

MALAYSIAN POLITICS AND THE 1978 ELECTION

Edited by
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Preface

THE purpose of this volume is not to provide an overall survey of Malaysian politics and the general election held in 1978. Such a survey has already been provided by Ismail Kassim in *Race, Politics and Moderation: A Study of the Malaysian Electoral Process* (Times Books International, Singapore, 1979). Rather our purpose has been to take up particular topics which we feel to be important and to discuss them in greater depth than is possible in a more general study. The topics that we have selected were not determined on the basis of an overall plan but rather by the availability of writers interested in discussing them. All the contributors to this volume have done considerable research on their chosen topics, including interviewing many of the political figures involved. Those discussing particular aspects of the 1978 campaign all followed the candidates around, discussed with them the problems they faced, and were able to make on-the-spot assessments of public response. Unfortunately several major areas are not covered—most notably the UMNO campaign in 1978. This was not because we felt such topics to be unimportant but was due simply to our failure to find writers who had done the research needed to treat them satisfactorily.

We want also to express our appreciation for financial and other assistance given to Lee Kam Hing, Michael Ong, Mahadzir Mohd. Khir, Mohamed Abu Bakar, and Firdaus Abdullah by the University of Malaya.

Kuala Lumpur
October 1979

THE EDITORS

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Abbreviations of Political Parties

Barisan	Barisan Nasional
Barjasa	Barisan Ra'ayat Jati Sarawak
Berjasa	Barisan Jema'ah Islamiah Malaysia Bersatu
Berjaya	Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah
Bumiputera	Parti Bumiputera
DAP	Democratic Action Party
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia
KITA	Kesatuan Insaf Tanah Air
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
Pajar	Parti Rakyat Jati Sarawak
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Parti Islam Sa-Malaysia
PBB	Partai Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
Pekemas	Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia
Pesaka	Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PSRM	Partai Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia
SAPO	Sarawak People's Organization
SCA	Sabah Chinese Association
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
UDP	United Democratic Party
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UPP	United People's Party
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation

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- Sothi Rachagan, Lecturer in the Geography Department, University of Malaya. Obtained Ph.D. in Political Geography at the London School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Judith Strauch, Lecturer in the Anthropology Department, Harvard University. Her book entitled *Local Leadership in a Plural Society: The Political Anthropology of a Chinese-Malaysian Town* which is based on her Ph.D. work will soon be published by Harvard University Press.

From Alliance to Barisan Nasional

HAROLD CROUCH

MALAYSIAN politics have always been communal politics. A classic case of the plural society, the indigenous Malay and the immigrant Chinese and Indian communities which made up the population of Malaya when she gained her independence in 1957 were divided not only by race but by language, religion, culture, and economic role. The formation of Malaysia in 1963 complicated the communal pattern further with the addition of the indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak who themselves did not constitute a single community but were divided along cultural and linguistic, as well as geographical, lines. The maintenance of inter-communal harmony has been the primary aim of the government and the foundation on which all other objectives rest. Without communal harmony Malaysia would be faced with political instability, the failure of its economic development programme, and the prospect of a form of government very different from that which she has had for the past two decades.

There has been no shortage of sources of potential conflict. Almost every major political issue has involved the prospect of benefits for one group while threatening others with deprivation. Malays called for the recognition of Islam as the official religion while the other communities wanted a secular state. Malays demanded that Malay be adopted as the national language while non-Malays preferred the continued use of English or a multi-lingual arrangement. In the field of educa-

tion Malays sought to redress the imbalance inherited from the colonial period in which the more urban non-Malay communities had much greater access to higher education than the predominantly rural Malays. In the economy, Malays demanded preferential treatment from the government to enable them to enter the modern sector of the economy in which, of the local communities, the Chinese played the major role although, of course, one that was still small compared with that of British and other foreign interests. On the other hand the non-Malays wanted easier conditions to acquire citizenship and better opportunities for appointment to the higher reaches of the civil service and the armed forces which were largely Malay preserves.¹

The ever-present threat of communal conflict had a decisive influence on the form of the Malaysian political system. Faced in the early 1950s with a communist rebellion based on a disaffected section of the Chinese community, the need to convince the British of their preparedness to lead a multi-racial independent state, and, not least, the necessity of working out a successful electoral strategy, the leaders of the Malay nationalist party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), agreed to establish what came to be known as the Alliance with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) representing the Chinese community and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) representing the Indians. By associating the main non-Malay parties with their own party, the Malay leaders hoped to win the confidence of all communities and thus lay the foundation for future political stability and racial harmony. A system evolved in which the leaders of the three Alliance parties developed close personal friendships with each other and, under the prime ministership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, worked out a series of communal compromises in which the interests of all three communities were taken into account. This type of system, which political scientists later called 'consociational', was one in which communal issues were settled through compromises reached in private between leaders enjoying the support of their respective com-

munities rather than through open, public debate which could easily arouse emotions and escalate into racial conflict.² The key to the system, however, was not only that the leaders should continue to enjoy each others' confidence but that they should retain substantial support in their respective communities.

The Alliance system worked effectively until 1969 but developments in that year brought into question the 'con-sociational' assumptions on which it was based. In terms of votes the 1969 election results were not a major departure from previous voting patterns but, largely due to an electoral pact between the predominantly non-Malay opposition parties, the Alliance lost a large number of seats resulting in the defeat of one state government and uncertainty about the fate of two more. Support for the Alliance had always been less strong in the non-Malay communities than among the Malays but it was only in 1969 that this weakness led to a substantial loss of seats. According to one estimate³ the Alliance won only about 40 per cent of non-Malay votes—a share that was probably not drastically less than in earlier elections but in 1969 the MCA was able to win only 13 of the 33 parliamentary seats which it contested while non-Malay candidates from the opposition parties won 24. At the same time Malay support for the Alliance fell to an estimated 54 per cent as the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS—Parti Islam Sa-Malaysia) won back much of the support that it had lost in the 1964 election, when some of its leaders were in prison as alleged sympathizers with Indonesia's confrontation campaign. The PAS vote, however, while much higher than in 1964, was only marginally better than in 1959 although, significantly, much of the improvement came from UMNO-dominated areas, especially Kedah, whereas in its own stronghold, Kelantan, it declined. Although the Alliance had lost ground, the 1969 election results were not in fact a major defeat for the government in terms of the popular vote but the apparent 'victory' of the non-Malay opposition parties in terms of seats had a great impact. It was greeted with exuberant

elation by many non-Malays and caused despair in some Malay circles. It was in this context that the May 13th riot broke out in Kuala Lumpur.

The election results combined with the Kuala Lumpur riot challenged the Alliance system at its roots. On the Malay side the credibility of UMNO's claim to represent all Malay interests had been undermined. The election results had shown that PAS could not only retain most of its support in its traditional strongholds but was gradually expanding its influence in UMNO areas, while the rioting revealed the presence of extreme disaffection and alienation from the government's multi-racial approach which, most likely, was only the tip of the iceberg. On the non-Malay side the poor performance of the MCA in terms of votes had for the first time been reflected in a drastic loss of parliamentary seats so that the hollowness of the party's claim to stand for the interests of the entire Chinese community was plain for all to see. By 1969 the 'consociational' premise that the leaders in the government should be recognized by their respective communities as their representatives had been badly shaken.

For UMNO, as the dominant party in the Alliance, the main task was to win back the loyalty of the Malays. Many Malays claimed that the Alliance under the Tunku had given too many concessions to the non-Malays with the result that after a dozen years of independence the overwhelming majority of Malays were as backward as they had been under the British. Malays continued to be largely rural, ill-educated, and poor. The government's programme of rural development was seen as no more than 'a cough on the stairs' (or 'a drop in the ocean') which had little effect on the overall level of Malay welfare while, according to Malay perceptions, Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indians prospered in business and the professions. The compromise contained in the National Language Act of 1967 which permitted the continued use of English for official purposes was seen as symbolizing an approach which betrayed Malay interests at every turn. Within UMNO a group of younger leaders pressed for the

resignation of the Tunku and for new policies to favour the Malays. During the post-riot period of emergency rule under the National Operations Council, effective control of the government passed to the hands of Tun Razak who succeeded the Tunku as Prime Minister in September 1970. Under Razak a new set of policies was introduced, designed eventually to eliminate the identification of economic role with race by taking drastic steps to improve the economic position of the Malays.⁴

The government's goal of 'restructuring society' was certain, in the short run, to aggravate communal tension. The programme implied a substantial shift in the communal balance in favour of the Malays which could hardly be welcomed by the non-Malays. A major problem for the MCA had been its own image in the Chinese community as a party too willing to yield to UMNO interests. The sudden introduction of a series of policies designed specifically to strengthen the position of the Malays was bound to undermine the credibility of the MCA leaders even further and did in fact lead to the formation of a 'Chinese Unity Movement' within the party which had to be suppressed by its leaders. On the other hand, the promise of a new deal for the Malays, while meeting some demands, would also serve to heighten expectations, all of which could not be satisfied by the government and thus would provide further opportunities to be exploited by PAS. There was thus a danger that the new policies to restructure society would set off a new round of racial competition with the opposition parties attempting to expand their bases of support by outbidding the government on communal issues.

The prospect of further political upheaval was faced initially by a turn to a more authoritarian form of government. In the wake of the 1969 riot a state of emergency had been declared, elections and parliament suspended, and power placed in the hands of the National Operations Council in which the military participated. Although the state of emergency was not formally lifted, the political system was allowed to return to a more normal condition in 1971 but only after

the adoption of a constitutional amendment enabling the government to brand as sedition the questioning—even in parliament—of constitutional provisions relating to citizenship, the national language, the special privileges of the Malays, and the sovereignty of the Sultans. The Sedition Act had the effect of removing key political issues from public debate and deprived the opposition parties of their most effective weapons against the government. Steps were also taken by the dominant group in the government to exercise stronger indirect influence over the press when in 1972 control of the major English-language newspaper group, the *Straits Times*, was acquired by the new state trading company, Pemas. The main Malay-language newspaper group, *Utusan Melayu*, was already in hands sympathetic to UMNO while the Chinese press was mainly acquiescent.⁵ The expression of public dissent on central issues was further curtailed by the continuing operation of the Internal Security Act which provided for arrest without trial. Moreover, laws restricting the political involvement of trade unions were already in force and in 1975 the Universities and Colleges Act was amended to prevent students from taking part in political activity. The sedition law, the Internal Security Act, indirect control of the press, and the depoliticization of important potential sources of opposition put the government in a very strong position to guide and limit political debate and thus avert an open upsurge of both communal and anti-government sentiment.

In the long run, however, Tun Razak believed that political stability required the reconstituting of the political system in order to restore the 'consociational' idea in a new form. Instead of the Alliance pattern in which each race was represented by only one party, the new *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) formula provided for multiple representation. In a series of moves Tun Razak brought the *Gerakan* and the tiny People's Progressive Party (PPP) into the Front alongside the MCA and MIC to represent the non-Malays while PAS joined UMNO in representing the Malays. The governing coalitions in Sabah and Sarawak (where the first *Barisan*-type coalition

had been formed in 1970) also joined the Front as full members, bringing the total to nine before the 1974 election. The effect of forming the Front was to increase the representativeness of the government at all levels by bringing former opposition parties into the central government while the old Alliance parties were given representation in the Gerakan-controlled Penang state government, the PAS-controlled Kelantan state government and the PPP-controlled Ipoh Municipal Council. Furthermore, the co-option of PAS into the Front neutralized the only significant party capable of outbidding UMNO for Malay support and thus stopped the drift of Malay votes away from the government. On the non-Malay side, however, the drift was only partly stopped, as the Democratic Action Party (DAP) remained a strong rallying point for disaffected non-Malays. While the inclusion of the former opposition parties in the Front brought immediate electoral benefits for the government, it was accompanied, however, by the loss of the old spirit of *camaraderie* which had characterized the relations between the Alliance leaders under the Tunku and its replacement by hard-nosed political bargaining and mutual mistrust within the governing coalition.

The electoral effectiveness of the Barisan Nasional strategy was demonstrated convincingly in the 1974 election when the Front won 104 of the 114 parliamentary seats in West Malaysia and 31 out of 40 in Sabah and Sarawak. The opposition party in Sarawak, the Sarawak National Party (SNAP), which won 9 seats, was persuaded to join the Front in 1976 leaving the DAP with 9 seats and Pekemas (Malaysian Social Justice Party) with 1 as the only opposition. The Front won 60.7 per cent of the valid votes, a result that substantially understated its support since 47 of its candidates were unopposed. On the other hand, the 18.3 per cent won by the DAP overstated its strength as the uncontested seats were those in which it had little influence. In addition, there were pockets of Malay opposition to the Front in Kelantan where a group of PAS dissidents won about 20 per cent of the votes, and in Trengganu where the Malaysian People's Socialist Party (PSRM)

mobilized disaffected former supporters of PAS to win 30.7 per cent of the valid votes.

Despite its overwhelming victory in 1974, the Barisan Nasional faced a series of threats to its internal cohesion during the next few years. In contrast to the Alliance with its amiable spirit of give and take among party leaders, the replacement of old leaders and the admission of new parties to the coalition made harmony more difficult to maintain. The post-1969 political atmosphere had greatly favoured the Malays and enhanced UMNO's domination of the government with the result that the position of the non-Malay parties in the Front became relatively insecure as the credibility of their claim to represent the Chinese and Indians was vociferously challenged by the opposition DAP. The diminished influence of the MCA in the government was shown most clearly when Dr Mahathir was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister in 1976 despite the strong opposition of the party. The party also lost the key economic portfolios in the cabinet that it had held earlier. Moreover, the admission of the Gerakan to the Front had been a heavy blow for the MCA which lost its position as the sole voice of the Chinese community in the government. Although the MCA continued to be the biggest non-Malay party in the Front with an established organizational network throughout the peninsula it was a junior member everywhere, whereas the Gerakan, with less widespread support, controlled the state government in Penang. In the period leading to the 1978 election conflict between the MCA and Gerakan became increasingly open while sharp factional conflict took place within the MCA itself.

On the Malay side, relations between UMNO and PAS also deteriorated. Many PAS supporters had opposed the party's joining the coalition and resentment had grown after the 1974 election when Tun Razak had insisted on appointing as *Menteri Besar* of Kelantan—the only state where the Barisan Nasional was dominated by PAS—a PAS leader of his, rather than the party's, choice. The warm relationship that the new *Menteri Besar*, Datuk Mohamed Nasir, enjoyed with the

UMNO leader in Kelantan, Tengku Razaleigh, led to accusations that he was being manipulated by UMNO and the demand by PAS members of the state assembly that he resign. The tension within PAS culminated in a vote of no-confidence in the Kelantan assembly in October 1977 and the expulsion of Datuk Mohamed from the party. The split in PAS provided a golden opportunity for UMNO. When minor rioting broke out in Kelantan the central government proposed the formation of an emergency administration in the state. The emergency was declared in December 1977 against the opposition of PAS which was then expelled from the Barisan Nasional. State elections were held in March 1978 and the Barisan Nasional scored an overwhelming victory although PAS won about one-third of the votes. Defeated in Kelantan, PAS turned its attention to Kedah which it hoped to develop as an alternative stronghold, but the party had lost much of its special appeal by joining and defending the UMNO-led government during the previous five years.

Apart from friction between parties, the period between the 1974 and the 1978 elections saw the development of a serious rift within UMNO itself. The accession of Tun Razak to the prime ministership had been followed by the appointment of his protégés to key posts in the government at the expense of the Tunku's confidants. Tun Razak had also initiated moves against certain state leaders whose local strength had enabled them to challenge the authority of the central leadership. Razak's death in 1976 provided an opportunity for a diverse group of party dissidents to mount a campaign against the late Prime Minister's closest associates which resulted in three of them, including two deputy ministers, being detained under the Internal Security Act. But the campaign against Razak's aides did not save Datuk Harun in Selangor and Tun Mustapha in Sabah; nor did it enable the Tunku's supporters to regain their influence in the government. Despite the upheaval of 1976, the new Prime Minister, Datuk Hussein Onn, gradually strengthened his authority and by 1977 the crisis had passed.

By 1978 the Prime Minister's ascendancy over UMNO had been firmly established and UMNO's hegemony over the Barisan Nasional further consolidated. On the other hand, PAS, which had newly returned to its earlier opposition role, was in disarray while the DAP also faced internal ructions. Although federal elections were not due until August 1979 the time seemed propitious for the government to go to the polls which it did on 8 July 1978.⁶ The essays in this volume are devoted to various aspects of Malaysian politics during the period leading up to the elections as well as the electoral contest itself.

1. Most studies of Malaysian politics have emphasized its communal nature. See K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1965; G. P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 2nd edition, 1976; K. von Vorys, *Democracy Without Consensus*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1976; and S. S. Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1978.

2. The concept of 'consociationalism' was first put forward by A. Lijphart in 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, January 1969. For its application to Malaysia, see R. S. Milne and D. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, Federal Publications, Singapore, 1977, pp. 352-6.

3. See K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, 'The 1969 Parliamentary Election in West Malaysia', *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 1970, p. 220. On the 1969 election see also von Vorys, *op. cit.*, ch. 12, and R. K. Vasil, *The Malaysian General Elections of 1969*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1972.

4. The 'New Economic Policy' was detailed in the *Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975*, Government Printer, Kuala Lumpur, 1971.

5. The chairman of Pernas was Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who was appointed as one of UMNO's vice-presidents in 1974. The chairman of the Utusan Melayu group was Abdul Ghafar Baba who had been an UMNO vice-president since 1962.

6. For general surveys of the 1978 election, see Ismail Kassim, *Race, Politics and Moderation: A Study of the Malaysian Electoral Process*, Times Books International, Singapore, 1979; and D. K. Mauzy, 'A Vote for Continuity: The 1978 General Elections in Malaysia', *Asian Survey*, March, 1979.

The UMNO Crisis: 1975—1977

HAROLD CROUCH

UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) has been the backbone of the Malaysian government since the attainment of independence in 1957. Formed in 1946 to oppose the proposed Malayan Union constitution which would have given the immigrant communities the same rights as Malays, UMNO developed in the 1950s as the principal vehicle of Malay political aspirations and, in alliance with the MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) and MIC (Malayan Indian Congress), established itself in the pre-independence elections of 1955 as the major political force in the country. Led mainly by men with upper-class, civil service backgrounds, UMNO was essentially a conservative party with a pragmatic, non-ideological approach to government. Enjoying overwhelming Malay support in most of the country, the party sought to preserve racial harmony by avoiding measures which blatantly offended the non-Malay communities while ensuring that each community was allocated a 'fair' share of government patronage. The government administration was largely in the hands of Malay civil servants whose primary tasks initially were to maintain law and order and create conditions favourable for economic development carried out by a private sector which consisted mainly of British and, to a lesser extent, Chinese enterprises.

The system over which the UMNO-dominated Alliance ruled was one in which the national political leadership and the British-trained civil service worked together to provide a

framework of efficient and relatively clean administration which facilitated economic growth and helped to make Malaysia one of the most prosperous nations in Asia. This framework, however, was not so tight and inflexible that politicians could not use posts in the government to provide rewards for political supporters. Although the role of the state in the economy was limited, there remained adequate scope for politicians to consolidate their political power through the distribution of patronage and all three parties in the Alliance acquired the characteristics of patronage machines. Chinese businessmen approached the MCA for licences, contracts, and other facilities from the government while Malays with UMNO connections were usually more interested in land matters and other favours, benefits, and opportunities at the local level. At the same time Malaysia's steady economic growth enabled the government to meet the expectations of most of the ordinary people through its industrial development policy and public works projects which provided jobs for mainly non-Malay workers and its rural development programme which brought benefits to the Malays. One condition for the effective functioning of the system was that the patronage-distribution activities of the parties should be kept within limits and not expand to the point where they undermined the capacity of the government to formulate and implement rational developmental and distributional policies which were needed to provide sufficient benefits to the masses in order to retain their political loyalty.

The successful functioning of the system was made easier by the relatively low level of political activity in the Malay community during the early years after independence. In the case of the Chinese, traditional loyalty to the upper class was weak and the more urbanized and politically sophisticated sections of the middle and lower classes were attracted to various opposition parties. But initially the overwhelming majority of Malays remained loyal to their community leaders, especially in the west-coast states where they faced large non-Malay communities. But the emergence of a new generation

of better educated and urbanized Malays in the 1960s resulted in the raising of political expectations and greater willingness to question and challenge established leaders. Many were disappointed with the achievements of the UMNO-dominated government and claimed that too many concessions had been given to non-Malays while not enough had been done to assist the Malays. This new mood of frustration, especially among urban Malays, reached its peak in 1969 when the May 13th incident occurred.

The crisis of 1969 forced UMNO to reconsider its policies. A younger group of leaders led by Dr Mahathir Mohamed and Musa Hitam called for the resignation of the Prime Minister and a better deal for the Malays. Although disciplinary measures—including Mahathir's expulsion from the party—were taken against them, their views won widespread support in the party and in 1970 Tunku Abdul Rahman was succeeded by his deputy, Tun Abdul Razak bin Datuk Hussein, who had friendly ties with the dissidents. Tun Razak's government declared its intention to 'restructure society' through a new set of economic and educational policies aimed at eventually eliminating the identification between economic role and race. This policy required drastic measures to improve the economic and social position of the Malays relative to the other races. A New Economic Policy was introduced which aimed to provide expanded opportunities for Malays to own and work in the modern sector of the economy and a new educational policy provided for the step-by-step adoption of Malay as the sole language of secondary and tertiary education.

Tun Razak's plans to 'restructure society' required not only new policies but the rise of a new generation of better educated and technocratically oriented leaders to implement them. Naturally the growing influence of Tun Razak's protégés in the government was resisted by many of the 'Old Guard' who had been accustomed to the Tunku's easy-going style and usually lacked the technocratic skills which Razak valued. The political strength of many of the 'old style' pol-

iticians, especially at the state level, rested mainly on patronage distribution and they felt increasingly threatened by the new trend toward centralized and technocratic administration, especially after several leading politicians suspected of corruption—including two *Menteri Besar*—had been replaced in the early 1970s. Razak, however, appreciated the importance of patronage in maintaining support for the party and did not attempt to overhaul and transform the party's character. Instead, he sought to impose a new type of leadership which could guide the party's national policies in a planned direction without unduly disturbing its patronage distribution network at the local level.

Tun Razak did not live to carry out his plans. His death in January 1976 came at a most inopportune time for his closest colleagues and protégés in that they had not yet fully established their positions in the party while their rivals were still strong. Many of the Tunku's men had been pushed aside but they remained on the sidelines ready to take advantage of circumstances that might enable them to return to positions of influence. Moreover, Tun Razak had commenced but not completed a series of moves against several 'old style' state leaders who had resisted the trend toward centralized control and whose activities left them vulnerable to corruption charges. Among them was the *Menteri Besar* of Selangor, Datuk Harun Idris, whose apparent mass support made him a likely challenger to Razak's own protégés in a future succession contest. The year that followed Razak's death saw a complicated struggle within UMNO in which an unlikely semi-alliance of dissidents emerged, centred on Tunku Abdul Rahman and consisting of the Tunku's old confidants and the Sabah Chief Minister, Tun Mustapha, together with Datuk Harun and his supporters who had never been particularly close to the Tunku in the past. Although PAS (Malaysian Islamic Party) could not overcome its antipathy for the Tunku and his for its leaders, it played a secondary role supporting Mustapha and Harun. The dissidents' overt targets were the members of Tun Razak's inner circle of advisers,

some of whom had leftist backgrounds, but the more important aim was to discredit the men Razak had groomed for future leadership, such as Dr Mahathir, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, and Musa Hitam, who had all been closely associated with Razak's 'leftist' aides.

THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE

Tun Razak had appointed his brother-in-law, Datuk Hussein Onn, as Deputy Prime Minister following the death of Tun Ismail Abdul Rahman in 1973 but as the Prime Minister's own health visibly deteriorated in late 1975, Datuk Hussein himself suffered a heart attack. Although he recovered quickly, there was much speculation when he succeeded to the prime ministership that his term of office might be short. The question of who would become Deputy Prime Minister was thus seen to be one of crucial importance. That it was not easy for Datuk Hussein to reach his decision was shown by the delay of two months before he announced the new appointment early in March 1976.

Tun Razak had already prepared the ground by placing several younger leaders in positions from which they could expect to rise further. He had smoothed the way for the return of Dr Mahathir to the party in 1972 and appointed him as Minister of Education in 1974. The other outspoken critic of the Tunku, Musa Hitam, was reappointed in 1973 as a deputy minister and in 1974 joined the cabinet as Minister for Primary Industries. Outside the cabinet, the young leader of UMNO in Kelantan, Tengku Razaleigh, who had been associated with Mahathir and Musa in 1969, was appointed to head the new state corporation, Pernas, and then the new state oil company, Petronas, while at the same time being appointed in 1974 at the age of 37 as one of the party vice-presidents. In 1975 when party elections were held, the main contest was for the three vice-presidencies and Tun Razak, in his speech to the assembly, made it clear that he expected the incumbents, Ghafar Baba and Razaleigh, to be re-elected with

Mahathir taking the third position.¹ Despite strong challenges from Datuk Harun and the disgruntled party veteran, Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar, Razak's candidates won.

When Datuk Hussein Onn took over the prime ministership, the three party vice-presidents reached agreement among themselves to propose that the new Deputy Prime Minister be selected from among them, thus excluding the only other serious candidate, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, the Minister for Home Affairs, who had been soundly defeated in the vice-presidential elections. It was expected that the youthful Razaleigh, who was not a member of the cabinet, would not be appointed but Ghafar Baba, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and a party vice-president since 1962, was clearly disappointed when the choice fell upon Mahathir and refused to accept appointment in the new cabinet. Nevertheless, he remained as secretary-general of the Barisan Nasional and continued to support the party leadership in the upheaval that was to follow.

The appointment of Dr Mahathir was naturally resented by Tunku Abdul Rahman and his group. At the same time, Tun Razak's death and the controversy surrounding the Mahathir appointment provided opportunities for two state leaders, Datuk Harun and Tun Mustapha, to seek allies in their efforts to block the moves against them that Razak had begun the previous year and Hussein intended to continue.

THE HARUN CASE

Datuk Harun Idris had been the Selangor state legal adviser in 1964 when the UMNO leaders persuaded him to step into the political arena as the Selangor *Menteri Besar*. Despite his bureaucratic background he proved himself to be an extremely popular leader, particularly with newly urbanized Malays, many of whom lived in the squatter areas surrounding Kuala Lumpur. A strong believer in increased Malay participation in the modern sector of the economy, he sought to provide opportunities for Malays keen to try their hand in business.

Although he in fact worked well with Chinese businessmen, his cultivation of lower class Malay support made him suspect in the eyes of the Chinese community in general, especially after the 1969 rioting in Kuala Lumpur which broke out near his headquarters. His popularity in the Malay community, however, continued to rise and in 1971, aged in his late forties, he was elected as Chairman of UMNO Youth, the active membership of which was largely made up of young, urbanized Malays aspiring to better economic opportunities. Harun also became the *Khalifah* (leader) of the *Silat Gayung* movement, a branch of the Malay art of self-defence.

In the period after 1969 Harun had joined other UMNO leaders in calling for a new deal for the Malays and was thus no supporter of the Tunku and the Old Guard. At the same time he used his control over the distribution of patronage at the disposal of the state government not only to help Malays into business but also to build up a strong political base for himself while his espousal of populist Malay and Islamic themes, especially in his role as UMNO Youth leader, gave him a large mass following throughout the peninsula. The rise of Harun as a potential national leader was naturally seen as a threat by the group close to Razak whose members feared his capacity to exploit Malay communalism and tended to see him as an unprincipled 'old style' politician without the vision and technocratic skills to carry through the restructuring of society on which the government had embarked.

The move launched by Tun Razak and his group against Harun took place in the context of a similar assault on another state leader, Tun Mustapha bin Dato Harun, whose party, the United Sabah National Organization (USNO), had dominated the ruling Sabah Alliance since 1967. Mustapha, who was personally close to Tunku Abdul Rahman, had turned Sabah into a kind of personal fiefdom and become fabulously wealthy himself, largely by controlling access to the booming timber industry. His political position was secured by distributing opportunities for personal enrichment to his supporters while the detention powers that he exercised under the 1969 emer-

agency regulations were used to punish opponents. He had further embarrassed the central government by channelling support to the Moro rebellion in the southern Philippines. By 1974 Kuala Lumpur's patience was wearing thin and Tun Razak tried to ease Mustapha out of Sabah by appointing him as Minister for Defence in the central government but this offer was rejected. In July 1975 Razak, working through his right-hand man, Abdullah Ahmad, encouraged disgruntled former allies of Mustapha to prepare themselves for a confrontation and when Mustapha showed his anger by suggesting that Sabah might be better off outside the federation, the central government had the issue for action that it needed. In July 1975 a new party, Berjaya, was formed with the Prime Minister's approval and, after a meeting with Razak, an intimidated Tun Mustapha agreed to resign. But the appointment in September of his loyal deputy, Tan Sri Said Keruak, as his successor left open the possibility of a future comeback. Tun Razak's moves against Mustapha, however, were interrupted in the latter part of the year when the crisis involving Datuk Harun broke out. The movement against Mustapha was thus held in abeyance and when Tun Razak suddenly died in January 1976 it seemed possible that an alliance between Mustapha and Harun with the Tunku's blessings might be able to challenge the new central government leadership.

Like Mustapha, Harun's Achilles' heel was the growth of his personal wealth during his term as *Menteri Besar* so the National Bureau of Investigation (the government's anti-corruption agency) was put on his trail. Anxious to avoid an open confrontation because of Harun's acknowledged popular support in Kuala Lumpur, Razak offered him appointment as Malaysia's ambassador to the United Nations but Harun, apparently sensing weakness in Razak's offer, rejected it. Rather than back down, the Prime Minister then decided to bring Harun to court and, in an atmosphere of high tension with troops stationed throughout the largely deserted city, Harun was arrested on 24 November 1975, and charged on sixteen counts of corruption. Despite the risk that action

against Harun might lead to communal disturbances in the capital, the Prime Minister's decision to take the case to court removed the possibility of a future political compromise. The 24th November was not to be the only day during the next few years when Kuala Lumpur would be largely deserted except for well-armed troops.

Harun, like Mustapha, apparently hoped that the sudden death of Tun Razak in January 1976 would give him a chance of fighting back. Hussein Onn was in fact less willing to compromise than Razak (it was rumoured that he had threatened to resign if Razak had not taken Harun to court), but his newness to the post, lack of control over the party machine and inexperience in intra-party manoeuvring were expected to put him at a disadvantage against the emerging Harun-Mustapha-Tunku alliance of convenience. Having taken 'leave' as *Menteri Besar* of Selangor ostensibly to prepare himself for his coming trial, Harun embarked on a nation-wide campaign to rally his supporters, especially in UMNO Youth. The campaign was expected to culminate in a huge rally in Kuala Lumpur on 14 March but the refusal of the police to give the necessary permission forced the organizers to limit themselves to a display of *silat gayung* and a small meeting indoors. At the meeting several speakers attacked the government and claimed that the charges against Harun were politically motivated. Harun himself alleged that certain personalities in the press were involved in a campaign of character assassination while a prominent Old Guard figure and former party secretary-general, Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar, alleged that communist agents had infiltrated the government.²

The outspoken attacks on the government by Harun's supporters forced the party leadership to act. On 18 March an emergency meeting of the UMNO Supreme Council advised Harun to resign from all party and government positions and when he refused the decision was taken to expel him from the party. This was followed a week later by a no-confidence motion against him in the Selangor Assembly. The Selangor

UMNO had initially passed a resolution refusing to recognize the expulsion of its leader from the party but soon modified its stand after most of the assembly members were taken to a hotel at Fraser's Hill in Pahang where they met the Prime Minister and underwent further 'briefing' by several members of the late Tun Razak's inner circle, including Abdullah Ahmad, Abdullah Majid, and the UMNO executive secretary, Khalil Akasah. The result was that when the assembly met on 25 March all but four of the UMNO members voted for Harun's dismissal. The 'persuasion' applied by the Prime Minister and his aides at Fraser's Hill had been very effective and a bitter Harun had good reason to feel betrayed as those who had once been his protégés and closest supporters suddenly lined up against him.

The expulsion of Harun from the party and his dismissal as *Menteri Besar* was soon followed by his first trial involving a bribe of \$250,000 paid by the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in connection with an application for land. Harun was found guilty in May and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Meanwhile a new forgery and criminal breach of trust charge was laid involving Harun's use of \$8 million of shares held by the Bank Kerjasama Rakyat, of which he was chairman, to promote the world heavyweight boxing championship between Muhammad Ali and Joe Bugner in Kuala Lumpur in 1975. The second trial was held in the latter part of the year and resulted in Harun's conviction and a further six months' gaol sentence. While Harun appealed against these convictions, however, the step-by-step destruction of his political career had been dramatically interrupted in the middle of 1976 by a new series of developments which put members of the late Tun Razak's circle of advisers on the defensive and gave new hope to Harun and his supporters.

'COMMUNISTS' IN UMNO

During the 1960s Tun Razak had recruited a small inner circle of advisers and assistants who shared his general orientation

and belief that drastic changes were needed in the 1970s. Unlike his political protégés such as Mahathir, Musa, and Razaleigh, however, Razak's aides lacked grassroots support in UMNO and derived their political influence almost entirely from their closeness to the Prime Minister and his confidence in them. The most prominent member of the group, Abdullah Ahmad, had been Razak's political secretary since 1963 and, in his late thirties, was appointed as Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department after his election to parliament from a Kelantan constituency in 1974. Another important figure was Khalil Akasah, aged in his mid-thirties and from Razak's home-state of Pahang, who was appointed as executive secretary of both UMNO and the Barisan Nasional. Abdullah Majid and his brother, Wahab Majid, joined the circle in the 1970s. Abdullah served as the Prime Minister's press secretary and then, after his election to parliament in 1974, was appointed as the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary, while Wahab took his place as press secretary. The most influential member of this group, however, was Abdul Samad Ismail, a distinguished novelist and journalist who was also managing editor of the *New Straits Times*.

Samad and the Majid brothers had left-wing backgrounds. Both Samad and Abdullah Majid had been gaoled as communist-sympathizers by the British in Singapore during the early 1950s and later moved to Malaya following the split between leftists and supporters of Lee Kuan Yew in the People's Action Party (PAP). Samad was approached by Razak's aides when conflict between the Alliance and the PAP intensified during the brief period of Singapore's membership in Malaysia. As a former colleague of the Singapore Prime Minister, it had been hoped that his intimate knowledge of the workings of the PAP could be tapped to gain ammunition for the Alliance campaign against it. Later, however, Razak began to appreciate Samad's political acumen more generally and especially after the 1969 crisis, continued to consult him and other leftist refugees from Singapore such as the lawyer, James Puthuchear, while they seem to have modified their

leftist beliefs or at least their views on how socialist objectives could be attained.

The growing influence of the 'socialists' surrounding Tun Razak was greatly resented by many other sections of UMNO which saw them as relative newcomers and usurpers without roots in the party. This resentment was particularly strong among members of the party's Old Guard, some of whom had been pushed aside by Razak in the 1970s and who tended to blame Razak's susceptibility to the advice of his inner circle for their own loss of power. Among them were such close supporters of the Tunku as Mohd. Khir Johari who had been appointed ambassador to the United States, and Senu Abdul Rahman who, although continuing to serve as secretary-general of UMNO, was often bypassed by the Prime Minister who relied more on the executive secretary, Khalil Akasah. Syed Jaafar Albar, a veteran party leader and former secretary-general of the party who had been aligned with the Tunku's critics in the late 1960s but had been disregarded by Razak in the 1970s, also gravitated towards the Tunku as did Tun Mustapha and Datuk Harun who each had his own grievances against Razak and his group. When Razak died in January 1976 his inner circle of advisers was left in a vulnerable position and came under attack at the UMNO Youth meeting in March 1976 referred to above when Harun struck out at certain personalities in the press (meaning Samad Ismail) and Syed Jaafar Albar revealed the names of 'communists' who had infiltrated the government (including Samad Ismail, Abdullah Majid, Wahab Majid, and James Puthuchery). Immediately after Harun's expulsion from the party a few days later, his cause was taken up by the Tunku who repeated the warning about 'communists' in the government and drew special attention to Soviet influence.³

Another leading figure in the government who had little time for Samad and his colleagues was Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, the Minister for Home Affairs and one of UMNO's leading intellectuals. A former senior civil servant and life-long friend of Razak, Ghazali's position was in some respects similar to

that of the Samad group in that his power was based on his intellectual and administrative skills and closeness to the Prime Minister rather than popular support in the party. At the 1975 UMNO General Assembly he had been strongly criticized by delegates for failing to prevent communist activity and had been badly beaten in his attempt to win one of the three elected vice-presidential positions in the party. When Hussein Onn became Prime Minister, Ghazali was a possible choice for the deputy prime ministership but his lack of grassroots support was a major factor weighing against him. As Minister for Home Affairs he was responsible for internal security matters and had become increasingly worried by the influence exerted over Tun Razak by the rival intellectual group headed by Samad and was concerned that they might continue to influence the new Prime Minister. The moves being mounted by the Tunku and Harun against Samad were thus welcomed by Ghazali who perhaps also saw in them an opportunity to restore his own reputation in the party as a guardian of the nation's security.

The signs of anti-Samad sentiment in Kuala Lumpur were also welcomed by the Prime Minister of Singapore who had been troubled by Tun Razak's close association with his old enemies. It seems that since early 1976 Singapore diplomats had been privately claiming that the Malaysian Government had been infiltrated by leftists. Then, in June, two Malay journalists in Singapore, including the editor of the Singapore *Berita Harian*, Hussein Jahidin, were arrested and accused of involvement since 1972 'in a Communist scheme master-minded and directed by Samad Ismail'. It was alleged that they had slanted news with the intention of 'softening the Malay ground for Communist ideas'.⁴ Hussein had been active in the left-wing opposition to Lee in the early 1960s but after a term in prison had apparently recanted and had since been allowed to hold important positions in the mass media.

The 'confessions' in Singapore provided the justification for the Malaysian Minister for Home Affairs to order the arrest under the Internal Security Act of Samad and the assistant

editor of the Malaysian *Berita Harian* (part of the New Straits Times group), Samani Mohammed Amin, in Kuala Lumpur. In a statement the Home Ministry accused them of 'direct involvement in activities in support of the Communist struggle for political power in this country'. Their activities, it was claimed, 'were subtly designed to blur public fear of and antagonism towards a possible communist takeover'.⁵ The initial allegations against Samad were not accompanied by detailed evidence apart from the televised confessions of the two Singapore journalists whose motives were at least subject to doubt. However, two months later, on 1 September, Samad himself appeared on television and declared that the accusations against him were true. He described a meeting in Jakarta in 1957 with exiled Malaysian communist leaders who instructed him to continue working with the Malay newspaper, *Utusan Melayu*, in Singapore, and to join UMNO. Although he joined UMNO briefly in Singapore, he soon decided to move to Kuala Lumpur to work with the *Straits Times*. In Kuala Lumpur he did not join UMNO but nevertheless gained influence with younger UMNO leaders with the result that 'some of them began to depend on me'. He claimed that 'Through them I succeeded in approaching the leadership of UMNO and also through them I succeeded in influencing important UMNO leaders to see issues and solve them in my way.'⁶ The Samad confession in fact failed to answer several important questions—it appeared that he had not carried out fully the 'order' given to him at the 1957 meeting in Jakarta, there was no evidence of contact with the Communist Party since then, and if he still had contact it was not revealed with which of Malaysia's three warring communist factions. Nevertheless Samad's arrest and confession had a great impact on the power struggle taking place within UMNO.

Samad's reference to young UMNO leaders through whom he approached and influenced top leaders led to an immediate demand put forward most vociferously by the Tunku's and Harun's supporters that they be identified and dealt with. Early in November, Hussein Onn announced that 'there are

some UMNO members, whether they realized it or not, who had been influenced by communist activities and ideology' but added that communist infiltration was not limited to UMNO alone.⁷ A day later Abdullah Ahmad, who had been appointed by Hussein as Deputy Minister for Science, Technology and Environment, and Abdullah Majid, whom Hussein had promoted as Deputy Minister for Labour and Manpower, were arrested under the Internal Security Act together with one MCA official, two Democratic Action Party officials and the chairman of the PSRM (Malayan People's Socialist Party). The arrests were reportedly opposed by Mahathir, Razaleigh, Ghafar Baba, Musa Hitam, and the Sarawak Chief Minister, Abdul Rahman Yakub, all of whom had worked closely in the past with Abdullah Ahmad.⁸

Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid were brought before the television cameras in February 1977 to confess their errors. They were preceded by the Chief of Police, Tan Sri Mohammed Haniff Omar, who claimed that the police had discovered evidence not only of Samad's influence but also of Abdullah Ahmad's contacts with 'several foreigners'.⁹ In his television interview Abdullah Ahmad admitted having 'close contact with several officers of a foreign embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1968' (the year in which the Soviet Union's embassy was opened in Kuala Lumpur). He said that he agreed with these diplomats who believed that the communists would eventually win in South-East Asia but 'as a Malay' he was worried that a victory of the Communist Party of Malaya would lead to Malaysia being dominated by a foreign power (presumably China). In order to avoid this, he said, the Malays 'must accept a form of communism which, it is said, approves of our religion, and, it is said, approves the preservation of our customs, culture and sultans'.¹⁰ Abdullah Majid also admitted to having been in contact with diplomats from a communist embassy since 1968 and confessed that 'I allowed myself to become a tool for their political tactics and to advance their interest'. However, the main example that he gave of his promoting communist ideas was an article in the

government-sponsored *Dewan Masyarakat* praising progress in 'a large Asian Communist country' which he visited in 1974, a contribution that could hardly have been at the prompting of the Soviet embassy in Kuala Lumpur.¹¹

While both admitted that they engaged in 'pro-communist activities', the examples that they gave were not fully convincing. Like many Malaysians and other South-East Asians, they were worried by the communist victories in Indo-China and the inability of the United States to prevent them. They therefore apparently hoped that the Soviet Union would play a larger role in the region to balance the feared expansion of Chinese influence. Among the specific examples of 'pro-communist activities' admitted by Abdullah Ahmad were several apparently harmless speeches including one to a conference on music in which he said that Malay music had been influenced by the feudal class, another in which he said that some communist policies did not conflict with Islam, and a third in which he advised students to read works by writers critical of some government policies. Abdullah Majid's confession that he wrote an article praising progress in China, too, should be seen in the context that it appeared in a journal published by the government-sponsored *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* and reported the Prime Minister's mission to open diplomatic relations with China.

The arrests and subsequent confessions of three key figures in the late Tun Razak's immediate entourage were enthusiastically welcomed by their adversaries and the party in general. The arrested figures had never enjoyed widespread party support and Abdullah Ahmad in particular was strongly disliked by many party activists. At the UMNO General Assembly held in July shortly after Samad's arrest, Ghazali Shafie was warmly congratulated in contrast with the criticisms that he faced the previous year while the UMNO Youth assembly elected the 62-year-old Syed Jaafar Albar as its chairman and Harun's nephew, Haji Suhaimi Kamaruddin, as his deputy in preference to the ruling group's candidate, Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, the Deputy Minister for Trade

and Industry. Claiming that its former leader, Datuk Harun, had been the victim of a plot organized by the 'communists', the UMNO Youth assembly called for the reinstatement of Harun as a member of the party and four months later, shortly after Samad's television appearance, the UMNO Supreme Council bowed to popular pressure and accepted Harun back into the party. In February 1977 the pro-Harun movement was further encouraged when the Chief of Police referred on television to the success of the police in discovering how Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid 'had tried to weaken the fighting spirit of an anti-communist individual'—who was widely understood to be Harun.¹²

Although the Prime Minister had warned at the UMNO General Assembly in July 1976 that 'a problem of witch-hunting, making innuendos and character assassinations as a result of uncontrolled emotions had arisen',¹³ the latter half of 1976 saw a whispering campaign against many of the ministers and other party officials who had risen to positions of influence under Tun Razak such as Mahathir, Razaleigh, and Musa Hitam. As the Old Guard and UMNO Youth continued to call for action against remaining 'communists' and 'pro-communists' in the government, many observers believed that UMNO was facing the prospect of a major split.

CONSOLIDATION

The burgeoning campaign of the Harun group and the UMNO Old Guard, however, suddenly lost its momentum in the early months of 1977. The UMNO Youth's demand that Harun be reinstated to all his old party and government posts was rejected by the party leadership in March while the rumours and innuendos implicating other leaders with the 'communists' gradually faded away. Meanwhile in Sabah, Harun's ally, Tun Mustapha, had his hopes for making a comeback finally dashed when his party, USNO, was defeated by Berjaya in the March 1977 state election. The feeling that the crisis had finally passed became even more evident in

May when Tunku Abdul Rahman was given a place of honour at the party's thirty-first anniversary celebrations and in July when, for the first time since his resignation as Prime Minister, he was invited to attend the party's annual assembly. By the middle of the year the challenge launched by the party dissidents against the Prime Minister's most senior colleagues, and thus indirectly against the Prime Minister himself, had run its course and Datuk Hussein emerged from the crisis with greatly enhanced authority.

The pro-Harun movement had suffered two crucial setbacks in January 1977. Firstly, Syed Jaafar Albar died on 14 January, exactly one year after the death of Tun Razak. The passing of Jaafar Albar deprived Harun of his most dynamic champion. As a party veteran with no personal ambitions for higher appointments and enjoying a strong base of popular support in the party, Jaafar Albar had few inhibitions in striking out fearlessly and sometimes recklessly against his opponents. The new UMNO Youth acting chairman, Haji Suhaimi Kamaruddin, was committed to Harun's cause but lacked his predecessor's authority and, as a young man in his thirties, was culturally restrained from standing up to the party establishment. Secondly, Harun's prospects were dealt a heavy blow when the judgment in the *Bank Kerjasama Rakyat* case was delivered. Found guilty again, he immediately appealed but his reputation had been further dented and his fate seemed sealed.

Another factor which may have contributed to the discrediting of the dissident movement was the sceptical reaction in Kuala Lumpur to what appeared to some to be a new attempt by the Singapore Government to spur on the Malaysian dissidents. It will be remembered that Samad's arrest in 1976 had closely followed the arrest of two Singapore journalists. The Malaysian authorities had quickly denied that they had acted on the prompting of the Singapore Government but they continued to be very sensitive to suggestions to the contrary. The Malaysian leaders were thus taken aback in late February 1977 when another Singapore political detainee, Leong Mun

Kwai, claimed that he had been approached by an unnamed Malaysian politician and two Malaysian Special Branch officers to take part in a 'Black Operation' aimed at denigrating the Singapore Prime Minister. While the Singapore Home Ministry stated that 'The Singapore Government does not believe that the "Black Operation" was mounted with the knowledge and consent of the present Malaysian leadership',¹⁴ the Singapore *Straits Times* editorialized that '... if Mr. Leong is right ... then it means a sinister hand within high Malaysian circles could run with impunity an exercise against a neighbour with whom Kuala Lumpur sincerely professes friendship'.¹⁵ The Singapore statements clearly exonerated Hussein Onn from blame but did not exclude Tun Razak and his close aides, not all of whom had been removed from positions of influence. The affair became further complicated when a tape recording made by the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* fell into the hands of the Kuala Lumpur lawyer, Dominic Puthuchery, a former left-wing opponent of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore whose brother, James Puthuchery, was an old schoolmate and former golfing partner of Hussein Onn. The tape recording repeated confidential comments made by Lee Kuan Yew on Malaysian political leaders, including his preference for Datuk Harun as a future Malaysian prime minister. The already sensitive Malaysian authorities were in no mood to take up the 'Black Operations' allegations which they tended to see as an attempt by the Singapore government to meddle again in Malaysian domestic politics while the comments made in the tape recording raised questions about Lee's motives. The Singapore move thus unintentionally further undermined the credibility of the dissident campaign.

The decline of the dissident movement removed the possibility of a political reprieve for Harun while the legal avenues of escape were gradually closed. During the next few months his appeals were not only rejected by the Federal Court but his six months' sentence in the *Bank Kerjasama Rakyat* case was increased to four years. As it became increas-

ingly clear that his fate had been sealed, many of his erstwhile supporters decided to cross to the winning side and even the UMNO Youth was split when Haji Suhaimi was accused by some of his colleagues of failing to mobilize the movement in defence of its former leader. In February 1978 the Privy Council in London upheld the sentences and in a final drama a few hundred of Harun's remaining supporters held him 'prisoner' at his house in order to prevent him from surrendering to the gaol authorities but in the end he began his term at the Pudu Gaol.

CONCLUSION

The period between the 1974 and 1978 elections saw an important struggle for power between elements of the governing élite. At one level, this struggle can be seen as a normal conflict between personalities and factions—of the sort that takes place from time to time in all political parties. During the 1970s a new generation of politicians gradually replaced the generation that had obtained independence from the British. The rise of the younger generation was resented by some members of the older generation who still felt that they had a contribution to make to the governing of the country and were not convinced that all of the younger aspirants for power had the qualities of leadership that the nation needed. This conflict between generations had become very sharp at the time of the May 13th incident of 1969 due to the bitter attacks made by younger leaders on the Tunku and his closest associates, especially the letter written by Dr Mahathir to the Tunku in which he held the Prime Minister responsible for the circumstances leading to the riots.¹⁶ The criticisms made by Mahathir, Musa Hitam, and others in their circle had deeply wounded the Tunku and his colleagues so it was only natural that they felt offended when Tun Razak and Datuk Hussein promoted these men to the highest positions in the government and party.

But the struggle for power was not simply a conflict between personalities and generations. Members of the old gener-

ation and others who had been pushed aside by Tun Razak claimed that some of his protégés had been influenced by communists—either consciously or unconsciously. While it was true that several of Razak's aides had been associated with leftist bodies in the past and that they favoured an expanded role for the state in promoting economic development and redistributing income between groups in society, their accusers failed to demonstrate links between them and any of the three communist parties active in Malaysia. On the contrary, it seemed that they feared the Chinese-dominated communist movement in Malaysia and for that reason some of them may have looked toward the Soviet Union as a possible balance to the growing influence of China in the context of the declining western military role in South-East Asia. Moreover, the domestic policies that they advocated—such as their support for continuing foreign investment from capitalist countries—fell far short of 'communism' in the ordinary sense of the term. Although several of Razak's aides were arrested because of alleged 'communist' activities, other protégés of Tun Razak who had been closely associated with them, such as Mahathir, Razaleigh, and Musa Hitam, were clearly in no way linked with communism, and survived the dissident campaign.

Apart from the power struggle aspect, political differences nevertheless existed between the core group of younger leaders and their opponents. The new leaders had a different approach to politics which perhaps reflected the better education that most of them had received, compared with the old generation. While the Tunku and his colleagues had been happy to let Malaysian society develop more or less according to its own momentum, the new leaders saw a need for extensive government intervention in order to create social and economic conditions conducive to the maintenance of political stability. The new generation of leaders was more technocratic in outlook and believed that the restructuring of Malaysian society to which the government had committed itself after 1969 required centralized planning and expert

implementation. Although they did not neglect the patronage aspect of politics, their aim to expand the scope of technocratic administration naturally conflicted with the interests of the non-technocrats on whom the Tunku had relied and also with those state-level leaders whose power rested primarily on control over distribution of the spoils of office rather than the successful implementation of long-term programmes of development and social change.

The new-style leaders whose rise Tun Razak had encouraged had attitudes in common which led them to support important policies which were not fully accepted by many of the older generation. The members of the new group were strong supporters of policies designed to improve the economic and social position of the Malays, which they claimed had been neglected by the Tunku's government. They strongly supported the emphasis on Malay as the national language and the medium of instruction in education. They pressed for the rapid implementation of the New Economic Policy which aimed at enabling Malays to play a role in the modern sector of the economy proportionate to their numbers in the population and to this end supported the expanding role of state enterprises and the introduction of the Industrial Co-ordination Act which gave the government wide powers to withhold licences from firms which did not meet conditions relating to Malay ownership and employment. They were also sympathetic to Tun Razak's stress on 'economic nationalism' which led to stricter conditions for foreign investment, the encouragement of joint ventures between foreign investors and state-owned domestic enterprises, the purchasing of controlling interests in several large, established foreign enterprises, and the formation of Petronas to control the oil industry. In contrast the men of the Tunku's era tended to call for gradualism in implementing the language policy, warned against restricting the scope of free enterprise, and stressed the need to avoid giving offence to Chinese and foreign business interests whose capital was still required by the nation.

The aspirations of the new group of leaders also tended to run counter to the interests of other leaders, especially at the state level, whose political power had been built on the basis of control over the local machinery of patronage distribution and who represented the main alternative source of leadership for the future. Some of these state leaders, such as Datuk Harun, had been aligned with the critics of the Tunku in the late 1960s and strongly supported the measures taken by Razak and his group to provide new opportunities for Malays, especially in business. But Harun, like Tun Mustapha in Sabah, did not share the technocratic outlook of Tun Razak's group. For men in this category the growing role of state-owned enterprises and the new emphasis on helping Malays to go into business provided all the more opportunities to strengthen and consolidate their political power by rewarding loyal supporters. At the same time these leaders stressed Islamic and Malay communal issues which helped them to win widespread popular support among the Malay masses. They were thus increasingly seen as threats to the members of Tun Razak's circle. In meeting the threat Tun Razak made great use of the anti-corruption body, the National Bureau of Investigation, which uncovered material that was then used against the dissident leaders. In the early 1970s two state *Menteri Besar* had been removed from office following investigations and Tun Mustapha was another target. In the case of Datuk Harun, the NBI's detailed allegations were the key to his downfall. Moreover, the threat of corruption investigations was a strong weapon in deterring other local leaders from supporting the main dissidents.

The protracted struggle between the 'new style' leaders in the central government and their opponents finally ended in favour of the former. The dissidents consisted of several groups which were united only in opposing the new group. Although several of the dissident leaders appeared to have substantial popular support, much of it proved illusory when the crunch came. The central government had greatly feared Datuk Harun's charismatic hold on the sympathies of the

Malays in Kuala Lumpur but by early 1978 when he finally went to prison his hard-core support had been reduced to a few hundred youths. It was apparent that Harun's power had in fact rested less on charisma and much more on his control of the machinery of patronage distribution in Selangor state. While those entranced by his charismatic appeal were prepared to follow him to the end, the majority of his supporters deserted him when it became clear that in the future patronage would no longer be his to dispense, as was shown most dramatically when the sole vote against the no-confidence motion in the Selangor assembly in March 1976 was Harun's own.¹⁷ While his supporters in UMNO Youth proved more loyal than those in the Selangor assembly, they too were gradually persuaded to accept 'reality', including former lieutenants such as Mohamed Rahmat, who was promoted from a deputy ministership to membership of the cabinet, and Harun's nephew, Haji Suhaimi. Similarly, the unanimous public support which Tun Mustapha had become accustomed to obtaining did not prevent the rush to join Berjaya when it became clear that the central government was determined to bring him down.

The central leadership's ability to win over erstwhile supporters of dissident factions was facilitated by the continuing 'feudal' atmosphere of UMNO politics. Despite the turmoil of factional strife, no group directly and openly challenged the party leader. This was partly because the dissidents were not sufficiently united among themselves to be confident of success but it was also due to the aura of authority that surrounds the UMNO leader to a much greater extent than it does the leaders of non-Malay parties. Although Malay values are undergoing a process of change as a result of urbanization and the spread of education, UMNO, according to an editorial in the *New Straits Times* immediately after the expulsion of Datuk Harun from the party, is still 'peasant in outlook with traditional values that regard any form of open defiance of the leadership as impolite'. The editorial continued, 'to the Malay mind, to challenge him (the Prime Minister) would

almost amount to an act of heresy. He is not only the *pemimpin* (leader) of the party; he is the head of the nation, a father-figure now to whom loyalty, respect and esteem is the traditional duty of the *rakyat* (people) whatever his social status, to accord'.¹⁸ As long as this attitude prevailed in the party, the prospects of a successful challenge were slight.

The political crisis in UMNO had at its root the question of future leadership. The steps taken by Tun Razak to secure the ascendance of his protégés were challenged by a disparate array of dissidents who, whatever the differences between them, were in general not primarily concerned with planned social change while many of them gave much attention to patronage and its distribution. The eventual victory of the central leadership, now under Datuk Hussein Onn, did not mean that patronage distribution had ceased to be a major function of the ruling party. On the contrary, the concern of many party activists to retain their positions and access to the spoils of office—despite their sympathy for Datuk Harun—was of crucial importance in enabling the party leadership to withstand the challenge that it faced. The party retained its character as a patronage machine but the victory of the leadership group meant that technocratic and bureaucratic criteria in formulating and implementing national policies would continue to be given emphasis.

By 1978 the UMNO leadership had not only consolidated its grip on its own party but the departure of PAS from the Front and the continued squabbling between the non-Malay parties enabled it to attain an even more dominant position in the Barisan Nasional. The settling of the internal crises within UMNO and the Front in favour of the established leadership put the Barisan Nasional into a strong position to face the electorate which it did with great success in July 1978.

1. All three were singled out for special praise in the speech. See *New Straits Times*, 22 June 1975.
2. *New Straits Times*, 15 March 1976.
3. *Utusan Malaysia*, 22 March 1976; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 April 1976, p. 9.
4. *New Straits Times*, 23 June 1976.
5. *ibid.*
6. *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 September 1976.
7. *New Straits Times*, 2 November 1976.
8. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 November 1976, pp. 20-1.
9. *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 February 1977.
10. *Utusan Malaysia*, 6 February 1977.
11. *Utusan Malaysia*, 8 February 1977.
12. *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 February 1977.
13. *New Straits Times*, 5 July 1976.
14. *Straits Times* (Singapore), 24 February 1977.
15. *Straits Times* (Singapore), 26 February 1977.
16. See K. von Vorys, *Democracy Without Consensus*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1975, pp. 372-4.
17. Four government members abstained and 25 voted against Harun.
18. *New Straits Times*, 28 March 1976.

The Storm before the Deluge: The Kelantan Prelude to the 1978 General Election

MUHAMMAD KAMLIN

THE STORM

ON 15 October 1977, the Kelantan State Assembly met to consider a motion of no-confidence in the State *Menteri Besar*, Datuk Mohamed Nasir, and, as anticipated, passed it with all the twenty PAS assemblymen voting solidly in its favour. The motion touched off a series of public rallies, demonstrations and disturbances, mostly sympathetic to the ousted *Menteri Besar*. Properties of prominent PAS men, including the home of the then deputy to Datuk Mohamed Nasir, were ransacked and their families and friends, fearful of mob retribution, were put to flight. Kota Bharu and Kubang Krian were placed under curfew.

The response of the *Menteri Besar*—much encouraged by a steady build-up of public support and perhaps even more by the knowledge that UMNO and the federal government were behind him—to his ouster was one of defiance. He resolved to stand firm. The withdrawal of confidence by the state assembly left him with one of two options: either to tender his resignation forthwith or advise the Regent to dissolve the assembly and order fresh elections.¹ Characteristically, he chose the latter course of action, only to find the Regent unable to grant his request in view of the political unrest and confusion in the state.² These two events plunged the state into a constitutional crisis, which was resolved even-

tually by the federal government stepping in to bring the state directly under its administrative control through emergency rule legislation passed with the utmost speed by parliament in the early hours of 9 November 1977.³

The political storm thus hitting Kelantan with such unusual intensity effectively destroyed the UMNO-PAS 'partnership in power', which had seldom seemed either real or natural since its inception in 1973, and seemed poised to imperil the whole fabric of Malay politics throughout the rest of Peninsular Malaysia. It was not a sudden or freak turbulence. It had been in being, and steadily gaining strength, since the formation of the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration in Kelantan following the 1974 general election. The man at the centre of the storm was Datuk Mohamed Nasir, the *Menteri Besar* (MB).

