

PARTI BANS DAYAK SARAWAK AND THE SARAWAK STATE ELECTIONS OF 1987 AND 1991

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Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) pada asalnya ditubuhkan sebagai sebuah parti perkauman oleh satu kumpulan serpihan dalam Parti Nasional Sarawak (SNAP). Pada tahun 1987, PBDS keluar daripada kerajaan campuran Sarawak dan bersatu dengan Parti Persatuan Rakyat Sarawak (PERMAS) untuk menubuhkan Kumpulan Maju, iaitu satu kumpulan berbagai parti bertujuan mengambil alih kerajaan Sarawak. Artikel ini meneliti prestasi PBDS dalam pilihanraya negeri Sarawak pada tahun 1987 dan 1991 dan meninjau perkembangan politik sehingga kemasukan PBDS kembali ke dalam kerajaan campuran Sarawak pada tahun 1994. Artikel ini juga meneliti 'Dayakisme', iaitu suatu label politik yang dikaitkan dengan PBDS. Penulis menyarankan bahawa label tersebut adalah suatu teriakan melahirkan rasa kecewa kerana tertinggal dan terpinggir oleh pembangunan dan bukan sebagai suatu laungan chauvinis seperti yang sering didakwa.

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) was formed initially as a Dayak communal party by a splinter group from Sarawak National Party (SNAP). In 1987, PBDS pulled out of the Sarawak state coalition government to team up with Parti Persatuan Rakyat Sarawak (PERMAS) to form the Kumpulan Maju (Progressive Group) in the abortive bid to form an alternative government in the state of Sarawak. This paper analyses the performance of PBDS in the Sarawak state elections of 1987 and 1991 and discusses the political development leading to the return of PBDS into the state coalition government in 1994. The paper also discusses "Dayakism", a local political label associated with PBDS. The author suggests that "Dayakism", far from being a war-cry of Dayak chauvinism as it has been alleged, was essentially a cry of long neglect and marginalization.

In his Sunday bi-monthly column published simultaneously in the *Sunday Star* and the *Sunday Tribune* that appeared on the 15th September 1991, some nine days after the dissolution of the Sarawak State Legislative Assembly and some two weeks before polling, Datuk Mohamed Sopiee, a former United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) Member of Parliament and an interested observer of Sarawak politics, predicted that Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) would do very well in the Sarawak state election. PBDS was then in the

interesting position of being a component member of the ruling Barisan Nasional in the Federal government but was an opposition party in the state after it had pulled out of the Sarawak Barisan Nasional during the 1987 state election. Contesting in only thirty-four out of fifty-six constituencies Datuk Sophee rightly contended that unless PBDS could win more than 85 percent of the constituencies it was contesting, it could hardly hope to form the new State Government after the election. However, Datuk Sophee was confident that PBDS would improve on its performance in the previous state election held in 1987, in which it won fifteen out of the twenty-one constituencies it contested in a forty-eight seats legislative assembly. "In my opinion, PBDS would be able to win more than the 15 seats it won in the last general election in 1987. There is a possibility that it may win five or [even] ten more seats than it did in 1987."¹ In the column which appeared two weeks later, on the eve of polling, Datuk Sophee was more specific: the Sarawak Barisan Nasional, or Barisan Tiga (BN3) as it was also called, which consisted of Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and Sarawak National Party (SNAP), would continue to rule in Sarawak "but with a majority of only six members"; PBDS, Datuk Sophee predicted, "would be successful in 22 constituencies."²

Datuk Sophee was not alone in being confident that PBDS would perform well in the 1991 Sarawak state election. In my interviews with the many supporters and sympathisers of PBDS most had predicted that PBDS would sweep most, if not all, of the Dayak-majority seats; at the very least, they predicted, PBDS would secure sixteen seats. Rather simplistically, they pointed out that in the Parliamentary election held in 1990 PBDS won eight seats: four under the BN banner and four as independent candidates. As one Parliamentary constituency is made up of two state constituencies, thus one has only to multiply eight Parliamentary seats by two state seats to get sixteen state seats.³ Sim Kwang Yang, Sarawak State's Chairman of Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Member of Parliament for Bandar Kuching, while less sanguine about the performance of PBDS in the 1991 election, nonetheless suggested that PBDS would win between eleven to fourteen seats.⁴

All these pre-polling predictions proved to be wildly off the mark when the results of polling were announced. BN3 won a landslide victory, securing forty-nine of the fifty-six seats, while PBDS secured only seven seats. Dr. James Jemut Masing, Senior Vice-President of PBDS, when asked by the press to comment on the results of the election, could only

reply, "We are baffled. We really do not know why [we did badly] as we were very confident."⁵ Datuk Sopiee was likewise disappointed.

