

# **the challenge**

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**Mahathir Mohamad**

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# Introduction

Words are meant for communication, but too often they are used for miscommunication leading to confusion and chaos. I have long felt this about words like freedom, equality, democracy, socialism, communism, materialism, secularism, spirituality and many more.

To find the realities behind these words and make the relevant decisions, unclouded by illusions, distortions and misinterpretations, is a challenge facing the modern world in general, and the Malay community of Malaysia in particular.

The Malays have emerged from a long period of backwardness only to be pulled in different directions by conflicting forces, some of which seek to undo whatever progress has been made and plunge the entire community back into the Dark Ages.

One of the saddest ironies of recent times is that Islam, the faith that once made its followers progressive and powerful, is being invoked to promote retrogression which will bring in its wake weakness and eventual collapse. A force for enlightenment, it is being turned into a rationale for narrow-mindedness; an inspiration towards unity, it is being twisted into an instrument of division and destruction.

Ignorance of what constitutes spirituality, and failure to see the distinction between materialism and a healthy involvement in worldly concerns, render some sections of the Malay (Muslim) community susceptible to the notion that Islam exhorts believers to turn their backs on the world.

At the same time, other sections of the community are being confused by attempts to equate Islam with socialism, using the ambiguity inherent in words like justice, equality and brotherhood.

In this book I have tried to clear up these misunderstandings, using the accepted dual evidence in the study of Islam - *dalil 'aqli* and



*dalil naqli*, i.e. rational argument and excerpts from the Quran (the Islamic Holy Book) and the *Hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet). For the latter I have consulted authorised translations and interpretations and obtained the guidance of Islamic experts.

Misinterpretation of Islam is only one of the many forms of confusion threatening the Malays today. The challenge is tremendous – the stake survival itself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a long, sweeping horizontal stroke that curves upwards at the end, with several smaller, more complex strokes above it.

## Polemics

Polemics is so much part of the Malay tradition that there is almost no idea which has not been the subject of a lengthy and thorough debate. In the debate that takes place, not only is the idea found unacceptable after its shortcomings are exposed by those who oppose it, but the opinions of all the critics are also debated and their weaknesses laid bare. The outcome of every series of polemics is that neither the original idea nor the opinions put forward in the debate is acceptable.

Since no idea can be accepted, none can be followed. Thus the status quo is perpetuated, although it is clearly imperfect and ought to be changed. Worse, the conflicting opinions expressed during the debate only add to the confusion of society. When the criticism and polemics are studied they are found not only to be unproductive but also to add to the difficulty of overcoming challenges faced by Malay society in particular.

In the history of the Malays, many constructive ideas have met this fate. Every time an idea is mooted, all energies and thoughts are utilized not for its implementation but rather in subjecting it to a protracted debate. The habit of entering into polemics has become so much a part of the Malays that there are some who write books for the purpose of launching a series of polemics. The notion is that polemics will help sharpen the mind and is an intellectual exercise. Must the Malays spend their time on intellectual exercises? Is it not more important that they act to overcome the thousand and one problems confronting them? The following articles are not written to launch yet another series of polemics. They express the writer's ideas on ways of changing attitudes and rectifying values considered

## 2 THE CHALLENGE

important in facing the challenges of these times. The reader may accept or reject these ideas according to his wish. The important thing is not to scrutinize the ideas with the purpose of finding shortcomings – which can easily be identified if one sets out to look for them – but to accept what is acceptable. Should just one out of the many ideas presented here be accepted by just one reader, this book would have achieved its objective.

One undesirable attitude is that of waiting for the other party to take the first step. This is clearly illustrated in the case of drug abuse among the young in Malay society.

When drug abuse was just beginning to spread, a youth leader said, 'What is drug-taking among the young compared with the great number of adults and leaders who take liquor?' Some prominent personalities, including a number of Islamic 'experts' (*'ulama'*), echoed this view.

True, the taking of liquor is wrong and should not be practised. But should the fact that some people take liquor cause us to make light of drug abuse?

An evil is an evil. An evil should be eliminated because it is an evil. If an evil is to be eradicated only after other evils are eradicated, which one is to be eradicated first? If each party waited for another to act, no party would take the first step. Thus all evils would continue to exist. The youth leader's statement implies that until adults stop taking liquor, youths should not be blamed for taking drugs. Since there is no likelihood of all adults giving up liquor, drug abuse would continue. Is this what we wish to see? Do we not remember a time when many adults took liquor but the young did not indulge in drug abuse? The young of the fifties were not involved in drug abuse although many adults of that time enjoyed consuming liquor.

It is this kind of thinking that encourages moral decadence.

The following articles contain a number of views and suggestions. The reader may find one or two of these acceptable. But if he were to wait for others to accept and practise these before he did, his acceptance would be no better than rejection. And this book would have served no purpose.

This book was written with a specific goal. Hang Tuah said, 'The Malays shall never vanish from the face of the earth.' This saying is not meant to be voiced in poems and oratories for reassurance. Rather, it represents a hope. Whether this hope of Hang Tuah's becomes a reality depends on the Malays themselves. The purpose

of this book is to analyse and ascertain why a particular happening takes place, with the conviction that diagnosis is the first step towards cure. Then perhaps Hang Tuah's hope will not remain merely a hope.

The history of any group of people has its dark and bright eras. No one nation remains backward forever. And no one nation is progressive always. Empires like those of Greece, Rome, Persia, Sri Vijaya, Melaka and Britain experienced the same phases. At one time they were so advanced and powerful that it was inconceivable they could ever fall. But all of them declined and disintegrated.

A study will reveal that this cycle of feebleness-progressiveness-feebleness has a definite relationship with the system of values of a particular nation. When industry, efficiency, honesty, discipline and other good values are held in high regard and practised, progressiveness is certain to be achieved. But when these values are placed low, or are held in high esteem but not practised, the nation eventually becomes backward.

At this time the Malays appreciate these lofty values, but each is hoping for another to begin putting them into practice. Industry, for example, is regarded as a good trait to have. But today some members of Malay society who acknowledge that industry is desirable are themselves not industrious; while many ridicule those who are industrious in their study or their striving for success. This is an obvious fact. As long as these people are not prepared to acknowledge it, they will remain in their present plight. Their fate is in their hands. The fault may lie with others, but the Malays will have to shape their own destiny.

God will not change the fate of a nation unless that nation itself strives for improvement. To improve, the important thing is not to exhibit polemical skills but to accept what is acceptable and put it into practice. If there are any ideas worth implementing in the following articles, just implement them. The rest can be set aside. Any attempt to challenge the writer so that the critic could display his prowess will not be entertained. The critic, if he so desires, can write his own articles or books in order to influence society with his own original ideas. The saying goes: 'Those who can, do; those who can't, teach (or criticize).'

## **The Poor are Poorer, the Rich, Richer!**

In recent times, the ideology and logic of materialism have all too easily influenced human society. This is the direct result of the impact of Western thought and system of values, which fanatically focus on the material as the basis of life. Values based on the spiritual, on peace of mind, and on belief in feelings loftier than desire, have no place in the Western psyche.

Among the Muslims of Malaysia, particularly the Malays, Western materialistic values have spread and taken root. The very people who call for a spiritual rather than a material outlook use material criteria to measure the value placed on spirituality i.e., the material value given to the work of calling for spirituality or to activities with elements of spirituality.

In a situation where materialism holds sway, it is hardly surprising that materialistic values are used to control the movements and activities of society.

A materialistic society regards the possession or otherwise of wealth as the very foundation of human happiness or misery. The more property one has or manages to acquire, the happier one is – so the notion goes. Conversely, lack of property or source of wealth means ruin, degradation and suffering.

Based on these materialistic concepts and values, a slogan has been concocted to influence the minds and hearts of the people. It goes: 'The poor are poorer, the rich, richer.' Created by socialists in the West, the slogan has spread and infected the rest of the world. Among the communities caught in its trap are the Malays of Malaysia.

Communist ideology is obsessed with questions of wealth and

poverty. Religion, which gives a value to spirituality in the midst of the effects of materialism in the world, is called 'opium' by the communists. This is because religion acknowledges a value higher than materialism as a source of happiness and peace of mind. This value, which is spirituality, frees the minds of believers from the obsession with wealth and poverty which is the basis of the communist philosophy. Since religion brings peace of mind through the high value it gives to spirituality, the conflict between the poor and the rich loses its sharpness. The communists equate the serenity brought by religion to that obtained from opium. They abhor it, for such peace of mind would affect the power struggle and oppression which are necessary to their cause.

But communism, with its open condemnation of religion and denial of God, cannot be easily propagated among believers in religion in general, and Muslims in particular. Despite communist attempts to show that Islam and communism are not really in conflict, and that they have elements in common, Muslims remain unconvinced and continue to reject communism both as an ideology and a political system.

Such is not the case with socialism. Socialism does not directly oppose and at times seems compatible with religion, including Islam. Belief in the brotherhood and equality of men is not only compatible with, but is an integral part of Islam. The socialist concept of brotherhood and equality, however, is based on materialism and gives no importance to spirituality. In this it is vastly different from the Islamic view.

Socialist ideology is not content with the concept that all men are born equal. It insists on actual material equality before justice can be said to exist. As material equality is the socialists' objective they are forever measuring and comparing the wealth and property owned by various members of society. And each time they make a comparison, they are bound to find some imbalance or difference, for this inevitably exists in any human society. Thus a socialist society is continually engaged in the confiscation and redistribution of property.

The socialists believe in nationalization as a way of equalizing wealth. This stems from the notion that nationalization of commerce and industry would raise the worker's income since the State, as employer, would not keep all the profits to itself. Besides, the income gap between high-rung and low-rung workers would be nar-

rowed and even closed altogether.

But this is pure myth. In the first place, when the State (the Government) obtains profits from a certain industry, it cannot divide the profits only among the workers in that industry. The State (the Government) is responsible for all workers, indeed for all the people. If all incomes are to be equal in a socialist society, the profits from any industry must be counted together with the losses in other State-owned industries and business operations, also with other Government earnings, and only then divided.

Unfortunately, workers in an industry which proves profitable are not prepared to let the profits become part of State earnings. This, in their eyes, would be just like the tax imposed on the profits (incomes) of private employers in the previous system. They want the profits for themselves, not for workers in industries which suffer losses, and not for the rest of the nation.

On the other hand, workers in State industries which suffer losses demand that the State as employer cover these losses with earnings from other sources. Since all industries have been nationalized, company income tax has ceased to exist. To cover losses in one industry, the Government would have to draw on profits from another, the workers of which would not be happy at all with such an arrangement.

While this problem poses a challenge to the administration, the question of disparities in income continues to be a threat to the socialist state with its materialistic values. All workers want equal or almost equal incomes. Unfortunately, the functions and responsibilities of various workers are not equal and cannot be made equal. While the lower rungs want to reduce or eradicate the gap between them and those with higher incomes, the upper rungs want an economic (material) value given to the more important functions and responsibilities entrusted to them. If incomes are equalized, the upper rungs will lose interest in their work. On the other hand, so long as disparities in income remain, the low-salaried workers will be frustrated and threaten the stability of the nation.

The administration needs money for national development. Raising and equalizing the people's incomes achieves nothing if it means doing without facilities. If all industries are nationalized, the administration (the Government) has to provide all the roads, housing, schools, hospitals, water, electricity, and the myriad other necessities of communal life. All these should be financed by pro-

fits from nationalized industries. But these profits are claimed by workers in the various profitable industries as well as those in the losing ones. If the administration depends on these profits to finance the facilities for the people, the workers cannot divide all the profits among themselves to get higher returns for their services. The Government (the administration) has to take a portion of the earnings of industries to finance other services.

Faced with the problem of financing public services, the Government is forced to tax the people's incomes in various ways. In socialist countries, though the workers may have high incomes, nearly all of them including the low-salaried ones have to pay income tax. This makes their real incomes low and insufficient. In some socialist countries the workers' incomes after paying taxes is lower than those of the unemployed who are on the dole. As a result, many prefer unemployment and this affects the economic development of the nation.

Apart from these problems and the failure of the socialist state to equalize the people's incomes, there are two important tendencies in the socialist society. One is that materialistic values completely control the people's minds and influence every move by society or the individual. Other values, like spirituality, are destroyed by the total devotion to materialism. The second is that there is an easier and clearer veering towards the communist ideology.

In a society that is influenced by socialism, materialistic criteria control everything. They are used at all times and in all fields. Questions of poverty and wealth are a perennial focus of interest. Wealth is pursued by all, but even when it is achieved, comparisons with those who are richer (never with those who are poorer) give rise to discontent. To ensure that such comparisons are continually made, slogans like 'the poor are poorer, the rich, richer' are shouted about. In this way the community can never feel contented.

These criteria are particularly incongruous and heinous when directly related to human happiness and misery. In the eyes of a materialistic society, a high income means happiness, and a low one means misery which varies directly with the lowness of the income. In other words, human happiness and misery are based on and are measurable with property and income.

Leaders who are influenced by socialism are therefore unhappy when they see the low-income groups happy. Whenever they see this, the socialist leaders will make comparisons between them and the



high-income groups. When the gap is narrowed, they grow uneasy and turn to other criteria to show that 'real income' etc. had diminished. Whatever improvement has been achieved in income levels, they will somehow prove that 'the poor are poorer, and the rich, richer'. In this way they can change the happiness to misery and discontent.

Actually, in a developing country like Malaysia it is not easy to have a situation in which, in absolute terms, the poor really get poorer. The income of a poor man cannot easily become lower than before unless he stops working and remains unemployed. His income is bound to rise, whatever its source (salary, agricultural produce, livestock breeding, profits from trade, etc.) because the value of the source of income keeps rising. The problem stems from the fact that his wants and needs grow faster than his income does. For instance, if a farmer used to go to the town once in two or three months, now that the journey is easier (and cheaper) he goes once a week. If at one time he was content with a kerosene lamp, today he wants electric light, a radio, etc. This is known as 'the revolution of rising expectations' and it is this that often renders incomes insufficient. The situation is worsened when there are people who deliberately draw their attention to the gap between achievement and expectation. When the heart's desire is compared with the ability to fulfil it, everyone is poor. But when the previous income is compared with the present one, the once poor man is rich. Of course, when comparisons are made with the rich who have, by the same process, become richer, the poor seem poorer.

Those with an axe to grind like to point out poverty rather than wealth. What they do not highlight is that in modern society the rich have to pay high taxes to help support the poor. If 'real incomes', i.e. after tax, are compared, the income gap between the rich and the poor is not all that great. Besides, without the rich the poor would become poorer as their energies and the products of their labour would not get a good market.

To see clearly how the rich are exploited by a society to support the poor, let us analyse the income of a person who gets, say, half a million ringgit a year. The income tax imposed is as high as 40 per cent on a large portion of this income. On a rough estimate, he has to pay \$150,000 income tax. Out of the remaining \$350,000 he probably pays personal workers like chauffeurs, gardeners, housekeepers, cooks, domestic help, etc. This means that the rich man's income provides employment opportunities for those who may

well be jobless otherwise.

With the rest of his income, many necessities and luxuries are purchased each month. Nearly all these goods are taxed. The highest taxes are on luxuries that the rich are so fond of. Their purchase of necessities and luxuries means income through taxes for the Government, profits for shopkeepers (and these profits will be taxed further by the Government), and job opportunities in the shops and in industries involved in manufacturing, importing or distributing the goods purchased by the rich.

Let us say that after he has bought everything he wants, the rich man still has some money left; how does this affect the society concerned? If he keeps it in a bank, besides increasing the amount of loan that can be given by the bank, the money brings in the tax imposed on interest. If he invests the money in an industry, job opportunities will increase to help the unemployed and profits from the investment will be taxed. If he buys property, the profits made by the seller will be taxed by the Government. Even if he hoards his money at home, one day he will die and his heirs will have to pay death duty, after which they will spend their inheritance. And every time they spend something, the Government will collect taxes from it, job opportunities will be created, businessmen will make profits and many a person will have a chance to earn a living.

The reality in a country where the administration is fair and imposes taxes according to the level of wealth is that the rich are compelled to support the poor directly and indirectly. The job opportunities created and the profits gained by businessmen out of the spending of the rich comprise direct support for others. The taxes they pay indirectly support the less fortunate through facilities like hospitals, schools, roads and other services and amenities provided by the Government.

In Malaysia, out of a population of 12,000,000 only 500,000 (or 1 out of 12 adults) pay income tax. They pay a total amount of \$2,500 million a year. Only a small number pays income tax because some 2,500,000 workers are exempted, their incomes being considered too low. In countries with socialist leanings like Britain, all who are employed and have steady incomes are taxed. In this way the State naturally gets a higher income, but low-salaried workers are so burdened with taxes that they often demand higher pay. In Malaysia, where low-income groups are not taxed, they do not feel so burdened. Also, the gap between them and high-income groups is not widened

by their having to pay taxes as well.

The policy of imposing income tax only on high-income groups is right and fair. Through this policy, those who have the acumen for attaining wealth are compelled to contribute some of the results of their acumen to society, particularly to those who are less clever or less fortunate. In consequence not only is the gap narrowed between the rich and the poor, but everybody is able to enjoy the benefits of communal life and the products of natural resources and human ingenuity: i.e., all of God's beneficence. The richer a sector of society becomes, the greater are the benefits gained by other sectors that are less fortunate.

Some may say that if they too are rich, they will be just as ready to pay income tax. Therefore if everybody becomes rich the total amount from taxes will increase and the Government will be relieved of its burden of responsibility to help the poor.

Unfortunately, if everybody becomes rich, nobody will be truly rich. This is because the market value of human labour will rise tremendously. Since workers have to be paid very high salaries to equalize their incomes with those of the rich, the products must also be sold at very high prices. The 'rich' who buy these products will have to pay so much for them that they will not have enough of their incomes left to purchase other goods. If the rich cannot buy any amount of goods they wish, they are not really rich. And the workers who are paid high salaries will also be unable to buy all that they wish, as the prices are so exorbitant. If nobody can spend as he wishes, riches have no meaning. The situation will resemble a state of inflation when incomes increase but purchasing power decreases owing to high prices. The fact is that when everybody has a high income, nobody is rich and indeed everybody is poor.

The insistence on equal wealth for all on the part of socialists and communists is based on the fantasy born of greed and envy. The result of the experiment is not equal wealth but equal poverty. This reality can be seen in communist and socialist States where the workers and other sectors of society are all poor. The rich are those who have propagated socialist and communist beliefs and have become leaders (local and national). They live comfortably, travel here and there and manage to fulfil their hearts' desires - if not completely at least to a greater extent than the ordinary people.

Poverty and wealth are relative. Wealth means having more property or income than others. The gap between the two groups must

exist before there can be wealth. If the gap is so wide that there is unrest, the society will narrow it. Here two opposing attitudes influence societies. One view is that the wealth of the rich must be confiscated and given to the poor so that the gap is abolished. The result of such a move is that everybody becomes poor. Wherever this has been tried, the real consequence is that the people become poor and are enslaved by the Government. In addition, the country becomes poor because its productive power is affected.

The second view is that the wealth of the rich need not be confiscated in one fell swoop but that high taxes should be imposed. This will not affect their endeavours in the pursuit of wealth, but a portion of the wealth they attain will indirectly belong to the poor, through taxation. The greater the wealth they achieve, the greater will be the benefits gained by the rest of the population.

Since the desire for wealth, a natural one, is not destroyed, those who have the acumen to accumulate wealth can be exploited by society. They will build big factories for industry and commerce, which will not only increase the amount of taxes the Government can collect but also create many job opportunities.

While those with the acumen to attain wealth can be exploited by society, care must be taken to keep taxes at a level that will not kill their enthusiasm to strive for more wealth. In Britain, where income tax goes as high as 95 per cent, striving for wealth ceases. Those who cannot evade the high tax migrate to other countries where the taxes are less high.

In this context the rich can be compared to the goose that lays the golden egg. If the goose is slaughtered, all the eggs it has can of course be obtained at once, but surely it is more sensible and profitable to rear it. The logic of this fairy-tale is very clear, but when human beings are in the grip of greed and envy, no logic can stop them. Hence we often see the confiscation of property and the belief in and practice of socialist and communist ideologies. Greed for material wealth results not in prosperity but the enslavement of the people by the State.

This is evident in all countries where the rich do not exist. In such countries, nobody gets high earnings from his endeavours and services. Everybody becomes poorer. In communist countries everybody becomes a slave of the State, with an income and life-style that are no different from those of the slave in olden times. In socialist countries, though demands for higher incomes are met scores of times,

the people never stop sighing about poverty.

Such is the effect of uncontrolled materialism on human society. Every member of such a society is continually tormented and swayed by hatred and envy and there can never be peace of mind or harmony within that society. If any attempt is made to inflame the people against a sector alleged to have caused their 'poverty', they can be easily incited to rebel. And this is the objective of those who so frequently use the slogan 'the poor are poorer, the rich, richer'. Those who use this slogan are not interested in improving the lot of the poor but only in exploiting them. Should they succeed in their cause, the result would be as described, i.e. a materialistic society in the socialist or communist mould, characterized by poverty and slavery.

As socialism upholds materialism and relates human happiness and misery to the possession or otherwise of property, a society which has accepted this value will be more open to the communist ideology which is more wholly devoted to materialistic values. While socialism allows other values and beliefs, communism gives no place to any non-materialistic value. According to communism, human happiness can be attained only if wealth is confiscated, becomes State property and is divided 'equally' by the State among the people.

Seeing that the socialist way has not succeeded (and cannot succeed) in equalizing ownership and acquisition of property among individuals in a society, many socialists turn to the communist ideological system. In the communist ideology the individual does not exist as an individual but merely as a member of the society which is the State. Equality is achieved when all members of society become slaves of the State. In other words, it is equality among slaves. Although they serve in different fields, they are given the same remunerations. Since the State needs large allocations of money for administrative machinery and amenities and for armaments, remunerations for the people, who are the slaves of the State, cannot be increased. They can only be given subsistence-level incomes.

Poverty and wealth are meaningless in a communist society since supposedly nobody has more or less income than anybody else. In reality all are poor because they are not bothered by the fact that the standard of living is low. For the communists, what matters is equality of income which is supposed to eradicate envy among men. Thus, they claim, a communist society enjoys peace and happiness.

But the reality is vastly different from these theories. There is no

evidence that a communist society is happier than others. A life-status as slave of the State, which means slave to the powerful few, cannot possibly bring happiness. Nor can peace of mind exist in a spontaneous and genuine form. The orderliness of a communist State comes from absolute rule which uses the police and the army to oppress the people.

Studies of the socialist and communist systems have shown that materialism alone cannot give happiness to man and society. Ownership of property can indeed bring a sense of satisfaction but only when the property one owns is more than that of others. And this is purely temporary. Comparisons will be made with others and somehow some other person will seem to have something more. This revives discontent. Even if the communists or the socialists succeeded in making all the people have equally high incomes, contentment would still not be achieved. If they fail and disparities of income and property remain, feelings of envy will continue. In other words, a society which is totally dedicated to materialism cannot achieve happiness.

Therefore, while the possession of property and wealth cannot be completely ousted from the hierarchy of values in human society, other values which are not based on materialism must be given place and duly cherished. Spiritual values can withstand the pressures of the material world. Religious hermits in the mountains, for instance, can transcend the demands of the material. But then total dedication to spiritual values cannot be practised by all members of society. Also, upholding spiritual values to the exclusion of others cannot solve the problems of human beings living in a society.

The reason should be obvious. If all members of a society forgot the world completely and went to the mountains to become hermits, family life would not exist and mankind would vanish from the face of the earth in just one generation. This would be worse than suicide. It would in fact be a form of genocide. Suicide is forbidden by Islam; genocide is tantamount to destroying Islam.

If only some become hermits while the rest work to support the hermits as well as themselves, this means that worldly activities and values are essential, even for the hermits. It would be most unfair if religion awarded 'merits' in abundance to the hermits when their 'spiritual activities' were dependent on the 'worldly activities' of others. It is clear from this why there are no hermits in Islam.

In reality, a situation where some totally turn their backs on the

world while others support society through 'worldly activities' is not feasible. The world and human life are full of tribulations and threats. Even in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, those who believed staunchly in spiritual values were beset with all manner of threats. To overcome these, the Muslims of the time, including the Prophet himself, paid due attention to worldly activities. The acquisition of wealth and property, the mastery of martial arts and the establishment of a well-ordered administration were among the important activities in which all Muslims involved themselves so as to be strong enough to defend spiritual values and the Islamic religion. Surely it would not be reasonable to suppose that worldly activities can be separated from spiritual ones in human society today when no such dichotomy was possible in the days of the Prophet.

It is clear from this discussion that neither spiritual values nor material ones can, on their own, nurture and bring happiness to the lives of human beings. For a human society, large or small, to be complete and wholesome, a balance between material and spiritual values is essential. The question is to find the right ratio between the two value systems for the attainment of the happiness desired.

The trend of these times is more towards the material than the spiritual. As has been pointed out earlier, even those who call for spirituality are themselves so shackled by material values that they measure the spiritual by material criteria. Therefore this era cannot but be termed a materialistic one.

Many defend the influence of materialism by saying that it is part of human nature. But man must not let himself be bound by his nature. The difference between mankind and animals is that man can control his natural tendencies. Man can identify and study something that involves him to ascertain whether it is good or bad. As a result of this study, academic or otherwise, man forms his attitudes and system of values. Man, and particularly human society, usually rejects evil and practises good.

The trend of the times towards materialism is certainly bad for human society. But any attempt to curb this trend by calling for 100 per cent practice of spiritual values and total rejection of material ones would not only be unsuccessful but uncondusive to human happiness. Therefore the learned and the enlightened should, through exhortation and example, show that the present-day worship of material values is best reduced not by substituting extremist spiritual values but by finding a balance between the material and the spiritual.

For instance, a job should be done not just for the income but also because it is good and useful to the individual who does it and to society. Thus the individual should take pride in and be happy with his job, instead of feeling frustrated, as is prevalent today, because he cannot get the remuneration he desires.

For Muslims, this middle path is the right one, indicated in the following words of God:

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ  
إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ.

- سورة لقمان، آية: ١٩ -

The Interpretation:

*And be moderate in thy pace, and soften thy voice. Truly the ugliest of voices is the voice of the ass.*

(Surah Lukman, Ayat 19)

The history of Islam clearly shows that its followers practise moderation in all their dealings. Wealth is not disapproved of and certainly not forbidden. What Islam wants is that the rich help the poor voluntarily through alms and also through the payment of religious tithes, *zakat* and *fitrah*. In this way society is not faced with the problem of excessive imbalance.

Since the payment of the *zakat* is one of the duties of the rich, they cannot feel proud about it or consider the poor indebted to them. But if they give alms, i.e. over and above what is compulsory, their kindness will certainly be appreciated by society. This will further improve the social climate and make for an even more peaceful and happy society.

As for poverty, Islam takes a serious view of it, to the extent of regarding it as close to ungodliness. Although society is responsible for the care of its poor, there is no evidence that poverty and a beggar's life are held in high regard as they are in some other creeds.

Begging by reading the Quran on the roadside has no place in Islam, as is evident from the following Quranic text:



the first verse of the Holy Quran to be revealed.

The role of reading in the propagation of Islam is clear and definite. So too is the role of reading in education and the spread of knowledge.

In the notes to Ayat 4 of Surah Al-'Alaq (Iqra'), A. Yusuf Ali, a translator of the Quran, wrote, 'The symbol of a permanent revolution is the mystic Pen and the mystic Record.'

'The Arabic words for "teach" and "knowledge" are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a translation the complete orchestral harmony of the words for "read", "teach", "pen" (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), "knowledge" (including science, self-knowledge, spiritual understanding), and "proclaim" an alternative meaning of the word "to read" (Iqra')....'

'Read', the first directive revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, has a most important role in the spread of Islam. Without the ability to read, the teachings of the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet (*Hudith*) could not have been propagated. Those who can 'read' are the educated in any society. Education and the ability to read are almost synonymous. As Islam encourages its followers to 'read', education naturally spreads wherever Islam spreads. Islamic history bears testimony to this: wherever Islam is embraced, reading and knowledge also brighten the world of the Muslims.

The demand of Malays that their children be given more educational opportunities is in line with their Islamic faith and gives the impression that their stand on education is positive and firm. Close scrutiny, however, will reveal that the Malays have yet to be certain of the role that education can play and the attitude they should take towards it.

They are still worried lest the education provided in schools and institutions of higher learning inculcate new values which are not suitable for the Malays. On the other hand, they are afraid that without education they would be left behind by the march of time and their lives would lack something. This 'dilemma' becomes more difficult for the Malays since they are part of a plural nation. One false step can widen manifold the gap between them and the other communities.

The fear of Malays that new materialistic values may replace spiritual ones as a result of what they call 'secular' or 'Western' education has its roots in the history of the development of systematic, large-scale education in this country. Although there is

evidence that the Malays could read and write before the coming of Islam, it is an indubitable fact that 'education' on a wide scale and in a systematic form began when they embraced Islam.

The 'education' given by the Arab and Indian Muslims when the Malays first embraced Islam was confined to *aqidah* (faith and belief) and *ibadah* (principles and rituals of worship). This was right and proper, for the Malays must acquire a thorough understanding of their new religion and shed as much as possible of their old beliefs.

Hinduism and animism - i.e. the belief that spirits resided in all creatures, plants, places and things - had shaped and controlled the Malay psyche before the coming of Islam. These beliefs, which were ingrained in the Malays, were utterly incompatible with Islam. If the Malays were to become Muslims, these old beliefs must be erased and replaced with a strong and clear Islamic faith. Hence the teaching of *aqidah* and *ibadah* was not only vital for the Malays at the beginning of their Islamization but remains so always. There is evidence that if these areas in the teaching of Islam were neglected, the old animistic beliefs would again take control of the Malay mind.

The development of the Jawi script for the Malay language was also aimed at propagating and facilitating the understanding of Islam. The Jawi script, which was used for translations, interpretations and explanations of the teachings and rules of Islam, was also used to propagate Malay literature, to record incidents, to write books and articles. But generally the Jawi script was used more for the dissemination of knowledge in the fields of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *syariah* (Islamic law) and in other fields which were closely related to the practice of Islamic principles.

Since the education of the Malays on embracing Islam was virtually confined to *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlak* (morality) and the like, other areas of knowledge which had been explored and pioneered by Islamic writers, scientists and mathematicians were not propagated among the Malays. Thus the development which took place in Malay society after embracing Islam was limited to the practice of *ibadah*, of the clearly stated rules, and some Islamic values. The fact that Islam is a complete religion revealed by Allah through His Prophet to be disseminated to all mankind to the end of time, and that it contains a system of life and living that is wide and all-encompassing for man's happiness in this world and the next, has not become manifest after the Islamization of the Malays. Because the Islamization of the Malays was confined to certain fields, the greatness of

Islam was not reflected in the development of the Malays after embracing it, nor did it spread beyond them. On the other hand the Islamization of the Arabs brought growth and greatness which spread to the Turks, the Slavs, the Persians, the Indians and the Malays in the East, and the Berbers, the Egyptians and the Europeans in the West.

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ  
جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا  
عَذَابَ النَّارِ

- سورة آل عمران، الآية: ١٩١ -

The Interpretation:

*Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting and lying down, and contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying 'Our God! Not for naught hast Thou created this! Most Hallowed Art Thou! Give us salvation from the torments of hell'*

(Surah al-'Imran, Ayat 191)

Those who remember Allah always and think about the creation of the heavens and the earth and do not waste God's gifts will surely become not only strong in faith but also knowledgeable about the world around them. In other words, they will become men of faith and education (or knowledge) and not just men of faith who do not understand God's gifts and are devoid of knowledge.

This and several other verses in the Quran emphasize the importance of observing and thinking about God's creation while remembering Him.

Besides matters pertaining to the worship of Allah like the performance of prayers, the fast and the pilgrimage, the Quran also contains verses relating to politics, economics, science and technology, war, crime, marriage, morality, education, art, literature, etc.

The development and progress found in West Asia, North Africa, Spain, East Europe, Central Asia and South Asia after Islam had spread there are lacking in the lands of the Malays. Though there may also be other reasons for this feebleness in development, one cause must be that the Malays have focused on only some of the Islamic teachings, neglecting others, particularly those pertaining to 'worldliness'. This is in direct opposition to the call made by Allah in the *Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 77*:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ  
نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ  
اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ.

- سورة القصص، آية: ٧٧ -

#### The Interpretation:

*And seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, happiness in the hereafter, and do not forget thy fate in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to thee, and do not do mischief on earth. Truly Allah does not love those who do mischief.*

(*Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 77*)

When the British began colonizing the Malay states and setting up schools to train staff for their Government, education among the Malays was still confined to *aqidah*, *akhlak* and *ibadah* in Islam.

The concept of education as a means of disseminating knowledge, whether general or specialized for the training of workers, was new and alien to them. They viewed with suspicion the development of the school system introduced by the British, regarding such education as foreign and 'secular'. They were particularly worried about its effects on their religion, Islam.

