

# **Malaysia** **Quest for a** **Politics of** **Consensus**

**Kiran Kapur Datar**



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## PREFACE

The uniqueness and basic problem of Malaysia is that since its inception as an independent nation in 1957, it has struggled to arrive at a political and cultural consensus as a viable independent nation (consensus is used in the sense of an agreement on fundamentals). Its historical and political experience was not one of a unified political structure and hence there was no common political base to build upon. British influence and control had spread unevenly over the Malay states. With the opening up of tin mines and rubber estates in the nineteenth century there was large-scale migration of Chinese and Indian labour. Initially, they came to work, but as time passed many of them stayed leading to a situation where the immigrant non-Malays became as numerous as the Malays. It created a "plural society" par excellence, defined as one in which different ethnic groups lived side by side but separate within the same political unit. By the mid-twentieth century a society developed in Malaya in which the migrant communities lived with their own people, spoke their own language, worshipped their own Gods, kept their links with their mother country, preserved their own culture and expressed themselves in newspapers written in the vernacular. They were engaged in different occupations — the Malays were predominantly rural, the Indians worked on the estates while the Chinese worked in mining and construction industries, and retail and wholesale business enterprises. Traditionally, there were few levels of contact bringing the three ethnic groups together. The indigenous community, the Malays, felt that their interests were protected by the colonial power, while the Chinese and Indians were politically apathetic towards a country in which they felt they did not have a political stake.

Till the mid-twentieth century then, no overall sense of a national identity emerged. Distinct genetic and physical traits among the Malays, Chinese and Indians were reinforced by deep cleavages of cultural pluralism and distinct cultural values. These emphasized and reinforced ethnic identification and stood as barriers for the achievement of a

Malaysian identity. With independence, the immediate need was for the formulation and articulation of an identity acceptable to all. It was necessary to arrive at a consensus as to what constituted the Malayan identity and its acceptable symbols. In a delicate situation where the migrant Chinese and Indians were almost equal in number to the "indigenous" Malays, consensus on basic issues, institutions, norms and religion was sought to be arrived at as a process of compromises and adjustment.

Many "new" states faced with the primordial ties of race, language and religion hoped that these would be broken by the magic formula of modernization, urbanization, increased literacy and education, a modern economy and a full and free participation in the political process. In recent years however, there has been a sharp increase in communally inspired conflicts — in India the vocal demand for linguistic states, Northern Ireland beset with Protestant-Catholic problems, a rebellious Muslim minority in the Philippines, tension in Canada between the English-speaking and the French-speaking Canadians, Pakistan split by a civil war between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, Lebanon becoming a battleground between Muslims and Christians and Iran beset by problems of religious resurgence. Amongst Malaysia's neighbours as well there has been an increasing awareness of the nature of social pluralism.

This study seeks to present the developments in Malaysia, from 1969 to 1981, within a historical, chronological and analytical framework. In Malaysia, the persistence of ethnic pulls and the deep cleavages between the Malays, Chinese and Indians led to the political mobilization of each ethnic group — the majority of the Malays supported the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Chinese supported the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Indians the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The leaders of the UMNO, MCA and MIC came together to form the *Alliance* and to work out by consensus the sensitive and vital issues affecting the development of Malaya. The result was a process of bargaining and compromise which led to the establishment of the pre-eminent position of the Malays and the acceptance of citizenship rights for the non-Malays. Basic conflicts were resolved within the Alliance by compromise and consensus. In 1969 however, traumatic racial riots which followed the fourth general elections held in May 1969, in Malaysia, seemed to indicate that the consensus which had worked so successfully earlier was breaking down.

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KIRAN KAPUR DATAR

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Association of South East Asian Nations	ASEAN
Barisan Nasional (National Front)	Barisan; NF
Barisan Ra'ayat Jati Sarawak	BARJASA
Barisan Jumaah Islamiah Malaysia Bersatu	BERJASA
Borsatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah	BERJAYA
Democratic Action Party	DAP
Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia	Gerakan
Kesatuan Insaf Tanah Air	KITA
Malayan Communist Party	MCP
Malaysian Chinese Association	MCA
Malaysian Indian Congress	MIC
National Consultative Council	NCC
National Operations Council	NOC
Parti Islam Se-Tanah Melayu	PAS
Parti Socialis Rakyat Malaysia	Rakyat; PR
Party Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia	Pekemas
People's Action Party	PAP
People's Progressive Party	PPP
Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu	PBB
Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Malaysia	PKPM
(The National Union of Malaysian Students)	
People's Republic of China	PRC
Sarawak United People's Party	SUPP
Sarawak National Party	SNAP
Sarawak Chinese Association	SCA
Sarawak People's Organisation	SAPO
Socialist Front	SF
United Malays National Organisation	UMNO
United Democratic Party	UDP
United Pasok Kadazan Organisation	UPKO
United Sabah National Organisation	USNO

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*Dedicated to my parents*  
*AUTAR and SUDERSHAN KAPUR*

## Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MALAY WORLD

### Pre-Independence Malaya

The pre-colonial Malay world had an identity which was racial and religious rather than political. Racially, the Malays belong to what is commonly known as the Indonesian or the proto-Malay group of people. They are descendants of migrants from Indo-China or Yunnan. In the sixteenth century there was substantial immigration into Negri Sembilan, of settlers from Menangkabau, a kingdom in the Padang Highlands of Sumatra noted for its matrilineal social system.<sup>1</sup> This has formed the core of what is accepted as the Malay indigenous population.<sup>2</sup> The coming of Islam in the fifteenth century and its spread through the Malay world added to the racial identity, a sense of religious identity as well. There was no overall sense of political identity but there was a common political culture. Until the fifteenth century Malaya<sup>3</sup> had formed part of larger political units centred elsewhere in the Indonesia Archipelago, or on the mainland. There had been outposts in northern Malaya, of Hindu kingdoms, centred in Annam in Indo-China, and the Coromandel Coast of India. In the seventh century, the Malay peninsula fell within the Buddhist kingdom of Sri Vijaya, which was overwhelmed by the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit in the fifteenth century. In A.D. 1400, a Malay prince from Palembang established the Malacca sultanate (A.D. 1400-1511),<sup>4</sup> which was to transmit to other Malay kingdoms a pattern of political organization, political culture and a basic value orientation.<sup>5</sup> The apex of the system was the ruler, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, embodying in his person the unity of the state. As the religious head, he further served as a unifying force. The ruler stood at the head of a hierarchical order assisted by his Mentri (Secretary of State), the Bendahara (Chief Minister), the Temenggong (Commander of Troops and Police), the Penghulu Bendahara (Treasurer) and the Shahbandar (Harbour Master and Collector

of Customs). The system was supported by Muslim religious functionaries.<sup>6</sup> The capture of Malacca by the Portuguese in A.D. 1511 exposed the Malay world to new influences. The immediate result was that the centre of Malay power shifted away from Malacca, and Sultanates came to be established at Johore, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Perak, maintaining the political traditions of the Malacca Sultanate. Before the coming of the British then, the Malay world did have an identity which though not geographic, was racial, religious and cultural.

The British came to exercise varying degrees of control over the Malay states, from the latter part of the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> This provided a sense of geographic identity to the Malay states. Penang was occupied by Francis Light on behalf of the East India Company in 1786. Singapore came into possession of the East India Company when Stamford Raffles established a settlement there in 1819 while Malacca was ceded by the Dutch in 1824. These comprised the Straits Settlement as part of British India till 1867 when they were transferred to the Colonial Office and constituted as a Crown Colony. Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang came under British protection between 1874-88 and were united to form the Federated Malay states in 1895. The unfederated Malay state consisted of Trengganu, Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan (these four states were transferred from Siamese to British suzerainty in 1909). Johore came under British protection in 1885 but received a British administrative officer, called a General Adviser, only in 1914. The British exercised varying degrees of control over the Malay states. In the Straits Settlement, Government was carried on through a Governor, an Executive Council and a Legislative Council. In the Unfederated Malay states, British authority rested upon agreements concluded with the Rulers at various stages, from 1874 onwards. These agreements preserved the fiction of the sovereignty of the Ruler, and enjoined him to accept the advice of a British officer on all matters of general administration in his state, except those relating to Malay religion and custom. At the head of the Federated states was the Resident-General to whom Residents of the states were subordinated. This inaugurated the system of centralized government in the Federated Malay states which lasted in varying forms till 1932.<sup>8</sup>

The British advance into Malaya strengthened, rather than lessened, the integrative factor of religion. The British followed a policy of non-intervention in matters pertaining to Malay religion and customs, support to the Sultans and the preservation and re-enforcement of the traditional basis of authority. British policy was evidenced in the

address of Sir Hugh Clifford (High Commissioner in Malaya) to the Federal Council in 1927:

These states were, when the British Government was invited by their Rulers and Chiefs to set their troubled houses in order, Muhammadan monarchies, such as they are today, and such they must continue to be. No mandate has ever been extended to us by Rajas, Chiefs or people to vary the system of government which has existed in these territories from time immemorial.<sup>9</sup>

The special position of the Malay ruling class was maintained as a cohesive force for the Malay community,<sup>10</sup> which the British administration in Malaya accepted as the indigenous population. One of the old Malaya hands, Sir Frank Swettenham (Governor of the Straits Colony and High Commissioner of the Federated Malay states) stated categorically that the Malays "are the people of the country" for whose benefit the British went to Malaya.<sup>11</sup> Another experienced British administrator, Victor Purcell makes the point that Malays were treated as privileged children while the non-Malays were not encouraged to regard themselves as citizens of Malaya.<sup>12</sup> The British found it convenient to use the established Malay leadership in local administration. A Malayan administrative service was formed as a junior partner of the Malayan Civil Service, founded in 1906. A conscious effort was made to create an administrative class from the traditional elite, which would work with the British. Through the early part of the twentieth century, British policy laid the foundation of the "bumiputra" policy (that is, the acceptance and recognition of the Malays as the sons of the soil), and accorded the Malays a pre-eminent position in government, and later on, in political participation as well.

### **The Formation of the Plural Society in Malaya**

In the nineteenth century, the exploitation of the rich natural resources of Malaya (of rubber, tin and palm oil) led to the need for labour. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century large numbers of Chinese started coming into Malaya lured by the prospects of plentiful employment on the estates and mines. Immigration, in its early stages, was unrestricted and not subject to controls. In the case of the Indian immigrants the British followed a conscious policy of encouraging Indian labour in order to offset the Chinese. Sir Frederick Weld, the Straits Settlement Governor, in a despatch to the Secretary of State, in



1887 stated:

I am also conscious for political reasons that the great preponderance of the Chinese over any other race in these settlements and to a less marked degree in some of the native states under one administration should be counter-balanced as much as possible by the influx of Indians and other nationalities.<sup>13</sup>

The Chinese numbered 391,810 in Malaya and Singapore in 1891; in 1911 their number had risen to 874,200 and by 1947 they were 2,614,667 in number.<sup>14</sup> To offset this, the government of the Federated Malay states and the Straits Settlements established in 1907 an Indian Immigration Fund, from which Indian labourers were assisted to come to Malaya. Indian agents known as *Kanganies* were sent under government licences to India to recruit Indian labour. The preponderant majority of the Indian immigrants were Tamilians.<sup>15</sup> In 1947 the total number of Indians in Malaya was 530,638.<sup>16</sup> Most of these worked on the estates and mines, isolated in "coolie lines."

In 1957, when Malaya became independent, the Malays formed 40.8 per cent of the population, the Chinese 27.2 per cent and the Indians 11.3 per cent.<sup>17</sup> However, the Malays, Chinese and Indians remained distinct ethnic groups.<sup>18</sup> Racially they were different; they practised different religions, the Malays are Muslims, the Indians are Hindu, while the Chinese are predominantly Buddhist; they spoke in different languages — Bahasa Melayu, different dialects of Chinese, Tamil, Hindi and Punjabi. Their habits, customs and cultural norms were distinct and these emphasized and reinforced ethnic identification.<sup>19</sup> There were few levels of contact between them, beyond the superficial. Colonial policies and distinct occupational structures strengthened ethnic identities. The British "protected" the Malays, giving them a pre-eminent position in government and administrative employment. The Indians, primarily, worked on the estates, while the Chinese were allowed a free hand to set up business. In education, there was no over-all national system catering to Malays, Chinese and Indians. With regard to the Malays, the British policy was to isolate the Malays in their rural base. *The Winstedt Report on Vernacular Education* laid the foundation of this policy.<sup>20</sup> It emphasized a strong manual and agricultural base for education for the Malays, with a small privileged group going in for higher education in English.<sup>21</sup> Chinese schools were patterned on schools in China, run by China-born and educated teachers.

Kuo-yu (Mandarin) was generally the medium of instruction.<sup>22</sup> The Indians were mostly educated in estate schools run by their employers. A pattern of education with English as the medium of instruction was available in the urban areas, but patronized by only the urban non-Malays. Educational patterns therefore, served to isolate rather than to unify the ethnic groups.<sup>23</sup>

Before World War II, associations and groups formed in Malaya, further isolated the ethnic groups. Malay associations such as Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua were formed on the issue of Islamic reform and modernism. The Indians came together in associations such as Sanathan Dharma Sabha, Dravida Sangam, Young Men's Indian Association and the Indian Coastal Association.<sup>24</sup> The Chinese organized themselves on the basis of secret societies or associations of employers and workers. They were organized generally on the basis of associations of surnames, territory and dialect.<sup>25</sup> The growth of an effective trade union movement organized on class instead of on racial lines was weakened because in the immediate post-war years, several unions came to be linked with the Malayan Communist Party. This led to the banning of the Pan Malayan Federation of trade unions, the Trengganu General Labour Union, and the State Federation of trade unions.<sup>26</sup> Stringent regulations were imposed to ensure that trade unions would be free from political control. Radical Chinese leftist support was therefore drawn away from the unions which came to be dominated by Indians. In 1956 Indians formed 62 per cent, the Chinese 16 per cent and Malaya 21 per cent of the trade union membership in Malaya.<sup>27</sup>

The pattern of settlement of the immigrant population further separated the Malays and non-Malays. The non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, settled primarily, in the urban areas of West Malaya in the West Coast states of Johore, Malacca, Negri Sembilan, Penang, Perak and Selangor. The Malays, predominantly engaged in agricultural activities were concentrated in the east coast states of Perlis, Pahang, Kelantan and Trengganu (see Table I). Ethnic differences between the Malays, Chinese and Indians were therefore re-inforced by differing patterns of residence, occupations, language, religion and association. In 1957 when Malaya achieved independence, it had become a plural society "par excellence"<sup>28</sup> — the indigenous people, the Malays constituted only about half of the total population of Malaya (49.8 per cent), the rest being non-Malays.

The character of the plural society in Malaya, and the vast numbers of the immigrants that had come to reside in Malaya, had a great

Table 1  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY COMMUNITY  
 AND STATE: PENINSULAR MALAYSIA 1911-1970**

State	Malays		Chinese		Indians	
	1957	1970	1957	1970	1957	1970
Johore	48.0	53.4	42.4	39.4	8.0	6.7
Kedah	67.8	70.6	20.5	19.3	9.8	8.5
Kelantan	91.6	92.4	5.7	5.7	1.3	0.9
Malacca	49.1	51.8	41.5	39.6	8.4	7.9
Negri Sembilan	41.5	45.3	41.2	38.1	16.1	16.2
Pahang	57.2	61.2	34.6	31.3	7.6	7.3
Penang	28.8	30.6	57.2	56.3	12.4	11.6
Perak	39.7	43.0	44.1	42.4	15.3	14.3
Perlis	78.4	79.1	17.4	16.4	1.8	2.0
Selangor	28.8	34.5	48.2	46.4	21.4	18.3
Trengganu	92.1	93.7	6.5	5.5	1.1	0.7
Peninsular Malaysia	49.8	53.1	37.2	35.5	11.7	10.6

*Source:* R. Chander, ed., *Population Census of Malaysia, 1970*, Kuala Lumpur, Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, April 1977, vol. 1, p. 272.

influence on the slow growth of a movement in Malaya working towards independence. The early Chinese and Indian immigrants did not regard Malaya as their homeland, and had no sense of identification with the Malays. The Malays, afraid of the economic power of the non-Malays, were apprehensive that independence might strengthen and solidify the power of the non-Malays and hence their early political activity was concentrated on defining the Malay position and identity in the first half of the twentieth century. Efforts were made to re-assert and re-emphasize the broader Malay/Indonesian identity and relationship. In the 1920s Malay and Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University at Cairo formed an association called Djam'ah al-Chariah al-Talabijja al-Azhariah al-Djawiah (The Welfare Association of Jawa Students). They produced a magazine *Seruan Azhar* (call of Azhar) the first issue cover of which had a drawing of the globe with South-east Asia in the centre and territories of Dutch Indonesia and British Malaya shaded in black. Beside this was written, "The United World of our beloved people."<sup>29</sup> This idea of a united cultural world of the Peninsular Malays and the Indonesians was further developed by Malay radicals such as Ibrahim Ya'acob, Hassan Manan and Ibrahim Rashid who joined Sukarno's political party. In 1938 the *Kosatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM) was formed

under the leadership of Ibrahim Ya'acob emphasizing the idea of Indonesia Raya. Ahmed Boestamam<sup>30</sup> and the Angkatan Pemuda Insaaf (Malay Nationalist Youth Corps) patterned their flags and uniforms on the Indonesian model. Several prominent Indonesian leaders also voiced the idea of a Greater Indonesia. Sukarno in an address on 11 July 1945, called for the inclusion of Malaya within the territory of Indonesia on the grounds that Malaya constituted part of the unity of the Indonesian Archipelago. Mohammed Yamin, another proponent of the "Greater Indonesia" idea spoke of the Indonesian Fatherland (Tumpah Darah Indonesia), the foundations of which were determined by the fourteenth century state of Majapahit which had included Sumatra, Java, Madura, Borneo, Celebes, Moluccas, Peninsular Malaya, Timor and Papua.<sup>31</sup>

Dr Burhanuddin Al Helmy, one of the earliest members of the KMM, in his booklet *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (The Philosophical Basis of Malay Nationalism) published in 1950, quoting the examples of the kingdoms of Sri Vijaya and Malacca Sultanate asked for a re-unification of the Malay world.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis and assertion of a pan-Malay identity was sharpened by the real fear many Malays felt at the possibility of being swamped by the non-Malays. It was an expression of their fears and anxiety at being dispossessed in their own land.

The first Malay association with political aims was formed by a group of young English educated Malays seeking representation for the Malays in the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. In 1926, the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS) or Singapore Malay Union was formed. In the Peninsular states, there was no parallel growth of similar institutions. This can be explained by the British policy of protecting the prestige of the sultans and Malay rights so that the traditional Malay elite felt their interests were secured by the colonial power.<sup>33</sup> The traditional ruling class had a vested interest in maintaining the British presence, while the British encouraged the newly emerging Western educated Malays to form associations and groups with the belief that they would be more interested in preserving the status quo in the face of the growing economic power of the Chinese. Even after World War II, Malay leaders such as Dato Onn bin Jaafar (a district officer at Batu Pahat and later founder of the United Malays National Organisation—UMNO)<sup>34</sup> and Tunku Abdul Rahman first Prime Minister of Malaya) had serious reservations about seeking independence.<sup>35</sup> As late as 1943, when anti-colonial struggles in neighbouring countries had acquired distinct characteristics, an observer remarked about Malaya:

... Malay nationalism is not strong enough to withstand much opposition. Its leaders are no heroes. Their hope is to regain a sense of national unity and self-respect. They do not hope to become a free, independent nation, nor do Malays hope to become the leading communal people of the land.<sup>36</sup>

This observation reflected the fear of the Malays that with the withdrawal of the British, their position with respect to the Chinese would deteriorate.

### **The Japanese Occupation and Its Effects on Racial Relations**

The Japanese occupation of Malaya had a catalytic effect on the growth of a definite political consciousness. It also highlighted the differing aspirations, needs and roles of the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The Japanese tried to stimulate anti-British sentiments among the Malays and Indians, and played on the fears that the Malays had about the Chinese. Some Malay groups such as the KMM welcomed the Japanese and co-operated with them in the hope of Malayan independence. The Indians were encouraged to form the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army to oust the British. With respect to the Chinese, however, the policy was very different and evoked a different response. The Chinese considered the Japanese the real aggressors, because of their experience with them outside Malaya. Japanese aggression in China had aroused the hostility of the Malayan Chinese as far back as 1935 when the Communists in China had mounted an anti-Japanese campaign. The Sino-Japanese war of 1937 created anti-Japanese feeling among the Chinese in Malaya. During the Japanese occupation of Malaya (1942-45), the Chinese were singled out for retributive action. Evidence given at the war crimes trials in 1947 led to the estimate that about 5,000 Chinese had perished during the occupation.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese were financially squeezed – leading Chinese in Malaya were asked to gift large sums of money to the Japanese cause. The Japanese allowed the vernacular Malay and Indian schools to continue but no Chinese schools were permitted.<sup>38</sup> This explains why the basic and major thrust against the Japanese was led by the Chinese left, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP, founded in 1930) which organized the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and co-operated with the British in fighting the Japanese. During the campaigns of 1942, it was practically the only resistance group fighting the Japanese and contemporary accounts bear witness to their gallant

defence and the many difficulties faced by them.<sup>39</sup> However there was resentment among the Chinese at Malay collaboration with the Japanese, and some efforts were made to wreak vengeance which led to several Malay-Chinese clashes in 1945. In November 1945 Chinese settled at Padang Lebar in Negri Sembilan were attacked by a Malay band. An encounter at Batu Kikir cost six Chinese and some Malay lives. At Batu Pahat in Johore, some Malays killed Chinese and burned their property. In December 1945, about a hundred Chinese descended on a kampong in Perak killing some Malays.<sup>40</sup> The bitterness of this period lived long in the memories of the Malays and Chinese in Malaya.

The period of the Japanese Occupation was a very important stage in the future development of the unique nature of the Malayan political system. The presence of alien forces could have united the Malays, Chinese and Indians but instead it pulled them further apart. The racial clashes created resentment on both sides. The Malays viewed with growing concern the efforts of the MPAJA to take over power, which would dispossess them. On 25 April 1944, the Malay students society in Great Britain submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

We fear that the fear of the Malays being lost in their own country amongst alien immigrants of different races, creeds and cultural backgrounds is quite legitimate. If the fear is allowed to develop into desperation, it will inevitably lead to future troubles.<sup>41</sup>

The Chinese on the other hand were resentful at the treatment meted out to them during and after the war. Their bitterness turned many of them towards non-constitutional methods and towards insurgency which continues to be a problem in Malaysia even today. The years 1946-48 were years of strikes, lawlessness and terrorist activity in Malaya leading to the Declaration of Emergency in 1948.<sup>42</sup>

### **Beginning of Politicization — Constitutional Changes**

The war over, the British returned to Malaya faced with immediate problems — Malay tension, insurgency, the need to unify the diverse Malay states and to democratise the form of government. The Macmichael Commission was sent to Malaya (October 1945-January 1946) to investigate and frame policy. Macmichael commented:

... there was deep anxiety and even fear on the part of the Malays

lest they be gradually submerged by the minority Chinese, fear on the part of many Chinese that the position they had won for themselves would not be adequately recognised, and nationalistic concepts in the minds of others, sporadic cases of gangsterism and lawlessness on the part both of Malays and Chinese; some underground political activity and propaganda on both sides.<sup>43</sup>

The recommendations of the Commission took shape in the proposals for a Malayan Union in January 1946. This proposed the creation of a Malayan Union comprising the nine Malay states of Peninsular Malaya and the British settlements of Penang and Malacca with Singapore remaining a separate colony. It also proposed a form of common citizenship<sup>44</sup> for all those, irrespective of race, who regarded Malaya as their true home and as the object of their loyalty.<sup>45</sup> The proposals evoked a very hostile response from the Malays as well as the "old Malaya hands." The creation of a centralized union meant that the sovereignty of the Rulers would be affected as the Malay states would now come within the ambit of a centralized policy. The liberal citizenship proposals accompanied by the promise of democratization and self government were seen as a threat to Malay political power.<sup>46</sup> The British move to open the civil service to all of Malaya's races was resented as it had earlier been a British and Malay preserve.<sup>47</sup> The proposals were attacked vehemently by old Malaya hands in the British Parliament led by Viscount Elibank and Viscount Marchwood in the House of Lords and Captain Gammans, formerly of the Malayan Civil Service, in the House of Commons.<sup>48</sup> Malay opposition to the Union Proposals was so strong that in January 1946, Dato Onn bin Ja'afar organized the Peninsular Malay Movement at Johore to defend and protect the privileges of the Malays. In March 1946, representatives of forty-one Malay associations came together to form the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). This was the first effective pan-Malay association with political overtones which claimed the right to negotiate for the Malays. On 23 July 1946, Malay rulers and UMNO representatives led by UMNO President, Dato Onn, met Sir Ghent, the Governor of the Malayan Union, and submitted draft proposals for a Federation of Malaya, upholding the position of the Malay rulers and the special position of the Malays. UMNO made major headway because the British Government accepted UMNO leaders as the spokesmen of Malay interests. Secretary of State for the Colonies, Creech Jones announced in the House of Commons, "I have no doubt whatever that the Rulers and

UMNO are substantially representative of the majority of opinion in these matters in the Malay states."<sup>49</sup>

The Federation of Malay Agreement, 1948, which replaced the Union, acquiesced to the basic Malay demands – Malay special rights, the constitutional position of the sultans, and qualified citizenship rights to non-Malays. A new Federation came into effect of the nine Malay states along with Penang and Malacca, while Singapore remained a British Crown colony.<sup>50</sup>

The non-Malays remained generally apathetic during this very important and formative period. John Thivy, an influential Indian leader (later, President of the Malayan Indian Congress) in May 1946, advised Indians to steer clear of the controversy, while Chinese newspapers and organizations expressed more concern over the right to retain dual citizenship than over the failure of the Malayan Union scheme.<sup>51</sup> By late 1946 however some non-Malay groups stirred by Malay opposition to the Union proposals came together to form the All Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) to submit proposals for a future Malayan Constitution. They were joined by radical Malay groups (opposed to UMNO) such as the Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat, generally known as PUTERA. The AMCJA-PUTERA coalition drafted *The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya* in 1947. This proposed a united Malaya, inclusive of Singapore, equal citizenship rights to those who made Malaya their home; Malay to be the official language and Malays to be guaranteed 55 per cent of the representation in the Federal Legislature for the first three terms (i.e. nine years).<sup>52</sup> However it was UMNO which was able to vocalise Malay opinion and get British support for its proposals resulting in the implementation of the Federation of Malay Agreement, 1948.

#### **Inter-ethnic Compromise: the Alliance, in Independent Malaya: 1957**

The 1940s were turbulent years for Malaya – inter-ethnic strife, labour unrest, insurgency and the declaration of the Emergency in 1948. Discussing the issue of granting independence to Malaya, Oliver Lyttleton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated in the House of Commons:

I give as my considered opinion that were we to grant full self-government, so to speak as an instrument to Malaya tomorrow, the country would in six months be plunged into such racial strife, conflict and confusion as we have not yet seen.<sup>53</sup>



To create the conditions necessary for independence, it was necessary to demonstrate inter-ethnic co-operation and understanding. In the 1940s, as talk of independence opened up vistas of power, the major ethnic groups in Malaya tried to consolidate their own position in order to gain concessions for themselves as a group. They formed three distinct political parties — UMNO representing the Malays, Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) representing the Chinese, and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) representing the Indians. The need for inter-ethnic compromise led to the formation of the Alliance. UMNO, MCA and MIC came together to form the Alliance Party, but each party retained its separate status, identity and membership. It was a unique solution to the peculiar problem of Malaya's plural society.

UMNO was formally inaugurated on 11 May 1946 with Dato Onn bin Ja'afar as its President. As has been seen, it grew out of Malay response to the Malayan Union proposals, and it had become the spokesman for Malay interests in Malaya. UMNO was, and came to be identified specifically, as a Malay party and Dato Onn's efforts to enlarge it as a national party by accepting non-Malays as full members and changing its name from United Malays National Organisation to United Malayan National Organization, met with failure and he resigned from the party.<sup>54</sup> Since then the character of UMNO as a Malay party representing Malay interests has never sought to be changed.

The Malayan Chinese, had for long been associated in secret societies, but it was not till the early twentieth century that they started to organize themselves politically. The early expression of this was China-oriented rather than Malaya-oriented. In 1912, the Kuomintang (KMT) established a branch in Singapore and during 1913 branches were set up throughout Malaya. However, the KMT was more interested in implementing the policy of the Government of China towards the overseas Chinese than in providing political expression to the Malayan Chinese.<sup>55</sup> There were Chinese interest groups such as the Chinese Chambers of Commerce and the Straits Chinese British Association. It was not till the 1940s however that the Malayan Chinese sought political expression as a reaction to organized Malay political interests. In August 1946, the Malacca Chinese Union was formed under Tan Cheng-lock, but this was not a national body on the lines of the UMNO or, on a smaller scale, the Malayan Indian Congress (formed in 1946). During 1946 and 1947 Chinese interests were channelled into the AMCJA, but because of its leftist image many conservative Chinese interests disassociated themselves from it. The rejection of the Malayan Union and the

growing strength and unity of the Malays created the need for the political unification of the Malayan Chinese to fight for their rights. The declaration of Emergency in Malaya in 1948 and the banning of the MCP, made the Malayan Chinese suspect, and conservative Chinese interests and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce became interested in the formation of a body to counter the MCP. This received, behind the scenes, support from the British favouring a non-Communist Chinese organization.<sup>56</sup> Tan Cheng-lock had for many years been proposing the formation of a united Chinese organization and eventually on 27 February 1948 the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was launched at Kuala Lumpur — a spokesman for conservative Chinese interests.

The Indians though lacking the demographic strength of the Malays or the economic power of the Chinese, have been important as a "balancing factor" in Malaysian politics. It was only during World War II that they awakened politically, and like the Chinese, associated themselves initially not with Malaya, but the country of their origin, India. During the war many Indians formed the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army which collaborated with the Japanese with the objective of achieving independence for India. After the war, the Indian Association provided relief for destitute Indians in Malaya. In 1946 Jawaharlal Nehru visited Malaya and, on his suggestion that there should be a unified Indian organization, delegates from various Indian organizations met and formed the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) under the presidency of John A. Thivy.

By late 1946, therefore, three communal political parties had come into existence representing the interests of their communities. However due to the need for a unified political organization and inter-ethnic political compromise, it was obvious that without communal peace and stability, it would be difficult to negotiate for freedom. The solution was unique — UMNO, MCA and MIC, while maintaining their communal base, identity and structure, came together at the national level to form the Alliance organization. Initially, the UMNO and MCA came together in an electoral coalition to contest the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council Elections in January 1952. It seems, personal animosity between the Chairman of the Selangor MCA, Colonel H.S. Lee and Dato Onn, brought together the UMNO and MCA to defeat a common foe, Dato Onn and his Independence of Malaya Party (IMP).<sup>57</sup> The election results showed the great success of the UMNO-MCA Alliance which got 26 seats as against only one seat for the IMP. The UMNO-MCA Alliance was formally inaugurated at a national convention held

at Kuala Lumpur on 23 August 1953.<sup>58</sup> Initially the MIC had reservations about joining the Alliance. Many Indian leaders such as K.L. Devaser regarded the Alliance as an effort to win the elections on a racial basis and were critical of joining it. However, after considerable debate the MIC joined the Alliance in October 1954<sup>59</sup> and till today is a member of the Alliance. In 1957, the Alliance registered as an independent political party changing its name from the Alliance Organisation to the Alliance Party.<sup>60</sup>

The Alliance represented a unique consensus between the leaders of the Malays, Chinese and Indians – important decisions affecting the communities would be worked out as a process of compromise at top level closed door meetings instead of being subjected to the process of democratic debate at the grassroots level. Instead of negating the ethnic configuration, it accepted its primacy, and worked it within the political framework. UMNO leadership felt that the Alliance would serve the immediate needs of winning elections and gaining independence for Malaya.<sup>61</sup> It does not seem that the leadership envisaged a long existence for the Alliance in its original form. In January 1955, Tunku Abdul Rahman stated:

The Alliance will later shed its communal character and a party for all communities will replace the present alliance of communities. We are working towards that and we have made a real and honest start.<sup>62</sup>

However, the very success of the Alliance in achieving its immediate aim assured its continuance and growth. It swept the polls in the first federal elections held in 1955, gaining 51 out of a total of 52 seats, and in 1957 the Federation of Malaya achieved independence. The granting of independence was facilitated by the inter-ethnic compromises that had taken place. Tunku Abdul Rahman points out that pressure was exerted by Labour Members of Parliament on the British Government on the grounds that since the two majority peoples of Malaya had come to an agreement, their demands for independence should be met.<sup>63</sup>

The compromise was evident in the drafting of the Constitution of 1957. It reflected the consensus that had been arrived at between the Malays and the non-Malays – the acceptance of liberal citizenship rights for non-Malays, in return for the recognition that the Malays were the bumiputras (sons of the soil) in Malaya and as such entitled to special privileges and rights. Tunku Abdul Rehman recalls that Malays accepted

nationality for other races only because he warned them that "if they did not give in on this point how could they expect to win support from other races for the party's political victory."<sup>64</sup> The special rights of the Malays,<sup>65</sup> written into the Constitution of 1957 (commonly known as the Merdeka or Freedom constitution) have been the subject of much comment, criticism, debate and resentment on the part of non-Malays. The Reid Commission,<sup>66</sup> which was set up in 1957 to make recommendations for the proposed Constitution took note of the fact that the special position of the Malays had been reaffirmed from time to time as a result of the original treaties with the Malay states, and continued by the provisions of Clause 19(1) (d) of the Federation Agreement, 1948. It observed that there was little opposition to the continuation of the present system but great opposition to the continuance of the system for any prolonged period. The Commission recommended that

... the Malays should be assured that the present position will continue for a substantial period but that in due course the present preference should be reduced and should ultimately cease so that there should be no discrimination between races and communities.<sup>67</sup>

It suggested that after 15 years, the issue of special rights should be reviewed and a report placed before the Legislature should determine to "retain or to reduce any quota or to discontinue it entirely."<sup>68</sup> However, in the Constitution of 1957, the time clause was deleted, and the special position of the Malays with regard to the system of Malay reservations, special quotas for the Malays in public services, public scholarship and educational grants, permits and licences, was granted constitutionally.<sup>69</sup> Politically too, they were granted a pre-eminent position because according to the recommendations of the Constitutional Commission, rural constituencies were given weightage.<sup>70</sup> In return for all these privileges, the non-Malays were granted major concessions on citizenship rights which would qualify non-Malays in Malaya to qualify for citizenship either by birth or by fulfilling requirements of residence, language and an oath of loyalty.

The Merdeka Constitution reflected the compromise that had taken place amongst the Malays and the non-Malays in the Alliance. The consensus approach had proved successful in avoiding ethnic strife during the sensitive period of constitution making. It had taken

cognizance of the salience of ethnic identity and pulls in Malaya, and had utilized this ethnic solidarity to lay the foundations of a unique political system in Malaya – management of issues by means of inter-ethnic adjustment and consensus, rather than allowing issues, especially sensitive ones of race, language, citizenship and special rights, to be freely debated and deliberated. A very pragmatic approach was adopted of accepting the strength of ethnic solidarity, and this has become a characteristic feature of the Malay political system. In a speech to the Kaum Ibu (Women's section of UMNO) Tun Abdul Razak, the deputy Premier stated, "Our most important work is to strengthen the unity of the Malays behind the UMNO, the Chinese behind the MCA and the Indians behind the MIC."<sup>71</sup>

The Malays did not even constitute half the total population of Malaya. Their reaction to the Malay Union proposals had revealed their fear of being dispossessed in their own land by the non-Malays, especially the Chinese. The Malay Dilemma<sup>72</sup> was real and immediate. To the leadership of the Malays, Chinese and Indians, solution lay not in confrontation but in consensus – the Alliance approach. In the given circumstances – terrorist activity, Emergency and the attitude of the British Government – the consensus formula was the only viable and workable solution which did not place the Malays at a disadvantage. However, once the euphoria of independence wore off, and more and more non-Malays came to be born in Malaya and regarded it as their home, the consensus of 1957 was likely to be challenged. Many would be unwilling to concede a pre-eminent position to the Malays. Since 1957 there have been challenges to the system, but this has not led to abandoning it. On the other hand it has been sought to be strengthened by the conservative Malay and non-Malay leadership as the only viable system for Malaya's plural society.

### Opposition Parties

Significantly, no political movement seeking to unify the different races on issues of class, ideology or interest has had much success in Malaysia. Soon after the war, political groups of various hues, Malays and non-Malays came together in the AMCJA-PUTERA Alliance to protect their interests and demonstrate against the Federation of Malaya proposals. They drafted a constitution, *The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya* (1947) which envisaged the Malaya they wanted to create. Many opposition leaders and intellectuals in Malaysia feel that if the AMCJA-PUTERA Alliance had held ground, it would have

changed the very nature of political developments in Malaysia.<sup>73</sup> However it is difficult to see how the Alliance between conservative and radical interests could have survived for long. Secondly, the AMCJA-PUTERA Alliance did not have the co-operation of the UMNO supported by the large mass of the rural Malays, and without this support no political party in Malaysia could survive on a national level.

In 1957 another attempt was made to build up an opposition coalition. Under the leadership of Dato Onn and Dr Burhanuddin (President of the Malay Nationalist Party), Party Negara (PN), Party Rakyat (PR), the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) and the Peninsular Malaya Union were invited to participate in a Malay Congress. However, the parties could not reconcile their differences (the Party Rakyat objected to the communal stance of the PN and PMIP) and it fell through.

Left-wing, radical parties in Malaysia have suffered because of the outbreak of the communist insurrection in 1948 and the declaration of Emergency. A left-wing coalition did come together briefly – the Socialist front comprised of the Labour Party and the Party Rakyat. The Labour Party of Penang was formed in late 1951, and was later joined by the Perak and Selangor Labour Parties. It drew its strength from the West Coast States of Penang, Perak, Selangor, Johore and Malacca, primarily from trade unions. It stood for the nationalization of key industries, and favoured legal and political equality for all citizens though it accepted "special rights" for Malays as a transitory measure. However, infiltration by communists discredited the party.<sup>74</sup> The Party Rakyat was founded by Ahmad Boestamam. This was a left-wing, radical party, emphasizing agrarian socialism. Its membership, however, was primarily Malay. In June 1957 the Labour Party and the Party Rakyat came together to form the socialist front. The Labour Party had primarily Chinese and Indian membership while the Party Rakyat was predominantly Malay. Clash of interest on language and education policies led to the break-up of the front in early 1966. In 1968 the two parties came together again, not in a coalition but in some form of co-operation and electoral understanding,<sup>75</sup> but this did not last long as the Labour Party did not contest the elections of 1969.

A party which has challenged the right of the UMNO to speak for and represent the Malays is the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP),<sup>76</sup> formerly known as the Pan-Malayan Islamic Association. It rose from within the ranks of the UMNO itself. It was an off-shoot of a section of the UMNO, the Persatuan Ulama Sa-Malaya (the Pan-Malayan Union of

the Religiously Learned). The PAS came into existence on 24 November 1951, initiated by a group of Islamic reformists.<sup>77</sup> The PMIP has upheld and projected an uncompromising Malay-Muslim image. Membership to the PAS was open only to the Muslims. The highest authority for the PAS is "the Holy Quran, traditions of the Prophet and rulings of the Ulamas." It defined its objectives as the realization of an Islamic Government in which the Laws of God, Islamic teaching and Islamic ideal of society shall be practised; the maintenance of the rights of the sons of the soil; and the adoption of Malay as the sovereign official national language, and the observance of the Malay national culture.<sup>78</sup> The PAS has built up support in the predominantly Malay, east coast states, like Kelantan and Trengganu.

Predominantly non-Malay, opposition parties are the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan). In varying degrees all these parties tried to project a non-communal stance, but their membership and support came largely from non-Malays. The PPP was founded on 11 January 1953 at Ipoh in Perak, and was initially known as the Perak Progressive Party (renamed People's Progressive Party after 1955). Its founders and mainstay were two Ceylonese brothers, D.R. and S.P. Seenivasagam. It supported equal rights for non-Malays and the recognition of Tamil and Chinese as official languages. Its support came mainly from Indians and Chinese, and it remained a Perak-based and supported party. It was particularly strong in town councils in Ipoh, from 1958 onwards.<sup>79</sup>

A party which has a political manifesto somewhat similar to that of the PPP is the Democratic Action Part (DAP). In its origins it was an off-shoot of the People's Action Party (PAP) of Singapore which had contested in the 1964 Federal Elections in Malaysia. After the exit of Singapore from Malaysia, the PAP was de-registered and the DAP was founded in March 1966 under the leadership of Devan Nair. Like the PPP, the DAP tried to project a non-communal stand, but its membership has been largely non-Malay, predominantly Chinese. What is important is that it was generally regarded as a Chinese party.<sup>80</sup> This party has mounted the most vocal and effective challenge to what it calls the communal politics of the Alliance. The DAP took up the slogan of the PAP, a "Malaysian Malaysia" – equality for all races in Malaysia. It demands an official status for Chinese and Tamil; changes in the educational pattern to ensure that children get the facility to learn their mother tongues, and "special concessions" and "privileges" not only

for the Malays, but for the underprivileged of all races.<sup>81</sup> Its vocalization of these sensitive issues in Malaysia has presented a major threat to the Alliance consensus formula of negotiating these issues at top leadership level and presenting a compromise as a *fait accompli*. However its pro-Chinese image has kept its membership limited and it draws support mainly from the west coast states. Moreover there is considerable feeling that it has maintained links with Singapore.<sup>82</sup>

Another significant non-Malay party is the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan). The Gerakan came into existence in March 1968 as a result of talks between estranged leaders of the Labour Party and the United Democratic Party,<sup>83</sup> trade unionists, professionals and academicians. Its founder-members were very distinguished people such as Dr Tan Chee Khoo (a well-known medical practitioner in Kuala Lumpur and former member of the Labour Party), Professor Syed Hussein Alatas (Professor of Malay Studies at the University of Singapore) and Dr Wang Gungwu, a well-known academician. Its statement of principles reflected an idealism, which was not apparent in other political parties in Malaysia. Within a constitutional and parliamentary democracy, the Gerakan envisaged a just and equitable distribution of wealth with public ownership of the vital means of production. However, it stressed that in an effort to raise the standard of living "we shall not ignore the spiritual values such as honesty, the sense of justice, dedication, ability, soberness, and enthusiasm." It accepted the need to accord special attention to the economically weak Malays and other indigenous peoples. Interestingly enough, there was no mention of other sensitive issues such as language.<sup>84</sup>

The parties in opposition then, can be grouped into three categories — Malay conservative such as PAS; non-Malay such as PPP and DAP, non-communal, Gerakan, and leftist radical such as the Labour Party and the Party Rakyat. A lack of consensus amongst them on basic issues prevented their coming together to challenge the Alliance hold in Malaysia till 1969.<sup>85</sup> They were not agreed on what constituted the Malaysian identity, they had differing stands on language policy and there was no common ideology to bring them together.

### **The Federal Elections of 1955, 1959 and 1964**

A brief resume is given here of the three federal elections held in Malaysia before the fourth, vital election of 1969. It is intended here to present only those aspects of the elections or the results which indicate the degree of success achieved by the consensus formula of the Alliance.



The elections of 1955 were held at a time when independence was in the offing. The priority was independence and the Alliance Party which had negotiated with the British was regarded as the party most capable of delivering the goods. In 1955, about 75 per cent of the Chinese and Indian voters were ineligible to vote, as they were under 21 years of age.<sup>86</sup> The Alliance Party campaigned for immediate independence, a quick end to the Communist Insurgency and a new nation in which the rights of the Malays would be protected while the rights of other races would not be sacrificed. The Alliance swept the polls, polling over 81 per cent of the total vote and winning 51 out of 52 seats (the only opposition seat was won by the PAS).<sup>87</sup>

The next election was held in 1959 after Malaya had become independent. The years 1955-59 showed up the dissensions within the UMNO and its partners, the MCA and MIC, over vital issues of language, culture and identity. There was frustration over the predominant position accorded to the UMNO within the Alliance. Within the MCA there was dissatisfaction with the old guard and its compromises, and the President Tan Cheng-lock was replaced by Dr Lim Chong gu. In 1959, Dr Lim's stand that the MCA be given a greater number of seats led to a split in the MCA and the resignation of Dr Lim. The MIC showed its dissatisfaction by opposing an UMNO candidate in a local by-election in Selangor in 1958. This led to an eight month long feud between MIC and UMNO. From the late 1950s through the early 1960s, the majority of local councils in Ipoh, Penang and Kuala Lumpur had opposition Governments.<sup>88</sup> The election results revealed that a larger non-Malay electorate was beginning to question the consensus.<sup>89</sup> The Alliance won 74 parliament and 207 state seats; PAS won 42 state and 13 parliamentary seats, (mainly in Kelantan and Trengganu); the PPP won 8 state and 4 parliamentary seats (only from Perak) and the Socialist Front, 16 state and 8 parliamentary seats (from Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Pahang and Johore).<sup>90</sup> The challenges to the Alliance came from the urban west coast states which were predominantly non-Malay, or from the PAS challenge in Kelantan and Trengganu. The challenge might have been more significant had it not been for external factors, which rallied support for the Alliance. On 16 September 1963, the Federation of Malaysia came into being comprising the states of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah. This had an important bearing on the elections of 1964 for it brought in the People's Action Party of Singapore as a contestant into the elections. The People's Action Party of Singapore (PAP) came into the election with the strident slogan of a

"Malaysian Malaysia" – equality for all, a Malaysia where Malays, Chinese and Indians were equal in all respects, and where the language and culture of the non-Malays enjoyed co-equal status with the Malays. What it represented was a negation of the pre-eminent position of the Malays in their homeland. It resulted in a closing of Malay ranks behind the Alliance while the non-Malays were too fragmented to close ranks behind the PAP. Besides, the PAP had the disadvantage of being a Singapore based party and was viewed with distrust by many in Malaysia. The formation of the Federation of Malaysia also led to a strong reaction from Indonesia, resulting in a period of confrontation, 1963-66.<sup>91</sup> The Indonesian confrontation also closed ranks behind the Alliance as it built up a climate of nationalist fervour. The Alliance succeeded in putting the opposition parties on the defensive. Charges of disloyalty and sympathizing with Indonesia were levied against them and they had to concentrate their energies on refuting these allegations.<sup>92</sup> The results in 1964 showed the rallying of the strength behind the Alliance which obtained 89 parliamentary and 240 state seats; the PAS got 9 parliamentary and 25 state seats; the SF got 2 parliamentary and 8 state seats; the PPP got 2 parliamentary and 5 state seats, the PAP got 1 parliamentary and no state seats and the newly formed UDP got 1 parliamentary and no state seats and the newly formed UDP got 1 parliamentary and 4 state seats.<sup>93</sup> Despite the Alliance successes, what was significant was that in the urban constituencies the opposition did better than the Alliance.<sup>94</sup>

The elections, campaign and results indicated that there was significant, though limited, vocalized dissensus with the Alliance consensus formula.

### **Malay/Malaysian Identity**

Because of the historical, cultural and ethnic background the concept of Malaysian integration will emanate from the Malay factor within the country. The basis of the concept of Malaysian integration, unfortunately or fortunately, is Malay.<sup>95</sup>

A Malaysian Malaysia means that the nation and the state are not identified with the supremacy, wellbeing and the interests of any one particular community and race. The special and legitimate interests of different communities must be secured and promoted within the framework of the collective rights, interests and

responsibility of all races.<sup>96</sup>

Two differing perceptions on what constitutes a Malaysian identity. The former starts from the premise that the Malays are the Bumiputras, the sons of the soil, and therefore Malay culture must form the basis of the Malaysian identity. The symbols of this identity are the acceptance of Islam as the state religion; the upholding of the position of the Malay ruler, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong; the acceptance of Bahasa Melayu as the national language, and the acceptance of the "special position" of the Malays in Malaysia. Religion has been and is an important rallying point for the Malays. It has also kept the Malay and non-Malay identities distinct. The Malays swamped by the migrants, clung to their Malay-Muslim identity. A number of mosques and *surau*s (places of worship) have been built.<sup>97</sup> Since independence many religious schools have been opened; there is a state supported Islamic College, and Islamic Departments and faculties in Universities. The Muslim Society of Malaya (PERKIM) was established in June 1961, and by 1973 it had converted about 2,000 persons to Islam. In June 1974 an Islamic missionary foundation was set up to carry on the task of proselytizing.<sup>98</sup> In recent years the "Dakwah movement" has been gathering momentum emphasizing a fundamentalist revival of Islam.<sup>99</sup>

The symbols of the "Malaysian identity" are viewed by the majority of the non-Malay Malaysians as exclusive to the Malays and outside the periphery of the non-Malays. The Chinese and the Indians (with the exception of some Indian-Muslims) are all non-Muslims, and hence religion separates them. The Indians and Chinese take pride in the rich cultural heritage of their "countries of origin" and are reluctant to accept the "Malay" cultural base,<sup>100</sup> which creates a sense of alienation among the non-Malays. The non-Malay position was vocalized when the People's Action Party of Singapore contested the 1964 federal elections in Malaysia with the slogan of a Malaysian Malaysia.<sup>101</sup> A Malaysian Malaysia envisaged a Malaysia where people of all ethnic origins are equal and have equal rights, where linguistic and cultural identities of all ethnic groups are respected and allowed to merge in a "Malaysian" identity. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's Prime Minister pointed out:

... it is not just the Chinese and the Indian immigrant communities who must decide to be Malaysians. The Malays and the indigenous people will also have to be Malaysian and not a separate and distinct

group. They will have to accept as equal the Chinese and Indian immigrant communities who have settled here and have sworn to take this country as their only home and the sole object of their loyalty.<sup>102</sup>

The Singapore leadership constantly emphasized the obliteration of all racial differences. Lee Kuan Yew's many speeches and declarations, both at home and abroad constantly stressed equal opportunities for all, not based on birth or rank, in order to build a just and equal society.<sup>103</sup> The Malays, particularly the more "Ultra" section in the UMNO, led by its Secretary-General Syed Ja'afar Albar, viewed this as a direct challenge to the special position of the Malays in Malaysia, and their rights and privileges guaranteed in the Constitution. Even the more moderate Malay leaders like Tunku Abdul Rahman were protective about "special rights"<sup>104</sup> and were apprehensive of the young leaders of Singapore wanting to "rush things."<sup>105</sup> The evolution of Malaya as an independent nation in 1957 and its subsequent development and growth, had been based, not on the eradication of racial differences, but on their acceptance — Malays were the bumiputras, and non-Malays because of ethnic and religious differences could not fall into that category. A Malaysian Malaysia, thus, was seen as a direct challenge to the Malaysia that was developing since 1957. The result was to close Malay ranks behind the UMNO and its Alliance partners, the MCA and MIC, leading to the stunning defeat of the People's Action Party in the 1964 elections. Differing views on what should constitute the Malaysian identity ultimately led to the exit of Singapore, in August 1965 from the Malaysian Federation.<sup>106</sup>

The manner in which Singapore was forced to leave the Federation was a lesson for the non-Malays — a Malaysian Malaysia would not be tolerated. The very real and effective challenge that was posed by Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore lives on in the memories of Malays. Any effort to alter the Malay character of Malaysia had been firmly dealt with and the Malay base has been strengthened. In 1967 the Malay identity was further strengthened by the passage of the National Language Act providing that Bahasa Melayu would become the sole official and national language. Interestingly, opposition to the Act came not from most non-Malays who accepted it as a compromise, but from Malay teachers, associations, writers and a Malay student organization, the Malay language society at the University of Malaya. In Parliament only eleven members (mostly from the PAS) opposed it, as they were

unhappy at the continued use of English for official purposes.<sup>107</sup> In September 1968, the government accepted the setting up of a National University at Petaling Jaya which would use the national language and include an Islamic College.

As Malaysia approached its fourth general elections, to be held in 1969, it was becoming apparent that some major changes were taking place. The Alliance had functioned since 1957, by co-opting and absorbing dissent. The exit of Singapore had however, brought to the fore some basic issues which could no longer be discussed behind closed doors. The cry for a Malaysian Malaysia was taken up by the DAP – the challenges, now were not from without but from within and could not be ignored. Many non-Malays were no longer willing to accept the equation of the 50s and 60s. In April 1969 the DAP issued a collection of speeches of prominent DAP leaders like C.V. Devan Nair, Lim Kit Siang, and Goh Hock Guan, entitled *Who Lives if Malaysia Dies*. In its introduction it posed the question which many non-Malays were asking:

Will we choose the way of multi-racialism based on equality of status and opportunity for all Malaysians irrespective of race, colour and creed? Or will we go down the slippery slope of racialism to national disintegration?<sup>108</sup>

The DAP was rejecting the bumiputra position of the Malays – the corner-stone of the compromise of the 1950s.

The dominant Malay political party UMNO, was caught between its own younger extremist members, the "ultras" (like Syed Ja'afar Albar and Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and the concessions it had to make to its non-Malay allies, the MCA and MIC. Some of the UMNO members were resentful at the concessions given to non-Malays. There was also growing dissatisfaction within UMNO members at the policies and attitudes of the UMNO party leadership. The most important decisions were made by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Tunku exercised final authority on selections and appointments to high offices which was resented by the younger members.<sup>109</sup> The Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman has recorded the discontent of many UMNO members from 1966 onwards, at the "mild" treatment meted to Lee Kuan Yew, and their manoeuvres to work themselves into party leadership.<sup>110</sup> From the accounts of the UMNO leaders, as well as the UMNO dissidents, it seemed as if the party was facing internal problems on basic issues.

