

THE LEGACY OF C.H.E. DET: PORTRAIT OF A NATIONALIST AS A YOUNG MAN¹

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While he was a medical student in Singapore, Mahathir Mohamad wrote a series of articles for *The Sunday Times* under the pseudonym of 'C.H.E. Det'. Other than terse references to their existence in Mahathir's biographies, these articles have been overlooked by students of Mahathir's ideas and politics. Some may have bypassed the articles because of an exclusive association of Mahathir's ideas with *The Malay Dilemma*, still the best-known of his writings. Others may simply have reacted to C.H.E. Det's youth with a detached prejudice! This essay explores 'the world of C.H.E. Det' in order to apprehend the worldview of the adult Mahathir. It suggests that many of C.H.E. Det's 'youthful' concerns resonated as the 'Malay dilemma' and other 'dilemmas' which Mahathir, as Malay nationalist and as Prime Minister, has articulated with considerable force.

Semasa beliau seorang pelajar perubatan di Singapura, Mahathir Mohamad telah menulis satu siri rencana untuk *The Sunday Times* dengan menggunakan nama samaran 'C.H.E. Det'. Rencana-rencana ini tidak diberi perhatian oleh para sarjana yang telah mengkaji pemikiran atau politik Mahathir Mohamad selain daripada membuat catatan pendek bahawa rencana-rencana tersebut memang pernah ditulis. Mungkin ada yang mengenyakan tulisan 'C.H.E. Det' kerana mereka hanya mengaitkan pemikiran Mahathir dengan buku *Dilema Melayu* yang tetap merupakan tulisannya yang paling terkenal. Yang lain mungkin mempunyai prasangka tertentu kepada tulisan C.H.E. Det yang masih muda. Rencana ini menjelajahi 'alam hidup C.H.E. Det' untuk mengenali pandangan dunia Mahathir yang sudah dewasa. Ia mencadangkan bahawa banyak perkara yang menarik perhatian C.H.E. Det sewaktu masih muda bergema kembali dalam 'dilema Melayu' dan 'dilema-dilema' lain yang diutarakan dengan tegas oleh Mahathir sebagai seorang nasionalis Melayu dan selaku Perdana Menteri.

He was apt to identify completely with a small human circle and with a vital set of local problems. When he later burst into universality, it was not on the basis of extensive knowledge of the state of universal questions, but rather because he was able to experience what was immediately about him in new ways.

Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, New York, Norton, 1958, p. 87.

Young Mahathir's family gave him the pet name of 'Che Det'. It was formed by adding the common Malay honorific to 'det', 'a familiar shortening of the last syllable of his name'.² The adult converted the 'Che' into 'C.H.E.', a set of European-like initials. The resultant 'C.H.E. Det' became Mahathir's European-sounding pseudonym in a series of articles which he wrote for *The Sunday Times* of post-war British Malaya. As a pseudonym, 'C.H.E. Det' was an artful improvisation, probably born of the self-consciousness of young adulthood for Mahathir employed it to 'conceal the fact that the views expressed [in his articles] were being written by a Malay'.³ We shall never really know, nor is it essential to be able to tell, whether this small guile was successful. But the little-explored 'world of C.H.E. Det' harboured the many dilemmas of the adult politician who became famous for disdaining to conceal any of his views.

The main collection of the C.H.E. Det articles came out towards the end of 1948, appeared fairly regularly in 1949 and began to taper off in 1950, as the following chronology indicates.⁴

Chronology of C.H.E. Det articles⁵ in *The Sunday Times* 1948-50

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>
26 Sept 1948	Malays and the (<i>sic.</i>) Higher Education
17 Oct 1948	Malays and Higher Education: Summing-up
9 Jan 1949	<i>Ronggeng</i> is Popular ⁶
23 Jan 1949	Picnic Time in the <i>Dusun</i>
6 Feb 1949	Rains Bring Fish to 'Sawahs'
24 Apr 1949	Malay - 'Modern' and Standard
24 Jul 1949	Malay Housewives are Busy
7 Aug 1949	The Rulers are Losing Loyalty
9 Oct 1949	Rulers & <i>Ra'ayats</i> - Climax is Near

