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THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 'NATIONAL IDENTITY':
A STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS
IN MALAYSIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM, WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

by

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ABSTRACT

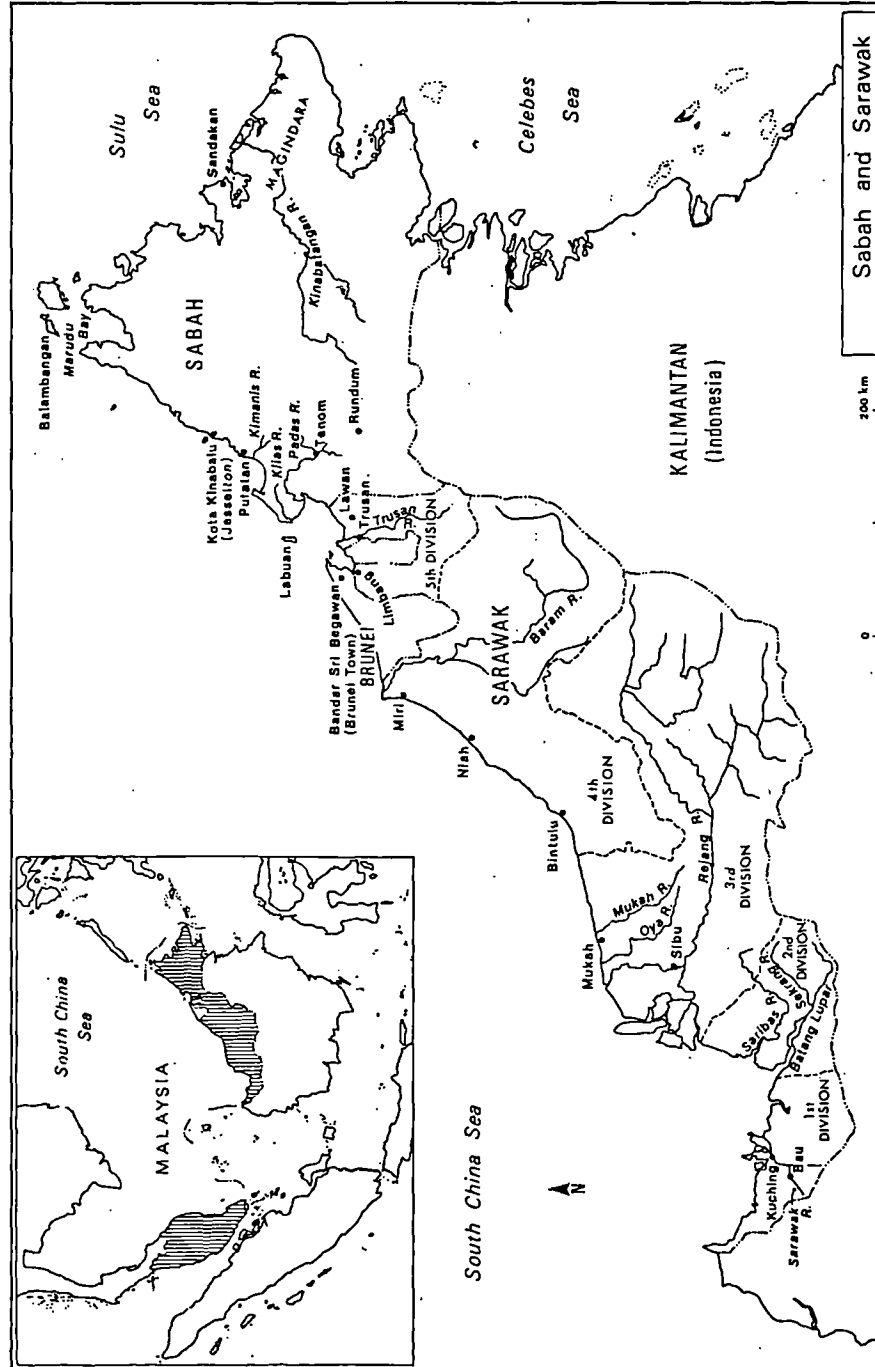
The Construction of a 'National Identity': A Study of Selected Secondary School Textbooks in Malaysia's Education System, With Particular Reference to Peninsular Malaysia

The overriding concern of a multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious Malaysia has always been with inter-ethnic conflict and resolution. It is therefore little wonder that the Malaysian education system is seen and utilised by the State as an important social institution where certain ideas, values and symbols can be transmitted to students, the country's future generations, with the primary objective of fostering ethnic harmony in schools in particular and in the country in general. And it is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine what kinds of images, ideas, values and symbols that are being selected and promoted (and at the same time, excluding other items, images, ideas) in the reading materials of school students, which collectively are deemed as constructing Malaysia's 'national identity'. The textual analysis shows that the majority of these school texts tend to give heavy emphasis on Malay culture and interests, thus indicating that the construction of the 'national identity' is largely informed and influenced by the State's policies such as the Malay-biased national culture policy and the New Economic Policy. In addition, the study also examines other related institutions such as the Ministry of Education (i.e. its Textbook Bureau) and the book publishing industry as a whole to see how they relate to the formation in the school texts of the kind of 'national identity' that is largely defined and sanctioned by the State. A group of 150 students were interviewed to ascertain their social and political consciousness. Their responses on the whole tend to suggest that the school texts are capable of creating, if not reinforcing, sub-national loyalties or ethnic sentiments among the students, the kind of consciousness that could seriously compete with and challenge the nationalist project of creating a 'national identity'. In other words, national unity could be threatened.

Map (a)



Map (b)



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

Most states in the world today have populations that are ethnically heterogeneous, often 'composed of two or more ethnic communities, jostling for influence and power, or living in uneasy harmony within the same state borders' (A.D. Smith 1981:9). It follows that inter-ethnic conflict has become more intense and regular particularly in the past several years (ibid.:10-11; Stone 1985:9-14). This is why many of these states are determined to foster rapid 'national' integration (Smith 1981:10). And it is therefore little wonder that in a multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious Malaysia, inter-ethnic conflict and resolution has become one of the country's overriding concerns. Since the political independence of 1957, successive Malay(si)an¹ governments have utilised one of the state apparatuses to forge a national identity and national unity, i.e. through educational institutions. For as Smith observes, 'New states, often top-heavy and fragile, are anxious to establish their "national" credentials, especially when they lack any semblance of common ethnicity. (1988:2)' The period after the bloody ethnic riots of 1969 made the pursuit for national identity and unity all the more urgent. Hence, the government's Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) stressed: 'This search for national identity and unity involves the whole range of economic, social and political activities: the formulation of education policies designed to encourage common values and loyalties among all communities and in all regions... (Malaysia

1971a:3)' The Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) was not only equally emphatic as regards the role of the education system in forging a national identity, it also spelled out what 'national identity' entailed:

A national identity is born out of a common set of social norms and values evolved over a period of time. This plurality of race and the fact that Malaysia is a relatively young nation present a great challenge to the moulding of a national identity within the time-frame of the present generation. The effort calls for greater determination and sacrifice on the part of all Malaysians. It calls for (i) a full identification (with) and commitment to the national goals and ideals; (ii) viewing emergent problems of whatever nature in terms of a challenge to Malaysia's capability as a nation and a people; (iii) accepting the country's socio-cultural diversity as a source of pride in regard to the nation's uniqueness; and (iv) treating internal differences and conflicts as a natural process of consensus seeking in the pursuit of the most satisfying compromises and alternatives. A common national identity lies in the willingness of the people to accept the above as guidelines for action... The evolution of a Malaysian national identity will be based on an integration of all the virtues from the various cultures in Malaysia, with the Malay culture forming its core (Malaysia 1976:93-94).

Such an ideological prescription underlines Deutsch's contention that national consciousness has the effect of giving added significance to a sense of 'relative complementarity and distinctness of a people' (1978:178). However, he cautions, such consciousness can only develop if nationality is valued; that is, 'if it is seen as a winning card in the social game for prestige, wealth, or whatever else may be the things culturally valued at that time and place; or if it fulfils a need in the personality structure which individuals have developed in that particular culture — or if it is at least valued for lack of any more promising opportunities... (ibid.)' A national identity achieves political saliency and recognition particularly in a social context where, as in Malaysia, there is clearly a need to make such an identity reign supreme over other competing loyalties or

'primordial' ethnic attachments (A.D. Smith 1988:150) in the ultimate desire to achieve some measure of ethnic unity and goodwill in the society concerned. In addition, as Smith argues, a single strategic ethnie (ethnic community) that dominates a multiethnic society tends to seek, 'to a greater or lesser extent, to incorporate, or influence, the surrounding smaller or weaker ethnie (ibid.)'.² It therefore necessitates the examination of what form or shape this national identity would take out of such ethnic configurations (with the Malay culture as an example of one great cultural influence).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

It is against this backdrop that this study aims to find out to what extent has the Malaysian government succeeded in fulfilling its professed commitment towards designing a school curriculum — within the national education system — that can help promote national unity and form a positive national identity among students of various ethnic backgrounds. In particular, the study seeks to examine the content of the reading materials, i.e. textbooks, in their depiction of a 'national identity'. Textbooks are chosen in this study as the primary unit of analysis because of the educational and social significance that is accorded them by educational authorities, teachers, parents and last but not least, students themselves. In addition, other units of analysis are book publishers, students and teachers. The specific aims of the study are:

1. to ascertain what were the images and ideas, or to borrow Anthony D. Smith's terms, 'myths, symbols, memories and values (1988:211)', presented in the reading materials (i.e. textbooks) of students that were acknowledged by the

education authorities as being important and necessary to forge a lived and active sense of belonging to 'the nation' amongst students.

2. to examine the process of selection, and exclusion or marginalization of certain socio-economic, cultural and political aspects of Malaysian life — in the reading materials.

3. to determine the ideological sources involved in the overall process of selecting items or images and ideas for the reading materials.

4. to examine the socio-economic, cultural and political context of Malaysian society in which these reading materials were written, published and distributed and in turn its impact, if any, on these materials.

5. to study the social and political consciousness of the students and their sources of awareness, and to gauge how these would possibly influence their response to the reading materials.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As intimated earlier, the Malaysian society as a whole is very much concerned about the formation of a national identity and the promotion of national unity. And the formal education system has been identified as one of the principal agents in Malaysian life by which such social and political objectives could be met to some degree over

a long period of time, albeit it is admitted that education alone cannot ensure success as this involves other equally important contributory factors such as the economics and politics of the larger society. But, as A.D. Smith remarks, the images the society's intellectuals and intelligentsia 'piece together and disseminate through the education system and media become the often unconscious assumptions of later generations in whose social consciousness they form a kind of rich sediment... (1989:207)'

1.4 Review of relevant literature

Past researchers have shown interest in educational policies that are essentially aimed at fostering good ethnic relations. Haris Md. Jadi (1983), for instance, argues that educational attempts and policies such as the Razak Report that were essentially aimed at building a Malayan nation were often confronted with political problems, and frequently had their objectives frustrated. He however seems to have overemphasized — as stipulated in the Razak Report — the role of the national language (i.e. the Malay language) to the extent of implying that it was the most important factor in the forging of national integration, and thereby de-emphasizing other political, economic and cultural factors that are basically seen as mere 'interruptions'. The failure on the part of the Malay(sian) governments to implement the recommendations of the Razak Report, he contends, was due to their hesitance and lack of political willpower, leaving them vulnerable to the pressures and opposition of certain groups, particularly the non-Malays. He therefore holds that a strong and 'pragmatic' government, such as the one after the 1969 riots which was well equipped with the necessary laws and commanding a substantial political majority, is crucial to the effective implementation of

policies important for creating national unity.³

Like Md. Jadi, Chai Hon-Chan (1977), in his study of 'Education and nation-building in plural societies: The West Malaysian experience', also contends that most of the new states tended to perceive education as the primary tool of 'changing individual and group identities so as to replace primordial group loyalties with an overriding national identity. Centralized control over education therefore tended to be total, and the spirit of nationalism tended to be pervasive. (1977:1)' This, he adds, entails, amongst other things, the changing of the curricula and rewriting of textbooks. Unlike Md. Jadi, however, he points out that it is possible in plural societies for different groups, even though put under the same educational system, to possess different values and views and to 'vary their respective allegiance to the political centre'. The degree of the groups' differences, he adds, depends on their social, economic and political status in the society. This therefore implies the need to look into the wider social context when dealing with the question of changes in policies and curricular materials in the overall objective of fostering good ethnic relations.

Studies such as the above point to the need to examine not only the process of policy change and implementation but also the need to look into changes in the curricular materials proper, i.e. textbooks. In their 1984 study of 'The Malaysian Lower Secondary School Curriculum and National Unity', a group of education experts at the University of Malaya's Department of Social Foundations, Faculty of Education analysed textbooks pertaining to history, civics, Bahasa Malaysia (national language), English language and geography with the

primary intention of identifying 'ways in which images and ideas associated with the goal of national unity are portrayed'. Research into textbooks is lacking in Malaysia, they assert, because of what is seen as the difficulty of assessing the textbooks' impact on students. Nevertheless, they argue, the fact that Malaysia's education system is centralised and standardized and under which teachers depend heavily on texts, makes it more important to examine these textbooks. The University of Malaya study also involved interviews with 83 teachers. It concluded that (a) there had been an overemphasis on Peninsular Malaysia and ethnic Malay in the textbooks; (b) a large number of schools was using textbooks that teachers were not satisfied with but could not change due to the Ministry of Education's rules governing textbook changes; and (c) none of the teachers interviewed perceived the fostering of national unity as a primary responsibility.

That school textbooks are important teaching tools gains support from Benedict Anderson's (1983) contention that, new modes of communication, like mass-produced newspapers and books, would help members of an 'imagined community' to forge a sense of being part of a large community that is made up of numerous, nameless and faceless people. By extension, this would therefore suggest that textbooks in schools can play an important function in helping students identify themselves with the nation. These students are young and hence their identifications are continuously being formed. But they are also old enough to have developed a number of identifications which can distance them from those offered in formal education.

Also relevant to this study is Raymond Williams' conceptualization of what he terms 'the tradition' or 'the significant

past' (in de Castell et al. (eds) 1989:58). Here he argued that most accounts of 'tradition' can be proven to be highly selective. Certain meanings and practices from the past and present of a particular culture are chosen for emphasis while 'certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded'. In this process a certain selection is usually successfully portrayed as 'the tradition' or 'the significant past'. 'It is,' Williams observed, 'a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of predisposed continuity (emphasis in the original). (ibid.)'

1.5 Method of the Study

A major portion of this study comprises a textual analysis of selected reading materials (i.e. textbooks) of pre-university level students which are recommended for reading by Malaysia's Ministry of Education. This study contrasts with the one conducted by the University of Malaya (UM) group (1984) in that firstly, it was an analysis of reading materials in particular and formal education in general at the pre-university level as opposed to the UM study of curriculum materials at the lower secondary level (Forms One to Three). Secondly, the scope of this study is limited to the analysis of textual materials pertaining to Peninsular Malaysia and not, as in the case of the UM study, the whole of Malaysia. Thirdly, the analysis of each book was conducted in relation to the other books that came under this study. The rationale is to determine the process of selection and exclusion or emphasis and de-emphasis within a text and between texts. In the case of the UM study, reading materials of a particular subject (like history, and geography) were analysed in isolation from those of another subject.

Five books pertaining to the subject of General Studies and four books on History were chosen for this study. These two subjects were selected not only because they were popular amongst the students interviewed but also because they particularly related to the emphasis given by the government to the 'study of the historical, economic, and social development of Malaysia' and the 'moulding of civic and national consciousness' (Malaysia 1986:6). In order to have a good grasp of the full range of materials available on the socio-economic, political and cultural background of the Malaysian society, the researcher had access to government documents, reports, books, professional journals, published and unpublished dissertations, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets, and to a lesser degree, conversations with individuals who were deemed relevant to the study. While in certain cases being a Malay proved to be a disadvantage, in others the researcher's ethnic origin was instrumental in helping him gain cooperation from his respondents. Experience has shown that it was considered prudent, for instance, not to broach so-called 'politically or ethnically sensitive' issues at the initial stage of conversation. It was also being Malay that helped the researcher get a sense of ethnic fears, suspicion and anxiety that exist within a particular group of respondents as well as the degree of ethnocentrism in another.

For analytical convenience, three divisions were constructed in the analysis of the reading materials: the political, the economic and the cultural, of which in many cases were not mutually exclusive. This involved the analysis of the ideas and images within and between the texts (i.e. reading materials) in order to examine the process of

selection and exclusion or emphasis and de-emphasis that is taking place in these texts. For example, an item in an History book assumes a position of relevance or significance not only if it is found in many places in this and other History books, but particularly if it is also used repeatedly in many of the General Studies books under study. In this case, such repeated use of the item in question has the effect of the present being ratified by the past. This selected item, i.e. image or idea, therefore constitutes 'the tradition'. On the other hand, an item that, for instance, is missing in a set of General Studies books but exist in many of the History books is considered being excluded or de-emphasised, and hence could be construed as being not 'the tradition' of at least the General Studies book writers. Certain phrases or terms that are used in the reading materials were also analysed in order to ascertain their possible ideological effect.

Apart from the textual analysis, the study also involved personal interviews with a few teachers in the state of Penang and book publishers and editors in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), primarily to gauge their teaching experiences and views of the students, and their publishing experiences respectively. Structured interviews were also conducted on 150 students from three upper secondary schools in Penang. Since these (accessible) schools were in a predominantly Chinese area, it is therefore little wonder that the ethnic composition of these students turned out to be as follows: 103 Chinese, 25 Malays, 13 Indians, and 9 who considered themselves as 'Malaysians'. These interviews were generally aimed at eliciting the students' general views on education and schooling experiences as well as detecting their social and political awareness. The fact that the study sample was predominantly Chinese presented the researcher with

an opportunity to ascertain the response of these students to the government's effort in forging a national identity and fostering national unity. With regard to the research problems (below), these schools were selected on the basis of the researcher's personal contacts with a section of the local teaching community. In the absence of an official permission, the researcher had to make the best of what was on offer. Time constraint was very evident, particularly when personal interviews were conducted by the researcher himself within the often busy school hours and on the school ground. The interviews were conducted in classroom, canteen, school corridor, and unused (and dilapidated) building. Time was even made more precious with many of the students busily preparing for their examinations. This therefore indicates that gaining rapport with the students, where possible, was an arduous task. And where part of the survey could not be conducted by the researcher himself because of certain restrictions, the help of a few teachers was acquired.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Due to financial and time constraints, this study is confined to matters pertaining to educational situation in Peninsular Malaysia, that is, not including the eastern Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. In addition, due to some logistical problems (which will be spelled out below) this study gave more emphasis on the students' reading materials in regard to the promotion of national identity and unity rather than on other factors such as classroom practices and interaction between teachers and students, and interaction between students themselves.

1.7 Research Problems

a. The political factor: The research was done some months after a political clampdown was struck by the State against politicians, political activists, trade unionists, religious activists, human rights campaigners, etc. beginning October 27, 1987. Since then, a climate of fear has descended upon the Malaysian society, with many of its members browbeaten — directly or indirectly — to acquiescence. Hence, talk of things that relates overtly or implicitly to ethnicity, ethnic conflicts or ethnic relations could easily cause uneasiness even if the conversations or interviews were conducted with great care and subtlety. Many a time, questions asked about such matters drew responses that were, at best, too brief or succinct, or at worst, indirect, vague or none at all.

b. The institutional factor: The reliance on the goodwill of certain teachers and headmasters meant that the researcher's physical movement on the grounds of the schools was quite restricted. An official request to do research was initially made with the relevant local authority. However, the political situation in the country at that time pushed the researcher into a dilemma: Making an official request might mean having to wait for quite a long time while the application was being processed in the central administrative body. The waiting might prove worthwhile, or it might just not procure success at all, especially given the nature of the research which might be construed, at least at that time, as fishing in troubled waters. The request was cancelled. Finally, a decision was regretfully made to rely only on the goodwill and assistance of certain individuals in the selected schools. It was in this relatively restricted context that the fieldwork was conducted — eventually

without the desired participant observation done in classrooms and on the school ground.

c. The personal factor: Finally, one's ethnic origin (the researcher's being Malay) could also pose a problem when dealing with questions whose central concern was inter-ethnic relations in the country. In other words, certain respondents tended to sound rather too 'blunt' or presumptuous (if s/he is a Malay), or too polite, diplomatic or over-cautious (if s/he isn't a Malay).

1.8 Plan of the Study

This study is made up of eight chapters. After this chapter, the second chapter deals with the theoretical discussion of nationalism in relation to national culture and socio-economic development; the third sets the Malaysian scene; the fourth discusses the State and education; the fifth traces the ideological sources of textbook knowledge; the sixth devotes itself to the major textual analysis of the students' reading materials; the seventh provides an analysis of the interviews conducted on the school students; and finally, the eighth chapter constitutes a summary and conclusions.

Notes

1. In this study, for the era between Malaya's independence and the formation of Malaysia, the term 'Malayan' shall be used, while for the period after the Malaysian formation, 'Malaysian' shall be applied. However, when both periods are taken into account in a particular discussion, the term 'Malay(si)an' shall prevail.

2. Clapham, for instance, asserts that 'the dominance of the core (Malay) group is so assured that most of the critical political bargaining takes place within it, and it is left to the minority Chinese and Indian communities... to associate themselves with it, only the occasional outbreak indicating the frustrations of

permanent subordination' (1985:79). It should be added that the political dominance of the Malays as a community in this case can be interpreted as one that has been maintained and enjoyed to a large degree by the ruling coalition's senior partner, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which is supposed to champion 'Malay interests'.

3. This view strikes a chord with Wan Hashim Wan Teh who believes that democracy has a disuniting effect upon new nations such as Malaysia: 'People who are already dissimilar culturally have been divided further. Increase (sic) politicization further polarizes the population into more distinct compartmentalized groups. (1983:31)' He however goes even further by saying that 'democracy in the new nations encourages dissident groups whose main interest is to oppose the ruling elites and to struggle for power through the process of election. (ibid.)' He concludes, rather disturbingly, that the successful assimilation of the minorities, as shown by Thailand, 'required a strong authoritarian rule rather than a democratic form of government. (ibid.)'

CHAPTER II

COMMON CULTURE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION: THE NATIONALIST PROJECT

To many nation-states, including those in the Third World and particularly those that are multiethnic in character, the nationalist desire to create a common culture (Smith 1988:136) is perceived as being crucial to the project of forging national identity amongst their people. This national identity in turn is essential in facilitating the nationalist design of pursuing economic development and modernization (Murphree in Rex and Mason (eds) 1986:156-7; Pettman 1979:39) of these countries.¹ In this nationalist perspective, both the common culture and economic development and modernization are vital ingredients in these countries' ultimate objectives of achieving cultural and economic growth, political stability and consequently, national unity.

2.1 Nationalism

Benedict Anderson defines a nation as 'an imagined political community'. This sense of belonging to a nation is not artificially manufactured nor false, but it is a sense born out of ideological construction. Thus Anderson argues that 'It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1983:15). And 'print-capitalism' — that led to printing technology and mass publication of books and newspapers — he adds, facilitates this imagination of communal belonging as people are brought together or

given a strong sense of togetherness by these mass media. His argument necessarily suggests that nationalism is a modern phenomenon. Anthony Smith (1988), while acknowledging the importance of this sense of 'fraternity', emphasises the salience of the ethnie or ethnic community as constituting the durable foundation or core of a nation or nationalism. This concept of ethnie is so important to him that he feels that the project of 'nation-building' would be seriously hampered if the ethnic base is lacking or absent. One can appreciate, he adds, the special qualities and durability of ethnie if one looks at the forms and content of the 'myth-symbol' complex, 'at the mechanisms of their diffusion (or lack of it) through a given population, and their transmission to future generations' (ibid.:15).

Smith asserts that his perspective strikes a middle ground between the extremism of what he calls the 'modernist' view (of which Anderson is held to be an advocate) and the 'primordialist' or 'perennialist' standpoint:

In rejecting the claims of both the modernists, who say that there is a radical break between pre-modern units and sentiments and modern nations and nationalism, and equally of the perennialists, who say that the latter are simply larger, updated versions of pre-modern ties and sentiments, we look to the concept of the ethnie or ethnic community and its symbolism, to distance our analysis from the more sweeping claims on either side. On the one hand, rejection of the modernist standpoint immediately concedes a greater measure of continuity between 'traditional' and 'modern', 'agrarian' and 'industrial', eras which many sociologists are prone to firmly dichotomize. Even if the break is radical in some respects, in the sphere of culture it is not as all-encompassing and penetrative as was supposed, and this in turn casts doubt on the explanatory value of concepts like 'industrial society' or 'capitalism' outside their economic context. At the same time, in rejecting the claims of the perennialists, due weight is accorded to the transformations wrought by modernity and their effects on the basic units of human loyalty in which we operate and live. (ibid:13)

An ethnic community or ethnie, we are told, must have a sense of belonging and an active solidarity that is strong enough, particularly in time of tension and danger, to 'override class, factional or regional divisions within the community' (ibid.:30). At this juncture, however, one strand of the 'modernist' view would serve as a useful reminder to us of the possible 'instrumentalist' function of ethnicity: Ethnicism and nationalism provide convenient 'sites' for the elites to gather support from the masses in their universal pursuit for wealth, power and prestige, particularly in a multiethnic society. Miles (1989:115) argues that by creating a sense of 'imagined community', the rising bourgeoisie can achieve its goal of capital accumulation when it mobilizes politically the people it intends to dominate economically and politically into believing that its interests that are about to be served are the 'national interests'. In other words, such pursuit of the elites can be effectively camouflaged by ethnic or nationalist appeal. This perspective asserts that ethnicity helps to combine economic and political interests with cultural 'affect'. For this reason, Smith (1988:10) believes that ethnic and national communities are often superior to classes in providing sound bases for rival elites to mobilize and co-ordinate mass action in support of their collective policies or quest for power. Boccock (1986:16) however feels that groups other than classes, such as 'national-popular movements', hold out hope in that they can be potential (human) agents of social change as they are seen as aiming at creating their own economic and political world.

Nationalism, says Smith (1976:1), is 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, cohesion and individuality for a social group deemed by some of its members to constitute an

actual or potential nation'. He proposes two approaches to nationalism: territorial and ethnic (1988:135). A 'territorial nation' is tied to the notion of a geographical territory that is carved out of a diversity of cultures. As Murphree notes, 'The territorial dimensions of these states, derived from colonial partition and tenaciously maintained in the post-colonial period, embrace ethnically diverse populations... (in Rex and Mason (eds) 1986:157)' And it is therefore crucial that this nation of people is held together by 'a community of laws' and legal institutions, and the concept of citizenship. Such a nation must necessarily be a cultural community (Smith 1988:136) that requires a common culture, a place where its members would identify with national symbols, myths and national values. Smith maintains, 'The solidarity of citizenship required a common "civil religion" formed out of shared myths and memories and symbols, and communicated in a standard language through educational institutions. So the territorial nation becomes a mass educational enterprise. (ibid.:136)' The civil religion is, in other words, the common culture. He cautions, though, that if these meanings, myths and symbols 'ceased to strike a responsive chord', cultural boundaries of the nation would emerge and subsequently halt the process of nation-building. Once again, schools and other educational institutions are singled out as necessary instruments for propagating the common culture. And in this context, as Boccock (1986:36) argues, intellectuals that include teachers, writers and politicians, amongst others, can play a vital role in the construction of national identity by the State.

The second approach, the 'ethnic nation', is founded on pre-existing ethnie and ethnic ties and sentiments, which then are

transformed into national ones through the process of mobilisation, territorialization and politicization. This perspective of the nation stresses elements like genealogy, populism, customs and dialects, and nativism (Smith 1988:137). Although the ethnic base of a nation is crucial and can be strong enough to arouse nationalist sentiments, a secure sense of possessing a recognized territory or 'homeland' and everything that it stands for would be an added advantage to the nationalist dream of forging national integration. It is therefore hardly surprising that the ethnic concept of the nation mingles with the territorial, particularly in cases where nation-states, which initially opt for the ethnic route, find difficulty in integrating their members who happen to come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. As a consequence, 'all nations bear the impress of both territorial and ethnic principles and components...' (ibid.:149).

The importance of national integration is made all the more pertinent and urgent when Smith declares that 'the tension between an ancient ethnic community and a modern territorial state still helps to destabilize the "nation" and its self-conception' (ibid.:150). This dualism and instability 'become endemic and divisive' with multiethnic societies. Here the multiethnic states are normally dominated by 'a single strategic ethnie' which seeks, to a larger or lesser degree, to incorporate, or influence the surrounding smaller or weaker ethnie. Out of this situation surfaces the phenomenon of dual sentiments of the minority ethnie or ethnic immigrants: loyalty to the political unit, the state, and solidarity with the ethnic community (ibid.:151). This dualism, or its sediments, or perception of such dualism by the dominant ethnie, could be construed as a lack of strong nationalist sentiments on the part of minority ethnie, and therefore could also

become a source of ethnic tensions within a given polity. It is here that the State would make a conscious attempt to ensure that members of the nation-state share or learn to share meanings, myths and symbols of a constructed common cultural community. The concept of hegemony, initiated by Gramsci, would serve a useful purpose in this context.

According to Bocock (1986:63), 'Hegemony, in its complete form, is defined as occurring when the intellectual, moral and philosophical leadership provided by the class or alliance of classes and class fractions which is ruling, successfully achieves its objective of providing the fundamental outlook for the whole society.' To attain a hegemonic position, whatever emerges as the leadership must have a coherent philosophy or world-view with (and acquire consent of) all major groups in a society. Hegemony is seen as being exercised in the economy (like factories), in the State (especially in law and educational institutions), and in civil society (such as the mass media and religions). Hence, the nationalist pursuit of a common culture and of economic development and modernization would require that the ruling group be in a hegemonic and dominant position so as to ensure better reception of these objectives by the society's main groups. Otherwise, such a project would be fraught with serious challenges 'from below' and consequently face failure.

2.2 Common culture

As stated above, the task of forging integration between ethnic communities in the long-term process of nation-building becomes more imperative and vital. In the realm of 'civil religion', i.e. common culture, this involves 'ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries

and reconstructions; each generation must re-fashion national institutions and stratification systems in the light of the myths, memories, values and symbols of the "past", which can best minister to the needs and aspirations of its dominant social groups and institutions. Hence that activity of rediscovery and re-interpretation is never complete and never simple; it is the product of dialogues between the major social groups and institutions within the boundaries of the "nation", and it answers to their perceived ideals and interests. (Smith 1988:206)'

This cultural dynamics relates closely to the notion of a lived hegemony as a process. For such a hegemony, argued Williams (1978:112), needs to be continually 'renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own'. And the images that are constructed and transmitted 'through the education system and media become the often unconscious assumptions of later generations in whose social consciousness they form a kind of rich sediment... (Smith 1988:207)' In other words, social institutions such as schools and the mass media become the ideological 'sites' where the State can continuously attempt to disseminate its own version of historical and cultural 'past' that has been re-interpreted and re-constituted for the consumption of the public in general and students in particular. This practice of selecting certain segments of the past is very much part and parcel of hegemony. Williams, in this connection, introduced the notion of selective tradition, which means that the selection of a certain segment of the past is passed off as 'the tradition' or 'the significant past', and this particular past is then used — through institutions — 'to ratify the present and to indicate directions for

the future' (1978:116). In terms of curriculum materials, subjects such as history, social sciences, literary and cultural studies present themselves as appropriate areas for the dissemination of what constitutes the official historical and cultural knowledge.

It is envisaged that such cultural transmission particularly in schools can be effectively implemented through the use of a common language understood by the citizens concerned (Smith 1988:136).² This, however, doesn't necessarily imply that such cultural messages or images from the State would not possibly face, to a certain degree, some kind of resistance from groups or individuals, particularly those who originate from the ethnic minorities and those who disagree with the ideas advanced by the dominant groups in society. On the contrary, a State attempt to propagate say, what constitutes as national or common culture may face opposition or even competition from ethnic sub-cultures, especially when the ethnic minorities perceive themselves to be subordinated and marginalized, if not eradicated, by the dominant group (Smith 1981:141). This is why Williams (1978:117) maintained that central to all contemporary cultural activity is the struggle for and against 'selective traditions'.

2.3 Economic development and modernization

Nationalism, says Hoogvelt (1985:57), 'presents a unifying force that on the one hand may psychologically rationalise present dissatisfactions, for example by using former colonial powers as scapegoats, and on the other hand excite people to even greater efforts and sacrifices.' Moreover, as Smith (1981:37) bluntly puts it, 'Capitalism's uneven development is necessarily "nationalism-producing" because development always comes to the less

advanced peoples within the "fetters" of the more advanced nations...' In other words, nationalism becomes a driving force for an imagined community to pursue economic development and objectives that are largely and closely associated with what is known as 'modernization', the kind of achievements that their former colonial masters have obtained. Most of the elites of the developing world are persuaded to accept this notion of modernization and industrialisation — which is largely capitalistic in principle — uncritically while choosing to ignore, or being ignorant of, the 'ethnocentrism of the concept (Gibbs in King 1986:201). This notwithstanding, the 'catching up' with the economic status of the former colonial powers, i.e. western countries, necessitates to a large degree socio-economic, political and cultural changes in the former colonies or Third World countries. What this also means is that social institutions, particularly the education system, are mobilized and shaped to the needs of such development. This is especially so when there are western modernization theorists who advocate not only the specialized training of the natives but also go as far as suggesting that the 'modernising elites' of the underdeveloped countries require some training courses 'so as to imbue them with the values and motivations appropriate to modern economic behaviour' (Hoogvelt 1985:54). Hence, one would witness the flurry of activities within a particular education system where schools and tertiary educational institutions are encouraged to fit into this development and industrialisation mode by offering more technical subjects so as to economically 'help build the nation'. And if this isn't enough, development and education experts from the west are invited to design development policies and educational curricula. Indicators of 'development' which, according to this perspective, are necessary for a developing country to acquire include urbanisation,

formal education, a high literacy rate, newspaper circulation, political democracy, free enterprise, social mobility, national unity, and independent judiciaries (ibid.:61).

Economic development and modernization in the context of nationalism are also perceived as an available route for a State to take, especially for one that feels the urgency to institute a social engineering programme that in principle intends to correct a socio-economic imbalance particularly in a multiethnic society. In this case, the State, in the name of national development and 'national interest', would consciously and systematically adopt a redressive socio-economic policy and/or an 'affirmative action' (or 'positive discrimination') strategy that would in principle try to help the economically disadvantaged. It is hoped, according to this view, that such socio-economic planning would go a long way towards creating a citizenry that would be able to identify itself with the economic prosperity, cultural affluence, and socio-political stability of the country. If and when this is achieved, national development, as Bottomore (1979:107) observes, 'may itself generate a more intense nationalism — as it did in the case of older nation states'. But things could go wrong if and when the economic well-being of members of a particular ethnic community captures the imagination of the ruling elites to the extent of marginalizing or excluding those of other ethnic and needy groups (Edwards 1987:30), for such economic, political and/or ethnic preferences would result in socio-economic disparity and injustice and ethnic conflicts.

In their redressive mode as shown above, modernization and industrialisation promise, at least for some, some kind of a solution

to ethnic problems. On the one hand it was largely assumed that 'the processes of modernization and industrialisation would lead to the early dissolution of "primitive" ethnic affiliations, as people adopted a more "rational" and "individualistic" approach to life'. On the other, it was argued that ethnic groups would become redundant, and that people would 'abandon the "false consciousness" of ethnic groups for the supposedly more "realistic" arena of class struggle' (Richardson and Lambert 1986:52). Such a promise can become contentious and lean when one is reminded of Smith's earlier argument, that elites can employ the ethnic or nationalist appeal in order to serve their political and/or economic interests to such an extent that class consciousness — instead of becoming pronounced as is expected of a modernizing society — is effectively submerged by ethnic and nationalist sentiments (1981:26-7; 1988:10). And also, as Hunter (1972:141) contends, 'Industry works within the total environment of political and social values, and has to conform to them.'³ In addition, an economic development, which normally takes on a capitalistic form, would necessarily mean uneven development and the concentration of economic and political resources in a few hands, and thus markedly stratifies the society concerned. This therefore has the grave potential of creating, if not exacerbating, ethnic tensions in a society particularly if those resources are perceived, real or imagined, to be scarce and monopolised by members of a certain ethnic community (Banton 1988:121).

This picture can be made even more complicated if one were to add the international dimension where foreign capital could play a vital role in determining or at least influencing the kinds and locations of economic activities in the country. A concentration of economic and

industrial activities in one particular geographical area, for example, could mean greater accessibility to employment opportunities for members of a particular ethnic community. Or, the kind of technology employed by certain industries could well spell a division of labour that largely coincides with ethnicity. In other words, the ethnic situation in a society can become increasingly critical if and when economic cleavages coincide with ethnic divide. Thus, 'new insecurities, anxieties and frustrations' that the modern and industrial economy bring can be exploited to the fullest by 'unscrupulous demagogues' who would appeal to 'the comforting warmth of old ethnic bonds' (Smith 1981:3).

Thus, while the long-term objectives of achieving national unity and creating national identity through the nationalist pursuit of a common culture and economic development and modernization are noble in themselves, their actual implementation may not necessarily yield the desired positive result. For one, the creation of (national) identity 'always has its inclusionary and exclusionary dimensions', and with it carries the danger of 'being a resource of sectional interest' (Murphree in Rex and Mason (eds) 1986:165). In a multiethnic society, this can be translated as the practice of creating an identity that over-represents aspects of a particular ethnic group over those of another. Secondly, like the case of identity, the common culture created may be the product of including too many elements from a particular ethnic sub-culture to the exclusion of those of another. Moreover, the dominant ethnie has the tendency to reap 'advantages greater than those of the minority ethnie' (Smith 1988:148). Finally, the nationalist fervour to pursue economic development, often of the capitalist kind, may necessarily give rise to uneven development and

socio-economic disparity between social and/or ethnic groups. Worse still, the nationalist zeal may be exploited by the society's dominant group to mask their true intention of advancing their own economic interests — all in the name of promoting and protecting 'national interest'. If and when this occurs, two possible scenarios are on offer: The society concerned would experience an uneasy socio-economic and political calm when the ruling group is in a hegemonic position, with the ethnic minorities and the poor still believing that their welfare and rights (which by now are gradually eroding) are still being taken care of by the ruling regime. On the other hand, serious conflicts could arise if the moral and political leadership of the ruling elites is being challenged, with ethnic or economic boundaries emerging markedly within the nation. Having said this, the nationalist project may on the contrary end up with the creation of a more egalitarian society where the national identity of the people possesses a positive quality and is closely tied to the measured notion of equal citizenship, socio-economic justice and egalitarianism — irrespective of race and ethnicity and socio-economic background. In other words, this provides an escape route from the overzealous and blind commitment to 'My country, right or wrong'. Furthermore, an ideological shift from the dogmatic attachment to structuralism to the emphasised reliance on human agency in the Gramscian fashion would enable one to perceive a nationalist movement — as opposed to class-based groups — as having the potential of initiating real social change (Bocock 1986:106). Put another way, nationalism, common culture and development seen in this light have great potential in creating a more just and equitable and progressive society.

Notes

1. It is argued that a new (national) identity and sense of belonging, provided by nationalism, are crucial in replacing the traditional systems of kinship and security that crumble under the strain of modernization (Gibbs in King 1986:195). On the other hand, keen competition for scarce resources under the zeal of economic development and modernization, particularly in multiethnic societies where ethnic groups by and large coincide with economic functions, can only aggravate the already existing ethnic tension and conflicts, and therefore reinforcing separate ethnic identities to the point of submerging the national one.

2. Ernest Gellner cited in Smith (1981:46).

3. In the case of transnational corporations, John Rex (1986:55) argues that they have the option of employing 'racial or ethnic domination' for their own ends. He adds, 'If a system of racial domination is most effective in promoting profit they will support it, but, if not, then they will be ruthless in supporting its overthrow.'

CHAPTER III

THE MALAYSIAN SETTING

3.1 The Geographical Background

Malaysia is made up of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Peninsular Malaysia was formerly known as the Malay Peninsula until the states within it were united and became independent from the British colonial power as a Federation of Malaya in 1957. Malaya (literally in Malay, Tanah Melayu, 'the Land of the Malays') later transformed into Peninsular Malaysia in 1963 when it merged with the Borneo territories of Sabah (formerly North Borneo) and Sarawak to form the Federation of Malaysia.¹ The Peninsula lies to the south of Thailand while Sabah and Sarawak sit on the northern part of the Borneo island. The two eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak are separated from the Peninsula by the South China Sea, but share common borders with Indonesia. Peninsular Malaysia, stretching an area of 740 km (460 miles) from the northern state of Perlis to the Straits of Johor in the south, comprises the states of Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang (Penang), Kelantan, Trengganu, Perak, Pahang, Selangor, the Federal Territory, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor (neighbouring the republic of Singapore). Sabah and Sarawak stretch some 1120 km (700 miles) from Tanjung Datu, Sarawak in the west to Hog Point, Sabah in the east.² Being in the tropics, the country experiences an average temperature of 26°C (or 80°F), high humidity and heavy rainfall all year round.

3.2 The System of government

The country's constitution provides that Malaysia be ruled by a bicameral parliament, consisting of the constitutional monarchy, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA, literally, 'He who is made Supreme Lord'), i.e. the Supreme Head of the Federation; the Dewan Negara (Senate); and the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). The YDPA is elected by the Conference of Rulers (whose members are the nine Malay Rulers in the Peninsula) for a term of five years. He may at any time resign his office in writing to the Conference of Rulers or be removed by the same body (Malaysia 1979:45). The YDPA is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and the head of the Islamic religion. In addition, he is deputised by the Timbalan Yang di-Pertuan Agong (TYDPA, Deputy King), who is also elected by brother Rulers for five years. The Dewan Rakyat, the primary law-making body, has 154 seats which are elective while the Dewan Negara, which can initiate legislation and also ratify to a certain extent, has 58 seats that are part appointive and part elective. The leader of the majority party and who commands the confidence of members of the Dewan Rakyat is appointed the prime minister. The twelve states in the federation, with the exception of the Federal Territory where the parliament sits, are ruled by their respective unicameral legislative assemblies where elected representatives conduct their legislative business. A chief minister³ is obtained from each assembly to appoint an executive council so as to manage state affairs that are within its jurisdiction.

3.3 The Origins of A Society Divided

The population of Peninsular Malaysia is divided into three major ethnic groups: the Malays, Chinese and Indians (i.e. those who came

from the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka). According to the Fifth Malaysia Plan, 1986-1990 (Malaysia 1986:128), Malays and other Bumiputeras in 1985 constituted an estimated 56.5% of the population of Peninsular Malaysia, while Chinese 32.8%, Indians 10.1%, and Others 0.6%; the corresponding proportions in 1980 were 55.1%, 33.9%, 10.3%, and 0.7%. In Sabah, Bumiputeras formed 84.2% of the population in 1985, while Chinese 14.9%, Indians 0.6%, and Others 0.3% compared with 82.9%, 16.2%, 0.6% and 0.3%, respectively, in 1980. In Sarawak, 70.1% of the 1985 population were Bumiputera, while 28.7% were Chinese, 0.2% Indian, and 1% compared with 69.6%, 29.2%, 0.2% and 1% respectively, in 1980.

The Malays⁴ also include the Javanese, Banjarese, Boyanese, Bugis and Minangkabau, all of whom are of Indonesian origin.⁵ The majority of the Malays in the Peninsula are traditionally found in the East coast states of Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang, and the northern states of Perlis and Kedah, particularly in the rural areas where agriculture is the main occupation. The Malays constitute the major ethnic group in the Peninsula, and their numerical and political dominance explains in part where the name 'Malaya' ('Land of the Malays') was derived from.⁶ 'Bumiputera' is a term whose meaning originally was restricted to the Malays who consider themselves to be literally 'sons of the soil'.⁷ However, with the formation of the Malaysian Federation (which includes Sabah and Sarawak) the term was enlarged so as to encompass those ethnic groups that are also considered indigenous, and thus making 'Bumiputeras' the single largest ethnic group in the country. Ross-Larson (in Young, Bussink and Hasan 1980:19-20) argues that the term Bumiputera gained currency particularly in those years prior to the tragic 1969 ethnic riots when

the Malays felt that their economic situation hadn't improved satisfactorily, which went against the promises given to them since Independence. Hence, the term was used by the Malays and particularly the government to further emphasise the significance of this socio-economic divide between the two major ethnic groups, for they feel that this is one way to highlight and subsequently rectify the economic backwardness of the Malay majority. The term's usage also helps to enhance the numerical position of especially the Malays vis-a-vis the Chinese and Indians. It should be noted here however that all Malays are constitutionally considered Bumiputeras; but not all Bumiputeras are necessarily Malays. This is to differentiate between the Malays in the Peninsula and such non-Muslim indigenes of Sabah and Sarawak as the Kadazans and the Ibans respectively. Hence, the 'Bumiputera' group is further sub-divided into three broad categories: (a) the aborigines (Orang Asli; literally, 'the original people'); (b) the Malays; and (c) the Malay-related. The membership of the first group remains the same while the second experiences a few additions in the form of the Malays of both Sabah and Sarawak as well as the Bajau of Sabah. The Malay-related group refers to all the non-Malay Bumiputera groups of Sabah (i.e. Kadazan, Murut, Kelabit and Kedayan) and Sarawak (i.e. Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Kenyah, Kayan and Bisayah). Consequently, those who are not considered as 'Bumiputera' are automatically termed as 'non-Bumiputera'.

The 'non-Bumiputera' (or 'non-Malay') group, on the other hand, comprises chiefly the Chinese and the Indians, with minority communities of Arabs, Eurasians, Europeans and Sinhalese. The Chinese population mainly originated from South China, with the Cantonese and Hokkien forming the largest dialect groups, followed by Luichiu,

Hakka, Teochew, Hainanese, Hokchew, Hokchia, Hengchua and Kwangsai. Most Chinese are located on the relatively developed West coast states of the Peninsula such as Penang, Perak, Selangor, the Federal Territory, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor. In these states, the Chinese usually gravitate around urban centres where commerce and industry thrive. Since the coming of the Chinese into Malaya was closely linked to the opening up of economic opportunities, tin mining and businesses in particular, on the West coast and the beginning of British colonialism in this part of the country, it is therefore hardly surprising that most Chinese are found in these geographical locations. This also meant the beginning of an identification of such economic activities with the Chinese community as a whole. Although the Chinese are in many ways a disparate group (in terms of dialect groups, clans, etc.), they are easily perceived to be monolithic, especially in relation to the Malays as an ethnic community.

