
WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

TAN CHEE KHOON

Editor
Raj Vasil

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Dedication

*This book is gratefully dedicated to my parents
the late Tan Chin Ghee and Tay Kim Siew
who have sacrificed so much for their children and
to whom we their children owe so much.*

Preface

Writing has always appealed to me. During my active days in politics I was forced to communicate with the people at large primarily through the spoken word. Politics was hectic and there was often little time to write. After I retired from active politics, in order to maintain my contact with the people and sustain the fundamental values of democracy and multi-racialism in this country, I decided to write for the press but soon found out that I was not quite "respectable" in their eyes.

It was only when I was awarded the Tan Sri that I suddenly became respectable and I was approached by the Managing Editor of the *Star*, Mr. Hng Hung Yung, to write for the paper. Of course, I was made aware of the fact that he had already secured clearance from the Board of Directors of the *Star* as well as from the Government. Such is the reality of life in this country.

I am of course grateful to the *Star* for giving me the start in writing for the press. I must, however, make it clear that I am not in any way beholden to the MCA, who are the main shareholders through proxies of course, or to the Barisan Nasional Government.

Later I was accepted as a columnist by the *Nanyang Siang Pau* and the *Thinamani*. From time to time too my articles have also been printed in the *Utusan Malaysia* and *Watan*. To each of them I am grateful. I also wish to thank the *Star* and the *Nanyang Siang Pau* for the use of some of their photographs.

Not all the articles I have written have been published. I cannot be too hard on the editors concerned as the publishing and printing laws of our country do make editors look over their shoulders all the time. However, after the assumption of power by the 2M administration none of my articles have been rejected. This is a welcome change.

This volume contains a collection of my articles. It also includes several articles which have not been published by any newspaper.

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I wish to thank Tun Mohammed Suffian for the foreword and the kind words he has written about me. Raj Vasil has been of special help for he agreed to edit the articles and write the various introductions contained in the volume. Without his help the job of producing this book would have been much harder and taken a much longer time.

I also wish to place on record my deep appreciation to my nurse Miss Wong Mee Kiew for typing all my articles. She is one of the few who can decipher my handwriting and she has spent many long hours in typing all that I have written often in dribs and drabs.

I also have to thank a large number of my friends whom I have consulted in the preparation of the articles and who have helped me out in other ways. To mention them individually would run into pages but there is one friend whom I must thank publicly — Dr. M.K. Rajakumar. We have been associated together for more than three decades — professionally and politically, in the University of Malaya and now he has been of immense help in my writing.

Lastly I wish to thank my wife for the help she has given me in the writing of these articles.

Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon

Foreword

I am delighted that my old friend Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, David as we affectionately call him, has decided to publish in volume form some of his articles that have appeared in *The Star*. David was very active in public life for many years, having been a member of the Selangor State Legislative Assembly and of the federal Parliament among other things. He was also active in University of Malaya affairs in which connection I got to know him well. Because of his long involvement in public life, apart from the trenchant views which he expresses in his writings, they later also contain nuggets of inside information essential for those who wish to be kept informed of Malaysian affairs and for academics who wish to write about them. They contain much food for thought.

David follows J.B. Priestley's advice:

"We should behave towards our country as women behave towards the men they love. A loving wife will do anything for her husband except stop criticising and trying to improve him. That is also the right attitude for a citizen."

No Government is perfect. Just as no Government can fool all the people all the time, so no Government can satisfy all the people all the time. We therefore have many opportunities to criticise Government. But David does not criticise simply for the sake of criticising; he criticises hoping to improve the Government. And when on the other hand he thinks that Government has done something good he does not hesitate to say so — to encourage them.

I don't agree with everything that he says, but it is too much to expect that people living in any country should agree with one another. Even if here and there I don't agree with what he says I respect his sincerity — and his loyalty to King and Country.

In most countries it is the lawyers who take the lead in speaking, writing and forming public opinion. Not quite so here. While there

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are many lawyers active in public life, the doctors are not far behind — for example, Datuk Sri Dr. Mahathir our Prime Minister, the late Tun Dr. Ismail, Tan Sri Dr. Mohamed Said, Dr. Lim Chong Eu, and David himself; people who in other countries would have concerned themselves only with the physical health of their patients. The reason our doctors are so prominent in public life is because our best students usually prefer to study medicine.

Else how does one explain the deftness with which they wield their pen? — such that even if one does not agree with them, there is no mistaking the meaning of the words which they have carefully chosen.

Certainly David writes lucidly — he takes a lot of trouble in digging out facts and figures and marshalling them in support of his arguments and opinions — displaying the kind of skill one associates with lawyers experienced in the art of persuading judges.

His audience is however the general public itself to which I have pleasure in commending this book.

Tun Mohd. Suffian
1982

Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-racial nation. The chief racial components of its population are the indigenous Malays and the immigrant Chinese and Indians. Despite a quarter century of independence under a Constitution that established a multi-racial polity, the country and its people remain as divided as before. Even that great Malaysian, 'Bapa Malaysia' Tunku Abdul Rahman, seems to have left little lasting imprint on race relationships. For more than a decade, this remarkable prince from Kedah was able to maintain communal peace and harmony and representative democracy against all dire predictions of doom and disaster. It was a measure of the Tunku's 'success' that in the mid-1960s many tended to go to the extreme of presenting Malaysia as model of a multi-racial society. Unquestionably, during the Tunku Abdul Rahman era, except for the communal explosion in May 1969 which tragically signified the end of the epoch, there was peace and harmony and the various peoples had developed a unique way of enjoying the good things of life without fighting about them. It was a happy Malaysia and the Tunku not unduly took pride in it. The Tunku used to remind Malaysians that they should be thankful to Allah that He had provided enough for everybody in the country.

In that all-pervading atmosphere of live-and-let-live, it did not matter too much that contentious racial issues were not discussed in the open, decisions were taken and compromises achieved not through a full process of debate and interaction amongst the different people. Malaysians had complete confidence in the Tunku's deep dedication to multi-racialism, racial harmony and a fair deal for all. It did not matter that a few top-ranking leaders of the three main racial groups met together out of public view and made compromises on behalf of their own respective racial groups, this being the *modus operandi* of the Alliance. It also did not matter too much that the dreaded Internal Security Act and other statutes did

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not allow the people full political freedom of expression and association. As a certain minimal justice and fair deal was ensured for all, people were willing, even if grudgingly, to accept restrictions on fundamental human rights.

However, since 1969, the situation in Malaysia has changed dramatically. The non-Malays, by and large, believe that the minimal social justice and fair deal which had been assured for all by Tunku Abdul Rahman have been replaced by a special commitment to the interests of the bumiputra. Added to that, basic human rights and freedoms have been further curtailed rendering the people, especially the non-Malays, substantially voiceless. The political organisations of the non-Malays in the Barisan Nasional have lost much of the leverage they enjoyed in the Alliance system with the result that they are not in a position to effectively protect and promote their interests. Further, the delimitation of electoral constituencies has reduced substantially the importance of the non-Malay vote for the UMNO. It is this setting of intensifying racial divisions and increasing frustrations among the non-Malays resulting from their inability to voice their grievances and seek any redress, which makes the writings of Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon assume a very special significance. Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tan Sri Dr. Tan are the only two persons outside the Government who can discuss contentious key issues facing the country publicly and with a remarkable degree of candour and forthrightness. This privilege is not even enjoyed by the senior non-Malay members of the ruling Barisan Nasional. The Tunku and Tan Sri Dr. Tan alone are able to remind the nation and its people of their commitment to multi-racialism and representative democracy, the ideals enshrined in the Constitution at the time of Merdeka in 1957. In that, the two leaders have come to represent the conscience of the country.

Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon has had a very distinguished political career. He was a Member of Parliament from 1964 to 1978. For years, he was widely viewed and acclaimed as Mr. Opposition. Even though he was always associated with the parties in opposition, his integrity, honesty and commitment to Malaysia were never questioned, even by his political adversaries on the Government side. It was no surprise then that in June 1980 the Yang di-Pertuan Agong conferred on him the title of Tan Sri. Tan Sri Dr. Tan is able to interview the leaders of the Government and discuss in his writings political issues, which under the law cannot be discussed in public. He does them with full freedom and a remarkable forth-

rightness. It is a measure of the confidence reposed in him by all Malaysians.

Tan Sri Dr. Tan completed his medical education in Singapore in 1949. Even at medical school, he was active in student affairs; he held the positions of President, Vice-President and Treasurer of the students union. For two years he worked at the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur. In May 1952, he began private practice at 329 Batu Road (now Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman). While practicing medicine, in view of his developed social conscience, Tan Sri Dr. Tan took full interest in community affairs. His greatest love was education and he served on the managing committees of several institutions. For many years, he was closely associated with the University of Malaya as a member of its council and later as its chairman. He has personally helped many a student who did not have the financial means to carry on with schooling or higher education.

In the early 1950s, with the beginning of politics in Malaya, he joined the newly-formed Kuala Lumpur Labour Party through two school mates, Tan Tuan Boon and Lee Moke Sang. The Kuala Lumpur branch of the Labour Party occupied a special place in the sense that it was almost entirely an organisation of middle-class professionals and intellectuals, who did not participate in grass-roots politics but were happy to get together regularly to discuss and debate. In the 1955 Federal Legislative Council elections, two years before independence, Tan Sri Dr. Tan worked for the Labour Party in its election campaign in Kuala Lumpur. Despite the fact that the party had failed badly, Tan Sri Dr. Tan continued his association with the organisation in view of his commitment to democratic socialism. In fact, after independence in 1957, he began to take a more active and direct part in the party's activities. In 1959, he acted as the chairman of the Socialist Front (including the Labour Party and the Party Rakyat) Election Committee in Selangor. The party won a large number of seats in the Parliament as well as in several state legislatures. The electoral successes allowed the party to establish itself as the chief opposition in the country.

It was only in 1964, at the height of the Indonesian confrontation of Malaysia, when the Labour Party was badly split between the Chinese-educated extremists and the English-educated moderates, that Tan Sri Dr. Tan agreed to contest for the parliamentary seat of Batu in Kuala Lumpur and the Selangor State Assembly seat of Kepong. Even though the Labour Party, along with all other Opposition parties, suffered crushing defeats at the hands of the

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Alliance, Tan Sri Dr. Tan won both seats (The Labour Party had won only two parliamentary seats). His electoral success was entirely a result of his own personal appeal among the common masses, including some Malays, based on their confidence in his integrity, honesty and loyalty to Malaysia. In Parliament, soon Tan Sri Dr. Tan established himself as an outstanding parliamentarian, questioning and probing the Government's actions and activities with a thoroughness unknown before. He was so much in the news through these that soon he came to be popularly known all over the country as Mr. Opposition; in Parliament he very much seemed to be a one-man opposition.

However, within his own party, the Labour Party, an intense struggle was being waged by the Chinese-educated extremists to assume full control. In the end, the Chinese-educated took over the party as they had grass-roots support. Tan Sri Dr. Tan was the last of the senior leaders to leave the party as a result of pressure from the radicals and extremists.

During his period in Parliament and the Labour Party, Tan Sri Dr. Tan, in keeping with his deep commitment to multi-racial politics, made very deliberate efforts to establish close contacts with the indigenous Malays. He not only sought to represent the views, frustrations and aspirations of the bumiputra but also worked hard, against substantial lack of interest, sometimes even opposition, to attracting them to the Labour Party in order to strengthen its multi-racial character.

Later, after leaving the Labour Party, with Professor Syed Hussein Al Atas and Dr Lim Chong Eu, Tan Sri Dr. Tan founded a genuinely multi-racial party, Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, whose one key objective was to attract Malays away from communal politics. However, unfortunately, the experiment did not work and Tan Sri Dr. Tan was forced to form yet another non-communal political organisation, the Social Justice Party. These were undoubtedly difficult times to promote non-communal politics and organisations in view of the racial polarisation that had occurred among both the Malays and the non-Malays following the tragic racial explosion of May 1969. Despite frustrations and disappointments, Tan Sri Dr. Tan continued, often a lone struggle, to reassert non-communal politics and values and representative democracy. In 1976, a serious health problem forced him to withdraw from active politics. After recovery, since 1980, Tan Sri Dr. Tan has maintained his efforts to preserve democracy and multi-racialism in Malaysia through his

writings, a collection of which is presented in this volume. The introductory notes, providing a brief background to each section have been written by me.

Raj Vasil

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The Constitution and the PART I
Laws

In multi-racial societies, such as Malaysia, the Constitution of the country is of more than usual importance as it provides the broad framework for the development of mutual relations among the various communities. It can either be the basis of nation-building, where people of different ethnic origins live together as citizens of equal worth, or an instrument of ethnic domination and oppression.

The 1957 Constitution of Malaya was substantially based on the recommendations of a Constitutional commission, consisting of eminent jurists from several Commonwealth countries. It is useful to recall that it was the Alliance which, in a petition to the Rulers of 31 August 1954, had insisted that the Constitution for independent Malaya be drafted by an independent commission of experts from abroad. It had then asserted that 'only such a Commission will be free from prejudices and other local influence. Only such a Commission will be able to exercise complete impartiality On the other hand, a Commission consisting of local people cannot be completely independent because they are bound to be influenced by local political and other interests'. The result was a Constitution which provided a fair balance between the interests of the Malays and the non-Malays and was geared to the creation of a united new nation.

Its four paramount features were the following. Firstly, it created a multi-racial and democratic polity that accorded an equal political status to all the people of the country, irrespective of their racial origin; it entrenched the principle of one man one vote, with equal value. Secondly, it balanced this by retaining the nine Malay States and their Rulers as the symbols of the Malay origins of the new state of Malaya. Thirdly, it guaranteed the non-Malays a measure of religious, cultural and linguistic autonomy, necessary for the maintenance of the multi-racial character of the society and the nation. And, finally recognising that the Malays had lagged behind the non-Malays in certain areas of human endeavour which had resulted in a disparity between the two that was inimical to the creation of a multi-racial new nation, the Constitution accorded the Malays a special position in respect of land, employment in the public service, scholarships and trade and business.

The 1963 Constitution of Malaysia was almost entirely based on the 1957 Constitution and it retained *in toto* its basic features and paramount commitments. Over the years, especially after the tragic and traumatic experience of May 1969, significant changes have been made in constitutional-legal framework. But fortunately, it

continues to reflect the ideals, aspirations and commitments of its founding fathers. Like a great many Malaysians, including 'Bapa Malaysia' Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon is deeply dedicated to ensuring that the constitutional-legal framework remains committed to the fundamental values of democracy and multi-racialism. The primary objective of his writings has been to point out to the people of Malaysia any deviations from these norms.

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION ON WHO IS A MALAY?

I

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir B. Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister, has given the country notice that the Government will amend the Constitution to re-define the status of a Malay as stated in it. He made the announcement towards the end of 1980 and it is a sad reflection on the people of Malaysia that very little notice has been taken of that statement. Any amendment to our Constitution is a very important matter as it concerns all of us. Yet sadly that statement has not caused a ripple in our national life.

The Tunku has quite rightly been called Bapa Malaysia but it is not generally known that he can also rightly be called Bapa Perlembagaan Malaya. The Malayan Constitution was later amended to be the Constitution of Malaysia. The present generation of Malaysians probably do not know that it was the Tunku who was mainly responsible for forming the Reid Commission with its main terms of reference: to draw up a federal Constitution based on parliamentary democracy.

All the jurists on the commission, except for its chairman Lord Reid, were familiar with the federal form of government. They drew up the Reid Commission Report from which the Constitution of Malaya was drawn up. Our Founding Fathers saw to it that our Constitution was not only based on Parliamentary Democracy but

was also founded on Parliamentary Supremacy. For this we have to thank the vision of the Tunku and his Cabinet and looking over the span of nearly a quarter of a century we must be grateful and thankful that our Constitution has stood the stress and strain that it has been subjected to over the last twenty-four years. Elsewhere we have seen how the Constitutions of emergent nations have been torn up and trampled upon and the countries ruled by dictators.

A Constitution is a living instrument and as such it is subject to change according to the needs of the country. The Reid Commission stated and I quote: 'The method of amending the Malayan Constitution should not be too difficult so as to produce frustration nor should it be too easy as to weaken seriously the safeguards of the Constitution.'

In the first twenty years of our country the Constitution has been amended 23 times and I have been fortunate to have taken part in the debates over most of the amendments that have been enacted in Parliament.

The Government goes to great lengths to maintain **secrecy** as regards Bills which are brought before Parliament. All this is unnecessary and sometimes contrary to the interest of the Government itself and the interests of the people of this country. Admittedly there are times when secrecy is necessary. When the budget speech is delivered it is necessary that the budget proposals should not be leaked out to the public. Again, when the Constitution and Malaysia (Singapore Amendment) Act, 1965 (No. 53 of 1965) and the Emergency (Federal Constitution and Constitution of Sarawak) Act 1966 (No. 68 of 1966) were brought before the Dewan Rakyat and passed in a matter of hours, it was essential that secrecy be maintained and there be no delay in the passage of the Bills.

Parliament is currently in session and is debating the Fourth Malaysia Plan. It is a great pity that there is hardly any discussion, not to say debate, on a Bill that will affect the lives of all of us. I do not mean that details of the Fourth Malaysia Plan should be revealed to the public. However the main thrust of the FMP must be discussed and debated in public so that the Government can have a feedback before the FMP (Fourth Malaysia Plan) is finalized. As it is there has been no public discussion on the FMP and all that we get is the dribs and drabs that the Government has allowed to filter to the press. What a pity!

Apart from *these* Bills I do not see the necessity for the Government wanting to keep a tight lid on Government Bills until

they are debated in Parliament. On the contrary I maintain that it is in the interest of the Government itself that all Bills brought before Parliament should be given the widest publicity so that the people of this country will have a chance to study, discuss and debate them thus hopefully providing feedback to the Government. As it is the Members of Parliament generally receive the Bills a few days before they are debated and the newspapers are not provided with copies of the Bills. Even if they do get them through their own contacts they are warned not to comment or publish anything about the Bills before they are debated in the Dewan Rakyat. Why all this secrecy?

Generally speaking the time given to Members of Parliament to study amendments to the Constitution is not enough. Two classic examples of **lack of time** are the Constitution and Malaysia (Singapore Amendment) Act 1965 (No. 53 of 1965) and the Emergency (Federal Constitution and Constitution of Sarawak) Act, 1966 (No. 68 of 1966), both of which were laid on the table of the Dewan Rakyat on the day they were debated and rushed through all three stages of debate in a matter of hours; passed through the Dewan Negara, and received the royal assent in record time. As I have mentioned before, perhaps there was justification for this.

However it is unjustifiable that not enough time is given to MPs to study many constitutional amendment Bills and non-constitutional Bills before they are debated. I remember one day in 1968 when I entered the House at 10 a.m. I was surprised to see a constitution amendment Bill on my table. I was still more surprised when after question time the late Tun Dr. Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman stood up to take the Bill through all its three stages on that same day. We had no time even to read the Bill let alone study it! I stood up to protest at this travesty of justice and I warned the late Tun Dr. Ismail that if the Government persisted in rushing the Bill through that day, I would try to persuade the whole Opposition to walk out and let the Alliance Party debate and pass the Bill by themselves. To give the late Tun Dr. Ismail his due he saw the justness of my protest and agreed to give the MPs one week to study the Bill before bringing it before the House once again.

This lack of notice to the MPs and the people of this country to study intended constitutional amendments can be seen in the passage of the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1976 (Act A 354 of 1976) which contained many fundamental changes to the Malaysian Constitution and greatly curbed the fundamental liberties enshrined

in it. This haste on the part of the Government has even moved the usually staid Bar Council to protest and I quote: 'It was stated in the press that the Government had been working on the amendments contained in the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1976 for the past two years, but the public and the Bar Council had only a few days in which to study the amendments. When fundamental rights are to be changed there should be more time given to the public to study the amendments especially where a minority group's right are to be affected. The founding fathers when drawing up the Constitution took into consideration the views of every community and provided a chapter containing fundamental liberties of which Article 12 is one. In order therefore to amend any one of the articles in the chapter on fundamental liberties the Government for the time being ought to give wide publicity to the proposed amendments and also give fully the consequences of such amendments and sufficient time for the people to present their views.'

I myself was particularly glad that the legal profession had voiced its protest. Up to that time, it had been conspicuous by its silence on the constitutional amendments that have taken place in our country. Now it is in the vanguard of the fight against the erosion of fundamental liberties and that is as it should be.

It is generally agreed by most constitutional experts that **retrospective amendments** to the constitution of a country should be discouraged. Yet time and again the Government had bulldozed through Parliament many retrospective amendments. Mr. H.P. Lee in his excellent article on the process of constitutional change in Malaysia has this to say on retrospective amendments and I quote: 'Another point to be made is that retrospective constitutional amendments should as a rule be discouraged. Although Article 7 expressly prohibits retrospective criminal legislation the Government should not resort to retrospective constitutional amendments which will deprive a person of an accrued right. The practice can be more pernicious if the amendments are given a retrospective operation when litigation is under way'

Another feature of constitutional amendments is the **erosion of the human rights** enshrined in our Constitution. The first erosion was made in 1960 when the Emergency was judged to be over. The Emergency regulations were repealed and the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1960 (No. 10 of 1960) was passed in order to facilitate the enactment of the ISA (Internal Security Act 1960) as it is generally

known. This Act has enchained and placed a millstone round the neck of all freedom lovers in this country.

In the wake of the racial riots of 13 May 1969 the Constitution was amended by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1971 (Act No. A 30) which amended Article 10 and 63 of the Malaysian Constitution to empower Parliament to pass laws to impose further restrictions on the right to freedom of speech. These restrictions applied to Parliament itself so that MPs could no longer seek protection behind the shelter of parliamentary privilege. Further some of these amendments were 'entrenched', making future attempts to remove them from the statute book virtually impossible.

The next big attempt to restrict human rights was by the passage of the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1976 (Act A 354 of 1976) which I have alluded to earlier.

II

Many times during the debates on the amendments to the Constitution I have reminded the Government that democracy is a tender fragile plant and it will need all the efforts of the Government, the Opposition and the people of this country to nurture it so that in due course it will grow into full maturity and be able to withstand the buffetings of politicians and extremists. I have also accused the Government of treating the Constitution as a sacred book when it suits them but tearing it apart when it is in their interests to do so. I pointed out to the Government how other countries take great care to see that the Constitution is not amended at the will and fancy of the Government of the day. Some countries go to extraordinary length to have maximum consultation with the people before the Constitution is amended.

The Government now proposes to amend our Constitution to re-define the **meaning of a Malay**.

By Art. 160 (2) of our Constitution a Malay is defined as a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom *and*:

- (a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore or
- (b) is the issue of such a person.

Thus it will be seen, that for the purpose of the Constitution a

Malay need not be of Malay ethnic origin. An Indian or a Chinese or a European of Malaysian citizenship can be a Malay if he professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks Malay and conforms to Malay custom. With the increased activity of PERKIM, increasing numbers of non-Malays in this country can qualify to be a Malay as defined under Art. 160 (2). This has caused some concern to the Government hence the proposal to re-define the meaning of who is a Malay.

In the process the Government must take great care that the rights of the other bumiputras, namely the natives of Sarawak and Sabah, are not vitiated and care too must be taken that the rights of non-Malays are not affected as well.

Art. 161 A (6) defines a native of Sarawak and Sabah as a person who is a citizen and belongs to one of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and Sabah.

The bumiputras of Sarawak and Sabah are of course very conscious of their rights *vis-a-vis* the Malays. This was exemplified in the speech made by Dato Leo Moggie during the budget debate of 1971 where he stressed on the rights of the natives of Sarawak.

The Government has written the definition of a Malay into the Constitution. But why not give a legal definition of 'bumiputra' in the Constitution as well? The word 'bumiputra' was first used in Parliament in 1965 when the MARA Bill was debated and passed by Parliament. During the course of the debate I remember I asked the Tunku, then the Prime Minister, if I qualified as a bumiputra. I reminded the Tunku that I was born and bred in Malaysia and that I spoke Bahasa Kebangsaan as well. The Tunku turned my query aside by saying that I did not need to be a bumiputra as I was a rich doctor.

In most countries a 'son of the soil' is a person who is born and bred in the country of which he is a citizen. There are millions of non-Malays who have been born and bred in this country and feel they should be bumiputras. A definition of the word in the Constitution will go a long way towards resolving this vexed question.

One way to get maximum consultation with the people is to establish a royal commission to study the subject. And when its report is tabled in Parliament it can be referred to a select committee for further study as was done in the case of the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act. The subject was first studied by a royal commission headed by the late Tan Sri H.T. Ong and later when the

Bill was tabled in Parliament it was referred to a select committee headed by the then Attorney-General.

In both instances, the royal commission and the select committee held their hearings in public. The royal commission headed by the late Tan Sri H.T. Ong invited interested parties and others to send their views by way of memoranda and appear in person at the public hearing. The select committee headed by the then Attorney-General invited any one interested in the subject to give oral evidence at the public hearing.

As a result the Government got a wide range of views on the subject and I must congratulate it on doing a good job on the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act. It was ably steered through the Dewan Rakyat by the late Senator Datuk Athi Nahappan. The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament and I believe it also received the royal assent. But for reasons best known to itself the Government has not implemented the Act although more than five years have passed since the Bill was passed by Parliament.

Another way to ensure maximum feedback from the public is to issue a **White Paper** on the subject. In the White Paper the Government can publicise firm but tentative Government proposals prior to the publication of a Bill. The Government has done this before in the case of some of the Bills it introduced in Parliament, for example the Universities and University Colleges Bill, the Bank Rakyat Bill. This will encourage the public to discuss and debate the subject before the Bills are introduced in Parliament.

Clearly the proposed amendment to our Constitution on who is a Malay and my proposal to define 'bumiputra' are matters of great importance. Will the Government take the lead in initiating discussion on the subject before bringing it to Parliament? Judging from past experience this is not likely. Will the legal profession or even any of the political parties set in motion public discussion on this important amendment to our Constitution?

THE SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) ACT 1981

The Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 will be debated in the Dewan Rakyat on 8 April 1981 and with the huge majority that the Barisan Nasional Government possesses its passage through Parliament is a foregone conclusion.

Few Bills in recent times have been so controversial. We are told that is not a hastily concocted Bill and that its gestation period has been many years. If that is so why should the Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Dr. Mahathir Mohamed say that the Bill will be debated in the current session of the Dewan Rakyat if it is ready? The Bill was given to MPs on 30 March and right on the first page is a note stating that the Bahasa Malaysia text would be available in due course. Why was no time given for translation? This shows that the Bill has not been a long time in the making and some of the clauses have been hurriedly concocted, as I shall presently prove.

The first hint of the Bill was made by the Deputy Prime Minister when he stated politicians should not masquerade as ordinary citizens in non-political societies to perpetrate their nefarious activities. These wolves in sheep's clothing should be rooted out of non-political societies which should be as pure (politically speaking) as vestal virgins. After that, bits of the proposed Bill leaked out to the press and this fueled a great deal of controversy. After the Bill was laid on the table in the Dewan

Rakyat, the Deputy Minister for Home Affairs stated that in future, there will be three types of societies: political parties, political societies and friendly societies. The wolves will be separated from the sheep and politicians will no longer be able to hide themselves in friendly societies.

It is not in the interests of the Government to be so secretive about the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. It has led to a great deal of speculation and provides opportunities for mischief makers. It is true that the Bill will be passed by our Members of Parliament but it concerns and affects 30,000 societies with a membership of hundreds of thousands. Surely these societies have a right to discuss and debate the Bill amongst themselves and comment on it before it is debated in Parliament. I have always taken the stand that the people should be consulted about important Bills before they are debated in Parliament. It will greatly help the MPs and the Government itself to have this sort of feedback.

No Bill in recent years has drawn so much controversy and fire from such a large cross-section of the population. I am happy that there are issues that Malaysians of all races, religions, ages and professions can agree upon.

Thus a group consisting of 19 societies has met and sent a memorandum to the Government to protest against the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. Students, ex-students, graduates and a number of professional bodies have come out in protest. Fancy even the Ulama Association of Malaysia and of Penang following suit.

On 4 April a larger group met at the premises of the headquarters of ABIM to voice their protest against the proposed Bill. The Balai Ikhtisas Malaysia or the Malaysian Professional Centre, representing a number of professional bodies, has written letters of protest to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Home Affairs as well. It has also sent telegrams of protest to all members of the Dewan Rakyat. I have no doubt that the volume of protest will grow louder and bigger by the time the Bill is debated in Parliament on 8 April 1981.

This shows that the protest against the Bill is widespread. Young and old, worker and professional, laity and the clergy of the major religions, men and women are all involved in the protest movement. The movement is therefore not confined to what the Government would classify as trouble makers such as ABIM and Aliran.

Why should so much heat and controversy be generated over

this Bill? Because, to put it simply, it limits the freedom of individuals and societies. The amendments will have a serious effect in eroding the fundamental liberties of Malaysian people besides going against the spirit of the Constitution. It will be a great setback for democracy in this country if the Bill is passed in its present form.

A political society is defined as any society which seeks to influence the Government of Malaysia, any State Government, any local authority or any department or agency of any such Government or authority etc. By this amendment the Government seeks to curb any comment by any society on Government policies and activities. I would have thought that any constructive criticism of Government activities should be welcomed.

Politics and opposition are being made out to be undesirable activities, not the essential part of good citizenship. Politics is the business of every citizen, both a right and a responsibility that comes with good citizenship. It is a dangerous line of thinking to say that politics is the prerogative of the professional politician. Every organization of citizens must have political concerns and must relate these concerns to the life of the country. This is not merely desirable but absolutely essential in a democracy. That is why the Opposition in Parliament is referred to as 'His Majesty's Opposition'.

I am a member of the MMA, i.e. the Malaysian Medical Association. Annually the MMA, like many other associations, is invited to meet the Minister for Finance at a dialogue session where attempts are made to influence the fiscal policies of the Government. If the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 is passed then the MMA, like many other professional bodies, will have to be declared a political society or be de-registered.

Then again, from time to time, the MMA like many other societies, seeks to meet the Minister of Health with the view of influencing Government policies for the good of the medical profession and the community. That would become an offence if it wanted to remain a friendly society.

This is the main reason why the MMA, like many other professional societies including the BIM, is opposing the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981.

Under the amendment the Registrar has the power to de-register any friendly society for dabbling in politics. While some of the political activities are defined with some exactness, the meaning of the term politics is not defined. Thus, going to vote in an election

is a political act because by voting one is trying to shape the sort of Government that the country is going to have. Almost every society, be it a professional, religious, sports or consumer group, at one time or other seeks to influence the Government. What is going to happen to them when the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 is bulldozed through Parliament?

By placing constraints on these societies which have no desire to take part in politics or to be labelled as political parties or political societies, the development of voluntary organizations and interest groups in this country will be much dampened, if not destroyed. This will seriously erode the participation of the people in the affairs of their own country and in providing the feedback that is so necessary for the Government itself.

One of the definitions of a political society is that it is a political party. Hence a political party and a political society are one and the same thing! This is one of the reasons why I say that the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 has been concocted in haste and not enough thought has been given to drafting it.

The amendments confer vast powers on the Registrar of Societies. He is now a 'supremo' — with the power of life and death over all societies. And his actions cannot be challenged in a court of law. Our Constitution provides for checks and balances between Parliament, the Judiciary and the Executive. Where a society is de-registered the aggrieved party can only appeal to the Minister of Home Affairs. This cuts across the fundamental liberties and the rights of the Judiciary as enshrined in our Constitution.

The Registrar can order an office bearer to be removed, the rules to be changed, a society de-registered etc., and virtually run any society he may take a fancy to. He is a law unto himself as far as the societies under his care are concerned.

But why confer on the Registrar of Societies such sweeping powers? I may stand corrected, but I believe I am right in saying that no other officer under the crown has such sweeping powers. It is unbelievable that such powers can be granted to a Government official in a democratic country. Moreover his actions are not subject to review in a court of law. Which makes a mockery of the Rule of Law.

The right of every citizen and organization in this country to have access to our courts and the independence of our judiciary is the only way of placing a check on the excesses of power on the part of our Ministers and the executive branch of Government.

The Deputy Minister for Home Affairs has sought to calm the fears of those concerned and said that the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 is 'nothing but calling a spade a spade'. If this is so, it is a curious way of achieving the Government's objective. Surely it is not beyond the capability of the Government and its legal draftsmen to draw up a Bill to separate the politician from the non-politician and not stir up a hornet's nest like this amendment Bill has done.

In view of the controversy that this Societies (Amendment) Bill has drawn I propose that it be referred to a select committee. Let us hope that wiser counsel will prevail in the Cabinet and that my proposal will be adopted by the Government.

THREE

SHOW CAUSE LETTER TO ALIRAN

The Show Cause letter to Aliran Kesedaran Negara (Aliran) comes as a shock not only to the members of Aliran but to all freedom lovers in the country who treasure human rights.

In a letter to Aliran, dated 11 October 1980, the Registrar of Societies asked Aliran to show cause why it should not be de-registered by 10 November 1980 unless it could give a satisfactory explanation for the statement made by its president, Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, that appeared in the *Star* of 9 October 1980. In that statement Dr. Chandra Muzaffar commented on the new allowances for public servants.

In the same letter the Registrar of Societies stated that the statement by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar could confuse the public and was liable to disturb the peace in the country. It further stated that Aliran was pursuing aims other than those that were laid down in its Constitution.

Before I comment on the letter of the Registrar of Societies let me examine the aims and objectives of Aliran.

Aliran is a reform movement dedicated to justice, freedom and solidarity. It started in 1977 with 7 members and it now has a membership of 55. It does not seek a mass membership and has deliberately and wisely kept its membership to a very select group. But what it lacks in members it more than makes up by the quality of its activities and its influence is far in excess of its small membership.

In order to be credible to the masses which it seeks to influence it has wisely decided to be multi-racial and multi-religious in its membership. It has excluded members of political parties from its leadership and has also decided to eschew participation in the electoral process. In other words its leadership and its members have deliberately decided not to be members of any political party nor take part in elections at state or federal level. Furthermore, it is not aligned to any political party nor does it take a partisan stance in the politics of our country. No other society of a similar nature in our country has taken such a stance and off-hand the society closest to it that I can think of is the Fabian Society of Great Britain. But the Fabian Society is of course aligned to the Labour Party in the United Kingdom whereas Aliran is not aligned to any political party in our country.

It does not receive any funds from any outside body either locally or abroad and with this financial independence it can afford to speak out without fear or favour on the many problems and issues facing the country. There is a great need for such societies in our country.

Aliran has organized a string of activities of which all Malaysians can be proud of. It has organized seminars and forums on religion and social issues that have been opened or chaired by such distinguished personalities like Tunku Abdul Rahman, our former Prime Minister and Dr. Ling Liong Sik, Deputy Minister for Information.

Its latest seminar was on corruption with regard to Malaysian society and was opened by none other than the Chief Justice of Peninsular Malaysia, Raja Tan Sri Azlan Shah. Aliran has also published pamphlets and books on various issues of importance which have sought to awaken the conscience of the nation. It has supported the Government where such support is merited but has been critical of it and the Opposition as well. I myself have at times disagreed with the views expressed by Aliran but I have respected its right to express them.

Our country has subscribed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as embodied in the Constitution of the United Nations. Freedom of expression is enshrined in our Constitution as well. The right to dissent in a lawful manner is fundamental in a parliamentary democracy which the Barisan Nasional Government says it practices. Why then this attempt to gag Aliran through the Registrar of Societies? When the Dewan Rakyat debated the

Societies Act of 1966 fears were expressed that the Act may be used to suppress societies whose activities or views were not quite welcome to the Government.

To be fair to the Government this is the first time that I know of the Societies Act has been used to browbeat a society into submission but I hope that better counsel will prevail and the Registrar of Societies will not be so foolish as to de-register Aliran. The Registrar must remember that his acts are not sacrosanct and that they are subject to review by the Minister of Home Affairs and to a court of law as well.

The Registrar of Societies too must remember that Aliran is pledged to advocate reforms through lawful and constitutional means. If such a society is de-registered it may well drive other societies, some registered and others not registered, which are pledged to work for changes in our society, to go underground and then we will have to increase the strength of our Special Branch to keep track of such unlawful activities.

Let me come back to the letter of the Registrar of Societies, dated 11 October 1980. The letter stated that the statement made by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar that appeared in the *Star* of 9 October 1980 on the new allowances for public servants 'is likely to confuse the general public'.

Before I comment on the merits of the Show Cause itself there are two observations that I would like to make.

Firstly the statement appeared in the *Star* of 9 October 1980 and the Registrar of Societies shot off the Show Cause letter exactly two days later. Why did he act with such alacrity? If all our top civil servants are so efficient we will not have the long suffering public complaining of the long delays that they have to put up with in the hands of our bureaucrats.

The indecent haste in which the letter was shot off to Aliran seems to indicate that the Registrar of Societies was waiting or was poised to pounce on it at the first sign of a slip up (in the eyes of Registrar). Here I wish to state quite clearly that in my opinion the president of Aliran did not slip up in making that statement on the increase of allowances for public servants. The Registrar of Societies may be used to sending Show Cause letters and de-registering societies almost as a matter of routine but to societies like Aliran and others a letter like that is a serious matter.

Why this discrimination against Aliran? Under the Societies Act of 1966 every branch of a political party has to present its report

and statement of accounts annually. Yet I know there must be hundreds of such branches which have not complied with the law and still have not received Show Cause letters from the Registrar. Why these double standards? Is it because Aliran is hurting the Government and hence it must be muzzled or de-registered?

Some years ago, if I am not mistaken, the MIC was late by a matter of years in making its annual returns and in holding its Annual General Meeting and yet the Registrar quite rightly took a lenient attitude towards that political party. Why then this threat against Aliran when other more established political parties were dealt with so leniently in the past?

Secondly why has Aliran been given less than a month to prepare a reply to the Show Cause letter before it is threatened with de-registration? Being struck off the register is a very serious matter to any society and surely on such an important matter Aliran or for that matter any society that is served with a Show Cause letter, should be given adequate time to prepare to reply.

The manner in which the letter was shot off to Aliran and the short time given to it to reply would seem to indicate that the Registrar of Societies wants to strike off the society from the register and give it a quiet burial without the public and the people of this country realizing that such an event has taken place.

But I am glad that Aliran is made of sterner stuff. It has not only made an excellent rebuttal of the charges against it, but also made known its case to the public so that the people of this country can know and see the rape of human rights that is taking place before their eyes.

Here I wish to congratulate the *Star* and *Malay Mail* which on 7 November 1980 gave a fairly good coverage of the case presented by Aliran. Had they not broken the news on that day the people of this country would be completely in the dark about the machinations of the Registrar of Societies. As for his charge that the statement made by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar was likely to confuse and also disturb the peace of the country, I do not wish to repeat the excellent reply made by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar.

If confusing the public is an offence in the eyes of the Registrar of Societies then what action has been taken against those who are responsible for official statements? These statements very often confuse the public rather than elucidate matters.

Why has no action been taken against other individuals and societies who have expressed similar views on the same subject?

The Consumer Association of Penang, for example, did just this but has been left alone.

It is obvious that the Registrar of Societies has not acted off his own bat. The decision to take such an action must have been cleared by people much higher up, like the Minister of Home Affairs and perhaps even the Cabinet. If my thesis is correct then the man in the street is entitled to ask why the Barisan Nasional Government is so afraid of a lawful body like Aliran?

I have already touched on some of its activities. They all contribute towards building a united multi-racial, multi-religious country which all of us strive for. Moreover all the activities are in conformity with the Rukunegara. I doubt if the Registrar of Societies can put his finger on one act of Aliran that can be labelled as anti-national. Hence far from wanting to gag and silence it the Barisan Nasional Government should lend a helping hand and encourage it in its endeavours.

The case of Aliran is a classic example of what a lawful, multi-racial, multi-religious, non-politically aligned and non-partisan society has to contend with in this country. It has to operate within the constraints placed by the Societies Act of 1966, the Internal Security Act and has to walk a very tight rope between the Scylla of the Societies Act of 1966 and the Charybdis of the Internal Security Act.

The letter from the Registrar of Societies also pointedly reminds Aliran that the statement issued by Dr. Muzaffar is likely to disturb the peace of this country. If that thesis is correct, then Aliran is one step away from the ambit of the Internal Security Act. There the individual may be detained not for what he has done but for what he may do!

The Show Cause letter has taken all of us by surprise but already many voices of protest have been raised against it.

Mr. Gurmit Singh, president of the Environmental Protection Society, Malaysia and of the Selangor Graduates Society has asked the Registrar to think again and added that there was no justification for his harsh action. Even the chairman of the Kuala Lumpur branch of the UMNO Youth, Encik Sheikh Mohamed B. Mohamed Sahad, has said that the action of the Registrar was a harsh one as Aliran had merely voiced its opinions on issues facing society. He went on to say and I quote: 'It is our opinion that what was said by Aliran should be given serious consideration.'

I wish to congratulate the Kuala Lumpur UMNO Youth

Branch for coming out in defence of Aliran and I call on all right-thinking Malaysians to add their voice of protest by writing either to the Registrar of Societies or to the Minister for Home Affairs.

The Registrar of Societies has stated that he will take a few days to study the reply made by Aliran. Let us hope that after a detailed study of the reply and after deep reflection on the subject he will come to the conclusion that there is no cause for it to be struck off the register.

I call on our Members of Parliament to bring up this issue when the estimates of the Ministry of Home Affairs come up for debate in the current Budget Session. And I am sure that Aliran will not take things lying down. It should take the matter to the High Court. If it does then I am sure that many Malaysians will rally to its defence by contributing generously to its legal expenses. I shall take the lead in heading the list of contributors of the legal aid fund set up for the legal defence should the need arise.

However I hope that such a need will not arise and as I have stated before I hope that the Registrar of Societies after deep reflection will not strike off Aliran from the Registrar of Societies and thus put an end to an unhappy episode in our national life.

FOUR

BRAVO THE BAR COUNCIL!

Congratulations to the Bar Council for getting out of their air-conditioned rooms and descending from their ivory tower to demonstrate for fundamental liberties and human rights in this country. At last the members of the Bar have reached manhood. In my wildest dreams I have never thought of the day when the lawyers of our country would participate in a demonstration. In their wigs and black gowns they have always looked too respectable and dignified to actually do so and that too in a drizzle. Yet, on 7 April 1981, they stood on the roadside in the rain, distributing their memorandum to the Members of Parliament who were arriving at the Dewan Rakyat for the historic debate on the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. Ten of them went up to the lobby of the House to distribute their memorandum there as well. It warmed the cockles of all freedom lovers' hearts. The lawyers did us proud and the country salutes them!

Let me explain. In the past the Bar Council had been headed by people who held office as chairman for too long and as a result got stale in office and in a sense isolated from the man in the street whom the lawyer is supposed to serve. But with the passage of the Legal Profession Act, a new generation of lawyers took over and the chairmanship was limited to two years. This was a change for the better. Raja Aziz took over and he was succeeded by a number of lawyers who were attuned to the needs of the profession and of the

people of this country. These men include Datuk Abdullah B. Datuk Abdul Rahman, the younger brother of the late Tun Dr. Ismail, Mr. Justice V.C. George, now a member of the High Court, and the chairman Mr. G.T.S. Sidhu.

Since late 1974 the lawyers, especially the Bar Council, have taken an interest in issues which affect the people where before they would not touch them with a barge-pole. Then they began to speak out loud and bold for human rights and fundamental liberties. They organized law conferences about what has happened in our country and they have also organized international law conferences such as Law Asia and have presented papers at them. Also, they have taken up cases like that of the boy in Penang who was sentenced to death while still a juvenile. They have also protested against the hanging of those who had been convicted and sentenced to death for the possession of firearms under the Internal Security Act.

I still clearly remember how in the fifties I despaired of ever waking up the lawyers of this country to take an interest in the Emergency Regulations, the Internal Security Act, the amendments to the ISA, the Universities and the University Colleges Act, etc.

It is true that in those days there were very few lawyers who were interested in such matters. Of course there were opposition MPs like the Seenivasagam brothers, Karam Singh and Lim Kean Siew. I called on the services of P.G. Lim whenever I wanted legal advice but, sad to say, at that time there were very few others who were willing to come forth to help such forlorn causes. When P.G. Lim and I worked on the case of the eleven young men condemned to death during the confrontation with Indonesia, very few lawyers came forward to help us. Happily during the last few years the situation has changed vastly. In order to curb the activity of lawyers the Government amended the Legal Profession Act, by increasing the quorum needed, thus making it very difficult for the legal profession to hold general meetings. But this has neither curbed their activities nor daunted them.

I have always maintained that the lawyers of our country should be in the vanguard of the fight for human and fundamental rights. In the past it has been left to trade unionists, doctors and others to lead the war. Unfortunately, they are not well-equipped where the law is concerned and usually do not read the fine print either where Bills, Acts etc. are concerned. But now that the members of the Bar are in the vanguard, as they should be, the battle

for the preservation of democracy will take on a new look.

I am told that in the past the Government used to consult the Bar Council about some of the Bills that they intended to bring to Parliament. That practice has long been discontinued which is regrettable.

To come back to the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981, the Government has bulldozed it through Parliament without any difficulty as I had predicted. The Opposition could not even muster enough votes to call for a division. To do that they need 15 votes but they could muster only 14 votes. The easy and arrogant manner in which the Government has passed the Bill will, I hope, bring home the message to every voter and citizen in this country of the need for a strong Opposition and the danger of entrusting the Government with too much power. The Government is so drunk with it that it has become insensitive to the needs of the people.

The Government has claimed that the opposition to the Societies (Amendment) Act, 1981 is really confined to a small cluster of individuals who are in control of a small group of societies. In truth, in all my years of involvement in politics amounting to more than a quarter of a century I have not seen a greater opposition to any Government Bill than this, the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981.

The Government also claims that much of the opposition to the Bill is due to ignorance and some of the protesters being led by the nose. With due deference to the Government I would suggest that even a legal luminary like the Lord President would hesitate to say that the members of the Bar Council are ignorant of any Bill that the Government brings to the Dewan Rakyat. By and large it would be true to say that the leading luminaries of the Bar have served or are serving in the Bar Council at the moment. Why, some of the leading members of the Bench have been recruited from the Bar. If the members of the Bar or the Bar Council cannot comprehend what is a relatively simple Bill like the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 and the fine print therein, who can? Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Besides, the members of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Staff Association are not exactly a body of nincompoops. They are experts in the respective fields they have been recruited for and I dare say that they are quite capable of comprehending what are the contents of a Bill like the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981.

One refreshing feature of the whole sorry episode is the brave

stand taken by Datuk Senu bin Abdul Rahman. He spoke out for parliamentary democracy and made a plea for the removal of the more objectionable clauses — not to accomodate the Opposition, but for democracy in this country and for the people of Malaysia. Now nobody can accuse Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman as being anti-national. He has been a General-Secretary of UMNO itself and a Minister of the Crown. Alas, now that he is a lowly backbencher his views and advice have been brushed aside.

I want to congratulate the *Star* — which had been mentioned in the Dewan Rakyat — for taking a brave stand on the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. It strove to have some of the more objectionable features of the Bill removed or toned down, as did the efforts of many others.

The Government must take note of the warning made by Datuk Dr. Ezanee Merican, the President of the Malaysian Medical Association, that the cure will be worse than the disease. Meanwhile the battle for democracy in this country goes on. Members of the Bar Council, the people of our country salute you and are proud of you. Continue the good work.

FIVE

RELEASE OF TWENTY-ONE DETAINEES

On 30 July 1981 Datuk Musa Hitam, the Deputy Prime Minister and concurrently the Minister for Home Affairs, announced the unconditional release of 21 detainees from two detention camps in Batu Gajah and Taiping.

This was exactly two weeks after Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed assumed office as the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia and twelve days after he announced the line-up of his new cabinet on 18 July 1981 when he made the unexpected statement that the detainees had not been forgotten. I wish to congratulate both the Prime Minister and his Deputy for implementing the promise that the new Government had made. Not only the families of the detainees concerned but the whole country rejoices at their release.

As a Hari Raya present to the detainees, 21 of them have been released without conditions. This is most surprising but quite in keeping with the sense of fair play and humanity of our new Minister for Home Affairs.

In the past the detainees had to accept a set of conditions and make a humiliating 'confession' on both TV and radio as a prerequisite to their release. I know of only six detainees who refused to confess on TV or radio and accept the conditions set by the Special Branch. One is now a prominent doctor in private practice in Kuala Lumpur. Another is a prosperous businessman. Then there is an academician, a motel keeper, a trade union officer

and a businessman. Of the six cases I have quoted, only two accepted the conditions set by the Special Branch.

Datuk Musa at the press conference took great pains to stress that one is not detained for his political activities but rather for carrying out communist, pro-communist, subversive and anti-national activities. I hesitate to take up the issue with Datuk Musa but in justice to the detainees I must ask what anti-national activities are? Acts prejudicial to security cover a multitude of sins of omission and commission. Are not today's anti-nationals tomorrow's Ministers if they survive?

Datuk Musa also pointed out that the Advisory Board reviews every detainee's case once every six months. It is not generally known that the abolition of the Emergency Regulations was one of the election platforms of the Alliance Party. When it won power, however, it entrenched the powers under the Emergency Regulations into the permanent laws under the Internal Security Act. Under the Emergency Regulations it was mandatory on the part of the Minister for Home Affairs to act on the 'advice' of the Advisory Board; under the ISA now the Minister can disregard the same. For a long time the Board has been headed by an ex-judge and many detainees have lost faith and refused to appear before it. I once appeared before the Advisory Board to speak on behalf of a detainee. As far as I was concerned it was a waste of time and a farce. The Special Branch would make a long list of allegations which were so vague that the detainee and his lawyer had no way of challenging them. An example can be seen in the following allegations made against Dr. Syed Hussein Ali. They are:

1. On 20 June 1972, speaking at a forum organised by the Anthropology and Sociological Society of the University of Malaya, you unhesitatingly condemned and exploited Government policies at various levels. In particular, you alleged that the Government economic system had exacerbated the suppression of the Malays of the 'lower class' by those of the 'upper class'. You also accused the Government of pursuing a suppressive policy against people who opposed its policies and system. Your irresponsible and inimical utterances are obviously designed to instil the spirit of 'class struggle' to the audience aimed at bringing the Government's downfall by revolutionary means.
2. On 13 October 1972, you again preached 'class struggle' in your discussion with the University of Malaya Socialist Club (UMSC) members, in the context that the 'lower class' of the Malays and the

Chinese were continuously being suppressed by those of the 'upper class' under the present system of the Government. Your participation in the above discussion indicates evidently your continued interest in the affairs of the UMSC which was first mooted by you in 1967, with the ultimate aim of using it as a vehicle for the dissemination of subversive propaganda and the preaching of 'class struggle' to the students, in furtherance of your pro-Communist aims.

3. On 26 May 73, at a forum organised by the UMSC in the University of Malaya, you strongly alleged that suppression, oppression and racial conflicts existing in the country were as a result of 'feudalist-colonialism' practised by the Government. You again preached 'class struggle' to the students based on Karl Marx Theory *vis-a-vis* 'The History of Man Has Always Been a Class Struggle', another clear manifestation of your attempt to instil pro-Communist ideals and to arouse student sentiment against the Government.

4. On 29 June 74, speaking at a PSRM mass rally at Kampong Masjid, Sg. Selisik, Selangor, you strongly condemned the Government for the 'arbitrary arrest and detention' of PSRM members. You also alleged that there were rampant corrupt practices amongst Ministers whose activities were never investigated. Your malicious allegation was obviously designed to arouse public indignation against the Government.

5. On 20 and 21 July 1974, in the capacity of Chairman of PSRM, Selangor Division, you conducted a political course for PSRM's cadres at Gadangsa, Selangor during which anti-Government sentiment and pro-Communist ideals were disseminated.

6. On 5 December 1974, at a mass students' gathering at the Dewan Tunku Canselor, University of Malaya, you pledged full support for the illegal violent demonstrations staged by students in Kuala Lumpur on 3 December 1974. You also called upon the students not to be deterred by the Government's suppressive measures and exhorted them to serve the masses. Furthermore, you vehemently condemned the Government for its alleged conspiracy in the exploitation of Malaysian economy by foreign capitalists resulting in rampant poverty and starvation in the country especially in the rural areas.

The trials and tribulations of one prominent person in Sarawak bear out the wrongdoings under the ISA. This person had been a Deputy Chief Minister, a member of the Council Negri of Sarawak,

a Member of Parliament when he was detained under the ISA. At that time his party was in the Opposition, both in Sarawak and in the Federal Parliament. He has appeared before the Advisory Board which recommended his release. But this advice was rejected by the then Minister for Home Affairs and this detainee was not released until his party joined the Barisan Nasional. Today this person is a member of the Council Negri and a prominent businessman. Presumably because he is a member of a party which is a component partner of the Barisan Nasional he is *persona grata*.

The many abuses of the ISA which have taken place are not generally known because its workings have been shrouded in secrecy. It was originally designed to counter communists and subversives etc. Now it is extended to cover anti-national and other activities including those that disturb the peace of the country. In recent years I understand the ISA has been extended to cover criminals as well. Thus, recently there were about 10 people detained under the ISA for being involved in the forgery of identity cards and passports. The police, instead of charging them in open court have quietly detained them under ISA. Surely these are criminal offences and the culprits should be charged in open court and if found guilty sent to jail. Or do the police fight shy of adverse publicity if the cases come to open court, seeing that both the Registration and the Immigration Department come under the Ministry of Home Affairs? Or have the police lost the will and the ability to prosecute such cases in open court? I call on Datuk Musa Hitam to look into these cases and see that justice is done.

The use of the ISA as a political weapon has increased in recent years. It was first used against those who threatened the ruling party but more recently became used in UMNO's factional battles. Although individual Special Branch officers sought to maintain their professional integrity, the department as a whole has lost esteem in the police force as it has begun to play the role of hatchet man to whoever seemed to be on top.

The 21 detainees included a former Deputy Minister, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad, two MPs, Chan Kok Kit and Chian Heng Kai of the Democratic Action Party, the chairman of the PSRM, Sdr. Kassim Ahmad; 11 members of the PAS, i.e. Pertubuhan Angkatan Subilludah and 6 others. The first four were all arrested on 3 November 1976 for their involvement in the Communist United Front. We are told that there are 568 still under detention and that from 1978 to July 1981, 726 detainees have been rehabilitated and

released. I would like to make an appeal on behalf of the remaining 568 detainees in particular on behalf of those who have been detained for ten years and more. These include:

1. Tan Hock Hin detained in 1967, a former Penang State Assemblyman and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
2. One Loong Sheng, a Nanyang University graduate, detained in 1967 and a trade unionist.
3. Ng Wei Seong, detained in 1967, a former member of the Kluang Town Council and the Labour Party of Malaya.
4. Eng Wee Ba, detained in 1968 and a worker.
5. Hooi Chin Han, detained in 1969 and a member of the PSRM.
6. K. Gunaratnam, detained in 1970 and a member of the PSRM.
7. S.N. Rajah, detained in 1970, a trade unionist and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
8. S. Thurairatnam, detained in 1970 and a trade unionist.
9. Chai Chu Ling, detained in 1970 and a trade unionist.
10. Yek Choon San, detained in 1971 and a Nanyang University graduate.
11. Chai Koo Khook, detained in 1971 and a member of the PSRM.
12. Thong Hock See, detained in 1971 and a worker.
13. Ma Hong Wan, detained in 1971 and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
14. Lim Yong Kwai, detained in 1971 and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
15. Wan Ah Bah, detained in 1971, and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
16. Chang Yok Lin, detained in 1971 and a member of the Labour Party of Malaya.
17. Pang Lee Sang, first detained in 1965 and released in 1971. He was a member of the Labour Party of Malaya. He was re-arrested in 1975 and has been detained up to now. He is now under custody in the Johore Baru Police Station for the last one and a half months. I gather that the only reason for his continued detention is that he refused to 'confess' over TV and radio and accept the set of restrictions imposed by the Special Branch.

All the above 17 detainees have spent ten years or more in detention, the first three have spent fourteen years as His Majesty's

Guests. They entered the detention camps as callow youths but are now middle-aged. They have spent all their youth, the best part of their lives under detention. To quote Datuk Musa himself when I interviewed him on 7 July 1981, when one is young one is impulsive, impetuous and even a radical. But now the above-named seventeen are no longer young — they are middle aged and more mature. Whatever might have been their mistakes, if any, in the past, they have paid a terrible price for them and deserve a chance to leave the prison and lead a normal life. I know that in the past there has been one major obstacle — they refused to 'confess' and they refused to appear on TV and radio. With the removal of the major obstacle to their release, I do hope that the Advisory Board and the new Minister for Home Affairs will give special consideration to the 17 detainees I have named and give them their freedom. That does not mean that the rest of the 551 detainees should be forgotten and allowed to rot in prison camps. Their cases too should be reviewed failing which they should be tried in open court. If then they are found guilty, and sentenced to a term in prison at least they will be *puas hati* (satisfied).

The free world, including Malaysia, has criticised Communist countries for their stage-managed 'trials' and 'confessions' but in the past we too have insisted on the latter on TV and radio and restrictions on detainees as a condition to their release.

Once again I must congratulate the new Minister for Home Affairs on the unconditional release of the detainees. Whenever I go abroad and I talk to friends and strangers about the human rights situation in this country, I have had to hang my head in shame. Now I can hold it a little higher but I still cannot walk tall. I can only do so when we have abolished the draconian Internal Security Act.

The complaint by Kassim Ahmad that he suffered humiliation and mental torture during the first nine months of his detention brought me back to the days when I raised such matters in the Dewan Rakyat. Kassim Ahmad was deprived of soap, tooth brush, prayer mat and even his glasses. He was interrogated twenty-four hours a day and made to sleep on the cement floor. All these measures are designed to break the spirit and morale of the detainee so that he or she can be pliable in the hands of the Special Branch. He or she can then be made to confess to anything that the Special Branch wants him or her to do, and what is more dangerous, to implicate others as well. Kassim Ahmad was not physically assaulted but other detainees who I have talked to have told me that

they have been beaten up by the Special Branch. In previous articles I have praised the latter's efficiency but I must point out that the almighty Special Branch, like Intelligence services the world over is a law unto itself and very often resorts to strong-arm methods. I have raised the cases of Tan Kai Hee, now a successful businessman and Dr. M.K. Rajakumar in the Dewan Rakyat and the then Minister for Home Affairs, the late Tun Dr. Ismail promised to investigate into the matter but the abuses continue to occur to this day.

Very often the detainees are asked not only to confess to plots against the Government but also to implicate others as well. And some of these people they are asked to implicate are very important personalities. One academician whom I know was brought to Kuala Lumpur and beaten up, all because he refused to 'confess' and implicate others. This is a very dangerous practice and I hope the new Minister for Home Affairs will investigate this thoroughly and if found to be true, put a stop to it.

The former Minister for Home Affairs has banned the Amnesty International Special Report on Malaysia on the grounds that it is a pack of lies about our detainees. Many of our MPs have called Amnesty International all sorts of names in the Dewan Rakyat. I wish to remind them that Amnesty International is one of the very few organisations that has been awarded the Nobel Prize for its work on human rights. A.I. representatives have been denied entry into Malaysia or, if allowed in, are not allowed to visit our detention camps to meet our detainees and see things for themselves.

The democratic system will not survive in this country as long as the ruling party has the power to imprison its opponents for the rest of their lives without bringing them to court to answer charges.

India with its great caste and ethnic conflicts still manages with only very restricted powers of detention. Malaysia should aspire to be a model democracy in the Third World which can have peaceful transition of power between ruling and opposition groups in Parliament.

In a previous article I had stated that Datuk Musa would be like a breath of fresh air in the Ministry of Home Affairs. He has already put a stop to the unseemly 'confessions' and restrictions attached to the release of detainees. I appeal to him to investigate the excesses and abuses of the Special Branch and order a special review of all the detainees especially those who have been His Majesty's Guests for ten years or more.



PART II
The Leaders

In a multi-racial society like Malaysia, where racial divisions are extremely pronounced and have a decisive influence on politics and the polity, the role of leaders is of special significance. It is the leaders who either educate the masses and lead them to multi-racialism and multi-racial politics or follow the easier course of taking advantage of racial divisions and prejudices to secure electoral successes and maintain themselves in power. Furthermore, as much of politics is based on race and racial loyalties, leaders have to play a dual role: one, as leaders of the racial group that they belong to, and second, as national leaders. The balance that they attain between sectional interests and national concerns is of critical significance.

Malaysia was fortunate that at the time of independence in 1957 it had national leaders who performed the dual role effectively. During the Tunku era, it was to the great credit of Tunku Abdul Rahman that he was able to promote the interests of both Malays and non-Malays, as part of national objectives and policy. He was successful in attaining a reasonable balance between the demands and aspirations of the Malays as well as the non-Malays, that was acceptable to most. He was 'Bapa Malaysia' to all. The key characteristic of the national leadership then related to its ability to attain acceptable compromises and promote national interests. There were also leaders in the Opposition who fully represented this approach.

However unfortunately, in the post-1969 era, not many national leaders are to be found in the country who are not only committed to one of the racial components but also to the nation. The leaders now are mostly viewed as Malay leaders, Chinese leaders and Indian leaders. There are no more 'Bapa Malaysia'. Even those who lead the Government and claim to represent the nation are increasingly being seen, certainly by the non-Malays, as equating national interests largely with the interests of one racial group.

DATUK HUSSEIN ONN

Datuk Hussein Onn has announced his intention of resigning from the Premiership. It is a wise decision and we should not try to persuade him to change his mind. Bearing in mind that his predecessor the late Tun Abdul Razak Al-haj and his late colleague Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam both passed away while in office it would be extremely hazardous for Datuk Hussein Onn to carry on the heavy burden of office with the Sword of Damocles hanging over his head.

Datuk Hussein Onn has done his share of duty for King and country and it is time a young and fitter person takes over the burden of office. Datuk Hussein Onn deserves a well-earned rest and I am sure I speak for the rest of the country when I say that we all wish him good health and a happy and quiet retirement.

He took office in January 1976 on the death of Tun Abdul Razak B. Hussein Al-haj. In their speeches of congratulation to him in the Dewan Rakyat on his assumption to the office of Premier all the speakers carefully avoided making any reference to his spell in the wilderness. When I rose to speak I made a pointed reference to it and I told Datuk Hussein Onn that he had no need to be ashamed of it. I said that the years that he spent in the wilderness with his father Datuk Onn bin Jaafar must have taught him what it was like to be at the receiving end of the stick. I am sure that experience has stood him well as Prime Minister. When he returned to Malaysia after

being called to the Bar in England he joined a leading legal firm in Kuala Lumpur. It was to the credit of the late Tun Abdul Razak that he managed to persuade Datuk Hussein Onn, and others of calibre, to stand for elections in 1969. He was appointed Minister for Education and thereafter his rise was rapid. When the late Tun (Dr.) Ismail passed away, Datuk Hussein Onn was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and on the death of Tun Razak in January 1976 Datuk Hussein Onn became the third Prime Minister of independent Malaysia. He thus succeeded where his illustrious father had failed. Now he has laid down the reins of office to become Malaysia's second living ex-Prime Minister.

On the Asian scene and elsewhere we do not have many Prime Ministers retiring from office to make way for younger and fitter men. Unfortunately in most cases they die in office or are forced out of it. But Datuk Hussein Onn does not want to cling on to his post hence has decided to retire and take a well-earned rest.

It is no secret that our first Prime Minister did not retire on his own volition. A decade has passed since he left office and in that decade the Tunku has lived a full, happy and carefree life.

In this country it is probably true to say that each successive Prime Minister has been weaker than the last. Yet Datuk Hussein Onn has maintained stability by reigning rather than ruling. His great assets have been his disinterest in power *per se*, his sense of fair play and justice, and his incorruptibility. He made it clear that he would walk out of office if full loyalty was not forthcoming from UMNO. He scrupulously maintained his family and himself free from business entanglements. This can be said of no other leader of UMNO. In the future we may have strong leaders to admire, but we may wish that we had an honest one again.

It is also no secret that Datuk Hussein Onn and another Minister threatened to leave the cabinet if no legal action was taken against a Mentri Besar (Chief Minister of a State). Then when he became Prime Minister he gave the green light for court proceedings to be taken against the Mentri Besar. The latter was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and is now serving out his term.

It is common knowledge that most of our Mentris Besar are corrupt and one of the main faults of the Tunku (Abdul Rahman) was that he did not take positive action to weed them out. Instead the only honest and incorruptible one amongst them was eased out of office when the 1969 general elections came around! Tan Sri Dr. Mohamed Said should not have been asked to step down as Mentri

Besar of Negri Sembilan and take up a federal Ministership. Quite properly he turned down the offer. Tan Sri Dr. Mohamed Said is now in retirement and I am sure he must sometimes wonder why fate was so unkind as to penalise him for being honest and incorruptible.

When the 1978 elections came around Datuk Hussein Onn knew that he could not clean the Augean Stables at one go but was determined to introduce new and honest faces in the State Assemblies and he had his way. Such new faces can be seen in Datuk Rais Yatim of Negri Sembilan and technocrats such as Encik Abdul Rahim B. Bakar of Pahang and Encik Adib Adam of Malacca. The two have, to their credit, decided to remain plain Encik instead of being made Datuk by virtue of their office. The message of Datuk Hussein Onn to those seeking political office or holding such offices is clear: corruption does not pay but honesty and dedicated services will be rewarded.

The National Bureau of Investigations had a new lease of life under Datuk Hussein Onn. It prosecuted several big fish and was successful in getting some of them convicted. If Datuk Hussein Onn's successor carries on the good work I am sure the incidence of corruption in this country will go down.

Datuk Hussein Onn's sense of fair play and justice to all has inspired confidence in all races in this country. It would be true to say that many non-bumiputras would have left this country were it not for this quality of Datuk Hussein Onn.

Unfortunately during Datuk Hussein Onn's term of office there had been an erosion of fundamental liberties. Slowly the lights of democracy in this country are being put out one after another. It is a pity that Datuk Hussein Onn who, as a lawyer, believes in the Rule of Law, should be a party to this. The latest example of this restriction can be seen in the passage of the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981.

Although Datuk Hussein Onn was not present during the debate of this Act, yet as the head of the Government he was a party to it. There is no doubt that this Act is a great setback to the Rule of Law and does not allow for dissent which is an essential ingredient of parliamentary democracy.

His sincerity, his conscientiousness in work and his dedication towards the welfare of his fellowmen set him apart from his colleagues. He has sacrificed himself in the service of his country. The Tunku, when he retired, was given a golden handshake of \$250,000 tax-free, I believe, with a monthly pension of \$5,000 and

other perks as well. At that time I opposed the \$250,000 ex-gratia payment but now with the advantage of hindsight I will admit I was wrong. Now I wish to propose that Datuk Hussein Onn should be treated no less generously by Parliament when he retires.

Nations get the Governments they deserve. It is likely that future Prime Ministers will be more prone to take away what rights that remain to us as citizens. We may not have the protection of gentle, considerate people like Datuk Hussein Onn, who are capable of feeling shame. But if we are unwilling then as now to stand up and fight for our rights, we will deserve the tyranny that we will get.

MUSA v. RAZALEIGH

Now that Datuk Hussein Onn has announced his intention not to contest the presidency of the UMNO and also to retire from the premiership soon after the General Assembly of the UMNO due on 26 June 1981, the battle for the deputy presidency of the UMNO and with it that for the deputy prime ministership is on.

The two likeliest candidates are Datuk Musa Hitam and Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, both of them Vice-Presidents of UMNO; and of course there is nothing to prevent any others from entering the race. But it is generally agreed by the pundits that the contest lies between these two. Long before Datuk Hussein Onn went for the coronary by-pass operation, party insiders must have known that he could not stay on for long both as Prime Minister and UMNO President. This and the fact that the next general election, although not due till 1983, will most probably be held next year gives added importance to this year's General Assembly. Both Musa and Razaleigh have declared that they will not challenge Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir for the top spot but both have declared that should Mahathir move up and the No. 2 spot become vacant they will definitely be interested. Hence both Musa and Razaleigh and their supporters have been moving all over the country opening divisional meetings, meeting their leaders, the real party bosses and leaving a trail of IOUs behind them. Come 26 June 1981 the party leaders will expect to collect the IOUs.

Datuk Musa Hitam

Datuk Musa Hitam was educated at the Johore English College and then went to the University of Malaya then located in Singapore. While there, he was a thoughtful and important student leader and a serious young student activist. He joined the Co-ordinating Secretariat (COSEC) of the anti-communist International Union of Students which was then establishing links with student organizations in the University of Malaya. Only later was it known that COSEC was a CIA front but a great many Malayan and European student leaders supported it in good faith as a vehicle for student solidarity. The year that he spent in Leiden, Holland proved to be a valuable experience. Musa was a pioneer in national student movements and played a leading role both in the Federation of Malay Students and the Pan Malayan Students Federation.

After graduation in 1959 he joined the civil service and served as Assistant District Officer, Kluang for three and a half years but left in 1964 for a spell in the private sector. In the later part of 1964 he became the political secretary to the then Tan Sri Sardon Jubir, at that time the Minister for Transport. Then when Datuk Syed Jaafar Albar resigned as Secretary-General of the UMNO, Musa was appointed Acting Secretary-General. Later he was confirmed as Executive Secretary, in charge of party administration.

He entered Parliament when the Segamat Utara seat fell vacant on the death of Hj. Abdullah B. Mohd. Salleh in August 1968. Musa was picked by the Alliance to fight against Lee Ah Meng, a Labour Party candidate and won easily. He was re-elected in 1969 and was made an Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, but was dismissed from that post in August that year after being accused by Tunku of disloyalty to the Government. It is significant that at the same time Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed too was expelled from the UMNO for his anti-Tunku activities.

Soon Datuk Musa left for England to pursue a course in International Relations at Sussex University and this probably saved him from detention for his opposition to Government policies.

When Musa returned from Sussex, he applied for a job as a lecturer in International Relations at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. In one of the paradoxes of history his employment was raised at the University Council because of his political involvement. It was approved against the votes of Government representatives by a majority representing the academic staff and

Guild of Graduates. I was then a member of the University Council representing the Guild of Graduates and moved the resolution to allow Musa into the university staff. Ironically this can never happen again as the Universities and University Colleges Act has destroyed university autonomy. This Act which Datuk Musa now administers as Minister of Education was not his creation but that of Dr. Mahathir who is reputed to be his political ally.