Datuk Mohamed Nasir was a leading figure of the Kelantan PAS and a member of the state legislature. He had served as Deputy *Menteri Besar* in the PAS-dominated coalition administration of Kelantan until the 1974 general election, and once in an earlier PAS administration. He was noted, and much respected, for his simplicity, humility, and approachability to the *rakyat* (ordinary people). Though not a great political tactician or a fiery orator, he was nonetheless known to stand for a clean, honest, and efficient administration dedicated to the physical and spiritual upliftment of his native state, and committed—to a degree greater perhaps than was desirable to his colleagues in the PAS leadership even in those early euphoric days of the Barisan Nasional's almost instant and ubiquitous success in 1974—to active PAS-BN collaboration as a secure foundation and a sure guarantee of that administration. Not surprisingly, therefore, when it came to choosing the head of the new Kelantan government, it was to Datuk Mohamed that the late Tun Razak, the national head of BN, turned. The choice was welcomed by the Kelantan UMNO but deeply resented by PAS.

PAS felt that as the major partner in the Kelantan BN, it was its right to nominate both the *Menteri Besar* and his

deputy. For his part, Tun Razak conceded that the *Menteri Besar* had to be a member of PAS, but stressed that it was his prerogative as leader of the Barisan Nasional to have the last word in the matter of actually who, even from amongst PAS ranks, was to lead a Barisan government. This was a procedure that PAS itself had implicitly accepted by its adherence to the concept and ground-rules of the BN as a ruling confederation of nine political parties, and which was followed in other states of Malaysia with scarcely an overt hint of dissent. In Penang, the only other state in Peninsular Malaysia where a former non-Alliance party (Gerakan) won a majority of seats, the same procedure was adopted to reappoint Dr Lim Chong Eu as the Chief Minister.

In the end, however, Datuk Mohamed Asri and his more recalcitrant colleagues in the Kelantan PAS leadership were prevailed upon, and Mohamed Nasir assumed the office of *Menteri Besar*, at the head of an Executive Council a majority of whose membership was drawn from PAS. Nevertheless, the bitterness and resentment persisted, and the obvious reverse sustained in failing to stop Mohamed Nasir, while distasteful and dispiriting to a degree, tended to be seen as no more than a tactical retreat ultimately to be put right in more favourable circumstances. In the preface to its Kelantan election manifesto, PAS recounts the events leading to the formation of the Kelantan government in 1974, and speaks of its acceptance of Mohamed Nasir 'with extreme regret and sorrow', but 'in a spirit of tolerance and with the hope of promoting peaceful political conditions and understanding'.⁴ Moreover, the very existence of the Barisan Nasional in Kelantan was due to the participation of PAS, 'realizing the importance of solidarity for the sake of national security and the restructuring of society in accordance with the new national economic policy'.⁵ Thus, as PAS saw it, there would have been no Barisan Nasional in Kelantan but for its willing and sincere acceptance of the concept, and it was right and proper that in any new arrangement concerning Kelantan, including above all the appointment of the *Menteri Besar*, its wishes should be

accorded a weight appropriate to its dominant position in the state assembly.

It is in the context of these expectations, however misconceived or naively held, and the consequent attitude to the Barisan Nasional, that the abortive PAS attempt to remove Mohamed Nasir as Kelantan *Menteri Besar* and the resultant storm in Kelantan politics in 1977, must be viewed. There seems little doubt that right from the beginning PAS had reluctantly 'suffered' the appointment of Datuk Mohamed Nasir, whether under pressure from Tun Razak or from a sense of solidarity with the BN. And as time went on, even this reluctant acceptance was put under increasing strain by certain public statements of the *Menteri Besar* which PAS thought provocative and unbecoming of a senior party man.⁶ Inevitably, he was seen as an instrument of a section of Kelantan UMNO intent on subverting and destroying PAS, a party to which at least nominally he still belonged. As a PAS document put it bitterly:

From the beginning Datuk Nasir was used by several persons who desired to grab the administration of Kelantan from PAS so that it (Kelantan) could again be ruled by UMNO. Datuk Nasir who is considered to be a sincere man did not see the tactics of UMNO until he felt a great concentration of force taking place around him. He forgot the tricks of other people (to engineer) the split between him and PAS.⁷

From within, PAS continued to apply pressure on Datuk Mohamed Nasir to step down. This pressure was progressively increased after Tun Razak, the author of the 1974 arrangement and the architect of the BN, died in January 1976. Later that year it looked as though the *Menteri Besar* had finally decided to give in to the pressure when, in a letter dated 20 November, 1976 and addressed to the President of PAS, he wrote:

I am pleased to inform you that I have decided to retire and give up my post of *Menteri Besar* on 31 August 1977. I shall however continue to serve as a member of the state assembly until the end of its term. Now it is up to PAS to choose a person who will replace me. . . . I am giving such a long time so that arrangements could be made amicably

within PAS and the Barisan Nasional. This is not too long a time, only about seven months more . . .⁸

Naturally, PAS took this to be a clear undertaking by Datuk Mohamed Nasir to vacate the office of *Menteri Besar* and so enable it to fill the vacancy with someone of its own choice. In the event, 31 August 1977 came and went, but the *Menteri Besar* did not resign—and did not look like quitting. Thus annoyed and frustrated, PAS stepped up its pressure, but the intensified campaign found the *Menteri Besar* in a mood of vigorous defiance. From this point events moved faster, and with each contender moving farther away from the other, the stage was duly set for an open confrontation between them.

On 12 September the head of Kelantan PAS issued a statement calling upon the *Menteri Besar* to resign or face a vote of no-confidence in the state assembly. Five days later the *Menteri Besar* rejected the demand and so pushed PAS further to the brink of a show-down. On 26 September the PAS Supreme Council met in Kuala Lumpur to consider the political situation in Kelantan with special reference to Datuk Mohamed Nasir's 'persistent violation' of party discipline, and, notwithstanding one or two disapproving voices, proceeded to put the defiant *Menteri Besar* on a three-day notice to resign or be expelled from the party. The rejoinder from the *Menteri Besar* the following day was delivered in the idiom of a counterthreat: if PAS were to expel him and remove him as *Menteri Besar*, he would ask for the dissolution of the state assembly and hold fresh elections. This seemed to shut whatever door might still be open for a compromise.

As if bound by duty and honour, the PAS Supreme Council met again at the expiry of the three-day notice, on 29 September, and at last took the decision which many Malay politicians including quite a number of PAS supporters had dreaded but nevertheless come to expect, namely, to expel Datuk Mohamed Nasir from the party. The decision was, however, temporarily reversed when it was discovered that there had been a minor technical irregularity in the counting

of votes at the meeting. On 10 October the mistake was duly rectified, and the original expulsion decision was confirmed.⁹ And on 15 October, as we noted in the opening passage, the *Menteri Besar* was disowned by PAS assemblymen in an unanimous endorsement of the party decision. But with Datuk Mohamed Nasir again refusing to comply, the situation was deadlocked.

In the three weeks between the vote of no-confidence on 15 October and the imposition of federal emergency rule on 9 November sustained efforts were made to break the deadlock and find a solution. Dr Mahathir Mohamed, the Deputy Prime Minister, intervening on behalf of the federal government, conveyed to PAS leaders two formulae of action for their consideration. Formula number one, presented on 22 October, proposed that all six PAS members of the Kelantan Executive Council including Datuk Mohamed Nasir should resign and be replaced by 'new faces', in the reconstituted government. UMNO representatives in the council were however to retain their places.¹⁰ PAS rejected this formula, and presented its counter proposal, namely, that the new Kelantan government should consist entirely of 'new faces', from UMNO as well as from PAS.¹¹ This was followed by yet another formula, the second from Dr Mahathir, which proposed that (1) the entire state government should resign; (2) in its place a government of new faces would be formed, provided it did not include, from PAS, the Kelantan assembly Speaker, Nik Abdul Rahman bin Nik Mohamed, and a former *Menteri Besar*, Ishak Lotfi; (3) the state would be placed under federal rule for a time, administered by a senior civil servant directly responsible to the Prime Minister, and (4) the state assembly would not be dissolved.

PAS accepted points 1 and 4 of Mahathir's second formula, indicated its willingness to accept point 2 provided the restrictive conditions were dropped, and instead of point 3 proposed that Kelantan must have a PAS nominee as *Menteri Besar*, but could have a new security committee with a civil servant rather than the MB as chairman.¹²

However, with both sides merely exchanging proposals and making no real progress toward a settlement, the Prime Minister stepped in, summoning representatives of the Liaison Committee of the Kelantan PAS and Kelantan UMNO leaders to a meeting at which he simply told his visitors that federal rule would be imposed on Kelantan without much further delay. PAS was bitterly disappointed, because the Prime Minister did not seem inclined for any further discussion. According to a PAS document, 'the meeting which was said to be for negotiations turned out in fact to be a briefing session at which the Prime Minister simply forced his plan to clamp emergency rule on Kelantan, whether PAS agreed or rejected it'.¹³

On 8 November the Bill to bring Kelantan under Federal emergency rule was moved and passed by both houses of parliament. As PAS was still a component of the Barisan Nasional, its members of parliament were still nominally obliged to follow the instructions of the government whips who directed them to vote for the government. PAS, however, was opposed to emergency rule and therefore opposed to the Bill, and had in fact instructed its parliamentarians to vote against it.

The PAS supreme council had resolved that the Kelantan Emergency Act violated democracy and instructed its members of parliament to oppose it. Ministers and other government functionaries belonging to PAS tendered their resignations. The whole of PAS left the government with the exception of Haji Hassan Adli. Apparently this decision of PAS caused UMNO to feel challenged, and so to propose to the Barisan Nasional that it should take disciplinary action against PAS by directing PAS to expel all its members, including the party President, opposed to the Emergency Bill.¹⁴

With the passing of the law PAS was out of government, out of the Barisan Nasional, and in serious trouble. The strategy it adopted to reassert its autonomy while remaining a component party of the Barisan Nasional had backfired. Understandably perhaps, PAS preferred to blame its misfortunes on UMNO. 'The expulsion of PAS from the Barisan represented the execution of a plan by the (UMNO) gang of

four who were never comfortable with the presence of PAS in the Barisan Nasional.¹⁵ However, assuming that the PAS-BN split was the work of a deliberate conspiracy, the tactics PAS adopted were so manifestly inept that they not only failed to counter and defeat the plot but obviously contributed to its success. Besides, some of the implications of federal rule were so apparently inimical to PAS interests that it seems strange that the party leadership did not anticipate them or change its tactics in order to avoid them.

With the declaration of the state of emergency the state came under direct federal control, administered by a senior federal civil servant, Encik Hashim Aman, who in turn was personally responsible to the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister was the national President of UMNO and the national leader of the BN, and with PAS so obligingly in disarray and dispossessed, this meant *in effect*, if not as yet wholly *in fact*, that UMNO's bid to regain the position of pre-eminence it had lost to PAS in 1959 would encounter but few serious obstacles. It seemed, at least, a fair bet, that in a future election in the state UMNO would not be so seriously disadvantaged or so stiffly opposed, as it had been between 1959 and 1973, in view of its relatively progressive policies, record of achievements elsewhere, reputation for firm action where firm action was deemed due, and undoubted capacity to honour election pledges. Moreover PAS had so dismally overplayed its hand in the contest for Kelantan and been so badly battered and bruised in the process that it seemed unlikely that it could overcome its many internal problems and put up the kind of fight in 1978 that had made it famous and victorious in 1959.

Another factor against PAS being able to turn the tide to its advantage was the fact that Datuk Mohamed Nasir and his new deputy, Encik Hassan Yaakob, along with their three UMNO colleagues in the state Executive Council, stayed on in their respective posts during emergency rule. They admittedly had no power or administrative responsibility while the emergency lasted, but once it was lifted they were restored,

albeit for a short time, to full political and administrative control of the state. Apart from providing administrative continuity, the arrangement offered the potential advantage to the *Menteri Besar* of being able to call a fresh election if the outcome of the forthcoming election were to prove inconclusive.¹⁶ Yet another point that could materially affect PAS's election prospects was the fact that the Federal government, having imposed emergency rule in the first place, alone had the power to remove it, guided by no other consideration than its own sense that the time was right for it to do so. And this is precisely why the federal rule appears to have been lifted when it was.

It was in fact lifted on 12 February 1978, so unexpectedly that even Encik Hashim Aman, the Director of the Administration, who should have known if anyone did, was reportedly taken by surprise at the news of his sudden departure, whilst the *Menteri Besar*, Datuk Mohamed Nasir, on a visit to Johor that day, was evidently also unaware that he was back in power. As for PAS, its national president, Datuk Asri, taking advantage of the enforced lull in Kelantan politics, had gone overseas apparently confident that the emergency would not be lifted without some publicity or speculation before hand.¹⁷

Following the termination of federal rule, the Regent of Kelantan dissolved the state assembly,¹⁸ thus clearing the way for the election of a new assembly on 11 March. On nomination day, a total of 95 candidates had their papers accepted to contest the election for the 36-seat state assembly. Thirty-six of these candidates belonged to PAS, 24 to Barisan Nasional and 25 to the fledgling Berjasa. There were 10 independents in the field. Even though the BN and Berjasa had agreed on a common strategy and formed 'a committee to co-ordinate their campaigns', both parties put their own candidates in the field in 14 constituencies. This was apparently done with the intention of splitting the PAS vote so that either party could win the seats.

Following their departure from PAS, Datuk Mohamed Nasir

and his supporters had the choice of either joining UMNO or forming another Islamic party. They decided to form a new Islamic party by the name of Barisan Jema'ah Islam Se Malaysia (or Berjasa, for short) believing, perhaps, that a new Islamic party would be better able to challenge and defeat PAS by harnessing those disaffected or disillusioned PAS members who, despite the depth of their feelings, would not turn out for UMNO under any circumstance. This also explains why the new party, having to all intents and purposes agreed on a common election platform with UMNO (BN), did not wish to formalize the arrangement into an electoral pact or to join the Barisan Nasional.¹⁹ The decision turned out to be a shrewd and rewarding stratagem, as, on polling day, both parties, in their separate styles and with their distinct appeals, managed to inflict a most devastating defeat on PAS in its traditional hunting ground.

The formation of Berjasa had the appearance of a party set up in a hurry, basically to serve a specific purpose, at least in the immediate future. That purpose was the defeat of PAS. Its stated objectives and adherence to Islamic principles, however, closely resembled those of PAS. Barring one or two areas of policy which the party singled out for special emphasis it seemed that about the only point where Berjasa stressed its different—and superior—pedigree was the question of leadership. 'We failed to save PAS', thus proclaimed Ustaz Mahmud Zuhdi, the Berjasa secretary-general and a former PAS stalwart after the election, 'because the leadership was stubborn and refused to heed us.' He and many others like him had tried to bring about reforms within PAS but were not successful. Nonetheless, 'the votes for Berjasa and the National Front are not so much votes against PAS itself but rather against its leadership', he concluded.²⁰ If the PAS leadership had had the good sense to listen to the voices of reason and purge itself of undesirable elements—one could almost summarize the thoughts of leading Berjasa men—there would have been no split in the party and therefore no Berjasa, and PAS would still be strong, vigorous, and triumphant.

THE DELUGE

In the election campaign which got under way in earnest with the closing of nominations, UMNO (or BN) as usual presented a united front, backed by a well organized and efficient election machine comprising a state election committee, committees in all the constituencies where BN candidates were standing, and hundreds of field workers taking part in publicity campaigns, *ceramah* (discussions), and door-to-door canvassing. In addition, the Malaysian Finance Minister and head of the Kelantan UMNO, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, was in residence in the state throughout the campaign period, visiting places, addressing *ceramah*, meeting ordinary people, addressing press conferences, and generally co-ordinating the entire BN election effort at every level. His ministerial colleagues belonging to practically every component party of BN, Chinese and Indian as well as Malay, including the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, came in a steady stream to bolster their party's campaign, opening new clinics, school buildings, community centres, and mosques. These visits were so numerous, and attracted so much publicity, that they became, at the end of the election, the subject of a question put by the Pekemas representative, Dr Tan Chee Khoon, in parliament. Replying, the Deputy Prime Minister stressed that the Cabinet Ministers who went to Kelantan during the campaign period were on official government business. 'It was the responsibility of the government to fulfil its promises to the people and accede to their requests to visit, launch a project or inaugurate a government programme', he said.²¹ It was thus obvious from the outset that, though supremely confident of victory, the BN was prepared to leave nothing to chance but was determined to mobilize all its available resources to secure—and maximize—it.

The confidence, however, was not misplaced. It derived from hard political realities. With PAS split and in considerable trouble, 'there was evidence' that the people in Kelantan had flocked to UMNO. This, according to Encik Ghafar Baba,

the Secretary-General of BN, was enough to enable his party to capture the state.²² As if to underline the confidence further, the Federal Minister of Public Enterprises, Datuk Mohamed Yaacob, resigned his cabinet post to return to his native Kelantan in order to contest the election. He was tipped to become the new *Menteri Besar* in anticipation of a BN victory.²³ But the size of that victory was always treated with a degree of, perhaps deliberate, caution. Even as late in the campaign as the eve of the polls, the farthest Tengku Razaleigh ventured to go in this respect was to say that 'the BN would take at least 19 seats, by retaining all its 14 seats and capturing another 5 from PAS'.²⁴

The BN manifesto sought to make much propaganda capital out of the fifteen years of PAS 'misrule' and the deprivation that Kelantan had allegedly suffered under it. It began by posing these questions: 'should we let PAS rule continue (knowing that) it has failed for fifteen years? Should we destroy the aspirations of our children through a regressive PAS government?' It then proceeded to answer them thus:

The state of Kelantan was ruled by PAS for fifteen years. During this long period it was clear that PAS did not possess the means to take the state toward progress and reforms appropriate to a change in the people's pattern of life, which was backward from the time of colonialism. Consequently, the economy of the state did not develop. . . . Because of this the people of Kelantan could not change their fate in order to enjoy improvement in their way of life.

But, by the grace of God, after PAS joined the BN four years ago, planning and development for Kelantan then began to be conceived and launched rapidly without any loss and disturbance. Its evidence could be seen (in the fact) that the central government of the BN allocated to Kelantan a sum of \$1,018,000,000 under the Third Malaysia Plan.²⁵

This vast expenditure would continue if the BN was returned to power.

Should the Barisan Nasional come to be given confidence in the election, God willing, the BN would not fritter away the confidence given by the people then. On the contrary, with this confidence it will further renew its determination and encourage the federal government to step

up all forms of spiritual and physical progress and development of the people of Kelantan who were left behind and backward during the PAS rule.²⁶

In short the BN pledged to give Kelantan a government which would be clean and use its power only for the benefit and progress of the people, maintain and defend the constitution of the state, give greater attention to the development of the teachings and practice of Islam in accordance with the national constitution, and step up all development projects under the Third Malaysia Plan, fully utilizing the financial allocation which it made available to Kelantan.²⁷

In its eight-page manifesto, more than half of which was devoted to the genesis of the political crisis that precipitated the election, PAS proclaimed that it never made election promises.

In all the elections PAS never made beautiful promises. What was (always) given was an undertaking to serve in the best interest of the people of Kelantan, in accordance with the trust reposed by God. If the people (decide to) give their confidence to PAS to continue its administration in Kelantan, then as always, PAS is determined to form a government which will be firm, competent, dynamic and clean.²⁸

On economic development, PAS declared its policy to be in accord with the policies of other parties and considered that it should not be a matter of controversy in the election campaign. It also declared that it would continue to co-operate 'with the (BN) Central government in the matter of providing low-cost housing throughout the state and other projects of benefit to the people'.²⁹

PAS approached the election not in a buoyant or confident mood but in a mood of deep bitterness caused, in the main, by a sense that it was betrayed by some of its own leading figures. These leaders had allowed themselves to be used as instruments of certain vested interests of UMNO who were determined to destroy PAS. At the very least, then, the expulsion or resignations of these men created the impression of a party in total disarray. The impression was reinforced when at the close of nominations, the list of PAS candidates revealed

that the party had dropped eleven of its former assemblymen who had loyally followed the instruction of their party bosses in supporting the vote of no-confidence in Datuk Mohamed. Quite naturally, the BN was happy about this development. As Tengku Razaleigh was quick to point out: 'This is a real admission by PAS that the so-called group of twenty no longer enjoys the voters' confidence. The line-up also shows signs of split in PAS.'³⁰

As if to underline the impression of division and demoralization, Datuk Asri, the President of PAS, went on an overseas trip. He returned on 16 February, forced, as it were, to cut short his foreign travels by the sudden lifting of the emergency rule and the prospect of an early election. Even so he arrived in Kelantan only on 28 February, for active and uninterrupted campaigning. His absence from the country gave rise to the accusation that he had gone abroad to seek funds to finance his party's election campaign. This he promptly denied³¹ as also other rumours which, for example, alleged that he and his family owned property in Indonesia, including a Jakarta hotel 'with 60 airconditioned rooms as well as a bar', but the depth of the impact they had on the Kelantan voter can only be surmised.

The Berjasa campaign was direct, sharp, and unsophisticated almost to the point of crudeness, as indeed one might expect from a new political party short of cash, short of time, and lacking an established organizational structure. The cutting edge of its strategy was to hit the PAS leadership for its alleged incompetence, corruption, and deviation from its own self-professed Islamic principles, and to portray itself as, in a sense, the *real* PAS, albeit in a new guise. It issued a steady stream of leaflets and handbills, not a sophisticated testament of its political philosophy, in a language that an ordinary voter could hardly fail to understand, levelling charges aplenty against the PAS leaders, answering their charges against itself, or plainly warning people against the dire peril of a PAS victory. In one of these handbills entitled '*Undilah Berjasa*' ('Vote Berjasa') it simply urged people to vote for Berjasa or

be prepared to face the consequences for which Berjasa could not be held responsible. It characterized all PAS leaders as

... hungry crocodiles who cannot be trusted, (who) are always on the lookout for victims to prey on, and who are in quest of wealth and self interest. ... In the eighteen years of PAS rule we do not see any change of which we can be proud—only 'Rumah Tok Wakil Besar', 'Kereta Tok Wakil Besar' (houses and cars belonging to PAS leaders), and many other things (of this kind) which all of us do not know and do not see with the naked eye.³²

In another leaflet it took up the matter of Datuk Mohamed Nasir's letter declaring his intent to resign to which PAS was then giving much publicity.

If the letter is read carefully it is clear and explicit that Datuk Mohamed did not want to hang on to his post of Mentri Besar in view of his poor health. That he wished to retire is proof that he is sincere and not motivated by self interest. ... And after he was restored to good health and the people gave him their confidence, the question of his retirement did not arise.³³

In yet another leaflet it returned to the sensitive question of the sale or distribution of timber land under PAS rule and alleged, with the help of neatly set-out facts and figures, that the royalty received by the state was too small and the money that actually went into the state treasury too little, even though 'now one third of Kelantan has been pawned'.³⁴

Despite the storm of 15 October, the bitter and open strife of the period until the imposition of federal rule, the opening of old wounds and revival of old rivalries, the sense of self-righteousness of most electioneering documents, and the over-indulgent or intemperate use of the language in some, the actual campaigning in the field was relatively quiet and unexciting and marked by an absence of an election 'air'. The voters of Kelantan for the most part played it by ear, and although in conversations they would occasionally turn to the question of the election and even inquire of each other as to who would win, nobody would tell, or even hazard a guess, 'Who'. The ban on public rallies imposed on 23 February,³⁵

was said to have been largely responsible for the absence of 'election fever', and for the lack of public debate on election issues. As a result the parties were forced to limit their electioneering to sticking posters in public places, distributing pamphlets and hand-bills, holding *ceramah*, and conducting house-to-house canvassing. PAS supporters made the interesting innovation of playing cassette recordings of the speech their President made in federal parliament on 8 November opposing federal rule in Kelantan; but their leaders were reported on the whole to be keeping a low profile.³⁶ Another observer noted 'a complacent atmosphere about the PAS information centre, unlike the busy Barisan and Berjasa offices'.³⁷

When talking to reporters and observers, workers of all parties, but especially those of PAS, were not only loquacious but also inclined to give highly optimistic assessments of their chances. PAS workers, for example, claimed that their party would do considerably better than the twenty-two seats it held in the outgoing assembly. The claim was based on the expectation that the traditional PAS supporters, having sworn on the Qur'an that they would vote for PAS as before, would not betray their party. Tengku Razaleigh, if anything, was even more confident of his party's victory, even expecting to 'pull a 1959 on PAS', a reference to the 1959 election in which PAS had inflicted a crushing defeat on UMNO. The reason for the optimism derived, as he put it, from the strength of UMNO 'coupled with the split in PAS resulting in some of its former supporters coming to our (UMNO) side and some others favouring Berjasa'. Moreover, the use of religion, and especially the 'whisper' that a vote for PAS for the fifth time is like making a pilgrimage to Mecca, was believed likely to work against PAS rather than for it.³⁸

At stake in the election were 36 state assembly seats, 20 of which (originally 22) were held by PAS in the defunct assembly. Also at stake was the question of which of the parties would have the authority to act as the voice of Kelantan Malays during the next five years, as well as the reputations

of several political leaders. The Kelantan election was crucial to PAS because the state was its traditional power base, and it was important to UMNO for the inverse reason that it sensed that at last it now had the opportunity to topple PAS and itself become the party of power, at first perhaps with the co-operation of Berjasa but eventually on its own. In its famous victory over UMNO in the 1959 election, the first after Merdeka, PAS won 28 of the 30 seats, and 63.8 per cent of the votes cast compared with UMNO's 26.9 per cent. In 1964 it was again returned to power but with a very much reduced majority (21 seats, 57 per cent of the votes cast) while UMNO increased its tally of seats to 9 and its share of the vote to 43 per cent. The 1969 election witnessed a further decline in PAS popularity, both in terms of seats (down to 19) and in terms of the percentage of votes cast in its favour (now 52.2 per cent). UMNO, on the other hand, registered further steady improvement in its position by increasing its share of seats to 11 and share of the total votes cast to 47.5 per cent.³⁹ In 1974 PAS contested as a component party of the Barisan Nasional and therefore as a co-partner of UMNO, winning all the 22 seats allocated to it in a packaged distribution of the 36 seats, the remainder being captured by UMNO (13) and MCA (1). In view of this it is virtually impossible to say whether PAS would have suffered more reverses had it entered that year's election on its own and not as a BN component party. This added still more significance to the contest in 1978.

When polling closed on 11 March 1978, a total of 241,566 voters (or 75.07 per cent of the registered voters) had turned out to vote, and by the time the first results were declared around midnight it was obvious that PAS had received a most stunning hiding. After all the results were in, the state of the parties in the new assembly was: PAS 2 (1 seat retained, 1 captured from BN); BN 23 (13 retained, 10 gained: 9 from PAS, 1 from Berjasa; 1 lost to PAS); Berjasa 11 (gained 10, all from PAS, retained 1, and lost 1 to BN).

By winning only two of the thirty-six seats—and even these

by two of the slenderest margins recorded in the polls—PAS not only lost its Kelantan power base to the BN for the first time since 1959 but seemed destined to be eliminated as a serious political force in Kelantan and quite possibly also in other states such as Trengganu, Kedah, and Perlis where it had built up considerable following over the years, and which could not be expected to remain unaffected in a future poll by the slide in Kelantan. And yet, for the eternal optimist at least, the picture was not entirely one of dark gloom and abject disappointment: for although it could win only two seats, in terms of the votes cast PAS picked up almost 33 per cent of the total, as against BN's 37 per cent and Berjasa's 27 per cent. This almost even sharing of the votes thus gave each party, in varying degrees and in proportion to their overall performance, reasons to be satisfied and disappointed at the same time. PAS could not but be deeply disheartened with its two seats, but its 33 per cent share in the popular vote, though this too was dismally down from the 1969 figure, offered a glimmer of hope, especially when seen along with the Barisan Nasional's 37 per cent which showed a drop of 10.5 per cent since 1969 (although part of this drop was due to its contesting fewer seats in 1978). On the other hand the BN had every reason to be overjoyed by the scale of its victory. But, all the same, it could hardly have failed to feel a tinge of disappointment at the still substantial size of PAS influence on, as one political commentator put it, its 'darkest day'.⁴⁰ Berjasa's eleven wins, most of them by handsome margins of 1600 votes or more, added up to an enormously satisfying performance but this, too, was slightly marred by lost deposits in five constituencies. Even so, it seems, Berjasa was the principal beneficiary of the massive defection of voters from PAS, and where—say in four or five constituencies—it failed to gain much support, its intervention or just plain anti-PAS propaganda was still sufficient to help the BN win. Berjasa's direct and, from all accounts, quite effective propaganda in which PAS's soft underbelly (i.e. its leadership) was the principal target of attack, was obviously dis-

tinctly successful in causing extensive defections of traditional PAS voters, not only in the constituencies that it won but also in four or five constituencies where the BN was successful. In the political atmosphere then prevailing it did not seem to matter much whether the BN or Berjasa won so long as PAS lost.

The swing against PAS was so strong that in only 10 of the 36 constituencies was the winning margin less than 1000 votes, and of these only 5 had majorities of under 500 votes. Three constituencies returned members with fewer than a 100-vote majority, of which two (Sering and Manek Urai), significantly, went to PAS, while the third (Semut Api) was taken by the BN. Otherwise most winning candidates were returned with majorities of 1400 or more. Datuk Mohamed Nasir, the object of PAS's wrath, ironically, had the biggest majority (4429 votes) in his Tendong constituency, in a straight fight with a PAS candidate.

In PAS-held constituencies like Sungai Rasau, Selising, and Bukit Panau, and its own constituencies of Jeli, Temengan, and Pasir Puteh where the BN considered the final outcome to be in some doubt, the swing was so strong (and almost of the same order as in those PAS-held constituencies where it was involved in straight confrontation) that the actual outcome seemed to make the Berjasa intervention quite unnecessary. Given the size of the swing the BN would have captured these seats in any case. On the other hand, in constituencies like Telipok, Bandar Machang, Gual Ipoh, and Bandar Pasir Mas, the election turned out to be a contest between the BN and Berjasa, with PAS finishing third; only in Lanas (interestingly the new *Menteri Besar's* constituency) and Semut Api, both won by the BN in four-corner fights, did the presence of the Berjasa and independent candidates seem to help beat a strong PAS bid to retain the seats. The winning BN margins in these constituencies were 188 and 76 votes respectively while the combined votes obtained by Berjasa and the independents were 271 and 1322. In Tok Uban, the intervention of an independent candidate (Abdullah Che Mat, 1631 votes)

probably accounted for the defeat of the sitting PAS member (Musa Mohamed, 1487 votes) at the hand of the Berjasa candidate (Daud Yatimi Ahmad, 3016 votes). In the 1974 election Abdullah Che Mat was also an independent candidate with demonstrable vote-pulling capacity, obtaining 981 votes in a year when PAS and UMNO had combined their forces. But these few seats apart, the PAS performance measured in terms of the seats won was on the whole extremely poor, and hardly in keeping with the dominant position it enjoyed between 1959 and the dissolution in October 1977.

How does one explain this extraordinary reversal of PAS fortunes in Kelantan? There is no doubt that, as election figures reveal, a substantially large number of traditional PAS supporters deserted their party and voted for either the BN or Berjasa. The real question is why so many people came to be persuaded that PAS was no longer worthy of their support. Here, the issue of leadership was perhaps central in their thinking. Indeed with the BN and Berjasa in hot pursuit of victory and conducting a deftly orchestrated campaign to that end, the public mind hardly had any respite from a seemingly endless recital of the alleged incompetence, insincerity, and corruption of PAS leadership. Datuk Asri's alleged hotel and agricultural estate in Indonesia were given wide publicity, and the so-called 'gang of twenty' (the twenty PAS legislators who voted Datuk Mohamed Nasir out of office), but in particular a few of them more than the others (e.g. Ishak Lotfi, Nik Abdul Rahman, Wan Ismail, etc.) were not easily forgotten, let alone forgiven, for their role in precipitating the political crisis and the subsequent imposition of emergency rule. The conclusion, therefore, must be that some at least of this concentrated attack on the PAS leadership rubbed off on a substantial body of PAS supporters and so turned them to the BN or Berjasa. Moreover, the PAS campaign of vilification against Datuk Mohamed Nasir appears also to have rebounded on to it.

Corruption and land deals allegedly executed under previous PAS governments also figured prominently in the cam-

paign and possibly did some damage to the PAS cause. Closely related to this was the favourite BN-Berjasa caricature of past PAS governments as fifteen years of misrule, as a result of which Kelantan progressively fell further and further behind the rest of the peninsular states in economic and social development. Under PAS Kelantan was said to have lost 'a generation' and to have been placed in a situation where 70 per cent of its people 'have a per capita income of \$25 a month'.⁴¹ The impact of this kind of simplified aetiology of poverty on an impoverished peasantry is not hard to imagine.

Another factor that probably explains the fall of PAS was the BN tactic of raising the spectre of a bleaker future for Kelantan, with no co-operation between the state administration and the Federal government, and consequently a further slide back in development, should PAS be returned to power. PAS, for its part, countered this by arguing that development was a non-issue since all parties had a broad identity of views on it, and that if elected, the PAS state government would fully co-operate with the Centre in the implementation of development projects. While some staunch PAS protagonists may arguably have believed this possible, quite a number of others who tended to view the PAS-BN relationship as one of deepening antagonism must have found the prospect of co-operation between them somewhat unconvincing.

Perhaps the most crucial factor that accounts for the rapid and dramatic descent of PAS from a high peak of power to the depths of the political wilderness is not what others did to it, though this was important, but rather what it did to itself. The recent history of PAS is a sequence of serious miscalculations, ventures in self-delusion, and grave errors of judgement which, though generated by a perfectly legitimate instinct of self-preservation, were to prove deeply damaging to its internal unity, harmful to its relationship with the Barisan Nasional, and ultimately, a threat to the very target it set out to achieve, namely survival as a distinct and autonomous political party of the Malays, a self-appointed alternative to UMNO.

Its decision at first to join a coalition with UMNO, and later the Barisan Nasional, while opening up new opportunities to share power in several states beside Kelantan, and at the Centre, also imposed limitations on its ability to do or act as it wished. The arrangement allowed it some freedom (i.e., to retain its separate identity, organizational structure, internal cohesion; to discipline members; to accept new members; to pursue certain principles peculiar to itself, etc.) but it took away absolute freedom to act absolutely as it pleased. Even the freedom permitted by the arrangement had to be exercised within the framework of BN discipline and the ground rules of its operation. Admittedly the system also provided for the possibility of bargaining, but even this had to proceed from an understanding that there were limits to how far it could be carried and that, in any event, the Federal Prime Minister (who heads UMNO and, by virtue of this, also leads the BN nationally), though always open to persuasion and special pleadings, is the final arbiter and the ultimate judge. His word carries the weight of law, any defiance of which, especially if persisted in over time, is liable to be met with sanctions. The enormous and virtually unlimited powers of the Prime Minister have to be seen in the context of the unique political system of Malaysia, the most outstanding feature of which is that it guarantees the indigenous Malays, as represented politically by UMNO since Merdeka, a core position, while also granting the other communities, in ways which themselves uphold and reinforce the central place of the Malays, the right to share power in the governance of the country. It is the actual working out of the system, as constantly modified by considerations of pragmatism, buttressed by convention and garnished by indigenous cultural elements, that makes the Prime Minister what he is. His position is not one of *primus inter pares*, nor even one of being more equal than others. It is virtually one of peerless supremacy and all-embracing authority. And there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that PAS either failed to appreciate this simple reality of Malaysian politics, or, understanding it, felt

that it was strong enough somehow to get around it. If the former, it was a case simply of political naivete; if the latter, it was one of pure delusion.

Assuming that PAS's initial decision to join the BN was sound and correct and motivated by the ideal of Malay-Muslim solidarity, then its objection in 1974 to the appointment of Datuk Mohamed Nasir as *Menteri Besar* was proof that it had not fully assimilated the implications of that decision and not quite absorbed the concept and *modus operandi* of the BN. True, a Kelantan *Menteri Besar* had to be a man of PAS since PAS had a majority of seats in the assembly. (This point was never in dispute.) But, equally, he had to be someone acceptable to both major components of the BN (i.e. UMNO as well as PAS); and above all, agreeable to the national leader of the BN (i.e. the Prime Minister). A lack of agreement on this point would have strained the partnership to breaking-point. That PAS in the end agreed, albeit reluctantly, to the appointment was a clear demonstration of the omnipotence of the Prime Ministerial power as well as an emphatic reminder of just how much membership of the BN had diminished the position of PAS even in respect of its own traditional stronghold. From being a party in its own right, it was reduced to being a mere component of a party, having to submit to the rules and discipline of that party, and aware that it could never expect to rise to a position of real influence in that party. It is a fair assumption that even from those early beginnings of the association with the BN, PAS did not quite relish its new role, still less the extra burdens that it imposed.

It was perhaps for this reason that after a short break, it resumed, openly or otherwise, the attempt to assert its autonomy and, as a concrete expression of this, to demand that a *Menteri Besar* of its own choosing be installed to replace Datuk Mohamed. But when the BN leadership showed no interest in ever conceding the demand, direct pressure was applied on Datuk Mohamed to step down. He, as a 'good man' of PAS, it was hoped somewhat optimistically, would heed the call of the party and just leave the field to it to do battle

with UMNO on the issue. Datuk Mohamed, however, was made of sturdier stuff than PAS had imagined. Having briefly raised the party's hopes that he would retire at the end of August 1977, he went on in the end to do nothing about it. At this point the party began to lose its nerve, and in sheer desperation stepped up its pressure, now mixing it with ultimatum and threat of expulsion. The simplistic calculation was that the threat would work, and if it did not then expulsion would see the elusive MB out of office and the BN presented with a *fait accompli*!

Instead, as more pressure was applied, Mohamed Nasir became more defiant, less ready to compromise, and more prone to lean on the BN. Within PAS itself there were those who had admired and sympathized with Mohamed Nasir. The expulsion decision forced these men to rise in revolt and join forces with the embattled MB and his supporters, thus causing a deep split in the party. But Mohamed Nasir still seemed just as immovable, just as deeply entrenched, as ever.

So far virtually nothing had gone right for PAS. Its leadership had underestimated Mohamed Nasir's tenacity, misconceived its strategy, miscalculated the risks, and misjudged the party mood; only the mood of the public still remained untested and this too was shortly to be rectified. The vote of no-confidence was its last weapon, but it was so final and so irrevocable in its effect that once it had been exercised, unavailingly as it turned out, the initiative was gone completely from PAS. There was now nothing left to the party except the hope—or wishful thinking—that a reference to the people would soon put things right for it and restore it to full vigour and authority.

The vote of no-confidence brought people surging into the streets of Kota Bharu, in a demonstration of solidarity with Datuk Mohamed Nasir. The 'complacent' masses thus gave their first view of what they thought of the crisis, and, ominously for PAS, a foretaste of what it might expect in an election. Soon enough the Federal government seized the initiative that had so ignominiously been surrendered to it, in the

assembly vote and, later, in the negotiations. With PAS out of power and no longer able to exercise any kind of control over events, the political situation, in a sense, resembled the period before the 1959 election—but with a difference. And the difference was that this time the situation was so desperate and hopeless that not even the invocation of the 'spirit of 1959' was enough to save the once formidable voice of Kelantan from almost total disaster. In fact with PAS winning only two seats and the BN-Berjasa combination claiming the rest, the 1959 results were precisely reversed. The spirit of 1959 gave way to the deluge of 1978, and PAS in grave danger of going under and being submerged by a high tide of discontent and rejection, just hung on precariously by the skin of its teeth.

1. See *Malaysia: Federal Constitution*, 8th Schedule, Pt. 1 (6), Govt. Printer, Kuala Lumpur, 1970.

2. *New Straits Times*, 13 February 1978. So said Dr Mahathir Mohamed, the Deputy Prime Minister, in a statement announcing the removal of federal emergency rule.

3. *The Star*, 10 November 1977.

4. *Pas Kelantan Menghadapi Pilihanraya Dewan Undangan Negeri Kelantan, 1978*, Perhubungan Pas, Negeri Kelantan, 6 March 1978, p. 2.

5. *ibid.*, p. 1.

6. In an interview he made these statements: (a) 'In the assembly UMNO members fully support me. But some PAS members do, others don't; but more support than don't.' (b) 'Unless PAS leaders change their attitude and renew their Islamic struggle, PAS will be destroyed.' (c) 'As long as I have people's support, I shall remain MB' (in an apparent allusion to the PAS demand that he step down). See his interview with A. Ghani Ismail, *Utusan Melayu*, 18 May 1975.

7. *Siaran Penerangan Pas Negeri Kelantan*. Bil 3/78, 22 February 1978.

8. *ibid.*, p. 7.

9. The decision was by no means unanimous or uncontested. It was vigorously opposed by Prof. Ali Taib who later left the Supreme Council and the party. Others to leave both the Supreme Council and the party included Dr Ishak Rejab and Ustaz Sofian Mohamad. Haji Hassan Adli, the deputy PAS President did not attend the meeting, but

was later expelled for defying the party whip in the Dewan Rakyat division on the Bill to place Kelantan under Federal rule.

10. See *Asiaweek*, 18 November 1977, p. 20.
11. *Siaran Penerangan Pas*, p. 2.
12. *Asiaweek*, op. cit.
13. *Siaran Penerangan Pas*, p. 2.
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.* Interestingly enough the members of the so-called 'gang of four' were not identified by name but were understood as the group headed by Samad Ismail. See ch. 2 above.
16. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the Kelantan UMNO-BN chief, said in a statement that should the election result in a tie between UMNO-Berjasa and PAS, the BN would seek fresh elections. See *New Straits Times*, 24 February 1978.
17. *ibid.*, 15 February 1978.
18. *ibid.*, 14 February 1978.
19. See Datuk Mohamed Nasir's statement on this point in *ibid.*, 22 February 1978, and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's statement on the same point in *ibid.*, 17 February 1978.
20. *ibid.*, 13 March 1978.
21. *The Star*, 30 March 1978.
22. *New Straits Times*, 15 and 16 February 1978.
23. *ibid.*, 23 February 1978.
24. *Utusan Melayu*, 11 March 1978.
25. *Rancangan Pembangunan 'Barisan Nasional' untuk Rakyat Negeri Kelantan*, Pejabat Barisan Nasional Negeri Kelantan, Kota Bharu, February 1978, p.1.
26. *ibid.*, p. 2.
27. *ibid.*, p. 3.
28. *Pas Kelantan Menghadapi Pilihanraya*, p. 5.
29. *ibid.*, p. 8.
30. *New Straits Times*, 24 February 1978.
31. *ibid.*, 17 February 1978.
32. *Undilah Berjasa*, a Berjasa handbill used during the election campaign.
33. *Jawapan Kepada Siaran Pas*, Markas Pusat Berjasa, Kelantan, n.d.
34. *Fakta-fakta dan Angka-angka Penjualan/Pembahagian Kayu Balak oleh Kerajaan Pas Kelantan*. There is no indication that it is a Berjasa document except that it was obtained from a Berjasa office.
35. *New Straits Times*, 24 February 1978.
36. See Rejal Arbee, 'It's Ceramah versus Cassette in Kelantan Campaign', *ibid.*, 3 March 1978.

37. See Shukor Hj. Ahmad, 'Just A'blowing with the Wind', *The Star*, 4 March 1978. The present writer who was in Kelantan from 4 to 12 March can report that his own observations are largely in accord with these reports.

38. Rejal Arbee, 'The Time for Change is at Hand', *New Straits Times*, 10 March 1978.

39. Rejal Arbee, 'Can Pas arrest the slide?', *ibid.*, 24 February 1978.

40. Dr Nordin Sopiae, 'UMNO's finest hour, Pas' darkest day', *ibid.*, 13 March 1978.

41. So said Datuk Mohamed Yaacob, the present Kelantan *Menteri Besar*, in an interview with Dr Nordin Sopiae, *ibid.*, 27 March 1978.

TABLE 3.1
The State Assembly of Kelantan:
The 1978 Election Results in Constituencies previously held by PAS

Constituencies	Electorate		Difference + or -	Turnout in 1978		Res- ult 1978	Margin of (+/-) Victory/ Defeat	Members Elected
	1974	1978		Total	%			
Bandar Pasir Mas	11470	10356	-1114	7333	70.80	Lbn	-919	Abdullah Che Him
Bukit Panau	9392	8912	-480	6897	77.39	Lbn	-1561	Abdul Latif Hj. Abd. Rahman
Guchil	6143	6324	+181	4868	76.97	Lbn	-1119	Mohamed Isa
Jelewat	10677	10112	-565	7880	77.92	Lbn	-790	Hj. Mohamad Hj. Hasan
Kemumin	10037	8837	-1200	6343	71.78	Lb	-1799	Omar Ibrahim
Ketereh	9644	9728	+84	7847	80.66	Lbn	-2503	Ariffin Mohamed
Kubang Krian	11572	11277	-95	8338	73.94	Lb	-2352	Nik Bahri Shah Yusof
Lanas	6252	5626	-626	4601	81.78	Lbn	-188	Datuk Mohd. Yaacob
Lemal	7889	7519	-370	5557	71.25	Lb	-1622	Noor Mohd. Mohd. Din
Meranti	9947	9247	-700	6760	73.1	Lb	-949	Hanifa Ahmad
Peringat	9632	9222	-410	7052	76.47	Lb	-2166	Wan Hashim Wan Ahmad
Perupok	10262	8922	-1340	6862	76.91	Lb	-1000	Wan Mohamad Wan Ahmad
Salor	10840	10595	-245	8319	78.52	Lb	-2104	Sofian Awang
Selising	10689	10519	-170	8207	78.02	Lbn	-2586	Wan Mohd. Abu Bakar
Semut Api	10448	9585	-863	7057	73.62	Lbn	-76	Hj. Mohamed Hussain
Sering	10557	9473	-1084	7308	77.14	R	+84	Abdullah Arshad
Simpangan	10284	10155	-129	7367	72.55	Lb	-2983	Tahir Abdul Aziz
Sungai Rasau	6051	5979	-72	4819	80.60	Lbn	-1078	Ustaz Yahya Yusof
Tawang	11313	10781	-532	8502	78.86	Lb	-1164	Mohd. Daud Mohd. Ali
Tok Uban	9095	8343	-752	6257	75.00	Lb	-1385	Daud Yatimi Ahmad

(Table compiled by the author from figures published in *New Straits Times* (26.8.1974) and *New Sunday Times/Berita Minggu* (12.5.1978).)

Legend: Lbn = Seat lost to BN (9)
Lb = Seat lost to Berjasa (10)
R = Seat retained by PAS (1)

TABLE 3.2
The State Assembly of Kelantan:
The 1978 Election Results in Constituencies previously held by BN

Constituencies	Electorate		Difference + or -	Turnout in 1978		Result 1978	Margin of (*) (-) Victory/ Defeat	Members Elected
	1974	1978		Total	%			
Bandar Machang	10876	10688	- 188	8377	78.38	R	+1474	Ibrahim Mohamed
Bandar Pasir Puteh	8769	8782	+ 13	6608	75.24	R	+1791	Raja Mahmood Raja Mohd.
Cherang Ruku	8820	8673	- 147	6795	78.34	R	+ 363	Wan Omar Wan Majid
Gual Periok	7990	6411	-1579	4825	75.26	R	+ 791	Hussin Ahmad
Gual Ipoh	7579	7245	- 334	5893	81.34	R	+2762	Mustapha Yaacob
Gua Musang	6289	8015	+1726	5261	65.65	R	+2163	Hj. Abd. Ghani Abu Bakar
Jeli	5495	5868	+ 373	4862	82.85	R	+ 660	A. Samat Hj. Derahman
Manek Urai	4981	5179	+ 198	3802	73.41	Lp	- 98	Hj. Wan Abdullah Wan Su
Pahi	6411	6115	- 296	4358	70.92	R	+1761	Abdul Aziz Talib
Pulai Chondong	8459	8032	- 427	6611	82.31	R	+2603	Abdullah Hj. Mohd.
Sungai Keladi	15444	14001	-1443	8832	63.08	R	+4174	Foo Chow Yong
Sungai Pinang	12121	11405	- 716	8027	70.38	R	+ 2191	Lat Kassim
Temangan	6096	6147	+ 51	5016	81.60	R	+1174	Salleh Harun
Wakaf Baru	12314	11958	- 356	8905	74.47	R	+2886	Che Omar Awang Kechik

(Table compiled by the author from figures published in *New Straits Times* (26.8.1974) and *New Sunday Times/Berita Minggu* (12.3.1978).)

Legend: R = Seat retained by BN (13)
Lp = Seat lost to FAS (1)

TABLE 3.3
The State Assembly of Kelantan:
The 1978 Election Results in Constituencies previously held by Berjasa

<i>Constituencies</i>	<i>Electorate</i>		<i>Differ- ence + or -</i>	<i>Turnout in 1978</i>		<i>Res- ult 1978</i>	<i>Margin of (+) (-) Victory/ Defeat</i>	<i>Members Elected</i>
	<i>1974</i>	<i>1978</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>			
Telipok	12142	11006	-1136	7341	66.70	Lbn	-2031	Ahmad Rastom Ahmad
Tendong	11263	10632	- 631	8079	80.79	R	+ 4429	Datuk Mohd. Nasir

(Table compiled by the author from figures published in *New Straits Times* (26.8.1974) and *New Sunday Times/Berita Minggu* (12.3.1978).)

Legend: Lbn = Seat lost to BN (1).
R = Seat retained by Berjasa (1).

TABLE 3.4
 The State Assembly of Kelantan:
 State of the Parties before and after the 1978 Election

<i>Parties</i>	<i>State of the parties at dissolution, 13 February 1978</i>	<i>State of the parties after the 1978 Election (12 March)</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>R</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G</i>	
BN	14	13	1	10	23
Berjasa	2	1	1	10	11
PAS	20	1	19	1	2
Total	36	15	21	21	36

Legend: R = Seats retained.
 L = Seats lost.
 G = Seats gained.

TABLE 3.5
The State Assembly of Kelantan:
The Voting Pattern in the 1978 State Assembly Elections

Total Electorate:	
1974	336843
1978	321669
Net decrease of voters between 1974 and 1978	15174
of the 36 constituencies 29 registered a decrease of 17800 voters	
of the 36 constituencies 7 registered an increase of 2626 voters	
Thus giving a net overall decrease of	15174 voters (or 4.5 per cent) since 1974.

Of 321669 persons eligible to vote in the 1978 election, 241566 (or 75.07 per cent) actually turned out to vote as follows:

	<i>Total Votes Cast</i>	<i>Number of Candidates</i>	<i>Percentage of the Total</i>	<i>Average per Constituency</i>
Barisan				
Nasional				
(BN)	88671	24	36.71%	3694.6
Berjasa	64680	25	26.78%	2587.2
PAS	79514	36	32.92%	2208.2
Independents	4709	10	1.94%	470.9
Spoilt votes	3992	ALL	1.65%	110.9
Totals	241566	95	100%	

PAS and the 1978 Election

FIRDAUS HAJI ABDULLAH

IN a speech to the delegates at his party's 24th annual conference in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November 1978, the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) president, Datuk Haji Mohamed Asri, referred to the Kelantan voters as '*baru hendak pulih dari peningnya*' (just about to recover from their giddiness) when they went to the polls for the national general election on 8 July 1978. He attributed this giddiness to the political events preceding and surrounding the 11 March 1978 state election in Kelantan which almost completely eliminated PAS's representation in the state assembly which it had controlled for the previous nineteen years. Citing 'the UMNO-orchestrated demonstrations and riots', 'the 96-day emergency rule', and 'the emergence of the splinter-party Berjasa', Datuk Haji Asri described those events as 'parts of a big design (*design besar*) to cripple and crush PAS in its struggle to uphold Islamic ideology'. To him the execution of the *design besar* became more intensive and extensive as the July 1978 general election approached. He referred to the various means by which the National Front exploited its advantageous position as a party in control of not only the government but also a thick coffer.

This giddiness may not have affected all the *rakyat* but certainly more than a simple 'political panadol' was needed to cure those who suffered from it among the traditional PAS supporters, as the 1978 general election results showed. The most significant effect of the giddiness was of course the sub-

stantial reduction in PAS's legislative strength at the state as well as federal level. After the 1974 election the party had 43 state seats: 22 in Kelantan, 11 in Kedah, 8 in Trengganu and 2 in Perak. Now its share of state seats had been reduced to 11: 7 in Kedah, 2 in Kelantan, 1 in Perak and 1 in Penang. And in Parliament the 1978 election reduced PAS's strength from 14 to 5 seats. Among those who lost their seats was Datuk Asri himself, as well as other leaders who had served as deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries before PAS ceased to be a component party in the National Front grand coalition.

At the November 1978 annual delegates' meeting there was no sign of Datuk Asri being giddy. His poetic and impressive oratory, his quick wit and leadership posture seemed to be all in good shape. But, despite his efforts to sound optimistic in an hour-long speech entitled '*Kearah Kemenangan*' ('Towards Victory') and in several other remarks during the two-day meeting, he indirectly admitted that organizational and financial problems faced by the party were bound to be a source of giddiness—or perhaps severe headache—to him and his colleagues for some time to come. And indeed, as we propose to do here, a closer look at the party's condition during the 1978 general election will highlight the fact that in addition to the National Front's 'over-kill' electioneering tactics, a severe shortage of money and depleted organizational resources were two important factors that contributed to PAS's poor electoral performance in the 1978 polls. Beneath the seeming enthusiasm of its supporters and campaigners PAS was, in a sense, trapped in a kind of vicious circle which became worse with the serious leadership crisis it faced a few months before the election. In its 28-year history, in spite of its sizeable potential base of support among the generally Islamic-oriented Malay populace, the party has always been handicapped by the scarcity of dollars and effective leadership. While its financial resources have always been very limited, the strength of its leadership has generally depended more on personality cults than on a cohesive team.

From the date of its inception as a religious wing of UMNO in February 1950 until Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy's assumption of its presidency in December 1956, one of the party's main preoccupations was to search for qualified top leadership. Before Dr Burhanuddin became its president, PAS did not have a fully committed leader of national standing. The first president, Haji Ahmad Fuad, was too much of a Dato Onn loyalist to be a leader of an organization which was totally separated from that of Dato Onn. The second president, Dr Haji Abas, was at best a disinterested politician whose appointment as the president—in what amounted to a draft—was perhaps mainly due to the title 'Dr' in front of his name and to the popularity he had achieved in activities other than politics. During Dr Haji Abas's presidency the party was practically run by Ustaz Othman Abdullah,¹ one of the party vice-presidents by virtue of his post as *Ketua Dewan Pemuda* (head of the youth wing), especially during the former's long trip to Mecca as a medical officer for the Malayan pilgrims. Upon Dr Abas's return from Mecca in 1955 he was transferred as a government medical officer from the capital, Kuala Lumpur, to remote Kuala Trengganu. Thus, until Dr Burhanuddin was elected president in December 1956, for all practical purposes Ustaz Othman was the president of the party. Due to poor health, Dr Burhanuddin was unable actively to perform his function as president after 1963 and therefore was only president in name until his death in October 1969. During the early period of Dr Burhanuddin's illness, Professor Zulkifli Muhammad was appointed acting president but he died in a road accident in May 1964. He was succeeded as acting president by Datuk Hj. Mohd Asri who became full president when Dr Burhanuddin himself passed away in October 1969. The fact that the party was led by acting presidents for almost ten years showed that it faced a considerable leadership problem.

Further, the party experienced a severe shortage of funds which became especially acute in the 1978 election when faced with the lavish expenditure of the National Front. PAS

had to rely on voluntary contributions from members and sympathizers and mandatory monthly contributions from legislators and holders of other remunerative positions obtained with the party's support. Of these two categories of contributors it was understandable that the latter provided more substantial and regular support than the former. When it was still a component party of the National Front—that is, when the number of its legislators and holders of other elected and appointed remunerative positions was larger than ever before in its history—the total sum of its regular income gave only temporary relief, not a permanent cure, to the party's financially anaemic condition. However, after the 1978 general election, the decreased number of successful candidates meant that the party's financial picture became more bleak. As Datuk Asri told the 24th annual meeting delegates: 'The monthly expenses of our headquarters are \$3,000 whereas the permanent monthly donations (contributions) from our legislators are only \$1,950.'

The president's confession of his party's financial problem did not surprise anyone. It had never been a secret to either his followers or his opponents. Instead, rather than trying to hide the fact of PAS's severe shortage of money, especially during the election, some of its campaigners used it as a rhetorical point to be sarcastic about UMNO's 'money power' and to emphasize the sacrifice and dedication of PAS leaders and supporters. It was a common thing to hear PAS supporters alleging again and again that the National Front was guilty of vote-buying by crude and subtle means.

During the two-week campaigning period and after the election, PAS supporters exchanged stories about how National Front supporters, especially in Kedah and Kelantan, had used money to bribe voters. Among the most commonly told was one about the practice of donating *Surah Yassin* booklets² containing five- or ten-dollar notes. In some cases, small packs of cigarettes were used instead of *Surah Yassin* booklets. Giving a *Surah Yassin* booklet or presenting one or two packs of cigarettes to friends is not uncommon behaviour among

Malays, especially in the rural areas. But to slip money into the sacred booklet or in the cigarette box is certainly unusual. And if such 'gifts' were given by supporters of a political organization when elections were around the corner, it is not difficult to guess what their adversaries would say about it. Admittedly it was difficult to prove such practices but PAS supporters nevertheless claimed that they were quite widespread in Kedah and Kelantan. It was this that they called a subtle form of bribery or vote-buying.

The crude form of foul play involving money or other incentives, according to PAS supporters, was the forcing of the recipient of the 'incentive' to '*bersumpah*' (taking a vow in the name of God) that he would vote for the *dacing* (weighing scales symbolizing justice, the National Front's electoral symbol) on polling day.

Of course National Front supporters would deny that they indulged in such practices as alleged by PAS. And since there is no way of establishing the objective truth regarding this matter, it would be unfair either to dismiss outright or to accept the latter's assertion. But the talk in PAS circles about this matter was not confined to its rank-and-file alone. Even Datuk Asri himself was reported to have said that 'PAS would only use legitimate means to achieve its ends and would not resort to *buying votes or using hooligans to intimidate voters*'.³ Perhaps he could have added that even if PAS had *wanted* to resort to buying votes, its financial condition simply did not permit it to do so. Apart from buying votes, PAS could hardly afford even to give a token honorarium to its speakers in the various *ceramah* sessions. In one of those sessions in the parliamentary constituency of Nilam Puri, Kelantan, this writer personally heard one speaker say: 'If I were campaigning for the National Front, I could get \$50 per night. Campaigning for PAS I could not even get taxi fares.' The figure he cited might not be accurate but his message was sufficiently clear. He was probably trying to impress his audience with his dedication to the party although he may have unintentionally revealed his suppressed disappoint-

ment at not getting any monetary reward for his efforts.

In another incident in Selangor, shortage of funds had deprived a PAS would-be candidate of his opportunity to contest the Shah Alam Parliamentary constituency. The person concerned, Raja Sulaiman bin Raja Wahid, was unable to file his nomination papers because his wife, who was supposed to bring part of the \$1,000 deposit, did not show up until nomination time was over. A few months after the election, in an interview with the party's Secretary-General, Ustaz Hassan Shukri, this writer confirmed a wide-spread opinion that no candidate received any kind of financial support from the party's national organization. The only form of material assistance provided by the headquarters, Ustaz Hassan said, was standard-size posters, manifestos in booklet form, and excerpts from the manifesto in leaflet form. The party spent almost \$200,000 for all these printed materials. All other expenses were borne by individual candidates and their local supporters. According to Ustaz Hassan, each PAS parliamentary candidate spent an average of \$6,000 or \$7,000 per constituency. Naturally, the figure would vary from candidate to candidate and from one locality to another. In Perak, according to a well-known PAS leader, Ustaz Baharuddin Latif, the expenses of his party's parliamentary candidates ranged from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per constituency. One PAS parliamentary candidate who spent relatively freely in his bid to get re-elected was Encik Zahari Awang, who had served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later to the Ministry of Housing and New Villages when PAS was still a component party in the National Front. Encik Zahari was seeking re-election in his old Kuala Kerai constituency. He told this writer that he spent about \$15,500 in his unsuccessful bid. Of that amount, \$8,000 was contributed by his supporters and the other \$7,500 came from his own pocket. He claimed that his opponent spent \$487,000. According to Encik Zahari, in his area the National Front paid \$25 to each speaker at *ceramah* sessions, \$15 per day to car owners who lent cars for campaigning purposes, and \$250 to

house owners who allowed their houses to be used for *ceramah*. Encik Zahari's figures might not be perfectly accurate, but they indicate real differences between the parties' financial resources. PAS supporters used these differences sarcastically as rhetorical points to exaggerate the National Front's 'money power'. But such rhetoric did not lessen the disadvantage PAS's financial shortage meant for its electoral performance.