Within the Indian category, the Tamils of South India and Sri Lanka constitute the largest group, followed by minorities Sikh, Pakistani and Malayalee. Like the Chinese, the Indians tend to concentrate in the urban areas, particularly on the West coast of Malaya because their descendants too came primarily due to the economic activities offered by these regions of the Peninsula. Indian labourers were 'imported' into the country as indentured workers to work the rubber plantations in Malaya.⁶ Like the Chinese, the Indians as a community are identifiable with economic activities that are related to rubber industry and, to a lesser degree, commerce and the professions. In contrast, the Malays were divorced from either all of the new commercial activities in the urban areas or the prospering tin and rubber industries. This is because in general they preferred

their traditional rural lifestyle to the squalid working conditions in the mines and rubber plantations.⁹ This social and economic distance of the Malays was reinforced by the British who kept the Malays isolated from the modern sector so as to maintain their traditional lifestyle. The British confined the Malays to areas of agriculture, peasant farming and, for the Malay aristocrats and their sons, the civil service. Even when public education was initially introduced to the Malays, it was primarily meant to 'make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had been'.¹⁰ Hence, there developed ethnic divisions of labour in British Malaya, with the Chinese in general taking a hold on businesses, Indians in the plantations, and Malays in agriculture (W.Y. Hua 1983:109), which in turn dictate to a large degree their respective geographical concentrations.

Apart from the above major groups, the Peninsula also has smaller ethnic communities such as the Orang Asli (literally, the 'Original People') or the Aborigines who reside in the jungle interiors. Other minorities constitute Arabs, Eurasians, Europeans and Sinhalese who by and large reside in towns.

It needs to be said here that the dichotomization of Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera in the present-day Malaysia provides a constant source of ethnic irritation in the nation's politics, economy, culture, and daily social intercourse. This dichotomy is so pervasive that it has become, in a sense, 'the de facto culture' (Muzaffar 1987:23). Peninsular Malaysians, in particular, are constantly reminded of this ethnic divide in their everyday life, such as in applying for jobs; places in schools, colleges, and

universities; and scholarships and other government assistance. To be sure, there is ethnic discrimination in the largely Malay-dominated public sector as well as in the private sector where non-Malays, the Chinese in particular, predominate. In short, ethnic label is usually made to be very significant.

The ethnic divisions in the Malaysian society are, at least in the popular perception, reinforced and complicated by religious differences. Since all Malays are Muslims, at least nominally (and they constitute the majority of the country's Muslim population), it follows that Islam can be easily 'ethnicized'. The Malays practise their Malay culture which is highly influenced by Islamic culture and, to a lesser extent, by elements of Hindu culture. Most of the Chinese are Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists or Ancestor Worshipers, or a combination of these; a few are Muslims, while some are Christians. Almost all Chinese follow their Chinese culture. Most Indians are Hindus, although there are a substantial number of them as well as the Pakistanis who are Muslims. A few of them are Christians. With the exception of the Muslim Indians and Pakistanis who may be absorbed into the Malay culture, the majority of the Indians practise their own Hindu culture. The majority of the Punjabis are Sikhs. About half of the Sabah population and about a quarter of the Sarawak population are Muslims. The rest of the population in the two states are Christians and Pagans. In other words, instead of emphasising common and shared features of these different cultures and religions and thus celebrate the diversity of cultures, Malay(s)ians most of the time are goaded to highlight their differences that divide them socially, politically, and culturally.

3.4 The Politics of National Unity: Before and After Malaya's Independence in 1957

3.4.1 The Alliance Party: UMNO the dominant player

The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) was formed on 11th May 1946 to help organize Malay opposition to the Malayan Union proposal, which sought to displace Malay rulers' sovereignty; taking away the special position of Malays; and the liberal citizenship provision. Given the extreme anger of the Malays regarding the Malayan Union proposal that essentially affected their political supremacy in the country, UMNO at the time made itself into the most powerful platform for the expression of Malay disgust and opposition.¹¹ UMNO, led by its first president Dato Onn bin Jaafar, was indeed born with the basic goal of protecting the communal interests of the Malays.¹² And by opposing the British scheme, UMNO was also actually seeking to maintain the traditional Malay status quo (K.J.Ratnam 1967:145).

The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was established in 1949 with two main objectives in mind: (a) to enable the British to gain cooperation from the Chinese community in helping to end the Emergency; and (b) to help the Chinese to unite themselves so as to improve their status under the new constitution. In addition, the party — in the eyes of the Chinese capitalists — provided the opportunity and ways to compete more effectively with the Communists in attracting the allegiance of the Chinese poor, especially the New Villagers (ibid:152-3). Hence, like UMNO, the party's primary concern was to protect and maintain the narrow interests of the Chinese community as a whole.

The Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was founded in 1946 with the principal aim of representing the interests of the Indian community and providing a channel for Indian opinions in the country. The party had also associated itself with the inter-ethnic political coalition, AMCJA (All Malaya Council of Joint Action), but later left it after it was dissolved during the Emergency. Subsequently, MIC went back to its original form: communal.

The Alliance began with the electoral pact between UMNO and MCA just before the Kuala Lumpur Municipal elections of 1952. Mutual dislike and opposition toward the IMP (Independence of Malaya Party) is also another reason for their newly-found unity. It was, in other words, a 'marriage of convenience' (ibid:160). It was also described as 'a freak of history' (Vasil 1980:63). It should be said here that the UMNO-MCA partnership was less a test of their non-communality than a case of UMNO using the Malays and MCA the Chinese in an effort to deprive the IMP of the opportunity to win under the prevalent climate of communalism (ibid:160). The result was that the IMP and the Labour Party lost in the elections. And just before the Federal elections in 1955, the original UMNO-MCA Alliance admitted the MIC. It should be noted here, however, that the Alliance is inter-ethnic as opposed to being multiethnic, in the sense that membership is not direct but through respective component parties. In other words, UMNO would only admit Malays, the MCA Chinese, and the MIC Indians. This explains to a large degree the internal problems that beset from time to time the collective body, what with each component party competing with the other in trying to respond to the demands and claims of the respective ethnic constituencies in the Peninsula (ibid:162-4).

The Alliance, being the political party that was acknowledged by the British as one that was capable of ruling independent Malaya, was in large measure responsible in setting the divisive and ethnic pattern of Malayan politics. This subsequently 'ethnicizes' almost every aspect of Malay(si)an life. Although a coalition party, its UMNO partner emerged as a dominant player, which in many ways helped preserved certain 'Malay features' of the Malaysian life, particularly the political and the cultural and, along the way, excluded or at least marginalized many of those of the non-Malays. UMNO's dominance is linked to 'the special position of the Malay rulers in the colonial set-up, the predominance of the Malays in the electorate, as well as the state's political strategy and ideology of bumiputraism' (W.Y. Hua 1983:109).

3.4.2 The 'Political Bargain'

The 'political bargain' that was reached between the major partners of the Alliance was that certain aspects of Malay traditions will be maintained: The position of the Malay Rulers; Islam as the official religion; Malay language would, by 1967, be the sole official and national language; and the 'special position' of the Malays. Islam and the Malay language, which were later written into the Malay(si)an Constitution, represented part of the endeavour of the Malays to retain a Malay identity in the independent nation (C.B. Tan in Aliran 1987a:247).¹³ In return for these concessions, the non-Malays gained further relaxation in citizenship provisions. This would increase the political strength of the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese. Another feature of the 'bargain' was that the Chinese would not be hindered from playing their dominant role in business

(Milne and Mauzy 1980:39).

With regards to the Malay's special status, Article 153 of the Malayan Constitution stipulates that it is the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to 'safeguard the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities'.¹⁴ The Article also states that the Head of State may reserve for Malays (a) positions in federal public service; (b) scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational and training privileges or special facilities; and (c) permits or licences for the operation of any trade or business (ibid.). Article 89 in the Constitution provides for the reservation of Malay land. Some of the reasons offered for the Constitutional provision of Article 153 are (a) the indigenusness of Malays; (b) the Malay rights were already there when Malaya was under British rule; and (c) to help Malays achieve a higher degree of economic equality. The last reason is often employed by the government in its declared determination to tackle Malay poverty. Two objections were raised against Article 153: (a) Since poverty exists in the Chinese, Indian as well as Malay communities, a constitutional protection should be accorded to individuals on the basis of socio-economic reasons; and (b) the protection under Article 153 is open to abuse. Another contentious aspect of the Article however is its duration. The Constitutional Commission had recommended that the matter be reviewed after 15 years, but the Constitution is silent on this (ibid.:40-1). Malay-based Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS), which has undergone some ideological changes since 1982, however has deemed this 'special position' provision un-Islamic (Utusan Malaysia: 19/9/85), for it argues that Islam is universal and non-discriminatory in its fight for social justice. That this pronouncement was not well received by the

Malay electorate in general — as illustrated by PAS's tragic defeat in the 1986 general election — can be attributed to an ethnically conscious environment as well as PAS's own failure to withdraw completely from actions that are still coloured by ethnic chauvinism. The controversy of this aspect of the Constitution continues to threaten, to a certain degree, Malaysia's ethnic relations.

3.4.3 National education system

The development of education in Malaya can be traced from the steps taken by the British authorities in Malaya since 1950 to commission a few successive committees to look into the country's education problems.¹⁵ The end result of all these studies took the form of the Education Ordinance of 1952, which stipulated that only two systems of education would be established: one type of school using Malay as its medium of instruction, while the other employed English. Mandarin and Tamil, according to this ordinance, would be taught in these two types of school if there was request from at least 15 non-Malay pupils. Non-Malay opposition to this led to some modifications. Thus, the teaching of English and Malay would be implemented gradually in Malay vernacular schools; three languages would be taught gradually in the Chinese and Tamil schools; and students' enrolment into English-medium schools would be restricted (S.S.Mok and S.M.Lee 1988:42-3).

After its victory in Malaya's first general election in 1955, the Alliance government immediately set out to improve the country's education system. A committee, headed by the then Education Minister Dato' Abdul Razak Hussein, was set up to assess the education policy at that time 'with a view to establishing a national system of

education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country' (Razak Report, Para 1(a) cited in Malaysia 1985:4-5). The Razak Report also emphasised the importance of the education system having a 'Malayan outlook'. Given the Committee's concern for the creation of a united Malaya, whose people were expected to possess a national identity, it recommended a single, integrated education system with Malay and English as the media of instruction. Having said that, the Razak Committee's recommendations were in general more moderate because the Committee did not seek to abolish the use of Mandarin in Chinese (independent or private) secondary schools as the medium of instruction. This moderation was also due to the Committee's belief that what was more important was the content of education rather than the medium of instruction. In addition, the Committee's recommendations reflected an Alliance type of 'political bargain' or 'compromise'.

The 'moderate', if not vague to some extent, characteristics of the Razak recommendations gave rise to conflicting and oppositional responses from certain groups in both the Malay and non-Malay communities. The Malays in general became dissatisfied by what they saw as a slow implementation of the Razak Report of 1956, especially the fact that Malay secondary schools had yet to be set up in the country. The Chinese on the other hand were alarmed by what they perceived as the gradual marginalization of their language and culture.

Soon after the 1959 general election in Malaya, the Alliance government set up a new education committee, led by the new Education Minister Abdul Rahman Talib, whose primary purpose was to review the Education Policy outlined in the Education Ordinance of 1957. While in many ways the recommendations of this Review Committee (1960) were very much similar with those of the Razak Report, the former was more demanding in its goal to make the national language the medium of instruction for the country's education system. Hence, the Review Committee argued that in the interest of national unity all public examinations at the secondary school level should be conducted only in the national language. This also implied that the medium of instruction at this level should also be in the national language. This again became the object of resentment for the Chinese because this meant for them the curtailment of the teaching of their language and culture (von Vorys 1975:215). Faced with these mounting oppositions, the government decided to tread carefully so as not to be seen as pushing too hard its line of establishing Malay as the country's official language (ibid.:216). In the meantime, certain steps had already been taken towards achieving this long-term goal of making Malay the national language, such as the setting up of the Language Institute (Maktab Perguruan Bahasa) in Kuala Lumpur in 1956 to provide training for specialist national language teachers.

The 1969 ethnic riots¹⁶ provided the government the rationale to hasten its effort to make the national language the sole medium of instruction in schools and institutions of higher learning in order to forge national unity, thus dispelling any ambiguity that might have been associated with the earlier education reports' method of

implementing the national language policy in the national education system. In July 1969, taking a tougher line, the then Education Minister Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yakub declared, 'English would be replaced by Malay one year at a time, from primary school to university' (Milne and Mauzy 1980:371). The government launched, for example, an extensive programme of training and re-training teachers to flesh out this pronouncement. In 1970 the government established the first university that uses the national language as its medium of instruction, the National University (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia). Later, other universities gradually followed suit.

3.4.4 Communist Insurgency: The Beginning of Curbed Liberties

The year 1948 marked the beginning of a state of Emergency in Malaya that was to last for 12 years. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which had been active during the fight against the Japanese Occupation, decided to resort to armed struggle against what it claimed to be an imperialist hold on the Federation. The Communist rebellion however failed due to several reasons, one of which being the Communist terrorism alienated a lot of people, and secondly, the setting up of 550 'New Villages' for those Chinese who had been living on the jungle fringes cut off food supply (which normally was obtained through the coercion on these Chinese 'squatters' by the Communists) from reaching the Communists (ibid.:32). The perceived Communist threat to the national security has had a long lasting impact on the country's fundamental liberties. The British authorities in Malaya instituted several laws that were perceived to be essential in containing or quelling the Communist threat. These laws usurped a major portion of a citizen's basic freedoms. For instance, the Internal Security Act (1960) provides the authorities the unquestioned

right to detain an individual for an indefinite period of time, and without charge or trial. The Printing Presses Act (1948) and Control of Imported Publications Act (1959) both contravened a citizen's freedom of expression and right to information. And the Trade Unions Act (1959) affects an individual's freedom of association. These laws were later further tightened to suit the needs of successive Malaysian governments which could cause undue anxiety and frustration for Malaysians particularly in matters concerning fundamental liberties and rights of ethnic minorities.¹⁷

3.4.5 Formation of Malaysia and Singapore's Withdrawal

The subject of a union of the states of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak and Brunei was first broached by the then Malaya's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman on 27 May 1961 when he said that there was a need for a political and economic cooperation between these states (Gullick and Gale 1986:105).

The idea of forming Malaysia was received with suspicion and fear by the Malays in Malaya as a whole, for they feared that the inclusion of Singapore into this scheme meant that its predominantly Chinese population would tip the 'ethnic balance' in the Peninsula in favour of the Chinese, thereby threatening Malay political supremacy through electoral contests in the country. This Malay fear was later allayed by the inclusion of the Borneo states in the federation so as to ensure that the latter's native populations, which were to be classified as 'Malays' (and 'Bumiputeras'), would help maintain the majority position of the Malays in the entire federation (M.N.Sopiee 1974:137). Eventually, after successfully resolving certain outstanding problems related to the merger project, Tunku Abdul Rahman

announced the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 with the agreement of the majority of the peoples of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. Brunei declined the invitation.

In 1965, Singapore left the federation. Its withdrawal essentially revolved around questions of political stability and national unity. When Singapore was in the fold, its ruling Chinese-based People's Action Party (PAP) was locked in fierce competition with Peninsular Malaysia's MCA for the hearts and minds of the Chinese electorate. The contest got stiffer and tougher when PAP, armed with its 'Malaysian Malaysia' slogan, mobilised non-Malays with the promise of equal rights and end to 'Malay Malaysia' (Means 1976:347). This resulted in an acrimonious relationship between PAP and the Alliance. Singapore's departure had an impact on Malaysian politics and ethnic relations. MCA branches demanded 'a more liberal' approach toward Chinese education and the implementation of Malay as the national language, while UMNO branches called for tighter citizenship laws and enhancement of Malay as the sole official language (ibid.:359). Once again, ethnic relations were affected.

3.4.6 The May Thirteenth Ethnic Riots

Riots broke out on May 13th 1969 immediately after the general election when the Alliance suffered major electoral reversals. The election results reflected popular disillusionment among both Malays and non-Malays with the Alliance's policies, particularly if the ruling party's electoral performance is compared to that in the 1964 general election. Opposition parties, DAP and Gerakan in particular, made huge political gains in non-Malay urban areas, while PAS managed to acquire extra seats in predominantly Malay rural areas. (See Table

3.1 below for electoral results and comparison.) Popular account had it that the first few clashes in Kuala Lumpur were triggered off by the provocative display of political victory by jubilant non-Malay supporters of the Opposition and the counter-action of loyal UMNO supporters who were trying to defend 'Malay interests' and honour. This eventually led to the killing of a few hundred people, both Malays and non-Malays, and a considerable destruction of property.

Table 3.1

The Peninsular Malaysian Federal Election Results by Party (1964 and 1969)

<u>1964</u>		<u>1969</u>	
Alliance	89		66
UMNO	59	UMNO	51
MCA	27	MCA	13
MIC	3	MIC	2
PAS	9		12
People's Progressive Party	2		4
DAP	0		13
Gerakan	0		8
Socialist Front	2		0
People's Action Party	1		0
United Democratic Party	1		0
Vacant	0		1
	<u>104 seats</u>		<u>104 seats</u>

Source: Goh Cheng Teik, The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia, p.13.

At least two primary factors were presented by the government as being the causes for the outbreak of the ethnic riots. Firstly, it was asserted that there were elements in the Malay community, during the

1969 general election, who questioned the constitutional provision of the Malay language as the national language and the special position of the Malays (Malaysia 1971b:1-2).¹⁸ These Malay elements, according to this version, created in the Malay community a sense of dissatisfaction and insecurity by claiming that the government had inadequately implemented these two provisions. Among the non-Malays, on the other hand, it was said that there were elements who 'created the fear and mistrust that their legitimate interest as provided in the Constitution would be eroded' (ibid.:2). As a corollary to the alleged inadequate implementation of the first two constitutional provisions above, the second cause was attributed to the 'the growing sense of fear and insecurity among the Malays due to the disparity existing between themselves and the non-Malays particularly in the fields of education and economics' (ibid.:4-5). Milne and Mauzy (1980:86-88) highlight another factor that was claimed to be yet another possible cause of the riots: the alleged 'softness' of premier Tunku Abdul Rahman towards the Chinese was perceived by certain quarters in the Malay community in general and UMNO in particular as being contributory to the ethnic riots.¹⁹

3.5 The Politics of National Unity: Post-1969 Period

3.5.1 Barisan Nasional: Consensual politics or politics of cooptation?

Following the restoration of the Malaysian Parliament on 30th August 1970 after the bloody ethnic riots on 13th May 1969, several amendments were made to certain Constitutional provisions, measures that were deemed by the government as necessary to the interest of the nation's security and stability. Article 10 of the Constitution was amended to restrict freedom of speech, for it prohibits anyone having

'a seditious tendency' (according to the Sedition Act that was amended under the Emergency Ordinance No.45 of 1970) to question Articles 152, 153, or 181 of the Malaysian Constitution.²⁰ This prohibition also applies to the Parliament (Article 63 amended) and State Assemblies (Article 72 amended).

With the May 13th riots still fresh in mind, Tun Abdul Razak, the UMNO politician who took over the premiership from Tunku Abdul Rahman (who resigned on 21st September 1970), discussed with his close advisers and decided that 'politicking' would have to be minimised; UMNO dominance would have to be ensured; Malay unity and Malay nationalism would be a major goal; the Alliance should be enlarged to enable consensual politics; Westminster model of democracy need to be modified so as to suit local conditions; and elements of ambiguity in political relationships would have to be eradicated (Milne and Mauzy 1980:177).

The first step in the coalition-building exercise, which was mounted in the Peninsula, involved the Alliance and the predominantly Chinese Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (popularly known as Gerakan) in February 1972. It was said that a split in the Gerakan triggered it to move towards the direction of a coalition with the Alliance. What this meant for the Alliance on the other hand is that it enabled it to share political power with the Gerakan in Penang State which was and still is the latter's political base. This also meant that the Alliance managed to coopt a moderate opposition party which had a grip over a highly politicized state (ibid.:181).

Next was the People's Progressive Party (PPP)-Alliance coalition

which occurred on 1st May 1972. PPP's move was precipitated by its declining popularity as a result of the death of its popular president; its failure to form a coalition with the Gerakan in order to form the State Government in Perak in 1965; and the prohibition (through the several Constitutional amendments mentioned earlier) on sensitive issues which were its favourite subjects. The Alliance on the other hand was keen on the coalition because it didn't have a secure majority in the Perak State Assembly; it wanted greater non-Malay representation in the state to compensate for MCA's and MIC's weaknesses; and also it wanted to wrest control over the Ipoh Municipal Council (ibid.:183-4).

And next in line was the PAS-Alliance coalition which happened on 1st January 1973. PAS's reasons for getting into this 'marriage' were: to achieve greater Islamic influence in the government; to promote national development; to promote Malay unity; to receive Federal assistance for State economic development projects; paralysed by the Sedition Act and the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1971 which prohibit 'sensitive issues' from being discussed or raised; a decline of power in its base in Kelantan state; to have a share in national power; and to contain leadership struggle in Kelantan PAS. The Alliance's reasons on the other hand were: to reduce 'politicking'; to achieve Malay unity; to channel all energies to implement the NEP; to participate in the PAS-dominated Kelantan State government; and to reduce State-Federal tensions (ibid.:187).

Prior to this, the Alliance had already managed to form a coalition with the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) in Sarawak on July 1970. In Sabah, the coalition idea took a little more time to be

attractive so that it was only in June 1976 that the Alliance managed to form coalition with the Berjaya party.

After getting a sufficient number of parties in all the states in the federation, the National Front (or in Malay, Barisan Nasional) was formed on 1st June 1974. Razak's motives were basically to reduce 'politicking' and to channel all energies and resources towards the implementation of the NEP.²¹ These motives were also prompted by Razak's desire 'to coopt or neutralize the Opposition, most especially Malay opposition' (ibid.:190). The dominance of UMNO was more marked in the new coalition than it was in Alliance because the party was able to control electoral bargaining with the coalition partners and ensured that '"government" candidates, and not potential opposition members, were selected' (W.Y. Hua 1983:152).²² UMNO's senior partner, the MCA, had its bargaining position weakened especially by its poor performance in the 1969 general election (P.K. Heng 1988:261-262) and its decision to opt out of the government after the election (J.K. Sundaram 1988:255). Furthermore, dissatisfaction within the Malay-based PAS could now be easily contained by UMNO. PAS however eventually left the coalition in December 1977 after facing intra-party struggle and aiming for its own 'political expansionism' (Milne and Mauzy 1980:385).

As of 1986, the Barisan Nasional comprises UMNO, MCA, MIC, Gerakan, PPP and Berjasa (all from the Peninsula); and Berjaya, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and United Sabah National Organization (USNO) (all from Sabah); and the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PPBB), Sarawak National Party (SNAP), and Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) (all from Sarawak). With its control over a two-thirds majority in

Parliament as a result of this coalition, the Barisan Nasional has since been able to amend — without much difficulty and, in certain cases, debate — substantial and crucial aspects of the Malaysian Constitution.²³ Besides, with such a parliamentary majority the party is in a position to indulge in gerrymandering if its political fortune is seen to be at stake (Means quoted in Higgott and Robison (eds) 1985:115). With its political position consolidated and power entrenched, the ruling party's initial argument about reducing 'politicking' and advancing consensual politics so as to get on with 'development' can only be interpreted as a shrewd attempt at muzzling opposition, discouraging, if not outlawing, legitimate debate and dissent, and eroding the democratic principle of checks and balance — all in the name of promoting ethnic unity.

3.5.2 Rukunegara: 'State Guidance' to a more united Malaysia?

The Rukunegara (or National Ideology) was formulated during the period of emergency after the 13th May bloody riots by the newly-established National Unity Department since its overriding concern is the unity of all Malaysians. The objectives of the Rukunegara are that Malaysia is dedicated to (a) achieve a greater unity of all Malaysians; (b) maintain a democratic way of life; (c) create a just society in which the wealth of the nation should be shared equally; (d) ensure a liberal approach to Malaysia's rich and diverse cultural traditions; and (e) to build a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology. To achieve these goals, Malaysians are guided by the following principles: Belief in God; Loyalty to King and Country; Upholding the Constitution; Rule of Law; and Good Behaviour and Morality.

The implication of instituting this ideology is that the government at that time was committing itself, at least in principle, to socio-economic justice and democratic values, and at the same time had demonstrated its appreciation of diverse cultures found in the society — all this as part of the strategy to forge national integration. Over the years, however, the importance of the Rukunegara was somehow eclipsed by successive governments' pre-occupation with Malay economic welfare, particularly in the objective of creating a small group of Malay capitalists. The significance of the national ideology has also been overshadowed by the growing attention given by the governments towards the issues of (Malay-based) National Culture Policy and Islamization Policy, which instead have in many ways worsened ethnic relations.²⁴ The seriousness, if not sincerity, of the government to overcome ethnic problems in the country is therefore brought into question.

3.5.3 The New Economic Policy

The economic policy, although deemed as 'new', is not entirely new, for it actually represents a conscious effort of the post-1969 governments to continue previous policies undertaken by the colonial government which purportedly served to protect the interests of the Malay community as a whole. Prior to 1969, socio-economic programmes were basically aimed at reducing economic disparity between the rural and urban Malays. Hence, various governmental institutions were set up to help improve the living conditions of the rural Malays: for instance, the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) was initiated in 1950 (which was then re-organised in 1965 to become MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat, or Council of Trust for the Indigenous People); the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) was established in

1956; the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) and Bank Bumiputera in 1965 for the purpose of agricultural credit (Milne and Mauzy 1980:322).

However, the approach towards granting economic assistance by the government to the Malays changed after the ethnic violence. The Policy constitutes an indigenous economic nationalism in the wake of the 13th May riots whose primary cause the government attributed to Malay economic backwardness. The government believed that unless the economic status of the Malays was improved vis-a-vis other ethnic communities, unity between ethnic groups might be endangered. Thus, the government felt that there was the dire need for state intervention in an economy where the philosophy of laissez faire prevailed — in order to help the Malays not only raise their living standards but also, more importantly later, participate effectively in the business and commercial sectors of the Malaysian economy. With the perceived socio-economic disparity between Malays and non-Malays in mind, governments since 1969 have been emphasising the significance of the two-prong objectives of the Policy: '(a) to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race; and (b) to accelerate the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function. This process involves the modernization of rural life, a rapid and balanced growth of urban activities and the creation of a Malay commercial and industrial community... The New Economic Policy is based on a rapidly expanding economy which offers increasing opportunities for all Malaysians. (Malaysia 1971a:1)'. Coupled with this twin objective is

the government's aim to help acquire for the Malays 30 per cent of the country's corporate and commercial wealth by the year 1990.

Several years since the implementation of the Policy have witnessed a dramatic shift in emphasis towards its second objective, that is, to restructure society, which in effect means to create a small community of Malay capitalists.²⁵ To achieve this aim, the State has deployed its energy and resources towards providing training facilities and financial and professional assistance to the Malays in the hope of preparing them for the challenges that lie ahead in the competitive world of commerce and industry. Various training institutions were set up, notably the MARA Institute of Technology (MIT) which essentially provides professional and technical courses to Bumiputera students only; MARA vocational institutes; and the National Productivity Centre (Milne and Mauzy 1980:331). In addition, several state agencies emerged with the professed objectives to help Malay entrepreneurs survive in the business world as well as, for some of them, acting as trustees for the Malays. One of the major and serious implications of this pre-occupation with creating a community of Malay entrepreneurs and capitalists is that the opportunities provided by the Policy have mainly benefitted the 'already urbanized, educated and, to a certain extent, better-off Malays' (Means 1976:450). Also, the trustees apparently have exploited their privileged position to advance their own interests (Mehmet 1988:124; S.G. Tan in DAP 1986:141). This consequently sharpens social differentiation and economic disparity within the Malay community (Means 1976:451). The government's focus on Malay economic welfare to the neglect of those of the non-Malays has caused much unhappiness among the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese.²⁶ This socio-economic scheme also

necessarily means greater urbanisation of Malays through rural-urban migration. Consequently, the influx of Malays into the once predominantly Chinese urban areas is invariably perceived, real or imagined, as an increasing threat to the economic survival of the urban non-Malays, the Chinese in particular. Thus an economic policy that started out as a holistic strategy to combat poverty of all Malaysians has, through its implementation, alienated the non-Malays as a whole, and hence affected ethnic relations in the country. More importantly, the relative neglect of the Malay poor as a whole, as a result of the government's obsession with creating Malay capitalists, can further aggravate ethnic relations in Malaysia since Malay poverty could be easily 'interpreted' by certain skilful politicians as a consequence of unrestrained material affluence of the Chinese community. In other words, the Chinese can be made a scapegoat for the poverty and economic hardship experienced by the Malay majority.

3.5.4 The National Culture Policy

This Policy was essentially formulated on the recommendations made at the National Culture Congress in 1971 at the University of Malaya which, judging by the composition of paper presenters, was highly dominated by Malay participants (Malaysia 1973: Contents). In its publication, Asas Kebudayaan Kebangsaan, which constitutes a compilation of the proceedings and resolutions of the Congress, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports stipulated that the Culture Policy would be based on the three major principles outlined by the Congress. They are:

- (i) The National Culture must be based on the indigenous culture of this region.
- (ii) The suitable elements from other cultures can be accepted

as part of the National Culture.

(iii) Islam is an important component in the moulding of the National Culture.

In addition, the publication specifically states that the second principle must be seen only in the context of the first and third principles 'and not from other values' (Malaysia 1973:vii).

Given this heavy emphasis by the Policy on Malay culture, it is less surprising that, when the Ministry called for a ten-year review of the Policy in 1981, the Chinese community as a whole voiced its apprehension and opposition to what it saw as 'a tendency towards forced assimilation of the other cultures in this country with hardly any cultural democracy' (K.S. Kua (ed) 1985:3). The Chinese group, comprising representatives from all the 13 state organisations of Chinese guilds and associations, the United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM), the United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia (UCSTAM), scholars and experts in the various fields of culture, held and participated in a Chinese Cultural Congress on March 27, 1983. The proceedings and resolutions were later submitted in a Joint Memorandum to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (ibid.:2). The Joint Memorandum proposed an alternative 'Four Principles', which are essentially more democratic, multiethnic and multicultural in approach (ibid.:4), for the formulation of the National Culture. The government failed to respond.

Apprehensions regarding the Policy were also voiced by the component parties in the ruling Barisan Nasional government; the Chinese-based MCA (The Star: 12/10/83), the Chinese-dominated Gerakan (Gerakan pamphlet: July 1983) and the Indian-based MIC (The Star

13/8/84) as well as former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas (The Sunday Star: 16/12/84). The opposition Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) (The Star: 5/2/84) also joined in the fray. In addition, 10 major Indian cultural associations submitted their joint memorandum to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in April 1984 essentially calling for a liberal and democratic interpretation of the national culture (K.S. Kua (ed) 1985:303-321).²⁷ If anything, these criticisms only hardened the resolve of the government, in particular its dominant UMNO component to pursue the current Policy as it is, for these criticisms were primarily construed as a direct attack on the perceived cultural and political supremacy of the Malay community (Berita Harian: 4/4/83). In other words, UMNO as well as other members of the Malay community believe that the national culture should be founded on the fact that the country was a Malay polity and hence necessitates the conscious preservation and promotion of elements of the Malay culture — but almost to the marginalization of other ethnic cultures. UMNO also accused those who criticised the Policy as bringing their loyalty to the country into question (Berita Harian: 6/4/83) apart from displaying their insincerity towards the quest for national unity. In conclusion, the Policy is still considered controversial and questionable by sections of the non-Malay communities even though the then Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Anwar Ibrahim, had already declared the matter closed (New Straits Times: 18/2/84). Here we witness again 'unity' being employed to help promote the government's notion of a national culture that has disuniting potential.

3.5.5 Islamization Policy

Islamization is perceived by the government as the gradual

infusion of Islamic values into the country's administration and public domain, while at the same time safeguarding the constitutional rights of non-Muslims. These values, the government argues, are essential to the long-term objective of forging national identity and unity. Furthermore, it adds, this would require all Malaysians to make a 'commitment to the tradition and culture of this nation' and thereby prevent them from being ideologically and politically swayed by alien forces and cultures (Intan 1988:91-2).

The Islamic resurgence movement, whose 'backbone' constituted Muslim youths,²⁸ started in mid-1970s when dakwah (missionary) groups sprang up in many parts of the country with the primary goal of propagating Islamic fundamentalism to Muslims. This Islamic fervour largely stemmed from a rejection of what were seen to be Western values, culture, materialism and 'decadence' (Mauzy and Milne in Gale (ed) 1986:88), and the victory of the Iranian revolution in 1979 provided the impetus and was primarily interpreted by many as an Islamic triumph over Western cultural intrusion. PAS, whose ideology is Islamic fundamentalism, was spurred by this turn of events to push for more Islamization of Malaysian life. It is in this context that the UMNO-led government under Mahathir found it necessary to pursue a more Islamic line in many of its actions and policies so as not to allow PAS to 'out-Islam' it (ibid.:90). While the government is in many ways goaded by its opponents to push for greater Islamization in the state, it is still not completely clear as to what its ultimate goals are nor is it able to make explicit the content of this religious drive. Uncertainty of what Islamization would lead to makes non-Muslims feel uneasy and subsequently creates a climate of tension between Muslim adherents and non-Malays, particularly when certain

religious and cultural practices are applied in such a rigid and conscious way as to divide these two large groups.²⁹

There is also an ethnic dimension to the Islamization drive in Malaysia. It has been argued that Islam is perceived by many Muslim Malays as the last of the cultural markers that not only protects their Malay identity but also separates them from the rest.³⁰ Malay language used to be an effective device for promoting and protecting Malay identity until it became the national language for all Malaysians, utilized by the country's new generations. In a society where ethnic consciousness is high and the Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera dichotomy plays a major part in the public life of the nation, the promotion of cultural markers such as religion would only exacerbate ethnic tension and suspicion.³¹ Such a situation would only result in Muslims and non-Muslims having the tendency to employ religion to mobilize ethnic solidarity against one another, particularly in the competition for economic and political gains. Thus like the National Culture project, Islamization, unless checked, can instead contribute to further ethnic disunity in the country.

3.5.6. The October 27, 1987 Political Crackdown: Impact on Ethnic Relations

The 27th October of 1987 saw the beginning of what turned out to be a massive political crackdown. Some 106 people — human rights activists, politicians, social workers, church workers, Chinese educationists, unionists, academics, environmentalists, Muslim religious teachers, and also certain leaders of the ruling Barisan Nasional — were detained under Section 73 (1) of the formidable Internal Security Act 'for activities that have been or may be

detrimental to national security'.³² In addition, publishing permits of four national newspapers — the Star,³³ the Sunday Star, Sin Chew Jit Poh, and Watan — had been suspended for allegedly having fuelled ethnic tension in the country. The Mahathir government argued that this drastic action was necessary so as to prevent the country from experiencing a recurrence of the bloody ethnic riots of 1969 when hundreds were killed in the capital city. Tensions that ran high prior to the political clampdown were primarily precipitated by the controversy over the Ministry of Education's appointment of non-Mandarin educated teachers to administrative posts in Chinese vernacular schools. This drew immediate response from the Chinese-based MCA and Gerakan parties (both partners in the ruling Barisan Nasional), the opposition DAP and 15 other Chinese organisations who jointly protested against this move. UMNO and its members and supporters in the Malay community in turn perceived this as a direct challenge to their political supremacy. The planned massive rally (to celebrate UMNO's 41st anniversary) of about half a million of UMNO members and supporters on 1st November 1987 provided an excellent opportunity for them to display Malay unity against 'external threat'. The rally was later cancelled by the government for fear of escalating ethnic tension in the country, particularly in Kuala Lumpur.

The appointment of the non-Mandarin educated teachers was one of the issues pertaining to language, education and culture that haunted the Chinese and the Malays. Another factor was a new ruling imposed by the University of Malaya that elective courses in the English, Chinese and Indian studies departments must be taught in Malay. And another one is about UMNO Youth's call to the government to withdraw financial

assistance to the predominantly Chinese Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC).

Apart from the above issues, there are also other important, if not more important, factors that collectively forced the hands of the government to execute the mass arrests of individuals who had been generally critical of the government's policies and actions. The fact that most of the arrested individuals were not involved in instigating ethnic animosities or religious conflicts but on the contrary were the ones promoting ethnic harmony lends credence to the suspicion that the Mahathir government had used this 'tense situation' to silence and frighten off its critics³⁴ in general and Mahathir's rivals in UMNO in particular. Firstly, the acute factionalism within UMNO had caused it to split into two teams: 'team A' led by Dr Mahathir himself and 'team B' by former trade and industry minister, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Because of some alleged irregularities in the party's April 1987 election (where Razaleigh lost only by 43 votes to Mahathir for the party's presidency), supporters of Razaleigh brought the case to the court to challenge the validity of the election. Secondly, financial scandals (apart from the BMF [Bumiputera Malaysia Finance] loan scandal) that involved the main parties of the ruling coalition, notably and most recently, the United Engineers Malaysia affair in which the Malaysian government awarded the company — alleged to have close links to the UMNO leadership through its parent company Hatibudi, an UMNO investment arm — a M\$3.4 billion to build the North-South Highway in Peninsular Malaysia (The Independent: 16/11/87). The secretary general of the opposition DAP, Lim Kit Siang, and his lawyer Karpal Singh had brought this case to the Penang High Court and had subsequently succeeded in obtaining an injunction to

restrain the signing of the contract. Both individuals, it should be noted, fell victim to the mass detention. Thirdly, economic recession had created a lot of retrenchment in estates, tin mines, factories, construction sites and other industries. Also affected was a large number of unemployed Malay graduates who in normal times would have easily been absorbed into the public sector. A disgruntled group of people, particularly in Malay quarters, could pose a threat to the credibility of a Malay-led government especially if some of them had become vocal in displaying their dissatisfaction. Finally, there were elements in both government and opposition parties who were quick to exploit this situation by fanning ethnic emotions so as to make political gains.

If the circumstances that led to the mass arrests and the personalities of the detainees are important, the constitutional, political and socio-cultural consequences of this episode are equally significant. As regards the UMNO internal squabbles, a High Court judge, Datuk Harun Hashim, not only ruled that there had been irregularities during the UMNO's 1987 election but also further argued that according to the Societies Act, the presence of unregistered branches would make the parent organization itself unlawful. UMNO was therefore declared illegal on February 4, 1988. In response to the failed attempt of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tengku Razaleigh and supporters to form a new party called 'UMNO Malaysia' so as to take the place of the old party, Mahathir quickly set up his own brand of UMNO, 'UMNO Baru' (New UMNO), which was registered on February 13, 1988. UMNO Malaysia was denied registration by the Registrar of Societies. The creation of the New UMNO presented Mahathir the opportunity to weed out his political foes from his new party structure. With both

factions striving hard to convince the Malay electorate that they can best protect their interests, Malay unity became the convenient rallying call.

Confronted by the factors mentioned above, particularly litigations, the government had decided to take certain measures in order to secure its position. For instance, a certain section of the Federal Constitution was amended so as to keep the Judiciary 'in line'. As a result, Article 121 (1) of the Constitution was amended in such a way that the statement that 'the judicial power of the Federation shall be vested in the two High Courts (of Malaya and Borneo)' was replaced by the fact that the jurisdiction and powers of both the High Courts and the subordinate courts shall be 'conferred by or under Federal law'. In other words, 'the Government and Parliament will be able to limit or restrict the jurisdiction of the Courts and have judicial matters decided instead by persons or bodies responsible to the Government or Parliament'.³⁵ In short, the Judiciary is made subservient to the Parliament, specifically the Executive. As if this isn't enough to assure the government that the Judiciary would be kept in line, the Lord President Tun Salleh Abas was suspended in May 1988 by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister for the former's alleged 'misconduct'. The only 'crime' of the Lord President was he tried to defend the Judiciary's independence and protect it from the criticisms of the Prime Minister. On 8th August 1988, a tribunal, which was set up to try the Lord President, found Tun Salleh Abas guilty. Later in July 1988, five Supreme Court judges who had exhibited some traits of independence, were suspended. Later two of them were sacked while the rest were reinstated (Aliran Monthly Vol.8/7 1987). This is an indirect warning to those judges who have

the tendency to step 'out of line'.

An equally important development was the amendment to the already restrictive Printing Presses and Publications Act in December 1987 which essentially provides that the Minister of Home Affairs not only has the absolute right to decide whether a publisher's or printer's application for a permit should be granted, but his decision is final and he doesn't have to give any reason whatsoever nor can his decision be contested in a court of law (Aliran Monthly Vol.9/9 1989:38). The Police Act too was amended so as to basically give police greater power to 'enter and break up any meeting or assembly which is deemed subversive and unlawful by a police officer' (ibid.). Thus in the wake of the 27th October episode, Malaysians have witnessed further and rapid erosion of their fundamental rights and liberties. This means that discontent harboured by Malaysians, particularly non-Malays, in areas of politics, culture and economics will have difficulty in finding legal avenues for expression (P.K. Heng 1988:276). It thus follows that remedy to these grievances will also be scarce. When this happens, not only do we get many crucial and fundamental problems being conveniently swept under the carpet, many non-Malays particularly would tend to feel that their genuine problems are not considered important by the authorities because they are only 'non-Malay problems', while at the same time they would also feel that their rights as Malaysian citizens are being increasingly eroded. Such legal and political constraints imposed on Malaysians are politically damaging and ethnically divisive.

Notes

1. Singapore also joined the new federation but left it in 1965, while Brunei declined the invitation to join it and remained a separate State.

2. See Information Malaysia. 1986 Year Book, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1986, particularly pp.1-2, for a geographical account.

3. This political position is called Ketua Menteri in states where there are no royal heads of state such as Pulau Pinang, Melaka, Sabah and Sarawak; and Menteri Besar in other states where royal heads of state exist.

4. According to the Malaysian Constitution, a 'Malay' is 'a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to the Malay custom and (a) was before Merdeka (Independence) 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' (Malaysia 1979:160).

5. These people are still considered as belonging to a larger entity of 'Malay stock' who reside in the Malay Archipelago, which embraces 'the Malay Peninsula and thousands of islands which today form the Republics of Indonesia and the Philippines' (Husin Ali 1987:1-7). For an account of the immigration of Indonesians into Malaya, see Saunders (1977:18-20).

6. The Malay term, Tanah Melayu, is strongly evocative to the Malays particularly when they were confronted with the controversial Malayan Union proposal before the Malayan independence. Slogans such as 'Malaya belongs to the Malays' (Utusan Melayu [22 Dec. 1945] quoted in W.Y. Hua [1983:77]) clearly bring out a sense of exclusive hold onto the land.

7. This claim was recognised by the British when they were the colonial power in Malaya. The indigenusness of the Malays has been established by archaeological evidence (Husin Ali 1987:8-11).

8. Immigration of Indian labourers into the Peninsula was done through the kangani (overseer) system. Under this system, the British employer would despatch a kangani to his former Indian village or district where the latter would recruit the labourers and, with the money provided by the employer, would pay for their passage to Malaya. The labourers were then employed in the Malayan rubber estates and assigned under the same kangani who recruited them. In order to repay the 'loan' (i.e. the expenses incurred in 'importing' them into the peninsula), the labourers would have to work, after which they were free to leave (K.H. Khong 1984:13).

9. According to B.W. Andaya & L.Y. Andaya (1982:177), Chinese labour in mines and rubber plantations faced exploitation, poor working conditions and terms of employment — despite some

attempts by the British colonial government to redress this problem.

10. H.R.Cheeseman (1955) cited in J.Gullick and B.Gale (1986:221).

11. Bottomore (1966:104) observes that a political party which has successfully led an independence movement against colonial rule 'establishes itself as the ruling elite and justifies its power both by its past deeds and by its promise to create a modern nation in the future'.

12. UMNO's rallying call has been 'UMNO is Melayu (Malay), and Melayu is UMNO' (Rahman 1986:9). Dato Onn however did initiate the idea of opening up UMNO's membership to other communities, but the majority of UMNO's members found it unpalatable. This then led to Dato Onn's resignation from the party.

13. The existence of names such as Keretapi Tanah Melayu (Malayan Railway), and 'Negeri-negeri Tanah Melayu, Malaysia' (Malay States, Malaysia) written on the identification card of citizens residing in Peninsular Malaysia can be construed as a conscious attempt to remind people implicitly that the land was originally Malays'. It is also instructive to note that the then Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, when proclaiming the independence of the Federation of Malaya (in English) used only the Malay term, Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, as Malaya was officially known as such. For the Proclamation of Independence, see for instance Aliran (1987:300-302).

14. The Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission, which was set up to draft the Malayan Constitution, envisaged the difficulty in forging a common nationality upon which a unified Malayan nation was to be established for as long as there existed what it perceived as the conflictual provision of 'safeguarding the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of the other communities' (Quoted in Ratnam 1967:107). The Commission nevertheless felt that, in view of the socio-economically disadvantaged position of the Malays vis-a-vis that of the non-Malays at the time, the special privileges that were to be accorded to the Malays were necessary. It did stress, however, that such privileges should not be permanent as they were only relevant in the context of social inequality. This is why the Commission also recommended that 'it would be more desirable "in the interests of the country as a whole as well as the Malays themselves" for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to cause the matter (of special Malay rights) to be reviewed from time to time' (ibid.:111).

15. A discussion of educational developments in Malaya will be dealt with later in greater detail.

16. The case of this inter-ethnic violence will be discussed in detail later.

17. For a discussion of the state of individual freedom and human rights in Malaysia, see Azmi Khalid in Scoble and Wiseberg (eds) (1985:84-92).