The consensus formula that had been established in 1957 had proved stable and viable. It had ensured an uneventful and peaceful transfer of power in 1957 and had faced three general elections. However twelve years later as Malaysia approached its fourth general election, it seemed as if the formula was going to be challenged. By the end of 1968, racial tensions were mounting.<sup>111</sup> The Malays were demanding economic opportunities while the non-Malays were demanding a more equal position culturally and politically.

## NOTES

1. O.H.K. Spate and Charles Fisher, *The Changing Map of Asia: A Political Geography*, U.S.A., Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1971, p. 227; R.J. Wilkinson, ed., *Papers on Malay Subjects*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 22.
2. Charges are often made, specially by immigrant Chinese and Indians, that the Malays should not be regarded as the indigenous population of Malaysia as many of them are products of fairly recent migrations from insular South East Asia.
3. From 1948 to 1963 the states of Perak, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis, Penang and Malacca comprised the Federation of Malaya. In 1963 with the inclusion of Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore, the Federation came to be known as Malaysia (in 1965 Singapore withdrew from Malaysia). In this thesis, Malaysia describes a geographical entity, Malaysian, the political citizenship of this entity, and Malay is used to describe a racial entity.
4. The Malacca Sultanate was founded by Parameswara, a prince of Palembang. It became the heir to the commercial power wielded by the kingdom of Sri Vijaya, in south-eastern Sumatra. It also became the center for the diffusion of Islam throughout south-east Asia. D.C.E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, New York, Macmillan, 1968, edn. 3, p. 213.
5. The great power, prestige and influence of the Malacca Sultanate finds evidence in the earliest written history of Malaya, *Sejarah Melayu* (translated as the *Malay Annals*). For the English translation see C.C. Brown, translated, "The Malay Annals," *The Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Singapore, Raffles M.S. 18, vol. 25, part II and III, October 1952, pp. 6-266.
6. J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London, The Althone Press, 1958, pp. 10-11.
7. C.D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 254-62.

8. *Annual Report of the Federation of Malaya, 1950*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1950, pp. 211-12.
9. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, p. 11.
10. Kalyan Kumar Ghosh, *Twentieth Century Malaysia: Politics of Decentralisation of Power 1920-1929*, (Calcutta, Progressive Publishers, 1977), pp. 303-4; Sir Richard Winstedt, *Britain and Malaya 1786-1948*, London, Longmans Green and Company, 1949, p. 49.
11. Sir Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1948, p. 305.
12. V. Purcell, *The Memoirs of a Malayan Official*, London, Cassel and Company, 1965, p. 156.
13. Quoted by J. Norman Parmer, *Colonial Labour Policy and Administration: A History of Labour in the Rubber Plantation Industry, 1910-1941*, New York, Association for Asian Studies, 1960, p. 19.
14. M.V. Del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population*, Singapore, Government Printing Office, 1948, pp. 584-88.
15. In 1931, about 82.2 per cent of the total Indian population were Tamilians. *Annual Report of the Agent of the Government of India in British Malaya for the Year 1935*, New Delhi, Government of India Press, 1936, p. 28.
16. *Annual Report of the Federation of Malaya, 1950*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1951, p. 16.
17. M.M. Fell, *The 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, 1960, p. 3.
18. Ethnic groups is a term used to designate those groups which are distinct from others by characteristics such as race, religion, nationality or some combination of these which generate a strong in-group feeling. Franklin Edwards, "Race Relations," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, U.S.A., Free Press, 1968, vol. 13, pp. 269-76.
19. The traditional Malay, Chinese and Indian value system is very different. This has led to the prevalence of many ideas concerning racial stereotypes, such as that the Malays are "happy go lucky and easy going," the Chinese are "shrewd and hard working," the Indians are "conscientious but lack initiative." Useful material can be gleaned from Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Asia Pacific Press, 1970. Peter J. Wilson, *A Malay Village and Malaysia: Social Values and Rural Development*, New Haven, 1967; Tham Seong Chee, *Malays and Modernisation: A Sociological Interpretation*, Singapore University Press, 1977.
20. R.O. Winstedt was in the Malayan Civil Service and was Director of Education in Malaya from 1924 to 1931.
21. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 140.
22. Purcell, *The Memoirs of a Malayan Official*, p. 155.
23. *Report by the Right Hon. W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore, M.P. on his Visit to Malaya, Ceylon and Java*, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928, p. 55.

24. For a detailed account of the Indians in Malaya see R.K. Jain, *South Indians on the Plantation Frontier in Malaya*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970; Kernail Singh Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of Their Immigration and Settlement 1786-1957*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.
25. For Chinese organizations and groups see Maurice Freedman, "Immigrants and Associations: Chinese in Nineteenth Century Singapore," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Cambridge, vol. III, no. 1, October 1960, pp. 25-49; Wilfred Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, Oxford University Press, 1969.
26. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 454, 23 July 1948, col. 792.
27. *Federation of Malaya Annual Report 1956*, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957, p. 84.  
 In 1957 the Malays formed 47.2 per cent of the labour force, the Chinese 35.7 per cent and Indians 14.1 per cent of the experienced labour force in Peninsular Malaya. R. Chander, ed., *Population Census of Malaysia 1970*, Kuala Lumpur, Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1977, vol. 1, p. 428.
28. The definition of plural society used is that of J.S. Furnivall as one in which people of different communities "live side by side but separate within the same political unit." J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, New York, University Press, 1965, pp. 304-5.
29. Angus Mcintyre, "The Greater Indonesia Idea of Nationalism in Malaya and Indonesia," *Modern Asian Studies*, London, vol. 7, no. 1, 1973, pp. 75-83.
30. Boestamam had worked with the Japanese during the Occupation. He became Secretary of the Malay Nationalist Party shortly after it was formed and later Chairman of the Youth Branch of the Malay Nationalist Party, Angkatan Pemuda Insaaf.
31. Mcintyre, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 75-83.
32. N.S. Funston, "The Origins of Partai Islam Se Malaysia," *Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, Singapore, vol. VII, no. 1, March 1973, pp. 58-73.
33. Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States, 1874-1895*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1968, p. 274.
34. Dato (known as Datuk) is a title conferred by a state of Malaysia. Tunku or Tengku is a hereditary title and is roughly equivalent to Prince.
35. Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society, 1874-1920," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1974, pp. 179-98.
36. K.P. Landon, "Nationalism in South-East Asia," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, New York, vol. 2, no. 2, February 1943, pp. 139-52.
37. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in South-east Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 306.
38. Yogi Akashi, "Japanese Policy towards the Malayan Chinese, 1941-45," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2,



- September 1970, pp. 61-89.
39. Chin Kee Onn, *Malaya Upside Down*, Singapore, Jitts and Company, 1946, p. 100.
  40. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, p. 311; Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free?* London, Victor Gollancz and Co., 1954, pp. 47-48.
  41. Quoted by James de Vere Allen, *The Malayan Union*, Yale University Press, 1967, p. 133.
  42. The origin and growth of Malayan Communist Party is discussed in Chapter V.
  43. Sir Harold Macmichael, *Report on a Mission to Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1948, p. 8.
  44. Before the Union Proposals there was no common citizenship — one was a citizen of a state, or a British subject if born in a Crown Colony.
  45. *Malayan Union and Singapore: Statement of Policy on Future Constitution*, Command Paper 6724, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946.
  46. Malay rulers had consistently resisted any proposals to recognize non-Malays or non-Muslims as their subjects. Mohamed Noordin Scpiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region*. Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1974, p. 18.
  47. The Malay rulers had consistently resisted the entry of non-Malays to positions in the services. In November 1940, the rulers of the Federated Malay states were invited to a Conference to discuss the appointment of non-Malays to technical, senior positions. The rulers were firm that non-Malays should not be appointed. C.M. Turnbull, "British Planning for Post-War Malaya," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, September 1974, pp. 239-54.
  48. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 419, 13 February 1946, cols. 358-60 and vol. 420, 6 March 1946, cols. 321-24.
  49. *Ibid.*, vol. 445, December 1947, col. 77.
  50. *The Federation Agreement, 1948*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printing Press, 1952.
  51. Yeo Kim Wah, "The Anti-Federation in Malaya, 1946-48," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. IV, no. 1, March 1973, pp. 31-51.
  52. *The Peoples Constitutional Proposals for Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Ja Chong Press, 1947.
  53. UK, Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, series 5, vol. 503, 17 July 1952, col. 2382. Oliver Lyttelton was Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Conservative Government of Winston Churchill.
  54. Dato Onn's subsequent career is educative in highlighting the basic feature of the Malayan political system, that no political party can survive without communal support. Due to the uneasy political climate of the 1940s, Dato Onn on the suggestion of Malcolm Mac Donald, the British Commissioner General of South-East Asia, set up the communities Liaison Committee. In order to strengthen

UMNO and turn it into a national organization he tried unsuccessfully to open its doors to non-Malays. In 1951 he left the UMNO to form a non-communal party – the Independence of Malay Party (IMP). He was so disillusioned when the Chinese did not join this, that he dissolved it to form the Party Negara (PN) in February 1954. Ironically the PN was to project a Malay, conservative image. Ishak bin Tadin, "Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism, 1946-1951," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Singapore, vol. 1, no. 1, 1960, pp. 56-88.

55. Png Poh Seng, "The Kuomintang in Malaya, 1912-1941," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1961, pp. 1-32.
56. Soh Eng Lim, "Tan Cheng-lock, His Leadership of the Malayan Chinese," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1960, pp. 22-55; Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, p. 342.
57. This view is presented by Tunku Abdul Rahman, *The Star*, Penang, 2 June, 1975.
58. Daniel Eldegredge Moore, "The United Malay National Organisation and the 1959 Malaya Election: A Study of a Political Party in Action in a Newly Independent Plural Society," Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, 1960, p. 211.
59. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 120.
60. In May 1958 a new Constitution was drawn up for the Alliance. The Alliance National Council was to have 16 UMNO representatives, 16 MCA representatives and 6 MIC representatives. The Alliance Executive Council was to have 6 UMNO, 5 MCA and 3 MIC representatives. The chairmen of both Councils would be UMNO members. (Gordon Means, *Malaysian Politics*, University of London Press, 1970, p. 211.)  
 Earlier the Alliance Executive Council had equal UMNO and MCA representation but later, one Chinese member was dropped. (K.J. Ratnam and R.S. Milne, *The Malayan Parliamentary Elections of 1964*, Singapore, University of Malaya Press, 1967, p. 41.)
61. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back: Monday Musings and Memories*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1977, p. 43.
62. M.F. Clark, "The Malayan Alliance and its Accommodation of Communal Pressure, 1952-1962," unpublished thesis, University of Malaya, 1964, p. 50.
63. Rahman, *Looking Back*, pp. 26-27.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
65. Article 153 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia gives to the King (Yang di Pertuan Agong) the responsibility to safeguard the "special position of the Malays":  
 1) Quotas in Public services reserving certain places for the Malays only.  
 2) Malay reservations – lands reserved only for Malays in some areas.  
 3) Quotas for educational grants and scholarships.

## 4) Quotas in the grants of licences.

- A Malay constitutionally is one "who professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom, and was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore, or is the issue of such a person." *Malaysia: The Federal Constitution*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1964, p. 97, 103-4.
66. The members of the Commission were, the Chairman Lord Reid (UK), Sir W.J. McKell (Australia), B. Malik (India), Justice Abdul Hamid (Pakistan) and Sir Ivor Jennings (UK).
  67. *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission*, 1957, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1957, p. 71.
  68. *Ibid.*
  69. Article 153, *The Federal Constitution of Malaya*, 1957, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1957.
  70. *Report of the Constituencies Delineation Committee*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1954, p. 1.
  71. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 30 April 1968.
  72. *The Malay Dilemma*, is the name of a controversial book written by the present Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. The theme is the dispossession of Malays by the non-Malays in their own land. Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Asia Pacific Press, 1970.
  73. Interview with Ahmed Boestamam (Kuala Lumpur), 30 March 1978 and interview Mohiuddin Abdul Kadir, member of Party Rakyat (Penang), 24 March 1978.
- Both expressed the view that if the People's Constitutional Proposals had been accepted, the subsequent communal pattern of development might have been averted.
74. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, pp. 238-39.
  75. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 30 April 1968.
  76. In late 1971 the PMIP was renamed Partai Islam Se Malaysia (PAS). Hereafter it shall be referred to as PAS.
  77. Funston, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 73, pp. 58-73.
  78. *Constitution and Rules of the Persatuan Islam Sa-Tanah Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, Jalan Pekeliling, n.d.
  79. In 1965 the Alliance Government brought about indefinite postponement of all local Government elections on charges of corruption.
  80. In interviews which Chin Fook Kiong conducted as part of a Graduation Exercise at the University of Malaya, he discovered that most Malays regarded the DAP as "anti-Malay." Chin Fook Kiong, *An Analysis of the Democratic Action Party in the 1969 General Elections*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1970, p. 10.
  81. *Setapak Declaration: Manifesto of the Democratic Action Party, Who Lives if Malaysia Dies?* A selection from the speeches and writings of DAP leaders, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, DAP Headquarters, 1969, pp. 17-30.

82. The DAP has, till recently, always supported the Internal Security Act (ISA) in Malaysia, and many people in Malaysia feel it is because the DAP upholds the ISA in Singapore.
83. The United Democratic Party (DP) was started in 1962 by Dr Lim Chong Eu, former President of the MCA. Dr Lim had resigned from the MCA in 1959 over election nominations and education issues.
84. *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia: Objectives and Principles*, Kuala Lumpur, 15 April 1968.
85. In this chapter, it is attempted only to present the basic framework of each party till 1969. Their subsequent growth, development or decline is discussed in subsequent chapters. For a good discussion on the political parties in opposition see R.K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-communal Parties in West Malaysia*, Oxford University Press, 1971.
86. K.J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press, 1965, p. 87.
87. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 167.
88. Nancy L Snyder, "Communalism and the Breakdown of Malayan Parliamentary Democracy," Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1972, p. 182.
89. In 1959 Chinese voters formed 35.6 per cent of the population, Indians 7.4 per cent, and Malays 56.8 per cent with 0.2 per cent being "others." Ratnam, *Communalism*, p. 252.
90. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 252.
91. Only those aspects of the formation of the federation and the "Confrontation" are being discussed which have a bearing on the issues being discussed.
92. Malay parties such as PAS and Party Rakyat had been emphasizing closer co-operation with Indonesia rather than Singapore, while left-wing parties such as the Labour Party and the Sarawak United People's Party opposed the federation as they feared that an attempt was being made to suppress leftist Chinese elements. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 16 February 1962; *Indonesian Observer*, 3 May, 1962; J.M. Gullick, *Malaysia and its Neighbours*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 45.
93. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p. 338.
94. In the parliamentary elections, opposition candidates got 4 urban seats while the Alliance got 2, in quasi-urban constituencies the Alliance got 23 seats while the opposition got 2. Ratnam and Milne, *The Malaysian Parliamentary Elections*, p. 365.
95. Musa Hitam (then Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry) speaking in a Seminar, *Trends in Malaysia II*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1974, p. 142.
96. *Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention*, Singapore, 9 May 1965, Publisher n.s., Members were SUPP, UDP, PAP, PPP, and Party Machinda.
97. One of the most imposing buildings is the national mosque at Kuala Lumpur.

98. Chandrasekharan Pillay, "Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position," Master's Thesis, University Sains Malaysia, Penang, 1974, pp. 175-77.
99. This is a strong movement emphasizing the fundamental principles of the Koran. Some of its more extreme manifestations are viewed with concern by non-Malays and some Malays also.
100. Arguments range from pointing out the contributions made by India and China centuries ago to pointing out that many Malays are themselves "migrants" from Sumatra and other Indonesian Islands.
101. Cham traces the concept to Tan Cheng-lock's Memorandum to Sir Samuel Wilson (British Colonial Under Secretary) in December 1932, when he asked for a policy "of Malaya for Malaysians, and not for one section of it only." Boon-Ngee Cham, "Towards a Malaysian Malaysia: A Study of Political Integration and Opposition Attitudes," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Alberta, Canada, 1971, p. 459.
102. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 4 June, 1962.
103. A clear exposition of Lee Kuan Yew's views can be gleaned from, Lee Kuan Yew, *The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia*, Singapore, Ministry of Culture, 1965. *Malaysia: Age of Revolution*, Singapore, Ministry of Culture, 1965.
104. Tun Tan Siew Sin (MCA President), in a rally at Ipoh said: "The Malays from the Tunku downwards feel strongly that the retention of this special position is their only hope for survival." *Malayan Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 1964.
105. *Separation: Singapore's Independence on 9th August 1965*, Singapore, Ministry of Culture, 1965, p. 12.
106. Dr Suryanarayan in a doctoral thesis concludes that it was fear of widespread communal violence which was the main reason which led the Tunku to force the exit of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation. V. Suryanarayan, "Singapore-Malayan Relations," Ph.D. Thesis, Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1968, p. 241.  
Tunku Abdul Rahman, Reminiscing, points out that Lee Kuan Yew in his statements was "openly taking the notice down 'Danger: Keep Out'." Rahman, *Looking Back*, p. 112.
107. Language and education policies are discussed in further detail in Chapter III.
108. *Who Lives if Malaysia Dies: The DAP's Case for a Multi Racial Society*, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, April 1969, p. xi.
109. Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Donald Moore, Asia Pacific Press, 1970, p. 9.
110. Rahman, *Looking Back*, p. 193.
111. Vishal Singh, "A Report on Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia," *India Quarterly*, New Delhi, vol. XXV, no. 4, October-December 1969, pp. 321-58.

## Chapter II

# THE 1969 ELECTIONS, RIOTS AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

### Background of the Elections

The unique political consensus which had been worked out by the political leadership in Malaysia was to receive a traumatic jolt when the fourth general elections took place on 10 May 1969. As polling day approached, the atmosphere was tense. This was the first election where the Alliance was facing an effective non-Malay opposition from parties like DAP and Gerakan which were contesting the elections for the first time. It was also facing renewed Malay opposition from the PAS. The DAP was vocalizing and bringing into the arena of public debate, issues of race and community regarding which compromises had been reached by a process of arriving at a consensus among the leaders of the UMNO, MCA and MIC. Issues of race and community were the most dominant issue of the election campaign in 1969.<sup>1</sup> The DAP rejected the bumiputra position of the Malays.<sup>2</sup> Ahmed Shukri, PAS member, expressed the dissatisfaction of many Malays when he said, "We will exploit the theme of the erosion of Malay political power."<sup>3</sup> UMNO leaders like the Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak warned the electorate against the upsetting of the applecart. They cautioned against the "all-Malay" position of the PAS or the "non-Malay" position of the DAP,<sup>4</sup> and refuted charges that UMNO had sold Malay rights to the non-Malays.<sup>5</sup>

In February 1969, the three major non-Malay opposition parties, DAP, PPP and Gerakan entered into a three-way electoral pact. They entered into separate arrangements to allocate party and state constituencies and to field candidates on the basis of organization and estimates of electoral support in the various constituencies. This had significant portents for it was a polarization along Malay/non-Malay lines, and represented an effective challenge to the consensus formula of the Alliance. By-elections in 1968 exhibited cause for alarm for the

Alliance. In by-elections held in Padang (Kedah), the home state of Tunku Abdul Rahman, a PAS candidate slashed the Alliance majority to 721 votes; in Segamat Utara, the DAP lost by a narrow margin to the UMNO Executive Secretary, Musa Hitam; in Serdang Bahru, the Alliance won only because of a three-cornered fight.<sup>6</sup> By early 1969, the *Straits Times* was forecasting that though the Alliance would come back to power, it would not score or triumph.<sup>7</sup> Just two days before the election, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* observed that getting a majority for the Alliance would be a close thing.<sup>8</sup>

The atmosphere before the elections was tense. On 24 April 1969, an UMNO party worker in Penang was murdered, according to government sources, by subversive elements agitating for a boycott of the General Elections.<sup>9</sup> Racial tension was mounting and a serious racial clash was averted. On 4 May 1969, a group of Labour Party members, painting anti-election slogans at Kepong (an outskirt of Kuala Lumpur) were accosted by the police and one of the Labour Party members was wounded and later died in hospital. The funeral procession was held on 9 May, a day before the elections. An estimated crowd of ten thousand people,<sup>10</sup> predominantly Chinese, marched through the heart of Kuala Lumpur carrying banners with Mao Tse-tung's thoughts and shouting revolutionary slogans. It seemed to be a significant massing of Chinese strength on the eve of the election.

The main parties contesting the election were the Alliance (UMNO, MCA and MIC), Parti Islam Se-Tanah Melaya (PAS), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Rakyat, the people's Progressive Party (PPP) and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysia People's Movement).<sup>11</sup> The Alliance had swept to power in all the preceding elections held earlier in 1955, 1959 and 1964. However, in 1969 the atmosphere was very different from that of 1964 when confrontation with Indonesia and growing discord with Singapore had closed ranks in support of the Alliance. The two major components of the Alliance, UMNO and MCA were facing some internal problems. There were whispers of discontent against the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, and his control over the election of candidates. The MCA was facing dissension over the question of Merdeka University – a demand for a Chinese language, university not too favourably viewed by the Alliance leadership. MCA organization and leadership under conservative business interests was facing challenges from the DAP. Its strident call for a Malaysian Malaysia was a challenge to the very nature of the political compromise arrived at by the Alliance. Well-known Malaysian personalities and

public figures were further challenging the Alliance. Some Malays also, were rejecting the UMNO as the spokesman for the Malays. The PAS, with its emphasis on Islamic values and a Malay state was projecting an appeal to the east coast states while the Party Rakyat was appealing to the ideologically oriented, leftist groups. In 1969, therefore, with no external issues to divert attention, there was evidence of increasing concern with issues – economic, educational and communal, which were basic to the constitutional compromise in Malaysia. An examination of the election manifestoes will bear this out.

### **Manifestoes: 1969**

The Alliance went to the polls with its manifesto of "An Even Better Deal for All." As the majority party winning every election since 1955, it asked for a continuation of its mandate. The manifesto re-emphasized faith in the democratic process working through the popular franchise. It accepted the historical circumstances which had segregated the races and stated that its own aim was one of avoiding easy appeals to racial sentiments for quick political gains. Its object was to work towards a national consensus "for a single Malaysian-centred consciousness." (It did not elaborate what constituted the core of this consciousness.) Its ambiguity as a multi-ethnic party could be seen in its warnings to the electorate not to get taken in by those who resisted special assistance to the Malays under Article 153,<sup>12</sup> and also not to support those who advocated a one-race government. The first charge was obviously levelled at the DAP for its criticism of the Malay-oriented policies of the government. The second charge was levelled at the PAS for its resentment of the compromises made towards the non-Malays.

On the sensitive issue of economic disparity between the poorer Malays and the more prosperous non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, the manifesto sought to present the problem not in strictly racial terms, but by presenting it as a need for intensification of programmes for the rural areas.<sup>13</sup> It emphasized the neglect of the farmers and the fishermen, which constituted the majority of the population, in contrast to the urban areas which were affluent. The party promised to adopt dynamic tactics to facilitate land development, and intensify the agricultural diversification programme. In the manufacturing factor, it promised to accelerate the development of the manufacturing sector to increase employment and output. It envisaged an economic growth of 6 per cent per year and a rise in the per capita income of M \$ 1000 to M \$ 1300 by 1985. In an obvious effort to allay the fears of the non-



Malays, it affirmed:

... our policies are not designed to deprive anyone of opportunities for advancement. We believe that everyone in the country shall have a place in the Malaysian sun.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the predominantly Malay State of Kelantan where the Alliance was challenged by the PAS, it adopted a separate manifesto. It emphasized all that it was doing to further the cause of Islam – building mosques, prayer houses and religious schools. In its campaigns, UMNO politicians stressed economic aid to Kelantan if it voted an Alliance government into power.<sup>15</sup>

The DAP offered the most vocal challenge to the Alliance and the premises on which it based its existence and success as a party. Its election manifesto was entitled, "Towards a Malaysian Malaysia," in itself reminiscent of the days when the People's Action Party of Singapore campaigned in the 1964 general elections, challenging the special position accorded to the Malays in Malaysia. The DAP outlined its triple objective as political democracy, social and economic democracy and cultural democracy. No race should exercise political, social or cultural hegemony over the others and the development of a Malaysian culture should not proceed from the hegemony of any one culture. It asked for the abandonment of the approach which divided the country into bumiputras and non-bumiputras, instead of the haves and have-nots.<sup>16</sup> All this challenged the premises on which the Alliance had governed Malaysia for twelve years – a recognition of the special position of the Malays as the bumiputras or the sons of the soil, and an assertion that Malay culture must form the basis for the development of Malaysian culture. Though the DAP tried to project its image as non-communal, its leadership and membership is predominantly Chinese, and many people in Malaysia regard it as a Chinese party projecting Chinese interests. It gets support predominantly from urban non-Malay areas and its members are concentrated in urban west coast states.<sup>17</sup> Its leadership is Chinese, its most vocal spokesmen were its (then) Secretary General Goh Hock Guan, and its organizing Secretary, Lim Kit Sieng.

The manifesto of the Gerakan revealed the idealistic and intellectual approach of its leadership. As a non-communal party, it rejected both the compromise of the Alliance, as well as the DAP's insistence on equality between all the races. It stressed the objective of striving for a

Malaysian nationhood evolved out of existing communities in Malaysia. The process of evolution of a nation should be left to natural forces of historical growth with a common experience and a common destiny being the decisive essentials of nationhood rather than a common dress or religion.<sup>18</sup> In its statement of policy the Gerakan expressed its disillusionment with the efforts of the Alliance Party to integrate the various communal interests, and to improve the condition of the Malays.<sup>19</sup> The Gerakan tried to project a broad, non-communal socialistic appeal, without limiting itself to a specific racial group. Due primarily to the personal charisma and popularity of its leaders like Dr Tan Chee Khoon, Professor Syed Hussein Alatas and Lim Chong Eu, it approached the elections with confidence. In Penang where the Gerakan received massive support, it took up the issues of the implementation of the Master Plan for Penang – free port status for Penang and the Penang-Butterworth Bridge.<sup>20</sup>

The PPP projected a non-communal stand, but it drew support predominantly from Chinese, Indians and Ceylon Tamils. Moreover, it was a Perak based party and its membership and support came only from Perak, generated largely by the personalities of the two Seenivasagam Brothers, S.P. and D.R., in Ipoh. In its manifesto, the PPP stressed education and language policies. It asked for a review of the education policies – the mechanism of instruction should be in accordance with the wishes of the parents, and Chinese and Tamil should be recognized. It criticized the UMNO for using Malay special rights to consolidate its own position.

The Malay challenge to the Alliance came from the PAS and the party Rakyat. Both depended on the rural Malays for support, but their membership, leaders and platforms were very different. The PAS as a Malay Muslim party made no pretence at projecting a non-communal stand. It campaigned for an Islamic State, with an Islamic approach. Its appeal to the Malay electorate was that it would go much further towards protecting Malay interests than the Alliance which was bound by its compromise with the Chinese and the Indians.<sup>21</sup> To counteract UMNO promises of aid to Kelantan, it decried greed for power, and accused UMNO of using lottery money to finance mosques and schools. It emphasized its stand as a Muslim Kelantan-based party.<sup>22</sup>

The Party Rakyat appealed to the rural masses and the have-nots, the majority of whom are Malays. As a leftist party, led by young intellectuals, it rejected a racial analysis and instead emphasized a class analysis. Its leftist orientation was evident in its manifesto which

rejected the "feudal imperialistic" approach of the Alliance and outlined the need for a new progressive economic system to replace the "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" one.<sup>23</sup> Ideologically the Party Rakyat is close to the Labour Party,<sup>24</sup> and for a brief period in mid-1968, the PR and Labour Party came close to another Alliance, but it did not last long. Within the Party Rakyat also, there was a split between the older group led by Ahmad Boestamam, and the younger leftists led by Kassim Ahmad. Boestamam opposed the merger with the Labour Party as he felt that the time was not opportune for such a merger. Ideological and tactical differences led to the resignation of Boestamam who formed the Party Marhaen.<sup>25</sup> He was succeeded by Kassim Ahmad as the Chairman of the Party.<sup>26</sup>

Political manifestoes apart, speeches and election rallies showed the pre-occupation and concern of the parties with issues regarding language and education. The National Language Act of 1967 had made Malay the National Language and no political party in 1969 came forward to challenge this. However, a lot of tension was generated by claims for the continued use of Chinese and Tamil. The DAP and PPP campaigned for multi-lingualism and the acceptance of Chinese and Tamil as official languages. The DAP wanted schools to have a common syllabus, but they should have the freedom to use the language of their choice. The Gerakan accepted the national language but asked for the "legitimate use of all languages." The PAS and Party Rakyat agreed on the use of Malay as a medium of instruction, but the PAS also wanted Islam to be a compulsory subject.<sup>27</sup> An explosive issue was the demand for "language" universities. The Chinese wanted the Merdeka University, with Chinese as the medium of instruction; the MIC campaigned for a Tamil University, while many Malay groups asked for a national university with Malay as the medium of instruction. The National University, Universiti Kebangsaan with Malay as the medium, received official approval on 8 September 1968. The Chinese and Tamil Universities did not receive sanction and the Chinese had to be content with the setting up of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College. The DAP and the Gerakan supported the demands, both for the Merdeka University and the National University.<sup>28</sup>

Other issues at party rallies and election speeches were, pre-occupations with corrupt practices and the use of money from foreign sources. The UMNO accused the PAS of receiving financial backing from the Communists<sup>29</sup> and was in turn accused of receiving money from foreign sources.<sup>30</sup> Pre-election campaigning was marred by the death of

a Chinese Labour party member shot by police as he was painting anti-election campaigns at Kepong on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur.<sup>31</sup> There was fear that this would lead to a racial clash, but it was averted.

As the polling day, 10 May 1969 approached, it became increasingly clear from the rallies, issues, debates, and the general mood of the country that the contest was going to be over the basic consensus that had been accepted in 1957. However, since none of the contesting parties could challenge or match the "national" image of the Alliance, political victory at the polls seemed certain for the Alliance. Only the Alliance had supported from all the eleven states of west Malaysia. The PAS drew support from east coast Malay states like Kelantan and Trengganu, the Party Rakyat had a limited appeal in states like Pahang; the DAP appealed only to the non-Malays, primarily in Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Penang; the Gerakan was untried and limited again to some states like Penang and Selangor, while the PPP drew support only in Perak. The opposition parties, moreover, did not come together to present a united challenge to the Alliance, though as the election approached, they began to have discussions on electoral pacts. The Serdang by-election where a three-cornered fight between the DAP, Gerakan and MCA led to the victory of the MCA jolted the opposition parties. Electoral agreements emerged in the form of spheres of influence – the Gerakan to concentrate in Penang with the DAP concentrating in Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore. The PPP was to concentrate on Perak with the Party Rakyat concentrating in rural areas of the west coast.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, there was some sort of an electoral understanding between the DAP and the PAS also.<sup>33</sup> The Labour Party's boycott of the election ensured that votes would not be split between the DAP and the Labour Party, as they drew support from the same areas.<sup>34</sup>

The Alliance had a major advantage over the opposition parties in that rural constituencies in Malaysia are heavily weighed and the Alliance (the UMNO section of it) draws support from the rural Malay areas. Many rural constituencies are much smaller than the urban ones, providing the rural constituencies with a strong representation. According to the Constitution, a new de-limitation reapportioning the country into 100 Federal Constituencies should have been done in 1964. This would have ensured a reasonably uniform number of registered voters in each constitution.<sup>35</sup> However, this was not done and the rural weightage continued.

**The Election Results**

On 10 May 1969, the peoples of West Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabha went to the polls to elect 144 members of the Dewan Ra'ayat and 362 members of the State Legislatures. (Table I). Elections in Sabah and Sarawak were to take place on 25 May and 7 June respectively. The opposition parties with the exception of the PAS and Party Rakyat put forward largely non-Malay candidates in the predominantly urban west coast states. (Table II). The election results showed major opposition gains at the expense of the Alliance. In West Malaysia, from its 1964 strength of 39 seats in Parliament and 240 in the State Assemblies, it came down to 66 seats in parliament and 167 seats in State Assemblies. The PAS got 12 parliament seats as against 9 in 1964 and 40 State seats as against 25 in 1964; the PPP got 4 parliament seats as against 2 in 1964 and 12 State seats as against 5 in 1964. The DAP and Gerakan which had not contested the 1964 elections won major gains — the DAP got 13 parliament and 31 State seats and the Gerakan 8 and 26 respectively. (Table III). Percentage-wise, the Alliance polled less than half of the valid votes cast — it polled 44.9 per cent of the overall vote in parliament elections, and 45.7 per cent in State elections;

*Table I***PARLIAMENT AND STATE REPRESENTATIVES 1969**

	Parliament	State
Perlis	2	12
Kedah	12	24
Kelantan	10	30
Trengganu	6	24
Penang	8	24
Perak	20	40
Pahang	6	24
Selangor	14	28
Negri Sembilan	6	24
Malacca	4	20
Johore	16	32
Total (West Malaysia)	104	282
Sabah	16	32
Sarawak	24	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>362</b>

*Source: Report of the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1969 of the States of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak (Kuala Lumpur, Election Commission, 1972. Hereafter referred to as 1969 Election Results).*

Table II

## MALAY AND NON-MALAY CONTESTANTS: 1969

	Seats where non-Malays contested		Seats where only Malays contested	
	Parliament	State	Parliament	State
Kelantan	0	0	10	30
Trengganu	0	1	6	22
Perlis	0	2	2	11
Pahang	1	9	5	15
Kedah	3	7	9	17
Johore	7	14	9	17
Negri Sembilan	3	17	3	17
Perak	12	21	8	19
Penang	6	18	2	6
Malacca	3	11	1	9
Selangor	11	18	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>163</b>

Source: FEER, vol. LXIV, no. 18, 1 May 1969, pp. 293-95.

the PAS got 20.9 per cent and 20.6 per cent respectively, while the DAP polled 11.9 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively, and the Gerakan polled 7.5 per cent and 7.8 per cent respectively (Table IV). More than half of the electorate had voted against the Alliance. The heaviest losses of the Alliance were in the urban areas, which had a high percentage of non-Malays — Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca. It also lost in the predominantly Malay States of Kedah and Trengganu (see Table III). The loss of control over Perak, Penang and Selangor was traumatic. In Selangor (which had the capital of Kuala Lumpur), a sensitive situation was created, when the Alliance lost its majority; the Alliance got 14 seats with the DAP getting 9, Gerakan 4, and 1 Independent seats. Had the Gerakan and DAP joined, they would have been in a position to put forward a non-Malay Chief Minister for the first time in the history of Selangor. Datuk Harun bin Idris (the Chief Minister of Selangor) announced he would consider a coalition with the Gerakan. The Gerakan's Secretary General, Tan Chee Khoon announced that the Gerakan would refuse to "sleep" with the "castrated" Alliance. Goh Hock Guan, the Secretary General of the DAP said that his party would consider a coalition with the Alliance if it made fundamental changes in its policies.<sup>37</sup> In Perak the Alliance lost its majority — it now had 19 seats as against 12 PPP, 6 DAP, 2 Gerakan and 1 PAS. The PPP announced its intention of forming a coalition

Table III

## SEATS WON BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT AND STATE ELECTIONS 1969

State	ALL		PAS		PR		PPP		DAP		GRM	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
Perlis	2(2)	11(11)	—(—)	1(1)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	—
Kedah	9(12)	14(24)	3(—)	8(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	2
Kelantan	4(2)	11(9)	6(8)	19(21)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	—
Trengganu	4(5)	13(21)	2(1)	11(3)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	—
Penang	2(6)	4(18)	—(—)	—(—)	—	1	—(—)	—(—)	1	3	5	16
Perak	9(18)	19(35)	1(—)	1(—)	—	—	4(2)	12(5)	5	6	1	2
Pahang	6(6)	20(24)	—(—)	—(—)	—	2	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	1
Selangor	9(12)	14(24)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	3	9	2	4
Negri Sembilan	3(6)	16(24)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	3	8	—	—
Malacca	3(4)	15(18)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	1	4	—	1
Johore	16(16)	30(32)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	1	—	—
Sabah	—(—)	—(—)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	—
Sarawak	7(—)	15(—)	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—(—)	—(—)	—	—	—	—
JUMLAH	74(89)	182(240)	12(9)	40(25)	—	3	4(2)	12(5)	13	31	8	26

P = Parliament  
S = State

(1964 General Election figures are given in brackets)

Source: 1969 Election Results, p. 115.

Table IV

PERCENTAGE OF VALID VOTES POLLED BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND INDEPENDENT  
CANDIDATES ON A MALAYSIAN BASIS

Party	OVERALL		IN CONTESTED CONSTITUENCIES	
	Parliamentary	State	Parliamentary	State
Alliance	44.9(58.5)	45.7(57.6)	45.8(58.5)	46.8(57.6)
Pan-Malayan Islamic Party	20.9(14.6)	20.6(15.2)	37.2(29.1)	35.6(29.1)
Party Rakyat	1.1	1.4	18.7	17.0
People's Progressive Party	3.4( 3.4)	4.2( 4.5)	55.9(34.4)	57.4(35.0)
Democratic Action Party	11.9	10.4	53.4	52.8
Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia	7.5	7.8	54.5	52.8
United Malaysian Chinese Organisation	0.1	0.1	2.9	3.2
Sarawak United People's Party	3.0	3.0	36.0	32.9
Sarawak National Party	2.7	2.5	28.7	25.1
United Sabah National Organisation	0.6	—	72.7	—
Sabah Chinese Association	0.8	—	71.2	—
Party Pesaka Sarawak	1.3	1.4	22.5	22.7
Socialist Front	— (16.1)	— (16.3)	— (24.9)	— (26.1)
United Democratic Party	— ( 4.3)	— ( 4.0)	— (15.3)	— (15.3)
People's Action Party	— ( 2.0)	— ( 0.9)	— (16.3)	— (13.9)
Party Negara	— ( 0.4)	— ( 0.4)	— (10.5)	— (10.2)
Independents	1.8( 0.7)	2.9( 1.1)	15.3(12.9)	15.7( 9.6)

(1964 General Election Figures are given in brackets.)

Source: 1969 Election Results, p. 121.



with Gerakan and DAP. In Penang the Alliance only got 4 seats, with the Gerakan getting 16, DAP 3, and Party Rakyat 1.

The election results and the gains of the non-Malay parties in the predominantly non-Malay urban areas indicated the rejection by the non-Malays, of the consensus that had been worked out between the leaders of the UMNO, MCA and MIC in the 1950s. The non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, seemed to be rejecting the mandate they had given to the MCA to negotiate on their behalf.<sup>39</sup> The MCA from its 1964 position of 27 parliamentary seats came down to 13 in 1969 (with 33 contesting).<sup>40</sup> It fared even worse in the state assembly elections. In Penang it lost all 6 seats, which it had won in 1964; in Selangor it won 1 as against 8 in 1964. The overall position of the MCA in the state elections was 26 seats out of 80 contested, as against its 1964 position of 67 successful seats of 82 contested. The MIC also fared badly in the state elections. It got 3 state seats out of 10 contested, as against its 1964 position of 10 successful seats out of 11 contested.<sup>41</sup> MCA losses were the gains of the Gerakan, PPP and DAP. Out of 29 Chinese members of parliament in 1969, only 13 represented the MCA.<sup>42</sup> Out of 10 Indian members of parliament elected in 1969, only 2 represented the MIC.<sup>43</sup> The UMNO-MCA-MIC consensus on vital issues like inter-ethnic relations, special rights for the Malays and language and education policies had broken down.<sup>44</sup> It was not parties within the Alliance, but outside it, which now claimed the right to frame the rules of inter-ethnic adjustment and compromise. Even if they did not specifically challenge the special position given to the Malays, they all asked for an enhanced role for the non-Malays – linguistically, culturally and economically. If the old "Alliance formula" was to survive, the Alliance would have to seek adjustment with these parties or change the rules of the game.

### **The Elections: Aftermath**

On 13 May, three days after the elections, the worst racial riots that independent Malaysia had ever known, broke out in Kuala Lumpur, leaving it paralyzed and stunned. It had been customary to refer to the lack of inter-racial strife in Malaysia. In retrospect, however, one can trace several cases of inter-racial conflict and tension. In the 1940s, after the Japanese surrender, there had been bitter clashes between the Malays and the Chinese (see Ch. I). In 1951 the Maria Hertog case led to racial riots in Singapore.<sup>45</sup> In 1964 ill-feeling due to the entry of the PAP in Malaysian politics led to violence on the occasion of a

procession on Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Twenty-two people were killed in riots at Bukit Mertajam in Penang, and Singapore. Through the 1950s and 1960s there were skirmishes in Kuala Lumpur between Malay authorities and non-Malay students, trade unionists and secret society members. In early 1965 there were skirmishes in Kuala Lumpur with defiant Chinese supporters of the Socialist Front protesting against the Internal Security Act and national military service.<sup>46</sup> In 1967 the devaluation of the currency in Penang led to a hartal and riots. This background of racial tension was evident in the atmosphere of early 1969 with elections in the offing. In a parliamentary debate on 4 February 1969, Dr Lim Chong Eu (Gerakan M.P. from Tanjong) stated:

Sir, ever since the formation of Malaysia we have had instances whereby on slight issues, or issues which probably were not foreseen, racial tension mounted and even racial clash takes place.<sup>47</sup>

In early 1969, Dr Tan Chee Khoo, the well-known Gerakan leader outlined communal harmony as one of the most important problems facing the country at that stage.<sup>48</sup> In parliament there were frequent references to the riots of 1967 in the context of the approaching elections.<sup>49</sup> The riots, however, that erupted after the elections were much worse than the Penang riots of 1967.

The unexpected gains of the opposition parties, following the elections of May 1969, led to victory demonstrations on 11 and 12 May in Kuala Lumpur staged by the DAP and the Gerakan, described as "noisy, racially provocative and intimidating." They shouted slogans such as "Mati Melayu Sakai Pergi Masok Hutan" (Death to the Malays, aborigines go back to the jungle); "Melayu sekarang tia ada kuasa lagi" (Malays have lost power), "Ini negeri bukan Melayu punya" (This is not a Malay country).<sup>50</sup> The Malays, faced with massive non-Malay gains in Selangor, decided to demonstrate Malay solidarity by organizing an UMNO victory procession. The Malays were to congregate at the residence of the Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of Selangor by 7 P.M. on 13 May. While they were assembling, news reached them that some would-be participants in the procession had been attacked by the Chinese in the Setapak area. Tempers rose, and the Malays ran "amuk" (on a rampage). Rioting spread to the central areas of Kuala Lumpur, to Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Campbell. The *Straits Times* of 14 May (Kuala Lumpur edition) reported that trouble began at 6.30 P.M. when groups of youth at Kampong Bahru set 2 lorries ablaze after

ordering the occupants to get down. Soon people had collected at Jalan Pekeliling with *parangs* and sticks, roaming the streets and attacking vehicles. Officially the riots were to result in 196 dead, 180 wounded by firearms and 259 injured by other weapons. As a racial group, the Chinese were the worst affected—of 196 dead, 143 were Chinese.<sup>51</sup>

The official reports on the riots recognized the seriousness of the racial problem in the country and the inadequacy of measures taken in the past to cope with it.<sup>52</sup> It came down heavily on the opposition parties assigning to them a major share of the responsibility for instigating the riots. Tunku Abdul Rahman levied immediate responsibility for the riots on the opposition parties which had transgressed the limits of democratic politics.<sup>53</sup> Malay politicians like Tun Dr Ismail voiced the unspoken fear of the Malays that their rights were not only being challenged by the non-Malays, but would also be destroyed.<sup>54</sup> Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad pointed to the fear of the Malays that if the non-Malays took over the country, they would be very hard on the Malays.<sup>55</sup>

Along with the opposition parties, the Communists in Malaysia were also blamed for the riots. Tunku Abdul Rahman not only blamed the Communists, but sought to establish links between them and the opposition parties.<sup>56</sup> The official report on the riots blamed the communist agents, secret societies and the communist extremists. It outlined the history of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) to show its exploitation of economic and social issues to create disorder, mentioning the riots in Penang in 1967, tension in 1968 when 11 Chinese and 2 Malays were sentenced to death for treasonable activities during the "Confrontation," and the incident of 24 April 1969 when an UMNO party worker was murdered by "subversive elements."<sup>57</sup> However, the Government was not able to produce any concrete evidence to substantiate its allegations against the communists. A press conference was held on 19 May by Tun Dr Ismail to show journalists the weapons captured during the riots in order to prove that the communists were involved. The evidence indicated however that the communists could not have been involved as there were only some home-made bombs and no firearms.<sup>58</sup> As a matter of fact, it seems that the MCP was caught totally unaware. The first monitored MCP reaction to the riots was as late as 21 May, where it blamed the Malaysian Government for creating the incidents to bolster up its unstable reactionary rule, and interpreted the riots as a class struggle against imperialism.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, in a multi-racial country like Malaysia, it was not to the advantage of the MCP, which was primarily Chinese to exploit the racial issue.

The underlying causes of the riots have to be looked for elsewhere

The underlying causes of the riots have to be looked for elsewhere – in Malay frustrations and in the power struggle within the UMNO. Many of the younger members of the UMNO felt that it was the Government's policy of appeasing the Chinese and its belief that "the Malays wished only to become government servants" that led to wrong assumptions and premises which created racial friction.<sup>60</sup> There was increasing fear and discontent amongst the Malays about the economic power of the non-Malays, specially the Chinese. Some well known writers like Shahnnon Ahmad, Abdul Rahim Kajai, and Ishak Haji Muhammad were active in a movement to develop a Malay radical-nationalist movement, which started as a result of Malay concern over the growing economic power of the non-Malays. This is reflected in Shahnnon Ahmad's *Menteri* (the Cabinet Minister) published in 1967:

This is 1967 ... all the brown skinned people have been driven out. They had to run away to open up new land outside the city. The city's not safe for them to live in. Too many dragons have their dens there. Dragons who lived prolifically. Dragons who like to swallow up brown skinned people. Don't you understand?<sup>61</sup>

In *No Harvest but a Thorn*, the same author expresses the fear of Malay peasants, through Lahuma, the Malay peasant of Banggul Derdap:

Our great grand-children will be beggars. There would be more and more mouths to feed, but the ancestral land would not increase by an inch. There had once been twenty relongs. Six had fallen into Chinese hands. Fourteen relongs were left to support the coming generations.<sup>62</sup>

In Malaysia, there has been, and there is, great disparity between Malay and non-Malay incomes.<sup>63</sup> Since 1967 there had been a severe decline in commodity prices, particularly for rubber; decline in incomes, unemployment, sluggish spending, and the slowing down of the rate of capital formation in the private sector. The incidence of unemployment was particularly high in the age groups fifteen to twenty-four. A survey of six major urban areas in West Malaysia showed 11.2 per cent unemployment in 1968 as compared to 9.6 per cent in 1962.<sup>64</sup> By 1969 there was a discernible trend – a growing population and the migration of a large number of Malays to the urban areas, specially Kuala Lumpur. Between 1957 and 1970, the population of

Malaysia rose from 7.4 million to 10.5 million.<sup>65</sup> The population of Kuala Lumpur grew from 315,000 in 1957 to over 750,000 in 1967. In the early stages of migration, the Malays were absorbed in traditional occupations but more and more, they began to be registered on the Kuala Lumpur Unemployment Exchange.<sup>66</sup> By mid-1968, unemployment in Malaysia had risen to 6.8 per cent;<sup>67</sup> by 1970 it was nearly 8 per cent in the urban areas with the Malays forming 9.6 per cent of those unemployed.<sup>68</sup> From about 105,000 unemployed in 1966, the number had risen to over 140,000 in 1969.<sup>69</sup> Employment surveys showed that employment opportunities were not expanding fast enough to absorb the young and largely unskilled labour force which was entering Kuala Lumpur. Thus ethnic competition over jobs which had been avoided amongst the older working groups was beginning to emerge in the younger unemployed groups.<sup>70</sup> Combined with unemployment was overcrowding in squatter settlements increasing the strain of urban living. The rural immigrants tended to congregate in areas of their own ethnic concentrations – the Chinese in Chinatown, the Malays in Kampong Bahru and the Indians in Sentul and Brickfields. Instead of accelerating social change, urbanization seemed to have intensified communal attitudes.<sup>71</sup> Against this background it is easy to understand, that with bands of Malays and Chinese organized for victory demonstrations, once trouble started, it spread rapidly. Some of the worst affected areas were the fringe areas of the Chinese and Malay neighbourhoods.<sup>72</sup>

Urban discontent showed itself in a rejection of the traditional leadership which had not delivered the goods. In the urban constituencies the opposition scored heavily against the Alliance candidates. Approximately two-thirds of the urban votes went to the opposition parties.<sup>73</sup> A great cause of anxiety for UMNO supporters was the loss of control over some predominantly Malay areas. In Ampang, a state constituency of Selangor, where the Malays were in a majority (Malays 51.6 per cent, Chinese 42.7 per cent and Indians 5.0 per cent) a DAP Chinese defeated a Malay UMNO candidate. (DAP got 7634 votes, UMNO 6601 and PAS 3560 votes.)<sup>74</sup> If this trend continued, it would lead to a serious polarisation of Malay/non-Malay lines which would paralyze political life.

In the wake of the riots two theories gained currency in Kuala Lumpur – one, that the riots were engineered by some sections of the Malay leadership in order to nullify the political effects of the elections; second is the belief that if not actually engineered, they were allowed

to develop in order to wrest leadership from Tunku Abdul Rahman and his supporters who had compromised on vital issues, to the detriment of the Malay community. Though it is not possible to substantiate beliefs and attitudes, it is necessary to examine them, for they have left a permanent impact on inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia.

Many non-Malays, among them prominent opposition leaders and well known journalists present in Kuala Lumpur during the riots, hold that the riots were created by the extremist members of the UMNO, led by the Chief Minister of Selangor, Datuk Harun bin Idris.<sup>75</sup> When the Selangor election results were announced, Datuk Harun's own position was very shaky as the Alliance had got only 14 seats out of 28. In the wake of the non-Malay jubilant processions, a victory demonstration was planned to demonstrate Malay strength. Critics point out that the Malays who congregated at Datuk Harun's residence on 13 May came armed with *parangs* (choppers) which should not have been necessary if it was only a victory parade. Curfew passes to essential services like Radio and Television, and senior Government officers had been issued as early as 4 May seemingly in preparation of the "incident."<sup>76</sup> When the trouble started, no quick and effective action was taken to quell the riots, and journalists present filed reports of non-Malays being on the defensive, not only against the Malay rioters but also against Malay authorities of law and order.<sup>77</sup> None of this is conclusive evidence, but what is significant is the belief, widely held, which shaped attitudes and reactions.<sup>78</sup> Lim Kit Siang, the organizing secretary of the DAP stated in Parliament, the belief of many non-Malays, "The country and the world know some of the leaders of the ruling party who have been responsible for the May 13 racial riots."<sup>79</sup>

The events following the riots do indicate that the situation was used to consolidate political power in the hands of the Malays, and to bring to the fore new leadership, both within the UMNO and at the helm of government which was more attuned to the needs and demands of the Malays. Following the riots there were a number of letters circulated within UMNO, and also publicly, expressing dissatisfaction with the traditional leadership. They all emphasized the need for change and the need to concentrate power in Malay hands, so that it could not be challenged in future. The tone of the letters was bitter, asking for the resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman and an end of the policies he had followed. The charges levied were that the "wrong policies" of the leaders had led to the "running amuck" of the Malays — the compromising attitude of the Tunku had led to the deprivation of the Malays as

compared to the non-Malays.<sup>80</sup> The letter of the Students Action Front concluded with:

We believe that the full implementation of the policies on education, Malay language, and Article 153 as an Act of National Economic Policy firmly based on the Constitution of Malaysia, would contribute towards national unity and the formation of a Malaysian nation.<sup>81</sup>

Raja Mukhtaruddin Dazin's letter also emphasized the need for a rational Malay philosophy, based on language, religion and the economic security of the Malays, the bumiputras, as distinct from the Kaum MENDATANG (Immigrant race).

The movement for the change in leadership was spear-headed by a group of young UMNO politicians led by Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad,<sup>82</sup> Musa Hitam,<sup>83</sup> and Tengku Razaleigh.<sup>84</sup> They were supported by some older members like Syed Nasir<sup>85</sup> and Ja'afar Albar.<sup>86</sup> These have been commonly referred to as the "ultras." It is elucidative here to refer to the Tunku's own statements on the power struggle between the UMNO. According to him the struggle for power had started about two years prior to the riots, between those who had built the party and the "ultras" who believe that "this country belongs only to the Malays and to the Malays only."<sup>88</sup> They were "hungry for power" and "were prepared to go a long way for a show down."<sup>89</sup> He also seems to imply that the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak was aware of the machinations.

... it must be admitted that he felt a bit small to be my deputy for so long and being an ambitious man, he would no doubt have liked to take over as Prime Minister. It was those around him who started to build his image and tried to belittle me.<sup>90</sup>

The Tunku's belief that the struggle was only for an assertion of Malay power was supported by leftist thinkers in Malaysia. Lim Kean Siew (Chairman of the Labour Party) and Kassim Ahmad, Chairman of the Party Rakyat expressed the view that the opposition to the Tunku was largely unideological and took the form of narrow nationalism.<sup>91</sup> According to the Tunku many of the "ultras" were willing to see an end to monarchy.<sup>92</sup> They also articulated the need for widespread nationalization of certain industries, exchange controls and regulation

of profits.<sup>93</sup> This was aimed more at the Chinese control of the economy than a change in the system.