Their suspicion was deepened by the fact that many of the schools in the British colonial period were set up and managed by various Christian missionary bodies. Besides giving 'secular' education, these schools taught and propagated Christianity. Several of these Christian missionary schools had chapels and crosses.

It is not surprising, therefore, that most Malays thought all education given through English schools was about Christianity or based on Christianity. They felt that such education, besides being worthless and opposed to Islam, might undermine their faith in Islam. This view gave rise to a generally negative attitude towards the systematic modern education and schooling provided by the British colonial Government.

The attitude hardened when the British referred to education through English schools as 'Western' education. The perception of the education and the knowledge brought by the British as 'secular' or 'Western' shaped Malay attitudes to such an extent that they became ingrained in the Malay psyche. To this day opposition to so-called 'secular' education still exists and the debate continues on the merits and demerits of education other than the 'religious'.

As a result of this view, this distrust, the Malays have shown a lack of interest and achievement in several important fields of knowledge. Each time a project is launched to raise the standard of the Malays in various fields of knowledge, doubts about its effect on religious faith have hindered its success.

Did the education introduced by the colonial government as 'secular' or 'Western' education really originate in the West and does it indeed conflict with Islam? To answer the question which has perplexed the Malays so much, we need to study and compare the histories of Islam and the European countries which are generally referred to as the West.

In the *Jahiliyah* or pre-Islamic period, Europe including Rome and Greece were in The Dark Ages. Western historians place The Dark Ages (also known as The Medieval Ages) as beginning in the 5th century (470 A.D.). During this period the people of Europe were

very backward. The feudal system made Europeans slaves of tyrannical princes. The princes as well as the people were generally illiterate. Only a few priests could read and write.

From the fourth to the seventh centuries, attacks by the Barbarians, a violent, merciless, unpolished race who loved carnage and war, destroyed the Roman Empire. The Barbarians set up little states which lacked strength and permanence and were constantly warring among themselves. Amidst these troubled conditions and the oppression of peasants by feudal princes, education and culture could not develop. The Dark Ages went on from the fifth century to the fifteenth when modern civilization began with the Renaissance (Rebirth) which resulted from the seeping in of Islamic Civilization in Spain (755/1492) and Asia Minor.

In sharp contrast, Islam from the beginning of the seventh century brought, along with the light of the true faith, educational and cultural development at a pace and on a scale unparalleled in the history of mankind. The Dark Ages in Europe coincided with what historians term the Golden Age of Islam when art and knowledge flourished, i.e. when Islamic Civilization was the peak of achievement in the world.

While feudalism terrorized Europe, Baghdad was the centre of research on various fields of knowledge. Under the Abbasiah Caliphs, especially Caliph Harun al-Rashid at the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth and his son al-Makmum, the pursuit of knowledge was encouraged through the giving of prizes and the provision of a fine library which was the scene of tremendous activity – writing, studying, translating, transcribing – in several areas of learning.

When Islam reached Spain in Western Europe, the entire Iberian Peninsula (Spain) experienced a golden era. Cordova (Qurthubah) under Abdul Rahman The Third was greater and more advanced than it is today. The city had more than 600 mosques, scores of hospitals, schools and libraries. The Muslims taught the Christians of Europe a great deal, from weaving and the making of perfume to advanced mathematics which had been created by the Islamic intellect. Literacy was not confined to the well-to-do but spread among the peasants.

The Arabic language blossomed into a language of the arts and the sciences and numerous academic terms were coined, e.g. algebra, almanac; for mathematics, astronomy and geography were either

founded or developed by the Muslims.

Among the outstanding Islamic experts in various fields of knowledge were Abdullah Ibn Sina (Avicenna 990–1037) in medicine and several other disciplines; Muhammad Ibn Rushd (Averroes 1126–1198) of Cordova, Spain, in medicine and law; Muhammad Ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi in advanced Mathematics; and other eminent figures like al-Biruni, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Batuta, Abu Musa Jabir. Books by Islamic scientists which have influenced Western thought and so-called Western science include *Kitab al-Manazir* by Ibn al-Haytham on "Optics"; *Al-Masa'il fi al-Tibb* by Hunayan bin Ishak al-Ibadi, known as *The Vade Mecum of Johanneus* by European doctors; a reference book in medicine by Abu Bakar Muhammad bin Zakariya ar-Razi titled *Kitab al-Mansuri*, *Al-Qanun* or *The Canon of Medicine* by Ibn Sina.

The greatest impact was in Mathematics, the discipline which controls all other scientific disciplines. The present-day Western counting system is based on Arabic numerals – a system using nine fingers and one nought (zero, cypher or *sifr*) which can indicate any amount, however large. The Roman numerals used before that were a hindrance to the development of mathematics and to general computation. With the Arabic numerals all calculations and measurements needed in all the sciences not only became possible but easier. The binary system used today in computer science in particular might never have developed if the Arabic numerals had not been there to begin with. Such has been the contribution of Islam to world education since the fourteenth century.

The coming of Islam to any area in Europe, North Africa, West Asia, Central Asia, and India was followed by rapid development reflecting a high standard of capability in engineering, architecture, seamanship, agriculture, astronomy and other important fields. Long stretches of sturdy roads, waterworks, magnificent mosques, bridges spanning wide rivers, all testify to a mastery of the various disciplines. Many of these remain to this day and quite a number have proved inimitable and unsurpassable despite modern techniques and tools. The Alhambra palace in Granada, Southern Spain and the Taj Mahal in Agra, India astound all gazers.

We have seen how the Europeans in Spain learnt various disciplines and industries from their Muslim conquerors. When the Dark Ages in Europe came to an end with the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, efforts were intensified to learn from the Muslims. Books by

Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd and others were carefully read and studied and European students gained mastery in the relevant fields; in addition, books were translated from the Arabic into Latin and other European languages. Unfortunately, the names of the authors and of the disciplines concerned were altered to suit Western tongues without noting the original names. Finally, the knowledge that belonged to the Muslims came to be known as Western education, the names of its items and their originators having been Westernized in sound and flavour.

European scholars proceeded to do research and add to the knowledge they had acquired from the Muslims, eventually defeating the Muslims in the very fields they had pioneered. By the time the Malay states were colonized, the West had mastered the knowledge and begun to seize back the territories that the Muslims had conquered.

The Renaissance (Rebirth) brought the Modern Era in Europe. Knowledge in various fields was acquired systematically. The result was extraordinary progress. More institutions of learning were set up and from the lecture theatres and laboratories of Europe all sorts of industrial techniques and materials were created and produced. But study will reveal that all the knowledge and skills originated from the contributions of Muslim pioneers. 'Western' or 'secular' education is neither Western nor secular. The education and knowledge that the West has and that the Western people have spread throughout the world are in reality Islamic. When the Muslims mastered these, Islam spread rapidly. It would not be too much to say that the knowledge helped the spread of Islam. Knowledge which was so effective in helping the spread of Islam cannot be said to be in conflict with Islam.

It is therefore clear that the education which the West terms 'secular' or 'Western' did not originate in Europe or the West. And history has not shown that such knowledge is in conflict with Islam. No area of knowledge is in itself good or bad; everything depends on how it is used. Many Jews study Islam but use their knowledge to give a bad picture of the religion. The notion that present-day knowledge is in conflict with Islam can only benefit the enemies of Islam. Muslims should not propagate this notion as there is no evidence to support it.

But at the moment the spread of 'secular' education is still viewed with suspicion. This is shown by the repeated calls that 'religious'



education should not be neglected and should be provided in greater quantity and through more effective methods. Constant demands are made that 'religious' education, i.e. the teaching of *aqidah* and *ibadah*, be expanded in both syllabus content and time allocation and that at the tertiary level the number of students of 'religion' be increased.

What is the status of 'religious' education today and should the Malays worry about it? In the British period, Malay children had very little education in *aqidah* and *ibadah*. In Malay schools, instruction in these subjects was given separately, in the afternoons. In English schools it was either not provided or taught unofficially. For most Malay children, 'religious' education was given by the Quran tutor who taught at home with merely token payments.

Some parents sent their children to *pondok* schools to learn the Quran and 'religion', with a small fee each for the *Tok Guru*. Only a small number gained entrance to proper Government 'religious' (Arabic) schools like Maktab Mahmood in Alor Setar. In the rural areas religious education was sometimes totally absent.

Although the education in *aqidah* and *ibadah* during the British period was not systematic and received no attention from the colonial Government, the Malays did not drift away from Islam. Their religious knowledge was meagre and unsatisfactory, but their religious faith and practice did not falter. Islamic traits were evident in the life of the Malays. Crime, the taking of liquor, drug abuse and unseemly conduct like disrespect towards parents, teachers and elders, did exist but were not rife. Malay society was disciplined and orderly; be it large or small, it had religious leadership. Mosques might be small but they were there and had all the necessary officials.

The Malay leaders at the time, i.e. the Sultans and their advisers, also had a clear religious stand. In other Islamic countries colonized by the West, Christianity could be freely propagated. But in the Malay states, the colonial rulers were not allowed to propagate their religion among the Malays, all of whom were Muslims.

The situation during the colonial period clearly shows that the Malays are not easily turned away from Islam and that they are willing to strive to uphold it.

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى. وَأَنْ سَعْيِهِ

سَوْفَ يُرَى .

- سورة النجم، الآية : ٤٠-٣٩ -

#### The Interpretation:

*That verily man can have nothing but what he strives for;  
and that verily his striving shall be shown (unto him).*

(*Surah An-Najm, Ayat 39-40*)

The situation since the achievement of independence is very different from that of the colonial period. Since independence, education in *aqidah* and *ibadah* has been given an official and special status. All schools, including those owned by Christian missionaries, have to provide instruction in the Islamic religion, according to officially prepared syllabuses, to all Malay pupils. Teachers of 'religion' are better trained and greater in number than before. These teachers enjoy the same status as others in the profession, and *aqidah* and *ibadah* are no longer separated from other subjects. Furthermore, a greater number of students specialize in *usuluddin* (principles of the Islamic faith), *syariah* and other fields at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

Those who lived in the colonial period and are still living today cannot deny that serious attention has been given to the teaching of *aqidah* and *ibadah* and that there has been a tremendous increase in syllabus content as well as percentage of students taking the subjects. Yet doubts about 'secular' education and allegations that 'religious' education is being neglected continue to be heard. The dilemma of the Malays and their leaders is whether these doubts can be erased by further increasing the syllabus content, the time allocation and the number of students for the subjects of *aqidah* and *ibadah*. What would happen to other fields of knowledge which are also vital to the Muslims and to the growth of Islam?

The difference between Islam and other religions has been explained earlier. Islam does not only decide on matters of belief, creed or faith (*aqidah*). It also decides on and systematically orders all aspects of a believer's life and death. Everything a Muslim does is subject to the rules of his religion. Therefore in Islam there is no dichotomy between the 'religious' and the 'secular'. And where

knowledge is concerned, there can be no division into 'religious' and 'secular' education. All education that is useful to mankind becomes part of the knowledge that Islam urges believers to pursue. And a Muslim who is well educated in any field is *alim* (knowledgeable). Thus Imam Ghazali was *alim*, and so was Ibn Sina. The only difference is that they reached excellence in their own fields. While Al-Ghazali excelled in *aqidah*, *syariah*, and other fields, reaching the level of mysticism, Ibn Sina excelled in mathematics and medicine. But their status as Muslims can neither be disputed nor compared. Both are Muslims and none can say that Ibn Sina is less Muslim than Al-Ghazali. Such measurements and comparisons have no meaning and no place in Islam.

This must be realized, for too many are prone to make judgements on how Muslim a person is. They use knowledge of *aqidah* and related fields as the criterion for Muslim status. Consequently they give a special value to the study of *aqidah* and try to judge a person's religious conviction by his attainment in this subject.

Islam does ask Muslims to study *aqidah*, but it also asks them to study other areas of knowledge. Turning one's back on other forms of learning does not make one a more complete Muslim. Since human abilities differ, the Muslim community is bound to have different people qualified to different degrees in different fields. As in the case of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina, Muslim societies, whether at the same place and time or different places and times, inevitably produce people educated in a variety of fields. So long as there is faith and the teachings of Islam pervade the activities of a society, Islam will remain the religion of that society.

Therefore there is no justification for the fear that Islam would fade away unless time was totally devoted to the study of *aqidah*. While time should be allocated for the study of this subject, it should also be given to other fields of learning which are equally important for Muslims. As a result of this division of time, the Muslims will not only remain true to their religion but will become invincible to their enemies.

If this is understood, Muslims will be able to divide their time and master all fields of knowledge including *aqidah* and *ibadah*. How much time should be spent on the study of *aqidah* and *ibadah* depends on the wisdom of Islamic leaders. What should guide them is an evaluation of all fields of knowledge in Islam, so that no particular field is given total concentration without weighing the im-

portance of others. If this can be given due emphasis, there will be a balance between the study of *aqidah* and that of other areas of knowledge.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا  
مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تُفْلِحُونَ.

- سورة الجمعة، الآية: ١٠ -

The Interpretation:

*And when ye have completed your prayers, disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah and remember Allah constantly, that ye may achieve success.*

(Surah Al-Jumu'ah, Ayat 10)

From this it is clear that time is not just for prayers but also for work, for seeking a living and of course for study, since no job can be properly done without the required experience and knowledge.

We have seen from their history that the subjects taught in school did not originate in the West and are not in conflict with Islam. All the knowledge was founded on study and research carried out by the Muslims according to the dictates of their religion, and grew and spread together with Islam. The Prophet's saying that knowledge should be pursued even to China shows the high value Islam places on knowledge in general. This exhortation was made before Islam reached China, and surely the knowledge referred to cannot be *aqidah* and *ibadah*.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ

ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى  
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .  
- سورة المنكبوت، الآية: ٢٠ -

The Interpretation:

Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation. Then Allah produces a later creation, for Allah has power over all things.'

(Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 20)

This verse asks us to observe Allah's creation, for the more closely we observe it, the more awed we will be. Ibn Rushd, a Muslim doctor of Cordova, Spain (1126-1198) said, 'Whoever knows well the anatomy and physiology of man, his faith in Allah will be deepened.' This is true, for those who have observed how complex the human body is and how it lives and moves cannot but be overwhelmed by the realization of God's power. Observation always brings experience and education. It is clear, therefore, that we are asked to study all of Allah's creation. Not to do so is surely tantamount to not appreciating God's gifts.

Besides the fact that Islam does not prohibit but encourages the pursuit of all knowledge, there is the additional consideration that in these modern times, societies or groups that lack knowledge will be oppressed and colonized. History has proved how easily a backward group is conquered by an advanced and successful one. Having been conquered, the group that is backward in 'worldly' knowledge and skills though *alim* (knowledgeable) in 'religious' matters will eventually be parted from their religion. If this does not happen in one generation, it will take place in future generations.

Modern history again shows how easily Islamic countries are defeated and Muslims persecuted under the rule of non-Muslims bent on destroying Islam. Where there is no conquest through force, it can still occur in other forms. If Muslims have no economic expertise, they will accept economic colonization which will weaken their

spirit. If they lack modern skills, they will be colonized through the skills they lack.

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطٍ  
لَخَبِيرٍ تَرَاهُيُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَالْآخَرِينَ  
مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا  
تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَوْفَىٰ إِلَيْكُمْ  
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَنْظُمُونَ .  
- سورة الأنفال، الآية: ٦٠ -

#### The Interpretation:

*Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the enemies of Allah and your enemies and others besides, whom ye do not know but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.*

(Surah Al-Anfal, Ayat 60)

This verse, which emphasizes the importance of getting ready one's strength to face them (enemies), is referring to swords and arrows and stone-throwing equipment of the Prophet's days. Today the armaments required would surely not be swords and stone-throwers but guns and cannons, aeroplanes and warships and other war equipment which needs knowledge to make and use. Muslims who lack this knowledge are surely culpable in the eyes of their religion. And Muslims who hinder the mastery of knowledge related to the production and use of such equipment, dubbing the knowledge 'secular', may be committing treachery against their religion rather than preserving its integrity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي  
 الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ  
 انشُزُوا فَانْشُزُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا  
 تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

- سورة المجادلة، الآية: ١١

The Interpretation:

*O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, make room, Allah will give you room. And when ye are told to rise up, rise up. Allah will raise up those of you who believe and who have granted knowledge to high ranks. And Allah knows all ye do.*

(Surah Al-Mujadalah, Ayat 11)

Allah grants knowledge to whomever He wishes, and those who have been granted knowledge have been granted a great deal of good.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ. وَإِلَى  
 السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ. وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ.  
 وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ.

- سورة الفاتحة، الآية: ١٧-٢٠

### The Interpretation:

*Do they not look at the camels, how they are made? And at the sky, how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the earth, how it is spread out?*

*(Surah Al-Ghasyiyah, Ayat 17-20)*

Certainly the knowledge meant is not confined to that related to *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *syariah* and the like. If only these had been meant, the intention would have been made clear and the Prophet himself would have emphasized it. But the Traditions (*Hadith*) of the Prophet make no such mention. On the contrary Muslims are urged to pursue knowledge even to China.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Muslims, especially in this country, would not be able to perform their rituals of worship without facilities made available by various forms of knowledge. They would not be wearing clothes which have been woven, distributed and sewn using techniques systematized and organized in accordance with knowledge of weaving and commerce. They would not be able to pray in a congregation, as all the mosques existing today could not have been built without using techniques and materials according to 'secular' knowledge. The large amounts of money required to build mosques came from taxes on industry and commerce which owe their existence to the use of knowledge that is not strictly limited to the study of *aqidah*.

Going on the pilgrimage (the Islamic duty of the *hajj*) involves depending on ships, aeroplanes and other vehicles which were invented and developed through the existence of 'Western' or 'secular' knowledge. Before these facilities came into being, very few could perform this fifth 'pillar' of Islam. And where the poor depended on religious tithes (*zakat fitrah*), they would suffer if the society concerned had no knowledge of trade, commerce and industry, because everybody would be poor and nobody would be able to give *zakat*.

Clearly rituals of worship cannot be properly carried out without 'wealth' which comes from other forms of knowledge.

One example that can illustrate the relationship between various forms of knowledge with rituals of worship in Islam in Malaysia is the Muda Irrigation Scheme. This scheme was based on a socio-economic study of the community of farmers in the 'rice-bowl' area



of Kedah. Next, an irrigation project was planned by experts in irrigation engineering and other engineers.

Financial experts and banks studied the scheme and worked out ways of getting \$340 million to finance this giant project. The construction involved hundreds of engineers, businessmen, skilled and unskilled workers and officials, and the use of several types of complex machinery and techniques.

As a result of the scheme, production of rice was doubled and a lot of *zakat* could be collected. More farmers could do the religious duty of going on the pilgrimage. Several other benefits related to religion came from the project. And finally Muslim farmers can live and die in better conditions and greater happiness, as is required by Islam.

It is clear that the so-called 'secular' knowledge is not only related to religion but helps Muslims to do their Islamic duties more effectively and satisfactorily. It would not be too much to say that these forms of knowledge are vital to Islam. It must be evident why Islam urges the pursuit of all knowledge without discriminating between one form and another. The rapid growth and spread of Islam took place when Muslims surpassed followers of other religions not only in devotion to Allah but also in mastering various forms of useful and constructive knowledge.

To return to the question of syllabuses for *aqidah* and *ibadah*, although some believe that adding to the syllabuses would strengthen adherence to Islam, the opposite may occur. To allocate so much time to these subjects that there is insufficient time left for the proper understanding of other areas of knowledge may weaken the position of Islam. It is important for Muslims to study these other areas of knowledge as well, and weaknesses in these will have a close and direct bearing on the practice of Islam and the welfare of Muslim society. Thus these areas of knowledge must not be neglected or taken lightly, just as *aqidah* and *ibadah* must not be neglected or taken lightly.

Therefore, besides providing instruction in *aqidah* and *ibadah* for every Muslim and encouraging specialization in these fields by a reasonable number, Muslim society also has the duty of training Muslims in various other fields which are important to its welfare and fulfilment. Who should be trained and which fields are considered important can be decided by the society in accordance with Islam. But the society would surely be culpable if it failed to do this,

for it is one of the duties of Muslims.

The role of education in equipping a society with vital personnel must be clear. For instance, should a Muslim society be in danger of attack by anti-Islamic forces, the society would certainly be at fault if it had not equipped itself with well-trained defenders. Similarly, if a Muslim society deliberately neglected to provide medical training and diseases grew rife and weakened it, surely it would be culpable for not having done its duty in this respect.

It follows that areas of knowledge besides *aqidah* and *ibadah* should not be regarded with suspicion. They are all Islamic knowledge, pioneered by Muslims. There is no rule against studying them. They will not weaken faith in Allah but rather strengthen it, provided of course that lessons in *aqidah* and *ibadah* are also given, using effective methods and syllabuses and with adequate allocation of time.

In Islam we are constantly told to observe God's creation. In *Ayat* (Verses) 17-20 *Surah* (Chapter) *Al-Ghasyiyah* of the Quran, we are asked to contemplate the creation of camels, of the sky how it is raised high, of mountains how they are fixed firm, and of the earth how it is spread out. In *Ayat* 20 *Surah* *Al-Ankabut*, we are asked to traverse the earth and observe how Allah created it. If we contemplate God's creation we are bound to be awed by His power. The more closely we scrutinize it the more fascinated we will be with the intricacy and complexity of God's creation.

It is true that there is arrogance among Western scientists who imagine they have conquered 'nature'. They believe that they have fathomed the secrets of all creation and there is nothing the origins of which they are unable to discover. But although these scientists can explain how something comes into being or is created, they cannot say why it is created such.

Thus it is that we find scientists easily and fluently explaining how oxygen is used by the human body so that the human being can live. But they cannot answer the question: Why oxygen? Why not some other gas? If leaves use carbon dioxide, why don't animals as well? Why aren't human beings born in eggs? Why must the living die?

To these and a myriad other questions beginning with 'why', no explanation can be given by scientists or anyone. There is only one answer to it: 'God's power'.

The arrogance of the Western scientists stems from ignorance. If they were enlightened, they would not be so inordinately proud of

their cleverness. Muslims who have been given sufficient religious training would not forget themselves in that way. They would be aware of their limitations and weaknesses. They would realize that they cannot answer questions as to why this is so, except by saying that ultimately everything depends on the will of Allah. And thus they will have even deeper faith in Allah, Most Hallowed and Most High.

Therefore we need not have worries or suspicions regarding fields of knowledge like science and others. Faith in Islam will not be weakened, let alone destroyed, by the mastery of such knowledge. On the contrary, that faith will become strong. At the same time, mastery of such knowledge will help Muslim society hold its own in competition with others in all fields.

To ensure that Muslims get true religious guidance and are not led astray by anything they may study, Muslim society must equip itself with specialists in *ibadah* and *aqidah*. These specialists are there for the good of the society and not just for their own good in this world or the next. Also their role is different from that of the priesthood in Christianity and of similar groups in other religions. They do not act as mediators between other Muslims and Allah. Although specialization in *aqidah* and *ibadah* is good both for the specialists and the society, this must not lead to a turning away from specialization in other fields of knowledge which are important to Muslim society. If specialization in other important fields were neglected out of a desire for rewards in this world or the next through the study of *aqidah* and *ibadah*, the consequences would not be as required by Islam.

A religion exists when it has followers. If a Muslim society, because of its wish to be known as a staunchly Islamic one, became weak in the so-called 'worldly' knowledge necessary for its survival, and was finally destroyed by enemies, leaving not a single person alive, then as far as that society was concerned, Islam would no longer exist. In Spain, for instance, Islam has ceased to have any significance. The descendants of the Muslims of Spain are Christians today, and the mosques of their ancestors have been turned into museums and churches. The same process has begun in some Muslim Arab states in West Asia. It can be fairly said that when a Muslim society rejects education which is not confined to *aqidah* and *ibadah* but includes other fields vital for its safety and welfare, that society is not conforming to the principles of Islam. Those who

reject such education are even more culpable if they do it out of a desire to have their society known as 'champions of religion', i.e. out of showiness and pride in displaying their 'religiousness'. To decide whether or not this is an overstatement, a study needs to be conducted on several Muslim societies and nations that have ceased to exist as such.

The educational 'dilemma' of the Malays goes beyond choosing between 'religious' and 'non-religious' education. Even if they succeed in overcoming their suspicion of fields of knowledge that the West calls 'secular' or 'Western' education, they still have to choose which fields they should study and specialize in. What should be the basis of this choice?

Education other than the 'religious' is usually regarded merely as a means of earning a living in the world. It is sought for what is termed its economic value. The emphasis on economic value has become so strong that there is pressure to decide the economic value even of 'religious' education. Economic value may draw more people to study 'religion' and thus help religious knowledge to spread, but it will also increase the number of those who regard religion purely as a means of attaining economic security. Those who look on religious knowledge i.e. in the fields of *aqidah* and *ibadah*, as an economic tool will benefit neither their religion nor their society. Religious knowledge is for the development of spirituality. If because of his religious knowledge a person can earn a living, this should be merely incidental. To regard religious knowledge as a source of income only means that materialistic values have superseded spiritual ones. In other words, the religious knowledge has not succeeded in forming the desired spiritual values. However, society must appreciate a person's religious knowledge and not make light of it. If the religious knowledge passed on by the people concerned can inculcate good values in society, their contribution will be duly appreciated.

It is a fact that education in various fields of worldly knowledge can bring a more prosperous life. Even for this reason alone it would be sensible to acquire such an education. Naturally an education that can give a higher income would interest students. But usually interest in a high income is not matched by interest in the field itself. Often a field of knowledge that is difficult to master guarantees a higher income, while one that is easier brings meagre earnings. Thus the choice of the field of study becomes another problem or 'dilemma'.

This problem can be seen in the choice between the arts and the science streams in schools. Arts is believed to be easier than science. Hence most Malay students choose arts. This would not matter if all were satisfied. But the popularity of arts reduces the number of Malay students taking science. In the universities there is only a handful of Malay students in the science courses.

This makes the entire Malay community unhappy. And they would be even more unhappy if they knew that this has created a vicious circle: i.e., lack of Malay science students causes lack of Malay science teachers. This causes lack of success on the part of Malay science students. Because success in science is difficult to achieve, students lose interest and so there is a lack of students in this field. Lack of students means lack of people qualified to become teachers. And as lack of students qualifying means lack of teachers, the vicious circle will continue to cause lack of success on the part of Malay science students.

The lack of science students causes Malays to call for an increase. They make the call to the authorities, to society and to the students. But everybody hopes somebody else will answer the call. Those who wish to see an increase in science students are themselves reluctant to let their children choose this field, for fear they may fail, or because it takes too long, or for some other reason. Thus Malay society continues to lack science students.

The same goes for Malay students who have obtained qualifications in science. Even as they say that teachers fluent in Bahasa Malaysia are important for increasing the number of Malay students taking science, they themselves are not prepared, for various reasons, to become teachers or lecturers.

This does not apply to science alone. Nearly all fields which are difficult to master, or take up too much time, or necessitate intense competition are avoided with all kinds of excuses. And demands are made that easy courses, e.g. arts, be increased in number and qualifications in these accepted even for areas of work that have no relevance to the subjects studied.

These demands are made without heeding the damage that can result from filling posts with people who are not qualified for them. For instance, demands are made that posts which need efficiency in administration be made open to candidates who have no relevant education whatsoever. If these demands are acceded to, the consequences are bound to be bad.

In these times various posts and jobs are vital for safeguarding the peace and welfare of a nation or a society. These must be filled with well-qualified people. The better trained the officer or worker, the more satisfactory is his work. If all posts are filled with experts and highly qualified people, society and the nation will certainly be more progressive and peaceful.

Seeing that the Malays as individuals are unwilling to choose education and training according to the interests of society and the nation, and realizing the consequences of inappropriate choice, society must not neglect its duty. Society itself must decide, to a reasonable extent, the type and field of education to be embarked on by each potential worker.

The streaming into arts and science which has been practised in Malaysia in recent years is an effort on the part of the community to correct the imbalance in education and employment. The stand taken by society, as interpreted by the Government that represents it, is right and proper. But while the individual as a member of society welcomes this policy, the individual as an individual is not prepared to be the 'victim' of society's aspirations. Pressure from the individuals involved finally compels society to change its policy. Streaming into science which is considered important is no longer fully implemented. The effect on Malay society is evident. The number of Malay scientists will dwindle again and this will cause the Malays to be dissatisfied.

In this matter, the responsibilities and rights of the individual as an individual, and of the individual as a member of society, must be understood and practised. Man cannot live in isolation. He must live in a family and in a society.

As an individual he has rights but as a member of society those rights are limited. There are no absolute or unlimited rights for an individual, because when his rights come in conflict with the interests of society, his rights must give way to the 'rights' of society.

In the matter of education too these rights are not absolute. Society provides educational opportunities because education benefits not only the individual but society as well. The benefits to both are clearly manifested when an individual obtains an education that is suitable for his job; he gets a job (benefit) and society gets his service (benefit). If he is trained in one field but is forced to work in another, he still benefits, but society does not get service (benefit) that is commensurate with his pay. Sometimes both do not benefit. This occurs when

the knowledge acquired by the individual cannot be used at all. In modern society, those who are jobless for lack of useful skills are a burden to society.

Therefore society must not always give in to the wishes of an individual or a group within it. The education provided must also suit the interests of society. And a pupil or a student must accept the directive or at least the guidance or advice given by the leaders or planners of society. Refusal to obey directives will be penalized with society's refusal to guarantee or give employment to the student concerned in the future.

Giving priority to the interests of society may adversely affect some students. Compelling a student to choose a certain field of education may frustrate him and cause him to fail. But even if he is given the right to choose his field, success in mastering it will be meaningless for him if he ends up jobless. On the other hand, there is still a possibility of success in a field he is forced into, and there will be a job waiting for him when he passes. If this happens, both student and society can still benefit, though the student may not have had his wish fulfilled.

Besides, a new and strange field which does not attract people will remain strange and unattractive until someone is prepared to be the first to enter it. When more come into that field, it will cease to be strange, and people will be easily attracted to it.

There was a time when it was believed that only Western people could become pilots. The first Malay to train to be a pilot was considered extraordinary. Parents were not happy when their children chose this career. But today, although there are still many parents who are not very drawn to this career for their children, it is no longer all that strange. And choosing this career is no longer such a difficult thing to do. One day choosing to be a pilot may become an ordinary affair, like driving a car.

Every field must have its pioneers. Once it has been entered, even if by just one pioneer, others will easily follow. As time goes on, not only will the numbers grow, but the rate of growth will be accelerated.

Once again we see the vicious circle phenomenon. If nobody begins entering a field, nobody will ever come in. But once somebody starts, not only will others follow easily but their numbers will multiply at an ever-growing rate. This phenomenon shows that talents exist in any society but need to be unearthed. Sometimes a talent emerges

on its own and breaks the vicious circle but a progressive society cannot wait for something to emerge on its own. A society that is aware of its responsibilities must unearth its talents and plan the pioneering of each field as well as the subsequent development.

The responsibilities of society are clear from this discussion. While the rights of the individual should be respected, the interests of society must not be neglected merely out of respect for the rights of the individual. In education this means that society must identify which fields of education are vital to it and direct the individual to adjust himself to this need. Society cannot pander to any individual or minority group that fights for self-interest. It is essential for society to take a firm stand, for this will not only preserve itself but also the individual or the minority group concerned.

For Malay society, this problem comprises another dilemma. Should they be firm in deciding the types of education that ought to be given to the young generation despite the risk of dropping out, or should they provide irrelevant education out of a desire to see all their children happy and passing examinations?

Finally, there is the language problem which has become a dilemma for the Malays in education. During the British period, the Malay language was neglected almost out of existence. For any race, loss of language will mean loss of identity. Thus for the Malays, language is a matter for strong feeling. They want to see their language not only perpetuated but also developed in usage and capability to be on par with the well-known languages of the world.

This wish is not just a dream. Malay has long been a widely used international language. Before its acceptance as the official language of this country, it had become the national language of Indonesia with her over 100-million population. The use of the Indonesian language guaranteed the sovereignty of the Malay language. With its acceptance as the national language of Malaysia, its future is even more secure.

Since Malaya/Malaysia became independent, a large-scale campaign has been launched and carried out to make Bahasa Malaysia more widely used. The Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka has been given the task of organizing the coinage and inculcation of new words and terminology. Schools use Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) from the lowest to the highest classes. Finally the language which nearly vanished 25 years ago is being used at university level so that students can follow all lectures and obtain degrees solely through the medium of



the Malay language.

The position of Bahasa Malaysia as the language of education can no longer be doubted. Not only the Government but the entire society, Malays and non-Malays alike, have accepted Bahasa Malaysia and are prepared to acquire knowledge through it. It is evident that the struggle of the Malays to perpetuate and upgrade their language has borne fruit, though there is still deviant behaviour in some quarters.