30 Oct 1949	Malay <i>Padi</i> Planters Need Help
20 Nov 1949	Changing Malay Marriage Customs
27 Nov 1949	Malay Progress & the University
8 Jan 1950	Malays in South Siam Struggle on
9 Apr 1950	New Thoughts on Nationality
23 Apr 1950	Plight of Malay Fisherfolk

The articles themselves may be categorised according to their contents as follows:

- i observations of Malay customs and social life - as in the articles on *ronggeng*, fish, *durians*, marriage customs and the housewives;
- ii analyses of the problems of the Malays - as in the articles on the Malay language, education, fisherfolk, *padi* planters; and,
- iii political writings as in the articles on nationality, royalty and the Malays in South Siam.

The first category of articles found C.H.E. Det writing to inform an English-reading audience that was presumably non-Malay and presumed to have little acquaintance with Malay customs. C.H.E. Det wrote earnestly and with an underlying endearment for the customs and social life he knew intimately. He had an eye for detail. He knew his *ronggeng*, could ponder its origins and comment on the innovations in the music, the dance and the *ronggeng* party hire arrangements.⁷ He knew his *padi* field fishes, the methods of catching them and the rewards which were 'never big enough to yield a profit'.⁸ He was familiar with the eager preparations for the seasonal *durian* picnics in 'up-country' *dusuns* where 'bathing may even be a serious problem'.⁹ He could evoke the air of *Hari Raya* in the *kampongs*, of the housewives' hard work and the children's gaiety, the 'open house' custom and the homemade cakes, and 'the yards and yards of cheap Japanese textiles' bought from 'Indian and Chinese textile shops'.¹⁰ C.H.E. Det was never facetious even if he sometimes meant to entertain. Here and there he inserted playful notes and lighthearted comments - on the *faux pas* of 'uninitiated *orang putehs* try[ing] to hold the *ronggeng* girls in their arms',¹¹ on 'how the picnickers can take *durians* for breakfast, tiffin, tea and dinner and in between meals',¹² and on how likely the *padi* field fisherman's hand 'may close around a water snake'¹³ instead of a fish.

At his best, C.H.E. Det showed a feel for the changing texture of Malay social life without betraying a maudlin nostalgia at the passage of certain

customs. He wondered how 'the seemingly crude Malay dance, the *Joget* or *Ronggeng*, still holds its own among Malays' in spite of 'the popularity of Western dances and the large number of cabarets' but noted that '[e]ven the dancing has been modernised and shows influence of the rumba and samba.' He suggested that 'the employment of *ronggeng* parties by amusement parks' was a 'recent affair' which 'ensure[d] a comparatively steady income for them' so that 'relieved of their pecuniary worries they have more time to consider modernising their profession'. He approved of 'do[ing] away with... elaborate marriages' so as to 'curtail expenses' but conceded that 'many years may lapse before simple Registry marriages become fashionable'.¹⁴ He seemed surprised that 'Malays are particularly sentimental about marriages' because 'the number of divorces among them seems to indicate otherwise'. He suspected it was because they 'attach[ed] greater importance to the various ceremonies than to the future happiness of the wedded couple'. He was relieved at the lifting of the ban on marriages between 'Royal ladies and commoners' - a ban 'no doubt motivated by a desire to preserve the mythical purity of the royal blood'. He could sense innovation at picnic time in the *dusun* where 'it was getting popular among the younger people' to spread the *durian* flesh on 'slices of bread just as one does with butter or jam', a practice which 'older people and true *dusun* dwellers are rather sceptical' of. '[R]earing *ikan darat*' commercially appeared to him to be a 'simple affair' but he did not think it could become widespread because 'the demand for this type of fish is confined to *kampong* folk only' and they, 'like everyone else, enjoy going a-fishing'.