The demand for a change in the leadership and policies, was also strong among Malay students in Kuala Lumpur, at the University of Malaya and at the Majlis Amanah Ra'ayat (MARA Institute of Technology), a predominantly Malay institute. These came out vociferously in support of Dr Mahathir's call for the resignation of the Tunku. At the University of Malaya, Dr Mahathir got a standing ovation along with cries of "Down with the bastard Tunku."<sup>94</sup> In July 1969, nine Malay youth leaders claiming to represent 25,000 Malay students gave an interview to four foreign correspondents. They asked for the resignation of the Tunku, and for an all-Malay government with the Chinese barred from taking part. Power and privilege was to be in Malay hands. Citizenship and the right to vote would be taken away from the Chinese.<sup>95</sup> These views, though extreme, attracted attention and support. After the elections, the MCA President announced the resignation of all MCA ministers from Federal and State Cabinets because of the MCA's poor showing in the elections. Significantly, there was little protest from the UMNO leadership at this move, while the "ultras" welcomed the move. Pressure to rejoin the government came from the Chinese community, which was now left without any official representation. When MCA rejoined, MCA Ministers were given ranks of Ministers without portfolio.<sup>96</sup>

Events following the riots seem to bear out the theory that the atmosphere created by the riots was used to bring about a change in leadership and an acceleration of Malay-based policies. On 15 May 1969 a Proclamation of Emergency under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution was issued by the Yang di Pertuan Agong. A strict censorship was imposed on the Press and many opposition leaders were arrested. On 17 May 1969, a special proclamation by the Yang di Pertuan Agong under the Emergency Powers created a National Operations Council (NOC). Tun Abdul Razak was appointed the Director of the NOC, with the Tunku acting in an advisory capacity. The NOC was to coordinate the work of the Civil Administration, Military and Police, and was to have full responsibility of administration under the Emergency. The Cabinet was named the Emergency Cabinet and made subordinate to the NOC. In the states, State Operation Councils were set up, under the NOC. On 21 July, a National Goodwill Council was set up to work on inter-ethnic relations and in January 1970, a National Consultative Council (NCC) was set up under the chairmanship of Tun Razak. This



had a broad spectrum of members — Mentri Besars, representatives of political parties (except DAP), religious groups, professionals and members from the NOC. However, the focal point of decision making during this period when parliament was suspended (May 1969 to February 1971) was the NOC. Its membership was overwhelmingly Malay.<sup>97</sup> In this sensitive and politically formative period it was the NOC which ran the country, and made all important decisions. There was an Emergency Cabinet, but it was subordinate to the NOC<sup>98</sup> which in the absence of parliament was not "responsible" to anybody. The non-Malays were inadequately represented on the NOC and that too by leaders who had lost the confidence of their parties, the MCA and MIC. Their political bargaining power had been considerably reduced in that they could not effectively protect the right of their own communities.<sup>99</sup> There was also the feeling among many UMNO members that as the MCA and MIC leadership would no longer organize support from their own ethnic groups, the *raison d'être* for the coalition between UMNO, MCA and MIC, no longer existed. In a statement which was deeply resented, Tun Ismail declared that it would be better if the UMNO were to break with the two Alliance partners if they continued to be neither dead nor alive.<sup>100</sup>

The Malays, however, had new leadership projecting a fresh approach. Though the Tunku remained the Prime Minister, real power lay in the hands of the Director of the NOC, Tun Abdul Razak, and his Malay advisers. Their public statements during this period indicated their disillusionment with past policies. In a preface to the NOC report on the 13 May riots, Tun Razak admitted that the racial problem in the country was a serious one and measures taken in the past to cope with it had not proved adequate, and outlined future policy as the entrenchment of the special rights of the Malays.<sup>101</sup> Ghazali Shafie<sup>102</sup> expressed similar disenchantment with earlier policies which had ignored inconvenient facts and problems. He emphasized that the policies of the country had been and must remain, for the foreseeable future, native based, that was the secret of our stability and our prosperity, and that is a fact of political life which no one can simply wish away. It must be a native base which believes not in false compromises or compulsions, but in cooperation with all the other races in the country. False compromises will lead us nowhere or rather it may lead us to a May 13.<sup>103</sup>

Pressures were being built up at various levels to ensure Malay hegemony. One of the demands after the riots was for the expansion of the armed forces loyal to the Malays,<sup>104</sup> and soon after it was announced that three new army battalions would be formed.<sup>105</sup> The time table for the expansion of the armed forces was revised and accelerated. Malaysian armed forces strength increased from about 22,000 men in 1963, to more than 60,000 in 1973.<sup>106</sup> The Royal Malay Regiment was expanded from 10 to 13 battalions with plan for continued growth. The Royal Malay Regiment contains the bulk of all ground forces strength and is reserved for Malays only.<sup>107</sup> The Chief of the Armed Forces Staff, General Tunku Osman Jawa was given a seat and a policy say in the NOC. The Armed Forces Council which runs the administrative side of the defense operations was overwhelmingly Malay. In 1971, 8 out of 10 members were non-Malays.<sup>108</sup>

Politically, pressures could be seen to re-organize UMNO in keeping with new trends and policies. Soon after the riots, campaign directors of UMNO met and suggested that Syed Nasir bin Ismail (a strong advocate of making Malay the sole language) should be made Education Minister, and Inche Khir Johari should be made Finance Minister (a position traditionally held by the Chinese).<sup>109</sup> At the UMNO General Assembly in January 1971, a youth delegation called for the closing down of all Chinese and Tamil schools in the country.<sup>110</sup> At the UMNO elections held in January 1971, overwhelming support was given to those who had been dubbed as "ultras," asserting "Malay-based" policies. Datuk Harun was elected UMNO Youth President, Syed Nasir and Syed Ja'afar Albar got massive support (the latter received the second highest number of votes for membership in the Executive Council); Musa Hitam was elected to the UMNO Executive Council;<sup>111</sup> and Inche Khir Johari who as Minister of Education was criticized for not implementing the National Education Policy, lost his post as Vice-President. At the UMNO assembly, a "new order" was seen to be emerging as opposed to the "old order."<sup>112</sup> The trend of events since the riots indicated the assertion of Malay rights. When in January 1973, Tun Ismail died, the obvious choice Tun Ten Siew Sin was passed over for the post of Deputy Prime Minister, and Hussein Onn was appointed. There were to be no compromises any more — Malays would rule in a Malay land. In May 1969, an attempt had been made to question the nature of the consensus that had been evolved in Malaysia since the 1950s. The partial success of the challenge, as seen in the election results, brought to the fore Malay fears of losing out to non-Malays.

The result was not a change in the consensus formula, but a strengthening and consolidation so that it would not be challenged again.

## NOTES

1. Editorial, *Straits Times*, Singapore, 5 May 1969.
2. Special rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Chapter I has discussed these.
3. *Strait Times*, Singapore, 11 April 1969.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 11 May 1969.
6. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, (hereafter referred to as *FEER*), vol. LXIV, no. 18, 1969, pp. 293-95.
7. Editorial, *Straits Times*, Singapore, 1 January 1969.
8. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 19, 8 May 1969, p. 330.
9. *The May 13 Tragedy: A Report*, hereafter referred to as NOC Report, Kuala Lumpur, The National Operations Council, October 1969, p. 12. The implication was that the Labour Party which had decided to boycott the elections was involved.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
11. Henceforth the parties will be referred to as the Alliance, PAS, PPP, DAP, Gerakan and Party Rakyat.  
A new party, United Malaysian Chinese Organization (UMCO) based in Seremban under the presidency of Chin See Yin also contested the election but it made no dent on the political scene.  
The elections in Sabah and Sarawak will be discussed in Chapter V as they did not have a direct bearing on the events which are being discussed in this chapter.
12. Article 153 deals with the special rights of the Malays. See Chapter I for details.
13. In West Malaysia the non-Malays are concentrated in the urban west coast states while the bulk of the Malays live in the rural east coast areas. See Table I, Chapter I.
14. "An Even Deal for All," *Alliance Party Manifesto*, Kuala Lumpur, Alliance Party Headquarters, 1969.
15. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 13 April 1969.
16. The Democratic Action Party, *Towards a Malaysian Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya, 1969.
17. Communal breakdown of DAP Membership in various States:

	Total	Malays	Chinese	Indian	%age
Selangor	320	11	261	43	5
Perak	323	95	138	40	-
Johore	290	54	216	20	-
Negri Sembilan	318	13	281	22	2
Penang	55	-	47	5	3
Malacca	59	7	39	6	7
Pahang	11	1	10	-	-
Total	1376	181	1042	136	17

- Chin Fook Kiong, *An Analysis of the DAP in the 1969 General Election*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1969, p. 60.
18. Jeffrey Francis, "Malaysia's Voters," *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 4 May 1969.
19. Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia: Statement of Policy, November 1968, in Roger M. Smith, ed., *Southeast Asia: Documents of Political Development and Change*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1974, pp. 283-84.
20. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 14 April 1969.
21. Choong Lai Huat, *Communalism and the 1969 General Elections: A Study of Political Manifestoes*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1970, p. 27.
22. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 15, 17 April 1969, p. 122.
23. R.K. Vasil, *The Malaysian General Election of 1969*, Oxford University Press, 1972.
24. The Party Rakyat and Labour Party had combined to form the Socialist Front, which dissolved in January 1966.
25. The word, *marhaen*, had been used by Sukarno in an article published in 1932, "Political and Economic Democracy." He used it to describe the suffering people of Indonesia, the have-nots, "the little men, peasants, traders, labourers and sea-men." C.L.M. Penders, *The Life and Times of Sukarno*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1974, pp. 46-47; Bernard Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*, Mary F. Somers Heidhues translated, Cornell University Press, 1969, pp. 43-45. Boestamam, too, used "marhaen" in the same sense i.e. to denote the have-nots.
26. Boestamam explained that he resigned when young "doctrinaire" leaders like Kassim Ahmad got control over the party.
27. Francis, "Malaysia's Voters". Also useful is the discussion in Huat, *Communalism and the 1969 General Elections*.
28. The issue of the Merdeka University showed up the ambiguous position of the MCA vis-a-vis the Chinese electorate. It could not publicly support the demand for the University as it would not be in keeping with Government policy on education and it, thus, lost support to the DAP which openly campaigned for it.
29. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969, p. 36.
30. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 20 January 1969.
31. *The Times*, London, 5 May 1969.

The Labour Party boycotted the 1969 elections on the issue of the detention of many of its members under the Internal Security Act.
32. *FEER*, vol. LXIII, no. 13, 27 March 1969, p. 615.
33. Tunku Abdul Rahman spoke of it as the "unholy alliance of DAP, PPP, Gerakan and PMIP." Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, pp. 34-36. The electoral understanding did not always work very well, as for instance when the Gerakan failed to surrender the seat of Dhobby Ghaut in Penang to the PPP. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 15,

3 April 1969, p. 86.

34. Most states which supported the Labour Party in 1964 supported DAP in 1969. Kiong, *An Analysis of the DAP*, p. 60.

35. *FEER*, vol. LXIII, no. 9, 27 February 1969, p. 359.

36. The breakdown is as follows:

Electorate of West Malaysia: 3,302,184

Electorate of Sabah: 208,861

Electorate of Sarawak: 332,737

Table — Parliament and State representation — attached. *Report of the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1969, of the States of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak* (hereafter referred to as 1969 Election Results), (Election Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 1969).

37. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 13 May 1969.

Tan Chee Khoo later explained that the Gerakan decided against a merger with PPP and DAP as it would have led to further polarization on Malay/non-Malay lines when communal passions were running strong. (Interview with Tan Chee Khoo, Kuala Lumpur, 13 March 1978).

38. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 13 May 1969. For results of state elections, see Table III.

39. The MIC did not have the bargaining strength of the MCA. The Indian community is not as numerous or as prosperous as the Chinese in Malaysia. In 1969 MIC had put up only 3 candidates as against 68 from UMNO and 33 from MCA.

40. Martin Rudner, "The Malaysian General Election of 1969 — A Political Analysis," *Modern Asian Studies*, London, vol. IV, 1970, pp. 1-21.

41. Coh Cheng Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 14-15; Vasil, *The Malaysian General Election*, p. 73.

42. Rudner, *The Malaysian General Elections*.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Many successful non-Malay candidates won by large majorities against their Malay opponents, revealing the extent of their dissatisfaction. In Tenjong, Lim Chong Eu (Gerakan) in a tripartite contest won by a majority of 15,160 votes (Gerakan: 19,656, Alliance: 4,496, PPP: 775). In Dato Kramat, V. David (Gerakan) defeated an Alliance candidate (17,272: 5,635). In Larut Selatan, Ng Hoe Hun (Gerakan) defeated an Alliance Minister, Lim Swee Aun, in a tripartite contest (15,641: 10,774: 4,962). In Ipoh, R.C. Mahadevarayan (PPP) defeated an Alliance candidate (23,979: 5,231). In Monglembu, S.P. Seenivasagam (PPP) defeated an Alliance candidate (29,089: 6,818). In Batu, Dr. Tan Chee (Gerakan) defeated an Alliance candidate (22,720: 8,772). In Malacca, Lim Kit Siang defeated an Alliance candidate (18,562: 7,346). In Bungsar, Goh Hock Guan defeated an Alliance candidate (37,050: 9,468).

Some ministers of the Alliance government were defeated, and many others won only by small majorities. Lim Swee Aun (Minister of Commerce and Industry), Enche Senu bin Abdullah (Minister of Information and Broadcasting) and Dr Mahathir Mohamad, a member of the UMNO executive committee were all defeated. *1969 Election Results*, compiled from pp. 52-69.

45. Maria, the daughter of Dutch parents had been left with a Malay during the Japanese occupation. She was brought up as a Muslim and married to a Muslim. In 1951 her Dutch mother went to court challenging the validity of the marriage. The verdict invalidating the marriage was very unpopular, and led to riots.
46. Felix V. Gagliano, *Communal Violence in Malaysia, 1969: The Political Aftermath*, Ohio University, Southeast Asia Series, No. 13, 1971, p. 10.
47. Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. V, no. 30, 4 February 1969, p. 5539.
48. *Ibid.*, vol. V, no. 15, 15 January 1969, pp. 2702-3.
49. *Ibid.*, vol. V, no. 1, 12 June 1968, p. 1202.
50. Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, pp. 29-35.
51. *NOC Report*, pp. 88-90.

I have at the outset, deliberately presented the official report of the riots. Various interpretations and theories on the riots will be presented in a later context.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
  53. Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, p. 95.
  54. *The Sunday Times*, Singapore, 5 October 1969.
  55. Bob Reece in an interview with Mahathir bin Mohamad. *FEER*, vol. LXV, no. 38, 18 September 1969, pp. 698-700.
  56. Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, p. 105.
  57. *NOC Report*, p. 10.
  58. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 22, 29 May 1969, pp. 481-82.
  59. *Summary of World Broadcasts*, SWB, Great Britain, 21 May 1969, FR/3079/1.
  60. Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Pacific Press, 1970, p. 15.
  61. Professor C. Skinner, "A Note on Communalism in Malay Literature" in Lee Kam Hing, ed., *The May Tragedy in Malaysia*, Victoria, Monash University, 1969, pp. 33-39.
  62. Shahnnon Ahmad, *No Harvest but a Thorn*, translated by Abidah Amin, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 3.
- Relong or relung is a Malay measure of area.
63. Lim Lin Lean, *Some Aspects of Income Differentials in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Faculty of Economics & Administration, 1971, pp. 64-66. For a further discussion, see Chapter III.
  64. Speech by Minister of Finance, Tun Tan Siew Sin, Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. V, no. 15, 9 January 1969, pp. 2734-39.
  65. R. Chander, ed., *Population Census of Malaysia 1970*, Kuala

- Lumpur, Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1977, p. 268.
66. T.G. McGee, "Rural-Urban Migration in a Plural Society: A Case Study of Malays in West Malaysia," in D.J. Dwyer, ed., *The City As a Center of Change in Southeast Asia*, Hong Kong, University Press, 1972, pp. 108-24.
  67. *Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East*, Bangkok, U.N., 1970, p. 248.
  68. R. Chander, ed., *Population Census*, p. 420.
  69. *Statistical Yearbook 1976*, New York, U.N., 1977, p. 90.
  70. T.G. McGee, *The Urbanization Process in the Third World*, London, G. Bell and Sons, 1971, p. 125.
  71. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
  72. In a doctoral dissertation, Jerome Bass has pointed to the insecurity felt by the Malays at their anxiety at being relegated to an inferior position by the more aggressive Chinese. In mob violence, they have the tendency to run "amuk" — to lose control and pick on these around them. Hence the Victory parades of the Gerakan and the DAP triggered off violent reaction amongst the Malays. Jerome Bass, "Malaysian Politics 1968-1970: Crisis and Response." Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1973, pp. 277-78.
  73. Rudner, *The Malaysian General Election*, vol. IV, pp. 21.
  74. Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident*, p. 16.
  75. Interview with Dr Tan Ghee Khoon (Kuala Lumpur), 13 March 1978; Interview with V. David (Kuala Lumpur), 23 March 1978 and Interview with Ahmed Boestamam (Kuala Lumpur), 30 March 1978.
  76. Alexander Garth, *Silent Invasion — the Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Macdonald and Co., 1973, p. 97, (This book is banned in Malaysia); Peter Simms, "A quiet Coup in K.L.," *Life* (Asia edn.), vol. 47, no. 2, 21 July 1969, pp. 7-8.
  77. The Royal Malay Regiment (RMR) which was brought in to quell the riots is a Malay Regiment. Bob Reece, "Requiem for Democracy," *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 21, 22 May 1969, pp. 437-38; Simms, "A Quiet Coup."
  78. Interview with M.G.G. Pillai (Kuala Lumpur), 18 February 1978.  
 In this context it was interesting to observe the events and reactions involving Datuk Harun's court case and arrest in Kuala Lumpur in February and March 1978. Datuk Harun had been convicted of corruption, forgery and criminal breach of trust. Pending an appeal to the Crown, UMNO youth members surrounded his residence refusing to allow police to enter to arrest him. The situation in Kuala Lumpur became very tense and a common topic of discussion was the fear of another May 12, when violence had broken out from Datuk Harun's residence. For further details of the Datuk Harun case, see *FEER*, vol. 99, no. 10, 10 March 1978.
  79. Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. III, no. 1, 30 May 1971, p. 4099.
  80. The more widely circulated of these letters were:

- a. Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad's (Member of UMNO Central Committee) letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman. According to Dr Mahathir only four copies of his letter were sent to the Tunku, Dr Ismail, Dato Harun and Musa Hitam.
  - b. Letter by Musa Hitam (UMNO's Executive Secretary) circulated within UMNO).
  - c. Letter by Raja Muktharuddin Dazin (Lecturer, University of Malaysia). "The Struggle by the non-Malays - Our Stand," (leaflet distributed to the Muslims attending the Friday Prayer at the National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur, 4 July 1969).
  - d. Letter by the Malayan Students Action Front, "Why Tunku Abdul Rahman should resign," Kuala Lumpur, August 1969.
81. *Ibid.*, (d).
  82. Dr Mahathir, a medical practitioner from Kedah was a Member of Parliament since 1964 for Kota Setar Selatan and a member of the UMNO's Central Committee was not elected to parliament in 1969.
  83. Musa Hitam, member of parliament and UMNO's Executive Secretary from August 1965 to May 1969. Elected M.P. for Segamat Utara in 1968 by-election.
  84. Tengku Razaleigh, leader of the UMNO Party in Kelantan, was son of the former Mentri Besar of Kelantan.
  85. Syed Nasir bin Ismail, was till 1968, Director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literature Agency). An ardent and vocal supporter of Malay as the sole national and official language.
  86. Syed Ja'afar bin Albar had been Secretary General of UMNO, and later, a member of the Central Committee. Led the UMNO confrontation with the People's Action Party of Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew. Resigned as UMNO Secretary General in 1965 when he demanded the arrest of Lee Kuan Yew.
  87. Musa Hitam expressed the view that they were referred to as "ultras" only because the older generation views the younger generation as extreme. Interview with Musa Hitam (Kuala Lumpur), 12 March 1978.
  88. Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, p. 137.
  89. Tunku Abdul Rahman expressed the opinion in *The Star*, Penang, 2 June 1975.
  90. Tunku Abdul Rahman, "Mahathir and I," *The Star*, 20 February 1978.
  91. *FEER*, vol. LXV, no. 38, 18 September 1969, pp. 697-98.
  92. Rahman, *May 13 Before and After*, p. 137.
  93. Derek Davies, "The Racial Balance Sheet," *FEER*, vol. LXV, no. 28, 10 July 1969, pp. 119-22.
  94. *FEER*, vol. LXVI, no. 32, 7 August 1969, p. 321.
  95. John Slimming, *Malaysia - Death of a Democracy*, London, John Murray, 1969, p. 71.
  96. In the Cabinet formed in August 1969, there were only 3 MCA Ministers - Tun Tan Siew Sin, Enche Khaw Kai Boh and Enche



Lee Siok Yee (All without portfolio).

97. Members of the NOC announced in June 1969 were:

Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Tun Ismail, Minister of Home Affairs.

Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, Chief of Civil Affairs.

Enche Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah, Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

Tan Mohammed Salleh, Inspector General of Police.

General Tunku Osman Jawa, Chief of the Armed Forces Staff.

Tun Tan Siew Sin, Minister without Portfolio.

Tun Sambanthan, Minister of Posts, Works & Telegraphs.

Umik Alsum bte Mohd. Noh, *The 13 May Since Malay Clashes, The Emergency and the NOC*, Kuala Lumpur, Graduation Exercise, University of Malays, 1979, p. 44.

98. Membership of the Emergency Cabinet was also overwhelmingly Malay.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister, in charge of Foreign Affairs, Culture and Youth Portfolios.

Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister, Director of Operations, Minister of Defence and Acting Minister of Finance.

Tun Dr Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, Minister of Home Affairs.

Tan V.T. Sambanthan, Minister of Works, Posts and Telecommunications.

Tan Sri Sardon, Minister of Health.

Enche V. Manickavasagam, Minister of Labour.

Haji Mohamed Ghazali bin Jawi, Minister of Agriculture.

Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'akub, Minister of Education.

Dato Ganie Gilong, Minister of Sabah Affairs.

Tan Sri Fatimah, Minister of Social Welfare.

Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah, Minister of Sarawak Affairs.

Enche Musa Hitam (Secretary General of UMNO), Assistant Minister to Tun Razak.

Dato Abdul Samad, Assistant Minister of National and Rural Development.

There were three Chinese Ministers without portfolio (n. 87). *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 21 May 1969.

99. Many of the Indians (particularly in Ipoh) interviewed, felt that the MIC leadership had "sold away" their rights.

100. *Straits Time*, Singapore, 18 January 1971. Tun Ismail's Political Secretary later clarified that it was meant to emphasize the defensive position of the MCA and the MIC on matters of language and special rights for Malays. *Straits Echo*, 19 January 1971.

101. NOC Report, p. 86.

102. Ghazali Shafie was permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Reputed to be a brilliant civil servant, and generally

believed to be one of the brains behind policy formulation at this time.

103. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 4 August 1969.
104. Letter by Dazin, "The Struggle by the Non-Malays."
105. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 22, 29 May 1969, p. 481.
106. Jeshuran Chandran, *The Growth of the Malaysian Armed Forces, 1963-1973*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Occasional Paper, no. 25, 1975, p. 4.
107. Malay representation in the army and police has always been weighted. Even though there are no ethnic restrictions on membership in any of the Royal Malay Police Regiments, the Malays have joined in much larger numbers. During the riots of May 1969, it was alleged by many of the foreign journalists in Kuala Lumpur that the predominantly Malay law and order enforcing authorities had shown discrimination. *FEER*, vol. LXIV, no. 21, 22 May 1969, pp. 437-38; *The Sunday Times*, London, 18 May 1969 and *Time*, New York, vol. 94, no. 3, 18 July 1969, p. 41.
108. Cynthia H. Encloe, "Malaysian Military in the Interplay of Economic and Ethnic Change" in John A. Lent, ed., *Cultural Pluralism in Malaysia*, Illinois, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1971, p. 28.
109. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 13 May 1969.
110. *Utusan Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur, 23 January 1971.
111. Soon after the riots, because of his involvement in the movement to make the Tunku resign, Musa Hitam had been dismissed as Assistant Minister to Tun Razak.
112. *Trends in Malaysia*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, July 1971, pp. 93-98.

## Chapter III

### A NEW POLITICAL MODEL

#### The Interregnum, 1969-1971

The quest in Malaysia since 1957 has been for a consensus on basic issues. In recognition of its unique ethnic arithmetic, Malay political leadership has sought to ensure Malay political predominance and Malay pre-eminence in language and educational policies. Till 1969, it seemed that consensus had been arrived at, as a result of arrangements between the leaders of the UMNO, MCA and MIC. The 1969 riots indicated that the consensus had broken down – it had been successfully challenged through the political process. To prevent the basic consensus from ever being challenged again, the political system, would have to undergo a change so that fundamental issues would be consolidated and placed beyond question or debate. The formative period which saw the shaping of policies was May 1969 to February 1971, when Parliament was suspended in Malaysia. Power was exercised by the National Operations Council (NOC) under its Director, directly responsible to the Prime Minister. The NOC dissolved itself when Parliament was reconvened in February 1971 and was replaced by the National Security Council (NSC). On 2 July 1969 the Government announced the setting up of the Department of National Unity. This was to study, in depth, racial problems with a view to finding solutions to complex problems. The department was set up by the Director of the NOC under his charge and was to be run by the Director of Establishment and the Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin. It was to have two main divisions – the Research Division and the Operational Division. The former was headed by Dr. Agoes Salim, while the latter was under the command of Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie.<sup>1</sup> Ghazali Shafie along with his team at the Department prepared drafts and submitted them to the National Consultative Council (NCC), a multi-member advisory body set up in 1969. After due deliberation in the NCC, a statement on fundamental principles, known as *Rukunegara*, was framed and officially proclaimed on 31 August 1970. The following

month saw the resignation of the Tunku on 22 September 1970. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Tun Abdul Razak with Dr. Tun Ismail as the Deputy Premier. In February 1971 Parliament was reconvened. The interregnum, however, had seen not only a change in leadership, but it also witnessed a conscious and forceful drive to arrive at a new political model and to define more explicitly the form of the consensus which must be accepted.

After the riots, real power lay in the hands of the NOC and the Emergency Cabinet. The membership of both bodies was overwhelmingly Malay.<sup>2</sup> After the resignation of the Tunku, a new cabinet was announced on 23 September 1970. Many of the members of the Cabinet were old timers who had been associated with the Tunku Government. Two important newcomers were Enche Hussein bin Onn as Education Minister and Ghazali bin Shafie as Minister of Information and Minister with Special Functions. Significantly, the MCA and MIC continued to be represented by their traditional leadership. Tun Tan Siew Sin was again appointed Finance Minister, while Tun Sambanthan was appointed Minister of National Unity and Tan Manickavasagam was appointed Minister of Labour and Man Power.<sup>3</sup> The political leadership at the helm was experienced and tried.<sup>4</sup> To some observers it seemed as if the most striking aspect of the new Cabinet was its continuance with the past as it contained many old faces.<sup>5</sup> To others, the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak appeared "new", "purposeful yet undramatic," "inflexible on the central issues of national unity and the fundamentals of Constitution and Rukunegara."<sup>6</sup> A more purposeful style of politics was being projected which showed impatience with policies followed till 1969. Tun Abdul Razak projected an image more Malay and more hard hitting than that of the Tunku.<sup>7</sup> He lacked the friendly rapport which Tunku Abdul Rahman had shared with Tun Tan Siew Sin, and Tun Sambanthan. This change of leadership was viewed as a "vital transition" which would lead to "changes in concept and approach."<sup>8</sup> In a message to the UMNO delegates Conference at Kluang Selatan, Tun Ismail emphasized that "The days of leadership based on the old principles are over."<sup>9</sup> The new leadership seemed intent on implementing a more Malay oriented policy.

The new Malay political leadership seemed to have arrived at a consensus as to the fundamental issues which needed to be specified and stated in Malaysia. An explicit indication of this was evident in the *NOC Report* published in October 1969. It stressed that Malaysia should find a solution which would guarantee that in future racial

sensitivities would not be provoked by the operation of normal democratic processes.<sup>10</sup> If the consensus of the 1950s on Malay language and Malay special rights was not upheld within the political system, it would be necessary to modify the system. The handicap system in the administration was a necessity, given the underprivileged position of the Malays.<sup>11</sup> The *NOC Report* in explaining its stand, gave the historical background and the circumstances which had led to the constitutional guarantee for the Malays to be written into the system. It emphasized that the Malays have no alternative homeland,<sup>12</sup> and stated:

The entrenched provisions in the constitution<sup>13</sup> are the result of agreement between all the communities in the country. They are the product of consultation and compromise. They represent binding arrangements between the various races in this country, and are the underpinnings on which the constitutional structure such as fundamental liberties, the making of Government and a score of other detailed provisions are built.<sup>14</sup>

It outlined the need for an understanding of the entrenched provisions, enactment of laws which would limit the right to question them and Amendments of the Constitution to protect them.<sup>15</sup> Malay special rights would have to be accepted as a permanent feature in Malaysia for hundreds of years to come.<sup>16</sup> Tun Razak rejected the idea of a time table for special privileges for Malays on the ground that it was a sensitive issue and on the assumption that once imbalances were corrected and people were happy, the question would not arise.<sup>17</sup> In reminding the younger generation of the non-Malays of the bargain that had been struck to ensure Malay special privileges, Tun Ismail expressed the deep seated fear of the Malays of being swamped in their own land:

The Malays must have absolute confidence that in a Malaysian Malaysia they will not be relegated to unimportant spheres of activity. As the indigenous people of this country they cannot be expected to be contented with, shall I say, the menial tasks.<sup>18</sup>

Non-Malays had forgotten this, and challenged it, through the electoral process in 1969. To ensure that this would not be repeated, restraints would have to be placed on Parliamentary Democracy. Consensus on this was reached within the NOC and is evident in the speeches and

statements of the leadership. In 1968, before the riots, Ghazali Shafie had distinguished between democracy as practised in the West resting on the multi-party system and electoral processes, and democracy which rested on a sense of national pride and purpose. In particular, he warned against those aspects of democracy which could be exploited by the self-serving, and lead to sterility.<sup>19</sup> Speaking at the opening of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Kuala Lumpur on 13 September 1971, Tun Abdul Razak explained explicitly the shape that the new Malaysian Democracy would take. In the first place he rejected the "Westminster model of Democracy"<sup>20</sup> as one which did not suit the environmental condition of Malaysia which lacked the homogeneous economic and social cohesion of developed countries. In Malaysia, restraints had to be imposed on "any completely liberal concept of democracy," for democracy had to be adapted to problems of communalism and militant communism. The riots of May 1969 focussed attention on the need for change. In the words of Tun Abdul Razak:

Certain vital priorities and issues emerged from this tragic passage in our history that could no longer be swept under the carpet. We had to think afresh in order to construct a political framework in an unshakeable and firm foundation consistent with the realities of our multi-racial society and our economic conditions. We could not use the Westminster yardstick of 1957 in Malaysia in 1971, as to do so would have been to miss a valuable lesson in history. We, therefore, had to give our people a new sense of direction and re-set the compass of our ship of state.<sup>21</sup>

Different environmental conditions and the lack of a strong social base were factors emphasized by Ghazali Shafie for the need to adapt British Democracy to Malaysian needs.<sup>22</sup> Parliament was re-convened in February 1971, but before that a conscious move was made to define and accept an ideology, which would incorporate within it the fundamentals of the Malaysian identity, sought to be projected. Also, Parliament was only re-convened when support had been obtained for the new political model.

#### **Projecting an Ideology: Rukunegara**

In the Afro-Asian experience, many new States emerging from colonialism to Independence had seen the need to formulate national

ideologies – slogans and symbols – to bind their disparate peoples together and to provide legitimacy to the Government. Till 1969, however, Malaysia had seemed to stand away from the experience. Her own emergence as a nation state had been untraumatic and smooth. There was little mention of an Ideological framework or base, and her leadership assumed a pragmatic style of politics which did not rely on myths and symbols to sustain it.<sup>23</sup> James B. Scott on the basis of exhaustive interviews conducted amongst Malaysian Administrators concluded that formal ideologies had little currency in Malaysia. His analysis was that this could be explained by the fact that there had not been a social upheaval of major proportions to create conditions for a new symbolic framework.<sup>24</sup> This is borne out by the attempt to state and formulate a set of fundamental doctrines after the riots of 1969 – to promote a sense of solidarity and identity.<sup>25</sup>

Since Malaya became independent the definition of an identity, Malayan or Malaysian had posed a problem. The demand had been vocalized by the non-Malays, of a broader Malaysian identity which had led to the exit of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation in 1965. The election results of May 1969 and the successes of the non-Malay parties were again posing a threat to the bumiputra position of the Malays. To the new Malay leadership it seemed necessary to define and project a national identity through an ideology, which would surmount national boundaries but accept the Malay core. In the weeks following the riots of May 1969, some basic issues were worked out in the NOC, the meetings of which were held in camera – the reassertion of the bumiputra position of the Malays, the implementation of Malay oriented economic and educational policies and the projection of a national ideology which would re-assert the Malay core of identity. On 18 July 1969, Ghazali Shafie (member of the NOC and the Department of National Unity) stated that Malaysia would have a national ideology, based on the Malaysian constitution and reflecting the Malaysian way of life. The stated aims of the ideology would be to provide principles, standards and norms; to reconcile contradictions and group conflicts and provide psychological satisfaction; and to transcend affiliations of race, religion, culture, class and political parties.<sup>26</sup> The Department of National Unity would assist the Director of Operators to formulate this ideology.<sup>27</sup> The draft by the Department of National Unity was submitted to a sub-committee of the NCC, under the chairmanship of Tun Tan Siew Sin, in June 1970. It was accepted on 28 August and on 31 August 1970 Rukunegara was formally presented by the

Yang di-Pertuan Agong.<sup>28</sup>

The word Rukunegara can be divided into two – Rukun and Negara – Rukun meaning fundamental doctrine and Negara state or nation.<sup>29</sup> Hence Rukunegara, literally, means the fundamental doctrines of the nation. Ghazali Shafie who as the foremost member of the Department of National Unity, is credited with the authorship of the Rukunegara explained that it should be regarded as the pillar of the nation, upon which the nation must be firmly established and it would be the duty of everyone to uphold and defend it.<sup>30</sup> Professor Syed Hussein Alatas points out that it is not ideology in the sense that it is the fully worked out philosophy and programme of a political party. Its function resembled that of the United Nations' Chapter on Agreement on Fundamentals, upheld by different political systems, parties and ideologies.<sup>31</sup>

The Rukunegara is in two parts – a statement of principles and a statement of beliefs and objectives. The five principles enunciated are:

- (i) Belief in God – Islam is the official religion but other religions and beliefs may be practised.
- (ii) Loyalty to King and country – loyalty to other countries is inconsistent with undivided loyalty to the nation.
- (iii) Upholding the constitution – it is the sacred duty of a citizen to uphold the constitution including the special provisions, relating to language and special rights.
- (iv) Rule of law – rights and liberties are assured but there is no right to overthrow the Government.
- (v) Good behaviour and morality – individuals and groups should conduct their affairs in such a manner that does not violate any of the accepted canons of behaviour. No citizen should question the loyalties of another citizen on the grounds that he belongs to another community.

The objectives of the Rukunegara are:

A united nation – a federal form of Government where national objectives are pursued consistent with the maintenance of states' rights.

A democratic society – power resting with the people through a constitutionally elected parliament. However there is no liberty to abuse democracy.



A just society – a fair and equitable distribution of the nations' wealth.

A liberal society – ensuring rich and diverse cultural traditions. A progressive society – oriented to modern scientific and technological values while not abandoning spiritual values.<sup>32</sup>

At first glance there does not seem to be anything new or revolutionary about the Rukunegara. It had no constitutional basis as it did not form a part of the constitution, though it did resemble the general guidelines expressed in the preambles of many constitutions or in Directive Principles of Policy.<sup>33</sup> What is new and significant about the Rukunegara is the definitive re-statement of the fundamental principles which should shape the ideology and the Malaysian identity, which must be accepted by all Malays and non-Malays. This must form the pillar or the base. Basically, what was being re-stated was the consensus of the 1950s. Islam was to be recognized as the official religion, Malay language and the special rights of the Malays were to be upheld, and non-Malays were warned that there must be loyalty only to Malaysia but were assured that loyalties would not be questioned on the basis of affiliation to a particular community. The Malay fear of being swamped, economically and politically, had fashioned the compromise of the 1950s and the same fear, after 1969, is reflected in the re-formulation of the compromise as a statement of fundamentals. Rukunegara was seen as a nation building, integrative force building the communities together with a common set of values.<sup>34</sup> The aim should be "a synthesis of thoughts, feelings and beliefs acceptable to all and applicable to all which will serve as the nexus binding everybody together."<sup>35</sup>

Some basic dichotomies were very evident. Emphasis was placed on a democratic society, yet constitutional constraints and constraints on freedom of speech were envisaged. Again emphasis was placed on a just society, but pre-eminent rights were given to one ethnic group. Cognizance was taken of the rich and diverse cultural traditions, yet it was sought to emphasize the Malay core of the Malaysian identity, rather than allowing circumstances to shape and evolve a Malaysian identity. The Rukunegara by stressing the native core emphasized again the Malay core of the Malaysian identity. Malay leadership emphasized three points:

(i) The national culture must be based on the culture of the original inhabitants of the region.

(ii) The Islamic religion must be an important element in the formation of a national culture.

(iii) Cultural elements from outside that were considered worthy or suitable could be used as elements in the national culture.<sup>36</sup> Malay leadership is quick to assert that there was an indigenous Malay culture before the arrival of the immigrants:

With regard to the Malay culture in particular, the general impression given is that it is nothing more than an extension of the rich Hindu and Buddhist culture from the Indian sub-continent, and later subjected to the influence of Islam brought about by Arab traders. The fact is that the "Malay" settlers were already here living in organised societies long before the advent of the early Indian immigrants to this region.<sup>37</sup>

The conscious and forceful efforts to define the Malay elements of the Malaysian identity were the result of post-1969 insecurities and trauma. To what extent however has the concept been accepted? Many non-Malays feel that the emphasis on Islam automatically isolates the non-Malays, the Chinese and the Indians, who are not Muslims. A significant trend of thinking makes a plea for diversity rather than uniformity to be made the philosophic base for a national culture.<sup>38</sup> Another view is that conscious effort should not be made to define or limit the national culture or identity, but it should be allowed to develop naturally.<sup>39</sup> Non-Malays are resentful that in the process of definition, their cultures are neglected and placed on the periphery of the Malay experience. Complaints are often expressed that Government controlled media like the television and radio neglect programmes in Chinese and Tamil.<sup>40</sup>

Ideologically, Rukunegara seems to have made little impact. The principle and objectives of Rukunegara grace Government office walls, and are recited on television ritually. Most non-Malays dismiss it as a Malay document, and hence it has been unable to project a national appeal, while ideologies in other third world countries have been used to inspire an emotional and psychological sense of unity and loyalty to the country.<sup>41</sup> What is important however is that the principles of the Rukunegara have been "entrenched" by means of constitutional amendments which immediately followed the re-convening of Parliament.

### **Constitutional Constraints**

Parliament was re-convened in February 1971, but not before rules and conditions were spelt out for its restoration. The need to limit Parliamentary Democracy had been stated and a restored parliament had to take cognizance of that, and enact legislation to put it into effect. On several occasions, before Parliament was re-convened, statements were made stressing emphatically that parliament would not meet until the following conditions were assured — stability and peace within the country and proper conduct by the opposition parties,<sup>42</sup> a voluntary sacrifice of some freedom and rights, and an agreement by members of Parliament to amend the Constitution so as to entrench sensitive issues like Malay rights.<sup>43</sup> It was also hinted that the outcome of the elections to be held in Sabah and Sarawak in July 1970 would indicate as to when parliament would be restored.<sup>44</sup> Obviously, if the Alliance did well and got the requisite two-thirds majority in Parliament to amend the Constitution, the chances for the restoration of Parliament were brighter. The Alliance needed 96 parliamentary seats to carry out amendments. When elections had been called off in May 1969, the Alliance had got 66 seats in West Malaysia and 10 in Sabah; to be contested were 1 seat in Malacca, 6 in Sabah and 24 in Sarawak. Elections held in Sabah and Sarawak in June and July 1970 gave the Alliance 6 parliamentary seats in Sabah and 7 in Sarawak. In January 1971 the Alliance won the Malacca seat and a Gerakan Member of Parliament, T.S. Gabriel defected to the Alliance.<sup>45</sup> By a process of manoeuvring, the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) joined the Alliance in a coalition.<sup>46</sup> Though the coalition was limited to the state the 5 SUPP members in the Parliament were expected to vote with the Alliance. The Alliance had reached the magic figure of 96 necessary for two-thirds majority. Just before Parliament met, Tun Ismail, the Deputy Prime Minister, explicitly told the non-Malays the conditions on which Parliament was being restored:

If there is no understanding on how to promote the Malays economically, it is better that we separate. If all the seats in the Universities and in other fields are monopolised by the non-Malays when will the Malays progress? Without a balanced economy there will be no Malaysian economy. Without a national language there will be no Malaysian Malaysia. The MIC, MCA and the UMNO have an understanding on the big issues.<sup>47</sup>

The rationale was that peace and stability would be ensured by a limited democracy<sup>48</sup> for if freedom was exploited, national Unity would be threatened.<sup>49</sup> This had been the theme since May 1969.

The first major task of the Alliance Government was to move the Constitutional Amendment Bill once Parliament met in February 1971. Basically, it did away with the right to question the constitutional compromise of the 1950s by entrenching the "sensitive issues." The major Amendments were: Article 10 was amended to empower parliament "to pass laws prohibiting the questioning of any matter, right, status, positions, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III (provisions relating to citizenship) of Article 152, 153 or 181."<sup>50</sup> Article 152 was amended so that official purpose was now to mean any purpose of the Constitution, whether Federal or State, and indicates any purpose of a public authority.<sup>51</sup> Article 153 was amended so that the natives of Sabah and Sarawak enjoyed the special rights of the Malays. Article 153 (8a) qualified that in Universities, colleges, and educational institutions where number of places offered is less than that of candidates qualifying "it shall be lawful for the Yang di Pertuan Agong to give directions to the authorities to ensure the reservation of such proportions of such places for Malays and natives of any of the Borneo States as the Yang di Pertuan Agong may deem reasonable."<sup>52</sup> Article 159(5) made the entire process of the Amendments to the Constitution more difficult. It was now necessary to get the consent of the Conference of Rulers on all Amendments on sensitive issues. Even if the Alliance lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament, no fundamental challenge to the Malay pre-eminent constitutional position could be successful as it would be blocked by the Malay rulers.

The Bill was passed on 3 March 1971 with 125 for, and only 17 opposing the Bill. With the exception of the DAP and the PPP all the political parties supported the Bill. The DAP and the PPP with their demand for a Malaysian Malaysia could scarcely accept a position where Malay special rights would be entrenched. Lim Kit Siang (DAP), and S.P. Seenivasagam (PPP) expressed the fear that the Alliance party was utilizing the riots of May 1969 to restrain freedom.<sup>53</sup> The Gerakan decided to support the Amendment "a careful decision taken after long and arduous discussion."<sup>54</sup> The leaders of the Gerakan felt that in the sensitive atmosphere, rejection of the Amendments would only lead to further polarization.<sup>55</sup> The other opposition parties, PAS and Party Rakyat with a predominantly Malay membership did not, in any case,

oppose the entrenched provisions of the Constitution. With parliamentary majority assured, and with an implacable stand that the constitutional amendments must be accepted,<sup>56</sup> Alliance leadership had refashioned the democratic model to suit Malaysian needs for unity and for communal harmony. On these basic needs consensus was obtained to permit the passage of the Constitutional Amendment Act. Alliance leaders accepted that what was being established as a result of the amendments was not one hundred per cent democracy, but it was better to have something lesser, than no democracy at all.<sup>57</sup>

### **The New Economic Policy and Economic Equality**

One question that has perplexed thinkers in many developing countries is whether economic planning should be tailored to meet political needs and concerns, or whether it should be structured to meet economic ends and needs. In countries where there is a large disparity of wealth, emphasis on economic equality has often taken precedence over economic growth as a political end, and differing socialistic economies have been accepted. Malaysia, a prosperous country with rich natural resources, had till 1969, followed a free capitalist system.<sup>58</sup> The Government policies encouraged trade and commerce and Chinese and foreign business thrived. Malays were protected by means of quotas and reservations,<sup>59</sup> but the majority of Malays continued to live in rural areas engaged in traditional occupations. Schemes to improve the lot of the rural Malays were launched. The Federal Land Development Authority was established in 1956 with the purpose of reclaiming land; creating prosperous farming communities; and reducing unemployment and underemployment. The majority of the schemes were designed to help Malay settlements.<sup>60</sup> Massive public investment was moved to rural areas with initiatives designed to assist the increasing number of Malays who moved to cities and towns. The Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) was started in 1950 to look after rural development. RIDA originated as a result of the discussions of the Communities Liaison Committee (1949-50) that new citizenship proposals would be accompanied by an economic programme for Malays. In 1953 RIDA became a statutory body.<sup>61</sup> The main thrust of RIDA was emphasizing development schemes for roads, bridges, social amenities and rural development, and giving loans and training to Malays for various projects. However, RIDA suffered due to financial and general mismanagement. More important perhaps was that the Malay demand for an adequate stake in the economy could not

be met with the kind of programmes designed by RIDA. Dissatisfaction with RIDA led to its re-organization in 1965, as the Majlis Amanah Raayat (MARA) or the Council of Trust of the Indigenous People. It focussed on the creation of a Malay public sector in commerce and industry with increasing opportunities for Malay participation. It started participating in industrial enterprises on the basis of joint ventures with Malay or foreign companies, buying up factories in industrial estates and promoting Malay capital ownership in the private sector. Due to the activities of MARA, Malays started being trained at the Institutes of Technology being run by MARA. Loans are given to Malays, preference is accorded in government departments, to Malays and other indigenous peoples, for tenders and quotations, and the ownership of the Malay share capital has been increasing.<sup>62</sup>

In 1965, the Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Berhad was started with an authorized capital of US \$ 8 million, and it has expanded with over 50 branches since then.<sup>63</sup> Despite all this, the glaring economic disparities between Malays and Chinese continued. The Malays were still concentrated in the rural East Coast States, in traditional occupations such as agriculture and fishing, while the non-Malays were forging ahead in commerce and industry in the urbanized West Coast States. (See Table I). Economic inequality is very marked between urban and rural areas,<sup>64</sup> in ownership and share capital of companies<sup>65</sup> and in the general distribution of incomes.<sup>66</sup> Unemployment was a serious problem, particularly for many Malays who were under-employed.<sup>67</sup>

Many Malaysians felt that it was the frustrations arising out of these glaring economic disparities that had led to the discontent erupting in the May 1969 riots, and there was an urgent need to remedy the situation. In a foreword to the *Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980)* it was stated: "Whatever their proximate cause, the racial riots of May 1969 owed their origin to inadequate efforts to redress socio-economic imbalances that have characterized Malaysian society for so long."<sup>68</sup> Lim Lin Lean, on the basis of his study of income differentials in West Malaysia, felt that though the immediate cause of the riots was political, "... it cannot be denied that substantial racial income differentials underlay communal discontents."<sup>69</sup> Many others disagree with the interpretation that Malay poverty was a cause of the riots, claiming that Malay poverty had existed for many years but had not led to riots, and it existed to a greater degree in areas outside Kuala Lumpur, but these did not break out in riots.<sup>70</sup> The riots did however, create the catalyst necessary for a renewed emphasis on correcting the racial imbalance

Table 1

INDUSTRY OF THE EXPERIENCED LABOUR FORCE BY  
COMMUNITY 1970

	Malays		Chinese		Indian	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	922,365	64.3	293,761	29.7	131,653	46.0
Mining & quarrying	13,270	0.9	37,093	3.8	4,561	1.6
Manufacturing	73,051	5.1	164,497	16.6	13,254	4.6
Construction	13,007	0.9	43,095	4.4	3,616	1.3
Electricity, gas, water & sanitary services	9,508	0.7	3,600	0.4	6,353	2.2
Commerce	64,273	4.5	179,759	18.2	29,103	10.2
Transport, storage and communication	41,518	2.9	39,093	3.9	16,655	5.8
Services	223,904	15.6	173,544	17.5	66,270	23.2
Other industry	74,110	5.2	55,598	5.6	14,688	5.1
Total experi- enced labour force	1,435,006	100.0	990,040	100.0	286,153	100.0

Source: R. Chander, ed., *Population Census of Malaysia, 1970*, Kuala Lumpur, Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1977, vol. I, p. 436.

and improving the Malay position. The National Consultative Council in recognizing economic imbalance felt there was "... an urgent necessity to rectify this imbalance if the nation is to survive in harmony," and asked for "a fresh approach to solve the problem."<sup>71</sup> Many theories sought to explain the disparity. Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie felt that colonial policies had been pursued so that the Malays had been isolated as farmers and fishermen, while non-Malays had been left free to make money in the towns and cities.<sup>72</sup> Many others, including Dr Ungku Abdul Aziz, a noted economist and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya, highlighted motivational differences between the Malays and non-Malays.<sup>73</sup> This belief is held by many people — some feel it is due to differing beliefs and attitudes regarding economic modernization which are the result of different historical and cultural experiences;<sup>74</sup> others feel it is due to lack of education in "modern subjects,"<sup>75</sup> and it is also pointed out that the value system of the rural Malays was resistant to change.<sup>76</sup> The view however which was to have

an impact on the shaping of a new economic policy was the one which pointed out that the Government's direct participation in the private sector, in the past, had not been aimed at solving economic imbalance and outlined a more active and direct role for Government.<sup>77</sup>

On 2 July 1969, Tun Abdul Razak announced over television, the shape of changes in economic policy. Economic policy was now seen as a means of strengthening the foundations of nationhood. Three major points were stressed.

(i) The need to ensure that in the employment structure, the multi-racial nature of the population was reflected.

(ii) The establishment of industries in smaller towns in the East Coast States and in the economically depressed areas.

(iii) Boosting agriculture by helping peasants and small holders to increase their production and income.<sup>78</sup>

All this envisaged a more positive policy of Government directed economic and social change. Since the rural areas lagged behind in development and prosperity, the Malays must be urbanized and helped to participate in the urban industrial sectors of the Malay economy. Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie's solution was "to bring towns to the people."<sup>79</sup> Statements and speeches of Tun Razak throughout 1970 emphasized the need to work towards a United Malaysian Nation, not only in terms of race but to achieve unity between economic and social groups. The disadvantaged groups should be helped so that there was more equitable distribution of wealth. The Government must play a more dynamic and direct role in increasing the involvement and participation of the less-favoured groups.<sup>80</sup>

Plans for the new economic policy were drawn up by the Department of National Unity, the Economic Planning Unit, and the National Consultative Council. Eventually a sub-committee on the new Economic Policy was appointed from the NCC.<sup>81</sup> The Report of the Committee outlined that the problem had been studied "in terms of the imbalance between the two groups, Malays and non-Malays," in the three areas of income, employment, and ownership of wealth.<sup>82</sup>

The UMNO general assembly meeting in January 1971 echoed the need for economic parity. Unemployment among Malay youth and the Malay economic position were the two main issues raised at the UMNO general assembly.<sup>83</sup> Musa Hitam, newly appointed Vice Chairman of UMNO youth, warned the non-Malays that they must uphold the concept of citizenship (in terms of economic concessions). "If they still don't understand UMNO youth can teach them."<sup>84</sup> Tun Ismail warned



the non-Malays: "if there is no understanding on how to promote the Malays economically, it is better that we separate."<sup>85</sup> There was general consensus among the UMNO members that economic imbalance must be rectified and rectified fast. Most non-Malays too agreed that the problem of Malay poverty needed special attention, but they pointed out that poverty should not be defined only in racial terms but programmes be implemented for the poor of all races.<sup>86</sup>

The new economic policy was formally presented to Parliament as part of the Second Malaysia Plan in July 1971.<sup>87</sup> It was further elaborated in the mid-term review of the Plan. The Plan emphasized a two-pronged effort:

(i) Eradication of poverty by increasing opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race. This would be done through programmes to modernize agriculture, accelerate land development, promote high employment growth in the modern sectors of the economy and extend subsidised social services to all and education and community facilities to lower economic groups.

(ii) Restructuring of Malaysian society to correct economic imbalances so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function. This would be achieved through a more racially balanced employment pattern in the different sections of the economy and in the various occupational groups, and measures would be taken to ensure a more equitable distribution of the ownership of wealth among all Malaysians. A special target was that by 1990, Malays should own and operate 30 per cent of the modern commercial and industrial sectors.<sup>88</sup> (Malay ownership and control of share capital was to rise from 2 per cent in 1970 to 30 per cent in 1990; the non-Malay share from 23 per cent to 40 per cent and the foreign share was to be reduced from 62 per cent to 30 per cent).<sup>89</sup>

This two-pronged programme was to be achieved through direct Government intervention and control, and Government investment and participation in the commercial and industrial sector. The Public Sector allocation for industrial and commercial development rose from M \$ 142 million in the First Malaysian Plan to M \$ 584 in the Second Malaysian Plan.<sup>90</sup> The Malaysian Government entered into joint ventures with domestic and foreign investors to project Malays into the industrial sector. It also expanded the existing concerns, like MARA to train bumiputras, give them managerial and technical advice and credit facilities. Other agencies used for improving the economic position of the Malays were PERNAS (Perbadanan Nasional or the National

Corporation) which was going into fields such as insurance, construction, trading, properties, engineering and securities; FIDA (Federal and Industrial Development Authority); MIDF (Malaysian Industrial Development Finance) and UDA (Urban Development Authority) to carry out development in cities and towns. State economic development organizations were set up in every state. State Governments were directed to help pool Malay capital and co-ordinate the use of money from *Zakat* and *Fitrah* (religious tithes) to set up Malay investments. They were to assist in the setting up of Malay companies, give advisory services to Malay businessmen and act as sureties for those who wished to obtain loans from banks.<sup>91</sup> The great increase in allocations for these bodies is seen in the comparison of some figures – in the First Malaysia Plan, the allocation for FIDA was M \$ 363.3 million, in the Second Malaysia Plan it rose to M \$ 908.7 million. For PERNAS it was M \$ 10 million as against M \$ 100 million in 1971; for MARA it was M \$ 123.9 million as against 158.1 million in 1971 and for MIDF M \$ 16 million as against M \$ 100 million in 1971.<sup>92</sup>

Most non-Malays accepted the basic features of the new Economic Policy, accepting the rationale that Malay poverty needs special assistance. Two basic criticisms levelled were that

(a) it was limited in its approach in the sense that it planned special assistance for only the Malay poor

(b) in its implementation, it was only helping a class of vested Malay interests. The projected 30 per cent Malay ownership of capital was regarded as unrealistic, and aimed at creating a class of Malay rich.