Closely related to its shortage of funds were the party's organizational shortcomings which were frequently mentioned as a major reason for PAS's electoral setback in 1978. With limited funds the party naturally could only afford to employ a limited number of skilled personnel to administer the organization. In his address to the party's 24th annual meeting, Datuk Asri also referred to 'the many things about which we have to interrogate ourselves'. And among the 'many things' was the need to strengthen the organization of the party. He did not make any direct or specific references to the organizational weakness of the party. But a close and careful reading of the text of his speech gives the impression that though his reference to the matter was brief and apparently casual, Datuk Asri euphemistically admitted that organizational inefficiency was one of the major reasons for PAS's electoral debacle. He said in rather padded language:

A study on our loss in the elections can be done on a wide scale, using much information and many arguments (to determine) whether it was due to the enemy's foul play or to our own financial weakness. But from the organizational point of view, we cannot run away from the fact that the Central Committee has to bear the burden (had to take the blame), and collectively should take the responsibility.

On the eve of the elections, the Central Committee, or for that matter the general leadership of the party, was not only organizationally incomplete but also incohesive. The 'Kelantan crisis' not only led to the expulsion and resignation of a number of state and national leaders but left a deep wound and a big rift between the opposing factions among the remaining members of the leadership. All that, including the emergence

of Berjasa as a splinter-party of PAS, naturally had adverse effects on the latter's organizational capability during the election.

A specific illustration of the party's organizational deficiency was its 'dysfunctioning headquarters' during the election, especially immediately after nomination day. For the first three days after the nominations had closed, the headquarters were virtually left unattended. The three or four persons who happened to be on the premises during that time could be regarded as no more than security guards or building care-takers. The co-ordinating role that the headquarters was supposed to be performing was not performed at all. Pressmen seeking comments or information from the party found the headquarters to be a useless source until three days after nomination day when a would-be candidate, Encik Subky Latiff, 'happened to drop in at the headquarters'.

A well-known journalist, Encik Subky was supposed to be the PAS candidate for the Setapak parliamentary constituency. However, his nomination was rejected because of a minor careless error: he was supposed to write his name twice—in two different places—on the nomination forms, but he overlooked the second one.

According to Encik Subky, while he was dropping in at the party headquarters three days after the nomination day, Datuk Asri happened to call from Kota Bharu. When Datuk Asri unexpectedly found that Encik Subky was there, he asked to speak to him and as a result of the brief and incidental phone-conversation, the latter was asked to take command of the headquarters and to become some sort of press liaison officer-cum-campaign co-ordinator for Selangor and the Federal Territory. Encik Subky was only a recent recruit to the party and had never held any party office at all. This is but an illustration of the organizational impotence of the party headquarters during the election.

Prior to nomination day, according to Secretary-General Hassan Shukri, the already limited resources at the headquarters were further drained to deal with contending groups

lobbying for candidacy. Some of these groups would even come to Ustaz Hassan's residence at 3.00 or 4.00 a.m., so that sometimes he had to stay the night at the headquarters to avoid disturbing his family.

The scramble for candidacy among competing factions resulted in the fielding of a third or neutral personality in certain constituencies. For example, according to Ustaz Hassan, his candidacy in the Selangor state constituency of Sungai Besar was meant to overcome rivalry between two local party contenders. In a straight fight, Ustaz Hassan managed to poll 2,143 votes against 4,596 votes polled by his National Front opponent. Admittedly, it is difficult to say whether it would have made any difference for PAS had its candidate in Sungai Besar been a local leader who enjoyed undivided local support from within the party. But the significant point in this case is that the rationale behind the candidacy of, and the choice of constituency for, certain PAS candidates indicated another dimension of disunity within the party. This point can be reinforced further by citing a few other cases, especially that of the Parit Buntar parliamentary seat.

Parit Buntar has always been considered as one of PAS's strongholds in Perak. In the 1974 election, when PAS was still a component party in the National Front coalition, one of its members contested the Parit Buntar parliamentary seat as an independent candidate against an UMNO local leader. The former was unsuccessful, but in spite of his grossly inadequate electoral machinery he managed to capture a substantial number of votes with the result that the UMNO (National Front) candidate won by only a narrow margin. In retrospect, PAS leaders attributed the almost successful bid by the independent candidate to two related factors: PAS's widespread influence in the Parit Buntar area, and the resentment of its local supporters against PAS joining the National Front. And when the party ceased to be the National Front's partner there was a perceptible rejuvenation of enthusiasm among its local supporters in Parit Buntar. Because of that, Parit Buntar was considered to be one of the most promising con-

stituencies for PAS in Perak, or even in the whole country in the 1978 election. Thus, it was not surprising that competing factions within the party were vying for their respective candidates to be nominated in this particular constituency. By standard or normal criteria, the nomination should have gone to Ustaz Baharuddin Latif, a founder member and a long-standing leader of the party at the state as well as national level. However, there had been strong rumours that Ustaz Baharuddin did not always agree with the party president on important matters including those pertaining to the expulsion of the former Kelantan *Menteri Besar*, Datuk Haji Mohamed bin Nasir, from the party. In my interview with him,⁴ Ustaz Baharuddin did not deny the rumours. Nevertheless, apart from his occasional disagreements with the party president, many observers within as well as outside the party felt that his unflinching faithfulness to the party had not been sufficiently rewarded. Perhaps because of that the party's Perak State Liaison Committee decided to nominate him for the Parit Buntar constituency. Ustaz Baharuddin himself was quite keen and hopeful that he would be selected. However, a local faction in Parit Buntar which had better rapport with the party president favoured another person to be the candidate. Thus, when the party's Central Committee was considering the candidacy for the Parit Buntar seat, another name appeared besides Ustaz Baharuddin's. And after lengthy deliberation, the party president decided that Ustaz Baharuddin was to contest in the Kuala Kangsar constituency whereas the Parit Buntar seat was to be contested by a local leader, Jaafar Ali, who himself was rather ambivalent. According to Secretary-General Hassan Shukri, Jaafar Ali was more or less drafted by his local supporters to become the candidate. But, out of respect for Ustaz Baharuddin, and partly due to a certain intuition, Jaafar Ali was in a dilemma as to whether or not to accept the party's nomination. He even resorted to performing the *sembahyang istikharah* (midnight prayers to be performed by those who are in a dilemma over making a decision). Finally, because of local pressure he unenthusiastically

accepted the nomination. To add another element to the whole drama and to the frustration of Ustaz Baharuddin and his supporters, Jaafar Ali's nomination papers were rejected due to technical errors in filling in the forms.

When I was interviewing him several months after the election Ustaz Baharuddin still sounded very bitter about the Parit Buntar episode. He failed to conceal his disappointment with the party president who, he believed, had the final word in shifting his candidacy from Parit Buntar to Kuala Kangsar where he came last in a three-cornered fight.

In expressing his disenchantment with Datuk Asri's decision over certain candidacies, Ustaz Baharuddin seemed to echo remarks against the president made by former PAS members who had joined Berjasa. He indirectly referred to cases of nepotism as well as other forms of undemocratic action by the party president. Among other things Ustaz Baharuddin singled out the candidacy of Encik Mohamed bin Haji Junid in the Grik parliamentary seat. Originally the party Central Committee decided to field someone else in this particular constituency, but at the last moment the candidacy was given to Encik Mohamed who is related by marriage to the party president. He polled 3,599 votes against 9,441 votes polled by the winning National Front candidate and 2,977 by a DAP candidate. These figures showed that it was most unlikely that PAS would have won the seat even if it had fielded a different candidate. But the point here is that the method of selecting the candidates and the mood of the party functionaries in facing the elections reflected a state of organizational incohesiveness and inefficiency. It seemed that decisions reached by means of the party's formal and structured procedure were at times superseded by its president's personal decision or simply not implemented due to local conditions.

According to the formal procedure instituted by the party headquarters, the selection of candidates was done in various stages. Party branches all over the country were asked to submit three names for each constituency. All these names

and other relevant information would then be systematically tabulated by the *Jawatankuasa Harian* (executive committee) at the headquarters before they were scrutinized at the Central Committee meeting. The next step would be for the Central Committee to hold separate meetings with party representatives from the four zones into which the peninsula was divided. In this meeting, the chairman of the particular State Liaison Committee would provide more information about each nominee. The meeting was held as early as the third week of May 1978, about one month before nomination day. Nevertheless, according to the party Secretary-General, in certain cases the final decision about the candidacy of certain nominees was communicated by phone a few hours before nomination. Altogether the headquarters received about 500 names to be considered for parliamentary and state seats. Eventually a total of 88 parliamentary and 203 state candidates were nominated. The number would have been more had many candidates not failed to fill in correctly and completely the nomination forms or failed to produce the required deposits.

In its 28-year history, this was the largest number of candidates PAS had fielded in any elections. The wisdom of doing so, however, became a debatable point. In the November 1978 annual conference a representative from Bagan Datoh (Perak) openly criticized the Supreme Council's decisions on the number and method of selecting the candidates. He alleged that the party (the Supreme Council) had been more interested in quantity than in quality, and pointedly asked: 'What is the point in fielding our candidates in constituencies where the chance of winning was very slim?' One may argue that such remarks might give some credence to the allegation of PAS-DAP collaboration. Perhaps realizing the possible damage such remarks might cause the party, the Bagan Datoh representative was cut short by the Chairman. Nevertheless his views on the matter were widely shared by others within as well as outside the party. It is interesting to note that in spite of the five hundred nominations submitted to the head-

quarters and the increasing number of highly qualified candidates available, many party activists believed that the party was still polluted by questionable characters either as candidates or as election workers. Such questionable characters (either considered to be un-Islamic in behaviour or lacking integrity in other aspects) became a handy target for their opponents to discredit the party during the election. This made one wonder if it was not wiser for the party to concentrate on realistically viable constituencies by fielding fewer candidates but whose characters were less questionable. However, the party leadership and those who were in favour of fielding a maximum number of candidates argued that with a relatively high number of intellectuals and other professionals prepared to contest the election on PAS tickets, the voters should be convinced that PAS was serious in its efforts to offer itself as an alternative to UMNO and thereby to win the election in order to form a government. Fielding a maximum number of candidates, they believed, would help to convince the voters of PAS's seriousness. They also argued that by fielding as many candidates as possible, the party would be able to assess its electoral popularity all over the country, which would be useful for planning future strategies.

'If we were to concentrate on fewer constituencies, we certainly would not be able to get about half-a-million votes as we did in the 1978 election. Furthermore, this was an opportunity to assess to what extent people in this country want an Islamic Government', said Ustaz Hassan Shukri. Another argument was that the party viewed the election as an opportunity to educate the populace on general political matters as well as on the Islamic struggle and ideology.

Similar to Hassan Shukri's tone and line of argument was Datuk Asri's statement in a *ceramah* at Bagan Serai on 19 June 1978 in which he confirmed that his party would field candidates in constituencies where non-Malay voters outnumbered Malays. He claimed that winning or losing in the election was a secondary matter to PAS. More important, he added, was for PAS to prove that it was still capable of struggling for

what it stood. But on another occasion⁵ he indirectly admitted that the party was short of 'personalities of desirable quality' to keep up the struggle. Because of that, he argued, PAS could not afford to be too idealistic but should instead try to make the best of whatever talent (leadership resources) was available. Responding to a question on the questionable character of certain PAS candidates, Datuk Asri said:

If we were to hope for a character like Umar bin Abdul Aziz (a man considered to be an ideal leader during Prophet Muhammad's time), then we would be having a day-dream. In the present situation it is impossible to hope for perfection. We do not yet have a system of cadres by which we could train PAS's would-be candidates.

A less convincing argument, or assumption, defending the party's preference for quantity over quality during the elections was noted by Ustaz Baharuddin Latiff who believed that by fielding a maximum number of candidates PAS hoped that the National Front's top leaders would not be able to concentrate on campaigning in their respective constituencies but would have to spread their time thinly to places where PAS was contesting. He seemed to overlook the possibility that the same argument might also work against PAS which had much fewer resources, and therefore was liable to a heavier loss. Such arithmetic, it seemed, was appreciated more by a top UMNO leader, Datuk Musa Hitam, who said that by resorting to such a strategy PAS showed its lack of understanding of the strength and the efficiency of the National Front organization. Datuk Musa stressed that the National Front did not depend on its candidates' personalities alone but also on a well-organized party machine.⁶

In certain constituencies, PAS's strategy in the selection of its candidates clearly showed its preference for quantity over quality so that its participation in those constituencies seemed to be nothing more than token, especially in Johor. For example, its candidate to oppose the incumbent *Menteri Besar*, Tan Sri Haji Othman Saat, in the Kesang state constituency, was a taxi driver whose political exposure was almost completely nil. The incumbent Ministers for Education and

Information, Datuk Musa Hitam and Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, were respectively opposed for parliamentary seats in Johor by unknown PAS candidates, Encik Abdul Hamid Rahim and Encik Jamal Mohamed. For this reason perhaps as well as to incorrect assessment of the party's strength, PAS candidates lost their deposits in 11 out of the 12 parliamentary seats and in 18 out of the 23 state seats it contested in Johor. None of the 35 candidates was elected. The party's electoral fiasco in Johor, in spite of its ambitious attempt, reflected a grave error of its leadership in planning the election strategy. From the various phenomena observed thus far in this paper, we may conclude that all these were mainly due either to 'self-misperception' and a series of irrational assumptions. Perhaps, of the various erroneous strategies the most interesting to discuss was the decision to field the party president in a Kedah parliamentary constituency.

While publicly PAS supporters defended the choice of the Padang Terap constituency for Datuk Asri, privately their views were in dissonance. Some believed that to ensure his victory Datuk Asri should have been given a much safer seat and that he should not gamble in an area where his chance of winning was thought to be only slightly over average. According to newspaper reports, which were reinforced by this writer's interviews in the field, the National Front's backroom boys in Alor Setar believed that the Kedah PAS miscalculated when it recommended Padang Terap to Datuk Asri. The National Front supporters admitted that Datuk Syed Ahmad, the National Front candidate in Padang Terap and retiring *Menteri Besar* of the state, was generally not popular in Kedah, but in Padang Terap he was still in good standing. He was the state assemblymen for Kuala Nerang, one of the two state constituencies making up Padang Terap. Datuk Ahmad's performance as a state legislator, apparently, was viewed favourably by his constituents.

PAS, however, believed that people in Kuala Nerang were discontented with the way the state government (headed by Datuk Ahmad) had handled the land acquisition for the Pa-

dang Terap sugar project. On the other hand, the other state seat in the area, Pokok Sena, was considered as a PAS stronghold. Most of its supporters believed that though the PAS incumbent there, Encik Osman Marzuki, was disqualified on a technicality on nomination day, voters in Pokok Sena were determined to vote PAS (Datuk Asri) for the parliamentary seat. After polling day, however, some argued that Encik Osman's disqualification had demoralized PAS supporters, especially when National Front campaigners spread rumours of his 'selling himself out by deliberately making mistakes in filling in the nomination form'.

Another argument given for Datuk Asri's move to Kedah was that it would strengthen the party's effort to wrest control of the state from the National Front. It was widely acknowledged that after the defeat in Kelantan, PAS needed control of a state government as a substitute for its old base in Kelantan. Judging by past electoral performances, Kedah was the logical replacement for Kelantan. PAS's attempt to capture Kedah dated back to the 1959 general election when it contested 23 out of 24 seats for the state Assembly. None of the PAS candidates were successful and three of them lost their deposits. But it managed to get 23.6 per cent of votes cast against 71.1 per cent received by the Alliance. In 1964, PAS fielded its candidates in 21 constituencies, but none was elected and one lost his deposit. However, in terms of total votes polled, it managed to improve from 23.6 per cent to 25.1 per cent *vis-à-vis* 67.6 per cent obtained by the Alliance.

A further, and more substantial, improvement was made in the 1969 general election when PAS contested all the 12 parliamentary and 24 state constituencies, winning 3 and 8 seats respectively. It managed to defeat two senior UMNO leaders, namely Dr Mahathir Mohamed and Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, for parliamentary seats. When in the 1974 election PAS contested as a partner in the National Front its electoral strength was presumably as good as, or perhaps slightly better than, it was in 1969. Thus, based on the progressive improvement in its electoral performances in Kedah, that state was

certainly the next one after Kelantan that PAS could expect to capture and it naturally hoped to make it a new base after the March 1978 defeat in the east coast. All this gave credence to the notion that the battle in Kedah would be a fight for survival by PAS. Perhaps this partially explained why Datuk Asri chose to contest in Kedah. But why he chose the Padang Terap constituency instead of a relatively safe seat in Kedah remained debatable, especially after the results were announced.

Some of those who argued in support of Datuk Asri's choice of Padang Terap pointed out that the incumbent PAS MP for that constituency, Encik Ahmad Shukri (not seeking re-election), and the PAS state assemblyman for Pokok Sena (one of the two state seats in that area) had done a good job as legislators and accordingly gave PAS a favourable image among the voters. Another point of view, however, emphasized that Datuk Asri's chance of winning was much better in Kota Setar where the PAS deputy president, Datuk Haji Abu Bakar Omar, was contesting. Kota Setar was regarded as a 'black area' for UMNO and thus was the safest seat for PAS. As an old hand in Kedah local politics, Datuk Abu Bakar still commanded widespread admiration and popularity and, it was argued, could have held Padang Terap. Thus, some observers believed that should Datuk Asri and Datuk Abu Bakar have swapped constituencies, the latter's chance of winning in Padang Terap was much brighter than the former's, whereas the former's chance of winning in Kota Setar was much brighter than in Padang Terap.

A few months after the election some close PAS sources privately divulged that attempts had been made to persuade Datuk Asri to contest in Pengkalan Chepa or Bacok, the two Kelantan parliamentary seats retained by PAS. According to these sources the reputable and 'revered' Ustaz Nik Abdul Aziz had agreed not to seek re-election in favour of Datuk Asri. It was believed that with the former's undisputed popularity and influence in Pengkalan Chepa he could easily persuade his would-be supporters to elect Datuk Asri in his stead.

Both before and after the election Datuk Asri seemed fully convinced that his candidacy in Kedah was fully justified. A few days after nomination day in a *ceramah* session in Alor Setar he said that his move was not because he was no longer popular in Kelantan but due to the wishes of the Kedah PAS. He said he was merely acceding to the wishes of PAS supporters to enable the party to win as many seats as possible in the general election.⁷ Then, not long after his defeat, he told an *Utusan Malaysia* reporter: 'From the point of strategy, the Central Committee's decision to make me contest in Padang Terap was not wrong because we were convinced that we could win that constituency.'

A few months later, at the party's annual general meeting, and on several other occasions, he further explained the rationale of that strategy. The main thrust of the argument was that to avoid a further act of electoral over-kill by the National Front in Kelantan, the PAS leadership felt it should deliberately maintain a low profile there. According to the latter's assessment, a few months after the shocking defeat in the March 1978 state elections, it had slowly, but steadily, regained a perceptible increase in popular support among the Kelantan voters. And the party believed that the National Front was not aware of this. Thus, PAS wanted the National Front to retain the impression that Kelantan was completely in its (the National Front's) hands, and therefore, it need not take the state too seriously when campaigning in the July election. And in order to delude the National Front so that it would continue to have such an impression, it was decided that Datuk Asri should not contest in Kelantan. Datuk Asri said: 'If I contested in Kelantan, they would reinforce their attack there, whereas if I contested elsewhere they would really believe that they could take Kelantan for granted. We knew that Kedah would be severely attacked regardless of where I was contesting.'

Regardless of the validity of this argument, it seemed to overlook the possibility that National Front campaigners would exploit Datuk Asri's 'running away from Kelantan' as

a handy issue to ridicule him and his party. And indeed, with the closed-door nature of the campaign, ridiculing personalities, to the extent of making what would have been slanderous remarks at a public rally, became a favourite indulgence of the campaigners in the various *ceramah* sessions.

During the campaign it was noticeable that campaigners from both sides were having a field day in blatant name-calling and character-assassination. While Datuk Asri was emphasizing the need for 'political education' for the *rakyat*, the speeches of some of the PAS speakers in the various *ceramah* sessions were anything but political education. In at least three different *ceramah* by the same speaker in Kelantan the writer heard insinuations made as to the abnormal sexual behaviour or preferences of certain UMNO personalities. And the language used in making the insinuations not only lacked good taste but was extremely abhorrent and repulsive to ears which were accustomed to more elevated styles of speech. Nevertheless the speaker concerned was generally received by his audience with approving laughter whenever he ridiculed certain National Front leaders. According to an article in the influential Jakarta weekly, *Tempo*, which sent a special correspondent to cover the elections, some PAS speakers in Kedah openly referred to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir as a 'Jew'.⁸ The magazine also quoted another PAS speaker in Selangor who deliberately mis-pronounced Hussein Onn's name so that it sounded like a Chinese name.

Thus, the making of personal attacks and slanderous remarks about certain leaders became part and parcel of the campaigning style. This particular style might not be entirely new in Malaysia's electoral history, but in the 1978 election, thanks to the banning of public rallies, it was more extensively and intensively practised than in previous elections. Indeed, the banning of public rallies resulted in the invention, or in the intensification, of other methods of campaigning. A notable addition was the use of the latest audio-electronic products, namely, cassettes and cartridges. At least two taped speeches made by Datuk Asri were widely distributed, espec-

ially in Kedah and Kelantan. Those taped speeches—one made in the Dewan Rakyat when he opposed the Kelantan Emergency Bill in October 1977, and the other one explaining PAS's manifesto recorded a few days after nomination day—were repeatedly played by party supporters in taxis, coffee shops and other gathering points in the *kampung*. Perhaps unintentionally, this new element in campaigning served another purpose for PAS in that it provided a new means of soliciting donations for election expenses. According to Datuk Asri, the production cost of the second cassette was met by 'a rich man who did not want his name to be mentioned'. In other words, the party was not paying anything for the production of the cassettes. However, at the consuming end, party supporters were voluntarily paying as much as \$20 per cassette, although officially it was priced at \$5. In one instance, the writer observed that a purchaser gave \$10 per cassette to a speaker in a *ceramah* session, and asked him to keep the change. Though the extra profit on such transactions seldom went directly to the party, it provided the speaker concerned with a small monetary reward for his efforts. Unlike the National Front, PAS found it almost impossible to provide sufficient monetary or other forms of material rewards to its electoral workers. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons why the top party leadership at the state as well as the national level found it difficult to exercise any effective control over the mode and manner of campaigning at the grass-roots level, to the extent that there were times when campaigning activities became counter-productive. Of course, as we discussed above, this was closely related to the general organizational inefficiency of the party.

The general guideline given by the headquarters regarding campaigning was that speakers at the various *ceramah* sessions were advised to speak on, or explain, the party manifesto. It seemed that this direction was in line with Datuk Asri's advice on the need for political education of the *rakyat*. Although he never clearly spelt out in specific terms what he meant by political education, in general terms he seemed to refer to

the need to explain to the *rakyat* that religion and politics were inseparable, that Islam was not only a theological concept but a complete system of life encompassing all aspects including politics. In response to the National Front's campaigning on development, Datuk Asri rhetorically told his listeners in various *ceramah* sessions that it was unbecoming for any leader to make the *rakyat* believe that politics was nothing but electricity, piped water, and the building of community centres. He explained that his party believed that there was more to politics than just that.

In his introductory message to PAS's forty-six-page manifesto entitled 'Religion, Nation and Country in Peace and Harmony', Datuk Asri pointed out that the manifesto was longer than, and different from, that of other parties because it was not only an election manifesto but also a 'manifesto of our struggle which spelt out a heavy responsibility to save our religion, nation and country from falling into the canyon of destruction and from breaking into pieces on deadly rocks'. He also pointed out that the manifesto was part of a 'long term programme to give us proper direction and a deeper understanding (of our struggle)'. Sprinkled with ambiguous metaphoric phrases, Prophet Muhammad's sayings, and Qur'anic quotations, the manifesto appeared more like a 'political testament' than an election programme. Besides Datuk Asri's three-page introductory message, the first thirty-five pages of the booklet consisted of a discussion from the Islamic perspective of a wide range of subjects such as economic reforms, fiscal policy, foreign debts, the plight of farmers and fishermen, income tax, loan interest, policy on petroleum, foreign policy, defence and security, culture and education, and the judiciary. The remaining ten pages of the booklet recapitulated and reinforced the preceding pages under a sub-heading '*Garis-garis yang akan diperjuangkan*' ('The lines that we are going to fight for'). This section was further divided into seven sub-sections, namely, (i) constitution, (ii) economy, (iii) finance, (iv) education and culture, (v) foreign policy, (vi) defence and internal security, and (vii) general

welfare of the people. Among the more salient points discussed in the manifesto was the role that Islam should play in the country, the sovereignty of Malay rulers, the guarantee of *bumiputra* political powers in the constitution, and the need to replace the current Western-oriented judicial system with Islamic laws. In a sense, the whole manifesto can be regarded as a small textbook for what Datuk Asri referred to as 'political education' for the *rakyat*. Notwithstanding the verbose language in certain parts of it and regardless of whether one agreed or disagreed with its contents, the booklet was informative, and made a useful introduction to certain Islamic political ideas. With the help of a competent teacher (speaker) explaining its contents to an audience with average intelligence in a *ceramah* session, the booklet might indeed have met the need for political education as well as been useful for electoral propaganda purposes. Unfortunately, however, the nature of the electoral campaign was such that both government and opposition speakers in most *ceramah* sessions were trapped in a kind of vicious circle of name-calling, 'pseudo-issues', and other trivialities to the extent that they simply had neither time nor inclination to speak on the noble subject of political education.

'Most of our campaigning time was wasted in rebutting wild and unfounded accusations made against us by the National Front speakers', said Hassan Shukri. He mentioned certain UMNO speakers who told their *ceramah* audiences that PAS would behead and circumcise non-Muslims if it won the election. Though such remarks were made in jest by the UMNO speakers, PAS speakers in other *ceramah* sessions could not afford to let them go unanswered. In another case, when Ustaz Shukri was seen visiting some Chinese clan leaders in Sungai Besar (Selangor), within hours rumours spread in the neighbouring *kampung* that he was entertained in a feast by the Chinese, insinuating that he had sold himself out, and thereby questioning his credibility. There were also instances in Kelantan where UMNO speakers condemned PAS leaders for accusing non-PAS supporters of being infidels, thereby

disrupting social harmony in the *kampung*. PAS sources explained that such practices were indeed popular in the 1959 and 1964 elections, but in the 1978 election accusations of infidelity were never brought out by PAS. But certain UMNO speakers referred to the 1959 and 1964 incidents and made it sound as if PAS was still making such accusations in the 1978 election.

The implication of this matter was that if the masses were really made to believe that PAS was still making accusations about 'the infidelity of non-PAS supporters', then it would create antipathy against the party, because generally the Muslim masses now believe that it is un-Islamic for a Muslim to accuse another Muslim of being an infidel. Another example of a pseudo-issue to which PAS was forced to respond was the accusation made by certain UMNO leaders that PAS had altered the first (of the five) precepts of Islam to the effect that Datuk Asri was now regarded as having assumed the role of the Holy Prophet.

Because of such fabricated rumours and non-issues raised by the National Front, explained Ustaz Hassan Shukri, PAS speakers were often distracted from explaining the manifesto. To make things more difficult for PAS, it was also bombarded with a series of insinuating questions put out by the National Front headquarters and prominently displayed in the national newspapers. One of the questions implied that PAS was collaborating with the DAP. But the party's answers to those allegations and questions were deliberately underplayed by the established mass media. Only the tabloid daily, *Watan*, gave it adequate coverage.

The biased mass-media coverage against PAS in the form of straightforward news and interpretative features was further reinforced with paid advertisements, including the reprinting of quotations from Datuk Asri's speeches made when he was a minister in the National Front government. Closer to polling day, the National Front released a poster-size picture of Datuk Asri proposing a toast in the Western diplomatic style, thus making it appear that he was drinking alcoholic liquor,

a practice forbidden by Islam. Months after the election, Datuk Asri still took the trouble to explain that the cocktail glass he was holding in the picture contained nothing more than orange juice, and emphatically told an *Utusan Malaysia* reporter: 'As far as I can remember, not a single drop of liquor has ever passed this [my] throat.'

He indirectly admitted that the picture had caused considerable damage to his image as a Muslim leader, especially in the eyes of the *kampung* folk. This admission in effect acknowledged that the mode and magnitude of the National Front's propaganda offensive was way beyond PAS's ability to retaliate against or ward off. On the other hand, PAS failed to launch its campaign systematically and effectively, so that in certain places (at least in the Federal Territory, Kelantan, and Kedah) the *ceramah* sessions deteriorated into exercises in trivialities, name-calling, and sometimes to a loud-voice contest. In one *ceramah* session in a small flat in Bungsar (Daman-sara Constituency, Kuala Lumpur) the writer observed a speaker addressing a group of less than twelve persons at the top of his voice as if he were talking at a public rally with a crowd of more than 3,000. The impression this particular speaker created was that he was more concerned about how loud his voice was than whether the party's electoral message got across to the small audience. He did not discuss the party manifesto because his main preoccupation apparently was to amuse the audience with jokes, some of which seemed to be more amusing to him than to his listeners. However, it should be pointed out that apart from the irrelevant jokes and the various trivialities, some PAS campaigners did speak about more substantial political matters of national as well as local interest.

Among the common themes PAS speakers throughout the country dwelt upon, at various levels of sophistication, were the unsatisfactory socio-economic position of the *bumiputra*, the decline of Malay political power, the decadence of moral values, the proliferation of vice, and the failure to observe the Islamic code of conduct in the government. Of course, UMNO

was made the scapegoat for causing, or for not making enough effort to remedy, this sorry state of affairs. To one of the National Front's favourite topics, namely development, PAS's most common rhetorical response was: 'What is the use of development if its fruits are enjoyed only by other people (meaning non-Malays)?'

Giving a religious slant to such rhetoric, certain speakers would argue: 'They (the National Front leaders) are obsessed with material development but they neglect spiritual development'. Besides these common themes, PAS speakers also dealt with specific local issues which varied from place to place. Personal attacks against National Front leaders were common throughout the country. But the intensity of the attacks varied according to the places and personalities concerned. In Kelantan the favourite target was Tengku Razaleigh. In Kedah it was Dr Mahathir. Several sections of the latter's banned book—*The Malay Dilemma*—were taken out of context and cyclostyled together with translations of questionable accuracy for distribution to the voters. The object of the exercise was to insinuate that the author was against Islam and had shown disrespect to the Malay race. For obvious reasons there was no acknowledgement as to the source of the leaflets. Threatening to take legal action, Dr Mahathir challenged PAS to associate itself openly with the production and circulation of the leaflets. He also challenged PAS to prove specifically and logically that his *Malay Dilemma* was anti-Malay. Responding to the latter challenge, Datuk Asri urged the government to lift the ban on the book for four hours so that the issues could be debated before an impartial chairman. This prompted Dr Mahathir to retort: 'This [Datuk Asri's request] typified his attitude to do anything to suit his interest without paying due respect of the law. He wanted to "legalize" the book for three or four hours to debate its contents. How can you make something legal for a few hours and then make it illegal again when your purpose has been served?'

Though they might not want to admit it, both sides in fact

resorted to various kinds of tactics (legal or otherwise) to serve their respective campaigning purposes. Besides the various personal attacks against Dr Mahathir, PAS in Kedah also released an eight-page manifesto specially prepared for the state. It promised to restructure the State Religious Affairs Department and to review the activities of the Kedah Development Board. In Padang Terap, as expected, the concentration of effort was on boosting Datuk Asri's image as a recognized Islamic leader whose return to Parliament should be ensured in order to continue his work in defending the faith. In Kelantan, however, Datuk Asri's name was mentioned more often by UMNO speakers than by PAS speakers. Of course, the former's frequent references to him were totally negative whereas the latter's attitude was more of benign neglect. Thus, instead of talking about Datuk Asri, PAS speakers in Kelantan were more interested in making personal attacks against Tengku Razaleigh and condemning the recently elected National Front state government. Among the issues PAS speakers were very fond of talking about were the mass dismissal of *penghulu* (local officials) by the new state government;¹⁰ the abolition of tolls for motor vehicles using the Yahya Petra Bridge; unbalanced development (which, it claimed, benefited non-Malays more than Malays, and put too much emphasis on material development at the expense of spiritual development); the alleged infiltration of communist elements into UMNO; the expansion of the Kota Bharu town limit which, they argued, would lead both to increases in quit rent and the acquisition of Malay land by Chinese; the proliferation of vices in the state as a result of the National Front's liberal policy on entertainment; and the failure of UMNO (National Front) to live up to its promises as spelt out in the March 1978 election manifesto.

Eight *penceramah tetap* (permanent speakers) were officially assigned by the party State Liaison Committee to speak in the various *ceramah* sessions throughout Kelantan. At least two of them were former PAS rebels—one contested as an independent candidate for the State Legislative Council in

1974 and the other was an active Berjasa leader earlier in 1978. In addition to these eight, of course, there were other speakers who were recruited on an *ad hoc* basis. As in Selangor, the Federal Territory, and elsewhere, some *ad hoc* speakers were recruited without being given proper instructions or guidelines on what issues to raise. I observed at least two instances, one in Kuala Lumpur and the other at the Kota Bharu campaign headquarters, where visitors were asked to speak in *ceramah* sessions without first ascertaining their political affiliations. This reinforces our earlier points that generally PAS was rather indifferent to the quality of the men who wanted to offer support and publicly identify themselves with the party. This, in turn, was a symptom as well as a consequence of the party's organizational inefficiency. And, perhaps, this is a partial explanation why Datuk Asri's hope of providing political education to the masses, fell short of any perceptible success.

The party's inherent weaknesses discussed above, in contrast with its adversary's access to various effective propaganda facilities and its manipulative abilities, all help to explain why PAS's determination to capture Kedah and to become a viable alternative party to UMNO in national politics ended in a disappointing electoral defeat. However, one should not overlook the fact that PAS mustered almost half-a-million votes; its loss in a significant number of constituencies was by very narrow margins; and its recovery of electoral influence in Kelantan after the March fiasco was significantly fast. All these, perhaps, gave some credence to Datuk Asri's assertion when he said: 'You may say that we were down, but we are not out, or you may say that we lost a battle but we have definitely not lost the war. It is a slip forced by a push but definitely not a fall.'¹¹

1. Ustaz Othman Abdullah later defected to UMNO in the early 1960s.

2. The *Surah Yassin* is one of the most popular chapters in the Qur'an (Koran).
3. *Berita Harian*, 1.7.78.
4. On 28.11.78.
5. At a seminar of the History Department, University of Malaya, on 12.8.78.
6. *Berita Harian*, 22.6.79.
7. *New Straits Times*, 22.6.78.
8. *Tempo*, 22.7.78.
9. Speech at Pokok Asam, Kedah, on 7.7.78.
10. It was assumed that most of the *penghulu*, who had been appointed by the previous PAS-dominated government, were PAS supporters.
11. *Malaysian Business*, November 1978, p. 7.

The UMNO-PAS Contest in Kedah

MAHADZIR MOHD. KHIR

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

WITH more than 70 per cent of its total population consisting of Malays, Kedah is regarded as a Malay state. The principal economic pursuit of the population is rice farming—Kedah being the rice bowl of Malaysia. Save for urban centres like Alor Setar, the capital, and Sungai Petani, the majority of the electors are rice farmers and peasants.

Kedah's involvement in national politics has been quite impressive. Such political parties as Kesatuan Melayu Kedah and SABERKAS, a radical Malay party, preceded UMNO and were very active after the war. They represented Kedah in the Malay Congress held in March 1946 in Kuala Lumpur, which paved the way for the formation of UMNO. The second leader of UMNO, and the nation's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, comes from Kedah as do other UMNO stalwarts such as Khir Johari and Senu Abdul Rahman, both of whom have been senior cabinet ministers and Secretaries-General of the party. The present Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamed, also comes from Kedah.

Since its inception UMNO commanded strong support in Kedah. Between 1952 and 1964 it won all the seats that it contested both for the Legislative Assembly as well as the Federal Parliament.

UMNO's success during that period may be attributed to

several reasons. The national leader of the party, Tunku Abdul Rahman, was an *anak Kedah* (son of Kedah) apart from being a member of the royalty. The Malay school teachers in the state, as elsewhere in the country, overwhelmingly supported UMNO. Their influence was considerable. After all, state UMNO leaders like Senu Abdul Rahman and Khir Johari were once school teachers. UMNO also enjoyed strong support from local religious leaders. Influential personalities like Tuan Haji Abdul Rahman Merbok, Tuan Haji Hussein Che Dol, and Tuan Haji Ahmad Baling were keen supporters of UMNO. After 1964, however, the erosion of UMNO's support in Kedah as indicated by the 1969 election results was principally due to the defection of significant numbers of these two groups—the Malay teachers and religious leaders—over policy matters, notably those surrounding UMNO's co-operation with MCA and MIC.

As expected, Parti Islam Se Tanah Melayu (PAS) derived support mainly from religious functionaries in the state. Formed nationally on 23 August 1951 at Butterworth, Province Wellesley, it was not until four months later that the first branch in Kedah was established at Bukit Besar. Early PAS stalwarts in Kedah included prominent local religious personalities such as Tuan Haji Osman Al-Yunus, Shukri bin Haji Abdul Shukor, and Tuan Haji Yahya Junid. Without exception, all were religious school teachers. Haji Osman Al-Yunus had his own *pondok* school in Bukit Besar. Not surprisingly it was the *pondok* schools which became the principal vehicles for the recruitment of new leaders and expansion of membership of the party. In the villages, the majority of *imam*, *bilal*, and Qur'an teachers were PAS supporters. PAS was able to harness the status and influence of these people within tradition-bound village communities.

HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

In the election of 1978 Kedah became the main battleground between the two principal Malay parties—UMNO and PAS.

UMNO considered itself to be the only Malay party which was moderate in outlook. It was still proud of its achievements as the party that won *Merdeka* (Independence) for Malaya, brought economic development to the country, and was the architect of Malaysia. UMNO has consistently declared that it is the only Malay political party that could guarantee the status of the Malay language and Islam in multi-racial Malaysia. PAS on the other hand continued to claim that it was the only Malay party which championed the cause of Islam; the struggle of PAS is considered to be the struggle for Islam. UMNO and PAS strove hard to influence the Malay electorate in Kedah. An important question is why Kedah became the focus of the UMNO-PAS battle.

For PAS, a victory in Kedah would enhance its image as a political party at the national level since it had only recently lost power in Kelantan. Kedah became the most likely alternative to replace Kelantan which had hitherto been considered as its home base and stronghold. If Kedah could be won, it would shore up PAS's position at the national level and boost the party's morale. If, on the other hand, PAS were to lose it would mean a severe setback for the party. Thus, PAS had to concentrate all its efforts on Kedah. Moreover, Kedah had been a state where PAS derived strong support in the past and its supporters in the state were considered more loyal than those in Kelantan.

The defeat in Kelantan could be attributed to the internal struggle and petty squabbling among its members which resulted in the formation of the splinter party—Berjasa. At the same time it could also be attributed to a loss of faith in Datuk Haji Mohd. Asri Muda, its national leader. PAS supporters in Kedah never questioned Asri's leadership. Indeed, Asri was requested to stand in Kedah. This request was seen as a move to enhance the morale of PAS in Kedah and thereby strengthen the prospect of victory in the state.

It had been suggested that PAS could not perform well in Kelantan in the national election because of its recent defeat in the state election. In contrast, there were grounds for op-

timism in Kedah. In 1969, PAS proved itself by winning 8 out of 24 seats at the state level while UMNO won 12. At the federal parliamentary level, PAS won 3 and UMNO 7. Its performance was considered an outstanding achievement compared to 1959 and 1964 when it did not win a single seat. In the 1974 election PAS had no opportunity to expand its influence as it had joined the National Front. In 1978 it was imperative for PAS to go all out to improve its position. It hoped that it would be able to form the government in Kedah to replace its base in Kelantan. At worst it aimed to maintain its present position as a serious opposition.

PAS in Kedah also felt obliged to defend its leader, Datuk Haji Mohd. Asri, who had been humiliated by the party's defeat in Kelantan. Many party supporters believed that no other leader could replace Asri who had guided PAS since the deaths of its two previous leaders, Dr Burhanuddin Helmy and Professor Zulkifli. Thus Asri was requested to contest a federal parliamentary seat in Kedah instead of his old seat in Kelantan. As far as PAS was concerned, Asri was invited to Kedah with the intention of enhancing the status of PAS in Kedah. He was needed to face the giant leaders of UMNO in Kedah like Dr Mahathir, Senu Abdul Rahman, Syed Nahar, and Khir Johari.

Moreover it was felt that Datuk Asri would be safer in Kedah than in Kelantan, where voting trends in the state election suggested that he might lose his seat to UMNO. If Asri had lost on his home ground the image of PAS would have suffered a heavy blow. Asri's coming to Kedah thus also carried hints of seeking political refuge.

Another theory was that Datuk Asri came to Kedah with the intention of saving PAS in Kelantan. If he had not come to Kedah, UMNO would have concentrated fully on Kelantan to annihilate Asri and PAS there. Thus the PAS strategy was to disperse the strength of UMNO over two areas rather than allow it to be concentrated in one state. It was hoped that this would enable PAS to defend itself and minimize any losses. PAS realized that it could not win in Kelantan, but it

went all out to maintain its popularity. If PAS were routed it would destroy its image altogether at the national level. This would inevitably result in loss of morale among its supporters.

Before nomination day it was speculated that Datuk Asri would contest Kubang Pasu against Dr Mahathir. It was also rumoured that he might stand in Kuala Kedah—Senu Abdul Rahman's constituency. If Asri could have defeated UMNO's Secretary-General, PAS's morale would have received a great boost. In the event it was decided that Asri would contest the parliamentary constituency of Padang Terap. The UMNO candidate was Datuk Syed Ahmad Shahabuddin, the retiring *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) of Kedah. According to PAS, Padang Terap was a safe area for Asri because in 1969 Syed Ahmad had obtained only a small majority of 952 votes over the PAS candidate, Ali Yunus. The parliamentary constituency of Padang Terap (formerly Jitra Padang Terap) was divided into two state Legislative Assembly constituencies—Kuala Nerang and Pokok Sena. Pokok Sena had become a stronghold of PAS in the 1969 election, when its candidate, Haji Ahmad Sanusi, obtained a majority of 3,650 votes over the UMNO candidate who polled only 3,305 votes. In 1974 the PAS candidate, Osman Mohd. Marzuki, easily defeated an independent and a PSRM candidate. PAS's strength in Pokok Sena might be due to the fact that Osman Marzuki was born in the area and resided in Pokok Sena while Datuk Abu Bakar Omar, the Kedah state leader, resided in Langgar—five miles away from Pokok Sena town. In local politics place of residence and family connections are often crucial in swaying the electorate during campaigns.

PAS believed that the nomination of Datuk Syed Ahmad for the Padang Terap parliamentary constituency by UMNO would be to Asri's advantage because Syed Ahmad was considered to be unpopular locally. He was regarded by many as a failure as head of the state government in Kedah and it was believed that it was for this reason that he was being moved to the Federal Parliament.

Placing Asri as a candidate at Padang Terap, it was calcu-

lated, would ensure the success of PAS against UMNO. In winning the election Asri's continued leadership of PAS would be guaranteed. PAS was also confident because it had held the Pokok Sena state constituency since 1969. In short Asri was seen as a sure winner.

BACKGROUND TO THE 1978 ELECTION

The Legislative Council meeting in Kedah on 21 December 1977, captured national attention when PAS tabled a vote of no-confidence in the Chief Minister of Kedah. The motion was spearheaded by Haji Mohd. Ramli, PAS member from Kupang, Baling. Although the motion was defeated, it enabled PAS to capture the attention of the mass media and get publicity. It seemed to be the first shot in the 1978 election campaign. At the same time, PAS was trying to create animosity within UMNO against the leadership of Datuk Syed Ahmad as the *Menteri Besar* and Head of the state UMNO Liaison Committee.

The government's position was further threatened by nature. In early January 1978 Datuk Syed Ahmad admitted through the media the seriousness of a drought in Kedah. 15,000 acres of padi land had dried up and could not produce anything. The drought threatened the livelihood of the farmers. Indirectly it would also threaten the position of UMNO in the coming election if the National Front was not able to overcome the problem. The effects of the drought would of course be exaggerated and exploited as a political issue by PAS in its effort to prove that UMNO failed to improve the plight of the poor farmers, particularly the rice planters.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN STYLES

Although public rallies were banned, the government permitted campaigning through *ceramah* (dialogue sessions). This style of campaigning was not totally strange or new to either

party. In past elections, PAS and UMNO had utilized this style on a rather modest scale. Another form commonly used was the *kempen rumah ke rumah* (house-to-house campaign). In 1978 both the *ceramah* and *kempen rumah ke rumah* styles were used.

A *ceramah* is a dialogue session between a speaker (or speakers) and voters who are mainly party supporters, which is held at a supporter's house or in the house compound. In a Malay village, where the community is usually closely-knit, neighbours know each other well. Some are related in extended families while others are related through marriage. The owner of the house plays an important role in determining the success of a dialogue session. If the owner is held in high esteem by the community, the session will automatically enjoy equivalent prestige, virtually assuring a large audience. The reverse is also true. When the owner does not enjoy any social standing, the audience tends to be small.

The *penceramah* (speaker at the dialogue session) is another factor in determining the success and the outcome of these sessions. The credibility of the speakers is of paramount importance. Apart from the candidate, the speakers are of four types, namely:

- (i) local speakers from the same village or neighbouring villages;
- (ii) representative(s) of the candidate or the information officers of the party;
- (iii) representative(s) of the party from headquarters (mainly from Kuala Lumpur);
- (iv) V.I.P. speakers ranging from Ministers, high party officials, and senators, to formal and informal leaders who are sympathetic to the cause of the party.

The choice of speakers for the dialogue sessions sometimes became a political issue. PAS accused UMNO of using university students as speakers while UMNO reacted by hurling similar accusations. Other voluntary youth organizations, such as Belia 4-B and ABIM, were also utilized by both parties to woo the electorate. Generally speakers in categories (iii)

and (iv) attracted larger audiences compared to speakers in categories (i) and (ii). Each party tended to believe that the size of the audience was a positive indicator of support by the electorate. It was true that Asri commanded a large and enthusiastic audience when he spoke at Padang Terap. It was equally true that Mahathir inspired a huge and jubilant audience where he spoke during the campaign.

However, political analysts pointed out that audience sizes are not a reliable indication of party support. Party supporters were often greatly attracted to hear 'what the other party had to say'. This was more fun than to hear 'the same old tune' day after day.

The credibility of the speaker, as mentioned earlier, played an important role in the dialogue sessions. The speaker's credibility hinges on two factors: (i) personality; and (ii) qualifications. These two factors, in turn, are dependent on the norms and the socialization process of the particular area. Generally speaking, in the Kedah Malay community, speakers who received religious education are beyond reproach. As such, religious teachers, *imam* (prayer leaders), *kadhi* (religious judges) and officials from Religious Departments were speakers who enjoyed high social status because they could not only give advice but perform important religious functions over life and death matters. Whatever they uttered was seldom questioned, let alone challenged. In addition ministers, party leaders, university lecturers, and students, especially non-Kedah residents, generally enjoyed large audiences.

One week before the Election Day, 'the house-to-house' style became operational. This style of campaigning is known by several local terms, namely:

- (i) *kempen bisik* (whispering campaign);
- (ii) *gerak/kempen kesot* (slow-approach/movement campaign).

Both UMNO and PAS used this style of campaigning skilfully and effectively. UMNO utilized its Kaum Ibu (women's section of UMNO) assisted by Pemuda UMNO (youth section

of UMNO) and its executive members. PAS, however, had a different strategy. Male supporters initiated the campaign followed by the women. This was, interestingly enough, in accordance with the Islamic way of life.

The main objectives of this style of campaign were:

- (i) to re-inforce the commitment of its party supporters;
- (ii) to 'close the deal' with party sympathizers;
- (iii) to persuade the indifferent or undecided voters;
- (iv) to win over the rival party's supporters at the last minute; and finally
- (v) to ensure that the voters go to the appropriate polling station.

In order to accomplish the above objectives, pamphlets, party symbols, polling-day information, and last minute advice were given. In general, UMNO and PAS used this style of campaigning in certain designated areas considered to be 'their own territory' and did not encroach on the other party's territory. These areas were determined according to the number of *ceramah* held. Non-designated areas outside the 'territory' of either party were considered to be free zones for everybody. In short, despite the explosive nature of the election campaign, certain unwritten rules of gentlemanly conduct were observed by both parties.

ELECTION ISSUES

The issues raised during the dialogue sessions apparently played a role in influencing part of the electorate. Although many of the voters had determined their choice prior to the election day, election issues played a dual function. Firstly, they enhanced the morale of the supporters and the party itself. Secondly, they were designed to capture and lure undecided or unconvinced voters. Hence, the nature and sensitivity of the issues to be raised were carefully weighed and selected in order to have the desired effect and impact.

When any issue is raised by one party it is automatically regarded as a challenge by the other party. Failure to respond

and to give the required rebuttal would be construed as a weakness of the party that is challenged. For example, PAS raised doubts about the ability of UMNO to implement the Syariah (Muslim) Law in a multi-racial society. It became paramount for UMNO to answer categorically, point by point, these doubts in its dialogue sessions. The defence should be made immediately and without any delay. If UMNO failed to respond it would not only antagonize its own members but would be regarded as disgraced and weak.

The issues raised during the dialogue sessions can be roughly classified into three major categories, namely:

- (i) national issues;
- (ii) state issues; and
- (iii) local issues.

Usually national issues were raised by campaigners from Kuala Lumpur or other non-residents of Kedah. State issues are naturally raised by campaigners who are Kedah-born while local issues are raised by informal leaders residing in that particular constituency. On the whole, the issues raised centred on the question of Islam, the economy, communism, party leadership (if the party won the election), and the Kelantan state crisis. However, the greatest concentration of effort in terms of money and manpower deployment was focused on two issues, namely:

- (i) the religion of Islam;
- (ii) the Kelantan state crisis.

In the case of the Islamic issue the focus was actually on the *akidah* (belief) of Islam. UMNO's main argument was directed at what UMNO leaders viewed as the obsolete and constricted interpretation of Islam by PAS leaders. Adding insult to injury UMNO pointed out the failure of PAS to turn Kelantan into an Islamic State even though PAS had been in power for nineteen years. Without a model Islamic state to point to, how could PAS ever dream of converting other states in Malaysia to the Islamic ideal? On the other hand, PAS consistently reminded UMNO of its dismal failure to propagate, let alone implement, Islamic policies. More-

over UMNO had failed to make Islam the sole official religion of Malaysia. Concretely, PAS pointed out UMNO's violation of basic Islamic principles by licensing gambling on a large scale, for example, at the casino at the Genting Highlands Hotel, and the licensing of liquor stores and many other activities and sources of state revenue contrary to the teachings of Islam.

The most fascinating and violently debated issue was the crisis in Kelantan state. It was the end of the 'beautiful partnership' between UMNO and PAS. UMNO claimed that PAS was the culprit responsible for the breaking of the partnership between UMNO and PAS in the National Front. For the voters of Kedah, who are predominantly Malays, the National Front was regarded as a sacred bond, symbolic of Malay unity. UMNO repeatedly claimed that PAS's failure in Kelantan was mainly due to its leaders. It was clear at the outset that UMNO's attack was on the leadership of PAS and *not* on PAS as a party. This tactic was deliberate so as not to antagonize PAS supporters who still believed in the UMNO-PAS partnership of the National Front. In fact, UMNO offered an explanation: PAS lost the elections in Kelantan because the electorate could no longer tolerate the leaders of PAS. The moral of the story was to warn the electorate in Kedah not to make the *same* mistake. PAS, naturally, pointed out the other side of the coin. The crisis in Kelantan was concrete proof of the 'evil' intentions of UMNO towards PAS. This, PAS added, was a dirty tactical manoeuvre by UMNO to prevent PAS from reaching its aspirations of establishing an Islamic state. PAS further accused UMNO of exploiting the sensitive situation by painting a totally inaccurate picture to the electorate in Kelantan and the nation as a whole through the mass media. To PAS, the crisis was an internal and private matter of the party. UMNO had no right whatsoever to interfere in the crisis on the pretext of national security. Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh, according to Datuk Asri, were the culprits mainly responsible for aggravating the already troubled waters in Kelantan. Their interference, con-

sequently, escalated the crisis to its apex. In this manner, PAS reiterated, UMNO was able to destroy PAS, thereby re-establishing itself as the new state government under the tutelage of unscrupulous UMNO leaders.

PAS defended itself by pleading to the electorate that the situation in Kelantan was not what UMNO wanted them to believe. Even though UMNO, the power centre of the National Front, had tried to put obstacles in the path of the PAS government in Kelantan, PAS was able to develop the state like the others. Instead, PAS argued, it was Kedah and Trengganu, under the rule of UMNO, which were 'under-developed' (as officially declared by the Federal Government) compared to the other states in Malaysia.

1978 ELECTION RESULTS

Before discussing the 1978 election results, it is instructive to first look at the constituencies. Each federal parliamentary constituency contains within it two State Legislative Assembly constituencies. A voter in any particular area is thus represented by two different representatives at the state and federal levels. More importantly, they *need not be* of the same party. In Malay areas where UMNO and PAS were the principal contestants four patterns appeared in 1978 as illustrated by Table 5.1.

In combination A, UMNO won the federal seat and both the state seats within the constituency. In combination B the federal and both the state seats in the area were won by PAS. The third combination, C, is where UMNO won the federal and one of the two state seats while PAS won the remaining state seat. Finally, there is case D where PAS won the federal seat while UMNO and PAS won one each of the state seats.

The following seats could be regarded as UMNO and PAS strongholds respectively since 1969 as each party has been able to hold its seats since the general election of that year. UMNO 'areas' include: Kubang Pasu (P), Jitra (S), Jerlun-Langkawi (P), Langkawi (S), Kuala Kedah (P), Pendang (S),

TABLE 5.1
Areas in Kedah where UMNO and PAS were
the Principal Contestants in the 1978 Election

<i>Combination A (Parliamentary Seat)</i>	<i>Combination B (Parliamentary Seat)</i>	<i>Combination C (Parliamentary Seat)</i>	<i>Combination D (Parliamentary Seat)</i>
1. Kubang Pasu (UMNO)	1. Kota Setar (PAS)	1. Jerlun Lang- kawi (UMNO)	1. Baling (PAS)
2. Padang Terap (UMNO)		2. Kuala Kedah (UMNO)	
3. Kuala Muda (UMNO)		3. Ulu Muda (UMNO)	
		4. Jerai (UMNO)	
<i>(State Seats)</i>	<i>(State Seats)</i>	<i>(State Seats)</i>	<i>(State Seats)</i>
1 (a) Tunjang (UMNO)	1 (a) Langgar Limbong (PAS)	1 (a) Langkawi (UMNO)	1 (a) Bayu (UMNO)
(b) Jitra (UMNO)	(b) Bukit Raya (PAS)	(b) Jerlun (PAS)	(b) Kupang (PAS)
2 (a) Kuala Nerang (UMNO)		2 (a) Anak Bukit (PAS)	
(b) Pokok Sena (UMNO)		(b) Pengkalan Kundur (UMNO)	
3 (a) Jeniang (UMNO)		3 (a) Sik (PAS)	
(b) Merbok (UMNO)		(b) Pendang (UMNO)	
		4 (a) Sala (PAS)	
		(b) Yan (UMNO)	

Jerai (P), Jeniang (S), and Merbok (S). PAS 'areas' comprise Jerlun (S), Anak Bukit (S), Kota Setar (P), Langgar Limbong (S), Bukit Raya (S), Kupang (S), and Sala (S).

Only a handful of marginal seats changed hands as a result of the 1978 election. The Tunjang state seat was formerly held by PAS but UMNO managed to win it in 1978. The

same happened to PAS's parliamentary seat of Padang Terap. The Parliamentary seat of Baling, a former UMNO seat, was won by PAS in 1978. Save for these few constituencies, however, both UMNO and PAS were able to retain their traditional seats.

It had been predicted that as a result of the Kelantan fiasco, PAS would lose more seats in Kedah. Events, however, proved this unfounded. Except for the federal constituency of Padang Terap and the state constituencies of Pokok Sena and Tunjang, which were won by UMNO, the party made little headway in other areas. Even in Pokok Sena, it could be said that UMNO won by default. It had been expected that PAS would romp home in the area, but its candidate's nomination was disqualified. PAS did not consider the defeats in Padang Terap, Pokok Sena, and Tunjang as absolute. It fared no worse than in 1969. It was obvious therefore that the Kelantan crisis had little effect on PAS in Kedah.

One hypothesis to come out of the results in Kedah is that Malay voters' behaviour remained very much uninfluenced by the campaign promises and tactics of the two parties. As Mahathir Mohamed himself admitted: 'Not only have the Malays in the villages decided on their party allegiance, but also they were happy to indicate them. At rallies and dialogue sessions, they turned up in full force proudly displaying their party symbols, and stickers and wearing their badges.'¹

The crisis in Kelantan failed to affect PAS's performance. Nor apparently were PAS supporters in the areas of Jerlun, Sala, Langgar Limbong, Bukit Raya, and Anak Bukit—the padi areas within the Muda irrigation scheme—influenced by the government's development efforts in these areas. Their loyalties were still to PAS. The same may be said of UMNO supporters. That the PAS national leader, Datuk Asri, contested in Padang Terap instead of his usual constituency, Nilam Puri in Kelantan, and stood against an unpopular state UMNO leader and *Menteri Besar*, still did not significantly swing the voters away from UMNO to PAS. PAS's calculation that Padang Terap, in view of the poor standing of UMNO's

TABLE 5.2
Parliamentary and State Seats by Party,
1964-1978

	1964		1969	
	Parliamentary	State	Parliamentary	State
UMNO	10	18	7	12
MCA	2	5	2	2
MIC	-	1	-	0
PAS	0	0	3	8
Gerakan	-	-	-	2
Total	12	24	12	24
	1974		1978	
	Parliamentary	State	Parliamentary	State
UMNO	8	12	9	14
MCA	2	2	2	3
MIC	-	-	-	1
PAS	3	9	2	7
Gerakan	-	1	-	1
DAP	-	1	-	-
Independent	-	1	-	-
Total	13	26	13	26

- indicates that the party did not contest;

0 indicates that it contested but lost all seats.

candidate, would be an easy seat for Datuk Asri proved unfounded and he lost.

The single most important reason for UMNO's success was the influence and role of Mahathir Mohamed. As was the case when Tunku Abdul Rahman was the Prime Minister, Kedah people in 1978 are still proud to have another 'son of Kedah' in a top national position. UMNO supporters were hopeful that by delivering their votes to UMNO and keeping Kedah in UMNO's hands, Mahathir's standing would be enhanced nationally. Hopes were even expressed that he might be the

next Prime Minister after Datuk Hussein Onn. Furthermore, by ensuring UMNO's victory it was hoped that more development projects would be undertaken in Kedah.

In conclusion it may be said that there had been no major changes in UMNO-PAS positions in Kedah as a result of the 1978 elections compared to each party's performance in 1969 and 1974. For both UMNO and PAS, the 1978 election conformed to the past trend in the state.

1. Dr Mahathir Mohamed in Alias Muhamed, *Sejarah Perjuangan PAS: Satu Dilemma*, Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Publications, p. vi.

