahathir had managed to buy some time and breathing space.

Who Killed UMNO?

For a while, as both UMNO factions continued to squabble over the causes of disunity, some efforts were made to mediate some form of reconciliation. A five-men committee, comprising three from Team A and two from Team B was formed for the job. The bargaining started. Team B demanded that the punishment of dissidents in the party must end, and also that at least some of the sacked ministers and deputy ministers should be reinstated. Their argument was that if Mahathir wanted party unity "he has to give something." "Otherwise, how can the 11 withdraw their suit?" they asked. Mahathir was adamant, and the mediation committee was as dead as a dodo.

On 4 February 1988, High Court judge Datuk Justice Harun Hashim ruled that UMNO was an illegal society and that the whole of the 24 April 1987 UMNO elections were null and void because of the presence of illegal branches. This started a new phase in the power struggle. From then on the two factions have been accusing each other of killing UMNO. It was a bombshell for the hundreds of thousands of ordinary UMNO members throughout the country.

Mahathir, who clearly had something up his sleeve, declared that UMNO would not appeal against the High Court decision. He claimed that there was no crisis in UMNO or in the country. And the Attorney-General said that the Prime Minister's position was not affected by the court decision. And so all the Prime Minister's men and all the Prime Minister's resources were summoned to declare almost undying support and loyalty to the Prime Minister without a party, at least temporarily. Even Zainal Rampak of the MTUC joined in the fun and pledged his support.

The 'Resurrection' Coup de Theatre

In the midst of UMNO's complete disarray was born a bizarre chain of events which aggravated an uncertain situation already saturated with rumours. On 8 February 1988, at a party to celebrate his birthday, attended by most of the leading lights of Team B, Tunku Abdul Rahman announced his intention to revive UMNO. The 85-year-old Tunku announced the formation of UMNO Malaysia; however, two days later its application for registration was rejected. This was not surprising since the

Registrar of Societies works under the authority of the Minister of Home Affairs, who happened to be none other than Dr. Mahathir himself. But even before the official and not unexpected rejection, UMNO Malaysia had run into difficulties. As Tinta Marwen puts it:

The Tunku's UMNO (Malaysia) apparently had some prestigious backing. Another former Prime Minister and critic of Mahathir, Tun Hussein Onn was said to be playing supporting role to Tunku's pro-tem presidency, and other former UMNO stalwarts also took position, or were rumoured to be about to throw in their lot with them. But the coup de theatre soon fizzled out into a non-starter, and proved to be ill-planned as it was ill-advised.

Hussein Onn, in Kuala Lumpur, openly stated that he had not been consulted about his position within the new party, although he sympathized with the idea. Then, one by one, people who were said to be office-bearers for the time being for UMNO's 'revival' withdrew from the platform, or denied any knowledge of the party's formation. The coup had turned into a situation comedy where people thought they were attending a birthday party found themselves coopted into a party political broadcast.

On 13 February 1988, the pro-tem committee was formed to register Mahathir's UMNO Baru (New UMNO). The application was submitted on the same day and approved two days later. The next day, Mahathir announced the official formation of UMNO Baru. The advantage of incumbency triumphed yet again, especially when one was in charge of registration itself.

The UMNO Baru Supreme Council decided on 21 May 1988 to expel from the Barisan Nasional old UMNO members who opposed the new party. A week later, UMNO Baru's Secretary-General Datuk Mohamed Rahmat suggested all MPs and State Assemblymen who were expelled from the Barisan Nasional should vacate their seats and be prepared to re-contest them. This piece of absurdity soon dawned on Mohamed Rahmat when even the Attorney-General pointed out that MPs and SAs could not be expelled from the Barisan Nasional which has no direct membership.

The UMNO Baru-UMNO Lama Sandiwara (Drama) was now rick with challenges and counter-challenges, accusations and counter-accusations, with each calling the other 'traitor' to the Malay race, religion and country. Articles proliferated in the Malay weeklies on the quarrel, billed by many as the greatest and most bitter in the post-World War II Malay history. Booklets,

presumably inspired by Team B, began to appear, calling Mahathir a dictator. Accusations, largely unsubstantiated, that some adversaries were Freemasons, were freely made.

UMNO Baru was busy asking people to make loyalty oaths, and government servants were drilled into singing 'Setia' (Loyalty) songs throughout the country. The Semarak rallies were introduced on the claim that there was the need to instil loyalty between leaders and the people, all on public expense account of course. The theatre was in full swing.

Judiciary Caught in Crossfires

The Mahathir government, and Dr Mahathir personally, had never been very comfortable with the judiciary. On 18 October 1977, Mahathir, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister, said in his capacity as Chairman of the First Tun Razak Memorial Lecture when introducing guest speaker Justice E.M. Fernando of the Philippines, gave a thinly-veiled warning to the judiciary "not to attempt to force its views on the legislature", for this "may result in a confusion of roles and the eventual destruction of the independence of the judiciary itself". 11 years later Mahathir acted.

The Lord President, Tun Salleh Abas, incurred the wrath of the Mahathir regime when he decided on a full Supreme Court panel of judges to hear the UMNO 11 case against Mahathir's UMNO Baru in early 1988. In fact, Tun Salleh Abas had already incurred the wrath of the powers-that-be when he, to protect the integrity of the judiciary under constant attack from the Prime Minister, courageously and publicly told the Attorney-General that judges did not need any reminders from the Attorney-General or anyone else as to their duties and responsibilities. This was on 12 January when he was officiating the launching of a book entitled *Malaysian Law and Law, Justice and the Judiciary: Transnational Trends*. For those who are interested in longer-term causes, they could go back to 12 July 1985, when Tun Salleh Abas disputed the Attorney-General's claim that the courts had no jurisdiction over the \$2.5 billion BMF scandal.

In March 1988, the Constitution Amendment Act 1988 was passed; this redefined the jurisdiction and powers of the superior courts. It also restored to the Attorney-General powers which were recently taken away from him by a Supreme Court decision, to determine the court in which or the venue at which any

proceedings may commence. The assault on the judiciary was being intensified.

On 26 March 1988, Tun Salleh Abas, with the concurrence of most of his fellow judges, wrote a letter to the King which complained:

All of us are disappointed with the various comments and accusations made by the Honourable Prime Minister against the Judiciary, not only outside but within the Parliament.

Tun Salleh Abas also said:

Other than that the accusations and comments have brought shame to all of us and left us mentally disturbed to extent of being unable to discharge our functions orderly and properly. We all feel ashamed because we are not able to avoid from being looked down by those who do not understand our position under the Constitution.

On 31 May 1988, the Prime Minister's Department announced that Tun Salleh was suspended as the Lord President. A tribunal was instituted to deliberate on his alleged 'misbehaviour'. This unprecedented move kicked up fierce protest from the Malaysian Bar, the international Press and international human rights organisations. It also divided the judiciary, and caused another five Supreme Court judges to be suspended.

As Hugo Young wrote in *The Guardian* of London on 8 November 1988, the tribunal on Tun Salleh Abas seems "to have been composed mainly of judicial placemen". "It is quite apparent that the Malaysian judiciary, rather like large parts of the Singapore judiciary, have been terrorised into submission by the political leaders who have no respect for the law". An English barrister, Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C., in an article in *The Observer* of London, called the Tribunal Report which recommended the dismissal of Tun Salleh Abas "the most despicable document in modern legal history".

In his foreword to Tun Salleh Abas' subsequent book *The Role of the Independent Judiciary*, former Lord President Tun Mohamed Suffian refers to the dismissal of Tun Salleh Abas as "this shameful episode". He said: "Disaster might not have struck the Judiciary if powerful litigants had not recently appeared in court as defendants and lost or feared losing their cases".

Thus, it is clear that the judiciary has become one of the first casualties of the UMNO power struggle.

The Circus Comes to Johore Baru

In the meantime, Musa Hitam had accepted the appointment as the Segamat UMNO Baru Divisional Head, although he had not applied for membership. As Ranjit Gill points out, Musa Hitam was making "a desperate bid to regain some of his credibility". Trying to play the role of statesman, he criticised both UMNO Baru for closing its doors to some former members and the leaders of Team B for taking court action against UMNO Baru. But the antagonists were in no mood for reconciliation. Not yet, anyway.

The former Welfare Minister, Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, resigned his parliamentary seat in Johore Baru to cause a by-election, after he was dropped as Divisional Head of Johore Baru of UMNO Baru. The by-election of 25 August 1988 was contested by Datuk Shahrir as an independent from Team B (which was now calling itself the 'Semangat 46' (The Spirit of 46), Haji Ma'sud of UMNO Baru for the Barisan Nasional, and Abdul Razak Ahmad of the opposition PSRM. Some people billed it as the most important by-election since independence, being freely exuberant in their ability to exaggerate.

While the UMNO Baru was clearly on the defensive, Datuk Shahrir, supported by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tengku Razaleigh and the whole Semangat 46 bandwagon, successfully capitalised on the widespread disaffection against the Mahathir leadership among the people. His by-election manifesto was impressive as it was a catalogue of cunning. Under the slogan of 'Unite For Change', it hit out against corruption and the abuse of power, economic mismanagement, unjust laws, and for judicial independence, freedom of speech and dissent, the freedom of the Press and the need to consult the people.

Amazingly, but perhaps understandably, in their strong anti-Mahathir mood, the voters did not care to question more closely some of the claims and promises of Datuk Shahrir. For instance, the fact that he did not question or condemn the ISA, the Official Secrets Act, the Press laws, the BMF and other scandals, the Memali massacre, and the 1983 Constitution Amendment Act during which he was named by Musa Hitam as one of the 'Magnificent Seven' heroes. They did not seem to mind that what he had to say about the ISA in his manifesto meant that he was not against the ISA and had not called for its abolition, but that he was merely against its 'misuse'.

The Shahrir manifesto concluded with this glorious and high-minded claim:

Dato Shahrir believes that his participation in politics must be based on the principles and values of his community and people.

The PSRM called for a vote against the two UMNO factions on the argument that "there are no fundamental differences between the two". The PSRM called on the voters "to express a vote of no-confidence against Dr Mahathir, his corrupt policies and his blatant abuse of power". It also warned against voting for Datuk Shahrir of UMNO Team B. It said:

If Shahrir wins the by-election, he will use this strength to rebargain with Team A for personal advancement and for himself and his friends in Team B and go back to the UMNO (with or without Mahathir) and their old policies of money politics, corruption, aggrandizement of wealth, etc. for themselves and their cronies.

The PSRM also pointed out that the "person backing Dato Shahrir is Tan Sri Othman Saat, the former M.B. of Johore. In his house Dato Shahrir officially announced his resignation from the Johore Baru seat. Obviously the ex-MB's vast financial resources will be used in this election for Dato Shahrir. We all know how he got his fantastic wealth. It is through corruption and abuse of power while he was Johore's M.B. Also Tunku Razaleigh, the head of Team B was implicated in the BMF scandal as well. Another leading Team B member, Harun Idris, former M.B. of Selangor, was convicted of corruption and CBT. How then can we really rely on Shahrir and his group to end corruption, and abuse of power?" The PSRM argued that "A vote for Shahrir means a Stronger UMNO tomorrow", but that "A vote for PSRM will deny Shahrir's group the leverage to rebargain with UMNO Baru: no more going back to UMNO to strengthen it. There will be a permanent split in UMNO".

On 12 August, *The Star* reported Shahrir to have said that Johore Baru would be what Tambunan was for Harris Salleh in Sabah. What he did not say, and the voters forgot to ask, was that Tambunan was an illusion in the end, because Datuk Joseph Pairin of the PBS not only went back to the Barisan Nasional shortly afterwards but is today a rather obedient Barisan Nasional component party hack.

At PSRM ceramahs during the by-election campaign, I emphasised:

The people of Johore Baru should recognise Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad for what he is - a politically dishonest and opportunistic

politician who wants only to see a change in Mahathir's style, not his basic policies and actions, for the simple reason that these basic policies and actions are also those of UMNO Lama to which he now belongs. His record as an MP and Minister is a record of failure and ineffectiveness, having no courage to take a stand on fundamental issues of human rights and democracy when it most mattered.

On 19 August 1988, Aliran came out in support of Shahrir. Its Executive Committee said in an eight-page statement that Shahrir was in the "best position" to represent those who opposed the national leadership. It also said that the PSRM should have stayed out of the contest.

The 20 August 1988 issue of Watan reported that Fahmi Haji Ibrahim, the UMNO Lama Selangor State Assemblyman for Pandan, said that Shahrir's resignation as Johore Baru MP and then re-contesting it was the first step towards re-uniting the two UMNOs. Shahrir himself said in the front-page of the 19 August 1988 issue of *Mingguan Kota* that he would go back to UMNO and the Barisan Nasional but on condition that Mahathir stepped down as Prime Minister.

In a lengthy article in the 22 August 1988 issue of the *New Straits Times*, journalist Sharifah Rozita said that political observers viewed the Johore Baru by-election in terms of a special set of circumstances which were more than a question of ideology and principles. Three days later, the voters seemed to endorse such a view. They gave Shahrir a thumbing majority, with the Barisan Nasional in second place, and the PSRM losing its deposit.

This reminds me of what Robert Martin Adams says: "We are in the age of the independent voter, responsive not to the principles but to moods....."

But six months later, Shahrir crawled back into Mahathir's UMNO, with Mahathir still the Prime Minister, albeit an ailing one, and no change in any of his fundamental policies. Some well-meaning but utterly naive people had thought and hoped that Shahrir's victory in Johore Baru would pave the way for great things and changes. Tunku Abdul Rahman had even praised Shahrir before the by-election that he "gambles his entire political future to save UMNO Lama." Well, gamble of some sort it was, but definitely he did not stake his entire political future. Neither did he save UMNO Lama, which he left hanging high and dry. As for the voters of Johore Baru, Datuk Shahrir gave them on 1

March 1989 a lesson in political selling-out which they are not likely to forget or forgive easily. Or, will they, despite the fact that they were taken on a ride on the backs of UMNO Circus animals?

Other Ironies and Revelations

The Johore Baru by-election also threw up some other ironies and interesting revelations. During and immediately after the Johore Baru by-election some people literally went ga-ga over Shahrir. It was obvious that there had emerged the paradox of a line of thinking that both despised UMNO and cultivated an obsession with it. Consider, for instance, a letter from one 'Thiru from Perak' which was published in the *Aliran Monthly* (Vol. 8:7) which went according to this melody: "Shahrir is a man of principles who wanted to stand in the by-election because he believes that there is only one UMNO, that is UMNO 46 which was founded by Datuk Onn Jaafar in Johore Baru". One wonders where Shahrir is now that people like Thiru might like to see him?

But then political treachery is not new, as Jose Ortega y Gasset tells us in his *The Revolt of the Masses*:

History has brought out into the foreground the conflicts and, in general, the politics, always the last soil on which the seed of unity springs up; but whilst the fighting was going on in one field, on a hundred others there was trading with the enemy...."

Now that Shahrir has returned to UMNO Baru, some people who had supported him in the Johore Baru by-election, including some leaders of the *Aliran*, now argue that Datuk Shahrir has prompted changes in Mahathir! What changes, one might ask. Mahathir has definitely not repealed any of the many repressive laws; neither has he dropped the recent amendments to the ISA, Societies Act, the Press laws, the Police Act and Article 121 of the Constitution — all of which have further strengthened the machinery of repression. Tun Salleh Abas and two other Supreme Court judges remain dismissed. Even within UMNO Baru itself, Mahathir has not changed the party's rather restrictive constitution. So, it is clear that the argument that Mahathir has changed, and by of all people Shahrir, does not hold any water. Significantly, Ibrahim Ali, a leading figure of the Semangat 46, has refuted the argument of this supposed achievement by Shahrir.

The Antics of Musa Hitam

In the Johore Baru by-election campaign, Datuk Musa Hitam

turned up to support Shahrir, made a speech or two and went overseas. His video-taped performance was hard-hitting. He said the most important issue in the by-election was the leadership of Mahathir as Prime Minister of the country. He said the trend of politics in the country would bring about an absolute dictatorship. He claimed that it was Mahathir's idea to amend the Constitution of Malaysia in 1983 to reduce the status and powers of the Malay Rulers, and that he (Musa) was merely carrying out orders dutifully. Musa also said that Mahathir dominated Cabinet and UMNO Supreme Council meetings with his monologues which took an hour or more.

Two days before polling, Dr Mahathir said over TV that he was prepared to swear by the Quran to prove that what Musa Hitam said was untrue.

The Johore Baru by-election campaign also revealed the first signs of schism in the Semangat 46 group. The *New Straits Times* of 23 August 1988 reported former UMNO Supreme Council member and now a leading light of the splinter group, Marina Yusof as saying that Musa Hitam had gone missing when his leadership and support for the group in the by-election campaign were most needed. Marina Yusof was reported as saying: "I do not like to say much of Datuk Musa....but in a critical time when his leadership is needed he goes overseas".

Marina Yusof also said that soon after Musa Hitam had quit as Deputy Prime Minister and lost his party post, his supporters were scattered and divided. The newspaper reported: 'She said Datuk Musa's last minute decision not to join the new UMNO had "trapped" some of his supporters such as former Johore Menteri Besar Datuk Ajib Ahmad who had announced earlier their decision to join the new UMNO'.

The Culture of Rumours

Before we proceed to the next Act and Scene of the UMNO Drama, we should perhaps, not so much as to digress but to, take a look at some significant by-products of the show. Because of the controlled media situation in the country, rumours have had always easy currency since Independence. Thus, the culture of silence imposed by the authorities has bred a culture of rumours. Malaysian history may designate the last three years, beginning with Musa Hitam's resignation as Deputy Prime Minister in early 1986, as the high tide of rumour-mongering, rumour-explosion,

and rumour-substantiation in Malaysia. Rumours of all shapes and sizes were, and still are, circulating the length and breadth of the country. Some sounded incredible, some were sinister, while others were humorous, and there were yet those which were bordering on the outrageous. But in the end, the best rule of thumb to take is to remember that while not all rumours are true, some do not turn out to be entirely false.

Kuala Lumpur, being the federal capital city, was and is rumour town. In August 1988, the Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Haniff Omar, said that there were rumours going around town but that they were only rumours.

During the Johore Baru by-election campaign a rumour flew around that Tengku Razaleigh had been arrested. The IGP denied it. At another time, it was rumoured that the IGP himself wanted to retire because he disliked pressure to arrest Tengku Razaleigh.

Around the same time, *Watan* came out with a front-page report that thousands of Malaysian pilgrims doing the Haj in Mecca had a fright because news had apparently spread that emergency had been declared in Malaysia and the country was under *Mageran* (NOC) rule. However, this rumour faded when all or most of the pilgrims had returned home.

Another rumour which floated around for some time was that four Kelantan-born generals were invited by the Sultan of Kelantan for tea and how the higher-ups advised them to politely decline. The *Mingguan Malaysia* of 3 July 1988 carried a report of a dialogue session between Mahathir and UMNO leaders and members of Negeri Sembilan at Paroi. It reported that Mahathir claimed that there were groups who lied that military generals from Kelantan gave warning to the IGP that they would take over the country if Tengku Razaleigh was arrested. Mahathir declared that such stories were supposed to frighten him into pre-empting the situation and thus actually bring about martial law.

And then there was the rumour that Mahathir had been carrying in his pocket a declaration of emergency signed by the King.

Whatever merits or demerits such rumours may have had, one thing is certain: the culture of rumours is a reflection of the highly charged and sometimes scary atmosphere that the intense and bitter UMNO power struggle has brought about. It reminds us of Henry James' naughty line in *The Altar of the Dead*: "The ever-impertunate murmur, 'Dramatise it, dramatise it!'"

But the rumour about the generals was apparently taken quite

seriously by the authorities, at least for the potential strength of its malice if not for anything else. On the occasion of a parade to mark Armed Forces Day at the Defence Ministry in Kuala Lumpur on 16 September 1988, the Defence Forces Chief General Tan Sri Hashim Ali, who incidentally is a brother-in-law of Mahathir's said that although the Armed Forces staff should maintain their neutral stand in politics, they should follow every development in the local political arena to face any eventuality. He said that "there are groups wishing to politicise the Armed Forces". **The Star** reported the next day that the Defence Forces Chief's message was also delivered at other parades held by units throughout the country.

Talks About Talks

The UMNO squabble did not abate after the Johore Baru by-election. Poison pen letters continued to fly with gay abandon. So much so that Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, the Agriculture Minister and former UMNO Secretary-General, a man with ideas which are sometimes innovative and sometimes bordering on the loony, started to toy with the idea of setting up a centre where people can send in all the poison pen letters they received; he also added that such letters could be compiled into a book (**The Star**, 28 September 1988).

On 14 September 1988, 13 MPs who refused to join UMNO Baru wrote to ask the Dewan Rakyat Speaker to review or change their seating in the House when it sat on October 10. They were led by Tengku Razaleigh, the MP for Gua Musang. Johore Baru and Sungai Benut MPs, Datuk Shahrir and Tawfik Tun Dr Ismail respectively, had been seated on the opposition side at their request from the July 1988 session of the Dewan Rakyat.

On 2 October 1988, Musa Hitam, the MP for Kota Tinggi, announced that he too had decided to become an independent MP. With that, the **Semangat 46** now had 16 MPs on their side.

In the meantime, there were moves to discuss reconciliation between former UMNO leaders and Dr Mahathir, as early as September. In the first week of September itself, Datuk Shahrir proposed reconciliation talks between Mahathir and Ghafar Baba on one side and Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam on the other. Amazingly, he said that the proposed talks would not touch on the Prime Minister's position, after having said during the Johore Baru by-election that he would go back to UMNO and the Barisan

Nasional only if Mahathir stepped down as Prime Minister.

The *Mingguan Kota* of 18 September 1988 meanwhile suggested that Datuk Musa Hitam had 'hijacked' the idea of reconciliation talks from Tengku Razaleigh, and that the latter's supporters were not too happy about it.

The Parit Raja Road Show

The Johore State Assembly Speaker Datuk Syed Zain Edrus Alshahab died on 2 September 1988. His seat of Parit Raja therefore fell vacant and provided another opportunity for a further test of strength between UMNO Baru and Semangat 46. Polling was fixed for 20 October.

On 12 October 1988, Musa Hitam, speaking at the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club, said that developments in Malaysia had reached a serious stage and that Mahathir might call a snap election to consolidate his power and, if he lost at the polls, he would declare a state of emergency. He also said: "The problem with Dr Mahathir is he is crass, rough and hard. This man pushes things down your throat." He also claimed that the reason for the MCA President Ling Liong Sik taking leave as a minister was the MCA's horror at Mahathir's option for a snap election. He added that half the MCA wanted to leave the Mahathir government.

Back in Malaysia, Musa Hitam's remarks were strenuously and even angrily denied by UMNO Baru and MCA leaders. Some UMNO Baru members urged the government to act against Musa Hitam.

Then on 15 October, five days before polling at the Parit Raja by-election, after a five-hour meeting of the UMNO Baru Supreme Council, Mahathir invited Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam to discuss party problems and those affecting Malay unity with him and Ghafar Baba at any time. He also announced that the UMNO Baru Supreme Council had agreed to admit all members of the de-registered UMNO into UMNO Baru if they applied to the members. He said that the change in policy was made because UMNO Baru was now stable and free from disturbance.

Although it was more than likely that Mahathir was responding to pressure from Semangat 46, it did seem to have an effect on the Parit Raja by-election which was won by a couple of hundred votes by the UMNO Baru candidate over the Semangat 46 candidate.

There were of course the inevitable mutual accusations of dirty tactics between the Semangat 46 and UMNO Baru. At a forum at Rumah Universiti at the University of Malaya, organised by the Social Science Association of Malaysia, to discuss 'The Social and Political Implications of Johore Baru and Parit Raja' on 31 October, Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin, the Semangat 46 MP for Bagan Serai, Perak, said that the 'budaya kasar' (culture of roughness), 'budaya gangster' (culture of gangsterism) and 'budaya ugut' (culture of threats) were born in the Parit Raja by-election. That rough and dirty tactics were used was probably true, but they were not born in 1988; as the opposition has always complained, such tactics have been with UMNO for a pretty long time, being a part of the political culture of UMNO even when Datuk Zainal was part of the scene but somehow did not protest about. A good example is the Padang Terap incident in which a PAS member was killed in the mid-1980s.

We must not forget that in the 1960s and 1970s UMNO was very fond of using the Pemuda Tahan Lasak (some form of young storm-troopers) to intimidate its political opponents, especially those from the PSRM and PAS.

The Parit Raja by-election also witnessed the widening rift in the Semangat 46, especially between Musa Hitam's camp and the camp of Othman Saat, the former Johore Menteri Besar.

Mahathir's Dramatic Move

On 15 October, apart from inviting Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam for unity talks and opening UMNO Baru to the 'rebels', Mahathir also announced that the UMNO Baru Supreme Council had reappointed three Supreme Council members of the deregistered UMNO, Datuk Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, Haji Rahim Bakar and Datuk Ajib Haji Ahmad of Kedah, Pahang and Johore respectively, because they had signed up as UMNO Baru members.

UMNO Baru held its General Assembly on 28-30 October 1988. Mahathir delivered a lengthy speech on the first day with a call to all Malays, including those in opposition parties like PAS, DAP and PSRM, to join UMNO Baru. In what looked very much like a well-orchestrated public relations exercise, the whole event was staged with razzmatazz, smiles, tears, standing ovations, poems, impassioned appeals for unity and calls for punishment. Given full media coverage, it was a serious attempt to show that UMNO Baru was the rightful heir to the deregistered

UMNO, that it had the majority of the old members, that it was stable and that it was growing. Most important of all was the effort to promote the notion that things had returned to normal.

On 27 October, a day earlier, UMNO Baru Deputy President Ghafar Baba lashed out at those still opposing UMNO Baru. He was speaking at the special assemblies of UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO. Ghafar likened the tactics of these critics to that of the communists, and said that they wanted to topple the government by destroying a growing economy.

On 29 October, Mahathir took time off from the General Assembly to call on the Sultan of Brunei at the Hilton Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. The Sultan was later to issue a statement to the effect that Tengku Razaleigh was never an adviser to him.

On the same day, at the General Assembly, Semangat 46 people came under fire, with some delegates calling for their arrest for dividing the Malay race. A one-time supporter of Tengku Razaleigh, Kelantan's Annuar Musa even borrowed from Shakespeare to say: "It is not that I love Tengku Razaleigh less, it is that I love UMNO more". Hajjah Zaleha Hussein, a Wanita UMNO delegate characterised the politics of the splinter group as "the politics of the cockerel", not being able to do anything but making a lot of noise. Syed Hamid Albar, the son of the late Tan Sri Albar Jaafar, was the exception. The Federal Territory delegate was in tears when he pleaded that Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam should still be asked to join UMNO Baru and that the two should accept the invitation to join the party.

But it was Mahathir himself who got the cake, the standing ovation and the subsequent tearful embraces and handshakes when, in his presidential closing speech, invited Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam to join his Cabinet as Ministers without Portfolio for the sake of Malay unity.

It was an act of considerable political and strategic cleverness, for it combined generosity with humiliation which put the two at some disadvantage in either acceptance or rejection. Tunku Abdul Rahman described the offer as "adding insult to injury". A Semangat 46 leader was later reported to say that the offer was too low to Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam who had held such high ministerial posts before. Both Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam, not unexpectedly, rejected the offer. But rightly or wrongly, Mahathir seemed to have come out of the exercise in fairly good light, being perceived by many people as wanting to

compromise, albeit rather late.

As for his offer to all Malays in opposition parties to join UMNO Baru, there were few takers. The Acting Chairman of the PSRM, Abdul Razak Ahmad, said the Malays in his party had to turn down Mahathir's invitation. He said: "The single biggest factor which compels us to reject the offer is that the Malays in PSRM do not subscribe to racial politics. They are committed to multi-racialism".

Be that as it may, Mahathir's offer to Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam was quite an impressive gesture to the UMNO Baru rank-and-file and many outside. In an article in the *Utusan Malaysia* of 31 October 1988, Zainuddin Maidin, the Group Editor of the *Utusan Melayu* Group, called it "an exciting political drama".

Indeed, the UMNO crisis does seem to have the capacity to generate drama even beyond its own broken gates. In November 1988, PENA, the National Association of Writers, was convulsed in controversy and acrimony among its leadership and membership over the propriety or otherwise of sponsoring a Congress for Malay Unity. There was the talk of legal action and the sacking of dissidents and action against members who had not been paying up their fees. Malay intellectuals, academicians and some youth organisations were also similarly split. In late December 1988, the UMNO disunity disease had so infected Malay writers that the Penang Malay Writers' Association (2PNP) wanted PENA to be sacked from GAPENA, the Federation of National Writers' Associations over PENA's involvement in the aborted Malay Unity Congress which was to have been held in November.

Some founding and life members of PENA — people like Professor Taib Osman, A. Samad Ismail and Kassim Ahmad — were either sacked or threatened to be sacked from the organisation.

A Face-Saving Forum?

December 1988 also saw other unity as well as disunity moves. The Kelantan state government was involved in a dispute with the state's Public Service Commission over the transfer of 20 administrative officers. On 21 December, Haji Rozali Isohak, the Semangat 46 State Assemblyman for Dabong, Kelantan, dismissed speculation that his group under the leadership of Tengku Razaleigh had engineered the dispute.

On 5 December, Tengku Razaleigh tabled a Private Member's Bill in the Dewan Rakyat to amend the Societies Act 1966 so as to revive the original UMNO. After two full afternoons and nights of fierce debate, the Bill was defeated by a vote of 108 to 35, with the DAP MPs supporting Tengku Razaleigh.

Not one to miss an opportunity for theatricals, Datuk Shahrir said during the debate that if the Bill was rejected he would ask his colleagues to mourn by wearing a white ribbon round their black songkoks.

On 18 December the so-called Johore Malay Unity Forum was held in Johore Baru. Attended by former Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn, Datuk Musa Hitam, Johore Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Muhyiddin Mohamed Yassin, Sungai Benut MP Tawfik Tun Dr Ismail, Datuk Shahrir and 200 representatives of organisations, it was in essence an UMNO unity meeting; using the name of 'Malay Unity' obviously made it look less parochial.

At the end of the 4-hour meeting, a 6-point resolution was adopted without debate. Tan Sri Abdul Jalil Hassan said the resolution would be forwarded to the UMNO leadership for consideration. The resolution called for (1) the adoption of the original UMNO constitution; (2) the reinstatement of leaders elected at the de-registered party's general assembly in 1987; (3) the automatic acceptance of former UMNO members; (4) the reinstatement of former branch and divisional leaders; (5) taking legal action to ensure there is only one UMNO for the Malays; and, (6) creating a conducive political environment for Malay unity and solidarity.

There was strong speculation that the whole forum was stage managed as a face-saving device to enable Musa Hitam and his group to return to Mahathir's UMNO. It was also significant that apart from the absence of any debate on the resolution, items (2) and (4) laid emphasis on reinstatement to leadership posts at national, divisional and branch levels. Tawfik Tun Dr Ismail said that the Semangat 46 had achieved its objectives, whatever that meant, and that there was no reason for it to exist any longer. It was clear that the Johore group of dissidents under Musa Hitam had decided to break away from the Semangat 46.

1989: In For Stirring Times

The UMNO drama entered 1989 with two matters waiting for resolution. The M\$1 billion worth of property of the de-register-

ed UMNO which includes the 3.6 hectare land, together with the 41-storey Menara Datuk Onn (UMNO headquarters), the Pan Pacific Hotel and the Putra World Trade Centre which stand on it, were up for auction. Some people speculated that the auction itself was politically motivated.

Bad blood was so prevalent among the antagonists that official visits and assistance in connection with the end-of-1988 floods, especially in the east coast states of Kelantan and Trengganu, were also alleged to be politically motivated.

The other matter was the Ampang Jaya parliamentary by-election. Some people had thought that the MCA MP, for reasons best known to himself, was instigated by the Semangat 46 group to resign his seat to pave the way for a by-election.

In the meantime, in an interview published by the *Financial Times* of London on 3 January 1989, Dr Mahathir admitted the possibility that his majority (i.e. the Barisan Nasional's majority) would be substantially reduced in the next general elections. On the question of the erosion of democracy in Malaysia, Mahathir said:

What was done before was even less democratic than now. There were more people arrested under the first, second and third prime ministers than during my tenure. The first thing I did on becoming Prime Minister was to release some 1,000 people who had literally been forgotten. I do not like that idea because I was myself very nearly arrested. All I did was criticise the Prime Minister and immediately I was thrown out of my party and threatened with arrest. That was the kind of atmosphere we were living in but this has been conveniently forgotten. The first Prime Minister (Tunku Abdul Rahman), in particular, was very, very intolerant.

It is a sad reflection on our ruling elite that their debate has degenerated into a question of who has been less democratic rather than who has been more democratic. No wonder Jean-Paul Sartre said, in his *Words*, "What I like about my madness is that it has safeguarded me, from the very first, against the blandishments of 'the elite'...."

The Ampang Jaya Extravaganza

As soon as the Ampang Jaya parliamentary seat fell vacant, UMNO Baru was quick to realise the trap. It promptly announced that it would be magnanimous enough to allow the MCA to continue to have the right over the seat, although it has a Malay majority. It was clever move: in the event of defeat it could

always fall back on saying it was the MCA's loss, and in the event of victory it could share the glory. Polling day was on 28 January.

The Semangat 46 put up Dato Harun Idris as its candidate. In a bitterly fought campaign, both the Barisan Nasional and the Semangat 46 resorted quite openly to racial exhortations and other dirty tactics, including plenty of personal attacks. As Chandra Muzaffar has pointed out (*Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 9:2), "it was not just the MCA that was communal; Semangat 46 also adopted a very communal posture. Some of its leaders called upon the Malay voters who constitute 68 per cent of the electorate to vote Harun because he is a Malay. Certain PAS officials who took part in the campaign added another dimension to that plea. Muslims, they said, should vote only a Muslim".

Then, an unexpected, dramatic event intervened. Prime Minister Dr Mahathir was rushed to hospital in the early hours of the morning of 18 January after complaining of chest pains; he was to undergo a by-pass operation a few days later. Mahathir's illness could have obtained some sympathy votes for the Barisan Nasional.

Moreover, Harun Idris' own political record also went against him. He was perceived by many Chinese voters as being involved in the racial riots of May 13, 1969. Many voters of all races still remember his corruption and CBT convictions in the mid-1970s. Tunku Abdul Rahman, a staunch supporter of Dato Harun, made a serious gaffe when he said that life under the Japanese Occupation was better than now. It has also been said by some observers that the appearance of Datuk Rais Yatim, a leading figure of the Semangat 46, at a DAP forum, also hurt Dato Harun among the Malay voters.

At the start of the campaign, the UMNO Baru Supreme Council decided to accept the 6-point resolution of the Johore Malay Unity Forum, thus creating the image that it was reasonable and was prepared to compromise, while the Semangat 46 core leadership had repeatedly spurned it.

Harun Idris lost by more than 4,000 votes to the Barisan Nasional candidate.

And there were more problems coming for the Semangat 46.

The Returnees

The return to Mahathir's UMNO Baru of Musa Hitam and his group had long been speculated upon. On 31 January, a mere

three days after the Ampang Jaya verdict, Musa Hitam, together with Sungai Benut MP Tawfik Tun Dr Ismail, two Johore State Assemblymen, and Haji Hamdan Yahya, the Semangat 46 candidate in the Parit Raja by-election, announced at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur to rejoin UMNO. Musa Hitam said their decision was based on the party leadership's change of attitude towards people on the other side of the UMNO conflict. He claimed that "they softened their stance eventually".

On the same day, Datuk Shahrir said that his return would depend on the readiness of the party leadership to implement all the six items of the resolution adopted by the Johore Malay Unity Forum in December 1988.

The Semangat 46 was obviously left high and dry. However, to put on a brave face, Datuk Rais Yatim said on 23 February 1989 that Musa Hitam's decision to join UMNO Baru had neither split the group nor weakened it. On 24 February, seven leaders of the Semangat 46 from Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor announced their decision to rejoin UMNO Baru. They said: "We all want peace and unity to return to UMNO and among the Malays."

Meanwhile, Datuk Shahrir, the Johore Baru MP was negotiating for an honourable return to the Johore Baru division. However, at an emergency on February 9, 35 out of the 44 branch leaders of the division decided not to accept him.

On 1 March 1989, Shahrir announced his decision to rejoin UMNO Baru, saying, "The present UMNO has returned to the Malays, and its characteristics reflect Malay values and culture". He also said, according to the *New Straits Times* of 2 March 1989, that he would continue to fight for the Semangat 46 cause within the party, whatever that may mean.

The interesting point is that Musa Hitam, Shahrir and others have pathetically reduced themselves to an undignified begging and crawling back on dubious claims of attitudinal 'changes' among the party's leadership. But as Chandra Muzaffar has pointed out, these changes are "superficial and do not affect the essence of Mahathir's power over the party and the government", and that the six-point Johore Malay Unity Forum resolution "has yet to be implemented fully, even within the State of Johore".

All this brings to mind Professor Bernard Crick's cynicism when he says, in his *In Defence of Politics*:

The politician has no more use for pride than Falstaff had for hon-

our. And if when suddenly dismissed from favour, he then invokes pride and asks for employment and honour, he is just kicking against the terms of his trade.....

Or, perhaps, this dialogue culled from Chinua Achebe's novel, **A Man of the People**:

'Now do you expect a man like that to resign on a little matter of principle.....?'

'Assuming, that is, that he can recognize principle when he sees it,' I added somewhat pompously.

Entering a New Phase

Although the return of Musa Hitam and others to UMNO Baru is a setback to the Semangat 46, it is by no means the end of the road yet for that group. Tengku Razaleigh has vowed to fight to the end, and is now busy trying to work with PAS to bring about the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (Community Unity Front) in time for the next general elections. We shall consider in the concluding chapter the possible political realignments in the Malaysian political scene in the coming months before the next general elections.

It cannot be denied that UMNO Baru has been somewhat strengthened by recent events. However, it is far too early to conclude that it is now free of problems. As I have said, in *Watan* of 4 February 1989, new power struggles could well emerge in UMNO Baru, especially in view of Mahathir's illness and possible early retirement. I said:

The entry of Datuk Musa will bring competition to UMNO leaders like Encik Ghafar Baba, Anwar Ibrahim and Datuk Haji Abdullah Badawai to become leader number one.

Ismail Kassim of *The Straits Times* of Singapore thinks (11 February 1989) that the "return of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam last week is likely to lead to adjustments in the power alignments".

Or as Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon predicts (in *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 9:2):

The general election may be due by late 1990 and this may have some impact upon the fight within UMNO Baru. This scenario of course takes into consideration candidates like Datuk Musa Hitam, Datuk Abdullah Badawi and Encik Anwar Ibrahim. There are also the claims of yet another candidate Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. He is outside UMNO Baru but will tussle for high office. We are in for stirring times...

In early March 1989, Tengku Razaleigh was reported to be ready to hold 'peace' talks with UMNO Baru leaders; but this was subsequently angrily denied by Tengku Razaleigh, who attributed the report to Press distortions. All the same, Ghafar Baba suggested that Tengku Razaleigh should meet with Mahathir after the latter's vacation overseas.

Then in the middle of March, the arrow shot up once again on the rumours-and-speculation chart when the Barisan Nasional MP for Arau, Shahidan Kassim, claimed that there was a 'grand design' by certain people within the government itself to topple the Prime Minister and his Deputy. Even while Ghafar Baba was busily and strenuously denying the existence of such a plot and conspiracy, UMNO Secretary-General Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said in Kota Bharu, Kelantan that certain groups were trying to destabilise the party from within (Bernama, 17 March 1989).

Thus, UMNO politics in particular, and Malaysian politics in general, are entering a new phase.

But, before we go to the conclusion, we need to examine the entire history of UMNO to better understand why things have happened the way it did as well as possible future developments.

2. UMNO: A Child of the Storm

"History is not events, but people. And it is not just people remembering, it is people acting and living their past in the present."

— J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*,
Book Club Associates, London, 1976.

"What in fact proved to be literally overwhelming was the party's success in writing the entire Malay community into a determined and demonstrative political army."

— Prof. K.J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1967.

While it can safely be said that the origins of Malay nationalism had begun even before the Second World War, Malay nationalism on a pan-Malayan basis only started to ferment shortly after the return of the British colonialists to Malaya in September 1945.

In the years immediately before the Second World War, there were three elitist groups among the Malays. The first group comprised the religious reformers who were mainly from the Malay bourgeoisie of the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca, and Singapore; they were of Arab and South Indian stock rather than *Melayu jati* (pure Malay). The second group consisted of the radical Malay intelligentsia. They were mainly from the rural areas; some of them had a Middle Eastern education, but the majority

grew up in the Malay school milieu and at the Sultan Idris Training College for Malay school teachers at Tanjung Malim in Perak. They had aimed to use Islam as a vehicle for pan-Malay nationalism. The third group drew mainly from the Malay ruling circles; these English-educated sons of the aristocracy enjoyed the advantages of traditional status and modern education. Many of them were schooled at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, the 'Malay Eton' as some people had appropriately termed it.

However, although political consciousness among the Malays existed before the Second World War, it was confined mainly to personal, social, economic and educational upliftment, not so much to the struggle for freedom from colonialism.

But the Japanese invasion in 1941 and subsequent occupation of Malaya for three and a half years helped to shape Malay political consciousness significantly.

Experience Under the Japanese

The speed and manner the British fled from Malaya, and the fall of Singapore to the Japanese invading forces – considered to be the greatest defeat of British imperialism in its long history – devastated the traditional Malay elite psychologically. As A.J. Stockwell points out, in his *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942–1948*, "many Malay government servants who now found themselves without the support of the administration, fled into the jungle, while those Malay associations which had accepted the principles of British rule despite their criticism of specific policies, were to be seen no more." However, there was not much to be feared with the coming of the Japanese so far as the traditional elite was concerned. With a few exceptions in the change of personnel, "the Japanese absorbed into their regime that traditional elite which had been fostered by the British."

In October 1943, the Japanese transferred the states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand (then known as Siam). Malay land reservations were invaded by Chinese squatters fleeing from the terror in the towns.

The Japanese occupation, in short, had a traumatic effect on the Malays. Political awareness among the Malays had increased during the three and a half years of Japanese Occupation. For their own purposes, the Japanese had encouraged intensive political activities among the Malays at all levels of society. By

1944, when it was clear that the war was going badly for the Japanese, some Malays had organised themselves into guerilla bands.

As Stockwell points out, these groups "illustrate the Malay instinct to preserve the community against non-Malay interference be it Japanese repression, Chinese aggression or Siamese religious persecution." However, the Japanese occupation did not paper over the divisions within Malay society. When the British returned to Malaya after the War, they faced a new Malaya "within which the Malays in particular were uneasy about their future." This uneasiness was also in part due to the atrocities committed by the MPAJA in certain parts of Malaya just before the British returned.