In the debate on the new Economic Policy, in Parliament, Dato James Wong voiced the question in many non-Malay minds:

... may I ask again how does the Government propose to assist the have-nots among the Chinese, Indians and other non-Malays and non-indigenous groups. We know that many institutions such as MARA, Pernas etc. have been set up to assist the Malays and other indigenous people. Is it contemplated by the Government to set up some form of organisation to help the Chinese and Indian have-nots?<sup>93</sup>

The Indians in particular have pointed out the need to study the problem of Indian poverty as well, in a special sense. It is pointed out that nearly half (46 per cent) of the Indians are engaged in agriculture of whom 74 per cent are in plantations. Nearly 80 per cent of employed

Indians are to be found in manual jobs, mostly in skilled or semi-skilled labour, with barely 6 per cent of Indians in the administrative, managerial and professional categories. The unemployment rate for the Indians was 11 per cent in 1970 compared with 8 per cent for the Malays and 7.4 per cent for the Chinese.<sup>94</sup> The Malaysian Indian Congress, in response to the new economic policy, asked for more effective monitoring of the programmes being designed to eradicate poverty and information to be published by the Government to include breakdowns of beneficiaries and extent of benefits among the various races separately. It asked the Government through its agencies like FIDA to assist workers to purchase estates and to reserve for Indians 10 per cent of new share issues for equity capital in newly established or expanding commercial and industrial enterprises.<sup>95</sup>

Many Chinese, who are in a position of economic strength, have raised the issue that numerical targets should be invoked in other spheres as well, for instance, in the political sphere, where they feel they are not represented enough, and ask for political and cultural equality.<sup>96</sup> Chinese businessmen also resent some of the administrative controls of the NEP for example, the Industrial co-ordinating Bill of 1975, which requires all manufacturing firms with a capital of more than M \$ 10,000 or employing more than 25 full-time workers to take out licences from the Ministry of Trade and Industry.<sup>97</sup> The Chinese reaction to the NEP is well seen, in the analysis of a Chinese banker and lawyer, Alex Lee who feels that the Chinese will support a policy which will "preserve their present position."<sup>98</sup> From a position of economic strength, the Chinese are not unduly worried about the economic effects of the new Economic Policy, but use it in order to press for parity in other fields. A criticism that has been levelled at the implementation of the new economic policy is, that the Plan is trying to create a Malay capitalist class to protect the vested interests of those in power.<sup>99</sup> The focus of this criticism comes basically from within the Malay community itself – from the Party Socialis Rakyat Malaysia<sup>100</sup> and the Malay student community.

Since its formulation, it is the new economic policy rather than Rukunegara which is viewed as the national ideology of Malaysia.<sup>101</sup> The paring down of racial imbalances is seen as the real panacea for Malaysia's ills, described by Tun Abdul Razak as the "last opportunity" for the Malays to improve their livelihood.<sup>102</sup> This is a slow process however and there has not been convincing evidence to show that a major change is evident. There has been massive Government investment

to help the Malays. The main recipients have been PERNAS, Urban Development Authority (UDA), MARA, National Paddy and Rice Board. In 1972, MARA set up a big financial consortium for mobilizing and channelling Malay savings. PERNAS has been predominantly employing Malays in its several companies. UDA has set up a chain of commercial premises, hotels and offices for Malays to get direct bumiputra participation in business.<sup>103</sup> However, no major breakthrough of the Malays in Industry and Trade has been seen.<sup>104</sup> Attitudes and values will take a long time to change, and Government sponsored economic and social change, though necessary, will not provide any quick solutions. There is lack of trained and skilled Malay manpower. Among the Malays there is deep dissatisfaction that often Malays are employed as mere "fronts," and not given any real responsibility or executive control and often because reserved quotas, licences are bought in the name of Malays and operated by non-Malays leading to the business-deals popularly known as "Ali-Baba" deals.<sup>105</sup> The economic transformation which will lead to social change and breakdown of racial barriers is still to be seen.

#### **Language and Education: Policy and Implementation**

With a multi-lingual population, the need for consensus on the national language was urgent and necessary as was the need to define and operate a national educational policy. In the first half of the twentieth century, no national system of education emerged in Malaysia. There were separate schools for the Malays, Chinese and Tamils. British policy towards Malay education aimed at preserving the traditional rural character. The *Winstedt Report of 1917* determined the course of educational policy by emphasizing the need to retain and cater for the rural base of the Malays. Essentially, only primary school education was provided for the Malays.<sup>106</sup> A small and privileged group of Malays could move on to higher education in English. To cater for this Malay elite, the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar was set up. In 1922, the Sultan Idris College was set up, but it was not till 1949 that Malaysia had its first university, the University of Malaya based in Singapore. The British adopted a policy of *laissez faire* with regard to education for the Chinese immigrants. Consequently the Chinese ran their own schools with school-teachers from mainland China. The orientation and curriculum of the schools was on the same lines as that of China, with little or no Malayan content. Indian schools catered primarily for the Tamil estate labour, and the medium of instruction was Tamil. Hence till the

1950s, there was no national educational policy, bringing the three ethnic groups together.

In the 1950s as the prospects for independence crystallized, it was imperative that a definite policy with regard to education and the national language should be adopted. One of the first acts of Tunku Abdul Rahman as Chief Minister of the Federation was to appoint an Education Committee under the Chairmanship of Tun Abdul Razak to go into the question.<sup>107</sup> The recommendations of the Razak Committee were adopted in the Education Ordinance of 1957. This outlined that the educational policy of the Federation was to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people as a whole, promoting their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation. The national language was to be Malay but the language and cultures of peoples other than Malays living in Malaysia should be preserved and sustained.<sup>108</sup> It was recommended that at the primary level, English, Tamil or Kuo-Yu (Mandarin) could be used as the medium of instruction but at the secondary level a new system of national-type schools was recommended with Malay as the medium of instruction. In 1960 an Educational Review Committee was appointed under Abdul Rahman bin Talib (the Minister of Education). It reiterated that at secondary level the medium of instruction would be Malay or English with the eventual aim of switching to Malay. However it recommended that at primary level also, Malay should be introduced. This aroused a lot of reaction from among the Chinese who strongly urged that the Government "should not force the issue."<sup>109</sup> Their apprehension was that their language would die out in the face of these educational policies.

Malay had been accepted as the national language due to the process of constitutional compromise in the 1950s, when the non-Malays had accepted the Malay special position and privileges. The Constitution of Malaysia of 1957 stated that the National Language would be Malay with the proviso that:

- (i) No person would be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning any other language.
- (ii) The Federal and State Governments could preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

For a period of ten years after Independence, English could be used in

both Houses of Parliament, in the Legislative Assemblies of the States, in the Federal and High Courts, and for all other official purposes.<sup>110</sup> It was hoped that within a decade the National Language would replace English as the *lingua franca* of the country, gradually, with persuasion rather than with force. The non-Malays were assured: "It is not the Government's intention to ask you to replace your language with the official language but what the Government does ask of you is to give the National Language . . . its pride of place in your daily activities."<sup>111</sup>

In February 1967 the National Language Bill was introduced in Parliament, becoming an Act on 1 September.<sup>112</sup> Section 2 of the Act provided that on and after 1 September 1967, the National Language must be used for official purposes. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong could however permit the continued use of English for such official purposes as may be deemed fit. Federal and State Governments could use any translations of official documents or communications in the language of any other community in the Federation for such purposes as was deemed necessary in the public interest. There was general consensus on the acceptance of Malay as the national language. The Bill received overwhelming support (95 votes for and only 11 against). The majority of non-Malays accept that only Malay can fill the position of the National Language. Even parties such as the People's Progressive Party accepted the Act. According to D.R. Seenivasagam, the Secretary-General of the People's Progressive Party, "since the Constitution declares that Malay shall be the National Language we feel it is the duty of the Government to make it so and we welcome any such move."<sup>113</sup> A vocal critic of the Government's language and education policies, the Democratic Action Party, too, supported the National Language Act.<sup>114</sup> What the non-Malay political parties such as DAP and PPP have campaigned for is the acceptance of Chinese, Tamil and English as official languages, and an educational policy which would keep alive their languages as well.

Surprisingly, discontent with the language policy was voiced from within the Malay Community. Most of the people who criticized the National Language Act were members of PAS. They resented the fact that English would continue to be used, and that not enough had been done to implement the use of Malay. Discontented Malay groups united to form the National Language Action Front to persuade the Government to remove the concessions given to English and other languages.<sup>115</sup> The Malay Writers Association protested while Malay students took out slogans reading "Malay is Dead" and "The National Language

Bill has cheated us."<sup>116</sup> Syed Nasir, the Director of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (the Language and Literature Agency started in 1966) was vocal in his criticism of the Act, and was subsequently forced to resign from the UMNO Executive.<sup>117</sup> The Tunku however adopted an unequivocal position and refused to be pressurized into amending the National Language Act.

The period after the 13 May riots, witnessed a major change in the implementation and focus of the language and educational policies. Enche Mohamed Khir Johari, Minister of Education was replaced by Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'akub. The new Minister announced, "We would have had to review our approach even if the riots had not occurred. Our children must be instilled with the feeling of belonging to one nation irrespective of their racial origins or belief."<sup>118</sup> Apparently the review of the policy was necessary in the light of the unfulfilled demands of 1967. Though the Act of 1967 had legislated on Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language, yet little had been done to actually implement it, and English continued to be used for official purposes. Significantly, it was formed and announced without the approval of the Tunku.<sup>119</sup> The new educational policy was outlined in July 1969. Malay was to be used as the sole medium of instruction in all Standard I Subjects. Year by year, this would be extended until by 1982 all instruction up to Form VI would be conducted entirely in Malay. English would be relegated to the position of a second language.<sup>120</sup> He also announced the setting up of the University Kebangsaan (National University) where the medium of instruction would be Malay. There was clear indication from the new leadership that Malay as the national language would be implemented with firmness and vigour.

Dato Ya'akub was replaced as Minister of Education in September 1970 by Inche Hussein bin Onn, obviously in a move to placate non-Malay opinion. However, there were no major shifts in the policy as it had been outlined in May 1969. There was to be further implementation of the national language policy, strengthening of the national education system and the use of Malay as the medium of instruction.<sup>121</sup> From 1972 a pass in Bahasa Malaysia would be necessary to gain entry into the University of Malaya and by 1984 Malay was to completely replace English as the language of instruction. In 1966, Professor Ungku Aziz (then, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administration) had promised non-Malays that courses in English would be conducted for a "long time to come."<sup>122</sup> In early 1971 Professor Ungku Aziz, now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malay stated: "In Malaysia there is

no question of multi-lingualism or the official use of three or four languages being accepted."<sup>123</sup>

Since 1969, educational policy and implementation is the single most important issue which has generated the greatest amount of dissension in Malaysia and polarized the population on Malay/non-Malay lines. There is very little debate about Malay which is accepted as the National language but the systematic effort to displace Chinese, Tamil and English has led to much discontent. The non-Malays feel that there is a definite policy of cultural emasculation and no effort is made to protect and project the cultural diversity of Malaysia. They point to the non-implementation of the Education Act of 1961 which had stated the educational policy of the Government as one of establishing a national system of education which would satisfy the needs of the nation and "promote its cultural, social, economic and political development." It had also stated that pupils would be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.<sup>124</sup> However in implementation of the national educational policy, many national type primary schools are being converted into national primary schools,<sup>125</sup> and there is resentment that there are no proper facilities for the teaching of Kuo-Yu and Tamil, and the school time tables are so framed that Chinese and Tamil are taught at very inconvenient times.<sup>126</sup> There is also discontent that English is relegated to just a subject and hence an inadequate grasp over the language makes the children unfit to compete for higher education overseas. At the University level, since 1970, there has been a far-reaching movement to increase the entry of Malays into the Universities and to particularly encourage Malays to join professional courses. Because of the low percentage of Malays in Science, Engineering and Medicine courses, (see Table II), the National Operations Council set up a Committee to Study Campus Life of Students of the University of Malaya. This recommended:

1. The University should decide and state categorically that it is University Policy to ensure that the racial composition of the population not only in the University as a whole but on a faculty to faculty basis should reflect the racial composition in the country.

2. Criteria of admission should not only be of an academic character. The Committee recommended that the criteria for admission should include other factors besides the HSC results and the University authorities should give weightage to those from rural areas.<sup>127</sup>

The Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971 states that students who have been awarded federal or state scholarships, loans or



Table II

## DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY COURSES OF STUDY AND RACE, 1969-70

Course	Chinese	Malays	Indians	Pakistanis	Ceylonese	Eurasians	Others	Total
Agriculture	187 68.2%	70 25.5%	10 3.6%	— 0%	6 2.2%	— 0%	1 0.4%	274 100%
Arts	930 32.9%	1489 52.7%	270 9.6%	10 0.4%	76 2.7%	22 0.8%	26 0.9%	2823 100%
Engineering	328 91.4%	11 3.1%	12 3.3%	— 0%	6 1.7%	2 0.6%	— 0%	359 100%
Medicine	388 68.3%	109 19.2%	43 7.6%	1 0.2%	22 3.9%	2 0.4%	3 0.5%	568 100%
Education	171 53.4%	102 31.9%	31 9.7%	1 0.3%	12 3.8%	2 0.6%	1 0.3%	320 100%
Economics & administration	563 49.4%	442 38.8%	94 8.4%	1 0.1%	29 2.5%	5 0.4%	5 0.4%	1139 100%

Source: *University of Malaya Yearbook, 1969-1970* (Kuala Lumpur, Khee Meng Jalan Bendar, 1970). Compiled from p. 213, Tables 12-18.

financial assistance from public funds for university degrees cannot be refused admission.<sup>128</sup> Most of the scholarship holders are Malays from rural areas and hence they get weightage in admissions (see Table III). The non-Malays feel that merit is no longer the primary criterion for admission procedures and it is leading to a sense of frustration for the young who find avenues for employment being closed to them. Many institutions such as the MARA Institutes of Technology and Universiti Kebangsaan cater almost solely for the Malays. The Chinese have been agitating for a Merdeka University with Chinese as the medium of instruction and the Tamils have been asking for a Tamil University. However the University Act of 1971 forbids the establishment of any higher educational institution with the status of a University or College except in accordance with the provisions of the Act that is, it must conform to National Educational Policy which is of implementing Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. In other words, the establishment of Chinese or Tamil medium universities would be regarded as against the National Education Policy.<sup>129</sup> The number and percentage of Malay students at the University have been rising while the numbers of Chinese and Indian students have been falling (see Table IV).

There is genuine concern over inadequate and improperly trained teachers in Bahasa Malaysia necessary for the proper implementation of the national language. In 1973, in the Malaysian Certificate of Education Results, of 37,126 candidates, 14,331 failed because of the compulsory Bahasa Malaysia Paper. Of 27,784 non-Malays who appeared, 9,314 passed and of 9,342 Malays who appeared 6,751 passed.<sup>130</sup> There was considerable agitation among non-Malay political parties like the Pekemas and DAP, which called for an enquiry into the affair.<sup>131</sup>

There is a large exodus of professionals, specially doctors, from Malaysia. Between 1969 and 1976 a total of 965 doctors (predominantly non-Malay) left Government service, among which were many specialists. There is resentment that promotions do not take place according to merit but according to racial considerations of quotas that have to be filled.<sup>132</sup> Many are also leaving because they feel that their children have no future within the system of education in Malaysia. The most vocal challenge to the Government's educational policies comes from the Democratic Action Party which acts as the spokesman for the disgruntled non-Malays, specially the Chinese. It is also utilized by the Malayan Communist Party to hit at the Alliance Government. The Voice of Malayan Revolution (VMR) broadcasts frequently refer to the exploitation of the Chinese and Tamils in matters of language and

Table III

## NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS BY RACE

Faculty	Scholarship		Fellowship		Loan		Grant		Total		Grand total
	B	BB	B	BB	B	BB	B	BB	B	BB	
Economics & administration	325	55	306	64	259	52	18	—	908	171	1079
Arts	401	49	658	95	779	75	56	3	1894	222	2116
Law	57	9	15	7	16	9	1	—	89	25	114
Engineering	38	141	10	58	6	106	—	3	54	308	362
Dentistry	27	12	8	1	5	8	1	—	41	21	62
Agriculture	117	28	9	14	7	10	—	—	133	52	185
Medicine	160	108	29	65	11	24	—	1	200	198	398
Science	93	112	47	166	44	147	1	4	186	428	614
Total	1218	514	1082	470	1127	431	77	11	3505	1425	4930
Grand Total	1732		1552		1558		88		4930		
%	35.13		31.48		31.60		1.79		100.0		

B = Bumiputra

BB = Bukan Bumiputra (non-Malay)

Source: *University of Malaya Yearbook 1974-1975* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), p. 194.

*Table IV*  
**ENROLMENT IN UNIVERSITIES BY RACE**  
**DEGREE COURSES; 1969-1974**

University	Session	Malay	Chinese	Others	Total
University of Malaya	1969-70	2373 (35.6%)	3532 (52.9%)	767 (11.5%)	6672 (100%)
	1970-71	3123 (40.2%)	3785 (48.6%)	869 (11.2%)	7777 (100%)
	1971-72	4191 (48.4%)	3628 (41.9%)	841 ( 9.7%)	8660 (100%)
	1972-73	4151 (47.4%)	3762 (43.0%)	835 ( 9.6%)	8748 (100%)
	1973-74	4100 (48.1%)	3622 (42.5%)	797 ( 9.4%)	8519 (100%)
Universiti Sains, Malaysia	1969-70	1 ( 2.0%)	40 (80.0%)	9 (18.0%)	50 (100%)
	1970-71	83 (33.2%)	129 (51.6%)	38 (15.2%)	250 (100%)
	1971-72	258 (34.6%)	394 (52.8%)	94 (12.6%)	746 (100%)
	1972-73	481 (35.8%)	711 (52.9%)	153 (11.3%)	1345 (100%)
	1973-74	506 (33.2%)	859 (56.3%)	161 (10.5%)	1526 (100%)
Universiti Kebangsaan	1970-71	187 (97.4%)	4 ( 2.1%)	1 ( 0.5%)	192 (100%)
	1971-72	560 (97.2%)	12 ( 2.1%)	4 ( 0.7%)	576 (100%)
	1972-73	978 (97.5%)	19 ( 1.9%)	6 ( 0.6%)	1003 (100%)
	1973-74	1415 (95.0%)	34 ( 2.3%)	40 ( 2.7%)	1489 (100%)
Institut Teknologi, Kebangsaan	1972-73	81 (94.2%)	5 ( 5.8%)	- -	86 (100%)
	1973-74	192 (80.4%)	46 (19.2%)	1 ( 0.4%)	239 (100%)
Universiti Pertanian	1973-74	75 (65.8%)	34 (29.8%)	5 ( 4.4%)	114 (100%)

*Source: Malaysian Chinese Association, 25th Anniversary Souvenir (Kuala Lumpur, MCA Headquarters, 1974).*

education.<sup>133</sup> This is aimed at fanning the widespread discontent that does prevail amongst Chinese and Indians on the single most important issue on which consensus has not been arrived at.

## NOTES

1. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 2 and 18 July 1970.
2. See Chapter II, f.n. 97,98.
3. *Malaysia Yearbook 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1971.
4. Tun Abdul Razak, an ex-member of the Malay Administrative Service, had been Deputy Premier since 1957, and had also held the portfolio of Defence, Rural Development and Education.  
Tun Dr. Ismail had resigned from the Cabinet in 1967 due to ill-health and had been summoned back in 1969 after the riots, as Minister of Home Affairs.
5. Hussein Onn was the son of Datuk Onn bin Jaafar, the first President of the UMNO. Hussein Onn had been elected Member of the Executive Council of the UMNO in June 1969.
6. Ghazali Shafie was permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Reputed to be a brilliant civil servant, and generally believed to be one of the brains behind policy formulation at this time.
7. Jerome R. Bass, "The New Malaysian Government," *Asian Survey*, vol. XI, no. 10, October 1971, pp. 970-83.
8. Samad Ismail, "A Day in the Life of a Prime Minister," *Bangkok Post*, 22 September 1971.
9. Statements of Tunku Abdul Rahman supported this image. He wrote in his weekly column in *The Star*, Penang, 29 December 1975: "For myself the less work I did the better it was for me. So I took a lot of time off for my pleasures such as playing golf, horse-racing, extramural activities etc. But Razak has a love for work, and would attend to everything else."
10. In an interview, Tunku Abdul Rahman stated: "... after I left there was this definite turnabout for bumiputras." *Asiaweek*, Hong Kong, no. 47, 19 November 1976, p. 9.
11. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 21 January 1971.
12. Operations Council, *NOC Report*, p. 80.
13. Ghazali Shafie in an interview with Dom Moraes, *The Asia Magazine*, Hong Kong, 22 August 1971.
14. *NOC Report*, p. 83.
15. The entrenched provisions of the Constitution relate to Malay language, special rights of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities, and the position of the Malay rulers. See Chapter I for details.
16. *NOC Report*, p. 85.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Attorney General, Tan Sir Abdul Kadir Yusof, speaking at the National University. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 20 May 1970.

The Constitutional Commission of 1957 had recommended that special rights for Malays be reviewed after a period of 15 years, but in the final constitution this period was not mentioned. H. Groves, "Notes on the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia," in K.C. Tregonning, ed., *Papers on Malaysian History*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian History, 1962, p. 270.

17. "Interview with Tun Abdul Razak," *Asia Research Bulletin*, (ARB), vol. 2, no. 2, 1-30 June 1972, p. 987.
18. Tun Ismail in an interview with Harry Miller, *Straits Times*, Singapore, 5 May 1970.
19. Ghazali Shafie, "Southeast Asia in the Seventies," *Institute of International Affairs*, Singapore, 16 December 1968 (not published).
20. The Westminster model of Democracy has been defined as one in which the head of state is not the effective head of Government; the effective head of Government is the Prime Minister presiding over a Cabinet of Ministers over whose appointment and removal he has at least a substantial measure of control; the Ministers must be Members of the Legislature and collectively and individually responsible to a freely elected and responsible legislature. S.A. DeSmith, "Westminster Export Models: The Legal Framework of Responsible Government," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Leicester University Press, vol. 1, 1961-63, pp. 2-16.

In ordinary usage and understanding, the Westminster model has come to mean the British system of representative Government with a basically two-party system. Many newly independent nations "imported" this model, but increasingly its relevance in differing conditions in Asia and Africa has been questioned. Till 1969, Malaysia was one of the few Asian countries that had continued with the British pattern.

21. Speech by the Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference at Parliament House, Kuala Lumpur on 13 September 1971. *Speeches of Tun Haji Abdul Razak*, Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister's Secretariat, 1971, p. 403.
22. Shafie, interview with Dom Moraes, *The Asia Magazine*, 22 August 1971.
23. Fred Von der Mehden, *Politics of Developing Nations*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 122.
24. James B. Scott, *Political Ideology in Malaysia: Reality and Belief of an Elite*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 169.
25. For a discussion on the uses of ideology to establish solidarity and identity see David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernisation*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 313-56.
26. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 17 July 1969.
27. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1969.
28. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1970. The NCC accepted the proposals for Rukunegara with very little debate or dissent. Challenges might have come from the DAP, which however was not a member of the NCC.

29. *Malay-English Dictionary*, Kuala Lumpur, Macmillan Ltd., 1976.
30. Malaysia, Dewan Negara (Senate), III Parliament, 1 Session, 23 March 1971, p. 280.
31. Syed Hussein Alatas, "The Rukunegara and the Return to Democracy in Malaysia," *Pacific Community*, Tokyo, 4, 2 July 1971, pp. 800-8.
32. Government of Malaysia, *Rukunegara*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1970; *Straits Times*, Singapore, 1 September 1970.
33. For example, *The Constitution of India*, Part II, Clauses 36-51; H.M. Seervai, *Constitutional Law of India*, Bombay, N.M. Tripathi Ltd., 1967, pp. A 15-A 16.
34. Y.B. Tan Sir Dato Muhammad Ghazali bin Shafie, in an Introduction to *The Second Malaysia Plan*, 2 August 1971, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies (not published).
35. *Rukunegara*.
36. These principles emerged as the consensus of opinion expressed in the papers presented at the Conference on National Culture held at Kuala Lumpur, 1971. They are stated as fundamental principles by the Ministry of Culture. *Malaysia Yearbook 1975*, Kuala Lumpur, 1975, p. 36.
37. Speech by Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak at the opening of the International Conference on Malay Culture at Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 21 January 1972, in *Speeches of Tun Haji Abdul Razak*.
38. Goh Hock Guan, M.P. (DAP) expressed the opinion. Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 1, session 3, 24 January 1972, p. 6435.
39. Interview with Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, Kuala Lumpur, 13 March 1978.
40. Views expressed commonly by non-Malays.
41. In this context, the best example, perhaps is that of neighbouring Indonesia. In 1945, Sukarno, later the President of Indonesia, outlined five principles as The Pantja-Sila Doctrine. In 1959, he outlined an explicit national ideology for Indonesia, based on the 1945 Constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy, and an Indonesian Personality. It was popularly known as MANIPOL - USOEK (Manipol standing for political manifesto, and USDEK being an acronym summarizing the five essential points of the manifesto).  
Sukarno, "The Birth of Pantja-Sila" in R.O. Tilman, ed., *Man, State and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, New York, Praeger, 1969, pp. 270-76; Herbert Feith, "Political Symbols and Their Wielders" in John T. McAlister Jr., ed., *Southeast Asia: The Politics of National Integration*, New York, Random House, 1973, pp. 499-516.
42. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 12 January 1970.
43. Addressing a meeting of the Heads of Departments, Tun Abdul Razak emphasized that unless the proposed amendments to the Constitution got the necessary support there would be no return to

Parliamentary Democracy. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 4 February 1971.

44. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 2 July 1970.
45. Goh Cheng Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 36.
46. Chapter IV discusses the coalition in greater detail.
47. Tun Ismail addressing Alliance state leaders in Johore, 15 January 1971. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 30 January 1971.
48. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 18 July 1969.
49. Tun Abdul Razak introducing the Constitution Amendment Bill, *Constitution Amendment Act 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.

Useful studies on the Constitutional Amendments are Lee Hoong Phun "Fundamental Amendments to the Malaysian Constitution" (Master of Laws Thesis, University of Malaya, 1974); H.P. Lee, "Constitutional Amendments in Malaya," *Malaya Law Review*, Singapore, vol. 18, no. 1, July 1976, pp. 59-124.

50. Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution states that Malay shall be the national language provided that

- a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (other than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning any other language;

- b) Nothing in this clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

Article 153 relates to the special powers of the Malays and empowers the King to ensure reservation of seats to Malays in public service, scholarship, education or training facilities and licences for the operation of trade or business.

Article 181 relates to the prerogatives, powers and jurisdiction of rulers.

*Malaysia Federal Constitution*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.

51. Tun Abdul Razak introducing the bill, *Constitution Amendment Act*, 1971.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Parliamentary Debates on the Constitution Amendment Bill, 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1972, p. 92; Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, III Parliament, Session 1, 20 February 1971, p. 54.
54. Statement by Gerakan Member of Parliament, V. Veerappan, Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, n. 53, p. 442.
55. Interview with Tan Chee Khoo (Kuala Lumpur), 13 March 1978.
56. Musa Hitam pointed out that the Alliance leadership was determined to push the amendments through and was in no mood to compromise. Interview with Musa Hitam (Kuala Lumpur), 12 March 1978.



57. Views of Tun Tan Siew Sin and Musa Hitam, Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 54, 100.
58. Roger A. Freeman, *Socialism and Private Enterprise in Equatorial Asia: The Case of Malaysia and Indonesia*, Stanford University Press, 1968, p. 56.
59. Article 153 of the Constitution ensured this.
60. Yeoh Kung Hock, *NEP: A Critique*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1973, p. 98.
61. J.M. Beaglehole, "Malay Participation in Commerce and Industry: The Role of RIDA and MARA," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, vol. VII, 1969, pp. 216-45.
62. *Review of the Second Malaysia Plan*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1976, p. 26.
63. *Asiaweek*, Hong Kong, vol. 4, no. 1, 13 January 1978, p. 46.
64. Between 1957-1970 urban/rural incomes were as follows:
 

	Urban Mean	Rural Mean
1957-58	M\$ 319	M\$ 173
1967-68	M\$ 360	M\$ 185
1970	M\$ 432	M\$ 202
- D.R. Snodgrass, "Trends and Patterns in Malaysian Economic Distribution, 1957-1970" in David Lim, ed., *Readings in Malaysian Economy*, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 266.
65. In Peninsular Malaysia the ownership of share capital of limited companies is 1.9 per cent Malay, 22.5 per cent Chinese, 1 per cent Indian and 60.7 per cent foreign. *Second Malaysia Development Plan: Mid-Term Review*, *Asia Research Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 7, December 1973, p. 2299.
66. Malay households form the largest majority (22.9 per cent) of those with a monthly income range of M\$ 1-99, while the Chinese form 2.6 per cent and the Indians 1.3 per cent. In the higher income range the Malays are at a disadvantage as compared to the Chinese and to some extent the Indians. *Second Malaysia Development Plan*, p. 2299.
67. As most Malays are engaged in agriculture, the problem of seasonal under-employment is not acute for them.
68. *Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printing Press, 1976, p. 7.
69. Lim Lin Lean, *Some Aspects of Income Differentials in West Malaysia*, Masters Thesis, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, 1971, p. 65.
70. Interview with Syed Hussein Alatas, Singapore, 11 April 1978.
71. *Report of the Economic Committee, National Consultative Council on the Problems of Racial Economic Imbalance and National Unity*, Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister's Department, 1970.
72. Tan Sri Ghazali bin Shafie, "Fresh Approach to Economic Policy," *The Financial Times*, London, 22 February 1971.
73. Karl von Vorys, *Democracy Without Consensus*, Princeton University Press, 1975, p. 227.
74. Tham Seong Chee, *Malays and Modernization: A Sociological*

*Interpretation*, Singapore University Press, 1972, p. 270.

75. R.S. Milne, "The Politics of Malaysia's New Economic Polity," *Pacific Affairs*, British Columbia, vol. 49, no. 2, Summer 1976, pp. 235-62.
76. Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad feels that the value system and the code of ethics of the Malays are impediments to their progress. Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Donald Moore, Asia Pacific Press, 1970, p. 173; Brien K. Parkinson, "Non-economic Factors in the Economic Retardation of the Rural Malays," in David Lim, ed., *Readings in Malaysian Economy*, n. 65, pp. 332-40 and Robert Ho, "Land Ownership and Economic Prospects of Malayan Peasants," *Modern Asian Studies*, London, 4(1), January 1970, pp. 83-92.
77. *Report of the Economic Committee*, Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister's Department, 1970.
78. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 2 July 1969.
79. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1970.
80. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1970.
81. The Chairman of this sub-committee was Mansor bin Othman, the Mentri Besar of Negri Sembilan. Members were Tan Sri Abdul Kadir bin Shamsuddin, Dato Habib Abdul Rahman, Abdul Azia bin Haji Abdullah, Rev. Dennis C. Dulton, Geh Ik Cheong, Enche Hussein bin Onn, Kam Woon Wah, P.G. Lim, Mathew Abraham, Melan bin Abdullah, P.P. Narayanan, Dato Abdullah, Dato Stephen Kalong Ningkan, Syed Hussein Alatas, Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, Ungku Abdul Aziz.
82. *Report of the Economic Committee*, Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister's Department, 1970.
83. Samad Ismail, "UMNO Looks at Itself and Its Partners," *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 25 January 1971.
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*, 30 January 1971.
86. Most non-Malays accept that the Malays are economically worse off than the non-Malays, but argue that often government programmes are designed to create a class of Malay "new rich".  
Observation based on conversation with many non-Malay professionals.
87. It had been preceded by *The First Five Year Plan* (1956-61), the *Second Five Year Plan* (1961-65) and the *First Malaysia Plan* (1966-70).
88. *Malaysia, Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971, p. 3.
89. *Second Malaysia Development Plan: Mid-term Review*, ARB, vol. 3, no. 7, December 1973, pp. 2298-2300.
90. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 29 March 1971.
91. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 28 May 1971; Milne in *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 255-62.
92. *Second Malaysian Plan*, pp. 68-71.

93. Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, III Parliament, session 1, 2 March 1971, p. 2975.
94. MIC Blueprint, *The New Economic Policy and Malaysian Indians*, Kuala Lumpur, MIC Headquarters, 1974, p. 6.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
96. Goh Hock Guan (DAP) speaking in Parliament in the debate on the New Economic Policy, Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, III Parliament, session 1, 2 March 1971, p. 2975.
97. Milne in *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 235-62. Since 1969 the Minister of Trade and Industries has been a Malay. With the resignation of Tun Tan Siew Sin in 1975, the Ministry of Finance, traditionally a Chinese preserve, is now headed by a Malay.
98. *Trends in Southeast Asia No. 2: Proceedings and Background Paper of Seminar on Trends in Malaysia*, Singapore Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1971, p. 85.
99. Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-75*, Occasional Paper no. 15, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1972, p. 8.
100. Interview with Mohiuddin Abdul Kadir, Member, Party Ra'ayat, (Penang), 24 March 1978.  
A particular focus of attack are Malay Ministers who have acquired affluence. This is very evident in speeches and protestations by Malay Ministers seeking to defend the affluent Malays.  
A good example is the speech of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, "Bumiputra Economy: A National Problem" at University Kebangsaan Bangi, 19 March 1978, *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 1978.
101. James Morgan, "Economic and Social Trends," *Trends in Southeast Asia*, p. 15.
102. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 13 August 1971.
103. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 22 April 1974.
104. Malay ownership and participation in the mining sector is 0.7 per cent, while the Chinese is 35.2 per cent; in retail trade Malay ownership and participation is 3.6 per cent while the Chinese is 75.6 per cent. *Quarterly Economic Review: Annual Supplement 1976*, London, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1976, p. 10.
105. The Malacca Chinese are popularly referred to as Babas, while Ali is a common Muslim name. Hence business deals in which licences are obtained by Malays but actually operated by Chinese are referred to as "Ali-Baba."
106. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, p. 111. R.O. Winstedt was a member of the Malayan Civil Service and Director of Education.
107. The Committee included two prominent MCA leaders, Dr Lim Chong Eu and Joo Joon Hing, and V.T. Sambanthan of the MIC.
108. *Malay Mail*, Kuala Lumpur, 22 August 1961.
109. *Ibid.*, 5 February 1960.
110. *Malaysia: The Federal Constitution*, Kuala Lumpur, Government

Printers, 1964, p. 96, Part XII, Clause 152.

111. Enche Khir Johari, Minister of Commerce and Industry, speaking at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, quoted in John Bastin and Robin W. Winks, Compilers, *Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings*, Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 396-97.
112. *The National Language Act, 1967*, Act of Parliament, No. 7 of 1967, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1967, p. 3. The Act did not apply to Sabah and Sarawak where temporary provisions authorized the use of English for a minimum period of 10 years, after Malaysia Day in 1963. In 1973 the Sabah Legislature approved the extension of the National Language Act of 1967 to Sabah. Sarawak did not adopt the National Language Act but passed a resolution prescribing the use of Bahasa Malaysia for official purposes side by side with English for five years, at the end of which the position would be reviewed. Tun Mohamad Suffian bin Hashim, *An Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1976, edn. 2, pp. 326-30.
113. *Malay Mail*, Kuala Lumpur, 8 January 1960.
114. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 3 June 1968.
115. Margaret Roff, "The Politics of Language in Malaysia," *Asian Survey*, Berkeley, vol. 17, no. 3, May 1967.
116. *Guardian*, Rangoon, 6 March 1967.
117. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka was entrusted with the task of the modernization of Bahasa Melayu and translation of textbooks. Its Director, Syed Nasir bin Ismail was an ardent and vocal supporter of the implementation of Bahasa Melayu as the national language. He was one of the "ultras" along with Syed Ja'afar Albar who opposed the Tunku's policies.
118. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 6 June 1969.
119. Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident*, p. 32.

This is corroborated by statements made by K. Padmanabhan (Deputy Minister of Labour and Man-Power) who mentioned that Rahman Ya'akub would not even attend Cabinet meetings summoned by the Tunku. Interview with K. Padmanabhan (Kuala Lumpur), 5 April 1978.
120. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 22 July 1969.
121. *Trends in Southeast Asia*... p. 116.
122. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 7 April 1966.
123. *The Financial Times*, London, 22 February 1971.
124. Federation of Malaya, *Act of Parliament*, No. 43 of 1961, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, November 1961.
125. National type primary school or Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan use English, Chinese or Tamil as a medium of instruction with the national language as a compulsory subject. The national primary school or Sekolah Kebangsaan have a six-year primary education (6-11 years) using the national language as the medium of instruction, with English as a compulsory subject and facilities for

- teaching Chinese and Tamil.
126. Many Chinese and Indian parents comment on this.
127. *Council to Study Campus Life of Students of the University of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, 1971.
128. *Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.
129. Before 13 May 1969, the National Language of Malaysia was called Bahasa Melayu. After the riots, it is called Bahasa Malaysia, obviously in an effort to neutralize its identity with the Malays.
130. *FEER*, vol. 80, no. 17, 30 April 1973, p. 10.
131. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 19 April 1973.
132. *The Rocket*, (DAP Headquarters, P.J.), October 1977, p. 4.
133. *ARB*, vol. 1, no. 9, January 1972, p. 684; *SWB*, 23 August 1974, FE/468503/3.

## Chapter IV

### THE NATIONAL FRONT

#### The Formation of the National Front

The period following the re-convening of Parliament saw a significant political development – the broadening of the base of the Alliance to accommodate most of the constitutional opposition within a broad national front, the Barisan National. The National Front (NF) came into existence in early 1973 but moves towards coalition had started much earlier. In a very real sense the genesis of a broad based National Front can be traced to the political philosophy governing the formation of the Alliance itself, between the UMNO, MCA and MIC. It was an extension of the Alliance principle. The ideas governing it remained the same. The basic motivation was to arrive at a consensus between the three major ethnic groups and achieve a workable compromise on the basic issues in Malaysia. The 1969 general election results had shown up that the MCA and the MIC were no longer the major spokesmen for the ethnic groups that they sought to represent. If the Alliance formula was to continue, opposition parties which had fared well in the 1969 Election would have to be brought within the Alliance system in order to sustain it. The alternative, the abandonment of the consensus between the major ethnic groups, would result in a change in the political development of Malaysia. If consensus was given up, it would mean a free for all, and the possibility of an intensification or racial polarization along Malay/non-Malay lines. In the wake of the 1969 riots the political leadership in power wanted a consensus on basic issues and not a furtherance of the racial polarization.

The UMNO had undergone a period of internal re-organization following the dissensions within the party in 1969. The period 1969-71 witnessed the emergence of a new leadership amongst the Malays and a consensus amongst the new leaders on what should be the nature of the future development in Malaysia. Some participants in the political process feel that parliamentary democracy remained suspended so long in order to give UMNO time to re-organize itself and settle its differences

within the party.<sup>1</sup> The leadership of UMNO under Tunku Abdul Rahman was being challenged. On 31 August 1970 the Tunku announced his intention of resigning by September 1970. Ostensibly the reason given was that as the Tunku's nephew, the Sultan of Kedah had become the Yang di Pertuan Agong, the Tunku as the Prime Minister could not pay homage to his nephew.<sup>2</sup> Tun Abdul Razak emerged as the new leader. Also back in power were two young UMNO "ultras", Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam who had been thrust into political oblivion after their attacks on the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman. By January 1973 Musa Hitam was appointed Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. Dr. Mahathir who had been re-admitted to UMNO in 1972, was appointed as Chairman of the Food Industries of Malaysia in 1973. Moderates like Senu Abdul Rahman and Khir Johari were gently moved out. The stand of the new leadership on issues of Malay rights, and the Malay pre-eminent position was more definite and vocal. (see Chapter III).

The MCA too underwent a period of soul searching and re-organization. Its disillusionment with the Chinese electorate in 1969 and its period of wandering in the political wilderness when it resigned from the cabinet following the 1969 riots achieved some basic things. It indicated afresh to the MCA leadership that its place lay in consensus style politics within the Alliance. It indicated an urgent need to revitalize the party, and it brought to the surface, discontent amongst many of the younger members, at the position occupied by the MCA within the Alliance. In the period (after the riots) when the MCA withdrew from the cabinet, its leadership became aware of the need to cooperate with the UMNO if it wanted a share in policy making and decision. In February 1970 when it was announced that the MCA would be invited to re-join the cabinet, the President of the MCA, Tun Tan Siew Sin stated:

We shall be happy to re-join the government. When the decision to withdraw was taken on May 13, the MCA was not in a position to foresee the course of subsequent events. Since then it has become clear that only a multi racial government can ensure political stability.<sup>3</sup>

The tough stand taken by the UMNO leadership after the 1969 riots had brought home to the MCA that if they did not abide by the political equation of the 1950s and pull their weight in delivering the Chinese

votes they were dispensable and could be replaced.<sup>4</sup>

At another level a group of young English educated professional Chinese were coming together to question the political compromise of the 1959s and the MCA role in the Alliance. They wanted to inject new life and vitality in the Chinese community demoralized after the 1969 elections.<sup>5</sup> Many of them viewed the post 1969 period as a swing towards Malay nationalism under an UMNO dominated government. The solution seemed to be in Chinese unity, the massing of Chinese strength to meet the challenge of the Malay political primacy.<sup>6</sup> The result was the Chinese Unity movement of early 1971 spearheaded by a group of young Chinese such as Alex Lee. The basic aim was to rally the Chinese together into a massive public opinion body and to re-organize the MCA as a vehicle to plan and carry out their objectives.<sup>7</sup> In the initial stages it received massive grass roots support and enthusiasm, with team forces working under Dr. Lim Keng Yaik in Perak, Alex Lee in Selangor and the MCA youth in Johore. The movement was stymied both from within and without. The Malay leadership viewed it as a threat. Tun Abdul Razak, addressing the MCA General Assembly warned against racial unity movements, Chinese or Malay.<sup>8</sup> The far greater threat however was from within the MCA itself due to a split between the "old guards" such as Lee San Choon, Lew Siok Yew and the "new guards" Michael Chen (the Alliance Party Executive Secretary), Dr. Lim Keng Yaik (Minister with special functions), Dr. Tan Tiong Hong and Alex Lee. The old guard wanted to conserve its established position while the younger group wanted a revitalization of the organization with a more equal positive role for the MCA. In the words of Alex Lee, "The foundation of our unity is the fair and just treatment of all communities."<sup>9</sup> The younger group stormed their way into the MCA Central Committee in 1972. Alex Lee and Dr. Tan Tiong Hong were voted into important posts. On the occasion of its 20th General Assembly on 19 August 1972 the MCA released a manifesto stating, "Chinese control over the economy is meaningless without a corresponding share of political responsibilities in the government."<sup>10</sup>

By summer 1973, the growing split between the old and new guards erupted in a clash between the former led by the president of MCA, Tun Tan Siew Sin and the latter led by Dr. Lim Keng Yaik. The issue that sparked off the crisis was the failure of a large number of Chinese candidates in the Bahasa Malaysia paper in the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination. Over 14,000 candidates (nearly two-thirds of the total who appeared) failed because of the paper.



There was considerable agitation by the younger group who expressed dissatisfaction with the political leadership of Tun Tan Siew Sin, whom they felt was more interested in manoeuvring the party to his advantage rather than in strengthening it.<sup>11</sup> MCA Central Committee members Alex Lee and Dr Tan Tiong Hong came out in support of Dr Lim and dissatisfaction spread to the Perak MCA.<sup>12</sup> The split erupted at the MCA Central Working Committee meeting on 9 June 1973 which reaffirmed support in the political leadership of Tun Tan, and expelled Dr Lim, Alex Lee, Dr Tiong and the Perak MCA leader Yong Su Hian. The crisis blew over but the party had been weakened. Its inability to handle the situation and contain friction within the party reduced its bargaining position in the Alliance. As Tun Razak was to state, "The MCA is no longer the sole representative of the Chinese Community in the national front as this role is equally shared by the Gerakan, PPP and MCA."<sup>13</sup>

In the early 1970s the MIC too was split by internal rifts and dissensions. Since 1955, the leadership of the MIC had been in the hands of Tun V.T. Sambanthan, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. In the initial stages, the MIC had attracted support largely from the Tamil estate workers. In the early 1970s a younger group of educated professionals started clamouring for a new image for the Indians. After 1969 the feeling was growing that the Indians were losing out because they had no effective political bargaining power,<sup>14</sup> and the old MIC leadership was unable to wrest any economic advantages for the Indians.<sup>15</sup> The years 1971-72 saw factions growing round the President, Tun V.T. Sambanthan on the one hand and the Vice-President Manickavasagam, Minister of Labour on the other. The crisis blew up in early 1972 when Tun Sambanthan suspended a member of the MIC Working Committee, S. Govind Raj for allegedly acting against party interest. Some MIC party members led by Manickavasagam defied the suspension orders issued against Govind Raj, and were accused by the President of creating and encouraging indiscipline within the party.<sup>16</sup> In June 1973 Tun Sambanthan resigned and in his resignation speech said, "During the past two years and more whilst the Indian Community had so many problems facing it, this party which should have concentrated its attention on their problems was instead diverted into fighting within itself."<sup>17</sup> He was replaced as party president by Tun Manickavasagam. The new Indian leadership has been trying to project a much more forceful image of the Indian Community. In particular they have been pressing for a more advantageous position for the Indians

in economy and education.<sup>18</sup>

The weakened position of the MCA and the MIC after the 1969 riots along with the infighting in these parties brought home to the Malay leadership that if the consensus style of politics was to continue, it would be necessary to bring within the Alliance those parties which had attracted dissident Malay and non-Malay votes in 1969. In order to strengthen the Alliance system, it seemed feasible to extend it. After the election of 1969 growing racial polarization had been evident. According to the architect of the Barisan Nasional, Tun Abdul Razak,<sup>19</sup> the idea of bringing together the different parties came to his mind after 13 May incident. "It was clear to me that in our country, a multi racial government, there was too much politicking and this was bound to go along racial lines."<sup>20</sup> Tun Razak also maintained that he formed the National Front "to cut across racial barriers so that people don't think in terms of Malays, Chinese or Indians."<sup>21</sup> This however is not borne out by the course of events. No effort was made to alter the basic structure of the Alliance or its multi communal composition. Within the broader coalition that came into being, the Alliance more particularly the UMNO, was the pivot as had been the case in the Alliance also. The UMNO, MCA and MIC came into existence to protect and promote the interests of their respective ethnic groups, and with the formation of the Barisan Nasional this has not been changed. In its constitution the objectives of the UMNO are stated as:

To carry out all possible means to improve the economy and well being of members, the Malay race and Bumiputras in particular and the people of Malaysia in general; to endeavour in the creation of a national culture based on the Malay culture.<sup>22</sup>

The MCA states its aim as:

To foster, safeguard, advance and secure the political, social, educational, cultural, economic and other interests of its members by legitimate and constitutional means (Members are Malaysians of Chinese descent); ... to preserve and sustain the use and study of the Chinese language.<sup>23</sup>

The Malaysian Indian Congress states its aims as the "... political, economic, educational, cultural and social interests of the Indians in Malaysia."<sup>24</sup> There were moves to set up the Alliance Direct Member-

ship Organisation (ADMO), which would have direct membership instead of UMNO-Malay, MCA-Chinese or MIC-Indian members. The ADMO would be represented in the Alliance National Council.<sup>25</sup> However the ADMO has in no sense replaced the multi communal structure of the Alliance. The Barisan Nasional, therefore was conceived not to alter the Alliance approach but to strengthen it. The need to extend it was felt because of the internal struggles within the Alliance and its weaknesses.<sup>26</sup> In a sense the Barisan Nasional was so much a projection of the Alliance system that some observers had predicted it as early as 1967.<sup>27</sup>

The opposition parties which stood triumphant after the 1969 elections faced a bleak future following the riots of May 1969. Within the suspension of parliament they lost their voice and when parliament was re-convened, it severely circumscribed the arena in which the opposition parties could operate. Most political issues on which the opposition parties could gather support were placed outside the scope of discussion. Legislation was passed prohibiting the questioning of citizenship rights, the national language, the languages of other community, the special position of the Malays and the sovereignty of the Rulers.<sup>28</sup> In a severely limited area of operation, the opposition parties had little chance of offering a viable alternative or in the foreseeable future, being in a position from where they could influence policy making and decision. Though the position of the Alliance had been shaken by the 1969 Elections, it was still in a position where it enjoyed a majority. If the opposition parties wanted a say in the government they would have to join the system.

The first party to join in a coalition with the Alliance was the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP). SUPP was founded in 1959 by a group of moderate Chinese led by Ong Kee Hui in Sarawak, and increasingly it came to be identified as a Chinese party. It was gradually infiltrated by Communists, specially at branch level. This led to friction between the moderate leadership and the left wing section. Despite its internal troubles, it was a major opposition party opposing the Sarawak Alliance, consisting of the Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA), Party Pesaka (representing the Dyaks) and Party Bumiputra (representing the bumiputras of Malay origin).<sup>29</sup> In the State Elections of 1970 the Sarawak Alliance got 24 seats (SCA 3, Pesaka 9 and Party Bumiputra 12) while SUPP and the Sarawak National Party (SNAP, another party in opposition) got 12 each. It was a very delicate situation with the opposition holding half the seats. However, according to informed

media, SUPP leadership was led to understand that if an opposition (SUPP, SNAP) government was formed, there would be no early return to control by an elected government and the State Operations Committee would simply continue in control. If SUPP joined the government it would have a say in the government, and a Cabinet post was dangled before the SUPP.<sup>30</sup>

In the summer of 1970 SUPP joined hands with the Sarawak Alliance in a State Coalition Government.<sup>31</sup> At the Federal level, its five members in Parliament would vote with the Alliance on national issues. This was of great significance for the Alliance for it would sway the balance in favour of a two-third majority for the Alliance, which was vital for the legislation of the proposed constitutional amendments when Parliament was re-convened. The President of the SUPP, Dato Ong Kee Hui joined the Malaysian Cabinet as Minister for Research, Technology and Local Government (the first non-Alliance Federal Minister in Malaysia), while the Secretary General of the SUPP, Stephen Yong became the Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak. In an interview with a University of Singapore scholar, Dato Ong Kee Hui discussed the reasons why his party joined the Barisan:

(a) The SUPP had been in opposition for too long and it could only influence policy by being directly involved.

(b) Its economic programmes were the same as that of the Alliance.

(c) It needed the help of the Alliance to oust the militant left wing section of the SUPP.<sup>32</sup>

The SUPP had been facing a division within its membership between the moderates and the more extreme pro-Communist factions. The SUPP moderate leadership facing an ever-growing radical challenge decided on a coalition with the Alliance in order to bolster its position.<sup>33</sup> After the State Election held in Sarawak in July 1970 no political party in the State could command a majority and when an appeal was made to the SUPP leadership it decided that Sarawak's interests would best be served by joining the State Alliance.<sup>34</sup> The success of the coalition with the SUPP paved the way for other coalitions.

The desire to contain the PAS<sup>35</sup> by making it a partner in the coalition was an important reason shaping the formation of the Barisan.<sup>36</sup> The only effective Malay challenge to the UMNO was from the PAS, particularly in the predominantly Malay east coast states of Kelantan and Trengganu. The existence of the PAS as an independent Malay party and its appeal to the Malays, negated the UMNO stand as the spokesman of the Malays. If the PAS joined the Barisan, there

would be no major Malay opposition left and the Malays would have a more effective bargaining power. The Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Ismail pointed out that the principle underlying the formation of coalition governments was to unite the Malays in order to raise the standard of living.<sup>37</sup> This appeal was specifically directed to the rural, poor East Coast Malay States where the PAS had a hold.