But before Datuk Musa could accept his appointment as a lecturer with the Faculty of Economics and Administration he was appointed Chairman of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and in June 1973 he was made Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry by Tun Razak.

The University's loss was UMNO's gain. Prior to that in June 1971 he had been elected Deputy Whip of the Alliance and a member of the UMNO Supreme Council. After the general elections of 1974 he was appointed Minister of Primary Industries and in June 1975 he was re-elected to the UMNO Supreme Council. In the Cabinet reshuffle of 1978 he was appointed to his present post of Minister of Education. He won the general elections of 1978 with a resounding victory in his old constituency of Labis. In September 1978 he contested for a place as one of three Vice-Presidents of UMNO and won.

It will be seen that Datuk Musa has a rich variegated political experience. He has worked at the party headquarters and is thus familiar with party machinery. He has worked his way slowly up the Government ladder with experience in various Ministries. He has worked in the private sector and has proved himself as a student leader. Like Churchill, Datuk Hussein Onn, and many others, he has been in the political wilderness and I am sure that that experience has taught him a great deal. For one thing, he knows by now who his real friends are.

In the Dewan Rakyat he is one of the best speakers, whether in English or in Bahasa Malaysia. His diction is clear and his language is simple for every member of the House to understand. I remember one Minister during Question Time was making a fool of himself until Datuk Musa came to the rescue. Once Datuk Musa and I attended a Quaker Conference in Chengmai together. It was during his spell in the wilderness and I had expected him to be a little low in spirits. But he was jaunty and took part in the conference with gusto.

He has had a long and arduous tutelage for the No. 2 spot and he feels that he is now ready for it.

Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah

Tengku Razaleigh was born in 1937 in Kota Baru, the son of Tengku Hamzah B. Zainal Abidin, the last appointed Mentri Besar of Kelantan. He went to school in Sultan Ismail College and after finishing secondary school there, he went to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. His stay in that college lasted only one week! The reason was that he could not bear the restrictions of hostel life and hence he transferred to Anderson School in Ipoh where he passed his sixth form, doing two years' work in one. He then proceeded to Queen's University in Belfast to read for a degree in Economics. Having obtained that in 1959 he went over to Lincoln's Inn, London to read law. However his father's sudden death cut short his legal studies for he hurried home never to resume them.

He took over his father's business and the family property as well. He is reputed to be the largest landowner in Kota Baru. Soon after his return to Kota Baru he joined UMNO and came to the notice of the party bosses. In 1965, he was appointed Executive Director of Bank Bumiputra. By 1967 he had risen from the head of the Ulu Kelantan Division to be deputy leader of the Kelantan State UMNO Liaison Committee.

In 1969, he won the Kelantan Barat seat and in September 1975 he was appointed Chairman and Managing Director of Bank Bumiputra on the death of Encik Ahmad Raslan in a motor accident. He was also appointed chairman of PERNAS.

Like Datuk Musa, in 1971 Tengku Razaleigh was elected to the Supreme Council of UMNO and was appointed head of UMNO in Kelantan. In the same year he was appointed Treasurer of the party, a post that he still holds.

In 1974 Tengku Razaleigh was returned unopposed to the Dewan Rakyat from its constituency of Ulu Kelantan. He was appointed Chairman and Chief Executive of PETRONAS with the rank of a Cabinet Minister.

He gained election as Vice-President of UMNO in 1975 and after the death of Tun Razak in January 1976 he was appointed Minister for Finance and has been that ever since.

He is generally acknowledged as the main architect of the Barisan National sweeping victory over PAS in the state elections in Kelantan of March 1978 and the general elections that followed soon after in July 1978.

He is one of the few Ministers who can take in his stride a delegation of intellectuals. The others that I know of who have taken

part in forums in our universities before large student audiences are Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir and Datuk Musa. He is the only Minister who holds dialogue sessions with the private sector when he urges professional associations to try and influence his budget policies. I myself have not attended any sessions but I am told that he puts up a dazzling performance. These dialogue sessions have been beneficial to both parties. The Minister gets the feedback that is vitally important in the formulation of the budget and the associations concerned can get their views across to the Minister himself. I do wish that other Ministers would follow the example of Tengku Razaleigh.

Behind the boyish smile and light patter is a skilled politician. He is reputed to have the confidence of the Chinese business community yet he has been responsible for a gigantic transfer of equity to Malay individuals and institutions. Petroleum, tin, plantations and banking have all passed into Malay hands. Yet he is trusted by Chinese businessmen. His decisive intervention in the Pengkalan Kota by-election was a master stroke that should win him the support of the MCA should the need arise.

The foreign business community is perhaps more ambivalent. They still remember the Petroleum Act and the Industrial Co-ordination Act both of which had to be amended to meet the wishes of investors. There must be the suspicion in the multinational heart that behind the playboy personality there may be lurking a Citizen Tippoo — the anti-British Sultan Tippoo who was influenced by the French Revolution. Yet Tengku Razaleigh is a dedicated believer in the free enterprise system.

He is commonly known as the prince with the common touch with a fantastic ability to mix freely with anyone from peon to millionaire. He has no hang ups and has no sign of the sense of insecurity that other Ministers manifest. He has transformed the Treasury into an innovative body from its stick-in-the mud image of the past.

Within two years of becoming Finance Minister, he achieved the exceptional distinction of being elected Chairman of the International Monetary Fund's Annual Meeting, Chairman of the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Bank. It is said in Kota Baru that Pahang has timber, Trengganu has petroleum but Kelantan has the incomparable Tengku Razaleigh!

But he is not without his faults. He is purported to have stated that if anyone in his Ulu Kelantan Division does not vote for Tengku Razaleigh he would be kicked out. He must be more tolerant and

must learn how to live with dissent especially in a multi-racial and multi-religious country like ours.

He has also reiterated that he will resign from the Cabinet if he loses the race for the Deputy Presidency. That is a wrong attitude to take. Tengku Razaleigh of course knows that in a two-horse race both of them cannot win unless there is a dead heat. There can only be one winner and there is no stigma attached to the loser in a fair and hard-fought fight. This fight to the death is a throw-back to the early days of Rome where the winner in the arena puts to death the vanquished. The society then was barbaric and primitive, quite unlike the two suave, polished and intelligent UMNO gladiators for the Deputy Presidency.

The Contest

The battle between Datuk Musa and Tengku Razaleigh is evenly balanced with only a whisker separating them. Tengku Razaleigh has his base in Kelantan and the other East Coast states and is moving into enemy territory — Johore. Datuk Musa has Johore and Malacca and has support in other states as well. Both of them are evenly matched where support from divisional chiefs is concerned. These divisional chiefs are the real party bosses and brokers and in the coming weeks there will be intense lobbying amongst them by both the contestants and their proxies. Tengku Razaleigh has the trust of the business community, but the common man, the humble worker, may have qualms about a millionaire as a future Prime Minister. Datuk Musa moves well in labour circles, especially amongst the Malay teachers and they are a potent force at divisional level.

Both of them have had adequate exposure to international forums and have performed credibly, with Datuk Musa having a slight edge there as he is slightly more vocal. Domestically too Datuk Musa has more varied experience as he has served in three Ministries namely Trade and Industry, Primary Industries and Education while Tengku Razaleigh has remained in the Ministry of Finance ever since 1975 when he was promoted to Minister. Tengku Razaleigh probably has the backing of Encik Ghafar Baba while Datuk Musa may have the covert backing of the Prime Minister designate.

Others who may enter the race may be Encik Ghafar Baba and Datuk Harun Idris. Even if they do not do so they are both important power brokers whose support is vital to both the leading contestants.

A battle royal is shaping up between the two evenly matched gladiators. Both of them have been brought to the peak of condition and their respective machinery has been finely tuned to the pitch of perfection. All that I will say is good luck to both of them and may the better man win! But after the din of battle is over, let not the loser retire from the Cabinet but instead live to fight another day!

Should there be a deadlock as it often happens on these occasions the party may turn to a compromise candidate. This is why Encik Ghafar Baba or Datuk Harun Idris may squeak in should a deadlock occur.

The old order changeth, giving way to the new. It is of immense significance that all the top candidates belong to the younger generation. These were not active in the UMNO campaigns of 1950s that led to independence. Nor were they involved in the Directorate which supplemented Parliament after May 1969. They are modern in attitude and style of living and thinking. This augurs well for a young nation, the majority of whose citizens are still of school-going age or younger.

Any change is a period of uncertainty but I think Malaysians should look confidently to our future as a modern nation.

**DATUK SERI
DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD**

The way is now clear for Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir to be elected President of UMNO in his own right so that when Datuk Hussein Onn steps down he will become the Prime Minister. The seal of legitimacy will be conferred on him come 28 June 1981 when the UMNO's elections take place and Dr. Mahathir's election as President is a foregone conclusion.

Dr. Mahathir was born on 20 December 1925 in Kedah. He first went to a Malay school and then to the Sultan Abdul Hamid College in Alor Star. In 1949 he entered the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore and his contemporaries included the late Tan Sri Datuk R.P. Pillay, the former Director-General of Health, Datuk J. Eapen, presently a consultant physician at the Hospital Besar, Kuala Lumpur and Dr. P.C. Vanisingam, former consultant surgeon, Hospital Besar Penang, now in private practice. I myself left college at the end of 1949 and so I saw a little of Dr. Mahathir and his contemporaries. Then, he struck me as a quiet and serious student, very clannish as all students from Kedah were in those days, more than thirty years ago. He played a little rugger and for a short time edited *The Cauldron*, a medical student magazine, and used to contribute regularly to the *Straits Times* under the nom de plume of Che Det. Even in those days he wrote mainly about the plight of the rural folk.

For a time he lived in a Nissen Hut on the playing field.

These were called 'stables' by the seniors and amongst his stable-mates, were Datuk Adnan Abdullah, the present Director-General of Welfare Services, Encik Ahmad Riduan, the retired Deputy Director-General of Customs, and Dr. Mohamed Abdul Kadir, now in private practice in Sungai Patani and still a bachelor. Amongst his senior contemporaries who remember Dr. Mahathir is Dr. Chong Chun Hian, one time Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and now in private practice, who during the ragging period made his junior, Mahathir b. Mohamed, sleep the whole night under his bed. If only Dr. Chong Chun Hian could have peeped into the future I am sure he would have thought twice about asking the future Prime Minister to sleep under his bed, ragging notwithstanding!

While in college too Dr. Mahathir was President of the Muslim Society succeeding the late Aminuddin Baki, *pari passu* he was a committee member of UMNO Kedah.

While in college he had a fancy for cars and bought a ramshackle Fiat for \$500. With it and in the company of Mohamed b. Abdul Kadir he set out for Alor Star but before he could reach his destination the Fiat broke down!

While in college, he formed a lasting friendship with Siti Hasmah bt. Ali whom he later married. Datin Seri Hasmah is now a superscale officer in the medical service and has added brains, grace and beauty to the exalted office which her husband now holds. After graduation in 1955 Dr. Mahathir served the Government service for four years and then resigned to go into private practice. He became one of the most successful general practitioners in Alor Star and resumed his political career.

In 1964 he and I entered the Dewan Rakyat at the same time: he in his 39th and I in my 45th year. He was from the constituency of Kota Star Selatan and I from Batu. Both of us had a long and arduous apprenticeship and it was obvious that he was a rising star amongst the Young Turks of UMNO. On the other hand I was one of two survivors of the Socialist Front. The SF had fielded 64 candidates in the 1964 elections and in the massacre of the innocents that ensued, only two of us survived — Lim Kean Siew in Dato Kramat and I in Batu. I had also won in the Selangor state constituency of Kepong with a majority of 2 votes out of 15,663 votes cast! Dr. Mahathir and I clashed very often in the House and outside it as well. Both of us would accept invitations to speak at forums organized by university students and there we would clash with no holds barred. As I have mentioned before Dr. Mahathir is one of the very few Ministers who

does not fight shy of student audiences. As a backbencher he was not only vocal but very outspoken as well. He enjoyed the cut and thrust of debate in the Dewan Rakyat. For a short time we both served together in the Council of the University of Malaya.

Come 1969 he was defeated in the constituency of Kota Star Selatan by Hj. Yusuf Rawa. He stirred the students up against the Tunku and wrote that fateful letter to him giving vent to the frustrations of a small group within UMNO over the plight of the Malays. The letter was leaked to the press and Dr. Mahathir was promptly expelled from the party. He remained in the political wilderness for about three years during which time he wrote *The Malay Dilemma* which is still banned to this day.* Being banned only made it a bestseller and boosted its sale here and abroad. In the process he acquired the label of 'Ultra' and he has since protested that he is not anti-Chinese or for that matter anti-anybody — only that he wants to redress the imbalance that exists amongst the races. It is significant that at the same time and for the same reasons another leading contender for high office in UMNO was expelled from the party and was also labelled an Ultra. I refer of course to Datuk Musa Hitam.

Dr. Mahathir did not make any attempt to join any other political party during his short spell in the wilderness. He did not appeal to be re-instated and I quote what he stated at that time: 'I will not crawl back!' Like Datuk Hussein Onn I am sure that Dr. Mahathir benefited from that short spell. It has taught him to look at things from a different prospective.

In 1972 he returned to the fold and was re-elected to the Supreme Council of UMNO. The next year he was appointed to the Senate and I thought at that time that it was a mistake for him to be a Senator because elsewhere to be kicked upstairs is the kiss of death to one's political ambitions. Evidently in Malaysia this is not the case for when the general elections came round in 1974 Dr. Mahathir returned to the Dewan Rakyat after being returned unopposed for the constituency of Kubang Pasu. But then one must remember that at that time PAS was a member of the Barisan Nasional and there was no opposition to the BN in purely Malay constituencies.

After the elections of 1974 Dr. Mahathir was appointed Minister of Education and he ran smack into a wave of student unrest that soon spread to the teaching staff as well. This brought

*The ban was lifted when Dr. Mahathir became Prime Minister.

out the tough guy in Dr. Mahathir for he introduced amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act which have virtually converted all our universities into adjuncts of the Ministry of Education. University autonomy is now a thing of the past. Our universities and other institutions of higher learning are now run at the behest of the Ministry of Education.

Since his return to the front bench of the Government and especially after his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister he has been charged to head several committees like those of pay revision and reform of educational system. He intervened in the Malaysian Airlines System dispute and in the Malaysian Trade Union Congress dispute over the amendments of the trade union laws. In the settlement of the two issues he used the mailed fist of the ISA to silence dissent.

Meanwhile Dr. Mahathir has moved from Education to Trade and Industry. Prior to his arrival at the Ministry of Trade and Industry foreign investment had virtually been at a standstill mainly because of the Investment Co-ordination Act which had frightened both foreign and local entrepreneurs. Dr. Mahathir met with the investors and amended the ICA several times to placate them. At the same time he embarked on several promotional trade missions which have been said to be successful. Unlike previous Ministers he boldly told foreign investors that labour in this country is not cheap but Government has kept it in check to be fair to both labour and capital. He was always well briefed by his officials and he evidently created a good impression abroad.

Now that Dr. Mahathir has reached the pinnacle of his ambition by stepping into the shoes of Datuk Hussein Onn, it does not mean that it will be plain sailing for the new incumbent. The office of Prime Minister anywhere is never a sinecure.

He has to live down his reputation, whether true or false, as an Ultra. Fortunately the five years that he has spent learning the job of Prime Minister has taught him the realities of power in this country beset by problems of race, religion and class. He has served his apprenticeship well and has mellowed a great deal. He has learned to curb his temper and I hope has learnt too to see the other person's point of view. What he has certainly understood is that in this multi-racial country the Government cannot rule with Malay power alone but must have the support and co-operation of the Chinese and Indians and others as well. He has been an outspoken critic of the Government as a backbencher and in his short spell in

the political wilderness, but now that he is in the saddle and calling the shots I hope he will not surround himself with sycophants and yes-men. That will be the surest way to destroy credibility in the Government.

Of late he has quite rightly been telling the bumiputras especially the Malays, that they must pull up their socks and do an honest day's work for nobody owes them a living and Government privileges and patronage cannot go on *ad infinitum*.

Now he must prove to the non-Malays in this country that they too have a stake in this land of ours. He must prove by deeds and not by words that they have a future in this country and that Malaysia is for all Malaysians irrespective of race, colour or creed. In this task his prescriptions may prove to be bitter to some in this country but he must know by now that being a Prime Minister is no bed of roses. He must come down hard on extremism of whatever kind be it race, religion or class. In this task he will have the support of a vast majority of the people of this country.

Dr. Mahathir must also learn to live with dissent which is a *sine quo non* of, and an inescapable part of parliamentary democracy which the Barisan Nasional Government subscribes to. Further curbs on fundamental liberties will only drive reasonable Malaysians either away from this country or underground. They will only serve to expose the Government's immaturity, insecurity and lack of confidence in its own people and self. Surely after nearly a quarter century of self-rule and a major cataclysm in 1969 we have learnt to cope with dissent without placing further restrictions on the fundamental liberties in this country. The Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 is totally unnecessary and will drive more and more people into opposing the Government. I do hope that when Dr. Mahathir becomes Prime Minister one of his first acts will be to order a thorough review of this obnoxious Act.

I congratulate Dr. Mahathir for coming down hard against religious fanaticism in this country. He was the first to speak out against the desecration of Hindu temples. Malaysia is a multi-religious country and all the major religions of the world can be found in it. It is vitally necessary that we should have religious tolerance and freedom. A Prime Minister who makes it clear to all and sundry that religious extremism from whatever quarter will be ruthlessly stamped out must have our full support.

DATUK HARUN IDRIS

The die is cast for the candidates for the UMNO elections, to be held towards the end of this month. Datuk Harun, the charismatic ex-Mentri Besar of Selangor will however contest only for the Vice-Presidency in order, as he said, not to rock the boat at this tense moment. He had been nominated for all the top posts in UMNO from the Presidency to a place in the Supreme Council. And he has chosen wisely. His nominations for the various top posts in UMNO by various UMNO divisions show that he has widespread support in the country. He and his supporters have shown that they are a force to be reckoned with in any election for important posts in UMNO.

He has wisely chosen not to challenge Dr. Mahathir for the Presidency. To have done so would have aroused the resentment of a large number of the delegates to the General Assembly and my guess is that most of them, if not all of them, want Dr. Mahathir to win that post without any contest — at least for the first time. That would be in keeping with UMNO tradition. Of course every now and then they have to contend with a maverick like Sulaiman Palestin who was only a front-man for someone else.

Datuk Harun has also played his cards well in not entering the race for the deputy presidency. It is obvious that both Datuk Musa and Tengku Razaleigh are the only real contenders and the party does not want anyone else to muddy the race. But that does not

mean that Datuk Harun Idris has no role to play. In fact the support of both Datuk Harun and Encik Ghafar Baba for either of the two candidates will be vital. Both of them can be king makers and as I have mentioned before, wheeling and dealing is not unknown in any race for top leadership not only in this country but elsewhere as well.

Datuk Harun had been nominated by thirteen divisions — five from Perak, three each from Selangor and Pahang, and two from the Federal Territory. I am sure that if there was no uncertainty about his eligibility to stand for elections, more UMNO divisions would have nominated him as their candidate for Vice-President in the coming UMNO Elections.

Datuk Harun and his followers take the view that there is nothing in the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 to bar him from standing for office. The law only bars him from holding office in a society. But a solution will have to be found should Datuk Harun win one of the three posts of Vice President. If he comes out top in that race, the fat's in the fire — Dr. Mahathir will then have a problem of the first magnitude on his hands even before he assumes the office of Prime Minister. Should Datuk Harun Idris come out on top by a wide margin then the delegates present may well force the hand of the Government. Remember, after Datuk Harun was expelled from UMNO it was pressure from the grass-roots level that forced the Supreme Council to make a *volte-face* and readmit him to the membership of the UMNO and the Supreme Council.

I first met Datuk Harun in 1964 when he and I together with many others entered the Selangor State Assembly for the first time. Prior to that he had been DPP and Legal Advisor Selangor and had been picked by the Tunku to be Mentri Besar. Prior to that he had to defeat a formidable opponent, namely Encik Aziz Ishak, former Minister for Agriculture for the constituency of Morib. It says much for the sangfroid of Datuk Harun that he took on such a formidable opponent as Encik Aziz Ishak and defeated him with ease.

Then came the elections of 1969 where in the state of Selangor there was a tie — the Alliance had fourteen seats — the Opposition had thirteen and an independent one. But before this could be sorted out the Tragedy of 13th May overwhelmed us. Ask any non-Malay in this country and he will tell you that the man responsible for starting it was Datuk Harun. I too had been of that view until I made discreet enquiries. I found that Datuk Harun, far from being

the cause of that tragedy had done his best to avert it. Consider the facts. He had won in Morib and had to cancel a procession in Banting in order to hurry to Kuala Lumpur where because of the tie that had ensued in Selangor he had urgent matters to attend to in connection with the formation of the State Government. To complicate matters there had been a clamour by UMNO members in Kampong Baru, where UMNO had won, for a procession. The Opposition had held a procession on Sunday, 11 May and although at the beginning Datuk Harun was not in favour of it he finally had to acquiesce to it. So an application was made to the police and approved. But still Datuk Harun hesitated and it was not until 11 p.m. on Monday, 12 May that the final decision to hold the procession was taken at a meeting in Datuk Harun's house. The meeting also decided that the procession should start at 6 p.m. the next day from that house.

Meanwhile Datuk Harun was preoccupied with the problems of the formation of a State Government. This occupied all his time the whole of Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 May. The main problem was to win over Mr. Lim Tuan Siong who had been in the MCA before but had left it in 1964 to contest as an independent in Sungei Rawang and had lost. In 1969 he won fairly easily and his vote in the State Assembly was vital for the Alliance to form the State Government in Selangor.

Meanwhile, on Monday 12 May, I had been on the phone to Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas and Dr. Lim Chong Eu, the President and Vice-President respectively of the Gerakan at that time. I was the Secretary-General. Consider the political scene at that time. Penang had fallen to the Gerakan, in Perak the Alliance were in the minority having nineteen seats to the Opposition's twenty and in Selangor it was a tie. In the national interest the top leadership of the Gerakan then, namely Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas, Dr. Lim Chong Eu and I decided that the Gerakan would not go into coalition with any party to form a Government whether in Perak or Selangor and I was authorized to announce that decision. When I did so, both the Gerakan and I in particular were reviled by the PPP and DAP.

Meanwhile, very early in the morning of 13 May, Goh Hock Guan, then the Secretary-General of the DAP, came to my house and told me that the DAP had decided to offer the office of Deputy Menteri Besar to me, meaning he was reserving for himself the office of Menteri Besar. I told him bluntly: 'You think that the Malays of Selangor will accept you, a Chinese and a non-Muslim, as Menteri

Besar and me another Chinese and a Christian as Deputy Mentri Besar? You will drive them nuts!' And sure enough by the evening the Malays had gone berserk on hearing the news.

That afternoon I had the late V. Veerappen and Felix Abiseganaden for lunch at my house. I told the latter of the Gerakan decision not to participate in a coalition in Selangor and Perak and he advised me to release the news the next day because on the day I spoke to him the MCA ex-Ministers all chose not to return to the Government and would steal the headlines. I accepted that advice and returned to work at about 3 p.m. At about 4.30 p.m. I received a phone call from Tan Sri Hoffman about the Gerakan decision. I told him it was too late to release the news but he asked me to remain in the dispensary as he would send the reporters to cover my news. In less than half an hour they turned up and I told them of our decision not to go into coalition with any party in Perak and in Selangor. Then at about 5 p.m., I rang up Datuk Harun at his residence and told him the news. It transpired that he had been given the same assurance by V. David now a member of the DAP. He had worked the whole day in his office trying to win over Lim Tuan Siong and did not return home till about 4.30 p.m. At about that time the crowd for the procession began to turn up at his residence and the rest is history. From the foregoing it will be seen that Datuk Harun had no part in organizing the procession for his preoccupation was with the formation of the Alliance State Government.

Corroboration of his innocence has come from many sources. One Intelligence source has it that Datuk Harun had no hand in bringing in various armed bands into Kuala Lumpur on the morning of 13 May. The Intelligence personnel were by themselves powerless to prevent this infiltration. As one source put it, 'We had no troops to deploy against these armed bands'. He too agreed that Datuk Harun was 'clean' and had no hand in the affair.

I wish to relate another incident in connection with Datuk Harun. Soon after the trouble started a Len Omnibus Co. bus was going through Kampong Baru and because of the riots the driver lost control of the bus which landed in a ditch. The driver managed to escape from Kampong Baru but the conductor was given shelter by a Haji living near the Kampong Baru Mosque.

But the young people around the house came to know of it and the Chinese was quickly removed to the first floor of the mosque. This information too leaked out so naturally the mosque authorities were worried and consulted Datuk Harun who had gone there for

his Friday prayers. So he opened the door of his car and asked the mosque authorities to bundle the Chinese inside and quickly drove to the Campbell Road Police Station.

I have related this story not with the idea of reviving an old controversy but to show that Datuk Harun was not out for the blood of the Chinese in those days of tragedy, as is claimed in some quarters.

He and I continued to hit at each other at the Selangor State Assembly so I was surprised when I received a phone call from him in early 1972. He told me that he intended to nominate me for a Datoship in the coming Sultan's Honours List. I thanked him for it but politely declined that honour saying, 'I was born a plebian and I will die a plebian. I have no desire to be a patrician.' I do not know whether Datuk Harun was surprised or not but I must be probably the only person to decline such an honour from the Selangor State Government.

Datuk Harun's present troubles started when he began his third term as Mentri Besar after the election of 1974. He had practically no opposition in the State Assembly as both Lee Lam Thye and I had been eliminated. In the Dewan Rakyat I had asked questions about the allegations of corruption against him. He was indiscreet enough to use Bank Rakyat money to finance the Muhamad Ali vs. Joe Bugner fight in Kuala Lumpur. This fight turned out to be a big financial flop.

In April 1976 at one session the State Assembly unanimously passed a vote of confidence on Datuk Harun. He then went on leave but before he could resume his office the State Assembly was specially re-convened to pass a vote of no-confidence against him. He was not allowed to resume his office but was voted out of it. As he quite rightly pointed out he should have been allowed to resume his office and if his party members were not satisfied with the way he was running the Government then they could have voted him out. With the exception of three, all his party members deserted him which made Datuk Harun cry out in anguish that most of them would not have been there that day were it not for him. Datuk Harun might well have echoed the words of Cardinal Wolsey: 'God help me from my friends, mine enemies I can take care by myself!' At that time I was in Sabah campaigning in the state elections there but when I came back, during the course of the debate on the King's speech that followed I made a spirited defence on behalf of Datuk Harun. I believe I am right in saying that at that time no one else

dared to speak out for Datuk Harun in that debate.

Soon after he was stripped of his membership of the Supreme Council and then expelled from UMNO. Then followed the charges of corruption and bribery in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and Bank Rakyat cases.

In the course of the investigations Datuk Harun talked freely to the National Bureau of Investigations officer and made a signed statement, knowing at that time that it would not be admissible in court. But how was even a former Deputy Public Prosecutor to know that the law could be amended and made retrospective to encompass his case?

Furthermore Datuk Harun was tried before a federal judge in the first instance. There too the law was amended to rectify his mistake and make it retrospective to encompass his case as well. When both the Bills were debated I was present and I remember the Member for Sepang, Datuk Suhaimi protested that they were specifically aimed at his uncle, Datuk Harun. I fully supported the federal Government in their drive to stamp out corruption but justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. There is no doubt that in being brought to book, Datuk Harun has had a raw deal. And now that he has almost paid his debt to society and has asked for a royal pardon I personally feel that he has suffered enough and has learnt his lesson. Like the Tunku I say that he should be given a full pardon to enable him to walk tall and take part in the political life of this country. I am sure he will be the first to admit that he had made many mistakes in the past. He has paid a terrible price for them and has drunk of the dregs of human misery.

INTERVIEW WITH DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD

I

Dr. Tan: It is widely regarded that your elevation and the rise of Datuk Musa is a historic watershed in the political growth of Malaysia, in that you represent a self-confident new elite that is entirely Malaysian in education and experience and owes nothing to any colonial godfather. How does it coincide with your own perception?

Dr. Mahathir: It is in a way, correct, but I must say that I was involved in UMNO from the beginning. As far as UMNO politics is concerned, this is mainly a confirmation of my own participation and the principles that UMNO stood for. There was no radical change in the direction in UMNO so as to allow us to say that this is a watershed which implies the changing of course.

Dr. Tan: By watershed, I mean that the previous Prime Ministers that we have had like Tunku Abdul Rahman, the late Tun Razak and now Datuk Hussein Onn, all had their education in England. The Tunku was from St Catharine's College, Cambridge, Tun Razak and Hussein Onn were both at the Inns in London, and they are of an older generation. You have qualified in Singapore, you are a home-grown product and you don't owe your education, your upbringing as a student to any colonial godfather and that must affect the thinking of anybody who has such an education. That is what I

mean by "watershed".

Dr. Mahathir: If that is the definition, then it is quite true but at the same time I am still very much associated with the old British leadership. However, having been locally educated and perhaps been more closely associated with the grassroots, I perceived things from a slightly different angle from previous leaders but that is not to say it will be such as to have a radical change in our nation.

As far as I am concerned, and I can speak also on behalf of Musa (Datuk Musa Hitam), we are not so much at variance in terms of policy — it is only in terms of implementation that perhaps there may be a change of style. As you know even as a Deputy Prime Minister, I have been more concerned with the running of the Government which means having direct contact with the implementers. Although now I am going to be Prime Minister, I'll continue to have this kind of approach towards implementation and I am quite sure Datuk Musa, too, is very much concerned about the carrying out of the policy. I think the policy, as far as we are concerned, is alright.

Dr. Tan: Dr. Mahathir, you and your deputy have a head-start over your predecessors in that your Malay constituency is assured. You only have to win over the confidence and trust of the non-bumiputra portion. Can you spell out broadly how Malaysians of all races and religions can have a place under the Malaysian sun?

Dr. Mahathir: I would say in the first place that I have been misinterpreted and misunderstood, even at the time when I was labelled as Ultra. I felt that the labelling was a political gimmick, and that image is unacceptable to a large majority of Malaysians. When I was a Member of Parliament, all I was talking about was that Malays should have a fair share in this country — no more than that.

I am not saying that the Malays should be given a status so superior that they will suppress others and I don't think anybody will disagree on the issue that Malays and Chinese and Indians should each have their fair share in this country.

If the achievement of the fair share involves certain unpopular measures, it cannot be helped. Measures are apparently biased. This is interpreted by many people as being unfair to the non-Malays. But I don't think it's unfair because if you look around you the non-Malays have done even better since the New Economic Policy was implemented. In fact if you look at Kuala Lumpur, the growth took place after 1969. Before 1969 there was hardly any growth. Economic growth came after 1969 when the New Economic

Policy was initiated in 1970. The reason why we want more growth is that we are committed to distributing growth, not distributing the original economic package. There will be no distribution if we don't encourage growth and certainly all communities will want to see growth so that they will have a share. But of course, there must be sufficient to give to the bumiputras.

Dr. Tan: As for the non-bumiputra, and as a non-bumiputra, if I may interpret, some of the qualms and misgivings are reflected in the share market that has fallen in the last few days. They say that now we have two Ultras at the very top posts what is going to happen next? Bluntly speaking, when you have a new department, will you have the Malays, Chinese, Indians and Eurasians working together instead of just the bumiputras? Foreigners coming to this country have the impression that this country belongs to the Malays only which gives a poor image of this country.

Dr. Mahathir: In every aspect of life there should be a distribution, whether in a private firm or in the Government sector. Whilst we have found in some very big firms bumiputras holding positions of importance, there are others who cannot do that in the private sector. We have therefore to make place for them in the government sector. That is equal treatment. In fact the Government has responded to the new situation. We found that quite a number of non-bumiputras who work in the Government left after a time because they found the attraction of the private sector much greater. You can see those who have gone to greener pastures were ex-government servants. They are doing extremely well and you cannot retain them here. In fact, some departments have more non-bumiputras. Maybe people do not meet them. For example, if you go to Malaysian Industrial Development Authority, the chances are that you will meet a Chinese or an Indian rather than a bumiputra. One reason perhaps is that the private sector can pay two or three times more than the Government sector. That is why they have attracted the non-bumiputras.

Dr. Tan: Although you were associated with the amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act which destroyed the autonomy of our universities, nevertheless you have emerged with a following amongst intellectuals and professionals who admire you personally as a progressive moderniser. Do you think we are ready as 1990 approaches to produce leaders with a multi-racial following based on ideas and policy?

Dr. Mahathir: I think there is an increased number of people who

are motivated by ideas and policies rather than race. But the fact of race must be taken into consideration in all our calculations.

The thing is that the most educated elite have their own lives. They have begun to realise that there is a need to apply themselves to the process of improving their capabilities in terms of knowledge and skill in order to bring about their own success and the success of the nation. I think if despite the Universities and University Colleges Act, they are still with me, it is because they realise that I don't do this merely to punish people. It is merely because there were a number of irresponsible people who diverted the attention of students from their studies to the much more irresponsible act of getting others to do things. That is why most of the intellectuals still feel that the Government is with them.

As we go along I think racial policies will diminish to a certain extent. I do not know how long it will take. I do not know whether by 1990 we would be ready for this but a lot depends really on the success of the New Economic Policy.

You may have heard that in the last UMNO General Assembly there was one Malay who donated \$9 million to the party. He has obviously gained very much by the implementation of the New Economic Policy. He has gained because this country is stable and economically doing well, that is why he is able to make this money. As the number of such people increases they will have a vested interest in this country's stability. When we have this vested interest, then the emphasis on race will diminish and they will have common ground with the Chinese who also have the need for a stable nation in order to maintain their position and wealth and their opportunities to make wealth. Once you come to that, there may be class division rather than racial division.

Dr. Tan: Again and again, we look not for words and promises but deeds. I refer to what Datuk Musa had said last November in Sungei Penchala. Speaking about admission to our universities, he said that admissions of bumiputras will be decreased by 2 per cent annually to reach 55 per cent, and the non-bumiputra student population will be increased by 2 per cent to reach 45 per cent.

That is a tremendous thing to say by any Minister. Naturally the bumiputras are not happy. He has made a very good promise but if this year the figures do not reflect the change you might as well forget about your credibility with the non-bumiputra.

Dr. Mahathir: What Musa had mentioned was the total figure but in order to reach the total figure one has to take into account different

faculties. Certain faculties have a greater preponderance of bumiputras in order to have balance.

The non-bumiputras do not want to do arts courses. They want to do science, medicine and so on. These are the courses where we are trying to build up numbers of bumiputras. As you know, out of 3000 doctors, we have 250 bumiputras. How are we going to increase that number unless there is some bias for bumiputras in that area? But you are talking of the intake of bumiputras — that it is excessive, taken as a whole. We would like to reduce this and increase the others. What Musa had said is his honest intention.

Dr. Tan: I have no doubt what Musa had said was sincere. But if what has been said is not implemented this year, the Government will lose its credibility.

Dr. Tan: You have been tested by a period in the political wilderness, in opposition so to speak. It is a remarkable testimony to the resilience of UMNO that it could accommodate you and allow your emergence to power. For a while it seemed that you might well end up in political prison to come out only through the well-beaten path of confession and admission and error. Has this experience determined your attitude to freedom of expression in Malaysia, now that you are in a position to deny it to others? And regard dissent as an inescapable part of, as *sine qua non*, of democracy which you say both UMNO and the Barisan Nasional Government believe in and practise?

Dr. Mahathir: I believe that there is dissent in any community. However, dissent should be something that is constructive, that is directed towards correcting certain abnormalities within the society. But dissent is something which I don't care for. I was thrown out of UMNO because of that very specific reason, and I held to that reason because I thought that was constructive criticism I had made. UMNO eventually felt that I wasn't trying to destroy them or the Government.

If you want to have dissent, by all means have it but not by saying things that might frighten away foreign investors for no reason. You cannot say it, merely because you want to say it. I think that is a rather negative attitude which I don't think I can tolerate. You know students still criticise me and the Government. If you were to ask them, they'll tell you that I have sat down to listen to their criticisms. But if they want to have demonstrations and publicity then I am not prepared to have that kind of thing. I have protested before in forums — but I didn't urge a demonstration.

When there was a demonstration in 1967, which I think you, Dr. Tan, tried to stop — I don't know whether you remember that — I told Tun Ismail at that time that if they wanted it, I was prepared to bring 20,000 people from Kedah for a demonstration in Kuala Lumpur just to show how strongly the people supported the Government. But Tun Ismail advised me not to do such a thing. He said "Let others do it but you must not do it as you are in the Government party". I obeyed what he requested of me.

If it is a question of showing dissent mainly because that is the fashion, then I am not for it. But if you want to criticise the Government because we may be doing something that may be wrong and you have an idea how it can be corrected, I am willing to listen.

Dr. Tan: Now if I may take you up on that. More and more, the Government has clamped down on dissent. The latest example, of course, is the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981. You have said that any society which seeks to influence the Government must change its rule and become a political society. Let us take the Malaysian Medical Association for example which you and I belong to. The MMA is a non-political society and has no interest whatsoever in political matters, but as in any other country it seeks to influence the Government on certain issues.

It has appeared before the Ministry of Finance to ask for certain concessions for the medical profession. Does that automatically cause it to be labelled a political society?

Dr. Mahathir: I think your interpretation is wrong, because the law says that when the action of a society taken as a whole is political in character, then it is a political society. The mere complaint that the price of sugar has gone up does not constitute a political activity. Taken as a whole, it is just one isolated instance of a criticism over the price. How can the Consumer Association of Penang function if they cannot make criticisms? In fact I've assured the Chinese Chamber of Commerce that merely criticising or making suggestions to the Government on certain specific issues will not make it a political society. It must be really taken as a whole. But if we have a society which goes around campaigning, organising rallies and all sorts of things and generally agitating the people, then this will be classified as a political society.

Dr. Tan: Today I have made myself very unpopular with some people after what I wrote in my column about Harun. I've received a lot of abusive letters. Well, it doesn't worry me. What I am

concerned about is the right to dissent. It must be a *sine qua non* of democracy.

As far as the Government is concerned, a feedback from the public is very necessary. The Government, in stifling the societies from giving their views, is in a way cutting off a very important source of feedback. There are other Governments who have spent money to hold opinion surveys to get feedbacks. If our Government allows societies to speak out loud and bold on various issues concerning them which they should bring to the attention of the Government — then you are getting a feedback for free from the public. This I think is very vital. What is your opinion?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, we would be glad to hear opinions for free. But as you know if somebody plugs a line which causes a lot of agitation among the people for no good reason, then of course that is a different matter entirely.

You must know that there was one professional association that has dissented to the extent of holding a demonstration at Parliament House when that association knows very well that there is a law which states that no parliamentarian should be obstructed — that is one of those things.

Dr. Tan: The lawyers are the people you can be least afraid of. They are one of the most respectable people in this country. I think there should be more of such instances where they can identify themselves with the people.

Dr. Mahathir: I like to differ there. It a professional association of that standing descends to the level of holding demonstrations against the law which they are very conversant with that is an example which is not good for the whole nation because others will follow. People will ask; if those of that standing could do it, why can't we?

If we have demonstrations I can arrange more demonstrations than anybody else. What kind of a country would we be in if it is a question of how strong you can demonstrate against the Government, and then demonstrating how strong they are for the Government. Then we can never end this kind of confrontation.

In this country Parliament was set up to enable people to express their grievances through their representatives. As you know, despite all the things they say about us, people from the Opposition can still win elections if the people really want to vote them in.

You can see that in every Parliament that we have, there is an Opposition member. There may not be many of them but they can come in. I would say that democracy is dead if in every election in

Malaysia we see a Government party winning 100 per cent.

Dr. Tan: All communities have an interest in seeing to it that the 1990 target for bumiputra advancement is fully achieved. The non-Malays are unhappy and the Malays are dissatisfied. But as you have pointed out, when all sections are unhappy then the Government policy may be on the right track in that it has not favoured anybody.

However, as 1990 approaches, there appears to be little progress in "Malaysianing" institutions such as the Civil Service which tends to identify itself as an instrument of Malay power, even of UMNO power. Can we make the principal institutions of state power truly Malaysian so that state employees can work together as professionals for national objectives, irrespective of their racial origin?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, again, this should not be only in respect of Government. This should be overall including public and private sectors. The fact is that if we do not have enough Malays in the Government, then they would not have the kind of influence they should have. If the different communities are evenly balanced in the private sector also then we will have no necessity to give the Malays very strong representation within the Government. Malay businessmen trying to get supplies from non-Malays, for example, find difficulty. They cannot find any Malays so they fall back on the Government and we have to be sympathetic. That is why we have tried to balance it up. Once the private sector is not biased in the employment of people, then the Government will have no necessity to have an overwhelming number of bumiputras in the Government. This is our intention. I would say this, that despite being the majority, we have been very considerate towards non-bumiputras in this country. If not, how else can you explain their success in this country. They are indeed very successful.

Dr. Tan: Allow me to voice the frustrations of the non-bumiputras in the Government. When I was in Parliament, you were also there — I asked whether the non-bumiputras would receive the same consideration given to the bumiputras in terms of promotion. The answer by the Tunku was that once you are in the service, race is given no consideration in one's advancement. This was also the assurance given by the late Tun Razak. Can you give us a reinforcement of this assurance?

Dr. Mahathir: If you take the proportion of bumiputras and non-bumiputras in the Civil Service and you compare it with the

proportion of bumiputras and non-bumiputras at the level of Secretary-General for example, the number of non-bumiputras is slightly more than that of the bumiputras.

Dr. Tan: What about corruption and nepotism. I myself am not happy with the example our political leaders have set. How can we raise standards of conduct in public life? Datuk Hussein Onn has started by cleaning some of the mess in our Augean Stables. Will you continue the good work of your predecessor?

Dr. Mahathir: This is one area where, honestly, you have to wait and see. I am not fond of saying that once I'm in the Ministry, I'm doing this and doing that. When I moved into the Ministry of Trade and Industry, I never promised that I would be able to overcome all these investment obstacles. But I went ahead to do what I think I could and the result is for the people to assess, not for me to say.

As in the case of corruption, I will see whether I can do anything to clean up or not. This is something I will leave to the judgement of the people later on after I have held office.

Unless you have the evidence and the co-operation of the people, it is difficult to stamp out corruption. People will not work with us to help to catch these people. But the court takes a very dim view of this. If you purposely set a trap, the court feels it is not acceptable as evidence — marked notes are not acceptable. This attitude adopted by the court makes it difficult for us to act.

Dr. Tan: Our economists say that inequalities in our society have widened greatly, even more so among rich and poor Malays. The dramatic contrast between ostentatious wealth and abject poverty is there for all to see. Do you have a plan to transfer more wealth to the poor in our society?

Dr. Mahathir: This is something people like to say: the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. Really we have to examine who are the people who are saying this. They are mainly the university graduates. How did they get into the universities? It is because we provided the means for them to do so. They came from poor families. Once they are out, not to say they will be in the millionaire class, but they will be fairly well-off.

We are bringing more of them from the village who never had a chance before in the mainstream of life and that is all we can do. The rest is up to them. Once they are in, they must make their own fight. We have equipped them with education — that is our means of helping the poorer class. At the same time, which country has a scheme for petty traders and hawkers? We have allocated \$30

million under the Third Malaysia Plan and \$50 million under the Fourth Malaysia Plan. This is literally giving money to them so that they can have better facilities, better places to do business.

We have helped the small businessmen, the padi farmers, the fishermen. We have given them everything possible. As in the case of the fishermen, we gave them outboard engines. They sold it straightaway to make a gain.

I have been saying to the people, especially the Malays, to work. They can't depend on the Government to give them everything. If I give a chap a million dollars, he is not going to be rich. He is going to finish the money in no time. I would rather give him the knowledge to look after his money and make more of it.

We are trying to teach them new methods of rice cultivation. For example, we are re-organising villagers so that they do not cultivate individually but cultivate as a group in order to have a much more industrialised padi-planting. These are the things we have done and succeeded in.

In 1957 when I was working as a doctor, the people were very poor and poorly dressed. When I stopped working in 1974, they were better pay-masters. Nowadays many people are going to private practitioners instead of the hospital because they can afford it. Let's take the hawkers — they are doing well and they are not taxed. It is not true to say that there is a widening gap. We are trying to narrow the gap, of course. There are some who succeeded and are doing very well. To me, if a man is rich, he is not going to hang on to his money. He'll invest it and do something which will benefit others ultimately. If we are all poor we cannot help the poor become rich. We can tax him and also tap the resources he has for the benefit of the community.

If you were to look back at the situation at the time of Merdeka, we have improved the quality of life of the poor people since then, much more than any other developing country . . . I am prepared to say that I bet my life that the poor have improved their position and the poor are now the rich.

Dr. Tan: Rural society in our country is still deprived and the trek to seek wealth in the cities continues unabated. Even medical care in the rural areas is deplorable. The rubber small-holders form one of the most deprived classes in our society. Everything they earn is *bahagi dua* — half for himself and half or sometimes more than half to the absentee landlord.

Years ago, I proposed that one way to help the small-holders

was to reduce or abolish the export tax on rubber for them. This is also the advice of the World Bank advisors but unfortunately this suggestion of mine has fallen on deaf ears on the grounds that it is not practical.

How then do you propose to give our rural society a share in our nation's prosperity?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, firstly let's take the padi planters. We have helped padi planters to increase their income in terms of padi price. When I was in Parliament in 1967, the price of padi was \$16 but they were selling it at \$8. Today they are selling their padi at \$40. Even if inflation is taken into consideration, this is an increase of five times.

In addition to that, the padi planters in Kedah, for example, are double-cropping, which means that if they earned \$8 before, they should be able to get \$80 which is a ten-fold increase. The padi yield per acre is much more, almost double, and this has added to their income. We have done the same for rubber small-holders and fishermen. Again here, they are not sufficiently educated to take the maximum benefit of the help. That's why we are trying to bring them in so that they are able to fend for themselves.

Of course, there is the problem of tax on rubber. We can have different rates of tax for small-holders and the big estates. But you'll know what will happen. If we have this kind of arrangement, the medium-size or big estates will immediately sell their rubber through the small-holders' organisation. This scheme will be shot to pieces.

Dr. Tan: Dr. Mahathir, you have warned the Malays that if they do not work hard they will suffer the fate of the Red Indians of North America. Are you aware that very soon the Orang Asli of our country will suffer this fate mainly due to neglect by the Government?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, we have programmes for the Orang Asli. We want to educate them and teach them skills. But as you know, these programmes will take a long time to come through.

Dr. Tan: If you say what you have just said to me to the Malays, will they accept this?

Dr. Mahathir: Yes, I've told them. There is no way they can achieve success overnight.

Dr. Tan: One example is seen in the Third Malaysia Plan — the original allocation was \$22 million, under the mid-term review it was pushed up to \$46.85 million. Under the Fourth Malaysia Plan the allocation is cut down to \$40.13 million. There doesn't seem to be a really genuine effort to help the Orang Asli.

Dr. Mahathir: The reason must be because they couldn't spend all the money given to them.

Dr. Tan: Why must this be so? Will you give the assurance that once the Orang Asli are properly trained, they will take charge of the Jabatan Orang Asli. I have pointed out that their education is not under the Ministry of Education but under the Jabatan Orang Asli. But the JOA is not equipped to train teachers or doctors for the Orang Asli.

It will help if the Government will give a target date when the JOA will have an Orang Asli as head of the department and a target date when the department will be abolished, for when the Orang Asli have caught up with the rest there will be no need for a special department like the JOA to look after their affairs.

Dr. Mahathir: We will look into that.

Dr. Tan: The Civil Service has grown very big, in some instances, arrogant. To protect the ordinary citizens from the arrogance of the civil servants will you reconsider establishing the post of ombudsman?

Dr. Mahathir: We have already thought about an ombudsman. By having one, the presumption would be that a person would know more than everybody else and would be able to make judgements. That presumption is really quite wrong. An ombudsman is just as prone to making mistakes or being biased as anybody else.

In this country, we don't see anybody who would be able to rise above everything else and pass judgement which is going to hurt. If you have an ombudsman and you don't care, it will be meaningless. But you are giving too much power to one person to criticise and say things about other people — that will cause a great loss of morale among the Government servants as well.

We have so many other avenues for learning about what is wrong with the Civil Service or the Government.

I think what they are doing in the *Straits Times* is a very good move.

Dr. Tan: I think the *Straits Times* is over-rated, critical only in certain areas. Only recently they have a new format, otherwise it's not worth reading. Many people have said that if you want to know about what is happening in this country you must read the foreign papers. What do you say?

Dr. Mahathir: I think that is a mistake, because I can point out to you that every report made by a foreign newspaper has been wrong. I can show it to you. I've spoken to the *Wall Street Journal* on one case. Why do they print news about Haji Mohamed Noah, the father-in-

law of Datuk Hussein Onn? Why bring all these things up? You mean to say in this country there is nothing else to report, that we haven't succeeded in anything?

If this country was like Iran, they would have their comments about the Muslims. But here we have a country of Muslims and there is tolerance. We live among non-Muslims. But we have not gone around murdering anybody. But the foreign newspapers only comment negatively. So if people rely on foreign newspapers I am sorry to hear that.

Newsweek commented that Hong Kong and Taiwan Chinese are now investing in Australia. They also commented that the Malaysian Chinese are investing there because they are frustrated with the New Economic Policy. How then does that explain the Singapore Chinese going to Australia?

Malaysian Chinese are like other Chinese. If there is an opportunity to invest in Australia and if they have the money, why not? But the foreign newspapers must bring in this question of the New Economic Policy. This is what they will report.

I follow foreign newspapers closely. *Time* magazine, for example, was wrong in its assessment. In one of the confidential reports on Malaysia was the forecast that, the DAP in 1980 would spread its wings and literally overwhelm the MCA. This was reported four months before what happened to the DAP in Penang. This shows that their assessment is totally incorrect. It is biased. They come to this country for a short while and they think they know everything. They think they know how to run this country better than the people here. I don't mind them highlighting certain things. At least say something worthwhile. Be fair. There are some things which we do in this country which is safer compared to the streets of London and Central Park in New York. The taxi in New York is like an armoured car, partitioned and bullet-proofed, such as it is in a jungle. This is a civilised country. I told Americans they are living in a jungle. I said they are not civilised.

Dr. Tan: May I ask you if you have a vision of what you hope to achieve, of the sort of society you would like to build during your term as Prime Minister? In other words, what are your dreams for the eighties and even of the nineties?

Dr. Mahathir: I hope to maintain stability. I hope I will not spoil Malaysia in any way or do anything that is detrimental to Malaysia. I know it is a modest hope but if I achieve anything, it's for others to judge, not for me to say.

The interview was continued on 16 August 1982

II

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, in a few days we will be celebrating the silver jubilee of our Merdeka, can you as Prime Minister, reveal to the nation some of your thoughts on this momentous occasion?

Dr. Mahathir: Firstly, I think every Malaysian, including myself of course, should feel extremely grateful that we have gone through twenty-five years of independence relatively free from problems.

Dr. Tan: One traumatic experience.

Dr. Mahathir: Only one traumatic experience but otherwise relatively few problems and in that same period I think we have made tremendous progress compared of course to other developing countries. So with this one thought in mind I have a feeling of gratefulness to Almighty God because we have experienced such a period of progress for this country.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, corruption is the bane of practically all newly-emergent nations and Malaysia is no exception to this truism. We have made more progress to eradicate corruption since you became the Prime Minister, but are you satisfied with what has been achieved since you took over?

Dr. Mahathir: I don't think anybody can say that he is satisfied. Certainly not myself.

Dr. Tan: With the progress?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, one always hopes that we could make better progress but the important thing is that one keeps on trying to increase the rate by which we improve the situation and I think there are signs now that the improvement has already been achieved and is likely to proceed even faster.

Dr. Tan: But as you are aware, although under you eradication of corruption has been stepped up things are still very bad. I was talking to someone last week, a big businessman, a self-made man who has never been to university but became the head of one of the big corporations in town. He was telling me something must be done, that the situation is extremely bad I told him that I would be interviewing the Prime Minister the next week and asked him what he thought. He said: 'You tell him the business community dare not speak up their thoughts to the Prime Minister. If they dare they can quote chapter and verse.'

You don't have the time but if you could designate some of your Anti-Corruption Agency officers to talk to some of the Captains of industry and to others as well and grant them immunity. What they fear is if they talk to somebody in authority and that leaks out then they will get victimised.

Dr. Mahathir: Well, society progresses or regresses depending on the will of the members of the society. If people are not willing to come forward because they fear things will happen to them, then we are going to have great difficulty in trying to correct whatever wrongs there are in the society. Of course, there will be some risks but as you know we investigate even anonymous accusations and anonymous letters. . . . Of course we cannot be entertaining anonymous accusations all the time, but every effort is made to investigate anonymous accusations against anyone. We have to do it discreetly because officers will become demoralised if everybody accuses them when they are probably innocent. We have to be very careful about how we move in our desire to lessen corruption. We can't just take people to task because somebody makes an accusation; we have to have some evidence that there is a basis for the allegation. But if people will not complain there is very little we can do.

Dr. Tan: I myself was very heartened when before the election you mentioned categorically that . . . you had access to the records of the Anti-Corruption Agency and you would not adopt a person with a corrupt record (as a candidate). But are you aware that there was one candidate in Kelantan who was known to be corrupt? Fortunately the electorate in their wisdom rejected him. If I know and I have not visited Kelantan for a long time, you surely must know as you have access to the ACA files.

Dr. Mahathir: When you say a person is known to be corrupt, can you prove it?

Dr. Tan: As I said, all you have to do is to look up the files.

Dr. Mahathir: Well, how do you know I don't look up the files? There are lots of people who have been accused of corruption but I have no records of their corruption, I can assure you. On the other hand, there are people who are not accused of corruption who are nevertheless corrupt. I am not aware of which one you are talking about. He was not corrupt and he has proven it to me. I am quite satisfied with his honesty. This is the problem. When you hear, you hear the people who accuse.

Dr. Tan: No, I hear from people who have no interest.

Dr. Mahathir: People who say they have no interest, merely echo the words of the accusers. In my position, I have to ask both sides. I have to be fair. I have to listen to the other side of the story. He told me quite clearly that he was not involved in all these things. What he was trying to do was to ensure that the person who was awarded the contract got paid, that's all, and the work was done. It was not that the work was not done. All kinds of accusations have been thrown not only at him but at all sorts of people. But I listen to the other side of the story. Invariably you will find these people not as they are made out to be. There are reasons why certain things do happen. Yet you must admit that not all candidates were adopted by me. That is not to say that all those people who were dropped by me were corrupt people.

Dr. Tan: I agree!

Dr. Mahathir: We mustn't make the assumption.

Dr. Tan: No, I don't.

Dr. Mahathir: The public is likely to make that assumption if you say that I dropped people who are corrupt. Of course, there are some people who are not corrupt but for other reasons I have to drop them. But some people were retained although there were accusations that they were corrupt. Sometimes it is because although they were accused, they were not corrupt. Sometimes although they were accused there was no proof to show that they were corrupt and I cannot decide beforehand unfairly without any proof, just on the basis of allegations that they are corrupt. But if I can find out later that they are corrupt I have no alternative but to take action against them.

Dr. Tan: In my handicapped condition unfortunately I don't move around, so I depend on people whose veracity I can vouch for.

Dr. Mahathir: Now let me say this — anybody who has a grouse will come to you.

Dr. Tan: No.

Dr. Mahathir: Oh yes they do!

Dr. Tan: No, they don't.

Dr. Mahathir: They do because you are going to listen to them and they say that you are on the other side and therefore you are more willing to listen than I am.

Dr. Tan: No! The contrary is the truth. They think that because I have accepted the title Tan Sri I am a Government man.

Dr. Mahathir: Nobody accepts you as a Government man. The title

of Tan Sri has nothing to do with being for the Government or against the Government. You know that very well.

Dr. Tan: I know.

Dr. Mahathir: You are not awarded the title of Tan Sri because you are a pro-Government man.

Dr. Tan: I know. I make no bones about the fact that I have never been and I am not pro-Government but I am quite prepared to give credit to the Government where it is due. Anyway there is a chap very high up in Malacca who was adopted as a candidate but lo and behold, when I saw the names on the Nomination Day, his name was there. Today he is high up.

Dr. Mahathir: But I can tell you even if there are suspicions and I don't have proof, I will still give the person a chance. But if later on I find proof, O.K. I will take action but it must be based on proof.

Dr. Tan: Well, I would say that if a chap who before was a impecunious Government servant, after he finished his office, he becomes a millionaire then he has lots of questions to answer.

Dr. Mahathir: Agreed, this is what happens to him. You must also remember that I am always looking out for this sort of thing but that doesn't mean that because I don't act therefore I am letting things slide by. I am not bound to make announcements to the press.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir: It is a sad commentary on all Malaysians that after twenty-five years, we have made very little progress towards national unity. What do you think went wrong? In your *Malay Dilemma* you did indicate that assimilation is one of the courses open to us. It is felt in some quarters that your government has already embarked on this course without fanfare. Would you care to comment?

Dr. Mahathir: When people insist on being different, naturally it makes things very difficult for true unity to be established. There can be some meeting points but it will not be complete unity. In any case unity is not something that is achieved overnight; in fact twenty-five years is really a very short period considering the diverse nature of the population which is divided by race, religion, culture, origin and everything else. Somebody has to give way in some form or other and they must not become all that rigid. There is a lot more for people to sacrifice in order to accept the basis for unity. One of the problems that we have in this country is the inferiority feeling, for example, while people would not mind loosing their language provided the language they adopt is English. They object very much to loosing their language if the language to be adopted is

Malay. Because that is their feeling, we have not pushed very hard.

Dr. Tan: Well, that is nothing new. In India, for example, at one time Hindi was mooted as the national language. Now they have dropped it. They don't call English their national language, but they use English almost as the national language

Dr. Mahathir: Yes, you have a situation as in Papua New Guinea where they had pidgin English, which is a corruption of English. In Malaysia, we have a substantial native population which speaks a known language, a language that has its own background-resources and therefore it is very difficult for us to accept a foreign language as our language. This is one of the divisive things that we have. As you know we are trying to use the language as a means of bringing the people together but with so much resentment over this that it is no longer an effective means of pulling people together. So we will have to live as we are now without being able to achieve the kind of national unity that we envisaged at first. But there is in this country a kind of national unity in the sense that people do work together. We are able to conduct our administration, we are able to set up a government that is acceptable to all the three major groups and this is not a very common thing in many other countries where you either have one group or the other.

Dr. Tan: I was hoping that you will touch a little on integration rather than assimilation because this cry of "*Satu bahasa, satu bangsa dan satu agama*" really frightens lots of people.

Dr. Mahathir: We never say "*Satu agama*" we only say "*Satu bahasa*".

Dr. Tan: Oh yes, those were the early days. In the early days there was a lot of extremism.

Dr. Mahathir: "*Satu agama*" refers to the official religion not the religion of everyone.

Dr. Tan: Just now in my dispensary, I threw away one letter from an extremist who wrote I must convert myself to Islam, otherwise I will go to hell!

Dr. Mahathir: We have cranks like that in every religion.

Dr. Tan: I know. There are lots of people like these.

Dr. Mahathir: Yes, but we can't take them as standard. I am talking about the majority and the majority of the people in this country understand what the Government is after. We want a single language and we want a single culture. That is what we have been pushing.

Dr. Tan: You see as you know the moment you touch . . . religion, . . . religious wars have raged throughout the centuries from the

beginning of time

Dr. Mahathir: But do we try to convert non-Muslims in this country by force or anything like that?

Dr. Tan: To come back to this question of national unity, you have a Department of National Unity headed by a Chinese. I think that was a wise choice on your part but unfortunately all his officers in that department are bumiputras. Now this is the Department of National Unity and an advertisement one would say for national unity. One would hope that the officers of that department will be a multi-racial lot. These top notch people can delve deeply into the problems of race in this country and advise you on what to do. Would you care to consider that?

Dr. Mahathir: There are quite a lot of non-Malays.

Dr. Tan: But they are not top people.

Dr. Mahathir: But the man right at the top is Chinese.

Dr. Tan: I know if you put a man at the top, whoever he is, and all others are of other races they won't even listen to him. It's a wonder that he is there because he is a prosperous psychiatrist. To me it is a wonder that he agrees to be there still, because he has the trappings of power but really has no real power. He is no fool either.

Dr. Mahathir: He is the chairman down there.

Dr. Tan: The proper thing for him to do is for him to pick his own team then you will have a department which can be of some use to the Government. I hope under you, you will not try to (like your predecessors have done) sweep problems of race under the carpet.

Dr. Mahathir: I suggest you watch the department in the future. I can't say anything more than that.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, I have read your *Malay Dilemma* when it was banned. You have revealed some of your thoughts on race, corruption, education and so on, in that book. Now that you have reached the pinnacle of power in this country and you are in the driver's seat, have you modified your views as contained in that book?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, that book was written in the late sixties . . . Of course the situation then was quite different and there were many things I said which were valid then.

Dr. Tan: Which is no longer valid today.

Dr. Mahathir: That they are not valid now I cannot say. All the views are still held by me. But certainly some of them are still valid and where they need to be acted on, we do act.

Dr. Tan: Now take the question of race, do you think that the

predominance of the Malays in this country should lead to their dominance in all spheres of human activity in this country?

Dr. Mahathir: No, one should not just talk of the predominance of Malays in this country. One should also talk about the dominance of the other races in their respective spheres. What we are trying to do now is to try to correct the situation so that there is no predominance of any one race in any one particular area. That is one of the things that we are doing in order to correct the imbalances that we saw at that time.

Dr. Tan: Now most of these imbalances are rectified. I have stated in quite a number of my writings that the Government has taken great strides in rectifying the imbalances. Take education, for example when you and I graduated and even as late as 1969 there were so few Malay doctors. But today the situation no longer holds good and so it is in the other professions. Now do you see the day that when all these imbalances are rectified and the Government policies on quota (officially there is no quota, although unofficially we all know that it is there) will slowly be stopped so that we can have a society where only the best will be chosen for our universities.

Dr. Mahathir: If the imbalances are truly corrected then there should be no fears on the part of any particular group. At that time of course there is no need to provide safeguards for the group that feels threatened. And if we don't have to have safeguards then everybody will be progressing without any special provision made for them. But one also has to remember that the safeguards are not removed too early so that there is no recurrence of the old position. It is very difficult for me to judge when that will happen or whether that will be the attitude of coming Governments. Obviously it will not be this Government, because at this moment in the medical profession out of about 2300 doctors we have 250 who are bumiputras and that is not a very satisfactory situation yet. The day might come when the figures might balance. Of course at that time the Government of the day will have to take that into consideration.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, the white man for more than a century has asked us to look to the West for our education, finance and development etc. Then you came along and asked us to look East. But as you are aware, and indeed you and other Barisan leaders have emphasized that there are many aspects of Japanese life that we must not try to emulate, for example Japanese militarism before World War II. I am surprised that you have not emphasized

elitism amongst the Japanese. As you are aware, in Japan only the very best students can get places in most Japanese universities. How about emulating this aspect of Japanese life, not just in education but other fields of human activities?

Dr. Mahathir: We do within each group really The Japanese are more homogeneous and therefore they can have elitism within the Japanese community. But even in Japan there are Chinese communities and Korean communities.

Dr. Tan: But they are very small and insignificant.

Dr. Mahathir: Nevertheless they are not given the same kind of status as the Japanese.

Dr. Tan: But they are not regarded as Japanese, they are regarded as Koreans and as Chinese although they may well speak Japanese very fluently.

Dr. Mahathir: Exactly, they speak Japanese fluently, they fit all the criteria that we use here to provide citizenship. In fact, if we were to do what the Japanese do to the Chinese or the Koreans there will be a hue and cry in this country. But the fact is that here we are more liberal. Because we accept other communities then we also have to accept the fact that different communities in this country develop at different paces. And because of that, to just single out elitism as the criterion is not good enough. It has to be elitism within each community and that is what we are practising.

Dr. Tan: For the purpose of this interview, I talked with lots of people, with veteran journalists and they were telling me, "Doctor can you emphasize, try to bring out in the interview that this emphasis on Malays, Chinese, Indians everytime a Government leader speaks is not going to build a nation. Why don't they try to emphasize the Malaysian nation and forget about the Chinese, the Indians and the Malays. Then we may march forward towards that cohesiveness a little faster."

Dr. Mahathir: Well it is not only for the Government to think of Malaysians. It is also for the people and the fact remains that the Chinese do consider the preservation of their Chinese origin as very important. So do the Indians and therefore so do the Malays. If they say, "I don't care what my origins are, I am a Malaysian and be damned with my origin", then of course it will be easy. Of course that is not happening now and because of that the Government has to recognise the fact that there are different racial groups.

Dr. Tan: Yes, you see the Government is in a much better position than anyone else to set the pace because the mass media in this

country (including the newspapers) is all Government-controlled. The radio, the T.V. are all in the hands of the Government so the Government should set the lead

Dr. Mahathir: The Government has given the lead in many instances but its not necessary that the people will follow the Government's lead. People have got their own thoughts and they are not easily influenced by what the Government says. The fact is that in all these matters both the Government and the private sector must act in unison.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, as you are aware, within the last decade or so Malaysia has lost some of her best brains because of emigration. And the main reason is their fear for the education of their children. Do you think that this is an instance of good riddance to bad rubbish or should the Government try to take steps to assuage the fears of the non-bumiputras, so that they will not emigrate from this country?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, they are emigrating not only from Malaysia, they are emigrating from Singapore, from Hong Kong, from all kinds of places. This is a normal happening, normal phenomenon that is found everywhere when people want to seek a better life for themselves. I mean it is not just because of the education of their children. It is simply because they want to emigrate. Education is just one excuse. People migrate for many reasons and not necessarily for education. Of course, if education is the problem here, then the only thing that can be said is that that is the education policy of this country and it is not a bad policy because education in Bahasa has been proven to be equal to education in other languages. People who were educated in Bahasa have been able to obtain Ph.Ds abroad and become very highly qualified. The problem is one of wanting to be educated in English — not getting just an education but getting one in English. This is the problem. That is the desire of these people which is very difficult for us to accommodate. One, I have always emphasized that when you are living in the country you have to accept the good with the bad. You can't have everything the way you want it and if you have roots in that country whether it is doing well or not you are going to stay there. But the moment things go slightly different from what they desire some people pack their bags and go. Well it is very difficult to persuade such people and I am quite sure wherever they go they are not going to be permanent either. I have known of people who have gone to Australia, settled there for a few years and then found that Australia

is not all that good. They pack their bags and go to Canada. And some of them after going to Canada found it not so good and have packed and come back here. This has happened, so how can a country accommodate such people, the wishes of such people. The way I see things, there will be emigration and there is no way we can stop it.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, despite 25 years of industrialisation we still have not developed a well-conceived industrial strategy and policy with a view to setting up coherent goals and guide industrial activity towards this end. This partially explains the fact that the composition of manufactured exports is weighted heavily on non resource-based activities like textiles and electronics whose contribution to the development of a healthy industrial base is minimal. An opportunity we have missed as a consequence of the absence of a well-defined industrial policy is the development of a lucrative automobile industry. May I know what steps are being taken towards formulating such a policy as it is imperative that we have an industrial blueprint which of course can be modified with changing circumstances. If there is already a policy I wonder whether it is possible for you to state briefly the policy objectives.

Dr. Mahathir: An industrial policy is something that is far easier to talk about than to work out, simply because we are not a very rich country . . . and we have very little know-how. So we have to take what comes and attend to our major problems, for example, we have a lot of unemployment and because of unemployment we have to go for industries that create employment opportunities and incidently the electronics industry is one that can create many employment opportunities. So we went for that, not because we like electronics but because it gives us an opportunity to create employment. Now if you want to go into other fields . . . for example, if you want to go into the automobile industry, you have to have a lot of supporting industries and knowledge . . . We don't have that kind of knowledge and we don't have people who produce electric circuits that are used in motor cars, meter and die-casting and all kinds of things that go into the automobile industry. Therefore we just can't rush into the automobile industry. We cannot rush into other industries because of the small consumer market that we have in this country. We think that we have now reached the point when we can gingerly go into the earliest part of the steel industry because now we consume sufficient steel to justify putting up a plant. This is our first move towards heavy industry but once you

have that you may want to develop other industries that are spun off from there Now in the case of the automobile industry we made a big mistake right from the word go. We allowed all kinds of cars to come into the country. As a result there is no one single make or size that is used in sufficiently large numbers to justify the industry. Nevertheless we want to go into the automobiles industry not because it is automobiles but because it provides us with the kind of engineering technology that is very important for this country. But there is a price to be paid. If you want to produce a car that is for a small market, the economies of scale will mean that you will have to pay a higher price. It is cheaper to buy a foreign car but it may be necessary for us to pay the price of having cars made more costly. So these are being looked into by the Government but there is no doubt that at some stage we must go into higher technology industries

Dr. Tan: My point up to now is that we are emphasizing not on resources that we have but on imported raw materials. As for electronics we are not doing anything but actually repacking. You see, I do agree with you that it is necessary to provide jobs but if *pari passu* we try to promote agro-based industries that use more rubber, more oil palm, more tin, then we can be going places. You have stated again and again in your reply that we don't have the expertise.

That comes back to an earlier question that I asked you about people emigrating from Malaysia. I was surprised to hear that a former professor of mechanical engineering has gone to Sydney. Now he would be an excellent chap to provide us with the expertise and yet he has gone there to work where he had some difficulty in getting a job. These people can contribute a great deal to improve expertise

Dr. Mahathir: Regarding resource-based industries we are doing fairly well. We have such industries but one has to remember that the fact that we have rubber in this country does not necessarily mean that the manufacturing of rubber goods in this country is an economical proposition. Frequently it is much more desirable to export the rubber raw because it will be processed where the consumer products, rubber tyres for example, are going to be marketed. At the moment, we are the biggest producers of rubber gloves in the whole world, supplying roughly 40 per cent of the World's need of rubber gloves. To produce tyres here is not an economical proposition. With regard to expertise, it is not a

question of a few people who have the knowledge of engineering; we need all kinds of expertise which will take time to develop.