But despite the high degree of mastery of the Malay language, in these modern times the educated usually have a command of more than one language. The mastery of two or more languages widens the scope of one's activities. It also adds to one's fields of knowledge and sources of information. Thus a person with a command of two languages has an advantage over a person with a command of only one language. It should be emphasized here that the question is not what language but plurality of languages. So the issue is not the capacity or capability of the national language as a means of communication or inculcation of knowledge. Although the national language is fully able to meet these aims and purposes, to have a command of it alone and not of any other language as well constitutes a weakness.

Considering this fact, the attitude of the Malays and particularly the Malay students to the learning of a second language is wrong. As the acceptance of the national language is beyond dispute, the refusal to learn another language can no longer be regarded as the attitude of pioneers or champions of a cause. The language-champion stance adopted by some Malay students today has no meaning whatsoever if it is accompanied by refusal to learn another language. Deviations in the implementation of the national language should be criticized, but the rejection of other languages as part of education can no longer be deemed a mark of the language champion.

This unjustified attitude or view, if not corrected, will adversely affect the Malays. Pride in the constant use of English as shown by Malays who went to school during the British period need not be revived. But there is no reason why the Malays cannot be proud of fluency in two languages, whatever the second language may be.

As English is no longer the medium of instruction in the majority of schools in this country, mastering it is not as easy as it used to be. A language can be mastered only when it is widely used. It is difficult to get a good command of a language which is only taught

as a subject. Still, this is no excuse for such poor performance in the English language on the part of Malay students. What is needed is the will to study and use it to a reasonable extent outside school hours. Using English in this way does not mean placing less importance on the national language. Refusal to acquire a command of English or some other language may well be a front hiding a weak personality that is terrified of exposure.

In the struggle to uphold their language, the Malays were forced to oppose and cast aside the English language which had been propagated by the colonial Government. English was made a symbol of colonialism, and its use as well as its study was opposed. The acceptance of Malay as the official language means English can no longer be used as the language of administration. This means that the Malay language opens doors to all levels of education and nearly all types of work, particularly in the administration of the country.

The educational 'dilemma' of the Malays centres around questions of religion, choice of field or stream, and the problem of language. Actually all these 'dilemmas' are imaginary as they are based on misunderstanding, misinterpretation and faulty logic. The 'dilemmas' will continue to exist and be an obstacle to the progress, and in fact the religious integrity of the Malays also, unless they are analysed and corrected right down to their roots. So long as the Malays are not prepared to face up to reality, so long will they be unable to overcome the 'dilemmas' which invade their minds. And it inevitably follows that so long as they have these fabricated 'dilemmas', so long will they fail and lag behind the times and even cease to be a people with their own identity.

## West and East

Twenty years ago if a young man had been asked to let his hair grow down to his shoulders, he would surely have protested vehemently. He would have come to the conclusion that the person who directed him to do such a thing was insane or at least not up-to-date. He would never have thought that the person was ultra-modern and could predict the changes to come.

But today young men with hair-styles like women's are commonplace. They go round unabashed and unashamed. At home, in the office, at the university, in the mosque, we see young men sporting long hair. When such a youth wears a *kopiah*, it perches precariously on a mass of hair. The same thing happens when he wears a white cap. Seen from behind, none can tell whether it is a female or a male.

This phenomenon is evidence of Western domination over the East. And Malaysia with its Malays is no less slavish in bowing to the domination of the West. What the West does today, the East will do tomorrow and the Malays the day after. If the West stops doing it, the East will follow suit tomorrow and the Malays are likely to do the same thereafter.

This is not a new phenomenon and is not confined to long hair. Just because Westerners wore coats and ties, although Malay dress would suit the hot Malaysian climate much better, we aped them and wore coats and ties. And it is not just Western attire that we copy; virtually everything that the West does we try our best to copy.

Copying is not necessarily bad. It is a way of learning. Children learn speech and norms through copying. From one generation to another, copying preserves the norms and values of a people. Copying becomes a problem when it is done indiscriminately, without

weighing whether what is copied is good or bad.

The history of the relations between West and East explains why the East so often copies the West. Westerners came as powerful conquerors, defeating and subjugating Eastern nations. Their superiority was proved by their success not only in conquering the East with small armies but also in perpetuating their colonial rule.

The success of the Western nations overawed the Easterners. If the West was so successful, it must be because of the qualities its people had. From this notion to the notion that the same success could be achieved by copying Western qualities is a logical step. And so the East copied the West in all fields, from the political and administrative system to language, religion, culture and countless other aspects.

It is clear that the copying was done without weighing whether what was copied was good or bad and whether or not it contributed to the success of the West. Sadder still, copying was done even when what was copied had clearly brought feebleness rather than success to the West.

One of the items copied without study or thought was attire. The Western people, particularly the British bureaucrats, had rigid rules of attire. Day wear was different from evening wear, and certain styles of attire were mandatory for certain functions. Anyone who failed to conform was looked on with contempt and ostracized by the community.

These rules of attire in fact reflected the character of a certain class of British people who were extremely proper and gave high priority to regulations. If such complex and restrictive rules could be respected and adhered to, self-discipline would surely result. For a small nation that ruled a quarter of the world, discipline was important. Without discipline, they would not have been able to handle a situation where sometimes two or three of them had to control hundreds or thousands of other races. The rules of attire could be regarded as training and practice for discipline.

The peoples colonized by the British often copied these rules of attire. They did so because they respected and looked up to the British colonialists. As British discipline in those days was closely related to their attire, copying the attire indirectly led to copying the discipline. Thus, although copying the attire was not useful in itself, the training in discipline based on the rules of attire benefited those who copied.

If we study the histories of the peoples conquered and colonized by the West, one salient fact we will note is their lack of discipline. The organization and tactics of the Melaka armed forces when they fought against the Portuguese clearly show that they had not the strict discipline of Western forces. Melaka's defeat by the Portuguese may have been due to other weaknesses as well, but if the Melaka armed forces had had good discipline, they would not have been so easily defeated, and indeed might not have been defeated at all.

Since discipline is beneficial, and if copying British attire brings discipline, then such copying is justifiable. The same applies to other Western traits copied by the East in the days of Western imperialism. Most of what was copied proved beneficial and none can deny that one of the major results was the liberation of the colonized territories of the East from Western colonialism. The colonized peoples won their independence through organizations and tactics copied from the West. One nation that had never been colonized but achieved outstanding success as a result of systematically copying the West is Japan.

The independence of the nations of the East caused a chain reaction which ended in Western powers losing virtually all their colonies. This is all the more extraordinary as these Western powers had just won a great victory in the Second World War. Their ability to defend their colonies was greater than it had been before the Second World War.

The loss of the colonies and the wealth that went with them led to a radical change in the Western psyche. No longer could they strut around as the chosen people whom the world must respect and fear. Their young men, in particular, could no longer be sent to the colonies to become administrators and *Tuan* (Master) to the natives.

The change in psyche caused by the loss of colonies did not occur all at once. It began gradually. But as time passed it became faster. Finally all the old values were cast aside, with no definite values to take their place.

If once again attire is to be used as an example, the rejection of the old values is reflected in the change in styles of attire. The old rules of attire have been thrown out totally. If once all wore coats and ties, today coats and ties are out and anything goes. If once a torn shirt could not be worn, today shirts and jeans are deliberately torn before they are worn. If once shoes had to be of good quality, today it is the in thing to use old slippers or go barefooted.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Western nations have reasons for rejecting the old values. Besides the loss of their colonies and sources of wealth, the war in Vietnam has had a terrible effect on their self-confidence. A big Western power was defeated by a small Eastern community. Their spirits are enfeebled and they can no longer stand tall as models for the world to emulate.

The fall of the West means victory for the East which the West once colonized. If the Western nations bemoan the loss of their colonies, the Eastern peoples should rejoice over their independence. If the Western nations react to their loss by rejecting old values and creating new ones, the Eastern peoples should hold fast to the values which brought them success. If the traits copied by the East in the colonial era, like orderliness, discipline and firm social organization led the East to success, these traits should be preserved. There is no reason why the Eastern peoples should reject the values and norms developed during their colonization by the West, unlike the Western nations who have cause to be disillusioned in their old values and norms.

But though the East has succeeded and the West, in relative terms, has failed, the habit of copying the West and acknowledging Westerners as trend- and pace-setters in all fields has remained. Therefore the East continues to copy blindly whatever the West does.

Once again attire is an example. Propriety in attire has been rejected by the new generation in the West for the reasons already explained. And so the East follows suit, throwing out the rules of attire and sporting shirts and jeans that are unseemly, torn, patched, dirty and old. The copying habit is so ingrained in the Eastern mind that the East goes on copying without realizing the reasons for the Western change of habits.

Just as copying proper attire once led to the East adopting Western values regarding discipline, copying improper attire has infected the East with the values behind the Western change in attire. The new values reject discipline and rules and replace them with unlimited freedom.

We have seen how, by copying and practising the old values and systems of the West, the Eastern nations succeeded in regaining their independence. If the values and systems are preserved, the logical consequence is further success for these independent nations. On the other hand, if a system that patently brought success is cast aside,

surely the logical consequence is that the Eastern nations may become backward once again.

There are already clear signs that the East, though free and independent, has not achieved success and is very far from being on par with the West. Had the wealth, manpower and abilities in the independent Eastern nations been properly organized and channelled towards development through the Western systems that had evidently brought success in the past, the East would have become as strong as or stronger than the West. But the East has not become strong and still lags way behind the West. There may be various reasons for this, but certainly it is to some extent due to the rejection of values and systems that the East once copied from the West and their substitution with the new Western ways which are obviously worthless even for the West. If the once firm and formidable West can be enfeebled by its new attitudes and values, these attitudes and values will have an even worse effect on the newly emerging nations of the East.

The rivalry between East and West is by no means ended. The West does not wish to see the East become so advanced and strong as to pose a threat to the West. Thus, even as the Western nations let go of their colonies one after another, they strive to protect themselves through various effective ways and means. In the economic field they set up the E.E.C., or European Economic Community, as a means of controlling the world market so that the East would not be able to reverse the economic oppression the West had inflicted on it.

The existence of such a rich controlled market enabled the West to force the East to accept whatever prices the West decided upon for Eastern products. A form of economic imperialism came into being as a result of the unification of European nations in the E.E.C. Through taxes, quotas and import restrictions, the West stopped the prices of Eastern raw materials from soaring and the products of modern Eastern industries from becoming a threat to the marketing of the products of the same industries in the West. Hence in the world inflation, whereas the prices of tin and rubber rose briefly and went down again, the prices of Western industrial products soared and remained high.

The East was aware that the economic strength of Western nations stemmed from their solidarity in the controlled market of the European Economic Community. The East knew that such co-opera-

tion was very effective. But the nations of the East were not prepared to take joint action to break through the walls built by the West, until the outbreak of the Yom Kipur war in West Asia in 1973.

As a way of blocking the aid usually given to Israel in the war against Arab states, the oil-producing Arab states took concerted action in reducing their export to the Western countries and raising the price of oil manifold. The action proved even more effective than expected. Not only were the Western states forced to stop giving aid to Israel but Western economies began to experience inflation and recession which ended their era of prosperity.

From this incident it is clear that co-operation among Eastern nations will neutralize or nullify the joint action taken by the West. But apart from the production and marketing of oil, Eastern nations are still not prepared to co-operate. They compete with one another in the marketing of various raw materials. If marketing agreements are made among them, they break them only too easily.

In the effort to perpetuate Western economic imperialism, the establishment of a common market like the E.E.C. is only one of the techniques used by the West. One of the weaknesses of the West lies in too high a standard of living, which makes labour expensive, and which in turn causes the production costs of the manufactured goods to soar too high. The West tries to solve this problem by using more efficient machines and techniques. But all these techniques can be copied by the East.

As labour is cheap and Eastern workers are more willing than Western ones, manufactured goods from the East are cheap and compete successfully with the same goods in the West and throughout the world. If the marketing of Eastern industrial products can surpass that of Western ones, the industries and the affluent life of the West will certainly be affected.

Therefore, besides establishing a controlled market, the West tries to raise the production costs of Eastern manufactured goods. Western trade unions work towards this. On the pretext of protecting the world's workers from exploitation by employers, Western trade unions have formed an international trade union and encouraged Eastern trade unions to become affiliated to this organization.

Through the international federation of trade unions and other international bodies, Western trade union leaders urge Eastern workers not only to demand more pay and less work but also to take all kinds of action that can weaken Eastern industries. As a result



of the campaign conducted by Western trade union leaders, Eastern countries cannot compete successfully with Western ones in world commerce.

The clearest example relates to cotton material. Lancashire, England, was once the largest and most famous producer of cotton material. The cloth was sold in the British colonies, which comprised a closed market, with handsome profits. When Hong Kong began producing cotton material, Hong Kong cloth being cheap competed easily and successfully against Lancashire cloth.

At first Lancashire factory owners and workers tried to pressurize the British Government to ban the import of cloth from Hong Kong into Britain. But in the world market Lancashire cloth was beaten by Hong Kong cloth. The result was that many Lancashire workers became jobless as cotton factories in the area were forced to close down.

Then the British trade union moved to sow discontent among Hong Kong workers. They pretended to feel sympathy for the factory workers of Hong Kong, alleging that they were being exploited by the employers. When the Lancashire workers were prosperous, they never bothered about the plight of workers in Hong Kong. But now crocodile tears flowed at the 'sufferings' of the Hong Kong workers. Clearly the activities of Western trade unions, though they can be useful to Eastern workers, are motivated by the desire to protect the position of Western industries in the world market. The more Eastern workers listen to their advice, the more will be the benefits gained by Western industries and workers.

This does not mean that trade unions are useless. As always, what is copied from the West is useful if the copying is done with open eyes. A trade union that goes according to the principles and aspirations of those who formed it can indeed ensure justice for the workers. But like any weapon, it can be misused and bring undesirable consequences. In view of the link with and the acceptance of advice from Western trade union leaders who were chosen by Western workers for their own special interests, there is often no guarantee that the principles and aspirations of Eastern trade unions will be upheld.

Western imperialism has been effectively perpetuated partly through the activities of the world mass media. The West controls the world mass media because a Western language, namely English, is understood in all parts of the world. Magazines and reports in

English are easily read by all, including Eastern nations and newly independent peoples. These reports are also easily and frequently translated into local languages. Thus Western reporters can disseminate their reports throughout the world and shape the world's thinking and attitude regarding a particular incident or nation.

For several years now Western reporters have been highlighting bad happenings in developing countries especially in the East. The moment something bad occurs, Western reporters will be on the scene with cameras, television, tape-recorders and notebooks.

From their reports one would think there was nothing good in the East. The East is undemocratic, unjust, cruel, chaotic in administration, full of corruption, dishonest, crooked, devoid of know-how, incapable of succeeding in national development, and possessed of a myriad other evils. They do not report successes achieved by the East.

Malaysia, for instance, was not as well-known as Vietnam because for many years Malaysia was progressive and successful. But now that Vietnam is closed to these reporters and Malaysia has begun to experience various misfortunes, Malaysia has become one of their targets. Similarly, Pakistan's economic success after the East-West partition has never drawn their attention, which is focused on the sufferings of Bangladesh since its birth. In the Philippines, their reports centre around political detainees and never touch on the country's rapid growth. In Thailand, rebellions against the Government are given detailed coverage, but should the rebels succeed in seizing power as in some Central Asian and African countries, the Western reporters would begin 'exposing' them.

The East, on the other hand, does not have its own reporters to roam around the world and write about the good aspects of the East and the evils of the West. What reports there are by Eastern journalists have limited circulation owing to the language problem. Eastern news agencies are mostly too small and are not subscribed to by Western newspapers and magazines. And well-known Western news agencies do not employ Eastern reporters even for the coverage of news in Eastern countries.

Through newspapers the Western world is able to shape and control the Eastern mind to such an extent that it is ridden by an inferiority complex and guilt feelings. The Eastern peoples are forced into judging themselves by Western criteria/values and constantly find themselves falling short of the requirements of the Western system.

The most effective pressure inflicted by the West on the East relates to the political system. The values in life and the way of thought of a society change from time to time. What is considered 'good' or 'just' in one era becomes less 'good' or 'just' in the next. For example, in olden times, when mankind was divided into small, constantly warring groups, the setting up of a system of monarchy which gave power over life and death to the monarch was a good move, because this reduced anarchy in a society and protected the society from all oppressors except the monarch.

But after the system of absolute monarchy had gone on for some time, the origins of and the reasons for the system were forgotten and society was aware only of abuses by the monarchs. Thus society formed the opinion that royal power was a threat and an oppression, and that the power should be abolished. As time passed, faith in the new view grew in strength, and finally it became public opinion. When this stage is reached, a society's criteria and values have truly changed.

Where once 'justice' meant having a monarch passing judgement according to his own views, today the system has been changed to a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch has no power to pass judgements and is a mere figurehead. Only the people have the right to decide what is just and what is unjust, and the people create various methods and systems to enable them to ensure the effectiveness of their powers. Although these systems have been given several forms and names, they can all be identified as democratic systems.

The democratic system was formulated in the West as the tyranny of monarchs took place in the West. At first the Westerners practised this system only for themselves. The system being a rather complex one, its use in the administration of colonies would have given rise to numerous problems for the West. Therefore the administration of colonies was autocratic, with full powers in the hands of the colonial Governors and officers. The local peoples had no say and were forced to accept the policies and directives of the senior officers of the colonial administration. In the countries colonized by the West, other democratic institutions e.g. trade unions were either not allowed or strictly controlled.

It is of course easier for an autocratic Government to run a country than for a democratic one. An autocratic Government does not have to accept criticisms and to adjust itself to the myriad opinions

of people from various sectors of society. Responsibility for the people's welfare does not weigh heavily on an autocratic Government. All that is necessary is to see to the effective implementation of the rule of law and prevention of anarchy.

On the other hand, a democratic Government is forever receiving criticisms. Besides trying to satisfy the often conflicting wishes of the people, a democratic Government has to face a major threat to its stability in the form of the general elections. All Government leaders not only have to lead efficiently and effectively but also to submit to scrutiny and criticism by the people. They are required to practise conspicuously all the lofty values and ideals as if they were not ordinary human beings with natural weaknesses. Failure to do so will bring bad consequences on themselves and on the Government of which they are members.

Western colonialists must surely have realized the complexity of a democratic Government. Nevertheless they made it a condition of independence that all their colonies must set up democratic Governments. In addition, they disseminated propaganda on the virtues of democracy to make those who do not accept the system and values of democracy feel guilty and inhuman. Western mass media often accuse this Government or that of deviating from democratic practice so that the world will look unfavourably on whatever Government becomes their target. Various organizations, e.g. Amnesty International, are set up by the West to worsen the image of any Government that does not conform to Western values.

Leaders of former Western colonies as well as Eastern nations that have never been colonized are not very skilled in or knowledgeable about democratic administration. They were ruled by autocratic Governments and this is the only type of government whose ways they know and understand. Besides the leaders, the people too have had no experience of democracy and the power given to them through the general elections. Nor do they understand such rights as freedom to form trade unions, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom to take part in politics, etc.

For this reason, when Eastern nations that are newly independent or have never been colonized try to practise democracy, the obstacles and problems that beset them cannot be overcome by their Governments. Conditions in their countries grow worse and worse. The national economy deteriorates and the political atmosphere becomes tense. The Government's attempts to solve the problem are opposed

and blocked by various organizations that have become almost as powerful as the democratic Government, e.g. the legislative assembly with its opposition members, the executive officials and the bodies that interpret and administer the laws (the judiciary). Finally, when conditions in a country have become uncontrollable, the Government is forced to take over all powers under emergency laws. This means democracy has been replaced by autocracy. When this happens, the entire Western machinery will be used to condemn the nation concerned. Other Eastern nations join in the attack.

Throughout human history, East and West have had contact with each other. As both have been centres of human civilization, their relations have seldom been peaceful. Each tries to dominate the other. There is constant rivalry. Sometimes the West conquers and dominates the East. This happened in the golden age of Macedonia under Iskandar Shah (Alexander the Great), of Rome under several Caesars, and most recently the era of the British empire and others. Sometimes the East conquers and dominates the West, as in the reign of Genghiz Khan and the early centuries of the spread of Islam.

Each time the West dominates the territories of the East or vice versa, the effects of the domination cannot be easily erased, even centuries after the colonization ended. The effects of the conquest of Europe by the Muslims, for instance, can be felt and identified to this day.

What is important is not to erase all effects but to choose between those which need to be preserved and those which do not. The effects of the conquest of Europe by the Muslims which still exist today are purely in the field of knowledge. These do not modify or change the identity of the West. The West remains the West. But the West progressed and grew strong as a result of assimilating knowledge from the East.

The East is now going through a phase in which independence in the physical sense has been achieved but the influence of Western imperialism is still pervasive. This influence is made more effective by the modern communications system which enables each incident or idea in the West to be instantly known by the East. If once only the upper classes were involved with colonial civilization and culture, today all strata are exposed to influences from outside. Thus the influence of the ex-colonialists is felt by all sectors. This makes it difficult to screen such influence so that only the good aspects are assimilated.

But this modern era also brings techniques of analysis and centralized planning of development so that it is focused on planned objectives. There is no reason why the influence of the ex-colonialists, or more accurately Western influence, cannot be analysed and systematically and judiciously assimilated by a nation or a group.

An example already exists. The modernization of Japan during the Meiji period is an illustration of planned assimilation of a foreign civilization. The assimilation of useful and good aspects of Western knowledge, ways or systems can also be done in an organized and systematic manner today. For this, the East must decide for itself which aspects can be emulated and to what extent practised. The East, with its background of a distinctive civilization with fundamental values respected by the world, is certainly capable of making a wise choice.

In making this choice, a narrow outlook based on emotion and excessive pride in the Eastern identity has no place. What is important is that while the Eastern identity must be preserved, the success and strength of the West must also be taken into account. In this way the East will remain the East but will be capable of holding its own in the modern world with its close global communications.

Malaysia and the Malays are directly involved in the East-West conflict. Whereas the non-Malays have easily adjusted to Western civilization, the Malays seem to be more attracted by the forms than the substance of that civilization. Thus we find that though young men keep long hair, their acquisition of knowledge does not match their adherence to this fashion. The wild ways of the West are quickly assimilated, but not the values and norms which have given strength to the West.

The effects of Western colonization should have been thought about and analysed much earlier on. And the assimilation of Western civilization should also have been carefully organized long ago. Nevertheless, despite the late hour there is still time to think and act. What is important at this moment is awareness. Does the awareness exist or is the East still lost in fantasies? This is the question posed in this chapter. What is the answer?

## Materialism and Spirituality

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ  
نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ  
إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ.

- سورة القصص، الآية: ٧٧

The Interpretation:

*And seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, happiness in the hereafter, and do not forget thy fate in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to thee, and do not do mischief on earth. Truly Allah does not love those who do mischief.*

*(Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 77)*

This era is a materialistic one. No one can deny this. At all levels, material wealth is the focus of interest and discussion. The result of this emphasis on material wealth is the creation of various political ideologies and practices which are based solely on worldly

**m**aterialism. And sometimes these ideologies are so attractive and **c**aptivating to the mind that they replace religions which have been **e**mbraced by mankind for centuries throughout the world.

Among the ideologies and policies based on materialism which **h**ave succeeded in weakening religious faith are communism, **s**ocialism and capitalism. All three, though not really in line with **o**ne another, are the same when seen from the viewpoint of spirituality. All three do not give importance to spirituality and claim that **m**an lives for and is happy because of the property he owns.

Capitalism, however, was not formulated as an ideology. It **o**riginated in trade and commerce which inevitably exist in human society. At first, trade was just a way of earning a living, like other **k**inds of work. But those with business acumen could acquire not **j**ust a subsistence income but unlimited wealth. The advent of the **I**ndustrial Revolution broke down all obstacles to the scramble for **w**ealth. That era saw the birth of the modern capitalist who was **c**ompletely devoid of humane feelings and whose only god was material **w**ealth. Men scrambled for wealth heedless of the sufferings of the **w**orkers or society or the pollution of the environment. **C**onsideration and humanity were non-existent and all teachings with elements of religion and spirituality were cast aside.

The cruelty of the capitalists and their oppression of the workers **s**hould rightfully be condemned by a sane society. But what cannot **b**e denied is that the industry and commerce run by capitalists create **v**arious job opportunities for those with no other source of income. **T**he more commerce and industry flourish, the more job opportunities there will be for the jobless.

Clearly, if capitalists can be controlled or brought back to the right **p**ath, their activities can benefit society. Unfortunately capitalists **a**re not only wealthy but powerful as well. Their wealth can control **p**ower. Such control is a form of corruption and a capitalist society **i**s made worse by this corruption. Inevitably a capitalist society **e**xperiences moral decadence since it is obsessed with materialism and **c**orruption and rejects spirituality and religion.

The control of capitalism has become more difficult not only **b**ecause capitalists can use their wealth to gain power but also because **t**he system developed rapidly in non-Muslim societies which did not **e**mphasize spirituality to begin with. The influence of religion on **W**estern nations had declined several centuries before the Industrial **R**evolution and whatever good values existed in the religion embraced



by the Western people could not modify their capitalist attitudes. Spirituality had no place and no power to pull those societies back to the right path.

As spirituality was weak, greed for material things was used to try to control capitalism. The communist and socialist concepts which were created to fight capitalism were totally uninfluenced by spirituality and religion. Both believe that only the possession of property and wealth can be effective in upholding justice and happiness among men. In this respect capitalism, communism and socialism are the same. All three reject spirituality and worship materialism.

The oppression of workers by (capitalist) employers drove the workers to organize themselves into unions to stop the oppression. The workers realized that the wealth of the employers depended on their labour. Therefore if they stopped work *en masse*, the wealth and the enormous income of the employers would be endangered and would decrease. For the greedy capitalists, such an event was a much dreaded one. But a strike was neither simple nor effective, for it also cut off the workers' source of income. Between the workers and the employers, the workers were more dependent on their wages. Although the employers set up industries with the aim of making profits, theirs was not a life-and-death dependence on these profits. Conflict between capitalist employers and their workers affected the workers more than the employers at the beginning of the Industrial age.

Before the Industrial Revolution, particularly in the seventeenth century, some philosophers and political scientists analysed the relations of the individual with the Government and with society. As a result of their studies and ponderings, a number of them formed the opinion that, first, the basis of human happiness and misery is the possession or otherwise of wealth and, second, the wealth of a country belongs rightly to its people. Therefore, to attain justice and reduce imbalance in a society, property must be divided equally. To achieve this 'economic order', the Government must take over all sources of wealth and effect an equal distribution among the people.

This philosophy could not be put into practice because before the Industrial Revolution and for a long time after, the wealthy were powerful, whereas the workers and the poor had neither weapons nor strength of any kind to ensure its success. When the workers increased in number as a result of the industrial expansion following the Industrial Revolution, intellectuals were of the opinion that

a mass strike could blunt or break the power of the employers and capitalists.

It was these intellectuals who formulated the socialist and communist ideologies. The two are identical in their objectives. Both want the workers themselves to govern and to own all sources of wealth. While socialism wants a gradual take-over of governmental power and sources of wealth through strikes and new legislation, the communists believe that change can come only through a revolt of the workers and peasants (the have-nots) against the employers and their stooges (the bourgeoisie). With the demolition of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, government by the workers (the masses) will come into being and will control and exploit all sources of national wealth.

The socialist intellectuals apparently assumed that sources of wealth would automatically ensure wealth. They gave no value to business acumen and the profit motive. But a study will show that the success of modern industrial technology is not due to the experts in technology. Technology is made successful by businessmen who are driven by the greed which controls Western materialistic society at all times. Had it not been for their efforts, nothing would have been produced from any source of wealth, be it ore or oil in the earth, or the use of the mass production system, or import-export trade or modern technology.

The socialist system is said to depend on the workers. But deeper analysis will reveal that this system depends in fact on human greed, which controls the psyche of a society that places importance on materialism. Human greed is the same whether it is found in the heart of a worker or an employer, poor or rich, King or commoner. A philosophy of life that is based on greed for wealth cannot give happiness to mankind, and this can be seen in the West where wealth only brings more problems which show no signs of ever being solved.

Britain is a country that has tried to implement a socialist system through parliamentary democracy in the belief that socialism will bring justice. British democracy depends on the number of votes given to each person. British socialist intellectuals held the view that if the workers, who naturally outnumbered the employers, could be organized into a party, they would surely win all elections and control the Government. These socialist intellectuals formed the Labour Party and united workers into a federation of trade unions called the British Trade Union Congress. The union fees paid by the workers were used as a source of funds for the Labour Party.

The support given to the party by the workers depended on the party's promise that the Government it formed would give (material) wealth to the workers. The party's instruments were the workers' votes and their power to intimidate employers and society through strikes and other forms of industrial action. The Labour Government would nationalize sources of wealth like the steel industry, coal mining, etc. Enormous profits from these industries would come into the coffers of the Labour Government, who would use the money for the welfare of all workers. Such was the theory.

As a result of the Labour Party's efforts, British workers became a formidable political force and succeeded time and again in forming the Government. The Labour Government passed various laws giving priority to workers and increasing manifold their power and income. Many industries were nationalized. But hopes of a more just and peaceful society were never realized.

Although the demands of the workers were fully met, they were not content and went on making demands accompanied by threats of going on strike. In short, their attitude to the possession of property and wealth was no different from that of their employers and the capitalists. To increase their income, they were prepared to threaten society and worsen conditions. The imbalance in a socialist society is perennial and to this day there is no evidence that the problems of human society can be solved through the implementation of the socialist concept.

Employers are the same, be they private capitalists or the Government, even those elected by the workers. Nationalized industries are as open to demands and threats of a strike as are private ones. Hopes cherished by socialist intellectuals that the nationalization of industries would solve the problem of exploitation by employers have not materialized. Not only do the workers accuse State-owned industries of injustice; they are not prepared to give these industries better service. The result is that State-owned industries suffer losses they never did when they were privately-owned and run. Whereas private industries paid income tax to the Government, nationalized industries have to be helped through taxes collected by the Government.

All this is brought about by the belief that a system based on materialism can give happiness to human society. The socialists have the notion that if the sources of wealth once controlled by capitalist employers are given to the workers, the workers will be contented.

Unfortunately, workers in a materialistic society are ordinary human beings who are as capable of greed as the employers. In a society guided by materialism, no amount given can satisfy desire. Therefore socialism cannot give peace of mind and happiness to human society. The reality is that unrest and oppression will thrive as much in a socialist society as in a capitalist one.

أَهْمُ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ  
مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ  
فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ  
بَعْضًا سُلْخِيًّا وَرَحْمَةُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

- سورة الزخرف، الآية: ٣٢ -

The Interpretation:

*Would they portion out the beneficence of thy God? It is We Who portion out among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may work for others. The beneficence of thy God is better than the (wealth) which they amass.*

(Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 32)

When an opinion or belief has become popular, a dissenting view cannot be easily promoted. In these times socialism is popular on account of the belief that equal distribution of *rezeki* (God's beneficence as apportioned to human beings) is just. This view is accepted not only by the West but by almost the whole world. Thus other groups dare not challenge the socialist concept of equality. In fact they try to show that they too uphold and practise this socialist

principle or at least have socialist leanings.

Therefore some Muslims have tried to show that Islam also has elements of socialism. They cite the Islamic teaching on the equality and brotherhood of all Muslims as evidence that socialist principles are part of Islam and have long been practised by Muslims. They conclude not only that Islam and socialism are compatible but that Islam is the original socialism.

At a glance this view may be acceptable. But close scrutiny will reveal that it is unjustified. The equality demanded by socialists is material equality. A worker is considered a brother and equal to another worker because their jobs and incomes are more or less the same. A worker is not a brother to an employer even though they may be of the same race and religion. An employer cannot be regarded as a brother because his income (wealth and property) is more than that of the workers. Since the employer is not a brother, even when he is a good man who sympathizes with and meets the wishes of the worker, he is still opposed because he does not belong to the working class. In short, so long as there is any employer other than the Government, equality and brotherhood cannot exist in a socialist society. Life will be divided according to class. The socialists want the material status of the employer to be pulled down through seizure of property by the State.

Seizing someone else's possessions is regarded by all human beings as a bad act. But seizing the possessions of the rich (employers) is considered good by socialists even though the wealth may have been acquired by legitimate means from the viewpoint of religion and of man-made laws. The socialist theory is that property seized by a socialist Government becomes the rightful possession of the people (workers). In other words, nationalizing the property of the rich means that the workers will get that wealth.

Thus the socialists do not consider such seizure wrong since the aim is 'justice'. But after the coal-mining industry in Britain had been nationalized, the workers still went on strike and criticized their employer, i.e. the Government, though it was a Labour Government that they themselves had elected. This happened because socialism, like capitalism, is based on materialism and workers who worship materialism cannot tell the difference between wages paid by a private employer and wages paid by the Government. They want more than what they already have because the materialistic philosophy urges continuing discontent and a perpetual struggle to acquire more pro-

erty. So the fulfilment of a demand does not mean cessation of all demands. Whatever the response to the demands, the workers will continue to agitate for higher earnings.