PAS had for long been in opposition. However, despite its overall strength in Kelantan and Trengganu it had been losing support to the Alliance specially in Kelantan (see Chapter II). In the State Elections in Kelantan in 1959 it got 28 of 30 State seats, in 1964 it got 21 and in 1969 only 19. In Trengganu in the State Elections of 1959, the PAS got 13 of 24 seats, in 1964 it got 3, and 11 in 1969. After the 1969 elections, it did badly in the by-election of 1971 and 1972.<sup>38</sup> Since 1969 the new UMNO leadership had been projecting a more vocal and definite image with regard to improving the economic and educational position of the Malays and implementing Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. PAS's stand therefore in appealing to the Malays was being challenged by UMNO. Moreover, the PAS was split by internal fights and leadership struggles.<sup>39</sup> There were reports that more than 3,000 PAS members from 24 branches in Besut and Kuala Trengganu districts had defected to the UMNO.<sup>40</sup> UMNO leaders built up pressure by emphasizing that the PAS leaders in Kelantan and Trengganu had not been able to do much to better the way of life for the people and suggested a change in government. Prospects were held out for a much larger share of Alliance aid if the PAS toed the line. The example highlighted was that of Trengganu which had supported an Alliance government and had far out-distanced Kelantan in receiving development assistance. Kelantan had received a total of M\$ 46 million in assistance in five years while Trengganu had got more than M\$ 100 million in two years.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout 1971 and 1972 pressures were building up but the PAS leaders seemed unwilling to commit themselves unequivocally. In May 1972 Datuk Haji Mohammed Asri, the President of the PAS and Mentri Besar of Kelantan announced that it was not necessary for the Kelantan government to form a coalition with the Alliance as it had an absolute majority in Kelantan.<sup>42</sup> In July 1972 at the 18th Congress of the PAS, 204 delegates gave a mandate to the party to join the Alliance.<sup>43</sup> In early September 1972 Tun Abdul Razak announced that the Alliance and the PAS had agreed to form a coalition at both federal and state level. The strategy of the PAS had, for long, been to weaken the

UMNO by denying it popular support, and if it joined the Alliance it might be able to pressurize the UMNO to adopt some of its policies,<sup>44</sup> and gain for itself a wider arena of operation.<sup>45</sup> As Datuk Asri put it: "As far as PAS is concerned we feel that we can derive more benefits by joining the Government. We are aware that remaining in opposition is a negative attitude."<sup>46</sup> The benefits were substantial. Within a year, M\$ 6 million were allocated for projects in Kelantan, Trengganu and Kedah.<sup>47</sup>

At the federal level the coalition between the Alliance and the PAS meant that the 11 PAS members in the Dewan Ra'ayat and 2 in Dewan Negara would vote with the Alliance. PAS was to be given one Cabinet post (Datuk Asri was appointed Minister of Land Development and Special Functions), while PAS Secretary-General Abu Bakar Hamzah was to be appointed parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of National and Rural Developments. At State level, the 11 Alliance state assemblymen in the thirty member Kelantan State Assembly would join the PAS government. In Trengganu the 9 PAS members in the 24 member assembly would join the Alliance State government as also the 8 PAS members in the 24 member state assembly of Kedah. PAS also had one assemblyman each in Perak and Perlis. One Alliance member would be given an Executive Council seat in Kelantan while PAS would be given an Executive Council seat in the state governments of Trengganu and Kedah.<sup>48</sup> There was, however, considerable dissent within the PAS to the coalition. The Special Congress of the PAS which met in a seven hour closed session voted on the entry of the PAS into the NF. It had 190 delegates voting for the coalition, 19 abstaining and 94 voting against the coalition.<sup>49</sup>

The entry of the PAS in the Alliance style politics meant that the Malay vote was consolidated. It was a warning to the non-Malay parties that they could only survive by joining the NF. If they stood away they would face a Malay dominated front. Speculation was rife about coalition moves with major non-Malay parties, particularly the Gerakan which had won total control over Penang and where a non-Malay, Dr. Lim Chong Eu was the Chief Minister. The Alliance had been particularly hard hit in Penang in the 1969 General Elections when it retained only 3 out of 24 seats. It was to the obvious advantage of the Alliance to form a government with the Gerakan which after its success in the 1969 election showed potential for winning support from non-Malays. The reasons why the Gerakan joined the National Front are more complex. Publicly, Lim Chong Eu stated that the reasons why the

Gerakan joined the coalition were twofold – first, it was in the interests of national unity, stability and security and second, it would better serve the interests of the people of the state and accelerate economic development.<sup>50</sup> The Gerakan had made major election promises in 1969, one of which was the construction of a bridge linking Penang, with the mainland. For development projects such as these the Gerakan needed the support of the centre.

Lim Chong Eu's career and personality give an interesting insight into the Gerakan coalition with the Alliance. His career has been a chequered one. Originally, President of the MCA, he resigned in 1959 to form the United Democratic Party and later became one of the founders of the Gerakan. Many of his political associates feel that he aims at being the spokesman of the Chinese, gradually replacing the MCA in that capacity.<sup>51</sup> Essentially pragmatic, Lim Chong Eu showed a desire to maintain a close relationship with the Alliance Government from 1969 onwards. After the massive victory of the Gerakan in Penang, Lim moved an amendment to the Penang Constitution to allow for the appointment of an Assistant Chief Minister. A Malay, Enche Mustapha, was appointed, obviously, to allay the apprehensions of the Malays in the face of an overwhelmingly Chinese government in Penang. Lim's personal relations with Tun Razak were cordial, and according to a Gerakan member, Lim moved toward a coalition with the Alliance, because of a personal appeal by Tun Razak.<sup>52</sup> Lim saw the writing on the walls – no party could survive on a national scale without Malay support. If the Gerakan did not join the Alliance it would be left out of national politics. In an address to the General Assembly of the Gerakan Lim spoke of the National Front as a novel system, "democracy in camera." His essentially pragmatic attitude towards the National Front is evident:

In a multi racial society, this method of conflict resolution is vital not only for the survival of democracy but also for the maintenance of inter-communal goodwill, understanding and tolerance. The Gerakan believes that the UMNO represents the strongest political force in the country and that the decision of the UMNO to share political power with all other nationally oriented political parties is a historic step towards the realisation of a truly united Malaysian nation with an identity of its own.<sup>53</sup>

Lim's perception of the role that Gerakan should play in national

politics was in sharp conflict with the views of other Gerakan leaders like Syed Hussein Alatas and Dr. Tan Chee Khoo. They wanted to use the Gerakan's majority in Penang to make Penang a "show-piece" and gradually win support for the Gerakan on a national level.<sup>54</sup> Personality clashes between the idealist, Dr. Alatas and the practical Lim Chong Eu erupted in a major party crisis in June 1971. Dissatisfaction was brewing in some sections over Lim's style of functioning and his patronage of his ex-UDP associates in preference to other Gerakan members.<sup>55</sup> The Biennial Delegates Conference scheduled to be held in 1971 was postponed and Syed Hussein Alatas suspended Lim Chong Eu. By adroit manoeuvring, Lim consolidated support for himself, and eventually Syed Hussein Alatas, Tan Chee Khoo and some others left Gerakan to form the Party Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia (Social Justice Party) commonly known as Pekemas. Their exit was followed by a series of visits to Penang by UMNO leaders like the UMNO Secretary General, Enche Senu Abdul Rahman, and the Deputy Premier, Tun Ismail. On 16 February 1972, Lim Chong Eu announced a coalition between the Gerakan and the Alliance at State and federal levels.<sup>56</sup> A Gerakan Alliance Co-ordinating Council was set up under the Chairmanship of Tun Tan Siew Sin with two members each from Gerakan, MCA, UMNO and 1 from MIC.<sup>57</sup> Gerakan's coalition with the Alliance embittered many people who see it as a sell-out to the electorate, which had voted a non-alliance party into power in Penang.<sup>58</sup> It has created problems between the Gerakan and MCA in Penang both trying to capture the Chinese vote. The MCA was resentful of Gerakan moves to win over MCA members as a number of them switched to the Gerakan.<sup>59</sup> In March 1974 the Penang MCA signed a declaration opposing the National Front concept.<sup>60</sup> The MCA at a meeting of its Central Working Committee reaffirmed support for Tun Razak and the National Front concept but Datuk Lee San Choon who had replaced Tun Tan Siew Sin as President of the MCA emphasized that the MCA must not lose its identity as "the vehicle for the channelling of the political aspirations of the Chinese."<sup>61</sup> The crux of the matter really was that as the MCA could no longer command the support of the majority of the Chinese, the UMNO was establishing equation with partners which could guarantee that support.<sup>62</sup>

The next move towards coalition was made to the Perak based PPP. In the 1969 elections, the Alliance strength had been reduced from 35 to 19 seats in Perak with the PPP getting 12 seats. With the defection however of 2 PPP members and 1 DAP member the Alliance strength



was raised to 22 and the PPP reduced to 10. Moreover, after the constitutional amendments of 1971 the PPP was losing interest in State politics. The PPP had appealed largely to non-Malays because of its stand against Malay special rights and its support for the linguistic claims of Chinese and Tamils. However, the constitutional amendments had placed these beyond the scope of discussions or debate.<sup>63</sup> Also the PPP had little support outside Perak. As stated by its President Dato Sri S.P. Seenivasagam, "I do not think that anybody in his sense can hope to have a non-Malay government. The only alternative is to have a combined Malay and non-Malay government."<sup>64</sup> In April 1972, Tun Razak announced that the Alliance and PPP had decided to come together in a coalition. The 4 PPP members in the federal parliament were to vote with the Government, while in Perak the PPP would join the Alliance and S.P. Seenivasagam was to join the State Executive Council as a member. Like the MCA in Penang, there was strong reaction from the Perak MCA, led by Dr. Kok Chee Min, the Chairman of the Sunget Siput MCA Division. MCA had to expel its two top leaders in Perak to stem reaction. The acting chairman of the Perak MCA Leong Khee Seong and the Secretary Choong Tien Chuan were expelled from the MCA for stating that the coalition defeats the principle on which the Alliance is founded.<sup>65</sup>

The party which however, was really emerging as the spokesman of the non-Malays, the DAP, did not join the coalition. Negotiations were started in the summer of 1971 but they fell through. In July 1971 DAP spokesmen alleged that for over a year MCA and Alliance operators had been trying to induce DAP members, parliament and State Assemblymen, to join the ruling party.<sup>66</sup> The DAP Vice-Chairman, Goh Hock Guan made a statement that he had been approached by Alex Lee, MCA Central Working Committee member who had sent an intermediary to his office on 12 April, suggesting that the DAP should call off the impending by-election in Bekok. Later, he reported a meeting with Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Ismail who asked the DAP to join the MCA and offered him a cabinet post.<sup>67</sup> Alex Lee confirmed that the MCA-DAP talks had taken place but negotiations broke down on the issue of the number of cabinet posts that would be given to the DAP.<sup>68</sup> Lim Kit Siang does not deny that the negotiations did take place, but points out that only initially, were they with his knowledge. Goh conducted the later negotiations without his knowledge or approval.<sup>69</sup> Eventually, the negotiations fell through but the DAP faced a party crisis and split with the resignation of Goh Hock Guan and Dr. A. Soorian.<sup>70</sup>

In December these various coalitions took the shape of a national coalition – the Barisan Nasional or National Front. On 9 December Tun Razak at a meeting of the National Alliance Council, attended by leaders of the SUPP, Gerakan and PPP announced the formation of the National Front, comprising different political parties in the country working towards a strong and united multi-racial Malaysia.<sup>71</sup> At a special conference on 21 December 1972, the PAS formally agreed to the coalition though with considerable opposition from many of its members.<sup>72</sup> The National Front (NF) government came into being on 1 January 1973. The objects of the NF, as stated in its constitution are:

- (a) to foster and maintain a united and harmonious Malaysian nation;
- (b) to strive for material and spiritual development; maintain Islam as the religion of the federation with the right to practise other religions, and to uphold Rukunegara;
- (c) to establish a fair and just society;
- (d) to promote closer relationship between the member parties.<sup>73</sup>

A few words on the organization and administration of the NF seem to be in place. In 1973 the members of the Barisan Nasional were UMNO, MCA, MIC, SUPP, Gerakan, PPP, PAS. It is administered by the Dewan Tertinggi or the Supreme Council consisting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary-General, Treasurer-General and three representatives from each member party. The Chairman is to be elected by the members of the Dewan Tertinggi and each member party shall appoint any of its three representatives as a Vice-Chairman; the Chairman in consultation with the Dewan Tertinggi will appoint the Secretary-General and the Treasurer-General. The decisions of the Dewan Tertinggi are to be unanimous except in matters of discipline (Article 14) and interpretation of rules (Article 21) where they are by majority with each member party having one vote. The Dewan Tertinggi is empowered to discipline, suspend or expel any member party for acting in any manner prejudicial to the interests of the Barisan Nasional.<sup>74</sup>

The Barisan Nasional is organized basically on the same lines as the Alliance – each member party retains its distinct identity, organization and membership. The various member parties come together in a Central Executive Committee to frame policy. In the early 1950s certain basic issues such as Merdeka (freedom), special rights for the Malays and citizenship rights for the non-Malays had been worked out

by the consensus formula of the Alliance. After the trauma of the 1969 elections and riots the same principle was applied but the base of the Alliance was further broadened to include opposition parties. The rationale of the leadership was the same – in a multi-racial society such as that of Malaysia, certain sensitive issues could not be aired or debated publicly – they should be settled by discussion, adjustment and compromise. Dissension and dissent should be regulated behind the closed doors of the Barisan Nasional. In the opinion of Tun Abdul Razak active politicking in a multi-racial society would exacerbate racial tensions.<sup>75</sup>

The UMNO has been the senior partner in the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance. In the Barisan Nasional too it is the UMNO which carries the most weight. Tun Abdul Razak, President of UMNO, was the acknowledged leader of the Barisan Nasional. The predominant position of UMNO can be seen by the allocation of seats for Barisan members for the General Elections in 1974. UMNO was allotted 62 seats, PAS (14), MCA (26), MIC (4), Gerakan (4) and PPP (4). In its origin, structure and aims, the Barisan Nasional was not moving away from the Alliance formula but was an extension of its principle of consensus. It is a logical culmination of the consensus style of politics that has shaped the Malaysian political system.

The National Front described as the "broadest coalition in Asian history"<sup>76</sup> claims that it represents more than 80 per cent of the electorate. It is a logical culmination of the consensus style of politics that has shaped the Malaysian political system. Tun Razak warned that those "who opposed the concept would be washed or drowned away."<sup>77</sup> Opposition parties who stand outside the system are seen as evil and unnecessary.<sup>78</sup> As the UMNO has been the leading partner in the Alliance, so too, in the National Front the central position is that of the Malay-based political parties, UMNO and PAS. Addressing a large gathering of people at Alor Star in Kedah, Tun Razak pointed out that under the National Front the UMNO and PAS would play a progressive role as the leaders of nationalism in the country.<sup>79</sup> Parties in opposition accepted the Front as conducive for unity, and stability<sup>80</sup> or simply because there seemed to be little future for them outside the political system. Moves towards building up an opposition front had always proved abortive. Negotiations between the DAP and Pekemas broke down by feuding between them over candidates for the Johor Lama parliamentary by-election.<sup>81</sup> Later talks of an opposition front between DAP, Pekemas and SNAP broke down as DAP wanted the

expulsion from the Pekemas of two ex-DAP members, Dr. A. Soorian and Samuel Raja.<sup>82</sup> A disgusted opposition member described the opposition as a "bunch of jokers,"<sup>83</sup> while Dr. Tan Ghee Khoo asked pertinently:

If the Alliance Party and its new cohorts can get together under the banner of the Barisan Nasional I do not see any reason why the smaller band of parties gathered here today cannot get together under one banner too.<sup>84</sup>

Their inability to do so however meant a strengthening of the consensus style of the Alliance.

### **The General Elections of 1974**

General elections were announced for August 1974. It was the first time that so many parties (UMNO, MCA, MIC, PAS, Gerakan, PPP, SUPP, and Party Pesaka Bumiputra Berasatu, a coalition of Party Pesaka and Party Bumiputra in Sarawak) were contesting the elections under one banner, one manifesto, and with one election symbol. It was the first time that the Barisan Nasional (National Front) was going to the electorate with one mandate. What in essence it was asking for, was a mandate for its consensus. If it got the support of the electorate it would demonstrate to the opposition that remained, that this was the style of politics most acceptable and also demonstrate the futility of being in opposition in Malaysia. Recent by-elections indicated a favourable trend. In by-elections in Kajang, the Alliance won in a three-cornered fight between the Alliance, the DAP and the Pekemas. In by-elections in Sungai Baru, the Alliance candidate defeated his Pekemas rival by thrice the number of votes.<sup>85</sup> Earlier in the year, Tun Razak had led a delegation to the People's Republic of China, a historic first for a Malaysian Premier. This was calculated to create a favourable atmosphere amongst the Malaysian Chinese voters. No explosive issues dominated the pre-election campaigning. The ban on the public debate of "sensitive issues" prevented issues like educational policies and quotas from being aired. The period of campaigning was restricted to about a month, ostensibly, to avoid communal clashes and tension.<sup>86</sup>

The Barisan Nasional went to the polls with a manifesto entitled, *The People's Front for a Happier Malaysia*. It described the Barisan Nasional as "a logical consequence of the growth and development of

Malaysian political life.<sup>87</sup> It justified its existence as a single effective political party which enabled the national interest and national unity to be placed above party and sectarian interests. Its rationale was, that it was providing greater popular representation and greater participation in the government. Appropriately enough, it adopted as its election symbol the *Dacing* or the Scale of Justice. On controversial issues, broad statements of policy were made. A "forward-looking" national economic and social programme under the new Economic Policy was envisaged, with emphasis on the creation of more jobs, an increase in the Gross National Product, modernization of the rural sector and eradicating economic imbalances. On a sensitive issue, educational policy, a general assurance was given that the national education system would be geared to "meet the requirements of national development and the progress in service and technology," and to train people to meet the manpower requirements of the expanding economy.<sup>88</sup>

Basically the National Front manifesto emphasized that it was the best guarantee for maintaining stability and security and for establishing a modern, just and prosperous nation. Its appeal was directed to a broad spectrum, people of all ethnic groups were being invited to vote for those representing their interests within the Front. As Tun Razak said:

It does not matter whether they vote for MCA, Gerakan, PPP or SUPP candidates. We do not want to take the Chinese from the DAP, Pekemas or Parti Rakyat. If the Chinese want to participate in the government, they will have to vote for the Chinese candidates in the National Front.<sup>89</sup>

The threat was quite clear. The Chinese were being reminded of the period following the riots of 1969, when MCA members had resigned from the Cabinet and Chinese businessmen and Chambers of Commerce had agitated for their inclusion. As Alex Lee (an ex-member of the MCA who later joined the Gerakan) said, "Now it's upto the Chinese, that's what it is about now. The question for them is simply, do they want a confrontation or do they want Chinese in government?"<sup>90</sup> The Chinese in opposition were being warned — they would have no political future if they stayed out. Many non-Malays accepted the logic of this, for particularly after 1969 few people were willing "to rock the boat."<sup>91</sup> The party to benefit from this attitude was the ruling party.

The only real challenge to the National Front came from the DAP.

In its manifesto it hit out at the political opportunism and knavery of the years 1969-74, with the Alliance changing its name to National Front but retaining its 1969 policies. However, the major thrust of its attack was levelled against the other opposition parties which had surrendered their political principles and beliefs for position, office and profit. It decried the shortsighted policies of the opposition of winning a few extra seats, to enhance the terms for joining the Front (as it pointed out had been done by Gerakan and PPP),<sup>92</sup> as well as "arch-opportunists" like Goh Hock Guan within its own party.

Its campaign was directed at ensuring economic and educational equality. It emphasized economic inequality existing between Malaysians and foreigners, and pleaded for class equality (as against the racial balance theory of the Front). As against the *towkay*<sup>93</sup> image of the MCA it appealed to the less privileged Chinese and Indians. It promised a full employment policy to give jobs to all Malaysians, a new deal for hawkers, petty traders and squatters, cheap housing and radical land reforms to give to every tiller the ownership of the land he framed. On educational policy which the manifesto described as "a festering sore of inequality and injustice, aggravating class inequality and undermining national unity," it asked for a thorough reform. It promised free primary to university education to the poor, and expansion of High School and University places (quotas for Malay students were creating resentment among non-Malays), and the establishment of private universities and colleges (in accordance with national educational policies, the Alliance did not support private "language" universities). It promised the compulsory teaching of the mother tongue of every student, government financial subsidy to independent Chinese secondary schools, and a constitutional guarantee that Chinese and Tamil primary schools would not be converted to national language schools. Within a broader framework of ensuring human rights it promised to repeal the Constitutional Amendment Act of 1971, the Universities and University College Act, 1971<sup>94</sup> and the Internal Security Act.<sup>95</sup> The DAP then, was appealing to those discontented with the ruling party's policies, specially economic and educational, and the discontented were largely the non-Malays.

The DAP made a non-communal appeal. It had come into existence as a result of a split in the Gerakan, and its founder-members, Dr Tan Chee Khoo and Syed Hussein Alatas had also been founders of Gerakan. Its aims, objectives and principles were strikingly similar to those of the Gerakan. Like the Gerakan it emphasized constitutional

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and parliamentary democracy as its objective; wealth and the means of production should not be concentrated in the hands of a few; Bahasa Malaysia and Islam were accepted as "national", as also was accepted the need to give special attention to the disadvantaged position of the Malays and other indigenous people.<sup>96</sup> The Pekemas was joined by Party Marhaen (of Ahmed Boestamam) on 18 July 1974, and they campaigned for the elections on the Pekemas name and symbol. Its manifesto aimed at a true "Malaysian nationalism," economic and social justice and equal opportunities. It promised free education up to the university level, social security, free health services and public ownership and control of the vital means of production. It advocated a social security scheme, the nationalization of mines and the eradication of landlordism.<sup>97</sup> The appeal of the Pekemas was socialistic, ideological and non-communal.

The only Malay party in opposition was the Party Socialis Rakyat Malaysia (PR). It was unable however to live down its image of being too far to the left. Its appeal, socialistic and leftist, was too intellectual for the peasants to whom it was directing its campaign. Its manifesto, *Program dan Manifesto Pilihanrava* (Programme and Manifesto for Election) promised land to the landless, and changes in policies and administration and education and culture. For Trengganu it had a separate eleven point programme promising to reduce licence fees and improve the system of religious instruction.<sup>98</sup> The PR's campaign went over the heads of the peasantry. Its Chairman, Kassim Ahmed in his radical non-conformist message used his poem *Sajak* which ended with "Tuhan suda mati" (God is dead). This was used by the National Front to play on the religious susceptibilities of the Muslim Malays of the area.<sup>99</sup>

A little known party, Kesatuan Insaf Tanah Air (KITA), contested with a slogan of service, sacrifice and sincerity.<sup>100</sup>

In East Malaysia, the only party in opposition was the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) with a largely Iban membership. It campaigned on a platform of Sarawak for Sarawakians, and Malaysia for all Malaysians, with no discrimination between any of the races. It promised a just and fair educational system and equal opportunities in all fields and yet it subscribed to the constitutional provision whereby the special privileges of the natives are enshrined in order to ~~help~~ <sup>help</sup> the underprivileged. It also upheld the new economic policy with special quotas for the Malays and the indigenous population.<sup>101</sup>

The manifestos of most of the opposition parties (with the

exception of the DAP) showed a striking similarity. They all promised equality, justice and a special deal for the under-privileged. There was no effective appeal on national issues which could sway the electorate. Moreover on no major issue was there a major difference of opinion with the National Front. On major issues on which there was a polarization, like on educational policies and reservation of quotas on the basis of class and not race, the opposition parties could only make ambiguous statements as they could not be publicly debated. It was only the DAP which, with its origin, history and plea for a Malaysian Malaysia held a definite appeal for a class of discontented non-Malays. The opposition parties were, however, unable to come to any kind of an understanding between themselves. The DAP-Pekemas efforts to present an electoral coalition broke down on 18 July 1974. The Front leadership capitalized on this by pointing out the inability of the opposition to be able to form a government, and picking out the manifesto of Pekemas, Tun Razak asked, "What is their point in being the opposition if they support the government's policy?"<sup>102</sup> Tun Razak also warned the electorate that UMNO-PAS could easily command a majority in parliament and form a Malay government if they did not support the multi-racial government of the National Front.<sup>103</sup> This was a clear warning for the non-Malays — either accept the Alliance style of politics and their brand of multi-racialism or accept total Malay political predominance.

### **The 1974 Election Results**

Elections were announced for 24 August 1974. A Constitution Amendment Act of 1973 had increased the number of members of the Dewan Ra'ayat from 144 to 154. In the new allocation of seats, Kelantan and Pahang got an additional two seats each; Kedah, Penang, Perak and Trengganu got one seat extra; the recently created Federal territory got 5 seats while Selangor lost three seats. The Federal territory (Wilayat Persekutuan) of Kuala Lumpur came into existence as a result of the Constitution Amendment Act of 1973 and was officially separated from the State of Selangor on 1 February 1974. It was given five parliamentary seats and for the purposes of elections it was regarded as a State. Selangor yielded 94 square miles to the Federal territory hence losing 3 Federal seats.<sup>104</sup> The Federal Constitution makes provision for a weightage to rural areas,

... the number of electors within each constituency in a State

ought to be approximately equal except that, having regard to the greater difficulty of reaching electors in the country districts and the other disadvantages facing rural constituencies, a measure of weightage for area ought to be given to such constituencies.<sup>105</sup>

The opposition alleged that the new electoral boundary changes were brought about to further increase the Malay rural vote and to weaken the Chinese stronghold.<sup>106</sup> Dr. Tan Chee Khoo pointed out instances of how voters in urban areas had been short-changed. Parliamentary constituencies of Menglembu and Ipoh had more than 51,000 voters while Grik, Johore Timor and Kuala Kangsar had 16,000, 17,000 and 20,000 voters respectively. Petaling Jaya had 26,863 voters while the constituencies of Sungei Way and Subang had just over 10,000.<sup>107</sup> Since the non-Malays were concentrated in the urban areas, this meant that the non-Malay political parties were at a disadvantage. Some urban (mainly Chinese) constituencies had as much as three times the number of voters in rural constituencies.

In Peninsular Malaysia 114 parliamentary seats were being contested with 16 seats being contested in Sabah and 24 in Sarawak. State Assembly elections were also being held (with the exception of Sabah where the assembly had been elected in 1971) to elect 360 members of the State Assemblies. The National Front was contesting all 114 parliament seats in Peninsular Malaysia – UMNO (62), PAS (14), MCA (26), MIC (4), Gerakan (4), PPP (4).<sup>108</sup> For the allocation of seats of the member parties of the NF, each branch in the country was entitled to submit a name to the divisional level and these names were passed on to the headquarters. The choice was made at national level by a Candidate Selection Committee headed by Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew.<sup>109</sup> Amongst the opposition, the DAP fielded 46 candidates, Pekemas 36, PSRM 22, KITA 4 and there were 39 Independent candidates. The Front and Party Rakyat were fielding primarily Malay candidates while the major opposition parties DAP and Pekemas were fielding mainly non-Malay candidates.<sup>110</sup> The DAP was concentrating in Perak where it was challenging 13 of 18 seats. It did not field any candidate in Trengganu, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Pahang.<sup>111</sup> In Sarawak, SNAP, was contesting all 24 seats. The Party Rakyat was concentrating in Trengganu where it was contesting six seats. The large number of independent candidates who contested was due to a number of PAS, UMNO and MCA candidates who stood as independents in protest against the National Front.

When nominations closed on 8 August 1974, the Front had won,

unopposed, 47 parliament and 43 State seats.<sup>112</sup> The results of the election were a thumping victory for the Front. It got more than two-thirds majority winning 135 seats. All the Malays candidates field by UMNO and PAS won; MCA got 19 parliamentary seats (as against 13 in 1969), MIC won all 4 seats it contested; and PPP one of 4 contested seats.<sup>113</sup> The opposition got 19 seats (DAP 9, SNAP 9 and Pekemas 1) (Table I). DAP was only able to retain its pre-1974 position.<sup>114</sup>

In the state assembly elections in Peninsular Malaysia, the National Front got control over all eleven state assemblies. It got a total of 283 seats (with an additional 30 in Sarawak) (UMNO 170, PAS 48, MCA 43, MIC 7, PPP 2, Gerakan 13). In Pahang, Perlis and Kelantan it had no opposition while in the other eight states it had a two-thirds majority, in Kedah it had 24 out of 26 seats, in Penang 23 out of 27, in Perak 31 out of 42, in Negri Sembilan 21 out of 24, in Trengganu 27 out of 28, in Selangor 30 out of 33, in Malacca 16 out of 20, and in Johore 31 out of 32. Amongst the opposition the DAP got 23 seats, Pekemas 1, SNAP 18 and Independents 5. In Sarawak SNAP got 18 seats and the Front 30 seats.<sup>115</sup> In the Federal territory, the Front got 2 seats while the opposition got 3 (DAP 2, Pekemas 1). Opposition in the state assemblies was practically wiped out with the exception of Perak and Sarawak, where some opposition remained. In Perak, the Front faced a reversal where the PPP was more or less wiped out. Among those defeated were Party President Datuk Sri S.P. Seenivasagam and Secretary-General Khong Koh Yat. All of them lost to DAP candidates. S.P. Seenivasagam was defeated by a DAP candidate by 10,748 votes.<sup>116</sup> The PPP had won support in Perak, from 1959 onwards, as a non-Malay political party vocalizing non-Malay demands on language and education policies. As a member of the National Front it lost its image and hence lost out to the DA.<sup>117</sup>

Amongst the opposition parties in Peninsular Malaysia, only the DAP made a dent. It got maximum support in Perak (4 seats), 1 seat each in Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca, and 2 from the Federal Territory. Its support came mainly from urban areas – Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Seremban, Malacca and Alor Star.<sup>118</sup> The other opposition parties fared badly. Party Rakyat and KITA did not get a single seat (Table I). Pekemas won only 1 state seat and 1 parliamentary seat. The successful member of parliament was Dr. Tan Chee Khoo who won by a narrow margin of 666 votes. The Chairman of the Pekemas, Ahmed Boestaman lost by 8,152 votes to a Front candidate.<sup>119</sup>

The Front got 60.7 per cent of the over-all votes in the parliamentary

Table 1

PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE GENERAL ELECTIONS 1974: SEATS WON BY POLITICAL PARTIES  
AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Negeri State	N.F.		P.S.R.M.		Pekemas		D.A.P.		I.P.P.P		S.N.A.P.		K.I.T.A.		Independent	
	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N
Perlis	2	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kedah	13	24	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Kelantan	12	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trengganu	7	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulau Pinang	9	23	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Perak	17	31	-	-	-	-	4	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pahang	8	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Selangor	10	30	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Wilayat Persekutuan (Federal Territory)	2	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negeri Sembilan	5	21	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Melaka	3	12	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Johor	16	31	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sabah	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sarawak	15	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	135	313	-	-	1	1	9	23	-	-	9	18	-	-	-	5

P = Parliament N = State

Source: Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Raayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Election 1974 of the States of Malaya and Sarawak (Election Commission, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers 1975), p. 132.

elections. It improved on Alliance 1969 position of 44.9 per cent and 45.7 per cent respectively.<sup>120</sup> The DAP got 18.3 per cent and 15.6 per cent respectively, Pekemas 5.1 per cent and 3.6 per cent, Party Rakyat 4.0 per cent and 4.9 per cent, SNAP 5.5 per cent and 5.0 per cent and independents 6.0 per cent and 9.7 per cent respectively (Table II). The magnitude of the Front victory can be gauged by keeping in mind the number of opposition candidates who lost their deposits while no Front candidate lost his deposit.<sup>121</sup> The nation had come out with a massive mandate for the coalition politics of the Front and for the principle of multi-racialism as defined by it. However, a closer look at the election results shows up some interesting facts. It indicated that opposition to the coalition was more widespread than parliamentary and state assembly seats indicated. In contested constituencies the percentage of the valid votes of the opposition parties was not inconsiderable. The DAP got 34.1 per cent in parliament and 31.6 per cent in contested state assembly elections; the Pekemas (with only 1 candidate in parliament and 1 in a state assembly) had 13.0 per cent and 10.1 per cent; the Party Rakyat which did not win a single parliament or state seat had 16.9 per cent and 16.2 per cent; the SNAP had 43.9 and 43.2 per cent respectively.<sup>122</sup> The failure of the opposition parties to come to any kind of an electoral understanding led to many three-cornered fights which worked to the advantage of the Front. In several constituencies the National Front won by only a narrow margin and in many others, the combined votes of the opposition parties were more than that of the National Front but because of their failure to come together, they lost to the National Front candidates.<sup>123</sup> In the Bukit Bendera constituency of Penang, National Front candidate got 18,136 while DAP got 9,408, Pekemas 2,138 and PR 2,135 votes. In the Nibong Tebat constituency of Penang, the National Front candidate got 11,271, DAP 5,132 and Pekemas 3,155.

In the Tanjong constituency of Penang, the Chief Minister Dr. Lim Chong Eu got 15,409, DAP 13,969, Pekemas 2,508 and Party Rakyat 1,622 votes. The combined opposition votes were more than Dr. Lim's votes. In Jelutong constituency of Penang, the National Front candidate got 16,112, DAP 10,152, Pekemas 6,955 and Party Rakyat 1,467 votes. The combined opposition votes were greater than the National Front vote. In Parit Buntar constituency of Perak, the National Front candidate won by 1,709 votes against an independent candidate (12,134:10,425). In Sungai Siput constituency of Perak, the National Front got 9,045, DAP 8,401, Pekemas 877 and Independent 103 votes.

*Table II*

**PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1974  
PERCENTAGE OF VALID VOTES POLLED BY POLITICAL  
PARTIES AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES ON A  
MALAYSIA BASIS**

*OVERALL*

Party	Parliamentary	State
National Front	60.7	61.0
Pekemas	5.1	3.6
D.A.P.	18.3	15.6
Party Rakyat	4.0	4.9
Sarawak National Party	5.5	5.0
Independent People's Progressive Party	0.1	0.1
K.I.T.A.	0.3	0.1
Bismah	—	0.03
Independents	6.0	9.7

*Source: 1974 General Elections, p. 740.*

It is likely that if the DAP candidate had stood alone from amongst the opposition, he would have been elected. In Taiping constituency of Penang the National Front got 14,253, the DAP 11,060, Pekemas 999 and KITA 479 votes. In Beruas constituency of Perak, National Front got 6,560, DAP 5,737, Independent 1,753 and Pekemas 1,204 votes. The combined opposition votes were higher. In Lumut constituency of Perak the National Front got 8,792, DAP 7,782, and Independent 3,707 votes. The combined opposition vote was higher. In Telok Anson constituency of Perak, the National Front got 9,685, DAP 8,436 and Pekemas 3,935 votes. All this indicated that opposition did exist, largely in the Urban areas. Keeping in mind the rural weightage in the electoral constituencies it can be seen that the value of the discontent was more significant than the voting figures indicated.

Malaysia's new cabinet was announced on 5 September 1974. It was more Malay-oriented, with only five non-Malays holding cabinet

rank (the old cabinet had seven non-Malays). A surprise appointment was that of Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Education Minister. Dr. Mahathir's strong views with regard to a more assertive role for the Malays in all fields were well known. His appointment in charge of the very sensitive area of education was seen by many non-Malays with misgiving. Perhaps to counter this fear, the Secretary General of the MCA, Chan Siang Sun, was appointed as Deputy Minister of Education. The new Cabinet reflected the political predominance of the Malays in the National Front.<sup>124</sup> In the new cabinet announced on 5 September 1974 Sixteen out of twenty one portfolios were held by Malays, four by Chinese and one by an Indian. All the important ministries were held primarily by UMNO members, including Finance which traditionally had been a prerogative of the MCA. The political upsets of the 1969 elections for the Malays were being wiped out. Non-Malays and Malays were being reminded that the consensus that had been worked out in the 1950s with regard to the Malay position in Malaysia could not be given up.

## NOTES

1. Syed Hussein Alatas, "The Politics of Coalition in Malaysia," *Current History*, Pennsylvania, vol. 63, no. 376, December 1972, p. 271. Dr. Alatas was then a member of the Gerakan.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 5 February 1970.
4. The resignation of the MCA members in May 1969 from the Cabinet had been readily accepted.
5. A very pertinent remark was made by one of the leaders of this new movement, Alex Lee when he pointed out that after the 1969 riots, "nothing was moving, no investments were being made...." Interview with Alex Lee (Kuala Lumpur), 8 March 1978.
6. Alex Lee, "The Chinese and Malay Dilemmas in Malaysia," *Pacific Community*, Tokyo, vol. 3 (3), April 1972, pp. 561-71.
7. Interview with Bernard Lu (Political Secretary to Tun Tan Siew Sin), Kuala Lumpur, 7 March 1978.
8. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 22 August 1971.
9. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1971.
10. *Malay Mail*, Kuala Lumpur, 22 August 1971.
11. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 1 June 1973.
12. *Ibid.*, 4 June 1973.
13. *ARB*, vol. 4, no. 3, 31 August 1974, p. 2951.
14. The Indians form 10.6 per cent of the population, but they do not form a majority in any of the electoral constituencies.
15. Interview with an MIC minister in government, Kuala Lumpur, 5 April 1978.



16. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 21 July 1972.
17. Press statement issued by Y.B. Tun V.T. Sambanthan, President of the MIC on his decision to relinquish the Presidency of MIC on 30 June 1973, Kuala Lumpur.
18. *MIC Blueprint: The New Education Policy and Malaysian Indians*, Kuala Lumpur, Iba Pejabat MIC, 1974.
19. Tunku Abdul Rahman ascribed to Tun Razak, the initiative for forming the Barisan Nasional. *The Star*, 7 November 1977.
20. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 8 August 1974. (Tun Razak in an interview with Abdul Samad and Noordin Soofie.)
21. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 23 December 1972.
22. *Constitution of the United Malays National Organisation*, Kuala Lumpur, Ibu Pejabat, UMNO Malaysia, 1974.
23. *Constitution of the Malaysian Chinese Association*, Kuala Lumpur, MCA Headquarters, 1976.
24. *Constitution of the Malaysian Indian Congress*, Kuala Lumpur, MIC Headquarters, 1973.
25. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 5 December 1970.
26. Alatas, in *Current History*, vol. 63, no. 376, p. 271.
27. In August 1967 Bob Reece, writing in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* hinted that Tunku Abdul Rahman was looking for a coalition outside the Alliance. *FEER*, vol. LXV, no. 32, August 1967, pp. 311-12.
28. The Constitutional Amendments prohibiting the discussion of these "sensitive issues" have been discussed in Chapter III.
29. In the 1963 District Council Elections SUPP had got 116 out of 429 seats. R.S. Milne and K.J. Ratnam, *Malaysia: New States in a New Nation*, London, Frank Cass, 1974, p. 73.
30. Michael Leigh, *The Rising Moon: Political Change in Sarawak*, Sydney University Press, 1974, pp. 143-44. This view is substantiated by Margaret Clark Roff, *The Politics of Belonging: Political Change in Sabah and Sarawak*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 143.
31. For a further discussion of Sarawak and Sabah see Chapter V.
32. Leo Ah Bang, "Elite Cohesion in Malaysia: A Study of Alliance Leadership", Masters Thesis, University of Singapore, 1972, p. 178.
33. *FEER* vol. LXIX, no. 29, 16 July 1970, pp. 6-7.
34. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 11 December 1970.
35. PAS was renamed Party Islam (PI) in late 1971. It is variously referred to as PMIP, PAS or PI, but in this thesis it will be referred to as PAS, unless it is otherwise referred to in a direct quotation.
36. Interview with M.G.G. Pillai, (veteran journalist and commentator on Malaysian Affairs), currently with *Asiaweek*, Hongkong, Kuala Lumpur, 18 February 1978.
37. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 2 July 1973.
38. At the Kapar parliamentary by-election the PAS candidate got 3,552 votes as against 12,313 votes for the Alliance. *Straits Times*,

- Singapore, 18 March 1971.  
 In Batu Rakit by-elections, an Alliance candidate won by a majority of 2,753 votes over a PAS candidate. *Ibid.*, 25 August 1971.  
 At the Muda State by-elections, an Alliance candidate polled 5,831 votes to beat a PAS candidate getting 2,434 votes. *Ibid.*, 13 December 1971.  
 In Lipis parliamentary by-election the Alliance candidate Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie defeated a PAS candidate with a majority of 12,097 votes. *Ibid.*, 9 April 1972.
39. M. Kamlin, *Politics and Electioneering: The Case of Trengganu*, Kuala Lumpur, Department of History, University of Malaya, 1972, p. 32.
  40. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 19 August 1970.
  41. R.O. Tilman, *The Centralization Theme in Malaysian Federal Elections, 1957-1975* (Occasional Paper no. 39, Singapore Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1976), p. 38.
  42. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 29 May 1972.
  43. *Ibid.*, 6 September 1972.
  44. Clive S. Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan, 1838-1969*, Cornell University Press, 1978, p. 242.
  45. In an interview Ahmed Boestamam expressed the view that the reason why Datuk Asri joined the coalition was the hope that the PAS would capture a wider mass support. Interview with Ahmed Boestamam (Kuala Lumpur), 30 March 1978.
  46. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 18 May 1973.
  47. *Ibid.*, 12 November 1973.
  48. *Ibid.*, 11 September 1972.
  49. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1972.
  50. *Ibid.*, 17 February 1972.
  51. Interview with Syed Hussein Alatas (Singapore), 11 April 1978.  
 Another member of the Gerakan V. David felt that with Tun Tan Siew Sin losing political control, Lim Chong Eu was aiming at the political leadership of the Chinese. Interview with V. David (Kuala Lumpur), 28 March 1978.
  52. Interview with Alex Lee, *Pacific Community*, vol. 3, pp. 561-71.  
 Tun Razak died in early 1976 after a long illness. In the early stages apart from a few confidantes his illness was not public knowledge. According to Alex Lee, under the circumstances Lim was responsive to Tun Razak's suggestions about a coalition.
  53. Address by Dr. Lim Chong Eu, national President of Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia to the Party's Extraordinary General Assembly at Ipoh, 27 September 1975 (Singapore, Institute of South-East Asian Studies, unpublished).
  54. Interview with Tan Chee Khoon (Kuala Lumpur), 13 March 1978; interview with Syed Hussein Alatas (Singapore), 11 April 1978.
  55. Ho Sooi Beng, *The Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia: An investigation into the break-up of a Malaysian non-communal political party*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1972, p. 63.

56. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 17 February 1972.
57. Md. Adris Ariffin, *Coalition Government in Penang*, University of Malaya, Graduation Exercise, 1973, p. 36.
58. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 17 February 1972.
59. According to the MCA, 300 members joined Gerakan, while according to the Gerakan there were 3,000. *FEER*, vol. 84, no. 16, 22 April 1974, pp. 28-32.
60. *ARB*, vol. 3, no. 4, 30 April 1974, p. 264.
61. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, no. 12, 31 May 1974, p. 2696.
62. Many UMNO members felt that the MCA and MIC were not backing the Alliance leadership on important issues. According to Dr. Mahathir, "If the MCA loses support, then the whole idea of working with the MCA becomes no longer tenable because we have to have a party that gets the support of the people." *Straits Times*, Singapore, 23 February 1973.
63. Chandrasekharan Pillay, "Protection of the Malay Community: A Study of UMNO's Position", Master's Thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 1974, p. 247.
64. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 17 February 1972.
65. *Ibid.*, 20 April 1972.
66. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 13 July 1971.
67. *Ibid.*, 12 July 1971.
68. Interview with Alex Lee, see fn. 5 above. Alex Lee stated that even a memorandum for the DAP-MCA coalition was drawn up.
69. Interview with Lim Kit Siang (Kuala Lumpur), 29 March 1978. Lim points out the question of a coalition with the Alliance did not arise as the DAP had radically different policies and programmes.
70. *FEER*, vol. 77, no. 27, 1 July 1972, pp. 18-19.  
For a further discussion on the DAP, see Chapter V.
71. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 10 December 1972.
72. *Ibid.*, 22 December 1972.
73. *Constitution of the Barisan Nasional of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Ibu Pejabat, Barisan Nasional Malaysia, 1975.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *FEER*, vol. 79, no. 2, 15 January 1973, p. 18.
76. M.G.G. Pillai, "Consensus Time," *FEER*, vol. 79, no. 2, 15 January 1973, pp. 17-18.
77. *Summary of World Broadcast*, May 1974, FE (4592) 3/26.
78. Tun Razaleigh commenting on the role of opposition parties, *FEER*, vol. 86, no. 39, 11 October 1974, p. 26.
79. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 22 July 1974.
80. Lim Chong Eu spoke of the "highest national objective" as to the reason for the Gerakan joining the National Front. *Gerakan*, Kuala Lumpur, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1974.
81. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 25 October 1973.
82. *Ibid.*, 20 July 1974.
83. Interview with Alatas.
84. Speech by Dr. Tan Chee Khoo at a meeting of opposition parties,

- Transport Workers Union, Petaling Jaya, 1975, (unpublished pamphlet).
85. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 25 March 1974.
  86. Opposition members were resentful, feeling that this was directed against the opposition, as government media was used to propagate the National Front.
  87. *Constitution of the Barisan Nasional*, n. 75.
  88. *Ibid.*
  89. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 5 August 1974.
  90. *Guardian*, London, 13 August 1974.
  91. S.M. Ali, "Front Won by Reading the Malaysian Mind," *Hongkong Standard*, 3 September 1974.
  92. The DAP was very bitter with Gerakan and PPP leaders for not coming together with the DAP to form an opposition government in Selangor and Perak in 1969.
  93. Big Business.
  94. This ensures heavily weighted quotas for Malays.
  95. *The DAP General Election Manifesto*, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 1974.
  96. *Aims and Objectives: Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1973.
  97. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 24 August 1974.
  98. *Manifesto of Parti Socialis Rakyat Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.
  99. Kamlin, *Politics and Electioneering*, pp. 43-44.
  100. *KITA Manifesto*, Dewan Masyarakat, Kuala Lumpur, 1974.
  101. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 24 August 1974.
  102. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 20 August 1974.
  103. *Ibid.*, 11 August 1974.
  104. Constitution (Amendment 2) Act, 1973 (Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, August 1973), 13th Schedule, Act 206.
  105. *The Federal Constitution of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1970.
  106. Originally Articles 113-17 of the Federal Constitution laid down clear-cut principles that (i) constituencies should be allocated in such a manner that there would be no undue disparity between the population quota of the State and the electoral quota of the Federation, and (ii) each State should be divided into single member constituencies in such a manner that each constituency contained a number of electors as close to the electoral quota of the State, as might be (permitted variation not to exceed fifteen per cent).

In 1962, a radical change took place, with the insertion into the Constitution of the Thirteenth Schedule. Under this, a rural constituency might contain as little as one-half of the electors of an urban constituency, and the power of delimitation was transferred from the Election Commission to a bare majority of the total number of members of the House of Representatives.

R.H. Hickling, "An Overview of Constitutional Changes in Malaysia 1957-1977" in Tun Mohammed Suffian, H.P. Lee and

- F.A. Trindale, eds., *The Constitution of Malaysia: Its Development 1957-1977*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 14.
107. *ARB*, vol. 4, no. 3, 31 August 1974, p. 2926.
  108. *Ibid.*
  109. Fatimah Aodullah, *The Malaysian General Elections of 1974*, Graduation Exercise, University of Malaya, 1974, p. 23.
  110. Among the National Front candidates, 65.8 per cent were Malays, 28.9 per cent Chinese and 5.3 per cent Indians.  
     Among the PR candidates 68 per cent were Malays, 27.3 per cent Chinese and 14.6 per cent Indians.  
     Amongst the DAP, 19.5 per cent were Malays, 64.3 per cent Chinese and 13.0 per cent Indians.  
     Amongst the Pekemas, 38.0 per cent were Malays, 47.7 per cent were Chinese and 14.3 per cent Indians. Abdullah, fn. 109.
  111. These states had a majority of Malays.
  112. *FEER*, vol. 85, no. 33, 23 August 1974, p. 26.
  113. *Ibid.*, vol. 85, no. 35, 6 September 1974, pp. 10-11.
  114. The line-up in parliament at the time of its dissolution had been—UMNO 52, MCA 15, MIC 2, USNO 13, Party Bumipura 5, SCA 5, Party Pesaka 4, SUPP 4, PAS 11, PPP 4, Gerakan 1, Independents 5, DAP 9, SNAP 8, Pekemas 5, and 1 vacant seat.
  115. *Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative General Assembly Elections of the States of Malaya and Sarawak*, Kuala Lumpur, election Commission, Government Printers, 1975, p. 52. Hereafter referred to as *1974 General Elections*.
  116. *Ibid.*
  117. S.P. Seenivasagam analyzed the reasons for the failure of the PPP as:
    - 1) The DAP concentrated on winning seats in Perak.
    - 2) The MCA did not co-operate with the PPP in Perak, which worked to the advantage of the DAP.
    - 3) The voters were not oriented to accepting the PPP's new role in the National Front.*Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 21 September 1974.
  118. *FEER*, vol. 85, no. 36, 6 September 1974, pp. 10-11.
  119. *1974 General Elections*, pp. 52, 56.
  120. *1969 General Elections*, p. 143.
  121. From the Party Rakyat, 9 parliament and 44 state assembly candidates lost their deposits; from Pekemas 19 parliament and 67 state assembly candidates; from DAP 2 parliament and 17 state assembly candidates; from KITA, 3 parliament and 9 state assembly candidates; from the Independents 22 parliament and 63 state candidates lost their deposits.  
*1974 General Elections*, p. 133. Election deposits for the 1974 elections had been raised three-fold from M\$ 500 to M\$ 1500 (for parliamentary candidates) and from M\$ 250 to M\$ 750 (for state assembly candidates).
  122. *1974 General Elections*, p. 140.

123. Compiled from *General Elections 1974*, pp. 48-57.

124. *ARB*, vol. 4, no. 4, 30 September 1974, p. 5.

## Chapter V

# THE OPPOSITION

### Political Parties in Opposition

In Chapter IV an analysis has been made of the efforts of the Alliance leadership to contain and absorb the opposition by the formation of the National Front. The quest was to arrive at a consensus in political life and government, in order to give the existing government legitimacy and stability. The consensus was arrived at, and accepted, as was seen by the success of the National Front in the General Election of 1974. A broadening of the Alliance approach with its emphasis on multi-communal politics was accepted by most of the opposition parties. A few, however, chose to stand outside the system and oppose the National Front, constitutionally.

From the beginning, Malaysian political life had revolved around a consensus formula of containing effective opposition. There were several opposition parties<sup>1</sup> but they were unable to come together to present any effective challenge. Some of them espoused a leftist-socialist stance such as the Party Rakyat and the Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> Some stood for greater Malay/Islamic interests such as the Party Islam (PAS). The Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) appealed, primarily, to the non-Malays, while the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan) projected a non-communal stand. A common accusation that the opposition parties hurled at the Alliance was that it was a communal organization,<sup>3</sup> and yet, none of the parties could survive, even those which projected a multi-racial appeal without building up support from one of the major ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup> The Alliance leadership in turn hurled the accusation at the opposition that their so-called non-communal stance was really aimed at doing away with Malay privileges and stimulating communal thinking, and in turn they pointed to the sagacity of their own approach.<sup>5</sup> In actual practice, thus, though the opposition parties decried the Alliance approach they too had to take recourse to

building up support on ethnic lines and not depend entirely on ideological or class interests. As such, they could not, and did not offer a viable alternative to the Alliance, failing to gather effective support on ideological grounds cutting across racial and religious barriers. Many of the opposition parties seeing no hope of making a dent in the political system joined the National Front. Some parties, however, stayed away. In this chapter, an attempt is made to isolate these parties, the nature of their appeal and support, and their future in the system.

By 1974 the National Front encompassed within its fold most of the political parties in Malaysia with the exception of the DAP, Party Rakyat, Pekemas and the Sarawak National Party (SNAP).<sup>6</sup> Of the parties in opposition, the most significant, undoubtedly is the DAP. Since its formation in 1966,<sup>7</sup> it has capitalized on its image as an uncompromising party in opposition. Though it tries to project a multi-communal approach, its image and identification in Malaysia is that of a non-Malay, predominantly Chinese, party. Its membership and leadership are predominantly Chinese.<sup>8</sup> Its effective and vocal spokesman is its organizing secretary, Lim Keng Siang.<sup>9</sup> Its support comes from the West coast urban states with a predominantly non-Malay population.<sup>10</sup> It has not ventured, till recently, into the rural Malay areas. Ironically, its strength as well as its weakness lies in its limited appeal to the non-Malays—strength, because it is the only party of note which offers an alternative to the Alliance, and weakness, because it does not attract the Malays, without whose support it cannot be a viable alternative to the Alliance.

The major platform and manifesto of the DAP has been its championship of a "Malaysian Malaysia" and "Cultural Democracy" — greater rights, political, social and economic for the non-Malays.<sup>11</sup> This has evoked a responsive chord amongst non-Malays, discontented at the intensification of Malay rights and policies since 1969.<sup>12</sup> It has successfully highlighted the Chinese dilemma, the feeling among many Chinese that things are slipping from their control.<sup>13</sup> The DAP has consistently championed more liberal and educational policies for the non-Malays, deeply frustrated at the neglect of their languages, Tamil and Kuo-Yu, thought the Constitution guarantees their preservation.<sup>14</sup> There is strong resentment amongst non-Malays that avenues for higher education are closing in for them,<sup>15</sup> and heavily weighted quotas are restricting the entry of non-Malays into the Universities.<sup>16</sup> The DAP expresses the frustration of the non-Malays and champions their demands for a Merdeka University with Chinese as the medium of



instruction. This has highlighted its image as a spokesman for the Chinese Community, as the MCA as a member of the National Front cannot officially support the Merdeka University, denied by the Government on the grounds that it is against the National Objectives.<sup>17</sup>

The DAP has sought to preserve its image by not associating or affiliating itself with the Government at any stage. During the Emergency (1969-71) when Parliament was not in session, it refused to be represented on the National Consultative Council, on which other opposition parties were represented. It did not support the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1971, when most opposition parties voted with the Government. When major opposition parties joined the National Front, it rejected overtures from the MCA for a coalition. Lim Kit Siang stated that for over a year, MCA had been working on them to join the coalition.<sup>18</sup> Some prominent members of the DAP, Walter Loh and Richard Ho, Members of the Central Executive Committee,<sup>19</sup> crossed over to the MCA in May 1972 but the DAP did not join the National Front.

Since 1969 the DAP has had to face problems, both external and internal. Along with other opposition parties, it has had to operate in a political arena in which public debate on "sensitive issues" is strictly circumscribed.<sup>20</sup> Within the party it has faced a major split, between one section moving towards "accommodation" with the Alliance and the extremists led by Lim Kit Siang refusing to be absorbed in the system. In summer 1972, two vice-chairmen Goh Hock Guan and Dr A. Soorian were suspended by Lim Kit Siang. One of the main charges against them was their "irresponsibility" in holding talks with the MCA,<sup>21</sup> while Goh Hock Yuan and Soorian felt that the DAP was becoming disoriented with Malaysian politics.<sup>22</sup> Throughout 1971 and 1972 the Party faced setbacks with expulsion and defection by elected Members of Parliament and state assembly men. In Selangor more than half the DAP state assembly men elected in 1969 left the party. Some members joined the Gerakan while others joined the MCA.<sup>23</sup> It did badly in by-elections in 1971 and 1972.<sup>24</sup> In the 1974 general elections its 1969 strength of 13 members in parliament and 31 in state assemblies was reduced to 9 and 23 respectively. In 1969 it captured 53.4 per cent of the votes in contested constituencies in parliamentary election, and 52.8 per cent in state elections; in 1974 this came down to 34.1 per cent and 31.6 per cent respectively.<sup>25</sup> Keeping in mind however, the restraints under which it operated in 1974 and the combined strength of the National Front, its performance, nevertheless indicated the considerable support it has.