Communal Parties and the Urban Malay Vote: Perspectives from Damansara

MOHAMED ABU BAKAR

THE Malaysian electoral process assumed a new dimension in the 1978 election when the non-Malay opposition parties, the DAP and Pekemas, entered the contest for the Malay vote. This contrasted with earlier elections when the competition for the Malay vote was almost entirely between the Malay-based parties. It appears that this encroachment into the 'preserve' of UMNO, PAS, and Partai Rakyat was a manoeuvre to provide themselves with a less 'Chinese' image. Furthermore, these parties were confident that they now stood a good chance of securing increased Malay support. Their decision set the tone for a tougher—and hence more interesting—fight in several constituencies, notably in the Federal Territory and the states of Selangor and Perak.

THE PARTIES AND THE URBAN MALAY VOTERS

The approaches made by the DAP and Pekemas to gain a Malay following were generally confined to Malay concentrations in predominantly Chinese urban areas. Predominantly Malay urban centres and rural areas were on the whole left undisturbed. Nevertheless, the direct overtures made by these new contenders in such urban enclaves or elsewhere meant that UMNO, PAS, and Partai Rakyat would no longer have the entire field to themselves. More importantly, the efforts

by the DAP and Pekemas must be seen as directly related to the former's strategy to attain a majority following and take over some of the state governments.

The urban Malays in the Chinese-dominated areas seemed a promising source of support for the socialist-oriented DAP and Pekemas. Since most were relatively poor, these parties could easily play on their economic backwardness or capitalize on their grievances with government policies. They could thus hope to influence them to break their primordial ties with the Malay parties, notably UMNO, which had earlier thrived on their support. Secondly, the Malay vote was important to these parties because of the increasing number of Malays residing in the predominantly Chinese towns and cities. The expansion of urban employment opportunities had resulted in heavy Malay migration to these places, the proportion of Malays living in the urban areas growing at a faster rate than that of the Chinese.¹ Thirdly, there was also the likely prospect of these Malays wanting a strong opposition in parliament or in the state assemblies which could 'draw attention to things done or not properly done although they do not have the power to direct government departments to get such things done'.² The DAP and Pekemas too could cater to their needs in the absence of a viable Malay opposition party.

Faced with this challenge, it was crucial for UMNO to retain its Malay following in both the urban and rural areas. UMNO, which saw itself as the sole voice of Malay political aspirations and economic expectations, claimed that the Malays, whether rural or urban, must rally behind it because it alone had the recipe for the progress and security of the Malay people. Although the ruling UMNO held an advantageous position because of its past performance in championing the cause of the urban Malays, the moves made by the non-Malay opposition to wean away urban voters forced it to mount a massive propaganda campaign aimed at undermining the credibility of its rivals by, among other things, fanning Malay fears of a Chinese-dominated Malaysia. Nonetheless, since it was PAS which posed a more formidable

threat to the party, even in urban areas, UMNO was forced to concentrate more on its traditional enemy. PAS, as usual, was portrayed as failing to come to grips with the practical issues in the country, and its presence in urban constituencies was considered as disruptive of Malay unity. UMNO leaders alleged that the party had resorted to religious bigotry as its political weapon and argued that by totally accepting Islam Malay economic progress and social advancement would be hindered. UMNO's implicit concern about the PAS proposal to make Islam the basis of Malay life and the Qur'an the country's constitution was in fact seldom spelt out in public. Instead UMNO leaders stressed the government's efforts at building hundreds of mosques, religious schools and the like, in order to demonstrate its concern for Islamic needs.

With its strong Islamic appeal, PAS was able to widen its support among the urban Malays. The growing commitment to Islam shown by the younger generation among the urban dwellers may perhaps prove to be a turning point in the party's struggle. The Islamic political ideology propagated by some Muslim organizations had struck a spark in the hearts of many urban Malays.³ In the eyes of the Barisan Nasional government, PAS had found in the Muslim youth movement, A.B.I.M.,⁴ a dependable vehicle for the promotion of Islam in the towns and cities. At the same time, the party also managed to continue to draw a good deal of its strength from the general Malay fear of Chinese economic dominance.

Partai Rakyat, on the other hand, was not a major contender for the urban Malay vote. On the whole, the party lacked wide appeal among the Malays, even though its leaders boasted that it was fast increasing its following in the East Coast states of Trengganu and Pahang. On the other hand its 'Malay communal posture' deterred non-Malays from supporting the party. In the urban centres of the West Coast, where there were large concentrations of Malay factory workers, squatters, and low-paid government servants, Partai Rakyat attained little success. Apparently, the party's socialist policies and ideas did not prove to be congenial to the

Malays and its participation in the election posed almost no challenge to the other contenders. In fact, of the Malay parties, the Partai Rakyat suffered most from the intrusion of the DAP and Pekemas.

Both the DAP and Pekemas had made earlier attempts to win Malay support. The DAP, for example, managed to gain ground in certain Malay areas. In Perak, the party was able to recruit several Malay leaders, including Diang Ibrahim, who became prominent for his role in augmenting the DAP rural base by securing Malay support. In Selangor, the backing of some Malay groups gave the DAP further reason for optimism. However, it is difficult to ascertain the strength of Malay support for the DAP. At best, one can only conjecture that its political stance made only a slight impression because of the Malay belief that they would stand to lose if a DAP government were established. Pekemas's confidence in capturing urban Malay votes was similarly buoyed by the increasing support the party received in some Malay areas, especially in the state of Selangor (where many of its supporters were former followers of Partai Marhaen, who followed their leader, Ahmad Boestamam, in switching to Pekemas). Probably to attract more Malays, Pekemas appointed some Malay leaders and even promised to appoint a Malay as *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) of Selangor in the very unlikely event of that state being won by the party.⁵ Although Pekemas had a reputation of being less Chinese in outlook and therefore supposedly more appealing to the Malay electorate, its leadership was poor, and the Malays among them were mostly old-timers who had failed dramatically in political life. Its popular support was extremely limited.

THE CONTEST FOR DAMANSARA

The one area where a contest occurred for the urban Malay vote involving all the above parties except the Partai Rakyat was Damansara. The competition for Malay support here represented a microcosm of the struggle among the Malay

and Chinese parties. Moreover, the participation of PAS for the first time in the Federal Territory gave additional importance to the Damansara constituency election.

The Constituency

Damansara constituted one of the five parliamentary constituencies of the Federal Territory where Kuala Lumpur is located. The others were Setapak, Kepong, Sungei Besi, and Kuala Lumpur Bandar. Except for Setapak which had a Malay majority, the rest were predominantly Chinese areas. In the case of Damansara, however, the Malays formed a large minority—roughly 25,000 or 37 per cent of the total population (see Table 6.1).

Generally, the Malays of Damansara may be described as 'urban people' in the sense that they were part of urban Malaysian society and tended to uphold 'urban concepts of life and worldview'.⁶ There were two main groups: the lower income group which comprised mostly squatters and the 'well-to-do' Malays who included members of the country's élite. Malays in the former group were largely concentrated on the urban periphery in densely populated villages and squatter colonies, where they lived in ramshackle houses under sub-standard conditions, such as in Kampong Kerinchi, Kampong Abdullah Hukum, Segambut, Kampong Pantai, and in the smaller settlements on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur city. Malays in the latter group, who were more sophisticated and in some cases very westernized, lived either in such 'high class' residential neighbourhoods as Bukit Kenny, Lake Gardens, and Damansara Heights, or in ethnically mixed government quarters⁷ which could be found scattered through the Damansara area and in the city of Kuala Lumpur itself. It has been noted that 'colonial urbanization in Southeast Asia had been attended by the residential compartmentalization of the various ethnic groups',⁸ and this was also the case in Damansara. While areas such as Kampong Kerinchi, Sungai Penchala, and Kampong Abdullah Hukum were almost 100 per cent Malay with only a handful of Chinese and Indians,

TABLE 6.1
Estimated Racial Composition of Federal Territory Constituencies

<i>Constituencies</i>	<i>Malays</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>(%)</i>
1. Kepong	10,000	(16)	45,000	(71)	8,000	(13)	50	(-)
2. Setapak	45,000	(64)	20,000	(29)	5,000	(7)	300	(-)
3. Damansara	25,000	(37)	30,000	(44)	12,000	(18)	400	(-)
4. Kuala Lumpur Bandar	6,000	(11)	42,000	(81)	4,000	(8)	100	(-)
5. Sungei Besi	15,000	(19)	60,000	(75)	5,000	(6)	100	(-)

others like Kampong Raja Laut and Brickfields had big Chinese and Indian concentrations respectively.

The 'have-nots' among the Damansara Malays generally worked in the industrial areas of Petaling Jaya or in low-paying government jobs, while those residing in the villages worked as rubber tappers and household servants, some only employed on a casual basis. As to their origins, many were 'outsiders'; that is they were either Indonesian immigrants (for example the inhabitants of Kampong Kerinchi and Sungai Penchala)⁹ or Malays from other states who had come in search of employment. There were small numbers of 'pure' Damansara Malays whose original rural *kampung* had now become urban due to the natural expansion of the city limits. The Malay 'haves', who formed a much smaller group, were mostly government officials or successful businessmen.

The Parties

UMNO was the strongest political organization in the Malay areas of Damansara. As the Barisan Nasional candidate in the Damansara election was an MIC man with little contact with the Malays in the constituency, UMNO was entrusted with the role of fighting for the urban Malay vote on Barisan Nasional's behalf. At the time of the election, it had thirty branches in the Damansara constituency and several thousand registered members. The branches in Kampong Kerinchi, Rumah Pangsia Kampong Kerinchi, and Kampong Haji Abdullah Hukum Bersatu were among the largest with memberships of the order of 680, 600, and 555. The smaller ones, like Bukit Lanjang, Kampong Pelambayan, Lembah Maxwell, and Segambut Luar had about one hundred members each.¹⁰ Of the UMNO branches in Damansara twenty-two were in the squatter areas.¹¹ It has been claimed that about 20 per cent of the Malay population in the constituency was actively involved in supporting UMNO and in Sungai Penchala, for example, the party in the recent past had been able to attract 'a majority of the adult inhabitants of the village'¹² to become members. UMNO's popularity apparently sprang

from its record of tangible achievements in championing the cause of the urban Malays, such as its efforts at stopping the Urban Development Authority (UDA) from taking over land in Bukit Lanjang and Sungai Penchala, obtaining a water supply for the inhabitants of Segambut, and seeking government help to allow those affected by the construction of a sewage plant in Pantai Halt to resettle in nearby areas.¹³ Another factor which had given UMNO a position of strength was the fact that it had operated almost unchallenged in the area for many years in the absence of alternative contenders for the Malay vote.

UMNO Damansara was not free of troubles, however. The problems which beset the party included intra-party squabbles and conflicts with the other parties within the Barisan Nasional. In the aftermath of the Harun affair,¹⁴ for example, several of his supporters became disillusioned with the party. More significantly, there was dissatisfaction among party followers over the failure of the Barisan Nasional (and earlier the Alliance) to nominate an UMNO candidate for the constituency in spite of its large Malay population. Their demand that the government appoint a Malay senator from UMNO as a substitute also went unheeded.¹⁵ And then there was the break-up in UMNO-PAS relations in 1977 resulting in the latter being ousted from Barisan Nasional. Several Malays, incensed by the decision, left UMNO and joined PAS.

PAS was a newcomer to Damansara but it was able to establish a substantial following in several areas. It first made inroads about two years before the election and at that time had barely 200 members. Since then PAS had increased its membership and by the time of the election had between 2,000 and 2,500 members.¹⁶ Altogether there were three PAS branches (of which one opened just before nomination day) in Damansara. The party had strongholds in Kampong Kerinchi, Pantai Dalam, and Sungai Penchala.¹⁷ Reportedly, about 90 per cent of PAS followers were former UMNO members, and some were even former UMNO party officials. Initially, they crossed over to the new party to protest against

certain branch leaders of UMNO or because of dissatisfaction with government urban policies. But the real exodus from the old party occurred in the wake of PAS's expulsion from Barisan Nasional in 1977 which was resented by those who stressed Malay unity and Islam. With growing religious consciousness among the Malays arising generally out of *dakwah* (missionary) activities, the movement of Malays from UMNO to PAS began to increase. On the other hand, the attempt by PAS to champion the cause of the squatters made little impact as people still believed that only the party in power could deliver the goods. Hence PAS, in its competition with UMNO, was forced to appeal to Malay sentiments (which paid a lot of dividends) and concentrate on the Barisan Nasional's overall failure to live up to Malay political and economic expectations.

Although the DAP's intrusion into the Malay areas of Damansara was, like PAS's, quite recent, it was not new to the constituency and was already popular among the Chinese and Indian populations. In the 1964 general election, the Bungsar parliamentary constituency—which covered part of the present Damansara constituency¹⁸ was won by the People's Action Party (PAP), the forerunner of the present DAP. In 1969 the newly-formed DAP won again but lost in 1974 to the Barisan Nasional candidate, S. Subramaniam. Over these years the DAP paid little attention to the Malays, at best only mounting a feeble campaign in the Malay areas. Only recently had the DAP begun to make serious moves to win the Malay vote. Its activities were mostly confined to such areas as Kampong Kerinchi and Segambut where there were large numbers of working-class Malays. This sudden change of policy reflects the party's strategy to gain Malay support in an attempt to give itself a more multi-racial character. Not many Malays turned to the DAP and those who did were mostly from Kampong Kerinchi or similar working-class quarters. According to one source, the few who went over to the party wanted to earn some money (*cari rezeki*). The same also applies to Pekemas's performance in the Malay areas.

The party, which had made its presence felt among the Malays earlier than the DAP, attempted to win Malay votes by voicing its concern over the plight of the poor urban Malays. It appears that what little support the party received from the Malay community came from former followers of the defunct Partai Marhaen in the Segambut area. The party also attracted some support from among the die-hard followers of Datuk Harun.¹⁹ Therefore, in the final analysis, the contest for the Damansara Malay vote became essentially a battle between UMNO and PAS, with the DAP and Pekemas relegated to the background.

The Candidates

Three of the four candidates were men of some standing in their respective parties. S. Subramaniam, the sitting member and Barisan Nasional candidate, was the best known of the four. After winning the last election, Subramaniam became the youngest Barisan Nasional MP, and was later appointed Deputy Minister for Local Government and the Federal Territory, a post which carried considerable weight (positively or negatively) in the context of the Damansara constituency election. He was also Secretary-General of the MIC.

Syed Ibrahim Syed Abdul Rahman, who ran on the PAS ticket, had made a name for himself as a student politician, youth leader (he was a former International Vice-President of A.B.I.M.) and a lawyer. He had received his legal training in England, and had previously worked with MARA before opening his own firm in Kuala Lumpur. Aged 30, Syed Ibrahim seemed a potential national leader of PAS.

V. David of the DAP was a veteran politician, but his past record was not necessarily an asset to his party. In 1959, he had already won the Bungsar seat for the Labour Party. In 1964, he lost to Devan Nair of the PAP when that party made its debut on the Malaysian scene following the inclusion of Singapore in the new federation. Some time later he joined the newly-formed Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan) and in 1969 won the Dato Keramat seat in Kuala

Lumpur. Then, before finally turning to the DAP, V. David switched from Gerakan to Pekemas. He was also a well-known union figure as Deputy Secretary-General of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) and Secretary-General of the Transport Workers' Union (TWU).

R. S. Menon,²⁰ the Pekemas candidate, was almost unknown politically and received little publicity in the media. He was a clerk with the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, at the time of the election.

The Issues

Although the contending parties addressed themselves to a variety of problems during the course of the campaign, there was a marked tendency to emphasize the social malaise which was peculiar to urban areas such as Damansara. Questions of basic amenities for urban dwellers, overcrowding on the land, resettlement of squatters in low-cost flats and the like featured prominently in the *ceramah*, which were occasionally held, and in the leaflets circulated in the area. Another important aspect of the campaign was the appeal made by both UMNO and PAS to Malay sentiment.

UMNO campaigned on the basis of its past record. The people were constantly reminded that they had no alternative but to rely on the government for help to alleviate their common suffering. Previously they had been given land on which to settle, multi-storeyed flats in which to live, and other facilities to enable them to overcome the problem of adjusting to the urban environment. Hence, it was argued, it was necessary for them to vote for the Barisan Nasional candidate. Otherwise it would be difficult for the government to bring in modern amenities like piped water and electricity. However PAS and the DAP contested UMNO's claim to be a dependable vehicle for the development and progress of the urban Malays. In the main, their contention was that the party had made only a slight contribution to uplifting the standard of living among these people. In a move to discredit the work of UMNO, PAS campaigners revealed that squatters

wanting to move to government-provided flats were required to pay \$28,500 which was surely beyond their means. The result was that the majority resorted to renting the flats, while the unoccupied units were sold to people from outside.²¹ The building of a sewage plant in Kampong Pantai Halt was also cited as a case of the people's protest going unheeded. PAS also emphasized that about 70 per cent of the residents of Kampong Kerinchi had been living on land which did not belong to them, and no steps had been taken to remedy the situation. A similar stand was taken by the DAP. The government was accused of paying lip service to the demand for housing, of not championing the cause of the oppressed, and pursuing policies that mostly benefited a few 'Malay capitalists'. The DAP specifically raised the issues of the government's inability to supply water to the people of Kampong Tengah, Segambut, and its failure to overcome the problems caused by housing shortages in the Bandaraya area of Bungsar.²² Pekemas took a similar line in its attack on the government for its failure to give special attention 'to the disadvantaged among the Malays'.²³ This tendency to stress the poor conditions found in Damansara was natural. Most of the squatter areas were densely populated and the people themselves had often in the past seen their houses pulled down by demolition squads sent by the government. Also, the area had always been subject to flooding. The rival parties had thus sensed a certain undercurrent of resentment among the people towards the ruling authority.

Malay unity and Islam were issues in their own right which drove UMNO and PAS into taking almost opposite stands. Support was urged for UMNO on the grounds that only UMNO was capable of uniting the Malays in the face of the challenge presented by the Chinese and Indians. But PAS maintained that UMNO had failed miserably and that the only course available was to rally behind PAS. The Kelantan debacle²⁴ was good propaganda material for UMNO and the party made use of it extensively to show that PAS rule would bring neither Malay unity nor economic prosperity. PAS's

opposition to the Barisan Nasional was given as further proof of the former's attempt to split the Malay vote, which therefore made nonsense of its claim to being the champion of Malay unity. On matters concerning Islam, both sides worked hard to appeal to religious sentiment. UMNO claimed that it had done a lot for Islam, and pointed out as examples the establishment of the *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Centre) and the *Tabung Haji* (Haj Fund) as evidence of the party's commitment to looking after the welfare of Muslims in the country. In reply to PAS's plank which pledged to implement Islamic laws, UMNO answered that such a move was impractical and that the people should not be fooled by such a political stance. Undaunted by the counter-attacks, PAS persisted in saying that Islam was as relevant to multi-racial Malaysia as it was to seventh-century Saudi Arabia and commented that UMNO had resorted to aiding Islamic bodies purely to check the rising tide of the party's influence.

A great deal of emphasis was also laid on the candidates fielded by UMNO and PAS. UMNO, supporting an Indian, tried to paint a good picture of him but it was almost to no avail. Joining the campaign, the MIC President, Manickavasagam, sought to convince Malay voters that his candidate was as capable of carrying out his duties as a Malay candidate. 'A victory for Mr Subramaniam is a victory for the National Front although he is an MIC candidate'²⁵ was one of his campaign messages. But PAS asserted that during his tenure as deputy minister, the candidate had been unable to extract from the government significant concessions for the Malays. Therefore there was a strong need for a Malay MP for Damansara who could work for his own people, and in that matter PAS could provide a solution in the person of Syed Ibrahim.²⁶

The Campaign

Campaigning in Damansara started in earnest very soon after nominations. UMNO and PAS were very much in the forefront in trying to contact as many Malay voters as pos-

sible. This was a new feature as lack of competition in the past meant that UMNO had been able to take Malay support for granted. A poster war was in evidence with posters mainly depicting party symbols and pictures of the candidates. UMNO and PAS posters were displayed throughout the Malay areas while a limited number of DAP 'Rockets' were also pasted in these villages. The Pekemas banners were found in only one or two places, such as Segambut, where the party claimed to have many supporters. The parties conducted their campaigns through branches or sub-branches both within and outside the Damansara constituency. UMNO, which operated through its thirty-odd branches in the region, had its headquarters in a flat turned into an operations room while the Barisan Nasional had separate headquarters. PAS also had headquarters in the area while Pekemas, which had only one branch, and the DAP, which had none in the area, had to rely more on their party headquarters located outside the Damansara constituency. Later, following Pekemas's withdrawal from the election and its candidate's decision to band together with V. David, the DAP took over its Bukit Bangsar branch and turned it into its own operations room.

Both UMNO and PAS seemed to have many workers. Many UMNO campaigners were party officials who were assisted by twenty UMNO supporters from Kelantan whose job was to instil fear of the possibility of PAS winning or ruling the country. The Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, also took a personal interest in the Damansara election and visited the constituency three times. Much house-to-house canvassing was undertaken by UMNO followers, including several women who went about under the pretext of selling *batik*. PAS, too, relied on both party officials and voluntary helpers. The latter comprised mainly teachers from local universities, Indian Muslims, and personal friends of Syed Ibrahim who happened to be A.B.I.M. members as well. The presence of these close associates of the PAS candidate gave rise to the charge that A.B.I.M. actually spearheaded the campaign for the party. The PAS president, Mohd. Asri, also took part and

visited Kampong Kerinchi on the very day the Prime Minister made his appearance there. However, in the case of PAS, there was a conspicuous absence of women among its campaigners. Both parties seemed well-financed. UMNO received big handouts from the Barisan Nasional while PAS, which had to contest the election in a weakened state because of the defeat it had suffered in Kelantan, managed to do extensive campaigning without much financial difficulty because it received many donations from well-wishers and sympathizers.

In their attempts to capture Malay votes, neither the DAP nor Pekemas tried to reach a maximum number of electors. This was understandable considering that the two parties still relied heavily on the support of the Chinese and Indians, and realized, perhaps, that at this stage no amount of hard work could bring the majority of the Malays to their side. Nevertheless, in their drive to enlist Malay support, both the DAP and Pekemas did send some of their campaigners into Malay villages and squatter areas. V. David himself undertook house-to-house campaigning and, following his withdrawal from the election, the Pekemas candidate, R. S. Menon, also joined forces with him in espousing the party's socialist line to the Malay voters.²⁷ Several Malays were also involved in the campaign.

In view of the ban on rallies, all the parties, not excluding UMNO, had to operate within certain constraints. But the party most affected was PAS which normally thrived on big rallies as a vehicle for reaching the maximum number of people. In order to put across its views to as many Malays as possible, PAS resorted to a zoning system. Under the system, the Damansara constituency was divided into seven *kawasan* or areas, in which *ceramah* or talks were given daily.²⁸ Some organizational difficulties nevertheless arose even though PAS had enough manpower. There was, firstly, the question of coordinating the party election efforts. Secondly, several of the PAS volunteers were unfamiliar with campaigning. Thirdly, being a newcomer, PAS encountered resistance in areas where

the people were already used to living under UMNO influence. In one such instance, in Segambut, PAS speakers were not allowed by local people to hold their *ceramah* session. Similarly, the DAP faced difficulties in entering the Malay areas to campaign and therefore, it has been alleged, its workers were forced to use cars bearing PAS symbols. This was denied by V. David who maintained that 'his workers were too disciplined to resort to such tactics' and that there was no need for the DAP to use such tricks to enter Malay areas as 'Malay voters are not hostile to us'.²⁹ It appeared that this story about PAS and DAP banding together in an 'unholy alliance' was part of the Barisan Nasional's nationwide campaign against the two parties. 'The aim', as one writer puts it, 'was to discredit PAS to its Malay supporters and the DAP to its Chinese sympathizers'.³⁰

The press also played a significant role in the campaign. Although all the parties and the respective candidates were given coverage by the newspapers, the Barisan Nasional and Subramaniam somehow were given special treatment. The *New Straits Times* and the *Malay Mail* generally gave good publicity to the MIC man by describing him in favourable terms. In one article he was said to have 'spent the early part of his four-year tenure as Damansara MP learning more about the problems of the people and towards the later part, managed to implement quite a number of projects'.³¹ His pledge to solve the problems of wholesalers was featured in the *New Straits Times*,³² and the visit of Hussein Onn to the constituency received headline news.³³ *Watan*, on the other hand, gave much coverage to PAS and its candidate, Syed Ibrahim. In different issues of the paper, space was devoted to highlighting the personality of the candidate and the party's chance of securing enough votes to win.³⁴ Subramaniam was also featured in *Watan* although the paper did not show the sort of goodwill to him that the other two papers did. Whatever space *Watan*, the *New Straits Times*, and the *Malay Mail* gave to the DAP consisted mainly of attacks on the party and mild criticisms of the candidate, V. David.

The response of the Damansara Malays to these overtures illustrated the growing feeling of insecurity of people living in downtrodden villages and squatter areas on the periphery of the city. The 'haves' among the Malays, however, were generally indifferent to the approaches made by the campaigners, possibly because they felt they had practically no vested interests in the result. They were, after all, well-fed and well-housed. Thus, when the election day arrived it was the poor Malays who eagerly rushed to cast their votes. In spite of the morning drizzle in several areas, there was a big turnout. Most flocked to the Barisan Nasional (UMNO) booths to have their names on the electoral registers checked before casting their votes but in some areas, such as Kampong Kerinchi, almost equal numbers of people were attracted to UMNO and PAS booths, an indication that the parties were equally influential in that village.

The Results

Altogether 45,584 people or 67.75 per cent of the total electorate cast their votes. V. David, the DAP candidate, polled 21,461 votes which gave him a majority of 3,222 votes over Subramaniam, who received 18,239 votes, followed by Syed Ibrahim, who secured 5,386 votes. The Pekemas candidate, R. S. Menon, drew 161 votes despite his withdrawal from the election.

The DAP won the election mainly through the Chinese and Indian votes. The party derived its support at the expense of Subramaniam who had the supposed advantage of incumbency. Some Malay votes might have gone to V. David but most were split between Barisan Nasional and PAS. Several Barisan Nasional leaders believed that PAS's entry was responsible for the split in the Malay vote and Subramaniam's defeat. It was further contended that PAS stood in the election as a 'spoiler' without any prospect of victory. But the argument that the party had entered the electoral contest without any confidence of winning or simply out of spite was rather far-fetched considering the composition of the

Damansara voters and the racial origins of the other three candidates. In the first place, PAS was attracted by the presence of about 25,000 Malay voters in Damansara who, if they had all cast their votes for Syed Ibrahim, would have given him an easy victory. Secondly, PAS was also banking on the possibility of a split in the Indian votes as all the other candidates were Indians. And thirdly, PAS also expected to get some votes from the Chinese—the group which formed the majority in Damansara and was unenthusiastic in supporting the Barisan Nasional.

The fact that Subramaniam still managed to receive about 20,000 votes demonstrated that the Barisan Nasional continues to have a good following in the urban areas, including the urban Malays. The various projects that the UMNO campaigners had stressed and the promises they made apparently made an impact on the minds of many Malays. Barisan Nasional, or UMNO, was still regarded as the party capable of delivering the goods on their behalf. Some, such as the flat dwellers of Bukit Damansara,³⁵ were reported to have unswervingly backed the party for fear of adverse consequences (government reprisals) if they were to do otherwise. But certainly, the many Malays who switched their allegiance from UMNO to the other parties must have done so with good reasons. The choice of an MIC candidate had greatly impaired Barisan Nasional's capacity to woo Malay voters who possibly thought that the party, in trying to be generous to the MIC, had overlooked their demand for a Malay candidate. One source noted that Subramaniam's 'lack of concern' about the National Electricity Board (NEB) workers' strike some time before the election had also cost his party many Malay votes as a substantial number of NEB workers were Malays. Further, the appeal to workers made by the country's union leaders to support any unionist standing for election must have brought some Malay votes to V. David as there were Malay bus drivers and conductors as well as other workers living in Damansara who belonged to the various trade unions in the Federal Territory. But more than any-

thing else, it was PAS's debut which drained off crucial Malay votes from the Barisan Nasional candidate.

The more-than-5,000 votes won by PAS must have come mainly from the Malays with only some from the Chinese³⁶ and perhaps a few from the Indians. PAS was able to cash in on Malay dissatisfaction with UMNO, which had not shown itself in the past because of the lack of an alternative. How far PAS was successful in getting Malay support by using the wide appeal of Islam is difficult to gauge. Possibly not very many were influenced by the party's advocacy of Islamic aspirations. One could even conclude that PAS failed, especially considering that it had made a major effort to win or at least gain a good footing in the area. Its votes only represented one-fifth of the total. One observer attributed PAS's unsuccessful bid to its neglect of the women-folk who formed half the electorate. Being more susceptible to threats, the women voters were said to be more conservative and anxious that the authorities should not 'disturb' their day-to-day lives. Thus when PAS showed little initiative in bringing them to its fold, the Malay women retained their preference for the party in power.

The Malay votes which went to V. David must have come from several groups of people. There were firstly those Malays who were attracted to the party because of the candidacy of V. David, a unionist who was as popular among Malay workers as he was among the other races. Secondly, there were those who were followers or supporters of Pekemas who voted for the DAP simply because the former had withdrawn from the election. And thirdly, there were possibly Malays who cast their ballots as protest votes in favour of the DAP or voted for the party out of the desire to see an opposition leader win the election.

The overall results suggest that, on the whole, voting, even in an urban constituency like Damansara, is still on racial lines. The Malays mostly voted for either PAS (represented by a Malay) or Barisan Nasional (which was seen as in fact Malay dominated). The Indians supported either V. David

or Subramaniam, both of whom were Indian in origin. The Chinese, who had no Chinese candidate to support, apparently spread their votes between the DAP and the Barisan Nasional, with the majority going to the former.³⁷

Conclusion

The campaigns of the various parties in the Damansara contest demonstrated their concern to secure the Malay vote which is now recognized as the most crucial factor for the attainment or retention of national power. The DAP, which has begun to improve its credibility within the Malay community, will naturally try to present a more appealing image of itself in the future to get a bigger following. The Malays can be expected to remain suspicious of the DAP but as more of them get increasingly restive in the urban areas as a result of economic difficulties,³⁸ the party may be able to capitalize on this discontent.³⁹

PAS is still able to gain rich electoral rewards by playing 'upon the two themes of Malay chauvinist nationalism and the political obligation of the state to preserve and promote the Muslim religion'.⁴⁰ The attempt by the Barisan Nasional to contain the party's growing influence by calling the election a year before schedule did not seem to undermine its strong vote-getting power. Apart from exercising a hold over the rural Malays, the party has now found some popularity among the urban Malays.⁴¹ However, PAS may not be able to advance its larger political purpose—the establishment of a non-racial Islamic state—if it continues to remain communal in its approach. Because, by so doing, the party's short-term tactic undermines the achievement of its long-term goal.

As for the Barisan Nasional, it has now lost most of its appeal not only to the urban Chinese and Indians, but also to part of the urban Malay community as well. The urban Malays, who had already been questioning the government's big land and urbanization projects which they believed were more beneficial to the non-Malays,⁴² had also been feeling that the New Economic Policy 'was only good for the rural

voters'.⁴³ They were therefore an easier target for the propaganda campaigns of the Barisan Nasional's two strongest rivals in the urban area, the DAP and PAS. What new political line will be adopted by the Barisan Nasional to stem the tide of popularity achieved by the respective opposition parties remains to be seen. But what is clear so far is that the whole thrust of the Barisan Nasional's and UMNO's efforts has been essentially pragmatic and devoid of any ideological commitment. In other words, UMNO has not been able to promote political values that can continuously command esteem even among the Malays, and as such it will face future elections with difficulty when it comes to competing with other parties on an ideological basis.

As far as the urban Malays are concerned, one can conclude that they will only respond to political appeals quite different from those that attract their rural counterparts. The task ahead therefore is a challenge not only to the Barisan Nasional but also to the other parties.

1. Lee Boon Thong, 'Malay Urbanization and the Ethnic Profile of Urban Centres in Peninsular Malaysia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, September 1972, pp. 224-5. Urbanization among the Malays as a matter of fact was not a new phenomenon. The Malays had been drifting to the towns and cities for jobs and trading activities since World War II. See Hamzah Sendut, 'Contemporary Urbanization in Malaysia', in Y. M. Yeung and C. P. Lo (eds.), *Changing South-East Asian Cities: Readings on Urbanization*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, p. 76.

2. *New Straits Times*, 6 July 1978.

3. It is only partly true that this 'new urban phenomenon' (Islamism) was a reaction towards materialism and the West. Chandra Muzaffar, 'Malaysia—The National Front On Trial', *Southeast Asian Affairs 1978*, ISEAS, Singapore, p. 156. In fact, more significantly, the growth of 'Islamism' among the urban Malays was due to their greater understanding of the tenets of the religion itself.

4. A.B.I.M. stands for Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia). The organization denied the charge that it had been involved in partisan politics. See 'ABIM dan Politik', *RISALAH*, July-August 1978.

5. See Mokhtar Shuib, 'Pembangking Ghairah Nak Tawan Selangor dan Perak', *Watan*, 28 May 1978.

6. Several writers prefer to describe some of these people as being not strictly urban. A. Maulud Yusuf, for example, in his study of Kampung Sungai Penchala, an 'urbanizing Malay village', observes that the people there still exhibited 'the characteristic appearances of other rural communities in the country'. A. Maulud Yusuf, 'Cultural Adaptations In An Urbanizing Malay Community', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Rice University, 1976, p. 37. E. J. Judd categorizes them as people 'who live in the city, but they are not part of it . . . their lives seem to gravitate in a sort of twilight zone between their locations on the outskirts of the Federal Territory and their ties to a culture which is not urban-based'. E. J. Judd, *Squatter Housing in Kuala Lumpur*, Malaysia, 1966, p. 3.

7. See T. G. McGee, *The Urbanization Process in the Third World*, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London, 1971, pp. 131-2.

8. Lee Boon Thong, 'Pattern of Urban Residential Segregation: The Case of Kuala Lumpur', *Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol. 43, December 1976, p. 41.

9. See, for example, Tunku Shamsul Bahrin, 'The Pattern of Indonesian Migration and Settlement in Malaya', *Asian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1967, p. 236.

10. *Senarai Jumlah Ahli UMNO Cawangan-cawangan Dalam Bahagian Damansara*, Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu, Bahagian Damansara.

11. Interview with Encik Abdul Razak Abu Samah. Encik Razak was Head of UMNO Damansara and the party's director of elections during the recent general election.

12. Abdul Maulud Yusuf, 'An Urbanizing Malay Village: Some Aspects of its Social Organisation', in H. M. Dahlan (ed.), *The Nascent Malay Society*, Jabatan Antropoloji dan Sosioloji, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1976, p. 159.

13. Interview with Encik Abdul Razak Abu Samah.

14. See Chapter 2 above.

15. Interview with Encik Abdul Razak Abu Samah.

16. Interview with Encik Yusuf. Encik Yusuf was PAS Publicity Officer for Damansara during the recent general election.

17. The party was particularly popular among the Malays of Javanese, Bajau, and Bawean origins.

18. The Federal constituency of Damansara includes the former Parliamentary constituency of Bungsar in addition to Segambut, Tiong Nam, and Chow Kit.

19. UMNO Damansara however was quick to point out that the 'Harun affair' had little damaging impact on the party. But the Pekemas candidate, R. S. Menon, said that his party was able to receive some sup-

port from the followers of the former *Menteri Besar* of Selangor. Interview with Encik R. S. Menon.

20. Thinakaran s/o Rajakannu, as his name appeared on the ballot papers, is better known as R. S. Menon.

21. *Masaalah-masaalah Orang-orang Melayu Damansara* (PAS party leaflet).

22. Interview with V. David. See also *Siapa Merasa—Siapa Menderita?* and *Sudahkah Merdeka Basmi Kemiskinan?* (both DAP party leaflets).

23. *Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia* (Pekemas party leaflet).

24. See article by M. Kamlin in this volume.

25. *New Straits Times*, 6 July 1978.

26. *Inilah Calon Anda* (This is your candidate) (PAS party leaflet).

27. Interview with R. S. Menon. In giving reasons for his withdrawal and later throwing of support behind the DAP, R. S. Menon noted that the idea was to avoid splitting the opposition votes. *New Straits Times*, 3 July 1978.

28. *Gerakan Ceramah Pilihanraya Umum Pas Kawasan Damansara*, PAS Damansara (n.d.).

29. *New Straits Times*, 29 June 1978. V. David told the author that several Malay workers who took him as their 'natural' leader even went to the extent of offering their houses as places for the DAP's *ceramah* and political meetings.

30. Ismail Kassim, *The Politics of Accommodation—The Analysis of the 1978 Malaysian General Election*, Research Notes and Discussion Papers, No. 10, ISEAS, 1978, p. 44.

31. Ratan Singh, 'Two Faces of Damansara', *Malay Mail*, 4 July 1978.

32. 'Wholesalers Get a Pledge from Subramaniam', *New Straits Times*, 27 June 1978.

33. 'Rousing Welcome for Hussein to Damansara', *Malay Mail*, 3 July 1978.

34. See 'Pas Yakin Pengundi Damansara Pilih Syed Ibrahim', *Watan*, 26 June 1978, 'Syed Ibrahim Optimis Menang', *ibid.*, 6 July 1978, and 'Pengundi Cina Jumpa Asri', *ibid.*, 6 July 1978. *Watan* was owned by the disaffected former UMNO leader, Khir Johari.

35. Interview with Syed Ibrahim, PAS candidate for Damansara.

36. See *Watan*, 6 Julai 1978.

37. Subramaniam, the Barisan Nasional candidate, claimed that he received only 20 per cent of the Chinese votes. See A. S. Nayagam, 'Why the National Front lost the Big Tussle in Damansara', *New Straits Times*, 23 July 1978.

38. Alvin Rabushka notes that 'the genuine concern in urban Malaya is economic, even though it invariably takes on communal overtones'. Alvin Rabushka, *Race and Politics in Urban Malaya*, Hoover

Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1973, p. 70.

39. Lim Kit Siang, *Time Bombs in Malaysia*, Democratic Action Party, Petaling Jaya, 1978 (second edition), p. xv. According to V. David the DAP is at present gaining new ground in several Malay areas in the Federal Territory constituencies of Setapak and Kepong as well, apart from maintaining its old position in Damansara. Interview with V. David.

40. G. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1976, p. 227.

41. This may be regarded as an extension of an earlier development in 1969 when PAS's appeal 'was rapidly spreading to urban enclaves, where Malay youth and workers, as well as a growing number of Malay intellectuals, found it attractive'. Karl von Vorzys, *Democracy Without Consensus*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1975, p. 262.

42. See R. S. Milne, 'The Politics of Malaysia's New Economic Policy', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 2, p. 254.

43. *New Straits Times*, 15 July 1978.

The Democratic Action Party and the 1978 General Election

MICHAEL ONG

ALTHOUGH not due until August 1979, the general election had been expected in 1978 by all political parties. The question was not whether but when in 1978. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) raised various issues during the last quarter of 1977. These included calls on the Government to lift the ban on political rallies and to release two DAP members who had been detained under the Internal Security Act.¹ In Parliament, it moved two motions on the issue of Human Rights, one on Chinese schools and Tamil education, and a no-confidence motion against Datuk Lee San Choon, the Minister for Labour and President of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). It also moved a Private Member's Bill to amend the National Bureau of Investigation Act (1973) so as to make it a fully independent agency answerable to Parliament, and free it from political and Ministerial influence or interference so that it could combat corruption in high political places.² These moves were no doubt made with an eye on the impending general election. Finally, in January the Secretary-General of the DAP, Lim Kit Siang, called on the party to be prepared for a general election to be held 'within 90 days' and he speculated that it 'may be held any time' from April to September.³

In this study of the DAP and the 1978 general election, our main focus will be on the problems faced by the party and how it tried to overcome them. The issues raised by the

party and those by the Barisan Nasional (BN) against the party as well as the results will also be examined. We will begin by looking at the state of the party before the election.

THE DAP BEFORE THE ELECTION

The DAP, before the election, was clearly in some disarray despite its claim to the contrary. Three main events accounted for this state of affairs. The first was the Penang DAP crisis which erupted in January 1978 and resulted in the formation of a breakaway party, the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), under the leadership of the former Penang DAP chief, Yeap Kim Guan. The second, in May 1978, was the resignation from the party of Fan Yew Teng, a party stalwart and its International Secretary. Then Diang Ibrahim, the party's National Vice-Chairman and Chairman of its National Rural Bureau, resigned on the eve of nomination day.

The Penang DAP crisis was, in a sense, long overdue and had its origins in the 1974 general election when the party won only two state seats.⁴ Several Penang DAP leaders blamed Yeap Kim Guan for the defeat, as did the national leaders. In a speech after the 1978 crisis, Lim Kit Siang stated that 'the fatal weakness of Penang DAP in the 1974 general election was the image of irresponsibility of the DAP Penang, created and reinforced by the utterances and actions of the DAP Penang leader at that time'.⁵ However, there were other reasons for the party's lack of success,⁶ a key factor being the redrawing of the electoral boundaries. It would appear that whatever disagreements existed between the Penang DAP leaders since the 1974 election were allowed to simmer until late 1977 when the Central Executive Committee (CEC) decided 'to reform the Penang DAP to make it a more broad-based and democratic organisation'.⁷ The issue that brought things to a head was the CEC's decision to co-opt Karpal Singh, a member of both the Kedah State Assembly and the CEC, into the Penang State Standing Subcommittee. This was opposed by several members of the

Penang Committee who felt that Karpal Singh had not acquitted himself well as a state assemblyman and accused him of trying to establish party branches in Penang without the permission of the Committee.⁸ The State Committee's refusal to accept the directive of the CEC led to its suspension and takeover by the CEC which appointed an interim committee consisting of Lim Kit Siang, P. Patta, the National Organizing Secretary, and their Penang ally, Peter Dason, as well as Yeap Kim Guan and his supporter, Ismail Hashim. The party also suspended Chua Ban Hock, the leader of the Bagan Jermal branch, for breach of party discipline when he openly attacked Karpal Singh in a Chinese newspaper.⁹ Over the next few days, various branches in Penang issued statements supporting or rejecting the action of the CEC. Yeap Kim Guan declined to accept his new appointment in the interim committee on the grounds of its 'legality and its formation' and because it was 'against the wishes of the majority'.¹⁰ He subsequently left the party and was joined by Oh Keng Seng, the DAP MP for Petaling in Selangor. Together, they formed the SDP which was registered in June, just in time to contest in the election.

In many ways the Penang DAP crisis was the result of failures in the party leadership and organization. Disagreements were not dealt with effectively but allowed to continue unsettled. In addition, the party organization was allowed to slide following the disappointing results of the 1974 election. Moreover, national leaders were more concerned with issues in Parliament as well as their own immediate interests.¹¹ These various factors meant that local leaders were able to pursue their own objectives. As Lim himself admitted, the situation in Penang 'had been even more serious and unhealthy than the CEC had thought' when it met in January. By then, according to Lim, Yeap and his supporters had created 'a party within a party'.¹² If the party organization had been effective, the national leaders would have been more aware of developments within the Penang DAP. As it turned out the CEC had to resort to the drastic action of dissolving the

Penang Committee and imposing direct control in the interests of party discipline. The party, according to Lim, was not prepared to allow 'the carving up of DAP Malaysia into different autonomous camps of influence each presided over by a state warlord'. He also claimed that Yeap and his supporters had been thinking about 'an alternative party symbol as far back as November 1977' and that they had 'decided to force a showdown with the CEC on the eve of the next election, when they would present the CEC with a slate of candidates for Parliamentary and State Assembly seats which they would not permit the CEC to amend or alter, the consequences being the threat of a mass pull-out from the party on the eve of nomination day'.¹³

The party's confidence that the crisis was over could be seen when the leadership of the Penang DAP was handed over to Peter Dason and Karpal Singh who treated the challenge of the SDP with contempt during the campaign. The DAP saw the quick registration of the SDP before the elections as an attempt by the BN to use that party to destroy the DAP. Although Yeap was confident that his party would perform better than the DAP, claiming that the DAP Penang was 'a mere shadow' of the national party 'which was also disintegrating',¹⁴ Peter Dason regarded the opposition parties as 'mosquito' groups and referred to the SDP as the 'Save Deposit Party'.¹⁵ In the election all the SDP candidates were defeated and most lost their deposits, including the two SDP leaders, Yeap Kim Guan and Oh Keng Seng, who had stood respectively against Karpal Singh and Peter Dason. Thus it would appear that the Penang crisis did not greatly affect the party's fortune during the election.

The second issue that the DAP faced was the resignation of Fan Yew Teng. Fan's resignation came as a bolt from the blue to most people. In a letter dated 18 May to Lim Kit Siang, he resigned from his positions as CEC member and International Secretary of the DAP as well as from the party. This was 'in protest against the continued refusal of the DAP to condemn, openly and unreservedly, the systematic, con-

sistent and ruthless repressions by the PAP in Singapore, a refusal adversely compounded by your advocacy that the PAP be readmitted to the Socialist International'. In his second letter dated 19 May, he elaborated on the remarks made by Lim at the Socialist International Party Leaders' Conference in Tokyo on 17 December 1977.¹⁶ These remarks, according to Fan, 'have helped confirm that the DAP is duplicitous about human rights at best and opportunistic at worst'.¹⁷ He then listed, in some detail, the failings of the Singapore PAP Government on the issue of human rights. The long and the short of Fan's letter, for our purpose here, was his claim that some DAP leaders, while condemning the abuses of human rights and the Internal Security Act in Malaysia, were not prepared to do so in the case of Singapore because 'of their close personal ties and stakes in Singapore'.¹⁸

Fan's resignation was given wide press coverage and was potentially very embarrassing to the DAP. The party's reaction was deliberately low-keyed. To Lim Kit Siang, Fan's action 'was not a complete surprise . . . except for the timing and the mode of resignation'. He admitted that the resignation 'has made the enemies of the DAP, the National Front on the one hand, and the mosquito opposition parties whose sole aim is to "subvert and destroy" the DAP, very happy'. While regretting the political parting of ways, he was saddened that Fan, 'to find an honourable political exit from . . . the political arena in Malaysia, has chosen the DAP as the whipping boy'. He denied the contention of Fan that the party had differentiated between Malaysia and Singapore in its condemnation of the Internal Security Act and pointed out that in the Malaysian Parliament in March he had stressed the need for an 'ASEAN Commission on Human Rights to protect and advance human rights . . . and to bring to an end the detention-without-trial laws like the Internal Security Act in Malaysia, Singapore and other ASEAN countries'. He then tried to use Fan's resignation to the party's political advantage by saying that 'Fan is a good example of the Malaysian nationalist who, because of the repressive actions

he had personally suffered, has been driven into disenchantment with the constitutional and democratic process'. He ended his statement on Fan's resignation by wishing Fan 'the very best in whatever new endeavours he has embarked upon'.¹⁹

The BN naturally used Fan's resignation as political capital during the election campaign. Datuk Senu bin Abdul Rahman, the UMNO Secretary-General, predicted that 'there will be more leaders to follow' Fan and claimed that Lim Kit Siang's 'dictatorial and double-standard attitude' would only bring adverse effects on the party.²⁰ On nomination day, Datuk Hussein Onn claimed that the 'DAP is facing a split day by day' and that the party 'is totally wrecked'.²¹ The SDP also used Fan's resignation by circulating his press statement in reply to Lim as an election pamphlet. This statement listed several events and incidents within the party which he alleged showed that the DAP was controlled by the PAP of Singapore. He challenged the 'Gang of Three', i.e. Chen Man Hin, Party Chairman, S. Seevaratnam, Party Treasurer, and Lim Kit Siang to 'redeem themselves by proving that they are not sycophantic or subservient to the repressive PAP' by issuing a joint statement condemning the PAP Government.²²

Apart from the initial statements, the DAP made few references to Fan's resignation during the campaign. According to Lim Kit Siang, Fan's absence from the country since 1975 meant that the public had heard nothing about him and consequently his resignation had very little impact on the voters who were more concerned with domestic issues rather than the Singapore issue.²³ However, it was privately admitted by several DAP State leaders that some of the party's rank and file were concerned.²⁴ Nevertheless, in the election Fan's former parliamentary seat of Menglembu was retained by the DAP with an increased majority despite the claim by the Perak MCA that Fan had 'neglected the constituency',²⁵ while Fan's state seat of Petaling Jaya in Selangor would most likely have been easily won if the DAP's candidate had not been disqualified on nomination day. The resignation

of Fan from the party, then, would appear to have made very little impact on the party's fortunes in the election.

The resignation of Diang Ibrahim was more damaging to the party than it would admit. He was the party's most prominent Malay leader and held the important positions of National Vice-Chairman, Chairman of the National Rural Bureau, Vice-Chairman of the party in Perak, as well as Chairman of the Gunong Rapat branch. He resigned on the eve of nomination day over differences with the party leadership in the allocation of seats. According to his supporters, he resigned 'because he has not been allowed to recontest the state seat of Pasir Puteh'.²⁶ The reason given by the party for switching his seat was that the electorate in the constituency was unhappy with him. Diang replied that the decision 'came from a handful of people and not from the CEC as claimed' and added that he 'would not be surprised if a number of Malay DAP candidates picked to stand did not file their nomination papers'.²⁷ In the event, of the 25 DAP Malay state candidates in Perak, 5 withdrew from the DAP after nomination and 1 was disqualified. Of the 5 DAP Malay parliamentary candidates from Perak, 1 withdrew. Apart from Perak, no other Malay DAP candidates withdrew. That not more Malay candidates from Perak withdrew from the election needs to be explained.

A major weakness of the DAP has been its relative lack of support among the Malays. Since its formation the party has tried to overcome this problem but with little success. In part, the non-Malay image of the party was the inevitable outcome of the party's decision to concentrate initially on the urban areas.²⁸ Success in the rural areas was to elude the party until after the 1974 election but by 1976 the party was making some headway among the Malays, particularly in the state of Perak.²⁹ According to a DAP Malay leader, Mohd. Fazlan bin Yahaya, 32 of the 68 branches in Perak before the 1978 election were predominantly Malay.³⁰ This, however, was not achieved without conflict among the DAP Malay leaders themselves. The Malay leadership came from three

geographical areas of Perak. The first group, led by Diang Ibrahim, was strong around Ipoh and was favoured by the CEC. The second, under the older leadership of Ibrahim Singgeh, Salleh Nakhoda Itam, and Abu Samah, had support in central Perak while the third, under the younger Mohd. Fazlan Yahaya, had influence in north Perak with pockets of support in the other areas of the state. There was some resentment against the leadership of Diang, in part because he was an 'outsider', being a Johorean, and in part because he was appointed by the CEC in 1977 to head the national as well as the state DAP Rural Bureau despite a 'no-confidence' vote against him by 28 of the 32 Malay branches. The reason for the CEC's decision, according to Lim Kit Siang, was that it was not sure of the other Malay leaders at that time, particularly because of the rapid expansion of Malay branches.³¹ The DAP's experience with some of its past Malay leaders had not been encouraging.³²

With the approach of the election, two lists of Malay candidates were drawn up, one by Diang and the other by Fazlan who was the Perak DAP Youth leader as well as the organizing secretary of the Rural Bureau. The majority of the candidates were selected from Fazlan's list. Diang, who was tipped to be the *Menteri Besar* should the DAP win power in Perak, felt humiliated. The final straw came when he was asked to switch seats at the last moment by Lim Cho Hock, the Perak DAP Chairman. He no doubt felt that he was let down by the party leaders. The reason for switching Diang from Pasir Puteh to Chemor was the fear that, though it was a 'strong' DAP area, the seat might be lost if Diang contested it again. Several Perak leaders mentioned local complaints that Diang had failed to serve the constituency well. The seat was given to Chian Heng Kai, the detained MP for Batu Gajah, who won comfortably.³³

It was alleged by the DAP state leaders that Diang was 'bought over' by UMNO and that he then set about to persuade other DAP Malay candidates to withdraw from the election. Diang himself had anticipated this allegation when

he said that he had resigned before the nomination to avoid accusations of being 'bought over'.³⁴ Although it was later reported that he campaigned for the BN, the fact remains that he resigned not because of overtures made by the BN but because of his disillusionment with the party. The DAP had supported him as the leader of its Rural Bureau, yet rejected many of his candidates for nomination and then switched his seat at the last moment. An analysis of how the DAP awarded seats to be contested will give us a better understanding of Diang's resignation and it is to this that we will now give attention.

ALLOCATION OF CANDIDATES AND SEATS

The selection of candidates in the DAP is controlled by the CEC. Clause XI 7(f) of the party's constitution states that 'the nomination of candidates to contest seats . . . shall be the sole prerogative of the CEC, and all decisions of the CEC in this matter shall be final and absolute'. In practice, DAP candidates were selected by the party's Election Committee, which is dominated by the CEC. Most of the party's parliamentary and state candidates, particularly in seats which were viewed as party 'strongholds', were members of the CEC itself. In the marginal seats, the party fielded secondary leaders of proven loyalty and in seats which the party had not contested before or had no hope of winning, potential leaders from local branches or defectors from other parties were nominated. The nomination list of the DAP candidates for the 1978 election was not finalized until 18 June, two days before nomination day. On that day, the party held a Special Congress in Kuala Lumpur where Lim Kit Siang emphasized the need 'to make personal sacrifices for our political beliefs' and warned that 'there is no such thing as a personal seat in the DAP. Every seat, even won and held by a DAP leader, is a Party seat, and it is up to the Party to decide who should stand where'.³⁵

In party 'strongholds' it was believed that candidates con-

testing for the first time would have no problem in winning. However, there was a danger in renominating sitting members who had failed to carry out their constituency duties. Consequently, several serving members including Farn Seong Tham and Diang Ibrahim were given more difficult seats to fight while others were not renominated at all. This led to several problems. In Diang's case, the party's decision tended to alienate potential Malay supporters who jumped to the conclusion that the Chinese within the party had been 'using' the Malays to serve their own purposes.³⁶ In the case of Kampar, the serving assemblyman agreed to retire but because his own nominee was not selected, decided to stand again as an independent. In Pangkor, the selectors bowed to the wishes of the local branches to renominate the sitting member despite their better judgement and the candidate lost.

An important change was Lim Kit Siang's nomination in Petaling (Selangor) instead of his home base in Kota Melaka in order 'to set an example to the other party leaders although personally he would prefer to remain in Malacca where he had served for two terms'.³⁷ The reason given by the party was that the seat of Petaling had been 'spoilt' by the former DAP MP, Oh Keng Seng, who had crossed to the SDP, and that the party was 'determined to demonstrate to the people of Petaling its seriousness in wanting Petaling to remain a powerful base of the DAP'.³⁸ Petaling has traditionally been an opposition stronghold and there appeared little likelihood that it would be lost. However, the disqualification of the DAP candidate for the state seat of Petaling Jaya, one of three within the Petaling parliamentary constituency, posed a threat as the Petaling Jaya seat with 51,468 voters was much larger than the other two state seats with only 16,049 and 23,093 voters respectively. The DAP feared that voters in Petaling Jaya might vote the same way for both state and parliamentary candidates. Moreover, a few days before the election a pamphlet, issued in the name of the hitherto unknown 'Chinese United Front' and written as if it were in support of the DAP, urged voters 'to stay at home

and not come out to vote'. This, the party claimed, was the work of the MCA.³⁹ In the end, however, Lim won the seat.

The selection of candidates did not satisfy some party hopefuls and several left the party with accusations of 'dictatorship' and 'favouritism'. But such behaviour was not the monopoly of the DAP. The major parties of the BN all had to expel members who either stood as independents or supported opposition parties when they failed to receive nominations.⁴⁰

The selectors for the DAP at the national level were Dr Chen Man Hin, Lim Kit Siang, and Lee Lam Thye. At the state level the State Chairman had a large say though the final selections were still subject to the approval of the national leaders. In the 1978 election the DAP was keen to ensure that some of its second echelon leaders such as P. Patto, Karpal Singh, and Chan Teck Chan were elected to Parliament and they were given seats which the party was confident of winning. At the state level, the competition was more intense, particularly in cases where party hopefuls had been working for some time in a particular constituency. Some were not chosen but given other seats to contest, often creating problems as local supporters might be reluctant to campaign for 'outsiders' and even be hostile. Furthermore some activists prefer to work for a particular candidate in the constituency to which he had been nominated rather than in their own constituency.

Despite all these problems, the DAP, unlike the BN, found itself lacking in candidates for some seats that it wished to contest and had to persuade individuals to stand. According to a party leader, some had to be 'begged' to accept the party's nomination. In such seats the party was prepared to accept candidates who were not even members of the party or were relatively new members. There are of course inherent dangers in this, as in the case of Richard Ho in 1969 who subsequently joined the MCA and later became a Minister. To minimize this, all candidates now have to sign two letters

before nomination, one an undated letter of resignation addressed to either the Speaker of the State Assembly or Parliament, and the other an undertaking to contribute part of the elected representatives' allowances to the party fund as well as not to resign from the party if elected.⁴¹ Only after signing the letters were they given the letter of authorization to stand as DAP candidates.

In the placing of candidates, the DAP generally followed the maxim that 'the community of the candidate must correspond to the predominant community in his constituency'.⁴² Nevertheless, there were exceptions such as one parliamentary seat in Perak with a Malay majority, where it was felt that a Malay candidate might not be able to carry enough of the Malay vote so the party nominated a Chinese who won. In general, however, the number of Malay constit-

TABLE 7.1
Distribution of DAP Candidates
by Ethnic Origin, for State and Parliamentary
Seats, in the 1974 and 1978 Elections

State	Malay				Chinese				Indian				Others			
	1974		1978		1974		1978		1974		1978		1974		1978	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
Kedah	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Penang	1	2	-	-	4	19	2	12	2	1	3	3	-	-	-	-
Perak	4	13	5	25	9	18	15	13	1	3	1	3	-	-	-	-
Pahang	1	-	1	7	1	4	2	7	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Selangor	2	7	1	3	2	10	4	7	2	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
F.T.	-	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Negeri Sembilan	1	7	1	5	2	5	2	8	1	5	1	3	-	-	-	-
Malacca	-	1	1	7	1	7	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Johor	-	2	-	-	6	10	6	11	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sabah	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	9	32	9	47	29	73	35	63	8	14	9	12	-	2	-	2

Source: Report on the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections 1974 of the States of Malaya and Sarawak and *New Straits Times*, 10 July 1978.

encies contested by the DAP can be roughly gauged from the number of Malay candidates contesting under its banner. The table on p. 148 shows the distribution of its candidates by ethnic origin and the states they contested in for both state and parliamentary seats. For comparison, the figures for the 1974 general election are also given.

Overall the DAP contested more seats, 53 parliamentary and 126 state seats, compared to 46 and 121 respectively in 1974. The numbers would have been higher but for the disqualification of 7 parliamentary and 17 state candidates on nomination day for various technical reasons.⁴⁹ In addition the Malay parliamentary candidate for Setapak did not submit his papers because he could not raise the money for the deposit. In terms of ethnic origin, the party presented 9 Malays, 35 Chinese, and 9 Indians for the parliamentary contests compared with 9, 29, and 8 respectively in 1974. For the state seats the figures for 1978 were 47 Malays, 64 Chinese, 12 Indians, and 2 Portuguese compared to 32, 73, 14 and 2 in 1974. Thus there was a marginal increase in the number of Chinese candidates for parliament but a big increase in Malay candidates for the state seats and a decrease in Chinese candidates. Moreover, in three of the eight states that the DAP contested—Perak, Pahang, and Malacca—there were more Malay candidates than Chinese candidates. Bearing in mind that the DAP's strength is found mainly in the largely non-Malay urban areas it is not surprising that only 17 per cent of the parliamentary candidates were Malays, but it was remarkable that 38 per cent were Malays at the state level, even allowing for the five who subsequently withdrew from the elections. According to a Malay DAP leader, Malays who joined the DAP had to pay a high social, economic, and political price. Socially, they could be ostracized by their *kampung*; economically, they could not expect government help in such things as low-cost housing loans, and jobs; politically they were branded by UMNO as traitors to their race and opportunists. During the election, Malays who joined the DAP were said by several UMNO leaders to be

frustrated, selfish, opportunistic, and motivated by the promise of money.⁴⁴

The increased nomination of Malay candidates by the DAP could have been motivated by several factors. Firstly, the non-Malay urban constituencies had all been covered leaving mixed constituencies where no community had an absolute majority, and the rural constituencies which are overwhelmingly Malay. The party therefore had to move into the mixed constituencies which meant that some Malay support had to be won. Confident of the loyalty of its Chinese supporters, the party calculated that Malay candidates might attract some Malay support and thereby win some seats. But this strategy was not successful largely because the Malay candidates did not have sufficient influence to win significant Malay support. Second, conscious of its non-Malay image at best—and Chinese image at worst—the party was making a deliberate attempt to change its character. The increase in the number of Malay candidates showed that the party was actively working to acquire a multi-racial image. One indication of growing Malay acceptance was the impression in 1978 that DAP posters in the non-urban areas were not torn down as much as in earlier elections. Moreover Malay DAP members were openly campaigning for the party in constituencies where the party had candidates. In spite of these encouraging signs the party had yet to develop an effective organization to support its Malay candidates.