To accelerate and encourage the demands for higher earnings, natural human desires and weaknesses are exploited. Whatever the earnings of the workers, their leaders will point to others who have more and urge them to demand higher wages. A slogan is created to arouse discontent and envy. Even as the workers' incomes rise, the slogan 'the rich are richer and the poor, poorer' is shouted about. Computations and evidence are fabricated to prove that the slogan reflects reality.

A rise in the prices of goods is pointed to as proof that the socialist slogan is true. A high income cannot buy more goods because of the rise in prices. So in reality the income has become low. Although the real roots of the situation are heightened living standards and wants, this is deliberately forgotten. The result of the campaign based on the slogan is insatiable greed. Contentment is never attained. Envy and jealousy grow more intense. All sorts of action are resorted to on account of greed. Society is never at peace. Strikes, picketing and riots are constantly occurring because of the desire for more. Whatever demands are met, there is always something new to agitate for, on the grounds that the rich are supposedly getting richer and the poor, poorer.

The fact that in a modern society like Malaysia the rich are heavily taxed is discounted or belittled by interested parties. A modern Government is usually an agent for narrowing the gap in livelihood between the poor and the rich. Therefore the rich are made to pay high taxes on their incomes, the goods they consume, the property of the deceased among them and various other things. The taxes collected are used by the Government to provide free of charge, various social needs like education, health, religion, communications, development, all sorts of subsidies and financial support for the have-nots and the less well-to-do. Had we adopted the feudal and colonial administrative system, the rich would only be paying for their own facilities and the poor would have to fend for themselves in all respects; in such a case there would be truth in the slogan 'the rich are richer and the poor, poorer'. Surely the poor would not be able to build their own schools, their own hospitals and their own roads, provide scholarships for themselves and medical and other services which they now get free from the Government.

These facts are never given prominence by those who are so fond of using the slogan 'the rich are richer and the poor, poorer'. Perhaps there are conditions in certain countries and in this country during the colonial and feudal periods and for a while after independence, which merit the slogan. But the type of democratic rule prevailing in Malaysia today does not permit such conditions to exist.

Unfortunately, facts are not often acknowledged and accepted, especially by those who worship materialism. Facts are easily cast aside in the interests of desire. Any means, even when it involves flouting facts, is accepted and used to the full to satisfy greed for material possessions. Heedless of the truth, the claim is made that the poor supposedly get poorer and the rich, richer. Such are the attitudes and behaviour of a materialistic society.

The materialistic motivation as found in a socialist society is not part of the Islamic philosophy. Equality in property is not the basis of justice and brotherhood in Islam. Possession of property is not equal in a Muslim society and there is no demand that all Muslims should own property of the same value. Islam accepts the reality that in any society there will be rich and poor, king and commoner, leader and follower.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا  
الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ  
فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ  
خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا.

### The Interpretation:

*O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Prophet, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God (The Quran) and the Prophet (His Sunnah), if ye truly believe in God and the hereafter. That is best (for you) and most beneficial in its consequences.*

(Surah An-Nisa' Ayat 59)

For a Muslim society, the relation of all groups and strata with one another are decided by Islam and oppression should not occur. If oppression does occur, it is not because there are groups that are not equal in wealth, but because the society or its members do not obey and do not practise the teachings and spiritual values of Islam.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ.

- سورة الحجرات، الآية ١٠ -

### The Interpretation:

*Truly the believers are brothers, so make peace (improve relations) between your two brothers and devote yourselves to Allah, that ye may receive beneficence.*

(Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayat 10)

In a staunchly Muslim society, equality and brotherhood do exist. The equality is not in material wealth but in religion. All Muslims, poor or rich, king or commoner, are equal. In worship and in the eyes of God they are equal. It is this equality which makes Muslims brothers regardless of economic position, rank and status, race and colour. The basis of the brotherhood is not status of property ownership but the spirituality that comes from faith in the teachings of Islam. It is a genuine brotherhood of pure hearts, free from jealousy and envy.



وَأَعِصُوا نَجْلَ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفْرَقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا  
 نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ  
 قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى  
 شَفَا حُفْرٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَنَقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ  
 يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ.

- سورة آل عمران، الآية: ١٠٣

#### The Interpretation:

*And unite all of you in the bond of Allah and be not divided among yourselves. And remember Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts together again; so that by His grace ye become brothers again. And ye were on the brink of hell, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make his signs clear to you, that ye may be guided.*

(Surah Al-Imran Ayat 103)

This *Ayat* (Quranic verse) shows how strong the Islamic call is towards brotherhood, for even those who are enemies are urged to unite. Certainly Muslims are not called upon to be enemies of one another until equality in property is achieved.

It is evident from all this that Islam is not socialism, and attempts to prove that there are socialist elements in Islam or that Islam is based on socialism are not only doomed to failure but should not be made in the first place. They seek to degrade the status of Islam as God's religion to an ideology created by ordinary mortals. Islam and socialism are not the same. In fact Islam and socialism are diametrically opposed. Thus we find that when socialist ideology is

practised in Muslim countries, eventually religious faith is weakened and civil war becomes a constant occurrence.

There may be intellectuals and philosophers who are of the view that although Islam and socialism are not the same, nothing will be lost by accepting material equality and adding it on to the spiritual equality and the faith required by Islam. Would not a Muslim society whose members are strongly united in brotherhood by spiritual ties become even stronger if differences in property ownership were abolished?

Logically, adding material equality to spiritual equality may well bring human beings closer together. Unfortunately material equality is impossible because it goes against nature. No two things in the world are created exactly the same. All are different. Among the 4,000 million people of the world, no two persons are truly identical. And the fingerprints of the 4,000 million human beings are all different.

This truth cannot be denied. Any attempt at equalization will not only fail but will give rise to problems that may lead to undesirable consequences. When the people of Paris revolted in 1789-1793 and mercilessly put to death King Louis XIV, Marie Antoinette and the aristocracy of France, they claimed that they would uphold Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. But after thousands had been killed and their wealth seized, equality was still not achieved even among the revolutionaries themselves. In fact, they quarrelled with one another over discrepancies which developed among them.

Since the French Revolution, the struggle to achieve equality in property and wealth has never ceased. Theory after theory has been formulated and various methods have been tried to attain equality within human society. Socialists have drawn up a political system that can give governmental power to the supposedly oppressed workers so that they can use the power to take over all sources of wealth and effect an equal distribution. All will have equal rights and equal incomes in the socialist State and none will be above another.

If there are not enough job opportunities, the jobless will be given rights and maintenance by the Government. Natural resources are the common property of all the people, and earnings from these must be given to all, employed and unemployed alike.

Unfortunately contentment and fraternity fail to materialize. In fact social problems increase. Each year, each month, indeed each

day there are riots. Those who have been 'equalized' in status and material wealth are in perpetual conflict and enmity with one another. Whatever criterion is used, everyone believes he has not gained 'equality' with some others.

The equality demanded is equality with someone who has more. Among the workers, just as among the capitalists, there have never been demands to be equalized with those of lower income.

In a socialist State like Britain, demands for 'equality' have reduced the once rich country to one notoriously beset with endless problems. In the capitalist era workers in coal mines were an oppressed lot. Their work was dangerous and shortened their life-spans, while their incomes were a pittance.

As a result of the concept of equality advocated by British socialists, in the coal mines which were taken over by the State the workers' incomes were increased and the hazards of mining reduced by the use of new techniques. The income of a worker in a coal mine rose to hundreds of times what it had been at the end of the 19th century. His life-style became as good and often better than that of other workers.

But the workers in coal mines are still not satisfied. They compare their jobs with office work and conclude that there is no 'equality', no justice. To get higher wages, they go on strike, especially in winter. In Britain a strike by workers in coal mines means that many homes will not have fuel for warmth.

The workers' action endangers the health of the elderly and the sick, especially among the poor. Some of these unfortunates become critically ill or die of extreme cold. For them the 'equality' and justice demanded by the coal-mine workers is a cruelty. But they are small in number and not organized to demonstrate and demand 'equality' and justice for themselves. Clearly, demands for 'equality' (justice) can bring imbalance in human society.

Such incidents of cruelty resulting from demands for equality and justice occur all the time. Patients suffer because nurses and doctors are demanding 'justice'. Workers become jobless because other workers are demanding justice. The development demanded by the workers themselves is affected because various groups of workers are acting in their own interests.

While the socialists act through legislation and strikes, another group seeks equality through seizing power. The communists believe that equality among men can be achieved only if they can eliminate

the aristocrats, the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, seize power and set up a workers' dictatorship.

As in the French Revolution, merciless massacres were carried out during the seizure of power in Russia in 1917. Not only were aristocrats, capitalists and bourgeoisie killed but also fellow-workers and peasants if they did not accept the communist ideology. From time to time people were killed or exiled from their districts so that the communist ideology which claimed to abolish all differences in human society would attain its objectives.

But communist society has still not achieved equality beyond calling everyone 'comrade'. In a communist State where all are said to be equal, there still exists a group of people who use cars, live in mansions and are able to travel abroad, while 90 per cent of the population have no facilities whatsoever.

The influence of materialism which motivates the struggle for equality is not confined to socialists or communists. In capitalist nations too there are demands for all forms of material equality. Besides equal rights in politics, in the context of a free economy all citizens demand equal rights to seek wealth and freedom. Strangely, each time 'equality' is achieved, justice and happiness fail to materialize. On the contrary, more 'differences' become manifest and the demands for 'equality' never cease, so that society is in a perpetual state of unrest.

This strange phenomenon can be seen in the following incidents. Colour, which poses no problem to Muslims, has become a big issue for disciples of equality in the West. Not only is attention drawn to the difference in rights and wealth between the Whites and the Blacks; attempts are even made to reduce the differences in their looks. While the Blacks copy the language, religion, values and life-style of the Whites, the Whites sport the afro hair-do and copy the language and cultures of the Blacks.

All these efforts fail to create equality because the equality sought is not spiritual but merely external. Even though they are the same in religion, language and customs, the Whites and the Blacks differ in their hearts and minds and the imbalance will continue.

Another form of equality demanded by Western society is equality of the sexes. At first it was only the women agitating for equal voting rights, but today the demands for 'equality' have increased. Women wear their hair long, so men also wear their hair long. And because men wear trousers, women too wear trousers. But still they

do not look alike. To reduce further the differences between men and women, unisex clothes are created. Yet men remain men and women remain women; they are still not the same. Thus the strange struggle continues.

If men can watch women do the strip-tease, why can't women watch men do the same? If women become prostitutes, why can't men also work as prostitutes? Surely there can be no equal rights so long as men and women do not have the same rights in these respects.

This almost insane struggle is not yet ended. Already other demands have surfaced. Are there equal rights among the women themselves? Why must prostitutes be looked down upon? Is not this also a difference (in rights)? And so prostitutes keep holding demonstrations and attacking churches until priests cease to discriminate between harlots and other women. And representatives of the profession attend international women's assemblies and receive ovations for having demanded equal rights and 'justice'.

Unfortunately all this still fails to bring equality to Western society. Why must women marry men? What's wrong with men marrying men and women marrying women? What's wrong with men seeking male lovers and women making love to women?

The demands for 'equality' now recognize no limits. Whatever demand is made in the name of equality is considered fair and will eventually be met. And so Western morals deteriorate with the attainment of each 'equality'. Since children and parents are equal, children need not respect their parents. Since pupils and teachers are equal, pupils need not obey their teachers. Since followers and leaders are equal, followers need not necessarily follow the leaders. In fact, the leaders must follow their followers.

The problem is, when the followers should follow the leaders and when the leaders should follow the followers cannot be decided. And society becomes chaotic because leaders and followers have equal rights to lead and their views are often incompatible.

Although it is evident that 'equality' is not only harmful to society but is in fact beyond reach, it is still revered as a form of 'justice' that must be given to mankind. Muslims also pay homage to this Western quality, and accept it as synonymous with 'justice'. As a result, the imbalance that occurs in Western society begins to invade Muslim society.

Class does not exist in Muslim society. Though there are the rich

and the poor, Muslim society is not divided into classes. Muslims value the family, which includes distant relatives. The Muslim family, unlike the Western one, is not limited to just parents and children. From great-grandparents to great-grandchildren, all are bound together by family ties.

Such a large family cannot be all rich or all poor. Each of these families has rich and poor members. But though some are poor and others rich, they all belong to one family. This bond cannot be broken by differences in economic status.

But when Muslims accept the socialists' materialistic concept and begin to seek material 'equality', Islamic solidarity and brotherhood cease to appeal to them. Family ties are also reduced in importance. Class and the ownership of property are given priority. The poor and the rich must be enemies. The poor must seize the possessions of the rich. The wealth (loot) must be divided equally. This is 'just', because 'justice' means 'equality'.

Does not religion demand justice? If the difference between poor and rich were unjust, surely religion would oppose the difference. Seizing someone else's property is forbidden by religion, yet in this case property is seized to achieve justice. If justice is demanded by religion, then surely seizure of property is also advocated by religion!

Thus goes the thinking of Muslims who have accepted Western materialism. Obsessed with equality, they even modify the interpretation of religious teachings so that there is no conflict between rights and justice in Islam and rights and justice in Western materialism.

Today some Muslim nations have turned socialist while others have replaced Islam with the communist ideology. All this happens as a result of confusion and misunderstanding with regard to materialism and spirituality.

Therefore materialism and spirituality must be clearly defined. Wealth does not mean materialism and poverty does not mean spiritual strength. Wealth and poverty have no direct bearing on materialism or spirituality. Materialism can exist in poverty and spirituality can be strong in wealth.

This fact must be understood by Muslims. Otherwise a man-made ideology may be confused with God's religion and the Muslims may even lose their religion. The enemies of Islam move not only on battlefields but also in the minds of men. Lack of vigilance may lead to Islam being influenced by Western philosophy and ending up no longer Islam. This will bring the downfall of Islam.

If faith in Islam and spirituality is to be preserved, reality must strengthen that faith. When someone is suffering and forced to forget his self-respect, it is very difficult for him to believe that he actually lives a happy life and is more fortunate than his neighbour who has no religious faith but is very prosperous. For him reality conflicts with faith. His mind cannot accept a claim that is manifestly untrue.

If he is forced to beg for help from or be dependent on the charity of his atheist neighbour, his faith will weaken. If the others in his circle are suffering as well and cannot help him, his faith will weaken even more. Finally, if in this precarious state his faith is undermined by materialists who give him aid, that faith will collapse.

What can happen to an individual can also happen to a group, a society and finally a nation. This is what we see now. Faced with reality that cannot be denied or rejected by the 'mind', faith in spiritual values declines. Efforts to revive the faith fail because of inability to show clear proof that what is believed in is true. In this state of desperation some groups try to find similarities between religion or spirituality and Western materialistic ideologies. This may lessen the doubts about religion but studies have shown that it only delays the process of loss of faith. Eventually a materialistic ideology takes the place of spirituality.

Other groups try to preserve spirituality by closing their eyes and ears to reality. They reject everything that they deem worldly and try to isolate themselves from outside influences. To revive the faith in spiritual values that flourished in the days of the Prophet, they try to practise the way of life of those days.

But this is not possible. Conditions have changed so vastly that nobody can escape the invasion of the modern world. Times and ways gone by cannot be revived. Attempts to do so will fail and the failure will further endanger the spiritual values that one seeks to defend and strengthen.

This happens because the people who try to practise the way of life of those days often become enemies of others of the same religion who are not prepared to accept the old ways. Such enmity in fact conflicts with spirituality and will disrupt the solidarity of believers in spirituality. This will certainly weaken their group even further. Finally they fail to achieve what they strive for and lose what they already have.

This is happening in Malaysia today. Those who claim to be true followers of Islamic teachings and spiritual values look coldly upon

and condemn those who do not join them. They hurl accusations at those whom they define as 'the group who has strayed from the right path' to demonstrate the righteousness of their own stand. Their 'spirituality' does not prevent them from saying things that are both harsh and untrue. All this serves to undermine spiritual values.

Since the challenge of these modern times cannot be successfully met by self-isolation, and material values cannot be made compatible with spirituality without endangering adherence to it, how are spiritual values to be protected from demolition by the materialism of the modern age? More pertinently, what should be the attitude of Muslims who believe in Islamic spirituality, in facing the challenge of the modern age?

Seeing that materialism which is the basis of modern Western life can weaken and may even destroy a fragile spirituality, importance of inculcating and strengthening faith in spiritual values is clear. In inculcating and disseminating spirituality its values must be clearly and accurately explained. A common source of confusion is the relationship between spirituality and an individual's economic status. Poverty does not mean spiritual strength and wealth does not mean spiritual weakness. Thus 'class' does not exist in a society that is guided by spirituality. As class does not exist, problems of class difference, which cause a great part of the imbalance in modern societies, will not threaten the serenity and well-being of a society that upholds spirituality.

Another is the definition of materialism. As materialism and interest in worldly affairs often occur together, they are frequently confused and given the same definition. In fact, as has been explained earlier, the two are not synonymous. When a person owns property, it does not mean that he rejects spirituality and is obsessed with materialism. If this were true, all who claim to uphold spiritual values should reject all material possessions except what was strictly necessary for sustaining life and performing rituals of worship. But we know very well that even those given the task of propagating spiritual values need remunerations commensurate with their task. Higher remunerations do not mean they have lost their faith in spiritual values. Property or income has no direct bearing on spirituality.

Materialism, therefore, should be clearly defined and kept distinct from ownership of property, wealth and interest in worldly affairs.



A person can have a positive attitude to worldly concerns and still uphold spiritual values. In other words, a balance can be achieved between interest in things spiritual and interest in things worldly. But it must be emphasized that a balance cannot be attained between spirituality and materialism.

Since ownership of property does not mean loss of spirituality, the right attitude for those who uphold spiritual values can be decided. They need not reject wealth or endeavours which lead to wealth nor reject the kind of knowledge that can preserve and protect their positions in the threat-ridden world. So long as their faith in spiritual values is nurtured they can work and compete with other groups to attain wealth and acquire knowledge in all fields.

Working hard, persisting in a particular endeavour and not easily giving up are means of achieving success in the world. Since these are not in conflict with Islamic teachings and spiritual values, there is no reason why Muslims should not work hard.

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ  
يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ.

— سورة الانبياء الآية: ١٠٥

The Interpretation:

*Truly we did write in the book Zabur after the message, that My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.*

*(Surah Al-Ambia, Ayat 105)*

What is clear is that the earth (world) belongs to the righteous. The righteous does not mean only the poor or only the rich. Any Muslim who practises Islamic teachings sincerely and honestly will be accepted by Allah as one of the righteous without discriminating between poor and rich. If this difference were taken into account, the Quran would have said so.

Allegations that work leading to prosperity and affluence is a

manifestation of greed for material things should not deter Muslims from doing such work, so long as they perform their religious duties and hold fast to their spiritual values. Working hard does not mean forgetting religious duties. In fact when energies and thoughts are focused on work, there is less likelihood of wasting time sighing and moaning over life's problems. Such idle sighing tends to direct one's thoughts to the things of the world.

When anyone contemplates his fate in the world, he is bound to feel frustrated. There is always some way in which he is lacking, in wealth or opportunity, and in which someone else has an advantage. And that second person whom the first deems so fortunate feels, in turn, that compared with someone even more affluent, he is left way behind. If all members of society waste time in such musings, not only will they be unproductive but the social climate will be made murky by imagined imbalance.

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي  
لَشَدِيدٌ.

- سورة ابراهيم، الآية: ٧

#### The Interpretation:

*If ye are grateful, I will add more (beneficence) unto you, and if ye deny (My beneficence), truly My punishment is terrible indeed.*

(Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 7)

This Quranic verse emphasizes the importance of a Muslim being grateful for what he has. Actually, no human being in this world is devoid of good fortune if he ponders his fate sensibly and honestly. A Muslim is in the first place fortunate to belong to the true faith. Besides this, there is always something he has more of than someone else, be the other person poor or rich. A person who is rich but has poor health, fears being attacked and dreads losing his property and so cannot go about freely, is not more fortunate than a poor person

who is spared such tensions. From another aspect, especially that of property, the rich person is of course more fortunate than the poor one.

Being grateful for what one has done does not mean not working to attain more. Not working is a manifestation of lack of gratitude, especially in those who can work. A healthy person who does not make use of opportunities to work shows ingratitude for his health. A person gifted by God with a talent or ability, in whatever field, surely cannot be considered grateful for God's gift if he does not use the talent or ability.

One's talent or ability should not be used solely for the purpose of acquiring merits in the hereafter for oneself. To depend on others to provide one with a living while one performs what one considers 'rituals of worship to guarantee one's place in the hereafter' surely shows greed. Islam clearly demands more than this. Those who give *zakat* (religious tithes) and alms, who serve a good cause, who contribute to human knowledge, are also acting according to Islamic principles. All these acts are related to society and the world. All these acts bring happiness not only to the doer in this world and the next but also to others and to society. Using God's gifts, not just for oneself but for a greater number of one's fellow-creatures, shows that one places a high value on God's gifts. This is surely in line with Islamic teachings.

The frustration (*frustrasi* as modern-day Malays term it) that is often voiced by the modern generation is in conflict with the spirit of Islam. To a greater or lesser extent, frustration is a manifestation of ingratitude. A person can change his fate if he works hard. He is not asked to sigh all the time over his lack of good fortune. In this world of a myriad challenges, there is nobody who can escape misfortune all the time. These are the challenges that will test the strength of a person's faith and spiritual values inculcated in him.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا  
بِأَنفُسِهِمْ.

- سورة الرعد - الآية : ١١

### The Interpretation:

*Verily never will Allah change the fate (condition) of a people until they change it themselves.*

*(Surah Ar-Ra'd, Ayat 11)*

Judging by what one hears and reads in this country, *frast* (frustrated) and *sedih* (sad) seem to be constantly on the lips of the Malays, including those who reiterate the importance of spiritual values and how bad materialism is. If some 'worldly' matter is not in accordance with their wishes, the words *kesedihan* (sadness) and *frastrasi* (frustration) are said over and over again. This shows that their faith in spiritual values is not strong, for those who are strong in faith are not easily frustrated.

A study of the Prophet Muhammad's struggle in propagating Islam will show that though challenge after challenge tested his faith, he was never *frast* or *sedih* about his plight. He continued his struggle, using various methods and measures to rise above the challenges that beset his path.

The history of the spread of Islam throughout the world after the Prophet Muhammad's death also demonstrates how all sorts of challenges were met by the Caliphs of Islam without sighing and feeling *frast*. Finally, the Islamization of the Malays themselves must have been a tremendous challenge for the Arab and Indian traders in the reign of Muzaffar Shah (fifteenth century A.D.). Had they been easily *frast*, today the Malays would not be Muslims.

It is clear therefore that if the worldly challenges faced by the upholders of spiritual values are to be successfully met, there is no place for *frast* and *sedih*. The problem in the world where those who believe in materialistic values appear more efficient and more advanced should not give rise to *frast* and *sedih* attitudes on the part of believers in spirituality. And if they find something lacking in themselves, as upholders of spirituality they must not let themselves be invaded by *frast* and *sedih*. On the contrary, all energies and thoughts should be focused on efforts to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Realizing that the wealth and efficiency of materialists can threaten the survival of spiritual values, those who cherish spiritual values should be clear in their minds as to the attitude they should take towards 'worldly' wealth and efficiency. They should resort to all

legitimate methods to acquire wealth and the kinds of knowledge which can give them power and strength. The importance of doing so is made more obvious by the existence of modern techniques of warfare.

In this modern age, Muslims are faced with the strong likelihood of having their nations and societies conquered and colonized by different categories of materialists. Be they capitalists, socialists or communists, they are all out to destroy adherence to and faith in spiritual values. In Muslim countries that have been conquered by communists in Central Asia and are now under communist rule, Islam has lost its followers.

Such too are the fates of Muslims in East Asia and South Asia. A religion is meaningless without followers. Emphasis on the hereafter as the only important consideration is also meaningless. A religion exists because its followers exist. Muslims are certainly at fault when, as a result of their lack of abilities, some Muslim nations were conquered and the Muslims there killed, tortured and brainwashed with anti-Islamic propaganda until they lost their faith and the countries had no more Muslims.

For this reason it is one of the duties of Muslims to develop mastery and capability not only in the use of modern armaments but in producing and designing these. To build up the defence of the nation and the Muslim community, Muslims must have sufficient wealth, for modern defence needs a large allocation of money.

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطٍ  
لَخَيْلٍ تَرْهَبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَالْآخَرِينَ  
مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْمَلُوا لَهُمْ أَلَّيْكُمْ يَعْمَلُكُمْ وَمَا  
تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ  
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ .

- سورة الأنفال، الآية: ٦٠ -

### The Interpretation:

*Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the enemies of Allah and your enemies and others besides, whom ye do not know but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.*

*(Surah Al-Anfal, Ayat 60)*

In West Asia the Muslims were perennial failures until they managed to get the wealth from the oil industry. And even now, where the technology of warfare is concerned, they are still forced to be beggars. The position of the Muslims there is still precarious because wealth without knowledge is ineffective. Besides, the wealth cannot last if they do not know how to conserve and use it. In one prominent Muslim nation, the total defence is in the hands of the Americans, who are not Muslims.

Indeed, some of the countries have run out of oil money owing to uncontrolled expenditure and ignorance of business methods.

لَا يُفَاكِرُ الدِّينَ إِلَّا بِالدَّرَاهِمِ وَالذَّنَانِيرِ

- الحديث -

### The Interpretation:

*Religion cannot be upheld without property and money (dinars and darhams).*

*(Al-Hadith - Traditions of the Prophet)*

An interesting phenomenon is the ineffectuality of those who do not know how to value and manage wealth when they are suddenly flooded with boundless riches. Wealth from oil, for instance, has done great harm to the economy and values of people who once upheld spirituality. Before oil became a source of wealth, the na-

tions of Central Asia did not have such a high cost of living. Today the rise in the price of oil has brought uncontrollable inflation which makes it difficult for Muslims to perform the duty of the pilgrimage. In addition, the behaviour and manners of the *nouveau riche* have tarnished the image of Muslims.

The world is indeed not the ultimate reality. Each person will one day die and the wealth he acquired in his lifetime cannot be taken beyond the grave. In the times of the Pharaohs attempts were made to take worldly wealth to the hereafter but it was a mere dream that has no place in Islam. The Islamic stand in this matter is clearly based on spiritual values. A Muslim must not forget that worldly wealth is required only for this world. Ultimate happiness depends on *ibadat* (rituals of worship), adherence to religious teachings, and on how and for what purposes the wealth has been used.

But although worldly wealth cannot help a person in the hereafter, it can help solve not only the problems of livelihood of his own family but also the Muslim community he leaves behind. Only a greedy materialist will regret the fact that he cannot take his wealth along when he dies. A person who believes strongly in spiritual values will have no such regret because he accepts that the affluent life of the world is transient. Indeed, he will be at peace to know that his endeavours in the world comprise a form of *ibadat* or service to God in that people who live after him will be able to benefit from his wealth.

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَةُ  
الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرًا مِمَّا.

- سورة الكهف، الآية : ٤٦

The Interpretation:

*Wealth and children are allurements of the life of the world, and good deeds that endure are of greater merit in the sight of thy God and better hope.*

(Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 46)

In Islam, helping people is a virtue and Muslims are exhorted to do so. When someone dies leaving property and it is divided according to the rules of Islam, in effect it is similar to *zakat* and *fitrah* (religious tithes), alms and other forms of welfare contribution from the living. A person who is fully aware that property cannot be brought to the next world yet still works hard to accumulate property cannot be accused of greed. What should be judged is not his striving for wealth but his attitudes and beliefs. If he is a Muslim who upholds spiritual values and at the same time is prepared to work to attain wealth which will finally be divided according to Islamic rules, he should be respected and encouraged.

On the other hand, if a person refuses to work to attain worldly wealth because it cannot be brought to the next world, he should be looked down upon. He actually values worldly wealth too much and works only for himself and not for society. This is a materialistic attitude, incompatible with spirituality.

In this materialistic age, upholders of spiritual values have a challenge to face. In some Muslim nations it is evident that the challenge is insurmountable. The Muslims are torn between two alternatives; some reject and others accept the values and ways of the materialistic world. Rejection without understanding the potential virtues of wealth has brought defeat to the spiritual group. On the other hand, those who accept materialistic values turn their backs on spiritual ones. Only a profound understanding of the materialism of the modern age and a strong spiritual education can ensure the integrity and survival of spirituality.

This chapter is not *fatwa* (authoritative religious ruling). It is an analysis to establish that spiritual and religious values can be preserved without abstaining from the mastery and use of modern ways which can safeguard the position and security of Muslims. Nevertheless, materialistic values are rejected. And the capitalist, socialist and communist systems which are guided by materialism are acknowledged to be wrong.

But the confusion between 'worldliness' and 'materialism' must be corrected. Worldliness does not necessarily mean greed for wealth. Worldly wealth is God's gift, and not to Muslims alone. Spurning it is an act of arrogance and ingratitude to God for His gift. What Muslims should do is to accept and value the gift without forgetting that they have certain duties in this world.

Can Muslims preserve their spirituality when they have the wealth



and expertise of this modern world? Will they not lose their heads, intoxicated by worldly pleasures and affluence? Will not their adherence to religious teachings be weakened because they devote too much time and energy to worldly endeavours? Will not Islam go the way Christianity has gone?

We have seen how sudden wealth owing to the rise in the price of oil has damaged the economy and morals of some Muslims. Therefore there certainly is some danger of spiritual values being destroyed by the onslaught of material wealth. But if believers in spiritual values understand the difference between materialism and worldliness and their relationship with spirituality, their faith will not be easily shaken or destroyed.

Among the Christians, belief in spiritual values was demolished by pressure from material values. This happened because they did not face the materialistic age with awareness and open eyes. They were suddenly invaded by secular values which were easier to understand and accept. To preserve spiritual values, they separated the Church (religion) from secular life (i.e. separated the spiritual from the temporal). As a result, Christianity became less able to defend its position from the threat of secularism, and the materialistic values of philosophers and political scientists replaced whatever spirituality existed in Christianity.

Islam does not separate the religious from the secular. Also Islam, at least in this country, is not totally separated from the political power of the Government. Islam can still influence and, in some important areas, control the administration of the country. With the present state of awareness and strength, Islam can still ensure that adherence to spiritual values will remain strong in the struggle to face the challenge of the modern world.

There is still hope that spirituality can be preserved even when Muslims seek and gain control of material wealth and modern knowledge. Indeed, only when Muslims are equipped with the tools and skills of the modern world can it be ensured that they continue to uphold the spiritual values which will bring them happiness in this world and the next. Without wealth and efficiency, the Muslims will be oppressed and finally spiritual values too will be lost. Such is the relationship between spirituality and materialism and the effects of both sets of values on human society, particularly Muslim society.

## The Malays and Communist Influence

فَاقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ  
الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ  
اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ  
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ. مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَقِيمُوا  
الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

- سورة الروم، الآية ٣٠

### The Interpretation:

So set thou thy face steadily to the faith, Allah's creation on the pattern of which He has created mankind. There is no change in the work of Allah. That is the true religion, but most among mankind do not know. Turn ye back in repentance to Him and devote yourself to Him and establish regular prayers and be not ye among those who join other gods with Allah.

(Surah Al-Rum, Ayat 30-31)

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) failed in its plan to wrest power in this country through armed combat during the 1948-1960 Emergency mainly because the Malays refused to join or support the communist guerillas. There are some who believe that the communists were defeated solely through the efforts of the armed forces which mostly comprised armies from Britain and other Commonwealth countries. But we have seen how in Vietnam, for instance, even the formidable forces of the United States of America were finally beaten by the communists. The Americans lost in Vietnam because the people of South Vietnam were not solidly behind their Government. They did not have a firm stand against the communists. And their religion does not prohibit atheism which is one of the pillars of the communist ideology.

In Malaysia there were Malays who fought on the side of the communists, but they were a mere handful. In general the Malays were against the communists. So after their defeat in 1960 the MCP resolved and planned to rally support from the Malays when they launched a fresh attempt. If they succeeded in gaining this support, there was a great likelihood they would be able to take over Malaysia.

The Malays' anti-communist stand is based on their religion. The teachings of Islam are patently opposed to the communist concept and ideology. The communists deny the existence of God and His religion, whereas belief in the one God is the basis of Islam. Besides, Islam decides the social order and all aspects of the lives and relationships of Muslims. All this is in conflict with the communist ideology. Hence our continued certainty that the Malays who are staunch Muslims will not support communism or become communists.

But we can no longer be so sure that the Islamic faith of the Malays will remain an invincible fortress to the communists. Though not many, there are Malays who are prepared to become communists. In Indonesia, for instance, many Muslims renounced their religion and at one time went all out to attain communist aspirations. In some Arab States and in Albania, there are Muslims who have renounced Islam and set up governments with communist or semi-communist ideologies. In the southern parts of the Soviet Union, descendants of Muslims no longer believe in Islam as a result of brain-washing by communists after they conquered those territories.