Dr. Tan: Yes, but what little that we have we lose and how are you ever going to build up?

Dr. Mahathir: That part can be replaced very easily because we can buy that kind of expertise.

Dr. Tan: Yes, but you cannot all the time be dependent on foreigners.

Dr. Mahathir: Yes, if our people choose to go away.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir; you have often said that we have to be more productive in order to compete in international markets. I support your call for increased productivity but this calls for a fundamental change in our attitude towards work and discipline. While we can see steps being taken to achieve these objectives many hold the views that much more has to be done especially in the area of higher-level manpower. With a view to meeting the increasing demand for this category of manpower, I wonder whether it would be possible for the Government to take stock of available talent in the higher echelons of the private sector as well as in the academic community. After having indentified such people would it be possible for the Government to invite a select few to serve the Government in posts commensurate with their qualifications and experience for brief periods and presumably at inflated salaries. Many think we should, especially during these difficult times, take advantage of such capabilities that are available to consolidate our economic foundations.

Dr. Mahathir: Well, this is not a new idea but to ask the people in the private sector to serve in the Government is different.

Dr. Tan: For short periods.

Dr. Mahathir: For short periods at inflated salaries.

Dr. Tan: You see, if you offer a chap who is making \$150,000 per year a super-scale A job, it is not going to attract him despite his willingness to serve. But if you offer him half way between what he is getting and the highest the Government can offer he probably will consider making the sacrifice.

Dr. Mahathir: You know what will happen to other Government servants!

Dr. Tan: I am talking of short periods.

Dr. Mahathir: Even for short periods, it creates a lot of problems.

Dr. Tan: I agree.

Dr. Mahathir: Even when we invite foreigners to come there is a lot

of resentment among Government servants. Why should the other chap be paid more for expatriation fees and things like that? But if you take a chap who is in the country, it is going to cause even worse repercussions. Nevertheless we have invited private individuals to help the Government in terms of advice, discussions and other consultations. In fact, I myself very frequently have sessions with them in order to tap their brains for whatever it is worth and I find it extremely useful but to have them working for the Government is going to be much more difficult.

Dr. Tan: Unless they work full time, they really cannot contribute substantially the knowledge that you want They come and advise you and other officials, which is not very satisfactory. But you should ask them to come here, for one or two years and if you find it difficult to pay them from public funds I am sure there are a lots of tycoons in this country who would probably help the Government. But I really don't see why Government funds should not be used if you think of the millions that are wasted.

Dr. Mahathir: I don't agree with the millions being wasted.

Dr. Tan: You only have to read the Auditor-General's report. It is all there.

Dr. Mahathir: But the fact is even if you employ them the millions will continue to be wasted. There is no guarantee that they will not be wasted.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, you have served as Minister of Trade and Industry and have been successful in attracting foreign investors to this country. You have even set up the one stop agency to smoothen and hasten things for the investors. But are you aware of the delays, frustrations and even corruption that cause many businessmen to tear out their hair with rage? How do you propose to rectify this state of affairs?

Dr. Mahathir: Well the only thing I can say is that you are exaggerating things quite a bit. Most businessmen in this country do not feel that frustrated. They would be even more frustrated in other countries and I can name a few where it takes five or six years before anything gets done We are doing everything possible to rectify the situation We are trying to curb corruption, we are trying to make the Government more efficient not only for the businessmen's need but also for everybody else. These things we are doing all the time.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, now that you have directed us to look East does it mean that we will be dropping some of our old and

trusted friends in the next quarter of a century and re-cultivating new ones in the East? Our relations, especially trade relations with the United Kingdom, are at a low ebb but do you think that Japan or Korea can come to our aid the way that Great Britain did during the Confrontation?

Dr. Mahathir: We really can't tell. I doubt whether Britain would come to our aid if we have a confrontation now.

Dr. Tan: Their circumstances are entirely different now. They would say they will think twice about supporting us. At that time although we were independent we had a defence treaty with them but now we don't have that treaty.

Dr. Mahathir: So relationships between countries depend upon circumstances. Somebody may be your enemy one day and your friend the next day. Similarly somebody may be very willing to help you at one time but may not be willing at another time and instead of them other people may be willing to help you. Our policy is of course to be as friendly as possible to everybody but when people are not friendly towards us it's very difficult for us to react in a very friendly way with them.

Dr. Tan: The poor businessmen here are not responsible for what is being done by the Thatcher Government. I would say that the Government in this country would do well to reappraise our foreign relations and not drop the old and trusted ones, as I mentioned in my question.

Dr. Mahathir: Yes, but that is your view, it is not a question.

Dr. Tan: Are you aware that lots of our old friends abroad are a little jittery about the way their relationship with this country has cooled since you took over?

Dr. Mahathir: If they are jittery about it, they can do something about it. They know the reasons for the cooling of the relationship. So if they feel that that is a bad thing, to have bad relationship, I think they should do something about it. They can't wait for us to do it.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, the Alliance Government enacted the International Security Act followed by the Barisan Government passing the Essential (Security Cases) Regulations Act. These have greatly restricted fundamental liberties in this country. You maintain that these laws are necessary to curb terrorism in this country but as you are aware repressive laws have not ever achieved that objective in other countries. Granted that there must be some erosion of human rights in a situation such as

ours where we are faced with internal insurrection on a small scale, will you consider amending some of the more obnoxious provisions of both these two sets of laws?

Dr. Mahathir: In the first place I would contest the description as insurrection on a small scale. People are still dying and today if you read the report one police sergeant was shot dead at the border. In order to make sure that people who are very free with the use of guns are suitably punished we had to enact this law. The only way we can modify the law is when we find people are less trigger-happy. This law was in fact enacted, I remember very distinctly, when Tun Razak was still Prime Minister and it was because some gunmen shot some jewellery shop salesmen. That is why it was enacted. It was not enacted because we feel we should hang people but because of the thing happening first. It was our reaction to that. Now for us to modify it, we must have something happening to show that people are less gun-happy.

Dr. Tan: But as you know, in the process of enforcing the law I am convinced lots of innocent people have been hanged despite our independent and fair judiciary because all that the gunmen did was have a gun in their possession.

Dr. Mahathir: But the law says quite distinctly that possession of a gun is punishable by the death penalty, so they are not innocent insofar as the law is concerned. The law may be harsh, I would agree with you.

Dr. Tan: I am only asking for the removal of some of the more obnoxious provisions of the law, I am not asking for the removal of the law, although as a human rights activist I would like to see both these sets of laws removed. And I have spoken about this as you know in Parliament. I am not speaking to you in the privacy of this room but my views on this are known. What I am saying is that lots of people are now in Death Row (I am told there are 31 of them) and I am not sure if all of them possessed the arms with the intention of shooting down anybody. Perhaps they only had the stupid idea of frightening somebody or some of them may have been asked to carry a parcel and got caught with it.

Dr. Mahathir: The courts take full account of all the circumstances and even then when the court has found all these people guilty and sentenced them to be hanged, the Pardons Board in some cases has not allowed the hanging to be carried out. A number of them have had their sentence commuted.

Dr. Tan: Off hand I can only think of one case, the young boy in

Penang.

Dr. Mahathir: That's the only one that you can record but I can tell you that there were a number of people who were sentenced but their sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment.

Dr. Tan: I hope the Government would want to review this question of mandatory death sentence. That leaves the court no alternative. If it finds the accused guilty, the death sentence is the only thing that it can pronounce. There are lots of cases where perhaps a life imprisonment may be a more humane and appropriate sentence.

Dr. Mahathir: Well, there is the Pardons Board.

Dr. Tan: As I said, I only know of one case.

Dr. Mahathir: There is more than one case I can assure you.

Dr. Tan: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, there is a genuine fear among non-Muslims of all religions in this country that religious freedom in our country is slowly and deliberately being curtailed, for example,

- (1) the ban on the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia — now partially lifted,
- (2) restrictions on the building of non-Muslim places of worship,
- (3) detention of a shipment of Bibles in Bahasa Indonesia by the Special Branch, since then this shipment has been released.

Can you assure the non-Muslims of Malaysia that the Barisan Nasional Government will guarantee freedom of worship, including the right to buy, sell and use the Alkitab in Bahasa Malaysia, and the alienation of land to the non-Muslims to build their own places of worship?

Dr. Mahathir: There is certainly no intention to curb freedom of worship in this country. Now that publication of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia has created a little bit of uneasiness among Muslims because they feel that this is an attempt to try and convert Muslims. Now we, as the Government have got to tell them that this is not so but it is up to the people who are using the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia to confine it to Christians or to other non-Muslims. If you try to distribute it among Muslims then you are going to create problems because the law provides that no non-Muslim missionary may carry out activities among Muslims. That is the law. That is why there is the fear about the Alkitab. Now we have allowed the Bible in Bahasa Indonesia to come in. It is the duty of the people concerned to see that these do not get into the hands of Muslims or that there is no deliberate attempt made to try and teach Muslims the contents of the Bible because that would be wrong according to our present

Constitution. That is why this thing has happened, not so much to suppress Christianity as to protect Muslims.

Dr. Tan: Well, I fully support your views. You must take into account the changed circumstances of this country. Because of the success of the Government's drive in propagating Bahasa Malaysia the present and future generations are only conversant in Bahasa Malaysia so how do we communicate with them? You can't communicate with them in English, you can't communicate with them in Mandarin or Tamil so we have to use the language they understand.

Dr. Mahathir: I know but this problem is not just because the Bible is in Bahasa Malaysia. Advertisements with regards to liquor in Bahasa Malaysia have been objected to by Malays, by Muslims, because they say this is trying to propagate the use of liquor among Malays. We are facing a problem here.

Dr. Tan: I agree. In this country the non-Muslims of whatever religion have accepted what is in the Constitution of Malaysia. They accept that there is a *cordon sanitaire* around the Muslims and they would not try to propagate their religion among the Muslims except you know in every society you have some cranks. It's for the Government to deal with these people. The difficulty of the non-Muslims, particularly the Christians is that you can only communicate with the future generations in Bahasa Malaysia and hence this use of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia. You see this ban was lifted only partially. They can use the Bibles and that's all that is in the gazette notification. They still cannot buy and sell them. If you cannot buy and sell, how can you say it's not a restriction on religious freedom?

Dr. Mahathir: Because we have to have some form of control but what you are saying is that it is a restriction on you. It is not a restriction on you. It is not because it does not stop the religious freedom in this country.

Dr. Tan: If I cannot buy and sell the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia, then it is a restriction.

Dr. Mahathir: But certainly there are other mechanisms by which you can distribute the Bible. The Church can do that for example.

Dr. Tan: But you cannot. The ban says very clearly that you cannot buy and sell.

Dr. Mahathir: But if it is done by certified bodies, I think it would be legal.

Dr. Tan: No, I have gone and consulted our lawyers. I do hope you will look into that.

Dr. Mahathir: I will look into that.

Dr. Tan: Because this concerns the Church very seriously. If the Church cannot buy and sell then what can we do. How can we preach the word?

Dr. Mahathir: Well we can look into that but as to restrictions on building of non-Muslim places of worship, this is not true. We have to have some control over the building of the places of worship simply because, as you know, in Hinduism for example, you find a big tree you begin with a small altar there and before you know there is a big temple in somebody's compound. This is our problem.

Dr. Tan: I agree with you but you know ever since Shah Alam has been built, no other religious body has been able to get a piece of land there to build a place of worship except the Muslims.

Dr. Mahathir: I don't know about Shah Alam, but I know in Petaling Jaya there are so many new churches and Siamese temples as well.

Dr. Tan: Petaling Jaya as you know, was founded in Templer's time. At that time there was no restriction whatsoever. Now in Shah Alam, they won't say they won't give land but they keep telling you that it is under consideration. It is things like that . . .

Dr. Mahathir: But certainly that is not the Federal Government's policy nor the nation's policy.

Dr. Tan: From time to time you have conferences with the Mentri Besar and we hope that you will pass the word around that they should approve applications for land. Shah Alam is a good example. We had applied for land even before Shah Alam came up, but we still can't get land. I give you another example. In Subang Jaya, there was land that was allocated by the developer for a church, the moment the State Government found it out they took over the land. So you see does that tell us that there is restriction or not on religion.

Dr. Mahathir: We can look into that.

Dr. Tan: Now, one final question. You and I have been actors in the first 25 years of our Merdeka and it is not likely that both of us will be around when we celebrate our Golden Jubilee, 25 years hence. So for the benefit of future generations can you look at the crystal ball and let us know what you see is in store for us in the next 25 years?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, I see great things for this country — the continuation of political stability and rapid development. I see a much more cohesive society and I think the imbalances that we find now would be diminished very very greatly and I think we will be well on the way to building a united and greater Malaysia.

Dr. Tan: Do you see that by the time we celebrate our Golden Jubilee, the restrictions based on race will be removed?

Dr. Mahathir: I should hope so but we would not be able to say what the future generation would do. If the present measures being taken to reduce imbalances are succesful by then I should think that most of the

Dr. Tan: For example, one of the most divisive forces in this country is entrance to our universities which is not based on merit at this moment. Will that be based on merit by the time we celebrate our golden jubilee?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, provided the progress made now is maintained and the disparities are removed, I think it is possible this restriction or quota will be done away or reduced at least.

INTERVIEW WITH DATUK MUSA HITAM

I

Dr. Tan: As you are aware racial polarization is on the increase especially amongst our younger generation. Paradoxically education which is supposed to be one of the main instruments of national unity is one of the main causes of polarization in this country. Go to any of our universities and you will find that this is so. What comments have you as Minister of Education on this sad state of affairs?

Datuk Musa: First of all, let me say that I beg to disagree with you on the points that have been used by you as the premise of your question. Firstly that racial polarization in our country is on the increase and secondly, that the increase is amongst our younger generation.

Let me first talk about the universities. I think what is happening in them at the moment is no different from what happened at the sole university that we had for our country in Singapore. When I was a student at the University of Malaya in Singapore, there was apparently what was known as racial polarization except that it was in the reverse order compared to what it is now, in the sense that Malays being in the minority tended to get together more among themselves as against mixing with others, thus creating the impression that the Malays were more racialistic as

compared to the students of other racial backgrounds. At the moment in the Malaysian universities, the situation is such that racially it is somewhat reversed as a result of the rather intensified attempts by our Government to increase the number of Malay students at the various universities thus creating a situation whereby the non-Malays are now in the minority at the moment. So the non-Malays tend to get together by themselves. If you look within that context you will see that the so-called racial polarization is not racial polarization but more, in the accordance with the theory of group behaviour, a normal process whereby people of a common background perceiving themselves to be a small group tend to get together. I must confess that this sounds very academic but I hold on to this view. Now I will go on to try to explain why I disagree that racial polarization in our country is on the increase and why it is more so not valid if it existed amongst the younger generation. I've made very careful or rather very interesting observations among the younger generation in our country. In the first place, if you look at the situation in our country now and compare it to pre-Merdeka or the post-Merdeka period, or even stretch it out up to the early sixties, I am sure you would see many changes in the pattern of behaviour amongst the young boys and girls in the country, especially the ones in the schools. If you look at the situation in the multi-racial schools for example, you would note young boys and girls react almost automatically to any delivery of instructions, be it in formal education or informal education, in Bahasa Malaysia just as we did, you and I, to instructions, formal or informal, in English.

Secondly, amongst our younger generation as well as amongst the older generation, if you look at the behavioural pattern, there seems to be a change in common denominators that could be found among ourselves in the way we celebrate our festivities, the way we cheer our national team at football matches, or hockey matches, or badminton matches. I remember, about fifteen years ago if let us say a Malaysian team was facing an Indian team from India or a team from Hong Kong made up of Chinese, you would have seen very clear cheering and support of one particular community, let it be Indian, or Chinese for the foreign team rather than the Malaysian team. But now in a football match, irrespective of who the opponents are if they are playing the Malaysian team, the Malaysian team would have the most enthusiastic and most spirited support by Malaysians of all races. When you look at the whole spectrum of life in Malaysia today and compare it to the period immediately

after Independence, I feel very encouraged by the fact that racial polarization is not taking place. On the other hand, racial harmony — a movement towards oneness and unity — is slowly but surely asserting itself.

Lastly, in our education system, the only constraint to our developing this oneness is the geographical division of our schools in such a way that the rural schools may be 100 percent Malay and urban schools 100 percent Chinese and Indian. I am talking of the secondary schools but, on the whole, where the schools are multi-racial, a slow but sure process of integration is taking place amongst our young. I don't see any reason for any alarm or concern amongst Malaysians in respect of racial polarization.

Dr. Tan: Let me make some observations about what you have just said. I will confess that what I said about racial polarization in our school system is from hearsay, what I hear from school teachers. But at the universities, people tell me the cause of racial polarization is not what you have said — the difference in numbers. This is an accepted fact: they resent it but they accept it.

I can suggest some causes. Last year, for example, some engineering students came to see me. They said that there are books which only Malays can borrow. This, of course, causes resentment. Take the University of Malaya — there is a Malay society but no Chinese society. When I was in the University of Malaya, I had asked why a Chinese society shouldn't be formed? Up to now, I am told, the Chinese society is not formed, so there is resentment. So they naturally clique amongst themselves. I can quote any number of instances whereby the Chinese tend to keep to themselves as compared to the days when I was in school. At school I didn't think of a chap who was sitting beside me as a Malay. We did not care about racial origin, for we were all students. That was 50 years ago. We did not think whether you were a Malay, Chinese or Indian. When I was in the university, one of my best friends, who unfortunately was killed in the bombing of February 1942, was a Malay. Another chap who was killed at that time was Hera Singh. I do not know whether you remember him. He was a very popular sportsman. That situation has changed; the numbers have been reversed. It is the inequalities that cause all the resentment.

Datuk Musa: I think in the first place I would like to put the record straight. There are no Malay societies — there is a Malay-language Society, Persatuan Bahasa Melayu. So far as the Chinese-language Society is concerned, incidently I am just in the process of

reconsidering the situation. Don't forget the reason why, I am told, the Chinese-language society was closed more because of, as we perceived in government (I was not in the Ministry of Education then), subversive activities. Let me put the situation right. The Chinese-language society — there is no reason why it could not be allowed. I want to give you a better perspective about resentment. I don't want to make it appear as though we score points here. I will tell you that a group of Malay students at the medical faculty of the University of Malaya, claim that books are not available for them but were available for the Chinese. Where do we go from there? I think one has to accept the reality of racial prejudice in the first place. That is No. 1. I think the problem with us is that we straightaway think of the ideal situation. You should not measure our success from the view of the ideal, but you should measure our success from what the situation was before and compare it to what it is now. I could turn around and say that the situation in the University of Malaya during my time was such that there could be racial polarization to the extent that the Malays were together because they were the minority. I could, at the same time say that there was no racial polarization at that time as Malays were elected to posts in the Students' Union. I was one of them. I was accepted by non-Malays very freely. My university mates were socially very close with each other but that does not prove that there was no racial prejudice and feelings at that time. There were these feelings then as now. This is where we differ in perception.

Dr. Tan: Last night I was talking on the phone to a university lecturer — a political scientist in the Universiti Sains Malaysia and I was telling him I was going to ask you this question. It shook me to learn that racial polarization amongst the university lecturers also is taking place. It is getting worse.

Datuk Musa: Let me say this, your question here is — are you aware that racial polarization in our country is on the increase?

I say no. I am saying that it is not on the increase amongst the younger generation. But if you zero in on the universities, I submit that you should look at the present structure of the university lecturers. One, you would see that they came from the old, left-over elitist English-educated group.

Dr. Tan: If I may interrupt. Although the university lecturer I referred to in the question earlier is an Indian, he has become a Muslim. He has a Malay wife and he is very good at Bahasa Malaysia.

Datuk Musa: I am saying that they may be good in Bahasa Malaysia but they went through the elitist sort of education that we had. Universities are a special case. I would admit that there is racial polarization in the universities even though my interpretation of it is that it is not reflective of the country as a whole. I think this is the difference in our thinking. I disagree with you when you start zeroing in and say that the proof is in the universities. I think that should not be used as proof that there is polarization. I want to counter that by giving you examples of society in general. By looking at the behaviour of our young boys and girls in the primary and secondary schools I would counter that we have a much more bright picture than you present by zeroing in on the Universities. I appreciate one thing — most of the non-Malays students who go to the university are really a special class because of the quota imposed on their numbers. Most of them know that they are above the average Malay students and so they look at themselves as supermen as compared to the kampung Malays. So the kampung Malays are "not yet as good" as they are and yet the kampung Malays are given the so-called special privileges and pampered. Of course, there is resentment and you can understand the psychological dimension of it. The Malay students say there is polarization, but they blame the Chinese for it. With right perception, leadership and understanding, we can get both sides to get the proper picture. I don't think you need to worry about it.

Dr. Tan: The target under the New Economic Policy is for non-bumiputras to have 40 percent of share capital by 1990. If the Multi-Purpose Holdings is to be believed, the Chinese already have attained this target. Yet the Fourth Malaysia Plan places very heavy reliance on the private sector. As you know under the FMP the public sector only has 30 percent and 70 percent of the funds are expected to come from the private sector where there is a large non-bumiputra concentration. If you want to attain the growth objectives of the NEP, then obviously there has to be greater flexibility for the 40 percent. How do you reconcile the contradiction in the objectives — if the 40 percent ceiling is to be rigidly followed?

Datuk Musa: I think in the first place, this talk of 30 percent and 40 percent amongst members of the public, including politicians, tends to get clouded in view of the fact that there does not seem to be a clear understanding of what this is all about. My perception of the objective is that is based on two aspects of the New Economic Policy that must be clearly understood.

Firstly, it is the objective of the NEP that in the overall economy of our country, the bumiputras should strive to achieve at least 30 percent participation, covering the whole spectrum of their economic activity, from selling ice-cream to being a multi-millionaire, if one might put it that way. That is the whole picture. Within that whole picture, there is the corporate sector. For that sector the objective is to achieve or reach a target of 30 percent foreign, 40 percent non-bumiputra and 30 percent bumiputra. I think this is very important for all of us to get this clear in our minds — the difference between the whole and that representing the corporate sector. Having said that, if you look at the latest report that has been published in the Fourth Malaysia Plan, you would see that the foreign equity of the corporate sector had reduced from 61.7 percent to 47.5 percent — 61.7 percent in 1971 to 47.5 percent in 1980. Now you look at the bumiputra part of that corporate sector, it has increased from 4.3 percent in 1971 to 12.4 percent in 1980. Now where does this increase come from? Obviously, it comes from the foreign equity sector. It may be over simplified but it means that 40.1 percent of the equity of the corporate sector is now in the hands of non-bumiputras, but Malaysians. In other words, technically speaking the non-bumiputras have already reached the target of 40.1 percent at the expense of foreign equity. So having said all these things, one has also to bear in mind another factor — that the so-called bumiputra sector of 12.4 percent that we have achieved, in effect substantially means the state as it is represented by agencies. Only a very small proportion of that, 4.3 percent, is held by bumiputra individuals. The rest is held by government agencies.

Dr. Tan: I have been told by Dr. Mahathir that an UMNO member presented nine million dollars to the party. That does not show that the private sector amongst the bumiputras is small.

Datuk Musa: No, it is not. Let me tell you this, it was 2.6 percent in 1971 for the individual holder, it is now 1.3 percent. But if you look at it in terms of how many million dollars, it has increased six-fold. So that is why we have Malay millionaires now.

Now, the question is if you want to attain the growth objective of the NEP, there has to be greater flexibility for the 40 percent — of course, there is no question of flexibility here. The figures we have formulated really represent targets. Targets are the ideal you should strive for. But in discussing this question two things must be taken into account. One, whatever increase that is to be attained by

the bumiputra sector should and indeed have been attained at "the expense" of the foreign sector.

Two, one has to appreciate that whatever further increase that is achieved by anybody would have to be within the targets we are talking about. If the economy expands at the rate it is now, the percentages can be retained and everybody will have a share in the expanding cake. I think this is a very important thing for us to remember — the quantum. There is a lot of difference between 40 million versus \$30 million versus \$30 million and \$400 million versus \$300 million versus \$300 million. The opportunities that are contained in the 40 percent of \$100 million versus 40 percent of \$1000 million are very vast indeed.

Dr. Tan: What frightened not only just the Chinese, but the other non-bumiputras in this country, was when an influential Deputy Minister, a head of Pemuda UMNO, said, "Let the economic progress amongst the Chinese be stopped."

Datuk Musa: Why do you worry about a political section of the political party? You worry about it because he is a Deputy Minister. But in all political parties everywhere in the world, the young always sound much more impatient and much more radical. The older they get the more sober they become, especially the more responsibility they are given. Whatever is being said and let us face facts, really represents the aspiration of the young in the party and as a democratic party, I think one has to accept it as a viewpoint to be taken into account by the leadership. I was very vocal when I was in UMNO Youth. This is the privilege of the young.

Dr. Tan: I accept that, except that some conservative elderly businessmen got frightened and they sent their money out of the country.

Datuk Musa: Well, this is another reality which we have to accept in our open society. People talk. Those who understand the history and political, economic and social system of this country, should have no reason to go to panic stations whenever people make statements. Don't forget that for every action, there is a reaction. There can always be comparable examples of statements by the young of the M.C.A. You know they will frighten the Malays in the kampung. Well, this is a multi-racial society. I don't think we need to worry too much about that.

Dr. Tan: I myself agree with you on that. Let us hope that our leaders, be they young or old, will be more responsible in their pronouncements.

Datuk Musa: The leadership in our country has always shown that we have succeeded in being moderate. The incoming leadership is no different in that sense.

There is another clarification I want to make about the 40 percent. It is not Chinese, not Indian. It is for all non-bumiputras.

Dr. Tan: The NEP targets for equity and restructuring are by any standard difficult and ambitious. As you approach 1990 and you find they cannot be attained, what do you propose? Extend the time horizon, say to 1995 or modify the policy or what?

Datuk Musa: In the first place, let me say that there is no better challenge that could spur a human being or groups of human beings than when the challenge becomes difficult and the target becomes ambitious. In fact, we do accept that the NEP targets are difficult and ambitious measured by any standard. But to me, this itself represents a challenge.

When your question is posed to me, I can say that it is premature. It is premature to speculate now as to what could, or should or would be done if we fail to achieve this target. It is premature for me to speculate on what would be done in ten years time.

Dr. Tan: Malay aspirations have been raised but delivery of promises is proving to be difficult. The Malays will grow impatient, how do you propose to handle this volatile situation?

Datuk Musa: It is one of the failings of the democratic political system that any aspirant for office from the lowest level, Wakil Rakyat, to the highest, the Prime Minister, has to make promises. In the process of making promises in order to win votes and support, you really go to town and as a result, of course, you raise the expectations of whoever your target audience is. But one has to accept that fact that promises are to be fulfilled. One of the reasons for the May 13 tragedy, if I may recollect my arguments as a young "upstart" with past leaders, I felt that time and time again there were pronouncements in the newspapers and in the mass media made by our leaders at national level to say such and such things would be given to Malays; and yet they were not fulfilled. The result was negative as well as positive, depending on who the recipient of the information was. To the Malay, he was lulled into thinking that everything was being done for him. As for the non-Malays, he cursed and said that everything was done for the Malays, yet nothing was done. I think I had the privilege of making that critical analysis so as to make me at least aware of the dangers of repeating the

mistake. So when you talk of the Malays growing impatient, we assure you that this impatience is not confined only to the Malays, the impatience is universal. But all we can do or say is that we should never make promises unless we can fulfill them. And I would like to assure you that insofar as the present Government is concerned, when we make promises, we ensure we can deliver. I think one of the strengths of the present Government is that whatever the shortcomings and whatever criticism has been made, we are able to learn from past mistakes and adapt ourselves. There are areas where you can apply criticisms on our implementation.

The way I propose to handle the volatile situation is through careful study of any project. Only after that tell people we can do it and only then make promises. That has been my personal style in government.

Dr. Tan: Although Malay poverty is being reduced there is a growing widening of the gap between the Malays at the top of the ladder and those at the bottom. It is inevitable that there will be a growing social class distinction between the wealthy and the poor Malays. How do you propose to diffuse this conflict?

Datuk Musa: In the first place, I agree with you that there will be a growing class distinction between the wealthy and not wealthy Malays. This has to be so, because this is the society we are striving for within the context of the NEP — to create a class that could occupy the top of a pyramid as against a class which occupies the very bottom of the pyramid. This is inevitable, but this does not necessarily create a situation of conflict. I personally do not subscribe to the Marxist perception of inevitability of conflict within the context of our society — especially within the Malay community. I think this is something which we feel that we will be able to diffuse by an injection of the spiritual value of development; by ethics, by religion, by making them realise one has to strive in order to reach the top. It is our bounden duty to respect the success of whoever reaches the top as a result of hard work and striving for it. So this is the sort of society that we are striving for. This is my own perception of what Malaysian society should be and I believe this is the perception of the Government at the moment. But just one word about poverty. If you look at the report based on the Fourth Malaysia Plan, you will see that within the ten-year period the level of poverty, in terms of percentage, has decreased — according to our own study — from 49.3 percent to 29.2 percent. So, if you manage to decrease the level of poverty, the gap that exists between

the rich and poor would close.

Dr. Tan: It is said that the upliftment at the bottom is not uniform and you have pockets of abject poverty.

Datuk Musa: To that extent our strategy in the coming ten years should be concentration at the lowest level, identification of the poverty area and an attack on that level.

Dr. Tan: Irrespective of race, colour or creed?

Datuk Musa: Yes, of course, I agree with you that there is no racial barrier in poverty.

I was involved in the discussion of the Fourth Malaysia Plan and we talked a lot about fishermen, farmers etc. Even though we are doing reasonably well, we must in future pay more attention to the lower level. The second decade of the NEP would concentrate on that level.

Just for your information, if I may reveal my personal thoughts. If I do go up the ladder, so to speak, I would like to perform the function in Tun Razak's style. I have already told Dr. Mahathir, what I would like to do irrespective of any other Ministry he gives me is that I want to visit villages. I want to visit areas to see projects going ahead. I want to re-establish the Tun Razak style of development strategy. I was inspired by Tun Razak when I was in the civil service, my first post as Secretary to the District Rural Development Committee. I literally built rural roads and learnt about technical words like, side-tables, reinforced concrete etc. I built rural roads with Penghulus. I dug wells and I knew what to use. I was involved in the padi-level development planning and implementation. I would like to go back to the villages. This is my secret ambition and if I reach the higher level I shall want to fulfil it.

Dr. Tan: Just now you said you want to concentrate on poverty at the lower level. One of the matters I want to bring your attention to is the Orang Asli...

The other matter is the gross injustice done to the New Villages. Under the TMP they were allocated \$20 million and under the FMP \$30 million. Now if you allow for inflation, there is no increase at all. Bear in mind that the New Villages now number about two million people — about one-sixth of the population. I would agree that not all of them are poor but by and large most of them are. For example in Johore — most of them are poor. Why are they left out in the cold like this? Will you ensure that justice is done to these two groups of people?

Datuk Musa: I want to say in the first place that I am not in a position

to confirm or deny what you have said because I have not been dealing with it. But for whatever it is worth, as regards the Orang Asli, maybe it is a new awareness among us, but I remember very well that when the Agong's speech was prepared, (we prepare the speech for Agong's delivery), there was lengthy discussion on the situation of the Orang Asli and we succeeded mentioning them in the speech. So for whatever it is worth there seems to be a fighter for the Orang Asli in government now. We have got this special mention of them and we hope to follow it up.

Insofar as New Villages are concerned, I think they have been slowly changing in the last decade. Previously the New Village was looked upon as a unit, now it is integrated in the local government system. For example, the schools, the clinics and the roads in the New Villages are now integrated in the national development programme. For your information, last year we made an allocation of \$1000 million to upgrade the roads all over the country which also includes New Villages.

Dr. Tan: If I can speak from my experience, I used to represent the biggest New Village in the country. The road there is still the same today as when I left. I am aware that the New Villages now come under the Majlis Daerah but they are under the State Governments which neglect them. I was in the Selangor State Assembly before and when I spoke for the New Village, they used to say that they are under "Kementerian Tempatan, dia menjaga". They said there was a Ministry with a Minister looking after it.

Datuk Musa: No, I don't disagree with you at all. What I am trying to say is that there is new development in that there is an allocation. The State Government had handed this to us because they had no money for roads. Now that the money for the roads has been given, they have to implement it. As I have said, I do not know the latest situation. I am just informing you on roads as an example.

D. Tan: Take education for example. This is a federal subject. Now look at some of the schools in Jinjang. You shake a little too hard they will fall down. But nothing is done.

One Minister of Education went there and he promised that the school will be rebuilt. That was just before 1974. The school is still there. Nothing has been done. In fact the School Management Board came and asked me, and I had to approach people like Lee Foundation and others to help them to build some new classes.

Datuk Musa: If you talk about schools, we must have a longer discussion on this because some Chinese schools have some

problems. All I can say is that under the Fourth Malaysia Plan the capital grant has been increased to \$40 million, I think as compared to about \$20 million or \$10 million before.

Dr. Tan: Do you believe that the basis of national unity is a single ethnic group possessing a common language, culture and religion, echoing the cry of "*Satu bangsa, Satu bahasa dan Satu agama*?" If so how you propose to achieve it?

Datuk Musa: I have not heard the cry for "*Satu bangsa, Satu bahasa dan Satu agama*" in so far as Malaysia is concerned.

"*Satu bangsa, Satu bahasa dan Satu negara*" has been the cry of the Indonesian Independence movement and this has been used by Malays. They were inspired by the Indonesians' movement in the old days leading to the independence movement in Malaysia. That's history.

Insofar as national unity is concerned, I believe that its basis in our country should be firstly, a recognition of the multi-racial and multi-religious nature of our society and secondly, that there could be in future, a slow but sure integration of our cultural heritage whereby we would be able to have the right Malaysian perception, the right Malaysian way of life.

Dr. Tan: Do you agree with my concept that this slow process of integration cannot be legislated?

Datuk Musa: I was just about to come to that . . . Culture cannot be forced or legislated. Culture is something which people should accept naturally, habitually. It is a way of life. I feel we are making progress. Once you say you must do this, or must do that, culturally, then people react negatively. My contention is, for example — this is the controversial part of it — if you are looking for a basis of the future Malaysian culture, I would say that Malay culture could form the basis. Why do I say it? Because if you study Malay culture, academically and thoroughly, as I did, you would appreciate that what is known as Malay culture indeed is already a synthesis. It is an integration of the cultural heritage of other racial groups of the country. You just follow lots of example — wedding ceremonies, *kenduri*, the *songkok*, the *baju Melayu*, the *capal*, the *ghazal* party, the *ghazal* music which we listen to. I was given a lecture by Zubir Said in Singapore in which he traced the Malay traditional song to Chinese music. In order to understand the basis of unity the people must be made to learn. I am not going to say that Malay culture shall be accepted as the Malaysian culture. What I am saying is that future Malaysian culture should be evolved, by contact, by interaction. If

you went overseas, you hear voices speaking in English, you will be able to recognise if they are spoken by Malaysians. He could be Malay, Chinese or Indian but you know automatically that voice is a Malaysian's. I was in Amsterdam having lunch in an Indonesian restaurant, I could see amongst the waiters, there were two non-Indonesians and I guessed they were Malaysians. Before I knew it, they approached me and greeted me, — two boys from Cochrane School — one Chinese and one Indian. They were speaking to me in a very relaxed Malaysian manner, very proud and chatty, a feeling of oneness and pride of being Malaysian. This is what I mean Malaysian sense of identity. There are certain aspects in our way of life which we could encourage. For example — again this is a very controversial matter — such as the *songkok*. If you were to think that the *songkok* equals Malay and if you say that you must wear it, there is a reaction against it. But if the *songkok* is used as a form of identification of Malaysians overseas, you can see Chinese or Indians wearing it quite happily, quite proudly.

Dr. Tan: You have during your tenure as Education Minister increased the intake of non-bumiputras into local universities and for this you are to be commended, but there remains a large unsatisfied demand. Your refusal to allow private universities runs counter to the needs of the country. Are you willing to reassess the position? If not, how do you meet the growing demand of the nation for skilled professional and managerial manpower?

Datuk Musa: In the first place, it is very significant that you comment on the increased intake of non-bumiputras. I said significant because I am under attack by the bumiputras who say that I am increasing it. I just want to emphasise the dilemma of government in this country.

Secondly, on the so-called refusal to allow private universities, I am afraid I do not want to discuss this since the case of Merdeka University is subjudice.

I will go into the question of how I will go about trying to meet the growing demand of the nation for skilled professional and managerial manpower.

I feel that the existing universities could be expanded to their full capacity. There is only one university, for example, University of Malaya, that is considered to be full capacity, a total of 8,000 – 9,000 students. The other universities have not reached that full capacity.

Now when you talk about professional and managerial man-

power, I immediately think of subjects that are less arts-oriented. The expansion should be in those areas where the professional and managerial training would be given. In other words, the engineering division, the faculties of Agriculture and Management, and all the other subjects that could come under this category.

Secondly, we have to have a long term plan to cater for this "excess" of men and women who are clamouring to go to the universities. I would like to submit that this situation is more the result of the success of our education system rather than failure. In other words, we have managed to produce a large number of men and women with the minimum qualifications to be able to enter the university as against the old days where the universities had to search for students. Now the students have to clamour and search for universities. What should we do in order to absorb them?

We have to expand polytechnic education and vocational training. I need not give you the statistic, that we are building polytechnics and other similar institutions.

Dr. Tan: It's not enough.

Datuk Musa: Today let's say we have 40 vocational schools against 24 existing ones upon Independence. You should be able to appreciate the enormous progress that we have made. And if you take into account the cost of building the schools which is ten times more than secondary schools, you would appreciate the problem. The planned polytechnics will be able to absorb students that normally want to go to the universities. We have long term plans to meet the need for skilled professional and managerial manpower. But I must confess it is a difficult exercise to try to dissuade young men and women from going into the easier arts stream. Also we can easily provide facilities for the arts subjects whereas for science, computer science and engineering, we need computers and machines. But to study history, you only need a book, a lecturer and notes. This is one problem we face . . .

Dr. Tan: I have one or two comments. One is that in Medicine, we cannot go on expanding.

Second, I agree with you that we must wean people away from the Arts. I have met a lot of people who are not fit for Science. I have three daughters. I had wanted one of them to be a doctor. I practically forced one of my daughters to go to the Science stream. For one term she studied in the Science stream, but after that I allowed her to switch. She totally missed two terms out of the six term course because of the switching and the late release of the

MCE result.

Datuk Musa: That is why you know amongst bumiputras at the secondary schools I have relaxed this automatic streaming into Science based on their results. I have ruled that if their parents produce a request they can remain in the Arts stream.

Dr. Tan: It is no point forcing a child to go to a certain stream, because it will be counter-productive.

Dr. Tan: A number of promising Malay scholars at the universities have been rapidly promoted and given administrative jobs, for example, heads of department, Deputy Deans, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and others. The result is that research and scholarship amongst Malay lecturers suffer. What do you propose to do about this sad situation?

Datuk Musa: I think, in the first place, this is a temporary phenomenon simply because there are at present only a few Malays who are academically qualified.

Secondly, I feel this situation is not so bad as there are not that many posts of heads of department, deputy deans, deputy vice-chancellors

I am in the process of looking into the question closely and thoroughly as a result of the last meeting of the Vice-Chancellors that I had at my Ministry and as a result of my discussions and talks with academics, individuals as well as groups. There is too much workload for the Malays because of Bahasa being the medium of instruction. There are other constraints too. There is a lot more that could be done. The Malay scholars are being placed in a situation where there is lack of motivation and incentive and also excessive workload.

We have sent a reasonable number of academics overseas to do research — not only the Malays, of course. This is the general policy at the universities to send them overseas for research

Dr. Tan: You must be aware that the standard of English in our schools is deteriorating and when students arrive at our universities they are at a big disadvantage. They follow the lectures and tutorials in Bahasa Malaysia, but when they go to their rooms they have to read textbooks and journals in English. The Tunku has recently suggested that we have instruction in English but I myself say that it would be a retrograde step. A lecturer who is fluent in Bahasa Malaysia has suggested that we should go bilingual. I myself will suggest that we should conduct certain courses in English. What is your view?

Datuk Musa: The deteriorating standard of English in our schools is of course inevitable in view of the fact that we have decided to switch to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. Having said that, let me submit that, in the first place, the situation that we are experiencing in Malaysia and we shall continue to is no different from the situation in countries like say, Holland, Sweden, Norway, just to mention a few.

I lived in Holland for two years. I know that the medium of instruction there is completely Dutch language but they also have to study English. They also have the disadvantage of having to use reference books in English in universities and so it is with other countries that I have mentioned. I feel that there is no reason why Bahasa Malaysia should be accused or suspected to be causing a lowering of standard of education in our country. I have a vision of Malaysia using Bahasa Malaysia in our institutions of learning yet developing into a developed country as the other countries I have mentioned. This is one positive aspect of it which I feel I should stress when one discusses the situation of Bahasa Malaysia against English. One should not be negative or unduly worried especially in the present situation when we are in the process of change. emerge and this is a natural phenomenon which one has to accept as a reality of life.

What do we do about it? Insofar as the strategy is concerned, let me say that it is a two-pronged strategy. At the universities, there is a definite programme at each one to intensify the study of English to upgrade its standard. University of Malaya is one example which I am sure you are familiar with. They have programmes for courses in intensive English. You find now from University Kebangsaan, a graduate from the university with a Bachelor's degree who goes overseas to America and ends up with a Ph.D. They have to undergo lessons and conduct research in English. They have been writing their doctoral thesis in English with good results. That is one aspect of the strategy.

The longer term strategy relates to schools. I need not elaborate on the much publicised effort of the Ministry of Education to revive the teaching of English in schools.

Dr. Tan: Then what is your objection to certain courses being done in English so as to act as a spur to those who really want to learn the language?

Datuk Musa: There is no objection to that except that I have to look

into it within the context of education policy, if the national education policy categorically states that the medium of instruction shall be in Bahasa. There are possibilities, for example of extra curricula activities being done in English. Well, why not. In fact, we are in the process of making this possible.

Dr. Tan: As you know in the villages the Malay community has no contact whatsoever with English. And it is impossible to make these children study English as there is no motivation at all.

Datuk Musa: We are concentrating as a first priority on the residential schools where it is easier to provide the best facilities. The very concept of such schools is to move the disadvantaged class of the remote villagers into the residential schools whereby they can get the best facilities. We have an input of the best English-language teachers possible. This is our priority. I think this problem can be overcome.

Dr. Tan: The Council of Churches of Malaysia has been established to speak on behalf of the Churches in Malaysia. Will the Government recognize the CCM as the body through which Government-Church relations can be conducted?

Datuk Musa: Insofar as I am concerned, I wonder why people are always interested in so-called recognition before a dialogue where an understanding can be achieved.

In my entire experience of government whenever a question of recognition arose I always put it aside. My approach has been: "We are available, we are approachable. You are an organization. Let's sit together. What is your problem?". Once you talk about recognition, then you are formalising it. Once you formalise the situation then we get a lot of "*susah*" — a lot of problems.

Let me elaborate on this. The Academic Staff Association of the university for example — if I recognised them as representatives of the academic staff to negotiate with me or tell me what is wrong, I would have a lot of difficulties. Instead I invited them on my own, not to negotiate but exchange views. I think I achieved a great deal within that spirit. Similarly with teachers' unions in the country — I have been continuously meeting them, yet not recognising each one of the meetings as an official meeting. These are meetings where we can say anything we like — you can tell me anything you like and I could also tell you anything I like so that we can exchange views and have a better rapport and understanding. I don't see any reason why such an organisation as the Council of Churches could not make itself available and I do not see why I could not make myself

available to hear whatever viewpoints the organisation has and whatever affairs they would like to raise with us. The problem of recognition is this — once you start saying you recognise the Council of Churches, the question is, for what purpose? To negotiate and talk on what subject? Then what about other organizations or other bodies and what each one will say about me? What about us? You have all sorts of interest groups wanting to claim "recognition."

Dr. Tan: The situation among the Christians in this country is that they are far more divided than the Muslims are. The main body among the Christians are the Catholics. They are divided also, but they form about half of the Christian population. The other half are divided among the group called Protestants.

The Catholics have stayed out of the Council of Churches while all the others have come together. They have registered themselves at the Council of Churches but the Catholics told them : 'if the Government recognises you to speak on behalf of the churches, than we will come in.'

The reason is that the Christians are afraid that one particular group of Christians may be friendly with a Minister and establish itself as the representative of churches. Whereas if the Council of Churches is recognised and if the Government wants to consult Christians on any issue concerning them, it can contact the CCM. It is for this purpose that the CCM seeks recognition.

Datuk Musa: When you want to ask about recognition, I am thinking immediately of the implication of the so-called precedent of recognition to other associations and bodies of a similar nature, the interest groups that you have. I do not know yet. I do not have experience in dealing with them. But to achieve the purpose of good relationship, to me there is no need for recognition. Dr. Mahathir, as I know, also is open to people's problems and listens to what your problems are.

Dr. Tan: Some churches are registered with the Registrar of Societies. Some, if not all, churches are committed to speaking out loud and clear on the issues facing the nation. If they do so will they fall foul of the law and come under the scrutiny of the Registrar of Societies?

Datuk Musa: This is new information to me that some churches are registered with the Registrar of Societies. Let it be so. In so far as churches being committed to speak loud and clear on issues facing the nation, it depends on what you mean by issues. The only thing I

can say here generally as regards the scrutiny by the Registrar of Societies within the context of the Societies (Amendment) Act, is that the Government shall be liberal in the application of the law. Issues depend on how you perceive them to be or we perceive them to be. There are certain reasonable issues that you might bring up. You must appreciate the spirit behind the amendments to the Societies Act. There are societies which use different names as a front, yet they are blatantly political in nature. We want to call a spade a spade. That is the spirit behind it.

If we hear that the Church says, "Boycott the election", that becomes very blatantly political. That's different. But when you talk about expressing views, as far as my knowledge goes I do not believe that the Council of Churches or groups of churches in the country are that political as to worry us. Let me repeat there should be a liberal application of the Act.

Dr. Tan: Both Dr. Mahathir and you have stated that both the UMNO and the Barisan Nasional believe in and practise parliamentary democracy. If at some distant date, the people, through the ballot box, decide that there should be a change of government, either in one of the states or even at the centre, do you think that there will be a peaceful changeover? There is another view in this country that Malaysia should be a one-party state. This latter view has the backing of at least one senior Cabinet Minister and a senior civil servant has mentioned it as a contingency for 1990. How do you resolve such conflicting views? Will the Barisan Nasional countenance an election victory and a transfer of power to an Opposition party or an Opposition coalition?

Datuk Musa: I am not aware of a senior Cabinet Minister or a senior civil servant advocating those things. If the victory of an Opposition party is through the ballot-box, it simply has to be honoured. If you questioned our credibility on this answer I can go so far as to say that in the history of the political development of our country, there have been precedents. We lost in three states and yet there was the normal struggle and change. Trengganu and Kelantan were under PMIP and Penang had also fallen into the hands of the Opposition. There is no unwillingness and no resistance on our part provided it is through the ballot-box and provided also that the political party is not advocating violence.

Dr. Tan: Our present Prime Minister is a moderate and his deputy acts like a lightning rod. But the new Prime Minister has a radical image, to the business community at least. And you as Deputy

Prime Minister have a reputation that is not far behind. How do you think that both of you will play these roles?

Datuk Musa: I think the word radical is misplaced here. What I would like to use is the word dynamic. The word radical gives a negative picture. If you look at the history of both of us, I would dare to say that in this whole country the two of us have been the most active members of Government seeking foreign investments and promoting industrialization and business development in the country.

I was Deputy Minister of Trade and Industries. I claim to be one of the first, if not the first Ministerial level official, who led various delegations to get foreign investments in this country. I had to advocate, propagate, explain and sell Malaysia to the foreign business community to invest in Malaysia.

I think I have had quite a good reception and I now can claim to be responsible for quite a great number of the companies which are already here now thriving and succeeding and doing well. These are the results of my personal effort when I was Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. And then when Dr. Mahathir became Minister of Trade and Industry he too went all over the world. He was one of the most approachable, one of the most liberal men on the question of investment and the generation of business and industrialisation in this country. . . . I think you would see that the Mahathir era, if one might use that word, shall convince the business community that we are not the men who would hamper or would dampen development in the business community in this country.

I think in the past we might have favoured certain categories of businessmen. What we can promise now is that there is going to be fair treatment of all those who will be able to offer the best. There will be less discrimination under the Mahathir era, as he knows the ins and outs of business. In a small way I can claim that I am familiar with it too. We have countless meetings because of our approachability. We have been very open to the business community. Another point you can criticise us for is the frankness by which we approach the business community.

INTERVIEW WITH TENGKU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH

Dr. Tan: Even in defeat, you have dominated the political scene. Do you in retrospect understand why you were defeated so badly? Has the fact that you have some royal blood been a handicap in the recent fight of the century as I have labelled it?

How do you see your role in Malaysian politics as the leader of the Opposition inside UMNO?

Tengku Razaleigh: I don't know whether I still dominate the political scene . . . but I lost in the party election simply because I had not taken an aggressive line. I had taken a rather passive stance and I had no campaign strategy because I took it as a friendly contest within the party. Some people consider this a wrong attitude for a politician like me to have adopted. They say that I ought to have been aggressive, cold and calculating in order to ensure victory. Admittedly, I could have taken an equally aggressive line to ensure my victory but this surely would have led to a split within the party and I would be the last person to want to see that happening. I will not allow or cause the party to be broken into pieces. If defeated it is just my bad luck, and I would accept it simply as not my day. I don't think my royal blood has anything to do with my defeat. I was Vice-President for three consecutive terms and before that a member of the Supreme Council. It was not a question of birth. They accept you for what you are. I lost the contest because I didn't campaign as hard. I didn't go about shouting slogans, or making promises. I did

not pose as an extremist or as a chauvinist because I never like to do these things. I like to be what I am and like to do things in my quiet way and that is what I have been doing all these years. And if I were to talk about my achievements people would say I am blowing my own trumpet. Whatever it is, I don't think there is any benefit in winning any election within the party or outside the party if it is going to bring untold misery or dissatisfaction and unhappiness to the people. Feelings have been hurt because of the heat generated during the campaign. Although the party is not split, there is a feeling of distance among some people within the party. All of us are working very hard trying to patch things up and bring everybody together....

As for my role as an Opposition leader within UMNO, this question does not arise at all. I support party policies and defend them because we all believe in and share the same ideals. We may have our differences on matters of approach but I think all of us are agreed that we should support the same policy style we have adopted all this while, with minor variations here and there. I lost not because I had advocated a different policy or an alternative policy but simply because I had not been aggressive in my campaign and because of last-hour developments....

Dr. Tan: There is virtually total unanimity in the country that your talents must be kept in the Cabinet. Do you make any conditions for your return and would you consider an alternative to the Ministry of Finance, for example, Agriculture or Health?

Tengku Razaleigh: I really shouldn't get the credit and be accorded this kind of recognition in the Cabinet. I don't think I am indispensable. I think there are many talented and able people who can run this Ministry or any other Ministries.

I am in the limelight now because of the election in the party recently and may be because of the little contribution I made over the last few years people seem to think that I should remain in the Cabinet.

Even early in my political career I had been very reluctant to join the Government. I never wanted to be in the Government. I didn't mind being a back-bencher because I thought I could contribute something to the country and to the people by way of doing things outside the Government as I had done in the past by running institutions on behalf of the Government, by promoting voluntary organisations which I think would help enrich this society which is so diverse and multi-racial in character. We are a

sensible and rational people; we should contribute in the best way we can.

I was asked to join the Government by the late Tun Razak who finally got me to promise virtually on his death-bed in London. I was summoned to see him in London just a week before he died. When I came back, I had no choice but to join the Government. Actually I had been asked to join the Government way back in the sixties and later in the seventies pressure was getting very strong but somehow I managed to persuade my leaders not to force me to join the Government. Nevertheless, eventually I found myself joining the Government and the Ministry of Finance and I have been trying to do the best I can at my job. At one time I was toying with the idea of doing my other jobs not necessarily finance but matters related to agriculture. I was toying with running the Ministry of Agriculture but my friends advised me against it, simply because they felt I should continue my work in the Ministry of Finance. So if I do go back to the Ministry of Finance or to the Government, it will not be on any terms or conditions. It will be simply because the feeling of the people for me to remain in the Government is so great that I simply had to put aside my personal feelings for the time being and try to serve the country through the Government and try to show unity which is greatly needed when power changes hands. We shall rally around and give support to the new man. It is very necessary. I think because the last UMNO General Assembly showed their support, I should remain in the Government and also because of the appeal from Datuk Hussein and his successor Dr. Mahathir, the Tunku, your good self and others. I should take this into account.

When I went back to my home state last weekend, 30,000 people came to greet me at the airport and at my house, they were crying, virtually pleading, that I shouldn't leave the Government. I am neither selfish nor conceited. I thought I should leave because if I had no place of some influence in the party I shouldn't remain in a Ministry such as the Ministry of Finance which is very important. I thought I could contribute to the country in some other capacity. Because of all this I should put my personal interest and consideration aside and let the people's will override my personal feelings. I am offering myself for a position in which I could be effective in helping to build a peaceful and united nation

Dr. Tan: You have a constituency of admirers among professional people who regard you as the brightest mind in the Cabinet. They

feel that you do not carry a chip on your shoulder either as regards race or intellect. What prospects do you see for a non-racial leadership emerging in Malaysia after 1990?

Tengku Razaleigh: I suppose it is my upbringing and my family background that has shaped my attitude and outlook. I don't see a person racially, I see a person for what he is. I suppose in a multi-racial society like ours where things can easily polarise, I would be considered a misfit to hold that kind of view and I appreciate that this can be a handicap in a party charged with emotions at times. But I have been able to walk the tight rope so far. I have tried to hold my head high and because of that I do not discriminate one against the other but I do discriminate in favour of the deprived and the underprivileged. I think the deprived and underprivileged deserve every assistance the Government and our society can give. That is why I feel strongly that the New Economic Policy (NEP) is the right instrument to initiate measures and redress any imbalance or inequalities that may have occurred over the years. As to whether a non-racial leadership in Malaysia will emerge after 1990, it depends on what you mean by the term "after 1990". It is a relative term, it could be January 1991, it could be a decade or two later. I know what you are trying to get at is that after the period of the NEP should there be a non-racial leadership emerging. Again, this is a matter of interpretation. I firmly believe that within the context of free enterprise the measures taken by the Government and the people on the socio-economic fronts will bring about social justice and economic equality among our people. There should then be a greater sense of unity in diversity, of genuine pride in upholding the national language as an instrument of national unity and in working together towards building a common culture and a new Malaysian civilisation.

Once there is social justice and economic equality among our people, a new sense of mutual tolerance will emerge, quite unlike what we are experiencing today. I can sense the beginning of this new direction even today. On the basis of equality the common people will be able to communicate with one another more freely and there will be a new sense of common national purpose and common nationalism. Once we come to that stage, there will no longer be mutual suspicions. Of course, as human beings, we are always suspicious of one another but political suspicion will not be there any more. Once there is no political suspicion and Malaysian nationalism takes deep roots among our diverse people I think it is

going to help us a long way. I believe that once all these inequalities and social injustices have been wiped out, non-racial leadership will have a chance to grow. But it will take some time to become acceptable. This is how I feel about it and we as well as the new generation must work toward this goal

Dr. Tan: Under you, the Treasury has emerged as a bold and innovative Ministry, attracting some of the brightest minds in the Civil Service. Some say that we have one of the best Ministries of Finance in the world. What is the philosophy that you have brought to bear on your task as Minister of Finance?

Tengku Razaleigh: I think you are very kind and generous in your tribute. I wish you were right that the Treasury has attracted some of the brightest minds in the Civil Service

In my case I am very lucky. When I came here, I inherited a team of officers who have been well-trained and experienced in running this Ministry and in shaping the financial and budgetary policies of the Government. The only thing to do was to give my personal touch to the way they are doing things. I am happy to say that I have been able to introduce my own style and philosophy of management. The Treasury officials responded enthusiastically with full commitment and dedication. We have been able to work as a good corporate team in running the Ministry of Finance.

You know I was in the private sector. When I came here, I had this grand idea that I could remould the Ministry of Finance into a corporate package monitoring activities and running this as a super-bank and be able to feel the pulse of all sectors of the economy. But I was disappointed. I was not able to do that. It was not easy. I had to fight to infuse the corporate sense of working into the Ministry itself. For instance I have introduced new ways and methods of work. This has received positive response from the officers and has increased productivity and efficiency. I have allowed them to voice their views freely and to defend them openly and I encourage them. Only in this way will I know what their thinking is

I must say since I started the budget dialogue sessions I have found not only that I could communicate face to face with the private sector people but that I am able to understand their problems better. I am able to talk to them frankly and freely.

Dr. Tan: I hope you will be able to infuse in your Ministerial colleagues some of these ideas of a dialogue with the private sector so that there is a two-way traffic which is very useful to you and to

them. At last they will say, "*Kita puas hati, Mentri kita telah dengar pandangan kita.*" (We are satisfied, our Minister has heard our opinions).

Tengku Razaleigh: Yes, it is very useful. After meeting the private sector people I will bring some of their ideas up when I meet with the Ministries on operating and development expenditure. I even pose to them the problems faced by the private sector. How do we solve them? How do we cut across the co-called red-tape?

Dr. Tan: The two prongs of the NEP are the eradication of poverty and the re-structuring of society. Both have caused an exodus from the kampungs to the towns. The result is that our agricultural production has fallen. How do you propose to arrest this fall?

Tengku Razaleigh: It might be some exaggeration to say that there has been an exodus from the kampungs to the towns. I will give you the figures. After all in 1970 the proportion of Malays in urban areas was 14.8 percent and in 1980 it was 21.3 percent. In any case it is not necessarily an unfortunate development since most of those from the kampung are now better off with better jobs, higher income and better quality of life in towns. Generally speaking, those who are living in squalor or in slums are people who are new to the towns and are trying to adjust during the first sojourn here.

Dr. Tan: I have no doubt that the standard of living and quality of life has improved. What I am concerned about is the fall in our agricultural production.

Tengku Razaleigh: It is somewhat erroneous. We talk of labour shortage in the plantation sector and in the padi growing areas, but let us remember that declining agricultural production is due more to unstable international prices for our commodities than to the shift of rural labour to the manufacturing sector of the economy. This, in terms of the economy as a whole, is a welcome thing. As our industrial economy grows and modernises, this trend will increase and must therefore be expected. However, we must do more to arrest this fall in production. The answer is not in arresting this drift of rural youth to the urban areas but lies in the increase of land-holdings maybe through merging pieces of land which have not been cultivated efficiently and productively, in order to increase the yield or instituting measures to lease land from the farmers who have not cultivated the land properly so that it can be packaged into a more economic unit.

Dr. Tan: Do you advocate collectivism?

Tengku Razaleigh: No, I don't. What I am saying is why shouldn't

the Government be allowed to go into farming and get the owners to rent their farms to the Government since they are not utilising them fully. They are working independently but not securing enough income for themselves and their families. The Government can give them good returns on the land. Let the old farmers give way to the young who can work on the land more effectively. I think this is one way to increase productivity and production.

Another way is to improve agricultural techniques of production. At the moment, we are still using archaic methods This can be looked into because we have the people and we have the determination to modernise agriculture. I think we can do it. Only then, by introducing modern methods and techniques can we introduce larger economies of scale. This can be done through estate farming as practised in some advanced countries. I foresee that agricultural production will increase even though the acreage allotted for agriculture is on the decline slightly over the years. I have faith in it. I think we can achieve it.

Dr. Tan: You have been responsible for a massive transfer of equity to Malays and several sectors have become Malay capital strongholds, for example, banking. Yet you are regarded as being soft on Chinese business. Have you an explanation for this paradox?

Tengku Razaleigh: I don't know whether you can call it a paradox but I am glad to hear that I am credited with the massive transfer of equity to the Malays and generally improving bumiputra participation in the modern corporate sector of the economy. But during the campaign, for Deputy President of UMNO all sorts of things were said against me and that I had done nothing for bumiputras. However, I draw great satisfaction from the achievement of this enhanced Malay participation in the modern sector of economy because this is insurance against the future.

It is not true to say that I have been soft on Chinese business. I am just being pragmatic. In economic, financial and monetary management, I have been very practical and pragmatic so as to generate rapid economic growth within the context of financial stability. In this way you don't have to rob Peter to pay Paul and neither do you have to inhibit the modernisation and industrialisation of the economy through inimical measures or stringent measures that can jeopardise the long-term objectives of the New Economic Policy.

Dr. Tan: Our defence expenditure is rising, especially the allocation for security in the Fourth Malaysia Plan which amounts to \$9.3

billion or 23.6 percent of the total public sector expenditure. But our national security situation, we are told by the pundits, is improving. The threat from Vietnam and elsewhere abroad seems to be receding. If so, how do you justify the rising defence expenditure?

Tengku Razaleigh: In the past, we had concentrated on maintaining the internal security of our country. At the same time, we had not neglected our defence needs but naturally things were different at that time. If you remember we were fighting the communist terrorists until 1960 when Tunku Abdul Rahman and his colleagues decided then that the country was safer after 1960 when we declared that there were no more black areas in the country and people were free to move about. We were then able to divert a lot of money toward peaceful ends by providing for economic development an investment in the future. We have done this successfully over the years but towards the middle of 1970 and coming through to the end of the 70s and now in the early 80s we see that the global picture has changed. You find greater awareness of bigger powers wanting to have a say in the affairs of this region. There is greater evidence of big power rivalry over here and this you cannot deny. Of course, we have made great strides in the economic development of our country over the last fifteen to twenty years. What is economic development if we cannot protect it? How can we assure foreign investors that their investment here is safe, that every dollar they have invested here will be safeguarded by us if we do not have the means to protect it? We do not intend or pretend to be a big power. We are a small country but at the same time, we don't think we should allow our shores to be left undefended. At least there must be some presence of defence or security arrangements. We do not have any defence treaty and we are not trying to depend on anyone. We have friends, yes, but they look after themselves first. So I think we have to look after ourselves. We have made great strides; we are providing better life for our people. We should divert some part of the money for security because we have dismantled some of our security barriers.

Dr. Tan: This is not some part. This is 23.6 percent of the total public sector expenditure.

Tengku Razaleigh: Yes. We have reduced the force level which was there during the emergency period until 1960. It was very hard but we had brought it down to the barest minimum in order to divert our money and energy towards development. The whole operation room technique used in the fight against communist terrorists was

employed in the eradication of poverty and bringing development to the less-developed parts of the country. We have done this. We have seen great improvement. But with this problem around this region, do you think it is safe? It is safe because our security forces, our Intelligence network and our people generally have been co-operative in order to contain the kind of danger we face all the time. You see the bombing of the towns, the guerilla warfare in the early and middle seventies and massive insurgency measures along the border, isolated areas or in the kampungs and villages in Malaysia. Our people have been shot at. You cannot pretend that everything is safe even though in your question you say that the security situation as told by the pundits is improving.

It is under control but we cannot allow things to go out of hand. We must be conscious of the fact that the danger is always there. We know that we are fighting an ideological force determined to rule the world. I think if we want to preserve peace and our way of life, we have to adopt measures that can protect them. We think that \$9.3 billion dollars is a lot of money, but we have to incur expenditure due to increase in cost. We have to make modern weapons in case we are invaded or attacked. We are not going to use bows and arrows and spears. We are going to use modern weapons. We do not intend to fight or shoot at anyone but at least to tell the world that we want to be left in peace. We want to protect our own people and our way of life.

Dr. Tan: I am glad that you say and imply that we are not a big power. We are not in that league. We can only go for conventional weapons. What I have always said is that we should ensure security through the unity of our people and have social justice for everyone irrespective of race, colour or creed, then we will have less people going into the jungle and joining the communists whereby we will have less danger of internal insurrection.

Who are we afraid of? We have friendly ties with Singapore, who are at our doorsteps. More than 20 years ago, our untold enemy was China, but now China is more pragmatic. Now the unseen enemy is deemed to be Vietnam. But Vietnam, as far as I can see, has more than its hands full in the way of reconstruction. It will take more than two or three decades to repair the ravages of their nearly three decades of war. We need not be afraid of them and listen to the war-drums beaten by Singapore. Singapore wants us to have a defence pact. The moment you have a defence pact, you will attract the attention of super powers and their activity here. I do not

know whether you know that I am a student of military history. It amazes me when I hear some of our ASEAN leaders beat the war-drums for we are in no position to do so. We are not in the league of the medium powers. We do not want to be like that. We have no military resources.

Tengku Razaleigh: We would like to increase our forces to a level that can secure peace in our country while we go about in our economic development. We have to do this to protect ourselves. We are not going to attack anyone. We have not the means to do so.

Dr. Tan: You must be aware that the Orang Asli and the New Villagers form the most deprived classes of our population. If so, how do you justify the allocation under the FNP of \$40.13 million for the Orang Asli and \$30 million for the 465 New Villages which have a population of about 2 million? Under TMP the allocation for New Villages was \$20 million. If you allow for inflation, the increase is minimal.

Tengku Razaleigh: The way you have picked these figures could be misleading. What has happened is that this \$40.13 million for the Orang Asli is purely for minor work. What is meant for the Orang Asli is channelled through FELDA and the Agriculture Ministry. We have a programme for the Orang Asli through the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education for health and schools respectively The \$40 million to Orang Asli is paltry if taken in isolation. Similarly the \$30 million for New Villages is for playing fields, community halls, drains etc. For housing, as Dr. Yee Pan announced today about the New Villages, it is coming out of this \$2.4 billion allocation under the Fourth Malaysia Plan. Similarly, provision for clinics and other health facilities for the New Villages is also under Health. The Ministry of Health has also championed the cause of New Villages. So, we have allowed it under the health programme. It must be reflected under sectoral programme.

Dr. Tan: I have raised this question with Dr. Mahathir, Datuk Musa and with you now. To me, they are the most deprived class. They must deserve special attention from the Government if the New Economic Policy is to mean anything. The New Economic Policy now proclaims loud and clear that it is going to eradicate poverty irrespective of race, colour or creed.

Tengku Razaleigh: Not only now, but since the launching of New Economic Policy.

Dr. Tan: Not in the beginning. In the early days I remember there was hardly any word about this. I was living next door to one of the

fathers of the New Economic Policy, Mr. Jus Faaland. I didn't realise then the vital role he played in the formulation of the NEP when he used to talk to me about all these things. He told me he was seeing Tan Seri Kadir Shamsuddin. I didn't realise he was discussing the New Economic Policy but now I know.

To me, I know that the New Villages now only get the money from this \$30 million which is really chicken feed. If you talk to them, they ask what sort of justice we get from the Government.

So I told them this is not all that they are going to get. Some amount will be allocated from various Ministries — for health under the Ministry of Health, for education under the Ministry of Education etc. However, taking Jinjang for an example. The roads are still just as bad as before. I don't see any evidence of improvement. Last year, the Government had allocated \$1600 million for the five years but I don't see any evidence of it.

Tengku Razaleigh: We are going to do it this year. It is under health, housing etc. Under housing, we are going to do the condominium, low-cost type of housing. Under education, we will build more schools and see that they have enough land for the restructuring of community. We are bringing enough electricity, water, drainage etc.

Dr. Tan: I do hope that the Government realises that gone are the days when you could make promises and not fulfil them. I remember just before one general election, some local MCA member brought a Minister of Education to a school in Jinjang. That Minister solemnly promised to build a new school there. To this day, that old school is still there. If you give it a big shake, it will collapse. The Government should fulfil their pledges once they have made them. This is one of the examples of the Government not fulfilling its pledges.

The School Management Board has to come to me and I have sought the help of Lee Foundation and others to get money to set up some new classes.

I do hope, Tengku, (you do have a big say) that the allocation of this \$30 million will be increased. I noticed in today's (14-7-81) paper that Dr. Neo has stated that it is \$40 million. In the Plan document, it is \$30 million. I do not know he has an addition of \$10 million. I do hope he is right.

Tengku Razaleigh: It is \$30 million, but that is only for playing fields, and minor works. For big things, it is under the Sector allocation.

Dr. Tan: I agree, but we don't see any evidence. You come from the north but if you go to the south, in Johore, the New Villages are badly neglected. I got the feedback from them. If you pledge to eradicate poverty, these are the two most deprived classes of our population. They deserve first priority.

Dr. Tan: Tengku Razaleigh, your name has become associated with speculative elements in the stock market. There is also your magical transformation of \$3 million of UMNO funds into \$80 million. Are these desirable standards for a Minister of Finance to set in public life?

Tengku Razaleigh: Actually, there is nothing magical about this transformation of \$3 million of UMNO funds into \$80 million. It is how you invest the \$3 million. What happened was, when I was made the treasurer of the UMNO building committee by late Tun Ismail in 1972, I was handed this \$3 million which was raised through donations from well-wishers. I placed this \$3 million in various portfolios. I didn't play on the stock market. As a result of the investment in 1972, today it is worth nearly \$85 million But it is unfair linking me with speculative elements in the stock market. It is a baseless allegation. I have people who come to see me off and on, people who were associated with me when I was in the private sector running banks and corporate organisations. I can't simply cut off my association with all these people just because I am a Minister. I am a man of affairs who still must keep in touch with the people both in the private sector as well as the public sector.

There may be a few who are dabbling in the stock market and because of the past association with me, I get hurled with these accusations. It is just too bad as you know, Doc, we have tried to avoid all these things. I would be the first person to go against speculative activity in the stock market. I have done this by asking Bank Negara to flush out all those market speculators and direct finance to productive purposes. That has dampened the stock market itself and they are not very happy with me. As I have said, it is definitely not desirable for a Minister to get involved in speculation. We are in a position of trust and privy to a lot of information.

Dr. Tan: As you know if you are in the U.S.A., once you are sworn in as a Cabinet Minister, you should completely sever business links.

Tengku Razaleigh: Yes, I have completely severed my links in business. But do you think I should sever my relationship with the business community?