18. The DAP, while denying that the questioning of Malay special rights or the status of the national language or citizenship provisions had caused the ethnic riots, did contest the wisdom of having the 1957 'political bargain' binding on a different generation: 'The 1970 generation of Malaysians of all races is vastly different from the old 1957 generation. They constitute a majority. Their wants, their hopes, are also different; and the world they live in at home and abroad is no longer the same. No generation has the right to dictate to the future generation as yet unborn or not ready to vote what precisely their political destiny must be. (Goh Hock Guan, a DAP Member of Parliament, quoted in Milne and Mauzy 1980:82)'

19. This allegation was contained in the famous and controversial Mahathir Mohamad letter (on June 17th 1969) to Tunku Abdul Rahman. It was highly critical of the latter's leadership and the MCA's continued presence in the latter's Cabinet. This episode led to the expulsion of Mahathir by the Tunku from the UMNO Supreme Council (Milne and Mauzy 1980:87).

20. Article 152 refers to the inclusion of 'official purposes' to the use of the national language; Article 153 refers to the educational facilities accorded to the Malays and also the fact that this additional provision is being extended to the natives of the two Borneo states; and Article 181 relates to the position of the Malay rulers.

21. The government asserts that the Barisan Nasional 'is an alliance of political parties founded on the premise that open intemperate debate and party politics based on sectional interests could divert the energies of Malaysians from the tasks of nation-building. The development of the Barisan lent itself to the resolution of sensitive national issues within the structure of political consensus... In its short history, the Barisan has demonstrated its capacity for muting divisiveness within society' (Malaysia 1976:99). Such an emphasis on socio-economic development of the country reminds one of Göran Therborn's argument that, 'a variant of co-optation through growth — one which worked very well in Brazil for some years at least — is the ideology and practice of developmentalism within the stronger capitalist states of the Third World' (1980:229).

22. C.B. Tan (1987b:109) asserts that UMNO elections are no less significant than 'the national election because of UMNO's dominance in the National Front'. He adds, 'UMNO resolutions are likely to be implemented by the UMNO-led government.'

23. At least two-thirds majority is required before any part of the Malaysian Constitution can be amended. For a discussion of the powers of constitutional amendment, see Azmi Khalid in Scoble and Wiseberg (eds) (1985:86-7). Examples of some of the crucial and controversial amendments to the Constitution are the Constitutional (Amendment) Act of 1971 (Act A30 of 1971) which, with the aim of curbing public discussion on certain 'sensitive' issues and to remedy ethnic imbalance in certain sectors in the economy, imposed, among other things, restrictions on the constitutional freedom of speech and expression, and curbed

parliamentary privilege of members of the Federal and State legislatures; and secondly, the Constitution (Amendment Act) of 1981 (Act A514 of 1981) that gave unfettered power to the Executive to declare an emergency at will and to perpetuate emergency rule. On the relative ease with which the ruling party has amended the Constitution, Lee Lam Thye, Director of the Political Bureau of the DAP, commented: 'It cannot be denied that the Malaysian Constitution has earned for itself the distinction of being the most amended Constitution in the World... it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of the constitutional Amendments in Malaysia is the history of a progressive erosion of Democracy in our country. (Quoted in Higgott and Robison (eds) 1985:115)'

24. Faced with growing ethnic polarization in the country, individuals like former Premier Tunku Abdul Rahman and certain groups have called on the authorities to look into the possibility of incorporating the Rukunegara into the Malaysian Constitution as a way of combating this problem (Aliran 1987:312). To date, the government has not responded to this idea.

25. The notion of development of the post-Independence elite, including prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, has been very much informed by Western liberalism and capitalism. For a lengthy discussion of Malay socio-economic development, see Shaharuddin Maaruf (1988).

26. For discussions of governmental neglect of the welfare of the Chinese community, see L.L. Lim in MCA (1988:37-55); S.G. Tan in DAP (1986:146-148); and also K.Y. Sim in DAP (1986:164-177).

27. For diverse views on this controversial Policy by representatives of various religious traditions and ethnic minorities in Malaysia, see for instance Kua (ed) (1987).

28. Zainah Anwar (1987:10) holds, 'Nowhere is this (Islamic resurgence) more pervasive and effective than in the universities and the institutions of higher learning in Malaysia'. This is because university students as well as young graduates were the prime actors in this religious movement.

29. For an account of anxieties expressed by non-Malays regarding the Islamization policy, see Mauzy and Milne in Gale (ed) (1986:99); and also see Rev. Dr. Paul Tan (in DAP 1986:98-120) for a discussion of erosion of non-Muslims' rights in the wake of the Islamization process in Malaysia.

30. For a discussion of the relationship between Islam and Malay ethnic identity, see Mauzy and Milne (in Gale (ed) 1986:87-88); Muzaffar (1987:23-26); and Nagata (in Gale (ed) 1986:125). Shamsul (in Gale (ed) 1986:137-138) however criticises Nagata for failing to see how her overemphasis of the ethnic and religious factors could 'obscure' and conceal the class contradiction within the Malay community.

31. A.D. Smith (1988:26-28) argues that an ethnic community, in order to sharpen its sense of exclusivity or togetherness, needs,

among other things, 'a distinctive shared culture' and, he adds, 'the most common shared and distinctive traits are those of language and religion'.

32. See for instance Aliran's mimeographed statement on 2nd November 1987 on this mass detention.

33. P.K. Heng (1988:275) asserts, 'The closure of the Star, despite its sponsorship by Tunku Abdul Rahman and its status as a respected journal and unofficial organ of the MCA, sent a clear message that the government intends to brook no public expression of opinion that is at variance from official policies.'

34. Saravanamuttu (1987:68) contends that 'this turn of events in Malaysian politics may be appreciated as further evidence of the state employing its coercive power to check popular dissent' in the context of public interest groups having assumed in the past few years an 'increasingly strident and effective role' of enlarging to a certain extent democratic space in Malaysian public life.

35. A comment made by the International Commission of Jurists is cited in Aliran Monthly (Vol.8/1 1986:7).

CHAPTER IV

THE STATE AND EDUCATION

4.1 The State and Education: Theoretical considerations

In most countries, the position and power of the State is pronounced and dominant, particularly in post-colonial societies which inherit a colonial legacy of an 'overdeveloped apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled' (Alavi 1972:61). The State has a huge apparatus at its disposal after attaining political independence from colonial rule, an apparatus that can be utilised effectively particularly if and when it adopts an interventionist role in the economy in the desire to achieve certain professed long-term objectives, such as economic growth, social change, political stability, and national integration, or short-run goals like maintenance of power. Alavi (ibid.) asserts that the State in the post-colonial society is not 'the instrument of a single class', but rather a representative of the competing interests of the three propertied classes, i.e. 'the metropolitan bourgeoisies, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes'. The State is also perceived by Poulantzas (quoted in Dunleavy and O'Leary 1988:243-244) as having a relative autonomy, a notion that helps to explain why in its attempt to gain a broad degree of support for its policy, the State tries to accommodate as far as possible demands from major social groups in society. To do so, the ruling elites will have to give the impression that they are acting independently of the dominant class fraction insofar as this doesn't affect greatly the long-term

interests of capital (ibid.). It is in this context of accommodation that the notion of 'space' for some kind of social change can be situated. Seen in this light, the role of the State could be construed as one of measured benevolence, concerned with the promotion and protection of 'national interest' (Gibbs in King 1986:203).

Antonio Gramsci provided a useful notion of 'hegemony' to help us to try to understand the various factors that are involved in the context of ideological transmission. He believed that instead of primarily using physical force, the ruling classes utilise a form of ideological hegemony to reproduce their power in society. This hegemony is basically established through the use of consent, and mediated through such cultural institutions as family, schools, churches, mass media, etc. Unlike Althusser, Gramsci did not identify what the ideological apparatuses are and what the basically repressive ones are. Each apparatus, he maintained, has both aspects of coercion and consent. What is 'liberating' about his theory of hegemony is that it provides a notion of consent having to be fought for in the 'civil society' (Forgacs (ed) (1988:420). In other words, he was able to identify the potential in a human agency to resist and fight against an ideological domination in the midst of social contradictions of a capitalist system. This notion therefore breaks away from the structural reductionism of Marxist theorists such as Althusser, and opens up an avenue for some kind of ideological resistance.

That there is space for ideological resistance by the subordinate groups in society within the education system provokes education theorists like Giroux to argue that, 'Knowledge ... becomes an object of analysis in a two-fold sense. On the one hand, it is examined for

its social function, the way in which it legitimates the existing society. At the same time it could also be examined to reveal in its arrangement, words, structure, and style those unintentional truths that might contain "fleeting images" of a different society, more radical practices, and new forms of understanding. (1983:36)'

4.2 The Malaysian State, Economic Imperatives and Social Change

Like many nation-states that had just achieved independence from the colonial masters, Malaya was poised to adopt an economic programme that was primarily aimed at developing the economy in general and raising the living standards of its people in particular.¹ Apart from relying on its traditional exports of primary commodities of rubber, tin, palm oil, etc. so as to sustain its programme of economic development, the Malayan government also embarked, after being strongly recommended by a World Bank mission (Sundaram 1988:220-221), on an economic diversification programme that included an import-substitution form of industrialisation. To realise this economic plan, the government was to provide infrastructural and industrial estate facilities, and encourage local industrial capital, attract foreign capital, etc (ibid:221). This effectively paved the way for further penetration of foreign capital into the economy and since then has locked the country into the structure of international capitalism.² This import-substitution scheme was later replaced by an export-oriented industrialisation strategy in the late 1960s after the former failed to achieve its underlying objective of inducing a greater flow of foreign investments (ibid.:222), of which the latter was envisaged to do better.

The pace of socio-economic progress and modernization was

quicken particularly after Malaysia was jolted by its bitter experience of the 1969 ethnic riots, the primary cause of which was attributed to the economic backwardness of the Malays and economic disparity between the Malays and non-Malays. Hence, the intense pressure to modernize the Malays as a group so as to help them participate effectively in the modern sector of the economy, side by side with the non-Malays. To do this, the government felt the need to expand the economy by playing a major and interventionist role in the country's economic life as well as encouraging the private sector's participation (Malaysia 1971a:7) so as to accommodate the government's strategy of eradicating poverty and more importantly, at least in the eyes of the government, restructuring the society (i.e. to enable more Bumiputeras to go into business and industry) under the New Economic Policy (NEP). The country has since witnessed a rapid rate of economic development and industrialisation,³ particularly under the Mahathir administration which introduced policies such as the Look East policy (to emulate the 'hard work' ethic and the aggressive modernization of the Japanese and Koreans); Privatisation policy (the transfer of certain government-owned enterprises to the private sector to increase profitability and efficiency so as to generate more economic development);⁴ 'Malaysia Incorporated' policy (to encourage better cooperation between the public and private sectors particularly as the latter is seen as the vital 'engine' of national development); and Heavy Industries policy (to 'foster linkages and the expansion of the industrial base' [Malaysia 1986:335]).⁵ These are policies essentially formulated with the aim of helping Malaysia procure the coveted status of a Newly Industrialising Country (Saravanamuttu 1987:59). Given the heavy emphasis on the modern sector of the economy by the State, especially in its primary objective of ensuring more

Bumiputera participation in this sector, their education and manpower needs therefore constitute the government's primary concern.

4.3 Formal education in Malaysia

4.3.1 Educational development, 1950 - 1969

A survey of the past education committees commissioned by the colonial government in Malaya to study and recommend ways to improve conditions of the country's education system suggests that, unlike the period before 1950, the British began to appreciate the importance of providing formal education to the local people in a more systematic manner and to recognize the significance of designing curriculum that would pave the way for the fostering of national integration and a national consciousness, the significance of which captured the imagination of the local people in the wake of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya during the Second World War. It also highlights contentious problems the colonial government had to face that were primarily associated with a multiethnic society like Malaya. In the period before the Second World War, the British were more inclined to educate a minority of the population, in particular those in the urban areas, to be trained as elites and clerks who could then serve government bureaucracy and colonial business enterprises.⁶ And since most of the people in the urban areas and whose children who went to schools were largely non-Malays, the colonial education system reinforced ethnic as well as class differences in the Malayan society.

a. The Barnes Committee

To start with, the Barnes Committee, led by the director of Social Training at Oxford University, L.J. Barnes, was set up in 1950 by the colonial government to look into problems faced by Malay

vernacular schools and to make recommendations to the government so as to improve the situation in these schools. In general, the committee pointed out the poor conditions, physical and academic, that had been confronting the Malay schools. It however did argue that improvements to the Malay schools couldn't be made until and unless the entire education system of the country was taken into consideration. Thus, the committee's terms of reference were eventually broadened to include matters pertaining to Chinese and Tamil schools. The major recommendation made by the committee was that the government should undertake a major task of gradually transforming all existing schools (including vernacular Chinese and Tamil ones) into 'national schools' where children of all ethnic groups would be taught together through the media of English and Malay languages, a proposal that primarily stemmed from the desire to foster good ethnic relations and national integration among the schoolchildren. As a measure towards improving the position of Malay language, the committee also called for the setting up of a Department of Malay Studies in the University of Malaya (A.H. Salleh (ed) 1980:48). The committee also stated that parents who were against this proposal (of transforming all schools into national schools) would be regarded as disloyal to the country, for its underlying concern was, it said, nation-building (Cited in F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:36). Such formulation, as expected, did not go down well in the Chinese community especially at a time when Malaya was under the Emergency and when Chinese loyalty to the Federation was already suspect (Gayl D. Ness 1967:77). Furthermore, as G.D. Ness emphasised, 'Such an equation might easily be accepted by a community that had never held formal education in high value, or by one that had not itself built an extensive educational institution. This could not be said of the Chinese, however. (ibid.)'

b. The Fenn-Wu mission

The Chinese dissatisfaction with the Barnes report prompted the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, to invite in January 1951 a two-man team of educationists, comprising Dr W.P. Fenn (of the United States) and Dr Wu Teh-Yao (of the United Nations), to survey and examine the situation of Chinese education in Malaya. The findings of the Fenn-Wu mission, as it was later known, differed from those of the Barnes Committee for the former were basically sympathetic towards Chinese education. The mission stated that:

It is not possible artificially to create one culture out of several, certainly not quickly. Because of the psychological and emotional attachments of the racial group, any attempt at the moment to force unwilling fusion will certainly lead to further cleavage which neither Malaya nor the world can afford. What can be hoped for is a peaceful and co-operative relationship among diverse elements, in which community of interests rather than differences are naturally stressed. There can be no justification for turning Malaya into a cockpit for aggressive cultures. By virtue of its composite population it should be a land where the developing culture draws its validity from acceptance of the high values of other cultures. The people of Malaya will have to learn to understand and appreciate their cultural differences. They should be proud of their spirit of mutual tolerance. We have dealt at length with this question of culture because of what seems to us the too casual and unconsidered use of the term 'Malayanisation'. For one thing, to most Chinese in Malaya, 'Malayanisation' is anathema. In view of the absence of a culture, or even a society, which can as yet be called Malayan, it is interpreted as meaning to make Malay rather than Malayan (Cited in F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:37).

As can be seen from the above statement, the Fenn-Wu mission was not in favour of imposed creation of one culture out of the many cultures available in the country, especially if the outcome of this project, as it suspected it would, would be essentially Malay rather than Malayan. It is therefore not surprising for the mission to propose that Chinese schools be maintained until the Chinese community felt that they weren't needed anymore. Regarding the lack of Malayan

outlook in the Chinese textbooks and of Malayan consciousness in the Chinese schools as a whole, the mission attributed this in part to the government's lack of attention and financial assistance to these schools. The mission later proposed several measures to improve the situation in the Chinese schools, one of which being more financial assistance from the government.

c. The Central Advisory Committee on Education

The committee was set up specifically to examine the conflicting views of the Barnes and Fenn-Wu reports. The committee supported the Barnes proposal of helping forge a united Malayan society while at the same time making some concessions to the Chinese demands as found in the Fenn-Wu report. The committee also agreed that all pupils were required to learn Malay and English, apart from requiring that all Chinese and Indian⁷ schoolchildren be taught Mandarin and Tamil respectively. The medium of instruction should be either Malay or English.

d. A Special Committee

This committee, set up in 1952 by the government, was made up of 11 members of the Federal Legislative Council and chaired by the Attorney-General. Its primary objective was to study further the recommendations of the Barnes, Fenn-Wu and the Central Advisory Committee on Education reports, and later to make recommendations for suitable legislation covering all aspects of education in the country. A bill, which was principally based on the Barnes report and the Central Advisory Committee on Education's recommendations, was tabled and passed by the Federal Legislative Council as the Education Ordinance of 1952. The Ordinance made a slight change to the notion of

a single bilingual national school to two types of national schools, with English as the medium of instruction for one and Malay for the other. In addition, facilities would be provided for the teaching of Mandarin and Tamil if requested by parents/guardians of no less than 15 pupils in any one school. English would be made compulsory as a subject in Malay-medium schools while Malay would be given similar status in English-medium schools (F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:38). The principal contents of the Ordinance reflected an attempt at compromise of sorts, leaving the major problem of giving more financial aid to schools still unresolved.

The objectives stipulated in the Ordinance were met with some problems. For one, there were not enough Malay and English teachers to teach in the vernacular schools, coupled by teacher shortage in Malay- and English-media schools themselves. Further, financial constraints experienced by the colonial government made implementation of the objectives rather difficult. But more importantly, Chinese and Indian communities — while they did not mind English and Malay being made compulsory subjects in their vernacular schools — voiced strong objection to making these two languages the media of instruction in these schools (ibid.). This suggests that their opposition was underpinned by the fear that such a move would threaten the survival of their own languages and cultures.

Another Special Committee was appointed by the High Commissioner in 1953 to find ways and means to implement the education policy as outlined in the Education Ordinance of 1952. In light of the financial constraints faced by the government at that time,⁸ the committee confined itself to four main objectives: (a) Gradual introduction of

Malay and English into Malay vernacular schools; (b) Gradual introduction of trilingualism (i.e. Mandarin or Tamil and Malay and English) into Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools; (c) Limitation of students' enrolment in English schools; and (d) Development of vocational secondary schools. The government was given a temporary reprieve as it was not required to set up immediately 'national schools'. Despite such cost-cutting strategy, the government still faced financial constraints. This and the government's preoccupation with the process leading to political independence, led to a failure to implement the objectives stipulated in the Education Ordinance.

The Alliance government which took over from the British also shared their predecessors' concern with the general standard of education in the country and, more importantly, making education as an effective instrument of national integration and socio-economic development. As a result, a number of committees were set up to examine various educational problems and subsequently to suggest solutions. Some of the recommendations made by these committees were then implemented.

a. The Razak Committee

The Alliance party, which came to power in 1955 after the first general election, laid emphasis on education as one of the most important areas of concern it would tackle before Malaya's independence. And as a gesture of keeping to its election promise, the quasi-independent government pledged to provide a more equitable system of education, stressing equal grants to all government-aided schools. The government appointed a committee consisting of representatives from the three major ethnic groups, chaired by the

Education Minister, Dato Abdul Razak Hussein. The committee's tasks were to review the existing education policy of Malaya and to recommend any necessary changes 'with a view of establishing a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country. (Report of the Education Committee [also known as the Razak Report], 1956, p.1, cited in F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:55)' The Razak Report was published in April 1956, and was later used by the government as a basis for its National Education Policy. The report's proposals and recommendations were then employed in drafting a new bill on education. The bill was passed and later enacted in April 1957 as the Education Ordinance of 1957.

The Education Ordinance implies that the government had abandoned its earlier aim of establishing 'national schools', and instead helped subsume all the four separate 'streams' of primary education, which is made freely available by the government — English, Malay, Chinese (Mandarin) and Tamil — under a common national education system. Under this Ordinance, two types of primary schools were established: (a) Standard Primary Schools used the national language as medium of instruction, while English was made a compulsory subject. Also provided were facilities for teaching Mandarin and Tamil if requested by parents/guardians of at least 15 children in the school; (b) Standard-Type Primary Schools used Mandarin, Tamil or English as medium of instruction, while Malay and English were made compulsory

subjects. The teaching of Mandarin or Tamil would be provided in Standard-Type Primary (English) Schools should there be request from parents/guardians of at least 15 schoolchildren in any one school. As mentioned above, central to the concern of the Razak committee were political unity, ethnic harmony and national development, and this largely characterized the Ordinance, whereby a common syllabus, to create a national consciousness, was introduced and Malay (as national language) was made a compulsory subject in all schools.

Secondary education was, however conducted only in Malay and English. Other languages were taught as subjects and not as media of instruction. Schools were either completely aided government schools, or completely unaided private schools as in the case of secondary Chinese schools. Although private, 'The independent secondary schools must adhere to the curricula and language teaching of the government schools, but they may use whatever language they choose as the medium of instruction. (G.D. Ness 1967:79)' It is noteworthy, though, that the Razak Committee had not used the term 'sole' but instead 'main' when referring to the medium of instruction to be used in the national education system, given the multicultural and multilingual nature of Malaysian society. Thus the Razak Report (1956) declared:

We believe further that the ultimate objective of the educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under the national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognise that progress towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual. (Cited in Malaysia 1985:4.)

The Razak Committee's recommendations in essence brought together the various vernacular schools under a common national education system, with the underlying objectives of attaining national unity and

socio-economic development as well as to help forge a national consciousness. The report was, on balance, moderate in tone as it did not seek to replace Mandarin, the medium of instruction in Chinese secondary schools, with Malay because it considered education content as being more important in forging a sense of nationhood:

One of the fundamental requirements of educational policy in the Federation of Malaya is to orientate all schools, primary and secondary, to a Malayan outlook. We consider that the way to do this is to ensure a common content in the syllabuses of all schools. (Razak Report, Para 115, cited in Malaysia [1985:4].)

By being content with making Malay as a compulsory subject in all schools and not the medium of instruction, the committee managed to avoid the most thorny and emotional issue of education, language and culture of the non-Malays. For others, however, the Razak Report presented itself less as a compromise between the divergent needs of the Malays and non-Malays than as a set of recommendations that came close to those of the Barnes Report, particularly the provision for making Malay a medium of instruction under the common national education system (S.C.Tham 1983:109). Nevertheless, the Razak Committee stipulated that its recommendations should be reviewed not later than 1959.

b. The (Rahman Talib) Review Committee

After winning the 1959 general election, the Alliance government appointed a committee headed by Education Minister Abdul Rahman Talib to review recommendations of the Razak Committee. It concluded that the policy had been faithfully implemented, given the financial constraints at that time, particularly in three fundamental areas: (i) introduction of a common Malayan syllabus in all schools; (ii) the

setting up of teacher training centres that would help in the educational expansion; and (iii) the provision of primary education for every child to choose his/her medium of instruction (Rahman Talib Report, 1960, cited in F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:57). The Rahman Talib Committee made several recommendations, one of which was universal free primary education to all children irrespective of choice of (medium) schools. No change, however, was proposed to the medium of instruction in primary schools because 'It was believed that to provide children with six years of elementary education in the language of the parents would serve to provide a firm basic grounding for children both linguistically and culturally. (S.C.Tham 1983:112)' This was also one way of placating the fears and anxieties of many non-Malays regarding the future of their languages and cultures. Besides, this recommendation was seen to be in tune with the underlying objective of providing primary education in one's own mother tongue only to be followed by a gradual progression towards Malay as a medium of instruction in the secondary school. This was felt to be the rational step towards the goal of forging national unity.

Since national unity is central to the formulation of the national education policy and national language is perceived as an appropriate and effective instrument for this purpose, it was suggested that the present Standard and Standard-Type primary schools be re-designated as National and National-Type primary schools so as to promote the 'national' character of these schools as well as the national language. In addition, these schools would be supplied with qualified teachers, particularly those trained to teach the national language.

The committee also suggested that all secondary schools would eventually have as their medium of instruction either Malay or English and subsequently that public examinations would be held in either of these two languages. It thus observed:

For the sake of national unity, the objective must be to eliminate communal secondary schools from the national system of assisted schools and to ensure that pupils of all races shall attend both National and National-Type Secondary Schools. An essential requirement of this policy is that public examinations at secondary level should be conducted only in the country's official languages. (Report of the Education Review Committee, 1960 [also known as the Rahman Talib Report] cited in F.H.K.Wong and P.M.P.Chang 1975:59).

It should be said here that Malay teachers (the majority of whom were UMNO members) and nationalists exerted great pressure on the government to pursue a more aggressive line in accelerating the use of Malay as the medium of instruction in the national education system. In fact, they did not try to pretend that their ultimate desire was to make Malay the sole medium of instruction (S.C.Tham 1983:114).

There were several implications from this recommendation. One, those students who had had their primary education in Mandarin and Tamil were now compelled to 'fit' themselves into this 'national' mould, i.e. to go into the national secondary schools, as officially recognised certificates at the end of their secondary education would stand a better chance of helping them secure further educational qualifications, employment and social mobility. Two, secondary schools whose medium of instruction was not in one of the official languages were not eligible for government financial aid. Three, this move also meant a curb on the growth of secondary vernacular schools, although allowance was provided for private, independent secondary vernacular

schools (i.e. for as long as they follow the national curricula). As a measure to appease the Chinese and Indians who were concerned about their linguistic and cultural sustenance, the committee proposed that pupils' own language (POL) be taught in secondary schools under the national education system if parents/guardians of at least 15 pupils asked for it.

The major recommendations of the Rahman Talib Committee were incorporated later in the Education Act of 1961, the gist of which was encapsulated in its preamble: ,

Whereas the educational policy of the Federation, originally declared in the Education Ordinance, 1957, is to establish a national system of education which will satisfy the needs of the nation and promote its cultural, social, economic and political development:

And whereas it is considered desirable that regard shall be had, so far as is compatible with that policy, with the provision of efficient instruction and with the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents:

And whereas further provision is required for securing the effective execution of the said policy, including in particular provision for the progressive development of an educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction. (Malaysia 1987:1.)

So far, since the Barnes Report, we have seen how the government had been subjected to the push and pull of the conflicting demands coming from the various ethnic communities in the country. At the same time, the government was also conscious of its urgent role of trying to use education and the national language as instruments of national unity and socio-economic advancement. It was however the tragic events in 1969 that compelled the government to succumb to the growing demand for the progressive and systematic use of the national language, a

language that was claimed, at least in the official circles, as one of unity and also of socio-economic upliftment⁹ at all official levels.

c. Measures taken to implement the National Education Policy

In order to meet the needs and demands that come with the implementation of the education policy, the government has provided facilities and set up institutions to promote the status of the national language. For a start, more Malay secondary schools were built to cater to increasing demands. Secondly, a system of 'remove class' was introduced to help pupils from National-Type primary schools familiarise themselves with the national language for a period of one year. Thirdly, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literary Agency) was set up in 1956 whose primary functions were to promote the development of the national language; to translate works into Malay language; to standardise pronunciation; and to publish textbooks in the national language for schools, colleges and universities, and general books for the general public. Also in the same year, the Maktab Perguruan Bahasa (Language Institute) was established to provide training facilities for specialist teachers of national language.

The 1969 ethnic riots provided the underlying rationale for the government to put into effect recommendations of the earlier education reports, in particular, making a conscious effort of using the national language as the medium of instruction in schools and institutions of higher learning, thus dispelling any ambiguity that may have been associated with the earlier education reports' method of carrying out the national language policy in the national education system. In July 1969, taking a tougher line, the then Education

Minister Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yakub declared, 'English would be replaced by Malay one year at a time, from primary school to university' (Milne and Mauzy 1980:371). The government launched, for example, an extensive programme of training and re-training teachers to give flesh to this commitment. In addition, 1970 saw the establishment of the first local university that makes full use of the national language as its medium of instruction, the National University (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia). Malay was later introduced gradually as the medium of instruction in other local universities.

4.3.2 Post-1970 Education and Social Engineering

In the wake of the 1969 ethnic riots, the government felt that, as already intimated, the promotion of national integration and unity must be the overriding objective of the education system. This was to be attained through the increased use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction, the moulding of national consciousness and of spiritual values.¹⁰ In addition, the education authorities were to develop and orientate the education system and training programmes towards greater emphasis on science and technology so as to meet the country's manpower needs.¹¹ It is within this context and particularly under the NEP strategy (i.e. the restructuring of society) that emphasis was given towards educating and training more Bumiputera students at all levels of education so as to satisfy the country's manpower needs in such a way that ethnic imbalances in education and economic fields are redressed (Malaysia 1971b).

With such a commitment, it is to be expected that money spent on education and training by successive Malaysian governments since 1969

has increased tremendously over the years. In contrast to the actual expenditure on education and training during the First Malaysia Plan period (1966-1970), which was M\$329.4 million (Malaysia 1971a:231), the actual expenditure under the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) was M\$697.59 million (Malaysia 1981b:358), and the budget allocation under the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990) was M\$5,566.06 million (ibid.). Such a large sum of money has enabled the State to provide more educational facilities and opportunities to especially the Bumiputeras as a whole within an expanded public education structure, particularly in areas of study 'where the numbers of Malays are disproportionately small' (Malaysia 1971b:6).

The Malaysian education system

(i) Primary and Secondary education

The formal education structure in Malaysia has four levels: the primary (six years), the lower secondary (three years), the upper secondary (two years), and the pre-university (i.e. Sixth Form; two years).

Schools at the primary level are divided into three types: National schools (originally Malay-medium), National Primary schools (formerly English-medium), and National-type Primary schools (with Mandarin or Tamil as medium of instruction). All National and National Primary schools, which are fully funded by the government, use Bahasa Malaysia as their medium of instruction. On the other hand, the National-type Primary schools (Chinese and Tamil), are partially aided by the State. The duration of study at this level is six years.

On completion of their primary education, students are

automatically promoted to the lower secondary level for three years (Form I to Form III). Here a comprehensive type of education is provided. Apart from the academic subjects taught, elective subjects of a pre-vocational nature like Home Science, Industrial Arts, Agricultural Science and Commerce are offered. The students are to choose any one of them. There are also the residential science secondary schools and the MARA Junior Science Colleges which essentially cater to Bumiputeras in the government's desire to increase the number of Bumiputera students in the science stream.

At the end of Form III, students sit for the Lower Certificate of Education, the result of which determine who will be promoted to Form IV at the upper secondary level. Here the students are channelled into two types of schools, both of which use the national language as their medium of instruction: (a) Academic and (b) Vocational or Technical. Those in the academic schools prepare themselves for the Malaysian Certificate of Education which, depending on the results, will then enable them to be promoted to the pre-university level. At the end of their two years here, students can seek further education in local or overseas universities. On the other hand, those in the vocational schools could be considered, after their final examination, for further training in professional fields in tertiary institutions such as the Ungku Omar Polytechnic and the Kuantan Polytechnic. Those in the technical schools, upon completion of studies, can also seek further education in colleges and universities. Thus, as shown by Table 4.1 below, the pattern of enrolments in schools by ethnicity in Peninsular Malaysia changed considerably. For the Bumiputera students, their enrolments increased substantially at the upper secondary and post-secondary levels. The enrolment rate of the non-Malay students

between 1970 and 1975 in general increased in actual numbers, although it decreased in terms of ethnic proportions.

Table 4.1

PENINSULAR MALAYSIA: ENROLMENTS BY RACE AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 1970-1975

	1970					1975				
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
Primary	759,064	511,729	142,147	8,529	1,421,469	875,975	550,064	151,744	9,126	1,586,909
%	53.4	36.0	10.0	0.6	100.0	55.2	34.7	9.6	0.5	100.0
Lower										
Secondary	193,054	146,872	36,339	2,270	378,535	305,700	198,493	54,290	2,988	561,471
%	51.0	38.8	9.6	0.6	100.0	54.4	35.4	9.7	0.5	100.0
Upper										
Secondary	43,627	38,800	6,258	715	89,400	101,486	54,095	10,420	1,108	167,109
%	48.8	43.4	7.0	0.8	100.0	60.7	32.4	6.2	0.7	100.0
Post										
Secondary	4,609	5,267	637	106	10,619	8,817	6,617	804	97	16,335
%	43.4	49.6	6.0	1.0	100.0	54.0	40.5	4.9	0.6	100.0

Source: Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980); Table 22.6, p.400.

(ii) Tertiary education

Further education at the tertiary level, academic and professional, is primarily provided by polytechnics, colleges, institutes and universities.

There are only two polytechnics in the country, the Ungku Omar Polytechnic and the Kuantan Polytechnic, which cater to the needs of especially those who are educated in vocational schools. These polytechnics provide skilled manpower at semi-professional level in technical and commercial areas.

As for the colleges, the MARA Institute of Technology (MIT)

started as a training centre, established by the Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) in 1956, to train Malays in commerce. In 1965, RIDA became Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA, Council of Trust for the People) and the centre became MARA College. In 1967, the college was renamed MARA Institute of Technology. Its main objective is to train Bumiputeras in the field of commerce, industry and other semi-professional areas. The Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC), on the other hand, was set up in 1969 mainly to meet the educational needs and demands of the Chinese community. The college, which uses Bahasa Malaysia and English as its media of instruction, provides pre-university education as well as professional and semi-professional courses.

With regard to university education, all of the local universities by now use Bahasa Malaysia as their medium of instruction for most of the courses offered. These universities, which are wholly State-funded, are Universiti Malaya (UM, established in 1959), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM, Science University of Malaysia, 1969), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM, National University of Malaysia, 1970), Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM, Agriculture University of Malaysia, 1971), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM, Technology University of Malaysia, 1972), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM, Northern University of Malaysia, 1984). Thus, within a span of 14 years since 1969 four local universities had been set up. There is also the International Islamic University (IIU) which caters for overseas as well as local students.

The increase in the number of local universities meant that the number of student enrolment, particularly from the Bumiputera

Table 4.2

MALAYSIA: ENROLMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATION BY RACE, 1970¹, 1980 AND 1985

	1970					1980				
	Bumi-putera	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total	Bumi-putera	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
Degree courses										
TARC ²	--	--	--	--	--	6	1,687	59	--	1,752
MIT ³	--	--	--	--	--	725	--	--	--	725
UM	2,843	3,622	525	277	7,267	4,063	3,124	677	181	8,045
USM ⁴	67	126	33	5	231	1,612	1,073	195	17	2,897
UKM	174	4	1	--	179	4,896	628	189	13	5,726
UPM	--	--	--	--	--	1,431	221	88	12	1,752
UTM	--	--	--	--	--	877	115	44	11	1,047
Institutions overseas	--	--	--	--	--	5,194	11,533	2,676	107	19,510
Total	3,084	3,752	559	282	7,677	18,804	18,381	3,928	341	41,454
(%)	40.2	48.9	7.3	3.6	100.0	45.4	44.3	9.5	0.8	100.0

	1985				
	Bumiputera	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC)	3	2,099	42	2	2,146
MIT	1,560	--	--	--	1,560
UM	5,041	3,374	841	126	9,382
USM	3,996	2,509	657	45	7,207
UKM	6,454	1,914	468	64	8,900
UPM	3,652	603	253	17	4,525
UTM	2,284	567	154	26	3,031
IIU ⁵	363	14	14	--	391
UUM	488	161	44	3	696
Institutions overseas	6,034	13,406	3,108	136	22,684
Total	29,875	24,647	5,581	419	60,522

	<u>Bumiputera</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
(%)	49.4	40.7	9.2	0.7	100.0

Notes: 1. The breakdown of enrolment of Malaysian students in local private and overseas institutions is not available for 1970.

2. Degree conferred by the University of Campbell, USA.

3. Degree conferred by UKM and the University of Ohio, USA.

4. Includes enrolment in off-campus courses.

5. Excludes enrolment of foreign students.

Sources: Compiled from Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985), Table 21.3, p.352; and Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990), Table 19-3, pp.490-491.

community, had increased rapidly. This is in large part attributed to the provision under the amended Article 153 — after the 1969 ethnic conflict — whereby the King is empowered to 'give direction to any university, college or other educational institutions at post secondary level to reserve for Malays certain proportion of places as the Yang di-Pertuan deems reasonable. The intention... is to reserve places in those selected courses of study where the number of Malays are disproportionately small' (Emphases in the original. Malaysia 1971b:6). These measures were therefore taken to ensure that student intake in tertiary institutions reflects the ethnic composition of the larger society, and hence the instituting of the 'ethnic quota'. Thus the student enrolment into the University of Malaya for the academic years 1960/61 to 1969/70 by ethnicity (See Appendix X for a breakdown of the University of Malaya Student Enrolment into Year One by Faculty) contrasted very markedly with those after 1970 as shown by Table 4.2 (Latest figures are not available). The number of Bumiputera students in the pre-1970 period was substantially lower than those in the years after that era. Their numbers however were still lower than those of the non-Bumiputeras in overseas institutions in the post-1970 period.

Apart from the increase in the number of Bumiputeras at the tertiary level the period after 1970, there was also — as shown by the data in Appendix XI — a considerable increase comparatively between 1970 and 1975 in their numbers taking professional courses, at certificate and diploma levels, such as engineering; land and quantity survey; architecture and town and city planning; statistics, computer science and actuaries; accountancy; business; and administration and law. This situation was especially made possible by the offering of such courses at institutions like the MIT and MARA vocational institutes. The number of Bumiputera students taking such courses as engineering and medicine at the degree level was also substantial.

4.3.3 Educational problems

Scholarships and education: Unequal access

An overemphasis placed on paper qualification by prospective employers, especially the government, and also due to the high social status given to tertiary, particularly university, education have led to intense competition so much so that demand for local universities (and colleges as well) spills over into those abroad. There were about 39,908¹² Malaysians studying abroad in 1980 while 20,764 sought degree education in local universities and MIT in the same year. Mehmet attributes this to what he calls 'credentialism', i.e. undue stress is given to paper qualifications by prospective employers (1988:117; also see Robinson 1981:184-185; Aznam and McDonald 1989a:31); Dore would call such a phenomenon a 'diploma disease' (in Cosin and Hales (eds) 1983:51-59).

This high demand for university education is largely due to, as hinted earlier, the availability of scholarships. A survey of about 50

per cent of the graduates of each of the five local universities carried out in 1983 by the Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of Malaya revealed that 'two out of every three students in Malaysian universities were on government scholarships' (Mehmet 1988:118). The survey results also showed that almost four out of every five scholarships were awarded to Malays. The Chinese share was only 14.4 per cent, the Indian 4.3 per cent, and those from Sabah and Sarawak 2.9 per cent (ibid.:119). The survey also indicated that no fewer than 90 per cent of the 1982/83 graduates on scholarship were under bond with the government, thus compelling them to work with the government.

Another disturbing result of this survey is that government scholarships were distributed in a manner that favoured heavily the well-to-do. This unequal access to scholarships and hence university education was found to be far greater among the Malays than the non-Malays: 'For every chance that a poor (Malay) household has of getting a government scholarship, the richest group has 21 chances, compared to 13 and 10 chances for the richest Chinese and Indian households respectively' (ibid.:123).

Such inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic disparities in terms of scholarship awards and educational opportunities in general have also caused some disquiet among members of the Chinese community.¹³ Children of the poor plantation workers — particularly Indian — in Peninsular Malaysia, too, are confronted by severe educational problems. Marimuthu argues that these children 'have become an educationally disadvantaged group, with the highest drop-out rates, lowest achievement levels and attending the "poorest and smallest"

schools'.¹⁴

In conclusion, we could say that in its declared desire to achieve socio-economic justice for Malaysians, particularly the Bumiputeras, within the larger framework of forging national integration and unity, the Malaysian government has to some degree instead aggravated the socio-economic and political situation of the country. What is perhaps even more worrying is that the intra-ethnic disparities, i.e. in this case, the Malay community, particularly in crucial areas such as education, could spell grave danger to Malaysia's ethnic relations because a socio-economic neglect of a section of a community can be interpreted in ethnic terms, and thus making 'nation-building' a formidable task.

Notes

1. Like many other countries under colonial rule, Malayan economy was — and still is, perhaps to a lesser degree, after independence — crucial to the economic and political interests of Britain and other western countries such as the United States (Caldwell in Amin and Caldwell (eds) 1977:242-249).

2. Brennan (in Higgott and Robison [eds] 1985:112) argues that since the 1969 ethnic riots, the Malay fraction of the ruling class (consisting of an alliance of the Malay aristocratic, bureaucratic and landlord classes) has been allied to international capital in its drive to resolve its problems with the Chinese capitalists. And since its legitimacy has always been derived from its populist, nationalist and ethnic appeal to the Malay community, the fraction must be seen (at least officially) as protecting the 'interests' of the Malay community and against collusion with Chinese capital (ibid.). This Malay fraction must therefore, in order to survive politically and economically, create and promote conditions favourable for international capital accumulation within the social formation, thus giving rise to an array of political and economic problems that is associated with subsequent 'class formation and polarisation'

(ibid.). The Chinese capital, on the other hand, is entangled in a dilemma. Once closely associated with the Chinese capital, the international capital, as indicated earlier, has now had to forge alliance with the Malay hegemonic fraction in order to ensure favourable economic and political treatment for the primary purpose of economic exploits. Thus the Chinese capitalists are compelled to compromise with the Malay fraction or send their capital out of the Malaysian economy.

3. This period is particularly marked by the rapid growth of the Malay bourgeoisie. For this observation, see for instance, M.H. Lim (in Taylor and Turton (eds) 1988); Brennan (in Higgott and Robison (eds) 1985); W.Y. Hua (1983); and Mehmet (1988:101-124).

4. Britain under the Thatcher government is said to be the world's protagonist of this economic policy. Such an economic strategy, i.e. privatisation, has inspired many other countries, including those in the Third World, to try to adopt (Veljanovski 1988:xv-xvi).

5. One of the heavy industries projects is the so-called 'Malaysian Car', which involves the participation of the State-owned Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia (Hicom) together with the foreign partnership of Mitsubishi Corporation and Mitsubishi Motor Corporation who essentially provided the crucial automobile technology.

6. Similar educational objective was found in colonial Africa. For an account of the educational situation in colonial Africa, see Walter Rodney (1973:261-287).

7. S. Arasaratnam (1970:180) argues that English education had enabled children of Indian middle- and upper-class parents to improve themselves socio-economically and gain entry into the elite stratum of Malayan society. He adds, 'From the outset this opening was denied to the children of labourers, for both by quality and the content of the education they received they were isolated from the rest of society and ill-equipped to play any role in the country's development.'

8. Priority was given to the war waged against the Malayan communists and to economic development in the country.

9. A study conducted by Leong Yin Ching (1981:388) demonstrated however that Bahasa Malaysia as the country's national language was not necessarily perceived as a unifying force by many non-Malay students since they interpreted the mastering of the language as merely a 'passport' to higher education and, by extension, social mobility.

10. Islamic religious education continues to be made compulsory for Muslims at the primary and secondary levels (and in universities too). Non-Muslim students are taught moral education and ethics during the period when their Muslim counterparts attend classes in Islamic knowledge. Under the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985), for instance, ten new Islamic secondary schools were scheduled to be built, while a new Islamic Teacher Training College was to be constructed in the state of Selangor.

11. Manpower development is believed to be one of the main five objectives common to most developing countries. See Richard Jolly (1971) in Seers and Joy (eds), particularly pp.213-226.

12. This figure includes 19,515 students in degree courses, 4,953 in diploma courses, 5,263 in certificate courses and 10,177 in post-secondary level education (Malaysia 1981b:350).

13. See for instance David Chua (in MCA 1988:65-75) for an MCA view; Tan Seng Giaw (in DAP 1986:154-156) for a DAP perspective on this educational inequality. When confronted with criticisms of unfair educational accessibility, a (Malay) Minister of Education argued: 'We are trying to bring youngsters from the rural areas into the centres... bring them to the universities... send them overseas. But can we allow them to compete in normal circumstances? Certainly not. You find a Malay third-grade pass getting a scholarship to go overseas instead of a Chinese first-grade. Conclusion: racial discrimination. But we have no choice but to do what we are doing. The Malay student who gets a third-grade lives in the rural areas. If he was exposed to the same facilities he might well get a Grade 1. That is what the National (sic) Economic Policy is all about. This is what discrimination is about. (Far Eastern Economic Review magazine (23/6/78) quoted in Gullick and Gale (1986:232)' While this may constitute a measure of 'positive discrimination' undertaken by the government to help Malay students in education, the benefits of such a State sponsorship tend to be enjoyed largely by, as shown by the 1983 study of the Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of Malaya, a small section of the Malay community, namely the well-to-do, and by implication, the urban dwellers. The problem of social injustice and inequality therefore remains.

14. For an account of the state of education in plantation estates, see T. Marimuthu (in Husin Ali (ed) 1984:269-273). The generally dismal socio-economic conditions of the Indian poor can perhaps be attributed in part to the apparent marginalization of the Indian community as a whole in Malaysian society. As Aznam and McDonald (1989b:32) observed, 'Once invariably included as the third component in multi-racial Malaysia, today politicians and the media speak of Malays and Chinese, with the Indians almost ignored as a minority of "others".'

CHAPTER V

SOURCES OF 'CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE' FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

In general, schools are one of the social institutions to which are accorded the role to transmit what is deemed by education experts as 'culturally significant knowledge' to each new generation (Luke et al. 1989:246). That a particular knowledge is considered significant to be imparted to students relates closely to the question posed by Basil Bernstein of who 'selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates' this important knowledge, for to him this 'reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control' (in M.F.D. Young (ed) 1971:47). In Malaysia, the 'culturally significant knowledge' that is embodied in school textbooks is by and large defined by the State, i.e. the Ministry of Education, particularly when it possesses as an overall objective a declared desire to forge better ethnic relations among students in a multiethnic Malaysia. And, apart from teachers, the transmitting vehicle that is normally employed to convey this particular knowledge is the textbook, which also happens to be central to the learning and teaching processes in the country's formal education system. The Report of the Cabinet Committee to Review the Implementation of Education Policy of 1979 demonstrates the Malaysian government's professed objective to instil a sense of national consciousness through a common syllabus, in particular textbooks and other related materials: 'Common Content Syllabus as put forward by the Razak Report (1956) is regarded as an important basis of the national education system to bring about national unity... This will assist the process

of uniting the pupils of various races in this country besides creating a common national identity. (Malaysia 1985:47)' Given this political reality, this chapter attempts to trace and identify the sources responsible in defining, consciously or otherwise, transmitting and making available what constitutes the 'culturally significant knowledge' to schools and students in Malaysia. These are the Textbook Bureau of the Ministry of Education; book publishers in the public and private sectors; and finally teachers.