I was surprised that PBDS has done so badly this time. I had expected the party to fare better, and improve its position in the State Assembly by five or ten seats....That expectation was perhaps based on the assumption that the Bansa Dayak in Sarawak are united and have been able to work together on the basis of consensus, to improve their political, economic and social condition, in partnership with the other communities in the State and the nation.⁶

The dismal performance of PBDS in the election was indeed surprising, even shocking. While it was generally expected that PBDS would not be able to form the government after the election many observers nevertheless expected PBDS to do better than securing a mere seven seats; indeed, to deny BN3 a two-thirds majority⁷. However, what was perhaps even more surprising was the announcement by Datuk Leo Moggie, President of PBDS, immediately after the results of the election became known, that PBDS would be applying to rejoin the Sarawak State Barisan Nasional which it had left during the 1987 state election. What was more, PBDS attached no condition in application for readmission into the State BN.⁸

This paper discusses aspects of ethnicity and politics in Sarawak, with particular reference to the Dayak community. The term "Dayak" is used to refer to the non-Muslim *bumiputera* (indigenes) of Sarawak, collectively referring to the Bidayuh, Iban, Orang Ulu, and other non-Muslim indigenous groups. The main focus is on PBDS and the Sarawak state elections of 1987 and 1991. The paper also discusses the developments leading to the readmission of PBDS into the state coalition government in 1994.

FORMATION OF PBDS

PBDS was formed in early 1983 by a splinter group from SNAP following a leadership crisis within SNAP. That crisis may be traced to July 1980 when Datuk Dunstan Endawie suddenly resigned as President of SNAP and as Deputy Chief Minister III⁹ to accept the appointment of Malaysian High Commissioner to New Zealand. This rather curious exchange of appointments, evidently, was to ease Datuk Endawie out of

Sarawak politics following his abortive bid to replace Abdul Rahman Ya'kub as Chief Minister in late 1978.¹⁰ Datuk James Wong, the long-time Deputy President, assumed the post of Acting President, pending the election of new office bearers at the party's Triennial General Meeting scheduled for December 1981.

At its Triennial General Meeting in December 1981 SNAP, besieged by a crisis, was split into two. At the crux of the conflict was SNAP as a multiracial party versus SNAP as a Dayak-based party. James Wong, a Chinese, who had been Deputy President for some seventeen years, appealed that he be allowed to lead SNAP as President for at least one term and argued that SNAP should not deviate from its multiracial stance. The young and educated Dayak leaders of the party, led by Datuk Leo Moggie, the Secretary-General, and Daniel Tajem, the Senior Vice-President, on the other hand, insisted that SNAP has always been a Dayak-based party and therefore should be led by a Dayak; the top leadership of the party must necessarily reflect that representation.¹¹ They argued, moreover, that should the presidency of the party be allowed to pass to James Wong, the Dayak community, which constitute the single largest ethnic group in the state, would appear to be without a leader of their own; and it was probably this that proved to be too much for the young Dayak leaders in the party to swallow.¹²

In the contest that ensued, Moggie's faction were all defeated by Wong's faction. Wong had shrewdly allied himself with the "old guards" of the party, those older and lesser educated Dayak, whose positions were threatened by the rise of the younger and better educated ones who were aligned with Moggie and Tajem. Moreover, in the months leading to the party's election, Wong had frantically set up new branches, particularly in urban areas, in an effort to ensure his victory at the Triennial General Meeting.¹³ In addition Datuk Endawie, the former President, who was present at the meeting was also instrumental in influencing "the final swing of the votes" in favour of James Wong.¹⁴ Endawie, it appeared, was bitter that Moggie did not support his bid to replace Ya'kub as Chief Minister in 1978. Moggie was defeated by Wong for the post of President while Tajem, who contested the post of Deputy President, was defeated by Datuk Edward Jeli, a Dayak Iban. After the party's election, however, Moggie and Tajem, because of the influence and support they command within the party, were appointed Vice-Presidents and were allowed to continue to function as Cabinet Ministers.¹⁵ Moggie was then a Federal Minister for Telecommunications and Post while Tajem was Deputy Chief Minister III

and Minister of Agriculture and Community Development in Sarawak. Tajem was first appointed Minister of Infrastructure Development when Moggie was appointed to the Federal Cabinet in 1978, and was subsequently promoted Deputy Chief Minister III after Endawie resigned.