The Malayan Union Scheme

When the returned British, whatever their motives were, announced their Malayan Union scheme, it could not have come at a worse time for the Malays. The proposed scheme not only envisaged the creation of Malaya as a unitary state with a common citizenship for all the races. This had also the effect of demolishing the sovereignty of the Malay Rulers, the autonomy of the Malay States and the privileged position of the Malay community.

The Malayan Union proposals were in essence technocratic reforms of British colonialism aimed primarily to increase the efficiency of the mechanism of exploitation through a restructuring of the classical colonial system. They were not meant to alter the basically exploitative relationship between Britain and Malaya.

The Malayan Union scheme was in the hatching incubator for some years prior to the end of the Second World War. There was considerable criticism within the British establishment itself, arguing that it was designed to strengthen direct British rule by diminishing the legitimate powers of the Malay Rulers. However, the British Colonial Office was in a stubborn and arrogant frame of mind. Stockwell says that the Colonial Office "did not, it seems, anticipate widespread opposition from the Malay community. Only the royal families, it was thought, might prove obstinate, and these could be won over not only by a mixture of threats and cajolery but also by associating with the new policy "those Malay princes who had escaped from occupied Malaya."

There were some bureaucrats and politicians at the British Colonial Office who viewed traditional Malay society with contempt, referring to it as a "Malay museum." They contemplated "Sultans in the future who will be harmless puppets". Some of them even wanted to go further by stripping the Sultans of all power and sovereignty.

The MacMichael Mission

From 31 May 1944 to 10 October 1945, the Colonial Office's planning on the Malayan Union scheme proceeded under a cloak of secrecy. In the autumn of 1944, Sir Harold MacMichael, upon his return from his Palestine tour of duty at London, was invited to undertake a mission to Malaya as soon as it was recaptured from the Japanese. He was told that his job "must be regarded as secret for the time being since it involves His Majesty's Government's policy to negotiate fresh treaties with the rulers as soon as possible after the liberation of Malaya."

The British bureaucracy has always a great penchant for secrecy. As far back as 1889, the British ruling class had enacted the Official Secrets Act, which was refined and re-tuned in 1911. But the walls of Whitehall and the British Parliament often talk, besides having ears and eyes. However secretive the whole Malayan Union scheme was to be, interested parties outside the official circles became increasingly suspicious. Malay students in London, for instance, were aware that there were plans afoot for a postwar Malaya, and they submitted a memorandum to the Colonial Office in 1944 entitled "Post War Malaya."

The Japanese surrendered on 15 August 1945. The British established a Military Administration for Singapore and Malaya. On 3 September, the Secretary of State for the Colonies obtained the British Cabinet's final approval for the Malayan Union scheme, the same day British troops were landing in Malaya. Sir Harold MacMichael was dispatched to visit Malaya to obtain from the Malay Rulers new agreements that would provide the British Crown with jurisdiction to implement the proposed Malayan Union constitution. He was the British government's 'Special Representative'. On 10 October, the day before MacMichael reached Port Swettenham (now Port Klang), an announcement was made in the British House of Commons regarding the British government's intentions on the Malayan Union.

Official British imperialistic thinking on the Malay States

betrayed an arrogance buttressed by ignorance. For instance, in a document entitled 'personal Minute Concerning Malay Sultans', dated 20 July 1945, the Principal Staff Officer on the staff of the Supreme Allied Commander argued:

Regarding the negotiations with the Malay Sultans, I think it is important to remember that these people are not traditional feudal rulers in any sense; but are a species of 'head man' chosen by us, and built up with British prestige and British support. This has been done within the last 100 years and in the case of some of them as recently as 30 years . . . Their salaries and the opportunities which British support gave them has enabled these puppets to build themselves up by fair means or foul, into enormous positions of wealth and influence. But as it is the British who gave them the power, then the British can take it away or modify it, without any scruples about interfering with ancient feudal structure of the country, which I think I am right in saying was practically non-existent.

MacMichael, accompanied by H.T. Bourdillon and joined by Brigadier A.T. Newbould, the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Malaya, set up his headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. From there he made arrangements to visit the Malay States by turn. Between 18 October 1945 when he saw Sultan Ibrahim of Johore and 21 December 1945 when he visited Trengganu, MacMichael succeeded to wrap up all the fresh treaties he was after, with a combination of cajolery, blandishments and threats.

Most of the Malay Rulers were uneasy about accepting the Malayan Union proposals and had in fact expressed their concern about immigration, citizenship, education for the Malays and their protection. But the British were adamant. In Pahang, for instance, they argued "that the only salvation for the future of the Malays was in the acceptance of the policy."

The Sultan of Johore was told by MacMichael that without the new agreement peace in Malaya would be impossible. The Yam Tuan of Negeri Sembilan signed "somewhat grudgingly", according to MacMichael's own secret telegram of 15 November 1945 to the Colonial Secretary in London. Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak complained:

In signifying my assent to the Agreement against my better judgement, I did so because I was caught in the atmosphere of haste and because I was engrossing my unshaken loyalty to the British Crown with full confidence that my rights and the rights of my people would not be disturbed.....It cannot be said that I have agreed to the serious implications of the proposed Malayan Union.

As for the northern states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, MacMichael and his aides exploited succession problems there to obtain agreement. Regent Badlishah of Kedah said he was shocked by the proposals which he called "very devastating". He also complained later that "although the manner was much more polite, the technique adopted by His Majesty's Government appeared to be not unlike the familiar Japanese technique of bullying."

Clearly, the general complaint of the Malay Rulers was that they were made to sign the fresh treaties under duress. For a short while, the British continued to whistle in the dark. A brief prepared for a meeting between the Supreme Allied Command and the Chief of the Imperial Staff, dated 3 December 1945, claimed:

Generally the Government proposals are welcomed and the tour of Sir Harold MacMichael has been followed with interest in the press...

The December 1945 issue of the **British Military Administration Monthly Report** was equally optimistic:

By the end of the month Sir Harold MacMichael had successfully concluded his mission in Malaya and after nearly three months in the country departed for Singapore..... No very noticeable popular reaction to his activities here has become apparent except in Kelantan where.....some agitation occurred.

MacMichael sailed from Singapore for England on 6 January 1946. On 22 January, the British government issued its White Paper on the Malayan Union. The details of the new constitutional arrangements were made public for the first time. To the consternation of the British, the storm broke. As Stockwell points out, "The vigour of the Malay opposition to the Malayan Union astounded all those convinced of Malay apathy." In a similar vein, Professor Khoo Kay Kim says: "So much was taken for granted that impressions were mistaken for facts, hence the general belief that the Malays were a contented people and satisfied with British rule. When opposition erupted against the Malayan Union Scheme in 1946, there was a widespread expression of surprise..."

The British imperialists failed to learn the lessons of their own imperial history, especially those from the Indian Sub-Continent, and were condemned to repeat them in Malaya.

The Storm and the Birth of UMNO

Initially there was Malay resentment, particularly among the

Malay administrator and intellectual classes, against the Malay Rulers over what was perceived at the time as a willingness to compromise with the British. However, this initial rift dissolved when more details emerged regarding the trying circumstances the Rulers had been put into by the British. From then on, the Malay Rulers stood firm against the Malayan Union scheme.

The gathering storm was first worked up in the Malay Press. After some initial confusion over the proposed constitutional changes, the Malay Press, including the *Utusan Melayu* and *Warta Negara* advised the Malays to revive their pre-war organisations and to coordinate their opposition to the Malayan Union. By November 1945 the *Kesatuan Melayu Johore* (Johore Malay Association) was formed. Many pre-war Malay organisations were revived, led mainly by English-educated Malays who were government servants.

MacMichael's visit to Kelantan in late December 1945 was greeted by a public demonstration of about 10,000 people in Kota Bharu. There were also demonstrations in Johore and Trengganu.

In England itself, ex-Malayan civil servants like Sir Frank Swettenham and R.O. Winstedt expressed strong criticisms against the Malayan Union scheme. Winstedt called the British proposals "tyrannical" and termed the Malayan Union itself as a "crazy prefabricated Union".

Professor D.G.E. Hall is of the opinion that it was the publication of the White Paper on the Malayan Union in January 1946 which "caused the storm to burst". He says that it "caused an explosion of Malay national feeling as sudden and unexpected as the one with which a quarter of a century earlier Burma had greeted the announcement that she was to be excluded from the scope of the Indian constitutional reforms of 1921."

In a debate in the British House of Commons on 8 March 1946, Captain L.D. Gammans, a Conservative MP, attacked the Malayan Union proposals as "naked acquisition". The proposals were also questioned in the House of Lords.

Meanwhile, frantic efforts were made among Malay opinion-makers to reduce the initial confusion and divisions within the Malay community to make way for a nationwide Malay movement which would transcend the narrow loyalties of region, state and district. On 12 January 1946, *Majlis* suggested that Dato Onn bin Jaafar, founder of the *Pergerakan Melayu Semananjong*

Johore was the most suitable person to lead a pan-Malayan Malay congress because Johore had made the greatest political progress. The Persatuan Melayu Selangor was to take the initiative to ask Malay organisations throughout Malaya to adopt Dato Onn as leader of the proposed congress. Dato Onn was enthusiastically received by the Malays in many parts of Johore.

Born in 1895 in Johore Bharu, Onn bin Jaafar was an aristocrat. His father, Dato Jaafar bin Haji Muhammad was a Menteri Besar of Johore under the reign of Sultan Ibrahim. His mother was of Turkish descent. At the age of seven, after the death of his parents, Onn became an adopted son of Sultan Ibrahim. When young he and Sultan Ibrahim's own children were tutored by an English woman; later they were sent to study at the Alderburgh Lodge School at Suffolk in England. Onn continued his education later at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar.

Onn's career was varied and rather colourful before he embarked upon politics fully. After his schooling at the Malay College, he returned to serve in the Johore Civil Service. He was an outspoken man. After some tiff with Sultan Ibrahim of Johore, he was exiled to Singapore from 1926 to 1936. While there he had a stint in journalism, first working for *Warta Malaya*, and in 1934 published his own weekly in Jawi, the *Lembaga Malaya*. After the War he was made District Officer of Batu Pahat. It was here that he became increasingly involved in Malay politics.

The Batu Pahat branch of the Pergerakan Melayu Semananjong Johore was established on 11 January 1946. As Stockwell points out, "In contrast with many other political associations in Malaya, the Pergerakan stood out with its clear principles, numerical strength and impressive leadership.

On 24 January 1946, two days after the publication of the White Paper on the Malayan Union proposals, Dato Onn's call for a pan-Malayan Malay Congress was published in *Majlis*. His call obtained enthusiastic response from Malay organisations in other parts of the country. It was finally decided that the congress be held in Kuala Lumpur. The organising committee was led by Za'ba, a Malay writer, and made up of Selangor Malay leaders.

The four-day congress was declared open by the Sultan of Selangor on 1 March, 41 organisations from all parts of the Peninsula and Singapore took part, with a total of 107 delegates and 56 observers attending. In his opening speech Sultan Hishamuddin of Selangor declared that the time had arrived for the

Malays to unite.

The priority issues at the meeting, held at the Sultan Suleiman Club at Kampong Bharu in Kuala Lumpur, were to organise a Malay national movement and to campaign against the Malayan Union. Soon after the official opening Dato Onn was elected the chairman of the congress, and the debate on the organisation of a national movement for the Malays resulted in agreement that the proposed movement should be named the Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (PEKEMBAR) or the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).

A working committee was formed to draft UMNO's constitution. When the next Malay Congress was held in Johore Bharu on 11-12 May, the constitution was approved, UMNO was inaugurated, and Dato Onn was chosen as its President, with the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang of Perak as its acting Secretary.

In the debate on the Malayan Union, Dato Onn called on the Malays of all political inclinations to unite to fight against it. The Congress passed six resolutions which they telegraphed to the British Prime Minister and other interested parties in England. They declared the MacMichael Treaties invalid and called for the repeal of the Malayan Union.

The British, partly not to lose face, went ahead with the implementation of the Malayan Union all the same. Sir Edward Gent was to be formally installed as the Governor of the Malayan Union in Kuala Lumpur on 1 April 1946. Faced with this intransigence, an emergency meeting was held on the eve of the launching of the Malayan Union among leaders of the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress. The emergency meeting decided on a total boycott of the new constitution. It was also resolved that (1) All Malays were to wear white headbands as a sign of mourning; (2) the Malays to boycott the Malayan Union Advisory Councils; (3) Dato Onn to request the Malay Rulers not to attend any ceremony or official function organised by the Malayan Union government; and (4) All Malay organisations to refuse recognition to the Malayan Union Governor and his officers.

The Rulers were told that it was "the desire of the People" that they should boycott Gent's installation as the Governor of the Malayan Union. They were also warned that they would be disowned by the people if they recognised the Malayan Union. On 1 April, the Rulers, who had been persuaded to boycott the installation, were cheered by a crowd of Malays as they assembled

on the balcony of the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

The Malays who had been invited by the British to become members of the Malayan Union Advisory Committee refused to attend the installation; more than that, they also declined their seats. They wrote back to the British that they thought it was "impossible to attend the funeral rites" of their "birthright and liberty."

All in all, it was an impressive show of Malay unity in the face of adversity. There was not only the spirit of solidarity; there was also idealism and a spirit of sacrifice. It was Malay unity's finest hour.

The British attempt to foist the Malayan Union on the Malays became abortive. The Malayan Union was as dead as a dodo, although a little more time was required to replace it with another constitutional outfit.

UMNO, the child of the storm, was set for interesting and momentous times.

Patricide in the Name of Purity

"My father watched him across the gulf of years and pathos which always
divide a father from his son."

— John Phillips Marquand,
The Late George Apley

"...and instead of principle governing party, party governs principle."

— Thomas Paine,
'First Principles of Government' Paris, July 1795.

"...now it seems the Dato is losing his head! He is becoming over-zealous,
is beginning to forget the people who supported him and placed him
where he is now....."

— letter to *The Straits Times*, 23 June 1951.

The British Colonial Office realised that face was one thing but
policy was another. It would have been foolish not to budge since
the Malayan Union was so massively and successfully boycotted
by the Malay community. The imperial stakes were too high;
after all, Malaya's tin and rubber were still jewels of the British
Empire. With labour militancy on the rise and the postwar anti-
imperial movement in ferment in Asia, the British had their hands
too full in fact to make longterm enemies of the Malays. In
any case there was a lot to be salvaged if there could be some com-
promise on the constitutional arrangements. It was preferable to
deal with an essentially conservative UMNO than to have to face
more ardent and fundamental demands of the left.

It was in Britain's interests to cultivate the aristocratic Malay elite and mollify UMNO. For, in the final analysis, there was a convergence of class interests between the colonialists and the English-educated, conservative, moderate Malay aristocrats and administrators who led UMNO. And so it was that Sir Edward Gent, whose installation as Governor of the Malayan Union was fully boycotted by the Malays, was anxious to allay Malay fears. After a meeting with the Rulers on 2 May 1946, he was convinced that there should be a conciliation with the Malays. He was also anxious that the Malay campaign of boycott should not get out of hand and be exploited by the Malayan Communist Party or Indonesians who were sympathetic to the Malay cause. He suggested that the British could consider narrowing the citizenship proposals and replacing the Union with Federation.

On 2 June Gent and Malcolm MacDonald, the Governor-General South East Asia told the Rulers of Britain's eagerness to accommodate Malay demands. On 25 July a Constitutional Working Committee of Twelve was set up to draft the Malayan Union's replacement. The Working Committee consisted of government, royal and UMNO representatives.

The Working Committee met at King's House in Kuala Lumpur on 27 July. It continued to meet from August to November 1946. The draft constitutional proposals were submitted to Whitehall by MacDonald in December. They were published on 24 December. The path was set for the Federation of Malaya, which finally came into force on 1 February 1948.

UMNO had achieved a signal triumph. It had succeeded to safeguard Malay especially upper class Malay interests. It had unified the Malays on a pan-Malayan scale. But problems began to surface.

Early Withdrawals

When UMNO was formed in April-May 1946, it was not a unitary organisation with its own direct membership but rather a confederation of many Malay organisations throughout the country. This was the structural arrangement up to 1948.

Even before UMNO was established, Dato Onn had faced some hostility from some influential Malay leaders in his home state of Johore. There were some strong differences between Dato Onn and Dato Abdul Rahman bin Mohd Yasin, a pre-war Johore State Treasurer in regard to the behaviour of Sultan Ibrahim over the

MacMichael Treaties. Dato Abdul Rahman and some other Malay leaders in Johore had thought that Dato Onn was being too kind towards the Sultan. His two sons, Sulaiman and Dr Ismail had refused to join UMNO until Dato Onn's resignation in 1951.

More serious was the withdrawal of the PKMM from the UMNO confederation at the UMNO meeting in Ipoh on 29 and 30 June 1946. The PKMM, the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya or Malay Nationalist Party, was formed in September 1945. According to one of its leading lights Ahmad Boestamam in his autobiography *Carving the Path to the Summit*, the PKMM had from the time of its formation "proclaimed the aim of its struggle to be the achievement of full or one hundred percent independence for Malaya, and nothing less than this."

After initially welcoming the Malayan Union scheme in principle early in 1946, the PKMM realised later that the aim of the British was not to create an independent Malaya but to strengthen their colonial hold on the country. As Boestamam pointed out, "both force and deceit were employed against the Malay Rulers" to bring the Malayan Union to birth. Hence, the PKMM decided to send a strong delegation led by its President Dr Burhanuddin Helmi to the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress in Kuala Lumpur on 4 March 1946.

As Boestamam said, the PKMM "agreed that the Malayan Union was opposed and crushed by the giant endeavours of all the people, but on the ruins of this Malayan Union a ONE HUNDRED PERCENT INDEPENDENT MALAYA must be erected." This was in fact the resolution put forward at the Congress by PKMM delegates. However, the PKMM resolution was defeated. Unhappy over this, PKMM delegates and observers walked out of the meeting on the afternoon of the third day of the Congress. But the PKMM was still in UMNO.

The division was clear-cut: the PKMM wanted full independence for Malaya, while other Malay organisations in UMNO wanted to preserve the status quo and maintain the feudal class", in the words of Boestamam.

Although the PKMM representatives signed the UMNO charter in Johore Bharu on May 11 and 12, less than two months later the PKMM withdrew from UMNO. There was disagreement over the UMNO symbol. The PKMM insisted that the symbol should be a red and white flag, the symbol of the PKMM itself. However, disagreement over the flag was just an excuse; as Firdaus Haji

Abdullah points out (in his *Radical Malay Politics*), "behind this issue there were serious and substantive disagreements over policy".

At the UMNO meeting in Ipoh on 29 and 30 June 1946, the PKMM's proposal for the symbol was defeated by one vote. After a lengthy speech by Boestamam, he and all other PKMM representatives and supporters walked out. The Malay left had broken ranks with UMNO. At the same meeting, and for the same reason, the *Persatuan Pekerja-Pekerja Junior Malaya* also withdrew from UMNO.

In order to turn UMNO into a full-scale political organisation, with its own direct membership and branches and divisions, it was proposed in mid-1947 that affiliate member organisations of the UMNO confederation should dissolve themselves and merge completely into UMNO. This move was opposed by several organisations which, apart from the fear of losing their own identity, were established long before UMNO itself. *Saberkas* of Kedah had a radical and 'socialist' orientation, while the *Singapore Malay Association* was formed twenty years before UMNO. Moreover, there were organisations whose leadership were drawn from the working class rather than the aristocracy and the English-educated administrative group.

When the proposal to turn UMNO into a full-scale political organisation was decided upon, the *Singapore Malay Association*, the *Sabak Bernam Malay Association* and *Saberkas* chose to remain as associate member organisations only, while the *Perikatan Melayu Kelantan* and the *Kesatuan Melayu Johore* of *Johore Bharu* withdrew completely from UMNO.

A few years later, there were to be two even more important splits from UMNO. One was the resignation of Dato Onn himself which we shall discuss in a few moments. The other concerns the breakaway of the religious wing of UMNO.

In February 1950, mainly to draw away support from the *Hizbul Muslimin*, the *Muslim Party* formed during the second week of March 1948, UMNO organised a meeting in *Johore Bharu* for its Islamic leaders and *Ulamaks* to discuss religious issues. The meeting decided to form a body within UMNO called the *Persatuan Ulamak Sa-Malaya*. *Haji Ahmad Fuad*, a friend of Dato Onn's, became the leader of this body.

However, in June 1951, the *Persatuan Ulamak Sa-Malaya* teamed up with another Islamic group consisting of former ad-

1950). A Singapore lawyer, Sardon bin Haji Jubir, President of the Singapore Malay Association, led the opposition. (He was later to become a Cabinet Minister and the Governor of Penang). Sardon was supported by Kelantan, Perlis, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, the same divisions which had opposed Dato Onn at the Arau General Assembly in May 1949. Speaking out against the proposals, Sardon said: "If they are adopted, the Malay race will fade into obscurity as it has done in Singapore".

To force the issue, Dato Onn resigned as UMNO President; he also announced the resignation of the entire executive council. The opposition reversed its position. A few thousand men, women and children, representing UMNO divisions from all over the country, went in a mile-long procession to Dato Onn's house in Johore Bharu on 27 July to persuade him to withdraw his resignation. A month later, the UMNO Assembly at its annual session in Kuala Kangsar re-elected Dato Onn as UMNO President by 66 votes to 3; it also approved the citizenship proposals which it had rejected earlier.

On 20 November 1950, Dato Onn told a *Straits Times* reporter that he thought that UMNO had progressed to the stage when it should open its doors to the non-Malays with equal membership rights and privileges. He said that UMNO had to be turned into a national organisation and not remain merely as an organisation of the Malays. He was reported in *The Straits Times* of the following day to have said; "Merely opening the door to associate members is not enough. This must be a national body and non-Malay members should be offered all the rights and privileges of the organisation." There were then about 1,000 non-Malay associate members of UMNO, including the then President of the MCA, Dato Tan Cheng Lock.

Dato Onn also wanted UMNO to be renamed as the United Malayan National Organisation.

He announced on 5 June 1951 that independence for Malaya could be achieved in seven years with the establishment of the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). He also warned that he would form the new party if UMNO rejected his suggestion to convert itself into the United Malayan National Organisation. He even said that the new party would make efforts for the merger of Singapore with the Federation of Malaya. The new party, he said, would also do away with the nine Malay States and the Straits Settlements. "We should not even use the term 'State' to denote Johore or Selangor, or Perak. The word should be

'territory'".

Although a number of prominent leaders of the different communities declared their support for Dato Onn on his proposed new party, his ideas were strongly opposed by a considerable number of Malays. For instance, in a letter published in *The Straits Times* on 19 June 1951, Ahmad bin Haji A. Rahim, the President of the Johore Peninsular Malay Union, argued that "..... to force the Malays to share equal rights with foreigners by giving further concessions to them in this country will lead to incidents similar to those in Palestine or India, which neither Malays nor foreigners desire".

The main thrust of criticisms against Dato Onn was that he was in too much of a hurry which was feared to be detrimental to the Malays. As Vasil puts it, "The common ground in this opposition was that Dato Onn was speeding up the independence of the country and thereby was attempting to expose the Malays prematurely to the enterprise and economic power of the Chinese and the Indians".

All the same, Dato Onn went ahead with his plans. He resigned from UMNO on 1 July 1951. Realising that his proposals faced substantial opposition from UMNO divisions, he did not think it would be useful to wait for the formal decision of the UMNO General Assembly scheduled in August. On 26 August 1951, he tendered formally his resignation from UMNO at the General Assembly. This is how Vasil narrates the event:

This time the UMNO did not request him to remain in the organisation and promptly elected Tunku Abdul Rahman, an unknown deputy Public Prosecutor in Kuala Lumpur, as the new President by fifty-seven votes to eleven.

As a farewell gesture, the UMNO General Assembly passed the following resolutions:

1. That this Assembly shows a token a sadness and regret because Dato Onn declined the invitation to stand for re-election to the Presidentship of the UMNO for the 1951-52 tenure of office;
2. As such, this Assembly should make a remembrance that the organisation is very grateful for his guidance and advice, for the discharge of his responsibility as President of the organisation and for the benefits that the Malays have gained through his sincere, conscientious and hard work; and,

3. That this Assembly is confident that the honourable ex-President will continue to work unflinchingly for the safety of the Malay race, country and religion; hence this Assembly prays that the Dato and the party that he intends to inaugurate would be guided and rewarded by God, the Almighty.

And so it was that Dato Onn, the 'Father of UMNO' and UMNO parted ways. His Independence of Malaya Party was formed on 16 September 1951. Faced with the communal onslaught from UMNO, and betrayed by the MCA, Dato Onn's multiracial experiment in the IMP had an early death.

Vasil explains:

Malays who have ever dared to go out of the ranks of the Malays have been called traitors to the Malay cause. In fact, they become outcasts within the Malay community. There is the case of Dato Onn bin Jaafar, father of Malay nationalism and the founder of the UMNO. Soon after he left the UMNO, its new President, Tunku Abdul Rahman, said that Dato Onn, by leaving the UMNO and forming the non-communal IMP, had sold away Malay rights and heritage to other races. One could also cite the example of Dato Zainal Abidin bin Haji Abas, at one time the Chairman of the United Democratic Party. Dato Zainal, coming from Perak, had been a very prominent Malay for over two decades. He, along with his mentor, Dato Onn, was one of the founders of the UMNO in 1946 and was also its first General Secretary. Later, in 1951, he left the UMNO with Dato Onn and joined the IMP. He later accepted the chairmanship of the United Democratic Party. But today, because of his politics, he is completely alienated from the Malay community. In the 1964 general elections, he contested for Parliament from his home constituency, Parit in Perak, where he was not only defeated by an UMNO candidate but lost his deposit. When Aziz Ishak, a top-ranking leader of the UMNO and a senior member of the Cabinet, dared to cross swords with Tunku Abdul Rahman, he was eased out of the UMNO. Once he was out of the UMNO he was hounded, and during the 1964 general elections all kinds of charges were laid against him and his political party, the National Convention Party. Not long after the elections he was arrested under the Internal Security Act on the unproved and unpressed charge of working with the Indonesians.

After the demise of the IMP, Dato Onn reverted to communal politics by forming Parti Negara. In the 1959 General Elections, Parti Negara was badly defeated; only Dato Onn himself managed

to win a parliamentary seat in Trengganu, with the tacit support of PAS. Dato Onn died on 19 January 1962 at the age of 67, obviously a disappointed man. The Parti Negara faded away soon after.

Whatever shortcomings Dato Onn had, he was at least a visionary in terms of a united Malayan nation. After him, finding a magus in UMNO is a rather rare event.

4. Fratricide in the Name of Unity

"Hence, vain deluding Joys, The brood of Folly without father bred!"
- John Milton, English poet, (1608 - 1674) .

"..... I'm sure I have a lot of enemies, all of us politicians have enemies...."
- Senator Trueba to Transito Soto, in **The House of the Spirits** by Isabel Allende, Bantam Books, New York, 1988.

"How true man is himself, and how false the things about which his quarrels divide man from man."
- Rabindranath Tagore .

"When great questions end, little parties begin."
- Walter Bagehot .

According to Vasil, Dato Onn's son Hussein Onn had said that his father had hoped that he was not severing all ties with UMNO when he left the organisation he founded. Vasil points out that what Dato Onn felt "was that the UMNO was not ready to accept his ideas which were ahead of his time, and therefore, he had to go out of it and establish a new organisation with the help of non-communal-minded Chinese, Indians and others and the non-communal elements within the UMNO. The rest in the UMNO, according to his idea, would be left under a moderate and responsible leader who would prepare them for eventual non-communal politics and cooperation with the IMP."

Tunku Abdul Rahman, the new UMNO President, however, thought quite differently at the time. On 17 September 1951, just one day after the formation of the IMP, the Tunku declared that any member of UMNO who joined the IMP would be expelled from UMNO. The Tunku said: "We cannot tolerate this ridiculous situation.... We cannot afford to have a split in our ranks. The policies of the IMP and the UMNO are opposed". He added: "It is the policy of the IMP to open membership to all persons who are resident in this country. There was no qualification as to their allegiance, loyalty or birthright. Can you form a nation with such flimsy materials?"

This was not the first and last time Tunku Abdul Rahman took a hard stand. On 30 June 1952, a few months after UMNO and the MCA had successfully contested the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections, the Tunku declared: "Malaya is for the Malays and it should not be governed by a mixture of races." Vasil pertinently notes:

In fact, the Tunku had started making these extreme statements immediately after assuming the Presidency of the UMNO in late August 1951. The Tunku was so extreme that Raja Ayoub bin Raja Haji Bok, Chairman of the Kuala Lumpur branch of the UMNO, was forced to warn on 13 September 1951 that the Tunku would be blocking all chances of UMNO's success in the municipal elections in Kuala Lumpur, where a large part of the electorate was non-Malay, if he went on making 'Malaya for the Malays' statements.

The UMNO youth leader at the time, Mohammed Sopiee, branded Tunku's policy as 'narrow racialism' and 'explosive'.

UMNO's Early Rivalries

Thus, UMNO under the Tunku's leadership, in contrast to that of Dato Onn, set the communal tone, by virtue of its supremacy in the Alliance, for the whole country. Organisationally, as Professors Ratnam and Milne point out (in their book *The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964*), "UMNO has had to face two kinds of internal problems." Such problems seemed to have intensified after UMNO became the dominant partner in the Alliance coalition government, fighting and scheming over the not inconsiderable spoils of office. Ratnam and Milne explain:

First, there have been rivalries for nomination as candidates and for positions within the party. These have not always been restricted to individuals, and have on occasion led to the emergence of

antagonistic factions. But there have been few outward manifestations of this at the national level, mainly because the chief positions have been held by men who enjoy wide support within the party and whom few would aspire to replace. The best examples are undoubtedly the Tengku and Tun Razak who, in addition to being the President and Deputy President respectively of the UMNO, are also the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the country.

The second half of the above statement by Ratnam and Milne, it should be pointed out, was only true for a while. For none other than the Tunku himself has exploded the myth that his relationship with Tun Razak was as harmonious as commonly believed. Writing in the 29 August 1983 issue of *The Star* (and reproduced in his book *Contemporary Issues in Malaysian Politics*), the Tunku related a telling incident thus:

Once at the residency, Khalid Awang Osman, the former High Commissioner to India, mentioned in front of Tun Razak that he (Razak) would have to wait for a long time before he could become the Prime Minister. I could see the shocked surprise on the face of Tun Razak. As it happened, after that day I noticed his attitude took a change.

Writing about the 1962 UMNO General Assembly (*The Straits Times*, 27 August 1962), veteran journalist A. Samad Ismail was still able to say: "Seldom are there dramatic moments when UMNO delegates meet for their annual conference. The party's general assembly which ended last Friday was no exception." He went on to comment: "But generally UMNO debates are neither dull nor destructive. What some of them lack in erudition and profundity, they make up for in eloquence."

But A. Samad Ismail did reveal that although the Tunku's presidential speech "on the whole was hardly touched to the extent that one would have expected", the "only point in the Tunku's speech which seems to have been taken up seriously was the problem of nominating candidates for future elections."

Significantly, this was the early symptom of UMNO's malaise, especially if we consider the fact that "A Kaum Ibu delegate said with some emotion that some wakil rakyat had become rich since their election".

Be that as it may, the fatal attractions of power and money had just set in and were obviously then not considered to be serious enough by UMNO leaders and members. As reflected by A. Samad Ismail's report, it was still a time for self-congratula-

tion, if not complacency, as "there is every reason for the party to be satisfied with itself. UMNO is expanding at a rate which must be the envy of its rivals." Also, as A. Samad Ismail reported, "The past year, too brought many rebels back into the fold."

While leadership conflicts at the national level within UMNO hardly burst into the open from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, the situation at the lower levels was far from calm. As Ratnam and Milne point out, in some states, "Rivalries involving individuals and factions have been quite noticeable, and have led to serious problems of discipline." The most salient example was that of Kelantan where the Alliance was defeated by the PMIP (known now as PAS).

Different groups within the UMNO began blaming each other for their party's virtual annihilation by the PMIP, and the situation deteriorated to a point where it was impossible either to get the existing leaders to co-operate with each other in rebuilding the party or to find an alternative group of leaders who were prepared to do so.

Ratnam and Milne explain that the second set of internal problems faced by UMNO in the 1950s and 1960s had to do with "disagreements over some of the policies followed by the government. They say: "In this connection, the main conflict has been between those who feel that the Government's first duty is to promote the material and cultural interests of the Malay community and those who maintain that due regard must also be given to the welfare of the other communities."

The Aziz Ishak Saga

However, it was not always a conflict over race and culture. More often than not, it was a question of conflicts of interests and perceptions among the leaders. The saga of Aziz Ishak, the Tunku's Minister for Agriculture after the 1955 general election, attests to this. In his semi-autobiography, *Special Guest: The Detention in Malaysia of an Ex-Cabinet Minister* (Oxford University Press, 1977), Aziz Ishak says that "when other members of UMNO came to live in Kuala Lumpur after the formation of the Alliance Cabinet, the beginning of a rift was already on the horizon."

Aziz Ishak says it was "inevitable" that with the top leaders of the Alliance living in Kuala Lumpur, "there would be keen competition for the Tunku's favours". He also claims that "a few

changes began to appear in the Tunku, who had begun to feel the sense of growing power and position, and with the new advisers around him the change was swift." He relates that one of his first disagreements with the Tunku "was the wearing of the uniform for Cabinet Ministers, which I objected to rather strongly, and for the first few occasions I refrained from attending official functions where uniforms had to be worn."

Aziz Ishak complains that after this he began to sense "a mild feeling of hostility towards me from the Tunku and Tun Razak." He says he was left out of the more important delegations going overseas.

Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman had designed the Ministerial uniform to resemble that of British colonial governors, "complete with gold-embroidered shoulder badge and a rich collar decoration with something like an oak leaf on it. The headgear had red and white plumes on a cocked-hat with a white sharkskin jacket or tunic with dark slacks." Apparently, the Tunku's Anglomania was too strong to make him recognise how grotesque the uniform looked.

Aziz Ishak also complains that the 1955 election manifesto of the UMNO-dominated Alliance coalition was "quite forgotten until the election in 1959. The policy on this occasion was to vote for the Tunku personally, not minding if earlier promises were not kept, as we had already achieved Merdeka. It had been a well-known habit of the Tunku after Independence was declared to claim that there was not even a single drop of blood shed. Also, that he was the happiest Prime Minister in the world. During all this time however there was a minimum of murmuring and rumblings of complaint which of course the Tunku ignored. Suddenly 13 May 1969 exploded and brought a considerable amount of bloodshed in its train. This spelled his fall from grace. A year later he retired as the first Prime Minister of Malaysia."

As we shall see in a later chapter, Aziz Ishak's rift with the Tunku eventually led to the former leaving the Cabinet and his later detention without trial under the Internal Security Act. For now it is perhaps useful to ponder upon Aziz Ishak's conclusion in his book:

On reflection, I wish to record here for the benefit of posterity that the first two governments of Tunku Abdul Rahman from 1955

* -63 of which I was a member, even at the initial stages were not

truly interested in principle. That 'the leadership is always right' had been the guiding lines of the Alliance Government then. In fact, it governed more by expediency than by principle. Thus, truth, justice and sincerity were being bartered for their opposites.

The Great Myths

Over the years, a myth had been nurtured by some circles who are either ignorant or forgetful or both whenever it was convenient to do so, that the Tunku and his deputy Tun Razak had always enjoyed an almost perfect political and working relationship. This relationship had been characterised by some people as being comparable to that of a father and obedient son. Tun Razak had often been praised for his 'patience' in being the Tunku's 'faithful' deputy, both in UMNO and in the government, without any complaint, envy or ambition. However, none other than the Tunku himself has exploded such myths.

In an article published in *The Star* on 20 February 1978 (reproduced in his book *Contemporary Issues in Malaysian Politics*), Tunku Abdul Rahman said that *Asiaweek's* M.G.G. Pillai had alleged in the 17 February 1978 issue of that news-weekly that "many political figures still insist privately that the Tunku stepped down unwillingly in 1970 and that he was in fact pushed aside by Tun Abdul Razak". The Tunku commented:

As regards the late Tun Razak pushing me aside, he made no attempt openly to do so but it must be admitted that he felt a bit small to be my deputy for so long, and being an ambitious man, he would no doubt have liked to take over as Prime Minister. Only those around him wanted to take over dramatically and with a blare of trumpets.

It may be true that Tun Razak made no attempt openly to push the Tunku aside. But the interesting and pertinent question is: Did Tun Razak make any attempt secretly to do so? As pointed out earlier, the Tunku said that Tun Razak's face betrayed "shocked surprise" at the Tunku's conversation with Khalid Awang Osman over the question of succession. On another occasion the Tunku said: "I took the remarks as a joke, but soon after things began to happen."

In an interview with *Asiaweek*, published on 10 May 1985, exactly sixteen years to the day after the fateful general election of 1969, the Tunku actually blamed Tun Razak and other colleagues for his downfall. In relating the charged atmosphere

just before the general election on 10 May 1969, the Tunku said:

"It started when one of them (alleged communists – author) was killed near the airport, and they asked for a funeral procession to bury the dead. I would never have allowed that. But I was not there. I was away campaigning. But my colleagues, who were trying to make trouble for me, gave permission, and so when the communists carried the body, they stopped at every corner to harangue the people, to curse the government, to curse me....

Further on the Tunku actually said that "My deputy allowed it", meaning the procession. To another question, he said: "I couldn't have stayed on. To stay, you have to be sure of the loyalty of your friends and colleagues. I wasn't sure. In fact I was very, ah, frustrated with the behaviour of some." This suggests strongly that he stepped down unwillingly. The tranquility of UMNO under the Tunku was actually a facade.

The Albar Outburst

Even before the May 13 tragedy and its aftermath there were already instances of unhappiness with the manner Tunku Abdul Rahman was handling affairs of the country as well as that of UMNO. When the separation of Singapore from Malaysia was hastily rushed through the Malaysian Parliament on 9 August 1965, the then Secretary-General of UMNO, Syed Jaafar Albar resigned his party post in protest over what he claimed was the absence of consultation over the matter.

The Tunku had this to say, in an article in *The Star* of 23 June 1975:

In 1966, after the break with Singapore, there was a quiet whisper of discontent from a group of young UMNO members working their way into the party leadership. They received an equally quiet rebuke from me. I said there was no haste for them to feather their nest; they were not yet ready for top posts. Old people must give way to the young in time, but they must not be forced out, as the country still needed them.

Here he was probably referring to others in UMNO rather than to Syed Jaafar Albar.

Tun Dr Ismail's resignation from the Cabinet was largely as a result of the Tunku's interference with established foreign policy when the former was the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1967. Tun Dr Ismail also disagreed with the Tunku's attitude that Malaysian defence policy should not be debated in Parliament in 1966 after the British had announced their military

pull-out east of Suez. As Chandran Jeshurun points out (in his book *Malaysian Defence Policy: A Study in Parliamentary Attitudes 1963-1973*), Tun Dr Ismail "was obviously not entirely happy with the Government's guarded silence over its future defence plans for he considered that 'the defence of this country is a national matter above party politics'." Jeshurun also adds that "during the initial years..... Tunku Abdul Rahman had a large, and sometimes final, say in these matters" of defence. He contrasts the "personal inclinations of the Tunku himself who much preferred to trust the traditional ties with Britain for the defence needs of the country than to experiment with a new foreign policy particularly where it involved the establishment with diplomatic relations with Communist countries" to Tun Razak's and Tun Dr Ismail's proposal for the neutralization of Southeast Asia.

The Toppling of the Tunku

The serious electoral setback of the Alliance coalition government under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, and the subsequent May 13 riots and paramilitary rule under the so-called National Operations Council left the ruling Alliance in political, if not organisational, shambles. Deep-seated differences in UMNO, dormant under a deceptive calm, erupted into fierce and open antagonisms. The Alliance had lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament, although it still had a comfortable majority. This is how Milne and Mauzy narrate the events of those heady days:

Despite the fact that the Alliance still commanded an easy majority in Parliament, the elections were viewed as a tremendous setback. In the agonizing period of reappraisal which followed, Malay discontent found expression in groups within UMNO and among the students, and centred on urging the Tunku to resign. A major crisis developed inside the UMNO between the Tunku and his supporters and the so-called "radicals". Open criticism subsided when Dr Mahathir was expelled from the party and Encik Musa Hitam was sent on "study leave" to England as the Tunku reasserted his authority.

A formidable challenge was mounted against the Tunku by a combination of Malay intellectuals, Malay university students and some UMNO personalities who included Dr Mahathir, Musa Hitam, Syed Jaafar Albar. Dato Harun Idris, the then Mentri Besar of Selangor and UMNO Youth leader was, according to

Bruce Gale who introduces the section on Malay Politics in Tunku's book *Contemporary Issues in Malaysian Politics*, "not known as a supporter of the Tunku. In fact, he had aligned himself temporarily with the Tunku's critics in 1969". As we saw earlier, the Tunku himself has also begun to point an accusing finger at Tun Razak. They felt that the Tunku's government had not done enough for the Malays economically and educationally, and that the Tunku's feudalistic style put more stress on loyalty than on ability or achievement.

On 17 June 1969, Dr Mahathir wrote a letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman, making scathing attacks on the Prime Minister and UMNO President. Apart from accusing the Tunku for being too soft on the Chinese, it also suggested that the Tunku should step down as Prime Minister and UMNO President. When copies of this letter were widely circulated throughout the country, the NOC imposed a ban on it being circulated and received. Whatever harm that was intended by the letter was already done. Dr Mahathir was expelled from the UMNO Supreme Council on 12 July 1969. Shortly afterwards, he was expelled from UMNO itself. Musa Hitam was sacked from his post as Assistant Minister.

As Milne and Mauzy point out, "before the 1969 elections the scene was deceptively quiet". The Tunku had naively thought that the controversial National Language Act of 1967 had been widely accepted in the country. But, as Milne and Mauzy argue, "In fact, the compromise had been rejected by militant and influential groups of Malays and non-Malays". They say that intelligent observers "were under no illusions" and that "they did not believe that all groups 'worked together harmoniously for the common good' as claimed by the Tunku. Another academic, Michael Leifer (in his book *Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia*), thinks that "the riots and the manner of governmental response to this eruption would seem to indicate that if the Tunku was regarded as failing Malay interests, he had also lost the confidence of the non-Malays, who saw themselves as footing the bill for an episode for which they did not feel responsible".