Textbook Bureau

The Bureau was established in 1967 (initially, only as a unit of the Education Ministry's Educational Planning and Research Division) with the primary objective of 'ensuring and maintaining the quality and standard of textbooks used in schools' (Malaysia 1981a:34) by the assessment of textbooks. This evaluation is made by 'a selected group of practising teachers or other educationists and teacher trainers who possess some expertise on textbooks evaluation' (ibid.). The evaluators will then recommend and distribute a list of approved school textbooks to all schools, which in turn are required to choose books only from this list. In addition, the Bureau has control over the purchase and sale of textbooks as well as monitoring the price and physical quality of the books. Equally important is its function to see to it that the textbooks 'fulfill the needs and aspirations of the Rukunegara (National Ideology), be written in good language and presented according to effective learning principles. (Malaysia 1985:117-118)' Thus while welcoming writers and publishers (who are registered with the Bureau) to contribute to textbook writing, the Bureau's director, Hashim Mydin, nevertheless cautioned that 'the end products must meet certain standard criteria' (in CAP 1986:108). This

Bureau constitutes a useful mechanism with which the government, in particular the Education Ministry, can give some inputs into the general guideline that governs in general the planning, writing and publishing of those educational materials which it considers beneficial to the well-being of the nation. This is where the government, for example, can see to it that 'sensitive matters or materials which are not suited for the multiracial and multireligious society in Malaysia will not be found in textbooks' (New Straits Times 14/7/88). After all, as Deputy Education Minister Woon See Chin asserted, 'This is in line with the Government's efforts to promote racial unity and to stamp out racial polarisation. (ibid.)' In other words, the government, through the Ministry of Education, is in a position to define to a large extent what constitutes a 'culturally significant knowledge' that should be transmitted to schoolchildren of various ethnic backgrounds.

Another function of the Bureau is to implement the government's Textbook Loan Scheme which was launched in 1975, a project that is meant to help needy students to acquire textbooks. In addition, the Bureau also cooperates and coordinates with the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP, Language and Literary Agency) in matters pertaining to book publishing and distribution.

The Bureau can give the impression of its evaluators working with clear criteria to vet new textbooks and other related materials. But experiences and grievances of publishers do not qualify that picture. The apparent lack of clarity of the Bureau as a whole in what constitutes good educational material makes the work of textbook writers, editors and publishers somewhat hazardous. Edda de Silva,

editorial manager of the Fajar Bakti, a Malaysian subsidiary of the Oxford University Press, for example, commented that whatever guideline there was from the Bureau was purely 'arbitrary' because there weren't any firm or written rules. 'We "learn to know" the guideline through our experiences with the Bureau,' she added (Interview, Petaling Jaya 27/7/88). Publishing manager Chia Chor Seong of Eastview Production Sdn. Bhd. too expressed the view that the guideline (of the Bureau) was 'quite general' (Interview, Petaling Jaya, 21/9/88). These sentiments were also shared by Haji Shaari Abdullah, vice-president of the Malaysian Book Publishers' Association (which represents about 70 registered publishers) and also business manager of the DBP, who suggested that the Bureau should let publishers and editors know where they went wrong in the production of a particular textbooks so as to avoid making the same mistakes in future (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 11/8/88). Besides, he added, this would help publishers reduce costs of production. When asked further why the Bureau concerned still (at least at the time of interviewing) hadn't got a clearcut guideline, Haji Shaari responded: 'Perhaps this goes to show that they're (the Bureau officials) still searching for one. (ibid.)' This 'deficiency' notwithstanding, de Silva said that the Bureau require all textbooks to be 'supportive' of government policies, i.e. these policies cannot be criticised (Interview, 27/7/88). For instance, Malays should be depicted in textbooks as acquiring comfortable and highly regarded professional jobs, a reference to the government's commitment to achieving the main objectives of the New Economic Policy (NEP), in particular encouraging more Malays to venture into the world of business and industry. However, if, for example, the socio-economic position of many Chinese new villagers has been neglected by the authorities concerned, which

is to a large degree a valid account, one cannot record this observation in the textbooks (ibid.; also see DAP 1986:146-149). National unity through education, as mentioned earlier, is the overriding concern of government. This, according to de Silva, has been translated by officials of the Bureau as giving emphasis to Malay culture and Islamic religion (ibid.). 'Nothing negative about Malays' should be shown in the textbooks, such as the poverty to be found in the Malay community (ibid.) In addition, these texts should not attempt to consciously or otherwise identify 'race with occupation or race with wealth or poverty' (ibid.), a deliberate step taken by the government so as to destroy popular stereotypes such as the easy-going character of Malays and the industrious nature of the Chinese. Further, the Bureau stipulates that if a textbook discusses business in Malaysia, it should not, for instance, use pictures or illustrations showing a row of only Chinese shops. Instead, the book should attempt to use pictures that display shops owned or run by all Malaysians irrespective of ethnicity. However, it cautions that when it comes to those shops owned or operated by Chinese, no Chinese characters (on signboards) are permitted (ibid.), which in many ways is consonant with at least the practices of certain local government authorities who imposed 'punitive advertisement fees' for the use of Chinese and other languages on signboards (K.S.Lim 1986:115-117). Hence, while certain officials of the Bureau may not be too clear about the guidelines for selecting materials for textbooks, they are apparently certain about promoting government policies, particularly one that encourages the depicting of Malays in a positive light. In other words, 'school knowledge', to quote M. Apple (in de Castell et al. (eds) 1989:156) 'has complex connections to the larger political economy'.

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

This government agency was established in 1956 primarily as a symbol of the Malay community's desire and aspirations to revitalise and popularise the use of the Malay language, especially after it was accorded the status of the country's national language, and also to enable it to meet challenges in the realms of administration, knowledge and modern culture. Given this underlying broad cultural design, it is therefore to be expected that under the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Act of 1959 Section (5), the agency's main aims are:

- (a) to promote and enrich the national language;
- (b) to promote literary talents, particularly those in the national language;
- (c) to print or publish or help in the printing or publishing of books, pamphlets, and other types of literary materials written in the national language and other languages;
- (d) to standardise spelling and pronunciation, and also to coin appropriate terminologies in the national language; and
- (e) to arrange and produce a dictionary in the national language (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 1967:17).

In tune with the agency's overall objective, some of its major publications have indeed become popular and highly regarded, such as the monthly magazines of Dewan Masyarakat, Dewan Bahasa, Dewan Sastera, Dewan Pelajar, and Dewan Siswa. Dewan Masyarakat commands a large following among Malay-educated Malaysians in general and students in upper secondary schools in particular, primarily because the magazine provides materials which are considered useful to the General Studies subject, coupled by the fact that quite often a few of its articles have been extracted and used for the Form Six public examination's General Studies paper. In addition, the magazine also

provides information on current affairs and analyses of domestic social issues and controversies although usually from a 'Malay perspective'. Dewan Bahasa is a semi-academic magazine that is devoted to the issues of and research in the Malay language, while Dewan Sastera dedicates itself to matters of Malay literature and popular culture. Dewan Pelajar and Dewan Siswa cater to the needs of primary school and lower secondary school students, and teenagers respectively.

The magazines aside, the DBP also, in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Education, publishes textbooks for primary school students, and academic books for upper secondary schools, the local universities and other tertiary educational institutions. As for the general public, the DBP publishes Malay novels and other Malay literary works, which is in line with its primary aim of promoting not only Malay language (which is Malaysia's national language) but also 'national culture'. The following comment of the then DBP director-general Datuk Hassan Ahmad attests to this commitment:

A publisher has a moral responsibility to society and the nation. It is important for him not only to understand but also to be committed to his role in the implementation of such policies as education, national culture and national language. (New Straits Times 14/9/87.)

The above statement was a response to the prevailing situation in the industry whereby there were people who became 'overnight publishers' solely motivated by profit. This prompted him as well as other concerned publishers to request the National Book Development Council to 'draw up rules for book publishers in the country' so as to ascertain the credentials, expertise and sincerity of future

publishers (ibid.).¹ This perspective is also not far from one of the professed aims of the Malaysian Book Publishers' Association: 'To help to foster national consciousness through publishing' (Malaysian Book Trade Directory, undated:52). This move to have stricter control over who joins the industry is indeed a manifestation of the concern of certain publishers of the need to protect the integrity of the industry as a whole from the unscrupulous practices of certain operators.

Private publishers

As far as this industry is concerned, the bulk of the book trade remains in the area of textbooks, guidebooks (or revision books) and related educational materials. Since the Second World War, textbook publishing constitutes about 70 per cent of the total annual book production in Malaysia (The Star 10/10/88). There are at least three major factors that contribute to this: One, the captive market of schoolchildren; two, emphasis placed on the importance of public examinations and the overall examination-oriented education system (and hence the proliferation of guidebooks and also textbooks); and finally, the lack of reading tradition in Malaysian society. Seen in this light, one can appreciate why school textbooks have unleashed competition among local book publishers. This competition is made even stiffer with, under the encouragement of the NEP, the growing participation of Malay book publishers. Haji Shaari of the DBP reinforced this point when he said that textbooks and guidebooks constitute 'a safe market' for most local publishers (Interview, 11/8/88). The lucrativeness of this market has inevitably caused certain problems and ill-feelings between the major publishers (who generally happen to be non-Malay and foreign-based) on the one hand

and the smaller ones (Malays in general) on the other. This fierce competitive spirit was displayed in the recent 'scramble' for the Education Ministry's million-dollar World Bank project of providing new books to schoolchildren. The Malay newspaper Watan (2/8/88), for instance, expressed editorial concern over the small degree of Bumiputera participation in the publishing industry. So far, it argued, Bumiputera publishers managed only to secure less than 20 per cent of the textbook market under the Education Ministry's Textbook Loan Scheme, and only seven per cent of the Ministry's allocation under the World Bank project. Yahya Ismail, a writer and critic, commented in his weekly column in the Malay weekly Mingguan Kota (10/7/88) that the Education Ministry was not doing enough to help Malay publishers who were too small in physical size and capital to meet some of the requirements of its Textbook Bureau. For example, he added, the Bureau insists that illustrations in books that were due for assessment must be in full colour and with the text typeset and printed, a process that could easily cost M\$2,500 per book. A fee for a book assessment by the Bureau is M\$300. In addition, a publisher whose books have been approved by the Bureau would need to conduct his/her own sales promotion to all the schools in the country, apart from the necessary giving away of complimentary copies to teachers, headmasters and others. These problems faced by small publishers, particularly the Bumiputeras, are further compounded by the arbitrariness in the decision-making of the Textbook Bureau, which can increase the costs of production. Given these financial and logistic problems, Yahya Ismail suggested that the DBP should be given an important role in supervising and coordinating the publication of books among Bumiputera publishers, beside also marketing these textbooks through its established national outlets.

The operating pattern of publisher Shukran Jamil Zaini of Nurin Enterprise perhaps would give us a rough idea of not only the kinds of problem a small-size publisher faces but also how s/he attempts to overcome such difficulties. Shukran uses his popular educational magazine Akademik not only as an effective basis of his business's financial viability, but also as a useful (and economical as well) vehicle to publicise and promote his new academic books to his readers (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 28/7/88). Chia Chor Seong asserted that Bumiputera book publishers had not been able to obtain a big slice of the textbook market because primarily they lacked capital and expertise. And, he added, because of the capital-intensive nature of the industry the successful publishers were normally the ones who were foreign-based (Interview, 21/9/88). Mr Chia said that certain Bumiputera publishers had already suggested that in future the Education Ministry should allocate certain quotas for them so as to help them meet the NEP goals. As regards the World Bank project, he noticed that certain publishing companies had been created to take advantage of it, and would only last for that particular project. In other words, these companies were not really serious about the quality and future of the local publishing industry (ibid.), a concern that was also echoed by Haji Shaari Abdullah.

The lack of a clearcut and coherent guideline from the Textbook Bureau has compelled some publishers to make their own house criteria more 'adjustable' to the Bureau's general guideline. Mr. Chia, for instance, said that his publishing company would consider favourably materials which project a love for the country. In addition, his group of editors would not accept anything that projects racial stereotypes,

aligns itself with certain political parties, 'especially the opposition', and possesses elements of advertisement (of certain products) (Interview, 21/9/88). As a last resort, he or any of his editors would consult the Bureau for some clarification if they still could not find solutions to their editorial problems (ibid.). In ordinary circumstances, the editors would consult each other or refer to the original writer of the manuscript if and when a problem surfaces, with the chief editor or editorial manager having the last say. As one of his guiding principles, publisher Shukran Jamil Zaini (who publishes educational magazine Akademik and academic books) shuns materials (for books or his magazine) which he himself deems 'too critical' of the government (Interview, 28/7/88). Further, he would, before accepting a certain material for publication either in book form or for his magazine, attempt to study the general background (like political orientation) of the writer concerned (ibid.). Thus this suggests a possibility of academic standards in school textbooks and guidebooks being sacrificed and the potential of them encouraging critical thinking being curbed to some degree. This also relates to the question of censorship which in turn concerns profitability (M. Apple in de Castell et al. (eds) 1989:163). Publishers and editors would be tempted to edit out from a text, if not withdrawing the whole manuscript, what they would consider 'controversial' or 'dangerous', particularly in an industry whose underlying motive is profit. Worse still, a problem that is essentially professional and financial in nature could in future be transformed by certain elements in the industry into something ethnic.

Teachers

While teachers are in general not involved in the actual planning

and production of textbooks and other related materials, they nevertheless play a significant role in making available in the classroom educational materials other than the prescribed textbooks. In a small survey of 18 teachers of Malay, Chinese and Indian descent (who either taught the subject of General Studies or History), many of them revealed that they referred to materials other than the approved or recommended textbooks. This they did because they felt that most of these textbooks in themselves were not 'sufficient' or 'comprehensive enough' or were a bit outdated. The reference materials were newspapers such as New Straits Times, Berita Harian, and Utusan Malaysia. The magazines took the form of Dewan Masyarakat, Dewan Bahasa, Dewan Sastera, Akademik, Diskusi, Prestasi, Utusan Pengguna, Far Eastern Economic Review, Asiaweek, and Newsweek. As for books, a few of the teachers referred to law and economics publications. It should be noted here however that with the exception of the foreign publications, the reference materials offered by the teachers could be considered 'safe'. This situation can be attributed in part to the fact that the Education Minister is empowered by law to, amongst other things, regulate the use and purchase of books and apparatus in educational institutions and to prohibit 'the use in any school or other educational institution or any specified class of school or institution of any book, the use of which appears undesirable (emphasis added)' (Malaysia 1987:49).

Conclusion

We have therefore identified the major sources of 'culturally significant knowledge', which primarily is embodied in the school textbooks. The Textbook Bureau acts as a mechanism of 'quality' control over school textbooks, no matter how obscure the terms of

control are at times. However, this vagueness could have two implications: On the one hand, a writer or editor could argue their case successfully under this shroud of measured uncertainty. On the other, this vagueness could provide the Bureau's officials ample room to manoeuvre to their own advantage and preference if and when the need arises, and it thus follows that this element of arbitrariness and vagueness has the indirect effect of making editors and writers tread so gingerly as to impose unhealthy self-censorship, 'playing it safely'.

In general, many, if not most, of the private book publishers and the DBP, to a lesser degree, depend a lot on the goodwill of the government for their own survival. The DBP is obliged to follow the policies of the government simply because it is a government body, whilst the private publishers perceive their financial survival to hinge on the lucrative market of school textbooks that is in turn closely linked to expensive government educational projects. In other words, market logic is likely to compel many publishers to sacrifice to some degree their editorial and policy independence, if any, and the overall quality of printed materials at the altar of profits. This situation could be made possible and aggravated if and when the government decides to re-write the rules of the competition, with the Malay publishers being accorded certain percentage of the textbook market, while the non-Malay publishers, big or small, are left to fight it out within a relatively compressed financial space amongst themselves.

The teachers are identified as one of the sources of 'culturally significant knowledge' because most of them are in the crucial

position to influence to some extent, select materials for and give emphasis to certain aspects of that knowledge to their students. It needs to be said here, though, that the bulk of the materials, particularly the local ones, that form the reference materials of the teachers are published by local newspaper and magazine companies whose editorial and business judgments are by and large governed by the provisions stipulated in the Publishing and Printing Presses Act (1984). In other words, it is quite possible that many of the articles in the newspapers and magazines on the whole reinforce what is already said in the prescribed textbooks, instead of serving as an effective avenue for alternative views for the students to be exposed to.² (Perhaps this explains in part why certain newspaper materials or items are extracted and reproduced by local publishers in their textbooks and other reading materials.) On the other hand, foreign publications, which incidentally also come under the purview of the Publishing and Printing Presses Act (1984) and are mainly in English and hence necessarily confined to those who are fluent in English, do sometimes produce relatively critical messages about the socio-economic and political affairs of the country.

Of course, all this is not to imply that the teachers would be influential enough to 'infiltrate' fully into the minds of the students, just as it is ill-advised to suggest that the editorial and bureaucratic controls in the Textbook Bureau and the editorial preferences and financial dictates of the publishers that determine to a large degree the contents of the textbooks would heavily influence the minds of the school students concerned. Nonetheless, what is required to be said here is that these are the forces at play which in many ways determine what 'culturally significant knowledge' is

available. It may have varying effects on students, particularly in terms of ethnic and national consciousness.

Notes

1. The primary aims of this Council are to provide a general policy for the development of book publishing in the country, to coordinate efforts made by publishers to improve standards such as conducting professional training among members, and to encourage reading among the general public.

2. As an example of a publication trying to exercise some editorial independence, a senior editor of one of the popular magazines of the DBP was reprimanded and transferred 'within 24 hours' to a different department within the same agency in 1988 for publishing a satirical short story, 'Maharaja Beruk' (Monkey King), which essentially criticised the leadership of the Mahathir government (Mingguan Kota 18/9/88).

CHAPTER VI

AN ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS

In this study, [a] five books pertaining to the subject of General Studies (Pengajian Am) and [b] four History textbooks have been analysed. They are (in alphabetical order): (a) Rupert Emerson (1987), Malaysia. Satu Pengkajian Pemerintahan Secara Langsung dan Tidak Langsung (Malaysia. A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 7th Print; (b) D.G.E. Hall (1979), Sejarah Asia Tenggara (A History of South-East Asia), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2nd Print; (c) Gilbert Khoo and Dorothy Lo ((1981), Asia Dalam Perubahan. Sejarah Tenggara, Selatan dan Timur Asia (Asia in Transition. The History of South-East, South and East Asia), Petaling Jaya: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia); (d) Atan Long (1987), Pengajian Am 2 (General Studies 2), Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti; (e) Ranjit Singh Malhi (1988), Kenegaraan Malaysia, (The Malaysian Nation), Petaling Jaya: Federal Publications; (f) Abu Hassan Othman, Razak Mamat & Mohd Yusof Ahmad (1988), Pengajian Am I (General Studies 1), Petaling Jaya: Longman; (g) Abu Hassan Othman, Razak Mamat & Mohd Yusof Ahmad (1988), Pengajian Am 2 (General Studies 2), Petaling Jaya: Longman Malaysia; (h) Mimi Kartini Saidi & Rahimah Salim (1988), Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM (Self-Preparatory: General Studies STPM), Kuala Lumpur: Federal Publications; (i) D.J.M. Tate (1985), Sejarah Pembentukan Asia Tenggara (The History of the Formation of South-east Asia) (Jilid II), Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 4th Print. These books constitute a list of recommended readings that is prescribed by the Education Ministry for students preparing themselves for the local equivalent of the Higher School Certificate

examination. This is an examination at a pre-university level.

For the purpose of this study, two books from each of the two sets (General Studies and History) are chosen to be included in the thesis proper; the rest, whose characteristics and contents are largely represented by these four books, are placed in the appendices. Originals of translated materials are also placed in the appendices and hence, 'Trans. Appnd.' in parenthesis is an abbreviation for Translation Appendix.

The criterion used for selecting materials that are deemed relevant to the study is: Texts which encompass those aspects of culture, politics, economics, and/or science that relate to and affect questions of fundamental liberties, race, ethnic identities and stereotypes, ethnic relations, nationalistic sentiments and 'national identity' of the major ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia, i.e. Malay, Chinese and Indian.

In this study, the analysis of each of these textbooks comes under three separate categories: the Cultural, the Political, and the Economic (but not necessarily in this order).

[a] (i). Ranjit Singh Malhi (1988), *Kenegaraan Malaysia* (The Malaysian Nation), Petaling Jaya, Federal Publications.

This 317-page (General Studies) book was written specially to meet the needs of students who are future candidates of the Form Six examination, the Peperiksaan Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM, or Malaysian Higher School Certificate Examination). This book fundamentally touches on political matters only.

The Analysis

THE POLITICAL

(a) A united Malaysian nation

In his discussion of the 'Nation' in Chapter 1, Malhi stresses the importance of having Malaysians united. He feels that 'We need to create a united people whose loyalty to the country is undivided [p.4; Trans. Appnd. 3.1]' because the country, he asserts, is still in the process of nation-building, and of creating a national culture as well. This exhortation is made despite positive features which, he says, Malaysia has as a nation: a definite territory, a population, an orderly government, and sovereignty, and also possesses 'other characteristics of a nation such as a constitution; an official religion (Islam); a national ideology (Rukunegara); and a national language (Malaysian language) [p.4; emphases in the original; Appnd. 3.2]'. Malaysia, he adds, also has symbols of a nation, which 'are the flag and the national anthem (NegaraKu) [p.4]'. The importance of the nation's characteristics is further reinforced by the chapter summary on page 15 (pointer number 2) where Malhi exhibits Malaysia's four characteristics of a nation: (a) a Federal constitution; (b) an official religion (Islam); (c) a national language (Malaysian language); and (d) a national ideology (Rukunegara). These characteristics notwithstanding, Malhi's apparent deep concern for national unity is perhaps best exemplified by his allocating a whole chapter to the subject of national unity in the book. This chapter will be examined later.

(b) Protection of citizens' basic rights

(i) The Malaysian Constitution

The subject of Malaysian constitution is given a further boost when Malhi discusses it on pages 4-5. Here the writer argues for the importance of a constitution to a nation (pp.4-5): 'A constitution is needed to create a political, economic and social framework that would facilitate national unity and development. A constitution is also important in order to avoid the abuse of power by the government and also to protect the interests of all ethnic groups. [Trans. Appnd. 3.3]' The importance of this is later reminded by Malhi in the chapter summary on page 15 where the reader is told (in pointer number 3) that 'A constitution is the supreme law that determines the type of government a nation would have and also the kind of human rights its citizens would acquire. All other laws must not come in conflict with the constitution. [Trans. Appnd. 3.4]' This concept of the 'supremacy of the Malaysian constitution' appears again on page 22 in the 'discursive questions' section where (in question no. 2) the reader is asked, 'What is meant by "the constitution as the supreme law"? [Trans. Appnd. 3.5]', and on page 48 where question no. 2 asks, 'What is meant by the concept of "the supreme Federal Constitution"? [Trans. Appnd. 3.6]'. In addition, the image of the constitution as being a guarantee for and protection of human rights is reminded on page 48 where question no. 3 asks, 'How far does the Federal Constitution protect the basic rights of a citizen? [Trans. Appnd. 3.7]' At the same time, Malhi also reminds the reader that Malaysia's constitution can be amended by at least two-thirds majority in Parliament (p.5); and it is in this context that the 'homework exercises' section on page 23 (no.2) should be approached, where the reader is asked to discuss the following topic: 'A constitution is

needed to be reviewed from time to time so as to adapt itself to new developments or needs. [Trans. Appnd. 3.8]'

Malhi, in chapter 2 on Federal and State constitutions, also asserts that (p.9) 'Malaysia and almost all western countries have a government that is democratic in nature' [Trans. Appnd. 3.9]. He substantiates this claim on page 10 by saying that a democratic system is based on the concept of 'government of the people, by the people and for the people'. And one of the characteristics of a democratic country that Malhi has listed down is that the country 'champions the freedom, equality and rights of the people' [p.10; Trans. Appnd. 3.10]. This noble task of a democratic country is repeated in the multiple-choice question no. 6 on page 20 where the reader is to make a choice from the given list of possible answers: 'A democratic country has the following characteristics: (i) decision is based on a majority vote; (ii) voting is conducted in confidence; (iii) the head of government is a president; (iv) all members of the legislature are appointed by the president; and (v) champions freedom, equality and rights of the citizen [Trans. Appnd. 3.11].' The answers given to this question by Malhi are (i), (ii) and (v). Two forms of reading are open to the reader: The noble goals of the constitution (such as protecting basic rights of the citizens, and the interests of the ethnic groups in the country), as they are presented in the book, may have the effect of giving the impression that all is well in the country. On the other hand, the display of these constitutional assurances as well as the required characteristics of a democratic country may also serve as a reminder to the reader as to where Malaysia, or rather the Malaysian government of the day, really stands in relation to, for instance, the curbs imposed on certain fundamental

liberties as expressed in Othman et al.'s Pengajian Am 1 and Pengajian Am 2 (the details of which will be discussed later).

(ii) The Judiciary

If the constitutional provision for the protection of the interests of all ethnic groups and the basic rights of the individuals as well as the Malaysian government's commitment to this constitutional provision is not enough, Malhi's description of the Malaysian Judiciary would help the reader feel more at ease. On the Judiciary, Malhi states that (p.177) it is '... the protector of basic human rights against any violation from either an individual or government. To ensure that the Judiciary can perform its tasks justly, it is somewhat independent of the controls of the legislative and the executive. [Trans. Appnd. 3.12]' This judicial role is repeated on page 189 in the chapter summary no.1. The importance of the independence of the Judiciary is again highlighted when Malhi states that (p.178) it 'means that the judges can interpret laws and administer justice according to their judgements without fear or favour. This is necessary in order to guarantee the rule of law and to protect basic human rights [Emphases in the original; Appnd. 3.13].' The judicial independence is further emphasised with the presentation of the discursive question no.1 on page 195 which reads: 'What is meant by the independence of the Judiciary? [Trans. Appnd. 3.14]'

(iii) The Parliament

In addition to this judicial checks, Malhi also assures the reader that the Parliament (p.156) '... controls the Executive through the approval of the annual budget allocations and also enables

the people to question actions of the government through their representatives in Parliament. [p.156; Trans. Appnd. 3.15]' In addition to these checks, Malhi adds that the primary role of the Upper House is to debate a particular bill passed by the Lower House with greater detail and care. That the Constitution protects the interests of all ethnic groups; the government of the day, by virtue of it operating in a country 'democratic in nature'; and the Judiciary is there to safeguard the basic rights of citizens may well stand out and serve as a grim reminder of the importance of having these freedoms promoted and protected, particularly in view of the restrictions already imposed on these fundamental liberties as shown in Othman et al.'s two books and the discussion below.

(c) Malays' Special Position and Rights

The assertion that the Malaysian constitution provides the protection for the interests of all ethnic groups and the rights of citizens experiences some kind of an ideological dissonance when it comes to the discussion of special position of the Malays and of national security — as has already been implied in Othman et al.'s two books. It is under the subject of fundamental liberties that a portion of this constitutional provision is put to the test. Equality, one of the eight fundamental liberties discussed by Malhi, is the case in point. (The other seven are [p.33-4]: freedom of the individual; freedom from slavery and forced labour; protection against retrospective criminal laws and repeated legal proceedings; prevention of banishment and freedom of movement; freedom of expression, assembly and association; freedom of religion; and the right to property ownership. This principle of fundamental liberties is mentioned again in the chapter summary on page 42 [pointer no. 4].) Malhi states

that (p.33) every Malaysian citizen should be treated equally under the law. He stresses that there should be no discrimination based on religion, race, origin or place of birth. But at the same time he also points out that an exception is made to this rule (p.34) as provided for in the Malaysian constitution:

Article 153 provides the special treatment for the Malays and other Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak in areas such as the holding of public service posts, the granting of scholarships and the issuance of permits and licences.
[Trans. Appnd. 3.16]

On this subject of special position of the Malays and Bumiputeras of Sabah and Sarawak, Malhi reiterates on pages 39-40 the significance of the give-and-take approach used and the 'political bargaining' struck by leaders of the three major ethnic groups prior to Malaya's independence in 1957 — all this in the name of maintaining political stability and unity in the country. Malhi thus writes (p.40):

Leaders of the Malays (who were represented by the United Malays National Organisation - UMNO) had agreed to the liberal citizenship conditions for non-Malays. Through the principle of *jus soli*, automatic citizenship was granted to all who were born in the Federation of Malaya on or after Independence Day. As a way of repaying this concession, the Chinese and Indians who were respectively represented by the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) had acknowledged the special position of the Malays who were left behind in the economic and educational fields. [Emphasis in the original.
Trans. Appnd. 3.17]

The 'political bargain', therefore, constitutes the granting of citizenship to the non-Malays in return for the provision of privileges for the Malays. The question of the socio-economic problems of the Malays, who are considered a numerical majority, is alluded to in chapter 11 where the topic of national security is discussed. Malhi begins by saying (p.223) that (economic) development and

national security are very much inter-related; one cannot do without the other. He asserts, 'Without the assurance of security, national development will be hindered. Conversely, uneven socio-economic development that does not benefit the majority of the population can jeopardise national security. [p.223; Trans. Appnd. 3.18]' This point is repeated in the chapter summary (nos.1 and 2) on page 228; and in the discursive questions nos.1 and 2 on page 232. This therefore underlines the importance given to the argument that special privileges are crucial to the objective of helping Malays economically and hence, maintaining the social and political stability of the country.

As mentioned earlier, the special rights of the Malays are provided for by the Malaysian Constitution in Article 153 and, adds Malhi (p.40), after the formation of Malaysia, these rights were extended to the Bumiputeras (the indigenous people) in Sabah and Sarawak. This constitutional provision reappears, and is thus emphasised, in the pointer no. 10 of the chapter summary on page 43 ('Article 153 provides the special privileges of the Malays and the bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak' [Trans. Appnd. 3.21]); in the multiple-choice question no. 4 on page 45 ('Factors that were central to the give-and-take approach employed between the races in order to achieve Malaya's independence are: (i) the special position of the Malays; (ii) the post of Prime Minister; (iii) citizenship; (iv) Malay language (now Malaysian language); and (v) voting right in a general election. [Trans. Appnd. 3.22]' The answer given is (i), (ii) and (iv).); in the multiple-choice question no. 6 on page 46 ('Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution provides: (a) Malay language (Malaysian language) as the country's official language; (b) the special

treatment for the Malays and other Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak in the holding of public services posts and the granting of scholarships; (c) Islam as the country's official religion; (d) the freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and association; and (e) equality for all under the law. [Trans. Appnd. 3.23]' The answer given is (b.); in one of the discursive questions (no.4) on page 48 ('Why is our constitution considered as the product of a give-and-take between the races? Give examples. [Trans. Appnd. 3.24]'); and finally in one of the two 'homework' questions (no.2) on page 48 ('Make a study of the give-and-take between the Malay and non-Malay races on several issues such as citizenship, the special position of the Malays, Islam and the sovereignty of the Malay rulers. [Trans. Appnd. 3.25]'). The subject of constitution as being a product of an inter-ethnic bargaining is again mentioned in another discursive question section on pages 47-48. Here question no. 1 asks, 'Why do we need to study the history of the development of the country's constitution? [Trans. Appnd. 3.26]'; and no. 4 asks, 'Why is our constitution regarded as the product of an inter-ethnic cooperation? Give examples. [Trans. Appnd. 3.27]'

As we can see, a lot of attention and emphases have been given to the issue of the special position of the Malays and other Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak. This important issue of special privileges of the Malays should also be viewed in a wider perspective that encompasses the royalty. The King, in chapter three where Malhi studies the System of Malaysian Government, is said to be (p.55) 'responsible in protecting the special position of the Malays and the bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak' [Trans. Appnd. 3.28]. This constitutional provision is well protected so that should any amendments be made to it, it would require the consent of the

Conference of (Malay) Rulers of which the King is a member (p.57). Thus, the principle of equality in Malaysia is tempered with the questions of the socio-economic backwardness of the Bumiputeras and of national unity and political stability of the country. At this juncture, it needs to be said that Malhi, as many Malay politicians and a few non-Malay ones, argues for a narrower sense of equality, that is, the need to help the needy Malays to gain equal access to economic resources of the country so as to achieve social justice. The barrage of reminders of and emphases on the importance and historical significance of Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution may have reached saturation point so as to alienate the reader, particularly the non-Malay one.

(d) Fundamental liberties

On freedom of expression, assembly and association (within the fundamental liberties discussion), Malhi states that the Malaysian Parliament can impose certain restrictions in the name of 'national security, and public or moral order' (p.34). As an example, he points out that it is an offence to question sensitive issues such as the special privileges of the Malays and the use of the Malaysian language as an official language. Not only do these restrictions affect the ordinary Malaysians, Malaysian Members of Parliament, too, have their parliamentary privileges curbed when it comes to 'sensitive issues'. Malhi thus declares (p.159): '... Members of Parliament cannot question the existence of certain sensitive issues such as the special rights of the Malays, citizenship, the national language and the suzerainty of the Malay rulers. [Trans. Appnd. 3.29]' As regards Malay special rights that are enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution (as Article 153), although its underlying objective is to serve as a

mechanism to help the Malays improve their economic standing and 'catch-up' with their non-Malay brethren through measures such as the New Economic Policy, the life of this constitutional provision may not necessarily be shortened once the majority of the Malays have attained substantial economic achievement. The possibility of this constitutional provision's longer life hinges on the existence of the Sedition Act which prohibits discussion or questioning of 'sensitive issues'.

(e) The Internal Security Act (ISA)

In the name of protecting national security, due judicial process is not adhered to in cases that come under the jurisdiction of the powerful Internal Security Act (ISA) of 1960. The ISA is employed by the government, says Malhi (p.224), as one of the methods used to combat a communist threat. He holds that (p.223) the process of creating a united Malaysian society is compounded by the fact that the majority of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) membership are Chinese while the majority of the country's armed forces' personnel are Malay. He warns that (p.224) the CPM is actively spreading its communist ideology and is receiving public support particularly through schools and trade unions (emphases in the original). The ISA empowers the authorities to do the following, as mentioned again in the multiple-choice question no. 4 on page 231: 'Anyone who is suspected of possibly threatening the security of the nation can be detained without trial for a particular period of time [Trans. Appnd. 3.30].' The equation here is necessarily as follows: the ISA is primarily meant to fight against a communist threat and the communist threat only. The dangers of the communist threat are raised again in the chapter summary numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6 on pages 228-229; four

multiple-choice questions on pages 230-233; and two discursive questions on pages 232-233. The reader, therefore, is reminded, directly or otherwise, of the need and importance of giving legitimacy to this exception to the judicial norm that a person will not be detained without trial for an indefinite period of time. The reader here may be compelled to rethink the earlier claim about the constitutional provisions, government's commitment and the Judiciary's role to protect citizen's (irrespective of ethnic origin) rights and interests, characteristics that are deemed essential to be acquired in the project of making Malaysia a modern state.

(f) Religious freedom

On freedom of religion in the fundamental liberties discussion, Malhi claims that everyone has the right to embrace and practise his/her own religion (p.34). However, he cautions of another exception to the rule: '... there is a law that restricts the proselytisation of a (non-Islamic) religion among Muslims' [Trans. Appnd. 3.31]. Put another way, any Malaysian but the Muslim is at liberty to embrace and practise whatever religion s/he so chooses. This religious restriction on the Muslim ought to be viewed in a social context that is compounded by the fact that almost all Malays are Muslim. And therefore any attempt at converting Malays into faiths other than Islam can necessarily be perceived as a threat to the numerical and political strength of the Malay community (as the analyses of other textbooks would illustrate), for constitutionally a Malay is, among other requirements and by definition, necessarily a Muslim. The Malay-Muslim reader may find solace and comfort from this constitutional provision, while his/her non-Malay counterpart may not necessarily cherish or share such a sentiment as it can be read as an

undemocratic practice.

(g) Institutional assistance for Malays

In its endeavour to help Bumiputeras to improve their economic standing, particularly in business enterprises, the Malaysian government has created a number of federal statutory bodies primarily for this purpose. On the topic of federal statutory bodies in chapter four, Malhi lists down on page 85 some of the organisations which were set up by the government. Three of these that are relevant to our study and thus require mentioning are the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA, or the People's Trust Council), Perbadanan Pembangunan Bandar (UDA, or Urban Development Authority), and Pusat Daya Pengeluaran Negara (PDPN, or National Productivity Centre). These are organisations which are associated with the 'Bumiputera participation in the fields of commerce and industry' (p.85). The importance of the UDA in assisting Malays in commercial activities is emphasised in the presentation of multiple-choice question no. 11 on page 98.

Related to the government's attempt to help speed up Bumiputeras' participation in commerce and industry is the federal agency, Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU). On page 128, two of the main functions of the Unit are stated as: to monitor certain government agencies and public enterprises such as the HICOM (Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia) and PERNAS (National Corporation) so as to see to it that they run along the lines laid out by the New Economic Policy objectives; and to help upgrade Bumiputeras' participation in commerce and industry through training schemes and other ways (Trans.). The importance of this Unit is again highlighted in the chapter summary (no.3) on page 130; in the multiple-choice questions

no. 6 and 9 on pages 133-134; and in the 'discursive question' section on page 134 (no.3). The State once again is seen playing an active interventionist role to help encourage the development of a Malay entrepreneurial class through the activities of the public enterprises (Bruce Gale, 1984). The emphasis is thus laid on the kinds of governmental help, in this case those coming from public agencies. The silence on any kind of help to needy non-Malays, at least in this book, is deafening.

(h) National language

With regard to the national language, Malhi writes that the Malay language's status as Malaysia's national language was written into the Malaysian constitution under Article 152. However, he does note that (p.40) '... no one should be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning any other language' [Trans. Appnd. 3.32]. Anyone found questioning this constitutional provision can be charged under the Sedition Act 1984. In other words, constitutionally there is a safeguard for the use of ethnic languages other than the national language. The legal status of the Malay language as the national language is, however, the only aspect of this constitutional provision that gains more attention and is emphasised, as in the case of pointer no. 11 of the chapter summary on page 43, and again mentioned in the multiple-choice question no. 11 on page 47. Given the legal and official position and the cultural value of the Malay language in the country and the rest of the Southeast Asian region, it is conceivable that the language has become part of Malaysia's foreign policy and regional cooperation as well. Malhi states that (pp.253-254) the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia Language Council, formed on 4th November

1985, aims to spread the use and upgrade the role of the national (Malay) language of member states; and to increase solidarity between member states. In the summary section, two pointers (nos.22 and 23) are presented on page 256 regarding the language council concerned. The importance of the national language has, as we have seen, also been touched upon by Pengajian Am 1, thereby adding to the emphasis given here, and consequently pushing the other vernaculars on the periphery.

(i) National unity

Malhi dedicates one whole chapter (10) on the question of National Unity, where he begins with a powerful quotation (from local sociologist Chew Hock Thye) on page 199: 'Malaysia is not the property of any one race, but a joint property of all races and all Malaysian citizens. [Trans. Appnd. 3.33]]' The quotation should serve as a useful reminder to the reader for it implicitly says that as a citizen of the country every Malaysian deserves equal treatment and rights under the law, as is already pointed out earlier by Malhi. The first paragraph of the chapter emphasises the importance of national unity (p.199):

National unity is the foundation of the effort of building a Malaysian nation that is strong, united, stable, just and progressive. Unity is also important in ensuring long term stability and security of the nation. Without unity, our nation will be exposed to the threats of race riots such as the one that occurred on 13th May 1969 and external aggression... We, as Malaysian citizens, should help and support efforts made by the Government in fostering unity [Trans. Appnd. 3.34].

The reader's attention should also be drawn to the writer's conceptualisation of unity. Malhi says that (p.199) 'Unity can be meant as one process of uniting the entire society and nation so that

every member of the society can form one identity and shared values and also having the feeling of love for and pride in the fatherland [Emphasis in the original; Appnd. 3.35].'

This endeavour to form a Malaysian identity and shared values brings us to the government's policy of infusing Islamic values into its administration. In chapter 14 where government policies are examined, Malhi begins by stating, among other things, that (p.285) 'The infusion of Islamic Values policy is not meant to Islamise the non-Muslims. The government hopes that all races in Malaysia would be able to appreciate and practise noble Islamic values which are good and do not conflict with the teachings of other religions... The Islamic values that can be absorbed by all races are trust, justice, discipline, cleanliness, honesty, the spirit of cooperation, neighbourliness, hard work, racial harmony, consideration and selflessness. [Trans. Appnd. 3.36]' This point about Islamic values is repeated in the chapter summary no.11 on page 289; the multiple-choice question number 4 on page 292; the discursive question no.4 on page 294; and the 'homework' question no.2 (iii) on page 295. The claim that these values are Islamic and hence merit their adoption by all Malaysians irrespective of ethnic origins and faiths may alienate the non-Muslim readers for these values are also espoused by other religions that are found in Malaysia. In other words, these shared values that are inherently positive and are not exclusive to Islam, when approached in this fashion, might have a disruptive effect on the multiethnic and multireligious Malaysia. Mutually positive values of all these religious traditions, could have been stressed and promoted — as have been indirectly insisted by Malhi in the 'homework exercise' section (p.220). Malhi also suggests in this chapter that

unity can be achieved in two main ways, integration and assimilation. Malhi adds that (p.199-200) elements of integration, a process of forming one national identity (emphasis in the original) among disparate groups, can be found in the realms of regional, economic, cultural, social, educational and political integration. On assimilation, he cautions that (p.200), given the context of the nation, total assimilation is rather difficult because of religious differences and strong ethnic feelings that can pose a major obstacle to inter-marriages. The non-Malay reader may tend to agree with the dangers of assimilation, and as a result favour integration.

On problems of unity in the Malaysian society, Malhi lists the following factors (pp.200-203): (a) religious and cultural differences; (b) the British divide-and-rule policy; (c) separate educational system; (d) separate economic activities; (e) ethnic associations; and (f) the Japanese Occupation. Having said this, Malhi then touches on (as is shown in the following) several factors which, according to him, constitute the solutions to these problems of unity. What is significant here is that by pointing out what are deemed to be problems of unity and later offering their 'solutions,' Malhi has in effect given the reader the impression that these solutions — especially if they are then repeated, and thus reinforced, in other forms — are not only the official, and hence rational, ones, but also quite 'natural'. He has therefore defined the parameters of discussion on this issue of unity, thereby excluding alternative and perhaps more effective solutions to the problems. In other words, as far as the book is concerned what has been said in this chapter about national unity constitutes the 'culturally significant knowledge' (Luke, de Castell and Luke in de Castell et al. (eds) 1989:246). In the

'homework exercise' section (p.220), Malhi does ask the reader to make a study of the cultural commonalities between the Malays, Chinese and Indians — instead of merely focusing on their religious and cultural differences. And as for the steps taken by the Government, Malhi provides the following (pp.203–213): (a) Rukunegara (the national ideology that contains five principles: (i) Belief in God; (ii) Loyalty to King and Country; (iii) Upholding the Constitution; (iv) Rule of Law; and (v) Good Behaviour and Morality [Trans.]); (b) New Economic Policy (NEP); (c) National Education Policy; (d) National Culture Policy; (e) National Language; (f) National Unity Department; (g) the ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front) party; and (h) regional integration. All of these remedial measures that have been taken by the Government are again mentioned in the chapter summary no.5 on pages 213–215. There are at least two of the proposed 'remedies' which are problematic: national culture policy and Barisan Nasional party. The first is a policy that is still controversial and potentially divisive, while the second one in itself can be and has been, on a number of occasions, a source of ethnic tension and disunity.

The re-emergence of the following in the 'multiple-choice questions' section (pp.216–219) has the effect of emphasising their importance: Rukunegara (nos.2 and 3); the NEP (nos.4 and 6); the National Education Policy (nos. 8 and 9); the National Culture Policy (no.7); and the National Unity Department (no.10). And the subject of Rukunegara is again mentioned on page 220 in discursive question no.3; National Culture Policy and the NEP in discursive question no.5; and regional integration in discursive question no.6. Malhi, in the chapter (four) on the 'Administrative Structure of the Federal

Government', states that (p.81) the National Unity Department is one of the nine government agencies and public enterprises which are directly responsible to the Prime Minister's Department. This may imply, rightly or wrongly, that the Prime Minister's Department places great importance to the question of national unity.¹

(j) The Monarchy

Under the chapter (3) on the 'System of Government and Malaysian Administration', Malhi, like Othman et al.'s two books, touches on the subject of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or the King of Malaysia (pp.53-55). Here the King is sketched as a 'symbol of sovereignty and national unity. [p.54; Trans. Appnd. 3.37]' The King is also described on page 145 as the head of the Islamic religion in states where there are no Malay rulers. In states where there are Malay rulers, the latter are the heads of Islam in their respective states. The role of the King in the framework of parliamentary system is also examined on pages 156 and 163. And this point is further emphasised in the chapter summary no. 8 on page 167 where it says, 'Bills that are passed by the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House) and the Dewan Negara (Upper House) need the consent (except that which is provided for in Article 66) of the King before they are made laws [Trans. Appnd. 3.38].' Apart from this, the King, as already mentioned earlier, is also said to be (p.55) 'responsible in protecting the special position of the Malays and the Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak. [Trans. Appnd. 3.39]' This constitutional provision is well guarded so that should any change be made to it, it would require the consent of the Conference of (Malay) Rulers of which the King is a member (p.57).