The DAP provides an alternative for many Chinese, discontented with the role and position of the MCA in the Alliance.<sup>26</sup> It also presents an alternative to the predominantly Chinese Malaysian Communist Party. The question sometimes raised is whether the MCP uses the DAP as a "front" organization. Recently some DAP members were arrested on the grounds that they were agents for the MCP.<sup>27</sup> The Government permits the DAP to function though with stringent supervision and control.<sup>28</sup> If irrefutable evidence of MCP infiltration in DAP was available, it could be surmised that the Government would not hesitate to use the considerable powers at its command to place restrictions on the functioning of the DAP.

As the only effective political party in opposition in West Malaysia, the DAP plays a vital role in providing a forum for dissent. Its basic disadvantage however is, that it is not a national party and cannot hope to be one in the near future. It gets support from urban, West coast states, with no hold in the predominantly east coast states of Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Pahang or in the East Coast Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. With the rural constituencies being heavily weighted the DAP has a further disadvantage in being an urban based party.<sup>29</sup> Without the support of the Malays (which seems unlikely) it cannot hope to challenge the National Front on a national level. The DAP leadership realizes this and hopes to gradually move into the rural areas but as Lim Kit Siang confesses "it will be an agonisingly slow process."<sup>30</sup>

Another party which has consistently been in opposition is the Party Rakyat. Formed in 1955 as an agrarian socialist party it allied itself with the Labour Party to form the socialist front. With the break-up of the Socialist Front and dissensions within its own leadership, it split. Young Malay intellectuals led by Kassim Ahmad tried to re-orient the party by ousting the older politicians such as Ahmed Boestamam. It has however been unable to pose any kind of a serious challenge to the National Front, despite the fact that with the entry of the Party Islam into the National Front, the Party Rakyat is the only Malay party in opposition.

Since 1969 the party has tried to project a new programme appealing to the peasantry. It has advocated the abolition of land taxes on agricultural holding of six acres and below, limitation on the personal holdings of agricultural lands, free lands to landless peasants, and abolition of all debts accrued through interest to landlords.<sup>31</sup> However, in view of the fact that the Party Rakyat, in the foreseeable future, is unable to implement these, it seems like a utopian dream to the rural

peasantry. The Marxian terminology and class-based analysis are too sophisticated for the rural peasantry to whom the Party Rakyat projects its appeal.<sup>32</sup> A speech by Party Rakyat Chairman, is quoted at some length to make the point:

The racial contradiction is basically a class contradiction. The Malay feudal and big bourgeois classes have used the banner of Malay nationalism to oppress the Chinese working class, peasants and petty bourgeois giving rise to Chinese oppression. The Chinese bourgeois have used the banner of Chinese nationalism to oppress the Malay peasants and workers, giving rise to Malay oppression. In reality the Malay Chinese upper classes oppose the Malay Chinese lower classes, but due to the lack of a homogeneous nationalism of all races, the racial contradiction is created and it supersedes class contradiction.<sup>33</sup>

In the rural East coast Malay States from where the Party Rakyat hopes to get support, this kind of terminology is not calculated to appeal. Moreover the Party Rakyat is at a definite disadvantage as compared to the other Malay parties, UMNO and PAS. UMNO got an edge initially over other parties by being identified as the party that achieved Merdeka.<sup>34</sup> The PAS has an edge over the Party Rakyat because of its strong espousal of Islam. Government interference and control has also worked to the disadvantage of the Party Rakyat. Kassim Ahmad pointed out that when the Party Rakyat was seeking realignment with the Labour Party, the *Utusan Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur, Alliance-supported) published several articles instigating the Malays to oppose it.<sup>35</sup> Ahmed Boestamam, the founder of the Party Rakyat stated that the Government systematically destroyed opposition parties and personalities, quoting his own example.<sup>36</sup> The top leaders of the Party Rakyat have not been allowed to operate freely. Top leaders like Kassim Ahmad and Syed Husin Ali, have been in detention off and on over a period of time. The appeal of the Party Rakyat to the young has been countervailed by legislation debarring student political activity.<sup>37</sup> In the 1969 general elections, the Party Rakyat had got 3 state assembly seats, but in the 1974 elections it did not win a single parliament or state seat though it got 16.9 per cent and 16.2 per cent of the vote in parliament and state election in contested constituencies.<sup>38</sup>

An opposition party which projects an ideological, multicommunal appeal is the Pekemas. It was founded by a split-away group from the

Gerakan. It has within its ranks, distinguished and eminent Malaysians such as Tan Chee Khoo, Syed Hussein Alatas and V. David—seasoned politicians and parliamentarians. Its party platform emphasizes constitutional and parliamentary democracy, and a socialistic form with public ownership and control of the vital means of production.

Despite its intelligent leadership and appeal, it has not however been able to get off the ground. To a great extent the split within the Gerakan has damaged it. In 1969, the Gerakan, which had swept the polls in Penang was on the way to projecting a non-communal alternative to the Alliance. The split in 1971, and the adroit manoeuvring by Lim Chong Eu consolidated the position of the Gerakan within the National Front. Pekemas was left out in the cold. Pekemas tried to come to some form of agreement with the Party Rakyat and initiated moves for this purpose in 1973.<sup>39</sup> These however were abortive, and Party Rakyat members feel that Pekemas has no base or definite ideology.<sup>40</sup> In their efforts to project a truly multicommunal image, they have as their Chairman, a Malay, Ahmed Boestamam, one time member of the Party Rakyat. This has not helped it to draw support on ideological grounds cutting across racial barriers. It has no solid base from which to draw electoral support. In the 1974 general elections, the first elections contested by the Pekemas, it got only one parliament and one state seat.

In East Malaysia in the period under survey, the only significant opposition party was the Sarawak National Party (SNAP). In order to analyze the role of SNAP it is necessary to look into some aspects of the political development of the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. The effort is not to present a chronological picture but only to highlight some factors and features which have worked for or against the consensus which the Central Government has tried to achieve.<sup>41</sup>

Sabah and Sarawak, before they became a part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 had an existence and development which was quite different from that of the mainland. In 1841, James Brooke, an English adventurer obtained the territory of Sarawak from the Sultan of Brunei and by 1846 was acknowledged as a Raja of Sarawak. Subsequently the white Rajahs of Sarawak (as they were called) received British recognition and protection. In North Borneo (now known as Sabah) a group of British subjects obtained a lease of territory from the Sultan of Brunei and in 1882 the territory was taken over by the British North Borneo Company (Chartered) under Alfred Dent, and it came under British protection. After the Japanese Occupation, the two territories were taken over as British colonies and in 1963, along with Singapore,

were merged to form the Federation of Malaysia. Initially there were adverse reactions to joining the federation but the realization that the British were disengaging themselves from the Borneo territories along with the special concessions held out to Sabah and Sarawak brought about an acceptance of the Federation.<sup>42</sup> Sabah and Sarawak were given autonomy with regard to immigration, labour and educational policies, and special provisions for elections, judiciary and public services. English was to be accepted as the official language till the State legislatures decided otherwise, indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak were given special privileges similar to the ones granted to Malays in West Malaysia, and the two states were granted federal revenue for economic development.<sup>43</sup>

The pattern of population in Sabah and Sarawak is much more complex than that of West Malaysia. The situation is complicated by the presence of indigenous tribes in Sabah and Sarawak, many of whom are non-Malay and non-Muslim. Therefore the "Bumiputra" connotation in East Malaysia is very different from the Bumiputra (Malay-Muslim) connotation in West Malaysia. Language, race and religion did not act as a common dividing factor between the ethnic communities as they did in West Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia is more widespread in Sabah than in Sarawak. Islam is also more widespread in Sabah than in Sarawak.

The ethnography of Sabah and Sarawak is variegated and significant. According to the 1970 census figures in Sabah, the Kadazans were 28.2 per cent of the population (183,574), Murut were 4.7 per cent (30,908), Bajau 11.9 per cent (77,755), Malay 2.8 per cent (18,244), Chinese 21.3 per cent (138,518), other indigenous 19.4 per cent (126,274) and other 11.7 per cent (76,037). In Sarawak, the Malays were 20.1 per cent (178,188), Sea Dayak 30.8 per cent (273,889), Melanau 5.9 per cent (52,293), Land Dayak 9.4 per cent (83,313), Chinese 27.0 per cent (239,569), other indigenous 5.7 per cent (50,528) and others 1.1 per cent (9,512).<sup>44</sup>

When the party system developed in Sabah and Sarawak, it did not initially follow the pattern of West Malaysian political parties. The political parties that developed in East Malaysia in the early 1960s have been studied under three main categories—(i) native non-Muslim, (ii) native Muslim and (iii) non-native. In Sarawak, within the first category were the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and PESAKA (both Iban based but the former stronger in the Second Division of Sarawak and the latter in the Third Division); in the second category were PANAS and BERJASA, and in the third category were the Sarawak Chinese

Association (SCA) and the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) which held a strong, radical appeal for the Chinese. In January 1963, the Sarawak Alliance was formed on the advice of Alliance leaders in Kuala Lumpur from all existing parties in Sarawak, except the SUPP. It is significant that starting with this kind of a division, what actually evolved by the end of the 1960s was a strengthening of the Muslim based parties (either by coalition or manoeuvring) resulting in political power residing in parties which had an affinity of interests with the UMNO. In 1966 SNAP left the Sarawak Alliance to set itself up as an opposition party.<sup>45</sup> Soon after, the two Malay/Muslim parties, PANAS and BERJASA merged to form the Party Bumiputra, which along with SCA and PESAKA formed the Sarawak Alliance. Opposition to the Alliance in the form of SUPP and SNAP was significant. SUPP, a leftist oriented, radical Chinese party was commonly believed to be a front for the Communist Party in Sarawak.

SNAP, though claiming to be multi-racial, represents the Ibans. Apart from their initial entry into the Sarawak Alliance, the Ibans have not been attracted by the cry of "we the indigenes." Historically there was a tradition of hostility with Brunei Malay rule.<sup>46</sup> The Ibans, represented in SNAP also have a sense of resentment over increasing control from Kuala Lumpur. Rahman Yaakob, the controversial ex-Education Minister responsible for the intensification of Bahasa Malaysia, was appointed as the Chief Minister of Sarawak, surrounded by Malay advisers. There was a strong feeling that Iban interests were being shortchanged.<sup>47</sup> SNAP has consistently highlighted its demand of "Sarawak for the Sarawakians", with less control from the centre. The strength of the opposition in Sarawak can be seen by looking at the results of the elections held in 1970.<sup>48</sup> In the state assembly elections, the Sarawak Alliance got 24 seats (Bumiputra 11, PESAKA 8, SCA 4 and Independent 1). The opposition got 23—SNAP 12 and SUPP 11. In parliamentary elections, SNAP got 9 seats and SUPP 5, with 5 seats going to Bumiputra, 3 to PESAKA and 2 to SCA.<sup>49</sup> SUPP and SNAP's capture of almost half the total number of seats was represented in the percentage of votes that they got—SUPP got 30.2 per cent in the parliamentary elections and 28.9 per cent in the state election while SNAP got 26.8 and 24.5 per cent respectively.<sup>50</sup> SNAP also attracted Chinese votes, many of whom were frustrated at being "betrayed" by SUPP which had joined the Barisan Nasional. In Kuching constituency, a SNAP candidate defeated a prominent SUPP leader, Stephen Yong.<sup>51</sup> The opposition parties being in such strength represented a basic threat to

the consensus style politics of West Malaysia. Negotiations between SUPP and SNAP fell through, when by adroit manoeuvring Tun Razak persuaded SUPP to join the Sarawak Alliance.<sup>52</sup>

Since 1970 therefore, the only party in opposition in Sarawak has been SNAP.<sup>53</sup> In 1974 the SNAP campaigned on a platform of Sarawak for the Sarawakians and captured 18 seats in the state elections with the Sarawak National Front getting 30. In the parliamentary elections it captured 9 with the National Front getting 15 seats.<sup>54</sup> It consolidated its position as an opposition party—in the 1974 election it got 43.9 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections and 43.2 per cent in state elections.<sup>55</sup>

An interesting parallel can be seen between the major opposition party in West Malaysia, the Democratic Action Party and the SNAP in Sarawak. Both have challenged the primacy and control of the Malays by demanding a "Malaysian Malaysia" or a "Sarawakian Sarawak." The Ibans as the largest indigenous group in Sarawak, were however split between PESAKA and SNAP with the former joining the Alliance. The strengthening and consolidation of the Alliance pattern in West Malaysia led to a polarization with the non-Malays supporting the DAP. In Sarawak the effort to extend the Alliance pattern (the formation of the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu—PBB as the core of the Sarawak Alliance) led to a strengthening of the SNAP as an opposition party. Both DAP and SNAP have experienced Government supervision and interference. In October 1974, Datuk James Wong, the SNAP leader of the opposition in the Sarawak State Assembly was placed under arrest and rearrested in March 1975 under the Federal Internal Security Act.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike Sarawak, there has been no opposition party in Sabah which has stood outside the Alliance pattern. However, Sabah has posed different problems for the Alliance leadership by asserting greater rights as a State within the Federation.

In the 1960s in Sabah, the main political parties were (a) United National Kadazan Organisation (UNKO) and Pasok Momogun representing native non-Muslims, which merged to form United Pasok Kadazan Organization (UPKO); (b) the United Sabah National Organisation (USNO) representing the Native Muslims, and the Sabah Chinese Association (SCA). UPKO under its leader Donald Stephens stood for Kadazan interests, while USNO under Tun Mustapha<sup>57</sup> stood for Muslim interests. Following the West Malaysian Alliance pattern, the Sabah parties in November 1962 established an Alliance of their own. However, from the beginning there was an uneasy alliance between

UNKO and USNO—native non-Malay and Malay-Muslim interests, and clashes between Donald Stephens (Chief Minister of Sabah) and Tun Mustapha (Head of State). In the first direct elections to the State Legislative Assembly in May 1967, there was a lot of friction between UPKO and USNO. The election results showed a split in the native vote with USNO getting 14 seats, UPKO 12, SCA 5 and 1 Independent. Mustapha formed a Government, announcing a cabinet with no UPKO representation. In December 1967 Stephen called for the dissolution of UPKO.<sup>58</sup> With the dissolution of the UPKO in 1967, the USNO emerged as the leading Malay-Muslim party and formed the core of the Sarawak Alliance along with the SCA and the Sabah Indian Association. The controversial and dynamic Tun Mustapha was the leader of USNO and the Chief Minister of Sabah from 1967 to 1975. Under his leadership there was no challenge to the Sabah Alliance. In 1970 parliamentary elections, USNO received 13 seats and SCA got 3. In the State Assembly Elections in 1971, the Sabah Alliance won all the seats. In the Elections of 1974 the Sabah National Front won all 16 seats.<sup>59</sup>

Tun Mustapha's policies accorded well with the Federal Leadership concept of a "Malay-Malaysia." He held the opinion that in order to achieve unity, cultural diversity should be discouraged. He remarked: "I have repeatedly explained that the primary reason for the May 13 incidents was the existence of diverse races, cultures and religions."<sup>60</sup> In pursuit of this he espoused the development and encouragement of Bahasa Malaysia and Islam. The Sabah Legislative Assembly approved, on 25 September 1973, the adoption of Bahasa Malaysia as the State's sole official language and Islam as the State's official religion. A Bill allowed parliament to extend the application of the National Language Act 1967, to Sabah while the State Constitution was amended to effect the adoption of Islam as the State's official religion.<sup>61</sup> Tun Mustapha emphasized that Bumiputra would not be deprived of their right to use their respective languages but local Sabah radio and Television dropped all vernacular and Chinese language broadcasts, and no films in languages other than English and Malay were to be shown.<sup>62</sup> In particular, Tun Mustapha tried to encourage conversions to Islam of Chinese and Christian Sabahans (many of the Kadazans are Christians) with inducements of fringe benefits.<sup>63</sup> There were allegations in Parliament of religious persecution in Sabah and forced conversions to Islam.<sup>64</sup> Many Christian missionaries were expelled from Sabah.<sup>65</sup> In a mass conversion ceremony in Northern Sabah, about 3,500 people embraced Islam.<sup>66</sup> There is little doubt that the conversions were



actively encouraged and aided by Tun Mustapha. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia stated that he had been present at many of the conversions where people converted of their free will, but admitted that Mustapha did give the converts "material help."<sup>67</sup> Tun Mustapha is a committed Muslim, the founding President of the United Sabah Islamic Association which was established with the specific task of proselytization and conversion.<sup>68</sup> It seemed that Tun Mustapha's idea of fostering unity was to impose one religion—Islam, for all.

Tun Mustapha's creation of a situation brooking no political opposition, and the achievement of a Muslim-Malay identity through a common language and religion was, on the one hand, along the lines of the consensus formula being worked at by the Alliance in the Centre. On the other hand tensions developed because of the increasingly dictatorial stance of Tun Mustapha in Sabah and the strengthening of state autonomy. There was growing criticism over his extravagant style of living and alleged corruption.<sup>69</sup> More serious were the charges levelled at Mustapha that he was planning the secession of Sabah. Tun Mohammed Fuad (Formerly, Donald Stephens) the ex-Head of State, and Datuk Harris Salleh charged the Tun with the intention of creating a separate state of Borneo (Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan) alleging that he had made several trips to Indonesia to discuss it with Indonesian leaders.<sup>70</sup> They mentioned an USNO meeting of 23 April 1975 in which a paper was presented, "The Future Position of Sabah in Malaysia" pointing to secession.<sup>71</sup> In support of their allegations, his critics pointed to a letter written to Tun Mustapha by Tunku Abdul Rahman advising him to "look before you leap" and not to "disunite us once again."<sup>72</sup> The crisis blew up in July 1975 with the formation of a new political party in Sabah, Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (BERJAYA) under the leadership of Datuk Harris Salleh. The Head of State, Tun Fuad resigned, to join the new party. One of the objectives of the party was listed as the preservation of the rights and interests of Sabah within Malaysia.<sup>73</sup> The timing of the new party, its objectives, the meetings of ex-USNO members in Kuala Lumpur and the talk of secession all indicate that BERJAYA was being manoeuvred from the centre to control Mustapha.<sup>74</sup>

The formation of BERJAYA had the immediate effect of making Tun Mustapha categorically and publicly deny that he had any intentions of seceding from Malaysia. In the State Assembly he got passed a resolution by 31 votes to nil asking the Federal Government to state clearly that no state "has the right to withdraw from Malaysia."<sup>75</sup> However, the growing strength of PERJAYA and pressures from the

centre brought about the resignation of Mustapha as Chief Minister on 31 October 1975. At the state assembly elections held in April 1975, BERJAYA got 28 out of 48 seats with 52.5 per cent of the votes. The Centre took a tough stand over the admission of USNO to the National Front hinting that one of the conditions for readmission would be the resignation of Mustapha.<sup>76</sup> The Centre had asserted its hold, and federal rights, over Sabah. By the end of 1975 therefore, acceptance of the West Malaysia formula, a Malay-based polity and the containment of opposition had been achieved in Sabah.

In the period under survey, the constitutional opposition, therefore, was basically restricted to DAP in West Malaysia and SNAP in Sarawak. Neither DAP nor SNAP could hope to offer a national challenge to the National Front. Moves to bring together the opposition parties as a front against the National Front have never been very successful. The DAP from a position of strength sees no value in political alignments with parties like Pekemas or Party Rakyat,<sup>77</sup> and any opposition party front which excludes the DAP will not have much bargaining power. However, the nature of their challenge was important in focussing and highlighting the basic area of dissension, that is, differing conceptions of the image of Malaysia, Malaysian or Malay.

### **The Youth**

Many countries in the late 1960s witnessed a spate of student revolts and trouble—the United States of America, France, Indonesia, Ceylon, Philippines, Japan, Pakistan and Yugoslavia. In Malaysia, till 1969, the situation was fairly quiescent and the students were generally regarded as politically apathetic, especially as compared to the other South-East Asian countries. The period, 1969 to 1974 however was one of vocal student dissatisfaction, starting with a demand for a change of leadership in the country, and surfacing in 1974 as an expression of sympathy and support with the economic problems of the peasants. The significance of the vocalization of student unrest was that it represented a non-constitutional opposition to a system which brooked little constitutional opposition.

Despite the efforts of Malaysian policy planners to evolve and implement a "national" system of education,<sup>78</sup> what had evolved by 1969 was a system which created groups of elites with differing values and political outlooks.<sup>79</sup> The desired objective of creating a system of education which would create a sense of common identity did not take place.<sup>80</sup> Different "language streams" of education created strong lines

of differentiation, re-enforced by rural/urban, English-educated/Malay educated or Tamil or Kuo-yu educated cleavages. Larger number of the urban English-educated non-Malays went to University despite reserved seats and scholarships for Malays.<sup>81</sup> Despite Government policy aimed at implementing Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, most technical colleges and the University of Malaya used English as the medium of instruction.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the urban, English educated, non-Malays found it easier to enrol for professional and technical courses, while most of the Malay students coming from rural background were at a disadvantage.<sup>83</sup> In the job-market it was easier for the professionally and technically trained students to get better jobs, while the rural Malays with a basic arts background found themselves restricted.

Till 1969, political activity amongst students in Malaysia was limited, focussing on a few issues. In 1964, students demonstrated against the Internal Security Act Amendment (Bill) of 1964 which made it mandatory for students to obtain a suitability certificate from the Chief Education Officer before they could be admitted to the University of Malaya. In 1967 renewed student demonstrations against this led to its temporary suspension in 1968. In July 1966 students protested against the United States bombing of Vietnam.<sup>84</sup> Increasing political awareness culminated in a manifesto issued by the University of Malaya Students Union in 1969. This called for basic democratic rights, release of political detainees, freedom of the press, freedom of association, national unity, educational reforms, free health facilities for the poor, a minimum wage for workers, agrarian reforms and an independent foreign policy.<sup>85</sup> In short, it was espousing a vague socialistic platform and advocating a foreign policy not linked up with American or British interests. About 100,000 copies of the manifesto were distributed in a series of 13 rallies attended by about 83,500 people in the larger towns of West Malaysia.<sup>86</sup>

The major vehicle of student opinion has been the University of Malaya Students Union (UMSU) which came into existence following the recommendations of the 1949 Report on Higher Education. All students are automatically members of the Union paying subscription fees and annual membership fees. It is a self-governing council with power entrusted to an elected students council of twenty-five members and an executive committee of eight members. It enjoys the right to discipline students, to fine them or to suspend their union privileges. The National Union of Malaysian Students (Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Malaysia or PKPM) came into existence in 1958. This organized student political activity throughout the country<sup>87</sup> was dissolved in 1974. Following

the spate of student activity in 1969, a government-sponsored National Youth Consultative Council was set up in 1971 with representatives from Youth Leaders.<sup>88</sup>

Before 1969, students were not closely associated with any major political party though the University of Malaya Students Union generally supported the moderate left, socialist stance of the *Parti Rakyat*.<sup>89</sup> The riots of 1969 acted as a catalyst revealing dissatisfaction and frustrations within the Malay students. The focus of their dissatisfaction was the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman whose leadership and functioning of the Alliance compromise was being rejected. Significantly, the demand was being voiced by Malay opposition to a leader whom they considered elitist and Western oriented, who had "sold out" Malay economic rights to the Chinese. Their demands were coinciding with the demands of the Malay dissident "ultras" within the UMNO, Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam, who were agitating for increased Malay rights, the resignation of the Tunku and a change of leadership.<sup>90</sup> At the University of Malaya, Islamic College and at MARA Institute of Technology<sup>91</sup> agitation against the Tunku was rising. The slogans raised by them were interesting. They called the Tunku "imperialist" and "feudalist" asking him to resign because "we want a dynamic leader" and cautioned people to "keep away from poker players and race goers." The most significant accusation was that of "Pengkhanat" (traitor) to the people.<sup>92</sup> The students were voicing discontent against a situation in which economic control had passed into the hands of the Chinese and now after the elections of 1969, political control too seemed to be passing into their hands. In July 1969, nine Malay students gave an interview to four foreign correspondents calling for an all-Malay government with the Chinese being debarred from participating in the Government.<sup>93</sup> At an international conference on Traditional South-east Asian Music and Dance, about 200 Malay students demonstrated at the University of Malaya, asking for the resignation of the Tunku.<sup>94</sup> Tun Ismail, Minister for Home Affairs deplored that the demonstrators were all Malays.<sup>95</sup> The demonstrations were followed by the arrest of four student leaders, all Malay.<sup>96</sup>

Another major area of discontent voiced by the students was the slow implementation of the National Language in the University. In October 1970 Malay students demonstrated at the University of Malaya asking for the increased use of Bahasa Malaysia at the University of Malaya in University teaching and administration. Students of the Malay Language Society destroyed English language signs on the Campus and

demanding immediate implementation of Malay in the University.<sup>97</sup> The use of English as a medium of instruction had placed at a disadvantage the rural Malays who could not compete with the urban non-Malays. These Malay students were again echoing and supporting the demands of the Malay "ultras" within the UMNO. What really was the link between the agitating students and the UMNO? Certainly the speeches and demands of the young UMNO ultras like Mahathir Mohamad were echoed by the Malay students who presented a petition supporting the demand of Mahathir for the Tunku's resignation.<sup>98</sup> The UMNO youth of Kampong Bahru which spearheaded the UMNO procession on 13 May 1969 from Datuk Harun's residence was joined by MARA students, incensed at slogans of the opposition parties "Melayu sudah jatoh, MARA boleh Keluar" (The Malays have fallen—MARA will be dissolved!).<sup>99</sup> The vocalization amongst the younger UMNO leaders, of a "better deal for the Malays" found a ready response amongst the Malay students, disatisfied with their lot. Once the charges were levelled against the Tunku of not implementing the "Malay Terms" of the compromise of the 1950s, the dam of Malay resentment seemed to break. Among the students it took the form of criticisms levelled against the westernized affluent style of living of the Tunku,<sup>100</sup> as well as compromises with the non-Malays. The Tunku pointed to a connection between the students and the communists in Malaya.<sup>101</sup> There was little evidence to prove that the communists had any hand in the student trouble, and in retrospect the Tunku himself was to deny any connection.<sup>102</sup> It was only later that the Communist Party of Malaya tried to utilize the situation by preaching revolution among students in schools and universities.<sup>103</sup> It sought to incite them by playing on sensitive issues like language. The Voice of the Malayan Revolution (the broadcasts of the Communist Party of Malaya) asked Chinese and Tamils to protect their language.<sup>104</sup> A Communist Party policy directive of August 1969 noted:

The thought of the young students is being gradually revolutionised. Intensify student activities in the middle schools and universities of the various races, educate them with the thought of Mao Tse-tung and the factual livelihood; help them to accept the revolutionary truth and to join forces with the workers and peasants; bring them in line with the fulfilment of the revolution to participate in the struggle against the enemy and to embark on the road of the revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party.<sup>105</sup>

The Communist Party had not created the unrest but saw in the situation an opportunity to capitalize on it.

In order to curb student political activity, the Government came out with stringent legislation. An Ordinance of 25 February 1971 banned student associations from having any affiliation or supporting a political party or trade union at the risk of a penalty not exceeding M \$ 1,000 or six months imprisonment.<sup>106</sup> In April 1971, a comprehensive Universities and University Colleges Act was passed embodying all these. The Students Union of the University of Malaya was replaced by a student representative council of four members under the direction of the Vice-Chancellor. The Students' representative council could be suspended or dissolved for actions detrimental to the well-being of the University, as also could be any student body, which conducted itself in a manner detrimental to the well-being of the University.<sup>107</sup>

At another level, the National Operations Council appointed a Committee to go into the life of the student community of the University of Malaya. The committee noted that race relations on the campus were superficially cordial but there was indifference on the part of one group to the other leading to polarization and hostility in times of crisis:

The Malays appear to be in the eyes of the non-Malays obsessive and protective about language, culture and religion and the non-Malays in the eyes of the Malays tend to misread the country's history and to misunderstand the realities of the present.<sup>108</sup>

It emphasized the injection of a Malaysian consciousness making 101 recommendations for this purpose—18 on race relations on campus, 14 on student bodies and organization, 25 on social, cultural and academic facilities, 17 on student housing, 10 on financial assistance, 4 on national language policy, 8 on student staff relations and 5 on student attitudes and values.<sup>109</sup> The report took cognizance of one of the major areas of discontent of the Malay students that they were not adequately represented in the professional and technical courses by recommending that the racial composition of each faculty should reflect the racial composition in the country, and that weightage in administration should be given to rural areas. Changes in the leadership of the UMNO had brought to the fore a leadership more responsive to the needs of the Malays. Mahathir Mohamad, a vocal supporter of "Malay" rights became a member of the newly formed Higher Education Advisory Council in August 1972 and became Education Minister in 1974.

Limited political activity by the students in the next two years focussed on demands for the extension of Bahasa Malaysia. They criticized the setting up of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College (which used Chinese as a medium of instruction) protesting that it was not in line with national educational policy.<sup>110</sup> This revolved around a very basic issue—on the one hand the intensification of the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia, and on the other the demand of some Chinese and Indians that their languages be taught along with Bahasa Malaysia and that some higher educational institutions should cater to their children.

A second major wave of student political activity took place in 1974-75. The first major confrontation between the students and the authorities took place in the summer of 1974 when the police fired tear gas into a group of students, mainly from the MARA Institute of Technology asking for University status.<sup>111</sup> This was followed by a wave of student unrest though the causes were different. In October 1974, students demonstrated in Johore Bahru in sympathy with squatters who had been removed by the Government.<sup>112</sup> In November and December they staged massive demonstrations in sympathy with small rubber holders and peasants hard hit by recession, and the fall in the price of rubber.<sup>113</sup> Throughout 1974 the price of latex was steadily dropping and by the end of 1974 it had come down from 230 cents per kilo to 100 cents per kilo.<sup>114</sup> The situation for the small holders was complicated by a world-wide inflationary situation. The Treasury's Economic Report of 1974-75 admitted that compared to August 1973, food prices in 1974 were up by 24.3 per cent.<sup>115</sup> The consumer price index on food rose from 98 in 1969 to 153 in 1974 and on all items from 98 to 136.<sup>116</sup> On 21 November, about 12,000 peasants took to the streets in the biggest demonstration in Malaysia of this kind (it was the first time in 28 years that peasants had demonstrated in such a manner). Many university students in Kuala Lumpur joined the demonstration in sympathy.<sup>117</sup> Unrest spread to the five major universities<sup>118</sup> in Malaysia and throughout December students protested against rising prices and the plight of the peasants. A big student demonstration in Kuala Lumpur on 2 December erupted into a day-long running battle in the streets and in the National Mosque. On 5 December there was a violent demonstration at the University Kebangsaan with students hurling abuse and catapults at the police.<sup>119</sup> Men from the Police Field Force, a para-military unit, normally engaged in anti-communist operation were drafted to meet the student confrontation.<sup>120</sup> The Government arrested several student leaders, university lecturers and youth leaders. Prominent among them

was a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Malaya, Syed Husin Ali (Secretary General of the *Parti Rakyat*), Abdul Rahman Rukaini (President of the *Universiti Kebangsaan* Students Union), Ahmad Shah bin Mohamed Nor (Secretary General of the National Union of Islamic Students) and Hishamuddin Rais (President of the University of Malay's Socialist Club). Significantly, practically all the students arrested were Malays.<sup>121</sup>

Since the riots of 1969, there had not been such large-scale demonstrations and protest in Malaysia. Beyond the immediate factor of an expression of sympathy with the peasants, there were many other factors that led to this situation. It was a Malay revolt against a Malay Government and it showed the alienation of the students with the political style of the Government. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the "Big Daddy" approach of the Government, its failure to deal with corrupt politicians, resentment at the illiberal atmosphere of Malaysia, and disillusionment at the "Young Turk" members of UMNO who after joining the Government had failed to give it a new look. They burnt effigies of Mahathir Mohamad, Musa Hitam and Ghazali bin Shafie and shouted "Democracy is Dead."<sup>122</sup> The elections of 1974 had resulted in a decisive victory for the National Front and its consensus style politics. Barely any constitution at opposition remained, and the theory of the Government in power was that opposition was unnecessary. Their concept of democracy emphasized stability and bargaining behind the scenes rather than free debate and discussion.<sup>123</sup> The students, by focussing attention on the ills of the Government in power were acting as a non-constitutional opposition. The plight of the rural peasantry struck a responsive chord in the Malay students, many of whom came from similar rural backgrounds and were studying at the University on federal or state fellowships. According to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya, about 1,000 students at the University were "sons of rural people."<sup>124</sup> Students hit out at the foreign exploitation of multi-nationals like Sime-Darby. They pointed out that from 1967 to 1971 the total capital outflow from Malaysia of M\$ 3,017 million was three times the total public expenditure of M\$ 1,007 million in the First Malaysia Plan (1956-1961).<sup>125</sup>

The leadership in power linked the student revolt with the opposition parties and the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP). Tun Razak charged that a political group (which he did not name), discredited politicians and anti-national elements were behind the students' unrest.<sup>126</sup> The inference obviously was that the *Parti Rakyat* and the



MCP were involved. It would seem that the Party Rakyat was a force behind the peasant and student unrest. Its platform and policies emphasized the need to eradicate rural poverty. It was influential in the University of Malaya Students Union and the Socialist Club of the University of Malaya. The Party Rakyat's Secretary General was arrested at the University of Malaya, as also were members of the Socialist Club. The Party Rakyat was also influential in the ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia—Organisation of Islamic Youth of Malaysia), a group which emphasized Islamic religious purism and dominated the Malaysian Youth Council, alleged to have participated in the demonstrations.<sup>127</sup> Both the Party Rakyat and ABIM had predominantly Malay membership and control and a Malay concern for the Malay poor.

In December 1974 the Government issued a White Paper on *The Communist Party of Malaya—Activities within the University of Malaya Chinese Language Society*. This focussed on a new factor in the student unrest. In a foreword to the White Paper, Minister of Home Affairs, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie said there was evidence to show that subversive elements had incited student unrest and campus violence. The White Paper traced the steps by which the MCP gained control of the Chinese Language Society when a pro-MCP student was elected to the important post of Publications Secretary of the Society. In June 1971, the MCP gained control of the Chinese Language Society, three of whose members were on the University of Malaya's Student Union Council for 1974-75. They took advantage of the situation in late 1974 to instigate a revolt.<sup>128</sup> Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie pointed out that the police recovered wooden rifles, uniforms, and communist propaganda material from a house occupied by eight University of Malaya students. The students protested that these were props they needed for a play they were rehearsing.<sup>129</sup> It can be conceded that the MCP could have infiltrated and influenced some of the students of the University of Malaya. However, on the nature of the evidence presented by the Government, the MCP instigation and involvement in the revolt and demonstrations of December 1974 seems to be unwarranted. For one thing, the majority of the students involved were Malays. Mahathir Mohamad, the Education Minister, admitted that the majority of the students and student leaders involved in the demonstrations were bumiputras.<sup>130</sup> A number of the demonstrators and leaders were from University Kebangsaan and MARA, which are predominantly Malay institutions. It was not likely that they would be led by a handful of Chinese students of the Chinese Language Society.

Practically, all those who were arrested were Malays. All this militates against the theory that the MCP was behind the revolt. The students were demonstrating against a political and economic system and climate in which they had no power to influence events. Various groups of students, Islamic reformists, Socialists and perhaps a few Communists were joining hands to agitate for social and economic reform.

The Malaysian Government in pursuance of its policy of containing opposition sought to control the student movement by placing restrictions on student activity. The 1971 Universities and University Colleges Act was amended to state that no student would be a member or be associated with any society, political party, trade union or any other organization, body or group of persons in Malaysia or outside Malaysia. Further, no student was to express or do anything which may be construed as expressing support or sympathy, to any political party or trade union or as expressing support or sympathy with any unlawful organization, body or group of persons.<sup>131</sup> The Act empowered the Vice-Chancellor to appoint Deans, Deputy Deans and propose changes in the University Constitutions, and to suspend or dissolve any student body or organization which he considers detrimental or prejudicial to the interests of the University. It made it an offence for any student or student body from collecting or promoting collection of money and property, barred the union and student representative council from maintaining any fund, or collecting from any source, and instituted new provisions for the students representative council. Students subjected to preventive detention under the Internal Security Act could be debarred from the University. Participation in political activity could be penalized by fines up to M \$ 1,000 or six months in jail. Special disciplinary committees could dismiss lecturers and other university employees.<sup>132</sup>

With the majority of Malay students on scholarships and stipends, which can be withdrawn for participation in political activity, and the non-Malays competing for too few seats in the University, the Act of 1975 has stilled whatever form of protest there was in the Universities.<sup>133</sup> Amongst rural Malay students, there is the resurgence of a fundamentalist Islamic revival, known as the Dakwah movement, viewed with some disfavour by the leadership in power.<sup>134</sup> Some observers see this as a subtle form of discontent with the leadership which is seen as affluent, and out of touch with the needs of the rural Malays.<sup>135</sup>

### **The Communist Party of Malaya**

The early history and development of the Communist Party of

Malaya (MCP) is of significance in analyzing its role and position in the Malaysian political system. Since its origin, it has been identified as a Chinese party,<sup>136</sup> and this has had an important bearing on its appeal and success in Malaysia. It has not been successful in attracting large numbers of Malays so that it seems like a Chinese challenge to a Malay Government. Historically, as a result of the Emergency imposed in Malaysia (1948-60) it has come to be identified with violence. As an outlawed party<sup>137</sup> it serves as a focus of discontent.

Historically, the influence of China was very strong on the Chinese in South East Asia. Overseas Chinese were encouraged to identify with China rather than with their country of residence.<sup>138</sup> Throughout the year 1913 many Kuomintang (KMT) branches were formed in Malaya.<sup>139</sup> In 1928 a split within the KMT led to the moving away of the left wing branches, and the Nanyang or South Seas Communist Party was formed in 1928, and its name changed to Malayan Communist Party in 1930.<sup>140</sup> The focus of its activity in the 1930s was organizing labour strikes and anti-Japanese strikes.<sup>141</sup> It had a complex organizational structure with a Central Committee directing all activities, a Youth Section, General Labour Union, Picket Corps, a Special Branch and a Malayan Racial Emancipation League to bring Malays and Indians into the Communist fold.<sup>142</sup> Its influence was particularly strong in the Chinese schools.<sup>143</sup> Several factors can be put forward to explain the Chinese base of the MCP. Initially, Chinese were attracted and initiated by professional agitators set by the Chinese Communists. These utilized ethnic and familial ties and groups to draw members.<sup>144</sup> Communism did not have an effective appeal for the Malays because of their adherence to Islam. Special protection and privileges isolated them from the stirrings of political change.

In the 1930s, the Indians did not view Malaysia as their homeland and their sympathies and political activity were concerned with what was happening in India. Therefore Malays and Indians were only a mere handful in the MCP. Moreover because of the unique, plural society in Malaysia, with the major ethnic groups pursuing different activities and lives and being associated in different political associations, it was but natural that once communism came to be associated with the Chinese, it continued to have a Chinese connotation in the minds of the people and the Government.

The MCP organized and strengthened itself during the period of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya. According to Victor Purcell, the MCP received instructions from the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong

in mid 1940 that all anti-British movements and strike agitations were to cease and henceforth the Party was to concentrate on building an anti-Japanese front.<sup>145</sup> As early as the summer of 1941 the MCP made exploratory proposals to the British offering co-operation.<sup>146</sup> It organized acts of sabotage as the British armies retreated. Contemporary sources point to their very gallant defence as the Japanese crossed the Johore straits.<sup>147</sup> MCP members later worked with the 101 special Training Schools organized by Lieutenant Colonel Spencer-Chapman. During the Malayan campaign of 1942 the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), under the direction of the MCP, was practically the only resistance group fighting the Japanese, as it was not till May 1943 that reconnaissance parties of Force 136 (the South-East Asia Command's Division of Special Operations) arrived.<sup>148</sup> Substantial support from Force 136 did not arrive till August 1945 and so, for this period the MPAJA were fighting practically on their own.<sup>149</sup> Contemporary accounts of the Japanese Occupation give evidence of the great hardships suffered by the MPAJA. Chin Kee Onn points out that the Communists defied the Japanese, spread counter-propaganda, boycotted Japanese goods and were "a hidden force of moral power."<sup>150</sup>

With the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the MPAJA set up "Peoples Councils" to carry on the work of administration, and in the interregnum till the arrival of the British forces in September 1945, exercised local authority and control. "Leftist" opinion—both contemporary and modern—regard the MPAJA, and not the British, as the real liberators of Malaya from the Japanese.<sup>151</sup> Michael Carritt in *The Labour Monthly* wrote:

During World War II the People's Anti-Japanese Army fought a guerilla warfare against the Japanese unaided by the Allies. They fought with their own armies under their own leaders, losing thousands of their best comrades and seeing their relatives murdered and their villages ransacked by punitive police of the Japanese administration.<sup>152</sup>

Spencer-Chapman felt that the "guerrillas" stood as the "one representative of law and order in Japanese occupied Malaya."<sup>153</sup>

In December 1945 the MPAJA was asked to demobilize by the British Military Administration in accordance with their agreement with the Supreme Allied Command. They carried out the agreement, but in this period 1945-48, lie the seeds of the wave of guerrilla activity, strikes

and lawlessness that ran through Malaya leading to the declaration of the Emergency, 1948-60. There is a lot of conjecture as to why the MCP launched on terrorist activity during 1946-48 after their co-operation during the war and their peaceful demobilization. One set of opinion holds that this was due to external factors—the MCP changed its policy due to a Soviet directive at the Asian Youth Conference held at Calcutta in February 1948.<sup>154</sup> Another set of opinion holds that the reasons have to be sought in the disillusionment and bitterness of ex-MPAJA members resentful at the treatment meted out to them by the British Military authorities. Many members of the MPAJA were treated discourteously by the British Military Administration. For their participation in the war effort they were given M \$ 350 each, which did not satisfy them. There was deep resentment over the treatment meted out to collaborators which had been dealt with too lightly.<sup>155</sup> Many resistance leaders like Soon Kwong (President of the Anti-Japanese Union of Selangor), Chu Kow (leader of the 4th Regiment of the anti-Japanese Army) and several others were arrested on the evidence of Malay collaborators.<sup>156</sup> Others feel that it was the repressive treatment of the British authorities of the labour strikes and demands of 1948 that led to the violence of the summer of 1948.<sup>157</sup> Amendments to the Trade Union Ordinance of 31 May 1948 banned the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and prominent MCP leaders like R.G. Balan were arrested.<sup>158</sup> Left wing opinion feels that the MCP was compelled to take up arms to defend themselves.<sup>159</sup>

MCP objectives included the right of self-determination for the people of Malaya as well as the demand that the MCP be given the right to participate freely in politics.<sup>160</sup> In November 1947, the Central Committee of the MCP issued a proclamation asking for a democratic constitution, freedom of political organization, self-government and the right of self-determination.<sup>161</sup> In 1955, the famous Baling talks took place between the MCP leader Chin Peng and the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. John Davis, a British Officer who had been closely associated with Peng during the Japanese occupation was present at the talks and reported the acute distress of Chin Peng as a result of the failure of the talks. According to him, the conditions of surrender held out by the authorities were unacceptable to the MCP as they did not permit the communists "to enjoy equal status so that we can fight for independence by constitutional means."<sup>162</sup> The failure of the Baling talks has led to a situation of ever-present and continuing confrontation between the MCP and the Malaysian authorities.

The legacy of the post-war years in Malaya has been an unhappy one. There was considerable racial friction and tension between the Chinese and Malays. The Chinese sought to wreak vengeance on many Malays who had collaborated with the Japanese during the war, and in many areas Malays retaliated. Violent Malay-Chinese clashes took place in Pahang, Kelantan, Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Johore. In November 1945 Chinese settled at Padang Lebar at Negri Sembilan were attacked by a Malay band. An encounter at Batu Kikir, cost six Chinese and some Malay lives. Around Batu Pahat in Johore, some Malays killed Chinese and burned their property. In December 1945 about a hundred Chinese descended on a Kampong in Perak killing some Malays.<sup>163</sup> The racial animosities and hostilities of these years lives in the memories of Malaysians even today. The banning of the MCP and its subsequent failure to get legality has done great damage to the left wing movement in Malaysia. Left wing parties, with or without reason, have come to be associated with the communists, thus incurring governmental controls. It has also dissuaded large numbers of the Malays from joining these parties due to their "Chinese" connotation. Some MCP members infiltrated the Labour Party and Party Rakyat, and in April 1965 some branches of the Labour Party were dissolved on the grounds that they were working with the Communists.<sup>164</sup> In February 1963 the Malaysian Government arrested Ahmad Boestamam of the Party Rakyat on the grounds of his having links with the Communists.<sup>165</sup> It is difficult to present concrete evidence as to the extent to which the MCP was in control of the Labour Party and Party Rakyat. In June 1958, a captured MCP document spoke of its basic principle being to defeat the Alliance through the victory of Party Rakyat, Labour Party and Socialist Front.<sup>166</sup> The left wing alliance in the early 1960s had limited support and success but the Labour Party did not contest the 1969 elections, and subsequently withered away. The Party Rakyat faced its own problems as many of its leading members have been arrested by the Government, thus weakening the Party.

The presence of the Communists in Malaya and their sporadic activity has led the Government to analyze every major outbreak or disaffection in Malaysia as communist-inspired. All recent clashes have been interpreted as communist-inspired—Sino-Malay clashes in Penang on 24 November 1967 arising out of the protests against the devaluation of the currency; agitation by the Chinese over the death sentence given to eleven Chinese and two Malay saboteurs for treasonable activities during the confrontation were seen as Maoist inspired. On 24 April 1969 the

murder of an UMNO worker was attributed to subversive elements with known "Maoist links" and the racial riots of 13 May 1969 were attributed to the MCP and their agents in the Labour Party of Malaya.<sup>167</sup> The theory that the riots were communist-inspired is not given much credence.<sup>168</sup> As a matter of fact, it seems that the Communists were caught unprepared and it took them some time to exploit the situation. The instability in the country and the hostility between the Malays and non-Malay was used to instigate the Chinese. On 9 August 1969 the *New China News Agency* issued a statement from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Malaya claiming that 3,000 prominent people had been killed, 90 per cent of them being Chinese.<sup>169</sup> In the months following the riots, there were several armed confrontations between the Communists and Malay soldiers, and increased Communist activity in the Chinese schools.<sup>170</sup> There were armed bands of men operating in Kedah, Perak and Kelantan and indiscriminate violence in several Malaysian states. Police crack-downs in Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Johore, Pahang, Perak and Kedah found large hammer and sickle flags and Mao Tse-tung banners.<sup>171</sup> In Sarawak too, there was a spurt of renewed activity with reports of Chinese schools being infiltrated.<sup>172</sup> All this, however, was not the cause but the result of the riots. It indicated the desire of the MCP to capitalize on the situation and keep the tensions alive.

In October 1971 the Malaysian Government issued a White Paper, *The Resurgence of Armed Communism in West Malaysia* describing changes in MCP tactics to armed subversion. It pointed out that the MCP was capitalizing on the riots to mobilize the Chinese against the Government and was making contact with the old Communist haunts of 1948-60. It said that the MCP had infiltrated students, Party Rakyat and the predominantly Malay areas of North-east Kelantan.<sup>173</sup> According to intelligence reports most of the communist activity in Kelantan is carried on by members of the 10th Regiment of the MCP based in the jungles of Southern Thailand with predominantly Malay-Muslim membership.<sup>174</sup> According to one source, the 10th Regiment numbers about 400-500 men, 80 per cent of whom are claimed to be Malays.<sup>175</sup> However, it seems that the bulk of the 10th Regiment is composed of ethnic Malays from Thailand's Southern four provinces.<sup>176</sup> The significance of the 10th Regiment is that the MCP would like to broaden its base to take in more Indians and Malays, but it has found it difficult to shed its Chinese identity. In February 1972 another Government White Paper was published for Sarawak, *The Threat of Armed Communism in Sarawak*. It noted that

the Sarawak Communist Organisation (SCO) had renamed itself the North Kalimantan Communist Party, and pointed to clear evidence of active collaboration between the SCO and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). They had a joint guerrilla group known as the BARA force, the objective of which was to surround the cities from the countryside and take over powers from the Government.<sup>177</sup> The new Constitution of the Communist Party of Malaya stressed that the path of "encircling cities from the countryside and seizing political power by armed force" was the only correct line.<sup>178</sup>

The MCP had embarked on a renewed course of seizing political power by armed force. In April 1970, on the 40th anniversary of the MCP, the Voice of Malayan Revolution (VMR, the broadcast of the MCP transmitted from Yunnan in Southern China) announced the formation of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) and its four objectives:

- (a) greater efforts to set up underground revolutionary organizations;
- (b) to set up squads and cells of "Armed Peoples Militia" especially in rural areas, to carry out assassinations and sudden attack warfare;
- (c) to make greater effort to set up Listeners Stations for VMR to create public opinion;
- (d) to warn troops and police not to support the Government.<sup>179</sup>

In the light of the Government white papers and the avowed aim of the MCP to seize power by violent means, it is necessary to examine its strength and potential. Government sources have given the number of Communists working within and without Malaysia as 2,054,732 Malaysians of Chinese origin, 11 Malay *orang asli*, 23 Malaysians of Chinese origin claiming to be Muslim converts, 7 Thais, 661 Thais of Chinese origin, 509 Thai Muslims and 2 Japanese.<sup>180</sup> It is assessed that during the Emergency Communist forces had comprised 12,000 men of whom only 400 remained in 1960.<sup>181</sup> Weapons used by the MCP are fairly primitive.<sup>182</sup> Government sources maintain that there is no evidence that the MCP is being supplied sums by fraternal organizations outside Malaysia.<sup>183</sup> The numbers quoted by Government sources are misleading because these are only the active, hard-core communists and there are a larger number of "sympathizers" who provide food and shelter. Even then, the numbers are not so large that the MCP could hope to provide a viable national alternative and system of Government,



as has been done in other South-east Asian countries. Without outside help it cannot hope to do more than focus attention on the discontent and disaffection of the populace specially the Chinese.

The MCP has faced intensive problems and challenges in the 1970s. In 1974 Government sources announced a major schism and split in the MCP which had been brewing since 1970. The MCP split up into three groups.

- (a) The MCP under the leadership of Chin Peng. Its armed wing calls itself the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) and its political wing, the Malayan National Liberation League.
- (b) The MCP Revolutionary Faction formed in February 1970 by the ex-MNLA 8th Regiment.
- (c) The MCP (Marxist-Leninist-ML) established on 1 August 1974 by the former 2nd District MNLA 12th Regiment.

All these groups oppose one another but they have the common objective of the overthrow by armed struggle, of the Government of Malaysia.<sup>184</sup> With the split, there has been in-fighting and rivalry and also spurts of renewed violence.

In May 1974 Malaysia established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. China's sympathy and verbal support for the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and the identification that the ethnic Chinese felt for their homeland had been a major irritant in Sino-Malaysian relations. It was hoped that with the establishment of diplomatic relations with China the MCP would no longer attract support or consider it worthwhile to oppose Malaysia.<sup>185</sup> In the words of Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie,

After the Chinese Peoples' Republic has opened diplomatic relations, there will be no more reason for the terrorists to remain in the jungle. The opening of the diplomatic ties would open the eyes of the terrorists and at the same time strike a psychological blow to the terrorists.<sup>186</sup>

However, on the eve of Tun Razak's visit to China, communists blew up tractors and bulldozers on the highway near the Thai border.<sup>187</sup> Abdul Rahman, Inspector General of Police (Malaysia) and Chief of the Special Branch was murdered, the suspects presumably being the communists. Throughout 1975 there was a spate of violence when more than 70

soldiers and policemen were killed by communists. In March 1975 Communists made a daring rocket attack on the main Royal Malaysian Air Force Base in Kuala Lumpur; on 26 August they blew up the National Monument in Kuala Lumpur; in September they attacked the headquarters of the para-military force in Kuala Lumpur and in November a senior police official of Perak was assassinated.<sup>188</sup> Security officials pointed out that about 400 armed communists formed four assault units in Kedah, Perak and Pahang and built up lines of communication and cells in isolated Chinese villages.<sup>189</sup> An interesting feature is that a large number of Chinese special branch men have been killed. In June 1975 a leaflet was found in Ipoh claiming to be published by the Peoples' Army for the Liberation of Malaya cautioning against ethnic Chinese officials,<sup>190</sup> on the grounds that they were traitors.

The MCP is trying to shed its "Chinese" image by broadening its base and appeal. In its propaganda it is appealing to all races. On the 25th Anniversary of the Malayan National Liberation Day, VMR announced that its sole aim was "to serve the people of various nationalities of our country wholeheartedly."<sup>191</sup> In particular, it is appealing to the Malays. The Malay Wing of the Party, Partai Persaudaraan Islam (Islamic Brotherhood Party) is given an increasingly important role. A VMR broadcast of 11 November 1972 said:

More than 90 per cent of the Muslims in our country are working people living in misery. Religion can lead the way for the oppressed and exploited people to achieve progress and prosperity and the teachings of Islam can be used as a substance to encourage the advancement of Muslims in our country to engage in revolution.<sup>192</sup>

The MCP Central Committee in December 1975 released a "Draft Land Programme" with the slogan "land to the tillers and support to farmers" appealing to the rural Malays.<sup>193</sup> The Chief Minister of Kelantan pointed out that in Kelantan, communists were paying Malays recruits M \$ 200-300 to come into the jungle.<sup>194</sup> Recently the arrests of some prominent Malay journalists and politicians created a sensation.<sup>195</sup> As long as the MCP remains confined to the Chinese it can be isolated but if it spreads to the Malays it poses a danger for the Malay political system. However, despite the much publicized arrests of some Malays, there seems little danger at the moment of Communism becoming effective among the rural Malays.