Dr. Tan: No, I don't, particularly in a free enterprise system. It is important for the Minister of Finance to maintain cordial relationship with big business

Dr. Tan: Government has gained vast discretionary powers and our public expenditure is growing rapidly. As a result, corruption has permeated every level of Government. How should the country be rid of these thieves in Government and party?

Tengku Razaleigh: The Government has always had vast discretionary powers and therefore it is not something new to have them. Any Government to be effective must have wide discretionary powers. This is only right and proper since the Government has a full mandate from the people to exercise these powers so long as it doesn't abuse them. Public expenditure is one area of responsibility in which the Government uses its discretionary powers. But I see no relation between public expenditure and corruption. You can have no public expenditure and still have corruption. It is wrong to assume that corruption is only found in Government or the Government party.

It is also misleading to imply that corruption takes place without the connivance of the culprits that are found everywhere; in the private sector especially. After all you need two hands to clap. To be fair we need to ask how we should reduce corruption everywhere. Generally it is not the poor who are corrupt but the rich who can afford to pay the corrupt. You'll agree that most of the rich are outside the Government and the party. Some try to make use of their position peddling influence, some try to abuse their power and their position. Let us therefore ask what can also be done to stamp out corruption in the business community which in fact encourages corruption to meet its needs and ends. I would think the best way to fight it is to recognise that it is the responsibility of everyone and for that matter the whole society. It is something we must teach in our homes, schools, places of worship, and to the professional elite groups. The impression that you have thieves only in one segment of the economy is to distort the truth and protect the real culprits who prosper from promoting corruption. In short, I fully support any effort to stamp out the evil menace of corruption, especially in the business community which in fact encourages corruption to serve its ends. I think corruption also springs from too much regulations and rules which tend to create a situation favourable to its growth.

Dr. Tan: Yes, we have too many forms to fill. If you want to get a

form for instance you have to pay \$2. The Government should minimise regulations and rules.

Tengku Razaleigh: We must have records in order to be accountable to Parliament in questions raised by Members of the Parliament. There must be a balance. I think the Government is trying to reduce red tape as quickly as possible so that bureaucratic delays will be minimised insofar as its relation with the public is concerned.

Corruption can also come about because the tempo of development is getting too fast, outstripping the tempo of spiritual and moral development. People get lost in this kind of environment, forever chasing materialistic gains and leaving behind virtues of society based on spiritual and moral values. One sure way to break this, is to prevent abuse of power, by cutting out all the red tape that gives room for corruption. We must stand up for moral and spiritual values in order to fight corruption. This can start from homes. Proper religious instruction must be given so that everybody is imbued with a sense of pride that they live in a clean society — clean in every sense of the word. This can come about only if everyone has that spiritual strength and moral fortitude.

We are in the rat-race of trying to compete with other countries in the production of rubber and manufactured goods. And so long as we are also trying to compete in raising living standards, say against Singapore, in terms of cleanliness and efficiency, we will be actually helping to speed up development by providing infrastructure facilities and amenities for our people comparable to a developed society. However, we will be faced with problems of structural adjustments which also include adjustment within the person himself. He is exposed to a new environment completely and therefore, he tends to have this cultural shock. He tends to lose his senses. Unless we help bring back his senses he will lose his balance and get into corruption. I think we all can do this but not the Government alone. The Government can minimise and reduce this. Datuk Hussein has been trying to do that. Dr. Mahathir is going to tackle it with hammer and tongs.

Dr. Tan: This is where the Government should not use the velvet glove but the mailed fist. Every year since independence, we have seen our fundamental rights being steadily eroded by new legislation, even as Government claims that the security situation is improving. For example, a citizen may be detained for the rest of his life without an opportunity to defend himself in court or a publishing licence can be denied and there is no recourse to the courts available. Now

we have these new amendments to the Societies Act. Is there no end to oppressive legislation? Would you support a greater liberalisation of our society?

Tengku Razaleigh: Yes, I do. I think liberalisation has a price. Of course you don't get something for nothing. Everybody has to sacrifice in order to prepare for the future. This is what we are trying to do. You talk of oppression, but compare the kind of freedom we still enjoy in this country with what you have seen in some other parts of the world. You see revolutionary governments coming into power with revolutionary ideas. They have tried to dictate the lives of the people in order to bring in new order that they are trying to preach. Those who earlier enthusiastically supported the new order become the very people who want to remove oppression.

We here are trying to have an orderly society despite a lot of problems fraught with dangers because sensitive issues still abound in our society. We have tried very carefully to avoid having confrontation or social conflict which could flare up in a moment's notice. That can be disastrous for a country like ours. We do have rules and regulations and we do have laws which we change from time to time in order to regulate the lives of the people. Not that we want to but if we allow too much freedom, you will see what happened in the United States. Even the President is not safe to walk in the streets. The people are not safe to walk in New York City, or in Chicago or in other big cities.

The Pope is not safe to walk in St. Peter's Square. Nowadays it is not safe to walk in the streets of London, Ireland or Beirut. I am giving you examples. It is not much of a sacrifice to have some kind of a law that could act as a deterrent so long as the power that is implementing the law is not abusing the law for the sake of wanting power. You will share with me Doc, that this government has not abused that power. We have no police state.

Dr. Tan: But we are moving towards it.

What you have stated just now is a reasonable picture but you are not going to be here forever. You are not going to be in the Government — be a Cabinet Minister *ad infinitum*. There will be a period where the next generation of leaders will take over and they may not be as liberal. Your successor may not be as liberal as the present generation. There are thousands in this country who say that we already have too many oppressive laws.

Tengku Razaleigh: Well, that is not your doing or my doing. We may have this law today considered by you and some others as

oppressive but to me I don't think so because everything is relative. The new leaders may be more oppressive than we are today. They may even throw the Constitution up. They may have a new form of government with new laws much more stringent and more oppressive than what we know today. We can never tell.

What we have today is purely regulatory and deterrent, I don't think the laws of today are going to curb the freedom or the rights of the people. You will see that people are free to move around. To me Doc, I don't mind having some of these oppressive laws so long as people are free from hunger, disease and other things. These are the things that people value most. It is no use lying in bed and being free but not able to enjoy the fruits of your labour, or what God has given you. I think some kind of regulatory measures or rules must be imposed on society otherwise it can go wild.

Dr. Tan: Fundamentally I don't agree that there should be more regulatory laws.

Tengku Razaleigh: I don't agree and I don't subscribe to that but I think time and exigency demand that you impose some kind of regulatory measures

Dr. Tan: I think there are too many laws already in this country which restrict the freedom of the people. I think it is about time that the Government thinks in terms of putting a stop to having more restrictions and try to liberalise so that we don't give the hot heads a chance. Let's face facts, some of the people who make the trek to the jungle do so because of these regulatory rules.

Tengku Razaleigh: It is because of those people that the laws are brought about. If those people look up to the Agong and this country as their country and want to work for it we need not spend money on defence and security.

Dr. Tan: What place do you give to foreign capital in our development. Even the production of toothpaste and talcum powder is dominated by multi-nationals. Local business cannot compete; the local professional firms complain that the big consultancies go to foreign firms that provide no technology transfer. Have we got a policy on foreign capital or is it open house for anyone who can get an influential partner?

Tengku Razaleigh: We have no policy as such on foreign capital. We have gone out of our way to seek foreign investments in order to support the growth of our economy. Apart from providing employment and creating ancillary industrial activity, it also stimulates growth in the service industries, and in the last analysis we think

and we hope that we can get technology transfer. We invite people to invest here in order to strengthen our economy. In earlier days when we invited foreign investors it was more for import substitution to save foreign exchange as well as to provide employment to our people and also to acquire skills in some selected trades. It is true that the production of toothpaste and talcum powder is dominated by multi-nationals. They were the first people on the scene at that time and came with certain conditions. Malaysia was then a very young country with problems of internal insurgency. Therefore, they wanted certain protective tariffs which we willingly agreed to give at that time. We didn't realise they wanted to stay for good. That is why you see talcum powder is produced by the same company that came in the early 60s. It is very difficult to remove this protective tariff because it has been there at a level which has endured and protected them.

Dr. Tan: I noticed that Dr. Mahathir was the only Minister who is against protective tariffs. I was at one time a member of the Tariff Advisory Board. There were many businessmen who wanted protection of their goods. I told them that they could not expect the Government to protect their goods at all times. They have made lots of profit surely after a period of infancy and when they reach adolescence and then manhood, they must be able to stand against competition. This is my view. If we support them, we are in fact protecting inefficient industries.

Tengku Razaleigh: I am against it. I have made speeches against inefficient industries but they are still there. Some have been given perpetual protection that we can't remove. This is the problem. But for those who were given short-term protection, I am the first one to remove them unless my colleagues say to the contrary.

Since I came to the Ministry, they have been removed. Every year I have been dismantling the barriers, import and custom duties, excise and so on. I have been knocking them down because I believe in growth and through growth, I can get a lot of revenue out of income tax, corporate tax and better collection from machinery being brought about. I know they have been protected. The others — we do not know how to go about it because it is so legalistic. We must find a way. It is not true to say that local professional firms cannot compete with foreign consulting firms. No doubt there are some consulting firms from abroad with special skills and expertise which the local firms do not have because this requires time to develop. By and large, I think they have been given a lot of

jobs.... There is definitely technology transfer here, but three years ago it was minimal. We are now requiring them to transfer technology by writing into the contracts before we appoint them.

Dr. Tan: Very often they send a mechanic who poses as an engineer. Very soon the ignorance of this so-called engineer is exposed and we are taken for a ride.

Tengku Razaleigh: Correct. This may be another form of neo-colonialism?

Dr. Tan: Do you have a vision of Malaysia that reflects a personal philosophy? Do you have dreams for this country?

Tengku Razaleigh: Yes, everyone has a dream and everyone has a vision especially one who is politically conscious and who has great hopes for the future....

My dream is to see a united nation in the true sense of the word.... everybody is treated equally, bereft of feelings on racial lines and is able to understand one another easily, owing loyalty to only one man that is the King or the Sultan in the respective states and loyalty to the country. This sense of unity must also come from the development of the various cultural aspects of our ethnic groups which will help towards the moulding of a united nation.

Spiritually I think everyone is rich. Culturally we are also rich because Malaysia is the meeting place of so many cultures. I think there is a diffusion of Islamic, Asian and Western values which would help enrich the society. The religious values — Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist — all these will come into play and will help to mould the society. This development depends very much on inter-racial tolerance which can be brought about through a common denominator, that is religious faith. Of course, as a Muslim I would want to say if everybody is a Muslim and with only one religion, there will be peace. It is not easy to force another person to adopt another religion. Everyone is entitled to his own belief, so my ideal may not come about. I like to feel that with Islam as the official religion and everybody accepting it, then I think there will be peace. Islam doesn't practise extremism or preach intolerance and doesn't ask its followers to breed greed and hatred. I think these are values which can become the umbrella for our future society and through that tolerance we will be able to, not only survive, but grow strong.

INTERVIEW WITH DATUK LEE SAN CHOON

Dr. Tan: You yourself and many Malaysian Chinese Association leaders, past and present, have claimed that the MCA represents the Chinese in this country and that only the MCA can speak on behalf of them. On what basis does the MCA claim to represent the Chinese in this country?

Datuk Lee: First of all, we claim that we represent the Chinese based on our platform which is dictated by historical pattern. We are quite honest about it. We do not have to camouflage or pretend. Unlike other Chinese-based parties, we accept the realities of the situation that we are in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country.

If one were to look back, we can see a lot of parties that claimed to be multi-racial and multi-religious have not been able to stand the test of history and time. We are not saying that we are able to represent each and every Chinese, there are always a good proportion of disenchanted Chinese going against MCA just as a good proportion of disenchanted Malays going against the UMNO or Indians for that matter being against the MIC.

Tan Sri, you would remember that in 1952 when Datuk Onn bin Jaafar tried to open UMNO's doors to the non-Malays, that was rejected by the Malay community. The situation has improved but basically it is still bad. We have set ourselves on that pattern where we represent the Chinese. We recognise the fact that there are

always a certain proportion of disenchanted Chinese going against the MCA. But whenever there is a problem in Chinese society, invariably the Chinese will look towards the MCA for a solution.

Dr. Tan: Datuk, you said amongst other things, it is your platform that qualifies you to represent the Chinese. Now, supposing you have another political party, perhaps with the same platform that you have, could they also claim to speak on behalf of the Chinese in this country?

Datuk Lee: If it is accepted by the majority of the Chinese.

Dr. Tan: Then you would say that apart from the platform and the historical antecedent, it is also the support that counts. The best way of support that one can claim as evidence would be success at the polls. The MCA got a fairly good bashing in the 1969 general elections. Would you say that it was a partial rejection of MCA politics by the Chinese in this country?

Datuk Lee: You may put it that way. I look at it from another angle — when we decided not to join the Government in 1969, we decided we would remain in the Alliance but not join the Government and participate as Ministers or Deputy Ministers. But throughout the country the Chinese disagreed, even those Chinese who voted against us disagreed with this idea. They all wanted the MCA to represent the Chinese in the Government.

Dr. Tan: You can interpret it that way. I, myself, would be happier if the MCA at the time had stayed out of the Government for a much longer period rather than come back in such a quick fashion.

Datuk Lee: It made us think what would happen if we persisted while the Chinese community kept pressurizing us to be in the Government and the Malays feeling uneasy about the Alliance without Chinese participation. Under the circumstances, the sense of responsibility prevailed. The situation at that time was such that the Chinese, including the guilds, overwhelmingly wanted us to join the Government. We can verify the records.

Dr. Tan: The Chinese-based parties in this country — the MCA, the Gerakan and the DAP — abuse each other with extreme venom. All this is done in the name of Chinese unity. In what way, would you argue, is the MCA better for the Chinese than the other Chinese-based parties?

Datuk Lee: . . . At some times these parties say they are Chinese-based, on other occasions they, the DAP for instance, claim themselves to be a multi-racial, democratic socialist party. In the case of Gerakan, they are a multi-racial party. But you and I know, their base is largely

Chinese. How can they claim themselves to unite the Chinese when they are a multi-racial society? How can both the parties claim to be sincerely committed to uniting the Chinese when they talk about an ideology, democratic socialism? On that score alone, I don't think they can argue convincingly and say that they can unite the Chinese. On the other hand, we serve the needs of the community; whenever there is a problem or a need, the majority of Chinese want the MCA to find a solution. The MCA has played its part for the past three decades.

Dr. Tan: You assume that Chinese unity is good for the country. Is there a case for the Chinese to be scattered in other political parties, including PAS, according to their political and philosophical inclinations?

Datuk Lee: I do not think at the moment, there is a case, simply because the society doesn't work that way.

Dr. Tan: You yourself just now maintained that in 1952 Datuk Onn bin Jaafar wanted to open the doors of UMNO to the non-Malays but failed. But today the situation is better. Now over the period of nearly three decades, the racial situation in the country has improved from an extremely racial attitude to one of solving most problems through a multi-racial approach.

Let us hope in the days to come we will also forget our racial origins and become Malaysians. As I see almost every political leader in this country proclaims this. If that is our goal, then people should join a political party not on the basis of race but on the basis of the political platform or philosophy. That would be the proper thing.

.... You will recognise that we are moving towards multi-racial solutions in this country. After all both the Alliance and the Barisan Nasional say that. And that being so, should you not move towards becoming a multi-racial party? However slow the progress, you should make a start....

Datuk Lee: I accept that. It is only a question of method. As I said earlier, the situation has improved. It is true that there is improvement. Society has been decommunalised through a communal party. We still need that method to decommunalise effectively. Hence, we still believe in the UMNO, the MCA, the MIC. That is not to say that UMNO, MCA, MIC and other parties will forever perpetuate this situation, but at the moment we feel this is an effective way to decommunalise. There is now a feeling of interdependence, a feeling that we cannot live without each other, and a

feeling of recognising the existence of each other. That sort of feeling did not exist and was not prominent in the early 50s Communal feelings still exist and when I talk of improvement I refer to the recognition that we need each other. We are dependent on each other. You have to live with each other. This is a good sign that the society is moving towards multi-racial parties. To us in the MCA, what the UMNO says is right that the society and the people are not ready yet.

You may ask, why not give it a try? How do you know they are not ready?

History has proven again and again that unless you reach that stage an extreme move will become counter-productive.

Dr. Tan: If you beat the drum of Chinese unity, would it not stimulate a Malay unity movement and lead to confrontation from which the MCA must inevitably back out?

Datuk Lee: We have always emphasised unity, with the purpose of supporting moderate leadership. We have not forgotten to emphasise the importance of moderate leadership

Dr. Tan: You have spoken of the MCA's relationship with UMNO as a partnership. The Prime Minister, speaking to a foreign correspondent recently, remarked that the Barisan was more than a coalition. Your enemies say that the MCA has a client relationship with UMNO. Is there really a partnership between parties in the Barisan?

Datuk Lee: Regarding the Prime Minister's report about Barisan Nasional being more than a coalition I don't know what was in his mind when he said that. I suppose when he talked about more than a coalition, he referred to Barisan candidates standing under a common platform in a general election

Dr. Tan: If you were to have coalition parties fighting an election as a whole then you obviously must have a common platform. If you form a coalition government after the election, that is different. Then you fight the election under separate platforms.

Datuk Lee: When you talk about coalition, I have the impression that, as in other places like Australia, they form the Government after each party has fought the election on its own platform. In the Barisan Nasional, it is more than that. It has a common platform, a common manifesto which is hammered out by all the parties concerned. When we talk about hammering out the common manifesto, it means we have to give and take, to consider each other's needs. When there is a partnership, there is a spirit of give

and take. If our enemies claim that MCA has a client relationship with UMNO, I don't think there can be a spirit of give and take. We do not deny though that UMNO is the most senior partner in the coalition.

Dr. Tan: Does this spirit of partnership give you a say in the choice of Prime Minister?

Datuk Lee: Yes. We would also have to respect the wishes of our partner, UMNO. It does not mean we have no say at all.

Dr. Tan: As far as I can see from the recent events, there was no meeting of the Barisan Nasional called specially to consider the successor to Tun Hussein Onn when he stepped down. It was taken for granted by everybody that when Tun Hussein Onn stepped down, his deputy would take over If Barisan Nasional is a real partnership, I would have thought that there should be some outward show of concession to partnership by holding a formal meeting of the Barisan Nasional to ratify the choice of Prime Minister.

Datuk Lee: In fact there was a formal meeting of Barisan Nasional and there was consensus. Don't forget the last few decades, we always had this relationship of talking over problems with each other as party leaders. There were so many occasions when I talked over problems with Datuk Hussein Onn, not as his Minister talking to the Prime Minister, but as MCA leader to the UMNO leader.

Dr. Tan: In the past have there been many occasions when you as President of the MCA approached the Prime Minister to try to solve tricky problems?

Datuk Lee: Sure, there were many many occasions, for example, the formula we achieved on places in the universities. I approached him more as a party leader than as a Minister.

The Prime Minister has absolute discretion to choose whoever he wants as Minister. Theoretically, yes, but in practice the Prime Minister has always respected the wishes of component parties like the MCA. The President of the MCA, of course, can make his recommendations.

Dr. Tan: Of course, I agree with you. You know very well being the leader of a coalition, he (Dr. Mahathir) when making an appointment must take into consideration the wishes of the component parties in the coalition. I am sure that a Prime Minister would not like to appoint somebody who is *persona non grata* to one of the leaders of the component parties.

Dr. Tan: What about the Deputy Prime Minister? The MCA could

not even get consideration for Tun Tan Siew Sin as Deputy Prime Minister even though at that particular time he was the most senior person in the Cabinet when Tun Dr. Ismail passed away. How is this reconciled with partnership?

Datuk Lee: I know the full story because at that time I led the delegation of the MCA to discussions with the UMNO. I even spoke to the late Tun Razak at length about this. It is not true to say that some of the enlightened leaders in the UMNO did not accept the idea but the main thing was that all of them felt that they could not get the backing of the party, the UMNO, and the Malay masses. I don't think it was because he was the President of the MCA that he was not acceptable. I think the UMNO leaders felt that they could not carry the party and the Malay masses by appointing Tun Tan as Deputy Prime Minister...

Dr. Tan: Would you concede then that the Barisan is something substantially less than a partnership. There is a *primus inter pares*, the first among equal. The first is the UMNO, the equals are the others?

Datuk Lee: I accept the situation. The first among equals.

Dr. Tan: The MCA is heavily involved in business through its investment arm — Multi-Purpose Holdings. To what extent does this diminish your effectiveness as a political party? Is the MPH genuinely in the interest of the Chinese people in this country or does it benefit mainly the privileged select few from the ranks of the MCA?

Datuk Lee: MPH referred to as the investment arm of MCA is a very misleading phrase. Perhaps, the phrase is used by some reporters who are short of better words. The MCA as such has no shares in MPH. The MCA mooted the idea so that the small businessmen could go big and modernise in order to survive in this modern business world. Through this big organisation, they can strengthen their economic position. We launched Multi-Purpose Holdings with the view that this organisation will act as a catalyst for other Chinese business bodies to follow and it has succeeded to a large extent.

I am sure, Tan Sri, you know many Chinese guilds and associations are forming big holding companies on this pattern. This is a good sign. As I have said, the MCA itself has no shareholding in MPH.

Dr. Tan: Maybe not directly, but through its nominees. MPH is headed by Tan Koon Swan who is one of the Young Turks in MCA.

Dr. Lee: No. Tan Koon Swan himself has no shareholding in the company. That is why it is misleading to say that MPH is the

investment arm of MCA. It started with a \$30 million capital, including about 30,000 members, each one taking a \$1000 share. The Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, which has a membership of 160,000 members, put in a subscription share in the investment of MPH. In all, this organisation represents 200,000 shareholders in a population of four and a half million. Would you say it is a selected few? 200,000 members benefit from this. Let us go further. A few hundred graduates and 6000 employees are working with MPH. Is that a selected few? I wouldn't accept that. To say that Chinese have not benefited from this scheme, I don't quite agree. The Chinese have not only directly benefited but they are modelling their business organisations on the MPH example. There are at least 50 guilds and associations who are organising their holding companies on this basis which has served as our main aim.

Dr. Tan: With the vast discretionary powers that Government has given itself, your companies will constantly be turning to UMNO leaders for favours. Does this not put the MCA in the position of supplicants rather than partners? If they change the rules, you must comply. They are in the position of changing the rules.

Datuk Lee: Any company in any country has to abide by the rules of the country.

Dr. Tan: The MCA involvement in business has had side effects which I think the leadership did not envisage.

Now supposing if you found the UMNO to be unreasonable, you wanted to withdraw from the Government, which you have done before, the share prices of your company would come tumbling down and your wealthy leaders would face ruin. How can the MCA maintain its independence and its credibility under such circumstances?

Datuk Lee: If we talk in terms of a bunch of shareholders, or hundreds of shareholders, that may be true. Don't forget this company has 200,000 shareholders. Surely this is their wish in one way or another

Dr. Tan: A foreign correspondent recently conveyed to the Prime Minister a proposal from the foreign business community that Malaysian Chinese should be excluded from further equity participation because they had already achieved the 40 percent proportion that was supposed to be attained by all non-Malays in the year 1990. It was further proposed that foreign equity in future should be allowed to rise to 55 percent. What is the MCA reaction to this?

Datuk Lee: My reaction is that, whoever this foreign correspondent

is, he obviously does not know the spirit of the New Economic Policy. This 40 percent is not static. The equity participation is related to the extent of growth. The economic position is changing all the time. It may be 40 percent today, it can be 20 percent or 15 percent in 1990 if the participation is static. It is in the context of growth. Let me give an example. In the Fourth Malaysia Plan, the private sector is expected to put in \$72 billion for investment That itself implies that the private sector has to contribute more investment including Chinese investment. My reaction is that the foreign correspondent does not know what he is talking about.

Now as for increasing foreign equity participation, we welcome foreign investment. There are so many countries encouraging foreign investments even beyond the target of 30 percent

Dr. Tan: Can the MCA maintain unity with UMNO on this central issue in the face of the seductive appeal of foreign capital to the Malays? The foreign capitalists are wooing the Malays at the expense of the Chinese or the non-Malays. Can the MCA withstand this onslaught of the foreign capitalists seducing the UMNO at the expense of the Chinese?

Datuk Lee: In the first place, I don't think that is always the case. In some cases, for example, foreigners prefer Chinese to go into joint venture with them. While certainly there are also others who prefer the Malays in joint venture with them.

Dr. Tan: The National Economic Policy stipulates 30 percent, 40 percent, 30 percent. If you put yourself in the position of the Malays, they are still far behind their allocated proportion even for the first year of the 80s, whereas the Chinese have already reached the 1990 target in the year 1981. Why should the proposals be acceptable to them? They have not been able to attain their targets while the Chinese have already attained their's at this stage.

Datuk Lee: You cannot look at it that way. At the start of the New Economic Policy, Malay equity participation was almost negligible. You must look at the rate of increase. The Malays have done well; their rate of increase is better than the Chinese or the non-Malays.

Dr. Tan: When Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew lost the battle for the deputy presidency, he was compelled to resign from the Cabinet. When Datuk Michael Chen lost the fight against you for the presidency of the MCA, he too was forced to resign from the Cabinet. Why should the MCA be so vindictive towards its losers? On the other hand, when Tengku Razaleigh, the Minister of Finance, lost the fight for the deputy presidency, the out-going President of the UMNO, Tun

Hussein Onn, the in-coming President, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, the winner, Datuk Musa Hitam, and virtually the whole UMNO begged Tengku Razaleigh, the loser, not to leave the Cabinet. Why the magnanimity and sanity of the UMNO as compared with the vindictiveness and insanity of the MCA?

Datuk Lee: I think this is not a fair question. These facts are not correct. Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew didn't fight for the deputy presidency and lose. He put up Michael Chen to fight against Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan, and he put up Chan Kok Leong to fight against me.

Let me put it this way. If I had lost the presidency of MCA, I would have stepped down as Minister. Don't you think it would have been a proper move? I've been accused, with specific allegations being made, including corruption In UMNO elections, there is no basic quarrel over policy matters or how the party should be run. There is no basic quarrel. If there is, it is only in campaigning. In our case, there were pages and pages of advertisements in the newspapers, hundreds and thousands of dollars were spent. There was so much publicity that the party was placed in a very awkward position

Dr. Tan: *Mea culpa*, my fault, regarding Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew.

Our system of politics is derived from the Westminster system. The loser of a party battle in U.K. does not have to leave the Cabinet. There is no case of a British Cabinet Minister having to step down from the Cabinet after having lost in the party election.

In our country, it is the MCA that has set the lead. It is a very bad lead, because in every election or battle there has to be a winner and a loser. If one loses, so what? Both cannot win, one must lose. As Tengku Razaleigh now realises two cannot win at the same time, he bows down to the wishes of the party and also of a very substantial number of the non-Malay population who want him to remain in the Cabinet. That is why I say: the sanity of the UMNO and the insanity of the MCA. You forced a chap to resign from the Cabinet. Whatever has been said or done in the heat of the battle, which most of them regret after the battle, whether one loses or wins, should be patched up. If there is a conciliatory move on the part of the winner, I am sure things would have been patched up, and there would be no necessity on the part of leadership of the MCA, irrespective of whatever has been said by the loser, to force the loser to resign from the Cabinet. I am fairly certain that the Prime Minister did not, of his own volition, demand the resignations of Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew or Datuk Michael Chen. He did so as a

result of a demand by the leadership of MCA. That I think is most regretful and it has set a pattern of politics which is really unhealthy for the country.

Datuk Lee: You said there is no such precedent. Tan Sri Fatimah contested Datin Paduka Aishah Ghani and she lost. She stepped down immediately. Let me tell you this. You must understand, we have limited places in the Cabinet: we have only four members. We have to work well and be effective in putting forward MCA's views. The four must agree with each other.

Dr. Tan: Why is the MCA riddled with factions and internal quarrels? Are you aware that much of its strength has been sapped by internecine warfare so that it is unable to consolidate its strength. After the next Delegates Conference how do you propose to reduce the internal quarrels and prepare for the next general elections due about the middle of next year?

Dr. Lee: The party is much better today than before. Tan Sri, you have a lot of experience. Tell me of any party which has no internal factions. Even a small club like Rotary Club or Lions' Club with 50 or 60 members still has factions. The bigger you are, the more factions you have. I don't think we can avoid any political party or any organisation without factions within. I think the main thing is to try to prevent fierce factional fights destroying the strength and image of the party. We must recognise that there will be factions in any party.

Dr. Tan: If I may make one observation. In the MCA, the factions have been so strong that your fights have gone from small factions to the leadership. It is becoming a laughing stock when you talk of uniting the Chinese. You are fighting for unity for the Chinese while the Chinese leaders are quarrelling among themselves. How can the Chinese support such a party? The MIC are also facing such a situation. The Malays are laughing over it. Of course the Malays too have their factions and lots of fights but these are contained by their leadership. They are laughing at the MCA and the MIC. I agree there always will be factions whatever the leadership do but if these are contained by the leadership then they can do less harm. You can't afford to go to the next election with a party that is divided.

Datuk Lee: It is not happening today. The MCA leadership is much better today. Let me give you an example. There were 1300 elections going on at branch and divisional levels, from April to July. Apart from one or two isolated cases, the majority of them were fierce fights but the elections have concluded satisfactorily.

The members have accepted the verdict of the majority.

The newspapers sensationalise the issue when a branch or division of the MCA is fighting. There were 114 divisions and 1300 branches where the elections went smoothly. The papers had no comment, but if one out of the hundred fought fiercely, the papers would sensationalise the matter.

Dr. Tan: In 1961, when you were a young MP you spoke out in support of the Education Act of 1961. That included the controversial Article 21 (2). Do you honestly think that Article is beneficial to the Chinese schools and to Chinese education in this country? Have you any regret over your support of the Education Act of 1961?

Datuk Lee: The Chinese fear Article 21 (2) of the Education Act of 1961. They fear that the Government may one day convert Chinese schools into Bahasa Malaysia-medium schools. Speaking rationally, this was only an enabling legislation. Such an enabling power you can find in almost every piece of legislation. It becomes sensitive and controversial because it is an educational problem. It even becomes communalised. We are aware of this. We will keep on repeating and assuring that this will not happen. This is just an enabling power. Successive Education Ministers and Prime Ministers, Dr. Mahathir, Tun Hussein Onn and the late Tun Razak and our Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Musa have given repeated assurances that this provision will not be used to change the Chinese schools into Sekolah Kebangsaan. If these assurances are not good enough, what else can we do? Speaking rationally, almost every piece of legislation contains such an enabling power. On the other hand, even without such a law or without the Act, Chinese schools do not exist in many countries. They don't have the Education Act 1961 or Article 21 (2).

Dr. Tan: In other words, you are satisfied with the repeated assurances given by successive Ministers of Education and that the MCA as a party to the Government will not allow this article to be abused?

Are you aware that the standard of Chinese education in the primary schools is deteriorating? And what about the standard of Mandarin in those Chinese secondary schools which have converted to national schools? Do you still think that going to national secondary schools provides a good opportunity for students to learn Mandarin?

Datuk Lee: I am not a good judge of this but I tend to agree with you that the standard of Chinese education in Chinese primary schools has

deteriorated.

Dr. Tan: Yes, I think it is deteriorating because of the fact that no Chinese teachers are trained to teach Mandarin. You don't have a college to train teachers for the Chinese schools.

Datuk Lee: Yes, we have indicated that in the Mahathir Education Report. We emphasised that if a teacher is to teach Chinese in Chinese Schools, he must be trained for the job. We have the Teachers' Training College.

Dr. Tan: Even if you have a Teachers' Training College, as I know, there is an unsatisfactory aspect of the teaching of Mandarin at primary national school level. In the Chinese Primary School, the students have to learn Mandarin.

At the secondary schools, the Pupil's Own Language (POL) is badly taught. I have written an article on this which has not been published yet. It is a very unsatisfactory system of learning a language with temporary staff even though there are candidates who wish to be trained to teach Mandarin.

Datuk Lee: Coming back to your question that the standard of Chinese Primary schools is deteriorating. I don't really know, because I am not an educationalist. I am not the best judge of this. But I have the feeling that it is not because of the teachers but because the students' time is divided between Bahasa Malaysia and English Language. Surely, they will learn less Chinese. In this regard there is a great difference between the standard of Chinese primary school students now as compared to those who had gone through Chinese primary school education twenty or thirty years ago.

The standard of Chinese in those secondary schools which have converted to the national system varies from school to school. Some have been very well run. They have achieved a high percentage of passes at the SPM level. Some are not so good. It depends on how the schools are run. Some are good, some are not so satisfactory.

Dr. Tan: Mandarin is badly taught in the POL classes. The teachers especially the temporary teachers are lowly paid, and therefore they do not put in their best effort to improve or upgrade the standard of learning of Mandarin. We know, in this materialistic world, if they are not well paid, they would not put their heart and soul into their work.

Datuk Lee: I think our teachers are reasonably paid, especially after the revised salary, as compared to other countries.

Dr. Tan: Education is probably the most explosive issue that confronts our multi-racial society. Very large numbers of Malaysian Chinese youths with good HSC results cannot find places in our universities. Only a minority can afford to go abroad. Although the Tunku Abdul Rahman College is a small but valuable contribution, what hope can the MCA hold out to the others who want a place, purely on the basis of their merit, in universities and higher educational institutions in this, their own country?

Datuk Lee: Tan Sri, you will remember the last talk we had with the Government concerning the intake of university students, the Government has committed itself that in the future admissions will be on the basis of the racial composition of 55 percent Malays and 45 percent non-Malays. Of course, this cannot meet the needs of all the students who are qualified to enter university. Malay students also face the same dilemma of not finding enough places. Therefore, they go for other colleges, like the TAR College. The TAR College, for example, caters for 20 percent of the total Form 6 students in this country. The School of Business Studies and School of Technology in TAR College are very popular courses among the business community. Before the students graduate they are taken up by the business community. There is still scope for expansion in TAR College. We have expansion programmes. We hope to expand in Johore Baru. We also have a scheme where we can provide students who are qualified to enter university or institutions of higher learning with loans or funds if they face financial difficulties. We hope we can satisfy some of the needs.

Dr. Tan: Unfortunately the Government does not allow private enterprise to start private universities. That being so, the Government should expand whatever facilities they have to cater for all. The MCA is in a position to expand the TAR College. Can the MCA persuade MPH . . . to set up branches of TAR College in Penang and Ipoh?

Datuk Lee: Expansion is very much in our mind. As for pressing MPH, it is a different thing entirely. Firstly, we need funding. We are not short of people who are willing to contribute to the course of education. Once our expansion programme is approved, we can raise the money from companies, perhaps including Multi-Purpose Holdings. But to single MPH out to sponsor or run the programme will give the impression I spoke about earlier.

There was a report in the *Straits Times* that MPH is sponsoring a university in Canada. There is no such thing. We have been talking about the shortage of places at university and finding places for our

students locally.

Dr. Tan: Our best bet would be to expand the facilities of TAR College.

Datuk Lee: Our strategy is to expand TAR College, and also to find places in foreign universities for our students.

Dr. Tan: I am against it in certain cases. It is too costly. Let's say, you have a place in Medicine in the U.K. Do you know how much it will cost? £5000 in fees alone. It is about M\$25,000 per year. That is crazy. The sum of M\$25,000 can provide many places for people in our country, if you expand the facilities in TAR College.

Datuk Lee: If you think that is expensive, then running a university is even more expensive and not viable.

Dr. Tan: I don't think so. I think it would be better running a college in Canada if they will allow it, but I don't think any foreign Government will do so.

If foreign qualifications are the best hope that you can offer to the children of your members, it is a sad commentary on their political plight. What assurances do you have that these foreign qualifications will be recognised for employment in Government service or do you accept that Government service will remain out of bounds to them?

Datuk Lee: They must ensure that they enter universities with good qualifications and that the universities are recognised by the Government. They should ensure that they are employable when they return to their country.

We do not limit them to private sector or Government sector. If they want to go into Government sector and are able to do so, why not? If they wish to go to private sector, then go ahead by all means.

Dr. Tan: What are your first Five Projects and your second Five Projects? How do you think these will benefit the Malaysian Chinese and the nation as a whole? Can you give concrete examples?

Datuk Lee: The first among the Five Projects is, of course, the MCA building, and then the concept of MPH, the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, the TAR College and membership drive. We have discussed TAR College and the MPH.

The MCA building will be completed at the end of the month. This will ensure a regular source of income for whoever is running the party. We do not want to depend on one or two rich towkays to run the party. A political party like ours must be able to stand on its own feet whether we like it or not. We still need funds for the party.

This building will ensure a regular source of income to run the party.

We have the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society. We feel there is a need for interaction between various cultures. Admittedly, not all of Chinese culture and traditions are good, equally not all of them are bad. So how do we introduce them to the Malay society? Likewise, there are many good qualities in the cultural traditions of Malay society. Now who is doing the job to introduce them to the Chinese society? We hope this society, among other things would be able to play this role We have our membership drive. It is successful. We have, on our register, 460,000 members today.

Dr. Tan: How many are members in benefit?

Datuk Lee: The number of members in benefit at the end of last year was 245,000. Of course, there is a small proportion of life members, while there are others who have shifted elsewhere and have not paid up.

The second Five Projects is an extension of the first Five Projects. It is Kojadi, the Co-operative Society, which has a loan scheme for wage earners, and their children who are qualified to go to university or institutions of higher learning but cannot afford to do so.

Dr. Tan: Do you limit it to only the members of MCA.

Datuk Lee: No, it is open to all, irrespective of colour, race or creed. To date, we have distributed 300,000 forms.

One of the second Five Projects is a cultural centre. We have visitors and scholars who want to know about Chinese culture and traditions, but there isn't any place for them to go to. Some material may be in the university, some in the museum, but apart from these places they do not know where else to go. We have scholars from overseas who want to know the origins of the Malaysian Chinese, how the Chinese came to dwell in this country and soon. So we hope the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Centre will be able to collect together ancient Chinese books and other articles of cultural value. The third of the Five Projects is directed to the construction of a Multi-Purpose Holdings Building. We also hope to establish an education fund to complement and supplement the Government's assistance to Chinese schools. As you know, the Government has an annual allocation of grant in aid to Chinese schools. They call it "Bantuan Modal" to such Chinese schools where the land still belongs to the School Board. The Government tries its best, but in some cases where it is inadequate, we hope to set up this fund

and use the proceeds of this fund to complement the Government's effort to assist these schools. If we can set up a big fund, we can do quite a bit to help. We hope to start with \$50 million as an endowment fund. At 15 percent we should get \$7.5 million for this purpose every year. Another project of ours is a cadre training centre that we intend to set up to provide political education for our members. It is no use having a mass membership which is not politically well-educated.

Now how do these projects benefit the Malaysian Chinese? How do these projects benefit the nation?

The MPH has shown the Chinese how to modernise their concept of business, use modern techniques, and go big. As a result, many Chinese guilds and associations have been modelled along the line of the MPH. The MPH has 200,000 shareholders, all of whom have benefited. Then we have the TAR College. Something like 40,000 students have gone through the college in the last twelve years, which means that something like 10 percent of the Chinese population of those between 18 and 22 have gone through TAR College and benefited.

We have the Cultural Society and Cultural Centre which are to bring long-term benefits. I think we are performing a useful role, not only for the Chinese society but also for the Malaysian society. We have given the Chinese hope. At one time, the Chinese felt a sense of hopelessness and a sense of frustration. Now they have a sense of independence, and the spirit of survival.

Dr. Tan: The 465 New Villages that are scattered up and down the country were built nearly 30 years ago and had then a population of about 600,000. Today the population is nearly 2 million and the New Villagers are recognised as some of the most deprived people in our country. Under the Third Malaysia Plan the allocation for the 465 New Villages was \$20 million and under the Fourth Malaysia Plan the allocation was \$30 million. This works out to roughly \$10,000 to \$15,000 per New Village for each of the Five-Year Plans. The New Villages have always been under a MCA Minister. What has the MCA, which claims to represent the interest of the Chinese of our country, done to alleviate the plight of the down-trodden masses in the New Villages?

Datuk Lee: I think to look at the New Villages by these allocations is not fair because these are meant for small projects.

Dr. Tan: I have asked Datuk Musa and Tengku Razaleigh and both of them claim that these allocations are for minor works. The

sectoral allocation comes under Education, under Health and other Ministries. But as far as I can see, judging from the biggest New Village, namely Jinjang, which I represented for nearly fifteen years, I didn't see much benefit from the sectoral allocations they talk of. I can give you an example. One year when the elections were coming, when one MCA member brought a Minister to that place, he promised to rebuild the School in Jinjang North. The school is still there. If you give it a hard push, it will fall down. I do not know whether you have been to that village. The roads are still just as bad as they were thirty years ago. So when you talk of sectoral allocations we must realise that the New Villages are under the Majlis Daerah which is under the State Government. Without the State Government providing funds to the Majlis Daerah, we cannot get anything done. Sectoral allocation is an illusion. The New Villages have always been under a MCA Minister for the last eight years and if the MCA Minister cannot do much for New Villages which are nearly 98 percent Chinese what hope have the other Chinese?

Datuk Lee: I don't place much emphasis on this allocation of \$20 million or \$30 million. It is meant for small projects. Let me give an example. We have clinics, polyclinics, being built in New Villages all the time. Water and electricity have been supplied and improved. Schools have received grants for repairs and renovations. It may not be entirely satisfactory but these projects have been going on all the time. Certain State Governments are more helpful than others but these programmes are going on all the time.

Dr. Tan: I don't see much improvement in Jinjang. I don't see much proof from Jinjang. There are no new schools. In fact, they were not asking for new schools, they were just asking for upgrading of the existing schools.

I agree that clinics have been built, water and electricity have been supplied and improved but nothing has been improved for this school in Jinjang North. Schools have been built? — No. Employment opportunities created? — No. Roads? — No. Drains? — No.

Datuk Lee: Talking about drainage, I was informed that there is an irrigation scheme for Jinjang. They have accepted it and are committed to that scheme.

Dr. Tan: I know there have been lots of schemes, as I was an MP, but I don't see any evidence of these schemes being implemented on the ground.

Datuk Lee: The Minister of Housing, I know, has massive programmes for building walk-up flats in New Villages. They are sorting out the land problems. Certain states have agreed that the scheme should go ahead while in other states they are still waiting for approval Let me take you to some of the New Villages in Johore where schools, clinics, roads, post offices and so on, are provided.

Dr. Tan: The MCA has shown complete agreement with the Societies (Amendment) Act, 1981. On the other hand, Chinese people as represented by the Chinese guilds and societies are against it. How do you account for the difference in response to the Societies (Amendment) Act, 1981?

Datuk Lee: The Societies (Amendment) Act, 1981 first does not have the intention to curb or prevent the freedom of speech or activities of any society. It is more to clarify their position — if you want to play football, you play football and if you want to play tennis, you play tennis.

As a member of Cabinet I do not think it is the intention of the Government to curb the freedom to act or speak.

Dr. Tan: It is clearly stated in the Act that no society should comment on Government policies, much less make statements in opposition to Government policies. As you know every year Chinese guilds and societies, especially those headed by Tun H.S. Lee, such as the Kwangsai Association, approve a whole heap of resolutions. As an MCA MP you must have seen that various political aspects of Government are discussed by the Kwangsai Association. It has no desire to be a political society but is public spirited enough, hopefully, to feel that it can influence the Government to do the things which will benefit its members. So every year it writes down all the resolutions and passes them to the various Ministers. Now all that would have to stop because of this Act.

Datuk Lee: All societies have participated in everything. Doesn't that defeat the purpose of having a Constitution and having objectives. What the Society Act requires is that the society should act according to its objectives.

What the Societies Act requires is that society should declare its objectives: will it be a friendly society? A consumer society? Or a Chamber of Commerce where you talk of commerce. Surely that would be a healthier position and encourage more specialisation?

When the Consumer Association talks of prices, isn't it politics? It is dictated by politics but it is their function to talk about prices. So they can call themselves a consumer society instead of a

political society. Likewise, the Chamber of Commerce talk about Industrial Co-ordination Act, for example. They have every right to talk about this. I do not think it is the Government's intention to say: "O.K. Chamber of Commerce, you cannot discuss the ICA." Their declared objective is to talk about such things that affect commerce.

Dr. Tan: But one of the provisions of this Act is that we cannot try to influence Government policy. Now take the Malaysian Medical Association which I belong to. It blatantly wants to influence the Minister of Health on matters of health. Under the Act, we cannot do so.

Datuk Lee: I certainly do not think that is the intention of it. The Act has been clarified by Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, the Minister of Home Affairs, and Dr. Mahathir as to whether a society is political in nature or not. You say they can't talk about politics. I don't think so. Everything and anything is political. You talk about the Industrial Co-ordination Act. What do you expect the Chamber of Commerce to do — not talk about this Act and regulations governing commerce and industries?

The Environmental Society will be talking about environment. I do not think the Government will interpret the Act in a narrow sense.

Dr. Tan: At one time, the Malaysian Chinese were divided between class-based parties such as the Labour Party and the MCA. Do you think the Chinese will ever again divide on the basis of class or will the appeals for Chinese solidarity serve to unite them behind Chinese-led parties?

Datuk Lee: I do not know what will happen in twenty or thirty years time but for the next ten years I think class-based parties will not get very much support because, as I said earlier on, we are dictated by the pattern of our history. A Chinese is still a Chinese. A Malay is still a Malay. The Malays will tend to identify with UMNO or some of them with PAS. The Chinese will identify themselves with MCA, or with the DAP. One cannot talk about the Chinese society in isolation. I am not saying that class-based parties are bad. You have to take into consideration the whole Malaysian society. In fact, I would prefer to see a class-based party than a communal party.

Dr. Tan: I am glad you recognise that.

Datuk Lee: But I also must say that it is not acceptable now.

Dr. Tan: How is that you never champion working class interests? For example, you led a strong campaign against the Industrial Co-ordination Act but kept silent on anti-union legislation.

Datuk Lee: The fact that a vast majority of the membership of MCA is working-class or labour class speaks for itself If MCA was anti-labour, I don't think they will join us.

Dr. Tan: I did not say that the MCA is anti-labour. I said that the MCA kept silent on anti-labour legislation.

Datuk Lee: Anti-union legislation is a matter of opinion. Tan Sri, you think this legislation is anti-labour. We think, looking at the larger interest, overall interest, perhaps this legislation is necessary, especially at the moment when we are in the process of developing. So whether it is anti-labour or not, is a matter of opinion.

Dr. Tan: The vast majority of Chinese will never own shares or own business larger than hawking. Yet the concessions you obtained from UMNO only concern the interests of your wealthy members. How does the MCA represent the interests of the Chinese have-nots?

Datuk Lee: As I have explained the MPH and KSM are meant for the working class. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of the shareholders are from the working class. Kojadi, another project, is also meant for the working class. Surely, the rich towkays do not need to save, nor have to worry about their children's education in future. They have enough to provide for their children's education. The programmes are aimed for the wage-earner. How then can we be branded as anti-labour?

Dr. Tan: How do you see the relations between the races beyond 1990? Can the tensions generated by racially-based politics be contained at least until 1990 so that we can look beyond to a united Malaysian nation?

Datuk Lee: Yes, nowadays problems are not kept under the carpet. Problems are discussed.

Dr. Tan: Under the Mahathir Administration, I agree. But it's hardly a month old and it has yet to win its spurs as I mentioned in one of my articles. It is on its "honeymoon cruise". For a start it has shown a good example.

I welcomed the statement by Dr. Mahathir that he supports the reports of the Auditor-General. It is the Auditor-General's job to highlight all the mismanagement of financial affairs. The Mentri Besar of your home state, Johore, last year foolishly attacked the Auditor-General for exposing the malpractices in connection with the Pesta Pembangunan in Batu Pahat. To that extent, I agree it is a start. The Mahathir Administration has yet to gain its spurs.

Datuk Lee: Nowadays, there is a tendency to discuss problems. We

discuss these in the Cabinet, in private meetings, in the Barisan Nasional and so on.

The net result of these I think is that everyone is more aware of each others problems. The Malays are more aware of the Chinese problems and the Chinese are more aware of the Malays' problems. Surely that is an improvement.

At the moment, there is a feeling of inter-dependence, feeling of a need to live with one another. This feeling is growing. That is a good sign and hopefully will help de-communalise the situation beyond 1990. We must first generate this feeling and understand each other. We can talk about problems but that will generate too much tension. But to pretend that these problems do not exist would be worse.

In understanding each others problems we will take a more liberal and accommodative attitude towards solving problems. It will be good for all concerned.

Dr. Tan: Are not racially-based parties a big part of the problem? Don't they have a vested interest in maintaining racial politics and crying for racial unity? When each race cries for racial unity, when the Malays cry for racial unity and the Chinese do likewise, it tears us apart.

Datuk Lee: How can we solve the problem if we do not mention where the actual problem lies. We would not be able to understand Malay problems without mentioning the Malays. Similarly, how can the Chinese make the Malays understand Chinese problems without talking about the Chinese.

Dr. Tan: I will give you an example. In my former constituency, if I talk about problems in Jinjang, they are problems of Chinese. If I talk about problems in Segambut Dalam, I am talking mainly of Malay problems because only Malays stay in Segambut Dalam. If I were to talk about problems in Batu Caves, they are problems of Indians.

I have raised their problems. I agree you must mention race but you don't harp on it. If you harken to racial unity too much, it frightens the others.

Datuk Lee: Don't forget some important elements when we talk about racial unity. As for Chinese unity, we have always maintained that it is not for confrontation. We want Chinese unity to support moderate leadership. We have always emphasised that unity means moderate leadership.

If the UMNO cannot get all the Malays to support the UMNO,

or MCA cannot get Chinese to support MCA, how do you strengthen that moderate leadership? We tend to forget this. Then other parties, extremist parties, will have a field day. Extremism will only breed extremism. We are trying to curb it.

Dr. Tan: Do you have a vision for the Chinese in Malaysia! If so, will you elaborate for the benefit of the Malaysians of Chinese origin in this country?

Datuk Lee: We have seen healthy signs appearing. We hope after 1990, when the economic imbalance is corrected, we will have a society where economically, culturally, educationally, everyone is equal.

Dr. Tan: You think in another decade we can achieve that? We are now in 1981.

Datuk Lee: We have seen some signs of improvement, economically and culturally. We have more affluent Malay leaders in urban areas. They accept many Chinese cultural values, just as many Chinese accept Malay values.

We hope, educationally we will be uplifted and everybody is more enlightened. Maybe not by the next decade, but beyond 2000 we can see a more Malaysianised society. That is my vision.

INTERVIEW WITH DATUK SAMY VELLU

Dr. Tan: Can you explain why UMNO with great political power can live with powerful factions within it yet MIC is torn by strife between factions with very little political power?

Datuk Samy Vellu: I do not accept that the MIC is "torn by strife between factions". Activities of the MIC are more in the public eye than others and little incidents get blown up. There are two reasons for this.

The media feel they can play up MIC matters with impunity. The Indian readership of English papers is very small. There will be no readership drop if English papers ridicule the MIC or even if they write distorted stories. If it is the UMNO or MCA the English papers are more cautious. Secondly, the MIC does actually practise grass-roots democracy. Unlike the UMNO and the MCA, delegates to the MIC State and National Delegates' Conferences are elected at branch level. This means about 720 elections are held all over the country. Our election rules and procedures have the virtue of being meticulous, detailed and comprehensive but they are also rather complex. This has led to disputes arising out of different interpretations or misunderstanding of the rules. These misunderstandings sometimes combine with the tension of keen competition to ignite explosive rows. But in the context of the 720 elections, these rows are minimal — only about 20 to 25. The media presents these few rows in gleeful detail but fails to direct attention to the hundreds of

meetings that have been successfully and peacefully conducted.

People are free to have differences within the party. However let no one assume that we are not a united party. We are united in the pursuance of our basic goal — to serve and further the aspirations of Malaysian Indians.

Dr. Tan: Datuk, is it then your contention that the strife and factions in MIC are minimal and that they have all been blown up by the mass media? If that is your contention, how is that I, myself, have yet to see any explanation by the MIC of the fights that we have seen described in the mass media?

Datuk Samy Vellu: We have on several occasions made known to the press that certain things that they have published were not right.

I can quote to you one instance. In the last General Assembly which was held in Petaling Jaya where there was a great deal of argument, an explanation was given by the speaker. After the explanation from the speaker, the whole matter cooled down. But the next day's paper reported that chairs flew, which was not actually true. When we requested the press to make a retraction, they just said they would try to do it but they didn't do it. We don't own papers, big mass media, or have financial control over them, so they can write anything about us.

Dr. Tan: On the contrary, I am told that some political bigwigs in the MIC own a certain Tamil newspaper.

Datuk Samy Vellu: I can tell you there are three Tamil papers. The three papers are owned by three different people. But there are leaders in the MIC who have interests in certain papers. They have interests in certain papers because they feel that Tamil papers are an important medium for the Tamil-speaking crowd.... Some of these papers may sometimes write about me or about others but it should not be construed that they are being controlled by certain people.

Dr. Tan: You talk about MIC having 720 elections. When I interviewed Datuk Lee San Choon, he told me that in the MCA they have 114 divisions and 1300 branches and of course when the elections are held at branch, divisional, state and general assembly level they far exceed those in the MIC. In the case of the UMNO in view of their large membership of about 750,000 now, elections are also numerous, far more numerous than the MIC. Although we read of the occasional UMNO fight and also the occasional MCA fight, yet we read more, in absolute numbers, of MIC fights. You have laid the blame on the mass media. This is the first time I have

been given this view of the MIC fights. I do hope the press publishes this interview of ours in the *Utusan Malaysia*, the *Star*, and the *Nanyang Siang Pau*, your explanation will be known to a large number of Malaysians. I am trying to contact the Indian press and if they are interested in this interview they can publish it and the Tamil reading public can hear your views.

Now that the road is clear for your re-election as President of the MIC should you not play the role of elder statesman in the MIC and stay above the hustle and bustle of the fight at branch, divisional and state levels. Are you aware that your participation at these levels, even indirectly, will lead to dissension in the party?

Datuk Samy Vellu: First of all, Tan Sri although I am accused of being a participant at various levels, I sincerely do not accept it. This impression is created by the activities of certain factions who feel that involving my name would give them a better chance to win in elections in certain areas.

Dr. Tan: Is it your contention then that you have scrupulously stayed out of the fights lower down?

Datuk Samy Vellu: I have stayed out Politicians are administrators of power for community advancement. To be able to do this they must always protect their power base also. But there are areas where they should protect their power base and there are areas where they should leave it to the members to decide what is right and what is wrong. History is full of examples of so-called "elder statesmen" who by staying above politics lost their power base. I have recognised this fact.

I do not propose to destroy or stand in the way of anyone who works within the democratic framework of the MIC to attain a position of leadership as long as in doing so he does not undermine the rights of others. That is my contention. I have loyal supporters throughout the country. After the presidentship was taken over by Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam a very strong group of people went around campaigning against me. Although I was senior and I was supposed to contest the Deputy President's post in 1977, I was opposed by a very young man who had been brought into the political scene by Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam at a very late stage. That was done to deprive me of that position. Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam was directly involved and I know. I do not involve myself nowadays. I keep myself away from it because I feel I must stay in a position where I must be able to give justice to the others and be an appellant body rather than a participant in the elections. But people make accusations when they lose or even

elections. But people make accusations when they lose or even when they win. I can give you one example. In the last Federal Territory election which was held in Kuala Lumpur, I completely kept away. Many of my supporters came and asked me, "What is your view of this election." I told them, "You decide what is good for you — I am not here to interpret to you who is good and who is bad." They made their decision and elected Subramaniam . . .

The media plays about highly on MIC news. Today there is an article on the MIC. They said so-and-so will contest so-and-so. In fact the person whose name is mentioned in the papers does not even have the intention of contesting in the election . . . And so I think that the political reality is such that any leader who says he will stay above grass-roots politics is either doing it quietly or is too negative to remain in power for long. This is my contention. But at branch and state levels I do not interfere. The reason why they involve my name is because in most of the states there are people who have come into power who have seen my supporters for many years. Somehow the papers automatically write that Samy Vellu's men swept in. I have told my people that if they win an election, they confine it to themselves and don't bring my name into the picture at the lower levels . . . We want to do justice to everybody, and please allow us to do it. I have urged this but I have to keep urging.

For the last four or five months we have been trying to calm down things, and things are much smoother than before. This was what I thought I should do once I took over the leadership.

After I took over there were so many problems. People created endless problems giving me no room to move about. They denied me of my right to do work for the society, but somehow, I have overcome all these problems now. I am getting everybody in the fold to realign their thinking, act as party members and give up purely politicking. I think to a great extent I have succeeded in this. I am putting up the final exhibition at the General Assembly on 3 October 1981 where I hope the MIC would conduct itself as a peaceful and more responsible organisation, like any other party. The members are co-operating with me very well now and I hope things will change.

Dr. Tan: You said that the factionalism and the quarrels in the MIC are no better nor worse than those of other political parties and that the wrong image that a non-Indian like me gets of the MIC situation is entirely due to the mass media. How do you account for the fact

that this year's elections, for the presidency and other posts, that have been conducted thus far have been more boisterous, with fist fights and the like, than any other that I know of.

My recollection of MIC politics dates back to the time of John Thivy, way back to the early 50s, who then plugged the Indian National Congress line. There were plenty of controversies then because of the ties with the Indian National Congress. As time went by, these ties loosened and now the MIC is completely indigenous. Then after K.L. Devasar was ousted and the presidency was taken over by Tun V.T. Sambanthan, there was controversy. When V.K. Manickavasagam took over as President there was also controversy. Unfortunately the MIC seems always to be associated with controversy. When Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam passed away, I myself had hoped that when you took over as Acting President things would be smooth for you but there was plenty of controversy.

These certainly are not all creations of the press. There must be a grain of truth in what they write of the MIC. Now you tell me that the October Delegates' Conference will see a peaceful takeover by you of the control of the party. Can you give an explanation of the tension and the quarrels of the past, in particular your struggle to put your stamp of leadership on the MIC?

Datuk Samy Vellu: Tan Sri, as I have stated earlier, the MIC is after all not a disunited party. As we feel we are well-organised but of course emotions of certain members have created some problems at some times. If you take the year 1981, out of 725 elections held, there were problems at four places but these were just enough to gain publicity and spoil the image of 721 good elections. We have gained a bad name because of a group of over emotional people. I am trying to get rid of such people. I am trying to put into their heads that they must do politics with sense, not with fists and strength. This may need some modification of the rules regarding the conduct of elections. We have thought and analysed it very carefully and we are trying to bring in some changes.

Dr. Tan: You must be aware of the one feature the MIC has in common with the MCA — both of them have been riddled with internal quarrels and factions. And these two parties make themselves a laughing stock to the UMNO. What plans do you have to restore unity and consolidate the strength of the MIC?

Datuk Samy Vellu: The problem is that a distorted image of the MIC has been presented by the media largely because of the open nature of our party. We are proposing to take certain measures to

change this image. One of these measures is to streamline procedures to take the heat off at branch level elections. The state or national level elections always involve personalities. The other step we have recently taken is to stop members making statements to the press attacking or running down other members.

I personally am going around the country to concentrate attention at branch level on development projects, promoting MIC-sponsored institutions like the Unit Trust, our Co-operative Societies and our education projects. We feel that this is where we can divert the thinking of the MIC members into some national projects.

Competition for posts in the party should not be taken as a measure of disunity but rather as an indication that the party is dynamic and active. I also admit that we are sometimes too dynamic, too open and too emotional. We have to cut all this down a bit. Currently we are concentrating our unified strength towards development projects.

I hope that this will pave the way for a change in the image of the MIC. Many of my educated friends, professional people, have rang me up. They said that they feel happy about the present situation in the MIC and that many of them would like to come in and contribute in whatever way they can without expecting anything.

The officers and leaders of the MIC now feel that this is no time for quarrels. They feel that if they keep on quarrelling, they will be lagging behind in a country which is moving so fast. We do not want to be the lot that is left out.

Dr. Tan: The Malaysians of Indian origin have sunk to the bottom of the economic pile. How has this come about? And what steps, if any, has the MIC taken to increase their share of the economic cake?

Datuk Samy Vellu: It is true that the Malaysian Indian's economic position is a dismal one. We are far behind the Malays and the Chinese. This problem was thoroughly researched during the Second Malaysian Indian Economic Seminar held in July 1980. We have identified the problems and have drawn up comprehensive plans for our projects.

Essentially our problems can be stated thus. The Chinese have a strong economic base built in the early years of Malaya which is now serving them well. The Malays have tremendous political power which has been utilised to fuel their entry into various economic enterprises and business. Massive amounts of capital, opportunities and Government help have been made available to

them. They have progressed. Indians have neither, and have to rely purely on raw talent. A lot of time has been spent in the past bemoaning our disadvantaged position which has created a deprivation syndrome among Malaysian Indians. This in turn has brought about a sense of low esteem and a lack of direction. We have now placed more emphasis on self-help measures. We are marshalling the entire strength of the community and its resources in terms of money and talent towards self-help projects. Some of our projects and the setting up of technical and commercial training institutes are designed to train our young people to enter the technical and commercial world confidently. We are conducting small business workshops throughout the country to identify small business opportunities and instruct young people into the methodology of business. We are also setting up organisations to garner capital to fuel more ambitious economic ventures like the setting up of insurance companies and a multi-purpose holding company. I must tell you it was the MIC which had set up the National and Finance Co-operation Society in the late 50s which now has assets worth \$150 million. It is the MIC which set up the Nesa Co-operation Society that has a lot of assets and that has trained Indians in establishing small businesses, in buying lands etc. Then we have the MIC Unit Trust. The purpose of the Unit Trust is to create equity participation by Malaysian Indians. The first fund was started some three and a half years ago and received only \$5.6 million from the Malaysian Indians but the second fund which we started only on 16 May 1981 collected \$10 million within sixty days. This shows the overwhelming support that we have for our projects today. Malaysian Indians feel that now the MIC is going in the right direction

We also have the Workers' Co-operative Society. It has assets of almost \$20 million and has planned to carry out over twenty housing schemes throughout the country. The first housing scheme of 1000 units, of which 400 units are being constructed, is in my constituency in Sungei Siput. This society does not exclude Chinese and Malays, it is a multi-racial society All that I have been talking about is the work of the MIC. But in all this we have received help only from the lower class, not from the middle and the upper class. Many Indians still occupy high positions but very few of them have any sense of obligation to the community We have put up an application for a holding company which will concentrate on industrial and other developments. We have also

applied for a licence to have an insurance company which is under the consideration of the Ministry of Finance. We have already started the preliminary planning for setting up a technological institution in Ipoh. This is under the consideration of the Perak state government for the land.

Presently, we are running two institutions — the Vanto Academy and the Institut Teknologi Negeri, with almost two thousand students. The composition of students is 40 percent Chinese, 30 percent Indians and about 30 percent Malay. We give scholarships even from MIC funds to Chinese and Malays. We do not restrict opportunities to the Indians only

Dr. Tan: Datuk, you talk of the Vanto Academy and you have reasons to be proud. But the overall standard of education of Indians has fallen. If you go to the University of Malaya, the number of Indians applying for places falls far behind other non-Malays. They have no chance to enter into the university except through the quota system, whereas the others go in through their own merits. The Chinese tend to go in not because of their quota but because of their own merits.

As you know, under the Indian quota, you have the Ceylonese, the Bangalis, the Pakistanis and so on, who will also want a share of the 10 percent. You have so many asking for the small piece of cake

I am glad you are planning to raise the standard of education. When I talked to Datuk Lee San Choon, he talked of the Multi-Purpose Holdings where they employ hundreds of graduates and give employment to six thousand people. Do you have something of that nature, may be not on such a vast scale — a Multi-Purpose Holdings for the MIC?

Datuk Samy Vellu: The Multi-Purpose Holdings has started so many subsidiary companies and through these they are able to provide employment. Secondly, their capacity to raise funds is tremendous. They can raise \$30 million overnight, which the MIC can't do because our economic position is so bad. We have to go only at a speed which our community can afford. The National Land Finance Society, which was started by the MIC, can only employ over four thousand people. It has over twenty estates and we have graduates and planters working there.

Similarly, the Nesa Co-operative Society has offered employment to about fifty to sixty people now. The other Co-operative Societies are also providing employment. Our idea is that at a later

stage, we should be able to start more companies and institutions where we can provide employment.

Dr. Tan: Are you aware that the educational standards of Malaysians of Indian origin have deteriorated particularly after Merdeka? What has the MIC done to correct this trend?

Datuk Samy Vellu: Yes, the education standard has deteriorated. The reason is poor self-esteem, low motivation, inadequate preparation for school, and family and other environments. Fifty percent of our children are in Tamil schools. The MIC has been for sometime pressing the Government to give attention to these schools which are generally small, under-staffed and lack basic amenities like proper class-rooms, desks and chairs and toilet facilities. The drop-out rate is high because they are called Bantuan Modal schools. We are asking the Government to get rid of these Bantuan Modal schools. We have asked the Government to take over. The Government has considered under the Fourth Malaysia Plan to buy over these schools and convert them to fully aided Government schools whereby new school buildings can be erected with better facilities and environment. This is already in the Fourth Malaysia Plan and my Ministry has also received about \$10 million to reconstruct Tamil schools. This is very encouraging . . .

The "progressive amalgamation units" promised in the Third Malaysia Plan did not materialise. That was one reason why we lagged behind. They said they would amalgamate all the schools, give them better teachers under the Third Malaysia Plan, but it did not materialise . . .

We have embarked on a programme of self-help which I explained to you earlier. The first phase has been the buying of the Vanto Academy and the upgrading of the Institut Teknologi Negeri. similar institutions are planned in other states. We feel, Tan Sri, as you have pointed out just now, the Indians of earlier days and Indians of today are very different. In those days the Indians competed with others on merit. And today they have gone down so badly because of all the factors I have mentioned to you earlier on. And therefore after research by the MIC to find out where we are lacking, we realise we are lacking especially at the entry point into the university. If we do not do something about this, in future we may never have anybody at the tertiary level. That is why at the Vanto Academy we have taken the steps to provide two hundred special places, especially for Upper Secondary, to prepare them and streamline them with all sorts of sandwich courses and get them

ready to meet the challenges. I feel ashamed to beg around for quotas Last year we had 550 students applying to enter the universities of Malaysia and opportunities were given to 350. This year we had over 700 and 400 were given places

Dr. Tan: The meaning of the term "Indian" has changed over the past half century. Who are the "Indians" that the MIC claims to represent?

Datuk Samy Vellu: The MIC represents Malaysian Indians or Malaysians of Indian origin. Our Constitution allows as members all Malaysians of Indian origin. This simply means all citizens in this country whose ancestors at some stage originated from the Indian subcontinent. It is in a sense a geographical classification rather than racial, cultural, religious or linguistic classification.

Dr. Tan: The Indians are not a majority in any one constituency in Malaysia. How do you exert any influence on policies in the Barisan Nasional?

Datuk Samy Vellu: The question is a very good one. I can understand your assumption that if we are not a majority in any constituency we have no electoral power. But I think that is wrong. Such an assumption does not recognise the realities of Malaysian politics. If it is only majority that gives a people political status and rights, then our concept of the present government would have failed

In many constituencies the Indian vote added to the Chinese vote forms a non-Malay majority. I am presently studying the number of constituencies which exist in Peninsular Malaysia where the marginal difference between Malay and Chinese votes allows the Indian vote to provide the balance. I have worked out that in about thirty percent of the parliamentary constituencies, the Indians hold the balance of power. Whichever side they shift may get the winning chance I believe not in the race majority but the majority of Malaysians who can work for any party if they want to.

But I must say that in many urban constituencies the Indian race is the balancing factor between Barisan and Malay-based opposition parties. You will appreciate therefore that the MIC being the only party solely representing the Malaysian Indians plays a significant electoral role which the Barisan recognises and utilises.

I must however emphasise that the negotiating power of the MIC is not based solely on electoral power. We rely on the following negotiating bases:

Historical Antecedents

- (a) Development contribution: The Malaysian Indian contribution to the development of the country pre-date Merdeka and is a matter of record.
- (b) Barisan association: The Malaysian Indian Congress was an early and staunch ally for the former Alliance and continues as major component party of the Barisan. The former Premier, Tunku Abdul Rahman in a recent *Star* column has paid high tribute to the role of the MIC. The MIC has never left the Barisan or the Alliance at any time

Loyal Citizens

Malaysian Indians are woven into the fabric of the Malaysian nation. Their loyalty to the country and their commitment to national unity is total. A good indicator may be to examine the ethnic percentage of people attending National Unity classes. In 1977, a total of 69,933 persons attended National Unity classes of which 10,619 were Malays, 29,171 were Chinese, 25,433 were Indians and 4601 others This surely is proof of the commitment of the Malaysian Indians.

Usefulness

The alternative to being dispensed with is to become indispensable The Indian community has tremendous professional, technical and management talents that are currently used in the Government's development drive. It also forms the backbone of labour in this country. With increasing participation in commerce and industry the community is not a force to be lightly reckoned with. We are therefore a significant economic factor. Our contribution is meaningful and indispensable. It is in the country's interest to harness the resources and talents of the Indian community. The Barisan is well aware of these factors. That is why they consider us important for their own existence.

Negative Effects of a Disadvantaged Community

The task of nation building and economic growth will flounder if Malaysian Indians continue to be the most disadvantaged and deprived group. A poor community is a burden on the state and resources will have to be diverted from development to sustenance.

The New Economic Policy Consensus

The final negotiating factor is the binding contract of the New Economic Policy consensus. Eradication of poverty and restructuring of society is for all Malaysians irrespective of race. It is clearly indicated in the Third Malaysia Plan. The Government has therefore a moral commitment to ensure that Indians do not lag behind

a moral commitment to ensure that Indians do not lag behind . . .

Dr. Tan: I'd like to make an observation. This is the first time I hear an explanation of the so-called quarrels, but to a non-Indian who does not read the Indian press but reads only the English press and occasionally the Malay press, the quarrels are very real and to that extent, one wonders how the Government can give so much reliance to the role of Indians in this country.