And indeed the inculcation of communism among Muslims is no longer unusual or difficult. In a direct form this cannot easily oc-

cur. But in an indirect form such inculcation is not very difficult. And in Malaysia there are already signs that this process has been going on a long time and has effectively helped the communist cause.

Once, the communists tried to influence the Malays into rejecting Islam outright and denying the existence of God. One of the proofs of having accepted the communist ideology which the communists looked for was a Muslim's willingness to eat food forbidden by the religion. Only when a Muslim who joined the communist struggle was prepared to eat pork, for instance, did the communists believe he had really renounced Islam and could be taken into their confidence.

For Malays, whether or not they practise Islamic teachings, eating pork is a most difficult thing to do. Thus they were not prepared to take up the communist challenge, and rejected communism. So long as the communists insisted on this stringent test and on outright renunciation of faith in God, it was difficult for the Malays to accept communism.

Today, since the communists have come to understand the Malays' stand in the matter, they no longer pressurize the Malays to renounce Islam and accept the communist ideology. Instead they concentrate their attention and energy on disrupting Malay unity. By 'proving' that the communist cause is not very different from the Islamic one, they have managed to reduce Malay opposition to their cause.

Islam exhorts Muslims to unite. Each Muslim is a brother to his fellow-Muslim. This brotherhood does not mean that all Muslims are of the same status and belong to just one group. Islam accepts the reality that in human society there are, inevitably, rich and poor, king and commoner, leader and followers, those with power and those without. But the order and the relationship between one group and another have been decided by Islam in such a way as to bring justice and brotherhood.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ.

- سورة المائدة، الآية ١٠١ -

### The Interpretation:

*Truly the believers are brothers, so make peace (improve relations) between your two brothers and devote yourselves to Allah, that ye may receive beneficence.*

*(Surah Al-Hujurat Ayat 10)*

Islam also decides judicial procedures and punishments for various types of wrongdoing. The correct attitude and the obedience and loyalty due to the authorities are also determined. In short, Muslim society is a well-ordered one, equipped with ways of dealing with and solving problems which inevitably arise in any society.

Although there can be different ranks in Muslim society, all Muslims are equal in that all give their devotion to God and nobody mediates between a Muslim and his Maker. Other religions have priests or similar groups of high religious status who can appeal to their gods on behalf of ordinary people. Islam does not have a hierarchical priesthood. There is no Pope, no cardinal, no bishop, no vicar. There are no hereditary or chosen representatives of God or the Prophet in Islam as there are in some other religions. If there are differences, these are based on the degree of devotion to God, and only God can know these differences.

لَا فَضْلَ عَرَبِيٍّ عَلَىٰ أَعْجَمِيٍّ إِلَّا بِالْتَّقْوَىٰ .  
- الحديث -

### The Interpretation:

*Arabs are no nobler than Ajams (non-Arabs) except through devotion to God.*

*(Al-Hadith, Traditions of the Prophet)*

This excerpt from the Traditions of the Prophet clearly shows that if Islamic teachings are understood and practised by Muslims in full awareness, their society will not be easily disrupted or penetrated

by alien beliefs. Thus it is that although many Muslims are ruled by non-Muslim governments, in general they do not easily and voluntarily forsake Islam. The Malays are among the peoples who have succeeded in preserving their Islamic faith, though Malay lands have been colonized by Buddhists and Christians.

We have noted that the communists are now aware of the role of Islam as an obstacle to the inculcation of communism among the Malays. In their efforts to divide the Malays and lessen their resistance to the communist offensive, they (the communists) use groups of communist sympathizers whose opposition to Islam is not so apparent. They use the socialist concept or ideology since it does not concern itself so much with the question of religion. Socialists place more emphasis on the economic system and the relations of various classes in human society. In particular the socialists hold the view that the rich are all oppressors of the poor, especially the workers. Therefore workers and the poor cannot be friendly with the rich. They must be enemies of the rich and strive to abolish individual possession of wealth through seizure by the Government.

Seizure of property or wealth is not the method of attaining equality and fraternity in Islam. Wealth is not prohibited in Islam provided the rich obey Islamic rules regarding *zakat* and *fitrah* (religious dues) and alms. Hence the socialists have to inflame emotions by drawing attention to the hardship suffered by the poor and contrasting it with the affluence of the rich. They blame the gap between rich and poor and the hardship faced by the poor on oppression by the rich. This is easily demonstrated because most capitalists are non-Muslims and they often oppress their workers. Eventually the socialist view is accepted, particularly by the idealistic young. When this stage is reached, Islamic principles regarding the social order and the relationship between one social group and another are no longer upheld. Whether or not the rich are oppressors, the poor must be in conflict with them. In other words, conflict between classes need not stem from oppression but is purely ideological. And the conflict does not go through the channels decided by Islam but follows procedures laid down by Western socialists.

The result of the conflict between rich and poor, employers and workers, is a rift in Islamic solidarity. At this stage it is easy for the socialists to equate the rich with the powerful, i.e. the leaders in a society who hold the reins of government. The Government can be accused of collaborating with the rich. Thus the Muslims who are

poor (workers, farmers, fishermen) are subverted into opposing the Government. This worsens the rift in Islamic solidarity and fraternity.

The whole process has taken place among the Malays, all of whom are Muslims. Although this philosophy and viewpoint originate from socialism, they are no longer termed socialist. They are defended by various groups of Malays as Islamic teachings. Interpretations of the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet are modified to suit them.

What are the effects of this change in the Malays on the communist struggle in Malaysia? We have emphasized that the reason the MCP was defeated in the years 1948-1960 was that it did not have Malay support. Today the Malays still reject communism. Their Islamic faith is still strong. We can, in fact, conclude from visible evidence that the Malays are focusing more attention on Islam than they did before. Nevertheless, a significant change has taken place from the point of view of the communist struggle.

There is a rift in Malay solidarity. And the rift is where it matters most, i.e. between a large section of the Malays and their leaders who hold power in the Government. At one time only the communists opposed the Government (with support from some non-Malays). But today the Malays themselves are opposing the government and hurling all sorts of accusations at Government leaders.

In war tactics, friendship between two groups attacking the enemy is not necessary. What makes the attacks effective is that they are carried out simultaneously. The communists oppose the Government. The Malays too oppose the Government. Although the Malays are neither friends nor allies of the communists, by attacking the Government when it is facing communist attack, they are helping the communist cause.

We saw this happen in South Vietnam. For reasons unrelated to the communists, the Buddhists opposed the Government of South Vietnam. They were supported by students who had a separate set of grievances. Demonstrations were often held. As a result of the many accusations hurled at the Government, it became an object of hatred. The Government's attempt to crush the opposition against it by using the police and the army only served to draw energy and action away from the war effort against the communists.

The hatred which began among the groups opposing the Government spread and intensified till it infected the armed forces. Morale dropped among the forces as their confidence in the Government

waned. Attacked from the rear as well as the front, forsaken by the armed forces who were no longer loyal, the Government of South Vietnam finally fell.

Some may hold that the fall of the South Vietnamese Government was deserved because it was corrupt and cruel. But the defeat of the South Vietnamese Government did not mean victory for the leaders of the Buddhists or the students. It was the communists who won. The South Vietnamese lost not only the freedom to oppose and demonstrate, but freedom of worship as well. The Buddhists and the students did not get what they had fought for and lost what they had.

Similarly with Malaysia. If the Malays, supposedly on Islamic principles, act to harass and weaken the present Government, the weakness may spread to the armed forces. When the administration and the defence are weak, a communist take-over will no longer be an impossibility. A communist Government will not have Islam as the official religion. It will, on the contrary, seek to destroy Islam.

الْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ  
حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا.

- سورة البقرة، الآية ٢١٧ -

The Interpretation:

*Subversion (fitnah) is worse than slaughter, nor will they cease their attacks on you until they turn you away from your faith if they can.*

(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 217)

The possibility portrayed above is not a figment of the imagination, nor is it propaganda. It has happened in some Arab countries that were once centres of Islamic growth and education. It has happened in Albania. It has also happened in some territories of the Soviet Union and in South-East Asia.



The Malays are not more staunchly Muslim than these peoples were. Only awareness of this possibility can protect the Malays from the evils of communist influence.

## **A System of Values and the Malays**

The existence of a society of human beings depends on a system of values which has come into being or which they themselves have created. Without a system of values, human beings cannot live together in a group because relations between members cannot be determined. 'Bad' or 'good', a system of values must exist and be accepted by a large section of a society for its existence and perpetuation.

'Bad' and 'good' are relative. The definitions of 'bad' and 'good' are not rooted in the nature of things but are made and accepted by a society. 'Bad' and 'good' form the basis of a society's system of values, a basis which varies with different societies and different times.

To put it more clearly, we can say that what is considered 'good' by one society may be 'bad' in the eyes of another, and also what is 'good' to a society at one time may become 'bad' to the same society at another time.

Awareness of the impermanence of a system of values and its variation from one society to another is essential in this age, for not only are the systems of values of all societies changing; some are going through a perversion of values, 'good' being considered 'bad' and 'bad' being accepted as 'good'.

Examples of such perversion of values are found all over the world. For instance, nudity was once considered 'bad' by nearly all societies in the world. But today some societies in the West regard nudity as 'normal' and 'healthy'. 'Streaking' is lightly viewed because of this value change regarding nudity. And in Western societies nudity on the beaches has become normal and is no longer prohibited.

Not very long ago, smoking marijuana was considered bad and prohibited. In the sixties the use of marijuana began to spread in America. This would not have been such a threat if American society had considered marijuana 'bad' and had been prepared to take action against its smokers. But rational people who were not marijuana smokers' asked themselves, 'is smoking marijuana bad?'

If marijuana makes one lose one's senses, doesn't liquor do the same? If liquor is not banned, why should marijuana be? When rational people begin to question their 'belief', i.e. a value accepted by their society, that society will lose its sense of direction. In this state of affairs, those who flout and challenge curbs on marijuana smoking will do so more openly and blatantly. Those who try to uphold the old values will be dubbed old-fashioned. And those who question the old values will be considered liberal and progressive.

A society faced with such a challenge cannot take massive action because ultimately a society's power depends on the wishes of the majority. With the emergence of the liberal and progressive group, indirectly abetted by the neutral group, the upholders of the old values no longer form the majority. Thus the society's value concerning marijuana has undergone a change.

The neutral or passive members of society play an important and effective role though they themselves do not acknowledge it. They are actually giving support to the active and aggressive. A social value is effective if it is defended by the majority. In the case of a neutral majority, the value can no longer be defended and ceases to be a value of the society concerned. This is what has happened in the West regarding the smoking of marijuana. It is no longer considered bad.

It is very important to understand the role played by the silent majority, especially in a democracy. For them to say nothing when something good takes place is all right. But should the silent majority continue to say nothing when something bad takes place, they would all bear the bad consequences. Unfortunately most people sometimes find it difficult to be sure whether something is bad or good. In these circumstances, responsible people should be prepared to explain the real situation.

One of the difficulties faced by a democracy is that it guarantees the rights of every member. Democracy permits opposition and protects the rights of minorities and individuals. What types of opposition can be allowed and when minority wishes should be defended are questions to which there can be no clear-cut answers.

So it is that when a group within a society rejects one of the society's values, for instance the prohibition of marijuana smoking, the society is no longer able to take firm action. Personages from the majority will themselves debate the matter, not in terms of whether marijuana smoking is good or bad, but rather from the viewpoint of the practice of democracy which gives rights to individuals and minorities. Whether these rights bring good or bad is not discussed. The important thing is that individual and minority rights must be defended as this is one of the bases of democratic practice.

But it should be remembered that the deviant behaviour of a minority can be contagious and the minority will gradually grow in numbers. When it becomes a really large minority, the majority will no longer be able to control it even with undemocratic methods. When this stage is reached, the old values are lost and the values of the minority have pervaded the society and become part of its values. It is clear from this phenomenon that too great a concern for minority rights in a democracy can lead to victimization of the majority.

Today, reversal (perversion) of values or the collapse of value systems in human societies is rife throughout the world. Regulations and laws were once considered necessary and good, and were respected. Today, regulations and laws are regarded as obstacles to freedom and this has a very bad effect on other values held in high regard by society.

For instance, in Western universities, the regulation against male students visiting female students in their rooms is viewed by the undergraduates as obstacles to their freedom. Responding to pressure from the undergraduates, the administrators and teachers did some re-thinking on the matter and came to the conclusion that the undergraduates 'have a point'. And today there are mixed hostels where males and females live together and visit one another's room in total freedom. But it is not just the regulation on visiting rooms that is opposed by American university students. They regard all rules and regulations as obstacles to their freedom and persistently oppose all of them. The result is that all regulations are cast aside. The undergraduates can do anything they like. It was in this climate of untrammelled freedom that the office of a university was taken over by undergraduates and files, documents and office equipment destroyed.

As taking over an office also constitutes a freedom, the destruc-

tion wreaked by the students was not considered wrong and legal action was not taken against them. Those who demolished the office were not taken to court and there was no compensation of any kind.

What is clear from this incident is the collapse of a system of values. Once, regulations and laws were considered good and useful to society. Today, regulations and laws are no longer considered good and rioting, trespassing, vandalism, intimidation and the like are regarded as normal happenings which should not be stopped, reacted to or legally punished.

The rejection of regulations and laws is not confined to universities. In the entire Western society, conventions or normal values are flouted. If wearing clean, neat clothes was once a social norm or normal social practice, today shabby, torn and wild attire is the thing. If society once required hair to be regularly cut and combed, today it must be kept long and filthy and never combed, as a token of the high priority given to 'freedom' in a society's system of values. Such is the change of values in the West that those with long unkempt hair, beards and wild attire are considered 'handsome' while those whose hair is short and neatly combed, whose faces are clean-shaven and who wear coats and ties are judged 'ugly'.

All differences between men and women are rejected. What men can do, women must also be able to do. It began with dressing alike, i.e. if men wear trousers, women too must wear trousers. The rejection of old values finally involved prostitution, i.e. if men can go to female prostitutes, women must be able to go to male prostitutes.

Marriage in accordance with religion and civil law is rejected and lawless living together is accepted as normal. Not content with this, there are men who 'marry' men, and there is also the set-up where a man lives with a man and a woman and is the 'lover' of both.

All this constitutes the rejection of 'normal' social values. As the rejection is of regulations and laws, those whose task is law enforcement are abused and treated with contempt. Policemen are called 'pigs' and the police role of keeping the peace is regarded as oppression.

What is the connection between the Western rejection of values with us in Malaysia, particularly the Malays, who are Muslims? Since no individual or society can stand in isolation, and given modern communication methods, what happens in another part of the world will influence the life here. If the West rejects old values and develops

perverted new ones, sooner or later our society too will undergo similar changes.

This has in fact taken place. The most rapid change has been in style of attire. But a change in style of attire is not in itself a serious problem. It becomes one when it is followed by other value changes. For instance, when together with the style of attire of the hippies, marijuana smoking, reluctance to work and other values of the hippies are practised.

Living together out of wedlock is not rife among the Malays but there is evidence that it does occur. Values permitting and accepting sex outside marriage already exist among the Malays today. And many other forms of behaviour which were once forbidden and considered bad by Malay society are now taken lightly and accepted as normal.

The collapse of values regarding religion and the opinion of society is evident in several incidents. A Malay girl who goes abroad to study marries a man from another race. According to the old ways, such a marriage can take place only when the man becomes a Muslim, and the children are brought up as Muslims. True, this can be ensured only in form. In substance, there is no way of ascertaining whether the husband and the children are true Muslims. But then it is not easy to ascertain whether any Muslim is a true one. No human being can read the soul of another. Only God knows the truth.

In the case of the Malay girl's marriage, what happens is that, first, the man does not become a Muslim. This is because the Malay girl herself believes (in adherence to 'freedom' *a la* West) that on the question of religion everyone should be free. Even if her husband were to become a Muslim, it might be just a shame, a hypocritical act to deceive society. As an 'honest' person she abhors hypocrisy.

Consistent with this freedom of worship, when they have a child, she does not bring him up in accordance with Islamic teachings. The child, she says, must also be free to choose his own religion. Whether to choose the religion of his mother or his father is his right to decide.

This incident clearly shows the change in values that can occur among the Malays. It may be an extreme case. But developments that go beyond bounds usually begin with a tiny deviation. We cannot tell when a slight shift in values is followed by another slight shift and ends up in the flouting of all the old values as in the above

case.

'Slight shifts' in values often occur in Malay society. Not all are bad. Quite a number are good. But as the value changes in the West are more towards bad than good, and as it is easier to copy the bad, Malay society is showing definite signs of changing for the worse.

To cite another example, the Malays normally respect age. The elderly are considered wise and held in high regard. To be sure, not all the elderly are wise or merit respect. Some are stupid and backward in their thinking.

To respect all elderly people on principle may not be quite right. But not to respect all elderly people is also not right, for it must be acknowledged that the elderly were young once. If in their youth they merited respect (for we now acknowledge the ability of the young), increase in years should not decrease their ability. Unfortunately today in the eyes of the young all elderly people are ugly, dirty and unworthy of respect.

The change from a society that respects age to one that looks down on the elderly constitutes total collapse of one of the values of the Malays. If once a father warned his son of a certain danger, today the son arrogantly says 'Watch out!' to the father. Today the young, especially the highly educated ones, often write to their parents to remind them what to do. They issue instructions to their parents. On the other hand, whatever instruction or guidance their parents offer is cast aside on the grounds that their parents are not knowledgeable.

Will this change in values improve society? Logically, this cannot happen. The young will grow old and will be treated with contempt by the young, whatever they fought for and achieved in their youth. The dichotomy between old and young will continue, and goodness will be judged not on merit but on source. If something is done by an elderly person, it is bad. And if the same thing is done by a young person, it becomes good.

Besides the young-old question, there are many more examples of good Malay values having been replaced by bad ones from the West. Some of the Western values assimilated are of small consequence but there are others that will destroy Malay society.

A healthy society cannot exist and continue to do so without law and order. Law and order mean limits on individual freedom. Freedom is limited because one individual's freedom may affect the rights of others or the peace and security of the society itself.

For instance, an individual should be free to voice his opinions but if this involves abusing others, society cannot permit this freedom. Similarly, an individual can act to obtain what he believes to be his right but his action must not affect the rights of others and of society itself.

To enable each member of a society to attain his rights without affecting the rights of others and the collective right of the society itself, rules are set up to control freedom in the 'methods' of demanding rights. Rules or laws cannot stand by themselves. Thus society has to create a body to enforce the laws, and all members of society are required to obey the instructions of this body.

Here you get a dilemma. If the body obtains unlimited power, there is a possibility that the power will be abused. To check this, rules are made to prevent the body from abusing its power, and another body is given the power to act in the event of such abuse.

The controlling body is called the 'police'. The power given to the police is subject to the laws. Their work is vital to a society. If they abuse their power, there are ways of putting an end to the abuse. However, in their efforts to safeguard the collective interests of society, there are bound to be parties who feel the pressure of the laws they enforce. These parties will regard such pressure as 'oppression'. So long as it is only they who regard police action as oppression, it does not matter. But if society sympathizes with them, there will be problems.

If a society condemns its own police for carrying out the task it has itself given to them, the society will ultimately have its peace disrupted. If the police are called 'pigs' to ape the fashion set by American students, laws which keep the peace in a society cannot be enforced. And having laws that cannot be enforced is worse than having no laws. A society whose laws cannot be enforced will disintegrate. There will be anarchy, an absence of order and peace, domination by the violent and the ruthless.

The attitude of Western youth to the police is clearly unhealthy. The Malay system of values holds administrators in high regard as it acknowledges the rank, status and powers that go with their office. The police are part of the administration and in Malaysia there has been no evidence of their running rampage and acting beyond legitimate limits. The government elected by the people has power over the police. In some other countries where the systems are not well-organized the police may terrorize the people, who can therefore



rightly regard them as oppressors. In such countries the police may justifiably be called 'pigs'. But in Malaysia such 'oppression' is aimed at safeguarding the interests of the majority who do not wish to be oppressed by those who want to disrupt the peace.

Dubbing all policemen 'pigs' and oppressors is a form of collapse of the system of values. What should be respected is held in contempt, and what should be held in contempt is respected. If these new values are allowed to spread and become the values of the society as a whole, two things can happen. One, the police will actually resort to oppression to preserve their power. This can happen suddenly (*coup d'état*) or gradually. But the result is the same - a Police State.

Two, the police may become weak and unable to keep the peace. The powers given to them cannot be used for fear of being accused of oppression. Finally they lose their effectiveness and the laws of the society can be broken at will. The result is the collapse of all values of the society and the disintegration of the society itself.

The examples clearly show the collapse of value systems in societies throughout the world. Another incident merits mention as further evidence of such collapse.

In England a young man was recently arrested for trying to explode 'laughing gas' in court. The proceedings of a court of law are imbued with solemnity and any disruption is seriously viewed as showing contempt and can be heavily penalized.

In this case, when the young man was charged in court, the judge ruled that if the police could use tear gas in course of their duties, the young man could not be blamed for using 'laughing gas'.

This judgement constitutes a 'perversion of values'. Bad has been interpreted as good. If the logic of the judge's ruling were extended, anybody could use any equipment used by the police for any purpose he likes. The use of tear gas, armoured cars, firearms, etc. could not be prohibited for anyone. What would happen to peace in society is very clear.

So far the examples and the discussion have centred around the bad consequences of changes in a system of values. But not all value changes are bad for society. In fact the good found in human societies today came from changes in values - i.e. shifting esteem from bad behaviour to good.

Islam is one of the most powerful influences in replacing bad values with good ones. In the pre-Islamic period, killing daughters in infancy was considered normal practice but Islam declared it a heinous

crime. Arab society accepted the new value with Islam and prohibited the killing of daughters. Any attempt to practise the old value was severely punished by society, which shows that a change for the good had taken place in the Arab system of values. The benefits to Arab society owing to changes in the system of values after accepting Islam prove that value changes need not be for the worse. The problem is man's weakness when it comes to examining, studying and considering the effects and consequences involved when he is faced with an attempt to change a particular value.

In this modern age, a value that is often given priority is 'Basic Human Rights'. In the beginning the concept that every human being has rights was easily acceptable. Man should not be oppressed. Man's oppression of man, seen from the point of view of logic, is most unfair. ('Logic' in this context is 'logic' according to our present system of values. If the system changes, the logic may no longer be 'logic'.)

When the concept was first formulated, there certainly were reasons for giving it priority. Slaves of old had no rights and their status was no higher than that of beasts of burden. The system of values during the days of slavery looked upon the law status of the slaves as normal and not in any way bad or unjust.

But in every society there were some more humane individuals who could not bear to see human beings treated like animals. They were unhappy to see the cruel treatment of slaves. At first such individuals were few but their numbers grew. Their views became stronger. Finally they were prepared to fight to gain freedom for the slaves. At this stage society's opinion probably changed, accepting that it is bad to enslave a human being. In other words, the old value regarding slaves was replaced by a new and more humane value. Today it has become normal to condemn slavery. And none can say that this value change is for the worse.

The abolition of slavery was a radical step which at that time was regarded as the ultimate act which ended the problem of man's enslavement and oppression of man. The world community believed that with the abolition of slavery, mankind was giving total respect to 'humanity' as a value.

But after slavery had been abolished for some time, feelings of satisfaction over the achievement began to fade. The freed slaves and their descendants, though free, did not enjoy the same status as their former masters and the descendants of those former masters.

This inequality was regarded as a form of oppression. The cause was taken up and fought for until society accepted and practised the concept of equality between ex-slaves and their descendants on the one hand and ex-masters and their descendants on the other. Another of society's values had changed.

For a while the value change satisfied all parties. But this did not last. Equality was not enough. The descendants of slaves should have a chance to become leaders and bosses to the descendants of their masters. Efforts to change society's values were continued, and will go on forever.

But the change of values regarding man's oppression of man did not end with the abolition of slavery. Though slavery no longer existed, other forms of oppression were still thriving. For instance, colonialism of one country by another was a form of oppression. There was the struggle to abolish imperialism. The fall of colonialism as a result of the struggle constituted another value change for the better.

Although colonialism of one country by another is no longer rife, oppression of man by man still occurs. The Government of a country can and often does oppress the people though both are of one race. The question is the degree of 'oppression'. What freedom should be given to the individual, and who should decide the degree of freedom to be given?

In a democracy, the majority can decide the degree of freedom that should be given. But they cannot make up their minds on each instance of alleged tyranny. So they set up a Government and give it the right to decide what freedom can be permitted and what cannot be. Also, in a democratic system, minority rights are guaranteed. But who will make the decision when the views of the Government that represents the majority conflict with those of a minority or an individual.

If an individual wishes to do something and the law prohibits it, is not this tantamount to oppression of the minority by the majority? Philosophers will objectively and neutrally say that by definition, legal constraints on individual wishes constitute 'oppression'. As society values freedom and basic human rights and condemns oppression, society cannot go against the wishes of the individual.

Similarly, if the 'customs' of a society prohibit some act and an individual wants to do it, society cannot stop the individual if it does not wish to be accused of oppressing the people and violating basic

human rights.

Scrutiny will reveal that today the change in values has gone so far that freedom from all 'oppression' comes first, overriding laws and customs. This change has taken place as a continuing process from the struggle to abolish slavery, which was indubitably a good cause. Is the high priority given to freedom from all 'oppression' as good a value as that of freedom for slaves? To understand and answer this question, we need to study various practices and interpretations of basic human rights and their effect on society.

In Europe as elsewhere, homosexual liaisons have been forbidden and condemned by society. But some like to indulge in such deviant behaviour. In their eyes, social customs and rules are a form of 'oppression'. In recent years there has been a movement fighting for the 'basic rights' of these deviants. At first society maintained its stand. But when questions of rights and of oppression of the minority by the majority were played up, some supposedly 'rational' individuals began to have doubts about society's attitude in the matter. If society truly values basic human rights and rejects all forms of oppression, is society being honest if it allows laws and customs to thwart the desires of a particular group? The question confused society. Finally, as a result of fanatical faith in the sovereignty of basic human rights, customs and laws were abolished or disregarded to allow such deviant, non-human behaviour. Such was the logical development of the abolition of slavery. Supposedly in the cause of humanity, men have turned into beasts.

But society still has many laws and customs left. Those who dislike certain laws and customs will have their desires thwarted. This means that so long as laws and customs exist, so long will there be oppression of the minority or the individual. Since in modern human systems freedom from all forms of oppression is given top priority, customs and laws can be flagrantly flouted by anybody without any punitive measure from any quarter.

In these conditions, rules and customs like proper attire, decent behaviour, and reverence for religion, marriage, the family, work, mutual respect, honesty and a myriad other values, no longer have a place in human society. Priority, devotion and adulation are given to 'basic rights'. Anything that is interpreted by anyone as a 'basic right' must be allowed, regardless of effects and consequences.

A strange fact is that on analysis, it will be clear that these 'basic rights' and 'freedom from oppression' are themselves a form of op-

pression - the oppression of the majority by the minority or the individual. In a democratic system, for instance, workers are given the right to go on strike to prevent oppression by employers. At first this did protect the rights of workers, in that injustice on the part of employers would be punished with financial loss due to a strike. But the growth of unions has been such that a strike no longer affects only the employers concerned but the rest of society as well. Today when workers go on strike, the innocent public suffers. Therefore a strike has become too potent a weapon and workers, with their right to go on strike, have grown too powerful. And such tremendous power is prone to abuse.

When British coal-mine workers go on strike, almost the entire population of Britain suffers due to lack of heating fuel, and some of the sick and the aged die of cold. When nurses or doctors go on strike, patients - who are greater in number than they are - are badly affected. When workers in factories making car-engines go on strike, workers in other factories which use the engines have to be retrenched. Thus it is that the right to go on strike, initially designed to protect workers from oppression, has now become a weapon used to oppress others.

In the United States at a housing estate where ordinary families lived peaceful lives, an entrepreneur built a cinema which showed obscene films. The entire housing estate community felt that this would corrupt morals and destroy the peace. But a court of law was of the opinion that the 'right' of the cinema-owner must not be over-ridden. The right of the housing estate community - i.e. of the greater number - to protect themselves from the bad effects of obscene films was not given consideration. In other words, a 'basic right' of one individual succeeded in nullifying the basic rights of the majority.

These examples show that 'basic human rights' and 'freedom from oppression', though rightfully respected for the wholesomeness of their basis and aims, when given an extreme interpretation can become a form of injustice and oppression.

Such has been the evolution of values relating to 'basic human rights'. At first the change in values brought betterment, but gradually it led to a reversal of the original situation; where once the minority was oppressed by the majority, today it is the majority that is oppressed by the minority and the individual. Nevertheless, so strong is the belief in the new value, i.e. the sanctity of the 'rights and freedom of the individual' that this oppression of the majority has

received neither attention nor proper consideration. Let the sick and the aged die, let the family's morals be corrupted, let the economy of the country collapse, so long as 'basic human rights' are upheld.

The Malays should pay heed to this history of the transformation of values, for human value systems in various parts of the world can no longer be kept separate from one another. The invasion of the Malay system of values by the Western system has been taking place since the first contact between the Malay States and the West. The results of the invasion have not all been bad. Some outdated Malay values have been replaced by rather positive 'Western' ones. But many undesirable Western values have seeped into the Malay system.

In this age of instant communication, the Malays cannot isolate themselves from other systems. But each nation that has faith in itself can exercise censorship on all invading elements. The values of another society need not spread unchecked. It is up to each society to set the limits beyond which it will not accept the influence of a foreign system.

At the beginning of this chapter it was stated that the existence of a human society is rooted in a system of values that develops or is developed by that society. This chapter emphasizes that the state of a society, i.e. whether it is advanced or backward, is determined by its system of values. As a system of values is so vital in deciding the fate of a society, a change in the system of values means a change in the state of the society.

Considering the importance of a system of values, a society must be vigilant and careful of its value system and of changes or threatened changes which can happen at any time. This means that changes must not be allowed to take place in a casual fashion. Those with the training and authority in a society must play significant roles in selecting and shaping new values and substituting these for the old. A situation where anybody can bring about any change he fancies will lead to undesirable consequences.

In Malay society, as in others, a system of values plays the main role of destiny. Today Malay values are changing without systematic study and without guidance. Anybody can attack the current system and set up new values. This results in senseless conflict and confusion. It is time the Malays realized this and thought out the right steps to ensure that such a vital and potent tool as a system of values was properly used for the good of the Malay community.

## Spirituality and the Modern Challenge

فَاقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقِيمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ  
يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يُصَدِّعُونَ  
مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا  
فَلَا تَنْفُسُهُمْ يَمْهَدُونَ. لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْكُفْرَ نِفَ .

- سورة الروم - الآية: ٤٣  
٤٥

The Interpretation:

*And set thou thy face to the right religion, before these come from Allah the Day which there is no chance of averting: on that Day shall men be divided. Those who reject faith will suffer from that rejection: And those who work righteousness will spread their couch for themselves. That He may reward those who believe and work righteous deeds, out of His bounty; for He loves not those who reject faith.*

(Surah Al-Rum, Ayat 43-45)

These verses clearly urge the faithful (Muslims) to do good deeds and not to disobey God's injunctions. The problem that arises is that different leaders and interpreters of Islamic teachings have different interpretations. Although in general all agree that only good must be done, in certain matters there are differences of opinion on what is good and what is not. And these differences are so evident that fellow-Muslims become bitter foes.

Thus it is that although Muslims are asked to regard one another as brothers, the reality is that Muslim nations make war on each other (aided by non-Muslims) and Muslims of one nation are divided among themselves and seek to destroy one another.

In Egypt, for example, the government supported by a great number of Muslims there is opposed by a small group of people who claim that they are the only true Muslims and have the right to decide the form of government Egypt should have. To achieve their objectives, they are prepared to assassinate Muslim leaders who support the government and even to weaken Egypt by urging Muslims in the army and other government institutions to disobey government directives. In a situation where Egypt is facing Israeli attacks, these attempts, if successful, would surely bring victory for Israel. But, aware of this though they must be, the members of the minority group remain convinced that whatever they do is good and in line with Islamic teachings.

Thus something manifestly bad can be interpreted as being good by Muslims when they have a leader who deviates from the norm. And such are the consequences. The fault is not in Islam but in Islamic leaders who are not above making mistakes and yielding to base impulses. If all Muslim leaders shared a common interpretation of Islamic teachings, Muslims would not be divided. And those among the Muslims who were not well-versed in the religion would not have to choose between interpretations and between leaders. But since the religious experts disagree among themselves, Muslims who have not specialized in religion have to make a choice based on meagre knowledge. Such is the dilemma faced by the Malays (all of whom are Muslims) in Malaysia. And such is the confusion in the interpretation of 'spirituality' among the Malays today when they seek guidance from their leaders. In a democracy, where everyone must make his own choices, it is most bewildering when reality, logic and faith are in conflict. The result of this bewilderment is a choice that is not only unwise but dangerous to the individual and



to society.