CAMPAIGN OBSTACLES

The DAP's claim that democracy was in danger was highlighted by three issues which threatened to obstruct the party's campaign and hopes of winning extra seats. These were the Code of Conduct to be observed by parties during the campaign, the banning of public rallies, and the disqualification of candidates.

The Code of Conduct was discussed at a meeting of all parties, called by the Election Commission on 17 June.

Earlier, Lim Kit Siang had called on Barisan leaders, particularly those in MCA and UMNO, 'to stop "race-baiting" in order to get political support and votes' and stated that 'in reality, it has been UMNO Ministers and leaders . . . who have been harping on racial issues, about the dangers to the Malay race if UMNO is weak . . . which have aggravated the sense of insecurity of non-Malays generally'.⁴⁵ At the meeting, the DAP proposed that 'no political leader, party or candidate should call on voters to vote purely on racial considerations, for instance, Malays to vote for Malays, Chinese for Chinese, and Indians for Indians; and that no one should be allowed to threaten voters that if any candidate or party wins, there is going to be bloodshed or repetition of May 13'. Secondly, it proposed that 'no party or candidate should make use of government property and facilities for party campaigning'. But according to the Election Commission, these proposals 'were just going into points of detail which were adequately covered by the code' and, since they were 'already implied in the code', it was 'not necessary to go into detail'.⁴⁶ The rejection of these proposals led to a walk-out by the DAP from the meeting. Later, during the campaign, Barisan leaders such as Dr Mahathir referred to the May 13th incident while government machinery and funds were used in a way beneficial to BN candidates.⁴⁷

A second pre-campaign issue was the banning of public rallies on 'security' grounds. The original ban on public rallies had been announced in Parliament by the Minister for Home Affairs, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, in October 1974. In his announcement, he gave an assurance that the ban would be lifted to allow rallies during by-election and general election campaigns but rallies were banned in the March 1978 state elections in Kelantan and the BN made a dramatic sweep of the seats. As the national election approached the Inspector-General of Police stated that 'intelligence reports indicated that the Communist Party of Malaya intended to commemorate its armed struggle anniversary by creating violent incidents in various parts of the country to boost the morale

of its members'.⁴⁸ As the Communist Party's anniversary coincided with the date of the election, the DAP proposed 'the postponement of the elections till after the National Day, August 31st, if public rallies were to be banned and free electioneering restricted'.⁴⁹ However, the Prime Minister announced that the ban would continue but argued that it 'would not have decisive effects on the parties contesting the elections' and added that apart from the communist threat, 'the Government had to impose the ban because past experience had shown that opposition parties often raised sensitive issues at rallies'.⁵⁰ The ban on rallies was also opposed by PAS and the Malaysian Trade Union Council, and was publicly criticized by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia. In opposing the ban, Lim Kit Siang pointed to the contradiction between the Inspector-General of Police's speech and that of Dr Mahathir who, while wooing foreign investors during a recent European tour, had assured them that security was no problem in Malaysia. Lim asked, 'how did the security situation in Malaysia deteriorate so swiftly in a matter of days that public rallies, the very essence of a general election, have to be banned'. The ban coupled with media 'black-outs', was seen by the DAP as the BN's desire to ensure that the electorate 'see nothing, hear nothing and know nothing'.⁵¹

A third issue emerged on nomination day when many candidates were disqualified although no figure is available of the total number. In the case of the DAP, 7 parliamentary and 17 state candidates were disqualified. A few BN candidates were also disqualified but most of the 26 seats that it took unopposed were won due to the disqualification of opposition candidates.⁵² Reasons given by the Election Commission for the disqualifications included mistakes in identity card numbers, mis-spelling of names, and omission of the proposer's constituency. The Secretary of the Commission pointed out that all parties were well briefed before the nomination and rejections were 'made on substantial grounds'.⁵³

In most cases, it would appear that candidates were disqualified on technical grounds. Rulings, it was alleged by opposition parties, were not uniform. For example, an independent candidate in the Panglima Garang state seat claimed that errors were found in all the candidates' papers but the Returning Officer 'overlooked the error by the BN's candidate but disqualified us'.⁵⁴ According to DAP sources, one candidate who had no 'alias' was disqualified because he did not put a dash in the space on the form for 'alias' whereas, in another case, a similar form was accepted. In the case of the Petaling Jaya seat, the candidate's papers were rejected because of an error in the name of one nominator. The party pointed out that there were more names in the nominators' list than required by law and even if the offending name was discarded, the papers had sufficient names to fulfil the requirements.

In past elections, according to DAP sources, Returning Officers had been helpful in pointing out technical and minor errors when the papers were handed in, and these were corrected before nominations closed. But in 1978, the Returning Officers did not go through the forms with the candidates but received them as they were. Thus there was no opportunity to make corrections. To the DAP, the disqualification of a large number of its candidates indicated collusion between the Returning Officers and the BN. But in fairness to the Election Commission, the errors, minor as they were, were made by the DAP candidates or their agents and should not have been made in the first place.

Would the outcome of the elections, in terms of the number of seats, have been very much different had so many DAP candidates not been disqualified? In our opinion, the DAP was unlikely to win in the seven parliamentary seats where its candidates had their papers rejected. Three were in Sabah and were being contested for the first time by the DAP in what was more in the nature of a 'showing the flag' exercise without much hope of winning. The other four seats were held by Ministers, three of whom were from the MCA

and the fourth from UMNO. The DAP had never held these seats and unless there was a substantial swing in the votes, it was unlikely that it would have succeeded. Of the state seats however, there were several which the DAP felt confident of winning, including Bandar Kelang and Petaling Jaya in Selangor, and Bagan Jermal in Penang. But it is unlikely that the party could have won any of the other seats where its candidates were disqualified.

PARTY ORGANIZATION AND THE ELECTION

The general image of the DAP is that it is highly organized but in reality, in so far as it could be observed during the election, the opposite seemed the case. Two major weaknesses faced the party—finance and manpower. In the past the party had relied on public rallies to reach the electorate but the banning of rallies in 1978 exposed the two major weaknesses even more. This section will try to show how the party tackled these problems.

Political parties on the whole come alive as elections approach while at other times activities tend to be limited. Before the banning of public rallies in October 1974, the DAP often held rallies but since then the major means of communicating with the public has been through press statements issued by party leaders. However, party leaders have complained that they were either 'blacked-out' by the press or their statements were so edited as to become ineffective for their purpose.⁵⁵ The party journal, *The Rocket*, which was originally meant to be a monthly, has been published on an irregular basis. A major constraint has been finance. At various times the party also found difficulty in finding printers prepared to publish an opposition newspaper.⁵⁶

Organizationally, the party has a three-tiered structure.⁵⁷ At the top is the CEC, the members of which are elected by the party congress held triennially. The next level is the Standing State Committee whose membership includes *ex-officio* members of the CEC and parliamentarians and

assemblymen from the state together with representatives from branches. Finally, there are the local branches. Within each level there are various sub-committees such as the CEC Standing Sub-committee on Membership and various bureaus.

Electoral organization takes place in this framework. The Director at the national level acts as the co-ordinator and in theory works closely with the Chairmen of the State Election Sub-committees. In reality however, because the Director and the various Chairmen are usually themselves candidates, the system tends to break down. Consequently, each candidate tends to be concerned with his own constituency and local branches have to rely on a core of committed members and the relatives and close friends of the candidates. Unless these individuals are familiar with the problems of political organization much time may be wasted.

The party headquarters was responsible for ensuring that each candidate received publications issued at the national level. These included 4,000 posters of three sizes—2,000 large, 1,000 medium, and 1,000 small—party manifestos in the various languages, and other publications such as Lim Kit Siang's book, *Time Bombs in Malaysia*. In practice, because there were less than half-a-dozen full-time workers at the party headquarters, individuals were often pressed to do other work, thus neglecting their own responsibilities. *Ad hoc* measures had to be taken when those responsible for particular tasks could not be contacted, leading to conflicts over who was responsible for what during the campaign period. In fact there was no overall organizational plan for the election.

The party had always stressed the need for a tightly knit membership because of its fear of being 'infiltrated by government agents as well as by anti-Malaysian extremist elements'.⁵⁸ This meant that the party remained small with a membership of about 5,000.⁵⁹ But the ban on rallies meant that the party had to rely more on its members to spread its message. It needed manpower for putting up posters, filling in election cards, distributing pamphlets, and manning polling booths on election day. During the election period it had

to rely on party supporters and their friends to volunteer to put up posters. Word was sent out and fingers were crossed in the hope that there would be some response. These volunteers and supporters were usually overworked but did not seem to mind. In return, the party gave drinks, cigarettes, and an occasional meal. It claimed that these workers were not paid, at least not by the party. In some areas such as Taiping, where the DAP campaign was most impressive, it was hard to believe that the party was financially weak. However, it seems that some workers were paid by MCA supporters opposed to the Gerakan candidate, Paul Leong. In Petaling, supporters who complained that there were no posters in their area were encouraged to take them themselves from the headquarters but, at the same time, the party was not keen to give posters to unknown volunteers for fear that they might have been sent by rival candidates with the purpose of wasting posters. Candidates could not rely on the limited supply of posters from the party and in most cases were forced to print their own. In at least two cases, the DAP candidates were given special prices for their posters by printers who were party supporters.

The book, *Time Bombs in Malaysia*, by Lim Kit Siang was meant to have been printed before the campaign but it was delayed due to action by the Special Branch. A book by a DAP state assemblyman, Bernard Sta Maria, on the Sabah politician, Peter Mojuntin, had been banned by the Government.⁶⁰ According to Lim, while seizing this book at the printers, members of the Special Branch saw Lim's book being printed. They warned the printer not to proceed and took some of the printing blocks away. However, he protested that it was not the same book and the blocks were returned. When it became available towards the end of the campaign period, Lim's book became a bestseller and was later reprinted twice, including a second edition. Altogether 30,000 copies were printed. The party saw this action of the Special Branch as being deliberate although it may have simply been an error.

On election day, many of the DAP booths were understaffed, but this did not bother the party as much as the shortage of manpower for other aspects of the campaign. As in the past, voters who had not already received their voting slips, went to the BN booth to check their names and then voted for the DAP. Similarly, many DAP voters were transported to polling stations in Barisan cars.

The ban on open-air rallies affected the party adversely. The *ceramah* (dialogue) method of campaigning was completely alien to the DAP which was more at home with the rallies that characterized earlier campaigns. Under the new rules, only indoor *ceramah* were permitted. This meant that large halls had to be rented and the meeting publicized to local residents. In the past, before a public rally was held, a car with a public address system mounted on its roof would go around the town announcing the rally. But in 1978 this was permitted in only some constituencies. Thus the time and place of the *ceramah* had to be advertised in pamphlets and by word of mouth. The rules concerning *ceramah* were never fully spelt out. It was not clear whether a public address system could be used and whether the compound of a house or a hall fell within the meaning of the area where the listeners could legitimately congregate. Different rules seemed to apply to different areas. In Malacca, a DAP *ceramah* was dispersed by the police on the ground that it was a public rally because the crowd spilled over into the compound⁶¹ but in Nibong Tebal, a Gerakan *ceramah* in a shophouse addressed by Dr Lim Chong Eu was not stopped despite the fact that a public address system was used and the crowd was standing outside the building.

There were occasions when the various authorities tried to stop the DAP from holding *ceramah*. In one instance, P. Patto alleged that members of the Pasir Pinji *Rukun Tetangga* who were supporters of MCA, had locked members of the DAP in the building where a *ceramah* was to have been held, despite the fact that they had been granted permission to use the hall. They were released by the police after the

DAP lodged a complaint.⁶² In Malacca the party booked the Ujong Pasir Community Hall for a *ceramah* on 28 May but alleged that the District Officer tried to cancel the booking until he was told that a receipt had been issued showing that the booking had been paid for in advance. During the *ceramah* the electricity supply broke down and the party resorted to using the headlights of cars parked in front of the hall in addition to gas lights. The fact that there had been constant breakdowns of electricity supply in the area did not stop the party from alleging that the breakdown was an attempt by the authorities to sabotage the *ceramah*.⁶³ In practice *ceramah* became mini political rallies, the major difference being that the crowds were much smaller and confined within four walls. Nevertheless, the DAP *ceramah* in the urban areas were well attended. In Petaling Jaya, the party's nightly *ceramah* during the last week of the campaign in the Transport Union Hall were packed to capacity.

The other major weakness of the party was the shortage of finance. The party worked on the principle that each branch should be financially independent and that excess funds should be forwarded to the party headquarters.⁶⁴ The major source of the party's funds was the compulsory contribution made by its elected representatives.⁶⁵ In addition, funds were raised for the elections through special dinners. These funds and other contributions went to the Democratic Socialist Trust Fund which was set up in 1966 to mobilize financial support for the achievement of a 'free, non-communist, non-communal, multi-racial and democratic Socialist society'.⁶⁶ The ban on rallies was estimated to increase campaign costs six-fold because of the need for publications, the hire of halls, and other publicity.⁶⁷ The printing bill alone amounted to about \$100,000.⁶⁸

At the constituency level candidates had to rely on themselves for funds and this meant tapping their own sources as well as soliciting donations from party supporters. Better-off candidates with professional backgrounds obviously found it easier than those who were not. For most of the Malay can-

didates the problem of finance was crucial. We have already pointed out that one Malay candidate failed to be nominated because he could not raise the money for the deposit. Many could not afford to print additional posters though some tried to overcome this by relying on *ceramah*, but these were of limited effectiveness because of the large size of the rural constituencies. A major complaint of Malay candidates was that the party did not help them by paying their deposits.⁶⁹ Limited funds meant that few copies of the Malay version of the party manifesto were printed and even fewer reached the candidates. In the urban areas the financial problem was less serious because of donations in kind. For example, in Petaling, an old party supporter made and donated wooden boards and stakes when he found that they were needed for posters. Others donated cigarettes, T-shirts with the party emblem, banners and flags as well as cash. Drinks and food were provided by supporters during the candidates' 'walkabouts'. A number of candidates said that friends had taken up to two weeks' leave from their jobs to work full-time in the campaign. Thus the need for money was minimized. For example, actual cash expenditure in Petaling, the biggest constituency in the country, was less than \$4,000 which was covered by donations, mostly in small amounts.⁷⁰

The ban on rallies forced the party to find new ways of reaching the electorate. Candidates had to be seen in as many places as possible. In 'walkabouts' candidates walked around markets, shopping areas and supermarkets, and made house-to-house visits. In order to expose themselves to the maximum number of people, candidates could not spend too much time with individuals but requested them to bring their problems to the party office. Candidates spent most of their time shaking hands and asking voters to support them. The national leaders were also expected to support 'new faces' by visiting their constituencies. Where this was not possible, 'open letters' were written and printed by the local candidates with photographs of the national leader and the candidate. This was also done in Sungei Besi where the party candidate

had been detained. In addition some 300 taped speeches on cassettes were made during the last week of the campaign and circulated in areas not visited by party leaders.

For the first time political cartoons as posters were used in a big way. These depicted the party, personified in Lim Kit Siang, who was gagged with his hands tied behind his back while BN leaders landed blows on him. Another showed a huge fist squeezing Lim with words such as 'ban on rallies', 'disqualifications' and 'press blackouts' printed on the fingers. In both, the caption was 'Democracy?' in big print. Other posters urged voters to 'Vote DAP for an effective opposition' and 'Vote for your children's future'.

The key means of publicity was still the poster. Rival parties tried to choose choice spots and outdo each other in patterns and the sheer number of posters. Several minor incidents were reported in the press. In Klang, a DAP worker who was putting up posters near the local BN office was assaulted.⁷¹ In another incident, five party workers reported to the police that they had been threatened by seven unidentified youths in Rasah New Village.⁷² In Perak, party workers alleged that they were intimidated by a group of MCA youths called the 'Vanguard'.⁷³ Two DAP workers were arrested in Petaling for putting up posters on the ground that they were not election posters.⁷⁴ This was the 'Save Lim Kit Siang and P. Patto Fund' poster which was to defray the cost of their trials under the Official Secrets Act.⁷⁵ This, however, was later accepted by the authorities as a legitimate election poster.⁷⁶

Apart from the ban on rallies, the DAP was faced with what it felt was a partial blackout by the press. The DAP's campaign was given minimal coverage by the English and the Malay press although it had more prominence in the Chinese press. In response, the party ignored part of the press and on several occasions statements were given only to selected journalists. When the party issued 'negative' statements to the effect that it would not be able to capture power and was struggling for survival, however, these were printed by the

press⁷⁷ and the *New Straits Times* editorialized that 'It is no surprise therefore to see Lim Kit Siang now arguing that he is less confident of the DAP doing well. The DAP line is that the electorate must vote to ensure the very survival of the opposition in the face of the Barisan bulldozer. It is a very clever line. . . . Beware of pity.'⁷⁸

In the case of radio, the DAP and PAS were allocated 15 per cent of broadcasting time each while the BN was given 70 per cent. This was on the basis of the number of candidates nominated by the respective parties. This amounted to 3 broadcasts of 15 minutes each for the DAP over the 4 networks simultaneously. In the 1974 election, the party had boycotted the radio on the grounds that it should be given more time but was not prepared to do so this time although PAS did.⁷⁹

Having inadequate funds itself, the party called on the BN not to abuse its power by using government resources. Specifically, it called on Ministers to campaign as 'ordinary citizens' and to stop presenting funds to various government projects during the campaign.⁸⁰ It also called for a 'fair campaign' with no discrimination against the opposition, including equal access to the media and an assurance that the BN would not use the Information Ministry's vans.⁸¹ These calls were to no avail as Ministers presented cheques, announced projects and granted approvals during the campaign, even when they did not come under their Ministries. For example, Datuk Lee San Choon, who was the Minister for Labour and MCA President, handed out an approval letter for a government grant of \$120,000 to a Chinese primary school in Kuala Lumpur.⁸² When the Prime Minister announced that \$300 million would be allocated for low-cost housing in the Federal Territory, the DAP claimed that this was 'unfair' for its candidate, Lee Lam Thye.⁸³ The DAP also took legal action to restrain the Director-General of the Information Ministry from putting up billboards carrying a picture of the Prime Minister calling for unity among the people. This was rejected by the court which accepted the defence argument that the court had no

jurisdiction to grant an injunction against any public servant who was exercising his public duty.⁸⁴ In commenting on the DAP complaint the BN Secretary-General, Ghafar Baba, pointed out that the Information Ministry's 'Unity Campaign' was in line with the Barisan's policy to promote unity. According to him, 'there is no difference because we are the Government'.⁸⁵

In examining the problems of the DAP's campaign we have shown that the party's organization was weak. Although the party performed well in the election, its leaders were conscious of the need for better organization and expanded membership, particularly in order to face the *ceramah*-style campaign in the future. Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, the Minister of Home Affairs, has said that the *ceramah* style of campaigning had proved to be relevant and in keeping with the tradition of village leadership in the country and that the political rally is 'really a Western-style concept made for a one-way communication process'.⁸⁶ This may be a hint that political rallies will be a thing of the past, and if so, the DAP would be well advised to adjust to new circumstances.

ISSUES OF THE ELECTION

The DAP claimed that 'the 1978 General Election is an election without issues, not because there are no basic issues and grave problems to be decided by the people, but because the BN has suppressed all these issues. The DAP has found it virtually impossible to raise, let alone crystallize, issues in the 1978 general election because of the complete denial of media access to the people'.⁸⁷ In this section we will examine the issues that the party tried to raise and those raised by the BN.

The major issues raised by the DAP were publicized in its manifesto entitled 'To Save Democracy and Defeat Barisan Nasional Grand Design to Create a One-party State'. It claimed that the 1978 election 'is an important part of the BN Grand Design to preserve the forms of democracy minus its substance. It is the most unfair and undemocratic general election

in the history of Malaysia'. It called on Malaysians 'of all races to unite and save democracy and defeat the BN Grand Design "to use democracy to destroy democracy" and bring about a one-party state'. The manifesto pointed out that 'the gap between the haves and the have-nots has continued to grow, including the gap between the Malay haves and have-nots' and it claimed that education policy had become 'the most divisive issue in Malaysian society' because of deteriorating standards, reduced higher education opportunities for Malaysians in their homeland and insecurity about the future of mother-tongue education as guaranteed by Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution. Other important issues raised were corruption and human rights violations. The party also contended that its record showed that it had been an effective and fearless opposition and this was essential for a functioning democracy.

While the DAP tried to fight the election on its own terms, it was put on the defensive by issues raised by the BN in the form of ten widely publicized questions. The DAP was asked, *inter alia*, why so many DAP leaders had quit the party; why the party supported the Internal Security Act in another country (Singapore) while condemning the Act in Malaysia; why it co-operated with PAS, a racist party, while claiming to be multi-racial; why, despite its claim to be multi-racial, it was unhappy with efforts to restructure society and opposed the implementation of the New Economic Policy and the Education Policy, and why Lim Kit Siang was running away from Kota Melaka (his old seat). The BN argued that the DAP was an extremist and chauvinist party determined to upset the political stability of the country and accused Lim Kit Siang of being undemocratic and dictatorial while criticizing others on the same grounds.⁸⁸

The alleged relationship between the DAP and PAS was a key issue raised by the BN. By linking the two main opposition parties together in an 'unholy alliance', the BN hoped that they would be discredited in the eyes of the electorate as well as their supporters. The aim of this alleged alliance, it

was argued, was that in the non-Malay constituencies, where the real battle was between a non-Malay party of the BN and the DAP, PAS would draw away Malay voters from the BN candidate, thus allowing the DAP to win; and in the Malay constituencies, the DAP candidate would siphon off the non-Malay vote from the BN to enable PAS to win.⁸⁹ The Barisan leaders claimed that the alleged pact dated back to 1969 and its objective was to create instability.⁹⁰ They described it as being between the tiger (DAP) and the deer (PAS) in a cage, as a case of *khalwat* (close contact between people of opposite sex prohibited in Muslim law), and as political treachery on the part of the DAP.⁹¹ Both the DAP and PAS denied the allegation and Karpal Singh, of the DAP, claimed that PAS 'had in fact rejected DAP suggestions to have any relations for the general election'.⁹²

The pact, if it existed, was informal. At the local level there was some co-operation between the DAP and PAS depending on the relationship between local leaders. For example, in Johor, the *Menteri Besar* revealed that DAP supporters provided the proposer and seconder for a PAS candidate, a claim not denied by the DAP.⁹³ In Damansara, PAS attacked the DAP for using PAS symbols on its cars during the campaign—perhaps in an effort to disguise the actual co-operation between the two parties.⁹⁴ In general both parties refrained from attacking each other and concentrated their energies on the common enemy, the BN. In areas where the DAP candidates were disqualified and the fight was between the BN and PAS as in the cases of Segamat and Petaling Jaya, the DAP asked its supporters either to spoil their votes or to 'vote opposition'.⁹⁵

The issue on which the DAP found it difficult to defend itself was the allegation that it was an extremist and chauvinist party playing on sensitive issues to win support for its cause. This issue has always been used by the BN, and the Alliance before it, to discredit the DAP ever since its formation in 1966. The DAP, while claiming to be multi-racial, has its main support in the urban areas where the non-Malays

predominate and consequently it has never hesitated to champion the cause of the non-Malays. It justifies itself on the grounds that even an issue such as Chinese education is not 'a chauvinist issue, but a Malaysian issue'.⁹⁶ On this basis, the party claims that it 'has never and will never believe in raising sensitive issues in its campaign'.⁹⁷ The nature of its support and the fact that its opponents in the urban areas are the non-Malay parties of the BN mean that it must fight on issues which concern the interests of the non-Malays. Nevertheless, it has also attacked the BN for its failures to help the poor Malays.⁹⁸ Its ability to win some Malay support, small as it may be, indicates that not all Malays view the party as a Chinese chauvinist party. It is this small Malay support that has caused concern to the BN in general and UMNO in particular, especially in Perak where the DAP had more Malay state candidates than UMNO. Given the racial character of Malaysian politics, all parties must respond to political realities if they are to win public support. The DAP is no exception.

THE DAP IN SABAH

The DAP's involvement in Sabah politics is not entirely new. In the 1969 general election, Lim Kit Siang had been campaigning for an independent candidate in Kota Kinabalu when he was expelled from the state and arrested on his arrival in Kuala Lumpur after the post-election rioting had broken out. Apart from one visit by Lim, both he and Lee Lam Thye were refused entry by the Sabah State Immigration authorities on the grounds that their presence would 'pose a security risk in the state'.⁹⁹ In spite of these obstacles, a Sabah State Division of the DAP was established in February 1978 comprising members from Sandakan, Kota Kinabalu, Tawau, and Lahad Datu. The selection of candidates was made by both the CEC and local leaders. Apart from party supporters, local personalities were approached. In the case of Fung Ket Win, a personal message from Lim Kit Siang was sent to per-

suaide him to stand on the DAP ticket. He did not decide until the eve of nomination but eventually won the Sandakan seat.¹⁰⁰ If the party organization was weak in Peninsular Malaysia, it was virtually non-existent in Sabah. Of the five candidates, three were disqualified and the other two had to fend for themselves with help from their friends and organizations such as trade unions, with which they were associated. Party pamphlets, posters, and the manifesto were not available, and they had to print their own publicity materials. They did however manage to circulate an Open Letter by Lim Kit Siang to the voters of Sandakan and Tawau. Because staggered polling in Sabah continued after the election day in the peninsula, the party was able to send Lee Kaw, its National Treasurer and new MP for Kluang, to help in the campaign.

The major issues raised by the party in Sabah were corruption, the refugee problem, the allocation of radio and television time for the different languages, and the need for an opposition to voice Sabah interests in Parliament. The barring of top DAP leaders from entering Sabah was also raised as an example of how the Berjaya State Government had failed to keep its pledge to restore democracy in Sabah after the rule of Tun Mustapha. As an attempt to dramatize this issue, Lim Kit Siang tried to enter Sabah on the eve of polling day but was physically carried back to the plane.¹⁰¹ According to DAP sources, this was made known to the electorate by word of mouth because press reports of the incident were held back by the authorities. This incident was said to have swung the Sandakan voters in the DAP's favour. It was, as the Sabah Government pointed out, 'a publicity stunt'.¹⁰² The DAP won only the Sandakan seat and thus became the first political party from Peninsular Malaysia to win a seat in Sabah. The response of the Sabah Government to this victory was to take strong action against taxi-drivers, hawkers, and coffee-shop owners, who were among the party's strongest supporters. In addition, the State Assistant Finance Minister's post was given to a native instead of a Chinese.¹⁰³

THE RESULTS

Of the 53 parliamentary and 126 state seats that the DAP contested, it won 16 and 25 respectively, an improvement on the 1974 results as shown in the following table. On polling day, the party in fact had only 20 state seats, having lost 2 in Penang as the result of defections and 1 in Selangor through resignation. It had also lost two parliamentary seats, Petaling, which was held by Oh Keng Seng who had joined the SDP and Menglembu held by Fan Yew Teng, who had resigned.

TABLE 7.2
Seats won by the DAP in the Parliamentary and State
Elections, 1974 and 1978

	<i>State Assembly</i>		<i>Parliament</i>	
	1974	1978	1974	1978
Kedah	1	—	—	—
Penang	2	5	—	4
Perak	11	9	4	4
Selangor	1	3	1	1
Negeri Sembilan	3	3	1	1
Malacca	4	4	1	1
Johor	1	1	—	1
Federal Territory	—	—	2	3
Sabah	—	—	—	1
Total	23	25	9	16

At the parliamentary level, the result was the party's 'finest hour',¹⁰⁴ the extra seats being won at the expense of the non-Malay parties of the BN. Several more seats were lost narrowly while only four, Bukit Mertajam, Damansara, Tanjung, and Beruas, were won on minority votes. The victories in Damansara and Beruas were the result of the split of the Malay vote by PAS while the other two fell to the DAP as a result of the MCA-Gerakan conflict in Penang. Its 16 MPs

consisted of 12 Chinese and 4 Indians. The party thus had more Indian MPs than the MIC which had 3.

At the state level, the 25 seats were less than the 31 won in 1969 but two more than in 1974. The result in Perak was a disappointment as it was the only state where the party had some hope of winning power. We have shown above how the party's inadequate organization and financial weakness prevented it from helping its Malay candidates, who themselves lacked widespread influence. The much publicized 'unholy alliance' allegation and the claim by the BN that a vote for the DAP would be a vote for PAS and vice-versa were no doubt effective propaganda, particularly in three-cornered fights where the DAP had most of its Malay candidates. However, in Gopeng, the DAP won on a minority vote when PAS drew away Malay votes from the BN candidate, and in Kuala Kurau, the DAP helped PAS by splitting the Chinese votes. The defections of some of the Malay candidates also contributed to its failure, though it did manage to return its only successful Malay candidate in Guntong, a party stronghold, for a second term. The DAP did well in Penang but in the other states its victories were of only marginal consequence.

In terms of votes, the DAP won 19.2 per cent compared to 18.3 per cent in 1974 but the 1974 results greatly exaggerated the DAP's popular support because of the large number of uncontested seats won by the BN. A better indication of the DAP's success would be the votes won in urban areas where its support is strongest. For example, in the three Federal Territory seats which both the BN and DAP contested, the DAP won 46.6 per cent of the total valid votes cast compared with 37.3 per cent in 1974. The figures for the BN were 35.2 per cent in 1978 and 38.5 per cent in 1974. The DAP increased its vote by 9.3 per cent. Although the party won 19.2 per cent of the votes, it only won 10.4 per cent of the parliamentary seats, partly because of the large size of urban constituencies. For example, the biggest constituency is the DAP's Petaling with 90,611 voters, while Barisan's Kuala Kerai in rural Kelantan has only 19,697

voters, and there are even smaller constituencies in Sabah and Sarawak.

Among the reasons for the DAP's improvement was the desire for a strong opposition to protest against government policies such as the Industrial Co-ordination Act and limited higher education opportunities. The Industrial Co-ordination Act was introduced in 1975 'to provide for the co-ordination and orderly development of manufacturing activities in Malaysia'. Its provisions met with strong opposition from non-Malay business circles and a call by the Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce to repeal the Act. In the case of education, the Third Malaysia Plan showed that opportunities for higher education for the non-Malays decreased from 50.3 per cent to 34.9 per cent between 1970 and 1975.¹⁰⁵ This, however, was only in terms of local universities and colleges. The Government's assurance that in the implementation of the New Economic Policy 'no one in Malaysian society need to experience or feel any sense of loss or deprivation of his rights, privileges, income, job and opportunity'¹⁰⁶ was treated with scepticism by the non-Malay communities.

The election results have been interpreted by many observers as further evidence of the continued importance of communalism in Malaysian politics¹⁰⁷ which is usually attributed to the opposition parties, particularly the DAP. However, Malaysian politics has always been based on 'racial arithmetic'. The major parties rely on the support of one or other of the communities; selection of candidates for constituencies is also based on this consideration; the major issues, whether economic, educational, language, or cultural policy, have all been viewed through communally-tinted glasses. Given this framework all political parties must defend the interests of their communities. The DAP, despite its multi-racial claim, is also caught in this web. Communalism existed before the DAP was formed and will continue even if it were proscribed because every Malaysian in his daily life is continually exposed to it and socialized to accept it as a reality. It would be naive to expect otherwise.

The 1978 election exposed the DAP's weaknesses and these will no doubt be exploited by the BN. Its advance was in spite of its weaknesses and it cannot take comfort in statements made by Barisan leaders that steps will be taken to arrest the trend towards communal voting.¹⁰⁸ The party has said that it would co-operate with the Barisan Government in solving the problems facing the Malaysian polity but its request for a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the election results and to ask for the release of its two detained MPs was rebuffed. Its announcement that it would contest the Sabah and Sarawak State Elections in 'a big way'¹⁰⁹ is unlikely to endear it to the BN leaders. The tragedy is that both the BN and the DAP share the same goals in so far as one can accept their public statements, but the means differ, and because of this difference it is unlikely that the goals will be reached. It is thus a Pyrrhic victory that the various communities still unwittingly seek.

1. They were Chian Heng Kai, MP for Batu Gajah, and Chan Kok Kit, its Assistant National Treasurer.

2. Lim Kit Siang (henceforth LKS), Text of Speech in Parliament, 19 October 1977.

3. LKS, Text of Speech at the meeting to form the DAP Petaling Parliamentary Constituency Liaison Committee, 17 January 1978.

4. Both assemblymen, however, subsequently resigned and joined the MCA. One of them, the member for Bukit Tambung, was in fact the Chairman of the local MCA branch before the 1974 election but stood on the DAP ticket when the Barisan Nasional nominated a candidate from the Gerakan.

5. LKS, Text of Speech at DAP Solidarity Dinner at Halomon Restaurant, Penang, 12 March 1978, p. 2.

6. For an explanation of the Barisan Nasional's, particularly Gerakan's, success in Penang, see C. Pillay, *The 1974 General Elections in Malaysia*, ISEAS, Singapore, 1974, pp. 9-11.

7. LKS, Text of message to a meeting of the Selangor/Federal Territory DAP State Sub-Committee, 16 January 1978.
8. Ismail bin Hashim, Vice-Chairman of the Penang DAP, *The Star*, 6 January 1978.
9. Circular by P. Patto, National Organizing Secretary to all branches, 3 January 1978.
10. *New Straits Times* (henceforth *NST*), 7 January 1978.
11. LKS, for example, was preparing for his external final law examination with the University of London. He graduated with honours.
12. LKS, Press Statement, 16 January 1978.
13. *ibid.*
14. *NST*, 31 May 1978.
15. Interview with Peter Dason.
16. These remarks were circulated by the DAP.
17. Fan Yew Teng, Letter to LKS, 19 May 1978, p. 1.
18. *ibid.*, p. 18. Devan Nair, the Secretary-General of the Singapore National Trade Union Congress, was also the first Secretary-General of the DAP. S. Rajaratnam, the Foreign Minister of Singapore, is the brother of Dr Seevaratnam, the DAP's former National Treasurer.
19. The Statement is reprinted in his *Time Bombs in Malaysia*. Other quotes in this paragraph are also from the same source.
20. *ibid.*, 30 May 1978.
21. *NST*, 22 June 1978.
22. This Press Statement entitled 'Challenge to the DAP's "Gang of Three"' was dated 16 June 1978. Like the two letters, they were sent from Bombay.
23. Interview with LKS. Since 1975, after his conviction under the Sedition Act, Fan has resided in England.
24. Interviews with various DAP leaders. This was particularly true in Perak which was Fan's home state. Fan's resignation was also the subject of questions by voters during the 'walk-about'.
25. *The Star*, 23 June 1978.
26. *NST*, 21 June 1978.
27. *Malay Mail*, 21 June 1978.
28. *Straits Echo*, 16 November 1967; see also Michael Ong, 'The DAP of Malaysia: The Case for a Malaysian Malaysia Restated', M.A. Thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne 1969, Chapter 3.
29. Success in Perak was helped by the fact that UMNO Perak was split between the north and the south.
30. Interview. He is now Assistant Organizing Secretary of the DAP, a full-time party official.

31. Interview.
32. See Ong, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.
33. Chian was detained with Chan Kok Kit in November 1976 under the Internal Security Act. According to the Inspector-General of Police, they were detained 'because of their involvement in the activities of the Communist United Front or in activities which could be regarded as assisting the advancement of the CUF, whether directly or indirectly, deliberately or unknowingly'. *NST*, 5 February 1977.
34. *NST*, 21 June 1975.
35. Text of Speech, p. 2.
36. This was the claim made by two DAP Malay candidates who withdrew from the election, *The Star*, 28 June 1978.
37. *The Star*, 28 June 1978.
38. *NST*, 26 June 1978, Statement issued by LKS's political secretary, M. Nair.
39. LKS, Text of Eve of Polling Press Conference, 7 July 1978.
40. For example seventeen Barisan Nasional members were expelled, *NST*, 5 July 1979. This number was by no means exhaustive.
41. Barisan candidates had to sign similar undated letters of resignation. See *NST*, 24 June 1978.
42. John MacDougall, 'Shared Burdens: A Study of Communal Discrimination by the Political Parties of Malaysia and Singapore', Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University 1968, p. 226.
43. This will be explained later.
44. For example see *The Star*, 3 July 1978 and 7 June 1978.
45. *ibid.*, 6 June 1978. This was in reply to a speech by Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan urging Chinese voters to support the National Front to avoid the danger of a Malay Government and a Chinese Opposition. See *NST*, 6 June 1978.
46. *NST*, 18 June 1978.
47. *NST*, 5 July 1978. See also speech by Tengku Razaleigh in the same issue.
48. *The Star*, 5 June 1978.
49. *NST*, 6 June 1978.
50. *Malay Mail*, 12 June 1978.
51. LKS, *Ceramah* in Ujong Pasir, Malacca.
52. *The Star*, 22 June 1978. The Barisan Nasional won 5 parliamentary and 14 state seats unopposed while forgoing 1 parliamentary and 2 state seats.
53. *The Star*, 23 June 1978.
54. *The Star*, 23 June 1978.
55. See Ong, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-9. This is still the view of DAP leaders.
56. This was the case especially after the printer of *The Rocket* was

convicted for publishing a seditious article in the *Fan Yew Teng* case. Fan, the editor of the paper, was charged under the Sedition Act with printing a speech made by a DAP local leader in Penang.

57. For more details see Ong, op. cit., Chapter 3.

58. *The Rocket*, March/April 1968, p. 3.

59. The party itself does not know the actual strength of its membership. Records have not been kept up-to-date. This estimate is based on the fact that there are about 270 branches with most of the branches having no more than a dozen members. According to the DAP Balance Sheet for 1977 monies received from membership was \$2068. At \$3 a member this would mean that the party had less than 690 members! Obviously many members have not paid their annual subscription. Perak, which was one of the most active states, was said to have 1300 members. See *NST*, 16 June 1978.

60. *The Golden Son of the Kadazan*.

61. *NST*, 30 June 1978. Additional information was given by Bernard Sta Maria.

62. *NST*, 5 July 1978. Additional information provided by P. Patto. The Chairman of the *Rukun Tetangga* sector was also the Chairman of the local MCA branch.

63. Personal attendance at the *ceramah*.

64. DAP Constitution, Clause XXIV.

65. In 1977, out of an income of \$211,373.28, \$200,830.22 was from the compulsory contributions by the party's elected representatives. From this they were reimbursed \$91,765.36. See *Balance Sheet of the Democratic Socialist Trust Fund 31 December 1977*.

66. *The Straits Times*, 19 April 1966.

67. Interview with LKS.

68. This figure was given by P. Patto, the national Director of Elections.

69. This point was made by two DAP Malay candidates who withdrew. *The Star*, 28 June 1978. It was also made in an interview with a top DAP Malay leader.

70. According to one of LKS's polling agents.

71. See *The Star*, 24 June 1978. The DAP was not identified in this report.

72. *The Star*, 6 July 1978.

73. Interview with P. Patto.

74. *The Star*, 28 May 1978.

75. Lim was charged in April 1978 with divulging official secrets when he questioned the purchase of the Spica-M fast patrol boats by the Malaysian Navy. He alleged that there was corruption and it was the result of his raising the issue that the country 'saved' \$9 million dollars. He was convicted after the election but appealed to the Federal Court.

76. According to LKS, he had to waste half-a-day trying to track down the officer responsible for making this decision.

77. These statements were made towards the end of June and early July. See for example *The Star*, 1 July 1978, and *NST*, 2 July 1978.

78. *NST* Editorial, 'The Real Issue', 3 July 1978.

79. *The Star*, 1 July 1978.

80. See V. David's statement, *The Star*, 15 May 1978.

81. Call made by Lee Lam Thye, *NST*, 12 June 1978.

82. *NST*, 17 June 1978.

83. *NST*, 6 July 1978.

84. *NST*, 7 July 1978.

85. *The Star*, 26 June 1978. The DAP's complaint was of course unrealistic. As Tunku Abdul Rahman admitted 'I won't say in all honesty that I did not use the Government machinery to greater advantage. I would be a fool if I had not.' *The Star*, 3 July 1978. Members of the ruling party are not fools.

86. *The Star*, 3 July 1978.

87. LKS, Text of cassette speech, p. 1.

88. *NST*, 26 June 1978, and *NST*, 30 June 1978.

89. See *NST*, Editorial, 'Strange Allies', 26 June 1978.

90. Dr Mahathir, *The Star*, 25 June 1978; Paul Leong, *NST*, 25 June 1978.

91. See *NST*, 24 June 1978; *The Star*, 25 June and 1 July 1978.

92. *The Star*, 25 June 1978.

93. *NST*, 28 June 1978.

94. *The Star*, 28 June 1978.

95. LKS, Eve of Polling Press Conference, 7 July 1978.

96. LKS, *Open Letter to the Voters of Sungei Besi*, n.d.

97. Lee Lam Thye, *NST*, 5 June 1978.

98. For examples see *Time Bombs in Malaysia*.

99. *NST*, 20 May 1978.

100. Interview with Fung Ket Win.

101. *The Star*, 15 July 1978.

102. *The Star*, 17 July 1978.

103. *NST*, 23 July 1978, 'Hints of Changing Times in Sabah', by Solam Dab.

104. LKS, *Time Bombs in Malaysia*, 2nd edition, p. x.

105. Malaysia, *Third Malaysia Plan 1976-80*, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, p. 410.

106. Malaysia, *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-75*, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, p. v.

107. See for example, *Asiaweek*, 21 July 1978; *Asean Review*, July/August 1978.

108. E.g. Tengku Razaleigh, *NST*, 15 July 1978. This, according to him, would take five to six years to do.

109. LKS, Press Statement, 16 July 1978.

The Peninsular Non-Malay Parties in the Barisan Nasional

LEE KAM HING

THE 1978 general election and events immediately preceding polling day clarified a pattern of politics that had changed perceptibly since 1969 among the non-Malays. From what could be observed, the larger non-Malay political parties had been forced to adjust considerably their relationships with UMNO, a party which has emerged clearly as the dominating factor in Malaysian politics. In this process of adjustment, the relationship of the various non-Malay parties with one another has undergone considerable alteration too. These changes are without doubt the result of the new political format created after May 1969 when each non-Malay party found it necessary to re-evaluate its role. For some parties, it is considered necessary to continue to present the case of the non-Malays strongly and openly. This means remaining as an opposition. Others advocate a close working relationship with UMNO so that controversial issues can be resolved quietly. More of the non-Malay parties seemed to have been convinced that in the post-1969 political situation it was more desirable to be in the government. Thus in contrast to the Alliance pattern when there were only two non-Malay parties working with UMNO and multiple non-Malay opposition parties, the period since 1974 has witnessed multiple non-Malay parties in government and a reduction in the number of parties in opposition. In fact the main opposition strength is now concentrated in the Democratic Action Party (DAP). Interest-

ingly, while electoral co-operation seemed possible in a situation of multiple non-Malay opposition as was evident in the 1969 election, such understanding was difficult to achieve among the non-Malay government parties even within the framework of the Barisan Nasional. The difficulties in inter-party relationships and in intra-party politics within the ruling Barisan Nasional thus served to provide points of interest in an otherwise predictable election in 1978.

The 1978 election was held in a subdued atmosphere that was reminiscent of the campaign of 1974. The difference this time was that Parti Islam (PAS) was no longer in the Barisan Nasional. This profoundly affected Malay politics but it also had implications for the non-Malay parties in that the participation of PAS as an opposition party threatened to turn many safe constituencies for non-Malay Barisan Nasional candidates into marginal seats. The Barisan Nasional was worried that the presence of PAS candidates could draw away crucial Malay votes that were needed for non-Malay candidates and thereby enable DAP candidates to win. By the same token, a number of UMNO seats could conceivably be lost to PAS men if the non-Malay votes, which previously could have been counted as certain for the Barisan Nasional, were now to go to DAP contestants. It was for this reason that the Barisan Nasional mounted a strong attack on an alleged 'unholy alliance' between PAS and the DAP.

Another contributory factor to the subdued atmosphere of the campaign was the ban on public rallies imposed by the Government. In the past, rallies had provided much of the political excitement, colour, and even entertainment in towns, *kampung*, estates, and new villages. But in 1978, the Government ruled that on security grounds, rallies would not be allowed.¹ Instead only *ceramah* or lectures held in houses, halls, and community centres were permitted. *Ceramah* by their nature were small gatherings and in most cases the audience consisted largely of party supporters together with the undecided, while possible hecklers from the opposition parties were carefully though not always

effectively excluded.

Several developments which took place earlier in the year served to favour the Barisan Nasional in the non-Malay areas. Firstly the trial and conviction of Datuk Harun Idris on corruption charges as well as the Government's handling of a potentially dangerous situation at that time had impressed and reassured most non-Malays as to Datuk Hussein Onn's firmness and impartiality. This enabled non-Malay leaders to argue that the Barisan Nasional must be supported to ensure the continued influence of Malay moderates. The loss of seats by non-Malay Barisan Nasional parties, they maintained, could weaken Datuk Hussein Onn. The Harun case was particularly important subsequently in that it partially defused as an election issue the charges under the Official Secrets Act that had been brought against two DAP leaders, Lim Kit Siang and P. Pato, in that the Government did not seem communally biased. The second development was the near decimation of PAS in Kelantan during the March state election. This was also used by the Barisan Nasional non-Malay parties to support their contention that moderates were ascendant in Malay politics. And finally, the economic situation favoured the Barisan Nasional. Elections were held in a period of high commodity prices, especially of tin, rubber, and palm oil, while the employment position appeared to have improved.

But beneath this apparent placidity in the period just before the campaign non-Malay politics had been characterized by intense bickering and rivalry. This conflict took the form of firstly, intra-party rivalry; secondly, conflicts among the component members of the Barisan Nasional; and thirdly, the contest between the Barisan Nasional non-Malay parties and the opposition led principally by the DAP. All three areas of conflict were related and each had a bearing on the others. Clearly the intra-party divisions or the internal differences of the Barisan Nasional affected its campaign against the DAP while the anticipated campaign against the DAP had influenced considerably the course of developments within the Barisan Nasional.

INTRA-PARTY CONFLICT

Among intra-party conflicts, the MCA was most affected. The problems in the MCA were not new. Founded in 1949 as a party representing all Malaysian Chinese, the MCA gradually lost ground to other Chinese-based opposition parties because it seemed that its association with UMNO had reduced its effectiveness in defending the interests of the Chinese.² The MCA reached its nadir in 1969 when it lost control of the Penang state government and the party was almost decimated in Perak and elsewhere. For a while the MCA was out of the cabinet and effectively lost control of the ministries that dealt with finance and other economic matters. This development itself further undermined its declining influence over the Chinese business community which had been an important source of its former strength. Various moves were undertaken in the post-1969 period to re-vitalize the party, including the formation in 1971 of the Chinese Unity Movement and a task force aimed at establishing grassroots support in Perak. There was a prevailing mood within the party which held that renewed efforts ought to be made towards achieving unity among the Chinese in the country so as to obtain a stronger bargaining position *vis-à-vis* UMNO.

For a while the moves succeeded. New leaders emerged such as Alex Lee, Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, Paul Leong, and Dr Tan Tiong Hong, while a second echelon was also developed. The party succeeded in attracting considerable support in the new villages in Perak and in some urban centres a significant proportion of the English-educated Chinese were attracted to the party. But in the end the reform moves failed partly because the younger members of the reform group were threats to established leaders such as Tan Siew Sin and Lee San Choon. Early in 1973 the younger MCA members were expelled. The reform movement had failed because it was too expressly chauvinistic and lost the support given initially by Tan Siew Sin. Tan Siew Sin remained as President of the party for only a little while longer and gave

way early in 1974 to Lee San Choon.

Thus by the time Lee San Choon took over the party the older generation of leaders as well as the younger reformers were no longer with the MCA. Tan Siew Sin had retired and some of the previously senior men who had been expected to succeed him had either passed away or were politically eclipsed. The 1969 electoral defeat of the party had dealt the MCA a severe blow by depriving the party of men such as Dr Lim Swee Aun, the former Trade and Industry Minister, and Dr Ng Kam Poh, who once held the Health Ministry. Khaw Kai Boh, another MCA leader who could have taken over from Tan Siew Sin, died in 1972. And with younger leaders such as Lim Kheng Yaik, Alex Lee, and Paul Leong expelled there was no one to challenge Lee San Choon when he began to consolidate his leadership of the party.

A man skilled and experienced in intra-party manoeuvring, Lee San Choon could not easily be challenged. In his former position as head of the youth movement, he had established important links with young local leaders who by 1972 had emerged to head divisional or state branches. Furthermore, the setting up of the Multi-Purpose Holdings with a reported paid-up capital of \$100 million and the taking over of *The Star*, a recently established daily newspaper, enabled the new MCA President to strengthen his influence among party officials and members. Most important, the revision of the party constitution greatly increased his power, for it allowed the party president to expel a recalcitrant member or dissolve a troublesome branch.

But despite the powerful position in which he appeared to be, his attempts to assert himself as leader of the Chinese community were seriously circumscribed. Despite his office in the MCA, his lack of personal stature meant that he was not widely recognized as the principal leader of the Chinese in the country. Perhaps also critical was the fact that, unlike Tan Siew Sin, Lee San Choon did not enjoy the close confidence of the Prime Minister nor for that matter any other important Malay leader. Furthermore as Minister for Labour

he did not hold a key economic portfolio in the cabinet and was thus unable to establish important links with the Chinese business and professional community.

The first serious challenge to Lee San Choon came only in 1977 when he made moves to retire Lee Siok Yew as deputy president of the party. The decision to do so was largely in response to reports that UMNO leaders were not happy with Lee Siok Yew's performance and were planning to drop him in an impending cabinet reshuffle. Furthermore, the party had found him to be ineffective. To avoid embarrassment all round it was decided that he be asked to retire before the 1977 MCA general assembly when new party office bearers were to be elected.³ As the new deputy president, Lee San Choon proposed Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan. A former senior civil servant in the Treasury and a member of parliament from Malacca, Chong Hon Nyan was considered to be not only well qualified but politically very suitable because he was reputed to enjoy the trust of the Malay leadership.⁴ This was crucial to the MCA which, with the retirement of Tan Siew Sin, had very few men with close rapport with the UMNO. Furthermore, Chong's age was also a factor. Aged fifty-one, he was acceptable to many young leaders with leadership ambitions as it was expected that he would occupy the deputy president's position for only a relatively short time.

But in these calculations, the forgotten man was Michael Chen, one of the party vice-presidents, Minister for Housing and New Villages, and regarded as the most senior leader after Lee San Choon and Lee Siok Yew. To Michael Chen's supporters, Lee San Choon's support for Chong Hon Nyan, a much more junior member of the party, seemed directed against their man. For those in the party who were unhappy with Lee San Choon's leadership, Michael Chen emerged as the only viable alternative.

What followed was a series of highly-publicized manoeuvres which culminated in an unprecedentedly rowdy session in the 1977 general assembly during which the Federal Reserve Unit had to be called in to ensure order.⁵ The source

of the disturbances was not Michael Chen's supporters but other groups. Sections within the party were unhappy at the manner in which Lee Siok Yew had been shunted aside and his supporters, led by his political secretary, Lim Heng Giap, openly challenged the party leadership. In this the Sungei Besi branch, of which Lim Heng Giap was chairman, took the lead and demonstrated its opposition to Lee San Choon by fielding candidates for all the posts to be contested, including the presidency. Meanwhile Michael Chen responded to the move against him by contesting for the deputy president's post against Chong Hon Nyan and at the same time announced that he would not stand for the vice-presidency.

In the end, Michael Chen won comfortably against Chong Hon Nyan.⁶ But the episode revealed how deeply divided the party had become and the 1977 general assembly simply accentuated many of the differences. It set in motion a quiet leadership struggle in the party which occupied much of its leaders' attention as well as energy and was later to affect the party's campaign in the election. Michael Chen's close association with many of the Chinese guilds and associations as their legal adviser, his position as Minister for Housing and New Villages which gave him access to a large Chinese constituency, and his acceptability to UMNO leaders made him a likely challenger to Lee San Choon.

The MIC was also struck by internal strife. Like the MCA, the MIC had been troubled by factionalism throughout its history and acquired a reputation as an ineffective representative of its community. With the retirement of its long-time leader, Tun V. Sambanthan, the leadership had gone to his rival, V. Manickavasagam. The change had occurred quietly but an undercurrent of discontent remained and manifested itself regularly in heated debates and quarrels at the party's meetings. By 1976 some of the differences in the party had begun to coalesce around the rivalry between Samy Vellu, the MP for Sungai Siput in Perak, and S. Subramaniam, the youthful party secretary-general and deputy minister for Federal Territory. Samy Vellu, an entertaining and able

public speaker, succeeded in winning grassroots support and defeated Subramaniam, who was backed by Manickavasagam, for the post of deputy president in 1977. As in the MCA, the keenly contested election exacerbated further the existing acrimonious feelings within the MIC which also had some bearing upon the party's performance in the 1978 election.

The two non-Malay parties in the Peninsula brought into the Barisan Nasional during the 1970s also experienced difficulties. The Gerakan and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) had both done very well during the 1969 election, the Gerakan capturing the state government of Penang and winning several parliamentary seats elsewhere. But identification with the Barisan Nasional led to a serious erosion of the strength of both parties. Earlier the Gerakan was effectively reduced to a mere regional party when a faction led by Tan Chee Khoo and Syed Hussein Alatas left in 1971 to form the Pekemas. In the case of the PPP, the death of its founder, D. R. Seenivasagam, deprived it of much of its dynamism and aggressiveness. In the election of 1974 the PPP was almost destroyed while the Gerakan's potential for expansion beyond Penang was checked.

Thus one significant outcome of the 1974 election had been the virtual demise of the PPP as a major factor in Perak politics. The loss of seats was shattering but a more serious setback was the death of Datuk S. P. Seenivasagam a year later. For more than a decade the Seenivasagam brothers had articulated many of the expectations and interests of the non-Malays and the PPP had been built around the political charisma and skills they wielded. With Datuk S. P. Seenivasagam gone, the PPP lost perhaps the last important symbol that managed to hold the party together. In the weeks following the death of S. P. Seenivasagam, the ensuing leadership struggle split the party badly. R. Rayan, who lost his Ipoh seat in the election, led several branches out of the PPP when he was defeated by Khong Kok Yat for the party's leadership. For Khong Kok Yat this was a Pyrrhic victory. What was left of the party was a reduced part of an already diminished whole.

Khong Kok Yat, while having sufficient branch support to win the leadership of the PPP, had in fact little mass following while Rayan had neither. The Ipoh Municipality, which had been held by the PPP since 1958 and from where it succeeded in establishing its influence in the area, was now no longer dominated by the party. The presidency of the municipality which had long been held by S. P. Seenivasagam and then briefly by Khong Kok Yat had since been passed on to Datuk Liew Whye Hone of the MCA and the municipality itself was reorganized to include members from other component members of the Barisan Nasional. R. Rayan together with a few supporters set up the small United People's Party in 1976 to challenge the PPP in the Ipoh area.

The Gerakan, under the paternalistic leadership of Dr Lim Chong Eu, has been relatively free from internal strife since the breakaway of the Pekemas group in 1971. But the cost has been heavy. Its early promise of developing into a multi-racial party has been irreparably damaged by the departure of men such as Tan Chee Khoon, V. Veerapan, V. David, and Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas who provided it with a non-communal image. The group that remained came largely from the old United Democratic Party which consisted essentially of former MCA supporters of Dr Lim. In 1973 the Gerakan took on an even more Chinese character when it accepted into its ranks a number of expelled members of the MCA reformist movement, including Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, Paul Leong, Alex Lee, and Tan Tiong Hong.

Nonetheless the Gerakan has not been too seriously weakened by joining the Barisan Nasional. This has largely been because of Dr Lim Chong Eu's leadership and the background of some of its leaders. Dr Lim Chong Eu has proved himself not only to be an astute politician but is generally regarded as the most senior and respected Chinese leader in the country. He is also an able Chief Minister, who has succeeded in promoting economic growth in his state. Secondly, the Gerakan managed to broaden its influence in 1973 when many of the former MCA reformists joined the party. The Gerakan thus

gained several young leaders with popular support in parts of Perak and Selangor. Although the Gerakan is seemingly a non-racial party and pushing quite genuinely in that direction, the presence of Dr Lim Chong Eu and others with backgrounds associated with Chinese causes helps to attract some Chinese support to the party.

Despite the infusion of the reformist MCA group, the Gerakan failed to expand beyond Penang in the 1974 election. Firstly, the party was constrained in articulating too many issues that appealed to the non-Malays because of its participation in the Barisan Nasional. Thus, even with the presence of men such as Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, Alex Lee, and Paul Leong who had espoused Chinese causes while in the MCA, the Gerakan's stand remained overtly non-communal. Secondly, the Gerakan discovered that by being in the Barisan Nasional it had to accept only a share of the non-Malay constituencies to contest and that it was not permitted to field candidates in areas allocated to other parties even when it felt that it had a good chance of winning. And thirdly, the Gerakan, like the MCA, had to contend with the DAP which remained the only viable non-Malay opposition party. Having identified with the Barisan Nasional the task of the Gerakan in facing the DAP was formidable.

For the largely non-Malay opposition, the factor of party dissension has always been present together with the threat of defections. The DAP faced its most difficult test in the months immediately after May 1969 when a number of leaders including its secretary-general left to join the MCA and the Gerakan. But by and large the party had displayed considerable resilience and cohesion. It was therefore surprising to many when in early 1978 difficulties arose in the Penang DAP. Accusations were made by branch officials against what they termed the dictatorial character of the central leadership. In the end several of the Penang leaders led by Yeap Kim Guan left to set up the Social Democratic Party. Yeap Kim Guan was joined by the DAP parliamentarian from Petaling, Oh Keng Seng. For Lim Kit Siang, the break-

away of the SDP group seemed to be an indictment of his aloof style of politics and this appeared to be reinforced by the resignation just a month before the election of Fan Yew Teng, probably the next best known and able of the DAP leaders.

But where in the case of the DAP the main leadership and organization of the party remained intact despite difficulties, defections in the other opposition party, the Pekemas, almost devastated it. Founded largely by dissident members of the Gerakan in 1972, the Pekemas, like the DAP and the Gerakan, is a multi-racial party. But unlike the DAP, the Pekemas has a strong Malay base. This base was provided by remnants of the small Marhaen party led by Boestamam which were brought into the Pekemas when he joined. Held together largely by the ailing Tan Chee Khoon, the party was never able to establish itself strongly in the political scene. In the 1974 election only Tan Chee Khoon won while its other parliamentarians who had previously been elected on Gerakan tickets were defeated. Increasingly there had been disenchantment within the party and in January 1978 almost the entire non-Malay leadership of the Penang branch resigned to join the DAP. This was followed by those in Perak and elsewhere. Shortly before the election it was obvious that the remaining non-Malay leaders such as V. David and K. C. Cheah were preparing to cross over to the DAP which, with its better organization, would improve their electoral prospects. This they did a month before nomination day.

INTRA-BARISAN CONFLICT

More contentious and difficult however were relations between the component parties within the Barisan Nasional. The Barisan Nasional was dominated by the UMNO which, following the departure of PAS at the end of 1977, became virtually the sole Malay party in the front. But in the Peninsula there were four parties—the MCA, MIC, Gerakan and PPP—representing non-Malays. Whereas the MCA could once

claim to represent the Chinese and the MIC the Indians, their special positions were challenged by the inclusion of the Gerakan and the PPP in 1972 and 1973 respectively.