Datuk Samy Vellu: Because the Government as well as the Barisan itself knows very well that there may be splits and quarrels in the MIC but when it comes to the question of voting, the Indians have always pledged their support to the Government and therefore it is an accepted fact that whatever quarrels they have, it doesn't matter much but at the time of performing their duties, they do it well.

Dr. Tan: Have non-Malay contractors been totally excluded from all small public works contracts? Does this mean that no more small contracting firms will emerge amongst the Indians?

Datuk Samy Vellu: Before an answer can be given, it is important to highlight the definitions of bumiputra contractors and small contracting firms. The Government will recognise a contractor as bumiputra if the equity of the firm is either 100 percent owned by the Malays or a joint venture between the Malays and non-Malays with the equity of the Malays at least 51 percent.

Small contracting firms normally refer to class 'F' contractors, that is the lowest class, and the limitation of value of works of up to \$35,000. The registration of class 'F' is exclusively for the individual bumiputra or bumiputra company under the definition mentioned earlier. We give them this preference so that they can make a start.

While all works below \$50,000 must be given to the bumiputra contractors, in cases of specialist works, urgent works or where there are no bumiputra contractors available, such work will be given to non-bumiputra contractors from other classes. Hence there are a number of small contract works executed by non-bumiputra contractors

Up to March 1981 there were 4366 contractors registered in class 'F'. These contractors are normally confined to indent works only i.e. for works up to \$25,000 which involve minimum risk in terms of the cost as they are paid in accordance with the standard schedule of Rate prepared departmentally. Because of the large number of these contractors compared with the value of works available for them, on the average contractors of class 'F' could hardly make ends meet unless they supplemented their income

with other works, either in other Government agencies or private works

Although as a whole the number of bumiputras registered in this Ministry is more than the number of non-bumiputras, the bumiputra contractors concentrate only at the lowest class as indicated below, as of 15 March 1981:

Class	Bumiputra	Non-Bumiputra
A	48	180
B	44	151
BX	89	243
C	162	461
D	315	692
E	419	695
BX	573	1107
F	4366	—
Total	6016	3529

This Ministry provides special facilities to bumiputra contractors as a means to implement the New Economic Policy. As mentioned earlier, while providing special relaxation for the bumiputra contractors, the Ministry does not at all ignore the interest of non-bumiputra contractors. As regards Indian participation it must be admitted that while their number is still small, every assistance is given to them in increasing their participation in small contracts through joint ventures with the existing or new bumiputra companies and individuals.

Dr. Tan: How do you expect Indians to get preferential treatment if this will mean competition for the Malays? Will UMNO be willing to accept sacrifices to help the MIC?

Datuk Samy Vellu: One of the twin objectives of the New Economic Policy is to eradicate poverty among Malaysians irrespective of racial origin. Naturally many Indians fall within this category for whom the Government has made considerable efforts to elevate their present position.

With the present rate of development in the country, opportunities exist for all Malaysians to better themselves. Competition will always be there in order to ensure a high standard of performance. However, at this stage when the bumiputras are still learning the tricks of the trade by doing small business and contract

jobs, it is only fair that they be left to compete among themselves until such time when they are ready and capable of competing with the other races. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that this "preferential treatment", as you called it, is not only temporary but also confined to government works and not the private sector. I, therefore, do not think that the question of UMNO's willingness to sacrifice arises at all here. I have stated earlier the Directorate of Barisan Nasional recognises the relative usefulness and contribution of each component party, hence the concept of the "expanding cake" of the NEP. Progress is to be achieved not at the expense of any community but as a share of the increased opportunity. As for UMNO making sacrifices for us, let me say, our relationship has withstood severe trials and crises. We are confident that the UMNO has due respect for the MIC and will do all it can to support and strengthen the MIC. We are already receiving the help of UMNO to overcome several problems facing the Malaysian Indians.

Dr. Tan: Do you think the Indians would be better off if racial political parties were eliminated? Do you have a vision of a Malaysia with non-racially based political parties?

Datuk Samy Vellu: Tan Sri, I think the day will come when Malaysians will accept non-racial parties. The Barisan is a step in that direction. The component parties like UMNO, MCA and MIC represent specific communities but they are blended together as the Barisan which consists of representatives of all races making decisions for the common good.

Dr. Tan: Do you envisage in the foreseeable future a non-racial political party in place of a confederation of parties which the Barisan stands for?

Datuk Samy Vellu: As for one single party, my thinking is that it will take a little bit of a time but one day the country will see it, maybe probably within thirty to forty years which is during the generation of our grandchildren. Their thinking will be entirely different from our children. Children of today are still influenced by racial attitudes in their minds but our grand-children will have a different attitude or approach because they would come from a society which would be without much of racial identity.

PART III
The Cabinet and the Government

Malaysia's system of government is largely modelled on British parliamentary democracy. However, it has certain special features which have resulted from the multi-racial character of the Malaysian society and the determination of the indigenous Malays, since independence, to assert their political paramountcy. Until 1948, Malaya was maintained by the British as a Malay country and the sovereign status of the bumiputra was symbolised by their Sultans and the nine Malay states. After 1948, even though the concept of *Tanah Melayu* was largely discarded by the British, the nine Malay States and their Sultans were retained primarily to satisfy the Malays that no significant change had been made in their constitutional-political status. The Constitution of independent Malaya also did not provide for a *Tanah Melayu*. Instead it established a multi-racial polity in which all people, irrespective of their racial origins, were guaranteed equal rights. But, at the same time, to give recognition to the Malays as the bumiputras, their Sultans and the nine Malay States were retained. A federal polity was established with the sole purpose of allowing for the existence of the Malay states. The states enjoy extremely limited powers and their existence is substantially symbolic; for all practical purposes Malaysia has a unitary polity. Again to satisfy the Malays, the Constitution established a monarchy, with one of the Sultans occupying the position of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong for a term of five years. Even though the King is a titular head, he is viewed by the Malays as a custodian of their rights and their paramountcy.

Besides these, the Constitution gives no recognition to the Malays as the indigenous people. It does not, unlike some of the state Constitutions, provide that an indigenous Malay alone can occupy the position of Prime Minister, the head of government. It does not stipulate that any particular Ministry can only be headed by Malay Ministers. But in practice, as a result of the dominant position of the UMNO in the Alliance and later in the Barisan Nasional, the composition of the Governments has clearly reflected the paramountcy or domination of the Malays. All Prime Ministers of the country have been Malays and it is certain that no non-Malay in the future can realistically aspire to the high office. Since 1969, all important positions in the Cabinet have been held by the Malays. Increasingly, Malay control over government and administration is being extended and strengthened. But during the period that Tunku Abdul Rahman was Prime Minister, even though the UMNO occupied a dominant position in the Alliance and the

Government, the MCA and the MIC, representing the non-Malays, enjoyed a certain leverage and voice. Domination by the UMNO did not then mean total subordination of the MCA and the MIC.

However, after 1969 the situation changed dramatically. Malay control has been substantially extended. In the Barisan Nasional, which replaced the Alliance, the political organisations of the non-Malays do not enjoy the same influence and status that they had enjoyed in the pre-1969 Tunku era.

IMPENDING CABINET RESHUFFLE

(15 September 1980)

With the resignation of Datuk Seri Hamzah b. Abu Samah, a cabinet reshuffle must be expected, most likely after the return of the Prime Minister, Datuk Hussein Onn, from New Delhi where he is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Governments, Regional Meeting.

One Cabinet Minister has already resigned. The two others who are expected to resign are Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff, Minister of Land and Regional Development, and Datuk Abdul Samad Idris, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports.

Datuk Sri Hamzah Abu Samah resigned from the Legal Service to contest the by-election at Raub in 1967 on the death of the incumbent Tuan Hussein b. Tok Muda Hassan. He was appointed as Assistant Minister to the Ministry of Home Affairs. It was evident that he was not going to remain there long, for soon after he was appointed Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports. Sportsmen throughout the country rejoiced at this appointment for Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah was a sportsman of no mean calibre. I first met him when serving my first term in the Selangor State Council and he was the Legal Advisor, Selangor. We used to discuss the allocation of lands from the Selangor State Government to the Selangor Division of the Malaysian Schools' Sports Council. In the Selangor State Assembly then I used to make a plea for the MSSC to another sportsman, the Mentri Besar, Datuk Harun Idris, alas

without much success.

Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah then moved on to the Ministry of Defence and later to Commerce and Industry. After the last general election of 1978 he was appointed to his present post of Attorney-General.

Besides politics he has involved himself in sports, being president of Football Association of Malaysia, Asian Football Confederation, Olympic Council of Malaysia, and Malaysian Cricket Association. I am sure that with his resignation from the Cabinet he will be able to devote more time to sports.

With two coronary by-pass operations it is evident that Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah cannot carry on much longer as a Cabinet Minister and I for one am glad that he has taken heed of the advice of his doctors. Of course, he has the warning from his former colleague who recently died of a massive heart attack.

Another Minister who is expected to resign is Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff, Minister of Land and Regional Development. He has the unusual distinction of his wife, Tan Sri Fatima, preceding him as a Cabinet Minister. When he was in the Legal Service, Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff also had the distinction of setting free Y.B.V. David when he was under detention. And of course he was our first local Attorney-General. I well remember when Miss P.G. Lim and I were working hard for a royal pardon for the eleven detainees who had been sentenced to death for offenses under the ISA. When their sentences were about to be carried out Miss P.G. Lim and I went to see Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff. He promised to help and later we enlisted the help of the Prime Minister himself. The Tunku too promised to help and the rest is history — the Sultan of Johore later graciously commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment. When Datuk Asri vacated his Cabinet post he was replaced by Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff. It is not generally known that Tan Sri Kadir Yusoff is the oldest member of the Cabinet and some time ago he had expressed a desire to retire from his post. I am glad that he will do so shortly. May his health improve and may he have many healthy years of retirement before him.

I am glad that both Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah and Tan Sri Yusoff have resisted the lure of offices. Let me use a biblical quotation: "What profit is there in gaining the whole world when it means forfeiting one's self?"

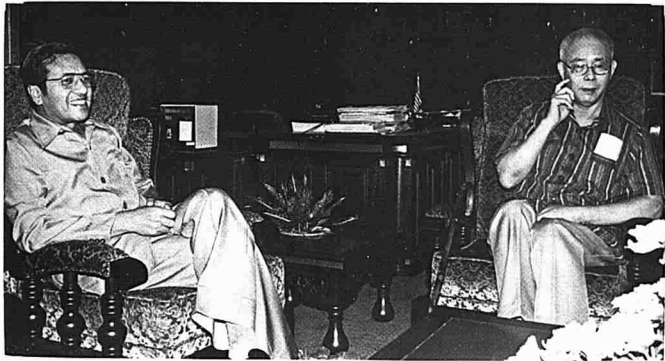
The third Cabinet Minister who will retire is Datuk Samad Idris, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. He is comparatively



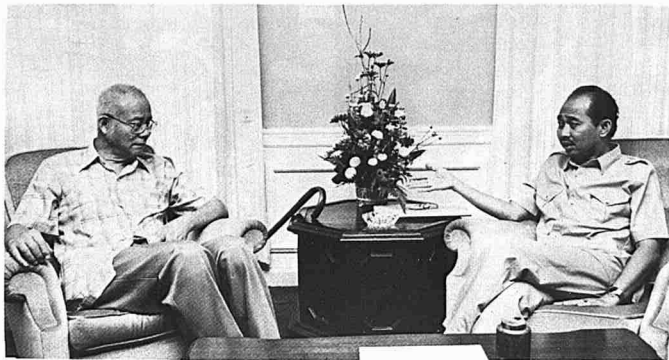
*The author interviewing
Datuk Musa Hitam.*



*The Yang di-Pertuan Agong
conferring the title of Tan
Sri on Dr Tan Chee Khoon.*



The author with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.



The author interviewing Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh.



The author with MIC chief Datuk Samy Vellu.



Datuk Musa Hitam looking at some of the teaching aids used in the 3R curriculum in primary schools. With him is Education Minister Datuk Dr Sulaiman Daud (right).



Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir with Datuk Musa.



Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir addressing a meeting.



Dr Lim Chong Eu (2nd from left), President of the Gerakan at a meeting of the party in 1980. On his right is Dr Lim Keng Yaik. On his left are Datuk Teh Ewe Lim, Datuk Paul Leong, Datuk Khoo Kay Por and Ong Boon Seong.



The author with DAP supporters.



The author talking with MCA chief, Datuk Lee San Choon.



Datuk Harun after having been sentenced to a six-month prison term.



Mr Lee Lam Thye.



Datuk Lee San Choon — 'In search of a (better) solution'.



In this photograph taken in 1977, DAP Chairman Dr Chen Man Hin addresses the 4th DAP congress, with the rocket symbol in the background. Fourth from right is Dr Lim Kit Siang.



Dr Lim Keng Yaik.



*The Barisan Nasional
candidate for Damansara,
Mr Tan Koon Swan.*



*Professor Dr Syed
Hussein Alatas.*



*Former PAS
President, Datuk
Haji Asri.*



*Encik Kassim Ahmad:
one of the 21 detainees
released.*



Dr Chen Man Hin.



*Datuk Senu Abdul
Rahman.*



*The late Tan Sri
V Manickavasagam —
former head of the MIC.*

young for a politician and will go into business.

Three Deputy Ministers will probably retire namely Datuk Ramli Omar of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Tan Sri Syed Ahmad Shahbuddin of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Datuk Ali Sharif of the Ministry of Transport.

Datuk Ramli Omar was elected to the Dewan Rakyat in 1959 and if he serves out his full term he will have served for more than two decades as a member of the Dewan Rakyat. And that is a record that will take some beating.

Tan Sri Syed Ahmad Shahabuddin was formerly Mentri Besar of Kedah before he moved to the centre as Deputy Minister of Home Affairs. He was succeeded by another Shahabuddin as Mentri Besar of Kedah.

Datuk Ali Sharif who hails from Kuantan was involved in a heated contest for the chairmanship of the Kuantan division of UMNO. At the last moment the other contestant, namely the present Mentri Besar of Pahang, Encik Rahim withdrew and Datuk Ali Sharif won the chairmanship of the Kuantan Division of the UMNO uncontested.

One of the persons to be promoted is Datuk Mokhtar Hashim, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. He is slated to take over the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. He took a science course in the University of Malaya and while an undergraduate he was elected as President of University of Malaya Students' Union. After that he worked as a research assistant in the planting industry. When Dr. Sulaiman Atas passed away Datuk Mokhtar Hashim was picked to contest the by-election in Tampin. He won handsomely and has climbed up the ladder as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Defence and currently is the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He made a good impression during his stint in the Ministry of Defence and would obviously be the first choice should any vacancy occur in the ranks of the Cabinet from amongst the UMNO members.

Clearly he is destined to go very high and time is on his side as he will be the youngest member of the Cabinet. He is the deputy leader UMNO Youth and with the promotion of Encik Suhaimi it means that the UMNO Youth will have enough clout in the Cabinet.

The UMNO Youth leader, Encik Suhaimi B. Kamaruddin is also promoted. I first met him in the Selangor State Assembly in 1964 when he was elected Member of Dengkil. We used to clash very often in the State Assembly, particularly over my remarks on

the Sultan of Selangor. Then in the 1974 elections he moved over to the Dewan Rakyat, being elected from the constituency of Sepang which he still represents.

He has been UMNO Youth leader in his own right for one term. At this year's UMNO convention his uncle and former mentor first threw his hat into the ring for UMNO Youth leadership. Encik Suhaimi Kamaruddin took up the gauntlet and won narrowly. In the murky underworld of the UMNO very little appears on the surface but it is not hard to surmise that for services rendered Encik Suhaimi is now being rewarded with a Ministership after being deliberately kept out of the corridors of power for a few years.

At the recent UMNO convention too, Encik Suhaimi Kamaruddin made a proposal to impose controls on the economic progress of non-bumiputras to reduce the economic gap between the bumiputras and them. This proposal together with the others on housing and education has greatly disturbed the non-bumiputras, particularly Malaysians of Chinese descent. Encik Suhaimi Kamaruddin has since tried to gloss over this but it has not assuaged the fears of the non-bumiputras. Let us hope that as Minister he will be more responsible in his comments on such sensitive issues.

One of the weaknesses of a coalition government, particularly a coalition as big as the Barisan Nasional, is that the Prime Minister has to accommodate all the component members of the coalition. He has to meet their wishes for a seat at the Cabinet level or lower down. As a result the Cabinet consists of some deadwood and it has to carry some passengers as well.

The MIC under Tun V.T. Sambanthan had two of its members in the Cabinet and it is no secret that it wants to have the status quo restored. But the MIC is now in such disarray that it will find it hard to press its claims. But in the Member for Telok Kemang the MIC has a candidate whose claim for promotion cannot be ignored.

The MCA also would like to see its Wanita MCA leader promoted, but has the MCA enough political clout to press home its claim? I doubt it.

On the cards too is the promotion of four Parliamentary Secretaries to Deputy Ministers namely: Encik Shahrir to Transport, Encik Abu Hassan to Housing and Local Government, Encik Abdul Rahim to Defence and Encik Abdullah Ahmad who is expected to remain at the Federal Territory Ministry.

Datuk Hussein Onn is expected to take over the post of Defence himself. He has been Minister of Defence before in

addition to being Prime Minister. On that occasion he had a very capable Deputy in the person of Datuk Mokhtar Hashim.

No one doubts for one moment that capability of our Prime Minister but it is his health that has given rise to some concern. I myself think he should not tax himself too much. What he should do is divest himself of some of his official duties. Remember he is also the Minister for the Federal Territory and if he takes over Defence he will be in charge of three Ministries which will tax the strength of even a much younger man. Datuk Hussein is too valuable to all Malaysians for him to overtax himself in this manner and I sincerely hope he will not do so.

It is no secret that Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed has fretted at his present post of Commerce and Industry. He has done a good job in expanding our trade and industry and his impending move to the Ministry of Home Affairs will give him greater political clout especially for one who aspires to move up to the Prime Ministership.

Other intra-Cabinet moves are on the political chessboard. Some Ministers have remained too long at their present Ministries and this is not in their own interest or that of the country at large. On principle I think five years should be long enough for a person to remain in any Ministry.

THE CABINET RESHUFFLE

The Prime Minister announced his cabinet reshuffle on 15 September 1980 and thus ended months of conjecture on the subject. In the past few months it was obvious that at least three of the more elderly and senior Cabinet Ministers wanted to retire and the Prime Minister quite rightly took advantage of this opportunity to promote two of his deputy Ministers to be full Ministers and also to bring in new blood at Deputy Minister and Parliamentary Secretary levels.

It is obvious that for any government and political party to survive the older members must retire in order to make way for new blood to be brought in at Cabinet level and lower down as well. This will provide the experience that is necessary before the younger leaders can become full members of the Cabinet. It will also ensure a smooth and peaceful changing of the guards in the Cabinet and a stable Government.

Gazing at a crystal ball to try and predict the changes that are imminent can be very chancy and in my article on the impending Cabinet reshuffle I made my share of mistakes. I did not touch on the elevation of Datin Paduka Rafidah not because I did not think her worthy of being a full Cabinet Minister but because I was thinking of the Asian prejudice against women taking too active a part in public life. The Prime Minister should be congratulated on appointing a second woman to his Cabinet.

Datin Paduka Rafidah fully deserves her elevation to the Cabinet. She is the second member of the Cabinet who has been a full time lecturer of the Faculty of Economics and Administration in the University of Malaya.

The Women's League in this country must be glad and proud at the promotion of Datin Paduka Rafidah.

I am also glad that the University of Malaya has been a good training ground for Cabinet Ministers like Datuk Dr. Neo Yee Pan, Minister of Housing and Local Government who was in fact Dean of the Faculty of Science. The University has also provided another don for the Government namely Dr. Goh Cheng Teik, Deputy Minister of Transport.

Yet another Cabinet Minister who has been a university don is Datuk Musa Hitam. He was at one time a part-time lecturer in the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Malaya and later he applied for a full-time post but before that application was processed he became the head of Federal Land Development Authority and later a Cabinet Minister.

I am glad that Datuk Hussein Onn in taking over the Defence portfolio has given up the Ministry of Federal Territory. That way it won't be too taxing on his health.

I had expected Encik Suhaimi to be appointed a Cabinet Minister but the Prime Minister has quite rightly decided that he being a lawyer should first serve his "pupilage" and earn his spurs.

Ours is a young democracy. We had a partially elected Federal Legislative Council in 1955 and a member system with Tunku Abdul Rahman as the first Chief Minister. In 1957 we became independent and in 1959 we had our first general elections. Over the years the educational standard of our MPs and Cabinet Ministers has risen. Take the recent appointees. Most of them have had a university education and some, as I have mentioned before, have been university dons. Most of them have had their secondary education at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar, which too has provided many of our Cabinet Ministers and those at lower level as well.

Datin Paduka Rafidah graduated from the University of Malaya in economics and has been a lecturer in the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya. Datuk Mokhtar Hashim went to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and then went to the University of Malaya where he graduated in Science. Encik Suhaimi Kamaruddin went to Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and later read law in Lincoln's Inn.

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Encik Hassan Haji Omar also went to the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and later obtained a B.A. (Hons.) from Hull University. After that he went to do his Masters in Regional Development Planning at the same university. Encik Shahrir Samad did his secondary education at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and graduated with a B. Econ. (Hons.) from the University of Malaya. Later he obtained an M.B.A. from Lausanne University, Switzerland. Encik Abdullah Ahmad went to Bukit Mertajam High School and later the Methodist Boys' School, Penang. He obtained a B.A.(Hons.) from the University of Malaya.

Encik Bujang Haji Ulis graduated from the University of Malaya with a B.A.(Hons.) in 1973 and then took the Diploma in Education from the same university. Encik William Lye had his early education at the Sacred Heart School, Kota Kinabalu and later went on to the La Salle College, Hong Kong.

Datuk Haji Embong is the only Deputy Minister recently promoted who has not had the benefit of a tertiary education. Of the two parliamentary secretaries the Wanita MCA leader, Mrs. Rosemary Chong had her secondary education in this country and later she left for Hong Kong University for her tertiary education. Encik Govindaraj the other parliamentary secretary appointed has not had the benefit of a tertiary education.

In the United Kingdom, until the advent of the Labour Party, Eton, Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge have been the best breeding ground for British MPs and Cabinet Ministers. Seventy percent of the Thatcher Government has been to either Eton or Harrow, Oxford or Cambridge.

However, when the Labour Party first achieved power in 1945 Clement Atlee had a large number of the working class represented in his Cabinet. Nevertheless there were some representatives of the prominent public schools and universities.

I want to make it very clear that I am not advocating that all our MPs and Cabinet Ministers should have a background of tertiary education. But, other things being equal a person with a tertiary background may be at an advantage against an opponent who has not been to a university.

In our own setting, I can think of several MPs and Cabinet Ministers who without a background of tertiary education have done very well in politics, namely Encik Ghaffar Baba, Encik Khir Johari, Datuk Lee San Choon and the late Tan Sri Manickavasagam.

In the United Kingdom the first Attlee Cabinet contained several working class representatives. Off hand I can think of Aneurin Bevan, the *enfant terrible* of British politics. He was a miner from Wales and while he was Minister of Health he introduced the National Health Service. A. Bevan, although a miner, could hold his own in debate even against the great W.S. Churchill. The other person I can think of is Ernest Bevin, a trade unionist and Britain's first post-war Foreign Minister.

Incidentally one of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers was the great Churchill and he was a drop-out! Thus a tertiary education is an asset in politics but not a *sine qua non* for entry into the Cabinet.

The present Cabinet is the youngest ever in our short history of parliamentary democracy. Leading the way is Paduka Rafidah who is 35 years old. She is followed by Datuk Mokhtar Hashim at 37, Datuk Leo Maggie who is 38 and Datuk Pengiran Othman b. Pengiran Rauf who is 39.

Then there are quite a number of Ministers who are 45 or younger, namely the Minister for Primary Industries, Datuk Paul Leong who is 41, Datuk Omar Taib Mahmud the new Minister for the Federal Territory who is 44, Datuk Abdul Manan Othman, the new Minister for Agriculture, and Datuk Lee San Choon, the Minister for Transport both of whom are 45.

Four others who are below 45 years are Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Minister for Finance, Datuk Samy Vellu, Minister for Works and Utilities, Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Minister for Information, and Datuk Dr. Neo Yee Pan, Minister for Housing and Local Government.

The oldest member of the Cabinet, Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui, the Minister for Science, Technology and Environment, has reached the venerable age of three score and six.

Having a young Cabinet in our humid climate is an advantage. They can stand the pace better.

In the Cabinet reshuffle the Attorney General has been left out of the Cabinet. This is regrettable. The Attorney General is the chief law officer of the Crown. He prosecutes on behalf of the Crown in all the major cases before the high court and represents the legal profession in the Cabinet and in the Dewan Rakyat. In the British system he is usually chosen from amongst the prominent members of the Bar who are MPs. He has a seat in the Cabinet and in the House of Common he is the spokesman of the Government on legal matters.

In our country the Attorney General up to now has not prosecuted on behalf of the Government while holding that office. The present incumbent, while holding the office of Solicitor General, has represented the Government in several big cases and I have no doubt that in his new office he will continue to do so.

THE MAHATHIR CABINET RESHUFFLE

The wind of change is stirring Malaysia. Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir was sworn in as the new Prime Minister on 16 July 1981 and he was supposed to announce his new line-up on 20 July 1981. Instead he made the announcement on Saturday, 18 July 1981 — two days earlier than he had intended. This shows that he does not intend to allow grass to grow under his feet and that he intends to get on with his job without wasting any time.

Also by starting work at 8 a.m. sharp he had given due warning not only to his Cabinet colleagues but also to all civil servants that punctuality must be observed by all of them. Too often do we see civil servants strolling into their offices sometimes long after 8 a.m. and leaving much earlier than 4 p.m. Now, with the Chief Executive arriving punctually at 8 a.m., it means that most of the rest of his subordinates will have to buck up or face disciplinary action.

The new Prime Minister is also action oriented. The announcement of the Cabinet reshuffle so soon after his assumption of office proves that he demands action from his subordinates. I am confident he is also against passing the buck — a favourite pastime of civil servants. Like President Harry Truman he can put a placard on his table with the notice: "The buck stops here".

As for the new line-up, Dr. Mahathir has quite rightly pointed out that it is not a major Cabinet reshuffle. No Cabinet Minister has been dropped, no Cabinet post has been scrapped and one Cabinet

post has been revived, namely the Ministry of National and Rural Development. Two Deputy Ministers have been promoted to full Ministers and five Cabinet Ministers have been moved about.

The Prime Minister in his conference has stated, as is my opinion too, that it is not good for a Minister to remain too long in any particular Ministry. For one thing, he is apt to go stale and lose his zest for the job. For another thing, he tends to identify himself personally with the powers given temporarily to him. Of the five ministers who have changed places one has remained eight years and the other six years in his job. But finance seems to be in a special category. Tun Tan Siew Sin had remained fifteen years in the Ministry of Finance and by popular acclaim Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh has been Minister of Finance since 1976.

I myself am of the opinion that every Minister should hold office in one particular Ministry for five to seven years, after which he should move on so as to get more experience to equip himself for the highest office in the land as has happened in the case of Datuk Musa Hitam.

An important statement made by the new Prime Minister is his intention to look again into the position of all detainees. "They are not forgotten people", he added. I must congratulate Dr. Mahathir that in his hour of triumph he has not forgotten the detainees of this country. Many of them have lingered, some in isolation for years on end in our detention camps — some of them, even forgotten by our authorities and some of them have remained there for longer than fifteen years! Political detention is a stain on the good name of the country. At long last we have a Prime Minister who has not forgotten these people. I wish to make an appeal to Dr. Mahathir to order a judicial re-examination of the Internal Security Act so that checks and balances that were present under the original Emergency laws can be restored. If necessary, he should amend the ISA to reflect the changes that have taken place in this country. In addition I would make a plea with him to look into the cases of those waiting in Death Row in Pudu Jail for their turn to be hanged, having been sentenced to death for offences under the ISA. Soon, I hope, we will no longer have to hang our head in shame when foreigners raise the matter of the ISA.

Let us now have a look at the five Ministries that have new incumbent Ministers.

Defence has been taken over by the Prime Minister himself. In most other countries Defence and Finance rank as the two most

important Ministries in the whole Government. But in Malaysia, Defence has become the foster child of the Prime Minister. It started with the late Tun Razak who was Minister of Defence while he was Deputy Prime Minister and continued to be so when he became the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind that the Premiership is more than a full-time job it is hard on our defence chiefs who have to get along with a part-time Minister. Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir is new to defence problems and to make matters worse his deputy is not only new to the job but is also new to federal politics. One must bear in mind that the Ministry of Defence is a comparatively new concept forced on the service chiefs after World War II. Prior to that there were three separate service departments, namely War, Navy and Air and it was a great tussle in most countries to get the three services to accept an integrated Ministry of Defence. I say that service rivalry does exist in Malaysia. Dr. Mahathir is a very capable man but he himself will admit that he is no superman and he will soon find out that running the Ministry of Defence, or MINDEF as it is known in this country, is very different and more difficult than tackling Trade and Industry.

Home Affairs now goes to Datuk Musa who is also *pari passu* the Deputy Prime Minister. He will bring in a breath of fresh air to this powerful Ministry. And he will have problems galore facing him. He has to tie up the loose ends of the case of the expulsion of the KGB agent posing as a diplomat and the problem of illegal immigrants, whether in Sabah or in Peninsular Malaysia. Furthermore, the problems of foreign wives of citizens must catch his attention, not to mention the nearly quarter million of stateless persons with Red Identity Cards in this country. Having interviewed him recently I am confident that given time he will be able to tackle all these thorny problems successfully.

Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie returns to the kingdom he once dominated as permanent secretary — the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now he returns as the Ministerial boss and "King Ghaz" will no doubt make his presence felt without delay. He is one of the more vocal of our Ministers and although in charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs he has often in the past few years made several forays into the field of foreign affairs.

Tengku Rithaudeen has left his mark in foreign affairs especially amongst the Arab countries in the Middle East so much so that Arab money and oil have been flowing into this country. I am confident that he will be able to continue the good work of his predecessor Dr. Mahathir, in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, especially where

investment from the Arab countries is concerned.

Datuk Dr. Sulaiman Daud, a dental surgeon hails from Sarawak, and has taken over from Datuk Musa Hitam as Minister of Education. The Ministry of Education has been called the nursery of future Prime Ministers but if one is not careful it can also be the graveyard of one's political ambitions. It is fraught with problems and this is one Ministry where one cannot hope to please everyone. Datuk Dr. Sulaiman Daud had been just promoted from Deputy Minister of Health to Minister for the Federal Territory in April this year. He has not had time to warm his seat before he is pitchforked into the important and vital Ministry of Education. But he has got on well with the doctors of this country and they are not an easy lot to get along with. The doctors of this country wish him well in his new job and I myself am confident that he will make a success of it.

Two Deputy Ministers have been promoted to be full Ministers, namely Datuk Abdullah Ahmad and Encik Sanusi Junid. Both of them have won their spurs in their respective Ministries and both have been elected to the Supreme Council of UMNO recently. Both of them are northerners. Datuk Abdullah Ahmad hails from Penang, the first Penangite UMNO member to become a Minister, while Encik Sanusi Junid is from Kedah.

Datuk Abdullah Ahmad becomes a Minister without portfolio in the Prime Minister's Department while Encik Sanusi Junid heads the revived Ministry of National and Rural Development. The latter has several nationalised agencies and Government departments under his portfolio and at the same time he is also in charge of Rural Development. He will work very closely with Datuk Musa in carrying out his duties. When I interviewed Datuk Musa recently he stated that he loved to go out and do things for people the way the late Tun Razak operated. This close liaison with Encik Sanusi Junid especially in Rural Development will provide both the opportunity to raise the standard of living of the rural people.

In addition five new Deputy Minister and three Parliamentary Secretaries have been created making a total of 59 Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. This is a large number when you consider that out of the 59 only two are senators, namely Datuk Hj. Mohamed Nasir, Minister without portfolio in the PM's Department, and Senator Lau Hing Ding, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment. This means that 57 MPs of the Barisan Nasional hold public office. Our Dewan Rakyat has 154 members and 22 of them are in the

Opposition. That leaves us with the Barisan Nasional membership of 132. Thus, nearly every one in two of the Barisan Nasional MPs is holding public office. This is a very high number by any standard and shows up one of the weaknesses of a coalition — there must be jobs for the boys. And if some more are appointed there may be no more back-benchers left in the Government!

However, the new Prime Minister has to work under several constraints. He must not rock the boat too much, especially in view of the general election most certainly due by the middle of next year.

It is interesting to note that both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister are taking over Ministries that are new to them and both their respective Deputy Ministers are also new to their jobs.

Another interesting feature of the new Cabinet is that the Minister of Health and his new deputy, Datuk Padhmanabam, have been top notch civil servants. Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan was the ex-*Ketua Setiausaha* of the Ministry of Finance while his new deputy had served as deputy Director-General of the E.P.U. and later Deputy K.S.U. of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower.

The Cabinet is a good blend of experience and youth. The oldest member is veteran Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui, now 67, and the youngest is Datuk Najib B. Tun Abdul Razak, now 28.

The "good ship 'Mahathir'" has now been launched on its hundred days' "honeymoon cruise" and Malaysians will all wish it well. I see that Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir, after his first cabinet meeting on 22 July 1981, has asked for one year's grace before we judge his new administration. That is a fair request but I must warn him that after the hundred days' "honeymoon cruise" is over, I for one will ask awkward questions if the "good ship 'Mahathir'" is off course!

THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS OF THE MAHATHIR ADMINISTRATION

It is appropriate that the first hundred days of Dr. Mahathir's administration were up on 24 October 1981 — the day that Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh, Minister of Finance, delivered his budget speech and confounded all of us with a budget that proved to be painless and had a bit for almost everyone in this country.

Now that the hundred days are over let me run a critical eye over the events that took place during the period.

The new administration set to work at a hectic pace which must have left the Prime Minister's colleagues and the civil servants breathless. In his very first press conference on 17 July 1981 the Prime Minister asked the country to give him a grace period of one year before passing judgement on him. Then he surprised devotees of human rights in this country by saying that those who have been detained under the ISA were not forgotten and that he would look into their plight. I say that this announcement surprised quite a number of us for in the past I have not known of Dr. Mahathir speaking out in defence of human rights, either inside the Dewan Rakyat or outside it. But as I interpret it, the reason for this announcement became obvious later.

On 30 July 1981, Datuk Musa Hitam, the Deputy Prime Minister and concurrently the Home Minister announced the unconditional release of 21 detainees. This surprised most of us as it saved us the unsavoury spectacle of detainees confessing their

"sins" on TV and radio as a condition of their release. I am glad that the Mahathir Administration has put an end to this condition of release of a detainee as it is most demeaning to the human individual.

This excellent start has been spoilt by the detention of Encik Halim and Datuk Aziz of the *Watan*. We are told that both of them have been detained for interrogation. If that is really so, it is a strange way of doing it by depriving a person of his freedom — merely to question him — up to a maximum of 60 days.

I have always maintained that if the Government has a case of subversion, acting against the national interests and so on, against any person, that person should be brought before a court of law, or otherwise he should be released unconditionally. And I call on the Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Musa Hitam, to do so in the case of Encik Halim and Datuk Aziz.

Then two days later, on August 1981, as a Hari Raya present, Datuk Harun Idris was granted a remission of his six years' jail term by the Federal Territory Pardons Board. He was released from prison and was able to spend Hari Raya Puasa with his family. Datuk Harun Idris had been a festering wound to the administration of Tun Hussein Onn and as long as he was behind bars there would be no peace within UMNO. By this remission of sentence, not full pardon, and the prior unconditional release of the 21 detainees Dr. Mahathir has neatly excised a festering wound from the body politic.

Prior to that, Datuk Harun Idris had come out second in the contest for the vice-presidency to the UMNO. Under the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 he was barred from taking office. He appealed to the Registrar of Societies but his appeal was turned down. His last court of appeal was the Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Musa Hitam. Datuk Harun promptly appealed to the Minister of Home Affairs who could not ignore the strong support that Datuk Harun had amongst the delegates to the UMNO General Assembly. Datuk Musa allowed the appeal and let us hope this is the last we will hear of an unhappy episode in the life of UMNO and of this country.

The first visitor of importance to this country was the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Zhao Ziyang. Dr. Mahathir told his visitor that Peking's support of the Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM) was an obstacle to the smooth relations between China and Malaysia. The blunt no-nonsense manner in

which this message was conveyed to the Chinese Premier surprised the latter. Other Asean leaders has tried to convey the same message but had not quite succeeded in doing so. It was left to the latest leader of an Asean state to bell the cat so to speak. I well remember that in the sixties the Tunku, our first Premier, stated openly that should the Chinese invade this country he would step aside and let the Chinese in. But this country and Asean have come a long way since then. We have openly objected to China helping the CPM and at Melbourne we have warned against a resurgent China armed with American arms. We are spending billions in upgrading our military hardware as has our neighbour south of the causeway and both at Melbourne have warned against a resurgent China. But our fears must not become an obsession. We must remember that we are a tiny nation and it does not pay for us to twist the tail of the Chinese Dragon too often.

The day after the Prime Minister was sworn in on 16 July 1981 he was at his desk at 8 a.m. he gave notice to all and sundry that the days of *laissez faire* were over and that all civil servants, from cabinet ministers to the humble office boy were expected to report for duty at 8 a.m. He also said that no excuse would be accepted and that the clock-in system would be instituted soon in stages. This shook up the civil servants and convinced them that the new Premier meant business. However, when I interviewed Datuk Samy Vellu, Minister of Works and Utilities, on 24 August 1981 he told me that the new order did not trouble either him or the members of his Ministry, for many months earlier he had instituted the system in his Ministry and by the time I interviewed him there were no latecomers.

On 13 August 1981, Dr. Mahathir paid his first official visit to Jakarta. As he stated later in his press conference on 24 October 1981 his first priority will be ASEAN, his second the Arab Middle-East countries, third the Third World countries and a long way down will be the Commonwealth.

The visit to Jakarta was a successful one and it was followed a few weeks later by the first official state visit by a reigning monarch of Malaysia. The visit was a successful one and has done much to cement the relations between the two countries.

While he was Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir played the role of trouble-shooter to the Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn. Now that role is taken over by Datuk Musa Hitam. His first official visit was to his home state, Johore. There in a three-day visit he

ordered two subsidiaries of Johore Tenggara Development Authority (KEJORA) to be closed down after making huge losses for several years and he served notice to several other subsidiaries that they too would suffer the same fate if they did not improve immediately.

Later in a state visit to Perlis, Datuk Musa ordered two subsidiaries of the Perlis State Economic Development Corporation to be shut down. To date, 41 subsidiaries of various SEDCs have been ordered to be shut down due to heavy losses made by them. Datuk Musa moved through some states like a whirlwind, closing subsidiaries of SEDCs that are wasting public funds. No doubt he put the fear of God into the corrupt, lazy and incompetent civil servants.

Meanwhile all Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Mentri Besar, Chief Minister, State Assemblymen and senior civil servants had been ordered to fill in an asset declaration form duly notarised by a Commissioner of Oaths. I noticed that in the Dewan Rakyat there was an attempt by some people to include their foreign assets as well. As these declarations have to be notarised by a Commissioner of Oaths they will form a useful baseline should anyone of them be investigated later.

I myself, and I am sure there are many others as well, will be happier if all our Members of Parliament, both of the Dewan Rakyat and of the Dewan Negara, are asked to do likewise.

After his return from Spain in mid-September Dr. Mahathir announced that he would not attend the meeting of the Commonwealth heads of Government at Melbourne as he had more important pressing business to attend to at home.

Meanwhile two constitutional issues of the utmost importance cropped up; one in Pahang and the other in Johore. The issue in Pahang involved intra-UMNO politics as well as the royalty. In order to have a cooling off period the Mentri Besar of Pahang was ordered to join the Malaysian delegation to the United Nations. This he declined to do and instead left for Mecca to perform the Haj, with no acting Mentri Besar appointed to run the state in his absence. It is contented that some Bills passed by the State Assembly had not received the royal assent and that some part of the State Government had come to a virtual standstill. At first, things looked grim for the Mentri Besar, Hj. Abdul Rahim Bakar. But later there was a swell of support for him and both on his departure for Mecca and on his return to Kuantan from the pilgrimage, he was welcomed by thousands of his supporters in the

UMNO. One must remember that in the election for the Supreme Council of UMNO he obtained more than seven hundred votes, beating Ministers, fellow Mentri Besars and Chief Ministers in the process.

The other crisis that developed concerned the state of Johore where the Mentri Besar, Tan Sri Othman Saat is virtually *persona non grata* to his Sultan. These two constitutional crises are of the greatest importance to the development of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia. Only the Tunku sounded a word of warning that the crises must not be allowed to drag on and that only the Rulers can solve them. The Tunku is about the only person qualified to speak on this issue as he was our first Prime Minister, is of royal blood himself and has a wealth of experience in dealing with the Rulers. I entirely agree with what the Tunku has written on this issue. In the constitutional monarchy that we have adopted, the business of running the Government lies with the elected representatives of the people. When the elected representatives have chosen a person to lead the Government, it is incumbent on the Ruler to accept the person chosen to be the Mentri Besar or Chief Minister as the case may be. If the choice of the people is ignored by the Ruler a constitutional crisis of the first order will ensue and that is not in the interests of the Ruler of the state.

Meanwhile the share market in both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore has almost come apart. The Prime Minister has laid the blame on short sellers and syndicates out to make huge profits. He stated that the Government will introduce legislation to amend the Securities Industries Act to check manipulation of the Stock Exchange. That Bill has since been passed by the Dewan Rakyat but the stock market is still in the doldrums and it may be a long time before we are out of the woods.

On 19 September the Prime Minister opened the General Assembly of the MCA in Kuala Lumpur and on 2 October 1981 he opened the MIC General Assembly in Penang. At both these meetings he reminded these two parties and other parties of the Barisan Nasional as well not to rock the boat and that new demands would not be entertained by him as head of the Government and of the Barisan Nasional.

By now all three main components of the Barisan Nasional have held their General Assemblies. Both the MCA and MIC have mended the fences within their respective parties and all three parties together with the other components of the Barisan Nasional

have girded themselves for the general elections that lie ahead next year.

But fissures have appeared between some of the component parties of the Barisan Nasional and the constitutional crisis must be solved before it can enter the election battle.

A new broom sweeps well and it remains to be seen whether the two Ms as they are now known, namely Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed and Datuk Musa Hitam, can outlast the cracking pace that they have set for themselves.

PART IV
Political Parties

Before the Second World War, the indigenous Malays had little or no need for politics or political parties: their country was governed on their behalf by the British who maintained the Malay Rulers as sovereigns with due pomp and glory, provided a special position for the Malays, and treated Malaya as *Tanah Melayu*. At the same time, most non-Malays, treated as they were as transient aliens, were able to maintain close contact with the countries of their origin and involved themselves more with the politics of China and India. As a result, in Malaya, politics and political parties essentially appeared only after the Second World War, when the British announced drastic changes in the constitutional structure which were to alter substantially the status of the Malays and the non-Malays.

The first major political organisation, the United Malays National Organisation, formed in 1946, sought to undo the constitutional changes that were to detract from the status of Malaya as *Tanah Melayu*. The Malays then were not overly enthused by a sense of nationalism or anti-colonialism; in fact, they had come to consider the British as their protectors and they viewed decolonisation with a strong sense of fear and anxiety. The Malays were influenced more by a fear of the non-Malays and the primary purpose of their political organisation was to protect and promote their interests. Soon afterwards, the large Chinese community formed a communal organisation, the Malayan Chinese Association.

Following this, Dato Onn bin Jaafar, the founder of UMNO and father of Malay nationalism, realizing that the strengthening racial loyalties of the people and the racial basis of political parties would prove to be a serious barrier to the country's progress towards independence, formed in September 1951 a national political organisation, the Independence of Malaya Party, with multi-racialism and independence as its two paramount objectives. Unfortunately, however, this first major effort by a Malay political leader to form a non-communal national political organisation proved a failure and the party did not last for long.

However, the need for inter-racial cooperation continued to be recognised. Realising that a single inter-racial political organisation was too drastic a step to be acceptable to the Malays in view of their excessive fears of non-Malays, the idea of an inter-racial coalition of the existing political organisations of the various racial groups was promoted by the leaders of the MCA and the UMNO. This led to the emergence of the Alliance, including the UMNO, the MCA and the MIC (Malayan Indian Congress), during the early 1950s.

MIC (Malayan Indian Congress), during the early 1950s.

The intensity of racial fears and loyalties made it difficult for non-communal political parties to function. They were formed and supported largely only by the non-Malays. The bumiputras have been fearful of non-communal political parties and have shunned them. They believed that their political paramountcy could not be maintained through non-communal politics and political organisations. Over the years, a large number of non-communal political parties have been formed: the Labour Party, the Party Raayat, the Socialist Front, the people's Progressive Party, the United Democratic Action Party, the Gerakan Rakyat and the Social Justice Party. In view of the emphasis on race and the predisposition of the Malays to shun non-communal politics and organisations, all of them found it impossible to maintain their non-communal character and eventually they were turned into virtually communal organisations of the immigrant non-Malays.

The inter-racial coalition, the Alliance, being more attuned to the racial reality in the country and the racial basis of political loyalties, proved to be a remarkable success. In the first national elections in 1955, it won 51 of the 52 seats and assumed control of the Government two years before independence. It has retained this position ever since and there have been no serious challenges to its monopoly of political power. In the Alliance arrangement, even though the UMNO occupied a dominant position, the MCA and the MIC as the sole mobilisers of the votes and support of their respective racial groups, did enjoy a certain leverage and influence. However, the communal crisis of 1969 changed the situation dramatically. With increased Malay fears of losing their political paramountcy through the ballot box, the Alliance arrangement gave way to the Barisan Nasional. Even though the Barisan, like its predecessor, is an inter-racial coalition, its non-Malay components do not enjoy the same status and leverage as they did in the Alliance. Their position has considerably weakened. The MCA and the MIC do not enjoy the privilege any more of being the sole mobilisers of the votes of their respective communities. They now have to compete against other non-Malay organisations within the Barisan Nasional.

THE APPROACHING 32nd UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The UMNO General Assembly which begins on 26 June 1981 has attracted the attention not only of the members of the party but is of absorbing interest to all Malaysians. And it promises to be a historic event as well.

First you have the president of UMNO laying down the reins of office of his own volition and this is an event that is very rare. Then you have a titanic battle for the deputy presidency. After that comes the fight for the vice-presidency and to round it up you have 71 contestants fighting for 20 places in the UMNO Supreme Council. All these add up to a historic event of the first order, the likes of which Malaysia has not seen before and will probably not see for many years to come.

Let us consider the various posts up for contest, starting with the presidency. When the closing date for the acceptance of the nominations came on 9 June, there was only one candidate left, namely Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed. The only other nomination was Datuk Harun Idris, who wisely did not accept the nomination. This is in the UMNO tradition, especially when the Prime Minister designate enters the ring for the first time. This is a show of unity when the whole party rallies round the new chief and gives him a unanimous mandat to rule the country. It is not only UMNO but the whole country that welcomes the Prime Minister designate. Let us hope that he will lead the country to a new era of

peace and prosperity.

For the deputy presidency there are two candidates and they represent the new generation of leaders who did not take part in the struggle for Merdeka. They are both evenly matched and have been finely trained for this fight of the century, in Malaysia. The pity is that this is a "fight to the death" between the two and the loser has deliberately chosen to go into the political wilderness. This is despite pleas from many quarters: from the Prime Minister designate, the former Prime Minister and many others. I too have lent my small voice to ask the loser not to resign from the Cabinet. Even at this late stage, at the eleventh hour, I sincerely hope that a solution to the problem be found.

The race, especially for the deputy presidency has reached the home stretch. Just one more spurt and the winner will be home. It can be a very close race. The maximum votes cast can be 1,300 but as I shall point out later, it is unlikely that the votes will reach that figure. It is estimated that the candidate with 621 votes will win and the winner may well win by a razor-thin margin of *one* vote! On the other hand, if either of the candidates commits even a small mistake, the margin of victory may well be larger.

For the vice-presidency there are seven contestants. Seven others who were nominated have decided not to accept the nominations. The contestants are: Encik Ghafar Baba, Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, Datuk Harun Idris, Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen, Datuk Ismail Majid and Datuk Rais Yatim.

Encik Ghafar Baba is an UMNO veteran and has served both as a Vice-President and as a Minister. In 1976, he lost out as Deputy President just when that glittering prize seemed to be within his grasp. He was not picked as Deputy President presumably because he had no tertiary education. He left the Cabinet to go into business where he has amassed a pile. The class conscious elite of UMNO must learn to be more democratic. Elsewhere leaders from the working class with no tertiary education have been elected as Prime Ministers and have done well. To quote but one example, there is the case of Jim Callaghan who led the Labour Government before Mrs. M. Thatcher.

Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman is a self-made man who went to the USA for his tertiary education. He returned to this country with a degree in political science. He hitched his wagon to the star of the Tunku. He was Secretary-General of the UMNO under three Prime Ministers, namely the Tunku, the late Tun Razak and Datuk

Hussein Onn, and has served as a Minister as well. He is now in business.

Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie has been Minister for Home Affairs since August 1973 after the death of the late Tun Dr. Ismail. Prior to that he had been Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for more than a decade. After the tragedy of 13th May he was picked by the late Tun Razak to be a member of the National Operations Council. With the resumption of Parliament, he entered the Senate and was appointed a Minister. Then the MP for Kuala Lipis resigned and Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie successfully contested the by-election there in 1972. He has represented that constituency ever since without a break. Of late he is given to flamboyance which has antagonized old and young alike. His appearance over Radio Television Malaysia in connection with the Societies (Amendment) Act 1981 was not one of his better performances.

Datuk Harun Idris has been dogged by controversy ever since he started his third term as Menteri Besar of Selangor in 1974. Up to the eve of the General Assembly Meeting on 26 June 1979 controversy has surrounded his candidature for the vice-presidency. I must congratulate the UMNO Supreme Council for not interfering in this issue. Now that all doubts have been removed regarding his candidacy no doubt his supporters will go all out to see that Datuk Harun is elected.

Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen is from Kelantan and has been Minister for Foreign Affairs since 1975. In the general elections of 1969 he won a narrow victory in the constituency of Kota Hilir and he has risen slowly but surely both through the party and Government. He is trying for the vice-presidency for the second time, having lost in 1978. He got the highest number of votes (915) in the contest for a seat in the Supreme Council in 1978.

Datuk Ismail Majid is a businessman and an UMNO veteran from Perak. He is the only candidate for high office to come from Perak. I do not think that he himself has any high hopes of winning but it is important he should show the flag of Perak at the General Assembly.

Datuk Rais Yatim is the head of PEMADAM and the Menteri Besar of Negeri Sembilan and at 39 is the youngest of the seven candidates for the vice-presidency. He had a varied scholastic career culminating in a LL.B. in 1973 and LL.M. from the University of Singapore. He entered Parliament in 1974 at the age of 32. Two years later he became Deputy Minister of Law and in 1978, at the

age of 36, he was picked by Datuk Hussein Onn to be Mentri Besar of Negeri Sembilan. He is obviously one of the new breed of technocrats destined to go places both in the party and the Government and time is on his side.

The seven candidates are evenly spread out as they come from Peninsular Malaysia, Malacca, Kedah, Pahang, Selangor, Kelantan, Perak and Negeri Sembilan. It is pertinent to ponder why Perak with the biggest delegation has not produced a contender for the highest office in UMNO so far. This year Perak with 21 divisions has 231 delegates.

With the biggest delegations, Perak should have a favourite son to carry her flag but so far has not produced anyone to challenge the leading contenders from other states. But now that Perak has a more stable leadership she may produce a favourite son to challenge the other states in the near future.

The Supreme Council of UMNO consists of:

1. The President
2. The Deputy President
3. Five Vice-Presidents, three of whom are elected. The UMNO Youth leader and the Wanita leader are ex-officio Vice-Presidents.
4. Twenty elected members.
5. Seven members nominated by the President.
6. The Secretary-General, Treasurer and Chief Information Officer, all of whom are nominated by the President.
7. The Permanent Chairman for which there are 7 candidates and the Deputy Permanent Chairman for which there are 10 candidates.

The total then is 37 but where an officer doubles his duties, as in the case of Tengku Razaleigh who is a Vice-President and Treasurer as well, the total then becomes 36 which is the present figure.

For the 20 places up for grabs in the Supreme Council there are 70 contestants out of 125 nominations. This figure includes seven Ministers, eight Deputy Ministers, three Parliamentary Secretaries, all the Mentris Besar except of Perlis, and the Chief Minister for Malacca. There are also three former Ministers, namely Encik Khir Johari, Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah and Tan Sri Abdul Samad Idris. The three former Deputy Ministers are Datuk Ramli Omar, Datuk Seri Kamaruddin Mohamed Isa and Datuk Engku Mohsein Abdul Kadir. Over the years there has been an improvement in the

educational standard of the candidates and their ages have been lowered too. One Deputy Minister who is in the running is still in his twenties. More and more professional men and women are entering the race for political leadership as well. This is understandable as the literacy rate of the population improves and the proportion of the population below the age of 21 increases as well.

There are two Wanita UMNO candidates who are amongst the contenders and these include the Minister for Public Utilities who is the youngest member of the Cabinet. At the rate she is moving up the ladder it will not be long before she becomes the elected head of the Wanita UMNO. Beyond that there is the presidency of the UMNO and the premiership as well. Britain has her Iron Lady in the person of Mrs. M. Thatcher and Malaysia too may boast of Rafidah Aziz as the Prime Minister in the not-too-distant future.

The other Wanita UMNO candidate is Datuk Paduka Zaleha Ismail, a Selangor State Assemblywoman. In 1978 both she and Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz were the official candidates of the Wanita UMNO and both of them won with ease. This year they are joined by Puan Marina Yusoff, a lawyer, who although not nominated by Wanita UMNO has decided to accept the nomination by a division.

Of those contesting for a place in the Supreme Council are several who are destined for high office both in the party and the Government. I have already singled out Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz. Others who will go far are Datuk Mokhtar Hashim, the Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture, Datuk Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, Datuk Rais Yatim and Datuk Mohamed Yaacob, the Mentris Besar of Kedah, Negri Sembilan and Kelantan respectively. The last named has the advantage of having been a Federal Minister before he returned to Kelantan to be the Mentri Besar after the State Elections of 1978.

The delegates include the following:

1. The head of each division.
2. One delegate for every 500 members, up to a maximum of 10 from each division. The UMNO membership is now estimated to be 650,000.
3. Members of the Supreme Council.
4. Representatives of the UMNO Youth and Wanita UMNO.

There will be a grand total of 1241 delegates and so each of the contestants for the Deputy Presidency will have to aim for 621 votes. I gather that all the divisions have paid up their dues and so

all of them can have the full representation that they are entitled to. In the past, padding of membership has taken place in some divisions. This is a common enough practice not only in the UMNO but also in other political parties in Malaysia and abroad.

UMNO has come a long way since the days of Dato Onn and the Tunku. It is no longer a poor man's party. The imposing UMNO headquarters in all the capitals of the states is mute testimony to its affluence. On 25 June the foundation stone of the new UMNO Headquarters will be laid by Datuk Hussein Onn and it will cost \$200 million at current prices. By the time of its expected completion in 1985, I venture to predict that the cost will increase by at least 50 percent to \$300 million.

The delegates no longer travel by public transport but many sport shining Mercedes-Benz cars. They no longer stay in cheap hotels along Jalan Raja Muda but in places like the Hilton.

The character of the delegates too has changed. They are no longer rural folks — mainly teachers — but instead are business executives, professionals, high-powered Ministers, car-owning teachers and the like. As many as 60 to 70 percent of the delegates are said to be teachers who exert tremendous influence in traditional Malay society in rural Malaysia. Next come the community development officers who work at grassroot level in the villages.

UMNO elections are not like the general elections. Here one does not run down or denigrate one's opponents. On the surface of it there are no bad guys and all the candidates are expected to strictly observe the "Queensberry Rulers". But all the same the struggle is very intense and often the rules are thrown overboard.

A candidate for high office very often in the course of his career does lots of favours for the party and its divisions and in doing so he unobtrusively collects a lot of I.O.U.s. Over the years these keep on accumulating until come an occasion like the big fight for the Deputy Presidency, the I.O.U.s. are encashed. I have no doubt that more and more I.O.U.s. will be encashed as 26 June draws nearer.

Now is the time when the candidates have to be extremely careful so that they do not commit any *feux pas*. The candidates must have a good Intelligence service. We in Malaysia may not descend to staging a Watergate but planting a Trojan Horse is a time-honoured practice in any political campaign.

On 26 June, the delegates will all make their way to the Nirwana Hall at the Hilton to take part in the party extravaganza and witness the "fight of the century", Musa vs. Razaleigh.

THE RESULTS OF THE 32nd UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 32nd UMNO General Assembly has come and gone. With it the immediate post-war era of politics has come to an end. With the retirement of Datuk Hussein Onn the generation of leaders who had taken part in the formation of UMNO and the Merdeka struggle has faded from the political scene to give way to a new one.

At the 32nd UMNO General Assembly, Datuk Hussein Onn was fittingly given a standing ovation when he came to the end of his last speech as UMNO President.

But the General Assembly had really come to see the fight between Musa and Razaleigh. The last time there had been such a fight was between the late Tun Abdul Razak and his deputy, the late Tun Dr. Ismail. But that was a tame affair compared to the interest and excitement that this encounter has generated not only in this country but abroad as well, not only amongst the Malays or UMNO members but amongst all Malaysians. Except for a general election, seldom has a political event gripped the attention of all Malaysians for such a sustained and prolonged period.

The campaign itself has hogged the headlines for more than two months and will provide an interesting case study for the historian, political scientist and politician of the future.

Being an intra-party fight between two top notch gladiators of the main component of the ruling party the participants could not denigrate each other overtly. But all the same the fight went on

intensely and relentlessly as it moved towards its climax on 26 June 1981 when the delegates finally responded to the call made on them and cast their votes in the Nirwana Hall of the Kuala Lumpur Hilton.

The delegates were distributed between states as follows: Perak (217), Johore (176), Kedah (143), Kelantan (132), Selangor (121), Pahang (87), Trengganu (77), Penang (73), Negri Sembilan (66), Malacca and Federal Territory (43) each, and tiny Perlis had the smallest delegation of 22.

The Supreme Council members number 35 with the UMNO Youth and Wanita chipping in with 5 each, making a grand total of 1245. There was one absentee, namely Datuk Harun Idris who was lying in hospital and so only 1244 turned up to vote.

It was obvious that Tengku Razaleigh's strength lay in his home state of Kelantan, together with the East coast states of Trengganu and Pahang. Datuk Musa had Johore, his home state, as his bastion and he had strong support in Malacca, Kedah and Selangor. The crucial state was Perak with the largest delegation of 217 so both sides worked hard to corner the votes there.

Ceramahs were held for the delegates and various official functions such as opening of mosques and a royal audience, were fully reported over Radio and Television Malaysia and in our newspapers. The pre-budget public hearing of the Ministry of Finance was squeezed in. If the last named event had been previously scheduled it was superbly timed, for, as I have mentioned before, Tengku Razaleigh always gives a superb performance at such hearings. He is at his best in the crossfire with the professionals and the captains of industry who try to influence his budget. It is interesting to note that under the Societies (Amendment) Act, 1981, this will be blatant politicking and all those appearing before the Minister are guilty of an offence and the societies or organizations they represent will have to convert to political societies.

When the results were announced to the eagerly awaiting delegates and indeed to the whole nation at about 6.15 p.m. on 26 June 1981, Datuk Musa had won 722 votes, Tengku Razaleigh had polled 517 votes and there were 5 spoilt votes. A majority of 205 votes was not expected. It would be true to say that most of the pundits had expected a close fight.

Let us now examine some of the causes of the defeat of Tengku Razaleigh.

History was with Datuk Musa and against Tengku Razaleigh. The Prime Ministers after the Tunku, have all been Deputy

Presidents of UMNO. The Ministry of Education seems to be a good training ground for Prime Ministers. But many have held the post of Education Minister and have not been anywhere near the premiership.

In a hard fought campaign the side that makes the least mistakes will romp home. In this respect there is no doubt that Datuk Musa did not make as many mistakes as his opponent. He was very careful with the announcement of his candidature at the Menglembu Division meeting and also delayed till the last hour, acceptance of his nomination. He adopted a low-key style throughout the campaign and this went well with the delegates who are essentially a conservative crowd. In this connection, Tengku Razaleigh was not helped by the foundation stone laying caremony during which he played a prominent part, the day before the vote was cast. About two months ago when I was discussing the campaign with an UMNO veteran I was surprised when he predicted that the foundation laying ceremony would be counter productive for Tengku Razaleigh. The loss by a margin of 205 votes proves the UMNO veteran right.

Out of the total of 1244 delegates who cast their votes about 60 percent of them are Malay school teachers who form the backbone of UMNO — hence the Ministry of Education is a stepping stone to the Deputy Presidency of UMNO and with it the Deputy Prime Ministership. An incumbent Minister of Education naturally has an advantage over his opponent.

The race for the Vice-Presidency was less exciting and as expected Encik Ghafar Baba came out on top with 869 votes. Datuk Harun Idris was the surprise second choice with 757 votes and Tengku Rithauddeen was third with 711 votes. Datuk Rais Yatim, the youngest challenger, ran a close fourth with 706 votes. Seeing that this was his first attempt it was a very good show on his part. As I have stated before he should go very far both in the party and in the Government as well.

The two who came out first in the Vice-Presidency race are outsiders in that currently they do not hold any official positions. The winner was at one time a minister and the second was the Mentri Besar of Selangor.

The election to the Supreme Council could not be carried out on the first day and had to be conducted on the second day. Voting started in the afternoon and the counting was not completed until about 7.30 p.m. And it produced several surprising results.

In the past those elected always had some official status, for example he or she was either a Minister or a Deputy Minister or a *Mentri Besar* et cetera. In this instance three were "outsiders"; one of them — Puan Marina Yusoff — is a genuine outsider and a lone ranger, not being adopted by the *Wanita UMNO*. Hence she had to campaign almost by herself and it says much for her grit and perseverance in the face of adversity to triumph in the end.

She came out twelfth with 678 votes, ahead of two Ministers, two *Mentris Besar*, two Deputy Ministers, one ex-*Mentri Besar*, and one of the official candidates of *Wanita UMNO*.

The other "outsider" is *Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail* who is the State Assemblywoman for *Permatang, Selangor*. She is one of the two official *Wanita UMNO* candidates — the other being *Datuk Paduka Rafidah Aziz*.

The third and last "outsider" is *Datuk Seri Haji Kamaruddin Isa*, currently our ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Strictly speaking he is not an outsider as he is a former *Mentri Besar* of *Perak*.

There were three ladies in the Supreme Council race and I am glad that all three won. In previous Supreme Council elections the *Wanita UMNO* fielded more candidates but all of them lost. In 1978 they got wise and fielded only two candidates and both of them won again. The *Wanita UMNO*, which is reported to account for about 51 percent of the total *UMNO* membership, has only 77 delegates out of a total of 1244. Thus it can be seen that the *Wanita UMNO* is grossly under-represented in the delegations to the General Assembly. I have no doubt that it will want to have this unsatisfactory state of affairs rectified in the near future.

In the representation by state to the Supreme Council, *Selangor* and *Pahang* lead the way with four representatives each. *Perak*, *Kedah*, *Negri Sembilan*, and *Trengganu* have two each and *Johore*, *Malacca*, *Penang* and *Kelantan* have one each.

Here it is pertinent to note that *Perak* with the biggest delegation has only two elected representatives to the Supreme Council and *Johore* with the second largest delegation has only one representative. *Perak* always has problems of leadership but *Johore* can boast of winning the biggest prize of all next to the presidency, namely the deputy presidency.

This 32nd General Assembly also marks the exit of four ex-Ministers, namely *Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman*, *Encik Khir Johari*, *Datuk Seri Hamzah Abu Samah* and *Tan Sri Abdul Samad Idris*. Their exit marks the close of the immediate post-war era of the

UMNO leaders. Another who made his exit perhaps for good is Tan Sri Othman Saat, the only Mentri Besar to lose in the race. The only other Mentri Besar left is Datuk Jaafar of Perlis who did not contest because of health reasons.

Malaysia will have as Prime Minister and his deputy leaders who have tasted the bitterness of being expelled from the UMNO. The winner, of one of the Number three spots, namely Datuk Harun Idris, has also been expelled and is waiting for a royal pardon or has to serve out his term. All three have been labelled as Ultras and their names still strike fear and apprehension in the hearts of some Malaysians. But more than a decade has passed since they were rebels and they have not only grown older but have mellowed in the process. The Tunku, our first Prime Minister, has advised that we should not lose any sleep over the issue and I agree with him. Initially there will be a period of uncertainty and many will be jittery but these three leaders are seasoned veterans and they know that in order to rule a multi-racial and multi-religious country they must be pragmatic and moderate in all that they do in order that there may be peace, harmony and stability in this country.

As for Tengku Razaleigh, he fought a very good fight but unfortunately lost. He has nothing to be ashamed of, he has lost a battle but not the war and he should remain in this present post and live to fight another day. I do not believe that there will be a split in the UMNO even if Tengku Razaleigh leaves the Cabinet.

On the contrary, I believe that even Tengku Razaleigh and his followers will respond to the repeated calls for party unity made by Datuk Hussein Onn and his successor, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir. Of course there will be some bruised feelings but given time they will heal.

On the last day of the conference, 28 June 1981, Datuk Hussein Onn announced that he would lay down the reins of office on 16 July 1981. Hence in a little more than two weeks' time, Datuk Hussein Onn will retire, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed will be sworn in as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia and Datuk Musa Hitam will become our new Deputy Prime Minister.

Datuk Hussein Onn, the son of an illustrious father has left his footprints indelibly on the sands of Malaysia's history. He has given Malaysia five and a half years of peace and stability. He will be remembered most for his honesty and his attempts to clean the Augean Stables when he took over as Prime Minister. He has handed over a country reasonably united, with peace and stability

within its borders.

Datuk Hussein Onn, we salute you and wish you a happy retirement and good health. At the same time we bid welcome to his successor Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed and we give him a hundred days on his shakedown "honeymoon cruise" before we start asking awkward questions.

THE MCA GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1981

The MCA General Assembly of 1981 has come and gone. Now that the dust has settled and the din of battle is over let me have a look at what took place this year and compare it with what took place in 1979.

This year the format of the General Assembly was different. It was a week long celebration and there was a spirit of a carnival about it, free from the noise and acrimony of factionalism that usually marked such occasions.

In 1979 it was a long, arduous and bruising campaign for the presidency and most of the other top posts. And it was bitterly fought with no holds barred and the "Queensberry rules" thrown overboard. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent by both sides in a campaign of villification. In the end the loser, Datuk Michael Chen, was forced out of the Cabinet. This year he resigned from the MCA and joined the Gerakan. A sizeable part of his supporters in the MCA followed him. With that resignation the heat was taken out of the contest. Prior to that, six MCA leaders had been expelled although on appeal two were taken back.

When I interviewed Datuk Lee San Choon I asked him about the internecine war that incessantly goes on at branch, division, state and federal levels with no end in sight. He assured me that this year things would be different, that the internal fights would be stopped and that the MCA leaders would stop making asses of

themselves in public for the edification of their foes and friends alike. He also told me that there would be a show of unity on the part of the MCA top leadership and that there would be no fight for the top posts in the party at the General Assembly this year. And he was as good as his word.

Ever since the MCA was founded in the late forties as a welfare party, mainly to look after the welfare of the Chinese squatters, under the chairmanship of the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock it has been riddled with factions, internecine warfare, often ending in court, and power struggle that has sapped the strength of the party.

The first big schism that appeared in the MCA occurred in 1959 at the time the faction led by Dr. Lim Chong Eu, then the President of the MCA, objected to the Tunku having the final say in the selection of the MCA candidates. The Alliance Party and indeed the Alliance Government nearly broke up on this issue. There was a talk of the Government, or what remained of it after the anticipated walk-out of the MCA rebels, declaring a state of Emergency and ruling by decree. The most unperturbed person in those tense days was the Tunku who was not in Kuala Lumpur when the storm broke. When he returned he asked what the fuss was about. When told of the objections of Dr. Lim Chong Eu and his fellow rebels he is reported to have said, "If he wants to leave, let him go, we will carry on with what is left of the MCA."

And the Tunku was right for although the MCA rebels fought the elections as independents they did not succeed and Dr. Lim Chong Eu left later to form the United Democratic Party.

The next big schism arose when Tun Tan Siew Sin, who had succeeded Dr. Lim Chong Eu, quarrelled with the reformist movement which he himself had helped to create in the MCA in order to revitalise the party. But out of disgust Tun Tan resigned to seek new pastures in the business world. He was succeeded by Datuk Lee San Choon, who had moved slowly up the party hierarchy. But he was soon challenged by Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew and later by Datuk Michael Chen and the rest is history.

The run-up to the recent General Assembly was full of quarrels, plots, counter-plots, expulsions and so on until Datuk Michael Chen and some of his supporters left to join the Gerakan. Then Datuk Lee San Choon laid down the law — there was to be no fight for the top leadership and no unseemly fights and squabbles at lower levels.

The MCA Week was kicked off on 14 September, by Tun Tan

Siew Sin. There was one week of festivities marked by cultural shows, book exhibitions, and of course the General Assembly meeting which was declared opened by the Prime Minister on 19 September 1981. The day before, the Wisma MCA was declared open by the MCA President Datuk Lee San Choon. That night there was a big dinner to mark the occasion. I see that there is criticism in some quarters regarding the building of such an expensive and big building by the MCA. I myself do not see anything wrong in erecting such a building provided the proceeds are used for its members, especially its poorer ones. Of course, the Wisma MCA must not be used to make some of the officials of the MCA richer, as has often happened with some other big organisations and political parties in this country and elsewhere.