But it was not just a matter of post-May-13 disillusion among the non-Malays with the Tunku and the Alliance. The 10 May 1969 general elections results indicated that the Tunku and his government had actually lost ground in both Malay and non-Malay areas. Among the Chinese dissatisfactions was the refusal of the Tunku's government to recognise the proposed Chinese-

sponsored Merdeka University project.

While the NOC in its official report, *The May 13 Tragedy*, blamed the communists, secret societies and opposition parties for the riots, Tunku Abdul Rahman's own account, *May 13: Before and After*, pointed an accusing finger at not only the communists, secret societies and the opposition parties but also at the 'Ultras' or extremists in UMNO.

The Tunku's Retort

For a while, the Tunku was down but not out. In September 1969 his version of the events that led up to the May 13 riots was published. In the book, he called Dr Mahathir's letter of June 17 to him "scurrilous". He said that there was "a group of men, usually referred to as the 'Ultras', or as they prefer to be known the 'Intellectuals' who have manouevred themselves into positions in UMNO". He accused them of wanting "to establish a new order of things inside the UMNO and the country. For instance, they consider our political thinking is out-dated and out of line with Afro-Asian policies. Among the ideas they have in mind are probably to remove the constitutional monarchy and to set up Malaysia as a Republic."

The Tunku also claimed that the 'Ultras' wanted UMNO "to take over the whole administration of the Government on their own as one Party", leaving out the MCA and the MIC.

Tunku Abdul Rahman also asserted that there was "a struggle for power going on inside UMNO as between those who built the Party and helped in our independence and the new elements, the 'Ultras'". He said that "In fact this struggle started two years ago, even longer back than that." He also wondered if the 'Ultras' would make an uneasy alliance with the PMIP, adding that "It is certain that such an alliance would be very uneasy indeed".

Mahathir's Further Salvos

Although Dr Mahathir was expelled from UMNO on 12 July 1969, he did not become idle. The early months of his wilderness years were utilised for writing his book *The Malay Dilemma*; when it was published in Singapore in early 1970, it was instantly banned in Malaysia. Apart from propounding some highly controversial assertions on the genetic factors he supposed were responsible for the socio-economic backwardness of the Malays,

he also devoted certain portions of the book to criticise the policies and actions of the Tunku and the Alliance government.

In his analysis of the causes of the May 13 riots, Mahathir was of the opinion that "the near-absolute power that the Alliance obtained corrupted the thinking of the leaders almost absolutely". He accused the top UMNO leaders at the time of rendering the party's constitution "incompatible and even irrelevant".

The prestige and authority of these officials as members of the Government outweighed those of party officials. The Prime Minister in particular became so powerful both by virtue of his office and by popular acclaim, that the party became subservient to his person. And so, not only was the General Assembly frequently put off, but even the Central Executive Council was not called upon to discuss Government policy or even party policy. The party was held together not because the members had generally identical ideas on politics, but through a system of patronage and disguised coercion based on Government rather than party authority.

Mahathir also referred to patronage as a significant factor in UMNO's intra-party politics. He accused UMNO leaders of having succumbed to the disease of dispensing patronage, and "believing that they no longer needed to heed the opinions of their supporters, they disregarded them at every turn."

More seriously, Mahathir accused the UMNO under the Tunku of appeasing the Chinese. He attributed the erosion of UMNO's strength and influence to this alleged appeasement. He also claimed that "the Government was apparently oblivious to what went on around it".

Secure in its absolute majority in Parliament, it was openly contemptuous of criticism. Policies were made which completely ignored public opinion. Typical of this was the decision to use Government funds to settle the cost of a private summons case when a Minister sued an opposition MP for slander. The decision was made after the case was lost. If the Minister had won he would no doubt have collected the damage awards.

Mahathir also charged that the Tunku was frivolous and that his government was contemptuous of "accepted public morals and public expectation". "Laws," he said, "were hurriedly passed without prior consultation with the representatives who had to 'sell' these laws to the people. Tax innovations were made and discarded with complete disregard for the disrupting effect on the public.

The medical doctor from Alor Star further charged that under

the Tunku's leadership, "Parliamentary sittings were regarded as a pleasant formality which afforded members opportunities to be heard and quoted, but which would have absolutely no effect on the course of the Government." He said that the "general feeling was that whether or not the Parliament sat, the Government would carry on."

The sittings were a concession to a superfluous democratic practice. Its main value lay in the opportunity to flaunt Government strength. Off and on, this strength was used to change the constitution. The manner, the frequency and the trivial reasons for altering the constitution reduced this supreme law of the nation to a useless scrap of paper.

Mahathir also made the serious charge that under the Tunku, "independent Malaya chose to treat membership of the Cabinet as a reward for loyalty to party chiefs and acceptability to the Prime Minister." "Once appointed," he added, "no amount of dereliction of duty could affect the position of a Minister. On the other hand, even if the Minister performed well, failure to remain on good terms with the Prime Minister meant removal from the Ministry." Apparently, he was referring to the case of Aziz Ishak.

Thus, Mahathir accused the Tunku's administration of nepotism and mediocrity. He was of the view that "All the while however the Government was busy on devices to perpetuate itself."

In an article entitled 'Problems of Democratic Nation-Building in Malaysia' published in the October 1971 issue of *Solidarity*, Mahathir was to broaden his attack on the Tunku's leadership, characterising it as 'feudal'. He referred to amendments to UMNO's constitution which gave the Tunku "the right to choose his own Secretary-General and nominate six other members of the executive council." "These amendments," he said, "decisively gave the president complete control of the party."

Reviewed in the light of later developments, these amendments marked the beginning of the end of democratic practices within the party, and by extension within the governments that were dominated by the party.

Another charge was that "the president arrogated to himself the right to choose all the candidates for elections, his position thus became completely immune to challenge." A more serious charge was that members of the Tunku's family "had been appointed to high posts, including that of commander-in-chief of

the armed forces, Governor of one of the States, a chief minister and numerous ambassadors."

The Prince Prime Minister off-handedly and without consultation with party or cabinet named a successor years before his retirement. Mahathir's catalogue of the Tunku's sins of commission and omission extended to the way Malaysia was espoused as a concept, "Without warning to either cabinet colleagues or party", and "objections were suppressed not because there was virtue in the Malaysia project, but because it would offend the Prime Minister." Even the Cabinet came in for censure:

The cabinet had by then become openly feudal in its thinking. Cabinet meetings had become briefing sessions or mere social occasions when everyone vied with each other to please the Prime Minister, the virtual ruler of the country.

He also charged that the "ejection of Singapore from Malaysia was decided upon in the same way." The Tunku was also accused of agreeing to a defence treaty with Britain which gave Britain extra-territorial rights and an influence over Malaysia's foreign policy without consulting his colleagues. He was also criticised for making a gift of 'Carcosa', the former official residence of the Colonial Secretary of the British, to the British on attaining independence. He said the Tunku considered himself "a hereditary grand vizier rather than an elected Prime Minister."

As we shall see in a subsequent chapter, many of Mahathir's criticisms of the Tunku's leadership would be substantiated by independent sources. However, the dramatic irony of it all is that almost twenty years later, Mahathir himself has come under fierce attack over many of the same faults for which he ticked off the Tunku.

By the time *The Malay Dilemma* was published, the Tunku was about to announce that he would resign on 21 September 1970. But, as Milne and Mauzy point out, "However, the rift which had developed within the UMNO continued even after the Tunku was succeeded by Tun Razak".

And so the Tunku did step down as announced, "but only after it was agreed, "as Professor Syed Husin Ali reminds us, "that a handsome pension would be paid to him – which was ironic for someone regarded as a nationalist fighter."

The Old Order in UMNO has passed? How was the New Order to take its place?

5. The Orba-Orla Soap Opera

— It seems history is to blame.

— Haines, in *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

“Love of power....is....more peculiarly the sin of little than of great minds.”

— Frances Wright (1795–1852)

quoted in Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas*, Ark Paperbacks, London, 1983.

“There is a quarrel, there always has been, perhaps there always will be, since human nature is ab ovo quarrelsome. But there need not be.”

— D.H. Lawrence, in *Apocalypse*, his last book.

“When I look through the pages of history or study events, I sometimes find that people who know one another most, quarrel most”.

— Jawaharlal Nehru, First Prime Minister of India.

“The dying order always likes to give a few kicks before it goes down.”

— Benazir Bhutto

14.2.89, Islamabad, UPI.

The major crisis within UMNO between the so-called radicals and the Tunku Abdul Rahman faction cooled down somewhat, at least on the surface, after Mahathir was expelled from UMNO and Musa Hitam was dispatched off to England on ‘study leave’. However, things were never really the same again in UMNO. As we have seen in the last chapter, the rift continued to simmer,

pecially between the Tunku and Mahathir.

Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar, himself considered by many to be one of the 'radicals' or 'Ultras' aligned with the Mahathir faction in 1969, was to say later, during the Dato Harun crisis in UMNO, that it was during Tun Razak's period of office that efforts to split the leadership into 'Old' and 'New' factions emerged. "The term known as *orba-orla* emerged. Order baru — order lama (New Order — Old Order)," he stressed. (See Marwilis Haji Yusoff's book *Terbuang Tapi Terbilang*).

"It was from there on that disunity in UMNO circles became extremely difficult to rectify began," said Syed Jaafar Albar. He compared these efforts to divide to those used by Aidit and Soekarno in Indonesia during the time of President Sukarno. It seems that Syed Jaafar Albar was pretty agitated over the matter for by 1976 he himself was considered to belong to the 'Old Order' leaders who were said to be unsuitable by then.

Gordon P. Means (in his book *Malayan Politics*) comments on the new situation as follows:

In the aftermath of the 1969 crisis, parochial Malay elites continued to move into more powerful positions in the United Malays National Organisation. At the 1971 annual meeting of the party, communal moderates found it very difficult to be re-elected to the UMNO Executive Council because of the strong support commanded by those Malay elites who were known as 'Malay ultras'.

The incumbent Khir Johari, a close ally of the Tunku, lost his Vice-Presidential position. Dato Harun Idris and Musa Hitam were elected as UMNO Youth President and Deputy President respectively. Tun Razak, the new UMNO President made use of the May 1971 Silver Jubilee General Assembly of UMNO to consolidate his own position. Constitutional amendments were passed to strengthen the power of the Supreme Council, UMNO elections were to be held every three years instead of annually, stricter disciplinary measures were imposed and the Supreme Council was given the power to select parliamentary and state election candidates. The amendment to hold triennial UMNO elections, which was passed narrowly by a vote of 180 to 175, was to take effect only after 1972.

In March 1972, Dr Mahathir was readmitted to UMNO, less than three years after he was expelled. In the June 1972 General Assembly, Datuk Hussein Onn, a brother-in-law of Tun Razak, was elected as an UMNO Vice-President, while Mahathir was readmitted in as a Supreme Council member with the largest number

of votes. It was at this General Assembly that Ghazali Shafie, an arrogant and intellectually pretentious prima donna with over-inflated ambitions, failed to win as one of the Vice-Presidents of UMNO.

The June 1973 General Assembly held no elections. For the first time, it was closed to the Press. Tun Dr Ismail, in his capacity as Deputy President of UMNO, lectured to the joint meeting of UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO on 29 June on the dire dangers of factionalism in UMNO. He pleaded (from *Amanat Tun Dr Ismail*, documented by A. Karim Haji Abdullah):

We must avoid the factionism disease, meaning one group crosses to the north, another group crosses to the south, one to the east and one to the west. Factionism is similar to the 'warlordism' disease in China before the Communist got into power, where that country was divided into certain areas controlled by the various warlords; this general in power in the north, that general in power in the south, a general in power in the east, as well as a general in power in the west.

In a big and influential party like UMNO, if the factionism or splitting disease were to descend upon us, we shall inevitably divide ourselves. (My translation).

Tun Dr Ismail also emphasised the need to discuss issues in the party according to established rules and regulations; they should not be discussed in front of the public lest they be misunderstood by them. He told the Youth and Women delegates that discipline was necessary for the party's unity and strength. He died a few weeks after making this speech, a speech which revealed that, below the calm surface, all was not well in UMNO.

At the General Assembly in June 1974, an amendment to the UMNO constitution, designed to stop the practice of vote-buying, was passed, setting a maximum limit to the number of delegates allowed for each division and branch. At the Youth level, Dato Harun Idris defeated Datuk Samad Idris of Negeri Sembilan as UMNO Youth Leader. It had been reported in the Press that Datuk Samad Idris was supported by Tun Razak, but this was subsequently denied. Nonetheless, as Milne and Mauzy point out, "the episode suggested that serious factions and divisions existed within the party."

Reasons for the Barisan Nasional

The 1969 general elections setbacks, the May 13 riots, and its own internal problems had shaken the self-confidence of UMNO.

Tun Razak felt the need to re-arrange the cards, as it were, to save UMNO and its traditional partners the MCA and the MIC from a worse fate. Hence, the idea of a larger coalition of parties in the form of a Barisan Nasional (National Front) to take the place of the discredited Alliance. The process of building the Barisan Nasional began during the 18 months when Parliament was suspended by emergency decree following the May 13, 1969 riots.

Apart from other reasons and calculations, some of the new arrangements were also necessitated by UMNO's internal squabbles. This was especially so in the state of Perak. There was dissension and factionalism within the Perak UMNO at the divisional level and no firm control from the state organisation.

In the meantime, Tun Razak was busy mending walls in UMNO. He replaced Tunku loyalists with his own men. The readmission of Mahathir into UMNO on 7 March 1972, and his later appointment as a senior Minister in the Cabinet after the 1974 general election, could be seen as Tun Razak's desire to neutralise former opponents through co-option. At the same time, Musa Hitam was also being rehabilitated by Tun Razak.

The Rise of Hussein Onn

In August 1973, Tun Dr Ismail, the Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy UMNO President died suddenly. Tun Razak chose his brother-in-law Datuk Hussein Onn to succeed Tun Dr Ismail. Less than a week after Tun Dr Ismail's death, the UMNO Supreme Council unanimously voted for Tun Razak's choice of deputy.

Datuk Hussein Onn, the son of UMNO's founder and first president, Dato Onn Jaafar, was by the time of his promotion already an UMNO Vice-President as well as the Education Minister. Four days after Datuk Hussein Onn was chosen as Deputy President of UMNO, Tun Razak appointed him as Deputy Prime Minister in a major Cabinet reshuffle. Mauzy (in her book **Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia**) comments:

This fast and smooth process of succession in the government and the party boosted confidence in the system and reconfirmed Tun Razak's leadership and control. He was able to placate the two senior UMNO Vice-Presidents while quietly insisting on his choice of Datuk Hussein Onn, with barely a murmur from the party rank-and-file.

It is significant to note that in this case, one other ambitious

person who had hoped to be appointed Deputy Prime Minister, or at least as one of two Deputy Prime Ministers, was the late Tun Tun Siew Sin, the then MCA President and Finance Minister. There were of course rumblings in UMNO, but for the time being at least, differences were kept beneath the lid.

The Entry of the Dalang

1975 was UMNO election year. After some agonising, Tun Razak chose to play the role of the *dalang*, the master puppeteer of the *wayang kulit* (shadow play). In his presidential address at the 1975 UMNO General Assembly, Tun Razak congratulated, in turn, Ghafar Baba, Tengku Razaleigh and Dr Mahathir for their work in the government and the party; he was in effect naming the government team.

In the end, Tun Razak's, or the government, team won: Ghafar Baba obtained 838 votes, followed by Tengku Razaleigh with 642 votes and Dr Mahathir with 474 votes. Dato Harun Idris and Tan Sri Jaafar Albar obtained 427 and 374 votes respectively. Tun Razak's people had also won overwhelmingly in the Supreme Council elections. 16 of the 20 incumbents were re-elected; only one of seven UMNO Youth candidates was voted in. It was a setback for Dato Harun and his team.

Seven months later, Tun Razak died of leukaemia in London, at the relatively young age of 53. His sudden death set the stage for another round of power struggle in UMNO.

The Triumph of Mahathir

Tun Razak died on 14 January 1976. The next day, Datuk Hussein Onn was sworn in as the Prime Minister. Sooner or later, Hussein Onn would have to name a new Deputy Prime Minister. Meanwhile, he had received, in his first week of office as Prime Minister, a pledge of support from the Cabinet, and confirmed by the UMNO Supreme Council as the Acting UMNO President.

On 5 March 1976, Dr Mahathir, the Education Minister and an UMNO Vice-President, was appointed the Deputy Prime Minister by Datuk Hussein Onn. The appointment was a surprise to many, and possibly a shock to some people in UMNO itself. Mahathir's appointment was in fact a supercession over two more senior Vice-Presidents of UMNO, Ghafar Baba and Tengku Razaleigh. As Milne and Mauzy explain: "First, Encik Ghafar

Baba was the senior UMNO Vice-President and had served as Acting Prime Minister on one previous occasion. In a hierarchy-oriented system, Encik Ghafar Baba ranked highest in line for the appointment. Second, Dr Mahathir had been expelled from UMNO in 1969 for criticising the Tunku, and his return and mercurial rise through the party and government ranks was bruising to the sensitivities of some of the 'old guard' in UMNO. Third, Dr Mahathir had been stereotyped as a Malay extremist by many non-Malays, who could be expected to be alarmed by his appointment."

Datuk Hussein Onn admitted (*New Straits Times*, 6 March 1976) that he had made his decision on the appointment of Mahathir only the night before the announcement. He said: "I do not expect 100 percent approval." The different reactions to the appointment were telling. The MIC expressed its support, the MCA headquarters declined to comment, while both the Tunku and Syed Jaafar Albar would not comment. However, most Malay reaction was favourable.

For a time, trouble seemed to loom after Ghafar Baba declined to serve in Hussein Onn's Cabinet. But this subsided when Ghafar Baba himself urged the people to support the new Cabinet and said that he would remain as the Secretary-General of the Barisan Nasional and as a Vice-President of UMNO.

Tengku Razaleigh from Kelantan was appointed as Finance Minister, while Musa Hitam was promoted to Education Minister. Datuk Mokhtar Hashim, the Deputy Minister of Defence, was made the new Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Sanusi Junid became the Deputy Minister of Land and Regional Development. Datin Rafidah binti Abdul Aziz was made Deputy Finance Minister, while Najib bin Tun Razak, Dato Hussein Onn's nephew, was appointed the Deputy Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts. There was an infusion of young blood into the government.

The Harun Idris Saga

In early 1974, Universiti Kebangsaan (National University) students stoked up the Bangi timber concession, a deal which Dato Harun Idris, the Selangor Menteri Besar and the then powerful UMNO Youth Leader, was said to be involved. Tun Razak ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the anti-corruption agency, to probe the allegations. In July 1974, and

again in October 1975, Tun Razak announced that the NBI had not completed its investigations into corruption allegations against Dato Harun.

Dato Harun was no doubt an ambitious man politically. And, of course, since the May 13, 1969 riots, he was considered by many people both within and outside UMNO as a controversial figure. For a time, he was associated with the so-called 'ultras' who lined up against Tunku Abdul Rahman. Over the years, he had ruffled the feathers of a number of other leaders in UMNO.

His staunch supporters think that the cause of his 1975 problems started in 1972 when he was perceived as an obstacle to the election of Ghazali Shafie at the UMNO General Assembly for the post of Vice-President. He had been accused for using the Selangor UMNO block vote against Ghazali Shafie. Harun was accused by his detractors of creating 'an UMNO within UMNO' through UMNO Youth. Harun's attempt to contest an UMNO Vice-Presidential post in 1975 was seen by some people inside UMNO as a strategy to wrest the party's leadership. His sponsorship of the Mohamed Ali-Joe Bugner boxing championship was termed by his opponents as an excuse to win the hearts of the delegates.

We now go back to the 26th UMNO General Assembly which was held in Kuala Lumpur in June 1975. A vacancy for one of the three Vice-Presidential posts had arisen, by virtue of the appointment earlier of Datuk Hussein Onn as Deputy President of UMNO. The poor health of Tun Razak and his deputy Datuk Hussein Onn had begun to give rise to speculation amongst UMNO circles that there might soon be leadership changes at the very top level of UMNO and, by extension, the top posts in the government. Datuk Hussein Onn was recovering from a heart attack, and was rumoured to want to retire. Tun Razak was also expected to retire before the 1975 UMNO elections. As Mauzy puts it, "Consequently, a struggle over the heir-apparency was building up, and the UMNO elections for the vice-presidential posts were regarded as crucial."

Dato Harun's candidacy for a Vice-Presidential post posed a problem for Tun Razak and his men, as it was thought that Dato Harun would not fit in with the style and politics of Tun Razak. It was also generally thought that Dato Harun was nursing ambitions for the ultimate position in UMNO - as UMNO

President, and therefore as Prime Minister of Malaysia.

According to *Asiaweek* (19 December 1975), "Although Dato Harun has repeatedly stated that he is not interested in unseating either Tun Razak or the Deputy Premier, he is on record as saying he would like to 'have a crack at the job' after both Tun Razak and Dato Hussein Onn leave the arena."

In November 1975, Dato Harun was arrested on 16 charges of corruption, misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, and failure to furnish the government with a statement of certain assets. These charges were amended in January and February 1976. In March, a new set of charges involving fraud against Bank Rakyat was levelled against Dato Harun.

Dato Harun's trial on the first set of charges began in April, and on 18 May 1976 he was found guilty and sentenced to two years' jail. His second trial was held between August and early November. On 24 January 1977, he was found guilty of forgery with the intention of cheating. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment and a fine of M\$15,000.

Because Dato Harun was a controversial and, at the time of his arrest, a powerful UMNO personality in his capacity as UMNO Youth leader, Selangor Menteri Besar and a 'hero' of the Malay community after the May 13 riots, his trial and related travails were politically significant. On 18 March 1976, the UMNO Supreme Council decided to expel him from UMNO. This was opposed by a number of UMNO members considered to be in the 'old guard' as well as a considerable number of UMNO Youth leaders and members. A great deal of controversy was generated over the expulsion issue. Some political observers thought at the time that UMNO was then going through its worst internal crisis since the resignation of Dato Onn in 1951.

The Supreme Council decided to expel Dato Harun from the party because it was felt that his activities and actions had contravened the spirit of the Supreme Council's decision of 30 November 1975 that he should take leave and refrain from political activity. It was also alleged that his actions were creating disunity within UMNO and anxiety among the people.

Interestingly, another part of the bargain with Dato Harun was Tun Razak's offer to him to be appointed as Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Dato Harun rejected the offer. But in the eyes of many of Dato Harun's supporters and sympathizers, the corruption charges, especially

in the light of the United Nations offer, were not strictly or wholly corruption charges per se but that they were politically motivated.

All the same, Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn acted decisively against Harun, despite fears from certain UMNO quarters that the party could be split open, UMNO was not split too seriously, but more feelings were bruised and divisions were submerged to re-emerge another day.

An Old 'Lion' as Youth Leader

The decision to expel Dato Harun from UMNO was not well received among some people in the party, for different reasons. There were those who really felt that for a man who had contributed so much to UMNO, it was too harsh a step. However, there were also elements who quite clearly had their own axes to grind in 'championing' Dato Harun's case. This was particularly evident among the Old Guards.

As usual in such matters, there was an atmosphere of crisis in UMNO, with rumours flying about ferociously, although Datuk Hussein Onn insisted that there was no crisis but rather an illusion of crisis because of the "lopsided views and fears of some leaders." All the same, Datuk Hussein Onn had to warn the delegates at the 1976 UMNO General Assembly that there should be no witch-hunt in Malaysia.

The rift, however, was reflected in the result of the leadership contest in UMNO Youth. At the UMNO Youth Assembly, Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar, a veteran already in his sixties and popularly known in some UMNO circles as 'the Singa (Lion) of UMNO', was elected as UMNO Youth leader, defeating Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, the choice of UMNO's top leadership. The UMNO Youth Assembly also unanimously passed a resolution appealing to the UMNO Supreme Council to reinstate Dato Harun as an UMNO member.

The 'Anti-Red' Witch-Hunt

When Datuk Hussein Onn denied that there was a crisis in UMNO, he was in fact trying to put on a brave face against reality. Journalists, diplomats, politicians, businessmen and many members of the public knew that the contrary was true. Some people with vested interest in UMNO were quick to make

of the Dato Harun affair as an excuse to hit back at their opponents. This was how the Hongkong-based Asiaweek (19 December 1975) reported the war preparations:

Just two weeks after Selangor Chief Minister Dato Harun Idris was charged in court on sixteen counts of corruption and misuse of political funds, the Government banned (under its sweeping Internal Security Act) seven anonymous letters which, according to the Administration, level "highly defamatory" accusations against a senior minister, a deputy minister and several civil servants. Almost all the letters involve allegations of corruption and were in wide circulation this week, with groups of anonymous people copying and posting them to others all over the country. After one was posted to members of Parliament, the Attorney-General, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Yusof, warned that a jail sentence and fine awaited anyone who showed the letters to a third person.

Last month, the Attorney-General had confirmed an Opposition query on one letter and said the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) was investigating the author's allegation that the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's department, Dato Abdullah Ahmad, was corrupt. This letter is one of the seven banned by an order signed by Home Affairs Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, and which provides for a 3-year jail sentence and a M\$2,000 (\$800) fine for anyone printing, publishing, selling, distributing or circulating the seven letters.

As 1976 advanced in time, the silent war between the rival camps intensified. On 6 June 1976, while opening the delegates meeting of Ulu Langat UMNO division in Kajang, Selangor, Prime Minister and UMNO President, Datuk Hussein Onn, found it necessary to hit out strongly at some of the antagonists. He said that he had come to know that there were some people in the Selangor UMNO who were carrying out activities to divert the thinking of members but were in fact activities directed at the top leadership. He continued (as contained in *Kaleidoskop Hussein Onn* by Sabda S.):

When we celebrated UMNO's 30th Anniversary recently, there were certain activities encouraging some UMNO members in Kuala Lumpur not to go in force to the Sultan Sulaiman Club, to attend the celebrations as mentioned. Such activities were meant to spoil the said meeting. In this way, with the small attendance of members they could see in essence that we did not get a natural welcome, especially at the historic place where our organisation - UMNO - was born. (My translation).

In the same speech, Datuk Hussein Onn also touched on a conspiracy to initiate a whispering campaign of slander to destroy

the leaders' characters. He said: "This unprincipled and characterless action is most regrettable, all the more regrettable because it is carried out by some people who claim themselves to have worked and struggled in the party for a long time." (My translation).

Although the old guards in UMNO were still licking their wounds after the Dato Harun saga, and were essentially fighting a rearguard action, an opportunity presented itself during the second half of 1976 for them to hit back at their rivals in the party. In early 1976, the Lee Kuan Yew regime in Singapore came up with one of its periodic 'communist' scares. Scores of people were arrested and detained under the ISA; they included students, lawyers, journalists and people who generally disagreed with Lee's policies and actions. In early June 1976, Lee's People's Action Party was forced to withdraw from the Socialist International based in London, after a campaign was waged to expel it from the International for serious human rights violations.

In June 1976 itself, shortly after being embarrassed by the Socialist International, Lee's regime arrested and detained under the ISA Hussein Jahidin and Azmi Mahmud of the Singapore Malay daily newspaper, the *Berita Harian*. Not unexpectedly, both of them made 'confessions' shortly after, to the effect that they had attempted to slant the news in the *Berita Harian* in a manner that was critical of the PAP government. They also 'confessed' that they were influenced by A. Samad Ismail, a veteran journalist with the *New Straits Times* group in Malaysia. A. Samad Ismail was a founder member of Lee's PAP in the early 1950s, but had subsequently fallen out with Lee. Pressure was exerted in Singapore as well as Malaysia to crack down on A. Samad Ismail. He and another journalist Mohamed Samani Amin were soon detained by the Hussein Onn government under the ISA, A. Samad Ismail just a few weeks after he had won the country's leading literary award.

In September 1976, A. Samad Ismail 'confessed' that he was a communist agent and had moved close to the core of the UMNO leadership, having been especially successful with the younger UMNO leaders. According to Milne and Mauzy, "the campaign to purge the party, led by Tan Sri Jaafar Albar and Datuk Senu, and apparently with the Tunku's concurrence, rapidly gained momentum". Masquerading as anti-communist campaigners, this old guard group claimed to have a list of communist sympathizers

which it threatened to expose publicly. It also charged that Dato Harun was being victimised by these alleged communist sympathizers in UMNO and in the government.

Around that time, Tunku Abdul Rahman, wrote in *The Star* that he was glad to see the Selangor UMNO Youth supporting Prime Minister Hussein Onn and accusing that there were certain people around the Prime Minister who "were up to no good". (See *Viewpoints* by Tunku Abdul Rahman). He added:

They branded them as communists, but there are others as well – opportunists and parasites. It appears now that UMNO Youth are trying to purge UMNO of these people, and if they succeed Datuk Hussein Onn's task will be made considerably easier.

On 3 November 1976, six politicians were arrested under the ISA for alleged communist involvement. Among those arrested were Datuk Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid, both deputy ministers. The former was the political secretary to the late Tun Razak, and the latter was the press secretary of Tun Razak. Apparently, to give a semblance of political as well as racial balance, the other four persons arrested were from outside UMNO – Kassim Ahmad of the opposition PSRM, Tan Kien Siew of the MCA, and Chian Heng Kai and Chan Kok Kit of the opposition DAP.

As Milne and Mauzy point out, "Generally, the anti-communist group seems to be led by the 'old guard' and supported by UMNO Youth, and the attacks have been directed against the younger UMNO members brought into the centre of power by Tun Razak." Obviously to protect his own position, Prime Minister Hussein Onn was treading "carefully" in the middle, warning against a 'witch-hunt' but insisting that the arrests were not arbitrary.

Tunku Abdul Rahman said that Prime Minister Hussein Onn's action in detaining them "must be admired". "It was a painful decision but necessary", he said. He accused the two former deputy ministers as men who had "formed a vicious circle around the late Tun Razak, and exercised their power in many cases by using his good name." He claimed:

Before they could do more harm, I had to expose them. That was how UMNO members first opened their eyes to realise the threat this clique posed, and started to take stock of their behaviour, their sinister intentions and their activities.

Later, Datuk Senu and Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar, the UMNO

old guards who chiefly conducted the anti-communist witch-hunt, were exposed by Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang to have been on the board of directors, and were shareholders, of the Great Malaysia Line, a shipping company which had financial dealings with a Soviet bank. All the same, the campaign they started had already created fear, alarm and suspicion among the UMNO rank and file. Also, doubts had been cast on the wisdom of the late Tun Razak in his choice of aides and advisers.

Milne and Mauzy commented, almost prophetically: "This could adversely affect the authority and credibility of the leadership, and deference to it by calling into question the loyalty of some of the leaders... This in turn could reduce the strength and stability of the party as well as its ability to lead."

In his book, *No Man Is An Island: A Study of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew*, James Minchin points the finger at Ghazali Shafie for the November 1976 ISA arrests. He says that it was "through Ghazali Shafie's offices as Minister of Home Affairs Lee was at last able to convince the Malaysian Government to take action against the journalist Samad Ismail". Minchin says that "Ghazali Shafie (more than likely with domestic axes to grind) alerted Hussein Onn forcefully to Samad Ismail's Marxist and subversive record, painting a grim picture of the rising tide of Malay and Islamic susceptibility to communism that Samad symbolised. Only weeks after receiving a prized Malaysian cultural award, Samad was detained, later making more than one television confession".

Minchin adds: "Ghazali Shafie also managed to please the Singapore premier by tarring those of Razak's courtiers who were hostile to Lee with the leftist brush. Some of them were detained, all were dropped from advisory councils".

One of the victims of the witch-hunt arising from the UMNO power struggle was Kassim Ahmad, at the time the Chairman of the PSRM. Although Kassim Ahmad has since his release from detention joined UMNO, it is worth recalling his version of events as stated in his book, *The Second University*. Kassim Ahmad says that even before Tun Razak's death, the "conservative pro-American group within UMNO" was trying to grab power in UMNO. He adds:

The conservative group in UMNO which was the backbone of this attack had joined forces with other groups, the groups of Datuk Harun Idris, Jaafar Albar and Tun Mustapha of Sabah – a combina-

tion that was not possible under other situations – in order to oppose Tun Razak and his supporters. But unfortunately for them, they did not achieve their real aims such as returning Tunku Abdul Rahman to the top leadership, or returning Khir Johari and Senu Abdul Rahman to the Cabinet.

Kassim Ahmad goes on to say that "Our arrest was desired by those in power in UMNO. If the conservative group within UMNO had not held the top leadership in the nation at that time, the arrest would not have happened." By this he seems to have included Ghazali Shafie as well as Hussein Onn in the conservative group. According to Kassim Ahmad, he penned these lines in his diary on 18 October 1976, 15 days before he and five other politicians were arrested under the ISA:

... the die-hard reactionary old guards are intensifying their attack on what they called 'communists' in UMNO. The chief of UMNO Youth, Albar, said yesterday that communists and socialists were the same! Before that, Mahathir had also condemned the socialists, but he did not equate them with the communists. At the end of this week, UMNO's Supreme Council will meet in Penang to consider the issue of membership of Datuk Harun and the 'confession' of A. Samad Ismail. In this poisonous atmosphere, I feel very sad. What will happen to the people and the nation in 5-10 years' time?

Of Monkeys and Drum Beats

Kassim Ahmad considers Ghazali Shafie to be the "most dangerous man in Malaysia" at the time of his arrest, because "He wants to grab the crown of Government!" He was referring to the "fierce power struggle" in UMNO then, and Ghazali Shafie, the Home Affairs Minister, was one of the main contenders. Kassim Ahmad writes:

Many people believed that under Hussein Onn, Ghazali Shafie had much power. He was not only a powerful Minister of Home Affairs but also often acted as if he was the Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister. In fact, Abdullah Ahmad described him as "the de facto Prime Minister". Political observers knew that Ghazali Shafie had a high ambition. He had hopes of becoming Prime Minister. In fact, he was almost named by Hussein Onn as his Deputy when Hussein Onn all of a sudden found himself as Prime Minister after the death of Tun Razak in January 1976. But in the end Hussein Onn chose Mahathir as his Deputy.

On the Singapore connection to the ISA arrests and detentions in November 1976, Kassim told his lawyer S.T. Gamany on one occasion in the Kamunting detention camp: "Our Ministers are like monkeys. Lee Kuan Yew beats the drum in Singapore and they become excited in Kuala Lumpur".

Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said in Parliament on 22 March 1977 that the two DAP leaders Chan Kok Kit and Chian Heng Kai, who were also arrested on 3 November 1976, were sacrificed on the altar of UMNO intra-party in-fighting", whilst the London-based human rights organisation Amnesty International states that the arrests "appeared to reflect the increasing strength within UMNO of a strongly anti-communist group".

Ghazali Shafie did not seem to give up his attempts to become Prime Minister too easily. On 12 July 1981, four days before Dr Mahathir succeeded Datuk Hussein Onn as Prime Minister, Ghazali Shafie personally announced the arrest under the ISA of Siddiq Ghouse, the Political Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister Mahathir. The arrest was timed to embarrass Mahathir. The Bahasa Malaysia weekly *Watan*, headed by Khir Johari, said by way of implication that Mahathir should resign as Prime Minister by virtue of the arrest.

Thus, the power struggle within UMNO had not only become intense and fierce; it had become rather relentless.

Even Datuk Hussein Onn's retirement as Prime Minister in mid-1981 was not entirely free from speculation and conjecture. For instance, in an article in *The Star* on 29 August 1983, Tunku Abdul Rahman put forth this intriguing theory:

It was rumoured that Tun Hussein had been unhappy over some small matter which took place in his absence abroad and this eventually led to his retirement. At least I think I am right in saying this, though he said he was resigning on account of ill health, but he appeared to be healthy at least from his appearance today.

Was the grand old man up to some mischief again by implying that Hussein Onn could have been pushed, like what happened to himself a decade ago? Was he still harbouring hopes of returning one day to his 'Camelot'? For after all, the Tunku had indulged in some reverie, however fleeting it was, in the late 1970s in a article in *The Star* entitled 'No Way for the Reds...', that "As I said before, I will not return to politics unless this country is really in trouble, or my services are really needed to fight these enemies." He went on to say that if he had a few more men like

the "faithful and loyal" brothers of Tun Dr Ismail, Datuk Suleiman and Datuk Yasin around "I would not hesitate taking up the call to return to politics even at my age."

The soap opera was to continue right into the 1980s.

6. A Love-Hate Triangle

"Insomnia is going to be a serious problem for a lot of people one day."

— Ishak Haji Muhammad (Pak Sako), in his novel
The Son of Mad Mat Lela.

"The Gods see what is to come, wise men see what is coming, ordinary men see what is come."

— Appolonius

"As the saying goes it is only when you are close to a man that you can begin to smell his breath."

— Chinua Achebe, in **A Man of the People**,
Heinemann, London, 1982 reprint

"It is always the other side which goes in for faction-fighting."

— F.G. Bailey, in **Strategems and Spoils**, Blackwell,
Oxford, 1970.

"Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are convinced beyond doubt that they are right."

— Laurens Van Der Post,
in **The Lost World of the Kalahari**, Penguins, 1958.

"Under the spreading chestnut tree I sold you and you sold me."

— George Orwell, in **Nineteen Eighty-Four**, Penguins

"Membasohkan arang di muka"

"Washing away the charcoal stains on the face" (Avenging an insult)

— A Malay saying

When Tun Hussein Onn decided, ostensibly for health reasons, to step down as Prime Minister in mid-1981, he named his deputy Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister. According to Ranjit Gill (in his book *Razaleigh: An Unending Quest*), "Tun Hussein's subsequent recovery and his recent veiled criticism of the policies of the Mahathir Administration, suggest that his decision was based on other considerations".

When Mahathir was nominated for the UMNO Presidency, "despite reports that Dr Mahathir had been unhappy over the 'special relationship that Tengku Razaleigh enjoyed with Tun Hussein", Tengku Razaleigh was said to have "fully supported" Mahathir's nomination.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, in an article in *The Star* on 25 May 1981, literally rushed to give a very flattering judgement on the Prime Minister-to-be, Dr Mahathir, his erstwhile bitter opponent. In a statement which he probably has cause to regret now, the Tunku said that Mahathir was chosen as Hussein Onn's deputy, he presumed, "at the request of Tun Abdul Razak on his death bed". The Tunku conceded that "Since then, Dr Mahathir has been Deputy Prime Minister and has acquitted himself well. His views have changed so much that one can see that he has become attuned to conditions of life in this country. He has become impartial towards all and appears to know that the well-being and safety of this country inevitably depends on the good understanding, goodwill and friendship among people of all races and creeds".

Then, the Tunku went on to assure the people of Malaysia by declaring:

There should be no feelings of uneasiness as to his ability and capability to take over the all-important post of Prime Minister of Malaysia. It will be safe for all and nobody need lose any sleep over his appointment as Prime Minister.

Apparently, the Tunku was back to his favourite past-time of manufacturing unbeatable political gaffes!

Increasing the Stakes

The UMNO General Assembly of 25 June 1981 was an important one in that not only was it an occasion to listen to the policies and priorities of the new UMNO President, Dr Mahathir, but also prime time to witness the contest between

Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh for the post of UMNO Deputy President, vacated by Mahathir on his promotion to the Premiership.

Tengku Razaleigh and his campaign advisers, according to some political observers, were over-confident and were lulled into a false sense of security by "flattering media assessments". According to Ranjit Gill, Tengku Razaleigh "had expected tradition to be observed and being the most senior of the contenders scarcely expected to be challenged – especially after he had rejected earlier suggestions to stand against Dr Mahathir". On hindsight, it was perhaps a naive sort of expectation.

The first sign of trouble for Tengku Razaleigh in his contest with Musa Hitam was during the laying of the foundation stone for the new UMNO complex by Tun Hussein Onn in Kuala Lumpur a day before the Assembly. Rather amazingly, some observers thought, Tun Hussein neither thanked nor spoke to Tengku Razaleigh at the ceremony, especially in view of the important part played by Tengku Razaleigh in raising funds for the new party headquarters.

The next day, in his opening and farewell address to UMNO delegates at the General Assembly, Tun Hussein was said to have harped more on education than on the economy. As Musa Hitam was then the Education Minister and Tengku Razaleigh was the then Finance Minister, this was supposed to have been seen by the delegates as a sign from the out-going Prime Minister that they should support Musa Hitam. Some observers attribute this slight by Tun Hussein to Tengku Razaleigh's support for Dato Harun Idris, who was then contesting a Vice-Presidential post from prison. Some observers say that Tun Hussein had harboured a grievance against Tengku Razaleigh who chose not to back him up when he was desperately cutting down Harun Idris to size a few years back.

And so it was that Musa Hitam won the contest to be Deputy President of UMNO and therefore Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. Tengku Razaleigh had declared during the campaign that he was going for broke, meaning that he would not accept any other post if he lost the contest for Deputy President. But he was retained as both Finance Minister and UMNO Treasurer by Mahathir.

An Uneasy Interlude

Despite his defeat, Tengku Razaleigh was retained by Mahathir as the Finance Minister in the Cabinet. For a time, hands were shaken, harsh words hurled at each other at the campaign were forgiven, and the rival tribes seemed to have closed ranks for the sake of UMNO.

The Mahathir-Musa partnership was hailed by many as a dynamic and liberal combination – so mutually reinforcing apparently that it was referred to as the 2M Administration. There was, at least for some time, an obvious air of euphoria in UMNO and the government. It was in that mood that the Barisan Nasional went into the 1982 general elections and won handsomely, at least in terms of seats.

For the first year of the Mahathir-Musa leadership, nothing would seem to go very wrong. With the exception, perhaps, of the trial and subsequent conviction of the then Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Datuk Mokhtar Hashim for the murder of Datuk Taha, the Speaker of the Negeri Sembilan State Assembly. At the time, the high tide of the new leadership both in UMNO and the government was only irritatingly embarrassed by the Mokhtar Hashim case. Thus, the whole frightening symbolism of the Mokhtar Hashim case in terms of political corruption and mayhem was almost completely lost on UMNO and government leaders and, sadly, also on their supporters and the country at large. It was a classic example of spectator sports: almost everybody was more interested in who killed who, and how, when and where rather than why. In the end, spectator curiosity triumphed; Mokhtar Hashim was convicted, and hardly anybody, least of all from UMNO itself, knew or cared to ask the right questions. However, questions of political morality would come back to haunt UMNO soon enough.

The PM's Men.....and Woman

On the other hand, the 1983 Constitutional Crisis did have a more successful impact on the psyche of the country. The episode also revealed some interesting divergences and shifting loyalties in UMNO. We shall go into the details of the issue in a later chapter; it is sufficient just to recall here and now that the Constitutional Crisis of 1983 arose from the decision of UMNO

to amend the Malaysian Constitution so as to reduce the position of the Malay Rulers and to transfer the power to declare a state of emergency from the King to the Prime Minister.