The significance of the King and the Conference of Rulers is

amplified by its repetitive mention on page 72 where discursive question no. 3 asks, 'What are the functions of the Conference of Rulers [Trans. Appnd. 3.40]?' and in 'homework' question no. 2 (on the same page) which reads, 'Make a study of the importance and role of the Conference of Rulers in the Malaysian system of government [Trans. Appnd. 3.41].'. The significance of the Conference of Rulers is once again highlighted on page 111 where it is portrayed as the important coordinating mechanism between the federal and state governments. Malhi adds, 'This Conference of Rulers can discuss any matters concerning national policies. Malay religious and custom matters can be solved by it. Any changes to the Constitution and state boundaries require its consent. [Emphasis in the original; Appnd. 3.42]' Another role of the King and the Conference of Rulers is that the former is responsible in appointing Malaysia's judges after receiving the advice of the Prime Minister who in turn has already discussed with the Conference of Rulers (p.178). The legal, socio-cultural and political standing of the Malay rulers are given more importance and emphasis by this chapter particularly in areas that concern the interests and welfare of the Malays and Muslims. Given such a prominence, the institution of Malay royalty may be easily perceived by the non-Malay reader as really the symbol of unity and security for Malays, and not all Malaysians.

Sentence phrasing and use of terms, themes and concepts

On page 40, Malhi writes: 'Through the principle of jus soli, automatic citizenship was granted to all who were born in the Federation of Malaya on or after Independence Day. To reciprocate this concession, the Chinese and Indians who were represented by the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress

(MIC) had acknowledged the special position of the Malays who had been left behind in areas of economy and education. [Emphasis in the original; Appnd. 3.43]' The use of the phrase 'the Chinese and Indians who were represented by the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC)...' gives the impression that, first, all Chinese and Indians were represented by these two respective political organisations and secondly, all of the members of these two ethnic groups had agreed to this 'political bargain', which in fact was not the case. There were people in these two groups who disagreed with this political arrangement for they argued that this would contravene the principle of equality for all the citizens of the country.

In his discussion of national unity and measures taken to help foster good ethnic relations, Malhi cites the ruling Barisan Nasional party as one of the means to achieve ethnic unity in the country, which is a debatable contention. He states: 'It can't be denied that Barisan Nasional has contributed to political and national unity. Through Barisan Nasional, social and national problems can be solved via consultation, understanding and tolerance. [Trans. Appnd. 3.44]' Apart from it being a contentious statement as argued elsewhere, the use of the phrase, 'It can't be denied that...' is not only questionable but also has the effect of 'bulldozing' one's idea onto the reader without him/her realising it.

Note

1. It needs to be pointed out here, though, that the National Unity (NU) Department started out as National Unity Ministry in 1972. However, in 1974 its status was demoted to National Unity Board, and in 1980 it changed to National Unity Department in the Prime Minister's Department (NU Department's undated pamphlet).

(ii) Mimi Kartini Saidi & Rahimah Salim (1988), *Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM* (Self-Preparatory: General Studies STPM), Kuala Lumpur, Federal Publications.

This 306-page book, which serves to help guide the students at the Form Six level in preparing themselves for their General Studies examination paper at the end of their two-year studies, is divided into four sections: [1] 'Introduction' (pp.3-43); [2] 'Excerpted Articles for Exercises' (pp.47-201); [3] 'Change of Communication Form' (pp.205-280); and [4] 'Problem Solving' (pp.283-296).

The Analysis

THE CULTURAL

(a) National language

Sample question 2 (pp.28-30) in Chapter 3 (on Sample Questions and 'A Guide to Preparing the Framework of An Essay') reads, 'Explain the problems of the lack of children's reading books particularly those in the national language, and also suggest measures to overcome them. [Trans. Appnd. 4.1]' The given introduction of the essay's sample framework says that there is not only a lack of children's books as compared with those for adults, but also insufficient children's books in the national language as compared with those in other languages. The essay concludes that writers and publishers of children's books should cooperate with each other in improving the book situation, whilst at the same time it proposes that schools and the government should encourage the publishing of more of those books in the national language. The writer's concern with the lack of children's books and particularly those in the national language seems genuine given the notion that this would be one of the ways of

popularising the national language. The reader may also connect this concern for more use of the national language in children's reading materials with the histogram (p.223) in the 'Prose to Graphics' part, which displays the distribution of marks in Bahasa Malaysia (national language) of Form Three students. It contends that there are still a number of students who have failed their Bahasa Malaysia paper quite miserably. The issue of the use of the national language emerges again in Exercise 1 (pp.261-262), under the 'Exercises for the transition from Prose to Graphics'. Here data of a census conducted on 7,596 government and government-aided schools in Malaysia in 1983-4 shows, among others, that the teacher-student ratio is not good. It is also here that the lack of the mastery of the national language is raised. The information expresses concern over the fact that of the 72% of students in the '10-year and above' age group who are literate, 'only 54% can master the Malaysian language, that is, Malaysia's national language' [p.261; Trans. Appnd. 4.2].

The question of national language does occupy a lot of the book writers' attention. Exercise 2 (pp.92-94) is on the text entitled, 'Bahasa Menunjukkan Bangsa' (Language Reflects A Race/Nation). The writer of this extract holds that language in the old Malay society used to be an indicator of a person's social conduct and etiquette. He acknowledges however that development and changes in modern times may have made this an inaccurate gauge. He also perceives language as an identity of a nation. Is it really true that a language reflects the people's spirit, thinking, worldview, etc.? he asks. He says, yes and no. Yes, he states, in the case of Indonesia, for instance, where Indonesians from all over the country's vast regions not only communicate through the Indonesian language but are also made to

'feel' Indonesian by the use of their national language. However, language is not a reflection of a nation of people in the case of, for example, the Philippines where the nationalist sentiments of the people are not reflected in Tagalog, their national language. This is because, argues the writer, Filipinos still need English language to communicate among themselves. In the case of Malaysia, he asserts that the country is in the process of not only making its national language a tool of inter-ethnic communication but also a language of nationalism. All of the five objective questions that follow the article focus and lay emphasis on the importance of a national language, particularly Malaysia's national language (pp.95-96): Question 1 concerns the notion of 'language reflects a race/nation' in Malay society; Question 2 is about the idea of slogan in Indonesian society; Question 3 seeks out the reader's understanding of the term 'state language'; Question 4 tries to find out the reader's grasp of the term 'national language'; and Question 5 seeks the reader's knowledge of activities that have been conducted to make Malay language as Malaysia's national language.

As mentioned elsewhere, the issue of language has been controversial in multiethnic Malaysia so that, in the wake of the ethnic conflict of 1969, the status of the Malay language as the national language and at the same time the position of other vernacular languages, protected and written into the Malaysian constitution in Article 152, have been shunt from the arena of public debate by an amendment to the Sedition Act of 1948.¹ The emphasis given by this and the other General Studies books on the issue of national language as well as the constitutional and legal protection accorded to the language itself reflects a conscious desire on the

part of the government and the book writers to promote and project the Malay language as Malaysia's national language. This project is thus a constitutional and historical imperative in the long-term objective of the State to attain what is seen to be the coveted status of a developed, modern polity.

The issue of language is still pursued as illustrated by the extracted article in Exercise 3 (pp.96-100), entitled 'Interpretasi dan Bahasa Undang-undang' (Interpretation and Legal Language), which basically calls for a vigorous effort to translate laws and statutes in Malaysia which were originally written in English. While recognising the many difficulties, particularly technical ones, in translating legal materials, the writer nevertheless argues for the utmost importance of translating legal works into Malay language by virtue of its official status as Malaysia's national language. It is therefore less of a surprise that all of the five objective questions following the extract concern themselves with the problems associated with translating legal works in Malaysia (pp.98-100): Question 1 revolves around the concern about the lack of interest of the local intellectuals in writing law books; Question 2 is about a linguist who cannot translate legal texts into the national language; Question 3 concerns legal experts who have less interest in translating legal texts; Question 4 seeks out the reader's ability to ascertain who would be the best to do the translation work; and Question 5 asks the reader to spell out factors that cause the dearth of legal texts in the national language. This is therefore presented as one area where proponents of the national language would like to see more use of the language. This is also one step towards making the status of the national language more meaningful. As we can see, since the beginning

of this cultural section heavy emphasis has been given to the political, legal, social and cultural significance of Malaysia's national language. Not only that, this subject is also treated at great length in Pengajian Am 1 (Othman et al.), Kenegaraan Malaysia (Malhi) and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) which in essence give support to the national language, thus making this emphasis more pronounced. In contrast, nothing much, if at all, has been said in this book on the other aspect of Article 152 of the Malaysian constitution, i.e. the status and uses of other vernacular languages. Such a degree of emphasis on the national language could well be interpreted as marginalizing and down-grading the legitimate position of other vernaculars.

(b) Racism

The issue of racism is discussed in Exercise 7 (pp.70-74) in Section 2 where there is an extract from a UNESCO publication, Kurier, entitled, 'Faham Perkauman Pada Hari Ini' (Racism Today). The article begins (p.70):

If all of the writings that support racism were to be summarised, it will be found that in general the content of those writings would fall into three categories of statement: first, the notion of the original or genuine race; second, that original race is biologically superior and thus that particular racial group is also psychologically and culturally superior; and third, this superiority legitimises its dominance and socio-historical privileges (over others) [Trans. Appnd. 4.3].

The article asserts that recent scientific study reveals that the above claims are untrue. Nevertheless, it cautions, these myths still prevail and persevere because of the social situation in which one group has to interact with the others which the former considers different. The claim of dominance of the 'superior group' over the

'inferior group' is, it emphasises, a mere ideological tool of the former to take control over resources available to both groups and hence, to exploit the latter.

The cautionary note of the writer of the above article is repeated in the objective questions that follow. Question 1 (p.73) says (in its given answer) that the gist of the article is that racism is formed in order to 'show' the uniqueness of a particular race of people.

Question 3 [p.73; Trans. Appnd. 4.4] reads:

The writer tries to illustrate that racism is a device to legitimise aggression and to grant privileges. The real meaning to all this is

- a. to enable a particular race to obtain privileges.
- b. to control other races.
- c. to gain control over material benefits from other races.
- d. to achieve security and survival.
- e. to ensure the security of a particular society.

The answer given is (b).

And Question 4 [p.73; Trans. Appnd. 4.5] reads:

According to the writer, in order to survive a human being must do the following. Which of the following is not relevant to the context of the extract? (Emphasis in the original.)

- a. to be aggressive.
- b. to defend one's rights.
- c. to act in a manner of aggression.
- d. to cooperate.
- e. to adopt racism.

The answer given is (d), because it does not relate to the example of an aggressive and exploitative human environment as illustrated by this extract.

The extract and its multiple-choice questions above should serve as an eye-opener to the reader in a society where ethnicity becomes

politically, culturally and economically significant. But more than that, this constitutes one of the positive portions of the book in that its writers have chosen an extract that is constructive in helping to generate an understanding and appreciation of non-racist attitude and behaviour in a multiethnic society. This certainly contrasts with the negative approach of Pengajian Am 1 (Othman et al.) which implicitly glorifies so-called racial differences. In addition, this also contrasts with the 'exclusive' tendency projected in the article in A. Long that calls for the cultural 'purification' of Malay songs. Many readers, Malay or non-Malay, may be able to appreciate and even promote this critical view of racism in so far as s/he does not succumb to some strong pressure from her/his ethnic community to conform to its own dictates and narrow interests, apart from the potential 'fear' of what constitutes the preferred view of the examination authorities regarding race-related issues.

(c) National identity

The extracted article in Exercise 8 (pp.74-78), entitled 'Pewujudan Keperibadian Nasional' (The Creation of a National Identity), is, as the title suggests, essentially about Malaysia's desire and attempt in having its own national identity. Eh Chot Cha Chan, the writer of the original article, expresses the importance for Malaysia to have its own national identity, especially in the face of what he calls 'cultural imperialism' of the British colonial power whose legacy he feels is still felt today in many areas of Malaysian life such as education. He writes (p.74),

Among the important features of a national identity of a Malaysian nation is, having the pride of being and considering oneself as a Malaysian race that is perceived to have a joint possession of symbols of independence,

language, arts, history and aspirations; living under the guidance of the Rukunegara; possessing the sentiment of a Malaysian nation that lives harmoniously in an independent and sovereign country; and having the love for and loyalty towards the nation, king and country. [Trans. Appnd. 4.6]

In addition, the writer asks what Malaysians have achieved in creating and assessing the features of a national identity. His response is (p.75): 'There is still a certain group that practises separate behavioural system, cultural and social values, and social organisations that at times come in conflict with the national aspirations [Trans. Appnd. 4.7].' Readers at a glance may wonder which group the writer is referring to. A hint can perhaps be found from the writer's further statements below.

Given this perceived unsatisfactory achievement in the effort to create a national identity, the writer suggests a number of measures, one of which is to intensify the introduction of cultural activities that are based on elements of national culture in schools, 'particularly in those schools which have many non-Malay students [p.76; Trans. Appnd. 4.8]' (emphasis added). He adds (p.76), 'In this matter, it is most appropriate of the Ministry of Education to establish a Malaysian Schools Cultural Council on 16 July 1984, which can give guidance to headmasters regarding cultural activities in schools so as to ensure that they are consonant with the national culture. [Emphasis added. Trans. Appnd. 4.9]'

The writer also suggests that (p.76-7) 'The Ministry of Education should direct all schools, particularly those secondary schools that are huge and with students of various ethnic background to hold special gatherings in schools in conjunction with the National Day every year. In this gathering, speeches whose themes revolve around

love for the country and to remember the nationalist figures, to sing patriotic songs, to declare one's loyalty to king and country, and the staging of short dramas that praise the beauty of the country. This is one effective step to forge the love for the country, nationalistic feeling and features of a Malaysian national identity. [Emphasis added; Trans. Appnd. 4.10]' As in the previous paragraph, the special reference to schools which are of 'various ethnic background' points to the writer's apparent concern about non-Malay cultural activities that are seen to be at variance with the main principles of the proposed national culture. And hence, he points out the need to give special attention to schools having students from different ethnic groups in inculcating the spirit of nationalism as well as elements of the national culture.² Thus, at this juncture, the reader can not only identify the 'separatist' group that the writer tries to imply, but also infer that the 'national identity' that the writer promotes is one that is based on the national culture that is defined by the government, i.e. Malay-based. And if one were to take this definition of Malaysia's national culture, then all the other General Studies book (except perhaps Malhi's) that have discussed extensively the subject of national culture can be said to have been involved in the construction of this kind of national identity. A non-Malay reader, while possibly appreciating the need 'to have a joint possession of symbols of independence, language, arts, history and aspirations', may feel alienated by this insinuation from the text. Even here, too, crucial questions could be raised about 'whose' symbols the writer is talking about.

The writer adds that (pp.77-78) steps should also be taken to continuously promote the national identity in the larger society. 'In

this regard, RTM (Radio-Television Malaysia) and TV3 (private television station) can make important and effective contributions. RTM and TV3 should provide a lot of local fares of high quality regarding local history, memoirs of nationalists, the beauty of Malaysia, dramas with nationalistic themes, patriotic songs and positive sayings. [Trans. Appnd. 4.11]' Taking the cue from his previous statements above, 'important and effective contributions' would necessarily mean the mass cajoling of the people to accept the dominant Malay elements of the national culture. This 'mass cajoling' notwithstanding, students in particular and teenagers in general may just find themselves instead easily 'lured' to the attractions of the popular culture such as Western and local pop songs, 'commercial-type' movies and videos, etc.

One of the two discursive questions that follow immediately after this extract reads (p.78), 'A national identity and culture isn't possible to be formed in most multiracial societies [Trans. Appnd. 4.12].'. Given the 'preferred view' of the above writer and the education authorities in general, readers may find themselves consciously or otherwise reaching for the expected conclusion: that a 'national identity and culture' can be established in a multiethnic society.

The concern for Malaysia's national identity is also reflected in the objective questions following the extracted article. The problem of achieving this goal is repeated in Question 2 which reads (p.79):

In the writer's opinion Malaysia's national identity has not been formed yet because

- a. there are different behavioural characteristics in the

- Malaysian society.
- b. it needs time, for national identity cannot be formed within a short space of time.
 - c. foreign culture still has a strong influence within Malaysian society.
 - d. of the cool attitude of some Malay leaders towards the idea of creating a national identity.
 - e. all of the above. [Trans. Appnd. 4.13]

The answer given is (b).

Such a great emphasis given on and concern for the subject of 'national identity' by the book writers — who express, implicitly or otherwise, their support for such an ideological construction as well as cautioning the reader of certain opposition to this project — reflects the important observation of Anthony Smith (1988:206):

Creating nations is a recurrent activity, which has to be renewed periodically. It is one that involves ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions; each generation must re-fashion national institutions and stratification systems in the light of the myths, memories, values and symbols of the 'past', which can best minister to the needs and aspirations of its dominant social groups and institutions. Hence, that activity of rediscovery and re-interpretation is never complete and never simple; it is the product of dialogues between the major social groups and institutions within the boundaries of the 'nation', and it answers to their perceived ideals and interests.

(d) Malay cultural heritage

'Memelihara Pusaka Budaya' (Protecting Cultural Heritage) is an article on which Exercise 7 (pp.111-114) is based. The article, as its title suggests, discusses the importance and techniques of protecting and maintaining cultural artefacts that may take the form of architecture, historical sites and documents, etc. The significance of this article can only be felt and appreciated after the reader has read a few of the articles mentioned below that basically discuss and highlight certain aspects of Malay cultural heritage.

(e) Malay culture

(i) Naming names

Exercise 9 (pp.80–82) revolves around an article about 'Menamakan Nama' (Naming Names) of babies. As its title suggests, the article focuses on the social practice of the Malay community in naming new born babes. For instance, the writers say that some Malay parents, when attempting to name their offspring, would be guided by their Islamic faith, in terms of the names of prophets and Arabic names in general.³ The practice of naming names, they add, changes with the passage of time. Similarly, the Indian community would normally refer to its religious leaders before giving names to new born babies.

The writers do stress however the need to exercise caution when christening offspring in a multiethnic society like Malaysia. They argue that certain names may mean different things to different ethnic groups, which in certain cases could only elicit laughter. They give an example of a fictitious Chinese name that was originally concocted by a famous Malay journalist, Ishak Haji Mohamad — Tong Sam Pah (literally meaning, in Malay, dustbin). At this point, it should be said that a non-Malay reader may suspect that the use of such a 'Chinese name' could be more than mere coincidence: an act of mischief on the part of the book writers. As it is, there is no mention here of a Chinese way of naming names. The article however concludes that for the more liberal, the response to all this is simply: what's in a name?

While there is an apparent attempt (as exemplified above), albeit somewhat limited, to include the practices of naming names among all

the major ethnic groups in the article, all of the five objective questions that follow it (pp.83-84) relates to things Malay only: Question 1 relates to the tracing of the origins of traditional Malay names; Question 2 is about the Malay name 'Damak' that is normally associated with certain human attributes; Question 3 is on certain Malay names that do not originate from Peninsular Malaysia; Question 4 concerns the social status that is attached to a particular Malay name; and Question 5 is regarding certain Malay names that take into consideration certain factors that would determine the former's suitability. Though some may argue that the Malay practice of naming names is a trivial matter, its inclusion in this book nevertheless registers the apparent perception on the part of the book writers that aspects of Malay culture need to be highlighted in light of the government's attempt at forming a national culture that is based on Malay culture. Here the non-Malay reader would not be happy with the marginalizing of certain aspects of her/his own culture.

(ii) Malay aesthetics

Exercise 8 (pp.114-118) focuses on 'Prinsip-prinsip Seni Dalam Estetika Melayu' (The Principles of Fine Arts in Malay Aesthetics). The principles examined by the writer are what he terms as 'Prinsip Berhalus' (Principle of Fineness) [The concern here is towards the fineness and precision of the object of art.]; 'Prinsip Berguna' (Principle of Utility) [The emphasis here is for the object of art to be functional as well as aesthetic.]; 'Prinsip Bersatu' (Principle of Unity) [The stress is on the holistic approach towards the object of art.]; 'Prinsip Berlawan' (Principle of Conflict) [Attention is also given to the tension that embodies the object of art.]; and 'Prinsip Berlambang' (Principle of the Symbolic) [An object of art, apart from

being functional, is also symbolic in nature.]. Following this article are five objective questions (pp.118-119), all of whom focus on aspects of Malay culture and arts: Question 1 on Malay concept of fine arts; Question 2 on the use of symbols in Malay fine arts; Question 3 on the Malay 'Principle of Fineness'; Question 4 on the (Malay) 'Principle of Egalitarianism'; and Question 5 on a particular characteristic of the Malays. Thus the stress here is on Malay arts.

(iii) Malay traditional theatre

The article in Exercise 9 (pp.119-123), 'Teater Tradisional Asia Tenggara — Wayang Kulit' (Southeast Asian Traditional Theatre — the Shadow Play), discusses one particular form of a traditional theatre, the Shadow Play, which has been popular in Southeast Asian region, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia (known as 'Wayang Kulit', for both countries), Thailand ('Nang Tallung') and Cambodia ('Ayang'). The writer holds that theatre in Southeast Asia, whose area encompasses Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, used to be considered by archaeologists, art and theatre experts as part of the larger group of the Indian theatre. Given such a cultural history, it is perhaps no surprise that the Shadow Play is said to be very much influenced by elements in the Hindu culture and religion, in particular the epic of Ramayana and Mahabrata. This Indian cultural influence underlines the general theme of the ensuing objective questions (pp.122-123): number 1 (asks which aspects of the Shadow Play have an Indian influence); 2 (asks what is meant by the term 'larger India' in Southeast Asian archaeology and history); and 5 (the reader is asked to associate the character 'Pak Dogol' in the Malaysian Shadow Play with that found in the Hindu-Buddhist epic). It is therefore implied here that certain

Hindu/Indian cultural elements have been incorporated into Malay traditional theatre.

(iv) Malay literature

The part on 'Creative Literary Works' (pp.169–201) exhibits only materials written by Malay writers. Apart from Exercise 2 (pp.173–176), which is based on an article about a well-known Malay journalist/writer, Ishak Haji Mohamad, or popularly known as 'Pak Sako', the rest of the part is allocated to nine creative works ranging from extracts of Malay short stories, to novels and to poems. Pak Sako in Exercise 2 is sketched as a journalist who was actively involved in the Malayan independence movement as well as being a writer critical of the colonial British power and concerned with the economic and political welfare of the Malay community. Pak Sako was also an active member of the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay Association), an organisation which 'reflected the Singapore Malay community's aspirations to champion the interests of the Malay race, and be free from the control of the "elitist" Arab-Indian Muslim leadership' [p.174; Trans. Appnd. 4.14]. The importance of Pak Sako as a writer, journalist and Malay nationalist is reflected in all of the five objective questions (pp.175–176) that are presented at the end of the article. While the non-Malay reader may appreciate the contribution of Pak Sako to the Malayan independence movement, s/he may be pressed to find out whether there was any equivalent figure in the non-Malay communities. Even if there was none, which may not be the case, it would be educational that that be stated in this book — but only as a historical fact and not as something to instigate ethnocentrism with.

The other nine works selected in this section are: the Malay novel, Krisis (Crisis), by Alias Ali; the novel Merah Kuning Biru (Red Yellow Blue) by Awang Had Salleh; poem 'Kedewasaan' (Adulthood) by A. Razak Jaafar; short story 'Terjebak' (Trapped), by A. Razak Jaafar; poem 'Sajak Adalah Sajak' (A Poem Is A Poem) by Nawawee Mohamad; short story 'Jiran' (Neighbour) by Razak Mamat; Indonesian short story 'Om Pimpah'; short story 'Pulang' (Return) by Maarof Sa'ad; and short story 'Wulan Perkasa' (Gladiator Wulan) by S.M. Noor.

The Malay short story 'Jiran' (Neighbour) (pp.188-191) deserves our attention. It is a story of an old and poor Chinese lady (a Muslim convert) who, in trying to be a good neighbour, visited her Malay-Muslim neighbour on the eve of the Islamic new year's celebration. Her visit was made with the intention of giving money to the neighbour's children as a form of gifts (here the writer, in attempting to establish the fact that the old lady is Chinese, uses the Chinese term angpow) in view of the festive occasion. The story thus projects a case of neighbourly act between an old Chinese lady and her Malay neighbour, and this point is repeated in the following multiple-choice question no. 3 ('The old lady gently smiled and with affection. Why?' The answer given is: 'This is a normal practice when two neighbours meet.' [Trans. Appnd. 4.15]) However, in the objective question no.5 (pp.190-1), the short story writer as well as the writers of the book are inclined to establish the fact that 'the old lady is not Malay' (emphasis added); she is a Muslim convert. It seems from here that human compassion, love and understanding are still subordinated to one's ethnic origin. Put another way, a Chinese person who embraces Islam may not necessarily be perceived as Malay by some Malays, despite the Malaysian constitutional definition, because

of suspicion between sections of the two ethnic groups. More appreciation of this human and neighbourly deed may have been invested by the reader in the old lady than in the fact that the book writers include such material in the book. To conclude, like A. Long who employs only Malay cultural contents, the writers of this book have primarily culled local literary works from the Malay world, excluding those of the non-Malays.

(f) Islam

(i) Islamic literature

Exercise 10 (pp.123-126) is based on an article originally written by Kassim Ahmad, 'Kritikan Sastera Islam' (The Critique of Islamic Literature), in the Malay monthly Dewan Sastera. It discusses factors involved in criticism - the problems of values and assessment, including interpretation and explanation. He said that Islamic literary criticism should consider three factors: (a) literary tradition and convention; the literary work's socio-economic, political, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual statement; and the writer's personality, which includes his/her education, experience, thoughts, ambition and worldview. The inclusion of this article is not inappropriate, for the question of Islam in Malay literature attracts a lot of attention among literary figures and intellectuals, particularly the Malay ones, in the context of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia.⁴ The significance of this issue is further boosted by the fact that Islamic elements are regarded as one of the major components of the proposed national culture, and also the fact that all the other General Studies books analysed, too, have touched on aspects of Islam.

(ii) Islamic approach to knowledge

The article in Exercise 10 (pp.84-87), entitled 'Etika Pembelajaran' (The Ethics of Learning), argues for an Islamic approach towards the notion and practice of knowledge-acquisition. Knowledge here is perceived as being connected to human and social responsibilities and thus the role of the teacher is more ethical than technical in nature. It asserts that Islam places great importance on knowledge that benefits the society at large in spiritual, intellectual and material terms, and not merely pursuing knowledge for its own sake. Islam, it adds, also gives importance to teachers who not only provide knowledge to the learner but also set a good example for others to follow.

(iii) Islamic law

In the 'Comprehension exercises' drawn up under the 'Humanities' rubric, Exercise 1 (pp.89-91) addresses itself to an article written by Siddiq Fadhil, 'Perundangan Islam' (Islamic Law), in the Malay daily Berita Harian. This article, which is then re-titled for the book as 'Perundangan Islam di Alam Melayu' (Islamic Law in the Malay World), argues for the rapid implementation of Islamic law in Malaysia. The writer begins (p.89),

The demand for the implementation of Islamic law is a justified demand and valid in order to reinstate the Islamic law to its rightful place as the original law of the Malay States, as had been acknowledged by the court which acted as the executioner and interpreter through the decisions it made in the following cases concerned: [Trans. Appnd. 4.16]

The article then quotes three major court cases in 1927, 1939 and 1982 which essentially acknowledged that Islamic law is 'the law of the

land'. It must be pointed out here that the act of changing the title of the article from 'Islamic Law' to 'Islamic law in the Malay World' has the effect of establishing close ties between Islam and a cultural region that is still seen as 'Malay', as opposed to Islam and (multiethnic and multireligious) Malaysia. This may also project an impression, real or imagined, in the reader of an attempt to 'ethnicise' a universal religion such as Islam.

The writer concludes that the constitutional provision that 'Islam is the religion of 'the Federation [Trans.]' must be strengthened by having more provisions in the constitution so as to produce the effect of making Islamic teachings the primary legal and guiding sources in the legislative processes of the Parliament and the state assemblies in the country. The discursive question and the objective questions following the above article would remind the reader of the stress given to Islamic law in the country. The discursive question (p.91) reads, 'Is Malaysia an Islamic country? What are the characteristics that can help identify whether a country is Islamic or not? [Trans. Appnd. 4.17]' The objective question 1 (p.91) reads, 'Why does the writer present three sample cases for the reader's perusal right at the start of the extract?' The answer given is: 'To determine that the judges recognised Islamic law as the foundation of the country's law. [Trans. Appnd. 4.18]' Question 2 (pp.91-92) is rather more insistent on the notion of Islam being the 'law of the land': 'What is the strong proof to demonstrate that Islam is the "law of the land" in Malaysia?' The answer given is: 'The existence of Islamic influence in the governance of the Malay States. [Trans. Appnd. 4.19]' And the last objective question (no.5; p.92) on this subject clearly emphasises the writer's concern:

What is the primary message of the writer in this article?

- a. Islam should be made the foundation of the nation's legislation.
- b. Western ideas must be obstructed in the attempt to create an Islamic law.
- c. Malaysia must be governed according to Islamic laws.
- d. Islam should always be recognised as the religion of the Federation.
- e. Government policies must be based on the Quran and Sunnah [Trans. Appnd. 4.20].

The answer given for the above question is (a), reflecting a bias in the selection of the article itself.

The above article, discursive question, multiple-choice questions 1, 2 and 5 all strongly argue for the implementation of Islamic law in Malaysia, a proposition that finds itself not in discord with the emphases that have been laid in the other General Studies books analysed. Besides, such an argument comes closer towards fulfilling — as the other books would attest — one of the requirements of the national culture proposal, i.e. Islam is one of its main components; this also constitutes a part of the government's commitment to inject certain Islamic values into its administration.⁵ Against this backdrop, it is thus to be expected that in the main the non-Malay non-Muslim reader would be apprehensive reading such materials that have a heavy Islamic slant.

The above extracts, starting from the one on Malay fine arts onward, show a heavy concentration and emphasis on Malay and also Islamic cultural artefacts and literary works that implies — with the one exception of the discussion on the Hindu-based Shadow Play — a neglect of cultural materials from the Chinese and Indian communities. This gap lends credence to the view that only Malay literature (or

literature in Malay) is considered as Malaysian literature as is pointed out in A. Long. Whilst the extracts concerned may be educational to the curious, the heavy emphasis on Malay cultural materials to the exclusion or marginalization of things non-Malay, which also occurs in the other General Studies books (except Malhi), may alienate the non-Malay reader.⁶ This omission certainly runs against the spirit of the 'Racism' article earlier, which promotes the notion of coexistence between ethnic groups in society.

THE POLITICAL

(a) The Opposition

The subject of the Opposition in Malaysia is examined in sample question 4 (pp.31-32) which reads, 'Why has the government created the post of the Opposition leader in Parliament? What is the role of the Opposition in Parliament? [Trans. Appnd. 4.21]' In the introduction of the essay's skeletal framework, in responding to the above question, the writers state (p.31):

A democratic system needs a government that governs through discussion. Discussion is the very foundation of the formation and exchange of opinions, even though the discussion is done in a coffee shop or more importantly at the level of Parliament. Thus, in a Parliament that functions as a hall of discussion at a higher level, the opinion of the Government must be reviewed and debated so that the people would know more of the governing process. This is the responsibility of the Opposition! [Trans. Appnd. 4.22]

The essay concludes with this positive note (p.32): 'Even though in the eyes of the government Opposition members in Parliament are considered as an irresponsible group, the role they play is very necessary, particularly in making the democratic process more interesting and more effective. [Trans. Appnd. 4.23]' First of all,

the inclusion of a topic on the Opposition in Malaysia's parliamentary system is significant, given the fact that no other General Studies books analysed have broached this important subject. For this promotes the notion of legitimate political opposition and dissent in the reader's mind, especially when s/he is told in this book and Pengajian Am 1 that Malaysia is embarking on a controversial project of forging a national culture. This is an enterprise that requires, in the words of Anthony Smith (1988:206), continuous 'dialogues' between prominent social groups. Besides, the concept of the Opposition as envisaged by this book sits well within 'the wider framework of fundamental liberties or basic freedoms that are highlighted in Othman et al. (both books), Malhi and A. Long.

THE ECONOMIC

(a) Socio-economic justice

The guide essay 4 in Section 1 (p.42) is responding to an essay topic that reads: 'The social chaos of a society originates from its own economic instability. Discuss. [Trans. Appnd. 4.24]' The thrust of the essay is generally summarised by its second paragraph (p.42): 'If the economic position of a society is unstable, this will indirectly create social problems which in turn threaten the security of the society. [Trans. Appnd. 4.25]' The economic well-being of a society is indeed central to the concern of this essay, and this also parallels with the sentiments of writers of the previous books, Othman et al. (Pengajian Am 2) and Malhi (Kenegaraan Malaysia), who turn their attention to the problems of poverty, particularly among the majority of the Malays. In other words, what is essentially referred to is the economic welfare of the Malays. And as far as this book is concerned, the central message of the above essay is given substance by the

following exercises in the book.

(i) Institutional assistance

The Malaysian government has taken a number of steps to ensure that socio-economic development benefits the people. Exercise 13 (pp.277-278), under the 'Exercises to change from Prose to the Graphics', is based on a piece of information that discusses one of the steps taken by the Malaysian government to help develop the (predominantly Malay) rural sector of the peninsular economy. This is done through the setting up of a cooperative called Pusat Pembangunan Keluarga (Family Development Centre). Through the centre — and there were, by 1985, 179 such centres — aid is given to the farmers and their agricultural produce collected and marketed. The non-Malay reader, especially Chinese, would feel that such governmental assistance is immense especially in contrast with the lack of political and economic willpower on the part of the government to assist, for instance, (Chinese) dwellers of New Villages? — as is also demonstrated by the conspicuous neglect of all the General Studies books (except Pengajian Am 1, which doesn't cover economic matters) in projecting and discussing poverty of the non-Malays.

(ii) Malays in the corporate sector

Apart from Malays' economic activities in the agricultural sector of the Malaysian economy, the Malaysian government is also concerned with Malays' participation, or lack of participation, in the business sector. Exercise 3 (pp.263-264) of the 'Prose to Graphics' part is about the New Economic Policy, particularly its second objective, i.e. to upgrade Bumiputeras' participation in the national assets acquisition. It expresses concern over the slow rate of Bumiputera

acquisition vis-a-vis that of the non-Malays. Thus, it comments (p.264):

In 1985 shares acquisition in limited companies increased to M\$76,000 million, where Bumiputeras' acquisition increased by 17.8% of the national total. Other Malaysian people acquired 56.7% whilst acquisition from foreigners tumbled to 25.5%. From the information given, the (economic) growth achieved by the Bumiputeras is rather too slow, i.e., only 5.3%, while the growth of other races is 12.1%. [Trans. Appnd. 4.26]

It also adds that based on the Bumiputeras' achievement from 1980 to 1985, it is certain that by 1990 (when the NEP expires) the 30% (of the entire national assets/capital accumulation) target would not be attained. The discursive question following immediately after this exercise perhaps expresses the kind of action that some Malays would like to take in the event of the NEP target not being achieved (p.264): 'The NEP needs to be extended well beyond its deadline year of 1990 because the Bumiputera assets acquisition in several sectors is still below its targeted 30%. [Trans. Appnd. 4.27]' As mentioned elsewhere, the prospect of the targeted 30% not being met by 1990 is quite likely because the whole Policy was built on the premise that the Malays would get a bigger share of income and wealth through the country's increasing economic activities, and not from a redistribution of income and wealth.⁸ If this economic goal is pursued relentlessly and in a fashion that necessarily neglects the poor, the Malays in particular, while concentrating on — as the following exercises below would show — building Malay middle class and a small group of Malay capitalists, the previous essay topic may just be a self-fulfilling prophesy: 'The social chaos of a society originates from its own economic instability.' In this respect, the non-Malay reader would be made to feel uncomfortable.

(iii) Social mobility of the Malays

The following exercise is a reflection of the Malaysian government's long-term objective to not only upgrade the socio-economic status of the Malays, but also to ensure a greater Malay mobility into the upper social and economic strata of Malaysian society. Exercise 6 (pp.267-268) focuses on the categorisation of people in Peninsular Malaysia in 1968 by social classes — upper, middle and lower classes, and these in turn are further sub-divided into ethnic groups. Hence, the given statistics show that of the 30,742 upper class families surveyed, 15.5% are Malay, 57.9% Chinese, 16.2% Indian, and 10.4% the 'Others'. In the middle class category, 31% are Malay, 47.8% Chinese, 14.9% Indian, and 6.3% 'Others'. Finally, of the 1,900,056 lower class families surveyed, 50.3% are Malay, 34.7% Chinese, 12.8% Indian, and 2.2% 'Others'. And of the 1,000,581 Malay families surveyed, 0.5% are in upper class, 5.8% in middle class, and 93.7% in lower class. Of the 755,834 Chinese families, 2.3% are in upper class, 11.9% in middle class, and 85.8% in lower class. Finally, of the 270,291 Indian families, 1.6% are in upper class, 9.1% in middle class, and 89.3% in lower class. The exercise (p.268) following this underlines the apparent concern of the book writers: 'Present a chart showing: (a) the distribution of races within each of the social classes in Malaysia; and (b) distribution of social classes within each of the races in Malaysia as given in the extract above. [Trans. Appnd. 4.28]' The given statistics show that the Malays were by and large economically behind the other ethnic groups. It nonetheless also illustrates that poverty haunts the non-Malays as well. However, it should be noted that the survey was conducted in 1968, a year before the explosive 1969 riots and the

formulating of the New Economic Policy. Generally speaking, the socio-economic position of the Malays — particularly those in the middle and upper classes — would have improved substantially over that of 1968. This thus begs the question as to why old data were used for this exercise. A non-Malay reader, especially if well-read and/or socially conscious, would interpret such use of dated information as an act of legitimising further unconditional economic assistance to the Malays, or simply a mischievous deed. In addition, if we were to go by the kinds of 'economic' questions that have been raised above, the reader may conclude that the socio-economic welfare of the Bumiputeras generally determines the social and political stability of the Malaysian society, and that this seems to be the only concern of this and other General Studies books except Pengajian Am 1 (as opposed to worrying about the general welfare of other ethnic groups in the country as well). Again, all this then would really provide substance to the essay topic given earlier: 'The social chaos of a society originates from its own economic instability' as poverty of the non-Malays doesn't seem to be properly and effectively tackled. The non-Malay reader is likely to be disheartened by this prospect.

(c) The glory of the Melaka empire

Exercise 14 (pp.258-259) of the 'Graphics to Prose' section shows a chart of the then Melaka (Malacca) empire and its trading partners in Asia and Middle East. The glory of Melaka at this time was connected to the significant role of the Malay legendary hero, Hang Tuah. Here the reader is asked to show the strength of this Melaka empire in terms of its trading position and the role played by Hang Tuah in this commercial and political achievement. This exercise represents the writers' conscious selection of that part of Malay

history which portrays the commercial and political attainment of a Malay empire and its Malay warrior, Hang Tuah. In the context of this book, this particular exercise (in relation to other exercises that concern the socio-economic and political position of the Malays) could be interpreted as the writers' way of saying that such economic and political glory of the Malays can, or should, be at least sustained in modern Malaysia. Put another way, the inclusion of this material could be perceived as, in the words of Raymond Williams (1978:116), 'a deliberately selective and connecting process which offers a historical and cultural ratification of a contemporary order'. As it is, the other General Studies books except Pengajian Am 1 have already pushed for the socio-economic improvement and modernization of the Malays.

Phrasing of sentences and use of terms

In the 'Comprehension exercises' drawn up under the 'Humanities' rubric of the book, Exercise 1 (pp.89-91) addresses itself to an extract, 'Perundangan Islam di Alam Melayu' (Islamic Law in the Malay World), which argues for the rapid implementation of Islamic law in Malaysia. The writer begins (p.89),

The demand for the implementation of Islamic law is a justified demand and valid in order to reinstate the Islamic law to its rightful place as the original law of the Malay States, as had been acknowledged by the court which acted as the executioner and interpreter through the decisions it made in the following cases concerned...
[Trans. Appnd. 4.16]

The article then quotes three major court cases in 1927, 1939 and 1982 which essentially acknowledged that Islamic law is 'the law of the land'.

Phrases which are used above, such as 'a justified demand and valid...' and 'that Islamic law... "the law of the land"' possess a 'commanding' tone so that it leaves little room for alternative explanation that may not necessarily reach similar conclusion. Besides, such phrasing gives the impression of them being 'commonsensical' in the Gramscian sense (Forgacs (ed) 1988:421). This text, extracted in this manner, seems to have deviated from its original intent (of displaying a view) to one that presents the popular Islamicist view, particularly when it is already preceded by an extract that discusses an Islam-related matter on pages 84-88.

Summary

On the cultural side, the book places heavy emphasis on aspects of Malay culture and Islamic tradition, covering discussions of various aspects of the national language (whose significance is reinforced via discursive and objective questions format); Malay practice of naming; Malay aesthetics; Malay traditional theatre; Malay literature; Islamic literature; Islamic approach to knowledge; and Islamic law. This and the fact that no attempt is made to introduce to the reader materials on other ethnic cultures make it very jarring for the book to include an article that is clearly critical of racism. Even the discussion on national identity that is given a lengthy treatment veers towards the importance of Malay culture. The 'commanding' tone that prevails in the discussion of Islamic law in Malaysia has an effect of making its argument sound 'natural', and hence conclusive.

Like the cultural, the economic aspect of the book is also dominated by overwhelming concern for Malay economic welfare — to the

neglect of any mention of the socio-economic standing of non-Malays. The book writers' focus on what they see as socio-economic justice for the Malays revolve around issues — which are treated in detail — such as institutional assistance for Malays; Malay involvement in the corporate sector; and social mobility of Malays. The past economic glory of the Melaka empire also has the potential of being an economic incentive for Malays.

On the political side, the book only has one topic of discussion. This is, rather refreshingly, the Opposition in Malaysia, which the writers portray as an essential element in a parliamentary democracy where criticism, dissent and debate are supposed to be legitimate rights. Thus, like the racism piece this Opposition article presents an inconsistency to the general thrust of the whole book, which is Malay-biased, ethnocentric and exclusive of other viewpoints. Although in the minority, these articles nonetheless can potentially be an eye-opener.

Notes

1. For a fuller discussion on the position of the national language, see Tun Mohamed Suffian bin Hashim [1987:440-52], and also Ahmad Mohamed Ibrahim and Ahilemah Joned [1985:199-203].

2. Former MCA president Lee San Choon, for instance, whilst conceding that Chinese culture would not play an important role in the formation of the national culture, said that 'Chinese cultural traditions were old and could not be changed or condemned into oblivion overnight. (Quoted in Milne and Mauzy 1980:367)' He even suggested that a Chinese Malaysian culture centre be set up to promote Chinese culture.

3. Syed Alwi Sheikh Al-Hadi's book [1986], one of the Form Six's reference books for the General Studies subject, discusses the Malay practice of naming names in some detail, particularly on pages 15-17.

4. For a discussion of Malay literature and Islam see, for

instance, Ismail Hussein (ed) (1986).

5. The greater push for Islamisation in Malaysia is also due to the immense influence religion has over the life of Malays as a whole, triggered off in particular by the recent Islamic resurgence. (See Abdullah Taib and Mohamed Yusoff Ismail [in H.Osman-Rani and E.K. Fisk 1983:124-125] for an account of how pervasive Islamic influence has been on Malay cultural and political life. See also Tun Mohamed Suffian bin Hashim (1987:343-349) for a detailed account of Islam's position in the Malaysian constitution and politico-legal system. See Ahmad Ibrahim (in Tun Mohamed Suffian et al. (eds) 1987:49-78) for a detailed discussion of the position of Islam in the Malaysian constitution.) The Islamic policy has found expression in several projects such as the Islamic Bank, Islamic insurance company, and Islamic university. Official assurances that the constitutional rights of the non-Muslims will be safeguarded at times have failed to allay non-Muslims' fears (Barracough 1988:40).

6. Faced with this unpleasant prospect it is perhaps not difficult to understand why non-Malay individuals and organisations such as the Chinese-based Gerakan political party argued that content should be used 'as the criteria for evaluation and not the language. All literary works which reflect Malaysian reality and manifest the feelings and thoughts of Malaysians with characters and background which are distinctively Malaysian — no matter which language is used for writing — should be accepted as Malaysian literature' (1983:65). Similar argument had been put across by several Indian cultural and religious organisations. While agreeing that Malaysian literature should not be the preserve of Malay writers, Chandra Muzaffar (in PICAS 1984:63), however, suggested that Indian writers should make an attempt to translate their works into the national language so as to ensure a larger Malaysian audience, and also as a way of making known to the larger Malaysian society of the socio-economic problems faced by the Indian poor. Some 10 major Indian cultural and religious organisations had submitted a memorandum on national culture to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in April 1984. For details of the memorandum see, for instance, Kua Kia Soong (ed) (1985:303-321).

7. Chua Jui Meng (MCA 1988:92) maintains that none of the government agencies 'deal with New Villages or list them as a target group for development'. He claimed that the New Villages were always depicted as being more advanced than the traditional Malay villages so as to provide justification for the 'pouring of funds' into these Malay villages.

8. See Benjamin Higgins (in H.Osman-Rani & E.K. Fisk (eds) 1983:175). See also Abdullah Taib and Mohamed Yusoff Ismail (ibid 1983:141-142) for a positive assessment of the NEP. The recession of the late '70s and early '80s, however, dealt a big blow to these economic aspirations, for this meant that certain economic opportunities of the non-Malays will have to make way for the Malays. That the NEP target may not be met had driven certain government leaders to express the government's desire to maintain the dual objectives of the Policy after 1990 if, as Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba was quoted as saying, 'racial imbalances are

still evident in the economy' (The Star 9/9/1988), which subsequently created anxieties among certain sectors of the Chinese and Indian communities about their political and economic future in the country. The MCA president Ling Liong Sik, for instance, expressed the need of all parties concerned to be consulted before a post-1990 economic programme is formulated (The Star 2/10/1988).