The MCA was never happy with having the Gerakan in the Barisan Nasional. MCA leaders saw in the Gerakan a challenge to their party's position as the senior Chinese party within the Government. They feared that the Gerakan might grow in influence either through personal links with particular UMNO leaders or the effectiveness of its approach to the Chinese public. Evidence of such a danger was seen by the MCA in the case of Penang where it lost control of the state government to the Gerakan in 1969. So long as the Gerakan remained in the Barisan Nasional and did not lose too many seats the MCA could never hope to regain its influence there. MCA leaders were also unhappy that ministerial, parliamentary, and state representation had now to be shared with the Gerakan. Furthermore some MCA leaders expressed concern that the bargaining position of the MCA would be weakened and that it might no longer be indispensable to UMNO if a conflict arose over critical matters affecting the position of non-Malays because UMNO could always turn to the Gerakan. The rivalry was compounded by the fact that the leadership of Gerakan consisted largely of men who had previously been in the MCA and had left the party following factional disputes. Much of the acrimony therefore continued.

An important issue for both the Gerakan and the MCA was the allocation of seats. With four non-Malay component parties and only about forty parliamentary seats to be apportioned between them in the Peninsula, each hoped to get a larger share. The overriding consideration governing the allocation of seats was that parties retained those they were holding while DAP-held constituencies were negotiable. For the parties this was the only opportunity to increase their representation and standing within the Barisan Nasional. Further, a party with many seats to contest could reward more party officials and thus retain their loyalty while a lack of seats could lead to increasing frustration and height-

ened factional rivalries, particularly if the seats given to another party were won, thus depriving others of the opportunity to contest those seats in the future.

Thus, months before nomination day, a propaganda war began as party leaders put forward claims as to why their parties ought to be given a larger share of seats. The MIC, for instance, maintained that as it won all the four constituencies given to it to contest in 1974 it deserved to be given more seats in 1978.⁷ Some branches went further and suggested that where Indians in particular constituencies comprised more than 10 per cent of the electorate those seats ought to be given to the MIC. But it was the rivalry between the MCA and the Gerakan over seat allocation that was most difficult to resolve. The MCA had always resented the fact that it had had to give up so many of its constituencies to the Gerakan in 1974 and party officials were keen to recover some of those seats in order to maintain its image as the senior Chinese party in the government. The Gerakan on the other hand viewed itself as an expanding party which ought to be given more seats, especially in areas such as Perak where it had established new branches and extended its influence. Throughout this scramble for additional seats the PPP kept a low profile. Virtually eliminated in the 1974 election, its goal was limited to securing a respectable number of seats to ensure political survival.

The process of seat allocation and candidate selection in 1978 went through a series of stages. From various accounts it would appear that Datuk Hussein Onn did not involve himself too directly with the selection of candidates as Tun Abdul Razak had in 1974, when it was said that the late Prime Minister went through the list himself and decided upon the candidates. In 1978 the first step was to decide on the number of seats for the various parties and the constituencies. This was done through bargaining at which each party was represented by one of its leaders. Then candidates had to be picked by the parties for the constituencies given to them, subject to ratification by the Barisan Nasional. For

the parties the second stage proved to be just as difficult as the first, particularly where local officials objected to some of the selections made by the national leaders.

On nomination day it transpired that the MCA had been given additional parliamentary seats to contest, 28 compared to 21 in 1974. For the state seats it had 59 compared to 56 in 1974. This surprised many because earlier rumours suggested that the party might be given fewer seats in view of its reported declining influence. Of the additional seats given most were in the Kinta area of Perak including several previously contested by the PPP. The Petaling parliamentary seat in Selangor where Gerakan's Goh Hock Guan had been badly defeated in 1974 was also offered to the MCA.

Without doubt the MCA's success in gaining the additional seats was an indication that the party was still seen by UMNO as the senior non-Malay party within the Barisan Nasional despite the inclusion of other parties. This was partly because it is expressly Chinese and thus useful in underlining the multi-racial character of the Government. Furthermore there were those in UMNO who continued to regard the MCA with favour because of its past association with the Alliance and MCA leaders alluded frequently to the party's historical role as a party of the Chinese in the crucial period when independence was negotiated and the constitution discussed.

More than this, the MCA was larger and in some areas better organized than the Gerakan. It claimed a membership of 200,000 throughout the country and had branches wherever there were concentrations of Chinese. It remained, for instance, very influential in all the new villages where the party had in the 1950s provided considerable assistance. Almost every new village has an MCA branch. And besides, the Ministry of New Villages which looks after and provides assistance to these settlements has invariably been held by an MCA man. Thus, irrespective of the electoral strength of the MCA, the party had an extensive organizational set-up and large membership, which neither the Gerakan nor the PPP, nor for that matter the MIC, was able to match. The PPP for instance

never had much of an organization even at the height of its influence under the Seenivasagam brothers. And the Gerakan remained cautious in its geographical expansion. The MIC on the other hand was limited to areas where there was a sizeable Indian population. Therefore the MCA had a clear advantage since it could back its demands for particular constituencies by claiming to have established branches and election machinery there. One example of this was the constituency of Kinta. In this area, the Gerakan's Dr Lim Kheng Yaik had worked for the last four or five years to build up his support but in the end, Kinta was given to the MCA. The argument presented by the MCA was simply that it had more branches and members in Kinta than the Gerakan.

While the PPP with only 1 parliamentary and 2 state seats was the biggest net loser within the Barisan Nasional, the Gerakan was also disappointed with what it was given. In all it was to contest in only 6 parliamentary seats as compared to 8 in 1974. The 6 seats were Tanjong, Nibong Tebal, Jelutong (all in Penang), Taiping, Telok Anson (both in Perak), and Kepong (in Kuala Lumpur). For the state election it got 17 seats—one less than in 1974. It contested an extra seat in both Perak and Selangor where it obtained 4 and 1 seats respectively. In Penang the seat allocation placed it in a precarious position where there was a danger that it could lose its then slight numerical superiority in the state assembly. It was given 11 seats—2 less than in 1974.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment for the Gerakan was that it failed to get an additional parliamentary seat in Perak. Some had hoped that the constituencies lost by the PPP to the DAP in 1974 would be given to the Gerakan. The Gerakan was particularly keen to have the constituency of Kinta for its Deputy President, Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, a former MCA leader and one-time Minister for New Villages, who had built up considerable support in the area and had a clinic at Chemor within the constituency. In terms of the party's long-term strategy the failure to get the seat was a serious setback as the Gerakan was particularly strong in the area, having been

built up since the 1971-3 period when many present Gerakan leaders were in the MCA task force. For long the area had voted strongly for the opposition but in 1978 it seemed winnable for the Government. The racial composition of the Kinta seat had changed considerably and Malays formed nearly 40 per cent of the voters, thus improving the prospects of the Barisan Nasional, and the incumbent DAP MP, Ngan Siong Hing, was said to have neglected the constituency and decided to contest in another area.⁸

Largely because of this both the MCA and the Gerakan wanted the seat. It was, however, more than just a question of winning an additional seat. For the Gerakan, gaining Kinta would provide a base to expand its influence in the Kinta area and establish a firm presence outside Penang, thus enabling it to lose its image as a small local party. And winning Kinta would provide considerable encouragement to Gerakan supporters who envisioned a Kinta Valley linked economically with Taiping and Penang, all of which would be under the Gerakan. The seat would also offer to Dr Lim Kheng Yaik high political visibility once again which, with his charismatic style, could be immensely advantageous to the party. It was to pre-empt these possibilities that the MCA was anxious that the Kinta seat should at all costs not go to the Gerakan.

In Penang the decline in the number of seats given to Gerakan came at a most awkward time. Gerakan's control of the Penang state government had never been accepted by the MCA and, as in Perak, the Gerakan-MCA hostility had been intense. The MCA was especially frustrated as there seemed to be no way of regaining its premier position in the state except to hope that Gerakan candidates would be defeated by DAP opponents in the election. But, despite the serious challenge of the DAP, the Gerakan had succeeded in holding on to its position through able economic management of the island. What was even more depressing for the MCA was its lack of a leader in Penang comparable to Dr Lim Chong Eu, the Gerakan party president and state Chief Minister. Thus, the MCA leader, Lee San Choon, in early 1978 surprised

many when he appointed a former Labour Party leader, Lim Kean Siew, to head the Penang MCA. A former member of the Socialist Front who had himself strongly attacked the MCA in the past, Lim Kean Siew certainly was not a man who could readily be accepted by many as a possible Chief Minister to replace Lim Chong Eu. His appointment then could only be interpreted as a move by Lee Şan Choon to introduce an unsettling element in Penang politics aimed against the Gerakan rather than as a move to offer an immediate alternative.

Largely because of the Kinta seat, many members of Gerakan, including some of its leaders, felt that their party had failed to assert itself sufficiently *vis-à-vis* the MCA. This, to them, had led to a situation where the party not only failed to get additional seats despite its expansion but had to accept fewer seats. The party leadership, in defence, maintained that the bargain reached was the best which the Gerakan could get under prevailing circumstances. According to various accounts, the MCA had proposed that the party which was given Kinta should also accept the practically unwinnable DAP-held constituencies of Batu Gajah, Menglembu, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur Bandar, and Petaling as well. Thus, if it had accepted the possible gain at Kinta, the Gerakan would have had to risk the high probability of heavy losses elsewhere. The Gerakan leadership hesitated but before it had made up its mind the MCA decided to accept the 'package deal'.

In exchange for Kinta the MCA had to accept the likelihood of having its performance severely marred by defeats in all those additional seats given to it. But it was prepared to accept such a consequence in order to prevent the Gerakan from taking Kinta and thereby establishing wider political visibility for itself in Perak. Among supporters of the Gerakan there was considerable disappointment. Many were convinced that since joining the Barisan Nasional, the party had been forced into a weaker electoral position. Certainly the number of seats given to the Gerakan in 1978 and 1974 was consider-

ably less than in 1969 when it first took part in the election.

For the MIC, the number of seats given to it was accepted as satisfactory. No seat was taken away from it. For parliament it retained the four constituencies it had previously won and at the state level it gained three seats. These were Kuala Ketil in Kedah, Kepayang in Perak, and Tanah Rata in Pahang.

TABLE 8.1
Seats contested by the Gerakan in 1969, 1974, and 1978

<i>Year</i>	<i>Parliament</i>	<i>State</i>
1969	14	38
1974	8	18
1978	6	17

BARISAN-DAP CONFLICT: THE CAMPAIGN

In the 1978 election few of the issues were new. Many of the subjects raised had been brought out in almost every election since 1959. Broadly these touched on questions of concern to non-Malays such as educational opportunities, jobs and economic prospects, and language. Whatever their form, these issues in essence related closely to the sense of uncertainty which many non-Malays felt. In 1978 many of these issues were viewed with increased anxiety, partly because of some of the effects of the New Economic Policy and the national education policy. And in 1978 the DAP appeared to be almost the only articulator of this non-Malay concern. The DAP charged that the government parties had neglected the legitimate interests of the non-Malay communities, especially in educational and economic opportunities which it claimed had narrowed, while Chinese education, in particular, was threatened.

Much of the 1978 campaign in the non-Malay constituencies was based on such broad concerns. However in some areas

the issues of larger communal concern were highlighted by a particular local controversy. The most common and emotional usually involved Chinese schools. The failure, for instance, of a Chinese school to gain approval from local authorities for extension, or its being required by the government to re-locate its premises could easily be turned into a political controversy. In 1974, for instance, a Chinese primary school in Menglembu, a town close to Ipoh, was reportedly under pressure to sell off part of its land at a price below the prevailing market rate and this, quite expectedly, became a matter used in the election there. In 1978 a larger debate broke out over the Chung Shan Chinese school in Penang. The school had been asked to move to another site to make way for extension work at the Bayan Lepas airport. But as the new site was some distance from the old school there was naturally some disquiet and with the election it became an issue. When such occurrences happen, the broader concerns of Chinese education become more easily understood and the reaction correspondingly fiercer and more emotional.

Against this political thrust of the DAP, the non-Malay component parties of the Barisan Nasional were largely on the defensive. It was recognized that even among the supporters of the Gerakan and MCA the majority held views on such issues that are no different from those who voted for the DAP. Members of the MCA or the Gerakan could be just as critical or vocal against the Government's educational and economic policies as those of the DAP. None of the non-Malay parties in the Barisan Nasional was able, therefore, to ignore subjects of concern to the non-Malay community for to do so would be to lose political support.

In response to attacks by the DAP, both the Gerakan and the MCA sought to explain why it was crucial that they remain within the government. They maintained that it was important for the non-Malays to gain access to the decision-making process so as to exercise some influence through dialogue and discussion with important Malay leaders.⁹ In this way they claimed that they could moderate some of the policies intro-

duced. But the effectiveness of their role, they insisted, depended on the parliamentary strength of the parties and the credibility of their position as representatives of the majority of the non-Malays. Both the Gerakan and MCA argued that a strong DAP in parliament serves to achieve little in tangible or positive results. Fiery oratory can provide no panacea for the problems which they conceded confronted the non-Malays. Thus any increase in the DAP's electoral strength would be inimical to non-Malay interests as this would alarm the Malays while at the same time enfeebling the non-Malay parties in their bargaining with UMNO.

One issue that was raised in 1978 and was to become important later involved the setting up of a private university to be named Merdeka University.¹⁰ This had first been mooted in 1968 and a company was set up to raise funds for its establishment. The promoters of the Merdeka University envisaged that the institution would cater for students from Chinese-language secondary schools and that the medium of instruction would therefore be Chinese although Malay and English would also be used. It was maintained that the concept of the university, even though privately run, would still be in accordance with the national educational policy. Sections of most non-Malay political parties had expressed support at one time or another in the past and the project appealed to many Chinese. There were still several thousand students from the privately run and financed Chinese-language secondary schools who had little chance of gaining admission into local universities because of language and entrance requirements. In the past many had proceeded to Nanyang University in Singapore or to institutions in Taiwan but this was becoming increasingly difficult. In Perak and Penang, especially, the private Chinese-language secondary schools had received considerable support and the Independent Chinese Secondary School Movement had raised funds to maintain these institutions. For English-educated Chinese too, the proposed Merdeka University would provide an alternative to the state-run universities to which access for non-Malays was limited. The

issue was promoted by Chinese school alumni and various Chinese guilds and associations and became a symbol for the problem of Chinese education in the country generally.

The non-Malay parties in the Barisan Nasional would have preferred to avoid the subject. While some leaders expressed support in their individual capacities, the parties as a whole were reluctant to come out categorically in favour as the subject was sensitive and strongly opposed by UMNO. DAP candidates naturally used the Merdeka University issue to attack the MCA and the Gerakan, and their failure to come out openly in support of the Merdeka University was presented by the DAP as yet another example of how these parties had allowed the interests of the Chinese to be undermined. In general the Merdeka University question seriously disadvantaged the MCA and the Gerakan during the campaign.

The non-Malay parties in the Barisan Nasional stressed the moderation of Hussein Onn's leadership. For some time non-Malays had viewed with concern and at times confusion the political developments within UMNO. But many had been reassured by the Prime Minister's firmness in dealing with the Harun case and its consequences so that their approval of Hussein Onn's leadership was an important electoral asset for the non-Malay components of the Barisan Nasional. Wherever possible, non-Malays were reminded during the campaign of the need to support the moderate leadership of Hussein Onn, especially as the situation in UMNO then remained unclear.

The political mood and the issues raised suggested that the DAP would do very well in the predominantly non-Malay areas. This being the case the main aim of the non-Malay parties in the Barisan Nasional was to hold the seats they already had. There was speculation that in all the large towns, DAP candidates would win comfortably. Thus the Barisan Nasional held little hope of gaining predominantly Chinese seats held by the DAP in Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, and Malacca. On the other hand almost all the seats held by the non-Malay Barisan Nasional parties were described during the campaign as marginal. In Penang, however, the Gerakan

received some comforting reports that the strong vote against the government parties would be confined largely to the federal level and that the party could count on general support to retain most of its state seats. It would seem that many non-Malays in Penang were anxious to have a Gerakan-led state government while voting for the DAP in the parliamentary seats to register their dissatisfaction.

In the 1978 campaign public rallies were banned. This seemed advantageous to the non-Malay Barisan Nasional parties as the DAP had demonstrated greater skill and effectiveness in this area of campaigning in the past. Few MCA or Gerakan candidates were particularly noted for skills in oratory or public debate in contrast with the DAP leaders. In past elections huge crowds had been attracted to the rallies of the opposition parties, particularly the DAP, where in most cases they enthusiastically responded to speeches critical of government policies or leaders. But with the 1978 campaign limited to indoor *ceramah*, the DAP was deprived of a valuable medium. More than that, non-Malay Barisan candidates found themselves very comfortable in the small and often neutral, if not friendly, audiences of the *ceramah* instead of having to face unruly crowds in public rallies. In the *ceramah*, supporters of opposition parties could be excluded or isolated in the midst of party supporters and uncommitted onlookers. The candidate could dominate the proceedings, especially if flanked by local and national dignitaries. If the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister were present the candidate's image would be considerably enhanced as he would be able to present himself as someone with access to the highest authorities in the country.

Further, many *ceramah* were organized by or for specific interest groups, such as trade or professional associations, and candidates could address themselves to issues or problems that were of particular concern to their audience. This allowed candidates either to avoid difficult subjects or to explain their party's stand in a quiet atmosphere. A candidate could appear to take his small audience into his confidence

and reveal the concessions his party had obtained or was in the process of working towards while sharing with them the difficulties the party had been facing *vis-à-vis* the DAP or UMNO. He could also pass on information about party or national politics to indicate that he was privy to the higher counsels, and, by showing that he trusted the audience, could get them to identify with his problems or cause. Such an approach is clearly not possible in a large public rally.

In a *ceramah* held at the Chinese Funeral Society in Jinjang in the important constituency of Kepong, the chairman of the meeting, which was attended by about thirty members, opened the proceeding by praising Dr Tan Tiong Hong, the Barisan Nasional (Gerakan) candidate and also adviser to the society, and listed the assistance he had made to the association. When it was Dr Tan's turn to speak he briefly explained his plans and the value he could be to the community. At the end of the meeting which lasted only an hour the chairman presented a contribution to his campaign. This was politely accepted and then returned immediately to the society by Dr Tan as a donation to the society. The gesture visibly impressed the audience. In the Soon Tuck Association in Taiping, Paul Leong of the Gerakan met a dozen or so members in a dialogue session. The members of this Cantonese association were mainly in the pork trade and thus important opinion disseminators in the markets. Paul Leong concentrated on the economic performance of the government, a subject with which he was very familiar as Deputy Minister for Primary Industries and which was related closely to the business interests of the members. Again there was a receptive audience. For the MCA's Richard Ho, a *ceramah* at a Felera gathering near Sitiawan was an opportunity to seek crucial Malay votes. Speaking in Malay, Richard Ho advised the largely UMNO audience of the dangers of an 'unholy alliance' between the DAP and PAS. His ministerial bearing and command of Malay impressed the small rural gathering. Thus for those with ministerial ranking small indoor gatherings could be turned into briefing sessions.

The nature of the *ceramah* as a means of campaigning meant that in many large constituencies no more than a quarter or a third of the electorate could be reached. Posters, the distribution of hand leaflets, and door-to-door campaigning were thus needed. Door-to-door campaigning was done selectively since this demanded a great deal physically from the candidates. Generally candidates concentrated on localities where reports from the party indicated that support was weak. Here the collection of intelligence was most important. Party workers reported back to the candidates' operation rooms the latest mood of the electorate. Good and reliable party advisers were therefore important. Not only had they to sense the mood of the voters but they had also to judge what the issues were and how adverse trends could be corrected. If need be a meeting might be arranged with a local community leader to sort out problems or to win over voters. Thus making contact with appropriate community leaders was important. In Kepong, the Barisan Nasional candidate, Dr Tan Tiong Hong, obtained the assistance of two of the former political secretaries to Dr Tan Chee Khoon, the leader of the opposition party, Pekemas, who had decided not to recontest the seat because of ill health. Both were invaluable in advising Dr Tan Tiong Hong as they were familiar with the political terrain of the area. Unwinnable groups were pointed out and marginal localities identified.

Of the main urban seats, the results of only Kepong, Damansara, Kinta, and the Penang parliamentary seats were expected to be close. In Kepong Dr Tan Tiong Hong, the Barisan Nasional candidate, was thought to have a good chance of winning the seat from Pekemas. Dr Tan Tiong Hong who has two clinics in the area had been preparing his groundwork there since he lost narrowly to Tan Chee Khoon in 1974. Involvement in many of the Chinese guilds and associations had given him access to important community leaders of the area. More crucial in this election was the fact that the veteran politician, Dr Tan Chee Khoon, was no longer contesting the seat and although his protégé Tan Seng Giaw could

count on good support it was not expected to be sufficient. Kepong was believed still to have concentrations of support for the now defunct Labour Party. But the opposition votes, considerable as they may have been, were certain to be split with the fielding of a candidate by the DAP.¹¹

DISSENSION DURING THE CAMPAIGN

In many constituencies the Barisan Nasional was further troubled by problems that were linked to differences, and even hostility, between the factional groupings within the component parties. Members of one party faction were frequently reported to be reluctant to support candidates belonging to another. For instance it was said that those who favoured Michael Chen were unhappy with many of the MCA candidates, virtually all of whom were chosen by Lee San Choon himself. This was believed to be particularly so in Batu Gajah and Kampar where national level factionalism was linked to local disputes. In the MIC similar rivalries between supporters of Samy Vellu and those behind Subramaniam were reported to be affecting the party campaign.

Some of the problems within the parties had arisen when officials who had expected to be nominated became disgruntled when they found that their names were not on the party list of candidates. The most serious of these involved the MCA which had nominated several newcomers in a move to bring in younger men. Altogether about six, mainly English-educated professionals, were included. Two of them met with strong opposition from local MCA officials. In Bukit Mertajam the four-term incumbent, Tan Beng Chee, resigned from the party to contest as an independent when the MCA replaced him with Lee Jong Kee and in Bukit Bendera the chairman of the division, Geh Chong Kiat, was finally placated only when Tunku Abdul Rahman, the former Prime Minister, intervened after he had reacted angrily to the nomination of H'ng Hung Yong. H'ng, in his early thirties, was the Managing Editor of *The Star* newspaper which was

controlled by the MCA but he was regarded by the MCA members in Bukit Bendera as an outsider even though he had been brought up in the area.

For the MIC party discipline was similarly tested. One example was in the state seat, Sitiawan, where the rank and file were unhappy when the candidate of their choice was not selected. The crisis was compounded when the local UMNO division claimed the seat as well. The matter was only resolved when Dr Mahathir, in his capacity as UMNO state liaison officer of Perak, intervened and confirmed the MIC's official nominee. Such disputes had repercussions in the campaign and understandably worried the parliamentary candidate in that area, Richard Ho, of the MCA. Richard Ho felt particularly vulnerable as he was never accepted as a truly MCA man after having moved into the party from the DAP. Furthermore the Barisan candidate for the state seat of Pangkor which fell within the parliamentary seat of Lumut was said to be politically very weak.

The Gerakan experienced some internal difficulties too. For instance, R. Rajasingam, the incumbent for the parliamentary seat of Jelutong, was dropped. Party leaders maintained that this was done because he was ineffective and had neglected constituency work, but supporters of Rajasingam suggested that the move came because he had taken too independent a stand. The decision to leave him out was a significant one. For with that, all the Gerakan candidates were for the first time Chinese.

Within the MCA not all resignations from party membership to contest the election as independents could be attributed to resentment at being overlooked for nomination by the party. In Penang, the resignation of seven MCA officials to contest as independents was a direct outcome of the long-standing conflict between the Gerakan and the MCA. Early in 1978 the former Labour Party leader, Lim Kean Siew, who had joined the MCA in 1974, was appointed chairman of the Penang MCA, apparently with the intention of embarrassing the Gerakan. If this was the intended role of Lim

Kean Siew, then he performed it most effectively in the months preceding the elections. His attacks on the Barisan Nasional state government led by the Gerakan were hardly disguised.¹² He demanded that the MCA be given more seats in the coming election and warned that if this were not done the MCA would field candidates under the party's own symbol. The result was a sustained exchange of angry statements between the Gerakan and the MCA. In a press conference on 9 May Lim Kean Siew challenged the Gerakan to contest under its own symbol. 'Let the people choose between the MCA and the Gerakan.'¹³

As events turned out the MCA was given two more state seats to contest—a total of five—but this was still insufficient, as even if all were won it would remain in a minority.¹⁴ When the official list was made known, seven members of the MCA resigned to stand as independents. Of these two had their nominations disqualified for technical reasons but the remaining five contested as the so-called People's Independent Front. The Gerakan reacted angrily and accused the MCA of being behind the Front. It would seem that the MCA was supporting not only the five MCA members accepted as official candidates of the Barisan Nasional but also the five independents and that this was aimed at wresting the political initiative from the Gerakan. Even if the independents failed to win the seats, it was possible that they would at least steal away enough votes to deny crucial seats to the Gerakan.

The conflict between the MCA and the Gerakan in Penang also occurred elsewhere in the country. Although less vocal and acrimonious, feelings were no less high as both charged each other with non-cooperation and, in some cases, outright sabotage. Allegations were made, particularly by the Gerakan against the MCA, that funds and support were being secretly given to DAP candidates. In Perak, it was evident that Gerakan candidates in Taiping and Telok Anson were getting less than enthusiastic support from MCA officials, as was the case also in the Federal Territory seat of Kepong. In the Perak state seat of Jalong local officials of the MCA in one new vil-

lage failed to provide promised leaflets to the Gerakan candidate, Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, for a door-to-door campaign. Conversely MCA candidates had many complaints about the effectiveness of Gerakan's support.

Not many voters appeared to understand what the MCA-Gerakan conflict had been all about. Both were seen as Chinese-based parties supporting the government and, except for personalities, there appeared to be little that differentiated one from the other. As part of the attempt to distinguish between themselves, both produced publications which stated what their parties represented. Just before the election Dr Goh Cheng Teik, the head of the Gerakan's political bureau, published an essay entitled *Integration in a Plural Society: The Chinese in Malaysia*.¹⁵ In it Goh traced the development and problems of the Chinese society in Malaysia. The principal argument was that the Chinese in Malaysia should avoid identifying themselves separately but see themselves only as Malaysians and that it was politically unwise for some leaders to promote Chinese unity since this would simply provoke calls for unity by other communities. While not an officially endorsed Gerakan statement, Goh's essay reflected the party's views on the direction which the Chinese community should take. For the Gerakan, Chinese political separateness should end and there should be no specifically Chinese party.

In reply to Goh's essay H'ng Hung Yong, the MCA candidate for Bukit Bendera, issued an election pamphlet entitled *Where do we go from here? The Chinese dilemma*.¹⁶ A Harvard graduate like Goh himself, H'ng had served as the special assistant to Lee San Choon and at the time of the election was the Managing Editor of the MCA's newspaper, *The Star*. Like Goh's essay, H'ng's pamphlet was a brief study of the Chinese in the country. The pamphlet was critical of the DAP but it reserved the most biting attack for the Gerakan without actually identifying it. Clearly referring to Goh's caution against using Chinese unity as a rallying point, H'ng Hung Yong wrote: 'A small but dangerous group of individuals is now propagating the view that those who call upon the Chi-

nese to unite to solve their common problems are in fact anti-national. . .'.¹⁷ Further on H'ng pointed out:

One common tactic used to achieve this purpose is to practise double standards, to denigrate the Chinese community while praising our Malay brethren. When Chinese leaders call upon the Chinese to unite to help in nation-building, they are at once accused of being chauvinistic. But when Malay leaders similarly call upon the Malays to unite, they are praised for having the interest of the nation at heart.¹⁸

THE RESULTS

The results of the 8 July election showed that the DAP was the only non-Malay party to emerge with any significant gains. It won altogether a total of 15 parliamentary and 25 state seats in the Peninsula, a net gain of 6 seats in parliament and 2 in the state assemblies. Its most impressive advance was in Penang where it took 4 parliamentary seats and 5 state seats compared to no parliamentary and 2 state seats in 1974. Another significant gain was in Johor where it became the first non-Malay opposition party to win a parliamentary seat at the expense of the MCA in that state. In the keenly contested Federal Territory seat of Damansara the DAP candidate won and the party picked up the major urban seats in Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, and the Federal Territory. The only setback for the DAP was in Perak where prior to the election it had claimed that it could win enough seats to form the next state government. Instead it lost the parliamentary seat of Kinta and failed to take Sitiawan and Telok Anson which the Barisan Nasional had considered to be extremely vulnerable. It also lost a state seat to the Gerakan.

The Gerakan's performance disappointed its leaders. Of most concern to them was the loss of seats in Penang. Even before the election an important state leader, Datuk Khoo Kay Por, had lost his state seat through disqualification, and when the final results came it held only 9 state seats, a loss of 3. This meant that the Gerakan had fewer seats than UMNO and this led sections of the state UMNO to question the position

of Dr Lim Chong Eu as Chief Minister. Dr Lim Chong Eu himself had considerable difficulty in his state seat and won by only a very narrow margin. The Gerakan also lost the parliamentary seats of Tanjong and Jelutong but managed to hold Nibong Tebal and Telok Anson after difficult campaigns. The only encouraging feature of the election result for Gerakan was the victory of its secretary-general, Paul Leong, in Taiping by an increased majority and the gains made in Kepong and the state seat of Jalong. It won Jalong after a close fight but despite this the Gerakan was unable to make the inroads into the Kinta Valley for which some of its Perak leaders had hoped. Overall the Gerakan won 4 parliamentary and 12 state seats.

The MCA obtained 17 parliamentary seats compared with 19 in 1974 and 44 state seats compared with 43. But its leaders were disappointed. Given the increased number of constituencies it contested and the general expectation of success, the total it managed to win was considered a poor performance. The party lost a seat in Johor and failed to improve its general position in the other states. And, except for Tan Koon Swan, who headed the party's Multi-Purpose Holdings, all the young technocratic-type candidates introduced by the party for the first time lost. Moreover, in Penang all the People's Independent Front candidates with alleged MCA support lost. Only the candidate in Nibong Tebal polled well. In its own post-mortem on the election the MCA in a confidential report expressed disappointment with its performance at the parliamentary level. However the report pointed out that except for Kluang, Bukit Bendera, and Bukit Mertajam which were MCA seats, the seats it lost were the same constituencies where the other component parties had been defeated in the 1974 general election.

The MIC's secretary-general, Subramaniam, became the only Deputy Minister in the Peninsula to lose a seat. But the party managed to hold on comfortably to its three other parliamentary seats. And of the 11 state seats it contested, the MIC won 9. The other non-Malay party in the Barisan Na-

sional, the PPP, lost the only parliamentary seat it held and for the first time since 1957 had no representation in parliament. It did however retain the safe state seat of Chemor in Perak which allows it to linger on politically.

As expected, none of the smaller non-Malay parties won a state or parliamentary seat. Candidates of the SDP in Penang and the UPP in Perak, like those of the Pekemas and the Workers' Party, were badly defeated with most of them losing their deposits. Among them were several leaders of the parties concerned. Only the Pekemas candidate for Kepong came close to winning a seat. Of the independents the only convincing win was that of C. Y. Choy, the former Socialist Front mayor of Penang. It is becoming increasingly evident that the high expenditures as well as the organization needed in elections, particularly when rallies are banned, have made it difficult for the smaller parties to compete against the Barisan Nasional or the DAP.

The MCA-Gerakan discord was not to be without a sequel in the post-election period. Dr Goh Cheng Teik, who survived a difficult election in Nibong Tebal against Dr Khoo Soo Kheng, the former head of the MCA Nibong Tebal division who contested as a People's Independent Front candidate, was quoted as saying that there had been treachery within the Barisan Nasional and referred to a plot to unseat him.¹⁹ Dr Khoo polled 7,272 against Dr Goh's 11,077. Likewise the Gerakan candidate who lost in Paya Terubong, Penang, also issued a statement which blamed the MCA for his defeat. In Paya Terubong the Gerakan candidate had to contend with opposition not only from the DAP but also from the People's Independent Front.²⁰ In a statement after the election, the Gerakan Political Bureau chief in Penang attributed the gains made by the opposition to the 'ambivalent politics of the MCA leadership, and a certain amount of confusion caused by it'.²¹

Lim Kean Siew, at whom much of the Gerakan's criticism had been directed, responded by denying that he had campaigned against Gerakan candidates. He reiterated that his

dispute was over the allocation of seats.²² But within Lim's own party, strong views were expressed over his stand during the campaign. The strongest criticism came from the Penang MCA Youth leader, David Choong, who placed much of the blame on Lim Kean Siew for the MCA-Gerakan dispute. David Choong himself lost the state seat of Ayer Itam and alleged that Lim was more preoccupied with attacking the Gerakan than the DAP. This outburst led later to the party leadership expelling David Choong from the party together with his supporters. To the party leadership the indiscipline of David Choong was more harmful to the party than the actions of Lim who, after all, was only over-zealous in promoting the cause of the MCA in Penang.

IMPLICATIONS

Following the election, there was considerable debate as to whether the results showed that there had been an increase in voting along racial lines. Much of the discussion was sparked off by concern within the Barisan Nasional at the gains made by the DAP which had emerged as the only non-Malay opposition left in the parliament.²³ One argument was that the DAP increased its representation because many more of the non-Malays responded to its communal appeals. There was thus a polarization along racial lines in the voting pattern. Unquestionably the support for the DAP indicated a protest against the government but it was not entirely communal. A point to note is that alone of all the parties the DAP fielded candidates drawn from each racial community and four of its successful candidates for parliament were Indians. Furthermore in two states heavily populated with non-Malay voters—Selangor and Perak—there was hardly an improvement in DAP votes compared with the 1974 results. These considerations notwithstanding it is unlikely that the DAP will lose its chauvinistic image because of the issues it emphasizes.

Clearly then, the MCA and the Gerakan have not, by being

in the Barisan Nasional, been able to gain enthusiastic acceptance as parties of the Chinese. They are identified with government policies about which many Chinese feel very unhappy. The difficulty of the MCA and the Gerakan here is that their ability to push for communal causes, even if they want to, is severely limited by being in the government and being confronted with the practical realities of the political situation. As an opposition party, the DAP can raise issues of concern and criticize those policies of the government with which it disagrees; in this role it has been relatively successful.

The non-Malay parties in the government thus face considerable difficulties in competing against the DAP on communal issues. The Gerakan has therefore chosen to avoid the use of symbols that appeal to the Chinese but rather to establish itself as a party with a technocratic bias. Its leaders argue that the party is concerned primarily with economic development and believe that only through increased economic opportunities for all can the tension among the races be reduced. The control of Penang is therefore crucial to the Gerakan as it offers an opportunity to the party to demonstrate its viability as a political alternative for the Chinese.

Aware of the changed balance of power in Malaysian politics, Gerakan leaders believe that it ought to work closely with the Malays and support moderate UMNO leadership. Through this the party expects to gain the co-operation of the Malays in power and therefore have some influence on policies. To gain this, the party has to avoid acquiring a blatantly communal character. Instead, its image should be that of a competent and technocratic party.

This approach has attracted strong criticisms from the MCA and aroused suspicion in certain sections of UMNO. The MCA accuses the Gerakan of being prepared to take a pro-Malay position in order to replace the MCA as the most important non-Malay component member of the government. It contends also that the presence of a second Chinese-based party in the Barisan Nasional weakens the non-Malay bargaining position since the MCA is no longer indis-

pensable to UMNO in so far as it needs to have Chinese representation, even token, in the government. On the other hand, some in UMNO view Gerakan's call for the evolution of parties which are Malaysian in identity and non-racial as an attack not only on the MCA but also on UMNO. Conceivably Gerakan's non-racial self-image could ultimately lead it to try its hand in Malay constituencies but in practice it has been aware of UMNO's concern and has on its own avoided scrupulously the Malay areas.

In competing against the Gerakan and the DAP, the MCA finds that it has on one hand to gain the confidence of UMNO and on the other to win the support of the Chinese. UMNO support is important if it is to retain its senior position within the Barisan Nasional and is particularly crucial in the period before elections when seats are distributed. The MCA cannot afford to appear to UMNO as an expressly chauvinistic party. As with the Gerakan and possibly because of it, the MCA has found it necessary also to present itself as a party with leaders of technocratic abilities. Under Tan Siew Sin, who was himself a competent and respected Finance Minister, the party had established a branch known as the Maju Ward in the early 1960s to attract professionals and those from the universities in response to the image of the People's Action Party as a party of intellectuals. From this branch the MCA has attracted a number of professionals who now occupy high positions in the party. As the recent election indicated, the MCA in its competition with Gerakan is prepared to put up candidates with reputed technocratic skills even though they did not all win.

Against the DAP the strategy of the MCA was to demonstrate its preparedness to fight for non-Malay causes. It has called for unity of the Chinese under its leadership similar to that of Malays under UMNO. Its effectiveness in mobilizing communal support is however greatly circumscribed by its anxiety not to offend UMNO. In the last few years, the MCA has started a number of ambitious programmes. These include the development of the Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR)

College, the setting up of the Multi-Purpose Holdings, a membership drive, establishment of a fund to aid Chinese education, and the building of a new headquarters.²⁴ The activities and progress of these projects have been given considerable coverage in *The Star*, a tabloid newspaper that was bought by the party. The projects are aimed at obtaining for the party high visibility among the Chinese and are perhaps intended to symbolize its role as the main party of the Chinese. They also create an important sense of activity and purpose in the party, especially during non-election periods. More important, these projects offer educational and economic opportunities and are useful to attract and bind supporters to it. Given the fact that unlike UMNO the non-Malay parties have little scope in terms of patronage, the MCA projects are of some material and political benefit. Critics of the MCA point out that the fact that the MCA found it necessary to carry out these projects only underlines the ineffectiveness of the party at the highest reaches of government and that the TAR College and the Multi-Purpose Holdings are piecemeal efforts which do not resolve the fundamental issues which concern the Chinese. But to the MCA, small as these programmes may be, they indicate the willingness of the party to participate in the community's educational and economic affairs.

It is increasingly evident that while purely communal issues remain important, there are sections of the Chinese community which are also concerned with basic questions of development. And it is in this area that the MCA and the Gerakan are able to compete with the DAP. The election results showed that the MCA tended to do well in rural and semi-rural seats. The key factor in explaining this pattern is the support of Malays who are usually a large minority in the semi-rural non-Malay constituencies and whose votes tilt the balance in favour of non-Malay Barisan Nasional candidates. But it is also true that in these areas where basic amenities and land are of more urgent concern than the larger issues of education and language, a substantial proportion of

the Chinese vote for the Barisan Nasional. It is the MCA or Gerakan MP (or state assemblyman) who is more likely to ensure improvements and changes than a parliamentarian from the opposition. Penang and Johor are two states where the government non-Malay parties have done reasonably well. In Penang, the Gerakan, by being in power as the state government, wields considerable economic influence and in Johor, which is often regarded as an MCA stronghold, the party has established close rapport with the *Menteri Besar* and through this has, it is suggested, ensured for the Chinese there comparatively easier access to land and other economic opportunities. Significantly, the Gerakan in the 1978 election won two important urban seats—Taiping and Kepong—largely, it is believed, on the reputation of the candidates as technocratic-types whose association with the government could help promote development in those constituencies.

For many the election proved to be unexciting and the results entirely predictable. Except for a few constituencies where there had been very close competition, the outcome in the others was generally expected. The non-Malay government parties predictably lost seats but not sufficiently to affect their standing within the Barisan Nasional nor with one another. The DAP made significant gains but failed to capture the state governments of Penang and Perak as it had earlier hoped to do. But perhaps the meaning of the election lay not in just the results but more in the events and developments prior to polling day. It was during this period that the politics of the non-Malays were reactivated when once again they sought to assert for themselves a meaningful and, if possible, an effective role in Malaysian politics.

This chapter is based on interviews with journalists, candidates, and leaders of political parties during the election campaign. The writer attended several *ceramah* and spent a week in Perak and in Penang. Among those the writer interviewed during the visits were Richard Ho, H'ng Hung Yong, and Liu Tai Heng of the MCA, P. Patto and

Peter Dason of the DAP, Paul Leong, Goh Cheng Teik, Lim Kheng Yaik, Tan Tiong Hong and Tan Kah Peng of the Gerakan, Lee Foo San of the *Straits Times*, and reporters of *The Star*. However, to comply with the request of some of my informants and in order to maintain some degree of confidentiality, sources of particular information are not attributed to specific individuals.

1. *New Straits Times* (henceforth to be referred to as *NST*), 20 June 1978.
2. G. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, London, 1976, pp. 198–218.
3. *The Echo*, 21 August 1977.
4. *Malay Mail*, 10 September 1977.
5. *The Star*, 20 August 1977.
6. *New Sunday Times*, 21 August 1977.
7. *NST*, 3 June 1978.
8. *NST*, 15 May 1978.
9. Report of Speech by Datuk Lee San Choon over Radio Malaysia, *NST*, 5 July 1978.
10. *Universiti Merdeka: Kenyataan-kenyataan dan Kritikan-kritikan*, Kuala Lumpur (Merdeka University Berhad), 1978.
11. *Malay Mail*, 7 July 1978.
12. *The Star*, 9 May 1978.
13. *The Star*, 10 May 1978.
14. These were in the state seats of Sungei Bakap, Kampung Kelan, Padang Kota, Datuk Kramat and Paya Terubong. *The Star*, 1 June 1978; 22 June 1978.
15. Goh Cheng Teik, *Integration in a Plural Society: The Chinese in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1978.
16. H'ng Hung Yong, *Where do we go from here? The Chinese Dilemma*, Kuala Lumpur, 1978.
17. *ibid.*, p. 8.
18. *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
19. *NST*, 10 July 1978.
20. *ibid.*
21. *NST*, 11 July 1978.
22. *NST*, 12 July 1978.
23. *NST*, 15 July 1978.
24. 'A Loud "Yes" (with a warning)', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 July 1978.

The General Election at the Grassroots: Perspectives from a Chinese New Village

JUDITH STRAUCH

To the practical politician, what really matters in an election is the counting of the votes. For the anthropologist, however, and perhaps even for the voters, the process itself may be as interesting as the outcome, which may hold little surprise in any case. In the southern Perak constituencies that include the 'new village' of Sanchun,¹ as throughout most of Malaysia, the government Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates were returned in the July 1978 election to both the federal parliament and the state assembly with comfortable majorities. Nonetheless, all indications point to a sizeable splitting of the vote in Sanchun. Many people supported the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) state candidate, whether openly or covertly, and many were disappointed at his defeat. Virtually none, however, appeared dissatisfied with the BN parliamentary success, and in fact few seemed concerned with it at all.

What do split votes, divided loyalties, and disappointments mean in the context of a typical rural Chinese town in Malaysia today? The casting of a vote expresses not merely a single decision, but an ongoing state of mind, shaped by historical developments and a contemporary context both local and national in nature. A dynamic tension exists between narrow local interests on the one hand, and, on the other, perceptions of a broader national framework and its implications—

past, present, and future. The political state of mind of Sanchun in 1978 was thrown into relief by the electoral process, but an analysis of it requires a background understanding of the community, of the men who provide its leadership, and of the ways in which they and their town have been touched by the currents of the national political scene over a much longer period of time. Though such currents are not uniform in all local systems throughout the country, Sanchun can be taken as a fairly typical representative of the many rural or semirural communities which are the homes of well over a third² of Malaysia's Chinese population, a large proportion of which were also originally 'new villages' of the Emergency period.³ Today the Sanchun microcosm includes all the elements of critical salience in contemporary Malaysian Chinese politics: three party branches (Malaysian Chinese Association, Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, and DAP), cleavages both ideological and factional, and an electoral balance in the wider arena of the constituency that reflects the nation-wide reality of the dominance of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Thus a close analysis of the political perceptions and attitudes of the Chinese of Sanchun is not only intrinsically interesting, but also valuable for the insights it offers into the perspectives of an important segment of Malaysia's people.

POLITICS AND THE CHINESE

The average Chinese, particularly in the overseas context, is commonly thought to be little interested in formal politics as such.⁴ The overriding concern with pursuit of economic security that dominated peasant life in southern China has continued to occupy the attention of Chinese immigrants to the Nanyang, and that of their descendants. The newcomers initially approached life in Malaya as sojourners, but even as many gradually came to realize that Malaya would be more than a temporary home, their largely negative experiences with political authority under first colonial, then Japanese,

then Emergency rule served to strengthen the time-honoured Chinese predilection for choosing an inward-turning obsession with the family and its maintenance as the most effective survival strategy.

Since independence, the Malaysian political system has incorporated formal party structures and popular elections, encouraging mass participation through the secret ballot. Although Chinese show little hesitation in making use of this low-profile channel of expression, a number of aspects of the system as it has developed contribute to a certain cynicism regarding the efficacy of democracy in Malaysia and the value of the vote. At the local level, elections instituted by the British to provide experience in self-government and a sense of personal involvement were discontinued in 1964 and replaced with an appointive system. At the national level, the multi-party Barisan Nasional is acknowledged by all to be an alliance of very unequal partners, with UMNO controlling the preponderance of power. Gerrymandering renders predictable the people's choice at election time, and the candidates of all BN parties have in any case been stamped as acceptable to the UMNO-dominated higher councils before they are presented to the people to be chosen. The political weakness of the Chinese *vis-à-vis* the Malays is only exacerbated by endemic intracommunal in-fighting, not only between Chinese in the government and in the opposition, but within and between Chinese-based Barisan parties, as seen in the 1978 election.

The common wisdom, then, is that Malaysian Chinese are basically apolitical, and that Malaysian politics are in any case the province of the élite. Nonetheless, local party branches do exist, and new ones have been formed in recent years. Local leaders emerge in Chinese villages, and compete for support, status, and what little power there is to be had.

There is an apparent contradiction here, but it resolves as we note that two distinct but related sets of phenomena are both commonly termed 'politics'. Politicians and political scientists tend to focus on macrolevel phenomena—the making

and breaking of governments, the high-level horse-trading involved in policy making, and the philosophical and pragmatic bases that support parties, governments, and policies. The people of Sanchun, for the most part, are probably little concerned with such matters as these. But there is another kind of more immediate politics, predicated on an assumed scarcity of and consequent competition for status, prestige, and power among a circle of frequently interacting peers. This is a personal politics operative at both macro- and micro-levels, and in Sanchun as in all human society it holds considerable interest for a certain stratum of the community.

Chinese local leaders, traditionally and today, earn and maintain their positions of esteem through a combination of service to the general community and service given more specifically to individuals in need of personal assistance. The very wealthy may underwrite school construction projects and temple festivals, but if they seek true prestige and power in the local arena they must give as unstintingly of their time as of their money. In fact, the interested individual with little money to spare may sometimes be able to earn a position of high respect simply through showing his active social spirit enthusiastically at every opportunity.

Today, as the bureaucratic state takes increasing interest in the details of the daily life of its citizens, the local leader-cum-middleman has an increasingly complex role to play. The wealthy still provide jobs in their enterprises, charity to the needy, and support for community projects, and the highly esteemed still help find solutions for local conflicts of interest and petty quarrels. But now in addition they must be able to sort out confusing details in citizenship papers, land applications, tax forms, and the like, all of which require knowledge of formal government procedures and, frequently, acquaintance with government officers. Consequently, today's qualifications for high standing in a Chinese local system include not only wealth, generosity, and wisdom, but also a carefully cultivated network of connections and a bureaucratic expertise. The local leader cannot afford to ignore the

political party system, and in Sanchun, as elsewhere, the Malayan Chinese Association has played an important role since its inception in the early 1950s.

When I began research in Sanchun⁵ in 1971, the MCA was the only party of any local significance. All the Chinese local councillors (twelve of a total of fourteen) were MCA men, as were virtually all members of other community committees. The branch membership of about sixty was basically unchanged in number since its formation, though some sons had replaced their deceased fathers on the rolls. There was no real opposition, merely widespread apathy. One man had stood as a People's Progressive Party (PPP) candidate for councillor some years before, and lost. Two young men of shopkeeper families had joined together with ten or so others from nearby estates and tin mines to form a DAP branch a few months before, but the organizers purposely maintained a low profile for fear of hurting family business.

Under Alliance rule the MCA was for the Chinese synonymous with the government. The council chairman, a wealthy merchant named Chin Ta Hing, who is both highly respected and highly capable, averred that party channels were more effective than purely bureaucratic routes when the council wanted to get something done. Though as chairman he had legitimate access to the predominantly Malay bureaucracy in the District Office and other state offices, he had found through experience that the MCA member of parliament or another state level MCA official could often expedite matters that might otherwise drag on for months. Membership in the government, i.e. in MCA, enabled the local leader to perform his community service obligations effectively.

Individual services, too, could most effectively be provided with the aid of MCA/government connections. All the successful Chinese applicants for a recently opened low-cost housing scheme were, perhaps coincidentally, MCA members (and it was said that the Malay and Indian house recipients were likewise Alliance members). In addition, two lower-ranking MCA activists were credited with less legal but more

direct access, through the District Office, to land titles for house-lots much in demand in a rapidly expanding community, which they passed on to others for a fee.

In 1971, virtually all the members of what might be termed the political stratum of Sanchun society, with very few exceptions, were MCA members. The motivations of most, however, lay less in political ideology or involvement in national political issues than in a pragmatic assessment of the role MCA membership could play in determining local status. The top leaders were party members because the party provided them access to useful connections and spoils controlled outside the local system. The second rung of local notables were members because participation in that organization, as in others, provided them with regular access to the first-rung leaders, for whom they served as friends, advisers, and confidants. The majority of the community, however, appeared to be apathetic and apolitical, and took no stand on party politics at all.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION: FROM THE MCA TASK FORCE TO GERAKAN

Beneath the apathetic surface, however, lay what proved to be a large reservoir of political interest waiting to be tapped. The Perak MCA task force mobilization programme began to operate in Sanchun in November 1971, and within a few months regular attendance at weekly meetings reached fifty or sixty. New activists who responded to the call included a number of young farmers, loggers, and construction workers from families who had never before taken part in politics, as well as sons and younger brothers of several of the established leaders.

The demise of the task force in 1973, in Sanchun as elsewhere in Perak, was not without acrimony.⁶ The Sanchun group had seemed solidly committed to the programme and

its leaders, but when expulsions and voluntary resignations from the MCA ensued, a split of major proportions appeared. Chin Ta Hing, MCA branch chairman, and the group monitor, a worker named Wong, were both expelled, and an additional thirty or forty task force loyalists withdrew to express support for them. This group chose to stay with the leadership faction that eventually joined Gerakan, and in 1974 a Sanchun Gerakan branch was formed with Chin Ta Hing as its head.

Chin Ta Hing was never a committed radical, and was apparently swept along in the tide of events. By choosing not to stand against the 'rebels', he found himself by default standing with them, and was probably singled out for expulsion because of his *de facto* responsibility as branch chairman for actions taken by the branch.⁷ But once expelled, and finding himself with a loyal following, it no doubt became a point of honour to avoid the tacit admission of guilt that return to the MCA would have implied. He now plays his role as Gerakan's leader well, but it does not interfere with his primary role as a community leader, the capable and respected council chairman. He remains personally humble and self-effacing, and slightly detached from community factionalism. It is his personality and manner that allow Chin Ta Hing to maintain both his local position and his external bureaucratic contacts virtually unchanged despite his new party affiliation.

The majority of the Gerakan members, however, have not accepted the community split so readily. They tend to be youngish idealists, strongly contrasted in political style with the pragmatists (considered 'opportunists' by the idealists) who stayed with the MCA or have joined it since. Most seem still to bear a grudge against the MCA, particularly against a few of the younger members who were active in the task force until the crisis. Some of the original Gerakan group have returned to the MCA, and are now labelled, by the Gerakan loyalists, politically unstable elements, men who probably changed parties in search of personal gain—which

in Sanchun's context generally means access to land.

At the time of the party split, the cast taken on by the MCA was indeed somewhat opportunist and self-serving, largely because of the reputation of the man who, when the dust had settled, became MCA chairman by appointment from above. Liew Kam Ming had long been a second echelon leader, an appointed councillor, and an outspoken member of virtually all local committees. In his youth he was a logger, and he is now a self-made success as an agricultural entrepreneur. The unflagging energy he invests in all his projects, both public and private, earned him a certain respect, but it was not unmixed with resentment of his wealth and suspicion of some of his 'private' projects, which included the shady land deals referred to above. He had taken a leading role in task force meetings, loudly questioning the party's policies, and had even spoken out vociferously against MCA leader Lee San Choon when he visited Sanchun on a pacification effort before the open split. When in the event Liew Kam Ming refused to break with the MCA, he was immediately branded a spy and a turncoat. When additional land deals of dubious legality came to light in the ensuing months, Gerakan stalwarts took it as proof of the corruption rife in the MCA branch, practised blatantly by its chairman. Even fellow MCA members appeared embarrassed by the affair and the very poor public face of their chairman. No one was prepared to stand up to him, however, and branch elections were not contested in either 1974 or 1975. By late 1976 Liew had decided to stand down voluntarily. The branch's image has probably benefited thereby, but it remains lacklustre, and both the current branch chairman and the MCA Youth chairman are men of managerial rather than leadership quality. The branch is said to be growing in membership, particularly in the youth section, and a women's division has been formed, though all admit that it is not active. The MCA is once again the establishment party, drawing support from older conservatives and some younger shopkeepers and teachers who see stability in the *status quo*.

THE 1978 ELECTION

The mobilization of grassroots forces required by the national political machine at election time provides a variety of opportunities to individuals in the local arena. Party leaders, through proper manipulation of those opportunities, are able to strengthen their positions both with their superiors and with their supporters. Similarly, supporters, through displays of loyalty and willingness to work hard, may move themselves up a rank in the local party structure, hastening the day when they become local party leaders themselves. And, aside from these rather calculated gains that may accrue to some, rewards of personal satisfaction, achieved through participating in a struggle for an ideal one believes in, are available in unlimited supply to all those inclined to take a more ideological or idealistic view of politics and the electoral exercise.

When party hierarchies are clearly delineated and each party supports its own candidate, these rewards and benefits can be distributed in a fairly orderly manner. A complex alliance such as the Barisan Nasional, however, poses numerous problems for political actors and puzzles for the analyst. MCA and Gerakan, two parties that are in reality rivals for Chinese support, were required during the election run-up to behave as closely co-operating allies, sharing out fairly the various perquisites of the campaign. In Perak and Penang, however, where conflict of interest between the two parties was heated, little co-operation was seen, and fierce in-fighting ensued.

The rivalry as it was played out in Sanchun must be viewed as multi-faceted and multi-levelled, and the solidarities and loyalties demanded of party workers and leaders were in many cases overlapping and conflicting, as channels of authority and reward ran laterally as well as vertically. For analytical purposes, three distinct sets of relationship may be isolated, each involving certain structurally defined demands for solidarity as well as situationally determined strains toward division and disunity. Sanchun BN members participated

in the 1978 election as (1) members of a *parliamentary constituency*, (2) members of a *state constituency*, and (3) members of the *Barisan Nasional*. In fact, of course, all these sets interacted simultaneously, producing through their combined effect specific impacts not only in terms of the particular election outcome, but also in less tangible influences on the configuration of social and political relationships within Sanchun and on the political state of mind of its people.

I will first specify five levels of political reference in which the Sanchun MCA and Gerakan members, who are the subject of this analysis, may participate, or with which they may identify themselves, separately or simultaneously (see fig. 1a). At the uppermost level, there is the umbrella of the Barisan Nasional party/government; below that, and only partially acknowledged, is a shared communal identity of Chineseness. At the third descending level a split occurs between the two Barisan member parties, MCA and Gerakan, as national organizations, and this split is maintained at the fourth level, that of the local organizations. The fifth level unites the groups together again as people of Sanchun, all 'our own people' (*tzu chi ren*) in the final analysis, a phrase used often by members of all factions and cliques when bemoaning the passing of the imagined good old days before the party split, when there were no factions and cliques to divide the community.

The three relational sets that I will construct involve these five levels selectively, the most complex set embracing four relevant levels, and the intermediate set drawing in only three. The set that can be described most simply involves either two or five levels of reference, depending on the degree of cynicism the analyst feels regarding the inevitability of the dominance of communalism in Malaysia today.

When I term the sets more or less complex, I refer not to the number of levels embraced, but to the degree of ambiguity or clarity with which the actors subscribe to the structurally prescribed solidarity in the linked sequence: simplicity is unambiguous clarity. For example, by structural definition,

rank-and-file members of both MCA and Gerakan *should* (speaking normatively in terms of 'party discipline') feel and behave according to a high degree of solidarity joining the three levels of formal party organization (1, 3, and 4) vertically, and, consequently, joining the bifurcated levels 3 and 4 laterally. All other things being equal, or, in the absence of any countervailing tendencies, they might in fact so feel and so behave. Similarly, by structural definition, levels 2 and 5, 'Chineseness' and 'our own Sanchun people' can be assumed to be unambiguously linked, other things being equal. In the simplest of the relational sets, that of shared membership in a *parliamentary constituency*, other things appear in fact to be equal in both possible analyses, and clarity results. When shared membership in a *state constituency* and in the *Barisan Nasional* are considered, however, other things are not at all equal, and countervailing tendencies that are situationally imposed wreak havoc with the structurally defined normative links joining the frames of reference.

1. The parliamentary constituency

The BN parliamentary candidate was Chinese, and the opposition DAP candidate in a straight two-way fight was Malay; the BN candidate won more than two-thirds of the total votes cast. People in Sanchun no doubt voted quite solidly for the BN parliamentary candidate. Discussing choices with me both before and after the election, friends and informants often expressed indecision with regard to the state candidates, and inevitably acknowledged widespread local feeling in support of the opposition state candidate, even if they personally refused to identify in any way with that support. The topic of the parliamentary race, however, was a non-issue, so universal was the foregone conclusion that the BN candidate would win. He was an incumbent, well-placed within the MCA party hierarchy, and thus seen as the obvious choice. To the question of why people supported him, the reply was generally simply that he was the government candidate and that he had been satisfactory in his first



FIG. 1a

LEVEL

1

2

3

4

5

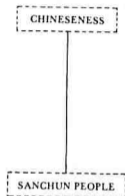


FIG. 1b

FIG. 1. THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

Solid-lined enclosures represent formal organizations with clearly defined and bounded memberships.

Broken-lined enclosures represent less clearly delineated quasi-groups, allowing fluctuating intensities of identification on the part of members.

Lines linking groups and quasi-groups:

- High solidarity
- Antagonism (situational/ideological)
- National-level rivalry (ideological/personalistic)
- Local-level factionalism (personalistic)

The absence of groups or linkages in a figure indicates that they are of no particular significance in the dynamic of that given relational set.

The Barisan Nasional, of course, includes parties that do not appear in these figures; the present analysis refers only to Barisan/MCA/Gerakan relationships.

These notes also apply to figures 2 and 3.

term in office. A few informants also mentioned that since he was Chinese, people felt they could rely on him to serve their interests better than the Malay opposition candidate might.

In this set, the authority emanating downward from the Barisan Nasional was no doubt strengthened by its easy incorporation of unambiguous Chinese solidarity as it linked itself and its Chinese candidate to the two Chinese-based national party organizations, and, through them, to the local organizations. Rank-and-file members of both parties felt no conflicting interests diluting the fealty they readily showed to twin loyalties: identifying either as Sanchun people or as BN party members, they, like the BN candidate, were Chinese, and in this context they could expect the candidate of their own party (BN) to serve them best (see fig. 1a). The more cynical interpretation might assert that party frames of reference are wholly unnecessary to explain the support the candidate won (see fig. 1b),⁸ but I would hold that the two elements cannot be so easily divorced. There has been no simple test of racial versus party loyalty at the parliamentary level, as the seat has consistently been a Chinese one, but the state seat was won in 1959 and 1964 by a Malayan Indian Congress/Alliance candidate, both times with comfortable majorities. He lost in 1969 to a Chinese PPP candidate (then in opposition), who retained his seat as a government incumbent in 1974. Thus there are past instances of government or party loyalty superseding communal loyalty.