The MCP, since its birth, has been fighting a long and lonely battle

with no immediate hope of being able to overthrow the Malaysian political system. Its basic strength lies in the alternative it poses to the National Front and its one party system. It lies in the alternative that it poses to the MCA which not all Chinese can identify with. It represents a threat in terms of a constant challenge to the Government. However, its presence and the nature of its opposition has done damage to the cause of the constitutional opposition in Malaysia. Most opposition parties are accused of being infiltrated by the communists. The threat of the communist presence is used by the Government to keep under detention many opposition political figures. Between 1969 and November 1975, 3,454 people were arrested under the Internal Security Act, including prominent figures like S. Husain Ali.<sup>196</sup> It has been used by the Government to take very strict and sometimes repressive action. The 1974 students revolts and supposed communist infiltration led to the University and Universities Colleges Act 1975 placing restrictions in many areas of student activity. A sixteen year old security law was reactivated on 4 September 1975 under which armed guards can shoot anyone who does not stop when challenged. New security regulations introduced in October 1975 introduced trial without jury; validity of evidence of masked or hooded witnesses; admissibility of testimony derived from tapped telephones, opened mail; and capital punishment. The police is empowered to make arrests without warrants and detain suspects for seven days, and the burden of proof lies with the accused.<sup>197</sup> In many ways the communist presence has worked to the advantage of the political leadership. It has restricted the growth of a viable leftist opposition, and it has enabled the Government to place restrictive controls on opposition parties and other interested groups such as the students who are critical of the Government in power.

## NOTES

1. For a good account of the political parties in opposition, see R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-communal Parties in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971.
2. The Labour Party, which did not contest the General Election of 1969 was officially de-registered by an order of the Register of Societies in September 1972. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 7 September 1972.
3. V. David, Gerakan M.P. from Dato Kramat expressed the view of many in opposition when he said of the Alliance, "Instead of channelling its efforts towards integration it has become an ultra-

- communal organisation." *Straits Times*, Singapore, 31 May 1971.
4. Alvin Rabushka points out, "Multi-racial parties have invariably failed in competition with explicitly racial parties or coalition of racial parties, and moderate parties over time have invariably fared worse in competition with the extremist racial parties." Alvin Rabushka, *Race and Politics in Urban Malaysia*, Stanford, Hoover Institute Press, 1973, p. 37.
5. Tun Abdul Razak, "The Alliance and the Opposition," *Straits Times*, Singapore, 30 April 1968.
6. There were some other parties such as IPP (Independent People's Party), KITA and BISAMAH which did not join the National Front but they did not make any dent on the political scene.
7. It was originally an offshoot of the People's Action Party of Singapore.
8. Malays regard the DAP as a spokesman for non-Malay interests.
9. Lim Kit Siang, a former representative of *The Straits Times* was political secretary to Devan Nair, the founder of the DAP. With Devan Nair's move to Singapore, Lim Kit Siang became the organizing secretary of the DAP, and its most vocal spokesman. He also edits the party paper, *The Rocket*.
10. In the 1969 General Election it received electoral support from the states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca.
11. This has been a consistent demand by the DAP, evidence of which is seen in *The Setapak Declaration* (Kuala Lumpur, 1967), its election manifestoes of 1969 and 1974, and the speeches of DAP spokesmen.
12. Lim Kit Siang speaking at the *Fourth Great Economic Debate at the University of Malaya Economic Society*, 25 August 1972 (Pamphlet issued by the DAP Headquarters, Petaling Jaya 1972).
13. Alex Lee, "The Chinese and Malay Dilemma in Malaysia," *Pacific Community*, 3 (3), April 1972, pp. 561-71.
14. *Malaysia: The Federal Constitution*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1964, p. 96, Part XII, Clause 152.
15. Of Malaysia's five universities, three are Malay-medium.
16. The University Colleges Act, 1971, states that students who have been awarded federal or state scholarships, loans or financial assistance from public funds cannot be refused admission in universities. Most of the scholarship holders are Malays from rural areas. *Universities and University Colleges Act 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 20 April 1971.
17. The University Act of 1971 forbids the establishment of any higher educational institution with the status of a University or College except in conformity with the provision of the Act (that is, it must conform to National Educational Policy) which is of implementing Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction.
18. *Asia Research Bulletin (ARB)*, vol. 2, no. 1, 31 May 1971, p. 939. See Chapter IV for details of the MCA-DAP talks.
19. The Central Executive Committee is the party policy making body. Michael Hung Choong Ong, "The DAP in Malaysia," Masters Thesis,

- Melbourne, La Trobe University, 1969, p. 35.
20. *Constitutional Amendment Act, 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.
  21. *Asia Research Bulletin* (ARB), vol. 2, no. 3, July 1972, p. 1094.
  22. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 1, 31 May 1972, p. 939.
  23. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 4 January 1972.
  24. In May 1971 it was trounced at Bekok in a largely Chinese Constituency; at Ulu Selangor in June 1972, and at Kajang it landed up third after the Alliance and Pekemas. *Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 6 August 1974.
  25. *Report of the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1969 and 1974*.
  26. It is felt that working class Chinese showed their displeasure at the compromise style politics of the MCA by supporting the DAP. Yoshiyuki Hagiwara, "Political Culture and Communalism in West Malaysia," *The Developing Economics*, Tokyo, 10(3), September 1972, pp. 250-66.
  27. Chian Heng Kai (M.P., DAP) and Chan Kok Kai (Assistant Treasurer of DAP) were arrested in November 1976, *The Rocket*, Petaling Jaya, DAP Headquarters, September 1976, p. 6; *Amnesty International Report 1977*, London, Amnesty International Publications 1977, pp. 199-200.
  28. The DAP office in Petaling Jaya and its publications are heavily scrutinized.
  29. Non-Malays predominantly live in urban areas.
  30. Interview with Lim Kit Siang (Kuala Lumpur), 29 March 1978.
  31. Policy speech by the Chairman of Parti Socialis Rakyat Malaysia at the opening of the party's 15th National Congress on 10 April 1971. (Kuala Lumpur, Party Rakyat Headquarters, 1971.)
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. *Ibid.*
  34. Interview with Mohiuddin Abdul Kadir, Lawyer, member of the Party Rakyat (Penang), 24 March 1978.
  35. See note 310.
  36. Interview with Ahmed Boestamam (Kuala Lumpur), 30 March 1978.
  37. This has been discussed later on in the chapter.
  38. *Report of the Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1969 and 1974*.
  39. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 25 October 1973.
- Pekemas leaders like Tan Chee Khoon were keen for negotiations with Party Rakyat. Interview with Tan Chee Khoon (Kuala Lumpur), 13 March 1978.
40. Interview with Mohiuddin Abdul Kadir, see note 34.
  41. There are several monographs dealing with the history and development of Sabah and Sarawak. Robert Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels: The Ibans of Sarawak under British Rule 1891-1941*, London Macmillan, 1970; Robert Payne, *White Rajahs of Sarawak*, New York, 1960; K.G. Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule*, University of Malaya Press, 1958;

Tom Harrison, *The Malays of Southwest Sarawak before Malaysia*, London, Macmillan, 1970; Margaret Clark Roff, *The Politics of Belonging: Political Change in Sabah and Sarawak*, Oxford University Press, 1974; Michael B. Leigh, *The Chinese Community of Sarawak: A Study of Communal Relations*, Singapore, 1964; R.S. Milne, and K.J. Ratnam, *Malaysia: New States in a New Nation*, London, Frank Baas, 1974; James P. Ongkili, *Modernization in East Malaysia, 1966-1970*, Oxford University Press, 1974; Edwin Lee, *The Towns of Sabah*, Singapore University Press, 1970; Nicholas Tarling, *Britain, the Brookes and Brunei*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971.

42. Milne and Ratnam, *Malaysia: New States in a New Nation*, p. 21.
43. *Ibid.*
44. R. Chander, ed., *Population Census of Malaysia: 1970*, Kuala Lumpur, Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, April 1977, vol. 1, p. 272.  
 In Sabah "other indigenous" include Lotud, Rungus, Tampuanu Dumpas, Maragang, Paitan, Idahan, Minokok, Rumanau, Mangka'ak, Sulu, Orang Sungei, Brunei, Kadayan, Bisaya, Tidong and Sino-native.  
 In Sarawak "other indigenous" include Bisayah, Kadayan, Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Murut and Punan.
45. Till 1965, SNAP under its leader Stephen Ningkan (who was also the Chief Minister of Sarawak) had been a major partner in the Sarawak Alliance. In 1965-66 there were several clashes between the Alliance leadership in Kuala Lumpur, under Tunku Abdul Rahman, and Ningkan. There was conflict over the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language by 1967 and conflict over educational policies. Within Sarawak there was resentment over Ningkan's controversial land bill enabling Chinese to purchase land in "Native Zones." Milne and Ratnam, *Malaysia*, p. 188.
46. Leigh, *The Chinese Community of Sarawak*.
47. Roff, *The Politics of Belonging*, p. 164.
48. As a result of the riots of May 1969, elections in Sarawak were held in 1970.
49. *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)*, vol. 69, no. 31, 30 July 1970, pp. 31-33.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Wagner Hui, *Development of Party Politics in Sarawak: A Case Study — The Sarawak National Party*, University of Malaya, Graduation Exercise, 1976.
52. The details of the SUPP merger have been discussed in Chapter IV.
53. In June 1976 SNAP joined the Sarawak Alliance.
54. *ARB*, no. 4, 30 September 1974, p. 4.
55. *Report on the Parliamentary Dewan Ra'ayat and State Legislative Assembly General Election 1974 of the States of Malaya and Sarawak*, Kuala Lumpur, Election Commission, Government Printers, 1975.

One upset for the SNAP was the defeat of Stephen Ningkan who lost both his state and parliament seats to National Front candidates. *Borneo Bulletin*, Brunei, 14 September 1974.

56. *Financial Times*, London, 11 March 1975.
  57. Tun Mustapha is reputed to have been born in the Sulu Archipelago in Philippine territory. He started life as a houseboy of the British Resident.
  58. Roff, *The Politics of Belonging*, pp. 87-108. Roff feels that the main reason why UPKO was dissolved was due to the negative attitude of the Federal Government.
  59. Robert O. Tilman, "Mustapha's Sabah 1968-1975: The Tun Steps Down," *Asian Survey*, vol. XVI, no. 6, June 1976, pp. 495-509.
  60. *The Borneo Bulletin*, Brunei, 9 May 1970.
  61. *ARB*, vol. 3, no. 5, September 1973, p. 2150.
  62. Tilman in the *Asian Survey*, June 1976, pp. 495-500.
  63. *FEER*, vol. LXVIII, no. 24, 11 July 1970, p. 5.
  64. Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, III Parliament, session 1, 11 March 1971, p. 834; *Straits Times*, Singapore, 2 January 1971.
  65. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 20 March 1973.
  66. *Ibid.*, 9 June 1973.
  67. *The Star*, Penang, 28 June 1975.
- Tun Mustapha was encouraging the Muslim secessionist group in Southern Philippines. A large number of Filipino refugees were being helped in Sabah with money. *ARB*, vol. 3, no. 3, 31 August 1975, pp. 115-17; *Washington Post*, Washington, 3 October 1974 alleged that arms too were being supplied to the Muslims in Southern Philippines.
68. Roff, *The Politics of Belonging*, p. 111.
  69. Tun Mustapha had the image of a playboy, spending a lot of time in Europe. He had two jet aircraft for his exclusive use. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 16 July 1975.
- There was a lot of dissatisfaction over corruption in timber concession. Tilman, in the *Asian Survey*, June 1976, pp. 495-509.
70. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 12 August 1975.
  71. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 26 July 1975.
  72. Harvey Stockwin, "The Question of Secession," *FEER*, vol. 89, no. 33, 8 August 1975, p. 13.
  73. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 16 July 1975.
  74. A report in the *Kinabalu Sabah Times* (owned by Tun Mustapha) alleged that BERJAYA was inspired by Kuala Lumpur. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 22 July 1975.
  75. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 22 July 1975.
  76. Tilman, in the *Asian Survey*, June 1976, pp. 495-509.
  77. The feeling of many opposition party members who were interviewed.
  78. The system of education has been discussed in Chapter III.
  79. Robert O. Tilman, "Education and Political Development in Malaysia," in R.O. Tilman, ed., *Man, State and Society in Contemporary South-east Asia*, New York, Praeger, 1969, p. 228.
  80. Chai Hon Chan's monograph points out with particular reference to West Malaysia that education has not been successful in creating conditions where primordial group identities are completely submerg'd under a national identity. Chai Hon Chan, *Education and Nation-*

*Building in Plural Societies: The West Malaysian Experience*, Canberra, Australian National University: Development Studies Centre, Monograph No. 6, 1977, p. 3.

81. Most urban non-Malays were educated in English medium schools.
  82. Joseph B. Tamney, ed., *Youth in Southeast Asia*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 11, 1972, p. 48.
  83. Till 1969, the majority of Malays were enrolled in arts courses.
  84. Joseph Silverstein, "Burmese and Malaysian Student Politics," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1970, pp. 3-22.
  85. Paul Pederson, "Possibilities for Violence in Malaysia," *Current History*, Philadelphia, vol. 61, no. 364, December 1971, pp. 339-44.
  86. *Ibid.*
  87. Silverstein in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 1970, pp. 3-22.
  88. *Malaysia Yearbook 1975*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printing Press, 1975, p. 38.
  89. Silverstein in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 1970, pp. 3-22.
  90. Younger Malay leaders within UMNO were vocalizing their discontent with the Tunku's policies.
  91. Islamic College and MARA Institute of Technology have predominantly Malay students.
  92. All these slogans are mentioned by Tunku Abdul Rahman himself in his account of the riots, Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13: Before and After*, Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969, p. 126.
  93. John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, London, John Murray, 1969, p. 21.
- Anwar Ibrahim, President of the Malaysian Youth Council pointed out that Malay Youth leaders were extremely partisan and intolerant and clamoured for Malay rights. Yong Mun Cheong, ed., *Trends in Malaysia*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1974, p. 148.
94. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 29 August 1969.
  95. *Ibid.*, 31 August 1969.
  96. President of the University of Malaya Students Union, Syed Hamid Ali Yusef bin Embi and two officers of the Malay Language Society. *Straits Times*, 31 August 1969.
  97. *FEER*, vol. LXX, no. 45, 7 November 1970, pp. 19-20.
  98. Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, p. 67.
  99. *The National Operation Council: A Report, The May 13 Tragedy*, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, p. 33.
  100. Many of the students were influenced by the Party Rakyat and its espousal of socialism. The Party Rakyat supports the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia and special rights for the Malays.
  101. Rahman, *May 13: Before and After*, p. 126.
  102. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back: Monday Musings and Memories*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1977, p. 14.
  103. "White Paper on the Resurgence of Communism in Malaysia," *Straits*



- Times*, Singapore, 3 October 1971.
104. Quoted in *ARB*, vol. 1, no. 9, January 1972, p. 684.
  105. See note 103.
  106. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 3 March 1971.
  107. *Universities and University Colleges Act 1971*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.
  108. *Report of the Committee appointed by the National Operations Council to study campus life of students of the University of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, 1971.
  109. *Ibid.*
  110. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 28 July 1972; *FEER*, vol. 78, no. 41, 7 October 1972, p. 15.
  111. *FEER*, vol. 84, no. 17, 29 April 1974, pp. 14-15.
  112. Rural influx into Kuala Lumpur led to the problems of squatters in many areas. On 8 September 1974 a demolition squad entered and tore down many squatter homes in Johore Bahru. Neil Mclean, "Malaysia: Social Unrest Calling Many Things into Question," *Dyson House Papers*, Melbourne, 1(3), January 1975, pp. 5-8.
  113. In the Malaysian economy rubber is of the utmost importance and small-holders all over the country are involved with the growing of rubber. Malaysia is the world's leading producer of natural rubber, amounting to about 35 per cent of the world's total output.
  114. *The Far East and Australia 1975-1976*, London, Europa Publications, 1975, edn. 7, pp. 517-18.
  115. *FEER*, vol. 87, no. 2, 10 January 1975, pp. 29-31.
  116. *United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Year Book 1976*, New York, 28th Issue, 1976, p. 634.
  117. *FEER*, vol. 87, no. 2, 10 January 1975, pp. 29-31.
  118. University of Malaya, founded in 1959 and officially established in 1961.  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, founded in 1970.  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, founded in 1969.  
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Agriculture University) founded in 1973.  
National Institute of Technology, founded in 1954 and gained university status in 1972.
  119. *SWB*, 7 December 1974, FE/4775/B/5.
  120. *Bangkok Post*, 4 December 1974.
  121. Amongst other arrested students were Mohamed Idris Jusi, President of the National Union of Malaysian Students, Hassanuddin Yeop, Deputy President, University Kebangsaan Students Union, and Basrah Hassan, its Secretary-General; Ibrahim Ali, Ishak Jaafar and Mohamed Husain, President, Deputy President and Secretary General of MARA Institute of Technology Students Union. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 10 December 1974.
  122. *Bangkok Post*, 14 December 1974.  
Newspapers and other media operate under controls, directives and censorship of the Government.
  123. The concept of democracy of the leadership has been discussed in

Chapter III.

124. *FEER*, vol. 87, no. 2, 10 January 1975, pp. 29-31.
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 7 December 1974.
127. The Malaysian Youth Council with branches in all parts of the country, is the country's most important youth organization.  
 Though the Council denied it had taken a direct part in the demonstrations, the Deputy Minister of Defence accused the Council of being involved.  
 Pran Chopra, "Malaysia Picks up the Pieces after the Student Riots," *Hongkong Standard*, 19 January 1975.
128. *ARB*, vol. 4, no. 8, January 1975, pp. 46-47.
129. *Bangkok Post*, 23 December 1974.
130. *ARB*, vol. 5, no. 1, 30 June 1975, p. 97.
131. *Universities and University Colleges Act*, 1971.
132. *Ibid.*; *FEER*, vol. 88, no. 25, 20 June 1975, p. 30.
133. Conversations with many Malaysian students. Fadzman Samad, President of the University of Malaya Students Union, in 1978 stated: "If I went out to demonstrate I will not be here longer." Interview with Fadzman Samad (Kuala Lumpur), 3 April 1978.
134. Interview with Minister of Education, Musa Hitam (Kuala Lumpur), 12 March 1978.
135. Interview with Chandra Muzaffar, Lecturer, Universiti Sains Malaysia (Penang), 22 March 1978.
136. According to Government sources, Chinese form the majority of the Communist Party of Malaya. Press statement by the Home Minister, *Split in the Communist Party of Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, n.d.).
137. A state of emergency was declared in Malaya on 18 June 1948 and on 23 July the MCP was declared illegal.
138. Stephen Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy 1949-1970*, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 6.
139. Png Poh Seng, "The Kuomintang in Malaya, 1912-1941," *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1961, pp. 1-32.
140. Chang Hu, "On the Formation of the Communist Party of Malaya," *Issues and Studies* (Taiwan), vol. XII, no. 5, May 1976, pp. 42-52.
141. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 301.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
143. Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960*, London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1975, p. 24.
144. Justice M. Van Der Kroef, *Communism in Malaysia and Singapore: A Contemporary Survey*, the Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1967, p. 23.
145. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, p. 303.
146. Gene H. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954, p. 31.
147. Chin Kee Onn, *Malaya Upside Down*, Singapore, Jitt & Co., 1946, p. 100.
148. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, p. 308.

149. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, p. 24.
150. Onn, *Malaya Upside Down*, pp. 99, 118; Brigadier M.C.A. Henniker, *Red Shadow over Malaya*, London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1955, p. 5. (Brigadier Henniker commanded the 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade during the Emergency.)
151. Lee Tong Foong, "The MPAJA and the Revolutionary Struggle, 1939-45," in Mohamed Amin and Malcolm Caldwell, ed., *Malaya: The Making of a Neo-Colony*, Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1977, pp. 95-119.
152. *Labour Monthly*, London, vol. XXVIII, no. 5, May 1946, p. 151.
153. F. Spencer-Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1949, p. 216.
154. Richard Clutterbuck, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya 1945-1963*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1973, p. 56. For other views see, Ruth D. McVey, *The Calcutta Conference and the South-East Asian Uprisings*, Cornell, 1958; Charles B. McLanes, *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia*, Princeton, 1966; Short, n. 143.
155. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, pp. 336-37.
156. *Labour Monthly*, vol. XXVIII, no. 5, May 1946, pp. 151-54.
157. Dr. V. Suryanarayan is of the opinion that the decisions to embark on violent struggle in 1948 was that of the MCP itself. V. Suryanarayan, "Communist Struggle for Power and China's Foreign Policy: Malaysia as a Case Study of Overt Insurgent Support," Paper presented at the Seminar on Southeast Asian Politics and Foreign Relations, New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 1979.
158. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*.
159. H.B. Lim, "War Comes to Malaya," *Far East Digest*, New York, no. 18, September-October 1948, pp. 40-41; Daud Latiff, "The British Military Administration, September 1945 to April 1946," in Amin and Caldwell, ed., *Malaya*, pp. 120-29; *Peoples Age*, New Delhi, vol. VII, no. 1, 4 July 1948, p. 1.
160. Harry Miller, *Jungle War in Malaya*, London, Arthur Baker, 1972, p. 174. Miller bases his views on captured MCP party documents.
161. Lai Tek, Report given at the 8th Enlarged Plenum of the Central Committee of the MCP, 22-23 January 1946. Quoted by Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, p. 51.
162. Quoted by Miller, *Jungle War in Malaya*, p. 169.
163. Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, p. 311.
164. Kroef, *Communism in Malaysia and Singapore*, pp. 89, 97.
165. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
166. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society*, p. 125.
167. *National Operations Council Report*, pp. 11-12, 27.
168. Chapter II has discussed this point.
169. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 30 July 1969.
170. *Ibid.*, 13 March 1970, 29 June 1970 and 4 July 1970.
171. *Ibid.*, 24 April 1970.
172. *Ibid.*, 12 November 1970.
173. *FEER*, vol. LXXIV, no. 41, 9 October 1971, p. 18.

174. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 29 June 1971.
175. Peter Simms, "Communist Infiltration into Peninsular Malaysia," *ARB*, vol. 3, no. 5, September 1973, pp. 2123-26.
176. *FEER*, vol. 78, no. 53, 30 December 1972, p. 23.
177. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 3 February 1972.
178. *ARB*, "New Constitution of the Communist Party of Malaya," vol. 2, no. 1, June 1972, pp. 1051-53.
179. Peter Simms, "Communism in Malaysia and Singapore," *Spectrum* (Bangkok, SEATO), vol. 3, no. 2, January 1975 pp. 42-48.
180. Press statement by the Hon'ble Minister of Home Affairs (Kuala Lumpur, n.d.).
181. Simms, in *ARB*, vol. 3, no. 5, September 1972, p. 23. There is a lot of divergence on the number of MCP members. Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff (*The Left Wing in Southeast Asia*, New York, William Sloane, 1950, p. 138) feel MCP membership in 1947 was 10,000. Kroef (*Communism in Malaysia and Singapore*, p. 28), feels that the guerrillas at no time numbered more than 7,000.  
In November 1966 Tunku Abdul Rahman maintained that there were about 20,000 hard-core communists and 40,000 sympathizers and most of them were Chinese.  
Quoted by Vishal Singh, "A Report on Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia," *India Quarterly*, New Delhi, vol. XXV, October-December 1969, pp. 321-58.
182. K. Das, "Keeping a Count of the Rebels," *FEER*, vol. 94, no. 41, 8 October 1976, pp. 22-23.
183. Chief of Armed Forces Staff, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid said there was no evidence that China was giving arms aid to Communists. *Straits Times*, Singapore, 9 May 1970.
185. The MCP has never recognized Malaysia and still calls itself the Malayan Communist Party. The Sino-Malaysian Treaty of 1974 is discussed in Chapter VI.
186. *Indonesia Times*, Djakarta, 17 May 1974.
187. *Bangkok Post*, 27 May 1974.
188. K. Das, "The Terrorists go to Town," *FEER*, vol. 89, no. 37, 12 September 1975, p. 10.
184. Press Statement by the Hon'ble Minister of Home Affairs, (Kuala Lumpur, n.d.).
189. *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 28 December 1975.
190. Das in *FEER*, 12 September 1975, p. 10.
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## Chapter VI

# FOREIGN POLICY AND MALAYSIAN POLITICS

Foreign policy has not been the subject of too much debate or dissension in Malaysia. A perusal of the election manifestoes and party policy statements of the major political parties indicate surprisingly little mention of foreign policy, and issues of foreign policy have never been prominent in any of the elections since 1969. In basic policy and orientation, Malaysia's foreign policy has been pragmatic rather than ideological, and this has been a constant theme since 1957, though its manifestation since 1969 has been somewhat different. As a small power, unable to make a dent in the power play of the Big Powers in South East Asia, Malaysia has pursued a policy of insuring her stability and security as a nation. Her internal needs and objectives have dictated her foreign policy. The major threat to her internal stability has been the presence of the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP) which is largely Chinese and appeals primarily to the Chinese. Major racial riots in May 1969 revealed a polarization, threatening the internal security of Malaysia. The thrust of Malaysian policy has been to win credibility as a nation by getting support from its Asian neighbours, big and small. Her new foreign policy stance and posture after 1969 is but a reflection of this. In this chapter, those aspects of foreign policy are being highlighted which are a manifestation of her need to achieve viability as an independent nation. The focus is on a few issues:

- (i) Assertion of a regional and Islamic identity;
- (ii) Membership of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN);
- (iii) Sponsorship of the neutralization scheme;
- (iv) Growing rapprochement within the People's Republic of China (PRC).

When Malaya achieved independence in 1957, there was a state of

Emergency that had been in operation since 1948, following a wave of violent activity by the MCP. Soon after independence, Malaya concluded an agreement of defence and mutual assistance with the United Kingdom (Anglo-Malayan Defense Treaty). Britain was to assist Malaya in the defence of its territories and the development of its armed forces. Britain was allowed to use some bases and maintain a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve Force in Malaya. Through the 1960s, Tunku Abdul Rahman's foreign policy was pro-western, anti-communist and favourable to South East Asian regionalism. In October 1959 the Tunku submitted a proposal for a South East Asian Organisation to promote mutual co-operation in the economic, social and cultural field. In a letter dated 28 October 1959 to President Garcia of the Philippines he expressed the desire that "... the countries of South East Asia should establish some organisation to facilitate consultation and closer collaboration between these countries," and approached Indonesia, South Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand with this proposal.<sup>1</sup> The response was not very encouraging and after long negotiations in July 1961, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines formed the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA). ASA however proved to be not much more than a pious hope, as the Philippines raised the issue of its claim over Sabah, and the association never really got started.

In the 1950s, non-alignment was an important creed and ideology, in the foreign policies of many of the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa. Malaysia stood outside the non-aligned group as a result of her defence pact with Britain. Also, the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman did not evince too keen a desire to build up ties with Afro-Asian countries, though some of the UMNO members like Abdul Aziz Ishak (Minister of Agriculture) and Mahathir Mohamad wanted a more "Asian identity." Malaysia was not invited to the Belgrade Conference of non-aligned States held in 1961, nor to the second such conference in Cairo in 1964. In March 1962 Abdul Aziz Ishak went to an Afro-Asian Conference but it was not well taken by the Cabinet. He comments: "The idea of having anything to do with Afro-Asian Organisation at that time was considered a waste of time."<sup>2</sup> In May 1965, Mahathir Mohamad led the Malaysian delegation to the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation at Ghana, but the Tunku disavowed knowledge of the mission.<sup>3</sup>

The major determinant in the Tunku's foreign policy was fear of Communism, externally, in the shape of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and internally in the shape of the MCP. The communists were feared as an insidious force capable of influencing the

sizable majority of the Chinese Malaysians. The MCP activities had involved Malaysian in a long period of Emergency and efforts to absorb the MCP within the system (Baling talks between Tunku Abdul Rahman and MCP leader, Chin Peng) had been a failure. Tunku Abdul Rahman was apprehensive of the role and the influence wielded by the PRC over the Chinese Malaysians. Addressing the UN General Assembly in 1969 he stressed acts of terrorism and subversion by enemies, "... who find ready support from followers within our territories, whose loyalty towards their country of origin make them tools ever ready to carry out the orders emanating from the source."<sup>4</sup> It was fairly evident that his focus of attack were the Overseas Chinese, because he explained further, "They are subjects of our country by operation of law but their hearts and minds are subject to outside power."<sup>5</sup>

Under the Tunku's leadership, Malaysia voted against the representation of the PRC in the United Nations. The Tunku supported the United States presence in South East Asia when most Third World countries were condemning it. In an unequivocal statement he declared, "We believe that we cannot co-exist with the Communists. We are non-Communists and will remain so, and so we stand in that sense with the Western Bloc."<sup>6</sup> When President Johnson visited Kuala Lumpur in October 1966, the Yang Di Pertuan Agong welcomed him. The Tunku was the recipient of the Grand Cross of the National Order of Vietnam awarded by the Republic of Vietnam based in Saigon. The Tunku admitted that in violation of the Geneva Agreement he sent arms and ammunition to the former President of South Vietnam, Ngoh Dinh Diem. He defended his position by saying he was helping "a good man defend his country against an aggressor."<sup>7</sup> In his policy there was a ready acceptance of the "Domino Theory" as a rationale for the United States' presence in South East Asia.

The same pragmatism led to a search for friends amongst Asian neighbours. During the period of confrontation with Indonesia 1963-66,<sup>8</sup> Malaysia found herself isolated. Internally, reactions to confrontation within Malaysia revealed tension within the Malays. While the Government of Malaysia was facing a very difficult situation with Indonesia, Malay leaders including Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, former Minister of Agriculture, were approached by Indonesian agents to form a Malayan Government in exile. According to a Government White Paper, Indonesian agents also gave large sums of money to political parties like Party Rakyat, PAS and the Labour Party, known for their anti-Malaysia views.<sup>9</sup> Indonesia as an active member of the Afro-Asian world received

support from many sources. The Soviet Union as well as the PRC, with whom Malaysia had no ties extended support to Indonesia. Malaysian leadership now realized the need for new friends. Several new diplomatic missions were established in Asia and Africa, and foreign service recruitment was accelerated. The Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Razak, visited Africa in 1964 and 1965. Malaysia started making moves towards the Islamic nations in order to counter Indonesia's propaganda. In 1964, Tun Razak visited a number of Muslim countries and this was followed by the Malaysian King's state visits to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Republic and Jordan. Malaysia supported the anti-Israeli policy of the Middle Eastern states. Though Malaysia was excluded from the Afro-Asian Islamic Conference held in Bandung in March 1965, the draft resolution of Indonesia and China seeking to condemn Malaysia did not receive much support.<sup>10</sup>

A shift in foreign policy became evident from 1969 onwards. The riots of May 1969 led to a change in political leadership and affected internal and external policy. Till 1969 the Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman had also been the External Affairs Minister. After 1969 leadership passed into the hands of a younger group. Tun Abdul Razak who took over as Prime Minister also held the portfolios of External Affairs and Defence. As the Tunku's Deputy, Tun Razak had emphasized the dependence on Western aid in order to combat Communism. Razak emphasized the development of nation building as a means of containing Communism. He emphasized that Malaysia was an independent country, but part of South East Asia and its internal security was tied up, with the security of the region. Therefore it was imperative to work with the other nations of the region.<sup>11</sup>

After 1969, Malaysia identified herself openly with the non-aligned nations. In April 1970 it sent a team of representatives under Ghazali bin Shafie (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to Dar-es-Salaam where the meeting of the non-aligned nations was held. Later in the year Razak personally led a delegation to the Third Summit Conference at Lusaka, Zambia, in "a search for new fronts."<sup>12</sup> Malaysia joined the Afro-Asian countries in protesting to the British against the proposed sale of arms and equipment to South Africa.<sup>13</sup> In September 1973 Tun Razak again personally attended the Fourth Summit Conference at North Africa (Algiers). He enunciated foreign policy objectives quite different from those of the Tunku:

The people of Southeast Asia have come to realise that embroiling



themselves in the contest and conflicts of foreign powers merely prolonged the agony of their vassalage. They have also come to realise that for the full flowering of their innate spirit, foreign military intervention should be expelled and excluded from their lands. The peoples of South East Asia must be allowed the freedom to chart their own destiny untrammelled by the self-seeking influence of foreign powers.<sup>14</sup>

In order to chart out an Asian destiny, Malaysia was moving to a new rapprochement with her neighbours. After a period of strain and hostility, relationship with Indonesia improved. When the agreement to end confrontation between the two countries was signed in August 1966, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik remarked, "This is a great victory for the Malay race."<sup>15</sup> On a visit to Djakarta in March 1968, Tunku Abdul Rahman even hinted at a defence agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia. The ethnic bond between Malaysia and Indonesia is of significance in Malaysian foreign policy as it signifies a Malay alliance for Malaysia, beset by its own racial problems and faced by a preponderantly Chinese Singapore. In March 1970, President Suharto of Indonesia visited Malaysia and signed a Treaty of Friendship, with collaboration in education, science, consular relations, extradition of fugitive offenders and closer co-operation between the police forces of the two countries. They also reached an agreement on delimitation of territorial seas in the Malacca Straits.<sup>16</sup> The two countries also co-operated on border and joint defence agreements. Joint operations were to be used against illegal entry, piracy and territorial violations. Navy patrols were to be allowed to enter each other's territorial waters in East Malaysia, and Kalimantan, in pursuit of communist infiltrators.<sup>17</sup> Similar Joint Defence Agreements were also concluded with Thailand in order to control the local communists who moved from Malaysian to Thai territory through the jungles. With regard to the Philippines, the Sabah issue which had complicated matters was sorted out with the Philippines in 1969.

In the 1960s Malaysia had seen many ups and downs in its relations with Singapore. The exit of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation in 1965 created many tensions but economic ties continued. Malaysia was dependent on Singapore for trading facilities and used Singapore as an entrepot, for her rubber and timber. However, there were several financial, economic and trade disputes between Singapore and Malaysia. In particular, there was the insistence from the Central Government

about the closure of the Bank of China's branch in Singapore. On 8 May 1973 Malaysia unilaterally announced the termination of the interchangeability arrangement for the Malay-Singapore dollar, and the separation of joint stock exchange and the rubber market of Malaysia and Singapore. There has been a conscious effort to cut down Singapore's influence within Malaysia. The reasons are not far to seek — the unhappy relationship in the period 1963-65 culminating in Singapore's exit from Malaysia, the memories of the challenges from Singapore of a Malaysian Malaysia, and Singapore's confident Chinese majority. Hence efforts were made to restrict Singapore's influence. UMNO interests bought up 80 per cent of the interests of the *New Straits Times* in Kuala Lumpur. By an amendment of the Shipping Act, coastal shipping was restricted to Malaysian owned ships. In order to break away from its dependence on the trading facilities of Singapore, Malaysia started building up Port Klang and a new port complex at Pasir Gunatang, fifteen miles from Johore Bahru.<sup>18</sup> Of late the emotion charged relationship between Singapore and Malaysia has given way to a more realistic approach. As Tun Razak stated during an official visit to Singapore in March 1973, "... I think our two peoples are beginning to accept that however close or intimate our ties, there are occasions when we will act independently and separately, based on our assessment of the situation and our own interests."<sup>19</sup>

A more viable working relationship with its neighbours was a reflection of Malaysia's priorities and needs — security and stability, internal and external. The same priorities had been emphasized by the Tunku's Government but then the British had been there to bolster her up militarily, while the United States' presence in the region had created a feeling of confidence. Now, there was the realization that Malaysia had to be self-reliant, and had to work out her own solutions to her problems. Malaysia's desire to play a more prominent role as an Islamic power has to be seen in the same context. In the election of 1969 the Malay political power had received a jolt and challenge from the new Malay opposition. The Malays wanted assurance that their political supremacy and position in their land would not be challenged. Improved relations with Indonesia, the largest Malay power in the region, have to be seen in this context. There has been a concerted move to woo Muslim opinion, and seek friendship and solidarity with Muslim nations.

Malaysia took the lead in advocating the formation of a Muslim Third World Group which would co-operate economically and politically. The First Islamic Summit Conference was held at Rabat, 22-24

September 1969 with representatives from Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan, Somalia, Southern Yemen, Tunisia, United Arab Republic, Turkey and Yemen. The representatives issued a declaration that their common creed constituted a powerful factor bringing their people together.<sup>20</sup> It established a permanent secretariat at Jeddah. Tunku Abdul Rahman was appointed as the first Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Islamic nations. This was followed by a second Islamic Conference at Lahore in 1974 which again emphasized the common faith and solidarity of the Islamic peoples.<sup>21</sup> However, as far as Malaysia is concerned, the main value of its membership of the organization has been to project an Islamic image, for in actual policy making, it seems to have exerted little, if any influence.

### **The Formation of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

A major determinant of Malaysia's foreign policy, as stated earlier, has been the preservation of its security and the establishment of stability in the light of the British withdrawal from the area. In January 1968, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson announced accelerated military withdrawal east of the Suez by the end of 1971. The Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA) lapsed on 1 November 1971 and a new Five Power Defence Agreement between Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia (ANZUK) came into existence. AMDA had had the responsibility of providing assistance to the Federation for the external defence of its territories and the maintenance of naval, land and air force bases and facilities. ANZUK, however, is committed to only consultations on matters relating to defence. The number of troops it maintains are modest, totalling only 7,100 men — 3,400 Australians, 2,500 Britishers and 1,200 New Zealanders.<sup>22</sup> Clearly this force is only a token and Malaysia has to meet its own security needs. As Tun Razak perceived, "Malaysia must gear her foreign policy to going it alone."<sup>23</sup> The changed circumstances led to a heightened awareness of the value of regional groupings. Since the early 1960s, Malaysia has been a member of several regional groups, but none of them assumed much importance. It was a member of the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) formed in 1961, with Thailand and the Philippines; Maphilindo formed in 1963 with Philippines and Indonesia which never really passed the blueprint stage; the Asian and Pacific

Council (ASPAC) formed in Seoul in 1966 with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and South Vietnam. It was on 23 June 1966 that Tun Ismail, Minister for Home Affairs and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Malaysia made an appeal before the Foreign Correspondents Association to form an all-embracing regional association for mutual benefit. On 8 August 1967 the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed with Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore as members. The statement issued by the members, known as the Bangkok Declaration stressed:

- (a) Common problems and common interests.
- (b) Regional co-operation imbued with the spirit of equality, partnership, peace, progress and prosperity.
- (c) Good understanding and neighbourliness.
- (d) Responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability and the maintenance of security.
- (e) The temporary nature of all foreign bases in the region.

It listed its activities as:

- (i) The acceleration of economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavour.
- (ii) Promotion of regional peace and stability.<sup>24</sup>

The most significant features that one observes are the emphasis on stability and security, the absence of any provision for a military or defence co-operation, and the statement that foreign bases are temporary. Keeping in mind that all the countries of ASEAN with the exception of Indonesia had military pacts or arrangements with outside powers, the emphasis on the temporary nature of foreign bases was in the nature of an acceptance of a situation whereby these powers could no longer depend on outside powers to ensure their security and stability. As stated in the Bangkok Declaration,

... the countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and that they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to

preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples.<sup>25</sup>

Malaysian needs and expectations of ASEAN are clearly brought out by Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie's analysis. He points out that there are three categories of security issues — internal, intra-regional and external, and of these "Communist insurgencies and/or alliance with sectarian dissidence, aimed at pre-empting erupting national unity and the establishment of a dynamic national equilibrium constitute the greatest of the internal security issues confronting ASEAN member States."<sup>26</sup> External security issues are closely allied to internal issues, prominent among them being the fear of the Communist insurgents, the predominant number of whom are ethnic Chinese. All the members of ASEAN have large numbers of overseas Chinese residing within their countries<sup>27</sup> and all have experienced or are experiencing insurgency problems. Most of them have a hard core communist group functioning within the country, supported by a large number of sympathizers.<sup>28</sup> What these countries fear is the link that these insurgent groups have with the People's Republic of China. Some of them such as Malaysia and Thailand, and Malaysia and Indonesia have got bilateral arrangements and joint military operations for border security. However, there was not, and has not been any concrete suggestion for a military grouping or defence pact amongst the ASEAN members. Malaysian leaders have constantly stressed that ASEAN is a non-ideological, non-military, non-antagonistic grouping. Tun Razak explained,

I think once we start talking about defence pacts, you will really put yourself in a bloc. Then it does not help our idea or neutralisation or a zone of peace and neutrality. It is not our intention to turn ourselves into a bloc.<sup>29</sup>

The point has been reiterated by Tun Razak's successor as well. As stated by Datuk Hussein Onn, "ASEAN is not, nor should be a security Organisation."<sup>30</sup>

There are many areas in which ASEAN members have an understanding but they have not been able to project a unified image. A barrier has been the ties which the various powers have had with Big Powers outside the region. All of them have had a difficult time shedding their anti-Communist image. The Philippines and Thailand were members of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), had security

arrangements with the USA and supported its military presence in Vietnam. Malaysia and Singapore were members of a Defence Arrangement, ANZUK. Indonesia, though not having military ties with the West, had strained relations with Peking and Moscow. The hope that other nations of the region would be associated with the Organisation has not built up the kind of co-operation that would have created confidence within its members and reduced their dependence on Big Powers. Various problems face the ASEAN member States — there is the problem of Thai Malay irredentists in Southern Thailand and grievances of the Thai Government that they receive encouragement from right wing Malay groups; the problem of the status of the Malacca Straits with the proposal of the Malaysian and Indonesia governments to deinternationalize the Malacca Straits which is not endorsed by Thailand and Singapore; the problem of the rebellious Muslim minority in Southern Philippines; and the Philippines claim to Sabah. The ASEAN member states have not presented a unified stand on the approach of Communist states. In particular Singapore and Indonesia have adopted a conservative posture with regard to the People's Republic of China. At the ASEAN meeting in Kuala Lumpur in May 1975 the member states were unable to arrive at a joint policy with regard to the Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian governments on the admission of other South-east Asian States into ASEAN. However, it remains the most viable regional association in South-East Asia and has stood the test of time. For Malaysia, the worth of ASEAN has been that it is a stepping stone to its aim of neutralization which explains why Malaysia has not been willing to enter into a defence pact with the ASEAN powers, and has always stressed the non-military character of ASEAN. As a regional body, it can give force to the proposals to neutralize the area and defuse the tension. Ultimately the value of ASEAN for Malaysia, as stated by Tengku Ahmad Rithanddeen is "...the atmosphere of peace and stability that would ensure in the region as a result of the understanding and cooperation among the members of the region."<sup>31</sup>

### **The Neutralization of South-East Asia**

Since 1968, Malaysia has been advocating a scheme of neutralization for South-East Asia. Despite its earlier commitment to Western Power presence in South-East Asia, the contention is, that this does not signify a radical change in foreign policy, but is a pragmatic answer to the changed circumstances and needs of Malaysia. The security and stability needs of Malaysia were earlier protected by a defence pact with Great

Britain. After the British withdrawal in 1971 Malaysia needed a guarantee that her stability as a nation would be secured. The scheme was first enunciated before Parliament by Tun Ismail<sup>32</sup> in January 1968, in the face of impending British withdrawal:

The time is therefore, Sir, ripe for the countries in the region to declare collectively the neutralization of South East Asia. To be effective, the neutralization of South East Asia must be guaranteed by the big powers including Communist China. Thirdly, it is time that the countries in South East Asia signed non-aggression treaties with one another. Now is also the time for the countries in South East Asia to declare the policy of co-existence in the sense that the countries in the region should not interfere in the internal affairs of each other and to accept whatever form of Government a country chooses to elect or adopt.<sup>34</sup>

The proposal was discussed and reiterated before the ASEAN members, but it was only on 27 November 1971 that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers signed the Kuala Lumpur Declaration accepting neutrality. Agreeing that the neutrality of South-East Asia is a desirable object they stated that,

... the time is propitious for joint action to give effective expression to the deeply felt desire of the peoples of South East Asia to ensure the conditions of peace and stability, indispensable to their independence and their economic and social well-being.<sup>34</sup>

The stated objectives of the scheme were:

- (i) To secure recognition and respect for South East Asia as a zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers.
- (ii) South East Asian countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of co-operation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship.<sup>35</sup>

In a Joint communique issued after the Kuala Lumpur meeting, the Foreign Ministers agreed to establish a Committee to study necessary steps for the realization of these objectives. A neutralization division was set up at Wisma Putra (Foreign Office) and the first meeting of the ASEAN Committee of officials on Neutralization was held in Kuala Lumpur from 11 to 13 May 1972. The committee defined a zone of

peace, freedom, and neutrality as one where "national identity, independence, and integrity of the individual States can be preserved and maintained."<sup>36</sup> Further, neutrality in the context of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration was taken to mean impartiality and refraining from involvement in ideological, political, economic, armed or any other conflict between powers outside the zone, and non-interference by outside powers in the regional affairs of the zonal states. There was nothing new about the idea of neutrality for South East Asia. Suggestions had been made in 1962 when the Government of Laos made a declaration of neutrality and in 1964 when General de Gaulle pleaded for the neutralization of South East Asia.<sup>37</sup> However, circumstances were changed — the British withdrawal, signs of the re-emergence of China from isolation, and the *impasse* in Indo-China created a fresh interest in the idea. With great pragmatism, which is characteristic of Malaysian foreign policy, Ghazali Shafie, regarded as the intellectual spokesman for the new leadership, stated:

For small countries who can ill afford to be buffeted about in the Big Power protagonisms wherein the interest of small countries are always subjugated to Big Power interest, sooner or later comes the realisation that a master/client relationship can be but a temporary thing and has to give way to a concept of greater permanence which in our view lies in non-alignment.<sup>38</sup>

ASEAN spokesmen have emphasized that the Big Powers — United States of America (USA), Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and People's Republic of China (PRC), and lately Japan also should guarantee the neutralization of South East Asia, and should not allow it to be used as a theatre of conflict.<sup>39</sup> As stated by Prime Minister, Tun Razak, "We believe that if Southeast Asia were to be made a neutral zone, we would be saved from any threat or indeed any calamity of war in future."<sup>40</sup>

Since 1969, regional associations and a non-aligned, neutral attitude are more in keeping with new policy directives. A growing rapprochement with other powers in the region such as Indonesia and the Philippines, is in keeping with an increasing "Malay" emphasis within Malaysia. Externally, Malaysia was taking stock of her new needs and priorities. Unlike many Third World countries, Malaysian leadership has made little pretence at even voicing an ideological support for the concept of neutrality — it is essentially a pragmatic solution to



Malaysia's needs. South East Asia has long been a centre of turbulence and international rivalries. There has been little stability with coups in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Communist insurgency has been ever present in Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The stability of Malaysia, internal and external, is tied up with the stability of her neighbours. The complex ethnic structure of the population of most South East Asian States creates extra-regional loyalties and ties. The Home Minister, Ghazali Shafie, emphasized the need to maintain internal unity in the face of dissident minorities who often find allies amongst Communist terrorists. Often ethnic-religious based dissident movements tend to look across linear territorial boundaries for support and therefore there was the great need for the ASEAN nations to maintain external security for internal needs.<sup>41</sup> Malaysian leadership therefore has been anxious to get neutralization accepted by the Big Powers in order to ensure the stability and security of the region.

In May 1971 Tunku Razaleigh bin Mohamed Ramzah, Chairman of PERNAS (National Trading Corporation of Malaysia) on his return from a trade mission to China stated that China had given a favourable response to Malaysia's neutralization policy.<sup>42</sup> In October of the same year, Tun Abdul Razak at a consultative meeting of 53 non-aligned nations at New York, secured endorsement of Malaysia's neutralization proposals.<sup>43</sup> On 11 December 1972, Razak told Parliament that Malaysia's proposals for the neutralization of South East Asia had been accepted in principle by almost all the countries in the region.<sup>44</sup> However, the specific guarantees desired from the major powers, USA, USSR and the PRC have yet to come. There has been considerable difference amongst the nations on the actual functioning and working of the scheme, and some fundamental differences as well. Indonesia, as the biggest power of the region, does not approve of Big Power guarantees, while the leadership of Singapore has been vocal in supporting Western presence in the region. There have been frequent references to the importance of getting endorsements from other South East Asian countries of the scheme but Tun Razak admitted that these have not been forthcoming.<sup>45</sup> Though the USA has vital security interests in the region, its experience in Vietnam has made it wary of specific guarantees or commitments in South East Asia. The USSR has been advocating its own collective security scheme to the South East Asian powers. The Sino-Soviet conflict and interests in the region have also worked against the establishment of a definite guarantee, and though the PRC openly

welcomes the scheme; it has not guaranteed it.

Tun Razak had outlined three pre-requisites for the neutralization of South East Asia:

- (i) The recognition and accommodation of the legitimate interest of all the powers concerned in the region.
- (ii) The cultivation among South East Asian nations of a sense of regional cohesion and solidarity.
- (iii) The existence of a dialogue among the major Powers, and the People's Republic of China's participation in the United Nations.<sup>46</sup>

It is obvious that all these pre-requisites have not been realized. Since the interests of the regional powers often clash, regional cohesion is difficult to achieve. The Philippines have been annoyed that Libyan-financed arms and funds are flowing through Sabah to its Muslim insurgents in its southern islands across the Sulu Sea. Thailand has been annoyed at the encouragement given by some Malaysian politicians (like Dato Asri of the PAS) to the Thai Muslim secessionists living in four provinces just across the Malaysian border. Until there is genuine commitment to neutrality both within the ASEAN powers as well as amongst the Big Powers, the neutralization scheme remains an unfulfilled dream.

### **Growing Rapprochement, and Links with the People's Republic of China**

In his farewell speech, the ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman warned, "Do not delude yourself into thinking that the Chinese Communists in Malaysia will change. They never will, no, never trust them."<sup>47</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman had opposed the entry of the People's Republic of China (PRC) into the United Nations, or the granting of diplomatic recognition to the PRC. When Malaysia achieved independence in 1957 it did not establish diplomatic ties with the Communist countries. However, with the change of leadership there has been a different attitude culminating in the establishment of diplomatic ties with the PRC in 1974. The new Prime Minister, Tun Razak, stressed the change in the country's foreign policy when he took over as the Prime Minister, "Four years ago on this occasion I stressed that our foreign policy's primary aim is to be friendly with all countries who are friendly with us regardless of ideology and social system."<sup>48</sup> The reference, of course, was primarily to the PRC for as Ghazali Shafie stressed, the "key

to peace, stability and security" lay in the PRC.<sup>49</sup>

In 1969 a trade agreement was signed with the USSR and by 1971 full diplomatic relations were established with the USSR, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Mongolian People's Republic. In October 1972, Malaysia and USSR signed a Joint Communiqué adhering to the "principle of peaceful co-existence, full equality, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, renunciation of the use of force in settling disputes and the development of economic cooperation . . ." <sup>50</sup> The most dramatic shift however has been in Malaysia's relations with the PRC. On 19 April 1971 Tun Razak declared in Parliament the intention to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC.<sup>51</sup> In September 1971, in a foreign policy pronouncement Razak declared, "It is beyond doubt that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the *de jure* and *de facto* Government of China and that the China seat should go to that Government."<sup>52</sup> Malaysia supported and voted for the Albanian resolution of one China, one seat in the United Nations.<sup>53</sup>

The key to an understanding of the changed attitude lies in the perceptions of the new Malaysian leadership with respect to foreign policy. Malaysia's sponsorship of neutralization for South East Asia, and rapprochement with China are designed to ensure the internal and external stability of Malaysia with the limited defence resources at her disposal. In a Radio and Television Address in December 1970, Tun Razak declared:

We believe that if South East Asia were to be made a neutral zone, we would be saved from any threat or indeed any calamity of war in future. Our decision to support China's membership in the United Nations is motivated by political factors and is made solely of and for the ultimate security of Asia.<sup>54</sup>

Tunku Abdul Rahman's and Tun Abdul Razak's policies towards China can really be studied as two sides of the same coin. Both were shaped by Malaysia's delicate communal balance, the presence of the MCP, and the fear of China. The earlier solution was to steer clear of the PRC so as to make it more difficult for China to appeal to the ethnic loyalty of the Malaysian Chinese and to infiltrate into the MCP. The new leadership felt that the solution lay in conciliating China and in pinning her down to non-interference in the internal affairs of the South East Asian States, and in the acceptance of neutralization for the region. Tun

Razak often stressed that neutralization guaranteed by the Big Powers was essential for the very survival of the South East Asian States.<sup>55</sup> Tun Razak's political biographer suggests that it was in furtherance of his objective of neutralization of South East Asia that Razak began making conciliatory overtures to PRC.<sup>56</sup> This is borne out by Razak's own statements that ties with the PRC should be discussed in the context of neutralization.<sup>57</sup>

The major impediment in Malaysia-China ties was the large Chinese population in Malaysia and the fear that the PRC would influence and exploit them, and "export" its brand of communism. The Tunku had upheld the view that the PRC was interested in establishing its hegemony over South East Asia.<sup>58</sup> There is little concrete evidence to support this view of Tunku Abdul Rahman that every major riot or clash in Malaysia and Singapore was communist-inspired.<sup>59</sup> A clandestine radio station, the Voice of Malayan Revolution (VMR) has been operating from Southern China since November 1969, and has been carrying out propaganda work against Malaysia. However, apart from this, there is no evidence to show that PRC has been aiding in any way other than psychological, the insurgency movement in Malaysia.