Dr. Mahathir in his speech asked the MCA and the other component parties of the National Front not to make requests that are difficult for him to fulfill. In other words he made a plea to component parties not to rock the boat, although the boat is no longer the symbol of the ruling party, and maintain the status quo. I suppose this request arose out of the motion by the MCA that the Number Three spot in the Government should be given to the MCA. The MCA must know that there is a time and place to bargain for privileges. If it wants to bargain for perks it must do so from a position of strength. The General Elections of next year will provide it with an opportunity to prove its strength with the electorate. It is no good now shouting from the rooftops that the MCA is strong and that it is the only party that can represent the Chinese in this country. Let them prove it by deeds — not by words. If the MCA wins at the general election next year it will be able to bargain from a position of strength.

During the elections that took place on 19 September, the top posts of President, Deputy President and the four Vice-Presidents were all uncontested. The winners were: President, Datuk Lee San Choon; Deputy President, Datuk Richard Ho; the four Vice-Presidents: Datuk Lew Sip Hon, Datuk Chan Siang Sun, Datuk Neo Yee Pan and Datuk Mak Hon Kam. Datuk Lee San Choon has carried out his promise that he will maintain party unity and that there will be no contest for the top posts. I agree that it will be good for the image of the party if the two top posts are not contested but I myself feel that it is carrying unity too far if the non-contest rule extends to the four posts of Vice-Presidents. If there had been a free-for-all it would have spiced up the elections and kept the delegates

on their toes all the time. The danger is that the rank and file and even the delegates may have felt that the election had been stage managed by the top leadership and so have lost interest in the proceedings.

All the six top officials are Datuks. Those humble members without any royal support are not allowed even to try their luck at displacing any of the six Datuks for the top jobs. And the MCA claims to be the party of the common man!

The elections came alive with the voting in of 20 members to the Central Committee. There were 35 contestants for the 20 vacancies after three hopefuls had withdrawn from the race on the morning of the election. The result has been described as a triumph for the veterans. There were four new faces in the new Central Committee: Mr. Kee Yong Wee, Deputy Chairman of the MCA Federal Territory, an architect; Mr. Wong Mook Leong, a lawyer and an appointed member of the previous Central Committee; Mr. Chew Hock Thy, Secretary-General of the MCA Youth and also Negri Sembilan MCA Youth Chairman; and Mr. Allan Tong Kok Mau, State Assemblyman for Klang, Executive Committee member of Selangor, Chairman of Shah Alam Division and an architect.

The three incumbents who lost were Mr. Yap Pian Hon, ex-DAP and Selangor MCA Youth Chairman; Mr. Tan Ching Gan of Selangor; and Mr. Kiam Hoon, liaison committee Deputy Chairman of Kedah. The fourth incumbent Datuk David Loh Kee Peng from Malacca did not seek re-election for health reasons.

The line-up for the newly elected Central Committee is as follows:

1. Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan, Secretary-General and Minister of Health who came out on top of the polls with 2217 votes.
2. Datuk Chin Hon Nyian, Deputy Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports — 2204 votes.
3. Datuk Choo Chin Hwa, national Treasurer-General — 2190 votes.
4. Dr. Liong Sik, Deputy Information Minister — 2176 votes.
5. Datuk Loh Fook Yen, Deputy Secretary-General and national Organizing Secretary — 2156 votes.
6. Datuk Teo Ah Kiang, Johore MCA Chairman — 2136 votes.
7. Tan Koon Swan, Chairman, MCA Federal Territory — 2077 votes.

8. Lim Kean Siew, Chairman, MCA Penang — 1990 votes.
9. Datuk Lee Hoon Peng, Chairman, MCA Negri Sembilan and Public Account Committee — 1983 votes.
10. Datuk Wong Cha Wah, Deputy Chairman, MCA Kelantan — 1875 votes.
11. Kee Yong Wee — 1830 votes.
12. Wong Mook Leong, Selangor — 1829 votes.
13. Miss Lim Sean Lean, Secretary, Wanita MCA — 1679 votes.
14. Senator Lee Jong Ki of Penang — 1509 votes.
15. Ngau Boon Min, Pahang State Assemblyman — 1406 votes.
16. Chew Hock Thye — 1449 votes.
17. Tan Kit Chee, Deputy Chairman, MCA Perak — 1447 votes.
18. Allan Tong Kok Mau — 1204 votes.
19. Ooi Gin Sun, Chairman, MCA Kedah — 1252 votes.
20. Peter Chin Gan Chon, Secretary, MCA Perak — 1170 votes.

An analysis of the representation by state in the Central Committee shows that Johore, Selangor and Negri Sembilan lead the way with three, followed by Selangor, Federal Territory, Kedah and Perak with two each, and Kelantan, Trengganu, Malacca and Pahang with one each.

It is regrettable that the Wanita MCA have only one representative in the Central Committee. In proportion to their numbers and power they deserve more than that.

The President has appointed seven members to serve in the Central Committee. They are: Dr. Tan Tiong Hong, Mr. Chen Teck Chen, Datuk Tan Peng Khoo, Senator Dr. Tan Kong Seng, Mr. Wong Kuan Lee, Mr. Sek Fong Hoo and Mr. Wong Chan Shin. He has also appointed Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan as Secretary-General, Datuk Choo Chin Hwa as Treasurer-General and Datuk Loh Fook Yen as Deputy Secretary-General and national Organising Secretary.

Finally I am sure the MCA leadership must be aware of the growing new generation of leaders to take the place of the veterans although this is not reflected in the election to the Central Committee.

THE 29th MIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The curtain has fallen on the 29th General Assembly of the MIC which was held on 3 and 4 October 1981 in Penang. I understand Penang was not the first choice. Originally the Civic Centre in Petaling Jaya was booked for the meeting but the booking was twice postponed and when the date was finally fixed the Civic Centre was not free hence the meeting had to be transferred to Penang.

The MIC has come a long way since its inaugural meeting on 4 August 1946, held in a textile shop in Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur, belonging to Datuk Gurdial Singh. About 300 founder members attended that meeting but today the MIC has multiplied more than a thousand-fold. Its age makes it the second oldest political party in Malaysia preceding the formation of the MCA. UMNO is just a few months older, being founded in May 1946.

The first president of the MIC was J.A. Thivy who had been jailed by the British military administration for the part he played in the Indian National Army. He went back to India and when India became independent, Mr. J.A. Thivy returned to Malaya as India's first High Commissioner. The next President was Booth Singh, an employee of the Malayan Railways, who was succeeded by Ramanathan. Then came K.B. Devaser, a teacher turned lawyer, who served in the Federal Legislation Council. Ever since the presidency of K. B. Devaser, the MIC has been surrounded by acrimony and controversy. At one time it seemed that the racial, religious and caste troubles in

India were exported to their fellow men in Malaya. No wonder the Tunku is reputed to have said that when two Indians get together they will argue amongst themselves and when three get together they are likely to start a fight!

The presidency of K.L. Devaser was marked by a running battle with his successor V.T. Sambanthan, later created a Tun by the Tunku K.L. Devaser later left the MIC and joined first the Independence of Malaya Party and later the Labour Party of Malaya.

Tun V.T. Sambanthan had a long lease as President from 1955 to 1975 and as usual in such cases he was challenged by his deputy, V. Manickavasagam. Tun Sambanthan passed away of a massive heart attack in May 1979.

The late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam had served both Tun V.T. Sambanthan and the MIC loyally and ably as Vice-President from 1955 to 1973. But 18 years is a long time to wait for the top post in the party particularly when it was evident that the party was slipping downhill under the leadership of Tun T.V. Sambanthan towards the end of his term of office as President.

Hence in 1973 Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam put in his bid for the presidency as did Tun V.T. Sambanthan. It appeared that another bruising battle was in the offing until the late Tun Razak, the Prime Minister persuaded Tun V.T. Sambanthan to retire from the race.

Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam immediately set about re-organizing the MIC and brought in new blood. Amongst those he brought into the party were Datuk K. Pathmanaban, Senator Subramaniam and several university dons. He obtained one extra federal seat, Damansara, and several extra state seats as well. The party, thus revitalized for once had a mission and was ready for the general elections of 1974 where it won all the four federal seats it contested and several state seats scattered all over Peninsular Malaysia. The MIC had reached the zenith of its power.

Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam had come a long way since 1959 when he contested the first general elections. He had since worked his way up the political hierarchy ending up as Minister of Transport. When he visited me in the University, in November 1976 he had already undergone a coronary bypass operation and was a tired man. He told me that he wanted to retire from politics but in 1978 he must have been persuaded to contest again for he returned as a Minister in the Datuk Hussein Administration. However, he passed away in October 1979, like his predecessor, of a massive heart attack. His term as President of the MIC was marked

in the later years by controversy over the post of Deputy President. His own choice for that post was Subramaniam, then a Deputy Minister, but it was Samy Vellu who won the fight in 1977.

Ever since the death of Tan Sri Manickavasagam it would seem that the MIC revelled in quarrels, controversy and fistfights. Hardly a week passed by without the newspapers printing such stories of the MIC in our newspapers. By the time I interviewed Datuk Samy Vellu on 24 August 1981, the MIC was in tatters and its image amongst Malaysians of all races was at its nadir. Datuk Samy Vellu, however, laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of our newspapers. He said that the newspapers exaggerated the stories about the MIC. When I asked why he did not issue denials he said that when he did so they were ignored by the newspapers. However he gave me the pledge that this year the General Assembly would be a peaceful one and that there would be no more quarrels and fistfights at the MIC meetings. He laid down the law — there would be no fight for the Deputy President's post although there could be a contest for the three posts of Vice-Presidents and the three vacancies in the Central Working Committee. I am glad that he was able to enforce his edict. When Mr. V. Govindaraj challenged Senator Subramaniam for the Deputy Presidency his arm was twisted and he had to withdraw his challenge and try instead the Vice-Presidency.

Although the fight for the top posts was muted yet it went on and towards the end of September the campaign broke into two camps — namely the supporters of Datuk Samy Vellu on the one side and those of Senator Subramaniam on the other. The English reading public in this country does not know how intense and at times vicious the struggle was. But the Tamil reading public knew all about it for the three major Tamil newspapers namely, *Dinamani*, *Tamil Osai* and *Tamil Nesan*, did not pull their punches in attacking one or the other camp. This is not surprising as at least one of the Tamil dailies is owned by one camp and another by the other camp through proxies. As the date for the 29th General Assembly drew near the attacks on the candidates became more personal and vicious. Finally came 3 October 1981, the first day of the General Assembly. The venue of the Assembly itself drew controversy. It was the Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra, University of Science, Malaysia. Many of the dons at the university objected to the campus being picked as the battle ground for a political party. This had not happened before to any of the four other universities in our

country. I well remember in the University of Malaya there had been applications from political parties, including the UMNO. But they were turned down. This is the first time a political party has been given permission to hold a meeting on the premises of a university and a bad precedent has been set.

The Prime Minister in declaring the meeting open stated that no new demands from component parties of the Barisan Nasional would be entertained. In other words, he reiterated what he stated at the General Assembly of the MCA on 19 August 1981 — that the status quo must be maintained and that the component parties must not rock the boat in view of the impending general elections next year.

Datuk Samy Vellu in his presidential address dwelt on the problems of the Malaysians of Indian origin in this country — how they do not have a fair share of the economic cake, owning only 1 percent of the corporate sector, how with the fall in price of rubber and oil-palm, the estate workers are struggling and the high drop-out rate amongst Indian school children. The need to improve the teaching of Bahasa Malaysia and English in Tamil schools was stressed as well as the need to restructure the non-bumiputra sector. There were nine resolutions tabled, one being about the long delays over the processing and approval of applications for citizenship. The President in his address, too optimistically, I think, declared that the rift in the MIC was a thing of the past. After Senator Subramaniam was declared Deputy President he was garlanded by none other than his Chief, Datuk Samy Vellu. Senator Subramaniam in turn called on party members to unite or be sacked! It remains to be seen whether past decades of internecine warfare within the party can be wiped out overnight or whether the vicious bruising campaign of the last two weeks will restart the process.

The *piece de resistance* of the General Assembly was undoubtedly the election of the three Vice-Presidents and filling the three vacancies in the Central Working Committee. Here the attempt to enforce block voting for the first time cast a shadow of doubt in the camp of Datuk K. Pathmanaban and his supporters. Block voting usually favours the party bosses who control the party machine. The pundits have punted for Mr. V. Govindaraj to top the polls and his running mates Datuk S. Pasamanickam, Chairman MIC Johore, and Dr. V. Ganesan, younger brother of the late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam, to win. The running mates of Datuk Pathmanaban were Datuk Ponnusamy Pillai of Perak, and M.G. Pandithan, a journalist. The total number of delegates was 2391 and the results

were as follows:

Datuk K. Pathmanaban	1,397 votes
V. Govindaraj	1,288 votes
M.G. Pandithan	1,116 votes
Datuk Pasamanickam	1,085 votes
Dr. V. Ganesan	1,041 votes
Datuk V. Ponnusamy Pillai	860 votes

Datuk Pathmanaban has proved his worth once again. He was a top civil servant before he entered politics. He is now the Deputy Minister of Health and his promotion to full Ministerial rank cannot be held back much longer. After the next general elections I am fully confident he will be raised to the rank of Minister.

For the fight for seats on the Central Working Committee, D.P. Vijendran, a lawyer, was a hot favourite and his running mates were Senator M. Mahalingam, a lawyer and Secretary-General of the party, and Dr. K.S. Nijhar, a former University of Malaya lecturer, now turned businessman. In the other camp were Datuk V.L. Kandan, a Selangor executive-committee member, G. Vadiveloo, Assemblyman for Bukit Raja; G. Veerappan; and outsider R. Perumal. The winners were D.P. Vijendran (1349), Senator M. Mahalingam (1223), Datuk V.D. Kandan (1250) with R. Perumal bringing up the rear with 81 votes.

Senator M. Mahalingam was re-appointed Secretary-General and Dr. K.S. Nijhar was appointed Treasurer-General. Puan Sri Janaki Athi Nahappan was appointed Wanita MIC Chief, Senator Muthu Palaniappan Youth Chairman and Tan Sri S.O.K. Ubaidullah was re-appointed to another term on the C.W.C.

One happy event was the awarding of gold medals to Datuk Gurdial Singh and Mr. V.J. Balasundram, both veterans, who had rendered yeomen service to the MIC. The former is a founder member of the MIC, while the latter had served three Presidents as Treasurer-General.

And so the curtain closes for the 29th MIC General Assembly with the party's public image in better shape, unity seemingly restored and the rank and file girding themselves for the general elections that lie ahead next year.

THE GERAKAN ELECTIONS

Seldom has as much publicity been given to a party election as to that accorded to the sixth annual general meeting of the Gerakan held on 17 August, 1980.

First, there was the announcement made by Dr. Lim Chong Eu that he would not stand for election as President of the Gerakan which caused consternation among members. But Dr. Lim has made the right decision and quite rightly has refused to be persuaded to change his mind. Three score years is a good age to slow down at especially in an enervating climate like Malaysia's and Dr. Lim has wisely decided to shed one of his political responsibilities.

The followers of Dr. Lim Chong Eu were afraid that without him at the helm of affairs the Gerakan would crack up. No man is indispensable and this is true in politics as in other fields of human endeavour. Take the case of the UMNO. When Datuk Onn walked out of the UMNO it was in a quandry for who had heard of Tunku Abdul Rahman? Some people thought that it was the end of UMNO. But the hour produced the man. The Tunku was elected president and he went on to become our first Prime Minister, "Bapa Merdeka" and "Bapa Malaya". He will probably go down in history as the greatest Prime Minister this country has ever known. He groomed his successor for many years so that when the Tunku stepped down, Tun Abdul Razak took over without any fuss.

In the recent Gerakan elections, most of the pundits were

afraid that a fight between Dr. Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Paul Leong would be divisive and would break up the party. I myself do not share such views. On the contrary I say that a clean fight between members of a political party for office will do the party a world of good. It will be a sad day for any political party in Malaysia if the post of the presidency of the party is won by the same person year in and year out or if through wheeling and dealing the party bosses get the President re-elected every year to serve their own ends.

During the two months preceding the Gerakan elections the newspapers in this country almost daily carried stories of the contest between Dr. Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Paul Leong for the presidency of the Gerakan.

It became a war of nerves not only between the candidates but also their supporters. It would be true to say that generally speaking the newspapers had picked on Datuk Paul Leong as the winner and successor to Dr. Lim Chong Eu. I am sure that there must have been heavy betting amongst the gambling public.

Dr. Lim Chong Eu quite rightly initially stayed away from the contest but on the first day of the conference he publicly threw in his weight behind Datuk Leong. Not only that, he tried to persuade Dr. K.Y. Lim to withdraw. In doing so he made a grievous mistake. As out-going President of the party he was expected to be neutral and it would have been better for Datuk Leong if Dr. Lim Chong Eu had not entered the fray. But once he entered the fray and pushed hard for Datuk Leong he must have antagonized a number of members who had up to then been neutral or had not made up their minds. Worse still a number of members who had originally intended to support Datuk Leong, seeing that so much pressure was being put on Dr. K.Y. Lim to withdraw from the race, must have changed their minds and swung their votes behind the latter. The result was that when the votes were counted on 17 August 1980, Dr. K.Y. Lim won a stunning victory.

He must be congratulated on this victory for he had all along been the underdog and the pressure on him to withdraw kept mounting all the time culminating in the call by Dr. Lim Chong Eu to withdraw from the race for the sake of unity of the Gerakan. By then it was too late for Dr. K.Y. Lim to withdraw from the race for his followers had threatened to withdraw from the conference if he did that.

Ted Heath lost out to Mrs. Margaret Thatcher for the leadership of the Conservative Party and has since been kept out of the Cabinet

by her. Datuk Michael Chan lost out to Datuk San Choon and had to leave the Cabinet. This all-or-nothing attitude is unfortunate for both Ted Heath and Datuk Michael Chan could have contributed usefully to their respective Governments if they had been allowed to do so. But Dr. K.Y. Lim has magnanimously proposed Datuk Leong as one of his two Vice-Presidents and on the surface at least, unity in the party has been preserved.

Why did Datuk Leong lose? I think the favourable press reports of his chances had lulled him into a false sense of complacency. Perhaps some members saw this as a sign of being pushed towards Datuk Leong. And, as I have already pointed out, the open support of Dr. Lim Chong Eu for Datuk Leong was counter-productive. Above all Datuk Leong did not campaign hard on his own behalf at grass roots level or on the opening day of the conference. Dr. K.Y. Lim, on the other hand, by rebuffing all the pressure on him has shown nerves of steel and this must have impressed the delegates. Besides he has worked hard at grassroot level for a long time before the conference and this has paid off.

But Datuk Leong must not be disheartened. To quote a trite saying: Failures are pillars of success.

I like to think of an episode in my own life. In the early fifties when I first attended the Selangor division of the Labour Party of Malaya I was nominated from the floor for the post of Chairman of the Selangor Division. Comrade Chai Choon Kwee, trishaw driver, was the only other nominee. When the votes were counted I had lost by 5 votes. But I was not disheartened nor did I lose face. I went on to win three general elections in Batu and later Kepong.

It is not generally known that I could have been the President of Gerakan if I had wanted to. Just before the final split in 1971 Dr. Lim Chong Eu had asked me to take over from Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas. One of the reasons I did not accept his offer was that I had known at that time he had been talking to the Alliance leaders about joining the Alliance. As long as I was in the Gerakan it stayed out of the Alliance but when my supporters and I left, it joined the Alliance soon after.

The Gerakan was conceived as a multi-racial party and at its birth it not only had a Malay as its Chairman but its membership was multi-racial. But at its recent 6th annual general meeting held in Port Dickson, Malays and Indians were conspicuous by their absence. Worse still the Chinese members were mainly former MCA members who followed Dr. Lim Chong Eu into the UDP and

later into the Gerakan. The other members were ex-MCA reformists from Perak and some MCA dissidents from Selangor. It is now essentially a Chinese party and as such can it withstand the onslaught of the MCA on the one hand and the DAP on the other? Time will tell.

PART V
Elections

Elections constitute a critical process in a representative democracy. It is not only important that elections are fair and free, but also that they are held in a political environment in which the people have full access to information so that they can have an informed view and also in which they suffer from no fear in making a choice of rulers on the basis of their convictions. In Western democracies, public opinion acts as the most effective check against the abuse and manipulation of the electoral process: it is known to all that if caught in the act of manipulation or abuse the price to be paid in the hostility and alienation of the electorate would be far greater than any political gains to be achieved. However, in countries such as Malaysia, fear of popular wrath does not act as an effective check as a large part of the electorate is not so well-educated and politically sophisticated as to view manipulation and abuse of the processes as affecting their own key role in a representative democracy and, moreover, a strong sense of racial identification and solidarity easily allows them, even the educated and the politically sophisticated among them, to often condone the use of improper means to attain political power.

It is, therefore, critically important to ensure that the vital rules of the democratic game are fully observed and not abused. Elections are held under conditions whereby all groups enjoy an equal opportunity to secure political power. Effective safeguards are established to ensure that improper means such as padding of electoral rolls, misuse of the bureaucracy and the armed forces, and gerrymandering of electoral constituencies, are not used to attain electoral victories. Elections are the means by which a people choose their rulers and if their processes are abused and distorted then the entire system of majority rule and representative democracy can easily become a farce.

In Malaysia, the Internal Security Act and some of the other laws, especially those introduced after the 1969 communal explosion, are not conducive to creating a political environment in which elections can perform their critical function of enabling the people to choose their rulers in an informed manner and without any fear. Furthermore, the changes in the Constitution and the laws over the years relating to delimitation of electoral constituencies and the independence of the Election Commission have affected the free and fair conduct of elections and the vital principle of one man vote, with equal value.

THE ANNUAL REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Annually the Election Commission carries out the exercise of the registration of voters soon after the fasting month. Normally this is in August/September. This year the exercise is about to end and it is pertinent at this stage to take stock of what has been done this year and in the past as well.

In the past the registration was carried out by Government servants after their day's work was over. This meant that they were at their registration centres after 4 p.m. and very often in no mood to do another spot of hard work. Some of them spent most of their time in coffee shops drinking and smoking or just chatting. Persuading the unregistered eligible to register was far from their minds and little wonder very little work was done. Very often the unregistered eligible voter turned up at the registration centre only to find that it was not manned. He would go away in disgust and after that it was very difficult to persuade him to register himself once again. Thus the registration of voters was not a success and a very large number of eligible voters were not registered. The number ran into thousands every year.

This year the Election Commission workers will go to the homes of the voters and with this new approach it is hoped that more voters will be registered. I see that there are banners strung over the registration centres. This new approach will not only be of great help but will greatly encourage the would-be voter to register

himself. In the past the people in a village had little or no clue as to where the registration centre was and very often a great deal of time was spent on looking for it.

However this year the Election Commission workers are going to the home of the would-be voter and I myself have seen a banner urging people to register themselves as voters strung across a registration centre. Yet to date the response has not been that good. Why is this so? Here are the reasons for the lack of success in the past and in the present campaign.

Some of the Election Commission workers are plain lazy, as I have stated before. Most of them are not motivated for this sort of work and do not care whether the registration campaign succeeds or fails. The time allocated for the registration is not all that suitable for the voter. The suitable time from my own experience would be 5.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m., and it will be most difficult for the Election Commission to get many workers during those hours.

Very often workers have not been briefed on the work that they are supposed to do. If all the Election Commission workers are properly briefed, perhaps they may be better motivated. Very often not enough publicity is given to the registration of voters. I do know that every year the mass media springs to life towards the tail end of the registration campaign. This is not enough. Two to three weeks before the start of the registration period the publicity campaign should commence urging all unregistered eligible voters to get themselves registered as voters. This publicity campaign must be sustained throughout the registration period.

Registration centres are not known to the would-be voter. Despite all that has been done the registration centres in the country still remain unknown to most would-be voters. To give but one simple example I live in Persiaran Madge and I do not know where the registration centre in my area is!

Tan Sri Mustapha Albakri was the first Chairman of the Election Committee and he allowed political party workers to register voters. The opposition party workers in particular worked very hard. They were all volunteers and they did not loiter about in coffee shops. I well remember we used to walk from house to house, sometimes waiting patiently for the householder to return from work before we would get about our business. We had to have patience as some voter would look on us with disdain and keep us waiting at the gate. At other times, we would be set upon by dogs but that did not deter us from our job. As a medical man I would

often be called upon to give free medical consultation which I readily gave. We all enjoyed our task though it was hard work and in Batu alone every year we would register thousands of voters.

On the other hand, many of the Alliance party workers, in particular those from the MCA were paid workers. These people were naturally not as well motivated as the opposition party volunteers and hence they did not register as many voters.

If the Election Commission were to examine its records it would see that while Tan Sri Mustapha Albakri was Chairman and political party workers were allowed to register voters, hundreds of thousands of voters were registered every year. But when he retired and Tan Sri Ahmad Perang took over, political party workers were stopped from registering voters. There was a drastic drop in the number of people registered and to this day the Election Commission has not succeeded in rectifying the situation.

The main reason why the Election Commission stopped the registration of voters by political parties was the duplication in the registration of voters. It is true that this did happen. But the fault did not lie entirely with the political party workers. Very often the voter himself did not know whether he had registered himself or not and so the party workers, to play safe, registered him. The Register of Voters now has the voters arranged serially according to their identity card numbers and as such it would be a simple matter to eliminate a number or name that has been duplicated. With the use of a computer, which is used in the preparation of the Register of Voters, this would be a simple exercise.

What should the Election Commission or the Government do to step up the number of people being registered as voters? I propose that the following steps be taken.

Scrap the annual six weeks registration of voters and have in its stead **year-round registration**. I had made this proposal at practically every Budget Session of the Dewan Rakyat. Whenever the estimates for the Prime Minister's Department were debated I had made the proposal. Often the Government reply would be that there was merit in the proposal but that it would have to be studied in detail before a decision could be taken. To date I see that no decision has been taken on this proposal although I see it is still brought up when the P.M.'s Department estimates are debated. If year-round registration is adopted by the Government it should not be too costly to them.

Off hand I can think of no better place for registration than our

post offices. They are easily accessible to the public and are scattered throughout the country. Every citizen knows or should know the nearest post office in the place where he lives. The non-voter who is a citizen should be encouraged to go to the post office, get a form, fill it at the post office itself and post it there as well. The registration form itself should be made as simple as possible so that a person with the minimum education is able to fill it.

Lower the voting age to 18 years. At this age every young man or girl should have his/her identity card changed. When he does so he can be handed a registration form to register himself as a voter. If this is done, and it can be easily done, it means that all persons who are eligible to vote can register themselves as voters without too much difficulty.

Singapore and Australia, among other countries, have **compulsory voting**. This proposal too has been brought up in the Dewan Rakyat but unfortunately has been rejected outright by the Government. I have yet to hear any cogent reason why the Election Commission should not adopt such a system.

If these proposals are not acceptable to the Election Commission and it wants to stick to the annual six-week period of registration then the Ministry of Information, Radio and TV should **mount an intensive campaign** to persuade all citizens above 21 years of age who are not-voters to get themselves registered as voters. We must not only use our Radio and TV to publicise the campaign but our newspapers should be persuaded to take part as well. Our information vans should go around especially in the evening and in the rural areas calling on all would-be voters to register as voters. As it is a month has gone by, the registration period is drawing to a close and hardly any publicity campaign has yet been mounted. *Apa macam?* (What's happening?)

After the would-be voter has registered and the names of voters are compiled, the **Provisional register of Voters should be displayed for public scrutiny**. Sometimes the place where the Provisional Register of Voters is displayed is not easily accessible or is not well known to the public. Here I would like to make the plea that it should be displayed at the local post office. I have already explained that the post office is easily accessible and is well known to the local people. All voters should check and see if their names are on the register.

If the proposals that I have made are acceptable to the Election Commission then our pool of voters for the next election due in

1983 will be greatly increased. The voter will also not suffer the heartache of finding his name missing from the Register of Voters. He need not rush from one polling station to another hoping against hope that he will find his name on the election register.

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1982 — THE BARISAN NASIONAL

If the life of the 5th Parliament were to run its normal course the general elections would be held next year. But with the world economic situation getting from bad to worse with every passing month and with our balance of trade running deeper in the red, it would be prudent for any Government to hold the general elections now rather than allow the situation to get worse. Besides, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir like all Prime Ministers before him, would like to have the stamp of legitimacy on his administration as soon as possible. Thus as he himself has said it will most probably be held in late March or early April when the schools are closed for the Easter vacations and the classrooms can be used as polling stations.

The opening shot of the coming election battle was fired last year when all the major parties of both the Barisan Nasional and the Opposition held their General Assemblies. In all the major components of the Barisan Nasional there was some blood-letting in the fight for power within the party but in the end the quarrels were patched up and the ranks were closed in the interests of party unity and a united front for the coming battle.

The first party to prepare for the coming battle was the UMNO. The President, Tun Hussein Onn, announced his intention to resign from the Prime Ministership and with it the presidency of the UMNO in order to allow his successor as Prime Minister and President of UMNO to be firmly in the saddle before leading the

Barisan into battle. For Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir it was plain sailing as he slipped into the shoes of Tun Hussein Onn without any trouble. But for the deputy presidency of the UMNO, the fight between Musa and Razaleigh was a titanic one. Although the cracks of the battle have been papered over, the scars have not healed as yet. Now is the turn of the lower echelon of leaders to flex its muscles in the fight for the divisional leadership. There have been charges and counter-charges of cheating, chicanery, vote-buying, influence-peddling and now the opponents have descended to fistfights and throwing of chairs at meetings. This divisive force has alarmed the top leadership and none other than the President of the UMNO, Dr. Mahathir, has warned against a house divided. But since the spoils of the coming battle are great for the successful ones, it will be very difficult to contain such internecine warfare.

Then, especially for UMNO, there is the added problem of the change of the old guard, especially for the posts of Mentri Besar, and the infusion of young blood to take the place of the ageing veterans. If UMNO is to survive there must be a continuous infusion of new blood, particularly of the technocrat types introduced by Tun Razak and Tun Hussein. And there is a need to bring some of the Mentris Besar to the centre to strengthen the Cabinet.

Datuk Musa has been appointed trouble-shooter in the UMNO, and he has plenty to do until the election is over. Right now the divisional elections are being held and the fracas at Rantau Panjang Division meeting has caused deep concern to the party leadership. The party faithfuls and hopefuls are all queueing up for selection either as state or federal candidates. Hence the lively interest taken by these prospective candidates in the various elections that are taking place all over the country. Over the years, since the national elections were first introduced in 1955, the quality of our candidates and hence of our elected representatives has steadily improved. It was the late Tuan Hj. Abdul Razak who first introduced the opponents of UMNO to stand for elections. An outstanding example is Tun Hussein Onn who later succeeded his predecessor. Under Tun Razak too, top civil servants, Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan and Datuk K. Pathmanaban, entered the political arena and stood for elections. They have now become Minister and Deputy Minister respectively. In the coming election I am confident that both Dr. Mahathir and Datuk Musa will take the opportunity to ease out veterans and introduce technocrats and other new blood as candidates. I want to make it clear that while I agree that a university

education is an advantage in an elected representative of the people, it is not a *sine qua non*. A candidate with no tertiary education but with a proven record of service for the community will make an excellent State Assemblyman or Member of Parliament. He may even end up as a Prime Minister. A glance at the list of Prime Ministers of Great Britain will bear me out. In Malaysia many of our Ministers have served our country with distinction although they have not had the benefit of a tertiary education.

The MCA was the second component of the Barisan to hold a General Assembly. Months before it was held, there was a running fight between the faction supporting the President, Datuk Lee San Choon, and that supporting Datuk Michael Chen. It only ended when the latter left the MCA to join the Gerakan. The MCA now has a war of words with the Gerakan and it threatens to break out into open warfare like a clash between the Ang Bin Huay and the Wah Kee. This despite the mediation efforts by Datuk Musa, Tengku Razaleigh and Encik Ghaffar Baba. In the last general elections in 1978, especially in Penang, the MCA put up independent candidates against the Gerakan and the Gerakan did the same thing to the MCA. The only beneficiary was the DAP. This time the MCA has come out with the absurd suggestion that the component parties be allowed to contest under their own banner — *a la* Sabah. If this absurd proposal is conceded by the Barisan Nasional Executive, it will be the beginning of the end of the Barisan. Sabah is the only state where both the ruling party and the Opposition party are allowed to be members of the Barisan Nasional and where the component parties are allowed to use their own symbols during elections.

Apart from the use of symbols there are many more difficulties in the way of understanding and co-operation between these two parties. There is the problem of crossing over from the MCA to the Gerakan and vice versa as represented by Datuk Michael Chen and Dr. Tan Tiong Hong. There is no doubt that Datuk Michael Chen is fairly popular with the Chinese community in Ulu Selangor and has kept his links with UMNO there as well. On the other hand, it is no secret that the support for Dr. Tan Tiong Hong is slowly slipping in Kepong and he is reported to be seeking another constituency in the Federal Territory. Or will he jump to Ulu Selangor?

Elsewhere in the country the Gerakan has built up some strength, particularly in Perak, Malacca and Johore. It can expand its representation only at the expense of the MCA. The MCA has

always made it clear that it is determined at all cost to maintain the status quo as far as seats are concerned. If it will not budge an inch, how will the Gerakan have the chance to enter the political fray? Datuk Musa and his colleagues will need the wisdom of Solomon to resolve the conflicts between the MCA and the Gerakan.

Penang is another problem state at dispute between these two components of the Barisan. The defeat of the MCA under Tan Sri Wong Pow Wee by the Gerakan in 1969 has rankled in the hearts of the MCA since that fateful year and this year it is no secret that the MCA has sought to displace the Gerakan in Penang. They tried in 1978 with the help of independents who were in fact MCA members contesting under the independent ticket. This year the MCA has sought to displace the Gerakan with renewed vigour. The Chief Minister designate has made his rounds of the constituencies hoping to drum up support for the MCA and this time they reckon is most propitious with the DAP in disarray and the ageing Dr. Lim Chong Eu quite likely to retire from the political arena.

Apart from the MCA-Gerakan mix-up, the MCA has difficulties with the choice of candidates throughout the country. The Member for Raub, Tan Koon Swan, is the chairman of the MCA Federal Territory. His business interests are in Kuala Lumpur and it is inconvenient for him to be the MP of a constituency that is more than 100 miles away from Kuala Lumpur. Will he take on Lee Lam Thye in Bandar Kuala Lumpur and risk defeat that may well spell political oblivion for him? Or will he try to arrange an exchange with the MIC in Damansara and take on V. David? Of the two challengers there is no doubt that the latter is the less formidable fighter. He is well advised to take on V. David where he need not face a goliath and where his prospects may well be good.

Yeoh Poh San, the budding Youth leader may well want to stand in Sg. Besi against Chan Kok Kit or in Petaling against Lim Kit Siang. Either way the prospect is very daunting for while in prison in 1978 Chan Kok Kit got 40,307 votes with a majority of 33,687, the highest in the 1978 elections, while Lim Kit Siang standing in a constituency with 90,611 voters got 41,405 votes and a majority of 16,754. But Yeoh Poh San has youth on his side and the MCA is very much better organized with less internal bickering.

In other parts of the country the MCA has to face the DAP and perhaps the PAS. But the PSRM may well put up the odd non-Malay candidate and being the only long standing left-wing party may well snatch a seat or two from the MCA. The new threat that the

MCA faces will be the Gerakan which has organized itself on a pan-Malaysian basis. It certainly will not be prepared to twiddle its thumbs and sit out the coming elections in areas where it had not fought before. If it cannot get the MCA to concede a few seats in mixed areas now held by the MCA or which the MCA contested in 1978 and lost to the DAP, it will put up independent candidates and after the elections, if they win, the elected ones can then declare their allegiance to the Gerakan. This was done fairly extensively in Penang in 1978, but I am sure it will be wide-spread in 1982, given the structure of the Barisan which prohibits expansion of the component parties in the constituencies that were allocated to them before. As Nomination Day draws nearer, the struggle between the MCA and the Gerakan will grow in intensity if not overtly then covertly.

The MCA will go into the coming general election in a better shape than as compared with other election battles. It is reasonably united behind Datuk Lee San Choon. It has jotted up a fair record of achievement for the community. The only fly in the ointment is its relationship with the Gerakan.

The MIC forms the third leg of the old Alliance and is the smallest of the triumvirate. Ever since its formation it has been beset by bickerings, quarrels, fist fights at meetings, and even court cases, which have dissipated its strength.

The Malaysian Indian Congress has been allocated only four federal seats to contest.

In 1978 it won in Sg. Siput, Telok Kemang, Pelabuhan Kelang but lost in Damansara. Pelabuhan Kelang used to be a MIC stronghold under the late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam although he was given a fright by Lee Lam Thye in 1969. But now with the demise of Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam the MIC is not so strong there and the seat may well be lost to the DAP particularly if the PAS splits the Malay vote.

Both Datuk Samy Vellu in Sg. Siput and Datuk K. Pathmanaban in Telok Kemang look safe. But Damansara is a Chinese majority seat and the MIC would be well advised to exchange it with the MCA. Unlike the other components of the Barisan in Peninsular Malaysia the MIC is fortunate in that it does not have too many claimants to the four federal seats it has been allocated. At state level the MIC is represented in most state assemblies and there will be some jockeying for seats but nothing like the clamour that has plagued the other bigger component parties of the Barisan. It will go

into the coming general election fairly united and well prepared for the fray.

The **Gerakan** held its General Assembly towards the end of last year. It was a tame affair as compared with the fierce struggle for leadership in 1979. Dr. Lim Chong Eu decided to relinquish the leadership and it was contested by Datuk Dr. Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Paul Leong. Dr. Lim Chong Eu, towards the end of the contest came out openly in support of Datuk Paul Leong but it was Datuk Dr. Lim Keng Yaik who won. This led to a split in the party but the new President has since united the party behind him. In the middle of last year the strength of the party was boosted by the arrival of Datuk Michael Chen who left the MCA to join the Gerakan and was appointed a Vice-President. Both Datuk Dr. Lim Keng Yaik and Datuk Michael Chen have been former Ministers of New Villages and both of them set about opening new branches all over the country. The Gerakan now has sizeable strength in Johore, Negri Sembilan, Kedah and Malacca. It has also gone to Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang where before it had no branches at all. Hence its clamour to be allowed to contest in these areas as well.

The Gerakan was established as a multi-racial party and it remained so when Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas, V. Veerappen, V. David, Yeoh Teck Chye and I together with many others were in the party. But when we left, it became another edition of the United Democratic Party — Dr. Lim Chong Eu's old party. It still proclaims itself to be a multi-racial party but there is no doubt that it is a Chinese-based party now — hence its feud with the MCA. I have already touched on the animosity between the MCA and the Gerakan and despite the efforts of Musa and company no one seems to be able to untie the Gordian Knot.

The other problem lies in Penang. There Dr. Lim Chong Eu must be nearing the end of his long career in politics but who is to succeed him there? There does not seem to be anyone in sight in Penang from the Gerakan, acceptable to the public as Chief Minister. One good candidate would be Dr. Goh Cheng Teik but he has no experience of state politics and this may be a handicap. But in Alliance and Barisan circles it has happened that a newcomer has been plucked out of the blue to serve as Mentri Besar or Chief Minister and if Dr. Goh Cheng Teik is pitchforked into that position he will be no better or no worse off than many other Mentris Besar or Chief Ministers before him. Moreover he has experience of Federal politics, this being his second term as a Deputy Minister. Up

to the time we broke away from the Gerakan it was truly a multi-racial party and had fair support from the labour movement in this country. It was spoken of even in Malay circles as a possible alternative to the Alliance. I have had many top civil servants and Malays telling me so but after my friends and I left the Gerakan and it joined the Barisan it lost that image, and being in the Barisan it could not become an alternative Government.

Tun Hj. Razak brought the PPP into the Barisan. But the PPP had long passed the zenith of its power with the demise of D.R. Seenivasagam. In 1974, even S.P. Seenivasagam lost badly in Menglembu and the only survivor was Su Liang Yu in Bruas. In 1978, he too lost to the DAP and for the first time since 1959 the PPP was not represented in the Parliament. In 1980, its sole State Assemblyman in Chemor, Perak, crossed over to the Gerakan and now it has no representatives in either the Dewan Rakyat or at state level. The PPP is now headed by S.T. Rajah and it has been racked by internal dissension. Most of its quarrels have now been patched up and the PPP is confident of its chances in the coming elections. But I feel that the PPP in its present state of disunity has lost its credibility and will be given a thrashing by the DAP should they meet in the next election.

As I have mentioned before, Sabah is the only exception where both the ruling party — the Berjaya — and the main Opposition, the United Sabah National Organisation, are members of the Barisan.

The USNO or United Sabah National Organisation is the oldest political party in Sabah and exemplifies the truism that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. After winning the most seats in the Federal elections of 1964, it started to swallow up the main Opposition party — UPKO — and then it held absolute sway in the state. It crushed all forms of opposition until it became too big for its boots and that frightened the Centre. The Centre engineered the breakaway Berjaya which won the state elections of 1975 and 1980. After the defeat of 1975, Tun Mustapha resigned as Chairman of the party and was succeeded by Tan Sri Hj. Mohamed Said Bin Keruak. But after the crushing defeat of the USNO in the State Elections of 1980 he too resigned and was in turn succeeded by Tun Mustapha. However, this form of musical chairs is not going to restore the credibility of the party in Sabah and in the coming federal elections the UMNO may well once again be annihilated by the Berjaya.

The Berjaya is a breakaway of the USNO with the addition of

new blood. Unlike USNO which is a Muslim and bumiputra party, the Berjaya is a multi-racial and multi-religious party. Thus although the Chief Minister is a Muslim his deputy is a Roman Catholic and there are some Chinese in the State Cabinet. It has grown from strength to strength since its formation but it must not let power go to its head or else it will meet the same fate as its predecessor — the USNO. The previous Government carried discrimination too far. Anyone who was not a Muslim was forced to convert and if he refused to do so he was transferred to a remote area, had his promotion delayed or was simply spent during elections. The Partai Keadilan Masyarakat (PAKEMAS) contested a few constituencies in the 1975 elections and it had difficulty in finding the deposit for its candidates. None of its candidates could afford to spend more than \$3,000 each. But the USNO and the Berjaya think nothing of spending \$100,000 on a candidate. There were no election petitions to declare the elections null and void on the grounds of spending more than the legal limit allowed! I have no doubt that money will be spent just as freely in the coming general elections.

It was in Sarawak that the idea of a coalition was first tried out at state level. The 1970 state election left the three main parties, Party Bumiputra, SUPP and SNAP, evenly poised. Secret negotiations were carried between all these three parties and in the end the Party Bumiputra and the SUPP formed the state coalition Government. Later before the 1974 elections, SNAP was brought into the Barisan fold and that triumvirate has ruled Sarawak since 1972. In the 1981 state elections a newcomer appeared on the scene in Sarawak, namely the Democratic Action Party, but in the state elections that year it did not win a single seat. This year the DAP will no doubt have another go but it will be difficult for it to move into the interior of Sarawak.

The Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB) was formed in 1975 by the merger of the old Bumiputra Party and the Pesaka Party. For a long time the Chairman of the party was Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Yacob who was also the Chief Minister. But in 1981 he resigned as Chief Minister and also from the state and federal legislatures and moved upstairs as Governor. He was succeeded by Datuk Patinggi Amar Taib Mohamad who resigned from the Federal Cabinet as well as the Parliament. He will now lead the Barisan forces into battle in Sarawak. Although in 1978 the Barisan lost one seat, Lambir, to SAPO it is likely that it will once again sweep the board this year although the DAP must not be taken

lightly. It may well snatch one or two seats from the Barisan.

The SUPP is one of the oldest parties in Sarawak and until 1970 it was the main opposition in Sarawak. But in 1970 it joined hands with the Party Bumiputra to form a coalition Government and its long-time Chairman Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui joined the Federal Cabinet and is today the oldest Cabinet Minister. The SUPP is multi-racial and multi-religious. Although most of its members are Chinese it has a fair number of Ibans amongst its membership and some have even been elected to the Dewan Rakyat. There is always a SUPP Deputy Chief Minister and Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui's long career both in the Cabinet and outside it must be coming to an end soon. If he does retire from politics his most likely successor as a federal Cabinet Minister is Dr. Wong Soon Kai who was a contemporary of the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir while at college and in the university at Singapore. He was a brilliant student and should make a good Cabinet Minister. He is at present a State Minister and the SUPP should do well in the coming elections.

The SNAP is the main Iban Party in Sarawak although it is multi-racial and multi-religious. Indeed its present Chairman is Datuk James Wong who in the days when SNAP was in the Opposition had been detained under the Internal Security Act for 16 months. He had been a Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak. The party had been revitalised under the previous Secretary-General Datuk Leo Moggie, now a federal Minister. There is a group of young Ibans who have provided a powerful thrust in the party and in the state Government. SNAP should do well in the coming general elections in Sarawak.

The Berjasa is the latest party to join the Barisan and it is a breakaway of PAS just as PAS was an offshoot of the UMNO in the early fifties. Its President Senator Hj. Mohamed Nasir had become Mentri Besar of Kelantan just before the break. He refused to resign when called upon to do so by the party and as violence threatened in Kelantan the Centre stepped in, declared a state of Emergency and ruled by decree. Tan Sri Hashim Aman, a civil servant, was appointed supremo until the state elections were held on 11 March 1978. In the state elections that followed the UMNO swept the board winning 23 seats of the 36 contested, Berjasa won 11 and PAS a miserable 2 seats. Then for the time in Peninsular Malaysia UMNO and Berjasa formed a state coalition Government with Datuk Mohamad Yacob becoming the Mentri Besar. Earlier Datuk Hj. Mohamed Nasir had been appointed to the senate and a

Minister without portfolio in the Prime Minister's Department. Since 1978 the Berjasa has not been very active although it had just roped in Prof. Syed Hussain Alatas as its latest recruit of prominence. It may well receive a thrashing from PAS when the next round comes along.

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1982 — THE OPPOSITION

The Barisan being the ruling party, like all ruling parties the world over, has tremendous advantages over its opponents. It is in a position to distribute patronage and honours. It can and does award licences and tenders to party faithfuls. It gives jobs to those who have served the party and it can and does give "double" promotions to those who have rendered service and, to the children of all these people, it can and does give bursaries and scholarships so that the future generation too is beholden to the Government of the day.

But, for the Opposition, it is a different ball game altogether. Not only do those in the Opposition have to have jobs in the private sector but they must also ensure that all their children choose professions where they can be independent of the Government. Thus I am a doctor in private practice, so are Dr. Chen Man Hin and Dr. Lim Chong Eu. Lim Kit Siang was a full time politician until he qualified as a lawyer partly as a result of his stay in Batu Gajah as a guest of His Majesty's Government. Kassim Ahmad although eminently qualified as a lecturer was denied a job with the University of Malaya and could not get a job as a teacher either. Those in the opposition are almost shunned by the top civil servants and those high up in the private sector — all that is the price that the leaders have to pay for being in the Opposition. But this is nothing compared to what the rank and file have to pay as is revealed in a press story where an UMNO householder has water and electricity

and his immediate neighbour, a PAS member, is denied these facilities. What price political opposition and how can we build up a united Malaysian nation? My critics may well ask me how come I served so long in the Council of the University of Malaya and how come the honour that has been bestowed on me? To the first I will say that I was elected by the Guild of Graduates of the University of Malaya to serve on that Council. With the amendment of the Universities and University Colleges Act, 1975, when elections were stopped I was appointed to that Council for one term by the then Minister for Education, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister in his speech at the dinner of the Bar Council on 12 February 1982 thought fit to mention that colleagues of his at the King Edward VII College of Medicine expressed surprise to him that a member of the Opposition had been made a Tan Sri. This much I will say — I did not lobby for it and it was conferred on me after I had retired from politics. In fairness to the former Alliance, when I was still active in politics, Datuk Harun Idris when he was Mentri Besar Selangor, in 1972, did propose to me that he wanted to recommend to the Sultan of Selangor that I be conferred the title of Datuk but I politely declined. Giving awards and honours to the Opposition is a rarity in this country but in a country where democracy has deeper roots it is a common enough practice. The life of an Opposition member is an uphill struggle all the way but in this respect Malaysia is no better or worse off than many countries which practise parliamentary democracy.

The DAP was born out of the People's Action Party (of Singapore) in Malaysia. When the latter was evicted from Malaysia the DAP was formed and virtually took over the remnants of the PAP. It took some time for the DAP to shed off the PAP image and being called a foreign party or at least being manipulated by foreigners. After PAS had joined the Barisan, the DAP became the strongest Opposition party in Malaysia. It maintained this image despite the return of the PAS to the Opposition fold and in 1978 it became the strongest Opposition party in both the Dewan Rakyat and most of the various state assemblies. It won 16 federal seats and 26 state seats.

The DAP has gone through several crises. The first was after the May 1969 tragedy when it opened negotiations with the MCA with a view to joining the Alliance. The man alleged to be behind this move was Goh Hock Guan who has since left the DAP to join the Gerakan. At that time, my friends and I were in the Gerakan and

we resisted or rather spurned the blandishments of the Alliance but the DAP started serious talks and when the story broke a great deal of dirty linen was washed in the public. Then some of its MPs, namely Datuk Richard Ho, Goh Hock Guan and the late Walter Loh, left. In 1974 the DAP made heavy weather against the Barisan but all the same won 9 federal and 23 state seats. But by 1978 when the PAS returned to the Opposition, the DAP did better, winning 16 federal and 26 state seats thus becoming the strongest Opposition party in the country.

But as is my personal experience, success brings trouble. Thus after the Gerakan victory in 1969 when I was the Secretary-General, I had endless trouble with two of our MPs — we had 8 federal and 26 state seats. One crossed over to the Alliance and another left the party to become an Independent. I must confess that I was happier when we lost.

Last year the DAP went through the same trauma. Lim Kit Siang must have gone through the same experience that I underwent in 1970 and 1971. In 1979, the DAP announced its grandiose plans to capture Penang in the next general elections. But after its defeat in Pengkalan Kota, Penang, its troubles started. Charges and counter-charges of treason and dictatorship flew back and forth. The troubles built up to a crescendo till about the middle of last year when the DAP lost 3 MPs and 7 State Assemblymen to the Barisan. It quickly abandoned its plans to capture Penang.

The DAP has three big assets: it had established itself as a party that is daring; its symbol, the rocket, is easily explained to the voter and is easily recognizable; and its willingness to fight for Chinese rights in this country. Organizationally it is not that strong and in fact in some constituencies it is weak but, because of the three assets that I have mentioned, it draws the crowds to vote for it. The two occasions when I fought against the DAP at federal level were in 1969 and 1974. In 1969 there was an electoral understanding and I had a straight fight against the Alliance. In 1964, the PAP candidate Dr. Too Chee Cheong got 2459 votes and lost his deposit. In 1974 the DAP candidate Chan Kok Kit got 4206 votes. On both occasions in many places they had no workers outside the polling stations and very often there were no polling agents inside and yet the DAP had thousands voting for them! But the biggest handicap that the DAP suffers from is that it is forever damned in the eyes of the Malays and hence it has no hope of ever forming a Government.

The PAS was formed in the early fifties as a breakaway of the

UMNO. In 1955 it took part in the partial general elections to the Federal Legislative Council and provided the sole Opposition member from Parit. Then came the 1959 general elections when it surprised the UMNO by sweeping the board in Kelantan winning 9 to 10 federal seats and 28 of the 30 state seats. It was the first Opposition party to form a Government at the state level and remained so until it was toppled by the Barisan in the 1978 elections. Meanwhile in 1964 it won 8 federal seats but had its state representation cut down to 21. In 1969 in the anti-Alliance wave that swept the country it won 6 federal seats and 19 state seats. In 1971 it joined the Barisan and contested the 1974 elections under the banner of the Barisan. But cracks soon appeared in the ranks of the party after Datuk Asri had left Kelantan to become a federal Minister. The internecine warfare in Kelantan reached a crescendo early in 1978 when the federal Government declared an Emergency in Kelantan and, as I have pointed out earlier, it appointed a senior civil servant, Tan Sri Hashim Aman, as Supremo to rule the state.

In the state and general elections that followed PAS was almost annihilated, winning only 5 federal and 9 state seats, seven of the latter in Kedah. It will be seen that it was internal dissension that caused the break-up and disastrous defeat of PAS that followed. Since 1978, PAS, having learnt a bitter lesson, has closed ranks and regained much of its lost ground, especially in Kelantan and Trengganu. The animosity that existed between UMNO and PAS members is deep-seated and will take a long time to eradicate. It is up to the Government of the day, whether UMNO or PAS, to administer the state in an enlightened and just manner. Once elections are over the benefits of development must be brought to all whether UMNO or PAS, Muslim or Kafir, bumiputra or non-bumiputra. Only by such enlightened and just rule can the deep-seated enmity that exists between the UMNO and PAS members be slowly eradicated.

The PAS stands for a theocratic Islamic State in Malaysia but we are a multi-racial and multi-religious country where the Islamic bumiputras form only about 50 percent of the population. The rest are non-Islamic. As such it will be very difficult for PAS to win the votes of the non-Muslims and non-bumiputras and form the Central Government unless it goes into coalition with a non-Islamic Party. But right now its priority is to regain control of Kelantan and here, if the UMNO does not look out, the PAS may well do just that.

However, the PAS has leadership problems. Its President,

Datuk Asri, has led PAS to victory and to defeat and should retire from the political arena to make way for the younger men waiting in the wings. I gather that although Asri is President of the party, its Central Committee is controlled by the Young Turks led by Mustapha Ali. These Young Turks have attracted some of the intelligentsia from our universities. If properly harnessed they may be a potent force if not now then in the future. The PAS is adamantly against any form of co-operation with any other Opposition party. It must learn that politics is the art of the possible and it must learn to co-operate with other races and religions if we are to live in peace and harmony in this country. Meanwhile if it plays its cards well it will and must do better than in 1978 which must surely have been the nadir of its fortunes.

Just as in 1959, when it was dissension in the ranks of the UMNO that enabled PAS to gain its sweeping victory, so in recent weeks the dissension in the ranks of UMNO has surfaced. The fracas at the meeting of the Rantau Panjang division is but a symptom and if it continues unchecked the PAS may just squeak in this year at the state elections. The PAS has already regained much of its lost ground but with trouble amongst the UMNO divisions and branches in Kelantan it may be presented with a golden opportunity to regain control of Kelantan. It may just do that if UMNO takes the voters of Kelantan for granted.

The Parti Socialist Rakyat Malaysia or the **PSRM** was formed very early in the fifties as a socialist left-wing party. It was a multi-racial and multi-religious party formed under the leadership of Ahmad Boestaman. But it had catered mainly to the Malays as a complement to the Labour Party of Malaya which was also multi-racial but catered mainly to the Chinese. The two together formed the Socialist Front, the first coalition of political parties and, at the time of its formation, was the only effective opposition to the Alliance until the arrival of the PMIP, later known as PAS. Some of its members contested the first partially elected Federal Legislative Council in 1955 although the Socialist Front did not contest that election as such. The party was first known simply as *Parti Rakyat* but later its name was changed to *Parti Socialist Rakyat Malaysia*. It was originally led by Ahmad Boestaman but when he was detained for a second time in 1963, it was headed by Kassim Ahmad who returned from teaching at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Kassim Ahmad was in turn detained under the ISA in 1976. He was released only last year, without any conditions.

Being in left-wing Opposition parties like the Labour Party of Malaya and the PSRM carried a very high occupational risk, for in the fifties and sixties practically all their leaders at branch, state and national levels had been detained first by the British under the Emergency Regulations and then under the notorious Internal Security Act. Some of those who were detained in the mid-sixties are still in the Kamunting Detention Camp. Those detained were: Ahmad Boestaman and Karam Singh, both MPs in our first Parliament; C.C. Yong, Datuk Kampo Radjo, S. Sivasubramaniam (now President of the Bar Council), and Zulkifli Ismail, all at one time State Assemblymen from PSRM; Ishak Hj. Mohamed, Teh Hock Hin, Tan Kai Hee, Dr. M.K. Rajakumar (a past President of the Malaysian Medical Association and now Chairman of the Council of the College of General Practitioners), and V. David from the Labour Party. In the 1959 general elections the Socialist Front had 8 successful MPs and 16 State Assemblymen, most of whom were subsequently detained. In 1964 the year of the Confrontation, the SF fielded 63 candidates and there was a massacre of the innocents for only two won and of the 150 odd state candidates we fielded, only 8 were successful. I took part in the 1964 elections and I was lucky to win both the Parliamentary seat of Batu and the state seat of Kepong.

In 1964 the Parti Rakyat went it alone, the Socialist Front having broken up. The Labour Party did not contest the general elections. The Parti Rakyat won 3 state seats, two in Pahang and one in Penang but did not win any parliamentary seat. In 1974, the PSRM fielded many federal and nearly a hundred state candidates but unfortunately did not win a single seat either at state or federal level. With most of its leaders languishing in detention camp, the PSRM took part in the general elections of 1978 fielding 4 federal and 24 state candidates but none of them won. Their leader, Kassim Ahmad, was still in prison.

In the sixties and early seventies it would be true to say that the PSRM had the greatest following amongst the students in our universities. Certainly it was so in the case of the University of Malaya and some of these students after their graduation gravitated to the PSRM. It had a small following amongst the staff of our universities as well. It had a fair following amongst the farmers, fishermen and rubber tappers but during the elections these efforts were not matched by the support the party commanded in the rural areas. Thus in the 1974 general elections, while it won 84,206

parliamentary and 108, 503 state votes mainly in the rural state of Kedah, Trengganu, Pahang, Malacca and Penang, it did not win a single federal or state seat. In Trengganu, it contested six of the seven federal seats and lost all of them. At state level, it contested 27 of 28 seats but did not win a single seat. It was obviously the sole Opposition party against the might of the Barisan and although it did not win a single seat at state or federal level, it had a large following in Trengganu, as is shown by the 34,331 and 32,916 votes that it gained. What were the causes of its failure in past elections? They were as follows:

1. It was more interested in propagating its socialist ideology than in winning seats *per se*.
2. Unfortunately most of its leaders being intellectual types and steeped in socialism spoke at rallies above the level of intelligence of their audience who as a result did not understand what the PSRM speakers were trying to put across. But some of the PSRM leaders are wonderful orators. Datuk Kampo Radjo did not have much of an education but he was a spell-binder at rallies. So too was Hasnul Hadi.
3. It lacked funds, a common factor certainly amongst the twin parties of the left-wing Socialist Front!

Of late the PSRM changed course slightly — it has emphasized socialism less and put an Islamic plank in its programme. This is obviously an attempt to have a greater appeal among rural Malays, where its main strength lies, and to avoid being labelled Kafir by the UMNO and PAS and as Communists by the Government. It has learnt its lessons and has decided, I gather, to field fewer candidates and attack on a narrow front. This is consonant with its lack of funds. The PSRM is determined to win a few federal and state seats this time and thus have a platform to launch forth to greater things.

The rest of the Opposition is a motley crowd of mainly localized regional parties who have largely failed to gain any seats. They often go to sleep after a general election and wake up on the eve of the next one.

The Socialist Democratic Party or SDP was formed on the eve of the 1978 elections and the founder members were mainly from the DAP led by two former DAP MPs, namely Yeap Ghim Guan and Oh Keng Seng. The party is centred only in Penang and has yet to spread its wings outside the confines of that state.

The Malaysian Social Justice Party or Parti Keadilan Rakyat

Malaysia (**PEKEMAS**) was formed by the breakaway group of the Gerakan. Reluctantly I was pitchforked into the leadership of the party. It contested the 1974 elections and won one federal seat in Kepong by me and one state seat in Bagan Jeermal by the late Ong Yi How. It fielded far too many federal and state candidates when it should have fought on a very narrow front. I was against it but I was overruled by a majority of the Central Committee. The result was that we lost 19 federal and 62 state deposits. I remember that I was against several candidates standing — I predicted that they would lose their deposits but they succeeded in convincing the rest of the Central Committee that they were sure winners! The truth was that we had not much of an organization, our candidates were of poor quality and of course most of them could not raise their deposits. I had to borrow the money from friends and after the elections when our candidates lost their deposits I was left to carry the baby. I cannot forget one candidate in particular. He did not lose his deposit which was paid by me, but after he was refunded his state and federal deposits, he refused to return it to me! He is now a member of the DAP and a very prominent trade unionist. In politics one makes strange bedfellows!

In 1976 I had a stroke and was succeeded by Ahmad Boestaman but he too resigned due to ill-health. In 1978 the Pekemas again contested the general elections and did not win a single state or federal seat. Soon after it folded up.

It is a foregone conclusion that the Barisan will win hands down in the coming elections. In the early sixties when I stated such a truism regarding the then Alliance Party I got into trouble with my party then — the Labour Party. The question is not who will win but what will be the margin of the Barisan victory in the coming general elections? The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in a speech at the dinner of the Bar Council on 12 February 1982 said that Malaysia needed a strong Government in order that the Barisan governs effectively. However, he admitted that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. We have seen how arrogantly and autocratically the Barisan has conducted themselves both inside and outside the Dewan Rakyat over the debate on the Amendments to the Societies Act 1961. The choice is before the 6.1 million odd voters of Malaysia come April this year. Do we want to entrust the Government with so much power that it becomes drunk with it and is insensitive to the needs of the people? Or do the voters of this country want to apply brakes to the

power of the Barisan to maintain the checks and balances that are an essential ingredient of a parliamentary democracy which we profess to practice? In the next few weeks the votes and people of this country will be bombarded with appeals from various parties. I do hope and pray that when the voters go to the polling booths they will ponder on the survival of democracy in Malaysia before they mark their ballot papers. *Alhamdulillah Tuhan akan memandukan pemilih-pemilih di pilihan raya umum pada tahun ini* — May God guide the voters at the general elections this year.

ELECTION PACTS AND ELECTORAL UNDERSTANDING

With the next general elections just around the corner, our mass media is full of election news. One topic of great interest is: will there be an election pact or electoral understanding amongst the Opposition parties? This arises from the assumption that the ruling party, whether the Alliance or the Barisan, is a monolithic body and united while the Opposition parties are a disparate lot, always quarrelling amongst themselves. Nothing can be further from the truth. The ruling party is not a monolithic body nor is it united, even in the heat of an election battle. Thus in 1959 on the eve of our first general elections when the MCA splintered, many MCA members left the party and contested as independents. An example was Robert R.C. Hoh who stood in Bukit Bintang and came out second there. Others who left the MCA and contested as independents were Koh Pooi Kee in Bungsar, Yap Kim Swee in Setapak and Chai Yoke Kim in Ulu Selangor.

In the last general elections there were signs of cracks within the Barisan, first within the UMNO where some who were not selected left the party to contest as independents. Then the troubles between the MCA and the Gerakan erupted into the open. Some members were urged to leave their respective parties and then contested as independents. This happened especially in Penang. In the case of the UMNO rebels, all of them failed. In the case of the MCA/Gerakan independents, the only party which benefited was

the DAP, which won 4 federal and 9 state seats in Penang. Thus it is clear that the Barisan is not the monolithic party it is made out to be. Right now the MCA and Gerakan are at each other's throats, not to talk of the enmity between Berjaya and USNO.

The PSRM has appeared to the onlooker to be more interested in propagating its brand of socialism injected with a dose of Islam, than in winning elections *per se*. In this election, however, it has shown that it is really interested and in earnest by contesting only in four states and that too on a very narrow front. What is more important, the PSRM like the DAP, is now willing to talk and form an electoral pact or, if that is not possible, to have an electoral understanding in agreeing not to stand against each other in any constituency.

The PAS has always been too narrow in its racial outlook for it to work together with any other non-Muslim and non-Malay party.

The DAP has always been very cocky that it could go it alone. After the elections of 1969 it was in a great hurry to form the Government in Perak and Selangor. When the Gerakan, in the national interest, refused to join the DAP and PPP in the race for power in Perak, it was condemned for its "treason" by the other two. The traumatic experiences of last year have I hope taught it to be more humble and mature.

I see that Datuk Mohamed Sovie has come out for an election pact between the big three in the Opposition namely DAP, PAS and PSRM. Quite rightly he has stated that given the will it can be formed and if it is formed it may well topple the Barisan! I myself feel that given the mood of the three parties an election pact between them is a pipe-dream. At this late hour the most that can be hoped for is an electoral understanding between DAP and PSRM. PAS may or may not have held secret talks with Opposition parties but after its traumatic and recent experience with UMNO it is not likely to jump into the same bed with any other political party and be caught committing *khalwat* — "in flagrante delicto"!

I well remember, after we had formed the Gerakan late in 1968 we scouted around for an election pact or at least an electoral understanding with other Opposition parties. We sounded PAS but soon found that they were not in the least interested in urban or urban-rural constituencies as we were hence there was no basis for any talks between us. Then we sounded PSRM who were more interested in hammering out a socialist programme than in the

nitty-gritty of discussions on constituencies. As the business of hammering out a socialist programme could have got us bogged down for months if not years of talks we soon had to give up the idea of an election pact with PSRM.

The PPP were only interested in being left alone in Perak, particularly in the Kinta Valley, and were prepared to let us have a few seats around Taiping so we agreed to leave them untouched in Perak provided they did not intrude into the constituencies we wanted to contest elsewhere in the country. That left only the DAP and the Gerakan. The Gerakan had two very clear objectives: to capture Penang and Bukit Bintang constituency in Kuala Lumpur. For these two objectives we were prepared to make sacrifices, including the Kinta Valley, Seremban, Malacca and even in Selangor.

At first we tried to hammer out a common programme but we soon found that it was not possible and feasible in the time available. Once you try to get down to discuss a common programme you soon get into all sorts of details and this leads to acrimony. We soon decided on an electoral understanding — not to contest against each other in any constituency. A straight fight between the Opposition and the Alliance was desired and although the PPP and the PAS were not involved, in practice there were straight fights with the Alliance in most of the constituencies throughout the country. The Alliance did not have the benefit of seeing the Opposition parties slitting each other's throats. Of course, the going was very rough and at times it almost drove me to despair. I still remember the last night of the negotiations when we broke up in the library at my house, one of the DAP members on hearing of the failure, broke out into an Indian war dance! It was the late S.P. Seenivasagam who saved the day for he pulled us back to the library as the differences were not big and were easily settled with his help.

The electoral understanding was signed in the wee hours of that morning and the rest is now history. The impact on the voters was not apparent at first but very soon the very large crowds that attended our rallies and deserted those of the Alliance showed that the voters up and down the country approved of the electoral understanding between the Gerakan and the DAP. Soon it was apparent to the Opposition that there was a wave against the Alliance and in favour of them. This was reflected in votes cast on polling day, with the Alliance getting 1,077,499 votes and the Opposition 1,101,682 of the valid votes cast. Alas, under the Westminster system of first-past-the-post the Alliance got 74

federal seats and the combined Opposition only 37 seats, but it can be seen from the foregoing that the Alliance Government formed by Tun Razak actually represented a minority. The Alliance lost Penang to the Gerakan, in Perak it was in a minority and in Selangor there was a tie.

The fact that a single electoral understanding between the two Opposition parties had such a potent effect on the minds of the voters of this country shows that there is a crying need for some sort of electoral understanding amongst the Opposition parties. What happened in 1969 can be repeated today, I would urge the PSRM and the DAP to get cracking on an electoral understanding between just the two of them. It will have a great deal of effect on the people of this country, perhaps far greater than can be visualized by either party. The time is ripe — both sides have stated that they want such an understanding. The PSRM has gone further to say that it will contest only in Penang, Trengganu, Pahang and Johore and even in these states it will fight on a very narrow front.

The ball then is in the court of the DAP. It must show political maturity and initiate talks with the PSRM as quickly as possible. It must adopt a policy of give and take and not push the PSRM into a corner or humiliate it when it perforce has to turn around and bite the DAP. And both parties have to act quickly and decisively. It is already late in the day to start full negotiations and hence representatives from each party must be appointed without delay. These delegates must have full powers to commit their respective parties. Once agreement is reached then there must be no attempt to welsh on the agreement. Once an electoral understanding is reached between the DAP and PSRM it may well create an anti-Barisan wave similar to the anti-Alliance wave of 1969.

I have not mentioned the PAS for they are just not interested and would be happier going it alone. So let them do so. But the PAS will also reap the fall-out of the anti-Barisan wave that will be created. Thus in 1969 PAS won 12 federal and 40 state seats whereas in 1964 they won 9 and 29 seats respectively.

It is up to the DAP and PSRM to explain their significance to the rest of the country. The reader will I hope notice that I have said nothing about hammering out a common election platform so dear to the heart of the ideologist. Once the parties get into such a discussion it will very quickly run into shoals that will wreck the talks and worse still poison the atmosphere of goodwill that now prevails. The basic idea is a very simple one — agree not to fight

against each other in any constituency. With the PSRM not wanting to fight on a broad front and the DAP not fully recovered from the traumatic experience of last year it should not be too difficult to reach agreement.

I have stated before and I reiterate that the task before the Opposition parties, and indeed the 6.1 million voters of this country, is to cut down the size of the majority that the Barisan will have in the coming Dewan Rakyat. This is in order that parliamentary democracy can have a better chance of survival. The voters of this country need not worry that the Government that is formed under such circumstances will not be a strong one. Paradoxical as this may sound to the people, a strong Opposition may result in a strong Government with a fair majority, but not an overwhelming one. For the Government then will be kept on its toes and on the alert all the time. Such a Government will have to be responsive and sensitive to the needs of the people and not ride roughshod over their hopes and aspirations.

THE ABC OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1982

The election fever has caught the imagination of Malaysians of all walks of life. Normally the life of our Parliament runs for five years hence it is not due to be dissolved till July next year. But because of the international economic situation and other domestic factors, the Mahathir Administration has to call for the dissolution of Parliament at the end of the present session and hold new polls next month. Strictly speaking, that is not correct for only His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has the power to dissolve Parliament and the conduct of our elections lies in the hands of the Election Commission. But His Majesty is a constitutional monarch and must act on the advice of the Prime Minister of the day.

Under Article 55(4) of the Constitution whenever Parliament is dissolved a general election must be held within sixty days in Peninsular Malaysia and ninety days in the states of Sabah and Sarawak. A Writ of Election under Section 12 of the Election Act, 1958 is then issued and this is published by the Election Commission in the Government Gazette and the major newspapers of this country. Nomination day must be fixed by the Election Commission not less than one week after the date of publication of such notice. In the event of a contest a poll must be taken and the polling day must not be less than two weeks after the day of nomination. I think I am right in saying that the longest a campaign can last is six weeks. All these dates are fixed by the independent Election Commission

although no doubt the Chairman of the Election Commission will "consult" the Prime Minister in fixing the dates.