That materialism cannot make mankind happy has been discussed in the chapter 'Materialism and Spirituality'. And can a society that upholds spiritual values achieve happiness in this modern age?

In ancient times when a society could isolate itself in a particular area, cutting off all relations with other societies and the outside world, the practice of a spiritually-oriented philosophy could easily bring it happiness. But in the modern age no society can cut itself off from the rest of the world. Whether they like it or not, the people in every society will have to face up to 'trespass' by the outside world – something they can neither avoid nor stop.

The easier the communications between one human group and another, the harder it is to avoid 'trespass'. Since not all societies practise spiritual values, any society that does so will have to cope with materialistic influences. The result is that its spiritual values and philosophy will be tarnished by greed for things material, which is the philosophical basis of the modern materialistic society.

It must be emphasized here that interest in worldly affairs is not synonymous with materialism. Man cannot avoid owning property. Even a beggar owns property, though it be just the piece of cloth he is wearing. He must have some regard and care for this property. But this does not mean he is greedy for things material or is materialistic.

The beggar will try to add to his property. In the same way anyone who already has property will try to add to it. Striving to add to one's property does not amount to being materialistic.

But a beggar or a millionaire becomes a materialist when he is prepared to do anything to add to his property and wealth and his life is dominated, in both thought and deed, by the pursuit of wealth. Such people will not return to society a portion of their wealth, in the form of voluntary contributions or otherwise, to help the less fortunate. They will, out of greed, strive to evade any kind of social responsibility.

It is clear, therefore, that the ownership of property or the seeking of wealth do not make a person a materialist unless he is so obsessed with wealth that he forgets his responsibilities to the society in which he lives. In other words, he is devoid of 'humanity'. It is important to understand this because it is all too easy for a community to be confused by the notion that poverty means spiritual

strength and the possession of worldly wealth is synonymous with materialism.

Islamic history shows that poverty and wealth have no correlation with spirituality and materialism. Certainly poverty and wealth do not determine a person's religious creed and faith (*aqidah* and *iman*). Many Islamic leaders are wealthy but none can doubt their adherence to Islamic teachings which place importance on spiritual values. Saidina Usman, for instance, was well-to-do. And Siti Khadijah, who became the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, was a wealthy businesswoman. They were rich, but they were not devotees of materialism. On the contrary, they and other close associates of the Prophet and Islamic leaders in the time of the four great Caliphs and after, used their wealth to help propagate Islam throughout the world. That the Malays are Muslims today is partly due to the wealth of Arab and Indian traders who sailed far and wide on business – business which was directly connected to the pursuit of wealth and property.

الَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى. وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا  
فَهَدَى. وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى.

- سورة الضحى، الآية ١، ٨-٦

The Interpretation:

*Did Allah not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee poor, and gave thee wealth.*

(Surah Dhuha, Ayat 6-8)

Islam never urged the rejection of worldly wealth. There must be balance between this world (*dunia*) and the next (*akhirat*). Thus Muslims are asked to work as if they were going to live for ever and to perform religious duties as if they were going to die the next day.

اعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَدًا  
وَأَعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَدًا  
- الحديث -

The Interpretation:

*Work thou for this world as though thou wilt live for ever,  
and for the hereafter as though thou wilt die tomorrow.*

(Al-Hadith [Traditions of the Prophet])

The following words of Allah also give value to worldly concerns:

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي  
الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ  
وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ .

- سورة الجمعة : ١٠ -

The Interpretation:

*And when ye have completed your prayers, disperse through  
the land and seek the bounty of Allah and remember Allah  
constantly, that ye may achieve success.*

(Surah Al-Jumu'ah, Ayat 10)

Islam does not look upon things of the world with the asceticism found in some other faiths. Islam does not ask any of its followers to live in a monastery or a nunnery, to be celibate, or to become

a hermit in the mountains. In Christianity, for example, there are several instances of rejection of the world. Roman Catholic priests are not allowed to marry. In other faiths too there are religious orders whose members isolate themselves from the rest of society, reject worldly concerns all their lives and devote their time to religious rituals. Lately these religious orders have become less rigid in their attitudes. But among the Roman Catholics the concept of rejecting the world remains. In their eyes, the rejection of the world (which God created) is a form of religious devotion which earns them spiritual merit.

In Islam there are no hermits and no religious orders which reject the world. For the rejection of the world and its wealth does not necessarily effect or enhance adherence to spiritual values. Although Sufis (Muslim mystics) study to reach the highest spiritual values, Sufism is not a religious order which rejects all worldly concerns.

There is no place in Islam for extremist theories and practices. This is clear from the words of Allah in *Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 190*:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقْتُلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ.

- سورة البقرة، الآية : ١٩٠ -

The Interpretation:

*Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for Allah loveth not transgressors.*

(*Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 190*)

And these words of Allah in *Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 93*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ

وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلَحُونَ.

- سورة المائدة، الآية: ٩٣

#### The Interpretation:

*O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to idols, and divination by arrows, are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork: Eschew such, that ye may prosper.*

(Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 93)

What Islam demands is not rejection of the world but awareness and humanity. The act of worship reminds all Muslims that however wealthy, powerful or brilliant they are, there is a power that is in every way greater than they are. It also reminds us that rich or poor, king or commoner, leader or follower, we are all essentially equal. In this way we are saved from the overweening pride which so easily grips the minds of the very clever, the very powerful and the very rich. Society becomes more just, peaceful and happy with the absence of that pride which causes misunderstanding and hatred among men.

Fasting, which is compulsory for all Muslims, makes them aware of the suffering of those in the throes of hunger (i.e. the poor). During the fasting month, a Muslim is not only made to experience hunger pangs but also to reject thoughts, intentions and acts that are unworthy and forbidden by religion and society. This is a tough and effective spiritual exercise. While in the grip of hunger and thirst, a Muslim is expected to control wild impulses which can be harmful to himself and to society. Certainly such an exercise increases a Muslim's ability to face the challenges of life successfully and makes Islamic society more orderly and peaceful. Besides, appreciation for ordinary everyday food and drink will be enhanced and gratitude will replace the arrogance of the affluent who have never known suffering.

The religious duty of *zakat*, or paying property tax, reduces the economic differences between one group and another in society, thus preserving peace and avoiding conflict. *Zakat* creates and nurtures feelings of responsibility and consideration among Muslims, thereby

lessening envy which so often causes disruption in a society.

The final duty of doing the *haj* or pilgrimage to the Holy Land is the culmination of all these exercises, making them more effective and instilling awareness of the brotherhood of all Muslims, regardless of colour, race, class or any other difference existing among men.

Clearly the rituals of worship and religious duties (*ibadah*) in Islam are designed to make Muslims aware of the attitudes they should have and the responsibilities they must shoulder to society and to God. These attitudes and responsibilities can be effectively held and carried out only if a Muslim plays his role fully in society. If he withdraws from society, becoming a hermit and performing rituals of worship all by himself, he is of course unable to play any role at all. In other words, a Muslim is not asked to reject the world totally and isolate himself from society. All Islam asks is that a Muslim should not let worldly concerns monopolize his thoughts and his time and make him inconsiderate, irresponsible and inhuman.

Rituals of worship in Islam are different from those of other religions. There are rituals of worship in other religions which are practised because they are said to give happiness to the individual concerned, making him a pious person who is preferred by God. This gives rise to groups who strive to devote all their time to rituals of worship and reject the world in order to reach a high level in religious attainment and perhaps earn the title of 'saint'.

A person who rejects the world also rejects society. The rituals of worship he performs are for himself alone. If everybody did this, conditions in society would worsen and society itself might disintegrate. For instance, if all the males in a society became monks and all the females nuns, it would be a society of pious people but would soon be extinct. When society becomes extinct, so does religion, for a religion without living followers is totally meaningless. A religion lives while its followers live.

The survival of the 'pious' groups depends on those who are not 'pious', who do not reject worldly concerns. Without the 'worldly' endeavours of 'ordinary' people, such groups or individuals who seek happiness solely for themselves would not be able to do so. This again shows how important 'worldly' concerns are even for those who reject them.

If worldly endeavours are necessary and important for the performance of rituals of worship and adherence to spiritual values,

to what extent should one pursue these endeavours? Would it not be enough to seek worldly wealth only to the extent of enabling one to perform rituals of worship? What is the use of acquiring extra wealth which does not help in the performance of these rituals?

If wealth is looked at purely from the point of view of the individual who owns it, it is of course true that extra wealth is of no use to him if he truly upholds spiritual values. But from the point of view of society, extra wealth possessed by an individual can bring benefits. If high taxes are imposed on his earnings while he is alive and on the property he leaves behind when he dies, his wealth can improve the lot of others in that society who are not wealthy. Without the wealthy, taxes for financing the administration of a society would be imposed on the poor. Such a burden would surely not make a society happier.

Therefore the role of the rich has been decided in Islam in the payment of the *zakat* (Islamic property tax). *Zakat* would be meaningless if there were no wealthy people in an Islamic society. The aim of *zakat* and *fitrah* (special tithe at the festival of Aidil Fitri) is that a portion of the wealth accumulated by an individual should go towards helping those who are less fortunate. The division of the property of a deceased person is such that wealth is not confined to a single line of inheritance. The Islamic method disperses such property and, both directly and indirectly, helps to fulfil a society's responsibility towards its members. To some extent the gap between the rich and the poor is narrowed when an inheritance is divided through *faraid*, the Islamic way.

The role of wealth owned by an individual or a group in a society goes beyond helping to develop the society and to eradicate poverty. Wealth is a very potent form of power. Through economic and social channels, with or without legitimacy, wealth can shape the thinking and the attitudes of a society. The government itself is not immune to the influence of wealth.

Indeed, Western political ideologies, directly or indirectly, are based on wealth. The free capitalist system came into being when wealth dominated the entire thinking of a society. On the other hand, the socialist and communist systems arose out of the reaction of envy to the monopoly of wealth by a small group. Basically, therefore, the three systems or ideologies are identical - all three being based on greed for things material.

In view of the role played by material wealth in shaping the iden-

ity of a society, which individual or group owns the wealth becomes a vital question. If a group that worships material things, i.e. is solely guided by materialistic values, monopolizes the wealth, sooner or later the society will turn capitalist, socialist or communist. When a society turns capitalist, socialist or communist, groups which are not guided by materialism, i.e. those who uphold spiritual values, are forced to turn capitalist, socialist or communist as well.

This transformation can be seen in some Arab countries which have rejected Islam. The monopoly of wealth by materialists aroused envy among the poor. Through subversion from outside, socialist and communist ideologies were accepted. Since these ideologies are based on materialism, Islam and spirituality have been cast aside. Today, in some countries that were once Islamic states, religion and spirituality no longer have a place. Each member of society is interested solely in 'justice' in the distribution of property.

If ownership of wealth by worshippers of material things leads to social destruction, will not ownership of wealth by upholders of spiritual values bring the same result? Will not wealth change the attitudes and philosophy of life of this group as well?

We cannot guarantee that adherence to spiritual values will not be eroded by the influence of wealth on man's natural greed. But where spiritual training has been strong and a society is dominated by spiritual values, there is less probability of the mind becoming obsessed with greed. The stronger the spiritual training, the slimmer is the probability of materialistic influences ousting spirituality.

However, the choice before upholders of spirituality is not between rejecting and accepting the world and its wealth. The world with its wealth and a myriad social activities will exist irrespective of what philosophies of life or death dominate human minds. The choice before the spiritual group is whether to let greedy materialists own all the wealth of the world and the power that goes with it, or to own that wealth themselves. If the materialistic group owns that wealth, the spiritual group cannot but face destruction. On the other hand, if the spiritual group owns the wealth, there is some hope that they can still avoid moral decadence.

There is no evading this choice, for no modern society is totally homogenous in this respect. In each society there are those who are obsessed with material things and those who uphold spirituality. Competition is inevitable between the two groups, each striving to dominate the other. The choice becomes all the more important as



no society in this modern age is immune from the influence of the world outside. And the world outside cannot be controlled by a society which seeks to uphold spiritual values. The realities, on the contrary, are that what Muslims term 'the world outside' is no longer influenced by religion and is obsessed with material things.

Even Mecca, the Holy Land, cannot but feel the effects of ideas, activities and general restlessness of the world outside. None can deny that the communication explosion, for instance, has changed conditions in and around Mecca. The number of pilgrims has grown to such proportions that problems of accommodation and welfare necessitate all sorts of new measures and amenities to ensure satisfactory and safe performance of the pilgrimage (*hajj*). And the impact of global inflation is felt as much in Mecca as elsewhere; its effects on the pilgrimage are evident.

If the Holy Land itself feels the pressure of worldly concerns, other societies upholding spiritual values cannot hope to escape it. The situation in West Asia is a clear example. The 70 million Arabs, mostly Muslims, possessed no wealth (neither property nor ability) and were unable to defend themselves without the help of communists and capitalists. Today they do have material wealth (from oil) but continue to lack 'worldly' ability and efficiency (as a result of insufficient pursuit of 'worldly' knowledge). Attacks by the two million Israelis still threaten the Arab world and the Arabs are still dependent for defence on the Americans (capitalists) and the Russians (communists).

This state of insecurity weakens the bonds of brotherhood among Muslims. To save oneself, one forgets oppressed brothers. Directly or indirectly, the pressure of worldly problems erodes adherence to spirituality. It is highly likely that if the pressure continues and worsens, religious faith itself will decline. Again it should be noted that in some Arab countries, Islam has lost its followers, is no longer the faith of the majority nor the official religion of the state.

If only the group upholding Islamic spiritual values had been rich, able and efficient, well-versed in the various disciplines of the world ('the world' is not synonymous with 'materialism'), with the tremendous source of wealth that God has given the Arab states, they would have been secure from the Israeli threat; in fact, there might not have been an Israel at all. It is strange and shameful that 70 million people with wealth cannot defend themselves against two million people without wealth.

Such are the realities. Some may say that there is a hidden benefit (*khasiat*) or wisdom (*hikmat*) in the present situation in West Asia; that we need neither worry about it nor learn a lesson from it; that we need not change our attitudes nor strive to save other upholders of Islamic spiritual values from the same fate! They may say that though the West far surpasses Islamic nations in wealth and strength, the Islamic nations continue to exist and Islam remains strongly rooted in the hearts of its followers.

Again reality belies this notion. Several Islamic countries in Central Asia have fallen into communist hands and the new generation in these countries neither believes in Islam nor upholds spiritual values. As communists they believe that the way to human happiness is through dictatorship of the proletariat and equal distribution of property. For them religion is an empty dream. Thus they demolish mosques or turn them into museums for exhibiting cultures and civilizations gone by.

In some Arab countries too, socialism and communism have ousted Islam and spiritual values. Mosques and religious schools have been reduced in number and the name of Allah is no longer mentioned. Far from propagating Islam around the world as their ancestors did, these people reject Islam outright, spreading in its place an ideology diametrically opposed to it.

All this happens because the assertions of Islamic 'leaders' are found to conflict with reality. In the modern world where Muslims cannot but see the material advancement and wealth of other communities, mere claims that Islam and spirituality bring happiness cannot be easily accepted by those Muslims who lack strength of spirit (faith). Claims need to be supported by facts demonstrating that spiritual values can help adherents to hold their own against materialists and find happiness.

It is an undeniable fact today that Muslims are forced to bow to materialists, to beg for aid and protection. In the face of this fact, it is difficult to convince anyone that spirituality brings happiness. Palestinian refugees who are attacked, hounded, displaced and slaughtered by both Jews and fellow-Muslims can hardly accept the claim that spiritual values bring happiness. All they know is that they are oppressed by materialists and that those who speak of the happiness brought by spirituality are too weak to give them effective aid.

Today the call is frequently made to preserve spiritual values and reject materialism. Everybody agrees that spiritual values are

desirable. But there is much confusion still about the definitions and the roles of spirituality and materialism. And there is no clear understanding of the challenge faced by spirituality in these times. In this hazy state of mind, it is difficult to make decisions on effective measures and attitudes.

The result is a wide range of attitudes and measures from various groups defending and upholding spirituality. Some regard certain clothes and colours, television sets, cars and other modern facilities as symbols of materialism (worldliness) and wage all-out war on these symbols of their own making. Others try to isolate themselves from others and condemn those who do not join their 'struggle'. Yet others are prepared to kill and torture fellow-Muslims (e.g. the assassination of the Egyptian Minister) claiming that they are fighting to uphold Islam and true moral values.

Man as an intelligent creature will certainly perish if he lets emotions and desires control his actions. Man as an intelligent creature needs to study and investigate calmly the problems he faces.

The challenge to spiritual values in this modern age is indeed evident. The challenge can be faced. History has shown how, in pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyah*) times, desires dominated social behaviour. History has also shown how in 23 years Islam managed to control human desires and lead society to the true path. And history has shown how in subsequent centuries Islam continued to spread and destroy undesirable values in nearly two-thirds of the then known world.

If today once more spirituality is challenged, the task of defending and upholding it should be based on sane analysis and action. A symbolic war is meaningless and cannot bring success. The same applies to the attempt to isolate oneself and to disrupt the unity of Muslims, who are already adherents of spiritual values.

Enemies of spiritual values are not just the materialists. More pernicious enemies are the unbridled passions and the shallow knowledge of those who wish to uphold spirituality but are hazy about what really challenges and weakens spirituality. Spirituality is not challenged by materialistic values alone. Spirituality is also challenged by the paucity of knowledge and the overweening pride of its very adherents. So long as this truth is not faced, the task of defending spiritual values will remain an exceedingly difficult one.

## Pressure Groups in a Democracy

Every political system has certain groups attempting to push their views through the Government in power. These are called pressure groups, for they strive to impose their ideas on the Government in various ways, systematically or otherwise. Most of these groups are harmless and can be useful. But there are pressure groups that can adversely affect the Government or the nation.

Pressure groups abound in a democratic system, and as they often do their work in the lobbies of legislative assemblies, they are said to be 'lobbying'. 'Lobbying' is, in fact, an integral part of a democratic system.

But lately some pressure groups are not content with lobbying as their *modus operandi*. They want their views to prevail on the people's representatives and the Government, regardless of whether the people's representatives and the Government agree with these views.

A democracy is guided by the views and the consensus of the majority. A pressure group is a minority. Clearly, therefore, a pressure group is not effective outside the lobby of the assembly hall unless it uses undemocratic weapons.

A weapon considered effective in recent times is the demonstration. At first it was a peaceful means. With the permission of the authorities, a procession was held, the participants carrying banners and calling out slogans. In Japan, students demonstrated by holding a snake-dance - forming four or five rows and dancing in imitation of a snake's movements.

At times a government would itself use a demonstration to show public support for a certain policy. Sukarno held frequent demonstrations in support of his confrontation policy. On occasion a

demonstration of Sukarno's erupted into arson when participants set fire to foreign embassy buildings in Jakarta.

In the United States, demonstrations were used by students and other young men to avoid becoming Vietnam war casualties. The US had been used to winning wars fast. But after being involved in Vietnam several years, it was clear that victory was beyond reach and that young Americans had suffered death, injury and captivity for nothing.

The young men of America could not honestly admit their cowardice about going to the war. In their demonstrations, they tried to make out that they were driven by compassion for the Vietnamese who were being victimized by American military power. Their demonstrations culminated in the burning of their draft cards, so that they would not have to register for military service. This was their real motive. Finally they managed to force the US government to reduce American participation in Vietnam, which led to defeat for South Vietnam.

The Vietnamese are still suffering the effects of the war but the young people of America have lost interest in Vietnam. Having achieved their objective, the young Americans concentrate on their studies to ensure a good future for themselves and their country. Clearly their demonstrations were not motivated by compassion but by self-interest.

Although student power is no longer wielded in the US, students as a pressure group have been accepted as a 'reality', emulated and practised by students in other countries. In France and other European countries, students are constantly playing the role of a pressure group. But their objectives are usually limited and do not include seizure of political power or toppling the current government.

In the East, their effectiveness as a pressure group seemed to have been proved by the fall of Sukarno in Indonesia and Thanom Kittikachorn in Thailand. The success of Indonesian and Thai students encouraged others to act as pressure groups, using demonstrations as a political tool.

In a country where the government has become so corrupt and rotten that it is destroying the people and the country, demonstrations may have a place. Even then, a sane survey will show that even if a change of government can be effected through demonstrations, corruption and inefficiency cannot be wiped out so easily.

On the other hand, in a country whose government is far from

corrupt or rotten, the use of demonstrations by a pressure group can only worsen conditions. Whether or not the demonstrations are allowed by the laws of the country, the result is the same – the destruction of the rule of law and the creation of anarchy.

This can be proved by tracing the history of student demonstrations in Malaysia from the beginning and following its logical course to the end. Starting with forums and dialogues where guest speakers were criticized by students present, demonstrations developed into speakers' corners for inflaming emotions, effigy-burning, banners condemning certain prominent figures, processions, mass rallies on the campus, mass rallies outside the campus, fighting the police, using violence and disrupting the peace.

Finding a reason for a demonstration was never a problem. It could be created out of the selection of a Vice-Chancellor, a university site, a student leader's failure in an examination, salary scales for future employment or any other university problem. Then the reason changed to 'Death from starvation'. Thence it moved to the posts of *Menteri Besar* and Ambassador, poverty, nationalization of trade, corruption, and so on. When the Government took action, reasons for demonstrating shifted to police action, the arrest of leaders and charges made against students.

Demonstrations were also held over the use of the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU). Replace the FRU with the Field Force, and it became another cause for demonstrating. If the police entered the campus, this was said to provoke a demonstration. When the police went out of the campus, the demonstration continued. Evidently anything and everything could be used as an excuse for a demonstration. What mattered was not the cause, but the show of power.

Would demonstrations cease if the Government relaxed its firmness? The answer is that when the Government does yield to the demonstrators' demands, bigger demonstrations will follow. Because the demand regarding the Vice-Chancellor was entertained, there were further demos over Bangi, university status for ITM, salary scales for graduates even before they passed their examinations, 'starvation', and long hair.

There is no doubt that had the 'starvation' demo been a success, the students would have staged bigger demos. The participation of kampung people in Kuala Lumpur and Kedah made it extremely difficult for the police to control the demos. In the Kedah demonstration, shops were ransacked and weapons used. The State flag was

treated with disrespect, offices and officers' houses were invaded and even their kitchens ransacked.

The use of children in the front line of a demonstration made it even harder for the police to keep the peace. To attack the children would arouse greater fury. Not to attack would result in worse violence behind the front line of children.

Once the people form the notion that through demonstrations they can get away with criminal acts and at the same time have their demands entertained by the authorities concerned, one group after another will demonstrate. Employees, labourers, fishermen, kam-pung folk, urban people, trishawmen, hawkers, trade unions and political parties are among the groups liable to demonstrate in their own interests. Several groups may demonstrate together, making it harder for the police to cope.

Demonstrations will not be confined to civilians. In several countries the police and the army also stage demos. When this happens, discipline ceases to exist. A country devoid of discipline can have no peace, and anarchy reigns. In a state of anarchy, nobody's safety is guaranteed. Each person has to look after his own safety.

We in Malaysia tend to imagine that what is happening in other countries could never happen to us. Just over a decade ago we never thought student demonstrations could occur here. Just over a decade ago drug abuse, hippy culture, the use of Islam for the communist cause and other phenomena were never dreamt of as possibilities in our land. But all these have come to us and none can say that we in this country will never see anarchy and the breakdown of the rule of law.

Therefore the activities of pressure groups in our country must be monitored by the Government. Even more important and effective, the people must be vigilant. The rise and fall of a government involves only a small group of people. But if pressure groups are allowed to go so far as to set aside laws and the machinery of governmental power and to bring about a state of anarchy, the entire population will suffer. From anarchy there is no return to a life of peace and order. One power struggle after another will take place. When this happens, it will be rather late to dream of the old tranquillity.

Pressure groups do have a role, but like other weapons there is danger in their use.

## **Nationalization of Foreign Industries**

A measure often taken by newly independent countries is to nationalize foreign industries and assets. This is done to prove that the independence and freedom achieved are real and that none can stop the newly independent countries doing what they wish. It may also be done out of a genuine desire to free the economy from foreign shackles. The general belief is that the profits from a foreign industry will go to the country that nationalizes it.

It cannot be denied that this is a popular move and that a government which resorts to it will win the adulation of a people rejoicing in their brand-new independence.

In the euphoria of achieving independence and taking over colonial assets and industries, the pros and cons of nationalization are seldom studied or discussed. Anyone who draws attention to possible disadvantages will be a discordant voice and bring abuse on his own head. Thus it is seldom that anybody dares to speak against the taking over of foreign commercial concerns and industries.

Apart from the idea that national independence and sovereignty should go with control of all foreign industries in one's own land, nationalization of industries is a much-vaunted socialist concept that is often implemented not only in newly independent countries but also in those that have never been colonized. When the British Labour Party became the Government, it nationalized the railway, coal-mining and steel industries which were owned by private companies belonging to British citizens. This was done in fulfilment of a socialist principle, to bring about equality of income and 'justice'.

Although in independent Malaysia nationalization is neither the policy nor the aspiration of the Government, it is often talked about



and has never failed to gain the support of one group or another among the people. Most people think that taking over a foreign industry results in the profits going to the nation. Quite a number believe that when an industry is nationalized, it becomes the property of the workers and they will get the wealth formerly enjoyed by the foreign employers.

Recently the question of nationalizing foreign industries was revived. Some groups are so bent on this that they are prepared to co-operate with those who act as a front to the communist cause. They deny that such a move can ruin the economy of a country and thus bring about a political situation conducive to the success of the communist movement. So obsessed are they with the dream of wealth through seizure of property that they disregard the failure of this method in other countries. They turn a blind eye to such realities in their infatuation with what seems an easy way to wealth. As nationalization has all sorts of implications affecting the people, it should be openly studied and analysed. The people must know the pros and cons of such a move, so that they can decide on a stand in the matter.

A commercial or industrial venture cannot succeed on just capital and planning. For instance, if a person with capital opens a sundry shop in a kampung, he cannot be sure of making a profit. Many who have opened sundry shops can testify to the truth of this statement. Success can be achieved only if the shopkeeper knows the intricacies of the retail trade and is competent in accounting, supply and salesmanship. In short, the success of a commercial venture depends largely on business acumen.

More complex business concerns, like those involving industrial factories, import-export, distribution agencies, overseas markets and the like, require even greater acumen, know-how and the right personality. Without acumen and know-how, a business cannot bring in profits. In trade, an increase in sales may not mean an increase in profits; it can, on the contrary, mean an increase in losses. Sales do not necessarily produce profits.

Cases in other countries can be studied to prove the truth of this. The coal and steel industries were among British industries which brought huge profits to the share-holders of the companies concerned before the Second World War. These industries created several British millionaires and made Britain a prosperous and renowned industrial country.

Seeing the profits obtained by the industrialists, the British Labour Government nationalized these industries with the whole-hearted support of the workers, in particular. The Government and the workers believed that through nationalization of these industries, all the profits would go to the nation and would be used for the benefit of the workers and the people in general.

History has shown that in no time the industries suffered enormous losses. Even more strange, the workers who had been so happy with the Government's taking over, did not regard the Government as a good employer. Their attitude to the Government as an employer was worse than their attitude towards the old capitalist employer.

Every year there were strikes and the industries were never profitable. Whether the Government was Labour or Conservative, the strikes went on. And these were held at critical times. For instance, workers in coal-mines frequently went on strike in winter so that greater numbers of innocent people were endangered and their demands would be met more quickly.

Whereas once the Government had obtained a great deal of revenue through taxing the profits of these industries, it could no longer collect taxes from them, for they were losing. In fact the Government had to subsidize these industries to keep them going. Though they were losing, the Government could not close them down, for the consequences would be worse. Such a move would result not only in shortage of coal and steel, which would affect other industries, but also in unemployment, which would burden the Government. Therefore the Government had no choice but to subsidize these industries, using taxes collected from industries it had not yet nationalized.

In Britain, the Government can still help the nationalized industries because there are still privately-owned industries which make profits and pay taxes. If all industries were nationalized and ceased to make profits, the Government would not have enough revenue from taxes and could not afford to give subsidies.

Besides the possibility of all nationalized industries suffering losses, all-out nationalization of industries can in itself hinder commercial success. For instance, if the Government nationalizes all industries making shirts, in accordance with the socialist ideology, the price of shirts will soar, for the purpose of nationalization is to benefit the workers. Though the Government may not wish to increase salaries, the workers will force it to do so by going on strike every

year.

Since the rich should not exist in a fully socialist State, the shirts produced must be of the kind workers can afford. But with high production costs and low selling prices, profits in the shirt-making industry must be low or non-existent. Profits are needed in business not just to enrich the businessman. Profits usually go towards payment of taxes and investment to expand the same business or start other ventures. Taxes are needed by the Government to finance administration and other commitments. Investment to expand business is important since demand for products keeps increasing. The Government as owner cannot avoid increasing production, for apart from the rise in demand, there is the problem of creating more job opportunities. If all industries are nationalized and all face the same problems, the Government may not be able to bear the burden. What with high salaries, low profits, the need to expand and start new industries, the need for taxes or a share of the profits to go to the Government as owner to finance various social amenities like education, health, security, communications and a myriad other national needs, the Government will certainly not be able to maintain and run the country.

To solve the problem of shortage of funds for administration, the Government may impose income tax. Again, if private trade and industry no longer exist, there will no longer be wealthy industrialists and traders, and there are only the workers to tax. If workers have to pay taxes, apart from the absurdity of it, the high salaries the Government pays its workers will be meaningless since half is taken back by the Government. This is what has happened in Britain. Workers go on strike to get higher wages, half (60 per cent) of which is taken back by the Government through various taxes. It would be better and easier to pay low wages and not impose taxes, for the result would be identical, i.e. the profits obtained by the Government would be the same as the taxes it collects from the workers to whom it pays such high salaries. High wages are not really high since taxes have to be paid. There is no sense in going on strike for higher wages, only to pay out the increase in the form of taxes.

The socialist ideology cannot be fully implemented anywhere, for it is a fact that nationalization of all industrial and commercial concerns will not only downgrade a country's economy but also affect the production of various necessary goods. Nationalization can be done provided it is confined to a number of important industrial

and commercial concerns. In a socialist state, much of the trade and industry should be carried out by the private sector so that profits can be taxed and the taxes used to help national industries. In other words, socialist principles can be practised only when there is free enterprise. Socialism which depends on capitalism is hypocritical.

Nationalized industries do not always suffer losses. Nationalized petroleum industries bring huge profits to the countries concerned. But this is because there are capitalist countries practising free enterprise which need to consume large quantities of petroleum. Had the supply of petroleum exceeded the demand, it would have been a different story. A petroleum-producing country cannot grow rich on the home market alone. Countries running nationalized petroleum industries depend on markets in countries which do not practise socialist principles. Again, socialism and nationalization are viable only with the existence of capitalism. What is clear is that to nationalize industries on account of a principle or an ideology, without studying the possible consequences, is futile.

These examples may provoke the retort that communist countries nationalize all industries and yet the Soviet Union, for instance, remains strong as a country and is able to become a world power that dispenses aid to other countries. The same goes for the People's Republic of China.

It cannot be denied that a communist country is able to nationalize industries without affecting the national economy. However, the vital factor in its success is not the nationalization but its dictatorial form of government which does not allow strikes or opposition of any sort.

Wielding absolute power, the government pays workers low wages and denies them a share of the country's wealth. This wealth and the results of the workers' toil are all taken by the government to maintain the machinery which curbs the people's freedom, and for the armed forces. Whether the government is popular or unpopular, whether it is just or unjust, the people do not have the right to oppose or change it.

In such a system, the affluent elite comprises the leaders of the ruling party and a small section of the people who are communist party members. This means that a minority is imposing its will over the majority. If the majority of the people were happy to be enslaved, nationalization of all industries might work. But the people cannot have both – prosperity for themselves as well as nationalization.

Nationalization of industries may work in a non-communist State

if all workers are prepared to accept a situation where the wages are low, where they cannot go on strike, are not free to change their jobs, cannot question their employers (the Government), cannot be extravagant, cannot buy non-necessities like motorcycles, television sets, motorcars and attractive clothes, cannot join or support any party except the ruling one, and so on.

If this system is carried out in Malaysia, our workers must content themselves with low wages, must not go on strike and must not make demands of any kind. In politics, only one party will be allowed and in an election 99 per cent of the votes will go to that party. Party leaders holding high posts in the government will enjoy affluence. Wealth produced by the workers' sweat will be the government's to do with as it pleases; the bulk will go towards strengthening sections which ensure that the government will remain in power. In other words, if Malaysia wishes to nationalize all industries, its political system must be transformed into a dictatorship.

Without either a dictatorship or a communist system, nationalization of industries, particularly in Malaysia, will inevitably bring economic deterioration. The reason is simple. Rubber, tin and timber are not as important as petroleum. If world prices of these commodities fall, as they often do, the industries are bound to suffer. Yet if production decreases and prices soar, consumer countries (all capitalist states) will use substitute materials, and prices will have to be brought down. Either way, Malaysia's economy will be adversely affected.