From the start, Tengku Razaleigh was one of those UMNO leaders who were not particularly enthusiastic about the move, for apart from his own royal background he is closely tied to the Kelantan royal family. It was not likely that Mahathir forgot this in later years. But there were enough UMNO 'heroes' more than prepared to do the Prime Minister's bidding over the issue. Musa Hitam, at a public rally in Batu Pahat – one in a series specially orchestrated to drum up support for the campaign, proudly announced the 'Magnificent Seven' who were supposed to be the heroes and heroine in the 'amend the constitution' crusade. Interestingly and, with the hindsight of history, ironically, the 'Magnificent Seven' were:

- Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, then Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, later Education Minister; initially in Team B but gravitated later into Team A;
- Adib Adam, then Information and Broadcasting Minister, later Land and Regional Development Minister; was for sometime in Team B, now quiet;
- Rais Yatim, Information and Broadcasting Minister then, later Minister for Foreign Affairs for a short while; now a leading light of Team B;
- Anwar Ibrahim, Culture, Youth and Sports Minister then, later Agriculture Minister, now Education Minister, the man who crossed over to UMNO from ABIM even as he was leading the campaign against amendments to the Societies Act in 1982;
- Rafidah Aziz, then Public Enterprises Minister, now Minister for Trade and Industry; leader of Wanita UMNO, the Women's wing of UMNO;
- Sanusi Junid, then National and Rural Development Minister, now Agriculture Minister;
- Shahrir Samad, then Federal Territory Minister, another leading light of Team B, but has since returned to UMNO Baru.

Tunku Abdul Rahman was opposed to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1983. Former UMNO Secretary-General Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman wrote an open letter of protest to Prime Minister Dr Mahathir, and in turn was pounced upon

some UMNO branches which called for his expulsion from the party. Anwar Ibrahim, the newly discovered star in the UMNO movement, claimed that there was "an unholy alliance between certain retired politicians and opposition members to try and revive the Constitution Amendment issue" after it had been resolved in early 1984. Anwar Ibrahim said he could not understand why "these retired politicians who hold high positions should join forces with the opposition to hurl allegations against the Government". He also said that these retired politicians disagreed with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir over matters in the past and are now trying to exploit an issue which had, in fact, been resolved". It was clear that he was referring to the UMNO old guards, including the Tunku and Senu Abdul Rahman.

It was fairly clear that UMNO was quite divided on the constitutional issue over the position of the Malay Rulers. It was Mahathir himself who, perhaps unwittingly, revealed how deep the internal schism was. At the Alor Star rally to explain the issue to the people, Mahathir declared: "I will not quit. I have no right to step down unless the rakyat want me to do so". He said: "I did not elect myself Prime Minister. The people chose me and, therefore, only they can force me to step down", arguing that he was a 'tool' to be used by the people. "If the people think this 'tool' is no longer useful, they can throw it away and choose another", he added.

Some UMNO people had sent Mahathir a memorandum calling for his resignation as Prime Minister. At a later rally in Bagan Datoh, Perak, Mahathir revealed that "even UMNO members have accused us of trying to replace the system with a republic. We have been denounced by our own members who accused us of trying to weaken or destroy the Malays". Mahathir's opponents had in fact invoked the ghost of the Malayan Union, almost forty years after its demise, to haunt him.

1984: Musa-Ku Li Contest Round 2

The antagonists Datuk Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh and their respective camps geared up early for the 1984 contest for the post of UMNO Deputy President. However, Tengku Razaleigh faced a tougher second-round fight against Musa Hitam, who not only had the advantage of incumbency but also the overt support of Mahathir. At the UMNO annual General Assembly in 1983, a non-election year for UMNO, Dr Mahathir had said: "With Musa

Hitam as Deputy President and Deputy Prime Minister, an effective team (is created) to make changes considered urgent for the government". He also thanked UMNO delegates who had supported "a Deputy President who can co-operate with me as a team". He added that "with his cooperation, leadership has been easy and effective".

Quite naturally, Tengku Razaleigh's supporters were furious with this biased and open intervention from the President of the party. Mumbblings that Mahathir had breached party tradition began to emerge.

Shortly before that, Mahathir had expressed this concern over the existence of cliques within UMNO. In an article in *The Star* on 9 May 1983, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was also the Chairman of the Board of that newspaper, commented:

Unfortunately, what the Prime Minister has said appears to be only too true. There seem to be groups within UMNO which support one leader against another and this goes down the line in the States, divisions and branches of UMNO. This rivalry even led to the death of an UMNO leader in a State. This is a very serious matter and before the situation deteriorates further, UMNO members must be advised and warned and be educated to take their places as good and loyal members.

The Tunku went on to say that it was quite natural that everybody in UMNO "is scrambling for important places in the party hierarchy to gain seats in the State Councils, Parliament and Senate" as these appointments "carry with them a tidy remuneration".

In another article in *The Star* (29 August 1983), the Tunku said Mahathir's remark on the choice of his deputy had caused a "furore among some UMNO members who quite rightly felt that it was unbecoming for the head of the party to pass such a remark as it tended to split the party and showed favour for one as against the other". However, rather surprisingly and contradictorily, the Tunku added: "In my opinion, however, such a statement has not come too soon. It must come sooner or later and it was just as well that he said it, however unpleasant it might sound to the ears of UMNO members". The Tunku was in favour of the Prime Minister and UMNO President choosing his deputy, for practical reasons.

The eagerly awaited UMNO General Assembly was held on 25 May 1984. Prior to this, Tengku Razaleigh had publicly turned down suggestions that the UMNO President and the

Deputy President should not be challenged. UMNO President Dr Mahathir, realising that his 1983 public endorsement of Musa Hitam did not go down well with some members, tried to strike some semblance of balance by telling the General Assembly: "It is not that I want to support Musa. In fact even he is confused thinking I am supporting him." Mahathir claimed that he made his earlier remarks because "people are spreading rumours that he and I don't talk to each other, or see eye to eye on several issues".

But it was not enough to erase the harm already done. If anything, it pleased neither the Musa camp or the Razaleigh camp.

The campaign for the Deputy President post itself was fierce and bitter. Just as in the 1981 contest, Tengku Razaleigh was accused of being too close and too nice to Chinese business circles. However, this time around, in 1984, two other factors crept into the campaign.

As Ranjit Gill relates the episode, first the surprise candidacy of Dato Harun Idris, the former Selangor Menteri Besar and UMNO Youth leader, on the ostensible reason that he did not wish to see Razaleigh defeated by Musa again. Harun had been one of those instrumental in the rehabilitation of Mahathir by the late Tun Razak in 1972. Similarly, it was Mahathir who as Prime Minister in 1982 helped to obtain a pardon for Harun after his imprisonment for corruption. Harun, like a bull in a china shop as much as a joker in the pack, started to criticise Mahathir's leadership of UMNO:

Even at the party level there is this strong under-current of feeling that it is one-man show. To be frank I am not happy as things are now. I think he (Mahathir) will be a dictator because most of the things he has implemented have never been brought to the party, with no discussion in the political committee, let alone the Supreme Council.

Harun also said that he felt "it is not right for Mahathir to pair up with Musa". This Harun intervention aroused the suspicion that a new partnership was emerging to challenge the Mahathir-Musa combination, which did not go down too well with some UMNO people. And in any event, it was not sure whose votes Harun's candidacy would actually split.

Something more damaging was yet to come for Tengku Razaleigh. It was the Bumiputra Malaysia Finance (BMF) scandal. A Malaysian, Mak Foon Than, who was accused of killing Bank

Bumiputra official Jalil Ibrahim, had made a statement to the Hongkong police to the effect that he had earlier visited Hongkong to collect US\$6 million from Kuok Brothers Ltd. on behalf of Tengku Razaleigh. This police statement of Mak's was made public in a Hongkong court less than three weeks before the UMNO General Assembly. Although Mak did not mention Tengku Razaleigh by name, he claimed that he had worked for the Finance Minister for eight years.

The revelation was sensational news in Malaysia, especially being so near the UMNO General Assembly. Although Mak subsequently denied having named the Finance Minister in his cautioned statement, and despite Tengku Razaleigh's strong denial, damage must have been done.

Pointing a finger at his enemies in UMNO and the government, Tengku Razaleigh claimed that Mak's statements were "probably inspired and instigated by some quarters that are going all out to defame me." He added:

The conspiracy to defame me is obviously politically-motivated, particularly at this time — just before the UMNO elections. If we fail to expose the conspirators and check their heinous tactics, the whole body politic will be poisoned and this can destroy our traditions, our democracy and our country.

As Ranjit Gill points out, "The government remained tight-lipped, despite calls from the Opposition to set up a Select Committee to investigate Mak's earlier claims. Both Dr Mahathir and Dato Musa declined to comment."

Naturally, Tengku Razaleigh was furious. In a speech in Kota Bharu, he inferred that there were people using dirty tactics against his attempts to become the Deputy President both in 1981 and in 1984. He said: "In 1981, I was linked with the UMBC affair but I had to keep quiet because of the collective responsibility towards leaders in the government."

How much the BMF accusations damaged Tengku Razaleigh's chances is hard to tell, but he lost to Musa Hitam by 744 votes to 501. Mahathir, who was himself returned as UMNO President unopposed, described Musa Hitam's victory as a "clear-cut decision with no ambiguity".

On 18 June, Tengku Razaleigh met Dr Mahathir and offered to resign as UMNO Treasurer and as Finance Minister. Three weeks later, Mahathir announced that Tengku Razaleigh had agreed to accept the Trade and Industry ministerial post. At the party

el, however, he was no longer the Kelantan UMNO chief, as the General Assembly had moved that only Mentris Besar (Chief Ministers) should head their respective State UMNOs.

Tengku Razaleigh was therefore without an important party post at state or national level.

For the sake of the party's public relations, ranks were again closed. There were handshakes and hugs and pledges to forgive and forget after a very bitter contest. But below the surface, the scars of battle ran deep. The repercussions dashed outwards with more than rippling effects. Victor and vanquished, both named by *Time* magazine in the early 1970s as potential Prime Ministers, began fresh calculations even as they settled down with the dust of battle.

As pointed out by A. Ghani Ismail (in his book *Razaleigh Lawan Musa: Pusingan Kedua* 1984), the rivalry between Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh went back as far as 1977 at least. It seems that at a meeting with University of Malaya lecturers in Pantai Valley in 1977, Musa Hitam had already said that Tengku Razaleigh wanted to become Prime Minister one day and that he (Musa) too would try to attain that highest position.

But that is not surprising. I got that clear impression of Musa Hitam's ambition way back in the early 1970s when he had just been rehabilitated in UMNO under the late Tun Razak. He was then the Chairman of FELDA. By coincidence, we were travelling in the same train one night from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, and in our short conversation, he left no doubt that he aimed to go to the very top of the political ladder.

There is of course nothing wrong in being ambitious. Many people in all sorts of human endeavour are ambitious in one way or another. Politicians are no different. Only that as advised R.H.S. Crossman, the late ideologue of the British Labour Party, politicians should remember that the "main task of a free society is to civilise the struggle for power".

History will record whether the Musa Hitam-Tengku Razaleigh power struggles in 1981 and 1984 were civilised or not. But as the *Asiaweek's* special report on Malaysia on 10 May 1985 pointed out, the Musa-Razaleigh contest in 1984 "left a wake of bitterness, not assuaged when most of the loser's men were purged from the cabinet". Quite clearly, UMNO politics was entering a new phase.

7. The Loyalty Bombshell

"I admire a straightforward enemy."

— Tagore

"Much that passes as idealism is disguised hatred or disguised love of power."

— Bertrand Russell

"Isn't reality itself more real than anybody's opinion about reality?"

— Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesian writer, in *Child of All Nations*, Penguins, 1984.

"There are no great leaders any more: they are no longer needed."

— Laurens Van Der Post, in *A Walk with a White Bushman*, Penguins, 1988.

"Power cannot, strictly speaking, be given to another, for then the recipient still owes it to the giver. It must be in some sense assumed, taken, asserted. For unless it can be held against opposition, it is not power and will never be experienced as real on the part of the recipient."

— Rollo May

When UMNO held its 36th General Assembly at the end of September 1985, there was an air of pride and quiet satisfaction. It was a non-election year for the party, so the heat of infighting was mercifully absent. The various factions seemed to have closed ranks after the bitter Musa-Razaleigh contest slightly more than a year ago. In fact, in 1985 the Barisan Nasional

component party which was embroiled in intra-party controversy and schism was not UMNO but the MCA where the Tan Koon Swan faction and the Neo Yee Pan faction were lock in mortal combat. More than that, the then UMNO senior Vice-President Ghafar Baba was playing the role of peace-maker in the MCA squabbles as the Chairman of the MCA ad hoc committee to sort out the differences in that party. UMNO President and delegates at the 36th UMNO General Assembly even had time and cause to laugh when a delegate to the General Assembly, Haji Mohamed Jais from Malacca, referred on 28 September to Ghafar Baba as the "MCA acting president".

But a greater cause for pride and self-congratulation was the fact that the gigantic and new M\$366 million UMNO complex in Kuala Lumpur which was being used for the very first time to hold the General Assembly. *The Star* of 29 September reported that "If there were major issues that would have caused disagreement within the party, they were not aired" in the new complex. "Indeed," added the newspaper, "pride in the federal capital's newest landmark possibly precluded the usual sharp arguments". UMNO was "apparently preparing the ground for the next general election by presenting a uniform face to the nation".

The absence of major internal disagreements, however contrived or momentary, even afforded UMNO delegates the luxury of bashing other organisations. CUEPACS (Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service) came under fire by some delegates over its claims for better wages for civil servants. An Indian community leader was rapped by an UMNO Youth delegate, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz for "deliberately" inciting the Indians. A Kedah delegate, Yusof Abdul Rahman, condemned "some people" in the MCA for accusing Dr Mahathir of interfering in the affairs of the MCA, and declared: "If these people want to challenge him, let me state categorically that they must step over our dead bodies first". New Finance Minister and UMNO Treasurer Daim Zainuddin was so exuberant at the General Assembly that he, as *The Star* reported, "got them tickled all over" with his small jokes. All in all, it seemed a peaceful, carefree and happy General Assembly.

For a while at least, the still brewing BMF scandal was consigned to the wilderness of investigation. There was no debate on the scandal which cost the country M\$2.5 billion, with the exception of a promise by the Finance Minister-cum-UMNO

Treasurer Daim Zainuddin that all the culprits would be apprehended. For public relations purposes, Mahathir even staged a fond embrace for his deputy Musa Hitam in mock seriousness.

But, in reality, all was not well in UMNO. In the early months of 1985, stories and rumours were circulating freely that there were strains in the much-vaulted 2M partnership of Mahathir and Musa Hitam. The March-April 1985 issue of *Mimbar Sosialis*, the monthly organ of the PSRM (Partai Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia), carried a front-page story entitled 'Perpecahan 2M' ('2M Split'). The story asserted:

There is alarming news now that the Musa-Mahathir relationship is getting more distant. The news is widespread in as well as outside the country. The fact is there has been no 2M for a long time. Musa's followers were sometime ago disappointed when Mahathir did not drop Ku Li from the Cabinet when he lost in the contest for Deputy President. Naturally Mahathir wants Ku Li to balance up Musa. Also, it is to have Ku Li in the Cabinet to shut his mouth. Many secrets on various things are thus concealed.

The Johore people are uneasy because Mahathir accepts many Kedah-Penang people as ministers. Johore UMNO, which considers itself to be UMNO's backbone, is angry because the number of ministers from Johore has increased less.

They are also restless because Mahathir likes to go to Johore silently and after that makes alarming news about the bad side of Johore. Why not through the Menteri Besar?

On the other hand, Mahathir's people are angry because Musa is reportedly always voicing that he is impatient waiting too long to replace Mahathir.

Moreover Musa is said to be always making statements or taking actions whenever Mahathir is out of the country, making a mess for Mahathir when he returns.

As regards visits to Johore, they say, Mahathir is forced to be quiet because Musa or Ajib never invites him. (My translation)

At the time, this story could have seemed to some people to be nothing more than partisan, sensational rumour-mongering at worst and unsubstantiated speculation at best. In January 1986, the Ministry of Home Affairs suspended the publication permit of *Mimbar Sosialis*, on the ostensible excuse that a poem in the July-August 1985 issue of the publication was a "threat to public order and national security". The public knew better, of course. For less than a year after the story of the 2M split in *Mimbar Sosialis*, Musa Hitam announced his resignation as both Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy President of UMNO.

The Sabah and Memali Episodes

Back in April 1985, the Sabah state elections were being held. When the results were tallied on the night of 21 April, it was quite clear that the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) had won 26 seats, USNO under Tun Mustapha 16 seats and Berjaya 6 seats. There was an attempt by Tun Mustapha to wrest power from the PBS. For this purpose he quickly formed an unholy alliance with Berjaya, and hurried to the Head of State's mansion to stake his claim to form the new state government, on the illogical and unconstitutional arithmetic that with 6 nominated seats provided for under the Sabah constitution, the USNO-Berjaya cabal would have a total of 28 seats, two more than PBS.

Mahathir was at the time in London, and Musa Hitam was Acting Prime Minister. The next day, Musa Hitam said that Datuk Joseph Pairin Kittingan of the PBS, who commanded a clear majority, should be sworn in as Chief Minister. Tun Mustapha, who was sworn in earlier, either through error or intimidation, was dismissed by the Head of State.

It appeared that there was a conflict of view on the above matter between Mahathir and Musa. K. Das puts it (in his book *The Musa Dilemma*) in the following manner:

In the ten months since the fatal election, Musa said nothing to indicate that he had misjudged the issue. He has still not change his mind.

On the other hand Mahathir has done nothing to indicate that he had endorsed Musa's action.

The next time Dr Mahathir was out of the country – this time to China –, and Musa Hitam was again Acting Prime Minister, something very serious happened, again. On 19 November 1985, a bloody clash between about 400 villagers and 200 policemen at Kampung Memali, near Baling in the State of Kedah, left 14 civilians, 4 policemen dead and at least 29 people injured, with another 160 people arrested. The Memali tragedy emanated from a confrontation between the government and those considered as Islamic deviationists led by Alsyahid Ibrahim Mahmud, nicknamed Ibrahim Libya. On 19 February 1986, PAS President Haji Yusof Rawa sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Dr Mahathir calling for the establishment of "a neutral and independent Royal Commission to reveal the truth behind the Memali incidence, as soon as possible", and the resignation of Musa Hitam as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home

Affairs for being "responsible for the bloody tragedy in Memali".

Soon enough, the Memali tragedy was to become another bone of contention between the Mahathir and Musa Hitam camps.

The Storm Broke

On 26 February 1986, Musa Hitam sent a seven-page letter to Dr Mahathir saying that as from 16 March 1986 he was resigning as Deputy Prime Minister and from all related governmental posts including that of Home Affairs Minister. Musa Hitam also announced in the same letter that he was resigning too on the same day as Deputy President of UMNO and from all related party posts.

Ordinary UMNO members throughout the country were shocked and taken by surprise. Many Malaysians were also surprised. Obviously, however, there were many outside UMNO who knew that the party was in trouble again. Of course, there were some inside UMNO who were quite delighted. The Musa Hitam letter, which was stamped 'SECRET' on the top and bottom of every page, was very soon to be secret no more; it was making the streets, adding fuel to wide speculation of an intense power struggle within UMNO.

Although Mahathir managed to put on an indifferent face on the matter, Musa Hitam's decision to resign all his UMNO and government posts, and the manner he announced it, must have come as some sort of a bombshell for Mahathir in particular, and UMNO and the Barisan Nasional in general. This was particularly so after the so-called 2M Administration had been advertised as the partnership of two hard-headed, dynamic and action-oriented political personalities. Only a few months ago, at the UMNO General Assembly at the end of September 1985, Mahathir had declared that there were no problems between him and Musa Hitam. As for the 1984 General Assembly, Mahathir was openly for Musa Hitam in the contest for the Deputy President position against Tengku Razaleigh for the second time.

Whatever happened between the two from June 1984 to early 1986? Didn't Musa Hitam give a solemn assurance, at the 1985 UMNO General Assembly held at the new and expensive UMNO Complex, that he had always been, and would continue to be, solidly behind Mahathir's leadership?

Possibly, the person who could be most relied upon to give some background explanation to the events and causes leading to

Musa Hitam's resignation is Ruhanie Haji Ahmad, who for four years from June 1982 to February 1986 was the Political Secretary to Musa Hitam. In his book *Musa Hitam: Serene in the Storm*, Ruhanie Haji Ahmad obviously wrote as someone who admired Musa Hitam as a political leader. He relates that it was on 2 February 1986 at Davos, Switzerland that Musa Hitam told him of the decision to step down. He is of the view that Musa Hitam had been wronged, that there was a "smear syndicate" which churned out "slandorous accusations" which led to UMNO losing its deputy leader.

Ruhanie Haji Ahmad infers that it was this "smear syndicate" which had accused Musa Hitam of striving to wrest power from Mahathir because Musa had wanted to become Prime Minister as quickly as possible. That Musa Hitam was "working hard to achieve his ambition by disseminating slanderous stories, allegations and rumours. "That he had made decisions and taken action without prior consultation and discussion with the Prime Minister. That Musa Hitam's 'men' and 'boys' were actively involved in this intended coup and were running wild. That his 'men' and 'boys' were always criticising the Prime Minister, blindly and indiscriminately. That they were going round the country on a smear campaign against Mahathir and his associates. That Musa Hitam had lent too ready his ears to his political aides, Sulaiman Aris in the Prime Minister's Department, and Ruhanie Haji Ahmad himself at the Ministry of Home Affairs. That it was these two greenhorns who filled Musa Hitam with power-lust and had instigated him to topple his close friend Mahathir. That when Musa Hitam was given the 'Man of the Year' award by *The Star* newspaper in 1985, there was a "lot of whispered comments", questioning the reasons for the award being given to Musa Hitam.

Wayang Kulit Language

Ruhanie Haji Ahmad's book seems to be an earnest attempt of a loyal aide to defend his superior. However, couched mostly in the indirect language of the traditional wayang kulit (shadow play) style, we are none the wiser about many questions still begging for answers. More so now that Ruhanie Haji Ahmad has apparently broken ranks with Musa Hitam himself and is happily in the newly formed UMNO of Mahathir.

What has or have brought about the split between Mahathir

and Musa Hitam? They were comrades during the heady days of Malaysian politics immediately after the May 13, 1969 riots, clamouring for the resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman, with the help of the students. They were both put out in the cold, as it were, at more or less the same time. In the words of Ruhanie Haji Ahmad again, "they bloomed and blossomed again. Both were good; both were inspirational. They became heroes of the young Malay generation which had by then learnt to be 'impertinent'. Both of them, until some months ago, had a complimentary political existence, each lending strength to the other."

What has helped to spoil "the glory of the Mahathir-Musa combination"?

Musa Hitam's letter of resignation, addressed to Mahathir, dated 26 February 1986, helps to cast some, but not all the light. In it, Musa Hitam reminds Mahathir that he (Musa) had "expressed my desire to resign when we spoke on January 27, 1986, before I left for Davos, Switzerland." The gist of the letter centres around the question of loyalty, that is, especially the question of loyalty towards Mahathir.

You will remember that on the night before the UMNO General Assembly last year, you brought up the matter of there being members of the Supreme Council whose loyalty to you was questionable.

Furthermore, you said that all sorts of negative statements and allegations had been hurled at you. All this, you said, had created an unhealthy situation and was potentially disruptive to UMNO our party.

Your words were very serious and emphatic, especially when you asked members of the Supreme Council to state their loyalty; so much so that the members became tense and uneasy.

Quite obviously, if Musa Hitam were to be believed from his letter, Mahathir had, by mid-1985 at least, developed a problem — one of uncertainty, perhaps even paranoia, about the loyalty of his own Cabinet Ministers, especially those in UMNO. It was a serious problem.

Musa Hitam's letter continues to throw more light on Mahathir's supposed myopia:

On January 15, 1986, at the Supreme Council meeting, though it was already late at night, once again you evoked uneasiness and question marks among the Council members by raising the matter of there being all sorts of allegations against you as Prime Minister. This time you were even more serious, emphatic and specific than before.

In your statements, and in response to questions from the members, you explained that, among others:

1. The allegations were that you as a Prime Minister were a 'dictator', 'corrupt' and 'the richest man in the world';
2. The allegations caused you such stress that they affected your performance of official duties, which were more important and needed attention;

(So serious were you that the next day you told me that that very night "I was determined to resign".)

3. The allegations were highly political and aimed at toppling you;
4. And, the allegations came from senior members of the Party and the Government who were impatient to take over from you.

The stakes involved were high. The ingredients of a power struggle – real or imagined – were all there. Gossips, rumours, innuendoes, suspicions, accusations, allegations, fear, betrayal, greed, abuse of power, envy, succession, loyalty, decency or the lack of it. Nothing about the condition of the country or the people whom they ruled over, but very much about self-centred 'life and death' problems and prospects of the top actors concerned, about their problematic ups and downs as leaders and holders of high positions and immense power.

But that was only the Musa Hitam letter. For reasons best known to himself, some other important and relevant questions were left out. The letter was still rather 'wayang kulit', that is, more shadow than light. It was not as candid as one would expect from a letter regarding resignations of such importance.

The Reasons Why?

We may never know the real or full reasons for Musa Hitam's resignations, since Musa Hitam himself was less than candid or complete. And Mahathir chose not to give a full-length official reply. And because of that gap, speculations and conjectural analyses have mushroomed, ranging from the rather nutty and vulgar to the plausible. The diatribes of S.H. Alattas are personal enough, vulgar enough, petty enough and often incoherently biased enough to be assigned to the first category.

It is beyond doubt that, their common political background notwithstanding, there are differences and nuances in personality and style between Mahathir and Musa Hitam. With his international exposure during his student days, Musa Hitam appears to

be more cosmopolitan in outlook, while Mahathir is seen by some people as somewhat inward-looking and morose. As pointed out by *Asiaweek* in May 1985, some think Mahathir is "too blunt, too impetuous and too much given to speaking his mind without carefully considering the implications". Someone has even termed Mahathir as "a one-man think-tank", implying that he has the tendency to give too much attention to his own ideas to the exclusion of those of other people.

But we need to remember that differences in style need not necessarily be differences in substance. As we shall see in a later chapter, Mahathir and Musa Hitam are essentially two of a kind, only different in degree. Of course that is not to say that they did not, as leaders of the Cabinet and of UMNO between July 1981 and January 1986, have different perceptions and emphases over certain affairs of state. As K. Das points out, "much as I tried to draw him (Musa), he never got enthusiastic about some of the more outlandish Mahathir projects. Even the Look East policy was something to talk about but not rave about. Mahathir himself made some wry remarks how he himself looked East while Musa looked West".

And it would be interesting to know what Musa Hitam thought honestly about the Proton Saga national car project, the Penang Bridge, the Dayabumi Complex, the 70 million population idea and the stress on heavy industries. It is possible that he had differing views on all these, but he hardly murmured them when he was Mahathir's deputy. And, as pointed out earlier, Musa Hitam seemed very enthusiastic over the campaign in 1983 to amend the Malaysian Constitution to reduce the power of the Malay Rulers and to transfer the power to declare a state of emergency from the hands of the King to that of the Prime Minister. It was he who proudly named the so-called 'Magnificent Seven' at Batu Pahat.

So it does seem that on basics Mahathir and Musa Hitam did not actually have any serious quarrel. Their differences centred more on the way certain policies and actions were carried out, like the Sabah election and the Memali tragedy. In fact, Musa Hitam was later to be criticised by some ardent pro-Mahathir elements for giving away, allegedly, Sabah to the Christians as Tunku Abdul Rahman was accused of giving away Singapore to the Chinese. He has also been accused of being responsible for the Memali tragedy in an attempt to embarrass Mahathir.

It is by now commonly believed that Mahathir's retention of Tengku Razaleigh in the Cabinet after the 1981 and 1984 Musa-Razaleigh contests for the UMNO Deputy Presidency was one of the main reasons for the Musa-Mahathir split. It seems Musa Hitam had wanted Mahathir to dismiss Tengku Razaleigh from the Cabinet after Razaleigh had lost.

But after the 1981 contest, Mahathir chose to keep Tengku Razaleigh as the Finance Minister in the Cabinet; he was also asked to stay as UMNO Treasurer. After Tengku Razaleigh lost again to Musa in 1984, although he had gone for broke as in 1981, Mahathir still retained him as Minister for Trade and Industry, although he was out of all party posts. Although K. Das does not believe "that Razaleigh's position was at the heart of the final Mahathir-Musa quarrel", he still thinks that "certainly it must have been one of the major irritations".

Why did Mahathir insist on retaining Tengku Razaleigh in the Cabinet? He could have genuinely wanted to preserve party unity; after all, on both occasions, Tengku Razaleigh did manage to muster a substantial number of votes from the UMNO delegates although he lost. But then, power politics is never based solely on altruism. The more compelling reason could be that Mahathir had wanted to keep Tengku Razaleigh to balance off Musa Hitam. As A. Ghani Ismail saw it in 1984, just before the second-round contest between Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh, Mahathir wanted to use Tengku Razaleigh to ward off Musa Hitam against himself in the foreseeable future. He quoted from a conversation he had with a veteran journalist from India who said: "You balance out your sidelines so that you need not worry about your backside".

So, as A. Ghani Ismail thinks, so far as Mahathir was concerned in this triangular equation, Mahathir was employing classical 'divide and rule' tactics. It has also been said by some observers that Mahathir's grooming of Anwar Ibrahim did not go down too well with Musa Hitam either. Was Anwar Ibrahim's meteoric rise in both the UMNO and government hierarchies another of Mahathir's cards to ward off both Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh from challenging him?

Counting the Days

Musa Hitam's resignation letter of 26 February 1986 was delivered to Mahathir on 27 February. By then, Musa Hitam was

on his way to perform his **umrah** (a minor hajj); after that he exiled himself to London. In early March, an unofficial UMNO delegation led by Trengganu Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, went to London to see Musa Hitam with the aim of persuading him to withdraw his resignations. On the delegation's return from London, Wan Mokhtar Ahmad read out a press statement by Musa Hitam on 14 March 1986. In the statement, Musa Hitam announced that in response to appeals, he was withdrawing his resignation as Deputy President of UMNO. He also said:

I would like to emphasise that I have never plotted to topple YAB Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir. On the contrary, my record can prove that I have worked hard to ensure the effectiveness of his leadership.

Then he called on all UMNO members "whether in sympathy with me or otherwise" to stop bickering and "to set aside all differences of opinion". He said they must all close ranks to face "challenges of the times, particularly in the context of the coming general elections." He signed off with the slogans of 'Unity, Loyalty, Service!', 'Hidup Melayu' and 'Merdeka'.

However, the wounds that had been opened in UMNO did not heal. As the Singapore-based ASEAN FORECAST of May 1986 reported, Musa Hitam's return to Malaysia "has fueled speculation that he may want to challenge Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the presidency of UMNO", at UMNO's next General Assembly in 1987, an UMNO election year.

For a while, Musa Hitam was keeping a low profile, declining to comment on other people's speculation about his possible next moves. He however declared that he intended to fully support the Barisan Nasional in the next Malaysian general elections. He also endorsed Mahathir's tenure of office as UMNO President until the next General Assembly.

However, all was not quiet on the ground. Musa Hitam's opponents saw in his attitude "a calculated strategy to prepare the ground for an eventual showdown with Mahathir at the appropriate time" (ASEAN FORECAST). The newsletter reported:

To pre-empt this eventuality, Musa's opponents in UMNO have resorted to attempts to character assassinate him through a 28-page **surat layang** ("poison pen" letter). It studiously related how Musa persistently opposed Mahathir when he was the latter's hand-picked No. 2 should be giving him his unreserved loyalty and support and patiently wait for his turn to succeed him. Thus Musa's opponents

hoped to destroy his credibility among the Malay masses by depicting him as being selfish and impatient to succeed Mahathir in their rationale that selfishness and impatience are qualities which traditional Malays do not associate with revered leadership.

Because the original version of the 'poison pen' letter was in English, ASEAN FORECAST thought that it was an "attempt to alienate the BN non-Malay parties, many of whom respect" Musa, from him. It also was of the opinion that it could be circulated by third parties in UMNO, meaning not Mahathir's faction.

The newsletter concluded by saying: "Many interesting developments in the growing power struggle between the two UMNO stalwarts await to be unfolded".

On 29 June 1986, former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, in a speech given at a dinner in his honour by the Tasek Glugor UMNO division near Butterworth, said that the Malays had no alternative but to back UMNO all the way, because UMNO was the backbone of the community, and if UMNO failed, the community would also fail.

Thus, UMNO had become like an old playing-record company which was producing not only scratchy records but also records with the same old boring songs.

8. Showdown in the Name of Honour

"One cannot escape feeling that what one is observing is precisely the unfolding of a drama in the classic sense. It is exceptionally intense, as well as immense...., but through its complexities and dissimilarities, as through a classical drama, runs an essentially simple theme."

— Professor Gunnar Myrdal, in *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Penguins, 1968.

"So I think, I'm the crab who is up and at the moment everybody is trying his best to pull me down. And believe me, the next man who climbs up and holds this position is going to have the same treatment."

— Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia and UMNO President, 1984.

Undoubtedly, Dr Mahathir faced a fairly serious dilemma with Musa Hitam's resignation as Deputy Prime Minister as it amounted to a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister and UMNO President. However, for the immediate at least, the prophets of Mahathir's doom were proved wrong when he turned his headache into an advantage by calling for a general election in the country, in August 1986, about eight months before one was due.

As expected, the general election helped to close UMNO's ranks, at least for the time being. The Barisan Nasional won 148 of the 177 Parliamentary seats and retained all the state govern-

ments in Peninsular Malaysia. This bought precious time for Mahathir. He began to consolidate his position in the new Cabinet.

Instead of following his own advice, given at an MCA General Assembly earlier that winners should not win everything and losers need not lose all, Mahathir took the opportunity to whittle down Musa Hitam's allies and supporters. In the post general election Cabinet reshuffle, Ghafar Baba, who was brought in to replace Musa Hitam the year before, continued to be the Deputy Prime Minister. Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin retained his position, while Anwar Ibrahim was named Education Minister. UMNO Secretary-General Sanusi Junid was appointed Agriculture Minister, while Abdullah Badawi Ahmad was made Defence Minister. Tengku Razaleigh was retained as Trade and Industry Minister.

Those thought to be close to Musa Hitam were either eased out or given relatively minor posts. Dato Abdul Ajib Ahmad, former Johore Menteri Besar, was made a deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Office. Federal Territory Minister Datuk Shahrir was made the Welfare Minister, while Land and Regional Development Minister Dato Seri Adib Adam was dropped. Datuk Najib Tun Razak, son of the late Prime Minister, was given the minor Culture, Youth and Sports portfolio, as he was seen as an ally of Musa Hitam, although he was once a Tengku Razaleigh protege.

The 37th UMNO General Assembly was held in Kuala Lumpur on September 17, 1986. Mahathir capitalised on the questions of Malay rights and the New Economic Policy (NEP) in his presidential speech. Musa Hitam was still the UMNO Deputy President, and he put up an appearance of togetherness with Mahathir at the General Assembly. Both Mahathir and Musa Hitam refused to stage a public showdown when Johore delegates demanded to know the facts leading to Musa Hitam's resignation the year before. The ethics of the wayang kulit were scrupulously maintained.

Musa Hitam delivered his traditional Deputy Presidential speech to the UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO joint gathering a day before the UMNO General Assembly proper. He warned delegates against falling victims to what he called the "silent syndrome". He exhorted: "Do not lose your idealism once you are in power".

And once in power, don't have too many interests until they overwhelm the ideals of your struggle. Don't be ungrateful, don't act like *kacang lupakan kulit*. When you try to abuse the power entrusted to you, don't forget the Malay proverb: *Sepandai-pandai tupai melompat, akhirnya jatuh ke tanah juga* (as clever as the Squirrel is at jumping, eventually he'll fall).

Further on, he said: "As individuals, you may be corrupt. But as leaders, you are forbidden any involvement in corruption."

The critics should not be made victims and treated with prejudice. Let there not be a feeling among the leaders that a person can be accused of being a traitor if he decides to offer his services for a higher office in the organisation.

He called for the defence of not only Malay nationalism but also of democracy in UMNO. He asked his audience to examine "all the successes and weaknesses of UMNO's struggle under the respective leaderships" from Dato Onn, to Tengku Abdul Rahman, to Tun Razak, to Tun Hussein Onn, to Mahathir.

Then came another indirect stab at his opponents:

One factor we have to consider from now on is the question of separating the political aspects from the business aspects of management in UMNO.

Musa Hitam said that "It is this trend that has given rise to 'money politics' and 'commercial politics' in UMNO today".

It was a cleverly thought out speech, constructed with skilled *wayang kulit* effect against his opponents. It was well received by his supporters, but was widely criticised by Mahathir's people for it was seen as an indirect attack on the Prime Minister's style of leadership, which some detractors see as combative or even dictatorial.

Meanwhile, playing the role of a keen observer, Tengku Razaleigh must have been able to assess for himself the pro and anti Mahathir and Musa Hitam currents and undercurrents at the Assembly. Thus, the leadership struggle for UMNO in 1987 had actually begun at the 1986 General Assembly.

The UMNO triennial elections were scheduled for April 1987. Thirty important seats in the UMNO Supreme Council were at stake. They comprised that of the President, Deputy President, three Vice-Presidents and twenty-five Supreme Council members. The 1987 UMNO General Assembly promised to be a political extravaganza or, to use more contemporary parlance, a blockbuster. The question in the minds of most Malaysians was: Would

Musa Hitam challenge Mahathir, but what about Tengku Razaleigh?

My Enemy's Enemy

By the last week of January, there were uncertain indications that Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh, despite their long and bitter rivalry in the recent past, would be likely to team up against the Mahathir-Ghafar combination in what the *Asiaweek* called "a grudge match".

Tengku Razaleigh has had over the years developed an unspoken antipathy towards Mahathir politically. It has been said by some people that in 1976, when Hussein Onn became Prime Minister and UMNO President on the death of Tun Razak, Tengku Razaleigh was confident, being the senior Vice-President of UMNO then, of being chosen as the Deputy President of the party as well as Deputy Prime Minister. However, Mahathir was chosen by Hussein Onn, while Ghafar Baba was skipped over supposedly because of his lack of formal education. In 1981, when Mahathir became Prime Minister and UMNO President, he had already shown his preference for Musa Hitam. Tengku Razaleigh's camp was infuriated when Mahathir spoke out in favour of Musa Hitam at the 34th UMNO General Assembly in 1983 on 19 August 1983; some of them launched an emotional and belligerent attack on Mahathir on what they considered as an unfair bias and a thinly veiled attempt by Mahathir to dictate his choice on the delegates. One Razaleigh man openly declared at the Assembly: "Dr Mahathir should not think that with his kind of speech and warning we will stop. No! We won't stop. We will continue working for the fight." (*Daiges Malaysia*, September 1983).

And to crown it all, when Musa Hitam resigned in 1986, Ghafar Baba rather than Razaleigh was chosen by Mahathir to be the Deputy Prime Minister. According to the *Asiaweek* (March 1987), "Razaleigh's friends and associates say that having been 'played out' by Mahathir several times, he is now ready to settle the score once and for all." It seems they were especially sore about this snub in view of the fact that Tengku Razaleigh had garnered about 40 percent of the votes in his two contests against Musa Hitam in 1981 and 1984.

By the end of February 1987, the *Asiaweek* reported that, increasingly, the office of Tengku Razaleigh "is resembling a

campaign headquarters." And although by then Tengku Razaleigh himself had not yet announced that he was going for the very top post in UMNO, "his associates are confident that he will oppose" Mahathir "for control of UMNO and Malaysia".

Marina Yusof, a lawyer and long-time associate of Tengku Razaleigh, was reported as saying: "There is only one post for him to contest. He has to go for No. 1, because in our party and government system it is only the No. 1 that matters. The rest have little or no influence." She added: "The time is ripe for a change in UMNO. We need fresh air, new faces. Mahathir has had his six years."

Whatever bitter rivalry Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh had over the past decade or more, by early February 1987 they had agreed to bury the hatchet, even if it was temporarily, to confront what they saw as the common foe: Mahathir. They had met several times including in Europe in early February, and had agreed, according to the *Asiaweek*, "to team up to oust Mahathir."

One observer remarked cryptically to *Asiaweek*: "For both of them, an enemy of an enemy is a friend. Mahathir is their common enemy and irrespective of what they might think of each other, they want to get rid of him."

By that time, Mahathir and Ghafar Baba had already been nominated by some party divisions for President and Deputy President respectively. Speculation had by then crystallised that Musa Hitam would allow Tengku Razaleigh to contest against Mahathir while he himself would defend his position of Deputy President against Ghafar Baba. It was said that by doing this, Musa Hitam could argue that he had never wanted to overthrow Mahathir as alleged by his opponents when he resigned a year ago.

Allegations, Speculation, Strategy

Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, a former Cabinet Minister and Ambassador to Indonesia, also from Johore, was reported as saying: "It is clear that he (Musa) wants Mahathir out and he is only using Razaleigh." This long-time opponent of Musa Hitam and now Mahathir ally added: "Musa is trying to kill two birds with one stone - embarrass Mahathir and kill Razaleigh."

Most observers believed that the Musa-Razaleigh combination would make a formidable challenge, although some people thought that they could have problems convincing their grassroots

supporters. But it seems, Tengku Razaleigh was looking beyond 1987, as Asiaweek reported: "Razaleigh supporters reason that if he loses but musters 40% of the vote, he would have enough ammunition to force Mahathir to step down before 1990."

Meanwhile, Mahathir's camp alleged that Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh made strange bedfellows who had teamed up merely for convenience. They said the pair would be at each other's throats as soon as Mahathir had left the scene. While observers believed that the 1987 and 1990 contests would leave UMNO divided, Mahathir's supporters accused Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh of wanting to "convert UMNO into India's Congress party". One of them warned: "Look at where India is today because of incessant squabbling." The Prime Minister's men argued that a divided UMNO would shake business confidence in Malaysia as a result of political instability.

At that late stage there was still some speculation that Mahathir might finally come to some compromise with Tengku Razaleigh. But some observers were correct in pointing out that such an arrangement would be unlikely as both Mahathir and Razaleigh were proud men. And they thought Tengku Razaleigh didn't "mind losing after giving a good fight but going down on bended knees is out of the question." "It is," one source said, "a matter of honour."