General conclusion

If the number of cultural materials used is an indicator, then all of these Pengajian Am or General Studies books — with the exception of Malhi's — place a high priority on culture, in particular Malay culture and Islamic tradition. If there is an attempt to soften this Malay and Islamic emphasis and also promote a liberal and multicultural approach towards education and cultural life in Malaysia, which there is, as in the case of the book Pengajian Am 2 by Othman et al., the impact is negligible, in a sea of Malay-centric materials within this book and in the total impact of the books analysed. On the other hand, the presentation of these materials can possibly place other materials in a critical light. At any rate, the heavy emphasis on Malay and Islamic materials — and, by implication, the marginalization or exclusion of non-Malay materials — seems to suggest that all these books are influenced directly or otherwise by the government's desire to form a national culture that is Malay- and Islamic-based. An inclusion of non-Malay cultural items, therefore, as is found in Pengajian Am 1 (i.e. Chinese tea ceremony), can only be seen as mere tokenism. And the attempt at a multiethnic approach in Pengajian Am 1 and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) only takes the form of multiple-choice questions where characters from various ethnic origins

are employed. This means superficiality as such characters cannot develop meaningfully within the limited format of multiple-choice questions. If multiethnicity receives scant treatment, racism however gets ample handling and is raised in two ways: the ones in Pengajian Am 1 and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) emphasise, if not glorify, it; while the one in Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM (PDPA) is critical of it. In fact, the critical view of racism in PDPA could help the reader see the rest of the Malay-bias content of the book — if not other books as well — in a new light.

National language, which is invariably drawn as the medium of inter-ethnic communication, also occupies the attention of all books except Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.). Most of the time the language is largely promoted for its unity role. Only once is it portrayed — in A. Long's book — as a rich and dynamic language endowed with the capacity of absorbing elements of other languages. Constitutional provision for the use and learning of other ethnic languages is down-played in all of the books.

Basic freedoms or fundamental liberties occupy the attention of all books but PDPA. Nevertheless, most of these books give the impression that such freedoms need to be sacrificed or compromised in the name of trying to preserve 'national unity' and 'political stability' without presenting an opportunity for alternative interpretations, such as political expediency for the parties concerned. It is in this context that the controversial Internal Security Act is mentioned in Malhi's book. The inclusion in PDPA of the importance of the Opposition in the functioning of a parliamentary democracy would help pave the way to an alternative reading. At this

juncture it is worth noting that national unity seems to catch the interest of only two books: Othman et al. provide a detailed discussion while Malhi gives a whole chapter to it. Malhi does more than that. He goes to great lengths in presenting a political framework — the Malaysian Constitution, the Judiciary and the Parliament — to the reader to suggest to him/her that this arrangement exists to, at least theoretically, protect his/her basic rights. Ethnic Malay nationalism prevails in Pengajian Am 1 and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) while Malay political supremacy/'numbers game' finds its place in Pengajian Am 2 and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long). Monarchy or Malay royalty, which is normally sketched as more a Malay rather than Malaysian symbol, appears in all books but PDPA and A. Long's Pengajian Am 2.

Economically, all but Pengajian Am 1 display a common and deep concern for Malay economic problems. In this connection, it is significant that only Malhi finds it necessary and appropriate to present a historical context to the special position and privileges of Malays whereas the other writers (who incidentally are all Malays) appear to have taken this constitutional provision for granted. Although Malay poverty as raised by these books is undoubtedly a reality, heavy stress on the ethnic definition of poverty to the neglect or exclusion by the books of the economic well-being of the poor and needy in the Chinese and Indian communities is revealing. The concern about the economic welfare of Malays is pushed in such a manner that it gives the impression that these books perceive poverty only along ethnic lines. Or that only the Malay community faces poverty.

The projection of things Malay is done by a few means. One, aspects of Malay culture or political interest are promoted overtly through extracts that possess such tendencies. Two, promotion in chapter summaries, discursive questions, and multiple-choice questions. The second method brings us to the point raised by Luke, de Castell and Luke. They argue that writers of textbooks by 'intentional sectioning and punctuating of information reinforce the apparently "neutral" character of the information, and serve distinct instructional ends'. The manner of framing and the choice of content to be framed tendentiously preserve 'the very words' of the writer (1989:250). However, different meanings could emanate from such conscious framing, meanings which, taken out of context, may deviate to some degree from the ones intended by their original authors. Thus, an inclusion of a certain aspect of a say, Chinese culture in a multiple-choice question — as opposed to an elaborate discussion in an extracted article — could have the effect of making such a cultural element a frivolous thing, apart from demonstrating the disinterested attitude of the book writer(s) towards that particular subject. In contrast, a Malay cultural aspect that appears in a multiple-choice question could mean a heavy emphasis and reminder if it has already appeared in an article prior to it. Certain phrases and terms used in these books usually have the potential of making themselves sound 'commonsensical' or 'natural' so as to discourage questioning or debate. In addition, it is significant that the frequent use of extracted materials from Malay newspapers, magazines, etc. which basically cater to Malay audience and interests is also a contributory factor towards the heavy Malay emphasis in the textbooks examined.

Nonetheless, there are certain contradictions and inconsistencies within and between the texts that could provide some space for alternative interpretations by the student-reader. For instance, in the case of the article (in A. Long's book) about the Malay fishermen's lot where the writer questions the structural problems that have been plaguing the Malay poor — even after so many years of independence and government aid. Other examples are the celebration by the writer of what he considers the dynamism of the Malay language to absorb other languages as well as the capacity of certain traditional Malay dances to absorb foreign cultural elements but at the same time calls for a cultural purification of Malay songs. There is also the uneasy tension between the particularism of Malay nationalism and the universalism of Islam. Then there is the juxtaposition of the essential basic freedoms and the 'necessity' to curb freedoms. One can also recall, as mentioned earlier, the celebration of racism and, in another article, a condemnation of it.

A reader who comes from a particular ethnic group that collectively perceives itself as being politically and culturally, if not also economically, marginalized, may feel disheartened, uneasy or incensed after reading these textbooks. Unless this deficiency finds its remedy, a common content school syllabus under the present education policy that was hailed to be one of the State instruments to help generate good ethnic relations, would instead find itself to be an effective tool for social tension and disunity. Given the multiethnic nature of the present Malaysian society, the contents of the textbooks analysed can only be construed in general as constructing a 'Malaysian identity' that is heavily Malay-biased. At the same time, these books — through the continuous process of

marginalizing and excluding non-Malay political, cultural and economic interests — can inadvertently or potentially produce a sort of separation of 'national identities'. In other words, the primary objective of fostering good ethnic relations in the country, in particular among students, would then have been defeated.

[b] (i) Rupert Emerson (1987), *Malaysia. Satu Pengkajian Pemerintahan Secara Langsung dan Tidak Langsung* (Malaysia. A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, (7th Print).

This 640-page book, which constitutes one of the history textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education for Form Six students, is a Malay translation of the author's English version, Malaysia. A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule.¹ It should be noted that the term 'Malaysia' in this book refers to 'both British Malaya and the Netherlands Indies, which are also known as Indonesia' (p.12).

The Analysis

Sections of the book that were selected for the analysis are Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10.

THE ECONOMIC

(a) British colonialism: a shared history of the Malaysian people

In the first chapter on 'The Setting of the Problem', Emerson points out, amongst other things, that western imperialist powers had one primary and significant role to play in their colonies: to create conditions that benefited their economic interests (p.1). This therefore provides the historical background towards understanding the political, socio-economic and cultural problems that a multiethnic British Malaya (now Peninsular Malaysia) had, and still has, to confront. In other words, a Third World country like Malaysia that experienced Western imperialism² has the potential to provide its peoples some sense of a shared history,³ a collective history of subjection to economic exploitation, political manipulation and subordination.

(b) Malay 'backwardness' in exploitative capitalism

Despite colonial rule and problems associated with capitalist penetration into the Malayan economy, Emerson stresses that the Malays as a people have succeeded in resisting the onslaught of capitalism brought about by the Europeans and Chinese because 'They are a people with a highly developed culture of their own and with a distinct and well-formulated attitude toward life which has tended to isolate them in some measure from the surroundings which have been thrust upon them. [p.22; Trans. Appnd. 6.1]' Nonetheless, this factor does not prevent the Europeans and Chinese complaining — as Emerson indicates — of Malays being lazy and shiftless. Having said this, Emerson argues that,

This is a libel which has been too often exploded to need elaborate further refutation. It is a fact written clearly on the record that the Malay in general is strongly averse to giving up his own more independent way of life in order to become a coolie on the rubber estates or tin mines of European or Chinese capitalists [p.22; Trans. Appnd. 6.2].

On page 138 in Chapter Three, Emerson provides us with another example of how members of another ethnic community, in particular some Chinese businessmen, demonstrated their inability to understand to a large degree the sociological background to this 'Malay backwardness'. In a petition which was signed by 248 Chinese businessmen and given to the British Governor to request that the British authorities abandon their non-intervention (in the Malay States) policy, the Chinese businessmen commented that 'Its application to the half-civilized States of the Malay Peninsula (whose inhabitants are as ignorant as children) is to assume an amount of knowledge of the world, and an appreciation of the elements of law and justice, which will not exist among those Governments until your petitioners and their descendants of several generations have passed away. [p.139; Trans. Appnd. 6.3]'

Such condescending assertion only makes the above cautionary comments more valuable and helpful. In addition, Khoo and Lo — whose book we shall examine later — contend that 'the Malays were not interested in working harder to accumulate wealth (p.88)' because the feudal structure of the traditional Malay society is such that any surplus or form of wealth tended to be usurped by the Malay nobles or chiefs. It is therefore this social context that provides the justification for Malay politicians in principle to institute and the Malay community as a whole to support official policies of 'positive discrimination' (such as the NEP) for the Malays as a way of stamping out these negative stereotypes as well as improving their overall living standards⁴ — as we have noticed in writings advancing this line of argument in Pengajian Am 2 of Othman et al., Kenegaraan Malaysia of Malhi, Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM of Saidi and Salim, and Pengajian Am 2 of A. Long. In other words, this portion of Malayan history, i.e. that the Malays' economic well-being had been neglected, has become the 'significant past' (Williams in de Castell, Luke and Luke (eds) 1989:58) for the writers of the Pengajian Am books concerned to emphasise the importance of and need for government assistance to the Malays.

Malay opposition to the capitalistic intrusion⁵ compelled the British authorities to import Chinese and Indian labour in order to exploit the natural riches of the land (p.30). It is here that Emerson describes the immigrant Chinese as being diligent, capable of improving themselves economically (p.35). The previous explanation for the lack of Malay input in the modern economy of the country would therefore go a long way towards putting the 'Malay problem' in the context of the economic contributions of the immigrant Chinese and

Indian groups in Malaya.

(c) Chinese economic contributions

The economic contributions of the Chinese community in the Malay Peninsula is further emphasised on page 157 where Emerson states that '... up to the time of federation (i.e. the Federated Malay States) the economic development of the Peninsula was almost exclusively in Chinese hands' [Trans. Appnd. 6.4]. Furthermore, on another page Emerson provides the reader with another account of Chinese economic contribution in the Straits Settlements, where the economic activities of the Chinese range from the categories of 'coolies, rickshaw pullers, and house boys at the bottom, through the large group of skilled workers, clerks, independent merchants and traders, and small manufacturers or processors in the middle, up to the higher group of professional men and of owners of large economic ventures at the top' [Trans. Appnd. 6.5], apart from a number of Chinese millionaires existing in their midst (p.331).

After making a broad survey of the economic activities of the Chinese in the Malay Peninsula, it is therefore less surprising to find the book writer asserting in the concluding chapter that there were many among the Chinese 'who have achieved a position of economic independence and who through a longer or shorter Malayan background feel that they have achieved as good a claim to be regarded as natives of the country as have the Malays themselves. [pp.601-602; Trans. Appnd. 6.6]' In other words, Emerson argues from the vast economic contributions of the Chinese that many of them felt really 'Malayan', just as 'native' as the Malays themselves. This brings us back to the Pengajian Am books, where there is no mention of the economic

contribution of the Chinese community as a whole, and if there is, it normally takes the form of Chinese economic advancement in relation to Malay poverty. In short, those books lack the recognition of this contribution to the Malay(si)an economy.

(d) Indian economic contributions

Emerson states that as part of the imported labour, the Indians, who too had made their economic contributions, formed the biggest group of labourers working in rubber plantations, while their numbers were equal to the Chinese in tin mines (p.49). This account, albeit not as detailed as the one on the Chinese, would also imply that the Indians too deserve to be considered as 'native'. As in the Chinese case, the economic contributions of the Indians is also conspicuously absent in the Pengajian Am books. Both the Chinese and Indian contributions can constitute a 'significant past' for many of the non-Malay readers. In other words, a recognition of their past collective input to the general economic development of the country would make them expect to be accorded equal rights and opportunities.

(e) Malay economic problems

(i) Malay economic standing in colonial Malaya

Of the position of the Malays in the colonial economy, Emerson has this to say:

In the political sphere it has been felt necessary to maintain a facade of Malay rule, or, at least, of Malay participation in government, but there was no such necessity in the economic sphere. The result has been...that the Malay has been economically dispossessed in his own country. He is allowed to carry on his life in his accustomed ways, but to date he plays neither a creative nor a servile role in the new economy which has supplanted his own as the dominant and the dynamic force in the country. It may be that the future will see the Malay entering into effective competition with

the aliens, but he will have no easy task in forcing his way into their economic stronghold [p.226; Trans. Appnd. 6.7].

That the Malays had been left to themselves and excluded from the economic activities of the rest of the Peninsula only strengthens Emerson's contention that it was wrong of a majority of the British officials to have had no faith in the Malays. To this misconception, the writer further observes:

...the Malays have¹ been in contact with Western civilisation for only a few decades and that in the Federation at least the plums have in the main gone to the other races while the ordinary Malay villagers have had to get along with the second best in every respect. Despite these handicaps it is asserted that they have made very real progress and can be trusted to continue onward and upwards if they are given the type of training, attention, and protection which has been afforded them in the Unfederated states [pp.438-439; Trans. Appnd. 6.8].

Given such a situation, it is thus hardly surprising for Emerson to comment that 'It will be seen that the higher the degree of economic life in any area the larger is the alien element in the population as compared with the native. [p.241; Trans. Appnd. 6.9]' Things had, however, Emerson seems to have hinted, improved to some extent. For instance, Chinese labour used to constitute an almost exclusive monopoly of mining in Johore. But now, he adds, the Malays are found to be 'at least equally suitable as workers on the big dredges introduced by the British mining corporations' [p.263; Trans. Appnd. 6.10]. This, plus Emerson's contention that 'the future will see the Malay entering into effective competition with the aliens', provides the 'significant past' for the Pengajian Am writers who argue that the Malays as a group need economic assistance in order for them to progress.

(ii) Economic disparity between east and west coasts

As a way of demonstrating the socio-economic disparity between the Federated Malay States (FMS, where most of the Europeans and the non-Malays were found) and the Unfederated Malay States (UMS, where the inhabitants were mostly Malays), Emerson chooses Kuala Lumpur (of the former category) and Kota Bharu (of the latter) as objects of comparison. Kuala Lumpur, he adds, represents 'a relatively highly developed modern Oriental city [p.305; Trans. Appnd. 6.11]' whose prosperity was largely contributed by the Europeans and the non-Malays. Kota Bharu, on the other hand, is 'a town which, with modern trimmings, is an obvious outgrowth of the Malay society. [p.306; Trans. Appnd. 6.12]' In other words, the geographical segregation along ethnic lines has, in many ways, its origin from this pattern of colonial rule and economic development. Such a social situation is further explained by the writer who cautions that such benefits as were received by the Malays from the socio-economic development, initiated by the British, were mainly 'coincidental', as demonstrated by the construction of roads and railways whose primary purpose is to serve the needs and interests of European, and to a lesser extent, Chinese capitalists (p.596). In other words, the Malays were not primarily identified as the main beneficiaries of the infrastructural construction and other modern public amenities. Once again, this situation has provided the rationale — as presented by the Pengajian Am book writers — for helping the Malays economically.

(iii) British 'protection' of the Malays

Despite the economic priority that had captured the imagination of the British colonial government, Emerson maintains that the British

nevertheless had the general welfare of the colonized people at heart. For after all, adds Emerson on page 578, the colonial government did not necessarily work only in the interests of capital. As an example, Emerson cites the creation of Malay land reservations as a British endeavour to protect Malay interests. Under this scheme, 'land may be alienated only to Malays and must thereafter remain in Malay hands' [p.587; Trans. Appnd. 6.13]. This is a measure taken by the British administration to help avoid the possibility of the Malay peasantry being made landless, and hence revolting, in the face of capitalistic penetration into the Malay States and, in particular, the 'swarming' of the Chinese population. Another of his examples of the British government's 'concern' for the welfare of the colonized people is the improvement of public amenities such as sanitation and medical care and facilities. This, as Emerson argues, served the long-term objective of the government to provide a better, healthier local workforce for the European capitalists and entrepreneurs (pp.576-577). The professed 'good intentions' of the British were counter-productive as Emerson declares on page 612,

The creation of Malay reservations in the Federation, Johore, and Kedah, although it is in good part merely a British weapon against the Chinese and the Indians, may be seen at once symbolic and as one of the most significant practical expressions of this officially fostered trend toward sheltering the Malays from too intimate a contact with the new forces that are at work in their country. [Trans. Appnd. 6.14]

To be sure, this land scheme only resulted in ethnic tension and suspicion between Malays and Chinese. Chinese objections to this scheme at the time lay in the term 'Malay' which not only applied to those Malays who were born in the FMS or the Peninsula but also to those recent Malay immigrants from the Archipelago. The Chinese, on

the other hand, were totally excluded irrespective of whether they were born locally or just arrived from China (p.587). Predictably, this opposition was strongly felt among those Chinese who had been in the Malay Peninsula for a long while and who felt quite 'native'. This then provides a wider option for the reader to interpret Malay(sian) 'nativeness' in particular and Malay(sian) history in general as compared to the one offered by the Pengajian Am books. To sum up, the underlying objective of this 'British protection' and its consequences are brought to the fore.

(iv) Preservation of the 'Malay character'

Given such economic and political realities at that time, it is significant to find that certain of the UMS had taken 'defensive' or 'corrective' steps to reserve administrative or political posts, or opportunities for further studies, to the Malays as a measure not only to try to conserve their 'Malay character' but also to ensure that some Malays were allocated jobs that were considered to have high social status. Hence the state of Perlis, with the agreement of the British authorities, reserved government posts for Perlis Malays (pp.287-288). Government posts, especially the administrative and clerical, in Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu were also reserved for Malays (p.292). The Kedah royalty, for instance, confined members of the State Council, with the exception of British advisers, to Malays 'in response to a general recognition by the native Kedah population that any increase in the power and prestige of the Chinese would seriously endanger their economic position and threaten the Malay character of the State' [p.294; Trans. Appnd. 6.15]. This endeavour to preserve the 'Malay character' finds its saliency and relevance in the government's project to forge a Malay-based national culture as

discussed in the Pengajian Am books.

(f) The 'benevolent British'

At the risk of sounding like an apologist of imperialism, Emerson holds that the British colonial government did help cushion the impact of the modern and industrial world which the Malay people had received, apart from helping the Malays to make the leap 'from Malaysian medievalism to the modern world' [p.593; Trans. Appnd. 6.16]. This point, about protecting the natives from the aggressive features of capitalism, is also emphasised on pages 589-590 where at the same time he states that he does not deny the attendant 'oppressive features' of imperialism. The writer further asserts that imperialism can be justified in so far as it transforms the subject people as quickly as possible into 'independent communities able to take their equal and autonomous share in the world's activities and decisions' [p.594; Trans. Appnd. 6.17]. Clearly, this stand runs counter to his later contention that an imperial power, given its vested interests, would not provide much assistance to the natives to enable the latter to 'enter into the modern competitive world economy on equal terms' [p.604; Trans. Appnd. 6.18] — which implies a certain ambivalence on his part. This perhaps largely explains why after all the years of 'British protection', the Malay majority was still in the grip of poverty. Moreover, this is the sort of socio-economic situation that lends credence and political legitimacy to the professed commitment of post-independence governments to help the Malay poor.

THE POLITICAL

(a) Problems of multiethnic society

In the 'Introduction', Emerson establishes the fact that a society can get very complicated with the entry of people of various ethnic origins along with the intrusion of Western imperialism:

In colonial regions the already complex is further complicated by the contact of two or more widely divergent races, each bearing its own traditions, peculiarities, aptitudes, and vices. Upon peoples deep-rooted in their own ways and institutions is suddenly thrust, with varying degrees of vehemence, an alien destiny which has no prior relevance to their own. The resultant political structure and, much more, the resultant human being, European and native, is inevitably a mixture of things not to be attached with certainty to either camp as it was before [pp.3-4; Trans. Appnd. 6.19].

This is indeed a cautionary note to the reader about the social, economic, political and cultural complexities that are inherent in a multiethnic society like Malaysia's. The last sentence of the extract above also indicates that the ethnic border of each community is necessarily blurred and thus implies that any attempt — as can be found in the Pengajian Am books — at glamorizing the ethnicity of a particular community is futile. The discussion below is an illustration of such problems. However, if seen in a positive light, such a blend of various cultures and peoples can also mean the opening up of a whole range of potential in the evolution of a new and richer culture — as hinted at by the article on the Malay language in Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.).

(b) The origin of the Malays: nativeness questioned

Emerson's search for the origin of the Malays may be quite unsettling for some Malay readers and, to a certain degree, non-Malay ones, for it unearths some evidence that tends to show that the Malays

are not the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula:

The origin of the Malay race which gave the country its name is an unsolved anthropological mystery, but there is some evidence to support the view that the Malays were driven southward by the constant pressure of the Chinese tribes and occupied the furthest reaches of Asia, perhaps at a time when the Peninsula was linked in a continuous land formation to Sumatra, Java, and Borneo. That the Malays are not the earliest inhabitants of the Peninsula is indicated by the remnants of more primitive peoples, who, driven back into the dark jungles and the mountains by the superior culture and force of the Malay invaders, cling with tragic insistence to their aboriginal nomadic life. Where they have followed the Malay into Mohammedanism, they have also tended to adopt his language and his culture and to become absorbed indistinguishably into the Malay community [p.15; Trans. Appnd. 6.20].

The writer's contention above seems to be reinforced by an account on another page which states that the Malay Peninsula '... has always been less of a true Malay center than the surrounding Archipelago. It was in the islands that the older Malay kingdoms and empires flourished, with the mainland being drawn in, apparently, only in a subsidiary fashion.' [p.16; Trans. Appnd. 6.21] This does give the impression that the Malays originate from what is now called Indonesia, and that many of them have since migrated to what is now Malaysia, particularly Peninsular Malaysia. Such an historical background would help the reader understand the significance of the following observation made by Emerson:

Although it is usual to think of the Malays as having an immemorial title to Malaya it must be remembered that immigration from the Indonesian Archipelago has continued to the present day and that a very considerable proportion of the present Malay population is made up of immigrants who were themselves born elsewhere or whose forebears came to Malaya only in the last few decades. In contrast to the other immigrant races which have come to Malaya in recent times, the Malaysians — a term used to embrace the Malays both of the mainland and of the surrounding islands — tend to settle in the country permanently and to become members of the established Malay population. [p.19; Trans. Appnd.

Thus although the Malays in Peninsular Malaysia include a substantial immigrant population, the similar cultural background between the Malays and the Indonesians poses no difficulty for the Malay immigrants in the Peninsula to assimilate themselves into the already established Malay community, and to be considered as 'Malays', and hence 'native' or 'Bumiputeras' of the country.⁶ This then brings us to the earlier account (p.587) about the strong objection voiced by the Chinese, especially those who had been residing in this country for long enough, they argued, to be deemed 'natives' of the land. In short, a culturally dissimilar group is excluded in the overall consideration of categorising people as 'native', irrespective of the length of one's domicile.

The subject of Malays being 'native' surfaces again in the section on 'The Peoples of Malaya' on pages 23-24 where Emerson maintains that

... it may be said that the Malays are the true natives of Malaya, subject to the qualification that they are themselves in good part newcomers to the country. But however good their historical claim, which is at least better than that of any other race, the country is in fact slipping from their grasp. Already they are outnumbered by the other races. The census of 1931 disclosed that of a total population of 4,385,346 the Malays accounted for only 1,962,021 or 44.7% while the Chinese came to 1,709,392 or 39.0% and the Indians to 624,009 or 14.2%.
[Trans. Appnd. 6.23]

The 'native-ness' of the Malays, as Emerson points out, is a qualified one as well as controversial. Apart from that, the Malays themselves have been confronted with the fear of losing in the 'numbers game', which is closely related to their struggle for

political ascendancy in the country.⁷ Such Malay fear would however be somewhat allayed by the following comment made by Sir Hugh Clifford, the British High Commissioner, and quoted in the book. He implicitly suggested that it was a British duty to protect the position of the Malays even if it meant depriving the country of a democratic system of government⁸ (which in principle is run by the will of the majority) [pp.212-213].

The controversy surrounding the position of the 'native' is again pursued by Emerson on pages 613-614. He obviously differs from Sir Hugh Clifford's argument because he firmly holds that the interests of the Chinese cannot be neglected or ignored since 'The hard truth of the matter is that the Malays can't be regarded as the sole natives of the country', and also 'It must be accepted as the patent and indisputable fact that the Chinese are now settled in Malaya in large numbers, that many of them have been established there for long periods of time and that they feel their interests to be entitled to at least as favourable consideration as those of the Malays.' Besides, with the coming of the Great Depression when Chinese political consciousness and pro-Malay sentiment among some leading British officials were high so that preferential treatment for the Malays caused the non-Malays to 'not only fear that the Malays will prove unable to handle their responsibilities but also are justifiably reluctant to abandon their claims to equal treatment in the country of their birth. [p.632; Trans. Appnd. 6.24]' This historical account has therefore problematised 'Malay natives'. It could constitute a 'significant past' of Malayan history for the non-Malay reader. However, the established notion of the Malays being indigenous, as sketched by many of the Pengajian Am books, may well make Emerson's

claim contentious,⁹ and subsequently alienate the Malay reader and perhaps even harden her ethnic sentiment.

(c) Position of Malay rulers

In Chapter Four where Emerson discusses the FMS, the position of the Malay Sultan is drawn as one of protector of Malay interests. Although in reality it was the British Resident who was active in the administration of the state under the Residential System, the Sultan nevertheless was still perceived, particularly among the Malay people, as the one governing the state; apart from having, as the Residential System stipulated, complete jurisdiction over matters pertaining to Islam and Malay custom (pp.169-170). This nominal status of the Sultan served the interests of the British, especially when pressed by the Chinese immigrants who demanded their rights. It is therefore 'a comforting and useful fraud to proclaim that since these are Malay States under Malay rulers the concessions which the aliens ask are beyond British granting' [p.171; Trans. Appnd. 6.25].

Once again we witness a situation in which the interests of the British were served and protected by not shaking the position of the Malay rulers and consequently by not giving the Chinese access to more rights as residents of the country. The position of the Malay rulers, seen in this light, would tend to mean one that protects the interests of the Malays to this day — as illustrated by arguments advocating this view that are found in Pengajian Am 1 of Othman et al., Kenegaraan Malaysia of Malhi, and Pengajian Am 2 of A. Long.

While the Malay rulers' position might be 'sacrosanct' (p.212) and unassailable to the British (and the Malays as a community), it

certainly has taken a severe beating from Emerson himself. In trying to explain why Johor, despite its official status as one of the Unfederated Malay States (UMS), was in many ways different from the rest, Emerson holds that this

appears to lie primarily in the character and strength of the rulers who have held the throne of Johore since the days when Raffles intervened at Singapore to upset the local balance of power. These rulers, some of whom are commonly asserted to have a considerable admixture of non-Malay blood in their veins, have not been noted for their high moral character or, perhaps, for their scholastic brilliance, but they have been gifted with political talents of a high order. They have known how to bow gracefully to the inevitable and to salvage the best out of it for themselves, how to adapt themselves to the standards and requirements of the new imperialist world which was thrust upon them, and how to play off against each other the various elements and interests, both European and Asiatic, with which they came in contact [pp.242-243; Trans. Appnd. 6.26].

Such an observation can hardly be considered in general complimentary and pleasing to the Malay royalty as well as the Malay reader. For one, the Malay rulers are portrayed as hybrid, whose 'true Malay blood' has been diluted by other types. But equally, if not more, importantly, this remark blemishes the notion advanced by an article in A. Long's book that characterises the institution of monarchy 'as a symbol of unity, as the source and bulwark of justice, as a place to seek sympathy and forgiveness, as a provider of honours'.

(d) 'Communal politics'

In this book, Emerson expresses his reservation about 'communal politics'. In his discussion of the Legislative Council in the Straits Settlements (SS), Emerson identifies the problem encountered regarding the kind of elected representatives that the people ought to have. He states, 'Here the fundamental problem is one of finding an acceptable

and viable electorate. To flee to communal representation is the easiest course but also in the long run the most dangerous, as the experience of India has amply shown. Wherever it has been tried it has been found to intensify rather than to minimize communal conflict. [p.362; Trans. Appnd. 6.27]' He further stresses the possible dangers of increasing or heightening ethnic sentiments which this kind of 'communal representation' would be likely to bring (p.363). This can be interpreted as a warning to adherents of 'communal politics' such as the ruling Barisan Nasional. It contradicts the view of this party, held by Malhi, as one of the positive steps towards remedying ethnic problems in the country.

(e) Malayan Union

As regards the Malayan Union proposal, Emerson informs that the basic idea was to unite the FMS, the UMS and the SS so as to form a big federation that was supposed to enjoy the political and economic benefits that such a union would bring. However, the Unfederated states of Kedah, Johore, Trengganu and Kelantan were vehemently opposed to this proposal for fear of losing their Malay character and 'the ability of the state to pursue its more modest Malay aims... [p.424; Trans. Appnd. 6.28]' It is clear that changes in the social structure, economic system and the ethnic complexion that were taking place in the FMS had compelled the UMS and their people as a whole to be aware of their 'Malay-ness' and to feel the need to maintain their 'Malay character'. In other words, this is probably the beginning of a shared sense of an 'imagined political community' (Anderson 1983: 15-16), a feeling of ethnic solidarity among the Malays.

THE CULTURAL

(a) Malay as national language

An endeavour to raise the status of Malay to the level of an official language found expression in a treaty of 1923 between the British and Kedah which stipulated that Malay be made the state official language (p.287). And the status of Malay as a lingua franca of the country was also acknowledged by the British particularly in a period when the British were planning to decentralise the federation and strengthen state administrations. It is here that certain serious problems were identified, one of which being the language of debate in State Councils. Emerson comments, 'The traditional practice is, naturally, that the Councils should be conducted in Malay, but this is a language with which the new members are likely in most cases to be grossly unfamiliar, their acquaintance with it frequently not going beyond the bastard Malay which serves as a crude lingua franca throughout Malaya. [p.419; Trans. Appnd. 6.29]' This observation illustrates Emerson's dislike about Malay being made the country's lingua franca, which is confirmed in his concluding chapter: Emerson criticises the British government's refusal 'to acknowledge anything except Malay as the appropriate lingua franca of the country. [p.634; Trans. Appnd. 6.30]' In this connection, the writer also criticises the British government's educational policy which he feels had contributed to the worsening of ethnic tensions in the country. This, he holds, is mainly due to the discriminatory practice of providing free Malay primary vernacular education while neglecting those of the non-Malays, which were consequently catered through private initiatives (pp.634-635). Emerson's criticism of Malay as national language certainly runs against the nationalistic fervour of the proponents of the national language as found in Pengajian Am 1 of

Othman et al., Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM of Saidi and Salim, and Pengajian Am 2 of A. Long who essentially perceive it as a necessary medium of inter-ethnic communication. However, Malhi does remind the reader of the constitutional provision (Article 152) that '... no one should be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning any other language' (p.40), which implies that teaching and use of other vernacular languages in the country are legitimate. Malhi's comment hence could be a vehicle for Emerson's view on the necessity of including and respecting non-Malay vernacular education.

Use of phrase

When discussing the lack of Malay participation in the modern economy of the country, Emerson concludes that the result is '... that the Malay has been economically dispossessed in his own country (p.226, emphasis added).' The phrase 'his own' strongly suggests an almost natural association between the Malay and 'his own' country, Malaya, despite evidence presented in this book that points to the contrary. Put another way, such usage of 'his own' is tantamount to making it sound rather 'commonsensical', in the Gramscian sense (Forgacs (ed) 1988:421), which in effect would only further emphasise the popular contention — as advanced by most of the Pengajian Am books — that the Malays are indeed indigenous.

Summary

On the economic side, Emerson points out the enormous contributions of the Chinese — who were brought into Malaya to meet the labour requirements of British imperialism — to the economic development of Malaya, so much so that the Chinese, he adds, demanded

'native' status with the Malays as a recognition of their important contributions. This demand was rejected by the British. Nonetheless, this portion of Malayan history could constitute the 'significant past' which the contemporary Chinese reader can employ to lend legitimacy to their demand for greater say in the political, economic and cultural direction of Malaysian society. The same applies to the Indians who had also made substantial contributions. At the same time Emerson highlights the economic problems faced by Malays which, to him, stem from the British policy that essentially marginalized them from the modern economy. He is confident though that the Malays, whose stereotypical laziness he dismisses, can make significant progress if given the right kind of assistance and 'protection'. Protection here meant the British reserving permanently agricultural land for the Malays, a policy which neither helped improve the living standards of the Malays nor fostered good ethnic relations, as many of the non-Malays themselves required land for their economic activities. It is here that Emerson's ambivalent attitude towards British imperialism surfaces: On the one hand, he praises the British for 'protecting' and 'cushioning' the Malays against the direct impact of the 'modern world' (p.593), while on the other he argues that the British were less serious and sincere about helping the Malays. Emerson's ambivalence notwithstanding, the Malay reader would hasten to employ this part of Malayan history to justify the need and importance of providing governmental economic assistance to the Malay community.

Smith (1988:23-6) argues that ethnic nationalists would tend to evoke memories of the past in order to strengthen the nationalist feelings of a country's inhabitants. He asserts that there are four dimensions of an 'ethnie' or ethnic community: (a) a collective name;

(b) a common myth of descent; (c) a shared history; and (d) a distinctive shared culture. As far as the Malays are concerned, what is revealed by Emerson could have posed a problem to categories (a) and (c) — i.e. had the Malays been really non-indigenous (See Husin Ali (1987) and Ismail Hamid (1988)). For the book claims in great length that the Malays are not the original inhabitants (and hence, cannot lay claim to the collective title of 'native') of the Malay Peninsula and that many of them were recent immigrants from Indonesia, thereby having the effect of turning the claim of the Malays to numerical majority and thus political dominance on its head. On the other hand, Emerson does support (d) for Malays, immigrant and settled, which may also explain the attempt of preserving the 'Malay character' by the Malay States, especially when one is fearful of losing the 'numbers game'. Malayan Union was one British proposal that was largely seen as harming the numerical strength and thus political supremacy of the Malays. In addition, the position of Malay as the lingua franca of the country and the education system are assailed by Emerson. All this could create havoc to the official definition of Malaysia's national culture, whose very foundation is the 'indigenous culture'. Emerson's historical 'revelation' would be discomforting for most of the Malay readers. If anything, they would tend to ignore this, or question its verifiability to the point of subsequently heightening their ethnic sentiments.

As regards the institution of monarchy, the manner in which it is run and maintained gives one the impression that it is mainly a bulwark for Malay interests and demands. Besides, an institution that supposedly gives expression to the Malay-ness of the country's political structure potentially faces problems with Emerson's exposure

of the rulers' mixed ethnic background and questionable moral and intellectual standing.

Notes

1. Hence, the 'English translation' of Malay excerpts in this analysis is largely derived from the English original.

2. British imperialism in Malaya, asserts Labour Research Department (1926), serves the economic interests of the European capitalists by not only making Malaya a rich source of materials they required but also a captive market of their industrial goods.

3. Smith (1988:23-26) argues that an ethnie or ethnic community derives its sense of community from the following dimensions: (a) a collective name; (b) a common myth of descent; (c) a shared history; and (d) a distinct shared culture. And for Williams (in de Castell, Luke and Luke (eds) 1989:58), it is important for a group or class in a society to select a 'significant past' — hence termed 'selective tradition' — that can connect with and ratify the present, as well as being useful in the process of social and cultural definition and identification.

4. Chua Jui Meng (in MCA 1988:91-95) expressed concern over the government's apparent obsession with issues of Malay poverty to the exclusion of sympathy and care for urban Chinese poor.

5. Alatas (1977:72) argues that the unwillingness of the Malays to 'become a tool in the production system of colonial capitalism', earned them a reputation of being 'indolent'.

6. The relative ease which Indonesian immigrants have when it comes to assimilating themselves into the Malay culture owes largely to the fact that they belong to a 'bigger entity known as the Malay stock' (Husin Ali 1987:4).

7. See for instance Kadir Abadi (1987) which essentially strongly supports Dato' Abdullah Ahmad's speech that called for the perpetuation of 'Malay political dominance' in the country.

8. It is interesting and significant that a similar sentiment has its place in present-day Malaysia: Perlis UMNO chief Dr. Abdul Hamid Pawanteh reminded UMNO Youth members that 'Malay survival is more important to the party than upholding the principles of democracy. (New Straits Times 28/10/1989)'

9. Archaeological findings have shown that the Malays are the indigenous people of Malaya. For a detailed account, see Husin Ali (1987), particularly chapter 2; Ismail Hamid (1988), in particular chapter 1.

(ii). Gilbert Khoo and Dorothy Lo (1981), *Asia Dalam Perubahan. Sejarah Tenggara, Selatan dan Timur Asia* (Asia in Transition. The History of South-East, South and East Asia), Petaling Jaya: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia).

The Analysis

Sections of the book that were analysed are: Chapters 1; 2; 3; 5; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; and 13. These are chapters that pertain to Peninsular Malaysia while the omitted 4 and 6 concern historical accounts of Sabah and Sarawak.,

THE POLITICAL

(a) The rich multicultural Malaysia

In Chapter 1 (pp.3-9), Khoo and Lo praise the economic dynamism of Malaysia which, according to them, was based on the country's growing political stability and national unity, while at the same time they clearly celebrate its multiethnicity: 'This country has a mixture of races that provides it with a certain freshness and potential which cannot be found elsewhere in the Southeast Asian region as well as the rest of the world. [p.3; Trans. Appnd. 8.1]' Implicit in the positiveness of this statement is the message that the country can progress in a dynamic manner if the socio-economic, political and cultural potential and contributions of each of the ethnic groups are fully realised. This optimism is echoed by an article found in Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.) which applauds the existence of various ethnic cultures in the country as opposed to the other Pengajian Am books (except Malhi's which doesn't discuss culture at all) which promote Malay culture to the neglect of other ethnic cultures. In terms of economic contributions to the country, unlike the Pengajian Am books, Emerson, Hall and Tate as well as this book highlight those

of the Chinese and Indians, which serves to remind the reader that these contributions deserve recognition.

(b) Malay political structure

In Chapter 3 (pp.78-95), the writers trace the political structure of Malay society where they identify two social classes in Malay political organisation: the ruling class and the ordinary people (p.82). To a large degree, they add, the source of power of the nobles and the Sultan derived from social tradition and control over material resources and wealth of the economy. Hence, they argue, since the Malacca Sultanate it has been a tradition for the Sultan and his nobles to be given the people's trust by which the latter would have their lives and material possessions protected by the former (p.85). Under this feudal relationship, it is no surprise that forced labour became a widespread practice exercised by the nobles (p.88). The writers assert that the two large groups of people were so closely linked to each other that the Malay society as a whole, even though Islamic in faith (as the religion proscribes, for instance, slavery), was essentially trapped in fatalism (p.88). They add,

the Malays were not interested in working harder to accumulate wealth because such deed would only mean having oneself eventually being dispossessed of one's own material belongings. As such, there did not exist an environment that would encourage the Malay peasants to improve their agricultural productivity or living standards. [p.88; Trans. Appnd. 8.2]

The writers further comment that the institution of slavery had been embedded in the psychological and social development of the Malays: 'They were not encouraged to work harder so as to improve the living conditions because of the prevalent social hierarchy. The freedom that would allow social mobility has been completely curbed. [p.90; Trans.

Appnd. 8.3]' This explains partly the 'late socio-economic development of the Malays' in the context of a larger multiethnic Malaysian society. But more importantly, this also helps to explain the existing residue of feudalism in the psychè of the Malays in general, which in turn causes to a certain degree a virtually blind loyalty of many, if not most, Malays towards their leaders.¹ This segment of Malay history also explains the saliency of the concept of 'protection' for the Malays by the institution of Malay monarchy in the present Malaysian political structure. An undiluted, positive approach to this concept is found in Pengajian Am 1 (Othman et al.), Kenegaraan Malaysia (Malhi), and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long).

(c) Royal support for British colonialism

In their discussion of the British Residential System in Chapter 5 (pp.121-172), the writers assert that despite initial apprehension from the ruling Malay elites, the British Residents generally received support and cooperation from the respective Sultans and noblemen as the latter were eventually made to realise that such an agreement had brought relative peace and economic progress to the Malay States as a whole. Nonetheless there were, for instance, pockets of resistance in Perak against British presence (pp.141-142).² It is here that one senses a taint of pro-imperialism in the writers: 'A clever and farsighted person, His Majesty (The Perak Sultan) had cooperated with (British Resident) Hugh Low in the State Council which was set up to act as an advisory body in the formation of the state's administration. [p.144; Trans. Appnd. 8.4]' It can be argued that the Perak Sultan was very supportive of the British precisely because the whole structure of the Malay political system in Perak had been changed in such a way that the next succession to the Perak throne was

very much dependent on the support of the British Resident. This contention may be supported by the following (p.144): 'Although it is maintained that the Residents were supposed to give advice, in reality it was they who would rule in the Council behind the Sultans concerned. [Trans. Appnd. 8.5]' Such political manipulation by the British is again felt when the writers hold that the Malays were governed and controlled by the British through their traditional leaders (p.148). The writers add that the same strategy applies to the Chinese community where the fiction of their leaders playing an effective role for the benefit of the whole community was sustained by the British (p.148-9). This questionable position of the Malay rulers and political leaders and Chinese leaders as representatives of their own communities is also pointed out by Emerson and Hall. In the case of Emerson, he focuses on the Malay rulers' political shrewdness and opportunism. In contrast, a survey of the Malay rulers' background by one or two of the Pengajian Am books (such as A. Long) do not reach these recesses of the royal history.

(d) Malay economic problems

In their survey of the socio-economic and political changes that had taken place in the Malay Peninsula under the British, the writers detect marked changes mainly in the urban areas of the Malay States while in the rural areas (which most Malays inhabited) virtually nothing had occurred. This is where the writers comment that despite the British attempt at modernising the country, 'The Malays did not understand and also were not interested in embracing Western lifestyle. [pp.162-163; Trans. Appnd. 8.6]' The writers' observation in Chapter 7 (pp.194-206) however seems to indicate that the above statement is not wholly true. For they write there that the Malays as

a group, at least towards the later part of the British presence, were interested and understood what Western lifestyle entails. There were Malays who were keen on social and economic progress and at the same time they 'expected the British to protect them from the negative effects of competition with other ethnic communities. [p.200; Trans. Appnd. 8.7]' Besides, as the writers assert, 'The British, apart from modernising Malay society, also wanted to maintain the traditional Malay village lifestyle, [p.200; Trans. Appnd. 8.8]' a position which was supported by their education policy that aimed at only making the Malay children better fishermen or farmers than their parents (p.200). Thus, there prevailed a sharp socio-economic gap between the Malay society and the non-Malay one. Such a disparity is also acknowledged by Emerson and Tate, a disparity that can represent a 'significant past' in writings about Malay poverty and the New Economic Policy in Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.), Kenegaraan Kita (Malhi), and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) — which advocate governmental and institutional assistance to Malays.

(e) Preservation of the 'Malay character'

Like Emerson and Hall, the writers tell us that in most parts of the Malay-dominated Unfederated Malay States the Malays were able to jealously guard and preserve their traditions, as well as acquire more autonomy without any interference from traders who would be quick to request British help and intervention and have eventually to serve their economic interests (p.169). Such a position taken by these Malay States to protect Malay traditions from the onslaught of western culture and modernization would find adherents among present Muslim-Malays, for the latter perceive the resurgent interest in Malay and Islamic traditions as an effective way to be culturally and

politically independent of outside influence. One has only to remember the call to 'purify' Malay songs in A. Long's book. Again, this is 'a significant past' of Malay history that can promote and strengthen a sense of shared history and culture among the Malay readers concerned.

(f) Job discrimination along ethnic lines

The issue of unequal citizenship as regards employment in the Malayan civil service surfaces on page 198. Many Malays, especially English-educated, had been absorbed into the British administration during the First World War through the Malay Civil Service, thereby making them 'less unfriendly' with the British, a practice to which is attributed the evolutionary — rather than revolutionary — nature of Malay nationalism. Many non-Malays, on the other hand, were not given the opportunity to serve in the administration because they were mostly transient in status. But this denial of occupational opportunities was also inflicted on those non-Malays who had decided to make Malaya their homeland, a fact which prompts the writers to argue that '... this British policy of depriving them (the non-Malays) of government posts is one way of isolating one race from the rest in Malaya so that there would not occur a socio-cultural interaction. [pp.198-199; Trans. Appnd. 8.9]'. The question of equal opportunities in civil service recruitment surfaces again in Chapter 8 (pp.207-214) where the writers state that there appeared a group within the Chinese community, the Straits Settlements Chinese, popularly known as Baba Chinese, who insisted on being given equal employment opportunities on the basis of having regarded Malaya their homeland for the past 100 years. The Malays opposed the demand of this 'foreign race' (kaum asing). The British government on its part refused to entertain the Chinese demand, for it had committed itself to protecting the rights

and privileges of the Malays (p.207). Clearly the book writers are critical of this practice given the multiethnic composition of the Malaysian society. In addition, this 'affirmative action' that was undertaken by the British for the Malays reminds us of the present one that has been adopted by successive post-Independence governments and one that is discussed by A. Long in relation to Malay poverty.