Non-primary industries need technical know-how. Electronic goods, machinery, textiles and various manufactured goods are not designed in Malaysia. Technical know-how from other countries, particularly capitalist ones, is needed. Technical know-how can be bought though the price is high, but methods, systems and designs change with constant modernization. Technical know-how is useless if it is out-of-date. Therefore a nationalized industry needs continually to increase its capital if it is to be successful. This cannot be done because a nationalized industry, as has been demonstrated, cannot make large profits.

In Malaysia, various commercial concerns have been nationalized. The railway, MAS, the Electricity Board, PERNAS, PETRONAS, industries under several State Economic Development Corporations, MARA, FIMA, FAMA, FELDA and others are state enterprises. These State enterprises have sufficient capital and the

types of industry are not only viable but sometimes constitute monopolies. Yet seldom do we hear of good profits and a large revenue through taxes. What we do know is that the Railway, the pineapple canning industry and several others are losing millions of dollars every year. We suspect lack of business acumen on the part of the management. Whatever the reason, it is evident that nationalization of trade in Malaysia will not be advantageous. On the contrary, the great likelihood is that it will bring economic decline.

Finally, there is motivation. Trade grows because of the profit motive. In a nationalized industry, the managers will no longer have the profit motive. Whether the industry shows profits or losses, the managers' earnings will not change. And they cannot change, for nationalization is a socialist way of equalizing workers' earnings. Nationalization would be meaningless if managers earned much more than other workers. This puts an end to incentive and therefore to commercial success. Without strong incentive and motivation, business is bound to fail.

All this goes to show that nationalization of industries is not a simple matter and is very likely to prove disadvantageous. However, this picture is not 100 per cent accurate. There are industries that should be nationalized. Petroleum is a vital commodity today and know-how, capital and management skills can be obtained even though the industry is partly nationalized. The same applies to telecommunications, electricity, railway, aviation and industries which can be monopolized. In these cases the main concern should not be profit but national interest, especially in times of emergency as in the event of a war.

From a practical point of view if we nationalize any agency, for instance estate management, import-export and distributors and agents for various imports and purchasing agents for foreign trade, the first problem is to study and understand all areas of that particular field of commerce. There is usually a shortage of government officers and there is frequent 'pinching' of officers among statutory bodies. Thus it is not easy to fill important posts in a nationalized industry. Even if these posts can be filled, success cannot be guaranteed. If statutory bodies that have been going on for years are still unable to make large profits and contribute to government revenue through taxes, it is impossible to say whether profits from other industries can be maintained on nationalization, especially those which are difficult to manage. Our experience shows that usual-

ly the trade concerned will decline and the losses will continue.

There is a group of people whose notion of nationalization is taking over without compensating the owners. This is an illusion. If compensation is not paid, foreign-owned companies can place sanctions on a government through their own governments and trade relations. This can ruin the trade concerned, particularly if it involves a primary commodity for which there is a substitute and which is therefore not of vital importance.

Every year the Malaysian Government has to spend 5,000 to 6,000 million dollars on administration and development. Most of the money comes from taxing commercial and industrial concerns. Obviously if these concerns are nationalized and consequently incur losses, not only will the Government be unable to have its normal budget, but there will not be sufficient money to pay compensation, and whatever taxes collected will have to be used to stop the decline or failure of the nationalized concerns.

If in such a situation the workers demand higher wages and go on strike when their demands cannot be entertained, the problem will be compounded. National industries like the railway, MAS and the National Electricity Board have again and again faced strike action from workers, and there is no reason why workers should not strike in other nationalized industries. Losses suffered by an industry have never prevented workers from demanding higher wages and going on strike.

All these problems have been faced by all democratic countries that have taken the step of nationalizing trade and industry. The consequences of this popular and emotional act can be witnessed by all who care to do so. There may be those who feel we should be prepared to face economic decline for the sake of 'justice' and satisfaction. But there cannot be satisfaction when a nation that acted out of emotion is forced in the end to send its Prime Minister abroad each year to get help from countries practising the abhorred capitalist free enterprise. This is the plight of several developing countries which proudly nationalized foreign commercial and industrial concerns on achieving independence. Thus it is that certain nations which were once so proud of their socialism and nationalization of foreign industries, today can only be proud of buildings donated by other nations. Without charity from interested foreign powers, these nations would have nothing to show in the way of signs of success since taking over foreign industries.

But even more dangerous, economic decline will bring poverty and suffering to the majority of the people. In such a climate it is easy for anyone to subvert the people and cause disturbances. Certainly the communists will have a better chance to seize power. Whether or not they succeed, the people and the country will experience dark, turbulent times. For most of the people, not only will they fail to achieve equality in living standards, but their security will be threatened and they may be oppressed by their own leaders.

This analysis is done because calls to nationalize foreign industries frequently draw public support. The emotion generated by these calls can easily override sane considerations. Before responding to these calls, the people of Malaysia, where the economy is still strong compared with some non-free-enterprise countries, must fully understand the implications and consequences of nationalizing industries.



## **Organization and Discipline**

From the fifteenth century, when Vasco da Gama sailed to the Far East, to the beginning of the twentieth century, Asian history is riddled with invasions and conquests of territories by Western nations. Nearly all Asian countries have experienced conquest and colonization - Thailand, China and Japan being the exceptions. Even these countries have had to some extent to bow to western powers.

While it is true that in those centuries Western imperialism spread throughout the world, including Africa and North and South America, there is a difference. Africa and America were inhabited by rather primitive tribes (with the exception of the Incas), whereas the peoples of Asia had known culture, progress and civilization earlier than the Europeans and were more numerous and occupied larger territories.

Even stranger, the Western forces which invaded and conquered Asian countries were very small compared with the Asian ones. The effectiveness of the Western forces may have been due to better weapons; but studies will show that a more telling factor was their organization and discipline.

As far as can be ascertained, though Eastern military forces did have a certain organization, it was less systematic and consistent than that of Western ones. In the army that defended Malacca against the Portuguese, for instance, though there was a general, between him and the soldiers there was no definite line of command. Asian armies had generals but there seemed to be no captains, lieutenants and sergeants to ensure that all commands reached the rank and file accurately and effectively.

Direct commands from general to soldiers could possibly work

if the force was small, but in the case of a large army such commands could not reach the rank and file accurately and effectively in the required time. The communication system between one battalion and another also left a lot to be desired, making concerted action difficult or impossible. A large army cannot be effective without coordination among its battalions.

Though Asian armies did have various officers, their posts, titles and responsibilities were neither clear nor consistent. Posts and ranks varied from place to place. The Melaka Government at the time of the Portuguese invasion did not even have a definite person as its army general. The Sultan, the Bendahara (Prime Minister) and the Temenggong (Home Minister or Police Chief) all had powers over the armed forces. In addition the various sons of the Sultan also had the right to command the forces, though their posts were not very clear.

The armed forces did not have regular soldiers. Most of them were people commanded by the Ruler from time to time to help defend the nation. They had no training as a military entity and had no notion of their positions in the forces. There was no uniform, and each fought a war as he would a duel.

From tales of battles in those bygone days, armies were led by example rather than specific commands. When the general was seen to advance, all others followed suit. When he retreated, the soldiers did the same. In such a set-up, the death of the general meant certain defeat though the forces were still numerous and could well continue the battle.

In Bali a king's death while fighting the Dutch was followed by mass suicide (*puputan*) on the part of all surviving soldiers though they were perfectly capable of continuing the battle and their courage was beyond question.

In contrast, Western forces that invaded Eastern countries, though small, were well organized. Normally, in a Western army, small entities under junior officers formed a bigger entity under a more senior officer. Several of these bigger entities formed a yet bigger entity under a general. Finally all generals and the entities under their command were placed under a military administrator who ensured that all moves in a war were concerted and coordinated in accordance with an over-all strategy pre-planned in response to findings by the military's intelligence section.

In a Western force, all positions and titles were fixed as were the

corresponding duties and responsibilities. Besides, normally all military personnel were full-time regulars, not just conscripted from time to time on a temporary basis. They were trained to act as a team and not as separate individuals. Methods and techniques of warfare were meticulously organized and training in these was compulsory at all levels. Commands came from definite officers and in the form of fixed words and signals to avoid misunderstanding and confusion during a battle. It was this orderliness and organization that brought victory to the small Western forces. In other words, organization played an effective role in the success of Western military forces.

Besides being well-organized, the Western forces enforced strict discipline. Ranks and levels were fixed to ensure that everybody knew his duties and each obeyed the commands of his senior.

The soldiers were not expected to follow the example of a leader but to obey his commands. The question of a leader's bravery or otherwise in a battle did not arise. He must remain safe to continue issuing commands. However, his death did not mean defeat for the force he led. His successor was pre-determined and invariably took over and continued the battle. Discipline guaranteed that nobody questioned his right to succeed the fallen leader.

Discipline had a most effective role in Western military forces. In *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, where a small British force faced a large Russian artillery, the command was given for the British to advance and attack. Though this meant death for most of them, they obeyed unflinchingly and indeed many were killed and the force was defeated. But the incident was memorable, for it showed enemies of the British they could not hope for an easy victory even against a small British force. This may well have saved other British forces by instilling fear in the hearts of their enemies.

The role of discipline in the Western forces' successful conquest of Asian countries was a consistent one. Virtually without exception, small Western forces defeated large Asian ones through good organization and sound military moves. Deviant behaviour was rare. A Western force was like a war machine, whereas an Asian one fought as separate individuals without coordination or system. In a Western force, commands were invariably obeyed; but in an Asian one there was no definite system or line of command, and commands were not obeyed promptly and effectively or were even ignored.

For Malays in particular and Asians in general, the lesson brought

by the West is that organization and discipline are important and effective in any undertaking. Organization and discipline can give strength to the weak and the small. The role of organization and discipline is not confined to the military forces and to war, though in these areas they play a most vital role. In other fields too organization and discipline are important in ensuring success.

The first nation to recognize organization and discipline as the basis of success was Japan. While it is true that the Japanese already possessed the basics of discipline when they came in contact with Westerners, their discipline lacked effective organization and system. With the basics they already had, they assimilated Western organization and discipline into all aspects of life in their society. In a very short time, Western-style organization and discipline succeeded in making Japan a world power. Considering that Japan has no natural resources to help the modernization process, organization and discipline played a more important role in its development. So effective was the Western system and discipline that paucity of natural resources did not constitute a problem or an obstacle.

The Asian nations' struggle for independence from Western colonization also owed its success to organization and discipline. In India, Gandhi organized the Congress Party on Western lines, and because the members were prepared to obey directives, i.e. to accept party discipline, though they had no weapons, Gandhi succeeded in weakening the administration of British India through a non-violent mass boycott. British military strength, administrative ability and wealth could not crush the disciplined and systematic non-violent movement led by Gandhi. In the states of the Malay peninsula, the Malays succeeded in their fight against the Malayan Union and their struggle for independence because they were prepared to join a political organization and obey the directives of its leader. Actually the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) which was set up to oppose the Malayan Union was extremely lacking in funds, in educated leaders and other aspects. But because the members were more organized than in the past and were prepared to obey their leader's directives, the British government could not reject UMNO's demands.

The fact that the Malays have succeeded in freeing themselves from colonial shackles does not mean that they no longer need to practise the organization and discipline they have learnt. The Malays still comprise a small and backward community in their own country.

Since organization and discipline can give strength to the weak, it is important that the Malays continue to practise them. And not just in politics, for the Malays are also weak in other fields, for example business and education.

In modern commerce, for instance, organization is very important. It involves not just the organization of officers and workers but also of tasks, so that everything goes according to plan and with the knowledge of the businessman concerned. The organization of tasks necessary to draw up a comprehensive account for a lone trader is as important as that for a giant company. The allocation of responsibilities among the personnel is also an important part of business organization. Without such organization, business depends on *agak-agak* (guesswork) or pure illusion, and losses can be incurred unawares.

Equally important is discipline in business, though it be a one-man affair. A trader who closes his stall according to his own whims and fancies will lose his customers. In a business that uses salaried staff, employees' unwillingness to obey directives is bound to bring failure. A restaurant depends on good service and if waiters do not carry out their tasks as directed, customers will not come a second time, however delicious the food. Hundreds of examples can be cited to prove the importance of discipline in trade. It would be no exaggeration to say that the failure of the Malays in business is largely due to lack of discipline on the part of the businessmen and their employees.

The role of organization and discipline in fields like education needs no elaboration. But while organization and discipline in general are good, they can in certain cases lead to the destruction of those who practise them. When people are brought together into a strong organization with strictly enforced discipline, the wrong leadership will land them into a terrible predicament. Discipline and organization in Germany under Hitler and Japan under Tojo's military regime are clear examples of the heinous consequences of wrong leadership. The stringent discipline makes it impossible to oppose the leader and difficult to recognize wrong-doing for what it is at the time it is perpetrated.

When Hitler restructured Germany after its defeat in the First World War, most Germans could not deny that his measures and methods were successful in quickly reviving Germany's wealth and strength. The Germans' dejection over their defeat in the First World

War was replaced by a new positive spirit and self-confidence. Hence they were prepared to accept Hitler's rule with its strict discipline and to support his scheme to dominate the world. Those who had doubts at the time dared not voice their doubts. Even if they had done so, they would have been in the minority. Their criticism, besides being futile, would probably have brought punishment on their heads for breach of discipline.

When the Second World War began with the highly successful aggression launched by the German *Wehrmacht* (war machine), no German, no Nazi party member or leader, could say that Hitler had misused German organization and discipline. Hitler personally directed the war despite his not being a trained general. But such was the discipline that he was not opposed, though history shows that his war tactics and strategy led to the fall of Germany.

As time passed, it became increasingly clear that Hitler's leadership would bring defeat and destruction to Germany. Still, discipline prevented those who were aware of this from counselling or opposing Hitler. Only when defeat stared Germany in the face was discipline breached and Hitler condemned by his own followers. But it was too late then to save Germany. Millions of Germans had died or suffered injury, and their plight was terrible.

This shows how discipline (and organization) can bring ruin to a particular group. But one cannot go by this, for more of the evidence shows that discipline and organization are good. The exception cannot prove (or disprove) the rule. An exceptional case cannot invalidate a principle. And indeed, though discipline had brought the Germans to a state of degradation, they did not reject it. They practised discipline to rehabilitate their country. Today, though the country has been cut in two, West Germany has once again achieved success and progress, in a sense defeating countries like Britain which won the Second World War. Britain is now known as a country which has lost the discipline it had in the days of its glory.

Organization and discipline do have dangers, but the benefits are greater. Habits which are so effective and beneficial to human society must be perpetuated, or created if as yet non-existent. To reject organization and discipline is to hinder success. To adopt it may not guarantee a hundred per cent success, but at least success will not be hindered, and chances are it will be achieved.

So far we have looked at organization and discipline from the worldly point of view. Are not religion and spirituality related to

organization and discipline? The answer is simple. The successful propagation of Islam throughout the world had its basis in the organization and discipline of the Islamic society, compared with the unenlightened (*jahiliyah*) society before it, and in the readiness of Muslims to conform to the organization and discipline. The rituals of worship (*ibadat*) in Islam are meticulously organized. Indeed there is nothing more organized and disciplined than Islamic rituals of worship. In the performance of prayers, particularly the Friday prayers, millions of Malays face the *Baitullah* in Mecca, from the nearest to those thousands of miles away, and carry out the instructions given by the great Islamic leader nearly 1,400 years ago. Those who have seen the congregation praying at the mosque in Mecca (*Masjidil Haram*) can picture the *Baitullah* surrounded by row upon orderly row of Muslims, not just in the *Masjidil Haram* and around, but all over the world, so that the *Baitullah* is truly the Islamic cynosure.

Rituals of worship are physical manifestations of organization and discipline in Islam. But more than other religions, Islam ensures that all aspects of life are organized in a disciplined way with definite laws and rules. Religious laws and rules, like other laws and rules, are effective and meaningful only when the believers or the society concerned obey them. This means that organization and discipline are vital to the essence of Islam as the true faith.

An example should be cited showing the consequences to Muslims when rules and regulations are ignored. In the Uhud War, the Prophet's command to a bow-and-arrow brigade to keep a look-out for enemy attack from the rear was at first obeyed. When the enemy seemed to have been defeated, the soldiers of the brigade left their posts and rushed into the fray to get a share of *al Anfal* i.e. war booty. The result was that the enemy could attack from the rear and the Islamic army suffered heavy casualties, including the death of Saidina Hamzah.

Such was one consequence of lack of discipline in the defence history of Islam. Similarly in the Huneyn War, a large and strong Islamic army incurred severe casualties owing to lack of organization and discipline in marching through the Huneyn valley.

These examples, both positive and negative, should be sufficient to show the high value Islam places on organization and discipline. Indeed, no ritual of worship in Islam, no ruling, is devoid of the need for organization and discipline.

Mankind normally lives in societies. Human society cannot exist

without organization and discipline. However primitive a society may be, it is at least divided into leaders and followers. The greater and higher a civilization, the more complex the organization. The very survival of a society depends on its organization and on the readiness of the members to obey the 'do's' and 'don'ts' laid down by the society. In other words, a society owes its security to organization and discipline.

Discipline in this context means limiting individual desires and interests to give priority to the interests of society. Interpretations of what constitutes the interests of the individual and the interests of society may differ from one society to another. But whatever the interpretation or evaluation, the aim of limiting the interests of the individual is the preservation of society.

For each member of society, the limitations placed on him as an individual may in the short term be frustrating, but the social security thus achieved will ultimately benefit him.

This can be seen from the kind of society that took shape in the pioneering days of the wild west in America. It was a society ruled by anarchy and controlled by 'lynch law' and 'mob law'. Anyone accused of murder was given a rough trial by the community and was then hanged by the people who had tried him. If he did commit the murder, such an act may be considered just. But the possibility of false accusation out of envy or some other motive is great, and when a trial lacks proper organization, an innocent person may well be sentenced to death.

In a well-organized society, though an innocent person may be arrested by the police and charged, the orderly process of the trial will ensure that he is not victimized. The point is that although conformity to a social order may at first be a form of repression, in the end it is good for the members of the society concerned. Without that social order, murderers may go free to commit more crimes.

The concept of an organized and disciplined society is opposed only by anarchists who have the notion that mankind should not be controlled by social organization or discipline of any kind. Theories offered by anarchists like Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin say that man's conscience will ensure peace and justice in human society. Therefore government (administration) is not important, for human society will divide itself into small groups which exist without any organization and which are not subject to any central power.



Ironically, those who do not believe in organized society are forced to organize themselves into all sorts of groups to promote their cause. It is this movement that has given rise to syndicalism, labour movements, socialism and finally communism.

As we know, every attempt to create an anarchist society has failed. If any society in the world comes close to anarchy, it is the socialist state, as found in Britain today. In Britain, not only is the government powerless to control the self-seeking of certain groups of workers; they do not even listen to their own leaders. The result is that society is constantly threatened with uncertainty over the supply of goods and services. Prices soar, transport by land, sea and air is unreliable, medical treatment is not easily available and various forms of terrorism and oppression occur freely because no power exists to ensure that the interests of society as a whole are given priority. The anarchist theory that a society without government and laws will benefit all members has not been proved right by such cases of anarchy in socialist societies. It can, on the contrary, be assumed or deduced that a totally anarchist society would be even more chaotic and threatened by various forms of oppression than the socialist society of Britain.

Looked at from any point of view, it cannot be denied that human society needs organization and discipline. Even those who believe in anarchy draw up a form of organization and discipline. The question is not the existence or otherwise of organization and discipline, but the extent and the nature - whether it should be minimal as demanded by anarchists or rigid as in a dictatorship.

The answer may lie somewhere between the two extremes. But there is a wide range, and shades of difference between one moderate, socially beneficial position and another are difficult to ascertain. Socialism *a la* Britain may be seen as being moderate, but it is close to anarchy and brings the evils of anarchy. Communism *a la* Yugoslavia may also be considered moderate, but it is close to a dictatorship. Between the two there are various shades of moderation, each with its own shortcomings. When the elements of organization and discipline are strong, they may constitute features of a dictatorship. On the other hand, when organization and discipline are lax, anarchist elements may threaten society.

This is the dilemma of human society everywhere. But since society needs to be organized and disciplined, what is important is a society's attitude to and understanding of the kind of organization and

discipline it practises. If every member of society understands the importance of organization and discipline and plays his part out of a sense of responsibility, the society will be stable and progressive. But if many or all members of society refuse to conform to its organization and discipline and insist on acting outside the given limits, disruption is inevitable, with adverse effects on those concerned and indeed on the entire society.

## Corruption

Nothing is deemed bad and forbidden by society without cause. Similarly with things that society deems good. The two values are normally set by society as a result of age-old experience. Man, as a creature of God with the ability to think and pass knowledge down from generation to generation, need not decide everything through his own experience. Accumulated experience which shapes thoughts and values is not only shared with the whole society which exists at the time but is passed down to subsequent generations. These values are normally accepted and assimilated by generation after generation as a part of tradition and culture. But sometimes a new generation questions old values, which may result in the formation of new values.

Concepts of good and bad in any human group are among the values perpetuated from generation to generation as a part of the group's tradition and culture. For instance, at one time the Arabs buried alive their newborn daughters. This was not the practice of one generation but of many during the pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyah*) period. Today the practice is looked on as horrifying and senseless. It is seen as cruel, an outrage to 'feelings of humanity', and grossly unjust. Certainly we do not need to be taught how to feel about it. It is unquestionably evil. In fact, however, consciously or unconsciously, these feelings are based on the present system of values, which gives a bad value to the act of killing, especially killing one's own children.

But if we lived in Arabia in the pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyah*) period, we too would carry out this cruel practice. We would do so because it was not considered evil by the society we lived in. 'Feelings of humanity' would not bother us, for at that time the killing of

daughters was not regarded as an outrage to 'feelings of humanity'.

We might imagine that a thousand four hundred years ago human beings were different from what they are today. Hence they could carry out such a cruel practice without any qualms. But we should remember that in China, less than a hundred years ago, mothers strangled their own daughters to death. And 'suttee', the burning alive of widows in India, despite having been banned was still secretly practised on a number of occasions only a few years ago. Even today there are groups in India that would practise it if police vigilance were relaxed.

If the values of a society were shaped entirely by that society itself during its time and according to its own experience, perhaps cruel practices like the killing of children and the burning of widows would not be perpetuated. But since values concerning good and bad are usually passed from generation to generation merely as a traditional code of ethics, without any explanation of reasons, values legitimizing the killing of children and widows can be accepted and their practice perpetuated for a long time.

Corruption is one of the practices deemed bad by nearly all societies in the world. That corruption is bad is decided by tradition and not by study or experience. Everyone everywhere condemns corruption as a crime. Yet, though everybody condemns corruption, this does not mean that everybody accepts the same interpretation of the term 'corruption' or truly knows what bad consequences come from corruption.

Corruption is better known as a practice which enables someone to obtain remuneration through illegitimate means. For instance, an official who receives regular remuneration (salary) for performing certain duties, may accept a gift from a person for performing one of those duties. Though this act can be interpreted as corruption, at first it may not bring any undesirable consequences. The giver may have given freely, and the official will perform the same duty for others who do not offer gifts.

But once a gift is given, the next time there is bound to be some preference for the giver. This means that those who do not offer gifts are served less promptly. Up to this stage, any deprivation is felt only by those who need the services of the official concerned. The public and the country are not yet directly involved. Not having felt the adverse effects of corruption, society is not very willing to act, and may take a light view of it, especially if the official's

regular remuneration (salary) is considered low.

But other officials whose duties do not bring them in direct contact with potential gift-bearers will feel envious of the official who receives gifts. To get a share of the gifts, these officials may deliberately block channels involving the tasks of the 'fortunate' one. This brings corruption to the active stage: positive action is taken to promote corruption.

This can be seen in the development of the 'tipping' system. Initially, tips were given to, say, waiters at a restaurant who directly served the customers. The size of a 'tip' depended on the customer's pocket and the service given. At first the 'tip' was looked on as something unusual and service was given whether or not there was a 'tip'. But not long after, waiters' attitudes changed, i.e. no service or poor service was given if there was no 'tipping'. At this stage the 'tip' changed in function. If once a 'tip' was given for good service, now good service was given for the 'tip'.

From this stage 'tipping' moved on to another, where the rate was fixed. The customer no longer had the right to give as he wished, but must adhere to the fixed rate; usually ten or fifteen per cent.

But the fact that 'tipping' benefited only waiters, who had direct dealings with the customers, aroused envy in those who had no direct dealings but were nonetheless involved in the service to customers. The chef, for example, was responsible for the delicious dishes, yet received no 'tip'. Indeed, employees at different levels in a restaurant were directly or indirectly involved in serving the customers but were not 'tipped'.

Their envy led to negative action to make the customer feel the sting. When this happened, a way had to be found to ensure that everybody concerned had a share of the 'tips'. This took the form of making 'tipping' official, as a charge added to the price of the food according to a fixed rate. Collections from this are added together and divided among all those who have something to do with serving the customers.

Now two things emerge. First, the officially collected 'tips' are divided among the hotel or restaurant staff according to their salaries. This means that those with high salaries get bigger shares than the ones with low pay, whereas it is the latter who need the extra earnings. Second, those who have direct contact with the customers can still find ways of getting additional 'tips' from them.

In other words, even after 'tips' have been made official, unof-

ficial 'tips' can be perpetuated, and worse, can continue to arouse envy among employees who have no direct dealings with the customers. So it is back to square one and business is threatened by acts that can bring losses to the businessman. In the end the customer is again penalized through rising rates of 'tipping'.

For the government in a country, corruption has definitely worse consequences and can lead to the downfall of the government and a state of chaos. If an official in charge of collecting various taxes indulges in corruption, the government will not have sufficient revenue from taxes. Shortage of national revenue means inability to pay fair wages. And when adequate wages cannot be paid, officials continue their corrupt practices.

Corruption can become a habit which finally bears no relation to the size of a person's legitimate income. Human desire knows no limits. Those with low incomes may say that if they have higher wages they will be contented. But we must remember that already there are people earning salaries yearned for by the low-paid officials. Are the high-salaried ones contented and untempted by corruption? The answer is, not only are they not contented; they demand bigger bribes to match their salaries.

Therefore raising salaries is no sure way of stopping corruption. In a country where corruption has become common practice, raising salaries threefold will only raise corruption levels threefold. In other words, when corruption is the norm, an increase in incomes will not only fail to stop corruption but will in fact increase it.

Corruption occurs everywhere. No country or nation is free from it. To erase it a hundred per cent is impossible. However, its effects can be lessened provided it has not reached two critical stages.

The first critical stage is when corruption is still kept secret but links have been formed between junior and senior officials. At this stage the junior official accepts the bribe and proceeds to share it with the senior official, or vice versa. When this happens, every official will protect every other, junior or senior. This may involve the highest officials, including Ministers and other politicians, and even the judiciary and the enforcers of the law.

The effects of this stage of corruption are obvious. A report from an aggrieved party will be futile. Worse, even when the masses want to clean up the system, there is nobody to take action because everybody is involved in corruption. Ministers and officials may be replaced, but those who take their places will in no time be drawn

into the corruption. Even if they refuse to be involved, they are paralysed, for their staff will not obey their directives. To sack all government staff and recruit new ones is impossible. If this is attempted, the result will be chaos and worse evils.

The second critical stage of corruption is when it is no longer hidden and is accepted as common practice by a society. Sometimes inadequate pay is cited as the reason why a bribe must be given. If this were true, the high-salaried, like senior officials and Minister, should not take bribes. The fact is that those with high pay, no matter how high, only ask for bigger bribes. There are no limits to human greed.

When corruption is openly practised and is in essence no longer illegitimate, its effects on a nation are most pernicious. First, the government is weakened, for each time a bribe is accepted, the government loses revenue or is deflected from a proper course of action. For instance, when a tax on a certain item has been fixed, the giving of a bribe does not hurt the giver's pocket; money which should have gone to pay the tax is shared between the giver of the bribe and the official who accepts it. If this occurs each time a tax is due to be paid, the government will not be able to collect enough revenue to run the country. This will hinder the payment of fair wages. To supplement the inadequate wages, officials will 'fish' for bribes. As human greed knows no bounds and corruption is lightly regarded, more and more bribes are accepted, and national revenue becomes less and less. The consequences need no elaboration.

If the government has insufficient funds, social services like education, health, public utilities and others cannot be given. Not only will it be impossible for the nation to progress; the gap between the rich and the poor will grow wider. This is because the public services provided by the government would normally help reduce the expenses shouldered by the poor.

In a situation where the poor grow poorer, their lot is further worsened by corruption, for being unable to offer bribes, they cannot obtain the services of officials. This state of affairs can only deteriorate with time. Justice will lose its meaning and the majority of the people will sink into despair.

Human greed, as has been said earlier, knows no limits. Though the economy of a country may be ruined by corruption, officials and others involved in corrupt practices will not desist. Finally corruption fails to bring them the benefits they once enjoyed. In a coun-

try where the people are prosperous, wealth is easily acquired, for consumers can afford to buy the goods sold. But when the economy of a country declines (through corruption), consumers will have less income and business will decline. When business declines, businessmen can no longer offer bribes to officials and the latter will suffer too. In countries where corruption is commonly and openly practised, even when officials receive all sorts of bribes, most of them do not live well.

It is important to identify these two critical stages of corruption, for once they are reached, there is no hope of remedy. The general public and certain groups in society will condemn corruption, will clamour and protest against its practice, will threaten to act against the officials and the government unless they stamp out corruption. But it will all be in vain. Even if the officials and the government are replaced, reform will only be momentary. The disease of corruption will infect the new people in power, though they were the ones who condemned corruption; in no time the disease will spread. The only difference is a change of beneficiaries. For the ordinary people and the country, replacing old officials or government with new makes no difference whatsoever.

This can be seen wherever corruption has reached the critical stages. We see a new government, not only with new faces but a new ideology as well. But all too soon the new government is accused of involvement in corruption. Declaration after declaration is made that corruption shall be erased. Campaigns are held. But corruption goes on. Sometimes the government is changed again and again. And still corruption flourishes.

The reason why corruption cannot be wiped out at these stages is that it is no longer considered a crime but has become 'a way of life' for the society concerned. Those who condemn it as a crime do so only because they have no opportunity to practise it. When they get the opportunity and the capacity, they too indulge in it. Similarly with those who condemn favouritism and nepotism; when they find 'someone in a high place' whom they know, they promptly ask for special consideration. Usually the reason they give for getting special treatment is that others get it. In other words, because others commit a crime, they have a right to commit the same crime. This means that because others practise corruption, anyone who has the opportunity has a right to practise corruption. When this is the way the people think, a society cannot possibly stamp out corrup-



tion. It can only transfer corrupt practices from one individual to another, one group to another.

At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that nothing is deemed bad by society without cause. From the discussion above, it appears that corruption is bad only for those who have neither opportunity nor capacity to benefit from it. Those who have the opportunity do not feel any adverse effects from it. In a situation where many members of a society are involved in corruption and enjoy benefits from it, it is not easy to talk about the evils of corruption. If a large number benefits from corruption, how can corruption be seen as a heinous crime?

In China under the emperors, corruption was not seen as such. All officials must be given monetary gifts when their services were required. The payment was made openly. Often, for instance, the people of a town collected money to offer as gifts to the authorities as a matter of course.

All government personnel were involved in this practice. Their entitlements were fixed. Indeed the collection of money for such gifts was no different from the collection of taxes. The only difference lay in the handling of the money collected. If taxes were given to the government and later distributed among officials and staff as remuneration (salaries), the money for bribes was shared out in the form of 'cuts' along the way, i.e. the collector took his share before handing the rest to the official above him, and the official did the same before passing on the rest to his senior, who did likewise; and so on.

In this instance the official benefited in the form of monetary reward added to normally very low pay, and the public benefited in the form of effective service. Since all quarters gained, the evils of this sort of corruption were not evident. It was not even called by the term 'corruption' but by various euphemisms.

But even in such a situation, the evils of corruption can be seen if a study is made. In China in those days, it was not only the officials who must be given monetary gifts; the leaders of the underworld also demanded such gifts. The Beggars' Association, secret societies and robbers' gangs must be given gifts of money to avoid being terrorized by them.

With so many groups oppressing the people who wanted decent lives, society could not progress properly. Nobody wanted to work harder than necessary, for the fruits of his labour would only be

taken by officials and criminals. Most members of society would just do the minimum for a living, since anything more would only benefit the oppressors. Moreover, society was constantly threatened and the people lived in fear. Justice could not be enjoyed by honest folks, for justice does not exist in a society that practises corruption.

Besides, monetary gifts are offered to the officials partly to reduce payment of legitimate taxes to the Government. This means the government does not get all the revenue from taxes due to it. Without this the government cannot provide public utilities, including the provision for fighting corruption. The country is inevitably weakened and may even be conquered and its people enslaved.