Of the five general elections held since 1959, the shortest was in 1978 when 3 weeks were allowed but in 1964 at the height of the Confrontation, the Election Commission on the "advice" of the Tunku allowed us five weeks — the longest period so far.

As I have mentioned before, nomination day cannot be less than one week after the writ for a general election is issued. I have seen the nomination papers and I must take this opportunity to congratulate the Election Commission for the changes it has instituted. For one thing, in the past the candidates for federal and state elections used the same forms and this often led to some confusion. Now the forms are separate and there is no likelihood of a mix-up. They are also very simple to fill; anyone who has had a secondary education should be able to do it. Not too many unnecessary questions are asked and those that are asked are direct, simple and easy to answer. At every election in the past, objections have been raised because forms have not been properly filled. In the previous years too, some important requirements had been tucked away in a corner, for example the statutory declaration had to be stamped. I very well remember in August 1973, we took part in a by-election in Johore Timor and the statutory declaration of our candidate was scrutinized closely by no less than a battery of six Pekemas lawyers the night before. None of them noticed that the form had not been stamped! No one, neither the lawyers nor the sitting MPs, including, I am ashamed to say, myself. The next day our candidate duly presented his nomination papers, and when objection time came the Alliance successfully objected to the statutory declaration not being stamped, and the objection was upheld by the Returning Officer. The Alliance won the seat uncontested, and we returned home to Kuala Lumpur thoroughly ashamed and disgusted with ourselves. The moral of my story is that no prospective candidate can be too sure of himself but should literally read every line of every form and until his nomination is accepted by the Returning Officer, he cannot say that he is in the race. But once nomination day is over and one's candidature is accepted then the race is on.

By now the parties must have printed all their posters, symbols, banners and manifestoes. These things take time to print and parties cannot wait for the election writ to be issued to start their preparations. The time allowed for the campaign may well be only

two weeks and if the printing is not ready then the elections may well be over by the time posters, banners, manifestoes and symbols are ready! Right from the word go, that is after nomination day, all the towns in Malaysia will be a sea of blue of the Barisan and red of the Opposition with other variegated colours as well.

Up to 1978 there were no restrictions on the number of rallies a political party could hold during an election, whether a general one or a by-election. Of course the party had to submit a list of the names of speakers. The rallies are taped from beginning to end and it goes without saying that they must end by midnight. But in 1978 the Barisan Government decreed that there should be no rallies because of the emergency situation in Kelantan. It does seem to me that the Barisan Government in this instance had a vested interest in keeping the emergency alive in this country!

So in 1978 rallies were banned but *ceramahs* (lectures) were allowed. This of course made it enormously more difficult for the Opposition to reach the voters of this country. Extension speakers are placed all over the halls so as to attract the crowds and *ceramahs* have become in fact mini-rallies! This makes the job of the police more difficult. Even with *ceramahs*, restrictions are imposed. According to a press report, the speakers are asked to give the police a list of the topics they wish to speak on. This is an absurd requirement. It is true that most of us sometimes have a written text but that is for the consumption of the press only. Speaking as one who has taken part in three general elections, almost all the speakers made impromptu speeches, responding to the mood of the crowd as the occasion arises. A speaker cannot give a list of the topics he wishes to touch on for the simple reason that at the start of his speech he himself does not know what he is about to speak on.

I see that in the debate on the King's Speech, Encik Ghaffar Baba, an ex-Cabinet Minister called on the Government to ban rallies in the coming general election. He went to accuse the Opposition, in particular the DAP, of raising communal issues. This was his main reason for advocating a ban on rallies during the coming general election! He would have us believe that the Alliance and now the Barisan is lily-white and pure and the Opposition is the devil and evil. Nothing can be further from the truth. If only the police were allowed to play back some of the speeches of the more rabid speakers of both sides, our hair would stand on end. All parties, whether Barisan or Opposition, are guilty of making blood-stirring speeches in their bid to reach the rural voters.

In the interests of the open society that the Mahathir-Musa Administration advocate I do hope that they will allow rallies to be held once again during elections in order that democracy in this country may survive. The ban on rallies and the restrictions on *ceramahs* do not affect the Barisan so much as the Opposition. Most of the big newspapers are owned by them and of the very few independent ones left, almost all of them are beholden to the Barisan Government for their annually renewable licences.

In the past, the Government had allowed political parties taking part in elections to have radio-time to explain their manifesto, party platform et cetera. Now I see in a press report that this too will not be allowed in the coming elections. If this press report is true and represents the intentions of the Barisan Government then I say that we are going from the absurd to the sublime. In most advanced countries (and Malaysia I presume is working towards that goal) most of the election battles are fought on radio and TV, especially the latter. I was in New Zealand last November during the latter half of their elections and the only time I was aware that there was an election on at the time was when I turned on the TV or switched on the radio. Not only were all the major parties allowed time on radio and TV, debates between the three major parties on TV and radio were held every week, sometimes more than once a week.

But Malaysia seems to be slipping back into the middle ages or shall I say the dark ages, where only *ceramahs* are allowed and even then restrictions are placed on political parties! *Quo vadis* Barisan Government? If Malaysia is to take a big leap forward into the 21st century there must be as few restrictions as possible placed on the activities of political parties taking part in the coming general election. It is no use asking the ordinary worker in Malaysia to adopt the work ethic of the Japanese worker when you shut his eyes and ears up during a general election and ask him to go to vote almost blind-folded. For that is what it amounts to if the Barisan Government bans rallies, talks and debates over radio and TV and places restrictions on the holding of *ceramahs*. We should also emulate the freedom of the Japanese system and their free press.

The financing of the coming elections of course poses no great problems or burden to the Barisan parties. I know of big tycoons rushing head-over-heels to pour hundreds of thousands into the coffers of the Alliance, now the Barisan. Just a simple telephone call from someone high in the political hierarchy will do and you see the unseemly rush to do favours for the ruling party be it in the form of

money, loan of cars, company personnel and so on. On the other hand the Opposition parties, especially those with no electoral success in the past, cannot even pick up the crumbs from under the table. When I interviewed Sdr. Kassim Ahmad he admitted that the PSRM candidates would be lucky if they could afford \$2000 or \$3000 each. The Barisan candidates can spread about a hundred times that amount! In Sabah, the candidates, whether Berjaya or USNO would spend even more!

For years the amount allowed on election expenses was ridiculously low. Thus a candidate in Bungsar, the biggest constituency in the country in terms of voters, then was allowed the same expenditure as in Johore Tenggara, probably the smallest constituency in Peninsular Malaysia. Later the sum was revised upwards based on the number of voters in the constituency but now more realistic rules have been introduced. Thus Petaling has more than 100,000 voters and the costs must be enormous — by my standards at least. After this general election an electoral law must be enacted whereby the Election Commission must place an upper limit on what a private individual or organization can give to a party or a candidate. This will put an end to the abuse of big money in a general election. Otherwise the cynic may well say, "money talks." This has been the case in the USA and other countries as well.

If one day the contributions that the Alliance and the Barisan have received from local and foreign patrons become known, I should not like to be in their shoes to face the wrath of the Malaysian electorate. To protect our budding democracy it may be useful to insist that all donations exceeding a thousand dollars have to be publicly registered.

It is also unhealthy for Ministers to go around the country giving so-called on-the-spot grants, as though they were disbursing their personal wealth. Nor should citizens have to stand in line before TV cameras, subjected to this indignity, in order to receive a Government cheque which is their right. Our electorate is better educated now and Ministers may discover that such stunts may win them, not votes, but contempt.

I can only hope that the election campaign will be marked by dignity and reason. Government members must set an example by eschewing threats and avoiding the abuse of their official entitlements during the election campaign.

The Election Commission seems to have a new breath of life under the new Chairman, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Talib. I wish to congratulate

the Election Commission for getting through Parliament a revision of the Electoral (Conduction of Election) Regulations 1981. I have already mentioned how the nomination papers have been completely revamped making life much easier for the prospective candidate. Another welcome revision is the raising of the upper limit on election expenses. For the coming election the Election Commission has been working overtime to get things ready for the big show. There is an enormous amount of work to be done but I gather that preparations are now almost complete. Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Talib and his loyal band of workers are to be congratulated for the hard work that they have put in. 154 returning officers and 525 assistant returning officers have been recruited and their names have already been gazetted. They have been given short intensive courses as they will hold very responsible jobs in the coming general election. Thousands of presiding officers, mainly Government servants who are teachers, have to be recruited and trained, hundreds of schools have to be inspected and thousands of rooms gone over carefully to see whether they will be suitable as polling stations. The work is enormous but the Election Commission is waiting for the Dewan Rakyat to be dissolved to get cracking.

Most political parties have been quietly making their preparations for the last six months or so. The major ones have been holding seminars, courses, and so on for their election workers on election procedures so now most of them are ready and waiting to go. If a newcomer is not fully prepared he will find that polling day has already arrived and he has not visited half the voters or that most of the propaganda material is still lying in the party office, the final preparations for polling day like sheds for party workers outside polling stations have not been erected, food and drinks are not ready and as the voters start rolling in the party workers curse the candidate and the top party officials. So confusion reigns and when the results are announced the candidate has deservedly lost.

Transport has always been a big problem with Opposition parties. In 1969 for instance I asked the voters to travel by sailing boat but vote Padil! It worked with devastating effect. The same thing happened to my state opponent, now a very prominent MCA leader. When he found that my votes were mounting up and his remained static he and his followers left the counting hall halfway through. In the end I had more than double his votes. My 1964 MCA state opponent whom I had beaten by two votes had thought that discretion was the better part of valour and in 1969 had gone to

Kuala Kubu Baru to contest there.

All candidates are allowed to fix their own seal on the ballot boxes at the end of the poll. Most of the Opposition candidates have no money to buy or make their own seals so we used to buy a piece of wax and then when the ballot box was locked we used to use a twenty cent coin to fix our seal!

At every election there are bound to be charges of cheating against presiding officers siding with Alliance or Barisan party candidates. I must admit that after being a candidate in three general elections I have not actually come across a single case of such alleged cheating. But there are many ways that a party can cheat on polling day. A voter can be persuaded not to mark his ballot paper and pretend to drop it into the ballot box whilst in fact the ballot paper is in his pocket. When he comes out he sells his ballot paper to the highest bidder. This is then marked by the party official and given to the next voter with instructions to exchange it with his own ballot paper which is brought out unmarked, for a consideration of course. So the cycle is repeated again and again and I can boldly say that only the ruling party can afford such a practice. The Opposition parties cannot afford to buy food and drinks for their party workers so how can they afford to buy votes? But to be fair I must admit that the practice is not widespread and I have not seen money changing hands. If I had seen it I would certainly have called in the police.

One of the main reasons why some people who are registered voters refuse to go and vote on polling day is that they say that voting is not secret. This arises from the fact that after the ballot paper is torn from the book, the number of the ballot paper is written on the counterfoil. This simple act strikes fear into the hearts of some voters for some Barisan speakers warn them that if they vote Opposition they cannot escape retribution from the ruling party! This of course is not an empty threat. I remember during an election a friend lent me his lorry and the number was noted down by an Alliance worker. After the election the carrier licence of the lorry was cancelled. Such is the price that the Opposition and their supporters have to pay. Talk about fair play and a clean election!

But voting is secret. After the counting is over, the ballot paper and other relevant documents are kept in a box sealed, and kept in safe custody for six months before they are destroyed — usually burnt in the presence of the candidates or their representatives. Only a judge of the High Court can order that any ballot paper or other document relating to an election be inspected. So one can see

the secrecy of our voting system is well taken care of by the Election Commission. In any case, in Petaling where the voters exceeded 100,000 I defy any person or group of persons to match the counterfoil number with that on the ballot paper out of more than 100,000 votes cast! However great may be the advantage of writing the number on the counterfoil, on behalf of countless voters of this country, may I appeal to the Chairman of the Election Commission to stop this practice for it does strike fear in the hearts of many. Or if it must be done why not do it out of sight of the voters?

The long count begins at 8 p.m. in the night and in the case of Petaling, for example, one must wait till dawn for the counting to be completed. If the victory is a narrow one and the loser loses by 1 percent or less he can demand a recount in which case the counting may well go on the whole of the next day! We are lucky that our electorate in each constituency is comparatively small. Compare this with the sub-continent of India where it is usual for a constituency to have an electorate of one million or more and the counting takes days to complete. If a recount is ordered the officials may have to sweat it out for weeks!

Usually if the margin of victory is clear out then this is reflected in the ballot papers piling in the baskets and the V-sign is flashed to one's supporters. But if the margin is in doubt then everyone is on edge until the result is announced. But we can hasten the process if the Election Commission will agree to revise the counting procedure. Each constituency can be divided into say ten counting stations and counting can go on simultaneously at ten places thus reducing the counting time to one-tenth the time taken now. What about it, Election Commission? I can't see any valid reason for not adopting such a system and speeding up the counting except maybe the fear of the Government revealing its weak areas. Thus if Jinjang New Village is a counting station and 80 percent of the voters there vote Opposition, it will expose the weakness of the Government there. On the contrary the Election Commission goes to great lengths to keep the pattern of voting from the counting agents. Up to 1978 the ballot papers of a polling station were poured out on the table, counted and kept aside. The numbers were checked to see that they tallied and any discrepancy was noted. In this manner the counting agents could have an idea of the pattern of voting. But since 1978 the ballot papers of all the polling stations are all mixed together so that the onlookers can have no clue of the pattern of voting.

THE FIGHT FOR THE FEDERAL TERRITORY

Today, 7 November 1982, is nomination day and after 1.00 p.m. all would-be candidates will know whether their nomination papers have been accepted. After that the fight is on and the campaign starts, officially. With the simplified nomination papers there should be much fewer rejections so let us hope that no candidate wins any seat uncontested.

Traditionally in Malaysia the urban seats have been won by left-wing parties representing the industrial workers, while the rural agricultural areas have been represented by conservative, feudal parties. This is the pattern the world over and once in power the conservatives give "weightage" to rural areas with the result that the rural constituencies with fewer voters send the same number of MPs to Parliament. In Malaysia, this weightage is particularly bad where constituencies like Sungei Besi and Petaling, each with more than 100,000 voters, elect one MP each whereas Panti in Johore and Grik in Perak with about 20,000 voters also elect one MP each.

To come back to the Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur originally started with four constituencies, namely Bukit Bintang, Bungsar, Batu and Setapak. But after the creation of the Federal Territory and the second delimitation of constituencies carried out by the Election Commission in 1972, the boundaries were redrawn and the number increased from four to five, namely Bandar Kuala Lumpur, Sungei

Besi, Damansara, Kepong and Setapak. As is the usual practice the world over there was a great deal of gerrymandering associated with the revision of constituencies. Kampong Baru, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, was carved out of Bukit Bintang and attached to Setapak, making the latter practically safe for UMNO or for a Malay candidate. One of the avowed aims of the revision exercise was to mix up the races in a constituency but exactly the opposite was carried out in the case of Setapak and Bukit Bintang. The former became a Malay constituency while the latter had very few Malay voters.

In the first national elections after independence in 1959 the Opposition swept the board, the Socialist Front winning three of the four seats namely Bungsar, Batu and Setapak, and an independent losing narrowly to the Alliance. It was a big shock to the Alliance, for in the first partially elected national election of 1955 it had won 51 out of the 52 seats at stake — the sole winner for the Opposition being the PMIP in Krian.

Just before the nomination day in 1959, the Young Turks of the MCA revolted against the authority of the head of the Alliance, the Tunku, in having the final say in the selection of MCA candidates. This created a crisis within the Alliance and the MCA and there was a serious talk of suspending the Constitution and ruling by decree. The Tunku was away from Kuala Lumpur at the beginning of the crisis but when he returned he quickly calmed things down and said, quite rightly, that the MCA rebels could leave and he was willing to go on with the elections even though he had only one MCA candidate left. The MCA rebels stood in three constituencies, namely Bukit Bintang, Bungsar and Setapak but all of them lost.

The sweeping victory of the Socialist Front so frightened the Alliance that they converted the Kuala Lumpur Municipality into the *Ibu Kota* and did away with local elections. Five years later, this was extended throughout the whole country, as a temporary measure during the height of the Confrontation. But when the Confrontation was over and after the Athi Nahappan Report was published, local elections were abolished all over the country by an Act of Parliament. So much for the solemn promises of the Alliance Party made in Parliament.

The four elected representatives of Kuala Lumpur in the first general elections of 1959 were V. David (Bungsar), Ng Ann Teck (Batu), Boestaman (Setapak), all from the Socialist Front and Cheah Theam Swee (Bukit Bintang) of the Alliance.

The general election of 1964 was a different kettle of fish for the opposition — the Socialist Front, PMIP, PPP, UDP and a few minor parties. The two main ones, namely the Socialist Front and the PMIP, foolishly took an anti-Malaysia stance and deservedly were soundly thrashed. The Socialist Front won 2, PPP 2, UDP 1, PAP 1 and PMIP 9 seats. The Alliance won 89 of the 104 seats. In Kuala Lumpur, I survived in Batu. Devan Nair of the PAP won in Bungsar and the Alliance were victorious in Setapak while S.Y. Chan and Tan Toh Hong won in Bukit Bintang. The honours were even with the Alliance and the Opposition each winning 2 seats.

In 1969 the Labour Party and the UDP faded from the electoral map. I had formed a new party, the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. The Gerakan proceeded to form an electoral understanding with the DAP, also a new party formed after the exit of the PAP from Malaysia. The exit of Singapore had created an anti-Alliance wave which spread beyond the confines of both parties. This was reflected in the final results of the elections. The DAP had 13 Federal and 31 state seats, PAS improved from 9 to 12 federal and 25 to 40 state seats, PPP from 2 to 4 federal and 5 to 12 state seats. In the *Ibu Kota* the winners were: Yeoh Teck Chye (Bukit Bintang) and myself (Batu), both of Gerakan; Goh Hock Guan (Bungsar) and Walter Loh Poh Khan (Setapak) both of DAP — a clean sweep for the Opposition.

In 1974 the Federal Territory had its constituencies redrawn and increased from 4 to 5, namely Bandar Kuala Lumpur, Sungei Besi, Kepong, Setapak and Damansara. The political alignment had also been changed. The late Tun Hj. Abdul Razak formed the Barisan and attracted into the Barisan ranks such diverse groups as PMIP, SUPP, Berjaya, USNO, PPP and Gerakan in addition to the old Alliance of UMNO, MCA and MIC. It was a formidable combination, and its main opponent was the DAP with some newer parties like Pekemas, Socialist Democratic Party and KITA Workers' Party. The result in the Federal Territory was as follows: Idris B. Hj. Ibrahim (Setapak) and S. Subramaniam (Damansara) both of the Barisan; Lee Lam Thye (Bandar Kuala Lumpur) and Fam Seong Than (Sg. Besi) both DAP; and myself (Kepong) of Pekemas. Thus we see that three of the five seats in the Federal Territory went to the Opposition.

By 1978 PAS left the Barisan and I retired from politics following my illness in 1976, although I carried on as an MP until the end of my term in 1978. My place as the Pekemas candidate in

Kepong was taken up by Dr. Tan Seng Giaw. I can now reveal that prior to the 1978 elections Dr. Tan Seng Giaw was repeatedly invited by the DAP to cross over but I advised against it. I told him in 1978 that if he joined the DAP then he would be labelled an opportunist but that, if after the election whether he won or lost, he joined the DAP he would not be called one. He knew he was throwing away a golden chance of being an MP for in the election that followed Dr. Tan Tiong Hong of the Barisan, the winner, had 20,055 votes, Dr. Tan Seng Giaw had 17,827 and the DAP candidate Khoo Chin Tow had 9971 votes. The combined Opposition votes in Kepong exceeded the Barisan votes by 7743 votes. The other winners were as follows: Idris B Hj. Ibrahim (Setapak) and Dr. Tan Tiong Hong (Kepong), both of Barisan; Lee Lam Thye (Bandar Kuala Lumpur), V. David (Damansara) and Chan Kok Kit (Sg. Besi), all went to DAP. The last named has set up a record in Malaysian electoral history that will be hard to beat. He gained the highest number of voters, 40,307, with the highest majority of any candidate — 33,687 — which was accomplished without any campaigning at all as he was a guest of His Majesty's Government in Kamunting Detention Camp, Taiping.

For the present campaign, the contest is between the Barisan and the DAP. Both sides have promised to make a clean sweep, but I think that it would be fair to say that each side is fairly certain of one seat at least — Setapak in the case of the Barisan and Bandar Kuala Lumpur in the case of the DAP.

In 1969 as a callow youth of 22 years Lee Lam Thye won the state constituency of Bukit Nanas and gave the late Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam the fright of his life by losing to the latter by only 480 votes out of 22,944 votes cast in the federal constituency of Klang. Since then Lee Lam Thye has built up a formidable reputation as the uncrowned king of Bandar Kuala Lumpur. He has already served two terms as MP and I venture to say that for the coming elections at least, no one can touch him in Bandar Kuala Lumpur — no, not even Tan Koon Swan or the Prime Minister. If he shifts from Kubang Pasu and comes to Bandar Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir will meet his Waterloo at the hands of Lee Lam Thye. After another term I cannot say what will happen but for the coming round Lee Lam Thye will win against all comers. I gather that the sacrificial lamb that the MCA is offering against Lee Lam Thye is Wong Soong Ying.

For Sungei Besi MCA has already announced their candidate,

Kee Yong Wee, accountant, developer and millionaire businessman. The DAP has picked Chan Kok Kit to fight again against him. It is true that the MCA has done plenty of work in Sungei Besi since 1978 but the MCA in general and Kee Yong Wee in particular must not make the mistake of thinking money conquers all. The DAP symbol alone, the Rocket, is worth thousands of voters. How else can you explain that in 1978 with Chan Kok Kit languishing in prison the DAP was able to get 40,307 votes? This time he is out of prison and actively campaigning. With a halo round his head he will be a very formidable opponent. I place my bet on him despite the vast strides that the MCA have made in Sungei Besi since 1978. Kee Yong Wee smells and looks too respectable in this class constituency.

The Kepong seat has been the most difficult problem to solve in the tussle between the MCA and the Gerakan. It arose from the fact that the Gerakan MP for Kepong, Dr. Tan Tiong Hong, crossed over to the MCA and the MCA MP for Ulu Selangor, Datuk Michael Chen, former Deputy President, of the MCA crossed over to the Gerakan. The Gerakan wants to keep Ulu Selangor which is a safe constituency for the Barisan but the MCA has claimed it back. The dispute has not been settled. Now the Gerakan is saddled with it and Kerr Kim Tee, member of the Chinese Schools' Association Committee, is most likely to be the candidate. In 1978 the Barisan got 20,055 votes whereas the combined Opposition votes totalled 28,188, thus exceeding the Barisan votes by 8,133. The DAP candidate is Dr. Tan Seng Giaw who in 1978 came out second with 17,827 votes. Kepong, and before it Batu, has always voted left and in this election I expect it to return to the safe hands of the Opposition. Dr. Tan Seng Giaw should be able to take on all comers in Kepong and win comfortably.

In Setapak, in 1978 Idris B. Hj. Ibrahim won without a contest. The nomination papers of his opponent had been rejected. This time the nomination papers have been greatly simplified and no one could have his papers rejected. The DAP candidate, Mohd. Isa B. Ismail, is practically unknown but as I have mentioned many times before, the Rocket is well known to every one in Kuala Lumpur and that alone is worth thousands of votes. This time in compliance with its need for change Hj. Idris B. Ibrahim is replaced as a candidate by another Idris Basir, a local strong man. But as Setapak is an UMNO stronghold the change of candidate should not make any difference to the final outcome.

THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE TITANS

In this general election, out of the 114 parliamentary contests, undoubtedly, the most important and the one that has attracted the most attention, is the fight for the parliamentary seat of Seremban. Never in its history has so much publicity been focussed on this capital of Negeri Sembilan, about 40 miles south of Kuala Lumpur. Suddenly two days before nomination day on 7 April 1982, Datuk Lee San Choon, President of the MCA, announced that he would contest the coming election in Seremban and the name of the town was splashed on the front pages of all our newspapers in the country. The DAP candidate all along has been Dr. Chen Man Hin, the outgoing incumbent and also the President of the DAP since its inception.

The candidature of Datuk Lee San Choon took most people by surprise causing a flurry of activity among the top leadership of the DAP. This was because earlier on Lim Kit Siang, the Secretary-General of the DAP, had challenged Datuk Lee San Choon to a fight in any of twelve Chinese majority constituencies and Seremban was one of them. Was Lim Kit Siang going to pick up the gauntlet thrown by Datuk Lee San Choon or was the DAP going to allow the outgoing incumbent of Seremban to stay on and fight the President of the MCA? In the end the DAP leadership decided that Dr. Chen Man Hin should take on Datuk Lee San Choon. Lim Kit Siang went further south to Kota Melaka to tackle Chan Teck Chun who had

been a protege of Lim Kit Siang and had defected to the MCA.

Datuk Lee San Choon has stressed again and again that the fight is not between himself and Dr. Chen Man Hin or even between the MCA and the DAP. The issue at stake is far wider than Seremban — at stake is the political leadership of the Chinese community in this country. Who can legitimately claim to lead the Chinese masses in this country? The fight in Seremban will decide that. As a non-partisan political observer I find it hard to accept that the fight in Seremban can decide this vital issue.

If we had a presidential system of election where the whole country voted for a single person as in the case of USA that might throw some light on this issue. But since the leadership of the Chinese masses is at stake, such a contest, if ever it is held, should be confined only to the Chinese voters of this country, the winner in such a contest can claim to have the majority support of the Chinese masses. But since such an election is not practical in this country, one must look around for other alternatives to decide the issue. If the "Chineseness" of the constituency is the main criterion in this combat between the two parties and their leaders, then Seremban is not the best testing ground. The best example of a "Chinese" constituency is Bandar Kuala Lumpur and next is Kepong. Let us look at the statistics pertaining to the three constituencies:

Constituency	Seremban	Kepong	Bandar K.L.
Total Electorate:	60,739	77,285	59,186
Chinese	36,470 (59.87%)	55,189 (71%)	47,199 (79.8%)
Malay	14,870 (24.48%)	12,284 (15%)	6,469 (11.2%)
Indian	8,331 (13.72%)	9,812 (12%)	5,339 (9%)
Other	1,112 (1.83%)		

Thus it will be seen that Bandar Kuala Lumpur and Kepong are more "Chinese" than Seremban both in absolute numbers and in percentage terms. Hence if one wants to test one's Chinese support one should go to Bandar Kuala Lumpur or Kepong. But Bandar Kuala Lumpur and Kepong are traditionally Opposition strongholds and would not be a good testing ground from the point of view of the MCA. The Malay vote in Seremban is 14,870, whereas Kepong with a much larger electorate has a smaller Malay vote of 12,284 and Bandar Kuala Lumpur has even less — 6,469. Another yardstick is the number of MPs returned to Parliament in a general election. In 1978, the MCA fielded 28 candidates and 18 got

returned to Parliament whereas the DAP, a much smaller party, fielded 53 candidates and 17 were returned. Here one must remember that while some of the MCA candidates won in Malay majority constituencies this was not so in the case of the DAP. On the contrary, the DAP used to field some Malay candidates in Chinese dominated constituencies at state level and win.

In 1969 it was a disastrous election for the MCA, their candidates were slaughtered by both the Gerakan (then in the Opposition), which won 8, and the DAP, which won 12 federal seats. This led the late Tun Dr. Ismail to remark that the MCA is "*Tak mati tak hidup*" — neither dead nor alive. As a result of this disastrous defeat the MCA had announced that it would not participate in the Cabinet, thus effectively withdrawing from the Government. Since then of course the MCA has returned to the Cabinet and with the infusion of new blood it has succeeded in rehabilitating itself to a large extent in the eyes of the Chinese and others as well. Under Datuk Lee San Choon, in the last few years, a good deal of confidence has been restored in the party.

The MCA has been quietly preparing for the general election and although there was some grumbling over the selection of candidates, the party is solidly united for the present election, especially in Seremban. Seremban has been a surprise for the rank and file of the party but it was no foolhardy move on the part of the MCA or Datuk Lee San Choon himself*. Nor is the challenge to the DAP made out of a spirit of bravado. It is a calculated move made by the MCA which has been preparing and testing the ground for the past year or so. Datuk Lee San Choon has unobtrusively been making frequent trips to Seremban attending and opening party and community functions, seminars, cultural shows, visiting the poor and telling them that they can depend on the MCA for help. The Seremban division of the MCA has stepped up its assistance to hawkers, petty traders and the poor in Seremban. When I climbed up the steps of the four-storey MCA building there I saw a notice on the wall of an academic institution calling on the students to help

* Lee San Choon, the president of the MCA, in response to the challenge by the DAP leader Lim Kit Siang to contest from a predominantly Chinese parliamentary constituency, decided to contest in Seremban himself. The contest became a focus of interest in the country. Many people believed that Lee San Choon had been misguided in contesting from a predominantly Chinese constituency, especially Seremban which had been the preserve of the DAP for many years.

the MCA in the current election. Obviously the MCA is leaving no stone unturned in this battle of the titans.

The DAP on the other hand regards Seremban as its stronghold. It has won there three times in succession with Dr. Chen Man Hin. He is a local man, born and bred there. After he graduated from the University of Malaya in Singapore he set up practice in Seremban and has been practising there ever since the early fifties. The private practitioner who takes up politics, if he has done his work well as a doctor and is sympathetic towards the poor, has a head-start over his opponents. I should know. When I started private practice in 1952 quite a large number of my patients were from Jinjang New Village and Kepong and they stuck to me loyally not only as their doctor but as their MP as well! And this despite the fact that I contested under three flags on each of the three occasions that I fought in Batu and later Kepong. First I contested under the banner of the Labour Party in 1964. In 1967 when I was threatened with expulsion from the Labour Party for not toeing the extremist line, I left them and formed the Gerakan together with Dr. Lim Chong Eu and contested the 1969 elections under its flag. Then in 1971, when I broke away from the Gerakan and formed the Pekemas, I contested for the last time in Kepong in 1974 under the flag of the Pekemas. I believe I am the only MP to have contested three times, each time under a different flag and won all three times.

To come back to Dr. Chen Man Hin, his record as a private practitioner is impeccable and he has served his electorate well as their MP. He has *pari passu* been the State Assemblyman for Rahang, which is in his federal constituency of Seremban. So he is in the fortunate position of being able to raise local issues in the State Assembly as well. He has not got the flamboyance and charisma of his Secretary-General, Lim Kit Siang but neither does he have the latter's abrasiveness. Dr. Chen Man Hin is quiet and almost self-effacing and hardly has any personal enemies in the Dewan Rakyat. He is moderate in his approach to most issues and has allowed Lim Kit Siang to bask in the limelight while he maintains a low profile most of the time. Dr. Chen Man Hin is a good general practitioner. He was in the first batch of general practitioners who passed the diploma examination to become an MCPG, Member of the College of General Practitioners. This in itself is no mean feat, for he has to combine a successful practice with that of a State Assemblyman and an MP. He has retained the loyalty of both his patients and his electorate who voted for him through three general elections. He

will be a formidable opponent.

The DAP does not view the current battle for Seremban in the same light as the MCA. The latter, views the fight in Seremban as one for the leadership of the Chinese community in this country. In any election, both the contestants cannot win — one of them must lose. What if the MCA loses in Seremban? To them defeat is unthinkable and they do not seem to have any plans for a post-Seremban defeat. The DAP on the other hand also places great importance on Seremban but does not view it as a life or death struggle. If the DAP loses it will live to fight another day. In any case whether Dr. Chen Man Hin wins or loses this will probably be the last time he will fight an election battle as a candidate. He is already 57 and he knows that he must make way for a younger man. He has already given up the Rahang state seat which he won in a by-election in 1965 and has held it till this year.

On the other hand, if Datuk Lee San Choon should lose it may well mean his exit from MCA politics at least. There will be many Young Turks waiting on the wings ready to take over from him. He is comparatively young, being in his middle forties. It is not generally known that he is a very seasoned politician, having entered the Dewan Rakyat in 1959. He first triumphed in Kluang Utara, with a majority of 1455, and in 1964 he moved over to Segamat Selatan and won with a majority of 6399 which he increased in 1969 to 9287. In 1974, he represented Segamat with a majority of 11,398 and in 1978 he increased his majority to 17,318. But it must be remembered that although Segamat is a Chinese majority constituency it always had a substantial non-Chinese vote. There are already rumblings in the Malay areas by UMNO members asking why they should carry Chinese and Indian candidates on their backs.

In 1959, Chin See Yin, ex-MCA and head of the "Chindependents", won in Seremban with 5762 votes and a majority of 1777. In 1964 Quek Kim Ding of the MCA won with 9604 votes and a majority of 4194. Since 1969 Seremban has been won by Dr. Chen Man Hin with majorities of 5402 (1969), 3339 (1974) and 8073 (1978). Against any other opponent it would be a walkover for him. But this time he is pitted against the President of the MCA, Datuk Lee San Choon himself and the battle between the titans for Seremban is on.

Datuk Lee San Choon has repeated time and again that this

contest in Seremban is not a personal fight between him and Dr. Chen Man Hin or even between the MCA and the DAP. He says that this fight will decide once and for all the question of the political leadership of the Chinese masses in Malaysia. The MCA is tired of having to fight with one hand tied behind its back and all the time being sniped at by the DAP. But Datuk Lee San Choon has forgotten that before independence when the MCA was the only Chinese party around and it had no serious challenger to its claim of being the leader of the Chinese community it could still not achieve Chinese unity. The DAP leaders claim that the sort of Chinese unity that the MCA seeks to achieve is illusory, a mirage, for even within the Barisan itself the MCA cannot clear its differences with the Gerakan. Very often these differences burst into open warfare. Indeed the MCA and the Gerakan at times attack each other with greater vehemence and ferocity than they do their common enemy the DAP. If Chinese unity cannot be achieved within the Barisan itself how can the MCA claim to lead the Chinese masses in Malaysia by a victory in Seremban?

Seremban is not the best battle ground for Datuk Lee San Choon to deal a knock-out blow to the DAP. There is no great virtue in beating an ageing politician. The tougher test is to knock out Lim Kit Siang. I want to make it clear that Dr. Chen Man Hin is no push-over for Datuk Lee San Choon. On the contrary, he is a very formidable opponent and next to Lim Kit Siang the most worthy opponent for the MCA against the DAP. But by demolishing Lim Kit Siang Datuk Lee San Choon will open a Pandora's Box in the DAP that will send its stocks tumbling down throughout the country. Datuk Lee San Choon should pursue Lim Kit Siang to Kota Melaka and fight him there and if the challenge is accepted by Lim Kit Siang, it will be *the* fight of the whole general election of 1982. Or better still, if the fight is moved to Bandar Kuala Lumpur or Kepong the chances for both the two contestants will be more even.

To be fair to Datuk Lee San Choon, in a sense, his choice of Seremban is dictated by Lim Kit Siang himself who had earlier on challenged Datuk Lee San Choon to meet him in any of the twelve Chinese majority seats. Included in the twelve was Seremban and when Datuk Lee San Choon picked up the gauntlet thrown down by Lim Kit Siang the latter backed down and gave the lame excuse that if he had accepted the challenge he would have deprived his president of the chance of contesting in Seremban. The DAP leaders are in the habit of throwing challenges to all and this time

Lim Kit Siang is hoist with his own petard. He will have to do a great deal of explaining both in Seremban and in Kota Melaka. But more so must the man on the spot — Dr. Chen Man Hin. I want to make it clear that the foregoing does not imply that Lim Kit Siang is a coward much less that he is afraid of Datuk Lee San Choon. I well remember the Gerakan-DAP negotiations of 1969. Both parties wanted Bukit Bintang, the Gerakan for Yeoh Teck Chye and the DAP for Lim Kit Siang. In the end the DAP conceded it to the Gerakan and Lim Kit Siang turned up in Bandar Melaka and won by a thumping majority of 11,216 votes.

But why should Datuk Lee San Choon pick Seremban? It is a puzzle that only historians of the future can unravel. Why should Datuk Lee San Choon leave the safe seat of Segamat in exchange for Damansara? There was no need for him as President of the MCA to give up Segamat, when in 1978 he won it with a majority of 17,318 votes. First, he was supposed to go to Kluang where he had made his political debut in 1959 in Kluang Utara. But Kluang now is quite a safe seat for the outgoing incumbent, Lee Kaw of the DAP. As I have mentioned before, for the past few years, the Malay press has expressed dissatisfaction with UMNO carrying MCA and MIC leaders on their back. The first MCA President, the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock did not contest in any election, as presumably he was too old and infirm. Tun Tan Siew Sin contested in Melaka Tengah, a Malay majority seat — the President of the MCA hiding behind the sarong of the UMNO! It is no secret that of late UMNO leaders have urged top MCA leaders to contest Chinese majority seats so as to justify their claim of leadership of the Chinese masses in this country. Datuk Lee San Choon himself has denied that he has been "pushed" to Seremban. On the contrary, he claims that both Dr. Mahathir and Datuk Musa have tried to dissuade him from contesting in Seremban. He is the first MCA leader to challenge a top DAP leader in a Chinese majority seat but as I have mentioned before it is neither a foolhardy move nor is it done out of sheer bravado. It is a calculated move made after careful planning and testing on the ground.

Today is 16 April 1982 and there are only five days left for campaigning before the people of Seremban go to vote. I visited Seremban and called on both camps in order to find out about their preparations, plans and prospects. Both sides are supremely confident.

I first visited Dr. Chen Man Hin in his house. As befits a

successful private practitioner he stays in Jalan Swettenham in the Lake Garden area near a colonial vestige, the Sungei Ujong Club. He was cool, calm and collected and did not show signs of stress or tiredness. The DAP in Seremban, as indeed in the whole of Negri Sembilan, had been preparing for the present battle for the last six months and in Seremban they were prepared to take on all comers. But he admitted that the entry of Datuk Lee San Choon caught him by surprise and it meant a different ball game altogether. He admitted too that they were a little short of workers but they were all local people and there were no "foreigners" helping out in his campaign. His workers were all seasoned and loyal men who had stuck by him through three elections since 1969.

His expenses are not that high compared to that of his opponent. All his printing had been done, most of the posters had been distributed and the banners strung up not only in the town itself but also in the villages in the constituency. However, he admitted that on polling day he would be short of cars to ferry the voters to the polling stations and back. But that had always been so, in every election that he had taken part since 1969. He had one piece of standard advice for his voters — travel Barisan and vote Rocket! That incidentally is also the stand taken by all the other Opposition parties — travel Alliance, now the Barisan, and vote Opposition! The reason is very simple, as no Opposition party can match the profusion of cars that the ruling party can muster.

Then we went over to the main operations room of the DAP in Seremban. It is conveniently located above Dr. Chen's dispensary in the heart of the town. The place was a bustle of activity with a continuous stream of workers coming for instructions and taking away election materials for distribution. Also there was a stream of voters coming to check up their names on the electoral roll. Dr. Chen Man Hin stated that most of the big guns of the party would be coming to Seremban to help out. Lim Kit Siang had already put in an appearance but he would come again. So also would Lee Lam Thye, Patto, V. David, Chan Kok Kit and Lim Cho Hock. The only leader exempted was Dr. Tan Seng Giaw who was engaged in a big fight with Ker Kim Tim in Kepong.

About four to five *ceramahs* were held in halls, temples and private houses and the response from the audience had been good. Dr. Chen stated that at that time he was still ahead of his rival but that the fight would be a close one — perhaps a very close one. When I asked whether he would win by two votes, as I did in 1964 in

Kepong, then a state seat, out of an electorate of 15,311, he replied that it would not be that close!

Then I went over to the MCA headquarters in Seremban which is a little further down the street. I had to climb up a four storey building as it is on the top floor and occupies the whole of it. There were a number of MCA supporters and helpers waiting in the corridor downstairs. I was told that they were mainly volunteers from outstation. Upstairs it was a hive of activity with a large number of workers. A briefing class was going on. This was necessary as a large number of the volunteers were "foreigners" so they had to be briefed on the local conditions.

I could not meet Datuk Lee San Choon as he had gone to Malacca to help out there. I was briefed by Lui Thai Heng, the political secretary of the ex-Minister of Transport. He told me that there was no shortage of workers and more were turning up every day. When I asked about funds Lui Thai Heng was non-committal on that point but from the number of election materials lying about on the ground floor it was evident that money was no problem. I gathered that large sums of money were being spent — on par with that spent in Sabah. Also many *ceramahs* are held every day and all over the constituency. But Datuk Lee San Choon for the first week of the campaign had to spend part of his time away from the constituency. In this respect Dr. Chen Man Hin has an advantage as he will not be required outside Seremban so he can devote all his energy there.

Datuk Lee San Choon will spend the second week of the campaign exclusively in the constituency. Most of the Barisan big guns will turn up to help. Datuk Samy Vellu had already turned up on 13 April, Datuk Lee Kim Sai will come on the 17, Dr. Mahathir on the 19th and Tan Koon Swan on the 20th. Most of the squatters in Seremban have been promised a 66-year lease of the land they occupy and many more promises have been made. This is the advantage of being in the ruling party. It is in the fortunate position of being able to distribute land, build mosques, markets, temples et cetera. But the Opposition parties are used to this handicap and still win. In my own case in 1964, 1969 and 1974 my opponent from the ruling party brought the Prime Minister and other Ministers to Batu and Kepong and then made all sorts of promises on developing the constituency but to no avail for I won all three elections. When I asked Lui Thai Heng what would happen if the MCA and Datuk Lee San Choon should lose in Seremban he could not answer my simple question. I suppose defeat is unthinkable to the MCA and to

Datuk Lee San Choon so they have no plan to deal with such an eventuality. But as I have mentioned before a good general always leaves a line of retreat in case of defeat. The DAP too is supremely confident but if Dr. Chen Man Han is defeated the DAP will not fold up.

To sum up, both sides are very confident of victory. The MCA has the money and the manpower but Dr. Chen Man Hin both as a private practitioner for more than a quarter of a century in Seremban and also the victor of Seremban for three terms, hopes to retain the loyalty of the electorate. It will be a close fight.

VICTORY FOR BARISAN NASIONAL

Today is 22 April 1982, polling day and 5.2 million Malaysians throughout Malaysia will go out and vote. One does not need to be clairvoyant to say that the Barisan Nasional will win again. That was a foregone conclusion, even long before the election started. But what is at stake is the size of the Barisan victory or to put it conversely will the combined Opposition muster enough votes to be credible, viable, effective and strong enough to provide the check and balance that is a *sine qua non* of parliamentary democracy that we profess to practise?

Dr. Mahathir, in a speech to the Bar Council Annual Dinner in February 1982, said that for a strong and effective Government he needs a strong effective majority in Parliament. The ruling party, first the Alliance and now the Barisan Nasional, has always had that. In 1959, the first general election, the MCA crisis notwithstanding, the Alliance won 74 out of 104 seats and increased this total to 89 in 1964 — more than the two-thirds majority that they required to amend the Constitution. In fact they had four-fifths of the seats, an unheard of majority in a modern democracy, except in a totalitarian or a one party state. In 1969, even with the anti-Alliance wave, they won 74 of the seats which was declared on 10 May 1969. By the time the Barisan was formed by the late Tun Razak they had more than the required two-thirds majority required to amend the Constitution. In 1974, when the Barisan had very little opposition, it won 135 of

the 154 seats up for contest. This constituted a four-fifths majority and finally in 1978 they won 130 of the 154 seats, close to a four-fifths majority.

Thus it can be seen that the Barisan always had a very large majority, certainly more than the two-third required to amend the Constitution. We have seen how the Barisan and before it the Alliance have mucked about with the Constitution in recent years. But the appetite of the Barisan is insatiable, they want an even bigger majority. They are obsessed with a large majority and with every successive election they want to increase the number of seats held by them in the Dewan Rakyat.

I wish to remind Malaysian voters that a large majority is not synonymous with a strong, clean, incorruptible Government that can deliver the goods that have been promised to the people in the Barisan manifesto. A strong Government need not necessarily bring rapid development to the people. There are examples galore where strong Governments have failed to deliver the goods to the people, have failed to bring development to the people and have turned out to be corrupt and repressive regimes until they have been swept away by revolution. Such strong Governments have been drunk with the arrogance of power, have become insensitive to the needs of the people, have turned a deaf ear to the pleas for help from the poor and needy and have only been interested in enriching themselves at the expense of the people. It is against this display of the arrogance of power and the insensitivity of the political rulers to the needs of the people that the voters of this country have to guard against when they go to the polling booths today.

In one of my recent articles when I urged the people to vote for PAS instead of the Barisan, one Deputy Minister rang me up to say that he and some of my friends were shocked to read what I had said. My answer was a short one — in order to cut down the massive majority of the Barisan I would vote for the devil himself rather than vote for the Barisan. To me, and for thousands of voters who will go to the polls today, the survival of democracy transcends party lines, I call on the voters of Malaysia to give the Barisan a working majority only and not the massive majority that they want and are obsessed with.

What of the Opposition? The three main Opposition parties in this election today are the DAP, PAS and PSRM and happily, even though there is no election pact between the first two, in some

constituencies they have not been involved in three-cornered fights. The DAP and PSRM have sensibly decided to avoid three-cornered fights with the Barisan. This limited understanding has had an immediate beneficial result. The PAS has won the federal seats of Arau without a contest and two others in Kelantan as well. Therefore the PAS is already one up in the federal contest and two up in the contest for state seats. This is unprecedented in Malaysian electoral history. Never in the past has UMNO lost a federal seat and two state seats without contest.

When I wrote in one of my columns that the PAS had touched rock bottom in 1978 and in this election they cannot do worse, quite a number of Barisan leaders derided my heresy. Now they are one up at federal level and two up at state level. So from now on they can only go up and cannot do worse than in 1978. The PAS will of course exploit the unexpected victories in Kelantan. They will say that Allah wants them to win in Kelantan and has presented them with two unexpected victories!

Parliamentary democracy itself denotes the presence of an opposition. Without an opposition it is not a parliamentary democracy but an autocracy or a dictatorship. The presence of a strong, credible and viable opposition is necessary in order to keep the checks and balances that are an essential ingredient of a parliamentary democracy. Paradoxically the Opposition can actually be of immense assistance to the ruling party. In the late sixties and early seventies I asked probing questions about the repression and corruption in Sabah. This finally led the Central Government to bring about the downfall of the Mustapha Government. That saw the birth of Berjaya and its subsequent assumption of power there.

During my years in Parliament, off hand I can think of many cases of corruption that were dug up by the Opposition and were subsequently successfully prosecuted in court. It is understandable that no Government likes to wash its dirty linen in public, especially in the Dewan Rakyat. It has always been the Opposition that has brought up major cases of corruption in the Dewan Rakyat. I well remember how the late D.R. Seenivasagam brought charges of corruption against a Cabinet Minister. This later led to his trial and conviction and resignation from the Cabinet. But he was appointed an envoy to a foreign country!

Many cases of bureaucratic red tape and long delays have been exposed through probing questions by the Opposition. Here I must say that such questions are asked by Government backbenchers

too. The Mahathir-Musa Government has promised an administration that is *bersih, cekap* and *amanah*.^{*} Very often there is a big gap between what is promised and what has been fulfilled. Here again it is the opposition that will keep the Government on its toes.

The right to dissent is fundamental to a democracy. Stifle it and democracy becomes meaningless and we very soon degenerate into an autocracy and even dictatorship. Within the ruling party control is so tight by the whips that even mild dissent is stifled and backbenchers are afraid or are not allowed to speak out their minds on the vital issues facing the nation. But no such restrictions hold back the members of the Opposition — indeed it is their duty to voice their dissent if it is necessary for them to speak out loud and clear and without fear or favour. Both Dr. Mahathir and Musa Hitam have been the victims of their expression of dissent from the official line and hence as soon as the new administration took over there has been greater freedom for our newspapers. But our mass media, be it TV or radio, or even our newspapers, have been and are still from my point of view rigidly controlled. I should know for I am the victim of such rigid control. Some of my articles have not been published because they were considered to be too critical of the Government.

When the silent majority in our society goes out to vote today they must weigh the need for a strong Government and that for a credible Opposition. By all means give Dr. Mahathir a workable majority, but in the process take care that he does not become too strong so that democracy may be endangered. Let us also send enough Opposition members to the Dewan Rakyat.

^{*} clean, efficient and trustworthy.

FIGHT FOR KEPONG

Of the three victories won by the DAP in the Federal Territory the most meritorious one of them all was that of Dr. Tan Seng Giaw in Kepong. It was a short, strenuous and very vigorously fought campaign. It was between two gladiators who were evenly matched, both being Chinese, Hokkiens, Chinese-educated and protagonists of Chinese education. One had acted on behalf of the United Chinese Reader's Committee Association and the Merdeka University as one of the battery of lawyers who appeared before the High Court and in the Federal Court of Appeal. The other, Dr. Tan Seng Giaw, is one of the spokesmen for Chinese education in the DAP. Both are trilingual being fluent in Chinese, English and Malay. But Dr. Tan Seng Giaw has the advantage of being able to read and write Jawi as well. And there the similarity ends.

Dr Tan Seng Giaw is a consultant dermatologist. He entered politics in 1976 at my invitation and served a long and arduous apprenticeship, first under me and later under Lim Kit Siang. He contested the 1978 election under the banner of the Pekemas. Although he lost by 2,228 votes to Dr. Tan Tiong Hong, he continued nursing the constituency until this year when he was adopted as a candidate by the DAP for Kepong.

Kerk Choo Ting, a lawyer, is new to politics. His opponents called him a seven day wonder for he joined the Gerakan on 31 March 1982 and was adopted as its candidate on 7 April 1982. He

had another big handicap. Right up to four days before nomination day the question of which party was to fight in Kepong on behalf of the Barisan Nasional, had not been decided. The choice lay between MCA and Gerakan and neither party wanted to fight in Kepong. Each of them wanted to fight in Ulu Selangor where both MCA and Gerakan reckoned it would be an easier fight. The Gerakan wanted it for Michael Chen who was the outgoing incumbent and the MCA wanted Ulu Selangor for Lee Kim Sai. Besides the uncertainty of which party was to fight in Kepong there was another complication: whichever party was to fight in Kepong who was to be the candidate? Finally it was decided that the party that won that seat in 1978 would have to fight there and under this formula Kepong went to Gerakan and Ulu Selangor to the MCA. When this question was resolved the Gerakan was in the horns of a dilemma as to whom they could place in Kepong. They originally thought of Michael Chen but decided against it as being too chancy for their Vice-President. Finally they settled on Kerk Choo Ting who had originally been slated to go to Tanjong in Penang.

Dr. Tan Seng Giaw too worked under a handicap. He had all along been geared to fight Dr. Tan Tiong Hong and would have loved to have had a return fight with his conquerer of 1978. If that had happened I am confident that Dr. Tan Seng Giaw would have emerged the victor easily. Since Kepong was given to the Gerakan Dr. Tan Tiong Hong went over to Raub. I advised Dr. Tan Seng Giaw to forget about his opponent and prepare to take on all comers. The outcome was that Dr. Tan Seng Giaw, after nomination day, had to face Kerk Choo Ting of Gerakan and Ishak Ibrahim, an independent. The die was cast on nomination day, 7 April, 1982 and the race was on!

The campaign went off to a slow start — too slow in fact for my liking, bearing in mind that only 15 days were allowed for canvassing. If you discount the first day when usually nothing substantial is done then you are left with two weeks to campaign. In my time, when I was at the nomination centre, my supporters were busy putting up my posters at strategic points on walls and posts. This was done by both sides, but on a small scale by the BN. This was understandable as Kerk Choo Ting had very little local support. But Chinese teachers were being mobilised all over the country to come to Kepong. Apart from the handicap of a late start and being new and hence unknown to the voters of Kepong, Kerk Choo Ting laboured under another big handicap. He and the UCTCA had

been fiercely anti-BN and now one of their chief spokesmen was contesting under the banner of the BN! This complete somersault caused great confusion among traditional BN supporters, especially amongst the members of the MCA and even amongst the Gerakan members! So a great deal of their precious time was spent on trying to explain this confusion. On the top of that the BN candidate added to the confusion by stating that although he was fighting under the banner of the BN he was not really part of it or even of the Gerakan but was fighting the cause of the UCTCA! This of course added confusion and drew a muted rebuke from the chief of the BN, Dr. Mahathir. It gave the DAP plenty of ammunition to attack both the BN and Kerk Choo Ting personally.

Half way through the campaign Kerk Choo Ting made another mistake. He took out an advertisement in the Chinese press urging voters to split their support for Dr. Tan Seng Giaw — give their vote to Kerk Choo Ting in Kepong and to Dr. Tan Seng Giaw in Klang! This was the standard practice of the Alliance, now the BN. When I fought for both Batu and Kepong in 1964 and 1969, they urged the voters to give me the state vote and support their man in Batu. This of course was done discreetly otherwise it would have caused dissension in their own ranks. But it did not work for I won both seats, both in 1964 and 1969. This of course drew the wrath of the MCA who in the beginning were already lukewarm in their support of Kerk Choo Ting and now probably blamed him for their defeat in Klang!

During the course of the campaign, Kerk Choo Ting also made many contradictory statements. This is understandable in the heat of battle but they provided further ammunition for the DAP.

Dr. Tan had got posters and banners ready long before nomination day. Kerk Choo Ting due to the short notice that was given to him got off to a very slow start but soon red banners sprouted all over the constituency, especially in Kepong and Jinjang. Soon it was evident that Kerk had gathered round him far more workers and volunteers than Dr. Yan. There was a splash of red all over leading the DAP to say that the BN had at long last gone red. In the other parts of the federal Territory the posters and banners were all in blue; only in Kepong were they in red and the writings only in Chinese emphasising the "Chineseness" of their struggle. Money was no consideration to Kerk and the UCTCA. At the main entrance to Jinjang the banners and the scaffoldings cost the donor, I am told, at least \$10,000. Dr. Tan had adequate posters

and banners but these were soon outnumbered by his opponent's.

Both sides held several *ceramahs* every day. Here Dr. Tan behaved like the veteran he had now become. He had visited the whole constituency several times in the last six years, more often since the middle of last year when it was evident that the elections would be held in April this year. I had advised him to visit the markets early in the morning and he followed my advice. He was a familiar face round the markets of Kepong and Jinjang and walked with ease, as a friend, among the housewives who thronged to the markets discussing their problems with him. He was there from 4 a.m. Kerk, on the other hand, at the beginning was awkward and felt like a fish out of water but he very soon caught on, cast off his shyness and awkwardness and mixed well. Both sides held *ceramahs* at the Community Hall in Jinjang North. The one held by Kerk was fairly well attended but Dr. Tan could only get the use of the Community Hall once on 17 April 1982. The meeting was a mammoth one. The hall was packed with people and there was an even greater crowd outside! I have not seen such a big crowd in that hall in a quarter of a century. The vast crowd proved a great inspiration to the DAP. They had two big guns, Lim Kit Siang and Chan Kok Kit. Dr. Tan and I spoke as well. But the biggest draw of the *ceramahs* and road side rallies was one Pang Foot Sang who with his biting wit and attacks on Kerk and the UCTCA, and *San Kor* songs in the Hakka dialect, drew roars of applause from the crowds. He drew big crowds for the Opposition at every election since 1959 except the one held in 1974.

Both sides made house to house visits. Here Dr. Tan was well ahead at the start for he had made such visits several times well before nomination day. But Kerk soon caught up. With his supporters and workers increasing by the hundreds every day he was able to deploy three or four people to visit each house in Kepong, Jinjang and Kepong Baru. They would plug the UCTCA line on Chinese education and each group would spend one or even two hours at every house. They would not leave till they got the promise of support. Of course Kerk knew in his heart of hearts that my supporters could not be that easily convinced to support the BN, even when to all and sundry whom they met in Kepong they gave away a cassette which must have cost \$1.60 to \$2.00 each. I gather that before polling day they boasted that they had given away more than 50,000 cassettes.

At every election since 1955 the left-wing in Batu and now

Kepong had voted and supported the Opposition. However in 1969 because I had left the Labour Party, established the Gerakan and stood under its banner, they campaigned against me clandestinely but they did not support the Alliance. All the same I more than doubled my votes from 10,122 to 22,720 whereas my opponent's votes were reduced from 9774 in 1964 to 8222 votes in 1969. In 1974 the left-wing neither supported nor campaigned against me. Then in 1978 when I was not in this country they threw in their support behind Dr. Tan rather late in the day. In the recent elections, a small portion of the left-wing in Jinjang supported Kerk, while the vast majority was solidly behind Dr. Tan. Lots of ex-Labour Party and Party Rakyat members also threw in their support behind Kerk, who of course exploited it to the full. They took out whole pages in the Chinese papers expressing their support for him. This gave the impression that the vast majority of the left-wing in this country was behind Kerk or the BN. But the converse is true — the vast majority of the left-wing have been, are, and will always be anti-establishment not only because of their personal sufferings but also the plight of the poor. Dr. Tan and I of course knew that the local left-wing support for the BN was very small. I advised Dr. Tan and the ex-Labour Party members in Jinjang not to lose their cool. For any disturbance that may be created, the person to suffer the most would be Dr. Tan Seng Giaw.

I came in for a great deal of criticism both in the press and in the local *ceramahs*. I was accused of living on my past glory and reminded that I had no influence on the voters of Kepong today. But wherever I went, especially in Sentul, to my embarrassment the voters came to greet, shake hands and promise me their support. I quickly directed them to the candidate, Dr. Tan, and asked them to support him. This happened also in Jinjang, Kepong Baru and Kepong. This is my answer to those who accused me of living in the past and being fit to be placed as an antique piece in the local museum.

The vast amounts of money spent by the BN on advertisements had to be seen to be believed. Dr. Tan was no match for them in this respect. Even a shrewd editor like Datuk Mohd. Sopia stated that I did not read the Chinese press and so did not know the vast and growing support for Kerk and the BN in Kepong. But I was not unduly worried. At every election this had happened to me and like Dr. Tan I was powerless to hit back. I certainly do not believe in spending any of my hard earned money on buying advertising

space in the Chinese press or in any press to further my cause in any election and neither does Dr. Tan.

The supporters and workers of Kerk and the UCTCA who had crawled all over the constituency by polling day were all "foreigners" in that they were not local people and had little or no knowledge of local conditions. They had come by buses from all over Malaysia, especially from the south. But as the campaign was a short one, Dr. Tan and I were not unduly worried. Before they could make their influence felt the campaign was over!

Never have I taken part in or witnessed an election where both sides had dealt with only one issue: Chinese education. I will readily admit that Chinese education is important to the Chinese but it is certainly not the alpha and omega of politics or even of education in this country. If you talked of Chinese education to the Malay voter, he would most probably have voted BN but if you talked *solely* of it he would be converted into an anti-BN voter. If you spoke in the same vein to the Indian voter he would probably ask what you were talking about.

Kerk and his supporters had been donated the use of over a hundred taxis to ferry the voters. To make sure that the taxi drivers did not indulge in sabotage they stationed one of their own men in each taxi. At every polling station they had 40-50 cars. Contrast this with the puny efforts of Dr. Tan who had less than 20 cars for the whole constituency. At every *ceramah* we had taught the voters to travel BN but vote Rocket! This was well taken by the voters.

With both sides at every election concentrating their efforts in Jinjang and Kepong I advised Dr. Tan to quietly slip away to Sentul to woo the Indian voters. In 1978 Dr. Tan Tiong Hong drew the support of the voters of Sentul. I had not been around and Dr. Tan was helpless to reach the Sentul Indian voters. This time, with me being around, we slipped away to Sentul and visited every street there. I was very happy that the majority of the voters there still remembered me and the fight I had put up for them in the past. I made a short speech in Tamil. Even Dr. Tan learned to say a few words in that language. And this helped enormously.

It was a bitterly and vigorously fought campaign and there is no doubt in my mind that the better candidate won. The counting was a nerve tingling affair but nothing like the 2 vote margin with which I won in the state constituency in 1964. In 1982 the total votes cast were 59,465 and Dr. Tan won by 1,205 votes. But in an election a miss is as good as a mile!

POST-MORTEM OF THE GENERAL ELECTION — THE BARISAN NASIONAL

With the end of polling on 22 April 1982 the curtain has fallen on the general election of 1982 and Dr. Mahathir has led the Barisan Nasional to a resounding victory. The main credit for this sweeping victory must go to the 2 Ms — Mahathir and Musa. In 1964 when the Tunku led the Alliance to a landslide victory, winning 89 of the 104 seats, I told myself that that must surely be the high-water mark of the ruling party. Now the crowning glory in 1982, Dr. Mahathir has led the BN to win 132 seats, 103 of them in Peninsular Malaysia. This victory is the greatest it has achieved in Peninsular Malaysia and I will stick out my neck and say that it is unlikely to surpass this sweeping victory in the future. The total votes won by the BN were 2,257, 312, about 61.28 per cent and an increase of nearly 4 per cent.

The BN, as the ruling party, naturally has a tremendous advantage over the Opposition. It controls both the TV and radio. While Ministers appeared every night on the Government mass media, the Opposition could not even have a look-see. Even radio time for the political parties was inequitable. In the past the ruling party contesting all the Federal seats took half of the radio time allocated and the other half was divided amongst the Opposition parties. This year, out of 200 minutes allocated, the ruling party took 130 minutes, and the rest was divided amongst the Opposition parties.

Rallies, the main source of dissemination of news for the

Opposition, had been banned and only *ceramahs* were allowed and that too only with a police permit. The Opposition was hamstrung as they could not get access to halls which were either owned by members of the ruling party or were not available to them.

The BN caretaker Government took the opportunity to distribute largesse to various sectors of the electorate — fishermen, farmers, rubber small holders, RISDA even urban flat dwellers were given a *baksheesh* in the form of an opportunity to buy the flats they were staying in provided they had lived there for ten years or more. Let me state quite clearly that all the foregoing is not illegal but the Opposition cried foul! Such practices are quite common the world over and the Opposition must be prepared for them.

Money has never been a problem to the ruling party as I have stressed before. I gather that a tycoon, just before he passed away, made a donation of \$10 million to the MCA! The ruling party has only to say the word and the tycoons of this country will fall head over heels to pour money into their coffers.

Dr. Mahathir led the BN to a stunning victory in Peninsular Malaysia and it was left to the "backward" states of Sabah and Sarawak to show their "advanced" countrymen in Peninsular Malaysia the need for an Opposition. In these two states, despite a head start of 8 uncontested seats for the BN on nomination day, on 26 April 1982 the "backward" electorate of Sabah and Sarawak sent 11 Opposition to the Dewan Rakyat out of a total of 40. Bravo to the Opposition and independents in Sabah and Sarawak.

The squabble for leadership at the divisional level gave rise to a great deal of anxiety, so much so that the leadership postponed the divisional elections of the party till after the general election. UMNO fielded 73 candidates and 70 of them were victorious. Their share of the total votes cast was reduced from 36.65 per cent in 1978 to 35.94 per cent. This fractional loss can be explained by the fact that UMNO contested 2 seats less in 1982 as compared to 1978.

The MCA made the biggest gains, its share of the total vote increasing from 14.87 per cent in 1978 to 18.41 per cent in 1982. True, in 1982 they contested 1 more seat than in 1978 but the increase of voters from 451,307 in 1978 to 675,205 in 1982, most of them presumably Chinese votes, would seem to back their claim that they have the majority support of the Chinese community in this country. Much play has been made of the importance of the fight between Lee San Choon and Dr. Chen Man Hin. The close victory by the former, by 845 votes out of 46,903, proves nothing.

What is significant is the increase in the votes cast for the MCA and the increase in its representation in the Dewan Rakyat from 17 in 1978 to 24 in 1982. This is indeed the high water mark of the MCA and it is up to them to deliver the goods, otherwise when the next round comes the MCA will again be in difficulties.

The MIC increased its representatives from 3 to 4 and also the votes cast for it increased from 67,119 in 1978 to 79,825 in 1982. When I interviewed Datuk Samy Vellu he was confident that he would increase his majority this time and he was right for his majority increased from 5141 in 1978 to 7899 in 1982. Fielding only 4 candidates, the MIC is the only party to show a 100 per cent record and it has performed nearly just as well at state level.

The Gerakan also made considerable gains in the general election. It had been allocated one extra seat, from 6 to 7, and its number of victories increased from 4 to 5. Its share of the votes increased from 98,219 to 146,690. At state level in Penang it won all the eight seats that it contested and also retained the Chief Ministership of Penang.

Berjasa had been allocated two seats, one in Kelantan and another in Kedah and it lost both to PAS. At state level it fared equally badly and was nearly wiped out.

In 1978 the PPP was allocated one federal and four state seats to contest and in this election it rather optimistically expected to be allocated slightly more seats or at least maintain the status quo. Instead, quite rightly it was not given any federal seat to fight and in Perak the seats allocated to it were cut from four to three. The PPP sulked like Achilles in his tent and made noises about leaving the BN but it soon came to terms with reality. It won only one of the three seats, the two others being won by the DAP.

In Sabah we had USNO and Berjaya, both members of the BN, fighting each other openly. Berjaya had been allocated 11 seats and it won 10 of them losing only Sandakan to the DAP. USNO had been allocated 5 seats and lost all of them to independents who were Berjaya members posing as independents.

In Sarawak the three component members of the BN are PBB, SNAP and SUPP. The PBB won 8 seats, SNAP won 6 and lost 3 seats, all to three of its own ex-members. SUPP lost two seats to DAP which for the first time contested in Sarawak. It won two seats in Sibu and Kuching.

Now that the dust has settled on the elections the whole country must bend itself to solve some of the pressing problems

facing all of us. Dr. Mahathir has set the right note by saying that the whole country will have a share of the development cake — including those constituencies that were won by the Opposition. This is only proper and one of the best ways to heal wounds opened in the heat of the elections. Contrast this with the surprising statement by Datuk Harun Idris who in commenting on the victory of Abdul Jabar Yusof at Batu Laut stated that since the voters of that constituency voted for the Independent they will be denied development for the next five years. I am not only surprised but also aggrieved at such a statement coming from a national leader. Dr. Mahathir knows that he is the Prime Minister not of the BN but of the whole country and to deny development to constituencies that voted Opposition will only let old wounds fester. Besides it will drive the people who voted for the Opposition deeper into its fold and reinforce their determination to vote Opposition in future. Dr. Mahathir has now got the mandate he wants and the whole country whether BN or Opposition, must accept the verdict of the people. The nation has spoken and we its citizens must accept the decision.

POST-MORTEM OF THE GENERAL ELECTION — THE OPPOSITION

The Barisan Nasional has won a stunning victory in the recent general election and the Opposition has been almost annihilated. But if one examines the results not only from the view of the seats won but also the votes gained, then one must admit that the Opposition has not done too badly. Thus the BN gained 132 seats and won 2,257,312 votes which amounted to 61.28 per cent of the votes cast while the Opposition won nearly 38 per cent of the votes cast. This is possible only under the first-past-the-post system of elections. This means that nearly two out of every five voters voted for the Opposition. Thus by no means is the number of people opposed to the BN small. The Opposition must take heart and not give up. It must work with renewed vigour in order to do better when the next round comes around and it must start work now. The DAP has proved that it is the biggest Opposition party, with 6 members in the Dewan Rakyat in Peninsular Malaysia, 1 in Sabah and 2 in Sarawak. Next come the independence with 5 in Sabah, who as I have mentioned before are in reality Berjaya members, and three in Sarawak, all ex-SNAP members. Bringing up the rear are the 5 from PAS.

The DAP was affected by desertions and defections both of MPs and of State Assemblymen following the defeat at Pengkalan Kota in Penang. Prior to this they had announced grandiose plans for the capture of Penang in 1983. Then followed the series of

desertions and defections. There were also intra party squabbles in Perak, between Lim Cho Hock and Patto. All these had seriously eroded confidence in the party and affected its credibility. Yet the leadership did not take stock of its own defeats and weaknesses, for come nomination day it decided to field 62 candidates at federal and 132 candidates at state level. To say the least, I was astounded by this foolhardy bravado on the part of the DAP. The proper thing to do would have been to take stock of the loss of confidence in the party and field a much smaller number of candidates at both state and federal levels. There is no virtue in numbers *per se*. There were further defections from the DAP ranks to the MCA and I believe in Malacca one of the DAP candidates switched allegiance. All these led to further erosion of the party's credibility. As there was a large number of candidates the already thin resources of the DAP were more thinly spread out resulting in the party's most humiliating defeat since its formation in 1966. On Saturday, 1 May 1982, the party's leadership together with the newly elected MPs and State Assemblymen, met in Kuala Lumpur, examined some of the causes of their defeat and mapped out plans for the future. A committee was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Chen Man Hin to inquire into the causes of their defeat.

Dr. Chen Man Hin attributed the main cause of their defeat to the entry of the Chinese teachers into the political arena. The DAP had entered into recent negotiations with the Gerakan over the two Chinese teachers' candidates, namely Kerk Choo Ting and Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, offering not to contest against them provided they did not contest in Kepong and Tanjong. But this proposal was rejected by the Gerakan and the DAP felt the full might of the Chinese teachers all over the country but more so in Kepong where fortunately Dr. Tan Seng Giaw won for the DAP. The DAP alleges that the Chinese teachers spread lies and wild accusations against the DAP and these greatly affected their fortunes.

Lee Lam Thye in commenting on the DAP defeat denied that the switching of their candidates contributed to their defeat. I wish to differ. I say it played a great part in the defeat. One has to nurse a constituency very carefully over a number of years — this is fundamental. Even Dr. Mahathir has to tend to his constituency, Kubang Pasu, very carefully. But the DAP thinks that its symbol, the Rocket and its image are enough to carry it through. True, in the past quite a number of DAP candidates have won solely on the strength of their symbol and its image but this time the old magic did not

work. As a result of the switching about, the DAP lost one constituency each in Penang (Tanjong), Selangor (Petaling) and three in Perak namely Menglembu, Ipoh and Batu Gajah. I venture to say that even if Lim Kit Siang had contested in Petaling there would have been no guarantee that he would have won there. Yeoh Poh San had nursed the constituency very assiduously ever since his defeat in 1978 while Lim Kit Siang has not nursed it as carefully as he should have.