The second set of articles revealed C.H.E. Det in quite a different light. He was sensitive to the plight of the Malays and alert to their interests. To publicise the former and defend the latter, he could be sharply critical regardless of the target of his criticism. When its first Chancellor promised that the University of Malaya would be a 'truly Malayan institution... where no race shall enjoy priority or privilege over others', he was told that 'a too stringent enforcement of this policy might end in bitter communal feelings'.¹⁵ C.H.E. Det recalled that 'a considerable section of Malay opinion was against' the 'university project' for 'quite sound reasoning' - the low number of Malays in English secondary schools and, '[h]ard as it is for the Malays to admit... [their] lo[w] average intelligence quotient'. C.H.E. Det was impatient with the *kampong* folk who, 'with their apathy towards English education and lack of faith in their own children's abilities... never would send their children to English schools even if they could afford to as quite a high percentage of them undoubtedly could'. He, on the other hand, was concerned that 'the number of girls [attending schools] compares unfavourably with boys'.¹⁶ He was all for the 'post-war innovation' of opening *Sekolah*

Menyesal ('Schools' for those who regret') to 'uneducated housewives' which 'ha[d] succeeded in widening the outlook of Malay women'.

'Malay Padi Planters Need Help' and 'Plight of Malay Fisherfolk', in particular, displayed a tremendous polemical ability that delighted in standing matters on their head. Malay leaders liked to call the padi planters 'the backbone of their race'. For C.H.E. Det, 'what they imagine is their backbone is made up of their most illiterate and tradition-bound members' - hence, 'the much talked of backwardness of the Malays'.¹⁷ The Fisheries Department thought that banning the [Chinese-financed] *kelong* was 'retrogressive' since 'with the same number of fishermen, Malaya [was] catching only a tiny fraction of the usual haul in the United States.' C.H.E. Det much preferred to 'keep [Malay] fishermen employed than to deprive them of their means of livelihood in the interest of 'progress'.¹⁸ He was not a Malay Luddite, only not a naive lover of 'mechanical farming' or 'modernisation in fishing methods' unless prior social changes ensured that his 'inarticulate communit[ies]' would be 'the first to gain by whatever advancement is made'.

The third and final category of the C.H.E. Det articles made up a limited attempt at political commentary. 'Malays in South Siam Struggle on' expressed the tacit sympathy of a Kedah Malay for the insurrection in the 'Malay states of Setul, Yala, Patani and Nakon Sritamrat'.¹⁹ But C.H.E. Det was guarded. He reported that the Malays of South Siam 'will be content with nothing less than union with the Federation of Malaya'. He concluded (cryptically?) that 'the possibility of such a union has never been explored with any seriousness in Malaya'. C.H.E. Det took an unequivocal stand on the 1949 conflict between 'diehard royalists' and the 'supporters and members of UMNO'. His tone was polite, his language was mild, his position was clear: the royalty could compromise or 'lose, perhaps forever, the confidence and loyalty of their subjects'.²⁰ And when the conflict between 'Rulers and *ra'ayats*' was nearing its climax, he was bold enough to predict that it 'will be surprising if feudalism can hold its own' against the 'new force' of a 'new Malayan democracy'.²¹

By far C.H.E. Det's most remarkable piece of political writing was 'New Thoughts on Nationality'. Barring minor differences in terminology, it could qualify as a lengthy 'abstract' for *The Malay Dilemma*.²² It anticipated all the central issues of *The Malay Dilemma*: the assertion of the 'hereditary rights of the indigenous people', the opposition to 'Equal Citizenship', Malay backwardness and the retention of Malay privileges, Chinese dominance and 'commercial discrimination', the inadmissibility of 'open competition'

between the races, Malay Land Reservation Laws, 'sympathetic state governments', *et cetera*. Then there could not have been Mahathir's unrestrained attack on Tunku Abdul Rahman but, uncannily, there was C.H.E. Det's muted criticism of Dato Onn Jaafar's leadership. In 1950, C.H.E. Det thought of Singapore as the 'lost world' of the Malays. Only in 1970 did Mahathir accept the separated Singapore as a wholly different world.²³ To go to the heart of it all, C.H.E. Det had already grasped the essence of what Mahathir ideologised, two decades later, as the 'Malay dilemma' - 'the necessity of retarding progress'.²⁴