Meanwhile, Musa Hitam asserted that it was to the good of UMNO for contests to take place, even for the very top posts. "I always say what's wrong with a contest?" "As far as I am concerned," he added, "anyone who wants to be in politics should aspire for the highest office possible."

On 11 April 1987, Tengku Razaleigh announced that he was going to challenge Dr Mahathir for the UMNO Presidency at the party elections on April 24. At the same time, it was confirmed that Musa Hitam would defend his post of Deputy President against Ghafar Baba. The campaign, already bitter and intense albeit covert, intensified further and broke into the open. It had all the makings familiar to a blood feud. UMNO was put to its strongest test in its 41-year history. The battle-lines were drawn; the stirrups were readied, and the crises had been sharpened. The classical Malay legend of the battle royal between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat of the Malacca Sultanate a few hundred years before, ostensibly over the great questions of loyalty, betrayal, dish and honour, had come alive on the UMNO stage of 1987.

The unanswered, and seemingly unanswerable, questions are: Who are the modern day Hang Tuahs and Hang Jebats? Will it be a fight unto the death?

A Bruising Campaign

As the campaign developed, it became more personal. Ghafar Baba was accused by Musa Hitam's people of being greedy for Musa Hitam's post, in contradiction to Mahathir's supporters' argument that it was against tradition to challenge established leaders. Ghafar Baba's personal business problems were also dragged into the melee. Some people began to ask why should Ghafar be elected when he was previously bypassed by Tun Razak, Hussein Onn and Mahathir himself.

Before this, a fiery Musa Hitam had fired his first salvo in late March 1987, with a fierce attack on those in UMNO who has their quest for personal glory behind "masks of morality". He had said, while opening the UMNO Jelutong division's 12th delegates' meeting in Penang, that there opportuniats were not afraid to cheat or lie in order to project themselves to be more moral than others.

According to him, this group of leaders who seemed to be uncompromising towards corruption had instead allowed graft to spread before their eyes. He also said that some had become "yesmen" who always agreed with the top leadership to the extent that they had departed from the aspirations of the people. Musa Hitam added:

What is said should come from the heart. Don't talk and mean something else. This is not in line with the clean, efficient and trustworthy concept which seems to have been forgotten. That concept, which gave one hope in 1982, seems to have vanished.

Referring to the coming leadership contest, Musa Hitam said that it was not too late to fight for truth and justice and weed UMNO of corrupt elements.

By nomination day, five of the eleven UMNO ministers – Razaleigh, Foreign Minister Rais Yatim, Defence Minister Abdullah Badawi, Social Welfare Minister Shahrir Samad and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Ajib Ahmad had declared their opposition to Mahathir. Najib Razak, the Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports, was said to support them privately. They were joined by three Deputy Ministers – Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir of Foreign Affairs, Zainal Abidin Zin of Energy,

Telecommunications and Posts, and Radzi Sheikh Ahmad of Primary Industries. Clearly, the seriousness and scale of the challenge to the incumbents were unprecedented.

It was a remarkable irony that just a few months ago, Mahathir's position looked solid after the Barisan Nasional's and UMNO's impressive, in terms of seats at least, victory in the 1986 general elections. But, as *Asiaweek* pointed out in its 12 April 1987 issue, "Nowadays, Mahathir is looking increasingly like a candidate trying to defend his seat rather than a statesman above the fray of political squabbling." Soon enough, Mahathir found it necessary to enter the arena. By the last week of March, he had to appeal to the delegates by reminding of UMNO's tradition of "smooth power transitions." By the first week of April, he said that he would carry on as UMNO President "even if I win by only one vote". Then, unwittingly perhaps, like a figure besieged, he said that some countries were "attempting to get weak leaders elected" in UMNO, referring to the Zionists, but without naming any country in particular.

Asiaweek reported correctly: "Analysts say Mahathir's fighting tone of recent days and reference to a close vote are tell-tale signs that he believes the contest will be a cliffhanger."

The record of the government, the leadership style of Mahathir, and financial dealings of some of Mahathir's close associates came under fire increasingly. The national debt also came in for criticism; and Ghafar Baba seemed to have committed a serious gaffe when he said earlier on that "the more we borrow the better".

Almost inevitably, the controversial role of Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin, a close friend of Mahathir's and one of the richest men in Malaysia, also became a major campaign issue.

However, a Mahathir supporter argued that the fact that some of the associates mentioned "are either in jail or fighting in courts is proof that Mahathir is not keen on protecting them." He added: "All these scandals that you hear about are two or three years old. At the time, Musa was still deputy prime minister and Razaleigh was finance minister. They must shoulder equal responsibility because in our system of government there is collective responsibility."

Although the M\$2.5 billion BMF scandal was also brought up, it had not been a major issue in the campaign because, as *Asiaweek* pointed out, "it also threatens in some ways to implicate

Razaleigh, a former Bank Bumiputra chairman."

Other issues brought up included the Dayabumi Complex in Kuala Lumpur, the Penang Bridge, the Proton Saga national car project, the Maminco scandal, some cement plants running way below capacity.

Asiaweek predicted that the intense and sometimes nasty intra-party squabbling "may leave UMNO, protector of Malays, badly bruised and, probably, split down the middle."

As the campaign intensified, the two UMNO factions were increasingly referred to by their supporters and outsiders as 'Team A' and 'Team B', led by Mahathir and Razaleigh respectively.

Datuk Abdullah Badawi, at the time aligned to 'Team B', lamented:

UMNO today is not like the UMNO of the past. In my father's time the UMNO general assembly was like a family gathering. It was a happy occasion when old friends would meet. But I am sad to say UMNO has lost that spirit. They do not even look at each other's face when they shake hands."

The final candidate line-up for the UMNO elections of 24 April 1987 were:

President: Dr Mahathir vs. Tengku Razaleigh

Deputy President: Ghafar Baba vs. Musa Hitam

Three Vice-Presidents: Anwar Ibrahim (A), Datuk Wan Mokhtar (A), Datuk Seri Ramli Ngah (A), Datuk Harun Idris (B), Datuk Rais Yatim (B), Datuk Abdullah Badawi Ahmad (B)

25 Supreme Council Members: 73 candidates, including 20 incumbents.

Like previous UMNO elections, 'poison pen letters' were circulated by both camps, with the only difference that they were flying more wildly around this time. Mahathir even branded his opponents as "traitors to the Malays and the party" because, he accused, they were disrupting unity, adding that it was "an attempt by a group to seize power." Asiaweek reported that Mahathir was sounding desperate towards the end when he said that a prime minister did not need to step down if he lost his party post, as he could only be removed through a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

Opponents reckoned those cryptic comments harmed his campaign.

Mahathir also declassified some top-secret Cabinet papers to show that both Musa Hitam and Razaleigh were party to decisions on certain projects which were now criticised by them. However, papers relating to the Maminco and UMBC scandals were not declassified.

Mahathir's supporters also referred to Musa Hitam's and Tengku Razaleigh's private lives. But, more serious, was the charge by Mahathir's team that Musa Hitam was responsible for the Memali tragedy of November 1985 in which 18 people were killed. Some even called Musa Hitam a murderer.

Money politics was obviously rampant in the campaign. Allegations were made by both sides against each other. It was roughly estimated that tens of millions of dollars were used by both factions to woo support.

Although a considerable portion of the campaigning was conducted in a subtle fashion "in keeping with Malay traditions, shadow boxing being more acceptable than the open fistfight", as Asiaweek put it (3 May 1987), there is no doubt whatsoever that the intra-party contest was the most comprehensive, most pervasive, fiercest, expensive and divisive in UMNO's 41-year history.

Fencesitter's Defection

Najib Tun Razak, a former Menteri Besar of Pahang and now the Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports, was believed to have given the impression, if not a clearcut promise, all along that he was privately supporting the Musa Hitam-Tengku Razaleigh team. Three days before the balloting, he "jumped the fence and declared his support for Mahathir". According to some people, this shift was fateful.

As expected, the last day of the campaign saw frantic and desperate activities in both camps. Musa Hitam delivered an impressive speech at the meeting of the UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO. However, he was quite effectively countered by Rafidah Aziz, the Wanita President, a known staunch Mahathir loyalist. Anwar Ibrahim, in his capacity as UMNO Youth leader, also gave an equally powerful message by emphasising that "the role of UMNO Youth is to support Islamic resurgence and to oppose those who oppose it."

Mahathir's faction carried on with its lobbying into the wee

hours of 24 April, polling day. Johore Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Muhyuddin Yassin was working particularly hard to get the fence-sitters from Johore to jump over to Mahathir's side.

As one source reported, there was pandemonium among the huge crowd of Musa Hitam-Tengku Razaleigh's supporters at the Regent Hotel in Kuala Lumpur that night when they thought they smelled victory.

The 1,479 delegates cast their ballots on 24 April. Shortly after 10.45 that night, the official result was announced. Mahathir had polled 761 votes against Tengku Razaleigh's 718, a mere margin of 43 votes. Ghafar Baba beat Musa Hitam by 40 votes, with 41 votes being left blank rather mysteriously.

Thus concluded the most bitter and closest leadership fight in the history of Malaysia's premier political party. However, the conclusion of a battle is not the end of a war. In the midst of the rejoicing and relief on one side and the disappointment and weeping on the other, were born hardened attitudes and animosities which would deepen the split in UMNO in the months which followed.

9. The Day of the Long Knives

"Every cock can crow on his own muck-heap, and ruffle gleaming feathers....."

– D.H. Lawrence.

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake."

– George Orwell

"...capacity to cope with organisational uncertainty is a source of power."

– Graeme Salaman and Kenneth Thompson,
in *Control and Ideology in Organisations*,
Open University, 1980.

"Politicians tend to be magnanimous in victory only when the opposition has been humiliatingly crushed; when the loser can claim to have won, the resentment and annoyance continue to rankle."

– Simon Hoggart, *Back on the House*,
Pan Books, London, 1983.

For the elections to the three posts of Vice-Presidents, two incumbents were returned. They were Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, the Menteri Besar of Trengganu, with 935 votes topping the poll, and Defence Minister Abdullah Badawi Ahmad, who came in second with 879 votes. Wan Mokhtar was aligned with Mahathir while Abdullah Badawi was at the time a close associate of Musa Hitam. The newcomer was Anwar Ibrahim, Education Minister and former UMNO Youth leader, with 850 votes; he is one of Mahathir's staunchest allies.

The leading losers were Rais Yatim from the Musa Hitam camp, Perak Menteri Besar Ramli Ngah Talib, a supporter of Mahathir, and Harun Idris, the former Selangor Menteri Besar. Thus, the delegates seemed to have struck a balance by voting in people from both camps.

Initially, both sides called for the healing of wounds opened up during a bitter campaign. Mahathir asked party members to close ranks in the interests of the Malay race, religion and the country. He said that the main task was to ensure the smooth running of the party and the country. Tengku Razaleigh also said: "What is important is party unity." But he reminded people that he and his team "still represent 50% of UMNO. We are still a force to reckon with."

Former Prime Minister and UMNO President Tun Hussein Onn said that the narrow margin "shows that there are very deep divisions in the party." He emphasised that Mahathir "must really work with all members of UMNO, not play favourites. He must make a genuine effort to weed out corrupt people and clean this government. That's the message I read from the results."

Initially most observers had believed that because of the narrowness of his victory, Mahathir would heal wounds and rebuild bridges within UMNO. Even Anwar Ibrahim was reported as saying that Mahathir needed to make accommodation and adjustments "in the implementation of certain policies and the personalities involved."

Tengku Razaleigh tendered his resignation from the Cabinet the day after the elections. As Ranjit Gill recalls, "His resignation, accepted some days later, marked the first step of a fresh battle. Henceforth, there would be no holds barred in what ensued and would continue to be a titanic struggle for political leadership of the Malays".

In a statement Tengku Razaleigh said he was ready to pledge his support for the party leadership – as long as there was "no witch-hunt".

Whether one could call it a 'witch-hunt' or not, considering the fact that the Prime Minister has the prerogative to appoint his Ministers and Deputy Ministers, one thing was certain: Mahathir had no intention to retain those who had opposed him in the leadership struggle. On 30 April 1987, the long knives appeared. All of Tengku Razaleigh's supporters were sacked from the Cabinet, after the resignations of Razaleigh and Rais Yatim were

accepted. Among those sacked were Shahrir Samad, Abdul Ajib, Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, Rahmah Osman and Zainal Abidin Zin.

As one publication commented, "The handshakes, hugs and unity speeches" immediately after the party elections, "were indeed cosmetic and shortlived".

The seven sacked Ministers and Deputy Ministers issued a joint statement which said: "We accept the decision with an open heart, and full realisation that this action was taken solely because of our stand in the recent party election. We will struggle to restore public confidence in UMNO. We will oppose all actions that threaten UMNO unity."

It was said that the seven were unhappy over the manner in which they were sacked. Their sackings were announced in a statement issued by the Chief Secretary of the government while the Prime Minister was about to leave the country for a visit to the United States and Japan. An angry and hurt Rais Yatim said: "It was as if he wanted to show that they were not important. Well, the nine of us are going to be important."

Team 'B' people reminded the public that Mahathir was going against his own words uttered after the bitter MCA power struggle between Tan Koon Swan and Neo Yee Pan in 1985 that "winners should not take all, while those defeated should not lose all. After all, even losers have their supporters, and they have a right to their views."

Sanusi Junid, at the time Secretary-General of UMNO, however argued that the move was necessary because "we cannot afford people who decide together in the cabinet and then leave and attack the decisions." Anwar Ibrahim, who earlier had suggested that Mahathir should make 'adjustments', now said: "Mahathir is no different from his predecessors in wanting a cabinet that has confidence in him and in whom he has confidence."

Meanwhile, Musa Hitam said that "a witch hunt would be unjust and wrong," but he also said that it was Mahathir's privilege to sack people. "That's the price for trying to go against those in power."

Cries of Victimisation

It appeared that the sackings did not go down well in Kelantan, Johore and other places where support for Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam was substantial. Soon enough, pro-Musa Hitam State Executive Councillors in Johore were also forced to resign. Shahrir

Samad, one of the sacked Ministers, said: "This is victimisation. It is fine to sack ministers but this is carrying it too far."

It was evident that the UMNO split was unprecedentedly deep. The 1987 leadership contest had definitely exacerbated divisions. In terms of geography and hierarchy, UMNO was split from top to bottom, and it is still continuing. As we have seen in Chapter One, the consequences and implications are far-reaching, spilling over, as it were, to the whole Malay community and the country at large.

In the last chapter we will attempt to see what is likely to happen in and to UMNO, as well as the probable realignments on the political map of Malaysia as a direct consequence of UMNO's internal developments. But, more importantly, how will the Malay community in particular and Malaysians in general view the two UMNO factions in the coming months and years. For that, we need first of all to examine the record of UMNO in its claimed role of protector of the Malays, and the record of the governments in which it has been the pre-eminent partner.

10. Protector or Betrayer?

"the best politicians are those who are most like actors."

- A.N. Wilson
in *Incline Our Hearts*, Viking, New York, 1989.

"All civilizations rest on myths...."

- Theodore H. White,
in *Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon*,
New York, 1976.

"They had little knowledge or understanding of traditional politics; for them politics was about power, and power was necessary to make money. The new intake did not regard idealism or principle as a virtue."

- Tariq Ali
in *The Nehrus and the Gandhis*,
Picador, London, 1985.

".....all men are cats pretending to be rabbits. As rabbits they eat all the leaves, as cats they eat all the meat."

- Prameodya Ananta Toer
in *This Earth of Mankind*, Penguins, 1981.

"Any party which takes credit for the rain must not be surprised if its opponents blame it for the drought."

- Dwight W. Morrow.

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake."

- O'Brien,
in *George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-four*

"He's stinking with money and thinks you're not a gentlemen. His old fellow made his tin by selling jalap to Zulus or some bloody swindle or other."

- Buck Mulligan to Stephen,
in *James Joyce's Ulysses*.

"More common is the succession of goals when the service of the old one is highly unsuccessful, leaving the organisation to find a new goal to serve if it is to survive."

— Amitai Etzioni
in *Modern Organisations*, 1965.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, UMNO was formed in response to a specific challenge faced by the Malays in 1946: the Malayan Union. Thus, from the time of Dato Onn right up to the present, UMNO has always existed in the name of 'Malay unity', more specifically, Malay unity to protect the interests of the Malays.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the two main factions engaged in the present fierce power struggle both do it in the stirring name of 'Malay unity'. So have those Malay individuals and Malay organisations and groups which have expressed their concern over the implications and consequences of the present drama between Mahathir's born-again UMNO and Tengku Razaleigh's so-called 'Semangat 46' (Spirit of 46). Malay daily and weekly newspapers and their readers, some academics, intellectuals, writers, community leaders and others have also entered the fray in the same name. A few months ago, Dato Asri, who was formerly PAS leader for 18 years, resigned from Hamim, the party he founded after leaving PAS, to join UMNO in the name of Malay and Muslim unity.

The 'Protector' of the Malays

Off and on, UMNO leaders have made it a point to reiterate UMNO's basic claim to be the defender and protector of the Malays and their interests and future. For instance, in his opening address to the joint UMNO Youth and Wanita Assembly in Kuala Lumpur on 17 September 1986, Musa Hitam, in his capacity as UMNO Deputy President, said: "UMNO is the only hope for the Malays; their fate depends on it. UMNO is the Malays and the Malays are UMNO. UMNO and the Malays are synonymous."

Tunku Abdul Rahman went a step farther by declaring on 6 February 1984 that "A split in UMNO would spell disaster to the well-being of Malaysia."

Lee Kuan Yew also subscribed to this notion of UMNO's indispensability, albeit not without ulterior political motives, when he and his PAP were trying hard to woo the Tunku and UMNO to admit them as ruling partners shortly after the formation of Malaysia. Speaking at an election rally at Kluang, Johore on 29 March 1964, Lee asserted that "the Malay leadership in UMNO is irreplaceable."

The UMNO Leadership

As Professor A. Kahar Bador has pointed out, the early top leadership of UMNO was drawn "almost entirely from the ranks of the English educated members of the Malay aristocracy, the Raja and Orang Besar families, i.e. the traditional leaders of the Malays." There were also many Malayan Civil Service and Malay Administrative Service officers who participated in UMNO at the state and national levels. These "administrators", as Dr Chandra Muzaffar calls them, "were unabashed supporters of British colonial rule". After the amicable settlement of their differences over the Malayan Union, as Muzaffar points out, in his book *Protector?*, both "feudal history and British colonialism had conspired to bestow the privilege of power and position upon this group." After that, according to Professor Syed Husin Ali, some of them "were given unrecorded leave to attend UMNO meetings." In the 1955 general elections, more than 80 percent of UMNO candidates were ex-civil servants. In those days, many of them had connections with upper class families. Muzaffar argues:

It is my contention that when the administrators acted as protectors in the Malayan Union episode they were doing so as protectors in the feudal tradition. They perceived themselves as protectors in that tradition and were perceived by the community as protectors in that same tradition.

Muzaffar goes on to contend that "the Malayan Union has been the foundation for the emergence of new notions of unquestioning loyalty". In return, the leader had to guarantee the ethnic protection of the Malays. Both Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak placed a great deal of emphasis on this traditional concept of loyalty. As we shall soon see, it is this feudal concept of loyalty that led directly to the breeding of arrogance, corrup-

tion and a loss of direction among UMNO leaders eventually.

A Warped Portrait of the Malays

In playing the role of the protector of the Malays, UMNO has constantly invoked the fear — real or imaginary — of the Malays being reduced to an insignificant minority, or of losing its political pre-eminence, or of being lost in the world like the Red Indians of North America. At the same time, the Malays whom they claim to protect and champion are invariably painted and portrayed as weak and helpless people incapable of standing on their own feet.

Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, notwithstanding the fact that he is today not only an UMNO member but also an ardent apologist for the Mahathir regime, has correctly characterised such portrayed of the Malays as “the products of the colonial ideology”, in his excellent book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (Frank Cass, London, 1977). Alatas says:

They are a reaction to the colonial thesis which apparently conditioned the response and attitude expressed in the publications. The image of the easy-going, unindustrious, lethargic Malay figures prominently in their works. Unlike Rizal's treatment of the indolence of the Filipinos, the two recent Malay works are not penetrating, analytic, or scientific. They resemble their progenitor, the ideology of colonial capitalism.

Alatas makes a scathing attack on *Revolusi Mental*, published by UMNO in 1971. He criticises it for its “inaccuracies”, “its lack of intellectual depth”, “its ridiculous conclusions”, “its contradictory statements”, “its simple outlook on the development process” and its “attitude of ignoring previous works and opinions on the same problem by Malays themselves in the course of approximately a century.” He sums up the book as generally characterising Malay society by the following attitudes: “The Malays are not honest to themselves, and they do not see their own faults. Hence the causes of their backwardness are suggested to be colonialism, exploitation by other communities, the capitalist system, religion, and a number of other causes. The Malays on the whole lack the courage to fight for the truth. The unresisted oppression which occurred frequently in Malay history is quoted as evidence of this.”

Alatas describes the book succinctly as “a chaotic amalgamation of sound common knowledge of no depth, and absolutely

ridiculous inferences, is perhaps the most naive, the least well-defined philosophy of capitalism, while claiming to represent the modern and indigenous philosophy of the Malays. The influence of colonial capitalism is strong. It avoided the issue of the indolence of the Malays. Its attitude towards this problem is ambivalent but definitely inclined to the view that the Malays are lazy."

Alatas says the UMNO book "proceeds to characterise the Malays in negative terms unexcelled in the history of colonialism. While many British colonial writers stressed the laziness of the Malays they did not strip the Malays of so many other qualities which the *Revolusi Mental* did. No colonial British book had ever recorded so many negative qualities relating to the Malays or considered them to be the dominant influence in the formation of the Malay character."

Alatas concludes that the UMNO book, edited by Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, the then UMNO Secretary-General, and hailed by Tun Razak as a milestone in the intellectual thinking of the Malays no less, "is the political ideology par excellence of a conservative ruling group confronted with certain political problems".

Professor Alatas also has some interesting things to say about Dr Mahathir's book, *The Malay Dilemma*. He considers Mahathir's views similar in many respects to the UMNO book, "but in at least one respect more extreme, that is the degradation of the Malays". He argues that although Mahathir's book shows "greater intellectual exertion", Mahathir "followed the same trend of thinking" as in *Revolusi Mental*.

On the whole his comments which occur in the book incline us to consider Mahathir's view on the Malay capacity for hard work as negative. His views on the Malays, like those of the *Revolusi Mental*, are dominated by colonial capitalism.

There is in his mental world no complete break with colonial thinking. On the ability of the Malays to work hard his judgement is capitulation.

He flays Mahathir for arguing "the benefits derived from the promotion of a few Malays to company directorship." He says Mahathir's thinking on Malay reform "must be seen within the context of capitalism. He did not question the capitalist system." Further on, he says that Mahathir "is even appreciative of feudalism".

In conclusion, Alatas argues:

The weakness of both *Revolusi Mental* and Mahathir's book is that they put the blame for the exploitation of the Malays on their

character, British rule, and the impact of immigrant business but not to the same degree on the Malay ruling class which profited from colonialism. Thus when they say Malays are not frank, it also means they are not frank. In this respect, their silence on the contribution of the Malay ruling class to the deterioration of the conditions of the Malays, is an illustration of their hypocrisy.

Both these works expressed the philosophy of the ruling elites in broad outline. While they attempted a detailed criticism of the Malays, they avoided a similar detailed treatment of the ruling elites. One or two brief references were made in passing but they never constituted a theme or a chapter or even a paragraph. It is a reflection of their position in the power structure, since they formed part of the status quo.

Alatas accuses the authors of *Revolusi Mental* and, to some extent, Mahathir, of distorting the Malay character. He attributes this fault of theirs as being "due to their lack of insight into the social sciences, their loose reasoning, and their unfamiliarity with Malay history."

All are, however, sympathetic to the Malays. They resemble some American negroes who believe what white racialists say about them.

Alatas thinks that the "negative traits of Malay character discussed by Mahathir are either an exaggeration or misplaced judgements". He also says that "Mahathir was wrong to consider certain phenomena pertaining to some individuals as indicating the character of a collectivity". He contends that "Mahathir's idea on the racial inferiority of the Malays" was "all vague". "His use of the survival of the fittest hypothesis was inconsistent," he adds.

This critique shows Alatas at his best, long before he warmed up to Mahathir and UMNO itself.

Chandra Muzaffar has pointed out correctly that the *Revolusi Mental* "manifests a lack of knowledge of the social forces that shape change" on the part of the individuals who helped to produce it. Be that as it may, UMNO's faulty perception of the Malays may not be that faulty after all: it is more of a self-serving self-fulfilling analysis-cum-prophecy. As Muzaffar has explained, "This is one way in which the UMNO leadership justifies protection". The more 'weaknesses' are conjured about the Malays, the more UMNO leaders can hope to continue to sell their wares: the advertised need for their protection. What UMNO leaders fear most is the day when most of the Malays stop to regard them as their protectors and saviours. That will be the day when UMNO's whole *raison d'être* would have evaporated. To UMNO leaders,

such a day must never come.

Dr Shaharuddin Maaruf points out, in his book **Concept of a Hero in Malay Society**, that the "Malay elite that assumed power after independence, was not only influenced by the feudal psychology of the past, but also by a materialistic outlook towards life." By "materialistic outlook", Shaharuddin Maaruf refers "to a type of thinking which advocates the pursuit of wealth and fortune regardless of the means employed in such a pursuit." He argues:

Revolusi Mental seeks to change the mentality of the Malays but it ends up as a justification of feudalism and materialism. It preaches a mental revolution which rests on 'the principle of accumulating unlimited wealth by individuals. Unlike the original type of western capitalism which was based on Protestant ethics where frugality, thrift and rationality were emphasised, the form preached by **Revolusi Mental** rests on the use of power and political influence.

He quotes extensively from **Revolusi Mental** itself to support his contention:

The principle of accumulating as much wealth as possible by individuals by whatever means is the basis of the progress of a person, a society and a nation. (My emphasis).

And,

... a powerful politician can also be a rich industrialist. In this case, he works hard at accumulating to the maximum tangible and non-tangible wealth by making himself the best and the most successful politician and industrialist.

Again,

... in this modern age the hero is one who dresses stylishly, wears a necktie too, carries the James Bond briefcase, drives a big Jaguar (maybe he has a second car), works in an air-conditioned room, draws a salary of more than two thousand dollars a month and lives in a big brick house.

And again,

To have a lot of money is to influence the angles (persons with money can do as they like).

Thus, **Revolusi Mental** undermines all ethical and religious values of honesty, fair play, humility and justice. It even equates a modern hero as "a personality pleasant to those who conduct

business transaction with him. It need not be good as judged by religious and moral standards.”

The Fatal Attractions

Such attitudes, regarding (1) using political power to amass wealth and using wealth to increase political power, and (2) to accumulate both political power and wealth without respect for religious and ethical principles, did not of course begin to develop only after 1971, the year *Revolusi Mental* was published. Such attitudes were already with UMNO leaders long before that; but they were to become fatal attractions as time went by.

In the days of Tunku Abdul Rahman's government, waste, abuse of power and hanky panky were not uncommon. Consider, for instance, this complaint made by Opposition MP Dr Tan Chee Khoon about the government sending the Lady Supervisor of Government Accommodation to Germany to buy crockeries for Parliament Building. In a speech in the Dewan Rakyat on 15 July 1964, Dr Tan said: “To me, it is the most wasteful means of purchasing crockeries: to spend, perhaps, \$4,000 to send a person to Germany to buy crockeries.”

And, then on 24 January 1969, again in the Dewan Rakyat, Dr Tan complained that “in the previous arms deals there had been allegations that some Alliance politicians had benefitted enormously by acting as agents for the foreign arms dealers.”

Then, there was the time when Lim Kit Siang, then Organising Secretary of the DAP, who called on the Tunku to “put a stop to Ministers running around the world” because the people would have to pay for Alliance “extravagance and waste” (*Straits Times*, 29 March 1969).

Dr Tan Chee Khoon also said that during the first decade of Merdeka, “there is corruption in high places, especially amongst politicians. A number of Alliance politicians at all levels of representative government have amassed lands, houses, bank balances, businesses, etc., during their term of office... almost every day I receive letters alleging corruption”. (quoted by Hans H. Indorf, in ‘Party System Adaptation to Political Development in Malaysia during the First Decade of Independence, 1957 – 1967’ (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1969).

As Y. Mansor Marican points out, “Although in 1961 the government accepted an Opposition Member of Parliament's sug-

gestion to announce that corruption is considered sinful in Islam, nothing was done subsequently."

Loyalty and Innocence

The inability or unwillingness to distinguish between what was public and what was private was a disease which afflicted top UMNO leaders fairly early. When independence was attained, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman presented Carcosa, the former official residence of the British governor in Kuala Lumpur, to the British as a 'gift'. His generosity in making a gift of public property was amazing, as though he was giving away one of his own horses. The Executive Committee of Aliran commented quite rightly: "If the unwillingness of the British to grant us independence was one of the reasons for making a gift of Carcosa, then the pre-Merdeka Government was motivated by a false sense of gratitude. For independence is a people's birthright. There was no justification at all for regarding British rule as 'friendly'. (Aliran Monthly, December - January 1986).

But this feudal state of mind of the Tunku was betrayed at an even more ridiculous and embarrassing level when his Education Minister, Rahman Talib, lost a libel case in late 1964. Opposition MP D. R. Seenivasagam had accused Rahman Talib of corruption in the Dewan Rakyat. When Seenivasagam repeated his allegation outside the House after being challenged by Rahman Talib, the latter sued for libel and slander. At the end of 1964, the High Court in Kuala Lumpur found against Rahman Talib on the ground that he did receive favours and had used undue influence for his personal benefit.

On 7 December 1964, Opposition MP Dr Tan Chee Khoo rose in the Dewan Rakyat under Standing Order 18(1) to move an adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent and public importance - to call upon the Education Minister to resign, after he had lost in the High Court. Dr Tan said: "This judgement, which I hold in my hand, is an indictment on the honesty and incorruptibility of the present Government." Dr Tan added:

In any democratic country, the Minister would have resigned, but in this country the Honourable Prime Minister has stated that he would not even suspend the Minister. This is a crying shame and is most deplorable. Here is a clear cut case of an adverse judgement by a Judge of the High Court in no uncertain terms that the Minister

has received favours and used undue influence for his personal benefit.

The request for a debate on the matter was turned down by the Speaker of the House. As Mavis Puthuchery points out, "In fact the Prime Minister and other Cabinet colleagues went out of their way to praise him for his past services. The Prime Minister declared in a letter to him that 'your colleagues and I are convinced of your innocence'. Furthermore when it was discovered that his costs of litigation had been paid by the government through some disguised item in the budget, the government justified it on the grounds that he was a public officer. What is more revealing is that the party whip was again used to secure voting along party lines."

This has prompted Mavis Puthuchery to comment:

Ministers that are found to be lacking in ability to discharge their functions as ministers or to be corrupt are therefore removed quietly without the public getting to know the real reason for their removal. They are either transferred to another (and less important) ministry in a Cabinet reshuffle or they are given a non-ministerial post either within the Government or in a statutory authority. Some are offered a diplomatic post overseas.

She says that "loyalty is valued much more highly than many other virtues, even personal integrity." And she adds: "The socio-political environment and the style of politics that has evolved in Malaysia since Independence, however, are inimical to the development of a system in which the convention of ministerial responsibility can operate fully."

Or as Karl von Vorys puts it: "Fairness aside, political realism argued for a broad-minded attitude towards their lapses in the face of materialistic temptations provided always that they remained loyal to the political system and, of course, to him (the Prime Minister) personally."

Moreover, the misplaced loyalty of the Tunku and his colleagues towards Rahman Talib was tantamount to contempt of court. As Hans H. Indorf says, "While this action was an expression of commendable loyalty, it also indirectly repudiated the judicial decision and downgraded the legal system". Or, as Y. Mansor Marican puts it, this "contrasts sharply" with the firmness shown by Hussein Onn's handling of the Dato Harun Idris' case in the mid-1970s.

Rahman Talib's strong loyalty for the Tunku was amply rewarded. As Chandra Muzaffar points out, "dereliction of duty"

was not a crime as long as one was also unquestioningly loyal." Muzaffar reminds us, Rahman Talib "was given all the protection possible by the Tunku. The Tunku even proclaimed his innocence before the Judge had reached a decision. More important, his legal fees amounting to more than eighty-eight thousand dollars were paid by the Government and the Tunku severely castigated critics of the corrupt Minister. Later, the Minister who resigned from the cabinet on his own accord was made an Ambassador. Needless to say he was ardent Tunku loyalist."

Of course, \$88,000, when compared to present-day financial scandals which have run into hundreds of millions or even a few billion dollars, can be laughed away as being 'peanuts'. But the important point is that in principle, a very bad precedent was set for succeeding generations of UMNO and Barisan Nasional politicians and leaders. In a very serious and damaging way, the mould had been established for the financial scandals of the 1970s and the 1980s, in an ever-escalating fashion.

How the ACA Became a Toothless Tiger

As Y. Mansor Marican recalls, the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) had a person of integrity in its first Director-General, Harun Hashim, who inspired public confidence through his frequent revelations of the activities of the ACA, the number of people arrested, the number of prosecutions and the amount of assets seized. During the first year of its operations, the ACA received 6,155 complaints from the public. "Harun's disclosures, however, began to cause concern in government circles. Possibly fearing that they would affect the government's image, the Prime Minister decreed that future press statements could be made only with the approval of the Ministry".

At a forum on 'The Problem of Corruption in the Country' organised by UMSU in connection with its 6th Press Training Programme in early 1975, I said:

In fact, some three years ago, the first Director of the then Anti-Corruption Agency — he has since been promoted as a High Court Judge apparently because he was too dynamic and active for the liking of some people in high places — had the occasion to announce that he had caught some big fish in Malacca. When I went down to Malacca shortly after that I issued a press statement calling on the ACA to make public the name or names of the 'big fish' it claimed to have caught.

A few days after that the then Minister of Home Affairs, Tun Dr

Ismail, warned the ACA not to say too many things in the Press. After that, that was the last we heard of the 'big fish' of Malacca. Apparently, the ACA was pressured into dropping the case and letting the 'big fish' swim back into the Straits of Malacca.

Well, as a saying goes, "Laws, like the spider's web, catch the fly and let the hawk go free". The ACA did not, and does not, have real freedom of action as a truly investigative and prosecuting body, being merely a creature of a government which is never above suspicion itself. It became a toothless tiger.

But all the same, I did say at the same forum at the University of Malaya: "There is still the buying and selling of votes at General Elections, and even at the elections of certain political parties, as evidenced by the charges and counter charges of UMNO leaders." And I also asked: "How many Mr Ten Percent's do we already have in Malaysia?"

Helping Vested Interests

Although one of the proclaimed main aims of UMNO is to uplift the socio-economic position of the Malays, its actions have always carried a distinct class bias. UMNO has always been a party of landed interests. As Martin Rudner has pointed out, although the Malay peasantry had welcomed the attention accorded agriculture, they had complained about the absence of a definite agricultural development programme in the First Five-Year Plan. Rudner comments:

Regret was also expressed at the Alliance failure to undertake even the modest reforms proposed by the Rice Committee Report (1956) to curb some of the more blatant evils of absentee landlordism in the rice-bowl of north-west Malaya. However the landed gentry dominating the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), senior partner in the Alliance, preferred to look elsewhere than to institutional reform for a remedy for rural backwardness. Instead, the UMNO squirearchy indicated their faith in the classic formula of social amenities and economic infrastructure came to denote Alliance strategy.

In another piece of writing, Rudner says: "By late 1958, it had become quite apparent that the First Five-Year Plan approach had failed to prevent the continued decline of Malay fortunes. With the onset of the general election campaign, rural UMNO candidates pressed the government for positive measures to alleviate agricultural distress. Yet when the gesture did come, it was too little too late, and the Alliance sustained important losses in

the 1959 General Elections, especially on the rural east coast.”

In fact, UMNO was pursuing conservative financial policies very similar to those of the colonial period. As Michael Stenson notes, “It has often been noted that this accommodation precluded significant nationalization or co-operativization, which were logical paths for the Malay administrative elite”. But class interests swept the expectations of the poor Malay farmers and fishermen aside. Stenson adds:

Thus, when, as Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Abdul Aziz bin Ishak attempted to improve the position of Malay rice farmers in 1960 by introducing co-operative rice mills in competition with private Chinese-owned mills, he was forced out of the Cabinet following MCA protests of unconstitutional discrimination.

For a full account of this intriguing episode, read Aziz Ishak’s ‘The Beginning of a Rift’ and ‘The Rift Widens’ in his book, *Special Quest*.

Bribes & Threats With Public Money

As UMNO arrogance grew, its leaders conveniently forgot increasingly the difference between public property and party property and the difference between public money and party funds. UMNO leaders flew around the country in public helicopters for essentially party functions; at election time, UMNO and Alliance leaders distributed public funds for schools, clinics and temples in return for hoped for votes. The facilities of the Information Department were used to the full for party purposes. For instance, Tun Razak’s speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of UMNO in 1966 was broadcast to the country through public facilities.

UMNO leaders very early on had developed the shameful habit of using public funds to bribe or threaten the electorate. In the 1969 General Elections, Tun Razak promised \$500 million for development projects in Kelantan if the Alliance won. Around the same time, he warned that if a non-Alliance government won in Penang, the people there would face hardship resulting from a cut-off in funds from the federal government. Tun Razak justified this warning by saying: “This is politics. We must help those people who support us. We reward support with benevolence”. (*Straits Times*, 17 April 1969).

A similar warning was issued to the people of Sarawak in the 1974 General Elections against electing a SNAP state government.

During the same general election campaign, Hussein Onn, then Deputy Prime Minister, warned that the federal government would not support financially a state government in Trengganu formed by the PSRM; he said both federal money and personnel would not be forthcoming. (*Straits Times*, 14 August 1974).

The 21 May 1982 issue of *The Star* reported Tengku Razaleigh, then Finance Minister, to have said recently that all 27 land schemes of the Kelantan Land Development and Rehabilitation Authority (TAKDIR) would be dissolved because a large number of settlers in these schemes were PAS supporters who had opposed the Barisan Nasional in the recent general election. He made it clear that the state government would give priority to development projects in constituencies represented by the Barisan and would "exclude areas whose elected representatives are from PAS, including projects for water, electricity and roads."

This prompted Aliran leader Chandra Muzaffar to comment: "It is a pity that after all these years of independence certain political leaders continue to misunderstand the responsibility of government and its relationship to opposition constituencies and supporters." He added: "For depriving people with a different electoral orientation, of basic human needs such as water and electricity, is not only a gross betrayal of responsibility but also a cruel and inhuman policy". (*Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 2, No. 2)

The² Chickens Came Home to Roost

Frantz Fanon says, in his classic *The Wretched of the Earth* that "If the party is mingled with the government, the fact of being a party militant means that you take the short cut to gain private ends, to hold a post in the government, step up the ladder, get promotion and make a career for yourself". This seems to be what has happened precisely to a good number of UMNO leaders at various levels. And this phenomenon can be traced directly to a number of sources: (1) the lax attitude of the UMNO leadership towards corruption in the 1950s and 1960s; (2) the influence of *Revolusi Mental*, that UMNO manifesto of greed; (3) the abusive implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP); and (4) Dr Mahathir's simplistic insistence on creating Malay millionaires to solve the problem of Malay poverty.

When Tun Dr Ismail, the then Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President, declared, at the joint UMNO Youth and Wanita Assembly on 29 June 1973, that "the party is Govern-

ment and the Government is the party" and that the two are "indivisible" because "the destiny of the two cannot be separated", he was not exactly saying something new. As we have already seen, this arrogant and dangerous attitude had actually intoxicated many UMNO leaders and members much earlier. However, the full horrors of UMNO's Pandora Box came into full view when opened by the increased economic opportunities of the NEP and the newly found oil money in the early 1970s.

As Stenson and Shaharuddin Maaruf have pointed out, while Tunku Abdul Rahman's government acted as some sort of a caretaker for colonial capitalism, Tun Razak's rise "represented historically the triumph of Malay capitalism on the political scene", while Mahathir's concern has been to balance off non-Malay capitalism with Malay capitalism. In the words of Bruce Gale, in his **Politics and Public Enterprises**:

After 1970, ... the establishment of public enterprises with generous financial allocations gave political factions (especially within UMNO) access to extensive resources which could be used as patronage. The nature of Malaysian politics began to change as clientelist networks extended into the economy and government bureaucracy.

Malaysia in the 1970s also seemed to be taking on other features of the patrimonial model. Political leaders derived much of their personal legitimacy and support from an ability to distribute political and economic resources as patronage. Hence, they were often beset by unwelcome requests for personal favours which by-passed standard procedures.

This is, of course, not to say that patronage was not absent during the Tunku years. The bounty in those days was much smaller to dance and fight over. Almost from the start, ours has been an elite-oriented economy. As Shaharuddin Maaruf says, in the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s, "The Barisan functions like a huge power syndicate". The advice by people like Professor Ungku Aziz that it would be a mistake to think that Malay poverty could be solved by two or three thousand Malay millionaires was simply brushed aside in the mad rush for the Malaysian El Dorado.

In **Loser Takes All**, Graham Greene makes one of his characters muse that "One adapts oneself to money much more easily than to poverty...." and that "I discovered that as on the stock exchange money bred money". And so it was that in Malaysia, the 1970s signalled the arrival of 'Scoundrel Time', to borrow

from the title of one of Lillian Hellman's books. A Perak Menteri Besar was convicted for corruption; the Menteri Besar of another state was busy building his personal empire, ending up scot-free with 17 luxurious cars, rows of houses, land and other properties. In the middle of the 1970s, at least one Cabinet Minister was for some time high on the rumours circuit for having accumulated a considerable amount of ill-gotten gains.

The Dato Harun Saga

In 1976, Dato Harun Idris, the former Menteri Besar of Selangor and UMNO Youth leader, was convicted and sentenced to six years' imprisonment on a M\$250,000 corruption charge involving the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, and a M\$6.5 million criminal breach of trust charge involving Bank Rakyat. But Dato Harun was not the only UMNO personality involved in this scandal.

According to the government White Paper on the Bank Rakyat scandal, Dato Harun's son Mazlan directed lending activities with virtually "blatant disregard for any established rules or procedures". According to the auditor's report, the people who had taken loans from Bank Rakyat included Datuk Harun's brother as well as many UMNO divisional chairmen, particularly those from Selangor. Other senior politicians who had also received loans included the Chief Minister of Malacca who took out a loan of over \$300,000, and an executive councillor of the Kedah state government who took out a loan of \$800,000. Abdul Aziz Salehuddin, a strong supporter of Dato Harun and an executive council member of UMNO Youth, was given a loan of \$50,000 in March 1974. The title deed and valuation report of his collateral land, it seemed, was missing.