The new Malaysian leadership has rejected the "Domino Theory"<sup>60</sup> of a hegemonistic, expanding China. Seemingly, there has been a consensus among the Malaysian leadership on the need for a new policy stemming as "much from her [Malaysia's] success in dealing with her internal problems as from the changing pattern of Chinese foreign policy."<sup>61</sup> Also, establishment of ties between China and Malaysia would weaken the MCP contention that Malaysia was feudal and colonial and hence it was the duty of the MCP to "free" it.

The new attitude met with a favourable response from the PRC. An official statement of Chinese Foreign Policy in 1972 stressed:

We insist on peaceful co-existence with countries having different social systems on the basis of the Five Principles, and strive for the relaxation of international tension. That is what we have done towards Asia, Africa and Latin American countries as well as towards countries in the second intermediary zone. Even if a country previously adopted a policy hostile to China we would hold talks with it for the improvement of relations between the two countries when it indicates its reactiveness [sic] to change that policy.<sup>62</sup>

The PRC was moving away from the isolation of the Cultural Revolution

period. Chen Ji-Sheng, the PRC's Director of South-East Asian Affairs stated that the ASEAN Declaration of peace, freedom and neutrality for the region was in harmony with Peking's policy.<sup>63</sup> In view of the Sino-Soviet split, the PRC was anxious to win friends among the South-East Asian countries and convince them that the PRC was more anxious to uphold stability rather than revolution.

In its new constitution of 1975, the PRC has dropped the Overseas Chinese Representation in the National People's Congress and abolished the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee.<sup>64</sup> The Malaysian leadership too in pursuance of its new posture towards the PRC was keen to play down the role of the PRC in the Malaysian insurgency movement. In 1972 Tun Razak stated, "... the Communist party has always said all along that it has support from Communist China or the Communist Party in China."<sup>65</sup> The new mood however, was reflected in a statement of Tun Razak at a political rally in Pekan town (200 miles east of Kuala Lumpur) that Peking was not supplying the communist guerrillas operating on the Thai-Malaysian border.<sup>66</sup>

In May 1974, Malaysia became the first ASEAN country to establish diplomatic ties with the PRC<sup>67</sup> when Tun Razak visited the PRC. The Malaysian Prime Minister's entourage included representatives of all the members of the National Front.<sup>68</sup> As a result of talks between the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai and the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Razak, a joint communique was issued. The communique is quoted at some length to highlight certain features:

The two governments hold that although the social systems of the People's Republic of China and Malaysia are different, this should not constitute an obstacle to the two governments and peoples in establishing and developing peaceful and friendly relations between the two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. The two governments consider all foreign aggression, interference and control and subversion to be impermissible. They hold that the social system of a country should only be chosen and decided by its own people. They are opposed to any attempt by any country or group of countries to establish hegemony or create spheres of influence in any part of the world.<sup>69</sup>

The emphasis on non-interference and non-aggression and respect for

territorial integrity was particularly significant as it sought to allay the fears of some Malaysians about the PRC's intentions in South East Asia. Malaysia recognized the government of the PRC as the sole legal government of China and acknowledged that Taiwan was an inalienable part of the territory of the PRC. It agreed to close down its consulate in Taipeh. The PRC's acceptance of the different social systems of Malaysia was significant for Malaysia, for the MCP had all along opposed the bourgeois leadership of Malaysia and was not willing to accept the Federation of Malaysia (which it considered inspired and set up by colonial powers). It was hoped that this would demolish the appeal of the MCP and weaken their rationale for carrying on the struggle.

A second major issue on which the Malaysian leadership needed assurance was that of the dual nationality of the Chinese in Malaysia. There was a sizable number of stateless Chinese in Malaysia, about 220,000 in number,<sup>70</sup> viewed with apprehension as potential areas of disaffection, with extra territorial loyalty. On this issue, the communique stated unequivocally that the PRC and Malaysia did not recognize dual nationality. Those who retained their Chinese nationality were enjoined "...to abide by the laws of the government of Malaysia, respect the customs and habits of the people there and live in amity with them, and their proper rights and interest will be protected by the Government of Malaysia."<sup>71</sup> In other words, the Chinese were being told not to harbour extraterritorial loyalties — or so it seemed to the Malaysian leadership, which hoped that this would check the activities of the MCP. One of the major issues which had stood in the way of a rapprochement between Malaysia and the PRC had been the support, direct or indirect, tendered by the PRC to the MCP. Understandably the Malaysian leadership was keen to obtain guarantees that this kind of support would not be extended in future. However, there was no direct or unequivocal reference to this in the communique. The Malaysian leadership felt that non-interference in internal matters was a guarantee while Peking maintains that there is a difference between government to government and party to party relations. Malaysian hopes that the rapprochement between Malaysia and Chinese would lead to a quietening down of the MCP were not realized.

The MCP's reaction, as seen from VMR broadcasts, was not what the Malaysian leadership had hoped for. The MCP warned that peaceful co-existence would in no way replace the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of various countries to change existing social systems.<sup>72</sup> Its point of view was that the establishment of relations with the PRC did not

change the character of the "oppressive" government of "lackeys."<sup>73</sup> On the eve of Tun Razak's visit to China, Malaysian communists destroyed road and building equipment worth M\$ 15 million on the East-West Highway between Grik and Jeli. On 17 June 1974 Tan Sri Abdul Rahman, head of the Malaysian Special Branch was assassinated.<sup>74</sup> In Malaysia, great umbrage was taken when Peking sent a congratulatory message to the MCP on its 45th anniversary on 26 April 1975. The message said that the "revolutionary armed struggle" of the Malaysian people would eventually triumph.<sup>75</sup> Tun Razak protested that this was contrary to the assurances given to Malaysia that the terrorists in Malaysia were an internal matter to be dealt with by Malaysia.<sup>76</sup> The PRC, however, has never given up its stand that party to party relations are different from government relations. In other words, its assurances to Malaysia were on a governmental level and it could not interfere with party policies.

It is a moot point as to whether the MCP receives direct help and aid, other than ideological and moral from the Communist Party of China. Weapons used by the MCP are fairly primitive<sup>77</sup> and government sources maintain that there is no evidence that the MCP is being supplied arms by fraternal organizations outside Malaysia.<sup>78</sup> However, there is support and influence in terms of directives, and policies adopted. The new constitution of the Communist Party of Malaya adopted in 1972 stressed its aim of "encircling cities from the countryside."<sup>79</sup> The VMR (the broadcasting service of the MCP) operates from Yunnan in Southern China. Communist successes in Indo-China were followed by a wave of insurgency in Malaysia in 1975. In March 1975 Communists made a daring rocket attack on the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base in Kuala Lumpur; on 26 August they blew up the National Monument in Kuala Lumpur; in September they attacked the headquarters of the Para Military Force in Kuala Lumpur and in November a senior police official of Perak was assassinated.<sup>80</sup> It would seem that in view of the recent *d'etente* mood of the PRC, it is not projecting direct material aid, but at the same time it is not willing to give up its Big Brother stance towards the insurgency movements in South-East Asia, which have a predominant membership of ethnic Chinese.

Despite the continued activities of the MCP, the rapprochement with the PRC has had some beneficial effects. It projected a liberal image of the new Malay leadership. In the increasing racial polarization after 1969, it was instrumental in demonstrating to the Chinese Malaysians that the new leadership was working towards rapprochement signi-

ificantly. Tun Razak undertook the trip to the PRC in May 1974, just a few months before the elections in August 1974. Chinese opposition, successful in 1969, was feared and Razak's China visit was given wide publicity. Foreign policy has never been a matter of much debate between political parties. The party manifestoes and statements of the major parties are remarkably silent on issues of foreign policy. Generally, concern is expressed on providing an environment for investment, and a condition of political stability, necessary for survival.<sup>81</sup> Razak's visit to China and the establishment of ties is significant, not only as a projection of Malaysia's external, but also her internal needs. Given the unique demographic structure of Malaysia, with the large number of Malaysian Chinese, friendship with the PRC was a politic move, meeting internal and external needs. If diplomatic relationships were established with the PRC, some control, hopefully, would be exercised over the influence, direct or indirect, over the Malaysian Chinese.

Malaysia's foreign policy, from 1969 to 1975, under its new leadership has been an essentially pragmatic and non-ideological one. It has been shaped by Malaysia's needs for security and stability. The leadership has sought to strengthen the internal consensus through acceptance and recognition by regional powers, big and small, and this has been the main focus and thrust of Malaysian foreign policy.

## NOTES

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## Chapter VII

# THE 1978 ELECTIONS

### A New Leadership

In January 1976, Tun Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia died, and his Deputy Premier Datuk Hussein bin Onn took over as the Prime Minister. An astute and experienced political leader, Tun Razak had emerged to power after the May 1969 riots when the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman was being questioned. Razak had been responsible for the many decisive changes that had taken place in Malaysia from 1969 to 1974 including the broadening of the Alliance into the Barisan Nasional (National Front — NF). With his death, there was speculation about the ability of his successor, Datuk Hussein Onn to hold the National Front together. Hussein Onn was the son of Dato Onn, the founder of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and along with his father he had left the UMNO in the 1950s, to rejoin it in 1968. He had been elected to Parliament in 1969 and appointed Education Minister in 1971. In 1973 he had been elected Deputy President of UMNO and subsequently Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. When he became Prime Minister in January 1976, there was a lot of speculation about his choice of Deputy Prime Minister. Eventually when Dr Mahathir Mohamad was named, the choice was not entirely welcome to the non-Malays. An experienced and outspoken politician, Dr Mahathir has had a chequered career. For his criticism of Tunku Abdul Rahman and his policies, he had been expelled from UMNO after the 1969 riots. He had been reinstated in 1972 and had risen to the position of Education Minister. However, as a result of his outspoken comments on the maintenance of a pre-eminent position for the Malays, expressed in his controversial book, *The Malay Dilemma* (banned in Malaysia), the non-Malays view him with slight trepidation. Ghafar Baba, Minister for Agriculture, who had been strongly tipped for the post of Deputy Prime Minister was dropped from the Cabinet. Tengku Razaleigh was

appointed Finance Minister. Younger leadership was in power though the UMNO General Assembly in July 1976 indicated a power struggle within UMNO — the older group led by Syed Jaafar Albar (who at the age of 62 was elected the new UMNO youth leader), Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, Tun Mustapha and Datuk Harun bin Idris supported by Tunku Abdul Rahman, as against the younger leadership of Mahathir Mohamad, Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh.

The new Malay political leadership had to face crisis after crisis throughout 1976 and 1977, with the main thrust of opposition coming from within the Malay community itself. The problems facing Hussein Onn were many. Not only would he have to consolidate his leadership within the Malay community, but he would also have to forge links with the non-Malays and establish credibility as an impartial arbiter of communal interests. Within the Malay community, there were signs of unrest at various levels:

- (a) Tensions arising out of the arrest of the influential and powerful Chief Minister of Selangor, Datuk Harun bin Idris;
- (b) The arrests of several prominent Malays on charges of being communists;
- (c) The dissatisfaction of the Party Islam (PAS) with the National Front (NF) and its break away from the Front.

In November 1975, the Chief Minister of Selangor, Datuk Harun bin Idris was charged on sixteen counts of corruption, misappropriation of funds and criminal breach of trust, involving charges that he had received M\$ 25,000 gratification from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Kuala Lumpur, between 26 August 1972 and 23 March 1973.<sup>1</sup> Datuk Harun was a prominent member of the UMNO, receiving backing and support from the powerful UMNO Youth as a spokesman for Malay interests. Despite pressure from the UMNO Youth who met to criticize the Government action, Hussein Onn took firm action against Datuk Harun. He was successful in getting Harun expelled from the UMNO on 18 March 1976 and on 25 March, the Selangor State Assembly passed a vote of no-confidence on him. The UMNO Youth came out in support of Datuk Harun, condemning the Government. What shook the nation were the charges they levelled that some members of the Government were communists.<sup>2</sup> The outlawed Communist Party of Malaya (MCP) relies for its membership and support, primarily on the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. Malay involvement, particularly at Govern-

mental level would mean that the MCP had been able to build up a wider support from the bumiputras (Malays), long considered to be the main stumbling block for the MCP. In the summer of 1976 some prominent Malay figures were arrested on charges of being involved with the communists. Among them were Samad Ismail (Managing Editor of the *New Straits Times*), Kalil Akassa (Executive Secretary of UMNO) and two Deputy Ministers — Abdullah Ahmed (former Political Secretary to Razak and later Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Environment) and Abdullah Majid (Deputy Minister of Labour and Man-power).<sup>3</sup> As the panic created by the arrests died down, a strong feeling grew that the arrests were being used to pressurize changes within the Government through power politicking within the UMNO.<sup>4</sup> There was a strong feeling that a campaign was being whipped up by some extremists to implicate top people in UMNO and the Government, like Dr Mahathir, Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh. The extremists leading the attack were the UMNO Youth led by its President Syed Jaafar Albar.<sup>5</sup> Specific charges were brought against Musa Hitam, Minister of Primary Industries. He was charged with using the Rubber Industries Small Holders Development Agency to propagate communist ideology among rurals. The UMNO Supreme Council investigated this charge and subsequently cleared Musa Hitam.<sup>6</sup>

The conflict and tensions within UMNO created an uneasy situation in early 1977. This was heightened by the sentence delivered on Datuk Harun finding him guilty and sentencing him to a fine of M \$ 15,000 and imprisonment. His effort to obtain special leave to appeal, to the Privy Council failed.<sup>7</sup> Appeals to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King) and efforts by the UMNO Youth to forcibly prevent his arrest created a politically charged atmosphere.<sup>8</sup> The non-Malays, though concerned and apprehensive of a break-down of law and order as in the case of the 1969 riots were nevertheless, essentially bystanders watching and awaiting the struggle within the UMNO. Hussein Onn's Government stood firm in not cowing down to pressures within UMNO, and Onn's peaceful handling of the arrest weathered the storm.

### **Split within the National Front: Withdrawal of the Parti Islam (PAS)**

Tensions within UMNO were followed by a major split within the Malay community, due to internal troubles within PAS and its subsequent withdrawal from the National Front. PAS, a spokesman for Malay-Islamic interests had, before its entry into the National Front

challenged the claim of the UMNO to be the representative of the Malays. Many observers feel that a major factor shaping the formation of the National Front had been the desire to consolidate Malays by a coalition between UMNO and PAS.<sup>9</sup> However, ever since its entry into the National Front, many members of PAS had been dissatisfied over allocation of seats, and the position of the PAS in state and national administration. In its annual assembly in August 1977 it set up a sub-committee to study the position of the PAS in the National Front. Dissatisfaction came to a head towards the end of 1977 brought about by a leadership crisis of Kelantan which had been brewing for some time. In Kelantan, the PAS governed with a majority of 22 seats in a coalition with 14 other Front members. There was dissatisfaction with the Chief Minister Datuk Mohamad Nasir, and a feeling that he was being subverted by the UMNO. The hostility against Nasir was also due to the fact that he had started clamping down on alleged corruption and mismanagement of Government funds and had withdrawn a number of leases that he considered poorly exploited and profiting private pockets.

In September 1977, 20 of the 22 PAS State Assembly members in Kelantan issued an ultimatum to resign or be thrown out of office. Nasir refused and a motion of no-confidence was passed against him. The Federal Government intervened and imposed Emergency Rule in Kelantan. The PAS voted against the Bill, and before the year ended, PAS withdrew from the Front, and was once again, a Malay party in opposition.

The State Assembly in Kelantan was dissolved and elections were held in March 1978. Supporters of Nasir with the tacit support of UMNO formed a new party Berjasa (Barisan Jumaah Islamiah Malaysia Bersatu). The stakes were very high for UMNO — PAS in opposition was a challenge to UMNO's claim to be the major spokesman and representative of the Malays. The consensus style politics of the National Front could not afford to see a major Malay party in opposition. The campaigning was intense though a ban had been placed on public rallies. The results of the election were reassuring for UMNO. The National Front won 23 of 24 seats that it contested while PAS only managed to get 2 seats, though it had contested all 36.<sup>10</sup> The National Front had weathered a major storm in quelling Malay dissension.

### **The Elections of 1978**

With the massive vote of confidence in Kelantan, the stage was now set for a national mandate on Hussein Onn's leadership. Parliamentary

elections were announced for 8 July 1978, a year ahead of schedule. Explaining his reasons for doing so, Onn stated, "People had the impression that UMNO was having serious internal quarrels. We had to consolidate."<sup>11</sup> This was an obvious reference to the internal crises within UMNO — the communist arrests, Datuk Harun's case, and the PAS withdrawal from the National Front. However it was not only the UMNO which was having problems, but trouble was also evident among some of the constituent members of the Front. In particular, dissensions were seen between the Gerakan and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in Penang. The MCA's claim to be the spokesman for the Chinese was being challenged by the Gerakan from within the National Front and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) from without.<sup>12</sup> The Gerakan demanded more seats in the forthcoming elections, threatening to fight under its own banner if it was only given two seats. The non-Malay representatives in the National Front, the MCA and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) were facing pressures from within their own ranks dissatisfied with the Front policy with regard to education which was heavily weighted in favour of the Malays. There was also resentment against the Industrial Coordination Act of 1975 which despite amendments in 1976 was felt to be discriminatory against Chinese businessmen. In Sarawak, the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) which had joined the National Front in 1976 agitated to contest under their own banner. The PAS, after its disastrous showing in Kelantan, was again seeking to strengthen itself by campaigning as the guardian of Islamic values and calling attention to the elitist and un-Islamic practices of the Malay political leadership. In Kelantan, moreover, there was a growing rift among the members of Berjasa on the question of joining the National Front.

### **Manifestoes and Issues**

The National Front fought the elections on the theme of a clean Government. In its 20 point manifesto it appealed for support in its "struggle to eradicate poverty, to build upon the foundation of racial harmony and national unity a peaceful, clean, just and prosperous future for our children." For non-Malays it held out the promise of expanding employment, additional provisions of low cost housing and expanding opportunities for education at all levels.<sup>13</sup> In essence the Front manifestoes emphasized its unifying role with respect to the different ethnic groups in Malaysia, and pointed to its record of providing a stable Government. In other words, the National Front leadership was asking



for a renewal of the mandate to the National Front. As the editorial of *New Straits Times* of 1 June 1978 pointed out:

The main objectives of the forthcoming elections will be to renew pledges of responsibility and effective Government to the people. These goals must transcend the individual causes and various interests that make up the NF.<sup>14</sup>

The opposition parties that challenged the National Front's mandate were the Democratic Action Party (DAP), Pekemas, PAS, and Parti Socialis Rakyat Malaysia (Rakyat). Pekemas (a break-away group from the Gerakan) would be contesting the elections for the first time though its leaders like Tan Chee Khoo and Ahmed Boestamam had long political careers as members of Parliament. It adopted the theme of a just, united and free country. It was critical of the Front policies of enriching some Malays at the expense of others, and not being able to narrow the gap between the have's and have-nots. Rakyat, a left wing socialist party projecting an appeal to the rural Malays, had failed to get a single parliament or state assembly seat in 1974. The Party Rakyat put up candidates only in 4 States (Trengganu, Penang, Pahang and Selangor). It pledged to fight on behalf of all oppressed Malaysians in the rural areas and advocated a programme of granting free milk and food supply to all school children.

The main challenge to the National Front came from the PAS, appealing to the Malays, and the DAP appealing to the non-Malays. The PAS took up the slogan of safeguarding "religion, nation and motherland." In its forty-six page manifesto it called for the sovereignty of the Malay rulers and bumiputra political power to be guaranteed by the Constitution. It urged the setting up of a welfare state and the establishment of three separate and independent organs of Government — legislature, executive and judiciary. PAS also released a special manifesto for the state of Perak, Kedah and Trengganu where it was making a special bid to break UMNO dominance by emphasizing that the Government had not been effective in improving the socio-economic position of the bumiputras. PAS was trying to build up support amongst the Malays by attacking the declining morals and anti-Islamic activities of the National Front leadership. The main focus for discontented non-Malays is the DAP. Since its formation as a political party in 1966 it has been the one party which has consistently remained in opposition, and has refused to ally itself, in any way, with the National Front. The DAP

has been able to attract support from non-Malays, capitalizing on the extreme frustration felt by non-Malays with respect to education policies. Since 1969 there has been an intensification of efforts to fully implement Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language. The non-Malays are resentful that though the constitution guarantees the preservation of their language,<sup>15</sup> little is done to sustain Tamil or Kuo-Yu. Heavily weighted quotas are restricting the entry of non-Malays into universities and many non-Malays feel that avenues of higher education are being limited for them. An issue which aroused much feeling and bitterness was that of the Merdeka University. This is the demand by the Chinese for a Chinese medium university which has been consistently denied by the Government on the grounds that it is against the national objective of educational policy.<sup>16</sup> DAP's support for Merdeka University gained its support from the Chinese (the Chinese supported MCA and Gerakan as members of the National Front, cannot support the issue publicly though privately many members often express support). More than anything else, this was the issue on which many educated non-Malays went to the polls.<sup>17</sup>

The DAP in its manifesto reiterated the DAP support for Merdeka University, criticizing the lack of opportunities for non-Malays for higher studies. It hit out at the National Front for subverting national unity and democracy, by encouraging communal politics. It put forward DAP proposals of radical land reforms, full employment policy, a minimum wage law, repeal of anti-labour legislation, reform of the education system and intensified anti-corruption efforts.<sup>18</sup>

However, despite its growing support, the DAP could not hope to be a national party, as it appeals only to the urban non-Malays. Its support comes mainly from the urban, west-coast states of Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Penang, Perak and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. With its demand for "cultural democracy" and a "Malaysian Malaysia" it has no appeal for the rural east-coast Malays. Moreover, rural constituencies in Malaysia are heavily weighted so that an urban based party is at a clear disadvantage. Some urban constituencies have as much as thrice the number of voters in rural constituencies. Stringent restrictions on the public discussion of "sensitive" issues further restricted the area in which the DAP could project its appeal.<sup>19</sup> Before the elections there was a total ban on public rallies. Parties had to use other electoral tactics such as posters and *ceramah* (lecture or dialogue, in the form of a coffee house or indoor rally). This worked at a disadvantage for the opposition parties as Government media continued to dispense

propaganda for the ruling Government.

A more immediate problem for the DAP was the arrest of its Secretary General Lim Kit Siang and a split in its Penang ranks. Lim Kit Siang was arrested on the charges of violating the 1972 Official Secrets Act and divulging secret information about the Government's purchase of Swedish naval aircraft. In Penang, the Deputy Chairman of DAP, Mr. Yeap Ghim Guan and seven other members were expelled and they contested the elections as a new party, the Socialist Democratic Party (SDS). In Negri Sembilan, more than 160 DAP members acknowledged that they had left the Party to work for the National Front. It was in this atmosphere that elections were held on 8 July 1978.

### **1978 Election Results**

On 8 July 1978 when elections were held, almost a million new votes had been added since 1974. 154 parliament seats and 276 state assembly seats were to be filled — elections for the Sabah State assembly were not due to be held till 1981, and for the Sarawak State Assembly were postponed. The results as expected, confirmed the mandate of the National Front — at parliamentary level the Front received 94 of 114 seats in West Malaysia. In Sarawak, the Front got 23 of 24 seats (one seat went to Sarawak People's Organization — SAPO) and in Sabah it obtained 13 seats (with one seat going to the DAP and two to independent members). Overall, the Front received 131 of 154 seats in Malaysia. Except for Penang, where the Front got 4 of 9 parliamentary seats and the Federal Territory where it got 2 of 5 seats, the Front trounced the opposition in all the States. In Perlis it got both seats, in Kedah 11 of 13 seats (2 went to PAS), in Perak 17 of 21 seats (4 going to DAP), in Selangor 10 of 11 seats (1 going to the DAP), in Negri Sembilan 5 of 6 seats (1 going to the DAP), in Malacca 3 of 4 (1 going to the DAP), in Kelantan 10 of 12 (2 going to the PAS), in Trengganu all 7 seats, in Pahang all 8 seats, in Sarawak 23 of 24 seats (1 going to SAPO) and in Sabah 13 of 16 seats (1 going to the DAP, 1 to a Berjaya supported Independent and 1 Independent).

Of the opposition parties, the Pekemas, Rakyat and SDS did not get a single seat. The DAP emerged as the only significant opposition party making a dent with 16 seats. The only other opposition party to get any seats was the PAS which won 5 seats. However, PAS President Datuk Asri lost his seat and 27 of the PAS parliamentary candidates lost their deposits. The DAP, in comparison did fairly well — it almost doubled its 1974 strength of 9 parliamentary seats. It is also significant that it

received 20.8 per cent of the overall vote in West Malaysia with PAS receiving 17.1 per cent and the Front 55.1 per cent.<sup>20</sup>

In the State Assembly elections, the Front performance with regard to the number of seats it captured was also impressive. It got all 12 seats in Perlis, all 38 seats in Trengganu and all 32 seats in Pahang. In the remaining States also it received majority support, getting a total of 239 seats (one additional seat was won by the Front in by-elections in the Kampung Jawa State constituency). In State elections held in Sarawak in 1979, the Front got 45 of 48 seats (with 3 seats going to Independent candidates). In Sabah where elections were held in 1981, Berjaya got majority support. The DAP got 25 seats. It lost 2 seats in Perak and its single seat in Kedah but got 5 seats in Penang where previously it held none, and made some gains in Selangor and Malacca.<sup>21</sup> The PAS got 9 State seats (7 in Kedah and 1 each in Penang and Perak). One Independent was elected in Penang and one in Selangor.

It is interesting to look briefly at the relative performance of the Front's component parties in the parliamentary elections. The UMNO did very well winning 70 seats (as against 61 in 1974). The non-Malay components fared worse than they had done in 1974, losing ground to the DAP. The MCA won 17 seats (as against 19 in 1974), MIC won 3 seats (as against 4 in 1974). The Gerakan won 4 seats (as against 5 in 1974). At the State level also the UMNO bettered its 1974 performance getting 175 seats as compared to 170 in 1974 while the non-Malay parties lost a little bit of ground.<sup>22</sup>

A significant aspect of the 1978 election results is the polarization that is apparent along National Front-Malay/DAP non-Malay lines. This was particularly evident in the trend of voting in the urban areas. The Front Secretary General and UMNO's Vice-President Ghafar Baba expressed concern at the drift in communal voting.<sup>23</sup> The DAP is emerging as the spokesman of the non-Malays, discontented with Front policies. In each of the constituencies where the DAP won, it won by a much larger margin than its performance in 1974.<sup>24</sup> DAP leaders like Lim Kit Siang and Chan Kok Kit won by very large majorities. Lim Kit Siang contesting from the Petaling ward got 41,017 votes, the highest of any candidate in the election. Chan Kok Kit won by a majority of 33,687 in the Sungai Besi constituency.<sup>25</sup> However, with its 16 parliamentary and 25 State Assembly seats the DAP cannot hope to offer a national alternative to the Front. Moreover, since the electoral constituencies are heavily weighted in favour of the Malay voters, the DAP unless it captures the Malay vote, cannot hope to make further serious inroads

into the National Front control. What it can, and does do, is to focus attention on non-Malay grievances with respect to educational policies and the special position given to the bumiputras.

For the Malay party in opposition, PAS, the election year was not a good one. The Kelantan elections in March 1978 had split the party, and it did not fare too well at the polls in July. However, it is significant that with only 5 parliamentary seats, it got 537,251 votes and 17.1 per cent of the overall vote in West Malaysia. At state level its showing is even more significant in some States — in Kedah it got 38.6 per cent of the vote, in Trengganu 36.3 per cent and in Kelantan 43.1 per cent.<sup>26</sup> With its claim to be a spokesman only for the Malays and with its unqualified stand on Malay pre-eminent rights it is a challenge to watch out for, specially if the Malay-non-Malay polarization were to increase.

### **Contemporary Issues and Concerns**

Following the elections, Hussein Onn appointed a Cabinet of 22 Ministers — 12 Malays from UMNO, 4 Chinese from MCA and 1 each from MIC, Gerakan, SNAP, SUPP, PPBB and Berjasa. Despite the success of the National Front in the 1978 elections, tensions were seen within the components of the Front. Other contemporary issues which have led to tensions are the educational policies of the leadership, Islamic revival and problems of external relations and security.

Within UMNO, tensions were evident when soon after the elections, the UMNO General Assembly was held in September 1978. Hussein Onn's candidature for Presidentship was challenged by Sulaiman Palestin, the former Chief Publicity Officer of UMNO. Though Onn was elected with 898 votes Sulaiman managed to get 250 votes. The UMNO is the kingpin of the National Front and hence of the Malaysian political system and any rumblings within UMNO are viewed with concern. The leader of the Front, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, has to have the confidence of the different ethnic groups in the country in order to ensure an atmosphere of confidence and stability. Of late, Hussein Onn's ill health had led to much speculation about his successor. As Deputy Premier, Dr Mahathir will succeed pending fresh elections, and though his period in office has allayed many fears, some non-Malays are sensitive to his public statements on a pre-eminent position for the bumiputras. Referring to the "special" position of the Malays, Dr Mahathir stated,

We have to bend over backwards so that in the rebound you get the

median line. You have to be extreme a little but not completely until you break.<sup>27</sup>

Two major components of the Front, the MCA and MIC, have also had problems within the party, and dissatisfaction has been surfacing with some Front policies. The death of the MIC Chief, Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam in October 1979 led to Samy Vellu taking over as the new party Chief, but there was a split in the party. Within the MCA, the Presidentship of Lee San Choon was challenged by Michael Chen, the Deputy President. Chen was defeated but a split within the party was indicated by the fact that he polled 43.2 per cent of the valid votes cast.<sup>28</sup>

### **Educational Policy**

The MCA and MIC have witnessed growing dissatisfaction within their parties with National Front educational policies. The New Educational Policy has led to an acceleration of measures to implement Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. By 1984, only Malay will be used as the medium of instruction up to the University level. Though the majority of non-Malays accept Malay as the national language, there is dissatisfaction that their own languages are not being given any encouragement. Moreover heavily weighted quotas for Malays in schools and colleges have led to a situation where many non-Malays are finding it difficult to get into institutions of higher learning. For instance in 1978 there were 23,687 Malays and only 9,814 non-Malays in tertiary educational institutions, and there has been growing pressure from Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry to open up more educational institutions.<sup>29</sup> The Yang di-Pertuan Agong was petitioned unsuccessfully to grant a charter to the Merdeka (Chinese medium) University. The DAP introduced a motion in parliament to declare private universities legal. The MCA pressurized its ministers to raise the issue at the Cabinet level, while the Gerakan questioned the principle of opposition to private initiative. However, the motion was defeated by 117 votes to 15 — the MCA and Gerakan voted with the Government. This illustrates the sensitive position of non-Malay parties like MCA and Gerakan which are facing pressures from within their own ranks for liberalization of policies with regard to non-Malays but which nevertheless have to abide by stated Front policies. In an interview, Hussein Onn admitted that MCA did badly in the 1978 elections because of the Merdeka University issues.<sup>30</sup> Educational policy and the feeling

among many non-Malays that they are being discriminated against continues to be a source of great tension in Malaysian society. In the words of the DAP leader, Lim Kit Siang,

The drastic diminution of higher education opportunities especially for Malay students in the country is one of the most serious new injustices and inequalities created by the new Economic Policy.<sup>31</sup>

### Islamic Revival

In a plural society like Malaysia, where ethnic differences are re-enforced by religious differences, any religious extremism is fraught with the danger of further polarization. The Malays are Muslims, the Malaysian Indians are primarily Hindus (some are Muslims as well) while the Chinese are followers of Buddhism, Confucianism or Christianity. Islam is the State religion. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is the Islamic leader while the Sultans of the States control religious affairs with a religious council to advise them. There is an Islamic centre at Kuala Lumpur with two components — the National Council of Islamic Affairs which tries to coordinate state religious council and the Islamic Affairs Council of the Federal Territory responsible to the King. There are several organizations involved with the organization of missionary (dakwah) activity — the Islamic Dakwah Foundation, Perkim (Pertubuhan Kehajikan Islam) which, during 1967-1977, claims to have made 30,000 converts in West Malaysia and 75,000 in Sabah, and ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia. In 1979, the ABIM had an approximate membership of 35,000 with a hold at the Universiti Malaya and the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia at Bangi. It has a growing network of its own schools (Yayasan anda). It is known to have ties with PAS, and in the 1978 elections at least 3 ABIM members ran as PAS candidates.<sup>32</sup> There are some extreme groups such as Darul Arqam and Tabliq India and a group which is inclined to Wahabism under the leadership of Mohamed Natsir Ismail.

There has been a marked manifestation of Islamic assertiveness in recent years — demands for reintroduction of Islamic laws specially penal law, amendment of curricula in schools, increase in the number of religious teachers, the increase in the number of women wearing the *telekung* (short head veil), women dropping out of university courses and instances of Malays in the rural east-coast States, throwing away their television sets as un-Islamic. Friday prayers and religious lectures are well attended, and the heightened religious awareness is evident amongst

the young. Judith Nagata has observed that students in the second half of the 1970s are more inward looking than their earlier counterparts, and are looking to Islam to provide them with a sense of identity distinct from the non-Malays. The motto of the UMNO youth is "Perjinangan Kami: hidup Melayu" (we strive for Malay survival) while the Government slogan "bahasa jiwa bangsa" (language is the soul of the people) has changed to "bahasa dan agama" (religion and race).<sup>33</sup> The increased Islamic awareness, dakwah (missionary activity) and a heightened sense of Islamic identity is viewed with concern, both by the non-Malays as well as by the Malay political leadership. In the words of Hussein Onn, "We need missionaries but not fanaticism."<sup>34</sup> For the non-Malays, Islamic awareness further emphasizes their non-bumiputra position in Malaysia, as Islam and Malay is equated in Malaysia. Incidents tend to get blown out of proportion and exacerbate racial tension. In recent years there have been a few incidents causing concern. In September 1978 an extremist Muslim group attacked Hindu temples in Keling;<sup>35</sup> there was a raid on a Buddhist temple in Penang, and in October 1980 there was a raid on a police station in Batu Pahat by Muslim fanatics.<sup>36</sup> The reaction that can set in against Islamic revival is a heightened ethnic and religious awareness amongst the non-Malays. Many Chinese youth are turning towards a more canonical Theravada Buddhism, while many Hindus are expressing a greater interest in Hindu philosophy and religion. This may have dangerous portents for a society where lines of ethnic, religious, linguistic and occupational differentiation are still fairly strong.

### **Security and Foreign Policy Concerns**

The turbulent situation in South East Asia has raised some acute problems for Malaysia, both with regard to its own security as well as its position in the region. Since 1975, the changing situation in Indo-China, the Communist victories in the region and the instability in Vietnam and Kampuchea (the State of Democratic Kampuchea was proclaimed on 3 January 1976) has created a tense situation. With its delicate ethnic balance and the continued presence of the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP) Malaysia is particularly susceptible to tensions in the region. Since 1975, Malaysia's problems, on the external front, have centred around:

- (i) Problems in Vietnam and Kampuchea which have led to the exodus of larger numbers of refugees, many of whom have come



to Malaysia.

- (ii) The need to evolve a viable policy which would ensure its independence and territorial integrity.
- (iii) The need to contain its own insurgency problem with the MCP and to safeguard its borders.

There was a fear among the ASEAN countries that with the liberation of Indo-China, communist insurgencies would be intensified in the region. In pursuance of its pragmatic approach, Malaysia was the first ASEAN country to recognize the Provisional Revolutionary Government in Saigon, and all five ASEAN members recognized the Pol Pot regime in Phnom Penh. Malaysia had established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China (China) in 1974, and in 1975 Thailand and Philippines also established diplomatic ties with China. An immediate concern for these countries was the fear that local communist parties would be encouraged by these victories by diplomatic manoeuvres, the attempt was to get some assurance that the local communist movements would not be supported by China. The fall of Saigon was marked by a spurt of activity by the MCP in Malaysia. Vietcong and Khmer Rouge flags were hoisted at Petaling Jaya (near Kuala Lumpur) to mark communist victories in South Vietnam and Kampuchea. Since the Government of China makes a fine distinction between State to State and party to party relations, maintaining that it cannot give guarantees for non-interference of party to party relations, Malaysia had to strengthen its own security arrangements. The Malaysia Parliament approved additional expenditure to further equip the armed forces and a new army brigade and a new Malay regiment were formed to contain the Communist guerrilla threats. In November 1976 the Malaysia-Thailand General Border Committee met to launch operations to stop the guerrilla activities along their common border, and in March 1977, a new border agreement was signed between Thailand and Malaysia, that allows "hot pursuit" into each other's territories.

In view of the situation in Indo-China Malaysia has been working closely with the ASEAN members to ensure the security and neutrality of the region. The first ASEAN summit was held at Bali on 24 February 1976 to evolve guidelines for future ASEAN cooperation. This provided for "continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between the member States in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests."<sup>37</sup> ASEAN members have shown a sense of common purpose. At the United Nations in 1976, Malaysia supported the East

Timorese peoples' intention to integrate with Indonesia. In December 1976 Malaysia and Indonesia had talks to tone up bilateral military cooperation. In August 1977 the second ASEAN summit held at Kuala Lumpur saw the member states come closer.

As a result of the big power interests and politics in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN countries have found themselves being wooed by the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam. During September and October 1978, the Vietnamese Premier, Pham Van Dong visited the ASEAN countries and expressed readiness to support "a zone of peace, genuine independence and neutrality." He also assured his hosts that Vietnam would not extend support to local communist movements. However, the Soviet-Vietnam Friendship Treaty of November 1978 and the invasion of Kampuchea leading to the installation of a pro-Hanoi Heng Samrin Government have made the ASEAN Governments suspicious of Vietnamese intention. Malaysia, along with the ASEAN members insisted that the "legitimate" Pol Pot regime be recognized, and supported the United Nations resolution for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Kampuchea. Diplomatically Malaysia has tried to safeguard its position. When Vietnam invaded Kampuchea in January 1979, the Djakarta Declaration offered the good offices of ASEAN to help solve the issue. When China attacked Vietnam in February, 1979 Malaysia voiced its disapproval but fear of Vietnamese' expansion was seen in the statement of the Deputy Premier Dr Mahathir that it might have "a salutary effect on Vietnam."<sup>38</sup> Malaysia has tried to keep open the lines of communication between China, Russia, Vietnam and Kampuchea. Hussein Onn visited Beijing in May 1979 and Moscow in September of the same year, getting a guarantee of non-aggression by Vietnam. In January 1980 the Malaysian Foreign Minister visited Hanoi and Vietnam, and Kampuchea agreed to hold constant dialogue with the ASEAN States to find peaceful solutions to regional problems.

One of the results of the turmoil in Vietnam and Kampuchea has been the exodus of a large number of refugees, "boat people" to Malaysia. By June 1979 about 170,469 refugees had reached Malaysia—of these 51,666 had been pushed back into the sea, about 44,000 had been resettled in other countries, and some 75,000 were in Malaysia, living in beaches and camps. A large number of the refugees are ethnic Chinese, and in Malaysia, any change in the ethnic balance is fraught with problems. Moreover, there is the problem of insurgency in Malaysia, and the feat that some of the refugees may be bringing in revolutionary ideas. In a recent interview, Dr Mahathir admitted that Malaysia did not

foresee China becoming an aggressive power and exporting revolution: "But the hard fact of life is that Malaysians are very conscious of their ethnic origins."<sup>39</sup>

The recent tensions in the region have brought about a strengthening of ASEAN ties and a sense of common purpose, but Malaysian leadership is wary of changing the character of ASEAN to a military alliance. However, there has been a steady increase in the military spending of the ASEAN powers. In 1980 the ASEAN countries' military expenditure totalled US \$ 5.5 billion, a 45 per cent increase over 1979. In Malaysia there is a steady expansion of all branches of the armed forces. In the Third Malaysia Plan, the defence allocation was of M \$ 1.5 billion, while in the Fourth Plan, it is M \$ 9.8 billion with the possibility of an increase.<sup>40</sup>

With the tensions both internal and external, there is the realization on the part of the political leadership in Malaysia, that prosperity and stability will make the country less susceptible to outside tension. As against rocketing, worldwide inflation, Malaysia has had an inflation rate of only 4 per cent for the past few years and it is forecast to be only 6 per cent in the early 1980s.<sup>41</sup> Through the 1970s the growth rate in Malaysia has been a steady 8 per cent.<sup>42</sup> If all the citizens of Malaysia feel they have a place in the "Malaysian sun," Malaysia may continue to be one of the most prosperous countries of the region.

## NOTES

1. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 25 November 1975.
2. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER), vol. 91, no. 13, 26 March 1976, p. 11.  
FEER, vol. 92, no. 14, 2 April 1976, lpp. 8-9.
3. FEER, vol. 93, no. 27, 2 July 1976, pp. 8-9.  
Just before the arrests took place the Government pushed through fiftyone amendments to the Constitution. Most of them were minor but one amendment was of crucial interest. It deprived of fundamental liberties any person accused, arrested or detained under the Internal Security Act of 1961,— the right to counsel, habeas corpus, or to be told of accusation, was denied under the new amendment.
4. *Asiaweek*, Hongkong, vol. 21, no. 46, 12 November 1976, p. 10.
5. Syed Jaafar Albar, one time Secretary General of the UMNO was known for his extreme views on "Malay" rights highlighted during Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965. In an interview, Syed Jaafar identified himself with Tunku Abdul Rahman, ex-Minister

Khair Johari and Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman (former Information Minister) as the "old guard . . . not happy with what is going on and want to put things rights." Shri K. Nayagam in an interview with Syed Jaafar Albar.

- Asiaweek*, vol. 3, no. 2, 14 January 1977, p. 11.
6. *FEER*, vol. 95, no. 1, 7 January 1977, p. 5.
7. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 1 March 1977.
8. The author was in Kuala Lumpur through February and March 1978 and observed the great interest and concern caused by the Harun trial.
9. Interview with M.G.G. Pillai (veteran journalist and commentator on Malaysian affairs), Kuala Lumpur, 18 February 1978.
10. *Asia Research Bulletin (ARB)*, vol. 7, no. 10, 31 March 1978, p. 430.  
*FEER*, vol. 99, no. 11, 17 March 1978, pp. 12-13.
11. *FEER*, vol. 103, no. 4, 26 January 1979, pp. 23-24.
12. Gerakan leaders pointed out that in 1969 MCA had fielded 12 candidates in Penang and lost all and in 1974 had fielded 3 and won 1. In contrast the Gerakan had won 16 of 19 contested seats in Penang in 1969, and 11 of 13 in 1974.
13. *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 24 June 1978.
14. *Ibid.*, 1 June 1978.
15. *Malaysia: The Federal Constitution*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1964, Part XII, Clause 152, p. 96.
16. The Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, forbids the establishment of any higher educational institution with the status of a University or College except in accordance with the provisions of the Act (that is, it must conform to National Educational Policy of implementing Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction).  
*Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971*, Kuala Lumpur Government Printers, 1971.
17. The author was in Kuala Lumpur just before the elections and had several conversations with non-Malay professionals, all of whom expressed a sense of great frustration with educational policies.
18. Ismail Kassim, *The Politics of Accommodation: An Analysis of the 1978 Malaysian General Election*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1978, pp. 52-53.  
*Malaysian General Election*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1978, pp. 52-53.
19. The Constitution Amendment Act 1971 did away with the right to question or debate sensitive issues like citizenship, national language, educational policies and special rights of the Malays. *Constitution Amendment Act*, Kuala Lumpur, Government Printers, 1971.
20. Kassim, *The Politics of Accommodation*, p. 66.
21. *ARB*, vol. 8, no. 2, 31 July 1978, pp. 466-68.
22. Kassim, *The Politics of Accommodation*, pp. 84-85.
23. *New Nation*, 10 July 1978.
24. *ARB*, vol. 8, no. 3, 31 August 1978, pp. 473-75 (see footnote 21).
25. See note 21.

26. Kassim, *The Politics of Accommodation*, p. 95.
27. *Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, November 1980, p. 3.
28. *FEER*, vol. 15, no. 38, 21 September 1979.
29. *FEER*, vol. 101, no. 37, 15 September 1978, pp. 23-24.
30. *FEER*, vol. 103, no. 4, 26 January 1979, pp. 22-23.
31. Lim Kit Siang, *Time Bombs in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1978.
32. Judith Nagara, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 3, Fall 1980, pp. 403-39.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *FEER*, vol. 103, no. 6, 9 February 1979, pp. 22-27.
35. *FEER*, vol. 101, no. 35, 1 September 1978.
36. *Asian Survey*, vol. XXI, no. 2, February 1981, pp. 245-52.
37. Jyotirmoy Bannerjee, "Indonesia, Malaysia and the Indochina Crisis: Between Scylla and Charybdis," *China Report*, Delhi, vol. XVII, no. 1, January-February 1981, pp. 41-54.
38. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, vol. 12, no. 1, June 1979, pp. 226-27.
39. *Asiaweek*, 27 March 1981, p. 32.
40. *FEER*, vol. 3, no. 2, 6 March 1981, p. 26.
41. *FEER*, vol. 109, no. 35, 22 August 1980.
42. Kevin Young, William C.F. Bussink, and Parvez Hasan, *Malaysia: Growth and Equity in a Multi-Racial Society. World Bank Report*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

## Chapter VIII

### CONCLUSION

On the eve of Malayan independence in 1956, the noted writer, Han Suyin observed:

Malay, Chinese, English (count the latter I must though they persist in not belonging and place their loyalty not in this land); Chinese, Malays, Indians, three words, three sweeping generalizations out of which it has been planned to forge a new nation, to create a country called Malaya; a single people called Malayan.<sup>1</sup>

The problem exists even today. The basic need is of achieving consensus, political and cultural so that the dominant ethnic communities in Malaysia, Malays, Chinese, and to a lesser extent, the Indians can arrive at a compromise on the nature of development and change in Malaysia and the shape the Malayan/Malaysian identity will assume. Where ethnic dissimilarities are so distinct that being absorbed in a "melting pot" is neither possible, nor perhaps desirable, the achievement of a workable consensus is no easy task. Ethnic consciousness as a political force to be reckoned with, has been noticeable as a world-wide phenomenon in recent times. Hopes or beliefs that "modernisation" would lead to a blurring of the lines of ethnic differences have often been belied. In the opinion of Walker Connor, on the basis of available data it is often seen that material increases in "... social communication and mobilization tend to increase cultural awareness and to exacerbate inter-ethnic conflict."<sup>2</sup>

The problem of ethnic identity and awareness has been a very important one for Malaysia, particularly, since its independence in 1957. For decades the Malays, Chinese and Indians lived together with little contact or friction. With independence however the need arose to integrate them into one nation. Faced with this problem in the 1950s, the

leadership accepted the salience of ethnic pulls, and sought to achieve a consensus by bringing the three communities together into the Alliance. The "contract" was that the non-Malays must accept the pre-eminent, bumiputra position of the Malays in return for a "place in the Malaysian sun." The special position of the Malays was constitutionally guaranteed though the framers of the Constitution had expressed the hope that in time, this would be reviewed and hopefully, done away with. The expectation of course was, that with time and with economic advance and modernization, the position of the Malays would improve so that they would not need the protection of their bumiputra status. Along the same lines it was hoped by one of the architects of the Alliance that in time, the communal basis of the Alliance would change.<sup>3</sup> With the passage of time, however, this has not happened. Special rights for the Malays have been placed beyond question or debate and the ethnic base of the Alliance has been strengthened in the shape of the Barisan Nasional or National Front.

There are two major areas in which consensus has been sought to be achieved, political and cultural. In the political sphere, consensus was worked out on the premise that, given Malaysia's plural make-up it was desirable to arrive at decisions and compromises as a process of bargaining amongst the leaders of the major communities rather than subjecting issues to debate and discussion at grass roots level. The implication here was that grass-root level politicking would exacerbate racial sensitivities and create racial problems. A basic consensus on this has led to the widening of the Alliance into the Barisan Nasional. By recognizing ethnic awareness and solidarity, the Malaysian leadership has utilized them to build up pillars of strength which are bridged at the top but which derive strength from each ethnic pillar. This has effectively weathered various crises in the short history of Malaysia as an independent nation — the achievement of independence in 1957 against the background of terrorist insurgency; the exit of Singapore from the federation in 1965, the confrontation with Indonesia, and the traumatic riots in 1969. It has provided stability and a stable economic and political environment. This is no mean achievement in South-East Asia which in recent years has witnessed growing instability in many areas, military dictatorships, coups and long periods of civil warfare. However, in such a situation, where consensus is viewed as an aim, any form of dissension is equated with disloyalty. This creates impediments in the growth of a healthy opposition, and with little or no opposition, the tendency towards authoritarianism can go unchecked and uncontrolled. In Malaysia, all

major political parties, with the exception of the DAP have been brought within the fold of the Barisan Nasional. The "containment" of constitutional opposition can create the danger that opposition will go underground. In the context of Malaysia this has dangerous portents due to the presence of the Malayan Communist Party, outlawed, but very much there, capable of providing a focus for dissent and disenfranchised groups.

Achieving a consensus on what constitutes the Malaysian identity has been a difficult task. Interestingly it has been much more problematical when efforts have been made to define it or give it a definite shape. A Malaysian identity has different connotation for different people. In the 1960s, the term Malaysian Malaysia (as popularized by the Peoples Action Party of Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew) was fraught with rather dangerous overtones, for to the Malays it seemed to challenge the *bumiputra* position of the Malays by demanding an equal position for all Malaysians — Malay or non-Malay. In the words of Dr. Mahathir,

This insidious campaign to replace what was once an accepted fact concerning the primary Malay right to Malaya started with the British concept of the Malayan Union. It waxed and waned with the changes in the Malayan politics. Finally it culminated in the now famous statement of Lee Kuan Yew "... that we [the Chinese] are here as of right". In other words the Malays have no greater right to the Malay peninsula than the Chinese or Indians.<sup>4</sup>

Today, leadership in Malaysia pays homage to the wider connotation of "Malaysia" by emphasizing that it encompasses the diverse peoples and cultures of Malaysia. Malaysia's national ideology, *Rukunegara*, euphemistically states that Malaysia is dedicated "to ensuring a liberal approach to rich and diverse cultural traditions." The dichotomy, however, is that in actuality, adherence is sought to a Malayan identity and symbols, while many non-Malays on the other hand, make a plea for cultural and linguistic diversity.

Since the riots of 1969, there has been a growing awareness amongst Malaysian leaders that consensus on what constitutes a Malaysian identity must be defined, and elaborated. This has been done through the framing of the National Ideology, *Rukunegara*, the setting up of a new Department, the Department of National Unity, and the National Goodwill Council. *Rukunegara* seeks to define the national identity



centring around Malay symbols like the King and Islam, with the hope however that no citizen should question the loyalty of another citizen on the ground that he belongs to a particular community. The function of the Department of National Unity is to study the racial problem in depth and to carry out research to find a solution, while the goodwill Council aims at the spreading of goodwill and strengthening the harmony and unity among our people. Projects are taken up to study employment structure of races in various sectors, problems of migration from rural to urban areas, socio-economic problems of Kampongs and estates, and themes in school textbooks. The output will no doubt lead to an increased understanding of the issues and problems of ethnic conflict but one doubts whether they can provide real solutions to a problem which at many levels is a psychological one of asserting and stressing an ethnic awareness and identity which does not want to be "assimilated."

Language and education, in recent years, have been the most important issues generating dissension and conflict. The Malaysian leadership has achieved a measure of success in achieving a consensus on the acceptance of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. However, the accelerated rate of its implementation has created resentment amongst non-Malays, fearful that their own languages are in danger of being forgotten through lack of use. As stated by an opposition member of parliament, Goh Hock Guan,

... there is a profound yearning in this country not just for economic equality alone, though this is important, but also for these tangibles and intangibles which lie behind the need for political and cultural equality.<sup>5</sup>

Economic and political manifestations and implications of language policy have further created distrust and hostility. The non-Malays find themselves at a disadvantage in Malay-medium universities and technical institutions while heavily weighted quotas for Malays have drastically reduced the chances of many non-Malays of entering institutions of higher learning. This is perhaps the single issue which can be isolated as an area where consensus has not been achieved.

The consensus that was worked out in the 1950s is no longer acceptable or tenable. A new generation of non-Malays has grown to adulthood since independence, unwilling to accept the compromise. Brought up on the concept of democracy, and social and political equality, they are loath to accept special privileges and rights for Malays

specially where they conflict with their own interests in seats in institutions of higher learning, and in the conduct of business in the context of the New Economic Policy. The demand now is for political equality and cultural diversity, a demand not easy to meet for it would dispossess the Malays already at considerable disadvantage economically.

A formative period in Malaysian historical and political development has been analyzed to show the manner in which Malaysian political leadership has handled the unique problems of Malaysia's plural society. Apprehensive of the divisive pulls of ethnic ties, it has sought to keep sensitive subjects out of the forum of public debate. Instead they have been deliberated on behind closed doors. This has had the advantage of keeping Malaysia relatively stable in a politically unstable area, though it is relevant to bear in mind that in Malaysia's short history as an independent nation, a state of emergency has been in effect from 1948 to 1960, 1963 to 1966 and 1969 to 1971. The first state of emergency was occasioned by terrorist activity and the second by the confrontation with Indonesia. The last period was necessitated as a result of challenges to the dominant position of the indigenous community, the Malays. It was utilized to further strengthen the position of the Malays, by giving them a constitutional guarantee and sanction, strengthened by amendments to the constitution in 1971.

Political leadership in Malaysia has stressed that a solution to the racial problem in Malaysia lies in the achievement of economic parity between the Malays and non-Malays. Possibly as a long-term solution it can provide some relief but it does not take into account the psychological needs of assertion of identity. It would be idealistic to hope that ethnic boundaries are going to wither away or disappear in the near future even if economic parity is assured. This is the reality that policy planners in Malaysia will have to accept.

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4. Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Asia Pacific Press, 1970, p. 121.

5. Dewan Ra'ayat, *Parliamentary Debates*, III Parliament, session 1, 11 March 1971, p. 3098.

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