Humility is not a word to be found in the DAP dictionary. Just before nomination day Lim Kit Siang had challenged Lee San Choon to fight him in any of the twelve Chinese majority constituencies. Seremban was one of the twelve named by Lim Kit Siang. When Lee San Choon decided to contest in Seremban he in turn challenged Lim to meet him there. Lim Kit Siang declined to pick up the gauntlet giving the lame excuse that he did not want to deprive his party president of the opportunity of fighting in Seremban where he had been successful three times. This further eroded the credibility of the DAP. Lim Kit Siang should not have thrown out the challenge to the President of the MCA if he did not want to honour his challenge. Therefore the DAP paid the penalty.

Although the DAP suffered a humiliating defeat in terms of seats lost, its share of the total votes did not suffer much. It can take heart that it has hundreds of supporters all over the country. Moreover when the next round comes it should not rush in and field candidates who will suffer the indignity of losing their deposits. With only 6 MPs from Peninsular Malaysia the risk of defection should be minimal and the party can live to fight another day.

The PAS also performed better than was generally expected, especially by the UMNO who had confidentially predicted that this time it would wipe the PAS off the electoral map. In 1978 it had won only 2 federal and 12 state seats and the UMNO openly stated that this time that PAS would do worse. On the other hand, I had stated that PAS had reached the nadir of its misfortunes in 1978 and that it could not do worse. The PAS could only improve its fortunes in 1982 and I was right. In Kelantan alone it won 4 federal and 10 state seats, 2 of them without contest from UMNO — an unheard of achievement. In all, it won 5 federal and 18 state seats — certainly an improvement on its performance in 1978. I will stick my neck out further and say that when the next round comes the PAS will improve on its 1982 performance. I say this because the old guard

will have to retire soon and the Young Turks will take over. When that happens the party will be rejuvenated. The PAS was badly affected when Anwar Ibrahim went over to UMNO. There were also the usual defections from PAS to UMNO. This crossing-over from PAS to UMNO and vice-versa has become an integral part of our Malaysian political scene. In this election it was more than usual.

The PSRM had very sensibly decided to fight on a narrow front but alas it did not win a seat either federal or state. Although its number of supporters increased, many of its candidates, especially those in Trengganu, still lost their deposits. There is a silver lining though, the performance of Sdr. Kassim Ahmad in Penang and Sdr. Razak Ahmad in Johore. If they continue with their efforts and nurse their constituencies carefully I am sure their efforts will be crowned with success in future elections.

VICTORY AT KEPAYANG FOR THE DAP

On the 16 October 1982, the DAP inflicted an unexpected defeat on the MCA at Kepayang. It was unexpected to almost everyone except to the DAP. I must confess that I was one of those who expected the DAP to lose and probably lose badly. No, I was not taken in by the MCA and Barisan Nasional propaganda. I based my verdict only on the fact that the DAP had been given a chance on 22 April 1982 at the general elections but because of intra-party squabbles, it went out of its way to inflict an unnecessary by-election on the electorate of 38,418, the majority of whom are Chinese, barely six months after its victory at the general election.

The by-election was necessitated by the resignation of Lim Cho Hock, the former strongman of the DAP in Perak. He first entered the Dewan Rakyat as the Member for Batu Gajah in 1969; in the state election he won the constituency of Tanjong Tualang. In 1974, he switched to Ipoh for the federal seat and Kepayang for the state seat. He won both by handsome majorities and repeated these victories in 1978. In 1982, in the DAP debacle that followed, he lost the federal seat of Ipoh and only won Kepayang by a narrow margin of about 200 votes after two recounts. Thus, this is his fourth term as a State Assemblyman but he claimed that he was being "stabbed" in the back by fellow members in Perak. As a result he resigned from all his party posts at federal and state levels and finally his state seat. Thus it can be seen that as a result of intra-party squabbles in the

DAP, the voters of Kepayang were subjected to the hassle of having to go through a by-election, not to speak of the public funds spent by the Election Commission in conducting the by-election.

It was a straight fight between the DAP's Lau Dak Kee and the MCA's Ng Yoke Kooi, the MCA Ipoh Division Youth Chairman and a businessman. It was the former's fourth attempt at electoral office; his first three attempts had ended in failure and it says much for Lau Dak Kee's perseverance that he agreed to make a fourth attempt. To the relief of DAP members throughout the country he won a smashing victory. This was Ng Yook Kooi's first attempt at electoral office and although he failed badly, he has nothing to be ashamed of and should learn a lesson from the perseverance of Lau Dak Kee. Prior to this by-election, the seat had been given to the PPP and they had lost it to the DAP in 1974, 1978 and 1982. With the PPP in disarray, the Barisan Nasional in Perak quite rightly, I think, decided that the seat should be given to the MCA. In the general election this year the MCA had wrested the federal seat of Ipoh from the DAP, Peter Chin won against the redoubtable Lim Cho Hock. Besides, the MCA had given the DAP a bashing in the general election early this year by winning 9 seats at the expense of the DAP. As a result, in this by-election the MCA could reasonably hope to win with ease. But the MCA made the mistake of counting their chickens before they hatched, a mistake in any election.

The DAP realized the importance of the by-election to the party and the uphill task they had before them. In the first place the party had received a drubbing from the MCA in the general election earlier this year. A defeat at the hands of the MCA in this predominantly Chinese constituency (92 percent of the electors are Chinese) could well spell the beginning of the end for the DAP. And so Lim Kit Siang was in Kepayang practically throughout the two-week campaign. Others who went there included MPs Dr. Tan Seng Giaw, Chan Kok Kit, Karpal Singh and Chan Heng Kai, ex-MP and a former detainee. With every passing day the DAP grew in strength until on polling day the DAP workers easily outnumbered the MCA, although the latter is a much bigger and richer party and also it could call on its allies in the Barisan Nasional namely, PPP, Gerakan et cetera. I well remember in 1964, when I contested the Batu federal seat and Kepong state seat, I visited every house in Jinjang New Village, a very crucial segment of Batu. The MCA candidate Yap Chin Kwee (Batu) and Chan Keong Hon (Kepong) ignored making a house-to-house visit, until they suddenly realized

that I was getting maximum exposure. They decided to follow my example but by then it was too late as the campaign was drawing to a close. There was no time to visit each house in Jinjang.

History repeated itself in Kepayang this year. In the propaganda war the MCA lost out to the DAP. Here usually the ruling party gets off to a slow start but invariably catches up before polling day. But in Kepayang, the DAP posters, banners and pamphlets outnumbered the MCA's right up to the end. In the beginning the DAP *ceramahs* were washed out by rain but very soon they were packed with voters. These unfortunately were not accurately reported by the BN-influenced press in this country and this of course gave them a false sense of security. The MCA *ceramahs* had very small crowds but because this was not accurately reported in the press, the organisation's supporters did not know the truth resulting in a poor turn-out for them on polling day. Two pieces of good fortune came the way of the DAP. The first was when Datuk Musa Hitam, the Deputy Prime Minister, addressed the General Assembly of the MCA and bluntly accused some Malaysian Chinese of disloyalty, all because they emigrated from this country and when they were abroad, some of them painted a black picture of Malaysia before foreign audiences. As far as I can see from press reports no MCA leader challenged that accusation at the General Assembly. The only MCA leader who had the courage to refute the accusation by Datuk Musa Hitam was Lim Kean Siew of Penang and he was followed by a few other MCA members.

The other issue was that concerning lion dances. The MCA had sent a delegation to see Datuk Musa Hitam regarding the restriction on lion dances for the Chinese New Year and a ban on them at weddings and important functions at the height of the Kepayang by-election. It would have been more prudent of the MCA to take up the issue with Datuk Musa Hitam after Kepayang rather than at the height of the election battle. Of course, the DAP led by Lim Kit Siang went to town over these two issues in Kepayang and so did every other DAP leader of note. The Chinese press was full of the charges made by them. I am sure these two issues contributed largely to the defeat of the MCA at Kepayang. To the surprise of the MCA on polling day, the DAP had more workers and supporters working for the party. I think the MCA had become overconfident and took the support of the voters for granted resulting in an overwhelming victory for the DAP. If more voters had come out to vote, the DAP majority would have been larger and the MCA

candidate Ng Yoke Kooi might have conceivably lost his deposit!

The MCA did work hard at Kepayang as was evidenced by the presence of Dr. Neo Yee Pan, Mak Hon Kam, Dr. Tan Tiong Hong, Youth Leader Lee Kim Sai, Wanita Leader Rosemary Chong, all MCA MPs in Perak and the MP for Petaling Jaya, Yeoh Poh San. As usual, the MCA being a component of the ruling party, could distribute all sorts of goodies to the voters of Kepayang.

In Kampong Bercham the MCA built tarred roads, promised 20 acres of land for the squatters and some of the landless, and building lots as well. The Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Tan Tiong Hong promised a grant of \$1 million for the Kg. Bercham Primary Chinese School. He had since denied making such an extravagant promise.

In Kampong Simee 24 lots of land were promised to the landless, \$60,000 for the library of the Chong Teck Primary Chinese School. Chicks, feedmeal and a free cinema show were also used as baits.

Waller Court had been built by the PPP and on 13 October 1982, the acting Mentri Besar said that he had got the agreement of the Prime Minister in principle to sell the flats to the residents.

The MCA, as is to be expected, had the mass media on their side. Adverse news regarding the DAP was played up by the press. It is true in the beginning there was a poor response to the DAP *ceramahs* but later on interest picked up and they were very well attended by enthusiastic crowds. This fact was not carried in the local press. On the other hand, the MCA *ceramahs* drew poor crowds but this was not mentioned in the press. The result of all this was that the MCA and their supporters were lulled into a false sense of security and when the moment of truth came on polling day, the MCA suffered a humiliating defeat in Kepayang. The MCA must learn that money, computers, promises and largesse to the voters do not always win elections and that there is no substitute for hard work and adequate manpower on polling day.

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir on his return from Fiji commented on the DAP upset victory: "I have a feeling that this is because the people, being sympathetic and generous-hearted and always wanting to keep things alive, have managed to keep the DAP alive. Otherwise it would have been the death knell of the DAP." I do hope that for once the Prime Minister is right in his diagnosis. If he is correct it means that Malaysians have a stake in keeping democracy alive in this country, for the survival of democracy in this, as in any other country, depends on a viable, strong and loyal

Opposition to keep the Government on its toes. As for the DAP, its General-Secretary, Lim Kit Siang has described its victory at Kepayang as "The Kepayang Declaration" of the people of this country. Kepayang with an electorate of 38,418, 92 per cent of whom are Malaysian of Chinese origin, is a Chinese constituency if ever there is one in this country and by its smashing victory at Kepayang the DAP has proved that it has the support of a section of the Chinese voters in Malaysia. But I do hope that the DAP will not read too much into this meritorious victory. It has still a long way to go to consolidate the party and there are still intra-party squabbles.

PART VI
Education and Language

Education and language have been among the most contentious issues in Malaysia. During the pre-independence period, with the British rulers not providing adequate facilities for education among the non-Malays these communities were forced to establish their own networks of schools. As they were maintained and financed by the non-Malay communities, they developed as centres of Chinese and Tamil nationalism. They used Chinese and Tamil as the media of instruction and taught more about China and India than about Malaya. However, just before Independence, the Alliance Government, committed as it was to the development of a common Malayan national identity, sought to create a national system of education. In 1956, a high-powered commission, under the chairmanship of Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein, recommended drastic changes with the objective of creating an integrated national system of education. Significantly, the Razak Commission allowed an integral place to Chinese and Tamil-medium schools in the national system of education so long as they accepted a common curriculum (focussing on Malaya rather than China or India) and the compulsory teaching of the national language, Malay. Most schools of the Chinese and Indian communities accepted these conditions and they were accorded a place in the national system of education. Examinations for these Chinese and Tamil-medium schools were conducted by the Department of Education and their certificates were recognised by the Government. They were also made eligible for government grants-in-aid.

The 1957 Constitution of independent Malaya established Malay as the sole national language. For a period of ten years after *Merdeka*, English was allowed to be used as an official language of the country. After ten years, it was left to the Parliament of the day to determine if English was to be continued for a further period or if Malay was to be designated the sole official language. The Constitution at the same time guaranteed that no person would be prohibited or prevented from using (other than official purposes) or from teaching and learning other languages, including Chinese and Tamil. It also asserted that the establishment of Malay as the national language would not prejudice the right of the federal government or any of the state governments to preserve and sustain the use and study of the languages of the non-Malay communities. Basically, the Constitution and the Razak Report had been accepted by the non-Malays as under these the continued existence and use of their languages, including as the media of

instruction, had been guaranteed.

However, soon after independence a drastic change was effected. The Rahman Talib Report of 1960 denied the Chinese and Tamil-medium schools a place in the national system of education. The Government discontinued the practice of holding examinations for these schools and stopped recognition to their students with the result that they could neither secure jobs in the public services nor gain admission to institutions of tertiary education in the country. The changes based on the Rahman Talib Report made Chinese and Tamil-medium schools non-viable. This was viewed by the non-Malays as a complete reversal of the policy established under the recommendations of the Razak Committee in 1956.

In 1967, Malay was established as the sole official language of the country; use of English as an official language was discontinued. It created considerable unhappiness among the non-Malay communities. The view of the Government was that if Malay was to be promoted as the national language and as the common language of the Malays and the non-Malays, use of English as an official language had to be discontinued. So long as English was available to the non-Malays as an alternative to Malay, they would inevitably tend to choose to learn English rather than Malay. And as a result, Malay could not be developed as an effective instrument of national integration. At present, with the abolition of English as an official language Malay is being developed as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education. And the Malay language is assuming its rightful place as the language of all Malaysians and an effective instrument of national integration.

EDUCATION IN THE EIGHTIES

I

For the year 1981, the Ministry of Education had been allocated \$2.8 billion as operating expenditure and \$293 million as development expenditure making up a total of over \$3 billion to be spent on education for the year.

This is the largest allocation to date for the Ministry of Education making it the first time that education has received the biggest allocation of all Ministries. In most countries it is defence that receives the biggest allocation but in giving education the biggest share of our national cake the Barisan Nasional Government has shown that it has given top priority to the education of the rising generation in our schools and universities. I wish to congratulate the Government on this change of policy and I am sure it will pay handsome dividends in the future.

In this country, except in the case of the Tunku, the Ministry of Education has been a stepping stone to the premiership. Our first Minister of Education, the late Tun Hj. Abdul Razak B. Hj. Hussein, succeeded the Tunku. Former Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Hussein Onn, at one time served as Minister of Education and the present Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir B. Mohamed, has also served his stint in the Ministry of Education. It can be seen that the Ministry of Education has served as a good place of apprenticeship

for the Prime Ministers of our country.

The Minister of Education is the head of a vast empire. In 1981 he was in charge of 7391 schools, 194 hostels, 3,210,089 students of which 2,041,965 were in primary schools and 1,162,233 in secondary schools.

The problems that face the Ministry of Education are enormous but fortunately these problems have been studied in detail by a special committee headed by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir. This committee, after studying the subject for a few years, published its report last year. It was hailed with acclamation by most educationists in this country and was accepted in principle by the Government. The present Minister of Education, Datuk Musa Hitam, has announced that the recommendations of the Mahathir Committee will be implemented in stages. Implementation of these recommendations will cost money and the \$3 billion is the first installment that this country will pay for improvement in the quality of education.

In the past the Ministry of Education has been to a small extent "neglected" in that the Minister had other responsibilities as well. The late Tun Razak was concurrently Minister of Defence as well as Deputy Prime Minister, a post held by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir also. However, the present Minister, Datuk Musa, not only has no other ministerial duties but he is in the happy position of being the only Minister to have two deputy Ministers, Datuk Chan Siang Sun and Datuk Najib B. Tun Razak, to help him. Judging from the work load he does need their assistance.

The revision of the curriculum for our schools, particularly for our primary schools, has been a burning issue with our educationists for several years. The Curriculum Development Centre has been studying this matter but has not come up with a solution. Unfortunately, as it happens very often, when the question of its revision comes up, more is added to the curriculum so that the already overloaded student has to study more and more with every passing year. The result is plain for all to see — there are many students who after six years of schooling do not know their three R's let alone other subjects like history, geography, English and science. Now the Minister of Education has announced the Musa Doctrine that is a complete revamping of the Primary school curriculum. The Mahathir Committee has examined this subject in detail and the main outlines of the present revision have been delineated.

The six years of primary schooling will be divided into two phases. Phase one is from standard One to Three, where 75 percent

of the time-table will be devoted to the three R's namely reading, writing and arithmetic and the rest for informal educational activities. Only two types of textbooks will be used.

Phase Two is from Standard Four to Six where 70 percent of the student's time will be spent on learning the three R's and the rest of the time on other educational activities. Only in Standard Four will lessons be formalized and some basic academic elements introduced. This new curriculum has been hailed by most academics and teachers in this country.

It makes sense to make sure that the young children after six years of school will be able to master the three R's which as it is many of them are unable to do. The teachers are frustrated, the parents are disillusioned and the children very often drop out of school. All told it is a colossal waste of the taxpayer's money. The present practice now is to cram the young children with more and more facts which very soon become irrelevant to them. The teachers have to work within a very tight syllabus and often it is a race with time to complete it. To top it all, although the Standard Three and Five examinations are known as assessment tests, in practice the teachers and the headmasters make the children cram for them. The result is that the good and the average students benefit but the poor ones, the slow learners, suffer and very often after six years of school they are *buta huruf* or unable to read or write.

Quite rightly the Ministry of Education has begun to lay great emphasis on English as a second language. This has led to new complications for young children. Let us take the word "*bas*" in Bahasa Malaysia. In English it is "*bus*". Then take the word "*air*" — in English it is "*water*". The differences between the two languages are enough to confuse adults so to young minds still struggling to master the three R's it can be very bewildering. Very often they turn to their parents for an answer. Unfortunately most parents are not familiar with the new spelling in Bahasa Malaysia and they themselves are confused and consequently are of no help to their bewildered children.

One solution would be to absorb the English language into Bahasa Malaysia and borrow wholesale from English. The purist in Bahasa Malaysia will throw up his hands in horror but he need not do so for Bahasa Malaysia itself in its present form has many words borrowed from Sanskrit and Arabic. And English has borrowed or rather incorporated a great number of Latin, French and Greek words. It is acknowledged that English today is an international

language, and hence it is not *infra dig* for us to borrow from it. Therefore I propose we use "bus" in both English and Bahasa Malaysia instead of "bus" for the former and "bas" for the latter.

There are two schools of thought regarding the implementation of the new curriculum. One school headed by Puan Sri Professor Fatimah Hamid Don of the University of Malaya is in favour of implementing the new curriculum from 5 January 1981, the start of the new school year. It claims that the time for starting is ripe now and not in 1983 because our teachers are familiar with and will be able to teach the new curriculum now. Puan Sri Prof. Fatimah Hamid Don claims that the present curriculum produces educationally maimed children so we should stop using it.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education and many teachers are in favour of trying out a pilot scheme and starting the new curriculum only in 1983. To me this makes sense. This year about 300,000 will enter school for the first time and to introduce the new curriculum to more than a quarter of a million of new students is a formidable task. The teachers will need to be retained for the new tasks ahead and will be more on their own. Their main task especially for the new students will be to concentrate on the three R's. Then they have the responsibility of picking out the brighter and more mature students for accelerated promotion.

Only two books will be used and these are not available in the quantities that are needed. New teaching aids will have to be made. Teaching materials which integrate history, geography and science will have to be thought about carefully and will take time to produce on a mass scale. A new time-table will also have to be introduced. Hence I agree with the Minister of Education in proceeding slowly.

The Minister of Education proposes to start a pilot scheme and start with ten schools. These will be of various sizes and also include national primary and national-type Chinese and Tamil schools. The reactions of both the students and the teachers will be monitored and the teaching aids will be tested under real situations. The mistakes made will be corrected and the new curriculum will be introduced nationwide in 1983.

This approach makes sense and I fully support it. I can see that there will be exciting times ahead for the young children and teachers in the eighties.

In the past few years the scandalous practice of the Ministry of Education sending new Standard One students to schools that have not been completed is most deplorable. It indicates that the right

hand of the Ministry does not know what the left hand is doing. It also shows a lack of planning on the part of the Ministry and a lack of initiative on the part of the headmaster of the new school.

I remember some years ago a new school in Sg. Way had only its pillars up and students were sent to report there for the start of the new term. It turned out that the school was not completed until more than a year later!

I also remember that a few years ago the students of the Jinjang area were sent to Sentul, Segambut and so on because the school built for them was not ready and there was some talk of changing the school from national-type to a national school. There was an uproar over this change and I had to contact the Director-General of Education, Tan Sri Murad, and the Deputy Minister, Datuk Chan Siang Sun, to hold a meeting at the new uncompleted school to settle the matter. But the uproar could have been avoided if the Ministry had not been sleeping over the matter and had taken remedial measures before the opening of the new term.

The main reason for the delay in the completion of the building programme of the Ministry of Education is that the work is carried out by the Jabatan Kerja Rakyat (Department of Public Works) and they just do not have the capacity to handle the job. We know that a large part of the building programme under the Third Malaysia Plan is still not completed.

The Ministry of Education has now decided to build its own schools. Actually this is one of the important decisions of the Cabinet Committee headed by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed. The Ministry now proposes to build pre-fab schools. It has appointed the former President of the Petaling Jaya Municipality, Encik Idris Mohamed Noor, to head this section. There will be a brand new Operations Room to keep track of the building programme, enabling the Ministry to gather up-to-date information on every project in the country. From time to time the two Deputy Ministers, Datuk Chan Siang Sun and Datuk Najib B. Tun Razak, will make surprise visits to check on each project. I must agree that all the above proposals look very impressive on paper but I must warn the Minister, Datuk Musa Hitam, that there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. It means dedicated work on the part of all concerned if he is to complete the building programme under the Fourth Malaysia Plan.

Fortunately the Government has given priority to schools over barracks so money will not be a big problem under the Fourth

Malaysia Plan. But the Ministry must lick the problems of acquisition of land, chronic shortage of cement, steel and labour, particularly skilled labour.

The OCAR — Other Charges Annually Recurring to schools — has been static for a long time and meanwhile the Ministry and the Treasury must know that costs are rising every year. All schools find it very, very difficult to manage with the OCAR. The result is that less and less is being done for the students with it. The electricity bill keeps rising and must be paid. So less is spent on books for the library. The grant for the school is \$2.50 per student. Anyone who has something to do with purchase of books in this country must know that the cost of books whether printed locally or abroad has risen tremendously in the last few years. The result is that fewer and fewer books are being bought for school libraries. Some enterprising school-boards of governors have taken it upon themselves to raise funds for their own schools but unfortunately such initiative is rare. All schools are now government schools and parents expect the Government to provide everything that the schools need. But sometimes the Government is unable to do this. The schools must do something for themselves if we are to make education more meaningful.

One of the recommendations of the Mahathir Committee is that the OCAR for schools should be reviewed. The Ministry of Education too has announced that the OCAR will be reviewed this year but until the opening of the new school year the heads of schools have not been notified of the quantum of the increase. Why the delay?

I see that the grant for libraries too has been increased. This is long overdue otherwise as I have mentioned before with the static grant that the schools get, they will be forced to buy fewer books.

The importance of a good and well-stocked library is plain for all to see. Yet the Ministry does not provide a full-time librarian for some of the big schools. This must be rectified and quickly. With so much time devoted to the three R's the library assumes greater importance for the young children. They should be encouraged to read as soon as they are able to read simple books and this reading habit both in Bahasa Malaysia and in English must be encouraged throughout their school life.

In my time, half a century ago, we would rush to the library during the interval to borrow the few books that were available. At that time of course we did not have such distractions like the radio,

TV and cinema.

A very useful tool to supplement Education TV is the VCR. This is because more than one class cannot be present to see a good ETV programme. But if that programme can be recorded and replayed when the other classes are free it will be of tremendous help to the teachers.

I gather that some schools are provided with a VCR free by the Ministry of Education. The vast majority of schools do not have such a privilege. Why this discrimination I fail to understand. I have suggested to the Minister of Education that he get a tax exemption from the Treasury for schools which show initiative to raise funds to buy a VCR for themselves instead of waiting in vain for the Ministry of Education to supply it free. Datuk Musa is of course a very busy person but if he reads this or if the matter is brought to his attention I hope he will not waste any time in getting in touch with the Minister of Finance to get a tax exemption for the purchase of VCRs by schools. This way the Minister of Education will kill two birds with one stone. This tax exemption will save millions for his Ministry and the schools will be encouraged to do something for themselves instead of depending on the Government.

This year the Ministry of Education is spending over \$3 billion to educate our children. Yet the children of most of our Ministers and top civil servants have been sent abroad for their studies. If they are sent for tertiary education it is not so bad but some have been sent for secondary and even primary education and some on government scholarships! If they are not sent overseas they are sent to the International Schools in the big towns, especially in Kuala Lumpur where the medium for instruction is English. Why should this be the case when the children of the man in the street are urged to study in our national or national-type schools?

In the past I have railed against the lack of faith of some of our Ministers and high civil servants in our educational system but it has not stopped the exodus overseas. Now even the Minister of Education has come out against such a practice even though he has admitted that his children are studying overseas. I reiterate that for primary and secondary education we should let our children do their studies in this country. Tertiary education should be preferably completed in our universities but when places are not available then parents are forced to send their children overseas.

On 5 October 1980 the *Star* brought out the story of the 150 stranded students in Toronto. It transpired that in August last year,

150 odd students had been sent by the PSD to Toronto to pursue pre-university courses prior to joining a degree course in the universities in Canada. On arrival in Toronto the students found that the college was not ready to take in students and worse still it had only received a provisional certificate of acceptance by the Ontario Department of Education. These students were stranded. Someone had blundered. The students were shifted from hotel to hotel and they were running short of money when the *Star* broke the story.

Then things started moving. The Minister of Education, Datuk Musa Hitam, asked two pointed questions. The first was how was it possible that a school whose accreditation was questionable was selected. The second was why were 150 students sent to one college in spite of his directive that there should not be over-concentration of Malaysian students in one school?

Datuk Musa Hitam then drew up a set of guidelines which all students intending to go overseas will have to follow. These guidelines will, it is hoped, prevent the Toronto fiasco from recurring. But why did he wait for the Toronto fiasco to occur before drawing up the guidelines? Prevention is better than cure.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Education sent the director of its Schools Division, Encik Zain Abdullah, and the PSD sent Encik Shamsul Bakrin B. Mat Akas to investigate the fiasco fully and make a report to the respective agencies.

Alas, the officers have gone to Toronto, investigated the incident, returned to Kuala Lumpur, presumably submitted their reports and after that complete silence! Why this veil of silence over the Toronto Affair? The public has been promised that they would be informed but when the officials returned to Kuala Lumpur it appeared that there has been a conspiracy of silence over the whole sad episode.

It is regrettable that the Barisan Nasional Government does not trust the people. Very often the Government tries to cover up the wrongdoing of one of its agencies. What has the government to hide from the people? I wish to offer one piece of advice: publish the truth and forget the consequences!

The condition of the Orang Asli schools throughout the country is deplorable. These schools are under the control of the Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli which is under the Ministry of Home Affairs. This department is ill-equipped to carry out the important task of educating the children of the Orang Asli. The Jabatan Hal

Ehwal Orang Asli does not have the financial resources and the personnel to carry out this vital task. I shall mention one example of its inadequacy in taking on the task of the education of the children of the Orang Asli.

At the 7th mile, Cameron Highlands Road there is an Orang Asli Primary School with a student population of about 300. At the 14th mile Cameron Highlands Road there is another Orang Asli School with about 80 students. But these schools are administered by one headmaster and about 15 teachers. Not one of them is an Orang Asli. The teachers come to school late and leave early. Discipline is poor in both the schools and the children come and go as they like. The drop-out rate is very high. What sort of education are these Orang Asli children getting?

I call on the Minister of Education to take over these schools. The sooner this is done the better it is for these under-privileged children of our country. Let them not be treated like the Red Indians in the USA.

The schools in our Villages throughout the country are also in a deplorable state. They were built in the early fifties and were built of wood. Many of them are in danger of collapsing and most of them must be rebuilt. They have been neglected ever since they were built at the height of the Emergency and they have been treated like step-children by the Ministry of Education.

However, I must congratulate the Deputy Minister of Education, Datuk Chan Siang Sun, that this year \$20 million will be spent on the repair of New Village schools. This sum is patently not enough but half a loaf is better than no bread.

Let us hope that for 1982 when the Fourth Malaysia Plan is passed by Parliament a much bigger sum will be allocated to rebuild and repair the schools in the New Villages throughout the country and so upgrade the standard of education of the children in the down trodden New Villages. It is time the Barisan Government redress three decades of neglect.

I wish to congratulate the Minister of Education for his promise to increase the intake into our tertiary institutions by about 19,000 under the Fourth Malaysia Plan. The figure now stands at 26,823 so that by the end of the Fourth Malaysia Plan, by 1985, the figure should stand at 30,823.

Education in this country has been a political football for too long and instead of being unifying, it is a dividing force and polarization in our universities is rampant. Hence the announce-

ment by Datuk Musa Hitam in his speech at the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan, Sg. Penchala, on 13 January 1980 that the intake of bumiputra students into our universities will be gradually reduced by 2 per cent annually until it reaches 55 per cent. By then the intake of non-bumiputra students will reach 45 percent. This announcement has greatly encouraged most Malaysians as they view it as eminently fair and equitable and probably stemming the brain drain that has taken place in this country.

In the same speech the Minister also declared that the policy of discrimination in favour of the bumiputras will not go on *ad infinitum*. He stated that when the gap in education between the bumiputras and the non-bumiputras has been closed this discrimination will be stopped. If my interpretation of the speech is correct then I wish to congratulate Datuk Musa Hitam for this clear cut statement on the policy of discrimination in favour of the bumiputras.

Here I wish to impart a word of advice to the non-bumiputras of this country. Discrimination in favour of the disadvantaged, especially in education, is a fact of life and must be accepted by all Malaysians. It occurs the world over. In the USA, preference in tertiary institutions of learning is given to Black Hispanics and now probably to Vietnamese as well. In India, places are reserved for the untouchables, scheduled castes and tribals.

Such discrimination is new in this country and hence it is difficult for the non-bumiputras to accept. But in the interests of peace and harmony of our country the non-bumiputras must accept it, especially as there is a declared policy that it will not last forever.

The Government must know that the main cause of the brain drain among the non-bumiputra professionals from this country is the fear that their children will be denied the opportunity to study in our universities even if they are good students. This statement of policy by Datuk Musa Hitam should reassure all would-be non-bumiputra emigrants from this country.

What has the Barisan Nasional Government done to discriminate *positively* in favour of the Orang Asli, the bumiputra *tulin* of this country? More than twenty years have passed since we have achieved Merdeka and educationally the Orang Asli are as backward as ever. Once again I call on Datuk Musa Hitam to take over the education of the Orang Asli and make a great effort to eradicate the decades of their neglect.

The pressure for places in our universities is growing every

year. The Minister of Education has already announced that under the Fourth Malaysia Plan 10,000 more places will be provided. Hence I wish to reveal for the first time the dog-in-the-manger attitude in the application of the policy of discrimination.

Some years ago the intake into the Faculty of Engineering, University of Malaya, was questioned by a high Government official, the Director-General of a Ministry. He wanted to cut down the intake of engineering students from 190 to about 150 for that year. This at a time when there was an acute shortage of engineers of all kinds in our country. I accused him point-blank of cutting his nose to spite his face. His reason was that there were no bumiputra candidates available and so the non-bumiputra intake should be reduced in order not to increase the gap. Fortunately, I was able to get support in the University Council and the proposal was dropped.

For the past ten years the intake of students to the medical faculty at the University of Malaya could have been increased by 32. Many times a few members of the Council of the University of Malaya have made the proposal to increase the intake in view of the extreme shortage of doctors in our country but our proposal has been defeated in the University Council. The person mainly responsible for the defeat of our proposal was the same high Government official and his argument was that there were too many non-bumiputra doctors in the country as compared to the bumiputras. At that time there were not enough bumiputra students qualified to enter the medical faculty and so according to him the intake of students into the faculty did not need an increase. It is such narrow nationalism as this that causes a great deal of heartburn amongst the non-bumiputras. However I am glad that the intake of medical students will be increased from 128 to 160 this year — ten years too late.

Our Constitution provides for the establishment of private institutions of higher learning. One such institution, the Tunku Abdul Rahman College, was established fairly easily but when others tried to establish another private college difficulties arose. I refer to the Merdeka University. As this case is now before the High Court I shall not comment on it.

The Association for the Promotion of Higher Education in Malaysia was a praiseworthy effort. It received the blessings of the Government and of the Ministry of Education. It had in its council people of various races, Malays, Chinese, Indians, foreigners and

people of various religions: Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and so on. It acquired a large tract of land in Genting Highland and put up a building there. It was ready to take off when the UMNO Youth agitated against it. In the end it had to be abandoned and the building sold to the Ministry of Education. Although the sale was effected about two years ago, to this day the building is unoccupied. The sale of the building broke the heart of Dr. Thio Chan Bee who had conceived of the project and soon after he passed away of a serious illness.

It is a great pity that the project has failed. Here was a multi-racial and multi-religious project which deserved to be supported by all Malaysians and deserved to succeed. But because of the opposition of the UMNO Youth the Government became lukewarm to the project and it had unfortunately to fold up.

Now I see that Datuk Musa Hitam himself has spoken out against the establishment of private universities. This is a great pity. I have a great respect for the liberal views of Datuk Musa Hitam. He was and still is progressive in his views and for such a person to speak out against the establishment of private universities saddens me.

Datuk Musa Hitam of course knows that private universities are a common feature in many parts of the world, both developed and under-developed. One of our neighbours, Indonesia, has a number of private universities some of which are recognized by our Government. In the USA, the Ivy League universities, Yale, Harvard, Duke, Princeton, Columbia, Cornell, Stanford and so on, are all private universities and are among the best in that country. It is true that in this country there are problems of race and religion which complicate matters. But these problems notwithstanding there is no reason why a private university should not succeed. Finance will be a big problem and recognition of the degrees will not be easy. But these problems are not insurmountable. I see that Dr. Goh Cheng Teik, himself an academician and a Deputy Minister, has proposed that there be established a La Salle university. The Catholics the world over have been in the forefront of education. In this country our oldest schools have been built by them. If they are given a royal grant to establish a university I have no doubt that they will succeed.

EDUCATION FOR 1982

The Government has quite rightly given pride of place to education in its operating expenditure for the past few years. In 1980 it was \$2786 million, in 1981 it is \$2805 million and next year for the first time it will top the three billion mark. Education for the first time will be given \$3252 million — the highest for any Ministry in this country. For the period 1970–1980 its share of the total budget was about 16 per cent and on an average accounted for about 7 per cent of the GNP. This figure is very high in comparison with other developing countries, particularly those of the Asean region.

It is but right that the allocation for education should increase every year as the pressure for places at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education is increasing with every passing year. Not only that, the quality of education should also be improved.

Next year the pilot scheme for the New Curriculum for Primary Schools will be tried out on a trial basis for 300 selected schools.

Clearly, if the New Curriculum is to be successfully implemented many more classrooms will have to be built next year and until the end of this decade. This is because the New Curriculum will accommodate 30 to a classroom whereas the average classroom now is normally crammed with 50 pupils. The whole experiment will fail if 50 pupils continue to be packed in a classroom.

In the Development Estimates for next year provision is made

for the construction of 20,815 new classrooms. Whether this will include the building of new primary schools is not stated in the speech of the Ministers of Finance. But over the years there has been a notorious shortfall in the construction of schools. I think I am right in saying that under the Third Malaysia Plan the Ministry of Education has only been able to meet less than 50 per cent of its target of construction of new schools. The situation was so bad that Datuk Musa Hitam announced last year that his Ministry will set up a special division to look after the building of schools and classrooms to speed up their construction.

When I interviewed Datuk Samy Vellu, the Minister of Works and Utilities, he was quite emphatic in that his Ministry was not to blame for the delay in construction for client Ministries. He assured me that when the acquisition of land had been completed and the funds were available work would start almost immediately and there would be no delay in the construction of classrooms and schools for the Ministry of Education. For the successful implementation of the New Curriculum it is vitally important that there should be adequate classrooms for young children when they enter school for the first time.

Right now in primary schools quite a number of classrooms have to "double" up.

Thus School I occupies the school in the morning and School II in the afternoon. This means that one school has to study in the afternoon, which is not the best time for a student to study. This system is not confined to primary schools. Many secondary schools too are forced to adopt the same system.

Ministry of Education is perennially short of teachers, yet I do not see the training of teachers being stepped up, as can be seen in the following table.

	1980	1981	1982
Intake of Trainee Teachers	6956	5635	6825
Total of Teachers under Training	13,391	12,691	13,258
Teachers who Graduate	7106	6254	6817

From the above table it will be seen that the intake of teachers in training and the graduates from our teachers' training colleges in Malaysia have fallen off in 1981 and also will fall off in 1982. This means that the staffing situation of teachers is very tight.

Last year when Datuk Musa Hitam announced that the ratio of teachers to a class will be improved the ratio was:

Primary School	1.2 per class
Lower Secondary	1.3 per class
Upper Secondary	1.4 per class
Sixth Form	2 per class

Some schools had their staff increased for this year but alas very soon the extra teachers were taken away and so most schools are now back to square one. When the teacher is on medical leave or is on sports duty elsewhere his class has no teacher and the children very often run wild. Now if there is a little staff reserve it means that the children do not have to suffer. If it is postulated that a pool of reserve teachers in every school is a luxury which the Ministry of Education cannot afford then a pool reserve for the state is a necessity. These teachers can be posted to schools for short spells to fill a vacancy when a teacher has been given sick leave for a month or more or when a female teacher is on maternity leave.

Last year Datuk Musa Hitam announced too that the OCAR will be increased. It has not been increased for more than a decade and meanwhile annual recurring charges keep on increasing. Electricity and water charges have been raised and the cost of books has increased by leaps and bounds every year. Worse is to follow this year. I am the Chairman of the boards of some schools and I was astounded to find out that most schools have not received their OCAR until the third term of this year. How does the Ministry of Education expect schools to pay their water and electricity bills if the OCAR has not been sent to them even as late as the third term?

Other amenities for education have been granted. These include:

1. 29 new secondary vocational schools.
2. 365 teachers' quarters in rural areas.
3. 98 hostels for secondary schools.
4. \$45 million for supplementary feeding programme which will benefit 850,000 pupils.
5. \$59 million as hostel food subsidies which will benefit 129,000 pupils.
6. \$95 million for scholarship and bursaries which will assist about 147,000 pupils.
7. \$30 million for the text book lending scheme which will benefit 2,685,000 pupils.
8. \$121 million for teachers' training colleges.

I wish to congratulate the Ministry of Education for these allocations particularly the subsidies which will be a boon to poor

and needy students. The Ministry has also taken a big leap forward in building 29 new secondary vocational schools. I well remember about a decade ago the Government used to build them in dribs and drabs and I used to make a plea in the Dewan Rakyat for the Ministry of Education to build them in bigger numbers. I am glad that this will come about next year.

I see that our five universities together with the Mara Institute of Technology and the Tunku Abdul Rahman College have been provided with \$488 million from the Operating Expenditure. This will help educate 49,000 students in these institutions of higher learning next year.

From the Development Expenditure of \$871 million the higher institutions of learning have been allocated about \$374 million. This means that these institutions swallow about 45 per cent of our Development Expenditure, a very high figure by any yardstick. Thus out of the total allocation of \$4,123 million, higher education has been allocated \$862 million. Despite this, it is no secret that the staff of universities are discontented and seething with frustration. It has not only to do with the pay that they receive but also concerns their working conditions, academic freedom, promotion and other issues. The result is that there is now an accelerated brain-drain to the private sector. That is not so bad, but when they leave the country out of sheer frustration then the loss of these highly trained academicians is a serious matter.

The allocation for education for next year — \$4,123 million — is admittedly high but more can be done. I have always maintained that it is better to build schools and classrooms rather than barracks. Provide our students with adequate tools in the science laboratories rather than buy fighter planes and tanks. The new Gong Air Base in Kelantan will cost about \$2 – 3 billion — is it all that necessary to spend such a large sum on a military air base?

THE KURIKULUM BARU SEKOLAH RENDAH

The Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah had a long gestation period but was finally ready as part of the Cabinet Committee Report of 1979. *Inter alia*, the CCR made the following recommendation: "The Primary School Curriculum should be formulated to enable pupils to achieve the skills in the three basic areas, viz Communication, Mankind and his Environment, and Personal Development in accordance with his needs, interests and mental capacity and intelligence."

The CCR also recommended that the Ministry of Education take definitive steps to ensure that the education provided in the primary level should be basic education with emphasis given to teaching and learning of the three R's.

Why did the Ministry or the Curriculum Development Committee take such a long time to initiate reforms in the curriculum in primary schools? For years, nay decades, it has been recognized by both parents and teachers that something was rotten within our primary schools. This is evident when after six years of study a large number of the children, are unable to read, write or count!

This is indeed an indictment on the schools, the teachers, the CDC and the Ministry of Education. It was not until Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed arrived as Minister of Education that the Cabinet Committee was established to review the whole educational system and it finally came out with the CCR. On the 8 December

1980 Datuk Musa Hitam, then the Minister for Education, enunciated the Musa Doctrine for Primary Schools and the Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah was launched. Since then the KBSR has been exhaustively and extensively studied in numerous conferences and seminars. Every attempt has been made to have it studied by teachers and get parents interested as well. I take the view that the co-operation of parents is vital, more so when a radical change like the KBSR is instituted.

We are told that briefings, seminars, workshops and weekend retreats have been held inviting education officials, academics, headmasters, representatives of teacher organizations, professional, politicians and school administrations. And rightly so a gigantic task lies ahead of the Ministry of Education, especially the Curriculum Development Committee and the teachers. It is estimated that about 50,000 teachers in the primary schools will have to be reached when the scheme is launched in 1983.

Next year, a trial run will be made for 300 selected schools. Then the scheme will be implemented in stages, starting in 1983 with Standard I and progressing annually through successive standards until the whole scheme is implemented by 1988. When the scheme was announced by Datuk Musa on 8 December 1980 it was hailed by teachers and parents alike.

The trial run scheduled for next year will enable the planners or the implementers to find out whether it is necessary for the teachers, who are already trained, to undergo further training in order to teach the new curriculum. In preparation for next year some teachers have already been sent for training. The number of teachers involved next year will be comparatively small but when the new scheme is launched in 1983 on a nationwide scale it is estimated that it will involve 50,000 teachers.

The trial run, hopefully will show up the suitability or otherwise of the new teaching materials and what implications the new curriculum will have on school organization, administration and finance. The trial run will no doubt provide the answer to most of the problems and hopefully they will be ironed out by the time the new scheme is launched on a nationwide scale in 1983.

In the new curriculum provision is also made for remedial work for slow learners. It is estimated that 10 per cent of the students will be slow learners and handicapped. For them special programmes will have to be worked out.

For the fast achievers, those who are more mature, or for those

who have had a head start by going to kindergarten or pre-school, there is a proposal to promote them to Phase II of the curriculum after two years instead of the usual three years taken by the average. Some of the possible problems relating to implementation are:

1. When the scheme is launched on a nationwide scale in 1983 about 50,000 teachers, if not more, will be involved. Will they be able to rise to the occasion and fulfill the role that is expected of them? All have been trained but the work is new to them.

A greater responsibility now rests on the teachers. They now do not have a set syllabus and are on their own. Those who neglect their duty and responsibility will seriously damage the education of the children under their care. As 1983 draws nearer the task of finding teachers with the right motivation and experience assumes greater importance.

2. Teaching kits and aids are being prepared and it is hoped that they will be ready long before 1983. A handbook to instruct teachers on how to make use of these learning kits has been prepared. With the aid of this handbook teachers are encouraged to make learning materials to suit the needs of their students.

3. A guide book is expected to be ready by August this year to explain the background, rationale, scope and features of the KBSR. The widest publicity should be given to explain the book to all concerned. It should be made available to parents as soon as possible.

4. Although in Phase I of the curriculum the need for text books will be minimal they are being prepared in co-operation with the Textbook Bureau. In Phase II there will be more basic text books and these will be supplemented by suitable library books.

5. The success of the KBSR depends a great deal on the individual attention that the teacher can give to the students under his care. This is impossible if the teacher has a class of fifty or more students. Hence there is an immediate need for more classrooms and more teachers. A great deal will depend on the Ministry of Education being able to build more classrooms right up to 1988 and even beyond that date. Judging on the past performances of the Ministry I am not that optimistic. Smaller classes will of course mean more teachers.

In launching the KBSR the Ministry of Education has embarked on a gigantic experiment but given the will to succeed and the co-operation of teachers, parents and students there is no reason why it should not succeed and give Malaysia a new breed of students ready to tackle the problems of the 21st century.

PUPIL'S OWN LANGUAGE

The Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia guarantees the study and use of one's own language. This is of course the result of the negotiations during the days of the Reid Constitutional Commission. By the Education Act of 1961 a child is allowed to go to a national school (Malay stream) or national-type school (English, Chinese or Tamil stream).

In 1967 the National Language Act was passed by Parliament and Malay became the sole official language but the study and use of other languages, English, Chinese and Tamil, was allowed. But in 1971 most Chinese and Tamil secondary schools were discontinued and they were persuaded to change to national or national-type secondary schools where the medium of instruction and examination was Malay to English.

They continued to teach their pupils Mandarin or Tamil as a language. There is a provision in the Education Act of 1961 which provides that if 15 parents or more desire their children to continue to study the Pupil's Own Language (POL) as a subject the school should provide it. Those that converted continued to receive government grants. However, some of them refused to convert and maintained Mandarin or Tamil as the medium of instruction. They prepared their pupils for government examinations which were conducted in either Malay or English and their own school examinations in Chinese or Tamil.

In 1970, the Minister of Education, Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Yacob, decided that Bahasa Malaysia should be the sole medium of instruction and examination starting with Standard I for that year. Then with each passing year Bahasa Malaysia became the medium of instruction and examination for every succeeding class. By 1982, Bahasa Malaysia became the sole medium of instruction and examination in all our primary and secondary schools. Thus, all our schools have converted to the national stream.

As I stated before, the Education Act of 1961 makes provision for the pupil's own language for non-Malay pupils. In the primary schools it is introduced to pupils in Standard III if 15 or more parents desire to have their children study the Pupil's Own Language.

It is desirable that at a young age the pupil should be introduced to his own language. Take my own case for example. More than half a century ago my parents sent me to an English school. I then lived in a rural area near the 11th Mile, Cheras village, and had to travel five miles to school and back. My parents did not think of sending me to the village Chinese school, which was owned by the Chinese community. And unfortunately, I myself in those far off days did not realize the importance of learning Mandarin. The result was that I spoke very indifferent Amoy Hokkien at home. My parents spoke that dialect and I had perforce to speak it. My father could read Chinese newspapers but could not write as he hardly had any education in his native Fukien, in South China. And so I am illiterate in Mandarin and speak very poor Hokkien and Hakka.

When I graduated from medical college in Singapore and returned to Kuala Lumpur I found my lack of knowledge of Mandarin a handicap. This became more so when I joined the Labour Party of Malaya in which the dialect was used by young and old. And when I became actively involved in left-wing politics there was no chance of my mastering Mandarin. Instead when I was elected to the Dewan Rakyat I had to study Bahasa Malaysia and use it as well. But if I had even a smattering of Chinese I am certain I would have been more successful in politics.

Some of my children studied Mandarin in the Kindergarten classes but when they went to the primary school they discontinued its study. And thus they too were unable to know their own language. This is a pity for I believe all young Malaysians of Chinese origin should have a knowledge of Mandarin. I do know that the

task is a very difficult one. They have to be virtually trilingual. To ask them to study Mandarin as a third language may be too hard on them. Unless of course instead of going to a national school they go to a national-type Chinese primary school. As soon as Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Yacob made Bahasa Malaysia the medium of instruction in Standard I in 1970, the enrolment in the national-type Chinese schools increased by leaps and bounds. In 1981, there were over 85,000 new pupils enrolled in these schools as compared to over 82,000 in the previous year.

A pupil with a Chinese primary school education will be able to continue with POL in the secondary school without any difficulty. I hope that more and more Chinese parents will send their children to a national-type Chinese primary school and then continue their education in a national secondary school. There they can continue to study Mandarin in the POL classes.

Chinese educationists insist that Mandarin should be one of the media of instruction in primary, secondary and tertiary levels. They do not believe in the usefulness of POL as an optional subject only.

There are advantages in beginning the children's education in a Chinese primary school. They have a very firm grounding in science and mathematics. Statistics from the University of Malaya show that almost all the first class honours winners in mathematics come from the Chinese stream. And that is an achievement that Chinese schools can be proud of.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Education only pays lip service to the study of POL, whether Mandarin or Tamil. The Ministry does not tackle the problems of its study vigorously, with the result that the drop-out rate is fairly high. Admittedly, as I have mentioned before, to ask the young pupils to study three languages is a formidable task. But if the Ministry of Education tackles the problem resolutely the success rate will be higher.

What is hindering the study of POL in our schools? Here are some of the issues which have to be resolved before the POL can be successfully studied in our schools.

Having a full-time teacher would be ideal. But to do this the school must be a large one and there must be enough pupils wanting to learn Mandarin. Unfortunately, such teachers are given thirty periods a week, that is, three periods per class and they will have to teach ten classes. For a teacher to teach a language in ten classes is a daunting task. To teach a language properly, he or she

should not be responsible for more than five classes. Hence it is little wonder that very few teachers would like to teach POL on a full time basis.

Part-time teachers may also be employed. But these are mainly found from among the primary school teachers. Some are not properly motivated and then there is the question of whether they are competent enough to teach in a secondary school. Another alternative is to have a teacher who is trained to teach other subjects but can teach Mandarin as well.

As I have stated before, if the Ministry of Education wants the pupils of POL to learn their mother tongue properly it should engage full-time teachers and reduce the work-load for the POL teacher so that he or she is on par with his or her colleagues in the same school as far as work load is concerned.

Another problem is the allowance for part-time teachers, including POL teachers, which was a pittance and thus failed to attract teachers of the right calibre to teach the language.

The rates were:

\$5 per hour for primary schools.

\$7 per hour for lower secondary schools.

\$10 per hour for upper secondary schools.

These rates are laughable and no wonder not many teachers were interested in teaching POL. However, from this year the allowance has been revised. Graduate teachers will get \$25 per hour and non-graduate teachers will get \$20 per hour. Since this revision there has been a rise in the number of teachers who have registered with the Education Department to teach Mandarin on a part-time basis.

Now the Ministry of Education cannot plead shortage of teachers for being tardy in starting POL classes. Also because of the bigger numbers who have volunteered to teach POL the Ministry of Education can afford to select only the best.

Under these new circumstances it is hoped that there will be an upsurge in the study of POL not only in the primary but also in the secondary schools.

Another problem pertaining to the teaching of POL is the attitude of the headmaster towards the subject. Very often he is not a Chinese or a Tamil and I regret to say that as a result he may not be that sympathetic towards the teaching of these two languages.

I have known of cases when parents ask for the teaching of POL at the beginning of the first term, but some headmasters give

various reasons for not starting the classes. One common reason is the inability to get POL teachers. As I have stated before with the revision of allowances for part-time teachers of POL these teachers are coming forward in adequate numbers. Hence this excuse is no longer valid.

Very often by the time the POL classes get started the second term has already begun and so one whole term has already been lost.

One way to avoid this would be to select the part-time teachers during the long vacation at the end of the year and asking students to indicate their desire to opt for POL classes the next year towards the end of the third term.

Frequently teachers previously from the Chinese stream, presently teaching science and mathematics may be asked to take POL classes as well, almost as a sideline. This is neither fair to the students nor to the teachers. The Ministry of Education is sending qualified teachers to be trained to teach English as a second language. It should in the same manner only use teachers qualified to teach Mandarin and Tamil in order to be fair to both the teachers and the pupils.

The pupils of today find that the curriculum is already overcrowded. Since Mandarin or Tamil is not a compulsory subject, the pupils are apt to neglect this optional subject at the expense of other more important examination subjects. A great deal then depends on the teacher of POL. If he or she can encourage his or her pupils to love the subject then the drawbacks that I have touched upon can be overcome.

The Ministry of Education has not taken the teaching of POL seriously in the past, which is confirmed by the haphazard and lackadaisical way in which these classes are being taught. But now with funds and teachers being available let us hope that the teaching of this subject will be greatly improved from this year onwards.

THE WOES AND FRUSTRATION IN OUR UNIVERSITIES

Higher education in Malaysia had its humble origins in Singapore. In July 1905 the Governments of the Straits Settlement and the Federated Malay States established a medical school known as the S.S. and F.M.S. Government Medical School. Its name was soon changed to the King Edward VII Medical School in 1912 and four years later in 1916 its licenciate in Medicine and Surgery was recognized by the General Medical Council of Great Britain. In 1921 its name was changed to the King Edward VII College of Medicine. Today it is the Faculty of Medicine of the National University of Singapore.

In 1929, Raffles College for Arts and Science was established and like the King Edward VII College of Medicine its early growth was slow but steady especially during the depression years of the late twenties and early thirties. During the Japanese Occupation of 1940-1945 work at both the colleges came to a complete stop as they were occupied by the Japanese Army.

Soon after World War II a commission headed by Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, came to Malaya to enquire and make recommendations concerning university education in Malaya. The commission arrived in this country in March 1947 and travelled all over talking to Government officials, academicians, graduates, undergraduates and the general public. It was so impressed by the quality of the graduates and

students that instead of recommending a university college affiliated to a university, the commission recommended the establishment of the University of Malaya forthwith.

The University of Malaya was established in October 1949 with the amalgamation of the King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College. The site of the new campus was to be at Johore Baru and a site for that purpose was set aside by the Johore State Government. But soon it became evident that the cost of such a move would be prohibitive so the Johore proposal was abandoned in 1954.

Following the Sir Robert Aitken's Report of 1957 it was decided to establish two divisions of the University of Malaya, one in Singapore and another in Kuala Lumpur. The site at Pantai Valley was acquired. On January 1962 the University of Malaya was founded.

But the thirst for higher education could not be satisfied and at the end of the sixties one university after another was founded, namely the National University of Malaysia, University of Science, University of Agriculture, and finally the University of Technology. But still the cry for more places in our universities cannot be met by our five universities despite the increase of 3000 places for next year. The government has partly solved this situation by sending many of our students, nearly all of them bumiputras, abroad. But places a broad too are getting more and more difficult to come by and besides the cost is prohibitive in some cases. The situation lies in building one more university, this time on the East Coast.

The University of Malaya as conceived by the founding fathers was to be a seat of learning to train our future leaders and also the staff to meet the manpower needs of the country. It was to be a liberal institution, with its academic freedom jealously guarded by its academic staff who in the initial stages were mainly recruited from overseas. This can be seen in the Constitution of the University of Malaya passed by Parliament in October 1961. The Council is the effective decision-making body of the university. It had several committees: development, finance, staff, promotions etc.

The original council as constituted by Parliament in 1961 consisted of the following:

1. Vice-Chancellor
2. Four persons elected by the court
3. Two persons, who shall not be deans of faculties elected

by the senate from among its own members

4. Two deans elected by rotation
5. One whole time reader or lecturer, elected by the whole time readers and lecturers from among themselves
6. Five persons appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong
7. Two representatives of the Conference of Rulers
8. Not more than four persons appointed by the Chancellor
9. One person appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Negeri of Singapore
10. One person from Brunei, Sabah or Sarawak
11. Five persons elected by the Guild of Graduates from among its own members

From the above it will be seen that it had a variegated representation. It will also be seen that although the university was completely financed from public funds no single party could control its running. However, as a result of the student demonstrations against the Tunku following the 13 May tragedy, fomented, it must be added, by some of those in power today, when Parliament was reconvened in 1971, the Government passed the Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971 which met with strong opposition in Parliament.

The autonomy of our universities and academic freedom so cherished by academicians was swept away. So also were the checks and balances contained in the old Constitution. In addition restrictions were imposed on political activities by the students who had to reconstitute their students' union into a students' representative council.

The University Council was brought under the control of the Government, through its nominees. It now constituted of the following:

1. The Vice-Chancellor
2. Three persons appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong
3. Two persons appointed by the Conference of Rulers
4. One person appointed by the Ruler or governor of the state in which the university is situated
5. Two persons appointed by the Chancellor
6. Two persons elected from the court from among its own members
7. One person (not a dean of a faculty) elected by the senate from amongst its own members in such manner as may be prescribed by statute

8. One dean elected in rotation in such manner as may be prescribed by statute
9. Two persons elected from the Guild of Graduates from amongst its own members.

It will be seen that the new council had a membership of 15 as compared to the old one of 28 and that it came under the control of the Government through its nominee. Out of a council of 15 members only 6 of them were elected, two each from the senate, court and the Guild of Graduates. I became a casualty of the new Act. I had been elected Chairman of the Council in 1970 for a term of three years. When the new Act was passed by Parliament I knew my days were numbered as Chairman. Under the new rules I was elected to the council as an elected member of the Guild of Graduates and although I knew I had no chance against the Government nominee, I nevertheless stood for election as Chairman of Council and lost.

The Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 became the model for all the four other universities established in this country.

If the Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971, was bad, worse was to follow. Following the students demonstrations in September 1974 the amendment to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1975 was passed by Parliament.

The students are now rigidly controlled. All students' bodies were disbanded including the University of Malaya Students' Union. A deputy vice-chancellor in charge of students' affair was appointed and any students' body wanting to resume its activities had to apply for re-registration. For reasons best known to the Government the Chinese Language Society has not been registered although it had applied for registration about six years ago.

When I interviewed Datuk Musa Hitam who was then the Minister of Education he agreed with me that there was no valid reason why it should not be registered now. That was more than three months ago and the Chinese Language Society is still not registered to this day. I do hope that the Minister of Education, Datuk Dr. Sulaiman Daud, will look into this subject for six years is a long time taken for any society to be registered.

It has been said that our university undergraduates are no better than sixth formers of a high school. And the University of Malaya has been called the Pantai High School. The staff were brought into the ambit of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and its amendments in 1975. All universities in this fair

land of ours are subject to rigid control of the Ministry of Education and the Public Services Department. Just to make things doubly sure the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Ministry of Education and the Director-General of the Public Services Department are now members of the council of each university.

The new council of each university consists of the following:

1. A chairman appointed by the Minister
2. The Vice-Chancellor
3. Two persons appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong
4. One person appointed by the Conference of Rulers
5. One person appointed by the Ruler or government of the state in which the university is situated, or by the Prime Minister if the university is situated in the Federal Territory
6. One person appointed by the Chancellor
7. Two persons elected by the Senate from among its own members
8. The Secretary-General of the Treasury or his representative
9. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Education or his representative
10. The Director-General of Education or his representative
11. The Director-General of the Public Services Department or his representative
12. The Solicitor-General or his representative
13. Two graduates of the university appointed by the Minister on the advice of the Vice-Chancellor.

Only the two academic representatives of the senate are elected — the rest of the council of 16 members are nominated by the Government. Even the two graduates of the University are now appointed by the Minister of Education. Election of members to the council of our universities is a chance that the Government cannot afford to take. The Government control of our Universities is now complete. I am proud that both the students and staff of our universities had protested against the original Bill in 1971 and its amendment in 1975.

Of course I spoke against the amendments during the debate in the Dewan Rakyat. I quote below two excerpts from that speech: "Mr. Speaker sir, I have been a member of the council of the University of Malaya since its foundation in 1959 and a Member

of this House since 1964 and I am appalled that the Government has brought in such a repressive Bill to this House today. Let me say that these amendments are diabolical and draconian in concept, tyrannical in execution, and will produce graduates who are intellectual morons."

I went on to say: "Mr. Speaker Sir, the implications of this Bill are much wider than its repressive effects on the universities and on the youth of our country. It makes me ponder, what is the mood and mentality of those who drafted this repressive piece of legislation. If this is how they respond to a single episode of student unrest, how will they respond to greater issues that will confront them in the future? Are these the desperate deeds of desperate politicians? Is this a panic reaction to the toppling of the client state of the United States in Vietnam and Cambodia? Foolish indeed are those who conclude from the events of recent history that dictatorship and not democracy is the answer to revolution.

"The gravity of the challenge to our liberties posed by this Bill cannot be overstated. In exchange for the opportunity for higher education, our youth are required to give up their fundamental rights as citizens. Undergraduates may not associate in any manner whatsoever with societies or groups of persons outside the University. Undergraduates may not express or do anything that can be construed as expressing support for political parties or trade unions. An undergraduate charged with any criminal offence is barred from being a student of the university even if he is acquitted, unless the Minister approves or intervenes. These are the awful provisions in this obnoxious Bill. A country that adopts such a law cannot even pretend to be a democracy any more. At one shot it destroys all pretences to autonomy of our universities, deprives the youth of their freedom and reduces university teachers to the status of hacks in the service of the Government in power. The status of the Universities is dragged into mud and the once exalted post of Vice-Chancellor becomes a dirty job — a hatchetman. We are now to have higher education in a concentration camp atmosphere to produce submissive, unquestioning, unthinking graduates fit to be employees, not citizens.

"I cannot believe that supporters of the Government are all behind this awful piece of legislation. I know there are decent, honest men and women in the Government benches. Will they remain silent in the name of political expediency? This Bill will remain a stain on the name of whoever supports it. So I appeal to

those with convictions of democracy to stand up and speak out now and be counted. I prophesy that the day will come when this Bill will become an albatross round the neck of the Government which they may try to get rid of by sacrificing the Ministers whose names are stained by it. This is war on intellectuals and on youth and the youth have time on their side. Recent history is littered with the names of petty tyrants who became hated names amongst their people and untouchables in their society. Not since the notorious Emergency Regulations became permanent law as the Internal Security Act have we had such an obnoxious, oppressive and repressive piece of legislation as the Bill before us today. The students have challenged you to debate and you answer them with the threat of prison gates. You are destined to lose because time is on their side.

"You are foolish to do this. Having eyes you see not the lessons of history. Having ears you hear not the cries of anguish against poverty and corruption. Having tongues, you will not let others speak. I sit down with great sadness in my heart. What meaning is there left in the democratic process when this sort of law can even be contemplated? What hope is there for peaceful change when youths are denied the right to dissent? This is a black day in the history of our country and a shameful day in the history of this House. I mourn for my country, for your arrogance of your power will bring it great suffering."

With the passage of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and its amendments in 1975 it would be true to say that morale began to sink and the staff began to look for new pastures. Academicians cannot be treated like other civil servants. You have to recruit them in the international market. The good ones in the technical fields have no difficulty in finding jobs, either in the private sector in this country or abroad.

In the early days the academic staff were mainly recruited from abroad but as our local graduates got post-graduate training and experience they have occupied most of the chairs in our universities. At the moment most of our academic staff are indigenes and rightly so. The foreign staff are only those people whose expertise we require. I have already mentioned that we recruit in the international market and the salaries and conditions of work here must match those in other countries. The foreign staff have also to study Bahasa Malaysia quickly so as to be able to lecture in it.

If besides the unattractive salary, the other terms and conditions of work are not attractive then there is a brain drain to the private

sector in this country or to foreign countries, as I have mentioned before. The problem has become so serious that the former Minister for Education, Datuk Musa Hitam, stated that the salary of the academic staff would be revised as an incentive to retain them in their posts.

His successor, Datuk Dr. Sulaiman Daud, pursued the matter further as soon as he took office. He invited the Vice-Chancellors of all our five universities to each present a memorandum on the subject. It was also intimated to the academic staff that any memorandum from them would also be considered. Hence the Academic Staff Association of the University of Malaya rushed a memorandum to the Ministry of Education before the end of September 1981. However the time given to the academics is too short. It would have been better if they or the Vice Chancellors were given three months, or better still the coming long vacation to prepare a memorandum. Then instead of each individual university preparing a separate memorandum it would have been better for the five universities to get together and prepare a joint memorandum.

Paradoxical as it may sound the various salary revisions from Harun to the Cabinet Committee Review to the latest 1980 Salaries Review have actually resulted in downgrading the salary scales of the academic staff of our universities! With this also comes the loss of some of the perks.

It is important that a decision should not be delayed for too long, but if time is needed for the Government to come to a decision then the date of implementation of the new scale must now be announced. I suggest that effective date of implementation be 1 October 1981. But important though the matter of salary is to the staff very often some of the staff resign out of sheer frustration over the other terms and conditions of service. Since the passage of the amendments of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1975, the administration of our universities has been highly bureaucratized. The universities have now become an adjunct of the Ministry of Education and the Public Services Department and the academics have less and less say in the running of our universities. This is understandable seeing that the University Council is now largely composed of civil servants many of who in my experience are very busy people in their own right and often do not attend meetings of the council but send their representatives. Important decisions regarding appointment, promotion and discipline and other terms and conditions of service are not made by academicians but by civil

servants. Our universities are being run like any other Government department with its vast set of rules and regulations.

Before the enactment of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 the confirmation and promotion of academic staff was decided by the Confirmation and Promotions Board where the academic staff had adequate representation. After the passage of that Act this Board was abolished and its functions were taken over by the members of council and that means mainly top civil servants.

With confirmation usually there is no difficulty, and in most of the cases it is clear whether to confirm or not to confirm. In a small number of borderline cases there is some difficulty but usually the problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the staff concerned.

The Promotions Board have three criteria, namely teaching research and publications. Some of the academic staff have accused the Board of asking them to publish or perish. But of late, race has come into consideration and this has caused a great deal of frustration, particularly if the candidate promoted is raw and so has very little teaching experience and very few publications or none at all. It is this sort of treatment of the academic staff that has caused some of them to leave the service of the university out of disgust.

The recent unstated policy of appointing bumiputra as Deans and Heads of Department had led to a great deal of discontent. These positions require not only academic ability and experience but also qualities of leadership. Hence the Vice-Chancellor, in appointing a junior academic to these high positions, may in the long run be doing harm to the institution and to the individual himself. Imagine the intolerable position of a professor of a department taking orders from a junior member who the professor is supposed to be training! I know of at least one professor resigning from a university when his subordinate was appointed as Head of Department. Where the subordinate has the experience and the requisite qualification for the job by all means promote the bumiputra to be Head of the Department. But not a junior academic member with no experience. It may well be against the interests of the individual himself.

Prior to 1971 the post of the Dean of a Faculty was an elective one. But in the last election for the post of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, the contest became a heated one and scurrilous letters began circulating in the faculty. Based on this it was decided to abolish the election of a dean. Under the

amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, the Dean is now appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. The elected Dean had the confidence of the majority of the Faculty, the appointed one may or may not enjoy that confidence. The situation becomes worse if a junior academic bumiputra member is appointed to that high office. He will then be like a fish out of water and the faculty suffers. In the final analysis the junior academic member also suffers.

Research is the life blood of any university and yet in the University of Malaya for more than a decade the sum allocated for research is \$1 million to be shared by all the faculties. When one considers that a CAT scan machine alone costs \$2.5 million one can see how ludicrous such an allocation is.

Now I am sure the academic staff are not expected to do research so that they are in line for a Nobel Prize. But research in so many fields can be contributed to by our academic staff. The conversion of palm oil into diesel oil can be pursued with greater vigour. If successful it will solve most of our energy problems not only for motor vehicles, but industrial plants and it can be a big export earner besides providing work for thousands in this country.

Of late I have been hearing more grouches regarding the denial of conference leave overseas for staff to present papers at scientific conferences. These conferences are essential to the academic staff to renew or make new contacts with their colleagues overseas. The allocation for conferences is not quite adequate and on top of that the successful candidate has to get the approval of the Public Service Department. Such an absurd practice rankles in the hearts of most academicians. I know of one associate professor who finally resigned because he said the last straw was the rejection of his application for conference leave.

In the past the Registrar, Librarian and Bursar, although not strictly academics, have all been treated on par with them, not taking into account certain perks given to the latter. Now that the civil servants have moved into control of the university council this category of staff has been down-graded and most of their perks taken away — another source of frustration. The academicians also resent the numerous controls and disciplinary rules that they are subjected to. They feel that nobody cares for them in the university, least of all the university council. I wish to reiterate that the council is now dominated and controlled by the civil servants who are treating our universities like another department of the vast Government bureaucracy.

One major grouse amongst the senior university staff is the lack of promotion opportunities. Our outstanding young associate professors may have to wait for many, many years before they can have a chance to step into the shoes of the professor. The solution is to have a multi-professorial system and let one of the professors be the chairman of the department. This system if adopted will end one of the major frustrations of the academicians. And professors who have reached retirement age can be appointed as senior professors on a contract basis. This way their services can be utilized by the university while they are still intellectually active.

The Deputy Prime Minister in his press conference on 13 August 1981 emphasised the need to ensure that the universities retain the best brains to train the best young minds of this nation. This concern of the Deputy Prime Minister is most welcome. It shows that there has been a gradual deterioration in the quality of our academic staff. The bureaucratization that has been taken place since the 1975 amendments has no doubt been the most important cause of this state of affairs. The frustrations so caused have taken their toll in the loss of a large number of brilliant, experienced and intellectually forthright staff. In no way can the statistics of more new academic recruits compensate for the loss of experience, traditions and values that would otherwise be the universities' gain.

The few good and experienced academics that still remain are alarmed that purely academic criteria in discussions, decisions and in planning are no more the dominant and prevailing factors. *Ad hoc* interference with the time honoured traditions of how universities should be structured, run and what their objectives and motivations should be, as typified by universities such as Harvard and the California Institute of Technology, will not lead us to the Nobel prizes that all nations take pride in attaining.

To sum up there is an urgent need for a review and assessment of our university system and its role in Malaysian society. I know this proposal is not popular nor acceptable to our bureaucrats. But our new Prime Minister, who was once Minister of Education and has served a spell in the Council of the University of Malaya is no bureaucrat and may order such a review and reassessment. Now I understand a letter has gone from the new Minister of Education to the Vice-Chancellors of our universities asking them for their suggestions for a review of the amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1975. I welcome this move on the part of Government.