The significant thing about the Dato Harun affair was the attitudes of some UMNO leaders towards it. As we have seen in Chapter 5, before Dato Harun was indicted, Tun Razak had offered him the post of Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, apparently in order to keep him out of the country to reduce his threat to the top UMNO leadership positions. Then there were the attitudes of UMNO divisional leaders over the Bank Rakyat scandal after Dato Harun's conviction. As a matter of fact, Prime Minister and UMNO President, Datuk Hussein Onn, in his adjournment speech at the UMNO General Assembly in September 1978, had expressed his surprise

that UMNO delegates had failed to raise questions relating to the almost \$67.7 million losses suffered by Bank Rakyat. Hussein Onn asked: "Why didn't any of the delegates raise this issue during the debates?" He was understandably disappointed and angry because, instead, the government had been criticised and condemned by some UMNO elements on the issue.

The phenomenon was succinctly described by Azmi Khalid and Harun Halim Rasip in their paper entitled 'Corruption and the Malaysian Situation' at an Aliran seminar on corruption on 2 November 1980 in Kuala Lumpur, when they said:

....those 'sharks' exposed to public trial have included many whose positions of power had waned or who posed political threats to the cohesion of the ruling elite. Even in such cases, convenient escape routes such as ambassadorships or other lucrative positions had initially been offered. These patterns of not 'sacrificing' loyal subordinates and acting only against those without effective power do little to improve public confidence in the political will of the ruling elite to combat corruption.

They also pointed out that "It has been said that it is alright to indulge in corruption for the benefit of one's own community".

Other Scandals

In May 1978 *The Star* carried the story on the \$220 million scandal involving the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation. In August 1979, the newspaper exposed the Kuantan Port scandal which cost \$250 million. Aliran was prompted to call on the government to set up independent commissions of inquiry into the two scandals, while Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said in the Dewan Rakyat on 22 October 1979: "But what is most shocking is the attitude shown by the top government leaders, including the Prime Minister, who appeared to have adopted the philosophy that such deviations in multi-million dollar projects are to be expected."

In the mid-1970s there was also the Risda scandal. Clearly, the corruption disease was already infecting the civil service as well.

Obviously concerned, Hussein Onn warned UMNO leaders and members, at the 30th UMNO Assembly in July 1979 not to become like 'Pagar Makan Padi' (The Fence Eating the Rice). But, the exhortations of some leaders seemed to contradict

the actions of some other leaders with regard to public honesty and integrity. The government was still taking a soft stance on mismanagement. For instance, in early September 1981, Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam announced that the federal government was writing off a \$23 million federal loan to the Negeri Sembilan state government over the losses sustained by Gula Negeri Sembilan, a state subsidiary company.

UMNO's Culture of 'Money Politics'

UMNO politics was increasingly becoming a profitable venture for many. For some, it was the prospect of attaining power at the divisional, state or even national level not just merely in UMNO but also in government. For others who were not particularly charmed by political power, what that power could do to their business and monetary fortunes was not lost on them. But for many, the power-money symbiosis was just ideal. As the saying goes, when you can drink two cups of tea, why only drink one? The money and power stakes in UMNO, especially because of the pre-eminent position of UMNO in the Barisan Nasional ruling coalition, increased with the years.

Soon enough, the composition of divisional leaders and delegates to UMNO General Assemblies also changed drastically. UMNO delegates were no longer dominated by school teachers but by businessmen, contractors and company directors. According to Bruce Gale:

In the late 1960's most UMNO delegates travelled to Kuala Lumpur in taxis, chartered buses or by train. Those who used their own cars normally arrived in relatively cheap models such as the Morris Minor or the Volkswagon Beetle. By 1981, however, the success of the New Economic Policy had resulted in many young Malay businessmen, executives and professionals arriving in an air-conditioned BMW or Mercedes Benz. UMNO delegates no longer stayed in the smaller hotels along Jalan Raja Muda but preferred instead the prestigious Hilton or Regent.

In 1984 Dr Mahathir warned "that one day only the millionaires will lead the UMNO". He also said: "If we sell our vote today, one day we will sell our party and possibly our country". According to Mahathir, there were those who had spent as much as \$600,000 to become UMNO Division heads.

As Chamil Wariya points out, in his *Siapa Kuasai UMNO (Who Control UMNO)*, "UMNO now is forced to learn to accept

the fact of the political game of rich people in the party". But Chamil Wariya makes a very pertinent point when he says that UMNO members cannot be blamed for this. Leaders have taught them to expect benefits, perhaps business permits like taxi licences, import permits and all sorts of other licences. He says it cannot be avoided that one day UMNO will be controlled by propertied people and millionaires. He is of the opinion that perhaps what saves the party now is that there is no alternative party which is acceptable to the people. Another writer, Rizal Rahman, in his *Perebutan Kuasa Politik & Kesombongan (Political Power Struggles and UMNO Arrogance)*, tells of the "yes-men culture in UMNO" and how division leaders who use money to buy people have become arrogant.

The obsession with UMNO positions became so intense and pervasive that very soon speculation on who would come after who as UMNO President or UMNO Youth Leader became a favourite past-time. Books were written on such speculative topics. Rumours accompanied speculation which in turn fed upon more rumours, innuendoes and often superficial analyses and sometimes even wild guesses. There were occasions when speculation degenerated into slander and childish conjecture. But apparently, such shallow tracts did sell like hot cakes, sadly reflecting how the public had unwittingly perhaps, become victims of the speculation machine of the UMNO power game.

Pagar Makan Padi (The Fence Eats the Rice)

As Professor Syed Husin Ali has reminded us, after the NOC was dissolved and Parliament was revived in 1971, "some of the administrative officers in the NOC began their careers as UMNO politicians and were given high positions in government or important posts in statutory bodies which were established with the objective of improving the Malay economy" under the newly launched NEP. There was also an influx of Malay professionals into UMNO. Syed Husin Ali says:

There were some who really wanted to bring about changes in UMNO, but there were others who had more opportunistic motives and saw UMNO as the quickest means to reach the top. The pressure from members of this new middle class who wanted power, or at least a share in the political and economic leadership, was one of the main factors which caused the change in UMNO. They strengthened their position by mouthing pro-Malay slogans, for they

knew this could attract wider support and would cause them to attain more influence among the lower strata of people and society as a whole.

However, a host of sins of commission and omission were done on the back of pro-Malay slogans, including that of being the 'protector' of the Malays. Anwar Ibrahim admitted at a closed-door meeting of business executives in Kuala Lumpur in the latter half of 1986 at which he was the guest speaker, on the topic of 'Politics & Business – Symbiosis or Antithesis': "We have, for example umpteen agencies and spent 9 billion Ringgit by either extremely corrupt officials, civil servants or politicians."

The NEP was helping a special class of Malays, not the poor Malay farmers fishermen and factory workers and other low-income groups. As Lim Mah Hui has shown in his study, *Ownership and Control of the One Hundred Largest Corporations in Malaysia*, 51% of Malay company directors held titles, and 19.4% were members of royal families. Lim says: "There exists a moderate association between being a Malay director and a politician. Not surprisingly, all the directors with political affiliations come from the ruling coalition – the Barisan Nasional, with the highest representation from the UMNO." Among the leading Malay company directors during the period of the study were Tan Sri Haji Noah bin Omar, a former UMNO General Assembly Permanent Chairman, former Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat and father-in-law of two former Prime Ministers; the late Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil, a former Menteri Besar of Kelantan and former Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat; Tengku Razaleigh, who is also reputed to be one of the largest landowners in Kelantan; the late Tan Sri Syed Nasir bin Ismail, a former UMNO Vice-President; and Datuk Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, a former Menteri Besar of Kedah.

According to Syed Husin Ali, a study of the Registry of Companies shows that "out of 1,526 Malays who have become directors 45 persons (or 3 percent) own shares valued at \$7,480, 000 or 50 percent of the shares of all registered Malay directors, and many of these were in politics or administration before". As Syed Husin Ali also stresses, "Members of the middle class, who do not have influence or political ties, cannot hope to have such opportunities. Of course those in the lower class have no such opportunities whatsoever". He also adds: "It is not easy

for a peasant or a worker to get a loan even if he is a bumiputra."

As Ozay Mehmet, in his *Development in Malaysia: Poverty, Wealth and Trusteeship*, since 1974-75, the period for Lim Mah Hui's study, "there has been an increased concentration of corporate asset ownership in Malaysia". He argues that "the ruling elites, in assuming the role of trustees, have emerged as a cartel" through various interlocking directorates and economic and financial coalitions. According to him:

The Malaysian poverty policies took a bad turn after 1980, accountable in part to the world recession and the slumping commodity prices. There was an absolute increase in poverty during 1980-83.

By 1983, there had been a net reduction of poverty of only 74,200 households, 9.4 percent over a 13-year period. As Ozay Mehmet points out, "This poor performance took place in a period of rapid economic growth during which numerous programmes were undertaken and large amounts of public funds were spent in a top-down approach to poverty eradication".

Studies have shown that the poverty incidence among padi farmers is still disturbingly high. According to a Universiti Sains Malaysia's Centre for Policy Research's survey, the poverty incidence in the Muda scheme in 1976 was 62.7 percent in the Perlis section of the scheme and 68.6 percent in the Kedah section. A socio-economic impact study of the Kemubu river irrigation project in Kelantan by R.T. Shand and others shows that in KADA I and II in Kelantan it was 79 percent and in Besut in Trengganu it was 69.9 percent. Thus, as Ozay Mehmet says, "by the late 1970s, as many as three out of every four padi households were still in poverty, unable to earn an annual average poverty-level income of \$3,100 (in 1978 prices)".

The World Bank evaluation study of the major rice schemes in Malaysia "shows that in 1979 the average small tenants and owners had incomes which were 57 and 72 percent of the official poverty level of income, compared with 54 and 57 per cent in 1966, indicating little improvement over this 13-year period despite the large irrigation investments and the Green Revolution technology".

The basic cause of this problem? The stubborn refusal of the UMNO leadership to initiate land reform "to correct maldistribution of land ownership".

And when padi farmers demonstrated for higher padi prices and against the coupon system of the authorities in Alor Atar

on 23 January 1980, the ISA was employed to detain some PAS officials and others who were accused of instigating it. But as Aliran said, "there is some connection between padi land ownership and political power". And as Shukor Kassim, David Gibbons and Halinah Todd tell us, in their study, *Poor Malays Speak Out*, almost half (46%) of the padi farm families in the Muda scheme still earned less than the official poverty line income of \$60 per person per month in 1981/82. They attribute this to the absence of radical land reform and the "grossly unequal distribution of the benefits of and opportunities for development".

In the field of education, a World Bank Research publication by Jacob Meerman concluded that at present, for tertiary scholarships and bursaries, "most of the Malays supported are from the higher-income groups". And, as Syed Husin Ali says, "Scholarships and bursaries can be given to those entering colleges and universities, but the children of peasants have problems even entering good secondary schools".

According to Dr Sanusi Osman of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, one study shows that only 10% of the Malays received any of the 'special rights' trumpeted for so long and so loudly by UMNO; however, 90% of the Malays endorse 'Special rights'. Among the Chinese, 47% of them perceived that all Malays had equal access to such rights, and 13% of them said that 60% and more of the Malays would benefit. As Dr Hing Ai Yun points out, this "only goes to show the success of the NEP as an ideology for garnering the popular support from the Malays".

The Burial Prayer for UMNO?

Be that as it may, it is evident that far from being the protector of the Malays, UMNO has actually betrayed the real and longterm interests of the Malays. The rural revolution that it promised since independence has become, sadly, a revolution that never was. The great financial scandals of the 1980s under the Mahathir regime – like the BMF, the EPF, Maminco, the UMBC and the more recent UEM and Bank Negara scandals have compounded that betrayal.

The \$2.5 billion BMF scandal, in particular, was the unkindest cut of all for the Malays whom UMNO claims to protect, especially in view of the fact that a good number of UMNO bigwigs were implicated. As *BMF: The People's Black Paper*, an *Insan*

publication edited by Hassan Karim points out, "Interestingly, and significantly, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, Datuk Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah – the three UMNO-BN leaders holding three of the most powerful positions in government during the (un)fold of the BMF fiasco – have all been implicated in it". Or as Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said in the Dewan Rakyat on 11 March 1986, "I must state that despite these clarifications, I find Tengku Razaleigh's flat and total denial weak and unconvincing". Or as Aliran had asked: "What was the extent and nature of the involvement of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Industry in the scandal?" (Aliran Monthly, March-April 1986).

In stark and cruel contrast to this culture of betrayal of UMNO, poverty among rubber smallholders increased from 41.3% to 61.1% in 1983, that among plantation workers rose from 35.1% in 1980 to 54.6% in 1983, and 59% of our rural population in Peninsular Malaysia were without electricity supply at the end of 1983, apart from having to contend with an inflation rate of 20-30%.

About 6,000 Malay infants below the age of 12 months die every year (12 February 1989). In 1986, 113,000 metric tons of caught fish costing an estimated \$267 million were spoilt because of the lack of icing facilities (15 January, 1989). Kuala Lumpur still has about 28,000 squatter families in 180 kampungs (25 December 1988) and Selangor has an estimated 178,616 squatters (8 January 1989), not to count those in other states in the country (All figures in this paragraph are from Nusantara).

In cruel and ironical contrast to the appalling conditions mentioned above, UMNO has become a billion-dollar business empire! For whose benefit?

In the Ampang Jaya parliamentary by-election in late January 1989, UMNO and the SEMANGAT 46 people were hurling accusations of corruption against one another. Education Minister and UMNO Vice-President Anwar Ibrahim was accused of having erected a house in Damansara Heights costing at least \$1 million, and also that his father had received \$400,000 worth of shares from Tengku Razaleigh in 1984. To his credit, Anwar Ibrahim invited the ACA to investigate the allegations made against him and his father. Tengku Razaleigh was reported to have said that he could not remember about the shares issue.

The charges and counter-charges continued to rage even after the Ampang Jaya by-election. So much so that a Bahasa Malaysia weekly, *Mingguan Kota*, thought it fit to print the photographs of the houses of Anwar Ibrahim, Tengku Razaleigh, Trade and Industry Minister Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz, former Foreign Minister Datuk Rais Yatim, Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin, former Deputy Home Affairs Minister Datuk Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, former Johore Menteri Besar Datuk Ajib Ahmad, and another former Johore Menteri Besar Tan Sri Othman Saat in its 19 February 1989 issue. In an accompanying editorial entitled 'Our Ministers' Houses', *Mingguan Malaysia* said:

Actually it is not a crime for anyone, including ministers, to own big houses. There are no laws to stop anyone owning a swimming pool or keeping five or six luxurious cars. Moreover, no-one can stop ministers from buying or building a house which costs a few million dollars, if they can truly afford to do that.

What is being frequently questioned by the people is how a minister whose fixed income is around \$10,000 to \$15,000 afford to own a big house and a luxurious car only a few days after joining the Cabinet.

Doubts like this always make thinking people think our ministers obtain a lot of money with methods that are wrong – corruption – and with this their view and opinion regarding ministers are always negative.

Such negative views need to be corrected and one way is for the authorities to investigate the houses and other properties of ministers and afterwards to explain to the people whether the ministers are corrupt or not. (My translation)

What is significant is that a weekly paper has found it necessary to do as it did. It reflects its concern about the continuing nagging suspicion among the people with regard to those who hold or have held public office in the country. It also betrays the continuing crisis of confidence in the country.

Mahathir's privatisation programme seems to be worsening wealth concentration at the top and widening further existing inequalities. As Haji Suhaimi Said, the former PAS Legal Adviser says, "The privatisation and Malaysia Incorporated concepts can be considered as the early burial prayer to UMNO. And when those concepts are fully implemented, this burial prayer can be read for UMNO".

What has happened to UMNO confirms what Amitai Etzioni,

in his **Modern Organisations**, says about the behaviour of organisations:

Organisations are instruments; they are created to serve one or more specific goals. But in the process of forming them, of granting them resources, and of recruiting personnel, interest groups are formed which are frequently concerned more with preserving and building up the organization itself than in helping it to serve its initial purpose. These interest groups use the organizational goals as a means to recruit funds, to obtain tax exemptions or status in the community, in short, as means to their own goals.

It all reminds us of these lines by Richard Armour:

That money talks
I'll not deny.
I heard it once –
It said "Good-bye".



Malay poverty after more than 30 years of Merdeka.

11. A Repressive Legacy

"In the deeper instinctive self, man is a being of power, and must feel himself powerful, powerful beyond himself, in his community or nation..."

— D.H. Lawrence

"The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?"

— O'Brien,

in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, by George Orwell.

"To tyrannize for the country is to tyrannize over the country."

— Tagore

"In the long run mistaken good gives rise to unmistakable evil....."

— Aristotle (384-322 B.C.),

in *The Politics*

"An avidity to punish is always dangerous to liberty. It leads men to stretch, to misinterpret, and to misapply even the best of laws."

— Thomas Paine

in 'First Principles of Government', Paris,
July 1795.

The last three decades and more of a formally independent country, under UMNO-dominated coalition governments, have been a sad and painful tale of a consistent and systematic pattern of state repression against the people. Legislation and executive acts embarked upon ostensibly on state security arguments often

soon developed a logic and momentum of their own. Repressive laws and actions for reasons of state were, and are, in many cases initiated, on closer examination and analysis, for narrow power calculations based either on class or racial considerations, or on both.

In fact, the present repressive Malaysian state has its origins in the 1945-57 period in Malaya. After the Second World War, the British colonialists found that they had to contend, first with rising Malay, and then Malayan, nationalism. In order to ensure continued British control over the Malayan economy, especially in regard to tin and rubber, the British began to cultivate their own choice of successors after the Malayan Union debacle in 1946.

And so it was that while genuine grassroot nationalists were not only officially discouraged but also ruthlessly suppressed, elements from the Malay aristocratic and upper classes and the rich Chinese business community were studiously aided and abetted by the British to take over eventually the reins of government. The 'Emergency' against an armed Communist insurrection, declared in 1948, was exploited to the full to dampen legitimate opposition from trade unions and political and social groups not favoured by the British. Apart from the Official Secrets Act, 1911, the Printing Presses Act, 1948, and the Sedition Act, 1948, the Colonial administration also had the power to banish persons it considered as 'subversive'.

As we saw in Chapter 2, in June 1946, the PKMM (Malay National Party), which wanted immediate independence, parted company with the rest of UMNO under the leadership of Dato Onn which wanted merely to return to the pre-1941 political status quo. As Firdaus Haji Abdullah points out, "UMNO's opposition to the Malayan Union scheme received accommodative and consultative treatment in the sense that the British agreed to open a dialogue with UMNO and the Sultans to discuss alternative arrangements."

The Malay left-wing PKMM and its youth wing API (Angkatan Pemuda Insaf) – which later became an autonomous organisation – as well as the Islamic Party (Hizbul Muslimin) were increasingly subjected to British Special Branch surveillance. In April 1947, API's leader Ahmad Boestamam was convicted on charges of sedition. On 16 July the same year, Sir Edward Gent, the Governor of the Malayan Union, declared API to be an unlawful society

the first political party to be officially banned in post World War II Malaya. When the 'Emergency' was declared in June 1948, it was followed by the arrest and detention without trial under emergency laws and regulations of more than 1,000 Malays labelled as leftists, communists or sympathizers in June, July and the following month. They were mainly leaders and members of API, PKMM and Hizbul Muslimin, and included Boestamam and the then PKMM President Ishak Haji Muhammad.

According to Firdaus Haji Abdullah, Dato Onn's attacks on leftwing Malay, and what was perceived as left-wing oriented Islamic, political activities "continued until those activities subsided as a result of the country-wide mass arrests" mentioned above. Firdaus Haji Abdullah comments:

Perhaps this is a major reason why, as late as 1980, many former supporters of the dissolved MNP and Hizbul Muslimin blamed Dato Onn for the arrest of their leaders. To fully appreciate the extent of his influence, it is necessary to consider that when the mass arrests took place, Dato Onn was holding a 'ministerial' post as Member for Home Affairs in the newly instituted 'Federation of Malaya' which replaced the 'Malayan Union'.

The Tunku's Mistaken Good

The UMNO-dominated Alliance government under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman was first handed 'self government' in 1955, and later in 1957 formal independence by the British. It thus inherited an already formidable armoury of repressive laws and regulations from the British. Almost from its inception, the government of Tunku Abdul Rahman had immense control of the media and matters relating to registration and de-registration of trade unions, political parties and societies.

The euphoria of freedom and fundamental liberties which came with the attainment of formal independence was indeed shortlived. For instance, the Trade Union Ordinance, 1959 gave enormous power to the Registrar of Trade Unions; this had, and still has, the effect of fragmenting the entire trade union movement in the country into peanut unions. As a lively trade unionist K. George has pointed out, "Since the enactment of this Ordinance, workers' right to form general unions has been withdrawn. Unions can only be formed on the basis of trade, occupation or industry." He has put it aptly that under the Ordinance, the Registrar "has become the supervisor, director and con-

troller of trade unions.”

But the worse was yet to come. In 1960, the year when the Tunku's government declared to the world that the 'Emergency' against the Communist insurrection which was started in 1948 was won and therefore officially ended, the Internal Security Act was legislated in Parliament for the "preventive detention, the prevention of subversion, the suppression of organised violence against persons and property in specified areas". The irony was cruel; the new stark and painful reality was, and still is, indefinite detention without trial on the dubious strength of mere suspicion and flimsy allegations. A horrific legislative creature was born, thanks to the Tunku's government. Eversince, the ISA has provided the government of the day with extremely wide powers of search and arrest based on hearsay and suspicion, the detention of persons in the first 60 days for investigation, followed by a possible confirmed 2-year detention order based entirely on allegations without trial in a court of law, and the possible extension of the detention order every two years, at the complete discretion of the Minister of Home Affairs.

A main reason for the creation of the ISA monster was the serious electoral setback experienced by the Alliance Party in the 1959 general elections. Whereas in the 1955 general elections the Alliance won all the seats except one, in the 1959 general elections the PAS, Socialist Front and the PPP in the Opposition made significant headway. Also, PAS captured the state governments of Kelantan and Trengganu. It is evident that the ISA was largely aimed to deal with the already rising tide of opposition challenge.

Soon enough, the Socialist Front, which was then at the height of its influence, became the main target of arbitrary arrests and detentions under the ISA. As Karam Singh, the then Socialist Front MP for Damansara, protested in Parliament on 20 April 1961, "the Government in the past year embarked on arbitrary arrests of the citizens of our country and trampled upon all principles of parliamentary democracy." Karam Singh added:

The Government has arrested leading members and personalities of our Party. Mr Speaker, Sir, that is only paying lip service to parliamentary democracy when in practice you seek to destroy by arbitrary and unprincipled arrests an Opposition Party from gaining strength in this country.

As a matter of fact, the minutes of the parliamentary debates of the early 1960s were already littered with protests from Opposition MPs about ISA arrests and detentions, banishments, and allegations of ill-treatment and torture of political prisoners.

On 8 January 1962, for instance, the then Minister of Internal Security, Dato Dr Ismail, told the Dewan Rakyat (House of the People), that all the 104 prisoners kept at the Seremban prison were under sentence of banishment. He said that the government "will not release them in view of the fact that they are held under Orders of Banishment."

Karam Singh was right in accusing the government of "corroding away and overthrowing constitutional process" by gradual stages in a piecemeal fashion. On 17 December 1962, he said that "there has been a visit by the Police to the Labour Party Headquarters and the Socialist Front Headquarters." Karam Singh then made a very pertinent point when he said:

If the Headquarters of leading Opposition parties in the country are not safe, what is safe in this country from the all-powerful interference of this Government? There is nothing sacred, nothing private, nothing inviolable to this Government. If you can threaten the very Headquarters of powerful Opposition parties, what security have the branches of these parties? What security have other political parties from these sinister raids of the Government?

The next day, Karam Singh accused the Tunku's government of "behaving like a pack of wolves", and said that "democracy is as safe in this country as a lamb among a pack of wolves!" A few days later, on 22 December 1962, his then colleague in the Socialist Front, V. David, accused the government of "trying to move a state of emergency in this country and even making mass arrests and so on and this may be the first step - to muzzle the Opposition Members in this House."

In early 1963, Socialist Front MP for Setapak, Ahmad Boestamam, was detained under the ISA. Karam Singh said, in the Dewan Rakyat on 11 March 1963, "that for the first time in the history of this country an elected representative has been forcibly put into detention without trial, and as such we find that he has been denied the right to represent his constituents, the people who elected him, and to voice their grievances in this House." He then asked, very pertinently as to "which Opposition Member is safe from the Government Police". Karam Singh also said: "If the Opposition Members are liable to be arrested

and carried off at any time, then Mr Speaker, Sir, this Parliament has no soul."

A Colonial Rule for Unions

A visiting German trade union leader, A. Kamanar, the then President of Public Services International, was reported in *The Malay Mail* of 16 November 1962 as having expressed himself in the following manner:

"My opinion is that trade unions in Malaya are not really free." He contended that compulsory registration of unions was an infringement of the rights of a citizen of an independent and democratic country and not in keeping with the Malaya's status. "Nowhere else in the world except in Germany shortly after World War II and in countries under colonial rule was this required of unions."

He urged the Government to ratify Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation, of which Malaya is a member, which gives the trade union movement full and free rights of association. Mr Kamanar explained that if the Convention was ratified, registration of trade unions would not be allowed.

Previous to that, Dr Charles Gamba, writing in the *India Quarterly* of July-September 1958, had this to say about the trade union situation in the country:

Militant trade unionism does not necessarily mean that it is Communist trade unionism. Yet it is unfortunate that one of the after-effects of the Emergency has been just this — to encourage the labelling of any union or any trade union leader, who argues vigorously with the employers or the Government, as red if not communist-inspired.

Aiding Off-Shore Repression

Tunku Abdul Rahman's initial proposal to form Malaysia included Brunei. The Partai Rakyat Brunei (PRB), a nationalist party founded in 1956, had campaigned on an independence platform and had opposed to be included in Malaysia. In the first Brunei District Council elections held in August 1962, the PRB won 80 percent of the vote and won all the elective seats in the Legislative Council. The PRB had favoured the creation of a single independent state comprising Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei.

According to Amnesty International (November 1988, ASA 15/03/88), the PRB, in order to achieve these aims announced

its intention to introduce constitutional amendments once the Legislative Council met in December 1962. The Government of Brunei, under the Sultan, responded by postponing the first post-election session of the Council. On 8 December, the PRB launched a rebellion. The then Sultan, Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin, invoked the 1959 Brunei Agreement to call in British troops, and within days the rebellion was put down.

Scores of PRB leaders were detained without trial under Emergency Orders. At the time of the rebellion, the Tunku's regime sent 150 police personnel into Brunei. As Karam Singh pointed out on 17 December 1962 in the Dewan Rakyat, the Malayan government was "responsible for aiding and abetting in furthering the save colonialism campaign in colonial Brunei".

According to Haji Zaini Haji Ahmad, in *The People's Party of Brunei: Selected Documents*, support given to the Brunei Revolution by the Malayan and Singaporean public were initiated by the Socialist and Islamic groups, as early as December 12. When the Malayan Parliament met, 28 opposition MPs staged a walk-out against what they said was an interference in the internal affairs of Brunei. Ahmad Boestamam of the Socialist Front said they would support any movement to wipe out colonialism. D.R. Seenivasagam of the People's Progressive Party took a similar stand. The President of PAS, Dr Burhanuddin Al-Hemy, said the uprising was an internal affair of Brunei and that the Malayan government should not interfere. Another PAS MP, Haji Hassan Adli, said that the revolt was a political manifestation of anti-colonialism; he urged the British to withdraw and give Brunei immediate independence.

Most of those people held under Emergency Orders in Brunei were detained without trial for more than 20 years. At least five are still being held, four of them continuously since December 1962. The four are Sarponin bin Sarpo, Suhaili bin Badas, Tinggal bin Mohammad and Baha bin Mohammed. The fifth person is Sheikh Nikman bin Sheikh Mahmud, the brother of A.M. Azahari, the PRB President in exile. As Amnesty International has pointed out, they "are among the longest serving political prisoners in the world," and their continued detentions are condemned by that respected international human rights organisation.

That was not the only time the Tunku took upon himself to involve Malaya in repression in neighbouring countries. By

his very own confession in an article in *The Star* on 28 April 1975, the Tunku said that after the 'Emergency' had ended in July 1960 he decided to send the then President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam "all the arms, war materials and equipment we used against the Communists in Malaya." Remarkably, the Tunku added:

When tackled at the time I denied doing so, because it was against the terms of the Geneva Agreement. Actually we had clandestinely been giving "aid" to Vietnam since 1958.

So, by his own admission, the Tunku was lying to the country and the world about his decision to commit our money and our materials to a repressive neighbouring regime, without parliamentary approval or Cabinet consent.

English Vicar's Tea Party

That such foreign adventures could take place with such a combination of secrecy and public deception is not surprising when we consider the way foreign affairs were conducted during the Tunku's era of power. As Marvin C. Ott, points out in his article 'Foreign Policy Formulation in Malaysia' (*Asian Survey*, March 1972), foreign affairs management, if not manipulation, was "the virtual prerogative of a small stable elite comprising four or five men". Ott says that "The Cabinet as an institution took few initiatives in foreign policy. Cabinet meetings were dominated by the Tunku who, in the words of one intimate, presided over them 'with the aplomb of an English vicar at a parish tea party'." Ott adds:

But despite his affability, the Tunku early proved himself capable of decisive and even ruthless action. Once decisions were made he would brook no opposition. Members of his own party who fought him at critical junctures found their political position gradually undermined, if not destroyed.

Ott also recalls that roughly half of the heads of missions at the time were political appointees. Such appointments "were used both to meet the Ministry's manpower shortage and as a reward for services rendered to the Alliance Party." He adds: "In some cases, ambassadorial posts were a face-saving means of removing powerful, but politically embarrassing, individuals from Kuala Lumpur. In other instances, birth and personal connections seem to have been the key criteria. The much coveted appointment as High Commissioner in London went

to Tan Sri Syed Shah bin Syed Abdullah Shahabuddin, a brother-in-law."

Some Allegations of Brutality

Off and on, complaints against police brutality on political detainees were made. For instance, on 15 December 1964, the then Socialist Front MP, Dr Tan Chee Khoon, raised in the Dewan Rakyat, in an adjournment speech, that "there are many cases of individuals who have been arrested by the Police and have been man-handled while being interrogated in the Police cells, lock-ups and other interrogation centres". Dr Tan added:

We all must have read with horror the death in a cell in Kuching of a political detainee, Wong Yuen Eng. The evidence relating to his death has been so shrouded in mystery that the Coroner, even after two inquests, had to give an open verdict.

Ironically, two days later, Dato Dr Ismail, the then Home Affairs Minister, informed Parliament that more money was needed for the establishment of a new detention camp in Kuching and the increase in the muster of inmates at detention camps.

On 1 March 1965, during Question Time in Parliament, the then Barisan Sosialis MP from Singapore, Chia Thye Poh*, asked the Home Affairs Minister whether he was aware of restrictions on visits to political detainees. Dato Dr Ismail, the Minister, claimed that restrictions were imposed "because of the fact that of late visitors have often been found to have abused the privilege of such visits by making allegations in respect of the conditions in the detention camps which, on investigation, were found to be absolutely untrue...." When pressed by Dr Tan Chee Khoon twice to "tell us specifically who have abused these privileges, and what has been abused", all that the Minister could say was a lame "I would suggest that if the cap fits any Honourable Members, or any of the members of the public, or any of the sympathizers of those who are detained, let them put the cap on."

*Chia Thye Poh was arrested and detained under the ISA in 1966 by the Singapore government. He has been in detention without trial since, and is today one of the longest-serving political prisoners in the world. He has been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

On the same day, in reply to Dr Tan Chee Khoon's request to state the reason for the re-detention of one Lim Shee Ping,

Dato Dr Ismail replied: "Enche Lim Shee Ping was re-arrested on 13 January 1965 because he was again found to be of security interest for having acted in a manner prejudicial to the security of the country". The answer was vague as it was evasive.

It was also on the same day that the Alliance government headed by the Tunku tabled a so-called White Paper on the ISA arrest of some leading Opposition figures, including former Cabinet Minister Aziz Ishak, Parti Rakyat leader Hasnul Hadi, Labour Party leader Ishak bin Haji Mohammed (Pak Sako), and PAS leader Dr Burhanuddin Helmi. In a statement to the Dewan Rakyat, the Prime Minister mentioned "the offences for which they are alleged to have committed in support of the enemy."

In fact, the White Paper itself was full of holes, evasion and contradictions, just like all such White Papers dished out by the Tunku's government and subsequent governments, including that of Dr Mahathir's on such arbitrary arrests and detentions. As though the whitewash was not enough, the Tunku went on to argue in this rather ridiculous fashion:

In fact, reading the various things which are alleged to have been committed, they should today have been brought to court and charged with treason. In most foreign countries the sentence for people charged with treason varies from death to a term of imprisonment or to other terms of imprisonment.

From both the legal and political points of view, this is an amazing statement indeed. For one thing, the Tunku himself kept saying that these people had "been alleged to have committed" various offences or "things".

Then he had the cheek to concede that "they should today have been brought to court and charged with treason". Why were they not tried in court for treason then? There were and there are laws for treason. But, of course, the Tunku, being the father of the ISA, should know more than any other Malaysian dead or alive that under the section of the ISA that these people were arrested and detained, they were not entitled to any trial. And what legal nonsense or judicial hocus pocus was the Tunku trying to conjure when he said that "In most foreign countries the sentence for people charged with treason varies from death to a term of imprisonment....."? How could any charge by itself carry a sentence? Surely, only a conviction could carry a sentence? And, how on earth can there be any conviction when there was not to be any trial? On a more serious level, this con-

nection of a charge to a sentence betrays the state of mind of leaders with a persecution complex who have to rely on the crutches of the ISA.

A few days later, on 5 March 1965, in a debate on the ISA arrests, Dr Tan Chee Khoon said that "never have I risen to speak with such earnestness and filled with such grave forebodings for my country." Dr Tan added: "Within the brief span of five years since independence our liberties have one by one been extinguished so that today we are on the verge of dictatorship." He described the ISA as "infernal and infamous".

Dr Tan said that since September 1964 "we once again have been living in a state of emergency. "When this will end I dare not say, but the question is how can we ensure the survival of our liberties under conditions of prolonged Emergency". He said that Article 5 of the Malaysian Constitution "stipulates that when a person is arrested he should be allowed to consult a lawyer of his choice. "All the people, except one," Dr Tan pointed out, "who have been detained by the Police since the 28th of January 1965 have not been allowed to see their lawyers although a month has elapsed since their arrest. So much for the rights that are enshrined in our Constitution."

Dr Tan Chee Khoon also deplored the extremely poor, inhuman and restrictive conditions in detention camps and interrogation centres where "relays of interrogation" were conducted. He called on the government to "rectify this immediately so that the mental institutions in this country will not be overcrowded by political detainees."

The Socialist Front MP said that "today a man may be detained in this country for his entire lifetime without knowing the precise nature of the charges against him. The secret hearing before a selected judge known as the review committee has become a farce." He added that "over and beyond this, the Police can order a man not to participate in politics or trade unions. The Police can order a man not to meet party officials, to stay indoors after 6 p.m., and to get permission before he leaves a district."

Dr Tan also pointed out that a police permit was needed to hold a public rally and that very often this was refused. "If given, numerous conditions are attached."

Dr Tan Chee Khoon then touched on the freedom of the Press in the country. He reminded the House that to "publish in

this country, one needs a permit. To print one needs a permit. These permits have to be renewed every year." He then revealed that just before the last elections, his party's organs the NYALA and BERITA BUROH were refused the renewal of their licenses. "So much for your democratic elections," Dr Tan condemned.

He informed the House that "This year we have been refused licenses for an English and Malay organs for the Socialist Front. This shows that the Alliance Government is firmly entrenched on the path towards totalitarianism. All of us know that our newspapers are kept on a tight leash and that editors are often called up and given a talking to and reminded that their licences are renewable annually. So much for the freedom of expression." He said that foreign journalists "are nauseated by our sycophantic press."

On the action of the Special Branch in respect of its behaviour towards political detainees, Dr Tan said that "at long last the Special Branch in this country has caught up with the technique perfected by the Russians of extracting confessions from their prisoners."

PAS wanted the political detainees to be given a trial in court. Devan Nair of the PAP did not condemn the ISA detentions, but he did have this to say:

However, Sir, in the past few months, there have been ominous indications of a growing intolerance of legitimate, democratic opposition and criticism of the Government's policies. This, Sir, is the cause of concern not only to me and to my colleagues but I believe to large sections of the public. Sir, I would refer in particular to criticisms of the Budget. Even the criticism of the Budget, Sir, was construed as subversion.

Coming from the PAP was of course like the kettle calling the pot black, so to speak. But then, since by then the PAP was already past masters of the mechanics of repression in Singapore, it could recognise intolerance when it saw it on parade.

Dr Tan Chee Khoo rounded up his rebuttal by saying that "both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs seem to act on the thesis that the bigger the lie the more it will stick."

Mahathir's Spurs

Significantly, Dr Mahathir, then an Alliance backbencher from Kota Star Selatan, Kedah, also took part in the debate. He was,

as it were, earning his spurs from his UMNO seniors like Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Dr Ismail. He termed the ISA arrests as doing "something in defence of democracy". His speech on this occasion, no doubt, was not particularly outstanding, an understandable handicap without the aid of professional speech-writers. But there was no mistake that he was learning fast the rhetorical requirements to justify repression – lessons which would come in handy about twenty years later.

The Molestation of the Judiciary

Even during the early years, the independence of our Judiciary was not left in peace, unmolested. Under the 1957 or Merdeka Constitution, judges could be appointed only on the recommendation of a Judicial and Legal Service Commission. However, as Milne and Mauzy have pointed out, this provision was abolished by way of a constitutional amendment in 1960, the same year which saw the birth of the ISA. Since then, the King must act on the advice of the Prime Minister after consulting the Conference of Rulers. Although the Commission was later re-established, it no longer has the function of recommending on judicial appointments. 28 years later, this amended constitutional provision was used by Prime Minister Mahathir to get rid of Lord President Tun Salleh Abas and some Supreme Court judges, testifying indeed to the long arm of historical irony.

In 1965, the Bar Council protested against the government's first attempt to curtail appeals to the Privy Council when a Bill was introduced to abolish appeals in criminal matters and in any case in which the Federal or any State government was involved or if any Federal law or state law was questioned. Opposition parties also protested because they thought the move was politically motivated. In the face of this the attempt was allowed to lapse.

However, three years later, the Alliance government of Tunku Abdul Rahman revived its plan to abolish appeals on constitutional matters to the Privy Council. In an article in *The Rocket*, Lim Kit Siang, the then Organising Secretary of the DAP, in July 1968, said: "The abolition of the constitutional appeals to the Privy Council is a threat to the fundamental liberties and rights of the people of Malaysia."

In the Name of 'Confrontation'

During the period of 'Confrontation' from Indonesia between 1963 and 1966, more repressive laws were introduced by the Alliance government, again in the name of national security. This was especially so in the field of labour and industrial relations. Drawing authority from the Emergency (Essential Powers) Act, 1964, the following anti-labour decrees were issued: (1) the Essential (Arbitration in the Essential Services) Regulations, 1965; (2) the Essential (Prohibition of Strikes and Proscribed Industrial Actions) Regulations, 1965; and (3) the Essential (Trade Disputes in the Essential Services) Regulations, 1965.

Broken Promise on Local Elections

On 1 March 1965, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman announced that in view of the intensification of 'Confrontation' by Indonesia, local elections to be held in Peninsular Malaysia in the middle of that year would be suspended. The Tunku gave a solemn pledge:

As soon as this peace and quietness has returned we would make haste with all proper preparation for the local council elections.

Then, at the end of his statement in Parliament, the Tunku made this undertaking:

The very moment peace is declared I can assure this House that the elections will be held.

Relations between Malaysia and Indonesia were normalised by August 1966, but the Tunku never kept his promise despite constant reminders from the Opposition, and despite the recommendation by the Royal Commission of Enquiry to investigate into the workings of Local Authorities in West Malaysia in December 1968 that the system of local council elections be continued.

The Gagging of Students

The formation of Malaysia in 1963 also saw the introduction of a so-called 'Suitability Certificate' regulation by the government. All those persons who had successfully obtained admission into institutions of tertiary learning must also get a security clearance from the Special Branch, in the form of a 'Suitability Certificate', before they could be admitted.

In 1967, the government came up with an even more ridi-

culous idea to control students. The Tunku's Education Minister, Mohd. Khir Johari, announced that students intending to go overseas for studies would have to obtain prior clearance from the Education Ministry — some kind of 'student visa'.

Hasty Constitutional Amendments

When the Tunku decided that Singapore should be separated from Malaysia in August 1965, the Constitution of Malaysia (Singapore Amendment) Act, 1965 was bulldozed through Parliament with a mere few hours' notice to MPs.

A similarly hasty constitutional amendment was imposed on Sarawak the following year. The federal Alliance government intervened in the political affairs of Sarawak in order to dismiss the state's Chief Minister, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, who had fallen out of favour with the Tunku. Although Ningkan had won his case in the law courts against his dismissal, the Tunku's government circumvented this by rushing through Parliament the Emergency (Federal Constitution and Constitution of Sarawak) Act, 1966. Ningkan, as a result, was dismissed again.

As Milne and Mauzy point out, the federal government's use of emergency powers to enable Parliament to change the Sarawak Constitution "was widely resented in Sarawak". Clearly, the Sarawak saga in 1966 was a gross blunder in constitutionalism on the part of the federal Alliance government of the Tunku, and it was roundly condemned by the Opposition.

The Singapore and Sarawak crises prompted the well-known and respected Swedish economist, Professor Gunnar Myrdal to comment (in his three-volume *Asian Drama*): "Tunku Abdul Rahman and his government had generally been heavyhanded in their relations with faraway, smaller states in the federation."

Also in 1966, the Societies Ordinance brought in by the British was superceded by the Societies Act, 1966. The registrar of societies was given the power to refuse registration and to deregister on very wide discretionary grounds. This Act, which governs the establishment and operation of essentially voluntary groups of persons, has evolved from colonial legislation introduced by the British shortly after the Second World War. In essence, it has served to regulate and curb the freedom of association in Malaysia. But, ironically, the 1966 Societies Act was to deal a death blow to the original UMNO twenty-two years later.