C.H.E. Det was attuned to Malay life everywhere and acquainted with the events which affected it: 'the experiments in mechanical farming carried out in Perak and Province Wellesley', 'the mood of discontent' in South Siam, the displacement of Malay fishermen in Penang, the Pahang government's ban on the *kelong*, 'the rashness of the Sultan of Johore's order to the Regent to accept Dato Onn's resignation',²⁵ the failure of the Peninsular Malays Union²⁶ and the urgent need for 'Malay political parties and the Malay public [to] awaken to the danger that they are very far behind the Chinese and Indians in education'.²⁷ He knew Kedah best, of course, but he knew the Malay world better than most. He knew it well enough to know when plans for the formation of a Supreme Educational Council for the Malays went no further than 'a dinner... attended by many responsible Malay leaders'.²⁸ He could see that 'Malay leaders have so far shown a singular lack of interest' in the 'encouraging results' of 'the experiments in mechanical farming'.²⁹ From Singapore, and as 'one who has had the opportunity of studying the Malays in the Federation', he could 'visualise', as even Dato Onn could not, 'the fate in store for the Federation Malays if they decide to forego their privileges too soon'.³⁰

The world, the Malay world, of C.H.E. Det was in transition. There was colonialism, there had been war, there was now political awakening. It seems anti-climactic to say merely that for C.H.E. Det the Malays' customs were passing, their social life was changing and their political future was uncertain. But that was what C.H.E. Det was grappling with when he wrote from Singapore, physically distanced from the Malay world but emotionally immersed in it. Perhaps now we discover the identity of C.H.E. Det, that is to say, we see the qualities which prefigured the Malay nationalist persona of Mahathir Mohamad: an unwavering identification with the Malays, an intimate knowledge of their problems and an uncompromising defence of their rights. Thus did C.H.E. Det come upon his vocation and an 'inarticulate community' find its ideologue in Mahathir Mohamad.

During the time when C.H.E. Det wrote his essays, he was a student at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in what was then the University of Malaya, Singapore. He was aged between twenty-three and twenty-five, an older age for his generation than is usually remembered in these times. By then he had already lived through the Second World War in the shape of the Japanese invasion and subjugation of Malaya. His schooling was interrupted. He ran a small stall in Alor Star's Pekan Rabu. When the British returned to Malaya, he resumed and completed his secondary school education. Then he witnessed the rise of Malay politics in the form of the anti-Malayan Union campaign. He took part in Kedah's nascent Malay politics and joined the equally nascent UMNO. Only after all that did he 'go to college'.

Mahathir's public recollection of that part of his life is relatively sparse. It is unadorned by youthful declarations and largely devoid of sentimental tones. But it is enough to confirm that those were formative years and definitive events for him. The Japanese occupation of Malaya ended what placidity there was in the life of a sixteen year old student who had hitherto thought of finishing secondary school and becoming a 'clerk', like some of his brothers and cousins.³¹ But they, like others in the British colonial service, had lost their jobs during the Japanese Occupation.³² When they turned to roadside hawking to survive, 'their lack of knowledge was pitiful, and they had a hard time making a living'.³³ For Mahathir, 'my education had not prepared me for poverty'³⁴ but he more or less took care of himself throughout this period. He had a share in a small stall at the Pekan Rabu in Alor Star. He sold coffee and cakes, 'bananas fresh and fried' and even the stall itself when it proved to be profitable.³⁵ In short, he experienced personal poverty, discovered Malay poverty and stumbled upon the means to overcome it.

Nor did the British return to Malaya restore much stability to the already uncertain times. Mahathir managed to resume and complete his secondary school education. Then came the colonial government's Malayan Union proposal which sparked off the rise of Malay politics. Mahathir took part in Kedah's Malay politics, joined the anti-Malayan Union campaign and became a member of the newly-formed UMNO. Politics having become an inseparable feature of Malay life, it seemed set on becoming an integral part of his. Just then the young man was shrewd enough to realise 'my need for a higher qualification in order to gain credibility in political circles, particularly among people older than me'.³⁶ He qualified for a scholarship. He would have preferred to read law but was 'offered' medicine.³⁷ So, in 1947, Mahathir, aged twenty-two, left Kedah for Singapore.