2. The state constituency

In this set communal identity was held constant, as both of the main candidates, BN and DAP, were Chinese,⁹ and Chineseness could be considered a relative advantage for neither. Other factors were extremely complex, however, and it is here that the strength of structurally prescribed loyalties and solidarities was most difficult to estimate. In the last few days before polling, people repeatedly reminded one another that voters' minds cannot be known, and may change at the

last moment as they enter the polling booth. Despite a general assurance verbally expressed that the DAP candidate would come through the winner, the gambling odds given remained at an even 50-50, and no one was really sure what the outcome would be.

Three factors combined to counterbalance the natural government advantage that can be assumed to exist in a constituency such as Sanchun's. First, although Chinese opposition sentiment there is neither so strong nor so firm as it tends to be in urban areas, it cannot be discounted entirely, despite the absence of overt support in the form of DAP branch membership. In 1974 the DAP candidate (a different individual) had drawn 40 per cent of the vote, and in 1978 the DAP vote totalled 38 per cent. Thus the basic strength of this vote, whether it would more accurately be described as pro-opposition or anti-government, remained about the same. It was probably because this sentiment was assumed to remain constant that people expected the two additional factors to swing the balance away from BN to DAP.

The second point was unambiguously one of generalized dissatisfaction with the BN, but in its party manifestation rather than in its government role. People were unhappy about the BN candidate, quite apart from his personal attributes or his MCA affiliation, because he is an Ipoh man, virtually unknown and unheard of before his nomination. Gerakan members complained specifically of the MCA's blatant disregard for a BN-formulated policy urging that all state candidates be local residents in their constituencies. Some MCA men were equally direct in their criticism of the MCA state and central committees on this point, but most simply talked in general terms about the difficulties that would be inherent in having as a state representative a man who was unfamiliar and inaccessible. Everyone agreed that the PPP incumbent of two terms, also an Ipoh man, had ignored his constituency, and all wanted to see a different style in the new representative, regardless of which party he belonged to.

The DAP man, by contrast, lives only some fifteen miles away (just outside the constituency). He had been an elected representative in a nearby constituency in 1969, and though he was defeated in 1974 he had kept up what everyone considered to be very conscientious constituency work throughout the area. The two stories of his good works most frequently told in Sanchun involved efforts on his part that had assured needed medical care in emergency situations when the district hospital had been short-staffed and unwilling to put forth the little extra effort required to meet the emergency. To the sophisticated urbanite, such matters may not seem to fall appropriately within the province of a state assemblyman, but to the villager, constantly subject to the disdain of urbanite bureaucrats and government servants, in the medical service as well as in other offices, such personal consideration and concern is one of the attributes desired in an elected representative.

The Sanchun MCA chairman admitted that the question of accessibility of the candidate was raised often by villagers visited in house-to-house canvassing. His reply to them was that the branch leaders would serve as the local contact link, guaranteeing accessibility of the candidate once elected. He assured people that he and other Sanchun men would themselves be able to help with many problems, but that if something came up that truly required the assemblyman's attention they would see to it that he was called in. Moreover, if he proved remiss in constituency responsibilities, the Sanchun branch would not hesitate to complain of it to the state organization, which would take action to remind him of these duties. These arguments, however well-meaning, could hardly compare favourably to the DAP candidate's proven record of service.

The third factor relates closely to the second. The DAP candidate was not merely accessible, he was also personally well liked, trusted, and highly respected. The MCA candidate was a blank as far as local people were concerned. The DAP candidate thus had the advantage from the outset in terms of

local recognition and popularity, not because his opponent was not a man of equal calibre, but simply because he was totally unknown.

The majority of the active MCA branch members, perhaps thirty to forty men and women, supported the BN candidate as was their duty; they turned out daily for canvassing work, and were much in evidence on polling day providing transport and helping at the polling stations. The branch officers boast a membership of over 400, however, and judging from many random talks with a broad cross-section of the community, I would guess that many of the remainder, like Sanchun people who belonged to no party, were not so firmly committed. I was repeatedly told that this time, in contrast to past elections, people were more sophisticated in their political awareness, and would vote not blindly for the party, but more carefully for the man who seemed to offer the best service.

A small group of MCA members opted out of formal political activity for the duration of the campaign because, they said, they could not give their wholehearted support to an unproven outsider when his opponent was someone they knew so well and respected so highly. One of their number, a highly political individual who had previously served as MCA Youth chairman and is by no means a 'sleeping' member by habit, explained carefully to me that while the two BN candidates were qualified professional men whose views of community service ran to large scale projects such as housing developments and clinics, what the people wanted in a state assemblyman was someone who, like the DAP candidate, concerned himself personally with social welfare work oriented more to individual needs.

In figure 2, the categories represented in levels 4 and 5 do not show cohesive unanimity in their views. Some members of each category, no doubt, responded to the structural demands to support the government and the party and voted Barisan, while others, those schematically represented by the quasi-group enclosed by the broken circle, felt the pressures imposed by the situation to be stronger, and voted for the

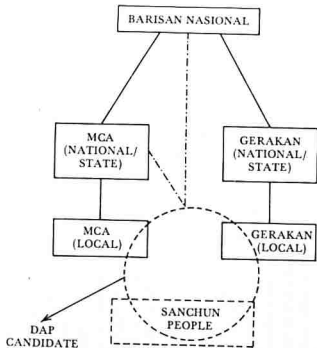


FIG. 2. THE STATE CONSTITUENCY

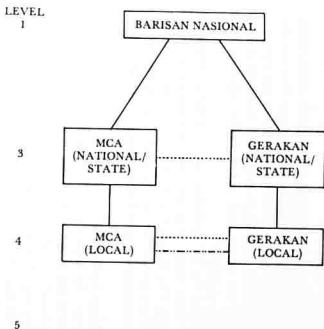


FIG. 3. THE BARISAN NASIONAL

man who was the DAP candidate. The latter group, moreover, may well have felt not simply neutral but negative affect toward the BN and the MCA, due to the first two situational elements described above, that is general dissatisfaction with the government and with the selection of a carpet-bagger candidate.

Nonetheless, the BN candidate won, and the popular DAP man lost. Many Sanchun people were surprised and openly disappointed. The reasons for the BN success, in the view of most Sanchun people, lie in the simple arithmetic of the broader constituency, and will be discussed more fully below.

3. The Barisan Nasional

In this set the expression of solidarity or antagonism is not limited to nor measured by the mere casting of votes, nor is this relational set, unlike the first two, effectively dissolved after polling day. The structural relationships of alliance and solidarity among the party units at local, state, and national levels have been clearly prescribed since the formation of the Barisan in 1974, but situational events just prior to and since that event have modified the actual (as opposed to the normatively defined ideal) content of those relationships. Moreover, the process of the 1978 election effected some further modification. The relationships persist, but, as depicted in figure 3, they show certain strains and antagonisms where ideally only solidarity should appear.

There is a basic contradiction in the Barisan formula in that two component parties, MCA and Gerakan, are in direct competition for the same support group, the Chinese. The difference in appeal of the two parties rests in part on alternative ideological orientations, as the MCA espouses the Alliance/Barisan communal approach while the Gerakan attempts to incorporate a multi-communal philosophy despite the implicit option UMNO holds on Malay support within the Barisan partnership. Equally salient today in the acrimony between the two parties, however, is ill feeling remaining from the factional power struggle within the MCA that

attended the rise of the MCA task force, its subsequent expulsion, and the move of several of its leaders and their supporters into Gerakan in 1974.¹⁰ In Sanchun, both factors—ideological differences and factional loyalties to national party leaders—combine with the aftertaste of enmity lingering in Sanchun itself from the task force split to undermine the local MCA-Gerakan working relationship. The essence of local Chinese politics, however, is the proper maintenance of a surface show of harmony. Men who had not yet forgotten old grudges nonetheless worked side by side on the council, the school committee, and many similar organizations. Thus the smooth public face presented by the Barisan election committee simply followed established precedent; but tensions below the surface were acknowledged privately.

Since the BN candidates were both MCA men, the local MCA branch had the upper hand organizationally. Each of the five Barisan parties represented locally (UMNO, MCA, Gerakan, MIC, and PPP) provided three members from each branch (one branch per party, except for UMNO, which has six branches in the *mukim*) to serve on the election working committee, but MCA held three positions on the executive committee to Gerakan's one. An UMNO man served as chairman, while Liew Kam Ming (MCA) was vice-chairman (*Timbalan Pengerusi*), and other MCA men filled positions as treasurer and assistant secretary. The sole active Gerakan member, one of three assistant chairmen (*Naib Pengerusi*), was Chin Ta Hing, who because of his focal role as council chairman and his personal predilection towards harmony and conciliation is the most accommodating of the Gerakan branch membership. He performed his duties, as always, very competently and conscientiously, appearing in the group that accompanied the BN state candidate as he canvassed in Sanchun (two Gerakan and fourteen MCA members), and sitting dutifully at the head table when national MCA leader Lee San Choon appeared for a *ceramah* (a clear indication, Chin remarked, that victory was in question). But he spent most of his time during the campaign in his shop, attending

to business, while the MCA men ran the show.

Other Sanchun Gerakan men insisted that they too were willing to work locally for the MCA candidates but were not given the chance to do so, because the MCA men did not trust them, fearing they would undermine rather than support the MCA candidates' efforts. MCA men knew, and Gerakan activists acknowledged, that the local Gerakan branch felt strong disappointment when Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, charismatic leader of the task force at the height of its popularity, was given merely a state seat rather than a parliamentary seat to contest as a result of high-level bargaining that awarded his home base to the MCA. Lim and other task force leaders such as Paul Leong Khee Seong had earned strong personal commitment from their supporters, which they have apparently been careful to maintain. Sanchun volunteers did campaign work in Gerakan constituencies such as Jalong, Taiping, and Telok Anson, and thus learned first-hand of the inter-party tension prevailing in those areas, where rumours of MCA attempts to sabotage Gerakan candidates were rife. Sanchun men identified strongly with Gerakan as a national party besieged by its 'partner' within the Barisan, and concerned themselves very personally with the battles being fought by their leaders at higher levels.¹¹ Thus the dissatisfactions of nomination day (Lim's relegation to a state seat, and the 'carpet-bagger' MCA man nominated locally) were exacerbated as the campaign progressed, and the tacit assumption on the part of local MCA men that Gerakan co-operation might be less than enthusiastic was perhaps well-founded, despite Gerakan protestations to the contrary.

A principal form of control exercised by the MCA was the limitation of electioneering permits ('Form E') made available to Gerakan members. These forms could be issued in unlimited numbers by the candidates, and were in practice distributed locally by the executive committee members. MCA informants said they did not know exactly how many were given out, but estimated the number to be in excess of 500 throughout the *mukim*, while an UMNO man suggested

2,000 as a likely figure. Of those, Gerakan received only five, prompting bitter charges of discrimination from Gerakan stalwarts, who went instead to volunteer their services in distant Gerakan constituencies where they were welcomed. Formal complaints were also lodged, however, and as a result thirty-one of the 200-odd special permits distributed on polling day went to Gerakan members. But most of the (Chinese) Gerakan workers were then assigned to Malay *kampung* polling places, where they felt there was little they could do but sit by and watch the proceedings.

While a few MCA men I talked with accused Gerakan members of secretly urging people to vote DAP, MCA leaders would say little against their 'allies'. They expressed some sorrow that there was little participation in the local campaign by Gerakan members, yet acknowledged that it was only natural that they should want to go out-station to support their own party leaders' campaigns, tacitly refusing comment on the electioneering permit issue. Some Gerakan stalwarts, by contrast, as the underdogs, were more vociferous in their complaints, accusing Barisan (i.e., MCA) campaigners not only of subversion in Gerakan constituencies, but of scare tactics in Sanchun. MCA workers, they charged, reminded voters of the riots that ensued when DAP made a strong showing in 1969, and threatened that illegal squatter houses (thirty to forty exist in Sanchun) would be torn down as punishment if DAP won in the constituency. Such dissension remained at the level of coffee-shop gossip among friends, however, and no open charges nor confrontations occurred. The alliance remained severely strained, but unbroken.

Returning to the schematic representation presented in figure 3, we note that the vertical linkages from party branch to party leaders to Barisan Nasional show the ideally prescribed solidarity, which is based both in ideological commonality and on personal loyalty to individuals at the higher levels. The lateral linkages within the BN, however, show antagonism. That between national party leaders at level 3, I would argue, contains elements of both ideological conflict and

factional power struggle. That which appears between the Sanchun party branches at level 4 incorporates the antagonisms of the leadership level, but is exacerbated by purely local-level factionalist conflicts as well.

THE OUTCOME AND ITS IMPLICATIONS: THE SANCHUN PERSPECTIVE

Very little comment was made in Sanchun on the victory of the BN parliamentary candidate. It had been expected and desired; Sanchun people were no doubt well represented among the nearly 16,000 who voted Barisan.

The outcome of the state contest, however, came as something of a surprise to many, and it was talked about long after the event. Whether pleased or disappointed with the result, all informants without exception attributed it to an increase in the Malay vote in the constituency, votes that were assumed to support Barisan. In 1974 the registered electorate had been slightly over 13,000; in 1978 it had increased by 20 per cent, almost 3,000 votes, to just over 16,000.¹² In 1975 two new government *Felda* (land development) schemes had been settled in Sanchun's *mukim*, providing 57 per cent of the increase in registered voters, the vast majority of whom were Malays, and all of whom were indebted to the government for their new homes and new livelihoods. The overall voter turnout was 80.4 per cent. *Felda* turnout might be expected to exceed the average, but 80.4 per cent of the registered voters in the two *Felda* schemes would provide 1,260 votes, which is, coincidentally, just thirty-four votes short of the BN candidate's majority. The contest was a very close one, and the figures clearly support the contention held in Sanchun that had the constituency grown by natural increase alone the outcome might have been different.

Local commentary on the election results, quite interestingly, referred very little to what this man might do now that he had been elected, or to what the people might have lost in not having the other man as their state assemblyman. Discus-

sion instead revolved around the view, perceived by Sanchun people as fact, that in their constituency the election had been determined by the Malay vote. Moreover, by the time of the next election that vote will increase again, as three more Felda schemes are scheduled to be settled in the next few years, and it is said that a police field force unit of 3,000 will be posted in the neighbouring *mukim*. An assumption widely held and rarely questioned in Sanchun maintains that Malays in general, and Felda settlers and police in particular, can always be counted on to support whichever candidate UMNO/government tells them to. For some people, mostly MCA supporters, this is a simple observation on the way things are, rather than a complaint. To most, however, the facts appear ominous, and the future gloomy. Many remarked, only half-jokingly, that there would be no point at all in voting next time, since the results would be cut and dried well in advance, following lines of fabled UMNO party discipline.

Are the Chinese of Sanchun apolitical? A negative answer emerges undeniably from the data presented. There is no scarcity of concerned political actors to take part in parochial local-level politics that are played out in traditional forms as well as in modern party-branch politics. Moreover, the traditional forms now bear the imprint of the modern, as personal alliances and rivalries from the modern sphere, influenced by elements in the broader national arena, spill over into the traditional arena.

But the lesson of the election is that Sanchun Chinese are concerned not only with parochial but with national politics as well. People from all strata of the community expressed concern that they have at least one representative who could be relied upon for personal social service, but in addition they voiced concern about the direction taken by national policies. Even those who clearly stated their overall support for the government maintained that in a democratic system there must be an opposition: government MPs, they said, are afraid to speak out and raise questions and are simply yes-men, so there must be an opposition to voice doubts and

alternative views. Virtually every person I talked with—rubber tappers and shopkeepers who had lived most of their lives in Sanchun, young loggers and construction workers who travel widely, and some housewives both young and old—asserted that political sophistication in Sanchun is growing. They say that villagers can no longer be persuaded by simple promises or threats. They believe that the votes cast in this election by Sanchun Chinese expressed genuine and careful choice, based on the qualifications and record of the candidates and not on the power of the party.

That the party has power is not denied, however. All acknowledge that the Barisan, more specifically the MCA, is powerful locally, and most believe consequently that to oppose MCA members openly, either politically or individually, is to risk retaliation—loss of business or contracts, or rejection of applications for licences or permits. People are interested in the DAP message and the alternative it presents, but although they attended DAP rallies in large numbers in 1974, and voted DAP in large numbers in 1974 and 1978, the DAP branch still has fewer than a dozen members, a fact which in the context of Malaysian politics is considered natural. The DAP secretary seemed to be the least disappointed of the people I talked with on the morning after the results came in; he stoically views the party's work as a long-term struggle in which immediate setbacks matter little, as long as the struggle proceeds and opposition views of the people have a channel for expression.

Interest in the election was not limited to the local arena alone, but encompassed a broad area of the country. Many people stayed up late to watch the returns as they came in on television. Comments and discussion in the following days made it clear that many people were very knowledgeable about the intricacies of contests in most of Perak, Penang, and the Federal Territory, as well as in Chinese seats elsewhere and in the seats of many of the Malay national leaders, both government and opposition. People seemed generally satisfied with the national results. They may disagree with

certain of the government's policies in education and industry as they see them to apply to the Chinese, but for most the malaise is satisfied at least for the present by a reasonable representation of the opposition in parliament.

Reactions to national and local results thus showed an interesting inconsistency. Sanchun people are aware of the reality of the overall dominance of the Barisan Nasional government, and of the power it has through delineation of constituencies and allocation of seats to be contested. At one level, the national, they accept this reality as simple fact, with a minimum of complaint. But when it is brought home to them in their own constituency, where they feel that the results were determined not by politically conscious and carefully discriminating voters (themselves) but by disciplined voters blindly following a party line (Malays), their feelings are bitter and cynical. The cynicism rests not simply in the defeat of their preferred candidate, but in their belief that he was not given a hearing by Malay voters. Rightly or wrongly, Sanchun Chinese believe that an opposition Chinese candidate will never be judged on his merits by the Malay electorate, who might give some thought to a choice between two Malay candidates but who will always follow the government line when the choice is between two Chinese. Rightly or wrongly, the state constituency results provided proof in Sanchun eyes that Chinese votes count for nothing in a political arena dominated by Malay solidarity and party discipline. For most Chinese in Sanchun, the symbolic impact of the 1978 general election seems unfortunately to lie less in an affirmation of the role of the individual voter in a participatory democracy than in a confirmation of the long-held belief, rooted in experience of decades and of centuries, that democracy is at best an unattainable ideal mocked by a reality in which the common man is manipulated and dominated by the powerful.

1. In keeping with anthropological convention, I use fictitious names for the town and for individual townspeople referred to throughout the paper. State and national politicians, who have freely chosen a public life, are accurately identified, as is appropriate.

2. There is truth in the homily that Chinese are far more urban than Malays: in 1975, 18 per cent of the Malays and 51 per cent of the Chinese lived in urban centres of 10,000 population or more; 56 per cent of the urban dwellers were Chinese, while 30 per cent were Malay (*Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980*, Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press, 1976, p. 150). But it must also be noted that nearly half the Chinese live in small towns or rural areas: in 1970, fully 30 per cent lived in population concentrations of under 1,000 people (R. Chander, *1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Community Groups*, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1972).

3. The Briggs resettlement programme of the early 1950s saw the forced relocation of some 500,000 people, most of them rural Chinese, into approximately 500 'new villages'. Nearly one in four of the Chinese of Malaya, and one in ten of the total population of the country, were involved in resettlement.

4. See, e.g., Wang Gungwu, 'Chinese politics in Malaya', *China Quarterly*, XLIII (July-September 1970), pp. 1-30.

5. Sanchun in 1971 was a town of nearly 3,000, about 80 per cent of whom were Chinese. Roughly a hundred households had been settled in the small market town before the Emergency relocation, when the population was tripled. Aside from commerce, which supports about 30 per cent of the households, rubber production, logging, and construction are major occupations, with smaller numbers involved in tin mining and other agriculture. The few Malays resident in Sanchun town area are mostly government servants; Indians include shopkeepers and a few rubber-tapping families who were relocated settlers. For both Malays and Indians, however, social, political, and religious centres of affiliation lie outside Sanchun, in the district capital or in nearby *kampung* and estates; Sanchun is essentially a Chinese town. For a fuller description, see Judith Strauch, *Sanchun, Malaysia: local-level politics in a rural Chinese town* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Publ. 75-21, 902; Doctoral dissertation in Anthropology, Stanford University).

6. See Judith Strauch, *Local leadership in a plural society: the political anthropology of a Chinese-Malaysian town*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (forthcoming), Chapter 7.

7. In Sanchun as elsewhere in Perak, for example, the task force issued press statements attacking the party centre and burned Tan Siew Sin in effigy.

8. i.e., that the BN candidate received Sanchun Chinese votes simply because he is Chinese.

9. There were three additional candidates, but their chief significance was seen to lie merely in the likelihood that they could draw

Malay and Indian votes away from the BN candidate. In the event their combined vote was only 8 per cent of the total, just over 1,000 votes, not sufficient to accomplish the effect most people had anticipated.

10. For a discussion of the split from the macrolevel perspective, see Lee Kam Hing, 'Politics in Perak 1969-1974: some preliminary observations with reference to the non-Malay political parties', Department of History, University of Malaya, 1977, pp. 13-17.

11. While Sanchun Gerakan men knew all the details of the MCA-Gerakan squabbles at high levels, however, they seemed unaware of the internal frictions that appeared to be developing within the state Gerakan leadership.

12. The racial breakdown for the two *mukim* in the constituency, according to Barisan Nasional figures, is as follows:

	Chinese	%	Malay	%	Indian	%	Total	%
Mukim A	7,005	70	1,799	18	1,140	11	9,944	99
Mukim B (includes Sanchun)	1,353	19	4,557	65	1,081	15	6,991	99
Total	8,358	49	6,356	37	2,221	13	16,935	99

Note: Rounding off errors account for the percentage totals. The total electorate given in the *New Straits Times*, 10 July 1978, is 16,032; in my discussion I assume this lower published figure to be correct.

Sarawak at the Polls

MICHAEL LEIGH

THE pattern of party-political behaviour in Sarawak has undergone three distinct phases:

- (a) 1959–1965: the creation of the first political parties and the reaction to the control of local politics by British expatriate officers.
- (b) 1966–1969: the first tentative efforts at Malaysiansiation, that is, the removal of the predominant British influence over politics. This was a period of considerable uncertainty.
- (c) 1970–1979: the Coalition Government led by Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Rahman Yakub.

This chapter is concerned with the predominant trends that have emerged during, and indeed characterized, the third phase, and how those trends have been manifested through the electoral process, specifically during the July 1978 federal election.

Three aspects warrant highlighting:

- (1) the strength and sense of purpose of the present political leadership;
- (2) the choice by that leadership of 'development' priorities that have resulted in a substantial widening of the gap between the rural poor and the urban rich;
- (3) a conscious effort by the political leadership to assert the primacy of race, and a subsequent exacerbation of hitherto relatively harmonious communal relations.

During the chief ministership of Stephen Kalong Ningkan (until 1966) Sarawak seemed foreign territory to federal politicians and administrators. The Civil Service was headed by expatriates, three of whom even sat as members of the State Cabinet. The British military were everywhere. It was business as usual, with an occasional doffing of the hat to the fact that Malaysia had already been formed. Federal policies were outlined to their Kuching counterparts, only to be answered by the infuriatingly legalistic reply that, under the terms of the Inter-Governmental Committee Agreement the state government would agree to only A, B, and C but not to D, E, and F. But Kuala Lumpur's attention was primarily directed to the Singapore problem and it was not until Singapore was discarded and *Konfrontasi* was waning that serious attention was given to the less important problem of Sarawak.

In 1966 the Prime Minister sacked the Sarawak Chief Minister, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, and his Sarawak National Party (SNAP) government. The new Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Amar Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, ushered out the bulk of the important expatriates and re-oriented the state administration away from the lines set by Ningkan, putting it more in accord with federal priorities. A year later Taib himself was ousted and sent off to Kuala Lumpur. Politics muddled along until the declaration of the state of emergency (May 1969), when Tawi Sli (nominally the Chief Minister) was simply by-passed. From 1966 to 1970 Sarawak had two strong opposition parties, the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), based mainly on the Chinese, and SNAP, based on the Ibans, the latter threatening to take control of the state government in its own right.

In summing up the period up to 1970, we see that it was characterized by wavering, outbursts against Kuala Lumpur, and above all, unpredictability. All this was rather unsatisfactory from Kuala Lumpur's point of view.

In 1970 Abdul Rahman Yakub stepped into that void of uncertainty and created the antecedent to the Barisan Nasional by bringing SUPP into the government. He was a trusted

confidant of Tun Razak, Ghafar Baba, and other top UMNO leaders while his stint as Federal Education Minister had gained him an impressive reservoir of Malay support. There seemed to be widespread relief in the Federal Government that Sarawak was now in capable hands. Even though Abdul Rahman Yakub's party, Party Bumiputera, held only one-quarter of the seats in the state legislature he was able to take political leadership wholly into his own hands. His coalition partners, SUPP, and the Iban party, Pesaka, merely played the role of facilitators.

The Chief Minister's Office was the locus of policy formation, and it was from there that initiatives flowed. Untrammelled control of the bureaucracy was of great significance. Transfers and promotions within the state civil service took into account the loyalties of bureaucrats to the government of the day. In addition, the series of governmental boards set up to administer development programmes were all headed by supporters of the Chief Minister, Muslim *bumiputra* who shared his general policy objectives. The fact that the Chief Minister was also the Director of Operations gave him access to a considerable volume of intelligence information, and the ability to recommend detention of opponents.

The Government's Achilles' heel was that it commanded very little support from the non-Muslim *bumiputra* plurality of the population. The 1974 state election represented a reverse to the Chief Minister, with the opposition SNAP picking up the bulk of Dayak support and even making significant inroads into the Chinese community. SNAP went close to obtaining a majority in its own right, and might well have done so had not staggered polling been so arranged in the government's favour. The end result was that Abdul Rahman's Partai Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), which had been formed in 1973 on the basis of a merger of the old Bumiputera and Pesaka parties, won 18 seats while SNAP also won 18 and SUPP won 12.

Abdul Rahman's response was to woo SNAP leaders into joining the Barisan government so that he was then in a posi-

tion to juggle SUPP and SNAP supporters, and would be ultimately beholden to neither. He played SNAP in a masterly manner. James Wong, the former SNAP leader of the opposition in the Malaysian Parliament, was detained indefinitely. SNAP thus lost its most prominent Chinese member and a good deal of its financial backing. Shortly after Wong's conditional release (16 months later) SNAP agreed 'in principle' to join the Barisan Nasional. But even a year later SNAP members were still waiting to be allocated ministerial portfolios of any significance. As a strategy the outcome could not have been better for the Chief Minister. The Government had SNAP's declared support, but SNAP had no power to determine government policy. Within the Cabinet SUPP and SNAP members were adroitly played off against each other, especially over the unresolved issue of allowing more native land to be opened up for cultivation by Chinese farmers.

A pattern of administration had been consolidated, one whereby most Ministers were almost totally ineffectual. Decisions were made by the Chief Minister's office. Permanent Secretaries reported directly to the Chief Minister, not to their own Ministers. Even the SNAP Deputy Chief Minister had his express wishes totally ignored and a close confidant of the Chief Minister was appointed as the SNAP Chairman's Permanent Secretary. Such were the lines of control and communication.

Yet, two years later in 1978 Abdul Rahman's position was so seriously eroded that he considered it necessary to announce his intention to resign. What had happened? The consequences of his choice of development strategies were coming home to roost. It is important to ask who had benefited from the economic growth of the preceding eight years.

Since 1974 there had been a marked reduction in official emphasis on agriculture and rural development, the source of livelihood of three-quarters of the state's population. Indeed the share of the State budget devoted to those two purposes fell from 27 per cent of total government expenditure in 1973 to only 19 per cent the following year, and within

this reduced allocation expenditure on export-oriented crops was 3.5 times that spent on food-oriented development.¹ By contrast, a rising share of state government expenditure had been directed towards urban 'modernization'. This included the new secretariat and Dewan Undangan Negeri complex in Kuching, costing more than M\$65 million; the introduction of television, principally of benefit to the few who could afford receivers and had electric power; and a proliferation of government agencies and statutory boards which might be seen as designed to provide jobs for the 'favoured boys'. Avenues of new employment created by government spending were, in fact, principally in the urban areas, and especially around Kuching.

The political consequences of this 'urban bias' to development will take some time to have full effect, particularly as elective politics is clearly the province of the professionals, the former government employees and the businessmen, not the agriculturalists, despite the latter's numerical preponderance in the state of Sarawak. Political leadership in the state is also becoming the preserve of those educated in a language that is foreign to most of the populace (English). All the evidence underlines the ascendancy of the urban, relatively rich, educated, and westernized over the rural people.

What was of more immediate import was that the Chief Minister had consciously set out to create quickly a group of rich Muslim businessmen, who would be in a position to play the role formerly reserved for Chinese towkays, that is, as those with sufficient economic means to underwrite political parties. Government contracts have been let with this paramount consideration in mind, and the FAO forestry rotation plan² was abandoned in the quest to re-allocate wealth quickly to this group. Abdul Rahman frankly acknowledged his priorities when he said:

I have selected those *bumiputera* who are able to make a success of the economic opportunities afforded them. . . . It sometimes appears that the implementation of a policy benefits only a few.

But where this is so, it is simply because we must start step by step. Then the circle of development will gradually widen.³

The pace of this re-allocation of public resources has noticeably quickened since 1974, and has evoked a good deal of jealousy at elite levels. However, with a compliant SUPP and a co-opted SNAP, the Chief Minister seemed secure for the time being—though there was a noticeable rise in ethnic tension in the state.

What brought matters out into the open was the formation of PAJAR (Partai Rakyat Jati Sarawak—Sarawak Native People's Party) in February 1978, a party led by the former chief of the state police Special Branch, Haji Alli Kawi. The new party hit the Chief Minister in the 'soft underbelly', for his successful electoral strategy had relied upon a secure Muslim political base, a base that would ensure for PBB at least one-quarter of the seats in the state council. Then the Chief Minister could use his considerable political skills to play the predominantly Dayak and Chinese components of the state Barisan against each other in order to sustain his own paramount position.

PAJAR drew on the historic division within the Kuching Malay community, that which erupted during the debate over the cession of Sarawak to the British Crown, a wound again re-opened by the bitter contest between PANAS and BARJASA (1962-7). There are many well placed Kuching Malays who resent the apparent ascendance of former BARJASA members over those from PANAS, as well as of Melanaus over the traditional Kuching Malay leadership. They are also conscious of the tightly circumscribed group around the Chief Minister.

PAJAR's campaign was disarmingly simple and direct. It stressed the need to eradicate the evils of nepotism and corruption and constantly reiterated the theme that since 1970 (the formation of the Coalition Government) only a handful of 'opportunists' had benefited from such practices. The word *pajar* is particularly evocative for the Malay community. Translated literally it means 'dawn', the beginning of a new

day or era. *Pajar Sarawak* (Dawn of Sarawak) was the name of the first Malay language newspaper in the British controlled area of Borneo, under the inspiration of Sarawak's first Malay novelist.⁴

PAJAR propaganda focused almost exclusively upon the alleged misdeeds of the Chief Minister and his associates. Its generalized public statements were underwritten by the active circulation of mimeographed sheets⁵ that purported to list the shareholdings of the Chief Minister's family and close associates in a wide range of companies, many of which were known to hold important government contracts. Another sheet listed in detail some fifty-five allotments which it claimed had been bought by the Chief Minister, his wife, and two close relations.

In the 1978 Federal election PAJAR was able to secure about a third of the vote in five constituencies, and about a quarter in four others. Of these nine constituencies, five were overwhelmingly Muslim in composition and three predominantly Dayak. Though failing to win a single seat, the PAJAR campaign seriously undermined the personal credibility of the Chief Minister, Abdul Rahman Yakub. So incensed was he by the innuendoes that he attempted to secure a court injunction to prevent PAJAR publishing such information. But Alli Kawi (also a lawyer) announced his intention to plead justification as defence which meant that a legal injunction could not be applied and it was necessary for the matter to go to court. Until such time PAJAR was free to continue distributing the information. Abdul Rahman thus applied for an early hearing.⁶ The anticipated airing of the business dealings of his relatives and close associates must have been a consideration in his announcement on 12 September 1978 of his intention to step down as Chief Minister.

The decision was not only due to PAJAR but was the culmination of a number of factors, principal among which was the apparent lack of federal concern for his position *vis-à-vis* competing elements at the state level. During Tun Razak's Prime Ministership Abdul Rahman had enjoyed the near com-

plete confidence of the senior UMNO leaders. He was seen to have rescued Sarawak from its hitherto fluid state and to have given direction to the state government. His 1974 electoral reverses, when SNAP nearly won a majority in its own right, the passing of Tun Razak and the exclusion from the Cabinet of his close federal confidant, Ghafar Baba, left him in a much more exposed position. Hussein Onn's tough stance toward corruption meant that various state leaders felt a little less secure, and were vulnerable to the dissemination of corruption allegations by their political opponents. The political-administrative structure so painstakingly erected by Abdul Rahman depended on the continued presence of that one man who brooked no rivals, and naturally undercut potential successors. It also required the combination of UMNO support and local Muslim unity.

Shortly before his resignation announcement, Abdul Rahman attempted to shore up both those pillars by declaring that 'PBB will be assimilated into UMNO and become its Sarawak branch'. 'With UMNO in Sarawak, the close relations between the State and Peninsular Malaysia would be further strengthened and "antinational elements" would be denied the opportunity to disrupt the unity and solidarity of all Malaysians, particularly Muslims and Bumiputeras.'⁷

The Federal reaction was quite lukewarm, and another pointer to Abdul Rahman that Kuala Lumpur's support was somewhat equivocal. 'UMNO will study and consider carefully any official application from PBB to be absorbed into UMNO',⁸ replied the Deputy Prime Minister the next day. 'UMNO will look into the merits and demerits of the suggestion', he added. It is understandable that, whilst PBB continued to draw its support primarily from the Islamic 25 per cent of the population and failed to unite within its ranks the non-Muslim *bumiputra* plurality, such a strategy had few benefits for Kuala Lumpur, though many for the Chief Minister himself.

The on-off resignation scenario did not have great significance in itself. However several aspects are worthy of men-

tion. Firstly, it represented a serious error of judgement by Abdul Rahman in his dealings with the top federal leadership. He appears to have assumed that he could employ a tactic more appropriate to the former Razak era, that is, a series of well-orchestrated rallies pleading with him to continue to offer his wise leadership to the state, and that they would impress the Prime Minister. Such tactics appear to have done exactly the opposite, particularly as there was some minor violence associated with the campaign.⁹ The Prime Minister cut right through the fog surrounding the 'irrevocable' resignation and the subsequent flood of appeals by the faithful with the terse comment, 'As far as I know he is still the Chief Minister of Sarawak, unless he himself considers he is not'.¹⁰ The letter that Abdul Rahman had written to the Prime Minister was regarded by the recipient as a signal of intent in no way fulfilling the necessary constitutional requirements. 'A Chief Minister can only be considered to have resigned after he hands in his resignation letter to the Yang di-Pertuan Negeri or the Sultan.'¹¹

Secondly, he seems to have personally insulted the Prime Minister,¹² and in so doing moved a position of political strength—where it was believed that the Prime Minister would support his becoming Defence Minister and Taib Mahmud becoming Chief Minister of Sarawak¹³—to one of weakness. By October it was believed that were he to go ahead and resign from the state leadership not only could he no longer expect a high federal office, but he might instead suffer a close investigation of his affairs by the federal anti-corruption authorities. On 15 October Abdul Rahman announced that the State Barisan Nasional leaders had decided that he should 'continue serving as Chief Minister for the time being, until a decision is reached otherwise'.¹⁴

Thirdly, the Sarawak state legislature was last elected simultaneously with the 1974 Parliamentary contest. Sarawak was the only state whose Government chose not to face the verdict of the people in July 1978. The state government must now go to the polls at the very latest in November 1979,

without the bandwagon benefit of a federal election campaign. The ability of the present state leadership to maintain its hold has become open to serious question.

Fourthly, it is the leadership of the SNAP which seems best placed to take advantage of the political fluidity that has resulted from Abdul Rahman's resignation scenario. Immediately after the conclusion of polling the Prime Minister invited the SNAP Secretary-General, Leo Moggie, to join the Federal Cabinet as Minister for Energy, Telecommunications and Posts. This was seen as an opportunity for Moggie to establish closer links with Federal colleagues, and as a testing of his ministerial abilities. He remains the most likely eventual Iban candidate for the position of Sarawak Chief Minister. SNAP leaders have been curiously reluctant to push their own interests to the point of risking a break with Abdul Rahman. Thus a pattern of capitulation seems to characterize their dealings with him on matters of substance. Perhaps this is a realistic strategy, that they perceive it is best for them to play second fiddle in *bumiputra* politics. Perhaps also it represents a hesitation on the part of SNAP leaders to throw in their lot with the predominantly Chinese leadership of SUPP, and to jettison the present liaison with PBB. Back in the longhouses the reaction to such accommodationist policies is often a stance of righteous indignation. But many in the longhouses are faced with the dilemma of how best such indignation can be transformed into activist policy when all Dayak representatives are in the government and there is much fear that an alternative arrangement with SUPP could lead to a loss of native land and total exclusion from the benefits of being a *bumiputra*.

The fifth aspect of the Chief Minister's announced resignation which is worthy of mention is that for some time Abdul Rahman had been none too delighted with what he saw as SUPP's 'back-stabbing'.¹⁵ His parting shot, in the very news conference when he announced his 'irrevocable' intention to retire, was to lift the previous ban on the entry of senior DAP leaders to the state. Such competition was just what SUPP

leaders most feared and Abdul Rahman's action could be seen as a mixture of pique and a desire to keep SUPP leaders busily engaged within the Chinese community. In the coming 1979 election SUPP will find it much more difficult to maintain any semblance of itself as a multi-racial party as it fights off the DAP challenge.¹⁶ A greater emphasis on primarily 'Chinese' issues (e.g. Merdeka University) only serves to confirm Dayak suspicions that SUPP is principally concerned with promoting and protecting one ethnic community.

The 1978 federal electoral contest in Sarawak was indeed quite muted by local standards. The only successful opposition candidate was a young Miri lawyer, Raymond Szeto, who only four months before the contest had registered the Sarawak People's Organization (SAPO). SAPO's policies were a mixture of Sarawakian nationalism and democratic socialism. Szeto was able to defeat convincingly a veteran local Chinese politician, Chia Chin Shin, who had moved from SCA to SUPP after the former party was dissolved. To the main parties the election was a trial run and the tips of various icebergs were evident.

SUPP's unhappiness with the decline of its influence was clearly evident. Having made Abdul Rahman's premiership possible in the first place,¹⁷ SUPP was now almost without influence. Worse still, various of its legislators had become fat in office and feared the thought of returning to the role of a lean and hungry opposition. On the other hand, many of its rank and file wanted the party to bolt from the Barisan and stand on its own. The leadership counselled that 1978 was not the right year to do so, that their quarrel was not with the Prime Minister, but with Abdul Rahman. The coming of the DAP will undercut SUPP's support and likely result in that party voicing a much stronger communal orientation.

In the case of the PBB, it was set on eliminating the challenge from PAJAR once and for all. It succeeded in winning all the contests, but PAJAR seemed unwilling to accept defeat—its sights too were set on the forthcoming state contest, and it stood ready to exploit any faltering by Abdul

Rahman. His on-off resignation scenario had tarnished the image of his impeccable political judgement.

The SNAP leadership on the other hand was as usual waiting for opportunity to come its way. In the longhouses some older Dayaks spoke wistfully of SNAP as Ningkan's party—an allusion to the former, more verbally aggressive, leadership. The present younger, highly educated SNAP leaders are striving to attune themselves to the broader Malaysian political reality and eschew the old slogans of Sarawak nationalism.

Nevertheless the Chief Minister remains at the helm 'until a decision is reached otherwise'. The possession of that office and the considerable resources it commands gives the incumbent an immense advantage. The concentration of economic and political power in his hands means that his role cannot be underestimated as long as he retains office.

November 1978

POSTSCRIPT

In the ensuing eight months Abdul Rahman Yakub has moved from a position of 'caretaker' to resume his role as the key power broker. Whereas, in 1978, many wondered whether he would complete his second term as Chief Minister, now it appears almost certain that he will lead the Barisan State Government for a third term.

SNAP leaders by and large see him as the only realistic leader, and are further away than ever before from making an alternative arrangement with SUPP. No rival leaders from within PBB have sought the mantle of leadership. On the contrary, there is every likelihood that the Chief Minister will succeed in purging rival Malays from within his own parliamentary party. Through a slight narrowing of his base he will secure greater loyalty. That approach seems to have worked in the economic domain, despite the risks involved, and is being extended to the political and administrative realms.

SUPP leaders no longer talk boldly of 'bolting the Barisan'.

Faced with the challenge from the DAP they have closed ranks and need the umbrella of federal and state government support. Were both SUPP and DAP in opposition voters might see little to be lost from trying a new team. However, whilst still within the Barisan SUPP can differentiate themselves from DAP by asserting that they provide *the* Chinese voice within the state government. Without SUPP 'the Chinese would suffer', to quote a familiar remark. The older SUPP leadership has in fact consolidated its hold within the party and more radical stances are now unlikely to develop.

When the crunch came over the issue of Abdul Rahman's Chief Ministership SUPP was not willing to support the SNAP Chairman's call that the Barisan 'respect Abdul Rahman Yakub's wish to resign as Chief Minister'. Various SNAP leaders expressed a feeling that the 'betrayal'¹⁸ of 1970 had been repeated. The other interpretation accords a much more actively manipulative role to the Chief Minister's staff, to whom it was critically important to ensure that SUPP and SNAP were at loggerheads. They had the numbers, but the Chief Minister had the manipulative skills. As the master tactician he excelled.

PAJAR did well in a by-election for the coastal Malay seat of Muara Tuang. Its Secretary-General Razali Sabang received 2,282 votes to the Barisan's 3,643. But again, it was something short of victory. PAJAR desperately needed to win. Subsequently there has been a series of well publicized resignations from the party, reminiscent of the experience faced by SUPP in opposition in 1962-3.¹⁹ These resignations received wide publicity through the media owned by, or sympathetic to, the Government. PAJAR responded by arguing that in almost all cases those who resigned were minor officials or not even party members, but those replies received scant media coverage. The biggest loss to PAJAR was its Secretary-General, who had been an active politician since the early 1960s.

Finally, the Chief Minister appears to have patched up his relationship with various top leaders in Kuala Lumpur. After the October 1978 Kuala Lumpur meeting of Sarawak's Bari-

san Nasional leaders it became patently clear to the national leadership that no other acceptable candidate for Chief Minister was about to be chosen—so Abdul Rahman Yakub might as well be recognized as such. This is not to say that the Prime Minister and Chief Minister will develop the warmth and mutual support that was evident between Tun Razak and Abdul Rahman Yakub. Unlike Tun Razak, who was able to overlook individual excesses by various Chief Ministers, Hussein Onn retains a scrupulous regard for the law. Such an approach can prove unnerving and adds an important qualification to the continuance in office of any of the present Chief Ministers.

July 1979

1. Abdul Rahman Yakub, *The 1975 Budget*, Government Printing office, Kuching. *Council Negeri Debates*, 20 March 1975.

2. Under that plan the state's forests were to be divided into five areas, each of which would be harvested sequentially thus giving a 25-year gap for natural regeneration. Though some argued that this was too short a period, contracts have already been let not in one but in all five areas causing rapid depletion.

3. *Sarawak Tribune*, 30 October 1977.

4. See P. L. Thomas, 'The dawn of Sarawak verse', *Sarawak Gazette*, 30 November 1977, pp. 181–3.

5. The mimeographed sheets to which we refer all include the address of the PAJAR office, are unsigned and dated 22, 26, 28 June and 1, 6 July.

6. *Sarawak Tribune*, 24 July 1978.

7. *ibid.*, 24 July 1978.

8. *ibid.*, 25 July 1978.

9. A bomb was exploded in front of the Kuching Chinese Chamber of Commerce building. That body, unlike its Sibu counterpart, had declined to call for the continuation of the Chief Minister's enlightened leadership of the State.

10. *New Straits Times*, 6 October 1978.

11. *The Star*, 6 October 1978.

12. The insult came when Abdul Rahman 'clarified' a newspaper report that he had rejected an offer by the Prime Minister to appoint him Malaysian Defence Minister. He added that 'Datuk Hussein did not

force him to accept the Defence portfolio. The offer', he said, 'was made to him some time ago.' *New Straits Times*, 13 October 1978. Making public capital out of a private conversation was seen by the Prime Minister as highly discourteous. Abdul Rahman was also reported as having remarked that he was willing to serve to the Federal Government 'if I'm sincerely asked'. *The Star*, 14 September 1978.

13. Taib Mahmud is a more relaxed person than his uncle, Abdul Rahman, and no longer evokes the same respect or disdain as the latter.

14. *Malay Mail*, 15 October 1978.

15. What really incited the Chief Minister was a reported conversation between the Prime Minister and SUPP's Secretary-General. The Prime Minister wanted to know why SUPP did not wish to use the Barisan Nasional *dacing* symbol while campaigning for the 1978 election. The latter proceeded to detail various reasons why the state government was held in low esteem. When asked to name a possible successor to the Chief Minister, he suggested Taib Mahmud. That discussion quickly leaked back to Abdul Rahman.

16. In the Sibu-Sarikei area there was a grouping of independent candidates in the 1978 election (dissident SUPP and former Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA) members) who publicized their intention of forming a 'Sarawak United Chinese Party'. *Berita Petang Sarawak*, 20 June 1978. Though the party was not registered, some of its more prominent backers subsequently joined the DAP, one becoming the DAP's first representative in the state legislature.

17. Michael Leigh, *The Rising Moon, political change in Sarawak*, (Sydney University Press, 1974), esp. p. 144.

18. *ibid.*, pp. 142-5.

19. *ibid.*, pp. 43ff.

The Development of the Electoral System

SOTHI RACHAGAN

THE fundamental function of an electoral system is to translate the wishes of the ordinary voter into an elected chamber of representatives. Ideally the process should provide for freedom of choice, avoid at least the grosser forms of corruption, and secure general acceptance as a fair way of choosing between rival claimants to political office. This chapter aims to examine the formal aspects of the electoral system and the administration of elections in Malaysia so as to appreciate their historical evolution and the extent to which they serve to influence the nature of representation of the Malaysian people.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Malaysian electoral system largely follows the lines recommended by a committee appointed during the colonial period to examine the question of election to the hitherto wholly nominated Federal Legislative Council. The system proposed in 1954 was wholly structured along the lines of the British electoral system. The committee recommended that plurality-voting, more commonly known as the Anglo-American first-past-the-post system, based on single-member territorial constituencies with a common roll, should form the basis of the country's electoral model.

In accepting the first-past-the-post system, the committee

conceded that the system would tend to benefit large parties and thereby compromise the principle of fair representation. But it considered this disadvantage less consequential than the disadvantage that would accrue from a weak government that might emerge from a large number of small parties attempting to form a coalition government. The committee considered that proportional representation would result in a multiplicity of small parties, and that the coalition governments which result are 'sometimes so unstable as to make difficult the application of long-term policies or the introduction of radical but necessary measures which are unpopular with any part of the coalition'.¹ What the committee could not foresee was that, despite their recommendations, from the very first election the government has been in the hands of coalitions, albeit pre-election coalitions.

Another important consideration of the committee was the need to establish a form of election that would not make it difficult for the average voter to grasp the precise significance of the electoral process and his participation in it. For these reasons the committee did not recommend the 'limited vote' and 'alternative vote' systems. The assumed qualities of strong government and simplicity determined the choice of the first-past-the-post system.

In Malaysia, as elsewhere, the effect of utilizing the first-past-the-post system has been to exaggerate the relative strength of the ruling coalition, i.e. the Alliance Party and its successor, the Barisan Nasional. Table 11.1 lists the percentage of votes won by the governing coalition and the percentage of seats it obtained at each of the parliamentary elections held in Peninsular Malaysia. In no election, except the first in 1955, did the Alliance share of the votes exceed two-thirds, and in the 1969 election its share actually dropped to less than half. Clearly it would not have been possible for the government to control the two-thirds of the seats needed to alter the Constitution were it not for the increased number of seats awarded it by the first-past-the-post system. This is particularly important since the constitutional changes intro-

TABLE 11.1
 Votes and Seats won by Government Coalition in
 Peninsular Malaysian Parliamentary Elections, 1955-1978

<i>Year</i>	<i>% Votes</i>	<i>Total Number of Seats</i>	<i>Number of Seats Won</i>	<i>% of Seats Won</i>
1955	79.6	52	51	98.1
1959	51.8	104	74	71.2
1964	58.5	104	89	85.6
1969	48.6	104	66	63.5
1974	61.5	114	104	91.3
1978	57.1	114	94	82.5

Source: T. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, 1955, Election Commission reports on parliamentary elections of 1959, 1964, 1969, and 1974, and newspaper reports in 1978.

duced by the Government to alter aspects of the electoral system were all passed in the years when its share of the popular vote was less than two-thirds.

Presumably because it is the only system Malaysians are used to and one which the ruling coalition is unlikely to reform, there has been no significant call for change. None of the political parties has dwelt on the issue with any sense of urgency; nor has any one of them included it as part of its election manifesto or party policy. Nevertheless opposition party leaders have referred to the 'inbuilt inequity in our electoral system where vote percentages do not necessarily have to tally with seat percentages'² in explaining their poor performances in elections. Dr Tan Chee Khoo, whose Partai Keadilan Masyarakat (Pekemas) gained only one parliamentary seat despite winning 5.3 per cent of the popular vote in Peninsular Malaysia in the 1974 election and no seats in the 1978 election, specifically recommended the 'German system where fifty per cent of the seats are elected under the first-past-the-post system and fifty per cent by proportional representation'.³ What is clear is that with the increased domination of the political arena by the Government coalition, opposition parties are likely to look for changes, and it is

probable that the first-past-the-post system will be subjected to increased scrutiny and criticism.

ADMINISTERING THE SYSTEM

Before the first federal-level election held on 27 July 1955, there existed no machinery to conduct elections and as a temporary measure the responsibility was given to the Chief Secretary of the Federal Government. A Supervisor of Elections working under the Chief Secretary was appointed on 23 June 1954. In December 1954 a committee, consisting of eight members of the wholly nominated Legislative Council, selected from the main political parties, two State Secretaries and one Settlement Secretary, and three other officials were appointed to advise the Chief Secretary. Election departments were created at headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and in the several states and settlements to administer the elections.⁴

The Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission which considered the constitution of independent Malaya recommended the establishment of an Election Commission of three members independent of the Government. Such election commissions had been established in virtually all the former British colonies. The Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission had envisaged that 'In appointing members of the Election Commission the Yang di Pertuan Besar shall have regard to the importance of securing an Election Commission which enjoys the confidence of all democratic parties and of persons of all communities.'⁵ The final draft of the Malayan Constitution of 1957, which was strongly influenced by the Alliance Party, was less specific and merely read that the Commission should enjoy 'public confidence'.

To ensure that the Election Commission cannot be interfered with by the Government, Article 114(3) of the 1957 Malayan Constitution provided that

A member of the Election Commission shall cease to hold office on attaining the age of sixty-five years or on becoming disqualified under

Clause (4) and may at any time resign his office by writing under his hand addressed to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, but shall not be removed from office except on the like grounds and in the like manner as a judge of the Supreme Court.

The said Clause (4) of Article 114 read 'A person is disqualified for appointment as a member of the Election Commission if he holds any other office of profit or is a member of either House of Parliament or of the Legislative Assembly of any State.'⁶ Though obviously the Yang Dipertuan Agung was required to consult the Government in appointing the members of the Election Commission, once appointed they were guaranteed sufficient safeguards to operate as members of an independent and impartial authority.

The Election Commission appointed under the provisions of Article 114 of the 1957 Constitution consisted of a Chairman and two other members. The initial appointments were wholly in the spirit of the 1957 Constitution and even of the recommendations made by the Constitutional Commission. A prominent and respected Malay, Haji Mustapha Albakri, was appointed Chairman and a Chinese, Lee Ewe Boon, and an Indian, Ditt Singh—both retired civil servants—were appointed as the other members. The new Chairman's standing in society was indeed high and it was his efforts that went a long way to earn the Commission its early good reputation.

In 1960 the Commission proposed a new delimitation of constituencies. The Alliance Government however, considered its report unsatisfactory and an attempt was made to remove Haji Mustapha Albakri as Chairman by amending Article 114(4) of the Constitution to read:

Notwithstanding anything in clause (3) the Yang di Pertuan Agong may by order remove from office any member of the Election Commission if such member

- (a) is an undischarged bankrupt; or
- (b) engages in any paid office or employment outside the duties of his office; or
- (c) is a member of either House of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly of a State.

Haji Mustapha Albakri, though not holding 'any other office of profit' as defined by the Constitution, had business interests yielding remuneration. The attempt to remove him, however, failed since Article 114(6) of the Constitution provides that 'the remuneration and other terms of office of a member of the Election Commission shall not be altered to his disadvantage after his appointment'. In the event he continued to serve as Chairman till his retirement in 1967 at the age of sixty-five.

Dato Ahmad Perang, who succeeded Haji Mustapha Albakri as Chairman, had no known party connections and, like his predecessor, had served in high office in the civil service. Some of the successors of the Chinese and Indian members, however, have had political backgrounds in the MCA and MIC respectively while a former party member was appointed to represent East Malaysia after 1963. The practice adopted in appointing members to the Commission continued to be on the basis of nominations made by the three component parties of the Alliance—UMNO, MCA, and MIC.

The Election Commission's functions as envisaged by the 1957 Constitution were to

- (a) delimit constituencies;
- (b) prepare and revise electoral rolls; and
- (c) conduct elections to the House of Representatives, the Legislative Assemblies of the States, the Municipal Council of the capital city and any other elections that may be authorised by federal or state law.⁷

Also included was a provision which charged the Commission with the responsibility of organizing and conducting elections to the Senate but this provision has yet to become operative.

The Commission's power to delimit constituencies was withdrawn in 1962 after the Alliance Government, probably concerned about its own electoral chances, found the Commission's 1960 delimitation exercise unsatisfactory.⁸ The Commission's now curtailed powers in this area were to 'recommend' changes, and Parliament became the final arbiter of

any delimitation proposals. In effect, of course, this meant the government of the day.

As a means of ensuring the Commission's independence and preventing any imperious intervention by Parliament, the remuneration of the members of the Election Commission is charged to the Consolidated Fund and thus not subject to annual scrutiny, debate, and approval by Parliament. The Constitution also guarantees that the remuneration may not be altered to the disadvantage of the commissioners after their appointment.

THE FRANCHISE

Adult suffrage for both men and women and a common register for all communities were instituted for the first election in 1955. Article 119 of the Malaysian Constitution sets out the requirements of a would-be elector. All Malaysians who are citizens, are above 21 years of age and resident in a constituency on the qualifying date are, with a few exceptions, entitled to register as electors. The exceptions include persons of unsound mind or those serving sentences of imprisonment, and persons convicted and sentenced to death or imprisonment for a term exceeding twelve months. Also exempted are persons who may be disqualified under any law relating to offences committed in connection with elections.

The utilization of the citizenship requirement has significant implications in the Malaysian context. The concept of federal citizenship itself was introduced by the British colonial government as part of the Malayan Union proposal after the Second World War. Till then, persons in the Malay States were subjects of the respective Malay rulers and those in the Straits Settlements were British subjects. The proposals aroused the fears of the Malays that they would be overwhelmed by the non-Malays and this led to the mobilization of the Malays in a massive show of strength against the Malayan Union proposal and the citizenship provisions. The proposal was abandoned and in its stead the Federation of

Malaya Agreement of 1948 was adopted. The citizenship regulations adopted in this later agreement were more stringent for the non-Malays.⁹ These citizenship regulations were included with minor alterations in the 1957 Malayan Constitution and the 1963 Malaysian Constitution. Since the Malayan Union proposal, however, the citizenship question has remained a divisive issue in Malaysian politics—the Malays resenting the granting of citizenship to the non-Malays and the non-Malays seeking even more relaxed conditions for acquiring citizenship.

At the time of the 1974 election there were an estimated 100,000 persons, mainly Chinese and Indians, who though permanently resident in the country were ineligible for the franchise because they had not obtained citizenship.¹⁰

Literacy, possession of property, or payment of taxes have never served as criteria for exclusion from voting rights in the country—the report of the election committee in 1954 and both the 1957 Malayan Constitution and the 1963 Malaysia Constitution rejecting these. A condition requiring the voter to be resident in a constituency for a period of six months immediately prior to his registration as an elector was included in the 1957 Constitution. Electoral registers, which are prepared annually, are normally ready only six months after the actual procedure of registering voters, and elections may be held up to a year after these have been prepared. With the high degree of migration within the country this regulation disenfranchised a large number of persons and was abolished in 1960.¹¹

The practice of the individual racial communities voting separately on communal rolls for communal candidates practised in some countries, notably New Zealand and Fiji, was considered and rejected by the election committee in 1954.¹² The committee and the 1957 and 1963 Constitutions opted to be optimistic and ruled that voting should be on the basis of territory rather than community. It was argued that communal elections strengthen communal feeling and would have seriously impaired any possibility of working towards a cohe-

sive and united society.¹³ Elections in Malaysia are thus conducted on a common basis and candidates are elected by individual territorial constituencies and not by individual communities.

THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

Although all adults who are not disqualified are legally entitled to vote, they can only actually do so if their names appear on the Register of Electors. In Malaysia, registration is neither compulsory nor automatic. Hence the machinery maintained and the ease with which voters can register are of prime significance.

Each parliamentary constituency comprises a separate registration area and each polling district within a parliamentary constituency is a separate registration unit and has its own separate portion of the register.¹⁴ Polling districts are devised by the state election offices so as to give the electors practicable distances to travel to vote. The number of electors per polling district may vary from a handful in some rural hamlets to over 5,000 in densely populated urban areas. The growth of new housing projects in formerly sparsely populated areas and the building of high-rise flats led to large increases in the number of electors in some polling districts. At the time of the 1978 election there were some 4,500 polling districts in Peninsular Malaysia. Within each polling district's register, streets are listed in alphabetical order, and the electors' names listed according to their identity card numbers. This practice replaced the system of names being listed according to house numbers and streets. The use of identity card numbers, the Election Commission believes, makes duplication and double registration impossible.¹⁵

The procedure for the registration of electors is contained in the Elections (Registration of Electors) Regulations 1959. These regulations stipulate that those eligible to apply for registration as an elector have to do so during the period allocated for this purpose. The regulations further stipulate that

the registration period shall be not less than 30 days and not more than 60 days. The revision of the registers, which occurs every year, is required by regulation 13(i) to be for a minimum of 21 days and a maximum of 42 days. In practice the Election Commission opens the register for revision for the maximum 42 days stipulated and this is normally from 1 September to 12 October. The practice of political parties registering electors, though never encouraged by the Election Commission, was allowed prior to 1972, but since then the Commission has, by denying the political parties the necessary forms, stopped this practice. The Election Commission now merely announces the date of registration by way of Gazette notification, the mass media, and public posters, and the public are expected to take the responsibility of registering. The publicity given to the revision exercise has frequently been criticized as being inadequate, especially by the smaller political parties. Clearly, despite the Election Commission stopping the political parties registering electors, the system of registering where the onus of responsibility for registration rests with the voters offers a premium to the larger and well-organized parties which ensure that their supporters get on the register.

No legal provision is made to register those below the qualifying age of 21 years, even where they would reach voting age during the period the revised electoral roll is in effect. Such an omission disenfranchises new voters. Assume that an individual becomes 21 years of age on 1 September of a year and assume that the qualifying date for registration, which is the day before registration commences, is 31 August of that year. Such an individual will not be able to vote for approximately seventeen months after he has reached the qualifying age of 21 years—this includes the twelve months till the next revision and five months for that revised register to come into effect. With elections normally due every five years this could, though admittedly in few cases, result in a person not participating in the voting process till he is twenty-six or so. Such disenfranchisement could be avoided by registering those

whose twenty-first birthday falls later than the qualifying date for registration but still within the course of the prospective register. The date on which they become eligible to vote—that is their twenty-first birthday—could be entered on the register immediately next to their name.