Corrupt practices and the resultant weakness once made the Malay States easy prey to any would-be conqueror. Sometimes the conquest was effected through threats, but sometimes a promise of aid was enough.

Clear examples can be obtained from a history of the Malay States. In the nineteenth century, foreigners began to take interest in the Malay States. It was evident that the States had potential wealth but the rulers and the people had neither the interest nor the ability to tap the potential, particularly in mining.

Various foreigners proposed to local chiefs that they (the foreigners) be given the right to develop the natural resources, in return for regular payments to the chiefs. In a short time the local chiefs had gained extraordinary riches for themselves through the cooperation of the foreigners. Naturally the earnings were not considered taxes belonging to the State, though the land mined did not really belong to the chiefs.

From mining, the cooperation was extended to the giving of land for other purposes, monopolies on gambling, on the opium trade and even on the collection of taxes. The chiefs' incomes from their cooperation with the foreigners exceeded normal collections from the people, and this eroded their feelings of responsibility towards the people. They placed priority on the wishes of the foreign traders.

At this stage various quarters felt envious. Foreigners who had not been given similar opportunities sowed seeds of discontent and strove to have the greatly enriched chiefs toppled by whosoever was prepared to do the deed for a fee. The result was enmity between local chiefs and also between groups of foreigners, erupting frequently in violent clashes. Following this, one Malay State after another fell into British hands through treaties promising 'aid'.

The fall of the Malay States into British hands may seem a somewhat extreme example of the consequences of corruption, but it cannot be denied that corruption can reach and has reached this stage. Given that corruption cannot be totally erased, and can in fact destroy a human society, what stand and what action can be taken?

The presence of corruption, like any other crime, does not necessarily mean that a society has accepted it as common practice. But unlike other crimes, corruption can, if allowed to grow, become accepted as something that is commonly and openly practised. As has been explained above, when corruption is commonly and openly practised, it is not only difficult to erase but also extremely dangerous to all. It is clear therefore that though a society can accept the fact that corruption cannot be totally erased, it cannot allow it to become common practice which need no longer be kept secret. Whatever the truth behind the existence of corruption, it remains a crime which cannot be lightly regarded.

Given that a society looks on corruption as a crime, just to condemn it as such, however vociferously, is not enough. What is more important and effective is that the society should, directly or indirectly, cleanse itself of corruption. To ensure such cleansing, all must understand what is meant by corruption.

Generally, corruption is understood as giving something to someone with power so that he will abuse his power and act favouring the giver. Corruption has clearly occurred when for example, among several applicants for a licence, the one who gives something to the licensing official gets the licence though he is less deserving than some of the others. But what if the successful applicant is the deserving one and he gives a gift on a festival day when others are also giving gifts; is this corruption? He has succeeded because he deserves to succeed, and he gives the gift in appreciation of the 'fairness' of the licensing official - is this corruption?

On this account, the giving of gifts on festival days should be considered a form of corruption. But it is not easy to decline all gifts. A gift from a leader in another country may be a token of friendship or a form of corruption to induce favourable treatment of a policy or of citizens of the country concerned! What does the public think about gifts on festival days?

Misuse of government funds is definitely to be considered corruption, as is misuse of power. If an official is entitled to claim reim-

bursement of expenditure he has incurred in the course of his duties, but claims more than he has spent, this clearly is corruption. If an official uses government funds to benefit himself, for instance by building a public road to his own house, this is corruption. If a Minister uses his power to get an allocation for facilities to benefit himself, his family or his supporters, this too is corruption! If a student gets a scholarship on the promise that he will study, but uses the opportunity for other purposes, this is also corruption!

At a glance, all these seem to be clear cases of corruption. But on close scrutiny, what was clear becomes hazy and even the very opposite of what it seemed: i.e. what appeared a clear case of corruption turns out not to be corruption at all. A Minister who ensures that his supporters get certain facilities may do it because in all fairness they should get such help. It may also be that they had been victimized by government officials or some other quarters who had deliberately neglected them. Is it not a Minister's duty to redress wrongs? Should a Minister reject a fair demand just to protect his own good name? Must all who have connections with a Minister suffer because he wants a clean image? The same applies to officers who have certain powers. Whoever they serve must have some sort of connection with them. The service may be an act of favouritism, or it may not.

What is clear is that anything to be granted, be it a licence, a scholarship or any other facility, will involve many applicants, and for each successful one there will be many more who are unsuccessful and dissatisfied. The official has made his choice, but can it be easily determined whether he has unfairly favoured anyone? The unsuccessful ones will say he has, but had they been successful, they would have said his decision was fair. Worse, if they had a chance to contact the official to ask for special treatment, they would not hesitate to do so.

From the above discussion, the salient point that emerges is that the definition of corruption, though simple in a clear case, is not quite so simple in most of the cases which draw such charges. When a charge is made by a disappointed person, its validity is questionable. But if the charge were not made by the person concerned, who else would make it? Surely those not involved would not know the bitterness of disappointment and the details of the incident in question.

The fight against corruption has its own dilemma. This does not only stem from the fact that some acts said to be corrupt are not

really so; there is also the need to give powers to certain quarters to stamp out corruption. These are substantial powers and like other powers, can be abused. In other words, anti-corruption personnel also have to cope with attempts to corrupt them. From the lowest to the highest, these officials will have to face such attempts, and whether or not they remain clean, accusations will be levelled at them. Whether or not these accusations have any basis, they will weaken anti-corruption efforts. Yet these accusations may well have a basis and if they are not made, the anti-corruption machinery may be transformed into machinery for the promotion of corruption. This is the corruption dilemma – no system can be used to fight corruption without itself being exposed to corrupting pressures.

In finding a way out of this dilemma, the determining factor is not the method or the machinery used against corruption. What is important and effective is the system of values of the society concerned. True, everybody admits that corruption is a crime and should not be practised. Nobody will say that he regards corruption lightly and not as a terrible disease infecting a society. But when an opportunity arises to benefit by corruption, between what is said and what is done there is a yawning chasm.

In a democracy, for instance, opportunities for ordinary people to practise corruption exist in abundance, particularly during elections. The proper function of elections is to choose able, qualified and honest leaders. The prime questions should be: can a candidate and his party run the country well? Will the country and the society be more progressive and peaceful if a certain candidate is chosen? Will the bad conditions in a constituency be improved? Will there be fairness in the distribution of government efforts and aid among the people? In short, the choice of a candidate should be determined by its effects on the well-being and progress of the nation from all aspects.

But usually during elections, most voters give top consideration to the special benefits they will get if the candidates appealing for their votes should win. Special benefits are not consistent with the concept of fairness. They are in fact direct gifts to the voters. The more the special benefits promised (involving unfairness to others) the stronger the support for the candidate.

From the start the candidate promises to give the voters what they demand, be it fair or otherwise. The candidate may even have to promise to neglect those whom the voters dislike, blatantly unfair

though this is. Just as an applicant for a licence has to cater to the wishes of the licensing official; the candidate who appeals for votes has to promise to cater to the wishes of his prospective voters.

When he wins, the chosen candidate has to fulfil his promises, especially if he belongs to the party that forms the government. Fairness has no place in the fulfilment of these promises. But this is not all. Since he is aware that votes can be obtained by catering to the wishes of voters, he prepares for the next elections by catering to these wishes beforehand. Candidates from the ruling party tend to give land and other special benefits just before elections. This is certainly a form of corruption. If at first votes were given on the promise of special benefits, now special benefits are given to gain votes.

But it is not just candidates from the ruling party who do this sort of thing. Other candidates also resort to practices which are similar in nature. They visit their constituencies to perform all kinds of services, attend the simple feasts of the rural folk, pray at the kam-pung mosques, give what little monetary help they can spare, and do other things which they would never do if they did not intend to stand in the next elections. This is crass insincerity, for such services would cease the moment they decided not to stand.

If a society does not want corruption, it should not create a climate so conducive to corruption. A voter's right to vote is similar to the power in the hands of the official. Votes can shape a person's destiny, even to the point of making him Prime Minister. Sometimes one vote is sufficient to determine the fate of a Prime Minister. This means that a voter holds tremendous power in his hands. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. A voter's power can become absolute, and absolute power leads to corruption.

A society given such enormous powers is easily corrupted and already there are signs that though everybody condemns corruption, everybody condones one form of corruption which he himself practises. If a society wishes to stamp out corruption, it must not practise it directly or indirectly during elections. If there is corruption in voting, the chances are that the chosen leaders will be the kind who tend to use corruption to become candidates and win elections. And leaders who tend to use corruption will tend to be influenced by corruption.

This problem should be carefully thought out. Each candidate and each party has to spend millions of dollars to take part in elections.

Once it was not necessary to spend so much, for many were prepared to serve on a voluntary basis because they believed in the principles upheld by the party or in a certain individual, or because they were inspired by the spirit of service. But today a poor person cannot stand for elections unless he is nominated by a rich party.

In such a situation, voters easily make unwise decisions. If they consider a party's wealth synonymous with corruption without weighing other factors, they may decide to elect a poor candidate as a protest. This is a negative attitude, for it may well be that the poor candidate is not a good one and incapable of doing anything useful, for instance fight corruption. Such a negative attitude shows that the members of the society concerned are not prepared to face up squarely to this problem.

The disease attacking society is corruption which is practised by society itself. The remedy is to rid society of the corruption, not to reject what has been put up as a symbol of corruption, i.e. a candidate's or a party's wealth. To erase the effects of corruption, and corruption itself, all or most members of a society must avoid all forms of corruption. In the context of elections, choice must be based on a candidate's efficiency and honesty, not on his promises to give this or that to the voters or to his *kampung*. Also, those who want to see a good candidate win must be prepared to work voluntarily, without asking for remuneration or the promise of some special benefit.

We have seen how democracy in the United States was shattered by various forms of corruption exposed in the Watergate case. The truth is that Nixon was not the only person who practised such a system; all Presidential candidates and Presidents before him did exactly the same. This stems from the fact that the voters make it necessary to spend an astronomical sum on Presidential elections; but the common run of supporters and voters are not prepared to give voluntary contributions towards this. Faced with a shortage of funds, a candidate and his party cannot but accept help from interested (and wealthy) quarters. Such help may not have strings attached, but the recipients will at the very least feel indebted. The society threw out the President, but the real disease, the corruption practised or promoted by that society, remains. This was proved by the discovery that President Carter was also involved in the corruption scandal around Bert Lance, his financial adviser.

Corruption is not a new disease. It is an old disease, known as

part of the value systems and cultures of societies everywhere. As with other values which are ingrained in a culture, statements on whether corruption is good or bad do not signify any depth of understanding. Not only is there lack of understanding of the meaning and effects of corruption; everybody has one meaning and value for himself and another meaning and value for others. Thus a person who condemns favouritism has no qualms about asking for a favour if he gets a chance.

A chapter such as this is not easy to write, for the reaction to it will be to try to show that the writer also practises corruption. Given the wide interpretation of corruption, nobody can possibly boast of being clean. For a politician to write such an article is tantamount to ensuring failure in the future. Potential helpers will be turned off by fear of being accused of wanting to help for corrupt purposes, or by the knowledge that they will get no personal benefits as a result of giving help. However, it is vital to recognize corruption not just as a part of culture but as a disease with definite consequences.

Stamping out corruption needs honesty. Anyone who tries to use this chapter for his own or his party's political interests is not only dishonest but is practising a form of corruption, the abuse of power that comes from knowledge. Corruption that prevents the stamping out of corruption is the worst corruption of all.



## **Umno and Unity**

True to the word 'United' in its name - United Malays National Organization - the history of UMNO is filled with efforts to unite the Malays in a national organization. Unity is the theme of its struggle. The Congress of Malay organizations at the Sultan Sulaiman Club, Kampung Bahru, in May 1946, created Malay unity through UMNO. The close UMNO-PAS relationship in the early 1970s also proves that UMNO's objective is to unite the Malays.

'United we stand, divided we fall.' UMNO or its Malay acronym PEKEMBAR (Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu) will certainly go down in history as a force for unity.

Uniting the Malays is no easy matter. History shows that the Malays of the Peninsula and the Archipelago are more easily divided than united.

The Malay political system is conducive to disunity. The Peninsula and the Archipelago are inhabited by ethnic Malays who are very similar in language and culture. Such conditions would normally give rise to one nation under one rule.

In Europe, for instance, the great and powerful nations came into being as a result of linguistic, cultural and geographical identity. Italy, Britain, Germany and other European nations, despite having hereditary district chiefs, are each ruled by one monarch and one flag. China, though even bigger and having several dialects which only share a common root, still managed to become one nation. So did Japan, Korea and Persia (Iran).

But for the Malays of the Peninsula and the Archipelago, similarity of language and culture did not create one nation. The Malay political system encourages small, autonomous states. Aceh in Sumatra had

broken up into more than 300 tiny states, each with its own monarch, when the Dutch invaded and conquered it.

In the Peninsula, it is not clear exactly how many states there were before British colonization. Sungai Ujung was once a state. So was Naning. And in Kedah, Perlis was made into a separate state, and the Kubang Pasu district nearly became a state too with its own monarch.

The Malay States became even more divided after the invasion of foreign powers far and near. There was always a monarch who was prepared to help a foreign power for personal gain. Singapore (Singapura) came into being because one monarch was prepared to hand over that part of the Johore empire. The break-up of the Johore-Riau entity was due to a similar incident – a monarch's willingness to accept Dutch rule.

Until the end of the Second World War, the Malays of the Peninsula were still parochial in attitude, owing allegiance to their various states and Rulers. State nationality was defined in several Constitutions as state citizenship. There was no common citizenship for all the states of the Peninsula.

And the citizenship was not a mere formality. Citizens of one state had no rights in another state. Kedah scholarships were only for 'Kedah nationals'. So were Kedah posts; they were open only to sons of Kedah. In the absence of Kedah nationals, a British or Indian candidate could be accepted. But Malays from other states could not get Kedah scholarships or posts.

It is clear from the history of the Malays that division and separation were part of the custom. Unity was not encouraged and was not customary. The Malays of the Peninsula and the Archipelago had a system that was based on fragmentation, i.e. division into smaller and smaller units.

The practice was broken in 1946 when the Congress of Malay organizations in the Peninsula formed a political party called the United Malays National Organization. The name was chosen because the world at the time had full faith in the United Nations Organization as a means of stopping war and building a new world – a world that was united and not divided.

If the nations of the world believed in unity, the Malays too must place their hopes in unity to fight the threat of the British move to put the Malay States under their direct rule. And so UMNO, or PEKEMBAR, was born – an organization to unite the energies of

the Malays, 'United we stand'. And in the United Malays National Organization, the Malays achieved unity, and stood strong. And in the cry *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live the Malays) the Malays began to live as a nation, not as citizens of small, weak States.

*Hidup Melayu* became the slogan and *Bersatu* (Unity) the practice of UMNO. But though the spirit of unity was strong, parochialism and narrow loyalties to the various organizations at the Sultan Sulaiman Club were not easily erased. UMNO being a federation of Malay organizations – the term 'United' not referring to a 'Union' but a 'Federation' within UMNO – there were separate organizations that had merely agreed to cooperate. Each of the Malay States had its own organization and there were also semi-political bodies which were free of the State's political organization and were affiliates within UMNO.

In Kedah, the Kesatuan Melayu Kedah was the national political party for the state. But SEBERKAS, an organization which was not a hundred per cent political, had also become a 'member' of UMNO. Other States had similar situations, with several organizations representing the Malays within UMNO.

The fight against the Malayan Union was conducted by an UMNO which was still a loose federation and not yet an entity. UMNO's success in this initial effort clearly showed the advantage of unity over separateness in a political struggle which did not just involve the Malays but was in fact the political struggle of the Malay States.

Had the Malay States acted separately in opposing the Malayan Union, the British would not have yielded. But the manifest unity of UMNO made it a force that the British could not dismiss (though they were at that time recognized as a world power).

After successfully setting aside the Malayan Union, UMNO found itself without a purpose, and unity as an objective lost its appeal. But following a leadership crisis, efforts towards unity were begun afresh. The result was that organizations which had merely been affiliated within UMNO succeeded in uniting themselves into a state UMNO which represented all Malays in the state who believed in UMNO's cause.

Kesatuan Melayu Kedah, Perak Malay League, Kesatuan Melayu Singapura and similar organizations were replaced by Kedah UMNO, Perak UMNO, Singapore UMNO and so on. SEBERKAS Kedah remained for some time as a non-UMNO organization within UMNO. Finally SEBERKAS also ceased to exist.

But the task of uniting UMNO did not end with the cessation of affiliated organizations. The State UMNO had a strong autonomy and often acted out of tune with the central body. Federalism still existed in this form. The end of federalism came when all divisions dealt direct with the centre, and the State organization was just a liaison body.

With this final step UMNO became a true entity. Each action, each policy, was decided at the centre by a body recognized as representing all members. The UMNO Supreme Council was the body with these overall powers, and it in turn was subject to the General Assembly which was the largest body of all, demonstrating the unity of members in UMNO.

But UMNO did not exist for UMNO. UMNO existed for the Malays. The unity sought was the unity of the Malays. The unity of UMNO members did not as yet mean the unity of the Malays. The name said 'United Malays' but the Malays were still divided in various political organizations which were in opposition to one another.

Though we have seen the way unity was gradually achieved within UMNO, we must admit that the Congress of Malay organizations in 1946 failed to convince a major Malay political party, the Malay Nationalist Party (Partai Nasionalis Melayu) to accept the UMNO concept of unity. The MNP rejected unity without ideology. As it placed ideology above national unity, the MNP did not join the federation called UMNO, though at that time affiliated bodies could retain their identities.

Later the Malays were drawn to various parties which emerged for various reasons. Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), Parti Negara, Parti Islam (PAS) were among those which attracted the Malays. Of these only PAS survived as a major party with significant support from the Malays.

Whatever promises UMNO made, it could not get all the Malays to join it. Some of the Malays continued to support PAS. Malay unity could not be achieved. PEKEMBAR or UMNO could not attain its paramount objective of uniting the Malays.

This fact was finally accepted by UMNO leaders. When the realization came that Malay unity need not necessarily mean unity within UMNO; and that UMNO did not exist for UMNO but for the Malays; attitudes began to change. It was this change of attitude that made possible the cooperation between UMNO and PAS, i.e.

between Malays and Malays. Unity within UMNO was not achieved, but Malay unity was.

And with the achievement of this unity, our nation changed. In just two years, what was once impossible for the Malays seemed to become possible. The Malays appeared to have a brighter future because they were united. A political party is just a means. What is important is unity. It is unity that brings success.

UMNO had achieved its original aim – to unite the Malays. The United Malays National Organization had had one more of its fundamental aspirations fulfilled. From the start UMNO had striven for unity. But in the practice of democracy with its elections, unity was set aside. The May 1969 incident brought shock and awareness. As a result of this awareness, efforts to unite the Malays were revived and PAS-UMNO co-operation was attained. This co-operation was the high point of UMNO's struggle under the leadership of its third President, Tun Razak.

But habit and custom are not easily overcome. While right-thinking Malays, who form the majority, were happy over Malay unity through PAS-UMNO co-operation, certain groups regarded this achievement with envious eyes. In this unity they had no roles to play and did not get the attention of the public. Just as at one time monarchs without thrones were prepared to betray their people in their greed for power, these groups were now willing to resort to any method to disrupt Malay unity for their own ends. Language, race, religion and other issues were exploited for this purpose.

Malay unity is threatened again, before their security can be ensured. Can UMNO cope with this new challenge? Can UMNO continue its struggle to maintain unity? Or will the Malays who were colonized for 400 years be again conquered and enslaved because unity is not a Malay custom?

## ***Quo Vadis Malaysia?***

The Alliance Party's victory in the 1955 General Elections gave Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra the opportunity to become Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya. This was followed up with a delegation to the United Kingdom, which he himself headed, to negotiate the independence of the Malay States with the British.

The delegation left for Sri Lanka by ship and thence to Europe by plane, bringing a mandate from the people and the Malay Rulers to demand that independence be granted in 1959. Though UMNO had set this date, the Tunku was strongly urged by UMNO Youth to ask for independence two years earlier, in 1957.

When the *Merdeka* mission arrived back in this country, at a historic welcome-home ceremony in Melaka, Tunku Abdul Rahman announced that the British had agreed to give independence to the Malay Peninsula in 1959; but, he added, as UMNO Youth had urged, independence 'if possible' would be granted in 1957. Though independence was actually attained in 1957, the Tunku's use of the phrase 'if possible' clearly reflected the doubts harboured by several groups including Malay leaders at that time regarding independence for the Malay States. Indeed there were Malay political organizations that openly opposed independence and made this their platform in the 1955 elections.

These doubts are difficult for the present generation to understand, having grown up in independent Malaysia. But doubts as to whether the Federation of Malaya could survive and remain stable after independence were very real when independence was being sought. The reasons for these doubts were the political developments in the Peninsula since the end of the Second World War and the

racial and economic situation at that time.

The history of British colonization in 'Malaya' is filled with economic exploitation. Many 'coolies' were brought in from India and China to 'open' estates and mines. The wide-open immigration policy attracted foreigners to such an extent that the immigrants exceeded the Malays in number. When the Japanese conquered the Malay Peninsula in 1942, its inhabitants were already divided on a permanent basis into three major communities, i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians. The three communities not only lacked unity; relations among them were so poor that they could easily become enemies. Japanese rule only widened the gap between one community and another.

The defeat of the Japanese and the delay on the part of the British in sending troops to take over power in the Malay States gave the opportunity to communist guerillas, who were almost 100 per cent Chinese, to commit atrocities against people of various communities. For the Malays, these atrocities deepened their hatred of the Chinese. The Chinese felt the same towards the Malays. Several bloody incidents took place between Malays and Chinese. The Indians, in the meantime, were so absorbed in the struggle for independence in India that they remained outside the political movement in Malaya, as if they were not there at all. In such a situation, the British proposal to give equal status to all communities in a British colony to be called the Malayan Union which was the brain-child of Whitehall, London, only served to increase racial division and tension in the Peninsula. Conditions worsened when the communists, who were nearly all Chinese, launched a large-scale guerilla offensive in 1948 to wrest power from the British.

Amidst all this tension and under Emergency rule, the Malay States had to revive public services and facilities which had been damaged and destroyed in more than three years of Japanese and Siamese rule. The number of British officials was increased to well beyond the pre-war establishment. The result was that all important administrative matters were in the hands of foreign officials. Local officials had no opportunity to go for training and to show their efficiency.

It is clear from all this that conditions in the Malay States of the Peninsula in post-war years were unstable and fraught with problems. When the demand for independence was made, these problems had become very serious. The problems were related to one another but could be divided into four categories. One, communal feelings were

very strong and relations among the communities extremely tense. Two, the guerillas were still very active and the war not only needed firm and efficient leadership but was costly in money and energy, though British help was still available. Most districts that were of some distance from the big towns had to be run as 'black areas' i.e. freedom to move about and to earn a living was restricted.

Three, the nation's economy was still poor and difficult to revive because of the lack of peaceful conditions. Not only was a manufacturing industry virtually non-existent; traditional industries like those involving tin and rubber were not yet fully rehabilitated. The import-export industry and other forms of commerce had only just been started and did not bring the Government much in the way of revenue or taxes.

Lastly, local Government staff was small in number and had no opportunity to hold important posts. All such posts were held by British officials who were responsible only to the colonial government and not to the people. Should the British officials leave, the government would certainly be paralysed.

With the existence of these major problems, it is not surprising that faith in independence was not strong among all groups except UMNO Youth. British officials and businessmen, and a great number of the people of the Peninsula, believed that the Federation of Malaya would see dark days and might even be destroyed if it became independent. In particular, they expected a racial war and the interruption of all commercial and industrial activities. In this state of disorder, the machinery of government under the leadership of local officials, especially Malay officials, would inevitably grow feeble and corrupt, and the government would not have the effectiveness and dignity purportedly enjoyed by the British Colonial Government with the backing of Whitehall, London.

Expectations that an independent Federation of Malaya would be destroyed were not based purely on imagination. There were many instances of countries emerging from Western colonization into crisis situations. The government of a newly independent country lacked efficiency or became dictatorial and tyrannical. The economy declined and the people's plight was worse than in the colonial period. This happened despite not having to cope with the problems faced by the Federation of Malaya at the time it was seeking independence.

As if the four problems were not enough, the British imposed a democratic system of government as a condition of independence.



Democracy was not a well-known system of government in this region and the future leaders of the independent Federation of Malaya had no experience of its intricacies. The government of British Malaya itself was not democratic and could not serve as a model for Malayan leaders. A government that had to consider the different views of the people could not be run as easily as the authoritarian government of the British period. Nevertheless, not only was this condition imposed; a full democracy as practised by European nations who had been independent for centuries was written in the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya.

Despite being burdened with these enormous problems, the Federation of Malaya became independent without suffering the terrible consequences predicted. Not only did racial clashes fail to occur; the communist guerilla offensive was weakened and crushed three years after independence. Defeating the communists was an extraordinary achievement. In Vietnam and other countries this could not be done despite all-out help from the United States, a most formidable world power. Success in defeating the communists did not stem merely from the presence of British and Commonwealth troops but was rooted in the ability of the independent Government of the Federation of Malaya to shape attitudes and combine efforts effectively.

After the 'Emergency' had ended, the Government focused its attention and energy on development in the widest sense of the word. In the rural areas, for the first time, attention was given to the provision of modern facilities like roads, water and electricity supplies, schools, clinics and so on. In the towns, trade and industry were given positive encouragement through various incentives. The Government itself put up capital and participated in trade and industry. Thus factories mushroomed and the economy grew at a tremendous pace. The Malays who once did not own a single stall in the towns were given opportunities and aid. Those who made use of these opportunities were so successful that they aroused the envy of other Malays.

But the achievement that is seldom appreciated or highlighted is the administration of a country under a complex democratic system by local officials. Far from collapsing as predicted, the administrative machinery grew larger and more sophisticated after the British officials had their services terminated. Today Government officials do not just have to give serious consideration to the wishes of the people

as voiced by their elected representatives; they have, in addition, to face challenges from the staff under their supervision, through trade unions which have flourished since independence.

All this must be recorded, for human memory is usually weak and this country has been independent for almost three decades. In these three decades, many are now adults who, before independence, were too young to be aware of the upheaval around them. They did not experience the bitterness and pain of life as a colonized people. Nor were they aware of the doubts felt at the prospect of independence. For them, colonization by a foreign nation means nothing, and they cannot make comparisons between being governed by one's own people and being governed by a colonial power. Since they cannot make comparisons, it is difficult for them to appreciate what they have today. They can only make comparisons between existing conditions and their hearts' desire. As man can never fulfil his heart's desire, such comparisons are bound to be frustrating.

It is this frustration which makes the generation gap so wide, leading to misunderstanding and clashes of opinion. The wider the gap, the stronger is the conflict between the two generations. This conflict or confrontation, which arises from misunderstanding, will surely do more harm than good. The older generation is responsible for training and shaping the younger generation, who will take over from them one day. The younger generation sees the older generation's efforts as oppression and 'fight' to crush the generation that in their eyes has lagged behind the times.

Under local leadership which comprises a majority of Malays, the Malay States in the Peninsula, as well as Sabah and Sarawak, have attained progress beyond all expectations. General opinion at home and abroad is that Malaysia has the potential and capacity to remain progressive and strong if it maintains its present stability. The question is, will the rift between the old generation and the new weaken the Malay States of the Peninsula? Will leftist and rightist views among the young generation destroy the organization that has so long succeeded in preserving the independence and integrity of Malaysia? In other words, where is Malaysia heading today?

Though the problems mentioned earlier did not affect the success of independent Malaysia, they have not vanished. All the factors threatening Malaysia are still there. Their effects have been reduced or controlled so that they do not hinder progress, but they continue to exist.

Communalism is still a threat to peace. A thoughtless act by any community can provoke a riot. The Government has to be careful in controlling action which has communal implications. If control is too strict or too lax, communal feelings can be aroused. Clearly moderation is needed, but what constitutes moderation? Moderate action on the part of the Government towards a certain community may be considered extreme by that community and too lenient by another community.

Communist activities too still threaten the nation. If at one time Malaysia could get British help in fighting the communist guerillas, today not only is such help lacking but the territories to be defended by the Malaysian forces have increased manifold. Communist guerillas no longer comprise semi-illiterates; they are more educated. They can plan their movements systematically, make their own weapons, use modern arms and find their way unnoticed into all levels of society. Government efficiency and capacity in thwarting communist guerilla efforts and schemes have become more important than before. Do the efficiency and capacity exist, and can they improve faster than guerilla tactics?

In the economy, the problems have increased in number and complexity. The number of school leavers seeking jobs rises fast from year to year. To cope with this, trade and industry must expand. But trade and industry have to be controlled, to adhere to the policy of a balanced economic development among the communities, and to ensure that industrial allocations are not monopolized by foreigners. Besides, trade union action has to be controlled to allay fears about new investments. If once economic matters were confined to the rehabilitation of the rubber and tin industries, today various other sectors are involved, directly or indirectly. Between the need to expand economic activities to increase job opportunities and national revenue on the one hand, and to attain the objectives of the New Economic Policy on the other, the administration of the nation's economy has become more complex than in advanced countries. Yet Malaysia cannot avoid competition with these advanced countries.

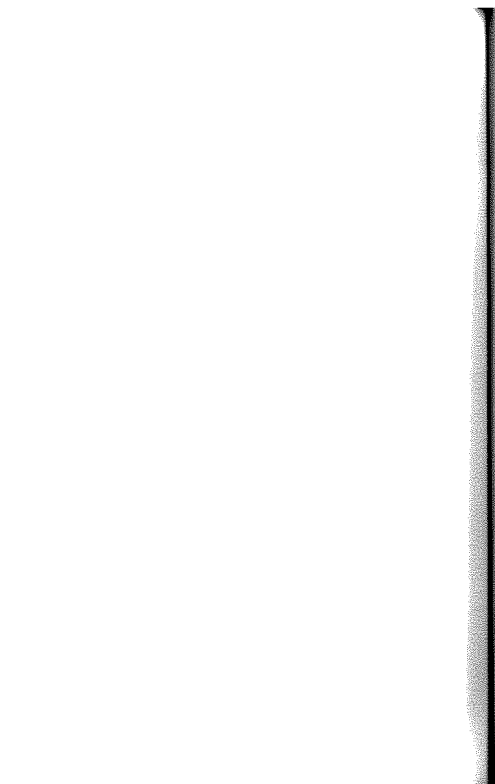
Since the problems mentioned above have grown more complex and intricate, a more efficient and smooth administration becomes extremely important. The number of administrative personnel has had to be vastly increased, and the areas of administration expanded. Semi-Government bodies set up to implement economic/political policies are given additional and widely encompassing roles they had

never played before. If in the old days the administration was isolated from the people, today administrators are required to be close to the people, to consider their wishes and to accept criticism from all quarters.

It is evident that the problems and complexities faced by Malaysia today have increased manifold over those of early post-independence years. In various parts of the world, nations that gained independence together with Malaysia have broken up or changed in character. Some are split in two; others are no longer national entities; yet others have become stooges of foreign powers. Nearly all these new nations have rejected or ceased to practise the forms of democracy that they inherited and chose on gaining independence.

Will Malaysia too follow this trend? Will a democratic government prove too weak to overcome the problems mentioned above, and will it be replaced by a dictatorship? Or will Malaysia gradually become paralysed and finally disintegrate because it cannot solve its problems? Or will realization of all this cause Malaysians and their leaders to work side by side to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of Malaysia and the characteristics which have so far managed to make Malaysia a multiracial nation that is successful and progressive in the true sense.

*Quo Vadis Malaysia??*



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DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, one of the most durable and outspoken figures on the world political stage, has been prime minister of Malaysia since July 16, 1981. He first came to prominence in 1969 when he was expelled from the ruling party, UMNO, for writing a letter critical of the then-prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. Before being readmitted to UMNO in 1972, he wrote his famous, highly controversial work, *The Malay Dilemma*, which examined the economic backwardness of the Malays, and advocated state intervention to bring about their rehabilitation. The book was promptly banned in Malaysia. In *The Challenge* (1986), he explodes fallacies and exposes distortions concerning religion, education, democracy, communism, freedom and discipline, and the concerns of this world and the next. In *A New Deal for Asia* (1999), Dr Mahathir reflects on Malaysia's fight for independence and rails against those who blindly worship the free market.

As Malaysia's fourth prime minister, Dr Mahathir has played a pivotal role in the confident march of his people towards Vision 2020, his blueprint for Malaysia's advance towards fully developed status. Born on December 20, 1925, Dr Mahathir studied medicine in Singapore, where he met his future wife, Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali. After working as a doctor in government service, he left to set up his own private medical practice in his hometown, Alor Setar. In 1974, he gave that up to concentrate on his political career. Dr Mahathir and his wife have seven children and ten grandchildren.