From Kedah one traversed the whole length of the Malay Peninsula to reach Singapore. It was a shorter journey for Mahathir than for those students who departed Malaya for the United Kingdom. And yet we sense, from the C.H.E. Det articles as well as the views of the older Mahathir, that 'Kedah-to-Singapore' entailed something of a momentous crossing for him.³⁸ It entailed a journey between two worlds, as it were: from an almost purely Malay milieu to a predominantly Chinese society, from mostly rural Alor Star to the most highly urbanised region of Malaya, from the 'ricebowl' of Malaya to its commercial capital. Scenes of grinding Malay poverty yielded to those of glittering Chinese prosperity, or, even worse, scenes of the one 'resided' in the other.³⁹ Images of humble Malay shacks made way for sights of 'palatial [Chinese] homes'.⁴⁰ *Kedai Cina*, the 'ubiquitous Chinese village shop' of rural Kedah found its culmination in the 'Chinese economic hegemony'⁴¹ of Singapore. One also moved from where there was a 'powerful Malay middle class' to a place 'filled with Malay syces, *kebuns*, cooks and *tambies*'.⁴² Finally one left a seat of traditional Malay rule for a place where 'they have never known Malay rule'.⁴³

C.H.E. Det was no country hick. He was a 'sophisticated town Malay' by his own reckoning,⁴⁴ cosmopolitan in the way he grasped the Malay world. In contrast, 'the world of the Chinese' in Malaya appeared to him as if only in the imagery of Furnivall's 'marketplace'. Despite, or perhaps because of, the six years C.H.E. Det spent in Singapore, it almost seemed as if his ventures out of the Malay world only took him past rows and 'rows of Chinese shops' and that his encounters with Chinese were little more than contacts with shopkeepers, traders, petty-traders, businessmen, merchants, small-time adventurers and tycoons.⁴⁵ At another level he encountered the Chinese in Social Darwinist imagery - a race endowed with superior genes and traits which he admired⁴⁶ but also a horde of predatory immigrants⁴⁷ whom he resented. The closest he came to grips with Chinese society was when the Mahathir of *The Malay Dilemma* tried to understand and explain Chinese business methods, practices and organisations⁴⁸ - that which made 'Chinese economic hegemony'⁴⁹ tick. In the heat of a parliamentary debate in 1965, Mahathir accused Singapore's PAP Chinese of never having crossed the Causeway.⁵⁰ Perhaps neither did C.H.E. Det.

Naturally the mature Mahathir broadened his horizon, so to speak, and Prime Minister Mahathir left Malaysia for the world at large. But the Malay world of C.H.E. Det never left him. It was *superimposed on* 'the world of Islam' and on the 'world of developing countries' so that his Malay dilemmas continued to resonate but as Muslim dilemmas and as the dilemmas of the Third World. Mahathir reacted to the West, as he depicted it in *The*

Challenge,⁵¹ and the North, as he confronted it in the 1980s,⁵² not unlike the way the way he reacted towards the Chinese of *The Malay Dilemma*. Where the Chinese of *The Malay Dilemma* had appeared to Mahathir to have been only shopkeepers, traders and businessmen, the West of *The Challenge* and the North of the 1980s practically stood for an undifferentiated lump of colonial oppressors, 'G-7' conspirators, trade union *provocateurs*, human rights meddlers and journalistic detractors.⁵³ The immigrant 'predator' was superseded by the Western 'protectionist', the hegemony of the one being simply replaced by the hegemony of the other. That was enough reason for Mahathir to react to each in turn with ill-disguised hostility, resentment and suspicion.

Therein lay C.H.E. Det's legacy - of knowing one's own world while confronting alien and dominating worlds one was apt to comprehend in caricature.

NOTES

- 1 I am deeply grateful to Dr Wong Shuang Yann, Geography Department, National Technological University, Singapore, for her assistance in obtaining copies of the C.H.E. Det articles.
- 2 Robin Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, United Kingdom, Hibiscus Publishing Company, 1989, p. 26.
- 3 Datuk Zakiah Hanum of The National Archives, Kuala Lumpur, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 4 Two articles, unavailable for this study, were exhibited in Mahathir's old house but unfortunately without proper citations, that is 'Weekly Fair at Alor Star' and 'Malay Women Make Their Own Freedom'.
- 5 Subsequent references to these articles in the footnotes bear only their titles.
- 6 The by-line for this piece appeared as C.H.E. Dett, an even more anglicised spelling of 'Det' were it not an error.
- 7 'Ronggeng is Popular'.
- 8 'Rains Bring Fish to "Sawahs"'.