Castrating the Election Commission

As we have seen earlier, a constitutional amendment in 1960 robbed the Judiciary of its independence in terms of appointment, transfer and promotion; as a matter of fact, since then the appointment of judges have been politicised by way of prime ministerial recommendations. In 1962, the Election Commission suffered a similar castration.

As Yaacob Hussain Merican points out in a chapter on 'Developments in the Law Concerning Elections' (in *The Constitution of Malaysia; Its Development: 1957-1977*, edited by Suffian, Lee and Trindade), the "independence of the Elections Commission is similarly qualified by the powers available to the Executive. By Act 14 of 1962, for example, the power to delimit Parliamentary constituencies was transferred from the Elections Commission to Parliament and the formula for the delimitation of constituencies under a 'quota' system which was written into the original Constitution was abolished."

Yaacob Hussain Merican hits the nail on the head when he says: "To transfer all powers to the myth of a legislature and the reality of an executive is to make the way straight for authoritarian rule." Professor R.H. Hickling, someone who is very familiar with the Malaysian Constitution and the ISA, thinks that the abolition of the powers of an independent Elections Commission was an act of expediency. While another authority on the Malaysian Constitution, Professor H.E. Groves, comments (in 1962 (4) *Malayan Law Review*, 329):

It is apparent that the (1962) amendments as to elections have converted a formerly independent Elections Commission, whose decisions became law and whose members enjoyed permanent tenure, into an advisory body of men of no certain tenure whose terms of office, except for remuneration, are subject to the whims of Parliament. The vital power of determining the size of constituencies as well as their boundaries is now taken from a Commission, which the Constitution-makers had apparently wished, by tenure and status, to make independent and disinterested, and has been made completely political by giving this power to a transient majority of Parliament, whose temptation to gerrymander districts and manipulate the varying numerical possibilities between 'rural' and 'urban' constituencies for political advantage is manifest. It is, perhaps, not unworthy of comment that the Constitution does not offer any criteria for the determination of what is 'rural' and what 'urban'.

Another relevant complaint in regard to elections during the

time of Tunku Abdul Rahman's premiership was the way such elections were conducted. The Information Department and public property like helicopters were used for the benefit of the Alliance Party. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the incumbent party was in the habit of using a combination of threats and bribes to influence the electorate. Opposition MP D.R. Seenivasagam, in a speech in the Dewan Rakyat on 20 May 1964, referred to "the disgraceful and shameful manner" in which the 1964 general elections were conducted, alleging specifically to the thousands of names of voters which were removed from the register "for no reason whatsoever".

The Crippling of the Press

When formal independence was attained in 1957, the Alliance government retained the highly restrictive Newspapers and Printing Presses Ordinance of 1948. Under this law, all daily newspapers and periodicals could only be printed and published under annually renewable permits. D.R. Seenivasagam had alleged that the 5 December 1960 issue, for instance, of the *Nanyang Siang Pau* was seized, scrutinised and then released by the government. On the Rahman Talib Education Report, he said that the government's attitude to the Press appeared to be "We tell you politely to do this.... Remember that we have the power to take away your licence."

Even the *Utusan Melayu*, the Malay newspaper in Jawi script, was not spared. Before 1957 the *Utusan Melayu* had supported Malayan nationalist aspirations, but after that it became increasingly critical of the government. As Ratnam and Milne relate it, "Individual members of the Alliance had bought up shares in the paper and in 1961 the editor was removed and an UMNO man installed, resulting in a strike by some of the editorial and production staff." And they add: "As early as 1950 Inche Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, then on the *Utusan Melayu*, wrote that Tengku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak 'had on various occasions condemned *Utusan Melayu* for its unfair criticism of them as the decadent feudal class which exploit the rakyat!!!' "

The Emasculation of Parliament

The role and status of Parliament as the most august legislative and deliberative body in the land had begun to be eroded from the early years of the Tunku Abdul Rahman government.

As Dr Tan Chee Khoon recalls (in his *Malaysia Today: Without Fear or Favour*): "My experience instead had been that the government goes out of its way to deny the opposition the rightful role they should play in parliament. Thus when I entered parliament in 1964 it very soon became apparent to me that we were there to debate only government business." Dr Tan narrates the occasion when he proposed a cut of \$1 in the salary of the Tunku as Foreign Minister:

Such a motion is a parliamentary device to enable the mover of the motion to speak at some length on the ministry in question. But to the Alliance back-benchers it was *lese majeste*. One must remember that the Tunku at that time was probably at the height of his power and popularity. He was the Tunku — he was sacrosanct. But to us in the opposition he was not sacrosanct, he was mortal.

Further Hammering of Trade Unions

1967 saw the passing of the obnoxious and draconian Industrial Relations Act which euphemistically sought to 'strengthen and continue the voluntary system of industrial relations' in the country. Workers employed in 'confidential capacity in matters relating to staff relations' were prohibited from becoming members of a trade union. No time off, unless with the consent of the employer, was to be given to trade union officials to do union work in the workplace, including membership recruitment. Strike action in respect of any dispute over the claim for recognition of a trade union was specifically prohibited.

Thus, in the name of national security as well as that of economic development, the close of the 1960s and the Tunku Abdul Rahman era had already witnessed and tasted the considerable buttressing of a 'strong state' which had imposed severe limitations on freedoms of association, assembly, expression and to organise.

Repressive Consolidation by Tun Razak

Tun Abdul Razak was UMNO Deputy President for almost twenty years since Tunku Abdul Rahman succeeded Dato Onn as UMNO President in 1951. From 31 August 1957 to 21 September 1970, he was the Deputy Prime Minister to Tunku Abdul Rahman. Tun Razak was undoubtedly a much better administrator than the Tunku; he evinced more seriousness and a sense of purpose. Because he was, and still is, largely identified with rural development during his long years as Deputy Prime Minister and

with the New Economic Policy and new foreign policy initiatives during his short premiership, it is often forgotten by many people that Tun Razak was for some years also the Minister of Defence and Internal Security. It was during these early years at Internal Security that he was learning the ropes in the field of repressive policies, laws and actions.

Before the Internal Security Act came into being in 1960, Tun Razak was in effect the man in charge of the exercise of the Emergency Regulations inherited lock, stock and barrel from the British after Merdeka. In a speech to the Federal Legislative Council (the forerunner of the Malaysian Parliament) in August 1958, Tun Razak dished out this piece of justification for detention without trial:

It has often been suggested that persons should not be arrested and detained unless they can be tried in a court of law. This is, to my mind, to misunderstand the whole purpose of detention in times of emergency. A person is detained not because he has committed an offence but because there are reasonable grounds to suppose that if he is not detained he will be likely to assist the enemies of society and imperil the safety of the State. In an emergency situation it would clearly be most dangerous to allow a person of known subversive tendencies and associations to have unfettered freedom until such time as he happens to be found out in the committing of an offence. (My emphasis)

On 1 October 1958, the Alliance government announced that it had arrested more than 100 people for helping the Malayan Communist Party. The Socialist Youth League was declared an illegal organisation and some left-wing publications were banned. These arbitrary actions prompted the Chairman of the Labour Party to accuse that they had been aimed not at preserving the country from subversion but rather at crippling the growing socialist opposition just before the approaching elections. Another Opposition leader, D.R. Seenivasagam, said the arrests were intended to frighten the people so that a new and tougher measure for the preservation of public order could be bulldozed through. He anticipated correctly the hatching of the notorious ISA of 1960, although at the time Tun Razak emphasised that these allegations "have no basis", and that "there is no truth in them at all." But, as William Shaw points out (in his book, *Tun Razak: His Life and Times*), "From the very beginning it was obvious that the Alliance could expect much tougher opposition than it had encountered in 1955..." As it turned out, the Alliance

Party of Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak managed to obtain only 52 per cent of the valid votes cast in the 1959 general elections.

On 25 November 1965, replying in the Dewan Rakyat to an accusation by D.R. Seenivasagam that the Alliance government's policies were becoming more and more dictatorial and that the Alliance government was suppressing and crushing the Opposition, Tun Razak had the audacity to say:

Everyone knows and the people of this country know that the Alliance Government believes in democracy and we uphold our democratic constitution strictly. Indeed, if there is any criticism at all against us it is because we have been too liberal.

Earlier, on 3 June 1965, in replying in the Dewan Rakyat to an allegation made by the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) leader Ong Kee Hui that the recent crisis in the Sarawak Alliance was due to UMNO's interference, Tun Razak said, apparently again without batting an eyelid: "It is known to everyone that we in the Alliance Party practise democracy strictly. In the UMNO, ever since our Prime Minister took over the leadership of UMNO in 1951, we practised absolute democracy".

But absolute democracy or not, it was Tun Razak himself who moved a Bill in the Dewan Rakyat on 19 September 1966 to amend the Federal Constitution in order to change the constitution of Sarawak so as to get rid of Chief Minister Stephen Kalong Ningkan.

The Further Protection of Vested Interests

After the racial riots of May 1969 which took place largely in Kuala Lumpur, the semi-military National Operations Council (NOC), with Tun Razak as Director, suspended Parliament and decreed even more restrictive measures. Lim Kit Siang, the then Organising Secretary of the DAP and newly elected MP, and the two newly elected PSRM Pahang State Assemblymen S. Sivasubramaniam and Zulkifli Ismail were arrested and detained under the ISA.

It has always been argued by some people that Tun Razak was a good democrat enough to decide to restore parliamentary rule after enjoying more than twenty months of the absolute powers of a virtual dictator as NOC Director. Perhaps he was, but it is more reasonable to believe that he was realistic enough to realise the danger that continued NOC rule could open the way to

eventual direct military intervention and domination. Authoritarian rule with a thin and deceptive veneer of democratic facade is easier to manage.

When the Malaysian Parliament was revived in early 1971, it was used to rubber-stamp amendments to the Sedition Act of 1948 and certain highly obnoxious constitutional amendments. As a result of the 1971 constitutional amendments, Members of Parliament lost their immunity of speech even in the debating chamber itself.

Shortly before that, the then Penang DAP Chairman, two printers and I were arrested and charged for sedition. (For some details of this case, see *The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments*, edited by Trindade and Lee, 1986).

Muzzling the Students

A few months later, the Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971 (UUCA) was passed in Parliament. The UUCA was primarily designed by the Alliance government under Tun Razak to curb the growth of the Malaysian student movement. The student movement in Malaysia had essentially been a progressive force in the political and socio-economic developments of the country. Between the 1930s and 1950s, it had opposed British colonialism, actively involved itself with the independence struggle, and closely identified itself with the worldwide anti-colonial movement.

After a brief period – 1959 to 1966 – when students focussed mainly on campus issues, the resurgence of the social and political dimensions of the Malaysian student movement began around 1967. As more universities and colleges were established from 1969 onwards, the student movement grew in both numbers and consciousness. This was especially so when more and more students came from poor and rural backgrounds.

In 1967, the student movement once again began to raise important issues relating to the lives of the people. Both the University of Malaya Students Union (UMSU) and the University of Malaya Malay Language Society (PBMUM) were directly involved in the historic Teluk Gong landless squatters' struggle led by peasant leader Hamid Tuah. (Hamid Tuah was soon after to be detained under the ISA). 1967 also saw the founding of the Socialist Club of the University of Malaya.

In April and May 1969, before the May 10, 1969 general elec-

tions, UMSU held a series of public rallies throughout the country, drawing large crowds of people. UMSU issued a manifesto which laid emphasis on the need for people to be more involved in decision-making processes and for national politics to be truly based on democracy. It also demanded for freedom and justice to be guaranteed, an improvement in the economic status of the people, land reform, drastic anti-corruption measures, a truly national education policy, the unconditional release of all political prisoners, and the withdrawal of foreign military bases from Malaysian soil. It also denounced political parties which capitalised on racial issues.

Clearly, the government was unhappy over the good response to UMSU rallies in several big towns, and it disallowed UMSU from holding rallies in certain places, particularly on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Shortly after the May 13, 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, students took an active part in a campaign to topple the then Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. While the PBMUM, led by Anwar Ibrahim, wanted the Tunku to step down for what it felt was the latter's over-generosity to the Chinese community and his failure to advance the status of Bahasa Malaysia and the implementation of the National Education Policy sufficiently, it never actually opposed the system of government represented by the Tunku and his Alliance coalition. On the other hand, the Socialist Club and UMSU as led by Syed Hamid Ali were multiracial and strongly opposed to the Tunku's political, economic and social policies; they were against the capitalist system which they saw as being the root cause of poverty. They were also opposed to the domination of the Malaysian economy by foreigners; lastly, they felt that it was the Tunku's conservative leadership that led to the racial riots of May 13, 1969.

On 29 August 1969, the police invaded, for the first time, the University of Malaya campus to disrupt a student demonstration against the Tunku. Several students including Syed Hamid Ali were detained. The crackdown on the Malaysian student movement was already on the drawing board of the authorities, who must have learned anxious lessons from the student uprisings in Indonesia, Korea, Paris and elsewhere.

The Monstrous UUCA

The ruling elite decided to act against the student movement

to prevent its own position being threatened. In 1970, the NOC formed the Campus Investigative Committee, the results of which became the basis of the UUCA 1971 which sought to control and weaken the various student organisations in the country. Despite massive opposition to the move from the students, opposition parties and other sections of the population, the UUCA was bulldozed through Parliament on 18 March 1971.

However, at least initially, the UUCA did not succeed in frightening the student movement into timidity and inactivity. Students continued to demonstrate peacefully against the Act itself within their campuses in 1971 – 1973. In 1971 itself, for instance, the Act was openly challenged at massive demonstration to oppose the Thai government's oppression of Muslims in Pattani in Southern Thailand. This demonstration on 14 June 1971 was attended by about 2,000 students from the University of Malaya and the National University of Malaysia, outside the campus, directed against the visit to Kuala Lumpur of the then Thai Prime Minister, Thanom Kittikachorn, the corrupt Thai dictator.

1973 witnessed the growing cooperation among student organisations from the various universities; they united to oppose the government on issues such as corruption and the UUCA. On 13 and 16 of October 1973, thousands of students demonstrated peacefully outside the American embassy in Kuala Lumpur to oppose the American role in the Middle-East war.

The September 1974 student demonstrations in solidarity with the squatters of Tasek Utara, near Johore Bahru, resulted in the arrest of a good number of squatter as well as student leaders, with considerable police brutality. UMSU itself was suspended by the government.

The climax of the student struggle came in November 1974. On 19 November, more than 1,000 peasants in Baling, Kedah demonstrated against inflation, falling rubber prices and corruption. They urged the government to raise the price of rubber and lower the prices of food and other basic necessities within 10 days. When it was clear that the government was not going to act positively on these demands within the given period, 30,000 people demonstrated in Baling on 1 December 1974. A big demonstration by 5,000 students at the Selangor Club padang in Kuala Lumpur was held on December 3. The students demanded that the government solve the problem of inflation immediately; that the price of rubber be raised to reasonable

levels; and, that all corrupt ministers and chief ministers be exposed and punished.

In response, the government used the police to disperse the demonstrators with teargas. The students retreated into the nearby National Mosque, but the riot squad (called the Federal Reserve Unit) fired teargas into the Mosque and entered it. 1,128 students were arrested. On the campuses, students continued to demonstrate peacefully until a few days later when, early in the morning of 9 December, the police entered the campuses. Many student leaders, including Adi Satria, Ibrahim Ali, Anwar Ibrahim and ten members of the Chinese Language Society of University of Malaya were detained under the ISA. Juliet Chin, a Malaysian expelled from the University of Singapore, was detained on 11 December.

In connection with the student protests, Syed Husin Ali, Tengku Shamsul and Gurdial Singh, lecturers of the University of Malaya, were also detained. Syed Husin Ali was released from the Kamunting Detention Centre six years later.

The following year, the UUCA was amended to make it even more repressive. All student organisations were dissolved.

On 14 January 1975, Abdul Razak Ahmad, a leader of the opposition PSRM, was also detained under the ISA, for his part in championing the cause of the squatters of Tasek Utara.

On 19 December 1974, the Tun Razak government issued a White Paper on the student demonstrations. In it the government shamelessly twisted the whole issue and racialised it by putting the blame almost entirely on the University of Malaya Chinese Language Society. In an excellent article entitled 'Malaysia's Emerging Rural Revolution' in the 10 January 1975 issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Denzil Peiris said:

A Government White Paper, explaining the University of Malaya protest, saw the hidden hand of communist manipulation operating under the cover of the Chinese Language Society. As a general theory that the communists could exploit cultural movements, it is plausible. As a blanket explanation for what happened at the universities, it is a tattered cloth.

13-Minute Freedom for 'Tarzan'

Another detention case worth recalling, is that of Dato James Wong, the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) leader and at the time Opposition Leader in the Dewan Rakyat. On 30 October 1974,

he was arrested and detained under the Sarawak Preservation of Public Security Regulations on the highly flimsy allegation that he was disloyal to Sarawak over the dispute over Limbang between Brunei and Malaysia at the time. Dato Wong, nicknamed 'Tarzan' by one writer, was taken after his arrest to Kuala Lumpur where he was kept in a police station lock-up for 66 days. Then he was sent to the Kamunting Detention Camp. Two months later, he filed a writ of *habeas corpus* in the Kuching High Court. After a week of hearing, on 7 March 1975, Justice George Seah declared: "I am constrained to come to the conclusion that I am not satisfied that the detention of the applicant is lawful." The judge ordered that Dato Wong be released on 10 March.

On 10 March, as expected, Mr Justice Seah directed that Dato James Wong be freed. Freedom Dato Wong succeeded in getting, but not for long. This is how he relates the drama (in his book *The Price of Loyalty*):

Thirteen minutes after the judge had ordered my release I stepped from the courtroom – and DSP Fernandez, who had brought me from Kamunting, immediately re-arrested me. With him was another policeman, Superintendent Ong Boon Huat, who was rather rough with me and with members of my family when they protested that they wanted to see me. I was taken to the airport, where I was permitted to spend a few minutes with my wife. Then I was put back on the same plane that had brought me to Kuching.

This time, Dato James Wong was served with a detention order under the ISA. He was to remain under detention without trial at Kamunting until his conditional release on 30 January 1976. This was a few weeks after the death of Tun Razak. One wonders if Dato James Wong was referring to Tun Razak or to some Sarawak politicians when he later said, in an interview with the *New Straits Times* of 25 December 1988:

I think it is a tragedy that some politicians lose their heads when they are hoisted to the pinnacle of power.

Or, did he have more contemporary figures in mind? Whoever they were, however, Dato Wong could be considered luckier than many other political detainees, as we shall see later.

New Curbs on Societies

Back in 1970, during the days of the NOC, measures had already been introduced to further curb the activities of societies. The Minister of Home affairs was given the power to approve the

registration of any society which was established or had affiliation or connection outside the country. The decree also spelt out the grounds on which a society could be deregistered, including the ground that any of its members had habitually contravened the Sedition Act, 1948.

In 1972, the Societies Act was further amended, creating the notorious Section 13A under which the registrar of societies could prohibit any affiliation or connection to a foreign organisation.

The ESCAR Terror

On 7 July 1988, Tun Mohammed Suffian, a former Lord President of the Supreme Court of Malaysia, when introducing Chief Justice Teehankee of the Philippines to deliver the 1988 Tun Abdul Razak Memorial Lecture in Kuala Lumpur, said that the late Tun Razak was "a lawyer who appreciated and did so much to maintain the supremacy of the constitution, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary."

Is Tun Razak worthy of such effusive and elaborate accolades? Or was Tun Suffian merely forgetful or naive, or both? How did Tun Razak maintain the supremacy of the constitution by amending it to get rid of a Sarawak Chief Minister? How did he maintain the rule of law by arresting and detaining, like the Tunku did, opponents under the ISA, without trial? And, how did he maintain the independence of our judiciary?

On 15 July 1971, when opening the First Malaysian Law Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Tun Razak talked generously about a "conscious Bar and a wise Judiciary". However, he betrayed what he expected of the judiciary when he also stressed that "the vigour of your standards can only have validity and can only be useful to the legislature and to the society if they are firmly grounded upon the realities of our society as it is in this time and place." (My emphasis).

How can the judiciary "be useful to the legislature"? By the legislature usurping judicial powers of conviction and sentencing? And what are the "realities of our society as it is in this time and place" if they are not the "realities" so arbitrarily and exclusively determined by the government of the day?

Tun Razak was soon to make sure about such "usefulness" in "realities" claimed by his government. In October 1975, on the argument that there was a Communist resurgence, Tun Razak by-passed Parliament and decreed, by virtue of the Emergency

(Essential Powers) Ordinance, 1969, the Essential (Security Cases) Regulations, 1975 (ESCAR).

ESCAR deals with the arrest and pre-trial procedures of those persons detained for undefined offences decided only by the public prosecutor. Arrests can be made without a warrant and arrested persons held for a week and then for a further 60 days for 'questioning'. The constitutional right of suspects to be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours of their arrest was done away with. If a suspect disappears, his property could be confiscated merely on suspicion that he has committed an offence.

So far as trials are concerned, the accused is no longer innocent until proven guilty. A High Court trial before a single judge without a jury is preceded by no preliminary enquiry. Any number of charges can be tried at the same hearing. Evidence from witnesses can be heard *in camera*, and when it is given in the presence of the accused, the accused can examine the witness either orally or in writing; since the identity of the latter is hidden, he cannot challenge the witness's credibility, however. Hearsay evidence or second-hand evidence is admissible. If and when the accused fails to establish his innocence, the judge has no choice but to impose the maximum death sentence.

Quite clearly, the Regulations were panic measures, with the accused having to go to court, as a senior lawyer put it, with his hands and feet tied while his counsel has his hands tied behind his back. The Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists was prompted to comment that these Regulations appeared "to go beyond what is strictly required for protecting the 'life of the nation' as opposed to the life of the government in power".

ESCAR also has retroactive effect all the way back to Merdeka (Independence) Day on 31 August 1957; thus, all political suspects detained long before 1975 could be roped in, so to speak. The constitutional amendment which did this trick, as Amnesty International pointed out, "legalises any past abuses of constitutional rights and freedoms" for the authorities. Even members of the accused's family are liable to be subjected to what has been succinctly called "collective premeditated injustice".

The then Secretary of the Malaysian Bar Council, Param Cumaraswamy, described the Regulations "As fearsome as the

Spanish Inquisition" (*Bangkok Post*, 24 November 1975). The then Chairman of the Bar Committee for Perak and Perlis, Dato V. Jeyaratnam, said: "Although we appreciate the concern of the Government to maintain security in this country, we feel that the proposed changes are repugnant to the very basic principles of law enshrined in the Malayan legal system and strikes at the very root of the Constitution." (*New Straits Times*, 5 October 1975).

In a memorandum sent to members of the Dewan Rakyat, the Bar Council argued that the Regulations "will demoralise all who believe in the rule of law in this country by bringing the law into disrepute." The memorandum added: "Of all the basic tenets of the profession, the principle that a man is presumed innocent until he is proven guilty is the most fundamental of all. These new regulations effectively remove this safeguard." It said that under the regulations the government was in effect inviting judges to convict and pass sentences of death without the procedure which normally protects the accused. It continued:

The impression may be created that the Government is putting pressure on judges to convict more people on less evidence.

During the second half of October 1975, Malaysian students demonstrated vigorously against Tun Razak during his official visits to Australia and New Zealand over ESCAR and other repressive laws and actions.

Moving a motion to repeal the ESCAR in the Dewan Rakyat on December 19, 1975, Lim Kit Siang, the Opposition Leader, said that the Regulations ought to be objected to on the grounds that (1) they were a blow to the rule of law; (2) they were a blow to human rights; (3) they violated the Constitution of Malaysia; (4) they would permit gross abuse and misuse of power; (5) they would undermine parliamentary democracy; and (6) they were a setback in the battle to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Hussein Onn's True Colours

Tun Razak's rule as good as came to an end with the passing of 1975; he died in London on 14 January 1976. There is no doubt about it: Tun Razak's period in office as Prime Minister was marked by a disturbing rise in repressive attitudes, policies and actions. It was during his time when Ghazali Shafie, the then

Minister of Home Affairs, audaciously suggested with all seriousness, shortly after the 1974 general elections, that there was no need for an opposition in Malaysia which, according to him, could do quite well as a one-party state.

Even the Americans, generally happy with the Malaysian government's capitalist ways of doing things, were fairly alarmed by its repressive laws and actions. For instance, Sevinc Carlson, in her book *Malaysia: Search for Unity and Economic Growth*, in 1975, concludes: "It is also generally accepted that there is a greater trend toward authoritarianism."

Datuk Hussein Onn, a brother-in-law of the late Tun Razak, took over as the new Prime Minister. In early July of 1976, Hussein Onn's government tabled a Bill in Parliament to bring about comprehensive and fundamental amendments to the Constitution. The 19-page Bill carried 48 clauses. The most serious proposal was to amend Article 5 of Part II of the Constitution in regard to 'Fundamental Liberties'. This proposed amendment had the effect of taking away from persons "arrested or detained or placed under restricted residence under any law relating to the security or the Federation, preventive detention, restricted residence, immigration or banishment" the basic right as then provided by the existing Article 5(4) to "without unreasonable delay, and in any case within 24 hours be produced before a magistrate and shall not be further detained in custody without the magistrate's authority."

In response to strong public outcry, the government withdrew its proposed amendment of Article 5(3) regarding the right of an arrested person to "be informed as soon as may be of the grounds of his arrest and shall be allowed to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice."

Clause 40 of the Bill sought to amend Article 149 of the Constitution. The amendment enlarges the period of detention of a person indefinitely. The Bar Council described this amendment as "undesirable" as it "could technically allow the Advisory Board to take its time to make its recommendations" on ISA detainees, instead of the 3-monthly review as required previously.

The Bar Council also deplored the retrospective operation of Clauses 4 and 28 to Merdeka Day as unjustified. It also lamented (*Insaf*, August 1976):

Of recent times, it has been the practice of the government to effect amendments to the Constitution without giving the public

notice of its intention to do so, even in respect of matters affecting fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution.

In his speech on the Bill in the Dewan Rakyat, Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said that "The present batch of constitutional amendments is another serious assault on the principle of the Rule of Law in Malaysia."

Another critic called the constitutional amendments "institutionalised terror and repression."

As mentioned in Chapter 5, as a direct result of the intense power struggle in UMNO between the New Order and the Old Order, the Hussein Onn government arrested and detained six prominent politicians in November 1976.

Warning Judges & Punishing Lawyers

The Malaysian Bar was disappointed that it was never consulted before the ESCAR and the 1976 constitutional amendments were made. The government in turn resented the role of the Bar in questioning official policies and intentions. Reliable sources said that some judges were also unhappy about the repressive measures. This prompted Dr Mahathir, then the Deputy Prime Minister, when chairing the First Tun Razak Memorial Lecture, to give this thinly veiled threat:

While the legislative wing should not assume judiciary roles or seek to direct the judiciary, the judiciary should not attempt to force its views on the legislature.

To do so especially when accompanied by threats may result in a confusion of roles and the eventual destruction of the independence of the judiciary itself.

Did Prime Minister Hussein Onn endorse Mahathir's statement? The Prime Ministerial silence is surely significant.

After the first two years of ESCAR's existence, more than 40 persons had been sentenced to death. Up to October 1977, not more than 7 of the persons tried under ESCAR had been acquitted, and those were all on technical grounds.

On 18 October 1977, the Bar Council, at an extraordinary meeting in Kuala Lumpur, passed by an overwhelming majority that all its members "be advised not to appear in trials under ESCAR whether retained or assigned from hence-forth as these Regulations are oppressive and against the rule of law."

In December 1977 the Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Yusof gave notice of the government's intention to introduce

the Legal Profession (Amendment) Act, which, he said, "would overcome problems arising from a boycott by lawyers of such cases" through the admission of foreign lawyers, especially those from Britain and other Commonwealth countries.

On 10 January 1978, the Dewan Rakyat passed the Legal Profession (Amendment) Act, 1977. As a result of this Act, a Malaysian lawyer could be disqualified from being a member of the Bar Council, a state Bar Committee, or of any committee of the Bar Council or a Bar Committee unless he or she has been an advocate and solicitor for a period of seven years or for periods which aggregate to seven years. Also, lawyers who are members of either House of Parliament, or of a State Legislative Assembly or of any local authority are to be disqualified from such membership of the Bar Council or any Bar Committee.

Those lawyers who held office in any trade union, or in any political party, or in any other organisation, body or group of persons which had objectives or carried on activities "which can be construed as being political in nature, character or effect" or which was declared by the government minister by order published in the government Gazette to be such bodies, were also subject to the disqualification.

Subsection 2 of Section 46A of the Act also states: "An order made by the Attorney-General under paragraph (c) (iii) of subsection (1) shall not be reviewed or called in question in any court".

At the 32nd statutory annual meeting of the Bar Council held in Kuala Lumpur in February 1978, the main resolution passed accused the Hussein Onn government of "the clear and wholly unworthy intention of muzzling the Bar". The government was also castigated as "showing itself to be unwilling to accept valid and constructive criticism".

OSA Charges

On 28 April 1978, DAP leaders Lim Kit Siang and P. Pato were charged in the Kuala Lumpur High Court under the Official Secrets Act, for receiving allegedly "secret official information" regarding the government's decision to purchase four Swedish patrol boats for use by the Defence Ministry.

Just before that, an application by Aliran to hold a forum entitled 'The Elections - Issues and Trends' on 31 March, was turned down by the police.

Emergency Rule in Kelantan

Another example of the high-handedness of the Hussein Onn government is its imposition of emergency rule in Kelantan in November 1977, arising from certain differences between the ruling PAS and UMNO over the dismissal of the Menteri Besar of Kelantan on 15 October. As a result of these differences, PAS withdrew from the Barisan Nasional. On 8 November, the government rushed through Parliament, by invoking Article 150 of the Malaysian Constitution, the Emergency Powers (Kelantan) Act, 1977. Federal troops were rushed to Kelantan, and the administration of the state was placed in the hands of a civil servant, entitled Director of Government. Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang called the imposition of emergency rule in Kelantan "a subversion of the democratic basis of the Malaysian Constitution".

Clearly, the Kelantan crisis was exploited by top UMNO leaders including Hussein Onn, Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh to give substance to UMNO's determination to wrest power back from PAS in Kelantan.

The worsening authoritarianism of the Hussein Onn government prompted **TIME** magazine to comment that "far more worrisome, has been a sharp curtailment of civil liberties that affects everything from criminal justice to what topics may be discussed in Parliament." The same issue of **TIME** (18 September 1978) said:

Though Hussein's administration has ruled with a somewhat gentler fist than Razak's the government still invokes security to thwart virtually any criticism. The continuing Communist insurgency, which was a genuine threat until last year, still serves as a convenient excuse for suppressing civil liberties. Most recently, Hussein used it to ban political rallies during last July's election campaign.

In the same issue of **TIME**, Aliran President Chandra Muzaffar was quoted as saying: "Because most people don't know what type of comment is permissible, fewer are speaking out at all. We limited debate in the past because there were Communist sympathizers in our midst. But now there are people behind bars whose political opinions aren't threatening."

TIME went on to report: "At the University of Malaya, many academics are troubled about a proposal to put university professors under the same stiff political restrictions that apply to civil servants. 'A whole new concept of insubordination is being considered,' says Sociology Department Chairman Kahar Bador.

'How can a university prosper when the freedom to disagree is denied?' The capital's newspaper editors are already familiar with those feelings. Dailies have turned into government broadsides, says Henry Chang, an editor of the **Business Times**. 'Most papers don't go beyond straight announcement. We don't interpret. The Sedition Act is always there.'

A Culture of Bans

By early 1980, the government had banned the Amnesty International Mission Report on human rights in Malaysia as well as the Hongkong-based Asia Forum's **The State of Human Rights in Malaysia**. A former Cabinet Minister's book, **Special Guest: The Detention in Malaysia of an Ex-Cabinet Minister** (Oxford University Press, 1977) was also banned. When Aziz Ishak tried to bring in 200 copies of the book across the Causeway from Singapore, they were all confiscated by the Customs and the Special Branch at Johore Bharu. More amazingly, **Zaman Pencoroba** (Era of Change) by Kassim Ahmad, who wrote the novel while in ISA detention, was banned even before it could be published: the manuscript was confiscated.

The Smashing of the AEU

1979 would probably go down into the annals of the labour movement in Malaysia as one of its darkest periods. What started off as a very normal and civilised trade dispute over better pay and conditions of service, ended with the Hussein Onn government employing almost all the powers at its disposal to smash the Airline Employees Union (AEU).

The leaders and members of the AEU working at the Malaysian Airline System (MAS) had been actively involved in industrial action in legitimate furtherance for better pay and working conditions since December 1978. After nine days, the industrial action was called off following the intervention of the government. The AEU and the MAS management then agreed to resume talks. However, the Registrar of Trade Unions was directed to de-register 874 members of the AEU who were involved in the initial industrial action. The AEU's response to this provocation was to boycott negotiations with the MAS management until the 784 members were reinstated. The workers then resumed their work-to-rule.

As Aliran pointed out in a statement, the government had "acted too hastily and harshly, "in de-registering a number of the AEU members and in "asking ~~and~~ union to show cause why it should not be de-registered."

Moving In the Army

The dispute reached its climax on February 12, 1979 when the government grounded MAS flights. On February 13, twenty-two AEU leaders were detained under the ISA. On February 17, Donald Uren, a Malaysian who was the then Asian Representative of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), was also detained under the ISA, and Johann Hauf, the visiting Assistant General Secretary of the ITF was ordered to leave Malaysia, although he was already booked for a flight that day for Bangkok.

On 15 February, Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn had gone on Television and Radio Malaysia to broadcast a statement on the dispute. He gave a stern warning that his government would not tolerate any interference from any foreign organisation in the affair. He said:

The Government wish it to be clearly understood that it will not tolerate any interference from any foreign organisation in the internal affairs of this country, as it will not countenance any foreign government to interfere in the internal affairs of Malaysia.

At the height of the dispute, four port workers' unions in Port Klang with some 10,000 members gave notice to the government that they would show their solidarity with the AEU if the dispute was not settled peacefully. The government reacted by moving the army into the port area, guarding the port at strategic places in anticipation of a sympathy strike.

At the same time, the government and the so-called Labour Bureau of UMNO tried to sabotage the AEU's industrial action by encouraging the formation of a puppet house union — an action committee of some MAS workers to save the Airline from being scrapped. The MAS management put in more pressure by suspending and dismissing workers who had actively supported the AEU work-to-rule campaign.

At the international level, airport workers in the United Kingdom, Germany and Australia refused to handle MAS planes in support of the AEU members.

On 15 April, it was confirmed that 13 AEU leaders were held

under under the ISA. The Malaysian government also disbanded the AEU itself.

Apologists & Harsher Laws

The London-based ITF mobilised international support to free the detainees. However, not unexpectedly, there were enough apologists for the actions of the Hussein Onn regime. On 16 March, P.P. Narayanan, the then MTUC President and also President of the ICFTU, castigated foreign trade unionists for what he alleged as "overplaying" their hands without fully understanding the situation. On the same day, in Singapore, Devan Nair, then President of the NTUC, the puppet trade union centre of the ruling PAP of Lee Kuan Yew, also attacked the ITF.

A year later, the Hussein Onn government amended, on successive days (3 and 4 April, 1980), the Trade Union Ordinance, 1959 and the Industrial Relations Act, 1967, to make them even more repressive. Despite the claim of Prime Minister Hussein Onn, on March 28, that it was "never the Government's intention to oppress or suppress the trade union and labour movement in the country", most of the 43 amendments to the Trade Union Ordinance gave more arbitrary powers to the government over strike action, union funds, membership, federations and consultative bodies, political association, etc. Under the amended Act, the Minister of Labour and Manpower "may in his absolute discretion, but with the concurrence of the Minister of Home Affairs, by order suspend a trade union for a period not exceeding six months, where in his opinion such trade union has acted or is being used for purposes prejudicial to or incompatible with security, or public order."

Under the amended Industrial Relations Act, the Registrar of Trade Unions has absolute discretion over "the appropriateness of a trade union to represent a group of workmen in respect of whom it is seeking recognition." Picketing is prohibited when a claim for recognition of a trade union is pending. Offences relating to strikes which are deemed to be illegal by the government are now seizeable and non-bailable offences.

The real intent of the amendments was spelt out more directly by Dr Mahathir, the then Deputy Prime Minister on March 22, 1980, when he said: "In cleaning up our labour laws, we have not taken away any of their existing rights but only enshrined them in a manner in which they cannot be even inadvertently

exploited by their own leaders or international trade unionists masquerading as their protectors.”.

Clearly, the amendments were a direct follow-up of the AEU saga a year before.

Silencing University Teachers

After the government had silenced the students with the UUCA in 1975, it began the task of silencing their teachers. The Discipline of Staff Rules for university teachers came into force on 16 February 1979. The Rules were drawn up at a meeting of the Vice-Chancellors in collaboration with the Education Ministry in early 1977. In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 16C of the UUCA, the Rules thus promulgated govern the conduct of all academic staff as well as officers and employees of all the universities in Malaysia. The strong protests of the academic staff associations of the universities were brushed aside by the Education Ministry.

Among the Rules in the Staff Discipline Order are the following which professors and lecturers are prohibited from:

- speaking in public on controversial political issues;
- writing letters or giving interviews to the Press;
- publishing books, articles or leaflets giving their ideas on any political party or circulating such items;
- holding office in any political party, or standing as a candidate in elections;
- publishing or writing books, articles, or works based on official information without the approval of the Vice-Chancellors;
- criticising the policies or decisions of the university; and,
- being involved in the running of any publication other than those approved by the Vice-Chancellors.

On the very day the Rules were gazetted, the Academic Staff Association of the University of Malaya issued strike ballots to its members. A week later, its President, Professor Abdul Kahar Bador, was sacked from his post as head of the Anthropology and Sociology Department by the Vice-Chancellor, Ungku Aziz, though Datuk Musa Hitam, the Education Minister, strenuously denied that it had anything to do with Professor Kahar's activities as the President of the Staff Association.

In a statement in February 1979, the Executive Committee of Aliran said it was “greatly disturbed” by the imposition of

the Rules. It said:

In two crucial spheres the Rules deserve the wrath they have incurred. First, they restrict severely an academic's ability to contribute to the well-being of his society. Second, they deny him the rights that other citizens enjoy.

On 21 September 1979, Professor Kahar Bador, who was returned unopposed as the President of the University of Malaya Academic Staff Association for a third consecutive term, said at the Association's annual general meeting that there were attempts to turn universities in Malaysia into a "mockery". He said, as reported in *The Star* of 22 September, that the "obnoxious and absurd Disciplinary Rules" had "threatened to erode the very basis of our way of life." "We had to fight back because the rules would have far-reaching and disastrous consequences on the healthy growth of our intellectual tradition." He pointed out:

For the very first time in our history Special Branch officers met an official of the association several times (from June 11 to July 17) to harrass and intimidate us from discharging our functions.

Professor Kahar Bador also said that there were "veiled threats" to use the ISA against those who opposed the Rules.

Drastic Constitutional Amendments & Acts

It was under the Hussein Onn government that some of the most far-reaching amendments to the Malaysian Constitution were made. In early December 1978, the Constitution was amended giving the government power to terminate the services of public servants without their right to be heard. Prime Minister Hussein Onn told Parliament that the amendment was the government's reaction to the Privy Council judgement, in favour of Mahan Singh, in the case of Mahan Singh v. the Malaysian Government, which was delivered on June 22, 1978.

Towards the end of 1978, the Privy Council in its judgement in the Teh Cheng Poh v. The Public Prosecutor case ruled that the 1975 ESCAR were unconstitutional and void. This ruling had far-reaching implications for the government. As H. P. Lee said, the decision "created a conundrum for the Government". Tun Sufian wrote, extra-curially:

It meant not only that the trial of Teh Cheng Poh was a nullity. There were hundreds of other trials held under the regulations. They too were a nullity.

To overcome this embarrassing dilemma, the government enacted the Emergency (Essential Powers) Act 1979 which, in essence,

was made to enact the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance 1969 as an Act of Parliament and thereby helping to validate all subsidiary legislation made under it. The Federal Court ordered a retrial for Teh Cheng Poh; he was subsequently charged, convicted and executed.

H.P. Lee comments in his chapter on 'Emergency Powers in Malaysia' (in *The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments*):

The sorry aspect is that it did not end the Government's determination to maintain its grip on emergency rule. On the contrary, the Government sought to diminish the role of the Judiciary in relation to Executive invocation of emergency powers by bringing in a host of amendments to the Malaysian Constitution.

The Malaysian Bar was clearly alarmed by the trend of events. In an editorial entitled 'The Road to Dictatorship' in its June 1979 issue, *Insaf*, the journal of the Bar Council, said:

What is disturbing is that Parliament has in the last twenty years amended the Constitution so very often that the repercussions of these amendments may be felt in the future at a time when it may be too late to do anything.

Going through the Constitutional Amendments made so far it is best to deal with the amendments made to Article 150 of the Constitution as these amendments it is felt have opened wide the path for some person in the future whose political future is in doubt to use Article 150 as it now stands to change our present Democratic form of Government into a Dictatorship.

But the government marched on with its pursuit of concentrating more and more power unto itself in the name of national interest. And so it was that on 10 April 1981, the Hussein Onn government, though in its last days, made yet another amendment to the Constitution.

The Constitution (Amendment) Act 1981 gives unbridled power to the government to, as in the words of H.P. Lee, "declare an emergency at will and to perpetuate emergency rule." The amended Article 150(1) empowers the King to issue a Proclamation of Emergency if he is satisfied "that a grave emergency exists whereby the security, or the economic life, or public order in the Federation or any part thereof is threatened." More ominously, the new Article 150(2) allows for a Proclamation of Emergency to be declared even before the actual occurrence of such an event if the King "is satisfied that there is imminent danger to the occurrence of such event." The new Article 150 (2A) empowers the King to issue different Proclamations on different grounds or in

different circumstances, whether or not there is a Proclamation or Proclamations already issued by the King under Clause (1) and such Proclamation or Proclamations are in operation.

Article 150 Clause 8(a) provides that the satisfaction of the King in relation to a Proclamation of Emergency "shall be final and conclusive and shall not be challenged or called in question in any court on any ground."

As H.P. Lee points out, "A big question mark overhangs the state of constitutionalism in Malaysia for the excision of the Courts' jurisdiction in relation to the validity of a Proclamation of Emergency or an emergency ordinance creates a situation whereby 'the Cabinet have *carte blanche* to do as they please.'" Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said that "Malaysia has reached a stage where the Executive can legally abolish both Parliament and the Judiciary." He added that the amendment to Article 150 "will arm the Government with complete dictatorial powers, and has completely deviated from the original intentions of the Fathers of the Malaysian Constitution."