At the end of the period of revision the revised register is prepared and open for inspection by the public to lodge claims or objections within a period of fourteen days from the date of publication of the draft registers. After the disposal of the claims and objections the rolls are certified and remain in force till the next revision in the following year. The regulations, it would appear, are adequate for the maintenance of an accurate register.

Table 11.2 lists the growth in the Peninsular Malaysian electorate by states from 1967/8 to 1973/4. Throughout, a steady growth in electors is noticeable, except for the year 1973/4, when there was a drop of 330,864 in the number of electors; the number of names removed was even greater unless it is assumed that there were no new electors registered! There was a decline in the number of electors for each state. The decline was greatest in Selangor (including the Federal Territory) where it was 92,466. Perak, Kelantan, and Johor also witnessed heavy declines. The Chairman of the Election Commission attributed this to 'the removal from the rolls of the names of persons who have died or migrated and cases of double registration. The latter was detectable because the Commission is now utilizing computers and working on the basis of Identity Card numbers.'¹⁶

On election day, 24 August 1974, however, thousands of electors were unable to find their names on the electoral register and were thus unable to vote. Omitted from the register were even the names of a cabinet minister and his wife.¹⁷ No official estimate of the number of electors unable to find their names in the electoral register has been released, but the number must indeed have been high.

The Election Commission understandably came under severe criticism from both government ministers and mem-

TABLE 11.2
Number of Electors by States, Peninsular Malaysia, 1967/8-1973/4¹

<i>State</i>	<i>1967/8</i>	<i>1968/9</i>	<i>1971/2</i>	<i>1972/3</i>	<i>1973/4</i>	<i>August 1974</i> ²
Perlis	52,971	56,060	59,808	61,420	58,244	58,721
Kedah	373,435	388,167	411,998	424,272	395,854	400,285
Kelantan	318,512	333,754	362,048	373,120	310,406	311,608
Trengganu	168,840	179,365	195,539	200,096	183,340	183,769
Penang	272,305	282,399	298,378	312,934	286,680	289,140
Perak	585,549	613,572	666,735	675,115	625,987	626,565
Pahang	162,041	176,768	202,484	207,337	196,057	199,478
Selangor (including Federal Territory)	473,564	516,984	592,558	601,911	509,445	511,299
Negeri Sembilan	163,373	170,728	183,950	191,744	177,335	178,717
Malacca	140,125	147,765	163,770	160,807	151,535	151,699
Johor	414,140	436,620	480,695	511,909	494,918	495,380
Peninsular Malaysia	3,123,855	3,302,182	3,617,963	3,720,665	3,389,801	3,406,661

¹ No registration exercise was undertaken during 1969 and 1970.

² As in the electoral registers utilized for the 1974 election.

Source: Malaysia, Election Commission.

bers of the opposition.¹⁸ Unsuccessful candidates found in it a convenient excuse. The inferred reasons for the omission are disturbing, but, given the communal nature of politics in the country, not wholly unexpected. For instance, David Loh Kee Peng, the unsuccessful Barisan Nasional candidate for the Bandar Melaka parliamentary constituency, complained, 'More than eight hundred of my Chinese supporters have lost their votes. The Election Commission people went around to the houses and asked where each voter was and when told they were not in they just cut off their names.'¹⁹ Similarly, Bernard Sta Maria, State Assemblyman and the DAP's campaign organizer in Malacca, claimed 'A lot of my Chinese voters have been left out. The Election Office sent young Malay school children to the houses. The question asked was "Mana ini orang?" ["Where is this person?"] and when the answer was "tiada" ["Not in" or "Not here"] their names were struck off the list.'²⁰ These claims, in all fairness, have to be regarded as not proven, but they are indicative of the fears harboured by candidates and electors and serve to emphasize the necessity for the Commission to be not only an unbiased and independent authority, but also to appear to be so.

In the face of heavy criticism the Election Commission attempted to vindicate itself and its then secretary, Hassan bin Ibrahim, explained that the electors' names were missing from the register because voters did not re-register after changing their addresses and that people had incorrectly assumed that their names would automatically be transferred to the register of the constituency they had moved to.²¹ It was subsequently shown that this was not all there was to it, and that in some instances persons who had not moved house had also been deleted from the register; in other instances the names of some members of the family had been deleted while those of others remained on the register.²² Even more alarming was the secretary's rather restricted conception of the role of the Election Commission in registering electors. The secretary held

The public should know that registration is an individual responsibility and should be done by all loyal citizens who believe in the principles of democracy. It is incorrect to assume that the Commission is responsible for the registration of new voters. The Commission is more concerned to see that those ineligible to vote are not registered in any constituency.²³

As a result of the complaints received as regards disenfranchisement by omission of names from the electoral register, the Election Commission appointed a committee to investigate the matter. Affected members of the public were asked to forward their complaints to this investigating committee.²⁴ Despite the obvious lack of enthusiasm and sense of urgency amongst the public after an election—especially since the next election was expected some five years hence and thus at least four revision exercises away—about 2,000 persons wrote in. This involved the names of about 4,000 electors.²⁵ Their names have since been reinstated on the electoral register. The report of the investigating committee was delivered to the Prime Minister but never made public and this served further to arouse the fears of the public. It is, however, believed that one of the causes of so many names being omitted from the register was the removal of the names in certain states of all persons who had their old identity card numbers rather than the new ones listed on the electoral register. The omission of names on an electoral register, especially when it involves as many as it did for the 1974 election, is indeed a grievous error. To a degree, at least, it encourages speculation about the validity of the election. It is encouraging to note that the Commission holds that 'In order to avoid similar cases recurring in the future a new procedure relating to the register of electors and revision of rolls has been devised.'²⁶ It is not, however, clear what this entailed for the 1978 elections.

The combined effect of the enfranchisement limitations occasioned by the citizenship laws and the procedure adopted for the registration of electors has resulted in the communal composition of the electorate being different from that of the total population. Table 11.3 indicates the com-

TABLE 11.3
Communal Composition of the Peninsular Malaysian Electorate in
Parliamentary Election Years

<i>Year</i>	<i>Malays</i>		<i>Chinese</i>		<i>Indians</i> ¹		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
1955	1,077,562	84.2	142,947	11.2	60,356	4.6	1,280,865
1959	1,244,827	57.1	752,846	34.5	184,665	8.4	2,182,338
1964	1,503,836	54.4	1,039,264	37.5	223,431	8.1	2,706,531
1969	1,835,908	55.7	1,055,958	36.3	264,890	8.0	3,296,256
1974	1,971,305	57.9	1,176,361	34.5	258,995	7.6	3,406,661

¹Includes all communities except Malays and Chinese.

Source: 1955, 1959, and 1964 data obtained from Barisan Nasional Office, Jalan Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur.

1969 and 1974 figures based on electoral registers for respective years.

munal composition of the Peninsular Malaysian electorate for each of the federal level elections held up to 1974. Table 11.4 indicates the electoral advantage or disadvantage accruing from differential enfranchisement to each community at each of the elections. In 1955 the Malay community had a very significant advantage but over the years this has been reduced and the Chinese and Indian communities have obtained an increasingly proportionate share of the franchise. This development was brought about by increasing numbers of Chinese and Indians acquiring citizenship. In 1974 however the trend towards parity in the share of the franchise was reversed, and the percentage of Malays in the electorate increased. This increase cannot be accounted for in terms of any change in citizenship laws. Hence it has to be assumed that the difference in the rate of registration of electors amongst the various communities has become markedly in favour of the Malay community, or alternatively, that more non-Malays than Malays were omitted from the electoral register in 1974. For Malay-based political parties this was certainly welcome but for the non-Malay-based parties this meant reduced chances of victory at the polls. Figures for 1978 are unfortunately not available for comparison.

TABLE 11.4
Discrepancies between the Communal Composition of the Electorate
and the Communal Composition of the Total Population,
Peninsular Malaysia, in Parliamentary Election Years¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Malays</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Indians</i> ²
1955	+ 34.4	- 25.9	- 8.5
1959	+ 7.1	- 2.5	- 4.6
1964	+ 4.4	+ 0.6	- 5.0
1969	+ 2.8	+ 0.7	- 3.5
1974	+ 4.7	- 1.0	- 3.7

¹ Derived by percentage community in electorate minus percentage community in total population.

² Includes all communities except Malays and Chinese.
Total Population data as estimated by Chief Statistician, Malaysia.

THE DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

The delimitation of constituencies for the first federal level elections was undertaken by a three-man commission headed by Lord Merthyr. The Commission delimited 52 constituencies and these were utilized for the 1955 election. The 1957 Malayan Constitution placed the responsibility for the delimitation of constituencies and the conduct of elections on the Election Commission. Article 46 of the constitution stipulated that there should be 100 parliamentary constituencies, and Article 116 and the 13th schedule included the principles by which the constituencies were to be delimited. Special provisions were made for the 1959 elections and for this election the 52 constituencies used in 1955 were each divided into two and these 104 constituencies were utilized.

Following the 1959 election, the Election Commission apportioned the 100 constituencies amongst the various Malayan states and then delineated the constituencies. The report was completed by 1960. The Constitution bound the Government to accept the report but the Alliance Government amended the Constitution in 1962. The effect, among others, of the amendment was that Parliament assumed the powers of delimiting constituencies and thereby restricted the Election Commission's powers to merely recommending changes. These new provisions were incorporated into the 1963 Malaysian Constitution. In the event the constituencies delineated as a temporary measure for the 1959 elections continued to be utilized for the 1964 and 1969 elections in Peninsular Malaysia. Over the years rural-urban migration and the increased numbers of non-Malays gaining the franchise led to great disparities in population and electorate size of urban and rural constituencies—in several states the size of the largest constituencies was as much as four times that of the smaller rural constituencies.

Following the resumption of parliamentary government on 20 February 1971 the Election Commission began a review of constituencies and presented its report in 1973. However,

even before this report was tabled in the House of Representatives, parliament approved Act 206 of 1973 which created the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Along with the amendments to the Constitution occasioned by this transfer, the Government increased the number of Peninsular Malaysian seats in the House of Representatives from 104 to 114, apportioned the seats between the states and the Federal Territory and again changed the principles governing the delineation of constituencies. This obliged the Election Commission to undertake a fresh review of constituencies. The review so undertaken was presented on 20 July 1974 and adopted by parliament with amendments. This delineation formed the basis of the 1974 and 1978 elections.

In apportioning seats to the several component units, factors other than just population or electorate numbers may be taken into consideration. Hence, when viewed in terms of representation of people, the apportionment may appear to disadvantage certain units. The 1963 Malaysian Constitution introduced such a malapportionment when Sabah and Sarawak were afforded 40 seats (16 for Sabah and 24 for Sarawak), far in excess of that to which they were entitled by their total population or total electorate. Singapore on the other hand was disadvantaged when it was afforded only 15 seats. (Refer to Tables 11.5 and 11.6.) Greater parity was achieved when the number of seats in the Malaysian parliament was reduced from 159 to 144 on Singapore's exit from the Malaysian federation.

Hence, most crucial in apportionment is the decision as to the principles of representation. Until the 1962 Constitutional amendment the Malayan constitution stipulated that two criteria be jointly utilized—the total population and the total electorate (i.e. registered electors) of the component states. The 1962 Constitutional amendment made the apportionment of seats dependent solely on the basis of the number of electors in each state.

In apportioning the 114 seats to the Peninsular Malaysian states in 1973 Parliament made no indication of the criteria

utilized, Table 11.7 indicates the number of seats apportioned to each state, the number that each state would have been entitled to by the total electorate criteria specified by the Constitution and the percentage deviation of the 1973 apportionment. This malapportionment contributed greatly to the discrepancy in constituency size between states (Table 11.8).

Once seats are apportioned between the states the Election Commission undertakes the actual delineation. Malaysian constituencies are currently delineated in accordance with the principles set out in the 13th schedule of the Constitution which reads as follows:

- (a) While having regard to the desirability of giving all electors reasonably convenient opportunities of going to the polls, constituencies ought to be delimited so that they do not cross state boundaries and regard ought to be had to the inconveniences of state constituencies crossing the boundaries of federal constituencies;
- (b) Regard ought to be had to the administrative facilities within the constituency for the establishment of the necessary registration and polling machines;
- (c) The number of electors within each constituency in [each] State and the Federal Territory ought to be approximately equal except that, having regard to the difficulty of reaching electors in country districts and the other disadvantages facing rural constituencies, a measure of weightage for area ought to be given to such constituencies; and
- (d) Regard ought to be had to the inconveniences attendant on alteration of constituencies, and to the maintenance of local ties.

These principles are largely based on the recommendations of the committee appointed by the pre-independence Federal Legislative Council to examine the question of elections to that council in their report dated 21 January 1954. Two clauses have, however, undergone significant changes.

Omitted from clause (a) as it currently appears are the words '... endeavour to define constituencies so that they would embody complete administrative districts ...'.²⁷ Clause (b), however, has been retained substantially as in the earlier requirement and calls for regard to be paid to the availability of administrative facilities for registration of electors

TABLE 11.5
 Discrepancies between the Total Population of Component Units of the
 Malaysian Federation and the Apportionment of Seats, 1964

	<i>Peninsular Malaysia</i>	<i>Singapore</i>	<i>Sabah</i>	<i>Sarawak</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>
Population	7,919,055	1,844,200	506,628	819,808	11,089,691
Population as percentage of Malaysian total	71.4	16.6	4.6	7.4	100
Seats	104	15	16	24	159
Seats as percentage of Malaysian total	65.4	9.4	10.1	15.1	100
Discrepancy	-6.0	-7.2	+5.5	+7.7	-

Source: Malaysia, Official Year Book, 1970.

TABLE 11.6

Discrepancies between the Total Population of Component Units of the Malaysian Federation and the Apportionment of Seats, 1974

	<i>Peninsular Malaysia</i>	<i>Sabah</i>	<i>Sarawak</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>
Population ¹	8,819,928	654,943	977,438	10,452,309
Population as percentage of Malaysian total	84.4	6.2	9.4	100
Seats	114	16	24	154
Seats as percentage of Malaysian total	74.0	10.4	15.6	100
Discrepancy	-10.4	+4.2	+6.2	-

Source: Malaysia, *1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Community Groups*, 1972, pp. 45-6.

¹ Population statistics are those for 1970.

and polling. Clause (c) of the 13th schedule has been repeatedly amended. The clause provides a weightage for area to rural constituencies and this involves allocating to rural areas greater representation than they would acquire by a strict application of the electorate parity principle. The 1954 Merthyr Commission's guidelines had allowed for rural constituencies to have 'as little as one-half of the constituents in the more populous urban areas'.²⁸ The 1957 Constitution restricted the allowance made for the disparity so as not to increase or reduce the number of electors in any constituency to a number differing from the average sized constituency by more than 15 per cent. The 1962 Constitution Amendment Act reinstated the Merthyr Commission's guidelines. The 1973 Parliament Act 206 removed all restrictions as regards the disparity. Consequently there now exist no limitations to the size of constituencies and the 1974 delineation of constituencies adopted by parliament created constituencies widely ranging in size.

TABLE 11.7
1973 Apportionment of Seats, Apportionment by the
Total Electorate Principle and Percentage Deviation,
Peninsular Malaysian States

<i>State</i>	<i>1973 Apportionment (1)</i>	<i>Apportionment By Electorate Principle (2)</i>	<i>Percentage* Deviation of (1) From (2)</i>
Perlis	2	2	0
Kedah	13	13	0
Kelantan	12	10	+17.4
Trengganu	7	6	+14.6
Penang	9	10	-10.7
Perak	21	21	0
Pahang	8	7	+12.0
Selangor	11	11	0
Federal Territory	5	6	-19.4
Negeri Sembilan	6	6	0
Malacca	4	5	-25.3
Johor	16	17	-9.5
Total	114	114	

* Plus signs indicate advantage introduced, and minus signs indicate disadvantage introduced.

In Malaysia voting is principally along lines of ethnic community. All Malaysian political parties, albeit some to a greater degree, are communally based. Hence electoral success for political parties depends largely on the numerical dominance of particular communities in the various constituencies. Consequently, regardless of the criteria on which constituencies are delimited, of fundamental importance to the political parties is the predominance of 'their community' in the various constituencies. Table 11.9 sets out the communal predominance amongst the electorate of the various constituencies prior to and following the delineation of 1974. The table attempts to measure the advantage that accrues to the community by the differential eligibility for the vote and the dif-

TABLE 11.8
Parliamentary Constituencies with the Smallest and Largest Electorate,
Peninsular Malaysian States, 1974 Election

State	Smallest Constituency		Largest Constituency		Ratio largest to smallest
	Name	Electors	Name	Electors	
Perlis	Kangar	29,256	Arau	29,465	1.01
Kedah	Padang Serai	24,236	Alor Setar	37,178	1.55
Kelantan	Kuala Kerai	17,332	Kota Bharu	35,954	2.07
Trengganu	Dungun	25,202	Kuala Trengganu	32,391	1.29
Penang	Permatang Pauh	22,663	Jelutong	42,804	1.89
Perak	Grik	17,280	Menglembu	49,038	2.84
Pahang	Pekan	21,970	Kuantan	27,800	1.27
Selangor	Sabak Bernam	22,343	Petaling	47,929	2.15
Federal Territory	Kepong	32,282	Sungei Besi	40,489	1.25
Negeri Sembilan	Jelebu	25,512	Seremban	40,731	1.60
Malacca	Jasin	33,727	Kota Melaka	44,370	1.32
Johor	Tenggaroh	17,379	Johor Bahru	51,534	2.97
Peninsular Malaysia	Grik	17,280	Johor Bahru	51,534	2.98

Source: Election Commission, *1974 Election report*, 1975, Appendix H, pp. 144-57.

TABLE 11.9
Electoral Advantage/Disadvantage accruing to Various Communal
Groups from Enfranchisement and Delineation of Constituencies, 1969-1974

Year	Malays			Chinese			Indians			Non-Malays		
	Enf. ¹	Del. ²	Cum. ³	Enf.	Del.	Cum.	Enf.	Del.	Cum.	Enf.	Del.	Cum.
1969	+2.8	+0.1	+ 2.9	+0.7	-8.0	- 7.3	-3.5	-8.0	-11.5	-2.8	-0.1	-2.9
1974	+4.7	+11.4	+16.1	+1.0	-14.3	-13.3	-3.7	-7.6	-11.3	-4.7	-11.4	-16.1

¹Enfranchisement Induced Advantage—Percentage Community in electorate minus percentage community in total population (refer Table 6).

²Delimitation Induced Advantage—Percentage of Constituencies

in which community has an absolute majority minus percentage community in electorate.

³Cumulative Advantage—i.e. Enfranchisement induced advantage plus Delineation induced advantage.

ferential rate of registration as electors, amongst the various communities. This has been expressed as 'Enfranchisement Induced Advantage'. The table also attempts to measure the advantage or disadvantage accruing to the several communities by the delimitation of constituencies—here referred to as 'Delimitation Induced Advantage'. The sum of these, here referred to as 'Cumulative Advantage', portrays the advantage or disadvantage that accrues to a community as a result of the franchise rules and procedure, and the delimitation of constituencies. Table 11.9 establishes that the delineation further accentuated the advantage accruing to the Malay community by the enfranchisement rules and procedure. This advantage was at the expense of the Chinese and Indian communities. Hence, barring split votes, the Malay-based parties entered the electoral contest in a greatly advantaged position *vis-à-vis* the non-Malay based parties.

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

The Malaysian Constitution requires that whenever Parliament is dissolved an election shall be held within 60 days in the States of Peninsular Malaysia and 90 days in the States of Sabah and Sarawak. The nomination day must be at least 14 days before the election.

The whole procedure for nomination takes some three-and-a-half hours (9 a.m to 12.30 p.m.) and is handled by the returning officer who is normally a senior officer of the Malaysian civil service. The first two hours are for the submission of nominations and the next one-and-a-half hours are reserved for any objections to the nomination.

The qualifications for election to Parliament are set out in Article 27 of the Malaysian Constitution and, except for a few differences, are substantially the same as those that apply for registration as electors. Malaysian citizens above the age of 21 years and resident in the Federation on nomination day are, with a few exceptions, eligible to seek election. Unlike electors who have to be resident in the constituency to be

eligible to vote, there is no requirement for candidates to be from the constituency in which they seek election to the House of Representatives. In the case of election to the State Assemblies, however, residence in the state is required. Ability to read and write the Malay or English language with sufficient proficiency to participate in the proceedings of the House had been required for election to the Federal Legislative Council prior to independence,²⁹ but the 1957 Constitution dispensed with this requirement. Articles 48 and 49 of the 1963 Malaysian Constitution list the grounds for disqualification from membership of the House of Representatives. By these articles, undischarged bankrupts, and holders of 'public office' and 'office of profit' are excluded. By public office is meant the armed forces, the judicial and legal services, the general public services of the Federation or any state, the police force, the railway services, and a number of named statutory authorities. By office of profit is meant the office of any judge of the Federal Court or of a High Court, the office of Auditor-General, and the office of a member of the Election Commission. Holders of public office and office of profit may, however, seek election provided they resign from their office. Those convicted of offences are disqualified from seeking election as long as they are barred from being electors.

The actual nomination procedure itself is governed by the detailed provisions of the Election (Conduct of Election) Regulations, 1959. Nominations are made on specified forms and supported by one proposer, one seconder, and four supporters, and the witness to the candidate's signature. Accompanying the nomination forms must be a statutory declaration signed in the presence of a commissioner for oaths or a magistrate establishing the eligibility of the candidate for the office he seeks.

All candidates seeking election are given a symbol which is printed next to their names in the ballot paper. Candidates of political parties which have already been officially registered with the Registrar of Societies and with the Election Com-

mission are allowed to utilize their respective party symbols. In order to resolve possible conflicts between rival candidates, each of whom may claim to be the official candidate of the same party, party candidates wishing to utilize the approved party symbol have to present a letter of authorization from the central committee of the political party concerned to the returning officer at the time of nomination. All candidates without such authorization letters are treated as independent candidates and are allocated a symbol from an approved list of 'independent' symbols for use during the election.

Regulation 5 of the Election (Conduct of Elections) Regulations, 1959, calls for the payment of an election deposit in cash or the presentation of an official receipt from an approved Treasury by all candidates seeking election. The deposit is forfeited if the candidate obtains less than one-eighth of the total valid votes cast during the election. The object of the deposit is to discourage frivolous candidates and those whose cause is unlikely to receive support. The election deposit itself has often been criticized as an odious regulation which serves to restrict candidates to the wealthier segments of society. In these circumstances some other kinds of deterrent might be thought appropriate, such as a petition signed by so many hundred electors. However, a deterrent of this kind is administratively complicated since signatures cannot readily be verified; it is also open to political objections since it would be a difficult hurdle to overcome, especially for new candidates. By comparison the present system of requiring an election deposit is convenient and works well.

What proved odious was the manner in which the deposits were raised prior to the 1974 election. The Election Commission, in reviewing the regulations governing the conduct of elections, sought the Government's permission to increase two-fold the election deposits for the state and parliamentary elections which till then were M\$250 and M\$500 respectively.³⁰ The consultation is a matter of practice since, though the Commission has the right to change the regulations regarding the conduct of elections, the changes would have to

be tabled and approved by Parliament as soon after as possible.³¹ Any measure that the Commission adopted without government sympathy would no doubt be denied passage through Parliament. The Government exceeded the Election Commission's suggestion by increasing the deposit three-fold to M\$750 for state elections and M\$1,500 for parliamentary elections. This decision was made on 9 July 1974³² but even the House of Representatives was denied knowledge of the increase. Only after Parliament had been dissolved and the nomination and polling dates announced did the Chairman of the Election Commission announce the three-fold increase in election deposits.³³ The decision to raise the deposit came under severe criticism from opposition parties and student unions which represented it as an attempt to prevent competition by the poor and the opposition parties. The DAP's Publicity Secretary, Lee Lam Thye, held that 'with the three-fold increase in deposits, politics now becomes a business risk and money raising proposition and an investment to take bigger risks'.³⁴ The three-fold increase would have stood had not the DAP challenged the legality of the decision to raise the deposits. In a letter to the Chairman of the Election Commission, the DAP Secretary-General, Lim Kit Siang, pointed out that clause 16 of the Elections Act, 1958 did not give the Commission the legal power to raise the deposit of any candidate beyond M\$1,000.³⁵ The Government then rescinded its decision and agreed to the Election Commission's earlier suggestion to raise the deposit to M\$500 for the state elections and M\$1,000 for the parliamentary elections.³⁶

At the end of the two hours for nomination one copy of the nomination paper and the candidate's agent's appointment letter are posted for public examination. Objections may be made to the nomination of any candidate by any person who is a registered elector in that constituency and by other competing candidates on any of the following grounds:

- (a) that the description of the candidate is insufficient to identify the candidate;
- (b) that the nomination paper does not comply with or was not

- delivered in accordance with the provisions of the regulations governing elections;
- (c) that it is apparent from the contents of the nomination papers that the candidate is not capable of being elected a member of parliament;
 - (d) that the provisions pertaining to election deposits have not been observed; and
 - (e) that the candidate is disqualified from being a member under the provisions of the Constitution of Malaysia.³⁷

No objection to a nomination paper is allowed unless it is made to the returning officer within the one-and-a-half hours set aside for this purpose, and all objections are required to be in writing. The returning officer is required to decide as soon as possible but not necessarily at once. This is to allow him opportunity to verify his decisions by way of reference to the Election Commission itself or to the Attorney-General's chambers.

The returning officer may himself lodge an objection on any of the grounds listed. The returning officer's decision is final and conclusive for the purposes of the election and cannot be called in question except by way of an election petition on the grounds set out in paragraph (b) of Section 32 of the Election Offences Act, 1959. The said section merely declares the election of a candidate void on an election petition on the grounds of 'non-compliance with the provisions of any written law relating to any election if it appears that the election was not conducted in accordance with the principles laid down in such written law and that such non-compliance affected the result of the election'.

Before 1978 disqualifications took place from time to time but not on a large scale. For example, in 1974 the DAP candidate for the Johor State Assembly seat of Tiram was disqualified following objections from Barisan Nasional supporters that he was a hospital assistant and thus a holder of public office. The candidate claimed that he had tendered a twenty-four hour resignation and paid a month's salary as required, before the close of nominations at 11 a.m. on nomination day. The DAP threatened court action but no election petition

resulted.³⁸ In 1978, however, it was estimated that about one hundred nominations at the Federal and State levels were rejected, mainly on the grounds of technical errors in completing the forms.

THE CAMPAIGN

Election campaigns, which in practice begin well before nomination day, officially end the day before polling day and no permits for public meetings and rallies are issued after this. An authorization letter is required to be issued by the candidate or his agent to all persons canvassing on behalf of the candidate or addressing public rallies, and three copies of these authorization letters, referred to as 'Form E', are required to be lodged with the Election Commission within forty-eight hours of it being issued. All public rallies must further have the approval of the officer in charge of the local police district and are governed by the limitations governing all public meetings. The names, addresses, and identity card numbers of all speakers at public meetings have to be submitted to the Election Commission and the local police before a permit can be obtained. As a matter of practice the police record in full all speeches at public meetings to watch for any breaking of the law. In 1978, however, public rallies were banned by the government on security grounds.

Personation, treating, undue influence, and bribery are the four categories of corrupt practices identified under the Election Offences Act 1959. Each of these is a seizable offence within the meaning of the Malaysian Criminal Procedure Code and punishable by imprisonment for twelve months and a fine of between M\$250 and M\$1,000. It further involves suspension from being a candidate, counting agent, or even an elector for five years after conviction or release from imprisonment, whichever is later. A recent addition to the section on undue influences is paragraph 2 of Section 9 of the Act, which reads:

A person shall be deemed to interfere with the free exercise of the electoral rights of a person within the meaning of this section who

induces or attempts to induce such person to believe that he, or any person in whom he is interested, will become or will be rendered an object of divine displeasure or spiritual censure.

The significance of the paragraph is more that there is official recognition of the problem of such practices and the possible deterrent value it affords, rather than the possibility of any actual trials and convictions.

Of special significance to the campaigns of the post-1969 elections are the amendments to the Constitution effected by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1971 which became effective from 10 March 1971. The vigorous campaign that had taken place during the election of 1969 had witnessed the inflaming of communal tensions and then communal rioting. The amendment makes it seditious for any person to question the rights and privileges established or protected by those provisions of the Constitution that relate to citizenship, to Malay as the national language, to the use of other languages for non-official purposes, to quotas for Malays and natives of Borneo and to the protection of the 'legitimate interests' of other communities, and to the sovereignty of the Rulers. There is, however, no restriction on any person questioning the implementation of the said provisions of the Constitution. Though these amendments to the Constitution have been criticized in some quarters as stifling freedom of speech, it is generally accepted that they reduce the crass appeal to communal sentiments that previous elections in Peninsular Malaysia had witnessed.

In an attempt to ensure that elections will be carried out in an orderly and peaceful manner, before each election the Election Commission normally invites all political parties and the police to a meeting to formulate an electoral code of conduct. The meeting for the 1974 election was attended by members of the Barisan Nasional, the DAP, and Pekemas. In 1978, however, the DAP representative walked out in protest against the Commission's refusal to accept the party's proposals for the code.³⁹ The code itself is not legally binding, but it must be conceded that much can be achieved by mutually

agreed codes of conduct rather than by placing reliance on statutes and regulations.

ELECTION EXPENSES

Though the transmutation of economic power into political power and the associated access of those in political power to financial support is of great significance, almost no effort has been made to discern and interpret the political roles of those engaged in funding candidates and political parties in Malaysia.⁴⁰ The Election Offences Act, 1959, prohibits and punishes with fines and imprisonment the personal bribery and intimidation of voters. It further requires the candidate to appoint an election agent (the candidate himself could act on his own behalf) who is legally responsible for disbursing all funds and reporting all contributions and expenditure on the candidate's behalf. It imposes a legal maximum on amounts spent by the candidate, and establishes the methods and timing of the submission of reports by candidates or their agents. The maximum limitation is a flat fixed amount and makes no allowance for type or size of constituency. The specified amount has, however, been raised over the years. Prior to the 1969 elections the allowable expense was doubled to M\$20,000 for parliamentary elections and M\$15,000 for state elections.⁴¹ No further increase was made for the 1974 parliamentary and state elections.

The amount stipulated as allowable expenditure by candidates is indeed small compared with election expenditure in many other countries, but Malaysian elections are usually short and simple by comparison. In practice, most candidates spend somewhat less than they could. However, the machinery is not sufficient to exercise any control over those candidates who spend more. The allowable expenditure is a flat maximum. This insensitivity of the law to the size of the constituency can be remedied by making the maximum limitation flexible by applying a fixed amount plus an amount per voter in the constituency. The amount per voter can again be

varied according to the type of constituency—rural or urban—should it be felt that the cost of campaigning varies depending on its type.

The control of expenditure by candidates during the official campaign period is not paralleled by any control of expenditure by the political parties, regardless of whether this is linked to any particular candidate or constituency. Often, expenses which in the case of larger parties are borne by the party, must, in the case of independent candidates or candidates from financially weaker parties, be borne by the candidates themselves and therefore declared in their statements.

The question thus arises as to whether some general and continuous control of expenditure for political purposes should be made. The present rules clearly favour large party organizations. The general complaint is that larger parties, and particularly the party in power, get a disproportionate share of publicity. With respect to the objective of providing equal access to publicity for all candidates, such devices as limited subsidies for advertising and publicity, equal access to radio and television, and the use of mails might be explored. Government parties, especially in newly independent countries, are often guilty of abusing governmental authority over the mass media, thus grabbing a disproportionate share of the publicity.

POLLING AND COUNTING

The ballot papers contain the names of the candidates in an order determined by lot at nomination time, the candidates' symbols and a blank space for the voters to indicate their choice by marking an 'X'. Each ballot paper carries a serial number and is attached to a counterfoil carrying the same serial number; the voter's number is recorded on the counterfoil when he is given a ballot paper. It is the presence of these serial numbers that has been the subject of criticism and accusations that the ballot is not secret. It is suggested

that the ruling party could trace through the serial number the choice of any voter and the fear of the retributive anger of the ruling party prevents voters from choosing opposition candidates. The practice of having serial numbers is found in other countries, notably Singapore and the United Kingdom, and is intended to prevent stuffing of the ballot boxes with forged papers and to allow for election petitions. The printing of serial numbers appears useful and the secrecy of the ballot has to be ensured by regulations and procedures governing the safe keeping and eventual destruction of the ballot papers after the counting. In Malaysia between 39 per cent and 51 per cent of the voters have in each election voted against the ruling party and this must serve as sufficient indication of the popular acceptance of the secrecy of the ballot.

The procedure observed at polling stations is strictly governed by election ordinances.⁴² Polling stations, usually in public buildings or schools, are established in each polling district. Outside the polling station is affixed, prior to the commencement of the poll, a notice showing the name and symbol of each candidate. No persons other than the polling station staff, the candidates, the election agent of the candidates, and one polling agent for each candidate are allowed into the polling station. As each voter applies for a ballot paper, his identity is established by checking his identity card, and his number, name, and description as stated in the electoral register are called out. In practice each candidate's polling agent marks off the name in his own copy of the electoral register. The number of the elector is written on the counterfoil of the ballot paper and the ballot paper is perforated and stamped or initialled by the presiding officer.

If a person claiming to be a particular elector named in the electoral register applies for a ballot paper after another person has been recorded as having voted in the name of that person, the applicant is made to take an oath of identity and vote on a 'tendered ballot paper'. The tendered ballot papers are of a different colour and a record of them is maintained. They are, however, not counted at the counting of votes after

polling. Their significance is only that they would be counted after adjudication by an election judge if an election petition arose. Unlike the problem faced in many other countries in establishing the identity of voters, in Malaysia the existence of an identity card system greatly facilitates polling. The tendered ballot papers are thus rarely utilized.

On the closing of the poll the presiding officer is required to make up and seal in separate packets the unused and spoilt ballot papers placed together, the marked copy of electoral rolls and counterfoils of ballot papers, and the tendered vote list. Candidates are invited to place their own seals as well. These are returned to the returning officer, who keeps them unopened for a period of six months and in the absence of any election petitions destroys them, also unopened, after giving notice of the place at which he is going to destroy them. As a matter of practice the candidates are invited to be present when these are destroyed. These measures are regarded as an important means of ensuring public confidence in the secrecy of the ballot, as it has often been suggested that recording the elector's number on the counterfoil of the ballot paper destroys the secrecy of the ballot and may influence the vote of those who fear governmental reprisal.

The counting itself is done in the presence of the candidates and their election and counting agents. The number of ballot papers from each polling station is counted to verify if the number of votes is correct, they are then mixed with those of the other polling districts, sorted for each candidate, and counted. A recount is allowed on request by the candidate or his agents if the number of votes for all candidates together with the rejected votes differs from the number of ballot papers found in the ballot boxes by one per cent or more, or if the number of votes cast for the leading candidate and the number of votes cast for the next leading candidate is two per cent or less of the total number of votes cast. The returning officer may, however, order a recount on his own discretion.

CONCLUSION

The system of elections utilized in Malaysia is structured wholly along the lines of the British electoral system of plurality voting in single member territorial constituencies. No steps were taken by the framers of the Malaysian system and the country's Constitution to allow for any guaranteed equitable representation of the various communities in Malaysia. The assumed inherent characteristic of the system introduced—namely that it would provide for a stable government by way of advantaging the larger parties—held sway. No mention is made in the relevant sections of the Constitution and the laws enacted as regards their implications for communal representation, and this omission appears to be based on the presumption that to accommodate communal representation would have the effect of perpetuating communal differences and would counter efforts towards building a united Malaysian society.

The key element in the administration of an equitable and free election in Malaysia is the existence of an independent Election Commission. It appears, however, that the hitherto largely independent Election Commission is coming under increasing pressure from the party in power which is able to utilize its power in Parliament to influence the Commission's actions. The manner in which the election deposits were increased for the 1974 election and the failure of the Commission to fix a polling date sufficiently after nomination day so as to allow for adequate time for the handling of postal votes are both indications of a possible yielding to governmental pressure. The Commission was again seriously compromised by the omission of several thousand names from the electoral register; the fact that the inquiry conducted into this was not made public only served further to arouse the fears of Malaysians.

Nevertheless the discussion in this chapter, which has been confined essentially to the formal and institutionalized aspects of the electoral system, indicates that, by-and-large, there is

an adequate system of ground rules on which to conduct a relatively fair and equitable election. However, no amount of statutory stipulations, both primary and derived, could by themselves ensure a fair and equitable election. It is on the formal aspects of the system that the informal aspects, like a tradition of fair-play by the administrators, candidates, voters, and the judiciary, interact to result in a just or unjust election.

1. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee appointed to examine the question of elections to the Federal Legislative Council*, 1954, p. 14.

2. Fan Yew Teng, DAP National Organizing Secretary, at the Great Economic Debate on 'The 1974 General Election: A Post-Mortem', organized by the University of Malaya Economics Society on 20 September 1974.

3. Tan Chee Khoon, Pekemas President, at the debate mentioned in the footnote above.

4. T. E. Smith, Report of the First Election of Members to the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya, 1955, p. 2.

5. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission*, 1957, Appendix II, Article 106(3), p. 160.

6. The establishment and functioning of the Election Commission are governed by articles 113–120 of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia.

7. Federation of Malaya Constitution, Article 113(1).

8. Discussion of this is included in the section on constituency delimitation in Peninsular Malaysia.

9. G. P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 1976, pp. 51–67 deals in detail with the developments mentioned here.

10. Personal interview with Tan Sri Ahmad Perang, Chairman of the Election Commission on 21 August 1975.

11. Federation of Malaya, Constitution Amendment Act, 1960, Section 14.

12. *Report of the Election Committee*, p. 12.

13. *ibid.*, p. 13.

14. Elections (Registration of Electors) Regulations, 1959, Reg. 3(1).

15. Personal interview with Tan Sri Ahmad Perang, Chairman of the Election Commission on 21 August 1975.
16. *ibid.*
17. *Straits Times*, 28 August 1974.
18. Reports in the *Straits Times*, the *Malay Mail*, and *The Star*, 24 August–10 September 1974.
19. Personal interview with David Loh Kee Peng on 19 August 1974.
20. Personal interview with Bernard Sta Maria on 20 August 1974.
21. *Straits Times*, 24 August 1974.
22. *ibid.*, 29 August 1974.
23. *ibid.*, 24 August 1974.
24. *ibid.*, 31 August 1974.
25. *1974 Elections Report*, p. 40.
26. *ibid.*
27. Federation of Malaya, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine the Question of Elections to the Federal Legislative Council*, 1954, p. 13.
28. *ibid.*
29. *ibid.*, p. 18.
30. *1974 Elections Report*, p. 28.
31. Elections Act, 1958, Clause 17.
32. *1974 Elections Report*, p. 28.
33. *The Star*, 30 July 1974 and *Malay Mail*, 1 August 1974.
34. *The Star*, 30 July 1974.
35. *The Star*, 4 August 1974.
36. *1974 Elections Report*, p. 28.
37. The Election (Conduct of Elections) Regulations, 1959, Reg. 7 (i).
38. The Election Offences Act, 1959 (No. 9 of 1954).
39. See chapter by Michael Ong in this volume.
40. R. S. Milne and K. J. Ratnam, 'Politics and Finance in Malaya', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. III, No. 3 (1965), pp. 182–98, is the only significant study of political finance in Peninsular Malaysia. Though based on the 1964 election it provides a valuable insight to political finance in Peninsular Malaysia for even the subsequent elections.
41. Malaysia, Election Commission, *Report on the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections 1969 of the States of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak*, 1972, p. 32.
42. The Election (Conduct of Election) Act 1959 (No. 9 of 1954), and The Polling Station, 1964.

The Results

HAROLD CROUCH

As expected, the election resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Barisan Nasional both at the federal and the state levels, elections being held in all states except Kelantan, Sabah, and Sarawak. But, as in previous elections, the government was much more successful in Malay than in non-Malay areas. While PAS, now in the opposition, was badly beaten in its contest with UMNO, the DAP expanded its representation, mainly at the expense of the MCA and Gerakan. The Barisan Nasional attracted support from all communities but the opposition made most of its gains among non-Malay voters. For this reason voices of concern were raised after the election about what seemed to be a renewed trend toward racial 'polarization'. But, in fact, in terms of voter support, the DAP was not very much stronger than PAS although it had three times as many representatives in parliament.

In the Federal election, the Barisan Nasional won 131 of the 154 seats, 4 less than in 1974. The loss was mainly in the Peninsula where PAS, which had been in the government in 1974, won 5 seats and the DAP raised its representation from 9 to 15. (The DAP also, for the first time, won a seat in East Malaysia, raising its total to 16 seats.) On the other hand, the Front improved on its 1974 performance in Sarawak where SNAP, which had done well as an opposition party in 1974, contested this time as a component of the Barisan Nasional. Overall the Barisan Nasional won 57.5 per cent of the valid

votes compared with 60.7 per cent in 1974 while the DAP won 19.2 per cent compared with 18.3 per cent, and PAS won 15.5 per cent. The fall in the Front's share of the vote was partly due to the withdrawal of PAS from the government but the statistics masked a more serious decline because in 1974 47 government candidates (including 15 in Tun Mustapha's Sabah) had won unopposed compared with only 9 in 1978. As a result the government's share of the total vote was less in 1974 than it would have been if these seats had been contested. Similarly, the 1974 figures exaggerate the support given to the DAP because its influence in the uncontested constituencies was insignificant; as a consequence the party's advance in 1978 was in fact more marked than it seemed.

The DAP's success in the parliamentary election was mainly at the expense of the MCA which lost 3 seats to the DAP although the DAP lost one of its seats, Kinta in Perak, to the MCA. The DAP won 2 from the Gerakan and one each from the MIC, the PPP and Berjaya. In the state elections the DAP won 25 seats compared with 23 seats in 1974. The strength of the DAP's support in the predominantly non-Malay urban areas was highlighted in Kuala Lumpur where it won 55 per cent of the votes in the four contested constituencies (although the Barisan Nasional candidate had been disqualified in one of them). The DAP's electoral success was all the more impressive bearing in mind the ban on rallies which affected it more than the other parties, and the disqualification of 7 of its parliamentary and 17 of its state candidates because of technical errors in their nomination papers. Nevertheless, the DAP leaders were disappointed by some aspects of the party's performance. Its hopes of taking over the Perak state government had been dashed before the election by the defection of several of its Malay candidates but it was not prepared for the loss of two of its seats, bringing it down from 11 to 9 in the 42-seat state assembly. In Penang, also, it won only 5 out of 27 state seats although it succeeded in 4 of the 9 parliamentary seats and had the satisfaction of seeing the Socialist

Democratic Party, set up by DAP dissidents, completely routed.

For PAS the election was a near disaster. Following its humiliation in the state election in Kelantan, PAS seemed to concede Kelantan to the government and instead concentrated its energies on Kedah where it believed it had a chance of forming the state government. However, its hopes were not fulfilled when it won only 7 of the 26 state seats, 4 less than in 1974 (although one almost certainly successful candidate had been disqualified on nomination day). In Trengganu, where PAS had once formed the government, the party failed to win a single seat. In the parliamentary election, PAS won 2 seats in Kelantan, 2 in Kedah, and, in a surprise result, one in Penang. Among its many casualties was its leader, Datuk Mohd Asri. Nevertheless, in terms of popular support, PAS was not a spent force, as was shown in Kelantan, where its share of the valid vote increased from 33.5 per cent in the March state election to 43.6 per cent in July, and in Kedah, where it won 39.6 per cent. Another hopeful sign for PAS was the internal crisis that hit its new rival, Berjasa, which, after refusing to join the Barisan Nasional, fielded several candidates as independents, all of whom lost.

Of the Barisan Nasional parties, only UMNO performed impressively. Of the 74 seats it contested, 69 were won, compared with 61 in 1974. (In addition, the former PAS deputy president, Haji Hassan Adli, retained his seat as a non-party candidate on the Barisan Nasional ticket.) The MCA, however, suffered a setback, winning only 17 of the 28 seats it contested compared with 19 in 1974. Several former MCA members stood against Gerakan candidates, especially in Penang, but the Gerakan retained its hold on the Penang state government despite the loss of several seats and won 4 out of 6 parliamentary seats compared with 5 in 1974. The MIC, too, lost one of its seats, winning only 3, while the PPP lost its sole seat. However, in Sabah and Sarawak Barisan Nasional candidates won overwhelming victories.

The detailed results are contained in the following tables

prepared by Lee Kam Hing, Michael Ong, and M. Kamlin. Statistics pertaining to the 1978 election are calculated from the results published in the *New Straits Times*. Data on the 1974 election are taken from the Election Commission's *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Rakyat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections 1974 of the states of Malaya and Sarawak*.

Appendix Tables

I. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS, 1978: NATIONAL, PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AND STATE

I.1 NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	153	131	1,996,307	57.5
UMNO	(74)	(69)		
MCA	(27)	(17)		
MIC	(4)	(3)		
Gerakan	(6)	(4)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-party	(1)	(1)		
Berjaya	(10) *	(9) *		
USNO	(7) *	(5)		
PBB	(8)	(8)		
SUPP	(7)	(6)		
SNAP	(9)	(9)		
DAP	53	16	664,463	19.2
PAS	89	5	537,253	15.5
Sapo	1	1	10,150	0.3
Others	93	1**	265,617	7.6
Total		154	3,473,790	100.0

*Includes officially endorsed 'independents' contesting the same seat.

**An independent.

The Barisan Nasional won 9 seats uncontested. The seats were won by UMNO (4), MCA (1), Berjaya (1), PBB (1), SUPP (1) and SNAP (1).

I.2 PENINSULAR MALAYSIA (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	113	94	1,732,839	57.1
UMNO	(74)	(69)*		
MCA	(27)	(17)		
MIC	(4)	(3)		
Gerakan	(6)	(4)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-party	(1)	(1)		
DAP	51	15	652,730	21.5
PAS	89	5	537,253	17.7
PSRM	4	0	22,031	0.7
SDP	3	0	13,788	0.5
Kita	1	0	350	0.0
Pekemas	6	0	22,871	0.8
Workers' Party	1	0	1,731	0.1
Independents	18	0	52,024	1.7
Total		114	3,035,617	100.0

*4 uncontested.

I.3 FEDERAL TERRITORY (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	4	2	46,147	25.1
UMNO	(1)	(1)*		
MCA	(1)	(0)		
MIC	(1)	(0)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	4	3	101,306	55.0
PAS	2	0	12,006	6.5
Pekemas	2	0	17,988	9.7
Workers' Party	1	0	1,731	0.9
Independents	3	0	5,072	2.7
Total		5	184,250	100.0

*Uncontested.

1.4 JOHOR (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	16	15	330,633	77.3
UMNO	(11)	(11)*		
MCA	(5)	(4)		
DAP	6	1	64,385	7.6
PAS	12	0	32,512	15.1
Total		16	427,530	100.0

*1 uncontested.

1.5 KEDAH (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	13	11	197,865	57.1
UMNO	(11)	(9)		
MCA	(2)	(2)		
DAP	1	0	2,828	0.8
PAS	13	2	137,400	39.6
Independents	5	0	8,410	2.4
Total		13	346,503	100.0

1.6 KELANTAN (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	12	10	143,161	56.4
UMNO	(12)	(10)		
PAS	12	2	110,620	43.6
Total		12	253,781	100.0

1.7 MALACCA (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	4	3	58,984	55.8
UMNO	(2)	(2)		
MCA	(2)	(1)*		
DAP	2	1	34,576	32.7
PAS	2	0	12,067	11.4
Total		4	105,627	100.0

*Uncontested

1.8 NEGERI SEMBILAN (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	6	5	81,671	57.6
UMNO	(3)	(3)*		
MCA	(2)	(1)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	4	1	41,736	29.4
PAS	4	0	11,217	7.9
Independents	1	0	7,151	5.1
Total		6	141,775	100.0

*1 uncontested.

1.9 PAHANG (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	8	8	123,593	66.8
UMNO	(6)	(6)		
MCA	(2)	(2)		
DAP	3	0	16,354	8.8
PAS	7	0	34,156	18.5
PSRM	1	0	6,441	3.5
Independents	2	0	4,384	2.4
Total		8	184,928	100.0

I.10 PERAK (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	21	17	294,063	53.5
UMNO	(10)	(10)		
MCA	(6)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(2)	(2)		
PPP	(1)	(0)		
Non-Party	(1)	(1)		
DAP	19	4	200,577	36.5
PAS	14	0	52,655	9.6
Pekemas	1	0	342	0.1
Independents	1	0	1,564	0.3
Total		21	549,201	100.0

I.11 PERLIS (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	2	2	30,762	60.8
UMNO	(2)	(2)		
PAS	2	0	16,973	33.5
Independent	1	0	2,906	5.7
Total		2	50,641	100.0

I.12 PENANG (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	9	4	138,173	47.1
UMNO	(3)	(2)		
MCA	(3)	(1)		
Gerakan	(3)	(1)		
DAP	5	4	79,918	27.3
PAS	6	1	31,667	10.8
SDP	3	0	13,788	4.7
Kita	1	0	350	0.1
PSRM	1	0	10,044	3.4
Independent	4	0	19,280	6.6
Total		9	293,220	100.0

I.13 SELANGOR (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	11	10	212,065	57.6
UMNO	(6)	(6)		
MCA	(4)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	7	1	111,050	30.2
PAS	8	0	36,615	9.9
Pekemas	3	0	4,541	1.2
PSRM	1	0	902	0.2
Independents	1	0	3,257	0.9
Total		11	368,430	100.0

I.14 TRENGGANU (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	7	7	75,722	58.4
UMNO	(7)	(7)*		
PAS	7	0	49,366	38.1
PSRM	1	0	4,644	3.5
Total		7	129,732	100.0

*1 uncontested.

I.15 SABAH (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	16	14	101,929	56.1
Berjasa	(9)	(8)*		
USNO	(6)	(5)		
'Independents'	(2)**	(1)		
DAP	2	1	11,733	6.5
Pekemas	1	0	921	0.5
Sedar	4	0	4,491	2.5
SCA	2	0	1,305	0.7
Pusaka	3	0	5,594	3.1
Independents	13	1***	55,814	30.7
Total		16	181,784	100.0

*1 uncontested.

**In one seat both Berjasa and USNO nominated formally 'Independent' candidates against each other. The Berjasa supported candidate won.

***The successful independent was in fact supported unofficially by Berjasa against the Barisan Nasional's USNO candidate.

I.16 SARAWAK (Parliament)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	24	23	161,539	63.0
PBB	(8)	(8)*		
SUPP	(7)	(6)*		
SNAP	(9)	(9)*		
PAJAR	12	0	35,009	13.7
Peace	3	0	962	0.4
Umat	3	0	3,898	1.5
Sapo	1	1	10,150	4.0
Independents	17	0	44,831	17.5
Total		24	256,389	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II. STATE ELECTIONS RESULTS, 1978

II.1 JOHOR (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	32	31	274,723	73.7
UMNO	(20)	(20)*		
MCA	(11)	(10)**		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	11	1	64,604	17.3
PAS	23	0	25,915	6.9
Independents	4	0	7,435	2.0
Total		32	372,677	100.0

*3 uncontested.

**2 uncontested.

II.2 KEDAH (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	26	19	180,199	55.1
UMNO	(21)	(14)		
MCA	(3)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	2	0	5,597	1.7
PAS	25	7	128,729	39.4
Kita	2	0	735	0.2
PSRM	1	0	567	0.2
SDP	1	0	54	0.0
Independents	6	0	10,940	3.3
Total		26	326,821	100.0

II.3 MALACCA (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	20	16	67,875	54.4
UMNO	(13)	(13)*		
MCA	(6)	(3)		
MIC	(1)	(0)		
DAP	14	4	39,057	31.3
PAS	16	0	16,128	12.9
Independents	1	0	1,679	1.3
Total		20	124,739	100.0

*2 uncontested.

II.4 NEGERI SEMBILAN (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	24	21	94,416	59.3
UMNO	(15)	(15)*		
MCA	(8)	(5)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	16	3	45,983	28.8
PAS	13	0	13,114	8.2
Kita	1	0	118	0.1
Independents	6	0	5,639	3.5
Total		24	159,270	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.5 PAHANG (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	32	32	109,921	61.9
UMNO	(24)	(24)*		
MCA	(7)	(7)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
DAP	15	0	22,943	12.9
PAS	26	0	27,490	15.5
PSRM	7	0	9,009	5.1
Berjasa	3	0	844	0.5
Independents	13	0	7,200	4.1
Total		32	177,413	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.6 PENANG (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	26	20	135,475	46.4
UMNO	(10)	(9)		
MCA	(5)	(2)		
MIC	(1)	(1)		
Gerakan	(10)*	(8)		
DAP	16	5	77,484	26.6
PAS	15	1	28,768	9.8
PSRM	3	0	9,508	3.2
SDP	9	0	10,259	3.5
Kita	4	0	1,138	0.4
MCA Independents	5	0	8,622	2.9
Independents	10	1	20,433	7.0
Total		27	291,687	100.0

*The nomination of one Gerakan candidate was rejected on technical grounds but later accepted following an appeal. A new election was held which was won again by the DAP candidate.

II.7 PERAK (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	42	32	269,328	50.5
UMNO	(24)	(23)*		
MCA	(8)	(5)		
MIC	(2)	(1)		
Gerakan	(4)	(2)		
PPP	(4)	(1)		
DAP	41	9	195,060	36.6
PAS	32	1	62,833	11.8
United				
People's Party	4	0	1,023	0.2
Kita	2	0	381	0.1
Independents	6	0	4,750	0.9
Total		42	533,375	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.8 PERLIS (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	12	12	25,151	57.7
UMNO	(10)	(10)*		
MCA	(2)	(2)*		
PAS	8	0	12,735	29.2
Independents	4	0	5,676	13.1
Total		12	43,562	100.0

*1 uncontested.

II.9 SELANGOR (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	31	28	195,583	61.1
UMNO	(20)	(19)*		
MCA	(7)	(5)*		
MIC	(3)	(3)		
Gerakan	(1)	(1)		
DAP	11	3	51,024	16.0
PAS	22	0	46,554	14.5
Pekemas	10	0	11,355	3.5
PSRM	1	0	550	0.2
Workers' Party	1	0	132	0.1
Independents	12	1	14,743	4.6
Uncontested		1**		
Total		33	319,941	100.0

*1 uncontested.

**The nomination papers of all candidates for the Kampong Jawa seat were rejected. In a new election held later the seat was won by the Barisan Nasional (UMNO).

II.10 TRENGGANU (State)

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	28	28	77,045	55.8
UMNO	(27)	(27)*		
MCA	(1)	(1)		
PAS	28	0	50,723	36.7
PSRM	12	0	9,894	7.2
Independent	1	0	344	0.2
Total		28	138,006	100.0

*2 uncontested.

State elections in July 1978 were not held in Kelantan, Sabah, or Sarawak.

III. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS, 1974
 III.1 NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

<i>Parties</i>	<i>Seats Contested</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Votes Obtained</i>	<i>% of Valid Votes</i>
Barisan Nasional	154	135*	1,287,463	60.7
UMNO	(61)	(61)		
MCA	(23)	(19)		
MIC	(4)	(4)		
Gerakan	(8)	(5)		
PPP	(4)	(1)		
PAS	(14)	(14)		
USNO	(13)	(13)		
SCA	(3)	(3)		
PBB	(16)	(9)		
SUPP	(8)	(6)		
DAP	46	9	387,863	18.3
Pekemas	36	1	108,709	5.1
SNAP	24	9	117,503	5.5
Others	66	0	221,389	10.4
Total		154	2,119,927	100.0

*47 uncontested.

III.2 PARLIAMENTARY SEATS WON AND PERCENTAGE OF VALID VOTES BY STATES

State	BN		DAP		Pekemas		PSRM		SNAP	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
Perlis	2	67.0	0	0	0	0	0	6.5	0	0
Kedah	13	74.5	0	8.6	0	0	0	3.7	0	0
Kelantan	12	74.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trengganu	7	64.5	0	0	0	0	0	30.7	0	0
Penang	9	56.0	0	24.3	0	13.2	0	5.9	0	0
Perak	17	52.2	4	36.2	0	4.0	0	0	0	0
Pahang	8	68.2	0	13.1	0	0	0	15.7	0	0
Selangor	10	61.8	1	19.0	0	12.8	0	0	0	0
Federal Territory	2	44.0	2	37.4	1	18.0	0	0	0	0
Negeri Sembilan	5	61.7	1	31.8	0	1.1	0	1.7	0	0
Malacca	3	62.5	1	15.5	0	11.3	0	9.0	0	0
Johor	16	71.6	0	20.6	0	0	0	2.9	0	0
Sabah	16	60.8	0	0	0	39.2	0	0	0	0
Sarawak	5	55.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	42.7
Malaysia	135	60.7	9	18.3	1	5.1	0	4.0	9	5.5

The Barisan Nasional won 47 seats uncontested. They were in Kedah (8), Kelantan (4), Trengganu (1), Penang (1), Perak (3),

Pahang (3), Selangor (2), Negeri Sembilan (2), Johor (8), and Sabah (15).

IV. STATE ELECTIONS, 1974
SEATS WON AND PERCENTAGE OF VALID VOTES BY STATES

State	BN		DAP		Pekemas		PSRM		SNAP	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
Perlis	12	66.1	0	0	0	0	0	16.8	0	0
Kedah	24	72.4	1	4.0	0	0	0	6.6	0	0
Kelantan	36	73.9	0	0	0	0	0	2.6	0	0
Trengganu	27	63.8	0	0	0	0	0	28.4	0	0
Penang	23	50.4	2	23.6	1	12.9	0	6.4	0	0
Perak	31	52.9	11	35.6	0	2.9	0	0	0	0
Pahang	32	65.6	0	6.7	0	0.6	0	13.8	0	0
Selangor	30	58.5	1	16.2	0	10.5	0	0.7	0	0
Negeri Sembilan	21	60.8	3	26.2	0	0.5	0	2.9	0	0
Malacca	16	59.1	4	18.6	0	10.5	0	9.8	0	0
Johor	31	70.4	1	21.7	0	1.6	0	2.3	0	0
Sabah	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sarawak	30	55.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	42.7

The Barisan Nasional won seats uncontested in Perlis (1), Kedah (8), Kelantan (1), Trengganu (1), Penang (2), Perak (3), Pahang

(6), Selangor (2), Negeri Sembilan (3), Malacca (2), and Johor (15).

V. PERCENTAGE OF SPOILT VOTES IN
NATIONAL AND STATE ELECTIONS, 1978

	<i>State Election</i>	<i>Parliamentary Election</i>
Perlis	5.5	4.2
Kedah	4.5	2.9
Kelantan	—	1.3
Trengganu	5.7	4.7
Penang	4.1	3.4
Perak	4.1	3.5
Pahang	5.7	4.8
Selangor	7.0	3.8
Negeri Sembilan	4.9	4.6
Melaka	3.6	3.9
Johor	5.4	4.1
Sabah	—	3.1
Sarawak	—	3.5
Federal Territory	—	0.9
National		3.4

Political Cartoons*



(1) A Barisan Nasional election cartoon

Translation: PAS: 'If we win we can form a coalition government'

DAP: 'Grr. . . If we won grr. . . I will eat him with Kue tieu'

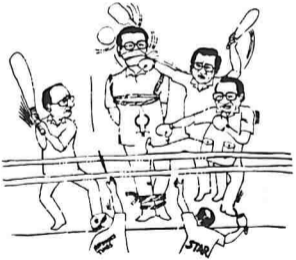
*Samples used during the 1978 Election.



(2) A Barisan Nasional election cartoon

Translation: Where are you going Uncle Asri. . . . To Kedah to work in the paddy fields?

DEMOKRASI?



DEMOCRACY?



(4) A DAP election cartoon



(5) A DAP election cartoon

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