(g) Ethnic nationalisms

Malay perception of non-Malays' ambiguous political allegiance to their country of abode not only had caused suspicion between the two ethnic entities but also eventually created islands of ethnic chauvinism. The nationalistic sentiments of the Chinese in Malaya before the Second World War was China-oriented, and this made their loyalty to Malaya suspect in the eyes of Malays and British. The revolutionary movement in China which opposed the Manchu rule captured the imagination of the local Chinese in Malaya. The significance of the events in China was brought closer to Malaya with Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Kuomintang (KMT) establishing his headquarters in Singapore and branches in Malaya (p.208). The book writers do caution, though, that 'the Chinese in Malaysia were compelled to regard Malaysia as their own country because they did not want to return to China' (p.210). However, China's Chiang Kai-shek had made it difficult for the Chinese to feel 'Malayan' and be accepted as one because he had declared that 'overseas Chinese are citizens of China if their fathers are of Chinese origin' [p.210; Trans. Appnd. 8.10]. This predictably had caused a rift and tension between the Malays and Chinese, a situation which to a large extent compelled the Straits-born Chinese, especially Tan Cheng Lock their leader, to unite the Chinese community, who by then had already made up its mind to

live permanently in this country, in order to demand collectively for its rights and to protect its interests (p.211). The Indians in Malaya, who as a group also by now had decided to settle permanently in the country, too tried to unite themselves so as to protect and promote their collective social and economic interests. However, the Indian attempt failed (before the Japanese Occupation) because of competing ideologies, one of which was the commitment to help liberate India from British rule (p.213). As for the Malay immigrants from Indonesia, the writers tell us that they did not have major problems in assimilating themselves into the Malay culture because of similarity in ethnicity, culture and religion, and hence the relative ease of being considered Malay (p.213). Their inclusion strengthens the sense of common bond within the Malay community vis-a-vis the non-Malay communities. Such 'separatist' ethnic social arrangements of the old somehow present a historical link to the present-day communal politics that is criticised by Tate and one that is practised by many political parties, including the component parties of the ruling Barisan Nasional. Ironically, Malhi sees such political arrangements, as characterized by the ruling Barisan Nasional, as being useful in the effort to achieve inter-ethnic harmony. The rest of the Pengajian Am books are silent on this.

(h) Japanese Occupation and divide-and-rule

Bitter Malay-Chinese relations in Malaya appear in Chapter 9 where the Japanese Occupation of Malaya is said to be the primary cause. The sharp enmity between the Japanese and the Kuomintang in China caused the former to be antagonistic towards the Chinese in Malaya who in turn launched a major anti-Japanese offensive. To compound the situation, the Japanese trained a large number of Malays

as policemen and soldiers to fight against the Chinese guerrillas. This consequently heightened the suspicion and tension between the Malays and the Chinese, and subsequently damaged the cooperative spirit between the two ethnic communities for several years (p.215). Thus the writers warn: 'It has been a Japanese policy to create conflict between the races so as to cause a loss of trust between them. [p.216; Trans. Appnd. 8.11]' The dangers of this divide-and-rule policy of the Japanese are raised again by the writers on page 219. In addition, the Japanese Occupation had also generated ethnic nationalisms among the locals', particularly the Malays (p.218). This thus reveals the ugliness of ethnic chauvinism and of communal politics (as mentioned above) which find their divide-and-rule origin in this period of Malayan history. Such divisive politics would not gain support from a reader whose concern is good ethnic relations.

(i) From Malayan Union to Malay nationalism

Chapter 10 highlights the Malayan Union scheme that was proposed by the British government to the Sultans and the Malay community, and which consequently propelled the growth of Malay nationalism. The latter rejected this proposal because they felt that it meant easy granting of citizenship to all non-Malays who were born in the country. Strong opposition to this proposal led to the creation of the Malay-based United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), headed by its first leader, Dato Onn Jaafar. This opposition had generated a Malay nationalism (p.222) that argued for the importance of the rights and privileges of the Malays, Rulers' sovereignty, and states' autonomy and strove that these would be considered when drafting a new constitution for the country. The Chinese were disappointed for being neglected by the British, 'but they eventually accepted this reality'

(p.224). Despite the initial apprehension among the non-Malays, the Chinese in particular, as regards the drafting of the constitution, the writers tell us that the Federal Constitution represented a compromise between Malay radicalism and non-Malay demands. Although the Malays had gained a lot of privileges, they add, the non-Malays did not incur immense loss. For instance, the Sultans were made the protectors of Malay rights and also of the rights of other ethnic groups in the country (p.225). The manner in which the constitution was drawn and the 'compromise' struck by leaders who professed to represent their respective communities represent the 'significant past' of the Malayan history that can be 'intended to connect with and ratify the present' (Williams in de Castell, Luke and Luke (eds) 1989:58) Malaysian political situation. In other words, 'Malay nationalists' of today can always resort to these origins of the political bargaining in order to sustain legitimacy to their continuous claims to Malay special position and privileges. As mentioned elsewhere, the bargain was essentially about the citizenship for non-Malays being granted in return for the special position of the Malays. This line of argument strikes a chord with the article in A. Long's book which supports the rejection of the Union proposal in order to give way to Malay political supremacy. Hall on the other hand, believes that the Union was essential in preparing Malaya for self-government and democratic rule; but his advocacy was undermined by his approval of the uneven and communal politics practised by political parties such as the ethnic-based Alliance.

(j) Communist insurgency

After the constitutional agreement, leaders of all communities were preparing themselves for the eventual independence of Malaya from

British rule. However, their anticipation was destroyed by the incursion and insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) which preferred Communist rule over Malaya. This subsequently led to the declaration of Emergency in the country (p.226). The Communists' protracted war against the authorities had caused further tension and suspicion between the Malays and the Chinese as many of the members of the MCP were Chinese, and the British use of the Chinese 'new villages' strategy as a means to cut communications between the Communist and the Chinese community as a whole also meant the physical isolation of a large segment of the Chinese community from the Malay community. The activities of the Communists provide the background and legitimacy to the curbing of basic freedoms by the government as discussed by an article in A. Long's book, and they also constitute the *raison d'être* for the existence of the powerful Internal Security Act of 1960 as mentioned by Malhi. In other words, in the name of protecting the country from Communist threat, certain fundamental liberties which are crucial for the political, economic and cultural expressions of citizens have been sacrificed, a situation that could impede a sense of 'fair play' among the readers within the project of forging national consciousness.

(k) Malay nationalism and communal politics

In Chapter 11 where the writers trace 'The Development of Malaysian Nationalism and Political Parties' (pp.243-257), the reader is told that the collective political awareness about Malaya being their country first prevailed among the Malays, and was subsequently acquired by the Chinese and the Indians. The bitter experience of the Japanese Occupation fanned ethnic nationalism among the Malays to the extent that they resolved to maintain their dominant position in

society. This then propelled the Malays to unite under the UMNO banner (p.243). The first leader of the UMNO, Dato Onn Jaafar, decided to open up the party to everyone from all ethnic groups. His suggestion however was wholly rejected by the Malays, which then led to his resignation. Onn believed, the writers add, that Malays and non-Malays must fight together for independence and for the eventual formation of a united and strong nation. However, 'Such a view is too premature and ahead of its time. [p.244; Trans. Appnd. 8.12]' Onn later formed the multiethnic Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). He received less support from the Chinese who by then were mostly active in forming the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), but instead gained only the support from the Malays who 'didn't have racist attitude' and members of the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) (p.244-5). Racial politics in Malaya, the writers caution, became more obvious when UMNO and MCA joined forces to contest the 1952 town council elections and consequently won 51 out of 52 seats that were contested (p.245). If a hint of regret on the part of the writers regarding the growing 'popularity' of racial politics cannot be strongly detected in their above account of the development of Malayan party politics, such sentiment is clearly expressed in the following: The successful experimentation in ethnic politics employed by UMNO and MCA spurred them to adopt this 'political arrangement' across the country. It is in this context that the writers lament: 'This is very unfortunate for Dato Onn, for the future Malaysian nation as well as for the government and the Federation of Malaysia. [p.251-2; Trans. Appnd. 8.13]' Unfortunately, as the writers seem to suggest, ethnic politics of short-term gains eventually prevailed in the country. They thus note that although MCA and UMNO did have fundamentally conflicting objectives of promoting each its own community's interests, these crucial differences were

buried under, at least temporarily, the attractive goal of winning the 1955 general election. The image of UMNO-MCA partnership as a 'multiethnic' party was enhanced with the later participation of the MIC (p.252). The general election of 1955 resulted in the Alliance party winning a handsome majority.

It should be noted at this juncture that the the writers however do suggest on pages 245-246 that it is essentially out of political exigency that ethnic-based political parties such as the MCA and the MIC were formed — i.e. to champion and protect the interests of the respective ethnic communities, cooperate with the other ethnic groups, and unify the people from within each community. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first prime minister of the country and leader of the Alliance, was quoted as saying that the success of the party was nothing but due to the issue of independence. The writers are however quick to deny this, and claim the people's support for racism (p.256-7). Racism did flourish on the political scene at that time when the kind of 'multiethnic politics' employed by the Alliance came under challenge from groups such as the Malay Nationalist Front, which was led by Dr. Burhanuddin. Another political threat to UMNO was the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) whose ideological base is Islam (p.254). These parties felt that the 'cooperation' struck between the UMNO and the MCA might jeopardise Malay interests, and hence the need to pursue a Malay-based politics. There was also opposition from the left, such as the Labour Party, whose political structure and numerical strength were however so weak that it disintegrated in 1972 (p.254). We thus witness here a period in which successful political parties rode on a strong wave of racism, a legacy of the past that still haunts the present Malaysia.

(1) Economics and ethnicity

The 1950s saw leaders of the three major ethnic groups acknowledging the importance of cooperating and working with each other in order to strive for national unity. However, this objective was fraught with fundamental problems: Malays clinged to their special position and privileges because they feared that without this 'protection' they would be inadequately prepared to confront the economically advanced Chinese who might use their strong economic position to acquire political power. The Chinese as a whole still maintained their dominance in the economic sector (p.247), the origin of which can be traced to the earlier economic contributions of the Chinese as indicated by Emerson, Hall and Tate. In other words, an identification of economic function as well as political dominance with ethnicity goes a long way towards impeding the difficult task of forging national unity among the various ethnic groups in the country. Which is why the writers express their long-term hope of a demolition of this dichotomy after the Malayan Constitution was drawn up:

Even though this Constitution has temporarily placed political power in the hands of the Malays and economic power in the hands of the Chinese, both sides are however confident that these features would gradually fade away after the economic conditions of the Malays improve [p.262; Trans. Appnd. 8.14].

To help combat this problem, the writers add, the government had launched economic programmes to help modernise the rural population (mainly Malays) so that the economic gap between the rural and urban sectors would be narrowed. The Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) was entrusted with this big task (p.247). This has been the main thrust of the argument put forward by the architects and

supporters of the New Economic Policy, that is, to eliminate the identification of economic function with ethnicity — a crucial factor that is pointed out in Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.), Kenegaraan Malaysia (Malhi), Pelengkap Diri: Pengajian Am STPM (Saidi and Salim) and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long).

In Chapter 12 the reader learns that soon after its triumph in the election, the Alliance began working towards self-government and Malayan independence. The British laid the groundwork by instituting the Reid Commission whose primary objective was to gauge the political sentiments of the people. The commission presented the following conclusions: a strong federal government; equal citizenship for all in the federation; 'the protection of the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other races'; and Malay to be acknowledged as the national language [p.258; Trans. Appnd. 8.15]. Leaders of the Alliance discussed matters that concerned the harmonious relationship and cooperation between the three major ethnic groups. It was decided that non-Malays who were born after independence would be citizens automatically, and those who were already citizens would remain so. The Malays demanded that their 'special position' be acknowledged. They would be given preference in matters concerning land, civil service employment, government scholarship, and business facilities, measures that were considered to be a strategy to help prepare the Malays to step into the world of competition with the economically advanced Chinese (p.260). Realists among non-Malays agreed that Islam would be the official religion while the Malays consented to freedom of worship to the non-Malays (p.262). Both sides considered the eventual Constitution as one of compromise, the kind of political document, say the writers, that

suits the multiethnic complexity of Malaya at that time (p.262). This 'political bargaining' constitutes a 'significant past' for Malhi and A. Long that justifies and maintains government's 'affirmative actions' such as the New Economic Policy.

(m) National language for national unity

The book writers say that social interaction between the Malays and the non-Malays failed after the Second World War because they were faced with serious problems such as suspicion between them that was created by the Japanese and the Communist insurgency. The writers assert that this lack of inter-ethnic communication was solved to a certain degree by the making of Malay as the national language. Such contention strikes a chord with all of the Pengajian Am texts as they promote and defend the status of the national language. Emerson, on the other hand, believes that other vernaculars should also be accorded equal status as Malay.

THE ECONOMIC

(a) British economic imperatives

In Chapter 2 where the writers focus on 'The Growth of the Straits Settlements' (SS), the fact is established that the ports of Penang, Singapore, and Malacca were opened by the British purely for economic reasons. This view is shared by Emerson, Hall and Tate. Because of the growing economic activities in the SS, labour shortage became an important problem in the 19th century. As a result, the British authorities encouraged immigration (p.19): 'The Malays from Sumatra, especially the Minangkabaus, a small group of Bugis, Ambon and Javanese people had come to these settlements as craftsmen and small traders. In the 1840s a Malay labourer fetched about \$3.50 a

month in Singapore, while Indian and Chinese labourers received about \$4.00 and \$5.00 respectively. [Trans. Appnd. 8.16]' Such discriminatory practice along ethnic lines in industry may in part explain as to why some Malays shied away from the exploitative employ of the British entrepreneurs and which may also lend credence to the myth of 'the lazy natives' (p.19). Such misconception of the 'lazy native' may also occur if the reader, who is particularly not aware of the Malay feudal history of forced labour, reads the following on page 151: 'The Malays much preferred to take up easy and dignified jobs, or jobs that were sanctioned by their tradition, instead of work that was done by the Indian labourers which they considered worse than that of the debt slaves. [Trans. Appnd. 8.17]' In contrast, the writers put emphasis on the significant role the Chinese played in the commercial success attained in the SS. Khoo and Lo say that a number of writers and government officers in the 19th century had acknowledged that the 'diligent Chinese' were the foundation of the SS economy (p.20). As if to reinforce their argument about the Chinese contributions to the economic development of Malaya as a whole, they comment (p.20): 'In towns, the Chinese were good businessmen; and in the rural areas, they were clever farmers. [Trans. Appnd. 8.18]' The writers nevertheless do remind us in passing of the economic contributions of the Malays as well as other exploited workers to the commercial success of the Chinese businessmen (p.35). The writers say that Chinese, Indian and Malay labourers met the needs and requirements of development in the SS, and add that 'Chinese traders had become rich because of their diligence. (p.35)' In other words, what the two writers point out is the hard work of the workers of all ethnic groups that constitutes the very foundation of economic development of the SS. At the same time they acknowledge that many of the rich Chinese contributed a lot to

social and welfare projects, like building hospitals, water supply, building bridges, educational facilities, drainage and roadwork (p.39).

(b) Chinese economic contributions

That the Chinese economic contributions in Malaya must not be forgotten perhaps explains in part why the writers argue that while the Chinese immigrants did cause political and social chaos to the region they nevertheless constitute a 'useful' group of immigrants (p.37). We are told that even though the Chinese were involved in 'immoral deeds' such as prostitution and opium smoking, the British just turned a blind eye. In other words, as far as the British were concerned their relationship to the Chinese was merely functional. This explains why, the writers add, the British perceived the Chinese community as diligent pioneers in prospecting the region's economic resources, especially for the benefit of the Straits Settlements (p.48). The writers remind again on pages 148-149 that the British acknowledged the economic significance of the Chinese community: 'They are the backbones of the economy of the Malay States. ...They're the labourers, miners, shopkeepers, contractors, capitalists, also contributors to state tax revenues in the peninsula. [Trans. Appnd. 8.19]'³ Having said that, the writers nevertheless acknowledge the economic contributions of all the ethnic groups (p.155). The economic contributions of the Chinese in Malaya is also highlighted by Emerson, Hall and Tate, while all of the Pengajian Am texts are silent on this matter.

(c) Indian economic contributions

As regards the Indians, the writers state that a big portion of

the Indian population was concentrated in Penang. Most of them came from South India, mainly traders or small businessmen, labourers and money lenders (p.36). Although the writers' account of their economic contributions is not as elaborate as the one on the Chinese, like Emerson and Tate, Khoo and Lo nevertheless make an acknowledgement of such contributions. This nevertheless stands in stark contrasts with its total absence in all of the Pengajian Am books, a past that apparently is not selected and deemed 'significant' by these books.

(d) Inter-ethnic economic cooperation

If there was an early form of Malay-Chinese cooperation in business, it must be the one that involved one of Perak's noblemen, Long Jaafar, who requested some Chinese miners from Penang to work his tin mines in Larut in 1848 — in order to procure larger profits. The same goes with Selangor where Raja Abdul Samad invited some Chinese businessmen and workers to open up tin mines in Kelang and Ampang, which subsequently brought progress and prosperity not only to these two towns but also helped build Kuala Lumpur, the later-day capital city of the Federation (pp.121-123). This goes to show that close cooperation and ethnic interaction, which largely are encouraged and governed by financial considerations, can prevail particularly at the level of the dominant class or bourgeoisie. Although such a social arrangement is still applicable in the present-day Malaysia,⁴ nowhere in the texts, particularly the Pengajian Am ones, is this cooperative spirit or alignment of interests advocated.

THE CULTURAL

(a) Hindu influence in Malay culture

In Chapter 1 Khoo and Lo detect the lingering Hindu influence in

the Malay culture, even after the Islamization of the Malay community.

Thus they observe:

As such courtly events and the institution of royalty are maintained to this day as Malay traditions. Even though Islam remains as a strong influence in the lives of the local people, animism still exists and is interlinked with Hindu and Islamic beliefs [p.4; Trans. Appnd. 8.20].

Like Hall, the book writers thus bring into question the very institution that symbolises Malay-ness, Malay culture and the protection of Malay interests and Islam — the Malay royalty — as is portrayed in Pengajian Am 1, 'Kenegaraan Malaysia, and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long). On the other hand, this may well illustrate to the reader the dynamism of Malay culture in its capacity to absorb foreign cultural elements.

(b) Common education system for national unity

In Chapter 12 the writers note that one of the ways of forging good ethnic relations that was suggested was that there should be provision for a common education system for all children in Malaysia so that a common loyalty to the country could be inculcated in them. 'This certainly cannot be achieved if there still existed three separate systems of education. [p.260; Trans. Appnd. 8.21]' Hence, the Barnes Report of 1950 recommended a common national education system for all children educated under one common syllabus content, while the subsequent Fenn-Wu Report of 1951 suggested that Mandarin be maintained while Malay and English became part of the curriculum. Consequently a review committee on education took consideration of both recommendations (p.260), which became the overall guiding principles for the later education policies of the country. This view is in essence consonant with Hall's. Emerson shares this view in so

far as the State provides and maintains vernacular education, but not necessarily to be subsumed under a common education system.

Summary

The writers' appreciation of Malaysia's multiethnicity is matched by their dislike of the divisive and ethnic politics of the kind practised by many local political parties, the ruling party being one. Unfortunately, they too, like many of these parties, do slide — although to a limited extent — into justifying the need of each ethnic community to protect and promote its own interests. Such negative sentiment is borne out of the notion that each ethnic community can on its own contribute towards improving ethnic relations by inculcating Malaysian consciousness among its members while at the same time championing their rights and interests in the name of that community. Both objectives can radically conflict at certain historical moments. The reader may be made to appreciate the divide-and-rule strategy of the colonialists and the Japanese as well as the economic disparity and political injustice that prevailed over a long time as being the causes of suspicion and tension between the Malays and Chinese. It is however an unresolved contradiction and therefore a disservice to the reader when the writers imply that an enhanced sense of ethnic bond among members of a particular community provides the necessary, if not the only, solution to ethnic problems in the country.

Notes

1. See Chandra Muzaffar (1979) for a lengthy discussion of unquestioning loyalty within the Malay community.
2. In this book on pp.157–158, Khoo and Lo also mention another

example, the British intervention in Pahang in 1875 where it met with strong protest from Malay noblemen and also the Sultan himself. A revolt broke out involving famous nobles like Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau, Abdul Rahman and Maharaja Perba, personalities who were later revered by the latter-day Malays as they symbolised Malay capability and success in defending their 'racial honour'. After 1892, the revolt was however crushed by the British.

3. This reminds us of a not-too-complimentary observation of a British writer, C.G. Warnfor-Lock, when he defines Chinese 'industriousness': 'He is the mule among the nations — capable of the hardest task under the most trying conditions; tolerant of every kind of weather and ill usage; eating little and drinking less; stubborn and callous; unlovable and useful in the highest degree. But never, under any conceivable circumstances, to be trusted or made a friend of. (Cited in Alatas 1977:75)'

4. For an analysis of such an alignment of economic and political forces, see Martin Brennan (in R. Higgott and R. Robison (eds 1985:93-127).

General Conclusion

All of the History textbooks have acknowledged, implicitly or otherwise, the fact that the opening up of the Malay Peninsula to the British was very much related to the imperatives of imperial capitalism. Views on British imperialism vary between these textbooks. Emerson, for instance, is rather ambivalent about it, for he feels that imperialism has its good and bad features. Hall on the other hand is more positive towards British imperialism, for he believes that it was the British presence and 'protection' (like Malay land reserve and special position) that enabled the Malays to be 'guided' gradually into the modern capitalist economy and at the same time acquire the trappings of a modern lifestyle. Tate is more concerned about problems associated with a multiethnic society which British rule was instrumental in creating, problems such as economic disparity between Malays and non-Malays. He nonetheless gives implicit approval to British attempts at 'modernising' the Malayan economy as a whole. Unlike Tate, Khoo and Lo celebrate the multiethnicity of Malaya that

originated from British imperialism as, to them, it promises a wealth of potential from all the ethnic groups with which the country can progress and modernise. In other words, the underlying message of these writers is that modernisation¹ as a doctrine introduced by the British is essential, as students of modernization would argue, in propelling Malaya into a modern, industrial era. It is a project which has its early beginnings in British Malaya and has sustenance in present day Malaysia. It has, in brief, permanence. Despite the conflicting views of the book writers on imperialism, the fact is that Malaya was colonized by the British, and this fact alone would have the potential of rallying the reader, Malay and non-Malay alike, to the cause of promoting national consciousness, that collective feeling of wanting to build and modernise the nation from the perceived 'ruins' of colonialism (Bottomore 1979:112-113).

It is in this context that Malay economic problems are raised by all the history book writers, problems which stretch from rural-urban disparity to British policies that essentially condemned the Malays into perennial poverty. The twin objectives of the British to modernise the Malays as well as maintain their traditional way of life is one particular example. At a glance this policy may seem conflicting, but on close inspection it is in many ways complementary, for the kind of economic system that had been introduced by British imperialism demands social differentiation and necessitates uneven development (Hoogvelt 1982:162-164). This is likely to convince particularly the Malay reader of the importance of giving economic help and support to the Malay community whose welfare, as a whole, had been neglected under colonial rule. Apart from focusing on the Malay economics, all of the writers also lay emphasis on the contributions

of the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, towards the general socio-economic development of Malaya. The reader is constantly reminded of these contributions in such a way that what is suggested, implicitly or otherwise, is that the Chinese community (and the Indians as well) deserves to be accorded equal citizenship and social justice. And some of the Chinese, like the 'Baba Chinese' of the Straits Settlements, had, as Khoo and Lo reveal, already demanded to be considered 'native' given their long residence in and strong allegiance to the country. All of the writers except Hall also acknowledge the economic contributions of the Indians. If, as Williams (in de Castell, Luke and Luke (eds) 1989:58) holds, sections of the past — consciously selected and deemed to be significant by a group or class — can shape the future, then some readers may well at this juncture take this historical account as a positive indication of the economic contributions of all Malaysians, particularly the workers of all ethnic groups who had toiled under the weight of British imperialism and various other exploitative conditions.

Related to the issue of British imperialism is the stereotype or myth of the Malays as a lazy community. All writers of these books in their own ways explode this myth. Both Emerson and Hall see the importance of providing British 'protection' to the Malays (who, according to them, have the capacity to progress economically) in order to introduce them slowly into the competitive, modern economy without them having to take the full brunt of capitalism at one go. It should be said here though that the 'progress' of the Malays is seen by both Emerson and Hall only in the context of capitalism. In other words, the Malays are still perceived by both writers as less developed so long as they persist to be on the outside of the

capitalist orbit. They may remain to be such for, as Emerson also remarks, the Malays as a group have the ability to resist the onslaught of capitalism. Khoo and Lo and Tate on the other hand argue that the feudal system which the Malays had been exposed to provides the explanation for their reluctance to work hard in order to accumulate wealth or surplus production. This also offers explanation to the fatalistic attitude of the Malays.² In addition, the experience of forced labour in the traditional Malay society made many Malays shy away from the deplorable working conditions of the tin mines and rubber plantations.³ This 'is the kind of 'lazy image'⁴ that many modern-day Malays want to shrug off. Spurred by this wish, many Malay political leaders encourage Malaysians, particularly Malays, to emulate the diligence and industriousness of the modernised and industrialised Koreans and Japanese.⁵ The desire of many political leaders for the country to 'take-off' to this modernised stage of socio-economic growth and also to have citizens who are hard-working and successful dictate to a large degree the features of the Malaysian government's New Economic Policy, in particular the emphasised objective to modernise the Malay society by creating a small group of Malay capitalists⁶ (INTAN 1988:1-6). Many Malay readers would not quarrel with this economic pursuit as they probably see 'modernization' of their community as the only way out of poverty.

Malay nationalism and/or ethnocentrism is also touched upon by all the writers in various ways. Principally, the notion that 'Malay nation' has its origins in rapid socio-economic development, that was perceived to be a threat to Malay political, economic and cultural survival in the Malay States. This sentiment was felt particularly after the Malay rejection of the Malayan Union proposal which was

largely seen as an attempt to usurp what was seen as their political supremacy. Later in the years before Independence, i.e. during the Japanese Occupation, suspicion of Chinese loyalty and fear of their economic prowess hardened these Malay nationalistic sentiments. Malay nationalism springs from the belief in their indigenesness, a claim which is questioned by Emerson. Emerson argues that the Malays were in the main immigrants from elsewhere, including the Malay Archipelago⁷ (where Indonesia is now). The aborigines in the Peninsula, he asserts, are the original inhabitants (some but not all of whom have assimilated themselves into Malay culture) and therefore they are the legitimate claimants to the indigenous title. His scepticism about the indigenous status of the Malays however turns out to be unfounded, for archaeological findings have confirmed their indigenesness (Husin Ali 1987; Ismail Hamid 1988). Tate, on the other hand, acknowledges the 'immigration' of Malays (from Indonesia) into Malaya, but he does not see this demographic movement as 'immigration' in the strict sense of the word as the Indonesians were perceived to be moving into an area that is culturally and historically part of their larger 'Malay World'. Khoo and Lo argue that British refusal to entertain demands from the Chinese community as they did not want to disturb Malay feelings was an indication of British recognition of the Malays' indigenesness. In other words, Emerson's assertion is less likely to create a problem to a future project such as the Malay-based national culture. If anything, this would only strengthen the argument of the Malay culture lobby. The question of 'numbers game' or numerical strength that necessarily relates to political supremacy, becomes of paramount importance to the Malays as a community vis-a-vis the non-Malays — as revealed by Hall and Tate. This numerical factor saw its importance emphasised in British Malaya when Malays as a group

were at one time outnumbered by the immigrant Chinese; a 'problem' that was later given the British solution of encouraging immigration of neighbouring Indonesians into Malaya. A relatively recent example of attaching significance to this numerical factor is when Malaysia was about to be formed. The inclusion of Chinese-dominated Singapore into this federation to a large degree prompted Malay leaders in the Peninsula to incorporate territories of Sabah and Sarawak where there are a sufficient number of Malays and Bumiputeras (indigenous group) to maintain the political supremacy of Malays in the Peninsula. Despite and perhaps because of the questioning of Malays' indigeneness such as Emerson's, the Malay reader would be overwhelmed by what s/he sees as the importance of attaching oneself increasingly to Malay identity. The non-Malay reader would be alarmed and feel insecure by this, and subsequently may be persuaded to jump onto her/his own ethnic bandwagon.

The position of the Malay rulers as a collective protector of Malay interests and of Islam is assailed overtly or otherwise by all writers but Tate. Khoo and Lo suggest that the Malay rulers had given their tacit approval to British intervention in the Malay States as it primarily served their own interests. Hall on the other hand has demonstrated in great detail the strong influence of Hindu culture upon the indigenous cultures of Southeast Asia, including that of the Malay Peninsula. And an outstanding example of where Hindu influence holds sway is the institution of Malay royalty, as asserted by both Hall and Emerson. While some non-Malay readers may see this as Malay culture's dynamism in being able to absorb and adapt to foreign influences and thus adding to its richness, Malay nationalists and Muslim fundamentalists would rather that this episode of Malay

cultural history be down-played or, better still, forgotten in order to keep some semblance of 'pure' Malay-Islamic culture. In addition, the Hindu input in Malay royalty and Emerson's case study of Johor royalty's questionable ('pure') Malay, intellectual and moral background could undermine its position as the guardian of Malay interests and of Islam. This notwithstanding, Hall's account of Malacca as the Islamic power base for the Southeast Asian region may well be considered and employed by many Malay readers as the 'significant past' that can give weight to and inspire the present drive of the Muslim community and the present government to inject more Islamic values into the government administration (INTAN 1988:89-96) and the Malaysian society in general in order to make Malaysia achieve a reputable standing in the eyes of the international Muslim community.

Khoo and Lo, Hall and Tate have all established the fact that Malaysians of all ethnic background have fallen victim to the divisive politics of not only the divide-and-rule policies of the British and the Japanese (during their Malayan Occupation), but also the 'communal politics' practised by political parties such as the Alliance (now transformed into the National Front). While Tate, for instance, is consciously aware of the dangers of communal politics, Khoo and Lo, despite their apparent concern, momentarily also fall prey to the argument that it is out of necessity that ethnic politics has been resorted to. Hall detects the danger of the divisive politics of the Japanese Occupation, and yet he applauds the communal and divisive politics practised by the ruling Alliance party. The image of ethnic tension and suspicion particularly between the Malays and the Chinese however does not necessarily, as Tate observes, rule out the

possibility of ethnic interaction and cooperation especially if it serves the economic interests of their ruling elites and bourgeoisie.⁸ If anything, such ethnic division that is brought about by a strong sense of 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983:15-16) is to a large degree instrumental towards maintaining the positions of each of these elites, as they are invariably perceived as championing and protecting the rights and interests of their respective communities. Thus the divisive aspect of communal politics may serve as a warning as well as a path towards understanding and appreciating the origins of such politics to the readers. On the other hand, some readers may be swayed by the argument put forward by Khoo and Lo that despite its dangers, communal politics is a necessity.

In the context of multiethnic problems the question of education policy is raised by Hall, Khoo and Lo, and Emerson. Hall has expressed his reservation about the 'wisdom' of maintaining separate vernacular school systems as he foresees their disruptive chauvinistic tendencies or potential. Khoo and Lo take a step further by suggesting that a common education system that incorporates all of the vernacular education is good for ethnic relations. In addition, they feel that Malay as a national language can play a significant role in facilitating inter-ethnic communication. Emerson however differs as he feels that it was unjust of the British to neglect the vernacular education of the non-Malay children. Neither does he believe in the ability of Malay performing effectively as the lingua franca of the country given the lack of proficiency in Malay of many of the non-Malays in pre-independence Malaya. Such a controversy rages on into the present-day Malaysia even after it was officially decided that a common education system and Malay as a national language and

also medium of instruction can play a prominent role in fostering good ethnic relations in the country. Some non-Malay readers would still feel apprehensive of the common education system unless facilities for the teaching of vernaculars under the present system are improved.

Khoo and Lo are the only writers who touch on the subject of communist insurgency in Malaya. Such a perceived threat, rightly or wrongly, laid the groundwork to future curtailment of certain fundamental liberties of Malayan citizens. Certain readers may be convinced by the 'social and political exigencies' of these curbs. For others who see their individual and collective rights as citizens of a professedly democratic country being trampled, this 'communist argument' could be discomforting and alienating.

As for the phrases and terms used in these texts, all of the analyses show that they have an effect or perhaps a calculated attempt of imposing on the reader a feeling of 'naturalness' and 'commonsense' in the Gramscian spirit (Forgacs (ed) 1988:421) as regards the indigenous status of the Malays and Islam's role in the Malaysian society. Thus Emerson, for instance, states that '...the Malay has been economically dispossessed in his own country', thereby subtly but strongly suggesting that the Malays are the 'owner' of Malaya (or, in Malay, Tanah Melayu). This connotation of 'Malay ownership' is again evoked when Hall remarks, for example, 'Naturally the Malays regarded themselves as the people of the country...' This terminological assertion is made more forceful when Hall further comments that the Malays would, if they were not careful with their political and economic positions, eventually find themselves 'pushed out of their own house on to the doorstep'. Again, the term 'own' serves to confirm

Malay indigenous relationship to the land.

There are accounts in these history books which constitute conflicting 'significant pasts'. For example, the Hindu cultural input into the Malay culture suggests that one, Malay culture is not 'pure' but a product of incorporation of elements of foreign cultures, and two, Malay culture is dynamic enough to absorb foreign cultural elements (including, later, Islam). This example could be used particularly by some non-Malays as their 'significant past' to demonstrate that the government's formulation of the national culture is faulty right from the start. In other words, the national culture cannot be solely Malay- and Islamic-based, but also should include other cultural bases. The economic contributions of the non-Malays (as well as the Malays) to the overall development of the country could be collectively formed and highlighted as another 'significant past' in arguing for an economic reform, progress and social justice for all Malaysians — irrespective of ethnic origins — especially the disadvantaged. The Malay reader on the other hand could employ items such as one, the historical neglect of Malay economic well-being which was primarily due to British economic policies in general and two, the 'lazy Malay' stereotype that was popularised by the British and Chinese which has put them in an economically disadvantaged position — to form her 'significant pasts' to marshal the argument that the Malay community as a whole deserves special economic attention and assistance from the government. That the Malay nationalist movements were in the forefront of the Malaysians' struggle for independence could be used as another 'significant past' and as a leverage for Malays' special position. Finally, the triumph of Islam in the golden days of Melaka empire could constitute another of her 'significant pasts' to

illustrate that Islam has gained a foothold in this 'Malay region' for a very long time and thus deserves to be made the basis of the proposed national culture. All the history books on balance have managed to put many things in their perspective. For instance, Malay economic neglect is traced to its origins in British Malaya and not simply a matter of a conscious Chinese attempt at dominating the Malayan economy. In addition, fundamental and structural factors are attributed to the Malay economic plight. At the same time, the reader is reminded of the economic contributions of the non-Malays to the general socio-economic progress of the country. The non-Malay economic contributions, at least in the eyes of the non-Malay reader, do have the potential — if their outstanding political, cultural and economic needs and demands are not effectively and immediately met — of creating, or at least creating a semblance of, separate 'nationalities' within the Malaysian polity.

Notes

1. For a critical analysis of modernization theories, see Hoogvelt (1982:116-119).

2. Tham Seong Chee (1983:9) points out the strong belief of the Malays that no-one can master his/her fate. Tham adds, 'The low status of the Malay commoners, closely linked to their attitude of submission to the traditional aristocracy, shaped and conditioned a further set of beliefs that paralleled and reinforced the existing value propensities and social ideals and gave them a negative twist. The traditional belief was to regard the chief or ruler as the embodiment of the fortunes of the state and its inhabitants.'

3. Alatas holds that Malay unwillingness to 'become a tool in the production system of colonial capitalism' earned them a reputation of being 'indolent' (1977:72).

4. Alatas argues, 'the colonial ideology utilized the idea of the lazy native to justify compulsion and unjust practices in the mobilization of labour in the colonies. It portrayed a negative image of the natives and their society to justify and rationalize European conquest and domination of the area. It

distorted elements of social and human reality to ensure a comfortable construction of the ideology. (1977:2)' In Chapter 9 of his book (1977), Alatas has marshalled a set of evidences to show that diligence and hard work are indeed part of the Malay value system. He also asserts that this lazy image of the Malay, however, still strongly influences 'an influential section of the non-Malays' and also a section of the Malay intelligentsia (ibid: 16-17). For instance, still imprisoned and stung to a large degree by this colonial image of the Malay, ruling UMNO party saw it as its solemn duty to 'correct' this image by publishing a book compiled by party secretary-general Senu Abdul Rahman, Revolusi Mental (Mental Revolution), in 1971 which, according to Alatas (ibid: 152), 'is even more negative in scope than that of colonial capitalism.'

5. Mahathir Mohamad (1981:162-163), the present prime minister of Malaysia, has shown a lack of understanding of the sociological context which has brought about the apparent 'laziness', the fatalistic and lackadaisical attitudes of the Malays as a group. His notion of these negative Malay values, which to him are inherent in the Malay mind, perhaps plays a greater part in his formulation of the Look East Policy, which essentially asks Malaysians to admire and follow the 'positive examples' of industrious and industrialised Japan and Korea (INTAN 1988:99-104). In addition, he believes that the Malays are hereditarily inferior to the 'diligent and industrious' Chinese (1981:25). 'The implications,' he confesses, 'are too depressing and hold no promise of easy or rapid remedies. (ibid.:2)' He asserts that this genetic inferiority stems from Malay cultural preferences, particularly 'in-breeding' which he defines as 'marriage between first cousins and other close relatives' within the Malay community (ibid.:2). He nevertheless suggests intermarriages as these are seen as enriching the Malay stock. Alatas argues (1977:163) that, like the Revolusi Mental, the weakness of Mahathir's book, The Malay Dilemma, is that it puts 'the blame for the exploitation of the Malays on their character, British rule, and the impact of immigrant business but not to the same degree on the Malay ruling class which profited from colonization.'

6. Lim Mah Hui (in Taylor and Turton (eds) 1988:28) comments however that almost all of the prominent Malay bourgeoisie 'have made a dramatic leap into a corporate world through an initial windfall obtained from state concessions'.

7. This area constitutes part of what is known as the 'Malay Archipelago' where its many inhabitants belong to the larger entity of Malay stock. For a discussion of the origin of the Malays, see Husin Ali (1987); Ismail Hamid (1988).

8. Lim Mah Hui (ibid.:29) argues that the contemporary Malay bourgeoisie's lack in 'capital, know-how and market connections,' often compels them to have joint economic ventures with 'either foreign and/or Chinese capital, (thereby) creating a symbiotic relationship between Malay and non-Malay bourgeoisie...'

Overall conclusion (for both the General Studies and History texts)

Most versions of 'tradition' can be quickly shown to be radically selective. From a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Yet, within a particular hegemony, and as one of its decisive processes, this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as 'the tradition', 'the significant past'... It is a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of predisposed continuity (emphasis in original). Raymond Williams in de Castell, Luke and Luke (eds) (1989:58).

The analysis of the two sets of History and General Studies texts shows that both are fundamentally different insofar as the first set in effect offers the second a Malay(si)an past whose segments it can and does — as asserted by Williams above — select and emphasise, neglect or exclude. The manner by which the General Studies books promote an aspect — and hence, neglect others — of a text that thus assumes a position of 'the significant past' is two-fold: One, it promotes explicitly through excerpts that have similar inclinations. These extracts are mostly derived from Malay newspapers, contemporary magazines and journals which are largely intended for Malay audience, and thus for the 'Malay mind'. Two, such promotion is done by repetition through the use of chapter summaries, discursive questions, and multiple-choice questions. Here, as de Castell, Luke and Luke argue, such 'intentional sectioning and punctuating of information reinforce the apparently "neutral" character of the information, and serve distinct instructional ends', the manner of framing and the choice of content to be framed would not to a certain degree be able to preserve 'the very words' of the writer (1989:250). In other words, different meanings would emanate from such conscious framing,

meanings which may deviate to some degree from the ones initially intended by their original authors as it may involve taking things out of context. What these General Studies books exclude are materials pertaining to detailed discussions or information regarding elements of Chinese and Indian cultures, non-Malay economic contributions, and poverty inflicting the Chinese and Indian communities and steps, if any, taken to overcome this economic hardship.

On the other hand, the History books, written by Western and Chinese writers, generally provide useful background so as to pave the way for a better understanding of the present Malaysian situation. And, as already intimated earlier, they also inform the reader of that part of the Malay(si)an history which is neglected or excluded from the pages of the General Studies books. Promotion, in the case of the History books, is implied by the repeated appearances between and heavy emphases within texts of a certain aspect. Contradictions nonetheless do appear within and between texts particularly when selection or promotion is juxtaposed with exclusion or neglect, or when a certain selection conflicts with another selection. These contradictions can in many ways provide for the reader alternative 'reading' of these texts. In other words, the product of these contradictions can forge a new 'significant past' that is totally different from the one originally intended by the writers concerned.

Malayan economics generally dominate the content of all the History books basically because the writers focus their attention on the impact of Western industrialisation and colonialism upon the socio-economic life of Southeast Asia. Hence, one of the recurrent themes in these books is Malay economic problems (and, to a lesser

degree, their economic contributions) that receives detailed treatment from all the writers. In this connection, it is perhaps not surprising that all of the History writers refer, directly or otherwise, to the myth of the 'lazy Malay'. Another theme that is highlighted and given heavy emphasis by all of these writers is the contributions of the Chinese to the economic development of Malaya. We are told in this instance that the Chinese saw their contributions as so great as to contest and qualify themselves for the 'native' category as well as for social justice. Also highlighted, although with less intensity, by all except Hall is the economic contributions of the Indians in Malaya. In other words, these History books have acknowledged the contributions of members of the major ethnic groups towards the socio-economic development of the country. In short, this constitutes their 'significant past'. The General Studies books however form their own 'tradition' as far as the Malay(si)an economic situation is concerned. All but Pengajian Am 1 emphasise the economic problems of Malays — to the exclusion or neglect of the significant contributions of non-Malays in the economic development of the country. Three of the concepts that are frequently employed are Malay poverty, Malay special position, and the New Economic Policy (particularly the stress on creating a small group of Malay capitalists) that is waved almost as an economic wand. As if this isn't enough, the economic plight of certain Chinese and Indians is hardly mentioned in any of the General Studies texts. If anything, as highlighted by most of the General Studies books, the historical neglect of Malays' economic well-being, when placed and seen in isolation, appears to become increasingly urgent so as to lend legitimacy and justification to the governmental and institutional aid for Malays. Thus from here we could deduce that each set of books in general have created their own kind of ethnic

readership; General Studies books are expected to be favoured by most Malay readers while the History ones by most non-Malay readers.

The History book writers recognise that immigration and economic and political problems were brought about by British imperialism in Malaya. Here a shared sense of being victims to British economic and political exploitations can be constructed. However, writers such as Emerson, Hall, and Khoo and Lo also at the same time assert in various ways that there are some 'virtues' of this political and economic intervention. Somehow their imperialist and capitalist preferences manage to slip in. These contradictory positions can evolve into two distinct 'significant pasts' for the reader to choose or perhaps incorporate both to form a third, middle path: i.e. one, that there are some goodness in British imperialism; two, that the British presence in Malaya only brought negative impact on the economy, particularly on its Malay sector, which as a result requires massive governmental help; and finally, that British imperialism wasn't too bad after all.

Malay culture and Islamic tradition, on the other hand, dominate the attention of most of the General Studies texts. That both constitute the bases of the proposed national culture of Malaysia suggests that the writers concerned are highly influenced by the official project. It is particularly felt when aspects of the non-Malay cultures, Chinese culture to be specific, are marginalized and reduced to being an extract and part of multiple-choice questions. It should be noted here that Indian culture, as a separate and living entity in Malaysia, is not at all mentioned or discussed in these texts. Malay language, which is officially hailed as the national

language of Malaysia that is supposed to function as a communication link between the ethnic groups, at times tend to be sketched by these books less as a language of Malaysians than of Malays. In addition, the constitutional provision for the use of other ethnic languages is only mentioned in passing in one of the texts. Seen in this perspective, Emerson's criticism of the exclusion of other vernaculars in choosing Malay as the national language could gain credence.

Malay culture, national culture, Islamic tradition, and national language are all tied, in various ways, to the notion of the Malays being the original people of the land. This subject is discussed implicitly or overtly by most of the History writers, particularly Emerson who essentially stands the Malay claim to indigenesness on its head by showing other than the Malays to be indigenous. Emerson's 'revelation', however, could have wide implications to the above national objectives and been employed as a 'significant past' by especially a non-Malay reader had it not been for the fact that Malays have been established (by archaeological evidences) as being the indigenous people of Malaya (Husin Ali 1987; Ismail Hamid 1988). Given this historical reality, the writers of the General Studies who propagate the notion of Malay indigenesness have obviously chosen to neglect this questioning of the Malay claim. As far as the Malay reader is concerned, the emphasis given by Emerson to his spurious claim may only serve to harden the former's ethnic consciousness. And it is interesting that of all the General Studies writers, only Malhi sees it appropriate to trace and discuss the origin of the special position of the Malays. The other writers, all Malays, perhaps have taken this constitutional provision, i.e. the Malay special position, for granted. Despite and perhaps because of this controversy,

Pengajian Am 1 and Pengajian Am 2 (A. Long) see the need to highlight ethnic Malay nationalism and ethnocentrism. So do all of the History writers for apparently different reasons: the first group generally seems to heighten and reinforce Malay claim to special position, while the second in general to indicate the socio-economic, political and cultural significance of this Malay special status. The indigeneness of the Malays may in part explain why some of the writers appreciate the importance of the 'numbers game' or Malay political supremacy to the Malays: Othman et al., Hall and Tate. Such a display of Malay ethnocentrism could alienate the non-Malay reader. What is meant to be educational could serve as a grim reminder to the reader of the dangers of such ethnic sentiments.