- 9 'Picnic Time in the *Dusun*'.
- 10 'Malay Housewives are Busy'.
- 11 'Ignorance is the usual plea though a few *stengahs* might also have something to do with it' (*Ronggeng* is Popular').
- 12 'Picnic Time in the *Dusun*'.
- 13 'Rains Bring Fish to "*Sawahs*"'.
- 14 'Changing Malay Marriage Customs'.
- 15 'Malay Progress & the University'.
- 16 'Malays and the Higher Education'.
- 17 'Malay *Padi* Planters Need Help'.
- 18 'Plight of Malay Fisherfolk'.
- 19 'Malays in South Siam Struggle on'. A Kedah Malay of Mahathir's age and period lived under three colonial regimes: British before the war, Japanese during part of the war, and Siamese when Kedah was ceded to Siam by the Japanese - and then British again after the defeat of the Japanese.
- 20 'The Rulers are Losing Loyalty'.
- 21 'Rulers & *Ra'ayats* - Climax is Near'.
- 22 Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Donald Moore, for Asia Pacific Press, 1970.
- 23 *Ibid.*, Chapter 11, pp. 179-88.
- 24 'New Thoughts on Nationality'. In *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, p. 61, Mahathir wrote: 'The Malay dilemma is whether they should stop trying to help themselves in order that they should be proud to be the poor citizens of a prosperous country or whether they should try to get at some of the riches that this country boasts of, even if it blurs the economic

picture of Malaysia a little. For the Malays it would appear there is not just an economic dilemma, but a Malay dilemma.'

- 25 'Rulers and *Ra'ayats* - Climax is Near'.
- 26 In 'New Thoughts on Nationality', C.H.E. Det strongly sympathised with Hashim Ghani, 'the original proposer of the anti-Malayan Nationality Peninsular Malays Union' who was under no illusion as [to] the chances of his countrymen in competition with the superior organisation, financial position and education of the non-Malays.'
- 27 'Malays and the Higher Education'.
- 28 'Malays and Higher education: Summing-up'.
- 29 'Malay *Padi* Planters Need Help'.
- 30 'New Thoughts on Nationality'.
- 31 Adshead, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- 32 In 'New Thoughts on Nationality', C.H.E. Det recalled: 'The Japanese occupation period had exposed their [Malays'] backwardness and incompetence as nothing else could. The systematic retrenchment of white-collar workers carried out by the Japs [*sic.*] resulted in untold misery to the Malays who form the majority of the Government employees. Unable to go into any lucrative trade, many were forced to turn to trisha pedalling, hawking and menial labour.'
- 33 Adshead, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 J. Victor Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, Petaling Jaya, Eastern Universities Press, 1982, p. 3, and Adshead, *op. cit.*, p. 31. Mahathir's business partner provided a brief recollection of the stall in Morais, *op. cit.*, pp. 5 and 7. This evidently formative experience became part of the basis of Mahathir's primer on small-scale trading. See Mahathir Mohamad, *Guide for Small Businessmen*, Petaling Jaya, Eastern Universities Press, 1985. Translated from *Panduan Peniaga Kecil (Edisi Kedua)*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982; originally published in 1973.

- 36 Adshead, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
- 37 Morais *op. cit.*, p. 7 was wrong about Mahathir being awarded 'a State Government Scholarship'. In fact, during his housemanship in Penang, Mahathir wrote to the State Surgeon of Kedah to request for a medical officer's post in Kedah. He specifically mentioned that he was not a Kedah 'State scholar' but indicated his interest in working in his home state and being near to his aging and ailing parents. This letter is on exhibit in Mahathir's old house, No 18, Lorong Kilang Ais, Kampong Seberang Perak, Alor Star. Details of Mahathir's Federal Government scholarship are provided in Adshead, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
- 38 As it was to be for a later generation of Malay students sent to the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Some of Mahathir's views on the experiences of those students, many of whom he thought were unable to deal with 'culture shock' in their encounter with the West, were cited in Mohd. Nor Shamsudin, '*Universiti Antarabangsa Islam Kembalikan Kegemilangan Dunia Islam*', *Utusan Malaysia*, 16 March 1982.
- 39 'The few Malays in the city live in the servants' quarters of Chinese and European houses' ('New Thoughts on Nationality').
- 40 In 'New Thoughts on Nationality', C.H.E. Det wrote of Singapore: 'And so in the island today the Malays, once the owners and rulers, are to be found only in the poorer quarters, living in dilapidated attap and plank huts sometimes only a stone's throw from the palatial residences of Chinese millionaires'. Fifteen years later, during an attack on Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) in Parliament prior to Singapore's separation from Malaysia, Mahathir said: 'We Malays are very sensitive, but this is a total war declared by the P.A.P. and even if it hurts our feelings, it is still wiser to demonstrate that in this land the privileged Malays, Ibans, Dayaks and Kadazans live in huts whilst the underprivileged Chinese live in palaces, go around in big cars and have the best things in life.' (*Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, Parliamentary Debates*, II(1), 26 May 1965, col. 84).
- 41 See C.H.E. Det's reference to 'the ubiquitous Chinese village shopkeeper' in 'Malay Padi Planters Need Help', and his numerous sarcastic remarks on 'Chinese economic hegemony' in *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, *passim*. In an important interview which he gave to the local newspaper editors, on the occasion of his '100th day in office', Mahathir said at one point: 'If we go to a shop, in our language, we say