Aliran argued that the new Article 150(2) gave the Cabinet "the sort of absolute discretion that does not exist in any Parliamentary democracy." With regard to Clause 8(a) of Article 150, Aliran said "the judiciary has once again been side-stepped", and that "the courts will become impotent witnesses to the excesses of the executive branch of government". Aliran concluded:

For all these reasons one begins to wonder whether we deserve to be described as a parliamentary democracy. Should we not call a spade a spade? Are we not an autocracy that uses Parliament as a fig-leaf to conceal the awful truth?

The Mahathir Years

In early 1981, the Hussein Onn government was also busy thinking about curbs and restrictions in other directions. It had started to talk about amending the Societies Act, 1966 further. Statements on the matter by the then Deputy Prime Minister Dr Mahathir and the then Deputy Home Affairs Minister Sanusi Junid appeared in the Press in March 1981. On March 31, copies of the Bill to amend the Act were received by MPs. The main amendments were, *inter alia*:

- definitions of political party and political society were broad enough to cover any society that issues public statements;

- the Registrar of Societies was to be given power to deregister a society, any of whose activities or affairs were in any way "violative of, or derogatory to, or militated against, or showed disregard for, any matter under the Federal or State Constitutions";
- the Minister's decision "shall not be challenged, appealed against, reviewed, quashed or called in question, any court";
- office-bearers, advisers and employees could be disqualified if they had been fined \$2,000 or more in any court of law within the preceding five years, which is also applicable to political detainees;
- all societies were required to obtain the Registrar's written permission to continue or initiate any foreign affiliation or connection;
- the Registrar was to be given powers to force all office-bearers to cease foreign dealings despite having obtained Minister's approval, remove any office-bearer or adviser, and amend the society's rules and constitution;
- the Registrar could denote a society to be a 'political society' at any time.

In the face of a strong and unified campaign of protest by numerous societies throughout the country, the government played for time. Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister on 16 July 1981, saying a day before that "The system of pressure groups, the system of lobbies, is one of the worst aspects of a democracy".

New proposals were put forward by the government in 1982 but, after more protests, were withdrawn on 7 December 1982, with the promise that a new Bill would be tabled in March 1983. On 16 March 1983, the government tabled a new Bill. It was essentially the same as previous proposals, with the exception that the clauses dealing with definitions of political parties and political societies had been dropped. The Societies (Amendment) Act 1983 was passed, and it was gazetted on 12 May. Another inglorious chapter was written into the already tarnished pages of Malaysian history.

The 1983 Constitutional Crisis

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1983, which was passed by Parliament in August of that year, aroused high drama and ended in low farce by the beginning of 1984. According to Dr Tan Chee Khoon, writing in *The Star* of 4 January 1984, the Bill,

which the top UMNO leadership had designed to forestall future constitutional impasses with possible recalcitrant Rulers, kicked up a constitutional crisis "that rocked the nation to its very foundations". The King refused to give royal assent to the Bill. As Dr Tan related, before that, the Sultans of Perak and Johore led in the campaign among their fellow rulers that the King should not give the royal assent to the Bill. "Then at the Conference of Rulers in Kota Kinabalu in October, the rulers voted 8-0 against the acceptance of the amendments".

Prime Minister Mahathir then barnstormed all over the country to address essentially UMNO-organised public meetings in an attempt to drum up support for the amendments.

The amendments, *inter alia*, sought to:

- 1) Transfer the power to declare an emergency, as provided under Article 150 of the Malaysian Constitution, from the King to the Prime Minister, who could declare an emergency without consulting Parliament, the Cabinet or the King;
- 2) Deprive the King of the power to give assent to parliamentary legislation as provided by Article 66 of the Constitution; and,
- 3) Curtail the powers of the Rulers in their respective states.

The amendments, especially with regard to Article 150, met with strong opposition from opposition parties, public-interest groups and, of course, the Rulers themselves. Aliran, indicating that it was "apprehensive about the future of Parliamentary Democracy in our country", said:

Indeed the proposed amendment – more than even the 1981 amendment – opens the way to political abuse. For the Prime Minister is, in the ultimate analysis, a political personality very much involved in the conflicts and compromises of party politics. There is no constitutional mechanism for ensuring that he will not use his emergency powers against his political foes.

The Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) considered that the amendments constituted "a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of the government in general and that of the Prime Minister in particular". On 25 November, SDP Chairman Ismail Hashim filed a writ in the Kuala Lumpur High Court to challenge the constitutionality of the amendments.

UMNO itself was divided over the issue, with some members calling for Mahathir to step down as Prime Minister and others coming out in full support for him. Parliament itself became theatrical during a debate on the issue on 29 November 1983. DAP

MP Karpal Singh accused the then Information Minister Datuk Seri Adib Adam of being *kurang ajar* (ill-bred). The Barisan Nasional MP for Johore Baru, Datuk Shahrir Samad, moved that the House suspend Karpal Singh until the end of the parliamentary session, and after a voice vote, he was so suspended. Information Minister was hurt by the accusation of being *kurang ajar* to the extent of being in tears. Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang walked out of the House after his requests to make a point of order were refused by Adib Adam.

By mid-December there were firm signs that UMNO and the Rulers had come to a compromise. The government introduced the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1984 to amend the amendments carried in the 1983 Bill which finally received the royal assent. The Rulers were given the right of limited assent to Bills. However, the amendment to Article 150 regarding the power to declare a state of emergency by the Prime Minister was withdrawn.

Malaysians were spared, at least for some time, the slippery slope towards totalitarianism.

Contradictions and Use of Force

Barely one year after their assumption to power, the promises made by Mahathir and Musa Hitam about 'open government' and 'liberalism' had begun to crumble to dust. Malaysian students overseas were among the first to be warned and castigated for their criticisms of government policies and actions, especially with regard to ISA detentions and ESCAR death sentences. Soon enough, international human rights organisations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, and the foreign Press came in for their share of censure by the government; the hypocritical argument of "interference in our internal affairs" was to be used increasingly. The international mission of lawyers's visit to Malaysia on 1-6 August 1982, to examine the working of the ISA and ESCAR, was demonstrated against by UMNO Youth leaders and members, led by Haji Suhaimi.

In February 1982, both Mahathir and Musa Hitam suggested to foreign bodies which criticised the government's policy of detention without trial that the latter should adopt the detainees as their fellow citizens. This prompted Aliran to comment: "By asking foreign organisations to adopt our political detainees as citizens in their countries, both the Prime Minister and the Depu-

ty Prime Minister have shown a lack of appreciation of fundamental democratic principles and values."

INSAN got into trouble over one of its books; its monthly *Nadi Insan* was eventually banned. *Aliran* was refused a permit to publish a Bahasa Malaysia edition of its monthly magazine. The PSRM had its monthly *Mimbar Sosialis* suspended temporarily. The Hongkong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* weekly had its issues held up from circulation for weeks on end in 1984. I was hauled to court over my book *Oppressors and Apologists*. *Bernama*, the official news agency, was empowered to handle all incoming foreign news. The Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 came into being, making it even tougher and more precarious for publishers, editors, reporters, printers and distributors.

In July 1984, Musa Hitam gave a stern warning about demonstrations. This was aptly described by Chandra Muzaffar of *Aliran* as "a clear example of the government's double standards".

The government's responses to the Papan-Bukit Merah anti-nuclear waste protests, the proposed levelling of Bukit Cina in Malacca, and anxieties over educational and language issues were characteristically insensitive and unimaginative. It was these very characteristics which were largely responsible for violent and fatal clashes between UMNO and PAS supporters at the Lubuk Merbau by-election in January 1985. Haji Suhaimi Said, the legal adviser of PAS, was detained under the ISA for allegedly initiating actions which could "split the country's Malay and Muslim community" and "threaten public order and national security". All he did was to publish a pamphlet giving an account of those clashes.

It was the same intolerant characteristics which led to the Memali tragedy in November 1985 which cost the lives of 14 civilians and 4 policemen. And, it was the same characteristics which prompted highhanded actions, backed by the FRU, teargas, baton and police dogs against unarmed squatters of all races in Bercham, Kampung Pisang in Perak, Sungei Nibong in Penang, and Kampung Kerinci, Kampung Melayu and Bumi Hijau in Kuala Lumpur.

On 11 September 1985, Param Cumaraswamy, the Vice-President of the Bar Council, was charged with making a seditious statement while representing the Bar Council on an open appeal to the Pardons Board to reconsider the petition of Sim Kie Chon for the commutation of his death sentence.

In late 1985, Datuk Rais Yatim, the then Information Minister,

warned that the government would act against all publications, "including print media and the Information Department" against publishing what he called inaccurate articles which could tarnish the country's image.

A Damning Indictment

At a dialogue of concern on Parliamentary Democracy in Malaysia, organised by Aliran on 14 July 1985, and attended by many political parties, trade unions, academic staff associations and public-interest groups, the consensus was that "democratic values and ideals, traditions and institutions, procedures and practices have not grown stronger in the last 25 years. On the contrary, the entire democratic system remains weak and feeble."

At the dialogue, the Bar Council said that "the political environment of Malaysia since independence has been inimical to the concept of Parliamentary Democracy which appears to be a myth." PAS was of the opinion that "UMNO/BN can in no way be expected to defend 'democracy'."

At the same time, the free enterprise zeal of the regime threw up more and more financial scandals. The M\$2.5 billion BMF scandal is not yet fully resolved; the EPF, UMBC, Maminco, Pan-El, Deposit-taking Cooperatives and North-South Highway scandals have brought poignantly home the public perception that corruption under the Mahathir regime has assumed unprecedented levels. Added to these are the expensive prestige projects like the Penang Bridge, the Dayabumi Complex in Kuala Lumpur, and the Proton Saga national car venture which have been subject to sharp public criticism and scepticism. The contradictions between the 'Clean, Efficient & Trustworthy' and 'Leadership by Example' slogans of the government on the one hand, and the reality of unbridled abuses and the rush for the spoils of office under the almost no-holds-barred auspices of a capitalistic New Economic Policy, and under its ambit questionable privatisation programmes, have attained national and international notoriety.

The OSA Weapon

It was against this background of events, coupled with Mahathir's known distaste for pressure or public-interest groups that the Official Secrets (Amendment) Act 1986 came into being.

On 13 October 1983, the Bill to amend the Official Secrets

Act was tabled for the first reading by the then Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Sheikh Radzi. It was passed by the Dewan Rakyat on 19 October 1983. On 15 October 1985, James Clad, the bureau chief of the Far Eastern Economic Review was fined M\$10,000 under the OSA. On 24 January 1986, Sabry Sharif, a reporter of the New Straits Times, was fined M\$7,000 or one year's jail under the OSA.

On 11 March 1986, a Bill providing for a one-year mandatory jail sentence for offences under the OSA was tabled in Parliament. This aroused fierce criticism from opposition parties, journalists, and public-interest groups. A lawyer was arrested on 29 October 1986 under the OSA. On 2 November, lawyer Shafee, who was defending two Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Wall Street Journal correspondents against expulsion moves, was arrested for resisting police search under the OSA.

On 5 December 1986, Prime Minister Mahathir initiated the second and third readings of the Bill in the Dewan Rakyat. After a five-hour debate, the Bill was passed, with 131 in favour and 31 against. The Barisan Nasional vote was intact, despite some hypocritical moanings and groanings made by some leaders of the PBS, MCA and Gerakan prior to the vote being taken. Significantly all those UMNO MPs who are now in the 'Semangat 46' or Team B voted quite happily for the Bill.

The Rape of the Judiciary

In the Mahathir scheme of things, the constitutional separation of powers among the legislature, the executive and the judiciary became a contradiction in terms at best, and a hindrance at worst. A fairly independent judiciary which could construe and interpret the Constitution and laws was not to be tolerated. Although, it must be recalled here that even before Mahathir's term of office as Prime Minister, many executive acts including laws like the ISA, ESCAR and Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act had already eroded the power of the judiciary through usurpation by way of ouster clauses and mandatory sentences under earlier Prime Ministers.

It is significant to remember that Mahathir, when opening the ASEAN law association general assembly on 26 October 1982, could still promise:

....I will always respect the independence of the judiciary. We do not expect the courts to be pro or anti government, only pro the Con-

stitution and pro the law. The Government always considers the Constitution and the law carefully before we do anything – so we expect the Judiciary to be free to judge our alleged trepasses without fear or favour, but in accordance with the Constitution, in accordance with the law, in accordance with the law of evidence and procedure and justly and fairly. We shall always respect their judgements.

But that sweet reasonableness was uttered during what could be considered as the tail-end of the honeymoon of the so-called 'liberalism' of the 2M administration. After all, Mahathir had given a thinly-veiled warning to the judiciary way back in 1977. Thus, his view on the judiciary changed almost as drastically as the proverbial English weather. It changed again after the courts gave some judgements against the government in late 1986 in favour of the Kuala Lumpur correspondent of the *Asian Wall Street Journal*. In an interview with *TIME* magazine, published on 24 November 1986, Mahathir said that if the government were to go along with the courts' interpretation of laws, "we are going to lose our power of legislation. We know exactly what we want to do, but once we do it, it is interpreted in a different way and we have no means to reinterpret it our way. If we find out that a court always throws us out on its own interpretation, if it interprets contrary to why we made the law, then we will have to find a way of producing a law that will have to be interpreted according to our wish".

A more recent interview with Dr Mahathir, carried in the *Financial Times* of London (3 January 1989), perhaps gives us slightly more insight into the Prime Minister's brand of logic:

This view resulted in a charge of contempt brought by the opposition. The courts decided there was no contempt but added that the Prime Minister was confused. That is like saying he is nuts. The only person who can say that is an expert. I resent that. I cannot take that judge and charge him with libel. So what do I do?

In Chapter 1 we have seen what Mahathir did since the fateful 1987 UMNO leadership contest, what his opponents did, and how their actions have brought about a whole chain of dramatic events which is still extending itself. We shall consider the implications and the possible consequences of this chain of events in the next and final chapter.

Epilogue: Curtains or Encore?

"Those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them."

– Santayana,
Spanish philosopher

"All political parties die at last swallowing their own lies."

– John Arbuthnot,
18th Century Scottish wit.

"Various tactics and strategies may be employed to promote Malay unity for Malay power. One way is by arousing fear of other ethnic groups. Another is by using government and non-government organs to bamboozle the Malays concerning the importance of unity for the purpose of promoting the economic, political and security interests of the country as a whole, but particularly for the Malays."

– Prof. Syed Husin Ali,
in *The Malays: Their Problems and Future*,
Heinemann, 1981.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the UMNO drama is essentially about power. The slogans and rallying calls connected with 'Malay unity' and the 'survival of the Malays' are most of the time convenient instruments in the pursuit of that power. The conflict between Team A (now UMNO Baru) and Team B (now Semangat 46) did not start in 1987 during the leadership fight between Mahathir and Ghafar Baba on one



Dr. Mahathir, Tengku Razaleigh and Tunku Abdul Rahman in happier times.

side and Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam on the other. It did not even start in early 1986 when Musa Hitam resigned as both Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO Deputy President. The conflict has longer roots than the 1980s; it definitely went as far back as the early 1970s, but some of the roots were as old as the heady days immediately following the events of May 13, 1969.

Consider, for instance, the exchange of letters between Tunku Abdul Rahman and Dr Mahathir in April 1988. In his letter to Mahathir on 18 April 1988, the Tunku said:

In the *New Straits Times* of 12 April 1988, it was reported you stated at a Press Conference that you "were kicked out of UMNO but you did not give the reason for your expulsion, and so it may have appeared that I was the culprit and that you were the innocent victim of political tyranny. Many people have asked me the reason why, and since the event took place nearly twenty years ago, I place on record what actually happened.

In his reply of 23 April 1988, Mahathir said:

It is quite plain that you have a deep dislike for me. It is also plain that you wish to get rid of me even if it causes a split in the UMNO, weakens the political position of the Malays and discourages foreign investment in the country.

This being so I see no benefit in explaining what I said and why I said it.

And, in his retort to that, dated 30 April 1988, the Tunku called Mahathir's statement "perverted" and "untrue".

This remarkable exchange of letters reflects how deep and personal the enmity is between the two. Obviously, the Tunku has not forgotten or forgiven Mahathir for being one of the chief architects of his downfall in 1969. The Tunku has gone on public record as saying that it is his wish to see Mahathir fall from power before he (the Tunku) dies. So, in a way, we can understand, although we may not agree, why the Tunku is persisting with his politics of nostalgia through his winter sonata. This is what the Malays call the politics of 'dendam balas' (revenge).

But apart from the personal animosity between the Tunku and Dr Mahathir, other forces in UMNO had been building up inside the volcano, as we have seen in chapters 3 to 9. There were other battles among other personalities at the various levels of the party. For instance, between 1970 and 1973, Tun Razak, in order to ensure loyalty to his leadership, replaced

the Menteri Besar of Perak, Perlis, Pahang and Trengganu and the Chief Minister of Malacca with his own men. For instance, Ghazali Jawi was considered to be the Tunku's staunch supporter since the 1950s; he was moved back by Tun Razak from the Cabinet to Perak as Menteri Besar because of some concern for his continuing loyalty to the Tunku. Another reason was Ghazali Jawi was sympathetic, in line with the 'old guard', towards Dato Harun Idris. However, in 1977, when Ghazali Jawi got into problems with the then Sultan of Perak as well as some Perak UMNO leaders, he was removed.

In September 1977, eight UMNO and three MCA dissident Malacca State Assemblymen charged the Chief Minister Abdul Ghani Ali, a loyal supporter of Tun Razak, for dictatorial behaviour, corruption and feudal attitudes, and asked the Prime Minister, Hussein Onn for his removal. Although he was not removed, Abdul Ghani Ali was replaced as head of the Malacca state party machine.

And, of course, in the early 1980s, there was the Mantoya incident allegedly involving a conflict between then up-and-coming Sanusi Junid and the Kedah Menteri Besar Syed Nahar Shahabuddin.

But other ingredients of the conflict – like money politics – were slowly brewing all the way back to the 1960s. Even in those relatively poorer days, the lure of the spoils of office was already evident. There was already growing rivalry to become election candidates; and as a Kaum Ibu (Wanita UMNO) delegate said in the 1962 UMNO General Assembly, some elected MPs and State Assemblymen had become rich since their election. The lax attitude of the Tunku towards Rahman Talib in the mid-1960s must also have contributed to the warped notions of the relationship between politics and money among UMNO leaders and members.

Thus, in the long march of UMNO, dramatic ironies began to descend like confetti. As Mahathir himself has put the whole problem in a nutshell, in his *The Challenge*: "After successfully setting aside the Malayan Union, UMNO found itself without a purpose, and unity as an objective lost its appeal."

People who joined UMNO in the 1940s were essentially and even qualitatively different. The early sense of mission, of idealism and of sacrifice has been long lost. The later crops of people include many takers and fakers riding on the band-

wagon of 'Malay unity'. Many leaders, at the various levels, have become the **Penghulu Ayam Gadang** – the Big Rooster – type of leaders, strutting about arrogantly, as Dr Nordin Selaf has put it, and forgetting the people who have made them important. Some have even gone a step farther and become the **Penghulu Pinak Sirawa** (the Underpants Penghulu) type of leaders who do not lack brains but lack character. They use their brains to oppress and exploit their own people and end up as **Pagar Makan Padi** (the fence who eats the rice)

A False Choice

As the preceding chapters have also shown us, there is not much to choose between the two factions of UMNO. Both sides have personalities who have subscribed to the basic policies and actions of successive Alliance and then Barisan Nasional governments which have been tarnished with corruption, racialism and repression. They are basically same in kind though different in degree. The Semangat 46 people these days often complain about the lack of Press freedom, but when they were in positions of power, they were quite happily and obliviously denying the people the same freedom. As Harry Miller tells us, Tunku Abdul Rahman himself set a fine example of intolerance to press criticism when he led more than 500 UMNO members in Johore Baru in 1954 to set fire to a coffin-load of copies of the **Qalam** and **Warta** newspapers which had criticised him and his party. The Tunku's intolerant attitude towards the international Press can be obtained from the chapter on 'The Press and the Riots' in his book **May 13: Before and After**.

Another example of my contention that they differ only in degree and not in kind is taken from what Musa Hitam said at a staff seminar of the **Singapore Straits Times** just before the Johore Baru by-election in August 1988. In reply to a question as to what he would have done on 27 October 1987 had he still been the Home Affairs Minister, Musa Hitam said he would have arrested less people than Mahathir did. This is revealing indeed. He too has no qualms about employing the ISA.

As for Mahathir, the whole thinking world has condemned him as a dictator. Of course, one of his apologists, Al-Jawahir has argued in his book, **Siapakah Diktator? dan Siapakah**

Pengkhianat Bangsa? (Who is Dictator? and Who is Traitor to the Race?), that the very fact that books like my *If We Love This Country*, *Mahathir Lawan Shahrir (Mahathir Fights Shahrir)*, *Mahathir Pengkhianat Undang-undang? (Mahathir Traitor to the Laws?)* and *Pemimpin Tamak Kuasa (Power Greedy Leaders)* have been allowed to be published proves that Mahathir is no dictator. This kind of simplistic thinking does not realise that these are merely the manifestation of the trappings and window-dressings of a repressive tolerance.

Another dimension of UMNO's record is its contribution to ethnic polarisation in the country since the late 1950s. As Chandra Muzaffar has pointed out *Aliran Quarterly*, Vol. II No. 1, 1982): "Right from 1957 the elites, presiding over a multi-ethnic society par excellence, approached all major issues in politics, economics and culture from ethnic perspectives". Or, as Ishak Shari and Jomo K.S. have said, "The defeat of the IMP and the success of the UMNO-MCA-MIC coalition—now known as the Alliance—set the stage for communal-oriented politics in the post-independence period." Shahrudin Maaruf is of the same opinion when he says that Dato Onn's IMP "was criticised along communal lines". Or as Syed Husin Ali says:

It appears as if racial politics is being deliberately perpetuated so that the masses in the lower strata of society will never be united to alter the status quo, which, at present, greatly benefits the upper class and the foreign monopoly-capitalists who are actually in close cooperation with each other.

Coming back to the question of corruption, the very fact that successive generations of UMNO leaders have strongly resisted the suggestion, that (1) the Anti-Corruption Agency be made a fully independent body and (2) that all Ministers and elected representatives be made to declare their assets, is more than ample proof of not only their toleration of but also their collusion with corruption.

And, coming back to the question of human rights, Musa Hitam's so-called 'liberalism', as K. Das puts it, "is not liberalism at all but a bureaucratic toleration-ism, that is to say, within the framework of existing laws, including the indefensible Internal Security Act....."

Today Tengku Razaleigh complains about the style of Mahathir. However, it was not very long ago when he said:

Dr Mahathir is a leader with many ideas and I admire his ideas,

although some people say his ideas are radical. Actually we also express views like Dr Mahathir but his manner of expression gets attention from many people. He has initiated many changes in terms of ideas, attitude and national administration, increasing the productivity of officials, preventing corruption in order poor people get help without having to pay.

For me, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir is a dynamic leader who fulfils many of our needs, that is the needs of the people.

(From *Tengku Razaleigh: Rintangan dan Cabaran (Obstacles and Challenges)*, edited by Alias Mohamed.)

And yet today he is complaining about Mahathir's style. But what of Mahathir's policies which are today also the policies of UMNO and the Barisan Nasional? What about the substance?

Thus, any choice between the two factions of UMNO is basically a false choice. The Malaysian tragedy is that most politicians, especially politicians who are in power or were in power have conveniently short or selective memories. One could suppose that if they don't, they would have ended up in mental asylums long, long ago. But then the tragedy is compounded when a people begin to suffer from the same disease of short or selective memories, and through a false consciousness begin to make false choices.

We should remember that during the public clamour in 1983-86 for a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the M\$2.5 billion scandal, none of the UMNO leaders, including Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh agreed to such an idea.

None, not one of UMNO leaders, past or present, has ever called for the abolition of the ISA, apart from shedding some crocodile tears whenever it suits them that the ISA should not be misused or abused. As Jomo K.S. has reminded us, "Tunku Abdul Rahman.....was responsible for legislating the ISA in 1960, and headed the government while thousands, including a former cabinet colleague were detained under the ISA during the sixties" And Jomo adds:

In fact, the ISA has long been used against non-communists as well as alleged communists.....Although originally introduced ostensibly to deal with communists, even during the tenure of the Tunku - it was used against non-communist opponents of the government, including a former senior cabinet colleague, Aziz Ishak.

As we have seen, in the field of socio-economic development, UMNO has actually betrayed the millions of poor Malays. It

would be unfair of course to assert that absolutely nothing has been done for the Malays, including the poor Malays. However, if all the billions since independence were added up, the result is a far and shameless cry from the declared aim of uplifting the really poor Malays from poverty and degradation. UMNO itself, intoxicated by and wallowing in the 'Ozymandias syndrome', has built an empire and nurtured a new class of Malay capitalists to work hand-in-glove with the Chinese millionaires, including the Tan Koon Swans, the Abdullah Angs, the Tee Aun Chuans and the Kee Yong Wees. And as though financial swindles at home were not bad enough, some UMNO leaders and associates have gone as far as to Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea to manufacture financial scandals.

The Dangerous Choice

The better is the critic of the good, naturally, but can the bad criticise what it claims to be the worse? To choose between Team A and Team B or whatever names they care to add on to themselves by and by, is not only false and futile but can also be dangerous.

Here is at least one trans-Asian parallel. In 1969, when the Congress Party of India split into two factions – the Congress (O) headed by the 'Old Guard' and the Congress (R) headed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi – Indira Gandhi's faction was supported by opposition parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party (Marxist) and the DMK of Tamil Nadu. Eventually, the Indira Gandhi faction became triumphant. However, when she declared an 'Emergency' in June 1975, Indira Gandhi not only arrested thousands of opposition leaders and detained them without trial, she also dismissed the DMK state government in Tamil Nadu in early 1976, apparently as her way of settling a debt of gratitude for helping to rescue her from defeat seven years earlier.*

**I saw Mr. M. Karunanidhi, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, at his house in Madras in early December of 1975. He was then putting up a brave fight against Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency'. A few weeks later, while in Europe I heard that his government was dismissed (on 31 January 1976). In early 1989, Mr. Karunanidhi and the DMK returned to power after defeating the Congress (I) under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the Tamil Nadu state elections.*

Of course, Malaysia is not India, but there are lessons to be learnt all the same. Just as those who supported or voted for Datuk Shahrir in the Johore Baru by-election in August 1988 must realise the lessons, whether or not they want to learn from them.

Another homegrown lesson hails from Sabah. When Datuk Pairin, the leader of the Parti Bersatu (PBS) had won the Tambunan by-election and subsequently also won the Sabah state elections, he was thought to be the beacon of hope for liberalism and human rights in that part of Malaysia. But, as Gurmit Singh has pointed out, the most dramatic turnaround over the amendments to the Official Secrets Act in late 1986 "was that of the PBS".

On the morning of 5th December, its President Datuk Pairin was quoted in the press as categorically saying that PBS would not support the Bill but that very afternoon all his MPs were among the 131 who voted FOR the Bill. So much for the man and the party that had been hailed as the saviours of democracy during the Sabah elections of 1985 and early 1986!

That is the price we pay for putting hopes on parties or factions involved in intra-Barisan Nasional or intra-UMNO power struggles in the holy names of 'democracy', 'freedom' and what have you.

The Semangat 46 is temporarily useful as a vehicle of protest. But as a serious, longterm and viable alternative, it is a false dawn. So long as it is unwilling or unable to bring out a well-thought-out programme based on certain fundamental values and principles of ideology, to rely on it is like going to sea in a sieve, living mainly on a dramatization of nostalgia for a questionable record. Thus, the reliance on the Semangat 46, which, precisely because it is not prepared to abandon the power struggle to control UMNO, is a gamble for a short-cut that may well turn into a cul-de-sac at best and a grand betrayal at worst.

Those from the Semangat 46 who have returned to UMNO Baru have justified their doing so because Dr Mahathir is supposed to have 'softened'. Those who follow them in the coming weeks or months will use the same justification. Without any fundamental changes, how soft is this softening? All the amendments recently incorporated into the ISA, the Police Act, the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Societies Act, the 1988 Constitutional Amendments and the Labour laws are still very much intact. The dismissal of Tun Salleh Abas and two

other Supreme Court judges stays. At the time of writing there are about 150 detainees under the ISA, including Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang and his son. All the repressive laws are safe and sound in the government's armoury of repression. What precisely has 'softened', may we humbly ask?

Mahathir's 'softening', therefore, is more tactical than a real change of heart. While his own heart bypass was genuine enough, his politico-strategic bypass does not appear to be so. The problem lies with those who fool themselves trying also to fool others.

Probable Scenarios

At the time of writing, there is still a flood of claims, counter-claims, rumours and mutual charges. The situation has cleared somewhat, after the return of Musa Hitam and his camp to UMNO Baru. However, there are still many contradictory statements and a considerable amount of confusion in the air. Between now and the next general elections in Malaysia, what will the likely political permutations and scenarios be? What new shocks and surprises will emerge?

The Semangat 46 has by now almost exhausted all avenues to revive the old UMNO. They have lost in the courts, their motion in Parliament was defeated, and the by-elections have come to a stop at least for the time being. It appears increasingly clear that the only and most effective avenue left is a test of strength nationwide at the next General Elections which must be held between now and August 1991. Whatever Musa Hitam had said in Hong Kong last year, the need for declaring a state of emergency or the likelihood of a military takeover has much lessened, especially after the return to UMNO Baru of himself and his group, and Ampang Jaya.

The former British Prime Minister of Britain, Harold Wilson, once said that in politics a week is a long time. So between now and August 1991 can be considered as a mighty long time. Anything can happen. But all the same, let's try to sketch some possible or probable scenarios.

Scenario One:

The Semangat 46 fizzles out, with Tengku Razaleigh and most of the others returning to UMNO Baru. (Yes, Tengku

Razaleigh has gone on record as saying that he would fight to the end. But there is a rumour that Rais Yatim is now thinking of going overseas, while Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin, Datuk Radzi and Datin Paduka Rahmah Osman are 'getting fresh' with UMNO Baru people. And, according to the *Watan* of 25 February 1989, Haji Ibrahim Ali of the Semangat 46 had said that Tengku Razaleigh was ready to discuss things if UMNO Baru leaders were sincere. The 5 March 1989 issue of *Mingguan Kota* reports that on 23 February 1989, Rais Yatim, Dato Harun, Datul Zainal and Hajjah Marina Yusof had met Ghafar Baba at his residence to discuss matters connected with the KUB (UMNO co-operative society) and current political issues.)

This scenario envisages that Tengku Razaleigh will then contest for the post of UMNO President in the UMNO elections in 1990, thus triggering off another intense power struggle.

Scenario Two:

The Semangat 46 fizzles out, with Tengku Razaleigh and other leaders of the group exiled to the political wilderness. Fresh power struggle all the same within UMNO Baru among Ghafar Baba, Musa Hitam, Abdullah Badawi and Anwar Ibrahim in the wake of vacuum created by Mahathir's retirement in two years' time.

Scenario Three:

UMNO Baru power struggle goes ahead, but Semangat 46 becomes a new Malay party and forms the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) with PAS, DAP and other smaller parties. (We have to remember that Tengku Razaleigh and his group think that they would be at a disadvantage to get out of the context of UMNO.) APU succeeds in reducing the majorities of the Barisan Nasional in Parliament as well as the State Assemblies, perhaps winning Kelantan and Penang.

(However, after Ampang Jaya, increasing numbers of PAS people seem lukewarm to a pact with the Semangat 46. For instance, the 24 February issue of *Harakah*, the PAS newspaper, has carried a report that PAS Liaison Secretary for Kelantan, Ustaz Haji Sabri Mohammad had said that many people in Kelantan still remember that Razaleigh was responsible for toppling the Islamic government of Kelantan in 1978.)

Scenario Four:

APU not only wins Kelantan and Penang but also enough parliamentary seats to form the federal government. (According to an article by A.Ghani Ismail in the *New Straits Times* on 24 February 1989, Tengku Razaleigh thinks that his group can take half of UMNO's 1986 general election's 1.5 million votes, and with DAP taking another 750,000 votes and PAS about 700,000 votes, they will win enough seats with 2.2 million votes to form the government at federal level. However, against this, Professor Khoo Kay Kim of the University of Malaya, has cautioned: "Bringing PAS and DAP together in the election is one thing. How do you sustain the co-operation afterwards is quite another.")

Scenario Five:

With or without APU, the Semangat 46 wins more seats than UMNO Baru. In such a situation, even without an agreement with PAS and DAP, it is likely that it will seek to form an alternative government with the MCA, Gerakan, and MIC and other Barisan Nasional component parties to displace UMNO Baru. Also, in such an event it can be expected that quite a number of UMNO Baru MPs will desert that party for the Semangat 46.

As stated before, there are still many intangibles based on shifting loyalties and other imponderables. Although the Semangat 46 is suffering some serious defections right now, it must not be forgotten that the protest votes it succeeded in obtaining in the three by-elections in Johore Baru, Parit Raja and Ampang Jaya exceed those obtained by the Barisan Nasional, although it lost the last two. In any event, it has proved that it could obtain a substantial number of Malay votes, whatever the reasons.

At a ceramah in Taman Cheras Indah during the Ampang Jaya by-election in January 1989, Tengku Razaleigh said that his group and other opposition parties aligned to it would contest all the 177 parliamentary constituencies in the country, and would have the chance to form a fresh government. But sooner or later the Semangat 46 group will have to put an end to its present politics of ambiguity – this love-hate relationship vis-a-vis UMNO, especially after Mahathir has left the scene. However, once they form a new political party they would have to sacrifice the emotional appeal of UMNO – an appeal, which

rightly or wrongly, still attracts a considerable number of Malays. And, with the exception of PAS, all post-1946 Malay-based parties outside UMNO have either failed or have been retarded, beginning with Dato Onn's IMP. As for PAS, its appeal is not entirely based on race, but in fact based more on Islam. A good number of PAS people are rather wary of any close partnership with the Semangat 46, which they perceive as not only secular but also not much different from UMNO Baru itself. After the defection of the Musa Hitam group, such wariness must be on the increase.

Some people see any merger or pact between PAS and the Semangat 46 as an opportunistic marriage of convenience with really no political or ideological cement. As *Dunia Islam* (15 January-15 February 1989) has warned: "But the problem is, PAS-Semangat 46 unity could threaten PAS solidarity".

The real problem about a Front of opposition parties with such diverse views and beliefs is not one of bringing it about. In fact, that could be the least difficult thing to do. The real problem begins when and if, by a combination of organisation, propaganda, programme and luck, such a front finds itself with a majority of seats to form a government either at state or federal level or both. How long can such a new power equation hold?

When Will there be Elections?

Ismail Kassim, a fairly perceptive observer of Malaysian affairs, wrote in the *Straits Times* of Singapore on 11 February 1989 that the "victory in Ampang Jaya would make early April before the start of the month-long fasting an ideal time for the polls" if not for Mahathir's illness. He is of the following view:

Considering that Dr Mahathir needs at least six months before he can recover his pre-operation fitness, the earliest that polls could be called this year would be in late November. It would be just before the start of the northeast monsoon rains and it would be after the New UMNO elections which begin at branch level in April and end with the annual general assembly on the first week of November.

A month after the Ampang Jaya by-election Ghafar Baba declared that UMNO was ready to face a general election (*New Straits Times*, 27 February 1989) He also announced that he would be visiting all parts of the country. Ghafar's statements

have aroused a great deal of speculation about an early general election. Thus, according to *The Star* of 7 March 1989, PAS is gearing up for an expected mid-1989 general election. The paper cited PAS Deputy President Ustaz Fadzil Noor as saying that recent developments, especially those concerning Barisan Nasional component parties, pointed to an early election. On the same day, *The Star* reported that the Penang DAP had set up a task force for the next general election.

So it does seem that the general election fever has quietly but surely arrived. But one thing worth remembering is that the ruling coalition, especially UMNO, will have the final say over the timing of the next general election. As Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, the controversial UMNO Baru MP for Kok Lanas, Kelantan, said at the University of Malaya forum at the end of October last year, "UMNO will not have general elections unless it is certain it will win". Perhaps in the post-Ampang Jaya situation, his cryptic remark that "there will be 1001 excuses not to have elections" need not be taken too seriously.

Dr Mahathir's illness, the issue of succession, the proposed Opposition Front and the prospects of an early general election all provide Malaysians with what Stephen Duthie of the *Asian Wall Street Journal* calls a "rich environment for speculation and idle rumour".

The Longterm Scenario

Whoever wins in the next election at the federal level, no important fundamental changes can be expected. In the first place, established parties like PAS and DAP cannot as yet win at the federal level on their own steam. Winning as a team with the Semangat 46 will mean a coalition government, albeit a coalition of diverse political philosophies and/or the lack of philosophies. Assuming that such a coalition can administer, it is unlikely that it can decide on fundamental changes.

As for the Semangat 46 initiating fundamental changes in a coalition which it dominates in terms of seats and votes, the chances are not too rosy. This is simply because hitherto, the Semangat 46 has shown itself to be a group merely mouthing slogans rather than questioning fundamental issues like corruption, ethnic polarisation, poverty, democracy, etc. At best it will be a mere UMNO Mark II, not a harbinger of radical reforms and basic changes which will make a real difference to the

people.

The 'TINA' (There is No Alternative) to the Barisan Nasional argument is of course nonsense. There is always an alternative, even if it is only of assortments. The real question is what kind of an alternative there is and what sort of an alternative do we want. An Islamic alternative? A socialist alternative? Another brand of UMNO and Barisan Nasional alternative? Only more time can tell.

Be that as it may, the UMNO conflict does seem to have thrown up some tentatively positive signs. One significant development is the breakdown of feudal deference to leaders in UMNO in particular and among the Malays in general. The leader-led relationship among the Malays may never be the same again. The led are more questioning and cannot be taken for granted as much as before. This is a plus sign.

However, the conflict does not seem to have improved inter-ethnic relations in the country. This is seen in the Ampang Jaya by-election where both sides were making blatant appeals to racial and religious sentiments. In the Johore Baru by-election, there were some people who went round telling the Chinese voters to support the Semangat 46 so as to ensure that "the Malays will kill the Malays". These are shameful and dangerous tactics.

We are in the early part of 1989. The UMNO drama continues amidst a mixed cacophony of cries and clamour for 'curtains' and 'encore'. In the final analysis, because of UMNO's claim to be the protector of the Malays, it will be the Malays who will decide whether it should be the one or the other. It has taken the Congress Party of India about a hundred years to face imminent ignominy; UMNO may be given less time than that.

At the moment, and probably for some time to come, the canting hambugs in various UMNO camps and factions will continue with their political demonology of recrimination and self-justification. After having come very close to the abyss, instead of embarking on a regeneration for themselves and for the country, they seem to be glued to a ceaseless settling of accounts, and a harsh book-keeping of the arithmetic of power, forgetting the algebra of nation-building. The branches of the diseased tree, whenever it suits them, continue to make hypocritical noises about the need for unity, the immorality of corruption and repression, and the desirability to help the poor.

The coming months and years are likely to witness an intensification rather than a tapering-off of the struggle for power in UMNO, even though it may not be exactly a never-ending story.

An UMNO-PAS Link-Up?

The 35th PAS Muktamar (General Assembly) on 31 March to 2nd April 1989 in Kuala Lumpur seemed to have endorsed the proposal to work out an electoral pact with the Semangat 46. The details of such a pact and its eventual implementation remain to be seen. Also, how PAS is to work out some electoral or longer-term working relationship with other groups like the DAP, the PSRM, ABIM and others is yet unknown.

The first week of April 1989 also witnessed an interesting development in Malaysian politics, with UMNO Baru and PAS leaders playing footsie with each other about the possibility of talks about cooperation. PAS was in the Barisan Nasional for a few years in the 1970s. It should come as neither shock nor surprise if another PAS-UMNO link-up were to come about just before the next general elections. I remember many years ago Professor Syed Hussein Alatas telling me in Singapore, just before a forum we were to speak at the University of Singapore with Dr Mahathir, that he found politics in Malaysia to be an art of the impossible. I think he was wrong on this score. Politics in Malaysia, as almost everywhere else on the globe, is the art of the possible, at least for politicians if not for the people they claim to work for. Increasingly, therefore, the world of politics seems to substantiate Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe when he says in his monumental *Faust*:

Renewed is pain: with mournful repetition
Life tracks his devious, labyrinthine chain,
And names the good, whose cheating fortune tore them
From happy hours, and left me to deplore them.

Yes, we are into interesting times in Malaysia, especially with the prospect that the past is becoming the future.

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Abbreviations/Glossary

- 2M : the Mahathir-Musa Administration
- ABIM – Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
- ACA : Anti-Corruption Agency
- AI : Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organisation
- Alliance : the UMNO-MCA-MIC ruling coalition in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s
- Aliran : Aliran Kesedaran Negara (National Consciousness Movement), a social reform group
- API : Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (Generation of Aware Youth)
- Bank Rakyat : People's Bank
- BME : Bumiputra Malaysia Finance Limited, a subsidiary in Hong Kong of Bank Bumiputra
- B.N. : Barisan Nasional (National Front), the ruling coalition in Malaysia today
- Bumiputra – the indigenous peoples**
- CUEPACS : Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services
- DAP : Democratic Action Party
- DATO/
Datuk/Tan Sri/Tun : conferred state and national titles
- Dewan Rakyat : House of the People, the lower legislative House of the Malaysian Parliament
- EPF : Employees' Provident Fund
- ESCAR : Essential (Security Cases) (Amendment) Regulations
- IMP : Independence Party of Malaya
- Insan : Institute of Social Analysis

ISA	: Internal Security Act
ITF	: London-based International Transport Workers Federation
Kacang lupakan kulit	: the peanut forgets its shell
Kaum ibu	: literally 'Mothers' Section', the forerunner of the Wanita UMNO, the Women's Section of UMNO
MCA	: Malaysian Chinese Association
Merdeka	: Independence
MIC	: Malaysian Indian Congress
MPAJA	: Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MTUC	: Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NEP	: New Economic Policy
NOC	: National Operations Council (Mageran)
OSA	: Official Secrets Act
PAP	: People's Action Party, Singapore
PAS	: Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Islamic Party), formerly known as PMIP
PKMM	: Malay National Party (MNP)
PSRM	: Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Socialist Party)
SDP	: Socialist Democratic Party
Semarak	: With the People Spirit
SGS	: Selangor Graduates Society
Tengku/	
Tunku	: Prince
UEM	: United Engineers Malaysia
'Ultras'	: 'Extremists'
UMBC	: United Malayan Banking Corporation
UMNO	: United Malays National Organisation
UMSU	: University of Malaya Students Union
UUCA	: Universities and University Colleges Act
Wakil rakyat	: elected people's representatives
Wanita	: Women

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