Malay culture receives very elaborate treatment from all the General Studies writers except Malhi. While in most cases Malay culture is promoted in full gear, there are occasions when its dominant cultural and political position gets undermined by certain contradictions. For instance, the liberal approach to culture and education as manifested in Pengajian Am 2 (Othman et al.) makes the official project of constituting a Malay-based national culture appear rather contentious. Another example of a cultural and political tension is the universalism of Islam and the specificity of the Malay culture. The liberal approach to culture and, to some degree, the universalism of Islam can both serve as a 'significant past' for the reader who is quite critical of the official notion of national culture that is seen to be narrow in scope and definition. On the other hand, the universalism of Islam could be interpreted by the reader as its being dynamic and magnanimous enough to absorb other cultural values so as to become the basis of the proposed national

culture. On the subject of Islam, only Hall (of the History writers) discusses it in relation to the glory of the Melaka empire. On the surface, it would seem that there is more concern with Islam in the General Studies. On closer inspection, however, Hall's discussion can constitute a very important element in strengthening the argument of these General Studies writers as Hall provides them with their 'significant past', i.e. the glory of Islam under the Melaka empire.

Still on a Malay-related subject: Malay rulers, or rather their position in Malay society, command attention in Emerson, Hall, and Khoo and Lo, and in General Studies, except those by Saidi and Salim, and A. Long. While the latter draw the rulers as almost an ideal type, the former's remarks on the royalty are quite unpleasant at best and scathing at worse. Emerson is particularly biting in his observation of the Malay royalty, revealing, like Hall and Khoo and Lo, amongst other things, its mixed parentage and hence the 'dilution' of its Malay blood. This could go both ways: The vision of the rulers as the collective protector of the Malay community and guardian of Islam is jolted among the Malays, while for some non-Malays this 'tradition' could symbolise the cultural dynamism of the Malay royalty. Anyway, given this inherent and historical role of the Malay rulers, they are often sketched as a social and political institution that is more significant to the Malays than the non-Malays. Corollary to this, the rulers' official status as the symbol of unity of all Malaysians can be brought into question.

Despite the professed concern for national unity in relation to the use of the national language, the subject of national unity doesn't seem to merit elaborate treatment by many of the book writers.

Hence, only Malhi, Othman et al., and Khoo and Lo touch on this subject. Unlike the others, Malhi allots a whole chapter to the question of national unity. A multiethnic treatment to a subject receives scant regard by the writers. When there is such a treatment, as in the case of Othman et al. and A. Long, it only takes the form of multiple-choice questions, with their restricted format preventing any possibility of developing characters into people who could represent the various ethnic cultures in the country. If anything, this represents a half-hearted attempt at being multiethnic. The dangers of communal politics that is inherently divisive gains the attention of only the History writers (with the exception of Tate). Among them, Hall and Khoo and Lo tend to justify the kind of pro-Malay politics practised by the ruling party. The question of racism is raised by the General Studies writers only, with conflicting emphasis. Othman et al. and A. Long in effect emphasise racial differences while Saidi and Salim condemn racism. Such contradictions could go a long way towards educating the reader not only of the ugly face of racism but also help her to detect racism in the other contents of the books concerned.

Education as a tool for promoting ethnic harmony is discussed by A. Long, Hall, Emerson, and Khoo and Lo. Unlike the rest, Emerson dislikes the notion of a common national education system as he perceives it as an attempt to stifle vernacular education, a criticism that may not find sympathy and support especially among many contemporary Malays because it would mean, amongst other things, undermining the Malay language not only as the national language (and hence a language of unity) but especially as the main medium of instruction. A. Long, Hall, and Khoo and Lo generally embrace this view of the national education system which stipulates the use of the

national language as the main medium of instruction, apart from providing facilities, albeit less emphasised, in State-run schools for the teaching and learning of other vernaculars.

Basic freedoms or fundamental liberties are recognised by most of the General Studies writers as requirements of the project to modernity. The desire to achieve this 'modern' objective is however partly arrested by certain constitutional and legal qualifications or curbs. The mention of communist insurgency and threat by Khoo and Lo presents a 'significant past' that justifies practices as expressed in the General Studies texts, such as detention without trial under the powerful Internal Security Act. Aspects mentioned as related to basic freedoms are the Malaysian constitution, the Judiciary, and the useful role of the Opposition. These, particularly the last one, are quite significant in the way of symbolising the legitimate right of a citizen to debate and dissent in a parliamentary democracy that Malaysia is supposed to practise. For the critical reader, this democratic right to dissent and discussion is found wanting in, for instance, the discussion of the controversial question of national culture in the General Studies texts.

Finally, most of the concepts, themes, terms and phrases used in these texts analysed suggest a general attempt at making many of the things said in the books into something 'natural' and 'commonsensical' so as to evoke in the reader's mind a sense of intellectual satisfaction and a refusal to question certain assumptions. The 'commonsensical' phrasing normally hovers over the question of Malay indigenusness.

On balance, one could argue that the overall and underlying emphasis of these books, particularly the General Studies ones, is the promotion of things Malay, be they economic, cultural or political. However, these are nevertheless countered within and between texts by contradicting discussions, the neglect, exclusion or appearance in another text of certain aspects of Malaysian economic, political and cultural life. Here we see the 'significant past' being actively constructed by writers of contemporary Malaysia through the General Studies books, who, with the exception of Malhi, are Malays. One can also argue that the Malay bias in the General Studies is sharply reinforced in part by the use of extracts from Malay newspapers, popular magazines and journals that are in essence targeted for the Malay audience. One then wonders whether the existence of materials in the History books which are neglected in the General Studies books can be attributed to the fact that the writers of the History books in question are non-Malays. This then brings to mind whether with the passage of time the present History books will be replaced by new ones that are written by more local (and perhaps mainly Malay) historians and scholars, and whether this would necessarily mean a shift of emphasis and new inclusions and exclusions. Such processes of inclusion and exclusion that are influenced by ethnic considerations can have the effect of dividing the readers into 'them' and 'us', thereby promoting just the opposite of what the national education system attempts to achieve, i.e. to try to foster good ethnic relations and forge a national identity amongst students. In addition, one can also attempt to identify aspects of the books that purport to be temporally specific while others universal. The economic factors, i.e. economic assistance for Malays and Malay special position, and national security and divisive politics belong to the first category,

while the national culture project, national unity, the monarchy, national language, and fundamental liberties fit the second. The first category needs to be phased out of the books gradually and systematically in order that the long-term goal of achieving national unity could be further emphasised. As far as the second category is concerned, the national culture project, despite its professed concern for unity, can be very contentious and ethnically damaging as well.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS-FORMING: STUDENTS' POSITION AND DISPOSITION

Schools, according to the popular notion, are an effective instrument in transmitting cultural values or 'culturally significant knowledge' to students in particular and the society's new generations in general. While this perspective presents a vision of a group of students absorbing passively almost everything that is imparted to them, another theoretical construct perceives political and cultural discourses within and from outside of the school as functioning 'to promote in a wide variety of students contradictory forms of consciousness and behavior, some of which may be exhibited in resistance, in accommodation, or in outright self-indulgence' (Giroux 1983:105). It is in this light therefore that a survey was conducted to explore the views, attitudes and mental inclinations of a group of 150 students in three secondary schools in the state of Penang with regard to the political, economic, cultural and educational aspects of Malaysian life. From here, we would attempt to gauge how these views and attitudes would respond to the images and messages presented by the textbooks already analysed. The ethnic and gender composition of the students interviewed is as follows:

Table 7.1: Ethnic and Gender Composition of Students Surveyed

	<u>Malay</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>'Malaysian'</u>	<u>Total</u>
Male	12	36	5	4	57
Female	13	67	8	5	93
Total	25	103	13	9	150

The schools that came under study were predominantly Chinese in terms of student population, and hence Chinese were greater in number than Malays in the survey sample. 'Malaysians' were those students who only wished to be identified as such, and not according to their respective ethnic origins.

7.1 The Political

It should be stated at the outset that this survey was conducted some months after the Mahathir administration launched a series of mass arrests since October 27, 1987 of Opposition leaders, a few politicians from the ruling party, government critics, academics, trade unionists, and social and religious activists. Not only did the public image of the government suffer to some extent at the time, at least in the eyes of many of the non-Malays, its drastic actions also resulted in a climate of fear descending on Malaysian society. Further, ethnic tension and suspicion still prevailed, to a certain degree, at the time.¹ In other words, such a political climate rendered it difficult for a researcher to gauge the degree of sincerity (and accuracy) of the responses of certain students, particularly in areas that were considered 'politically sensitive'.

Thus it was against this political backdrop that when, for instance, the students were asked, 'In Malaysian history, who are the political figures whom you favour less and why?', 37% of them, as shown by Table 7.2 below, chose to answer 'None', although 25% of them did register their disapproval of Mahathir and his political allies. While there might be a number of students who genuinely did not have any political leader to disfavour, it was quite conceivable that, in the wake of the mass arrests, many of them opted not to disclose their

political choice for fear of possible political repercussions. A comment from one student might illustrate this kind of political nervousness: 'There is one particular person and he is still playing a major role in the Cabinet and the Parliament and he is power-crazy. But I will not reveal his name because I may be sent to Kamunting.'² Another student remarked: 'I don't think I should mention it (the name of political figure(s). I might (be) charged under the ISA (Internal Security Act).' It is also illustrative that the students who decided not to declare their choices were: 64% of the Indians, 45% of the Chinese, 20% of the 'Malaysians', and only 6% of the Malays.³ As we can see, the percentage of non-Malays showing their apparent apprehension about making their political feelings publicly known is far greater than that of the Malays. This could in part be attributed to a general sense of political insecurity among many non-Malays after witnessing the consequences of an inter-ethnic conflict, or what was purported to be one. On the other hand, most of the Malay choices were more decisive by choosing Malaysia's octogenarian first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and allies (46%), and Opposition politicians (34%)

Table 7.2: Percentage of students disavowing Malaysian political figures

<u>Malay</u>	<u>Mahathir & Co.</u>	<u>Tunku & Co.</u>	<u>Opposition</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>None</u>	
Male	9	30	44	13	4	100
Female	0	75	17	0	8	100
Sub-total	6	46	34	8	6	100
<u>Chinese</u>						
Male	35	3	3	24	35	100
Female	29	2	2	16	51	100
Sub-total	31	2	2	20	45	100
<u>Indian</u>						
Male	40	0	0	20	40	100
Female	0	0	0	17	83	100
Sub-total	18	0	0	18	64	100
<u>'Malaysian'</u>						
Male	20	0	0	60	20	100
		240				

	<u>Mahathir & Co.</u>	<u>Tunku & Co.</u>	<u>Opposition</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>None</u>	
Female	60	0	0	20	20	100
Sub-total	40	0	0	40	20	100
						 100

as their disliked political figures in the country. As far as many of the Malay students were concerned, Dr Mahathir Mohamad was their hero and saviour, especially in times of social and political distress that was seen as threatening the unity of the 'Malay community'. This explains in part why they opposed Tunku Abdul Rahman (whom many Malay students perceived as being too liberal and 'soft' on Chinese demands). In contrast, Mahathir (and allies) was chosen by 31% of the Chinese students as their disliked political figure.

If declaring one's disfavoured political figure(s) seemed like a formidable task at a time like this, stating the likeable or favoured one(s) appeared to be less problematic. If anything, choosing a particular figure seemed to be, for some students, one way of going around the problem of declaring their disapproval of another figure. Hence, when the students were asked, 'In Malaysian history, who are your favourite political figures, and why?', Tunku Abdul Rahman and allies (including Mahathir's rival Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and former prime minister Tun Hussein Onn) were popular among most non-Malay students and the 'Malaysians'. Some 70% of the Chinese students, 78% of the Indians, and 64% of the 'Malaysians' gave support for the first prime minister and allies. In contrast, 36% of the Malay students gave support to Mahathir and supporters, 19% to Tunku and friends, while 42% went to various other individuals (alive as well as deceased) under the category of 'Other' and 3% to the Opposition. While the popularity of Mahathir was still strong among the Malay

students concerned, the overall figures also reflects their general anxiety and apprehension as regards the internal feud and conflict — of which Mahathir was one of those deeply involved — that afflicted UMNO, which in turn could be conveniently interpreted as a threat to the unity and security of the 'Malay community' (and by extension, the Malaysian community). In other words, those who sought other individual Malay figures were apparently also looking for some kind of a unifying symbol for the Malays as a whole.

In the wake of a political crackdown that was largely attributed, at least by the government, to ethnic conflict, but interpreted by government critics as a political ruse to muffle growing dissent and criticisms of the government, the question of freedom ('Some people think there should be more freedom, others think there should be less. What do you think...?') elicited an interesting response: 'More freedom' was demanded by 50% of the Chinese students, followed by 43% of the 'Malaysian' students, 38% of the Indians, and only 26% of the Malays. The group that topped the list of those who asked for 'moderate freedom' was that of the Malay students with 63% of them saying so. This was followed by 63% of the Indian students, 57% of the 'Malaysians', and 39% of the Chinese. Those who chose 'more freedom' felt that only with freedom could their political, economic and cultural survival be assured in the country. While those who asked for 'moderate freedom' argued that more freedom in a multiethnic Malaysia could be dangerous as it could conveniently be abused by certain people, especially politicians who, in their quest to make quick political gains, trampled upon the sensibilities of the major ethnic groups and consequently hampered national unity initiatives. One could perhaps at this juncture surmise that these are the sort of people who

would be inclined to support government measures — some of which are restrictive and fundamentally undemocratic in nature — taken in order to protect 'national interests'. Perhaps this political accommodation could be related to the students' response to the question, 'Do you think that sometimes the government must force people to do things against their will?'. Some 58% of all the students said 'Yes' while 38% said 'No', and 4% 'No comment'. However, when it comes to individual ethnic groups, only the Indians differed: 56% of the group voted 'No' to this question. One possible reason for the affirmative response is that there were some students (out of the 58%) who might have felt compelled to do so, given the 'sensitive' nature of the question and the uneasy political situation in which this question was posed. On the other hand, the 56% of Indian students who replied 'no' to this question were probably the ones who felt the need to have more freedom, particularly those who perceived their community being marginalized in many ways. Thus, the issue of fundamental liberties as presented by many of the General Studies books, for instance, must have aroused a lot of interest from the students, particularly those who sought 'More freedom' and who felt apprehensive by the assertion of many of the textbook writers that curtailment of certain fundamental liberties is necessary. In other words, discussion of such a crucial matter, as in the General Studies books, results in conflicting responses from the students.

7.2 The Cultural

It is interesting that most of the students, irrespective of their ethnic origins, defined race relations as achieving ethnic unity or better ethnic relations: 95% of the Malay students said so, followed by 95% of the Chinese, and all of the Indian and 'Malaysian'

students. It is also significant that, in response to the same question (i.e. 'What is 'race relations' to you?') 5% of the Malay students and 5% of the Chinese argued that one should only think of one Malaysian race as opposed to emphasising the division of the society into many ethnic groups. However, despite the concern for national unity in the country as indicated above, ethnic considerations still seemed to play a significant part in the lives of these students, regardless of whether they're fully conscious of this. Such a tendency is implied by the response to the following question: 'Do you think it sometimes helps to understand others if you know what racial group they belong to?' Affirmative answer was given by 69% of all the students; 75% of the Malays, followed by 73% of the Indians, 70% of the Chinese, and 44% of the 'Malaysians'. Such a response from these students is hardly surprising in a society where ethnic label or a strong sense of belonging to one's own community is often consciously or unwittingly celebrated. Thus, it seems like a formidable task to extricate oneself from the habit or practice of measuring others by an ethnic rod — even for some 'Malaysians'. Certain State policies also appear partly responsible for the perpetuation of pronounced ethnic consciousness. As one student commented, 'I'm made to feel this way (i.e. it's important to know a person's ethnic background) by the discriminatory policies of the government.'

That an ethnic label is important in many ways in Malaysian society is perhaps indicated by the following: 41% of the Malays saw themselves as 'Malaysians', 32% as 'Malay-Malaysians', 23% as 'Malay' and 4% as 'Other'. As for the Chinese, 56% of them considered themselves 'Malaysians', 25% 'Chinese', 19% 'Chinese-Malaysians'. With

regard to the Indians, 50% perceived themselves as 'Malaysians', 25% as 'Indians' and another 25% as 'Indian-Malaysians'. The 'Malaysians' on the other hand saw themselves as 'Malaysians' and 'Malaysians' only. This suggests that, with the distinct exception of the 'Malaysians', both Malays and non-Malays as a group have in themselves an identity conflict between being Malaysians and ethnic individuals, particularly those whose identities are hyphenated to 'Malaysian'. This 'identity tension' has its origins in the communal politics of most political parties in the country, and ethnic-based government policies, or at least, the ethnic-biased implementation of certain government policies. Such a situation can perhaps be related to the kind of question posed by Yinger (1986:28-29), 'Who benefits most when ethnicity plays a prominent part in the ways in which interests are pursued?' While in most cases only the minority from each of the communities would be likely to benefit from capitalising on ethnicity, the majority nevertheless may still believe, or want to believe, that much could be gained from promoting ethnic labels. In other words, a Malaysian identity is still receiving strong challenge from ethnic identities.

Religion plays an important part in the lives of most Malaysians. When asked, 'How important is religion to you in your daily living?', all the Malay-Muslim students interviewed replied that their religion was important to them. Some 84% of the Chinese expressed similar sentiments, followed by 92% of the Indians, and all of the 'Malaysians'. Such emphasis given to religion by the students could be attributed to several factors. One, the Islamization policy of the government has raised the religious consciousness of not only Malay-Muslims but also of non-Malays. Two, the forming of a Malaysian

national culture that is based on Malay and Islamic cultures not only emphasises the importance of Malay culture and Islam, but also prompts the non-Malays to jealously guard and promote their cultural heritage. Consequently, as Chandra Muzaffar (1987:98) observes, 'Dormant, even dead, customs and practices are being resurrected to emphasize the uniqueness and the distinctiveness of various non-Muslim religions and cultures.' Moreover, the Islamic resurgence in the country has also generated increasing interest in religious activities among non-Muslims to such an extent that there developed 'an undefined sense of solidarity among non-Malays that they are not Muslims' (S.E. Ackerman and R.L.M. Lee 1988:5).

Further, with the official promotion of Islamization policy and national culture, the seeming oppositional stand taken by Muslims and non-Muslims in the larger society, and the ethnic dimension that is added to religious affiliation, it is not surprising that when the Malay students were posed with the question, 'Do you feel differently about people who belong to different religions?', 83% of them said 'Yes' with 17% saying otherwise. The response was however different with the non-Malay students: 67% of the Chinese said 'No', 31% 'Yes' and 2% were 'Indifferent'; 91% of the Indians said 'No', and 9% 'Yes'; and 61% of the Malaysians said 'No', 37% 'Yes' and 2% were 'Indifferent'. The comparatively less percentage of non-Malays who had the 'sense of religious difference' can be interpreted as those who were willing to see others outside their faiths as being equal insofar as their sense of religious freedom and rights is not seen as being threatened. In other words, discussion and promotion of Islam and national culture to the exclusion or marginalization of those of the non-Malays — as is done in most of the General Studies books — must

have alienated and frustrated the non-Malay reader and by extension, heighten ethnic suspicion and tension.

a. Classroom activities

As far as subjects in school are concerned, the students in general put History on top of the list of their favourite subjects, while Economics came first in their list of least liked subjects. Further, among the textbooks they used which they liked best are those concerning History, Economics and General Studies. Reasons given for these preferences ranged from 'wanting to know the past and present of Malaysia to effective teaching of certain teachers of the subjects concerned.

When broached with the question, 'Are there textbooks which you find unattractive because they are offensive to you? If any, please specify in what aspect, and how?', 56% of them said 'None', 38% 'No comment', and 6% felt there were such cases. One Malay student briefly described his objection: 'The origins of the Malay royalty.' He was referring to the ethnic Indian and Hindu cultural background of certain Malay rulers of the old days, for it is not commensurate with the status of today's Malay rulers who are generally seen as the protector of Malay culture, Islam and interests. Another response seems to relate to the History textbooks: 'The Chinese and Indian contributions to the struggle for Malaya's independence were neglected.' This appears to represent a general feeling of dissatisfaction among some non-Malay students over the lack of appreciation of the sacrifices made by the non-Malays in their fight for the country's independence, a sentiment that is much related to the question of national identity formation. A sense of unfairness was

also registered by another student who felt that social problems faced by other ethnic groups were not highlighted by the books: 'The textbooks do not mention social injustice experienced by certain other racial groups.' This and the previous criticisms could be related to the promotion by certain History and General Studies book writers of a certain 'significant past' to the exclusion of others. That there was only a small number of students expressing their objections can be attributed to several factors: (a) In the wake of the late 1987 political crackdown, many students who were critical tended to be over-cautious about displaying their political opinions; (b) State ideological penetration of the students' mind had been quite effective as to make the latter incapable of noticing anything objectionable, i.e. able to see most things as 'natural' or 'commonsensical' in the textbooks; (c) the time constraint experienced by the students when responding to the questionnaire prevented many from answering certain crucial questions (that required some time to think carefully) including this one; (d) there were those who were genuinely unaware of any offensive items in the textbooks; and (e) a few students perhaps didn't fully understand the question.

b. Mass media

The mass media form one of the basic cultural channels through which members of the Malaysian society are largely informed, regardless of their degree of accuracy and/or distortion,⁴ about events that happen around them which may possibly affect their lives. For students, the media constitute an important social institution which in part help form their political and social consciousness. The survey revealed that 93% of all the students read newspapers regularly while the remainder 7% read them on an occasional basis. As far as

income groups are concerned, all of the upper income students were exposed to newspapers regularly, followed by 97% of the lower income group students who read them regularly, with 3% of them occasionally. In the middle income group, 92% of the students read newspaper regularly while 8% did so on an occasional basis.

A large proportion of the students were exposed to local newspapers which were published by Malaysia's media giants, namely the Star Publications group, the Fleet group (which owns the established New Straits Times group) and the Utusan Melayu group, all of which are directly or indirectly associated with the two major components of the ruling coalition, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the UMNO (for the last two media groups) (Article 19 1988:155). The Star group publishes the daily, The Star, and its Sunday version, Sunday Star; and the New Straits Times (NST) group publishes the dailies New Straits Times, the Malay Mail and their Sunday editions of New Sunday Times and the Sunday Mail respectively. The NST group also publishes its Malay publications, Berita Harian and its Sunday edition, Berita Minggu. The daily Nanyang Siang Pau has been acquired by the Fleet group, thus making it part of the NST stable. The third group, the Utusan Melayu group, on the other hand publishes the daily Utusan Malaysia and its Sunday edition, Mingguan Malaysia. Apart from these papers, there are also the Chinese daily Kwong Wah Jit Poh, Malay tabloids such as Bacaria and Watan, the PAS party's weekly, Harakah, and the consumerist Utusan Pengguna.

When asked, 'Name the newspapers you like', the Malay students chose Malay newspapers as their favourites (48% of the students chose them), but English newspapers came near with 40% (see Table 7.3). As

regards the Malay papers, 30% of the Malay students preferred newspapers published by the Utusan group as compared to 18% reading the Malay papers published by the NST group. In terms of English papers, 22% of them chose the Star publications while 18% for those papers that came under the NST banner. A likely reason as to why many of the Malay students read Malay papers is that many of them were more proficient in their mother tongue (i.e. Malay) than English. Those who chose English papers did so because they were proficient in English and also were looking for news items or analyses that had a relatively critical slant, such as those normally found in the Star.

Some 40% of the Chinese students on the other hand were more inclined to read English papers compared to the 28% who went for the Malay papers. Many Chinese students preferred English newspapers because of their English language proficiency, apart from their general difficulty in identifying themselves with the kinds of social and political issues that were normally raised by the Malay papers.⁵ Of the English papers, 29% of the Chinese students opted for the Star papers as opposed to 11% for the NST English publications. This pattern of preference can be attributed to the fact that the Star publications had always been perceived, at least before the October 27, 1987 mass arrests incident, as being the most critical of the local newspapers by many people, especially among the English-speaking urban dwellers in the country. Besides, the Star papers had been effective channels through which discontent and dissent, from the Chinese Malaysians in particular, were publicised.⁶ Some 5% of the Chinese students read Nanyang Siang Pau.

The Star, too, proved to be popular among 50% of the Indian

students as compared to 20% who went for the NST papers. In addition, only 25% of them read the Malay newspapers. Those who read the Malay papers did so for the following reasons: (a) They are attracted to many of the contents of the papers; (b) they want to improve their Malay language proficiency, in particular for the purpose of doing well in their examinations; and/or (c) they want to feel the 'pulse' of the Malay society. This pattern of newspaper preferences was also found among the 'Malaysians'. Some 62% of the 'Malaysians' chose Star newspapers as compared to 8% who read NST papers. As regards the Malay newspapers, 23% of them chose NST Malay newspapers while 8% went for the Utusan papers. 'Other' publications liked by 21% of the students include Kwong Wah Jit Poh, Bacaria, Watan, Harakah, and Utusan Pengguna.

As far as magazines are concerned, 57% of all the students read

Table 7.3: Newspapers favoured by the students

	<u>Malay</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>'Malaysian'</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Star Group</u>	22%	29%	50%	62%	31%
<u>New Straits Times Group</u>					
English	18%	11%	20%	8%	13%
Malay	18%	22%	20%	23%	21%
<u>Nanyang</u>	0%	5%	0%	0%	3%
<u>Utusan Group</u>	30%	6%	5%	7%	11%
<u>Other</u>	12%	27%	5%	0%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

magazines regularly, 41% on an occasional basis while 3% were not exposed to magazines at all. Of the magazines read by the students,

those published by the government's language and literary agency, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), such as the monthly Dewan Masyarakat, Dewan Budaya and Dewan Siswa were the favourites among 43% of the students surveyed. These were read by 47% of the Chinese, 40% of the 'Malaysians', 38% of the Malays and 35% of the Indians. The reasons given were (a) the non-Malay readers' intent to improve their Malay; (b) the comparatively cheaper prices of these magazines; and (c) many of their contents were quite related to the students' academic work and examinations. Other Malay publications from private Malay publishers were in general also popular among the students, such as Diskusi and STPM Fokus. International magazines which were mostly in English were popular among 15% of the Chinese, 20% of the Indian, 15% of the 'Malaysian' and 5% of the Malay students. In the 'Other' category, magazines that were read are: Asiaweek, National Geographic, Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Wanita, Varia Pop, Varia Sari, ERA, Saturday Weekly, Galaxie, Team Beat and Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV). This pattern of readership suggests that alternative views or perspectives that are often contained in many foreign publications may reach non-Malays more than Malays, especially when many of the latter are not proficient in English. The case of the non-Malays, however, may parallel that of the Malays in the near future when more and more Malaysians will be more proficient in Malay than English.

As regards income groups, it was most noticeable that only 2% of the lower income group were exposed to international publications, followed by 15% of the middle income and 18% of the upper income groups. One can surmise that the choice of international publications was governed by financial as well as language capability factors.

Like the newspapers, television⁷ is also popular among students: 89% of all the ethnic groups possessed television sets. And as far as frequency is concerned, 55% of them watched TV regularly, 45% occasionally and one percent shunned the set altogether. Regarding radio, all of the students had sets. However, it was not as popular as TV, as indicated by the following pattern: 37% of the ethnic groups listened regularly, 53% occasionally and 10% kept away from the set completely. However, more of the Malay students (68%) listen to radio. A possible explanation for this is that a major portion of the radio programmes cater to Malay-proficient listeners.

7.3 The socio-economic

The level and nature of social awareness of the students seemed to a large degree to be influenced by the government's policies, or their implementation. Thus, when asked, 'Is there any social injustice which you think ought to be put right either in school or in your (larger) society?', the majority of the non-Malays and the 'Malaysians' pointed to racial discrimination, while the Malay majority indicated 'rich-poor gap' (see Table 7.4 below). It is significant that 79% of the Chinese, 50% of the Indians and all of the 'Malaysians' cited 'racial discrimination' as one form of 'social injustice', an inclination that probably stemmed from a perception, real or imagined, that most of the State policies benefited only the Malays, and hence the State was largely identified with the Malays. For the Malays, on the other hand, the 'rich-poor gap' was perceived — also in ethnic terms — to be a social injustice that was marked by the supposedly material affluence of the 'Chinese community'. Thus, to them, this economic imbalance requires immediate remedy that is embodied in government policies such as the New Economic Policy. In

other words, both Malay and non-Malay groups viewed social injustice not only in ethnic terms but also in a polarised fashion. These conflicting perspectives of social injustice must have to a certain degree influenced the students' response to materials that discuss, for instance, economic policies such as those found in many of the General Studies. We can also deduce from here that while most students shared concern for good ethnic relations, as indicated earlier, they nevertheless disagreed about how to achieve that goal. After 'social injustice' came the students' concern for the lack of freedom of expression, and lack of human rights in the country, which in themselves indicate the students' apparent inability to place social injustice in a wider context of human rights and freedom of expression.

Table 7.4: Ethnic groups' views of 'social injustice'

	<u>Malay</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>'Malaysian'</u>	<u>Total</u>
'Racial discrimination'	38%	79%	50%	100%	74%
'Rich-poor gap'	50%	10%	25%	0%	16%
'Lack of freedom of expression'	12%	8%	0%	0%	8%
'Lack of human rights'	0%	3%	25%	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In conclusion, there are many aspects of Malaysian life — in and outside the school — that are ethnically divisive, or at least promote ethnic consciousness, that could influence the formation of students' political and social consciousness. These factors, when positioned against the reading materials that the students have to read, can produce in general conflicting results. This implies that

not only are certain State policies easily identified with a particular ethnic group, and thus alienating that group from members of other ethnic groups, but they also promote ethnic consciousness among Malaysians. The distorted implementation of the New Economic Policy (that is often mentioned and discussed in most of the General Studies textbooks), which is biased towards the Malays as a whole, is one such example of a government policy that has a divisive effect on the people, including students. These responses can take the form of heightened ethnic sentiments and thus consolidate a person's sense of belonging to an ethnic community, or that of an awareness that the route to ethnic harmony is the breaking down of ethnic labels and practices. In other words, certain kinds of presentation of the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of Malaysian life in these textbooks can result in their competing for the reader's national and/or sub-national or ethnic loyalties.

Notes

1. A few students whom I interviewed personally had to make sure that I am a member of their ethnic group before becoming candid about their feelings towards members of other ethnic communities: 'Are you one of "us"?', they enquired swiftly. Another group of students (whose ethnic background was different from mine) on the whole seemed measured and even over-cautious in its response to certain 'ethnically sensitive' questions.
2. Kamunting is where one of the country's political detention centres is located.
3. Percentages of the Indians and 'Malaysians' must be taken with a pinch of salt as they constituted a very small group in this survey.
4. Article 19, an international human rights organisation, states that the government owned and controlled broadcasting media 'have been instructed since the early 1970s to help oppose

"anti-national elements". As for the privately-owned press in Malaysia, it adds, 'Party politics tend to dictate the news values and editorial policy of these major newspapers' (Article 19 1988:155). 'Party politics' here refers to that of the ruling party.

5. The Utusan Malaysia however has already allotted certain news coverage and columns in their papers that are supposed to attract non-Malay readers, but the nature of these columns generally suggest that they are mere tokenism. For instance, there is an opinion-competition column entitled, 'What the non-Malays say'. The themes or topics of discussion are however decided by the papers' editorial board which normally skirt around more important, and often controversial, issues.

6. It was generally believed that The Star was an indirect means, a sounding board, by which its owner, the MCA party, expressed its displeasure over certain issues to its UMNO partner.

7. There are two television stations: one, Radio-Television Malaysia (RTM) is State run and controlled and two, TV3, a third channel station, is jointly owned by members of the major parties of the ruling coalition.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The forging of a common or national culture is, as discussed earlier, crucial to the construction of a national identity amongst people, particularly in a multiethnic society like Malaysia that perceives its long-term survival in fostering good inter-ethnic relations. As a corollary, this national identity is pivotal in the nationalist design to pursue economic development and modernization.

Formal education therefore must be situated in this larger societal context, for in tune, to a large degree, with the State's socio-economic and political objectives, educational institutions are expected to meet certain declared goals such as forging a national identity, fostering national unity and educating and training students to meet the country's manpower needs. This thus suggests that any designing of curriculum and writing of textbooks will have to take cognizance of this larger nationalist design. Smith holds, 'The solidarity of citizenship required a common "civil religion" formed out of shared myths and memories and symbols, and communicated in a standard language through educational institutions. (1988:136)' In practical terms, this can be interpreted as the State having the need to encourage and ensure that publishers and writers publish and write, respectively, textbooks and other educational materials that provide and transmit 'national symbols, myths and values' with which students of all ethnic backgrounds can share and identify.

As already intimated, social institutions such as schools become ideological 'sites' where the State can constantly try to impart its own version of historical and cultural 'past' that has been re-interpreted and re-constituted for the use of the general public and students in particular; and this is where Raymond Williams' concept of selective tradition comes into play. This study indicates that the books analysed have certain outstanding features or themes that recur from text to text or within the same text. This also implies that, at the same time, there are items or themes which, because of overemphasis of certain other things, get marginalized, de-emphasised or even excluded completely. I have argued that such patterns of emphasis and de-emphasis or selection and exclusion indicate that the writing and publishing of these reading materials are largely informed or influenced by policies and political philosophy of the State.

As far as the General Studies books are concerned, Malay and Islamic cultures, which form the bases of the proposed national culture of Malaysia, constitute the themes that dominate these reading materials. Such cultural discussions include the questions of national language and Malay royalty. Politically, issues of Malay nationalism, Malay special position, and the 'political bargain' that was struck by the partners of the Alliance before independence were emphasised. These constitute in large measure 'the significant past' for those who argue for promoting governmental assistance to the Bumiputeras, many of whom lag behind economically. In economic terms, these books focus mainly on Malay poverty and socio-economic development and institutional assistance for the Malays through the NEP. All the topics that receive the attention of the book writers, especially

those of the General Studies ones, were underpinned by at least the writers' assertion of the indigenous status of the Malays, and the concern for a national unity to be achieved through socio-economic development, modernization and industrialisation. Any attempts at being multiethnic, which there are, are easily submerged by this Malay emphasis. Not only that, when juxtaposed with the large array of Malay materials in these books, the presentation of items of non-Malay interest and concern can only be interpreted at best as mere tokenism, or at worst, to convey in the reader a sense of the marginality of non-Malay cultures. In connection to this, what is most pronounced is the complete absence of any discussion of Indian culture. Having said that, the presence of a few extracts in the books concerned that possess a liberal approach towards say, ethnic cultures and multicultural education — thereby contradicting the overall inclination of the books — can have the effect of making the reader aware of the Malay bias of these books.

As regards the History books, the writers' relatively wider perspective of Malay(si)an history enables the reader to acquire a broad overview of the origins of the country's multiethnic society and its attendant problems. Thus, for instance, the reader is informed that under British colonialism, non-Malays made contributions in various ways to the overall economic development of Malaya, and at the same time is also informed about the roots of Malay economic problems, and their impact on ethnic relations. These non-Malay economic contributions, as indicated elsewhere, can be considered as 'the significant past' of those who advocate that the State provide fair treatment to all Malaysians irrespective of ethnicity. Modernization of the Malayan economy by British initiatives on a capitalist model is

presented by the writers as being the only route towards socio-economic development and modernization. Like the General Studies books, the history ones seem to emphasise with little qualification the virtues of capitalism, to give the reader the impression that there was no alternative economic system that pre- and post-independent Malaya can or should adopt. In other words, the books could have problematised the concept of capitalism (as well as socialism) so that for instance they could discuss the disadvantages of Malaya's entry into the international system of capitalism as well as their impact on ethnic relations in the country.

Communist insurgency is presented as being a real threat to the country's political security and stability and hence, so the argument goes, necessitates the instituting of powerful and dangerous laws such as the controversial Internal Security Act, and Printing and Publications Act. This thus has the effect of ratifying 'the present and to indicate directions for the future' (Williams 1978:116), i.e. curtailment on or erosion of certain fundamental liberties have been legitimated by this 'significant past'.

Another theme that is commonly highlighted by these books is the Malay concern with the 'numbers game' and their political supremacy, which is seen by the Malay community as being challenged by the coming of the non-Malays into the country. Another common item is the (communal) politics of the Alliance that is highlighted in such a manner as to overwhelm other political activities in which other political organisations or movements (which were mass-based and multiethnic) were involved, particularly in the period before Malayan independence.

As far as the sources of 'culturally significant knowledge' are concerned, the study indicates that the Malaysian government in general and the Ministry of Education's Textbook Bureau in particular by and large has a control or at least an influence over the materials published by government (i.e. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) and private publishers. Ideological imperatives of the government and business contractual relationship between the ministry concerned and the publishers largely govern the latter's editorial independence, if any. With regard to the teachers, while there were those who did provide alternative reading materials to students they nevertheless were constrained by rules and regulations of the Education Ministry which can classify certain educational materials as 'undesirable'. Such a situation can and does help facilitate the selection and forming of 'the significant past' or the 'the tradition' in the nationalist design to construct a national identity and promote national unity. And as the study demonstrates, this ideological process is largely slanted towards the promotion of Malay — as opposed to Malaysian — culture and interests. Put another way, although there were published reading materials, such as the History books, that provided alternative views of the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of Malaysian life, the overall impact of both sets of the General Studies and History books and the ethos of the publishing industry and of the teaching profession as a whole suggest that the endeavour to achieve the said nationalist objectives is largely informed or influenced by the State's own interpretation of Malaysia's national culture and its promotion of Malay interests.

As regards the students, we have seen in the study, their social

and political consciousness was not only informed by their reading materials at school but also by their teachers, social relations and especially the mass media and other cultural forms of expression. This suggests that any crass form of indoctrination of the State's political philosophy would likely be met by strong resistance from at least some of these students. It is when the student-reader cannot identify with 'the significant past' advocated by the reading materials concerned that she is likely to seek alternative images or symbols in these texts that can form her own kind of 'the tradition', which at the same time may help harden her ethnic attachment. Put another way, as indicated above in the discussion about marginalized people, a State project to construct a national identity in the minds of the students may well end up in the creation of alternative and conflicting identities or the reinforcement of the already existing sub-national identities to such a degree as to submerge any form of 'national identity'.

At this juncture, it is perhaps useful to remind that this study was largely conducted under difficult conditions, particularly when it came to doing the survey of students and the interviews with teachers. Hence, there were responses to the questions posed — which were, at least at the time when the research was conducted, considered 'politically sensitive' — that may not necessarily be a true reflection of the respondents' feelings, views and attitudes. If anything, this indicates the fear, suspicion and anxiety concerning various social issues that reside within the ethnic groups of Malaysian society.

If, as Smith argues, the creation of a common culture,

particularly in a society where there exist more than one ethnie, involves 'ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions (1988:206)', then educational institutions as well as other social institutions possess this crucial role because they are located in this ever-going process of creating a sense of belonging to 'an imagined community' (B. Anderson 1983) or 'a cultural community' (Smith 1988:136). But if the nation's concern is really with the goal of forging a national identity and fostering national unity amongst its people, then certain features or themes found in the books themselves seem to require 're-interpretation, rediscoveries and reconstructions' to meet some of the social, political, cultural and economic needs that relate to the question of national identity and unity at the time. Such an ideological review would involve important and crucial matters, namely the New Economic Policy (NEP), the national culture project, the constitutional provision of 'Malays' special position and the legitimate interests of other communities', the question of national security and its relation to the country's human rights and fundamental liberties, and finally the overwhelmingly capitalist nature of Malaysia's economic system. The books allow little scope for such a review; were it to take place, the books themselves would have to be rewritten.

As regards the NEP, book writers could, in contrast with the government's preference of concentrating on the restructuring of society (i.e. creating a small number of Malay capitalists and entrepreneurs), have emphasised the first prong of the Policy, which is the eradication of poverty irrespective of ethnicity. For it is only when steps are taken to redress social injustice that affects all Malaysians can a reader identify with the NEP, and steer away from the

dichotomization of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera. Secondly, the national culture project could have been problematised in the reading materials as it is a complex matter that requires a long series of debate and discussions. While one can take cognizance of the fact that the national culture ought to be based on the indigenous culture (because of its historical attachment to the land) — Malay and other Bumiputeras — elements of the Chinese and Indian cultures could also be emphasised and taken into account in discussions presented in school books. Such a precaution might have been taken, but instead the books illustrate what Smith (1988:150) observes, 'a single strategic ethnie' would tend to dominate multiethnic states in such a manner as to seek, to a larger or lesser degree, 'to incorporate, or influence the surrounding smaller or weaker ethnie'. Thirdly, the question of 'Malays' special position and the legitimate interests of other communities' requires a critical and judicious review. Although at a glance, the introduction in the books of the constitutional provision for this is well-balanced, they do not point out that it is open, as it has been in certain cases in the past, to abuse. A review of this constitutional provision can be interpreted as being consonant with a changing cultural climate where Islam and, to a lesser degree, other religious traditions, can be expected to be playing a dominant and bigger role in Malaysian society. This is because, for instance, Islam's universalist and egalitarian preferences in approaching social justice can be perceived as being inconsistent with any form of special treatment of any group of people. Fourthly, the subject of national security and its impact on fundamental freedoms of Malaysians could have been broached by the book writers in a more critical manner. For the student-reader needs to be made aware that more freedoms do not necessarily mean jeopardising the country's internal

security; if anything, it often works the other way round. Finally, the books concerned could have put the capitalist economic system in perspective, with all its weaknesses and strengths vis-a-vis other economic systems that are found in the world. In this discussion, book writers could have an emphasis on inherent weaknesses of capitalism in that it promotes uneven development and creates socio-economic disparity, and this can have serious implications on Malaysia's ethnic relations and the construction of a national identity.

As implied elsewhere, a school curriculum and in particular the contents of the reading materials of the students cannot be positively changed or modified effectively until and unless certain vital changes are made in regard to the overall policies and ethos of the State, especially those of the Ministry of Education. This is because schools and their academic practices and activities are very much determined or influenced by the State, particularly when the former are perceived as and made the ideological instrument of the latter. Besides, book publishers are also influenced by the State in that their financial survival is almost always tied to government contracts and projects concerned, thereby making the former less independent editorially. The Malaysian government may have gained to a certain extent from this situation which enables it to pursue vigorously its own policies, but the social, economic, cultural and political costs may prove too high to be borne by all Malaysians in the long run. The government therefore may want to consider reviewing some of its policies and also the manner in which these policies are implemented. As intimated above, these take the form of the NEP, with its pro-Malay and pro-entrepreneur emphasis; the national culture; the State's and to some degree, societal stress on Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera dichotomy in

all aspects of Malaysian life, particularly in relation to education, employment, and politics. Finally, it may also be beneficial to have a serious re-appraisal of certain laws that impinge on democracy and citizens' fundamental liberties such as freedom of expression, association and movement, for curbed freedoms would necessarily mean the government depriving itself of vital means of gauging public opinion regarding its policies and actions.

Unless these changes are undertaken, the State may — after having succeeded in some measure in eradicating via the NEP the identification of ethnicity with occupation — find itself creating another kind of identification of State policies and assistance with ethnicity, which in and of itself is as ethnically divisive as creating an identification of the private sector with a certain ethnic community. In this connection, any scheme of social engineering, for instance, needs to have the eventual effect of helping all citizens irrespective of ethnic origins identify themselves with the economic and cultural affluence, and social and political stability of the country. In other words, unless these changes are forthcoming, the State's hegemonic position may be seriously challenged by groups in society which perceive themselves as being socially, economically, culturally and politically marginalized. As Yinger (1986:27) argues, 'The marginality that other persons feel refers not to their own racial or ethnic group but to the larger society within which they live — particularly with its polity. This may be expressed by a transfer of loyalty — or of its strongest expression — to the racial or ethnic group.' These groups may produce, in and outside the school ground, their own symbols, meanings and values that are an anathema to the spirit and objective of constructing national identity and

securing national unity.

If the present political climate, and the ideological tendencies of the State persist, and the financial survival of most book publishers, especially the small ones, is highly dependent on State 'goodwill' — and virtually nothing concrete is done to rectify this whole situation — then the future of education in particular and the country's ethnic relations in general seems quite daunting. For what we could surmise is that with further emphasis on the government's perspective of national culture and on State assistance to Bumiputeras — irrespective of whether the well-to-do reap the benefits — to the neglect of the economic well-being of the non-Bumiputeras, the bias in the writing of social science textbooks is predictable. In this case, the writing of General Studies books would be equally, if not more, Malay-biased — to the marginalization of things non-Malay. In addition, history books too would face important changes in the way of more local (perhaps, more Malay) writers writing Malaysian history for school students with a certain ideological inclination. Implicit in this change would be that, like the General Studies books, the accent would be on Malay aspects of the Malaysian life. If this scenario materialises, education would then have been politicized in such a fashion as to, to quote Chai Hon-Chan (1977:3), 'heighten existing tensions between groups whose differential perceptions of the role of education in satisfying their respective social, cultural, and economic aspirations reflect anxieties over their cultural identities and economic status in the new political order. In extreme cases, education may be seen by groups alienated by the political process not as an impartial instrument of national development but as a means of advancing or maintaining the social and economic privileges of the

powerful.' In short, the construction of a 'national identity' may well face intense competition from sub-national identities, and subsequently jeopardise inter-ethnic harmony in the country.

Finally, as a recommendation for future research and with a view and hope of an improved political climate in Malaysia in future, I would suggest that a participant observation be conducted to gauge the interaction between students and between teachers and students in a classroom environment. Specifically, this is meant to ascertain the kinds of educational materials provided and question (relating to the nationalist design) posed by teachers and responses made by students. In other words, this is an examination of the process of selection and exclusion that takes place in the classroom. Secondly, since a nationalist project constitutes an ever-going process of 're-interpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions' it would be interesting to analyse the contents of reading materials that pertain to the subjects of General Studies, History, Bahasa Malaysia (national language) and Malay literature, particularly if some of them are re-written or newly written by local writers. Thirdly, the future research may need to encompass a bigger area of study to include items or images in the school texts about and also respondents from Sabah and Sarawak. For by so doing, the researcher will be examining a wider process of selection and exclusion of the cultural symbols, ideas and values of all the ethnic groups in the country with regard to the nationalist project of forging a national identity and fostering national unity. In addition, she will also be studying a selective process occurring in the texts concerned that involves not only the cultural elements of the Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras, but also those of the Muslim Bumiputeras and non-Muslim Bumiputeras in Sabah

and Sarawak. In other words, the researcher will be examining a selective process that is not only wider in scope but also one that may prove even more contentious and controversial.

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