'go to a Chinese shop' (*kedai Cina*). As if the shop must be Chinese...
(*'100 Hari Dibawah Mahathir'*, *Berita Harian*, 27 October 1981.

- 42 'New Thoughts on Nationality',
- 43 *Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, Parliamentary Debates*, I(1), 26 May 1965, col. 84. The passage containing this line is given under fn. 47, below.
- 44 *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp: 22-23 and p. 26. But in 'Malays and Higher Education: Summing-up', C.H.E. Det had already distinguished between the attitudes of the town Malays and the kampong folk.
- 45 For the persistence of the Chinese shop in Mahathir's worldview, see 'rows of Chinese shops' in *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, p. 25; '*kedai Cina*' in '*100 Hari Dibawah Mahathir*', *op. cit.*; and 'the ubiquitous Chinese village shopkeeper' in 'Malay Padi Planters Need Help'. Frequent references to *Chinese* shopkeepers, traders, petty traders, businessmen, merchants, small-time adventurers and tycoons are found in *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 35-36, 42-43, and *passim*.
- 46 See Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25, for Mahathir's view of how the four thousand years' of China's history, 'littered with disasters, both natural and man-made', formed 'one continuous struggle for survival' which, together with 'cross-breeding' decreed by Chinese custom, and social adaptations to a 'predatory' officialdom, produced a 'hardy race' with 'the best strains and characteristics which facilitated survival'.
- 47 See his references to 'predatory immigrants' in *ibid.*, p. 71, and 'predatory Chinese' in *ibid.*, pp. 27 and 85.
- 48 *The Malay Dilemma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-56.
- 49 Mahathir missed few opportunities to rail at the 'Chinese stranglehold on the economy' (*ibid.*, p. 39), 'non-Malay economic hegemony' (*ibid.*, p. 43), 'Chinese economic hegemony' (*ibid.*, p. 56), 'Chinese monopoly' (*ibid.*), 'Chinese economic domination' (*ibid.*, pp. 60-61), 'total Chinese economic domination' (*ibid.*, p. 61) and the 'menace of Chinese economic hegemony' (*ibid.*, p. 125).
- 50 'They have never known Malay rule and could not bear the idea that the people that they have for so long kept under their heels should now be in

a position to rule them. They have in most instances never crossed the Causeway. They are in fact overseas Chinese first... and Malaysians a very poor second...' (*Malaysia, Dewan Ra'ayat, Parliamentary Debates*, II(1), 26 May 1965, col. 84.)

- 51 Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Petaling Jaya, Pelanduk Publications, 1986. Translated from *Menghadapi Cabaran*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1976. See especially the essays, 'West and East' (pp. 44-55) and 'A System of Values and the Malays' (pp. 91-103).
- 52 Mahathir's polemic against the 'North' in the 1980s is too extensive for any but a sample to be cited here. See, Mahathir, 'Holier Than Thou - A Mild Critique', Speech at Trinity College, Oxford, 19 April 1985, *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 137-49, and Mahathir, Speech at the Opening of the South-South II Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 5 May 1986, *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 23-31.
- 53 Western 'investors' being the only and always welcome exception!

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