Subsequently, in the Parliamentary election of 1982, three incumbents, including a Federal Deputy Minister, who were aligned with the Moggie faction, were dropped from the line-up as party candidates. The three stood as independent candidates against official BN-SNAP candidates, and all three won in the constituencies they contested. During that election Tajem openly campaigned for Edwin Tangkun, one of the three independents. Tajem was subsequently sacked from the party which also demanded that he resign as Cabinet Minister. Tajem, however, was defiant, refusing even to answer the charges made by the party. The Chief Minister, Datuk Abdul Taib Mahmud, despite the demand from SNAP, refused to exercise his prerogative to sack Tajem. Instead, Tajem, along with Edwin Tangkun and Edmund Langgu, two of the three independent candidates who successfully contested against BN-SNAP candidates, were shortly afterward given honorific awards which carried the title "Datuk" on the occasion of the Governor's birthday. It is against this background that speculations were rife among observers in Sarawak that both Taib Mahmud and Tun Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, the former Chief Minister and the then Head of State, had a hand in the break-up of SNAP.¹⁶ For after all, the Chinese-Dayak grouping within SNAP posed a real and formidable threat to PBB, the dominant partner in the state coalition, as exemplified in the 1974 state election and again in 1978 in the Endawie episode. Indeed, with eighteen members sitting in the State Legislature, SNAP rivaled PBB, which also held eighteen seats, as the largest party within the Sarawak state coalition government.

Meanwhile, Tajem undertook to form a new communal-based party, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, and offered the presidency of the new party to Moggie. Eventually, nine out of eighteen SNAP's State Assemblymen and four out of nine SNAP's Members of Parliament, all of them Dayak Iban, joined the new party. In explaining the reasons behind the formation of PBDS Moggie emphasised that although SNAP by its constitution is multi-racial, it was historically a Dayak-based party. The seats that SNAP won since elections were first held in the state were those in predominantly Dayak majority constituencies. "Its membership in the Barisan Nasional was not because it was multi-racial in constitutional structure, but because it was Dayak-based. For it was

considered essential that the Dayak community must feel that they are not left out from the Government." The present leadership of SNAP, Moggie charged, "have veered away from the original course for which SNAP was set up."

The setting up of PBDS [Moggie continued] is a reflection of the aspiration of the Dayak community to be self reliant and be responsible in determining the future of our community within the context of the New Economic Policy and the plural nature of the Malaysian Polity.... [PBDS would strive to be a] responsible spokesman through which the Dayak Community can progress together with their other Malaysian brothers in the years to come. We are still very much behind in many things - education, economics, the very nature of our livelihood and so on. The problem of rural poverty and rural Sarawak is synonymous with the problem of the Dayak community. Our priority must be...[to]...bring to the Government's attention the need to give priority to rural development in Sarawak, the urgency of setting up properly planned resettlement schemes to regroup scattered communities, the construction of more roads, the improvement of education opportunities, the extension of the New Economic Policy beyond its present time frame, and so on.¹⁷

PBDS was initially exclusively Dayak in membership. Its original constitution did not allow non-Dayak to be members although this was amended in early 1987 to allow other races to become "associate members". This marked a departure from the Sarawakian norm; all previous parties, although dependent upon a particular ethnic community for its core support, had nonetheless opened their membership to other races and could thereby make pretensions toward multiracialism. As Moggie explained: "We are communal in the same way that UMNO, MCA [Malaysian Chinese Association], MIC [Malayan Indian Congress] and PBB¹⁸ are communal" but added that "[a]lthough PBDS is communal in its membership, it is committed to a moderate and pragmatic policy required in a plural society such as Malaysia where the interest of the various communities as reflected in the New Economic Policy is safeguarded." PBDS, Moggie emphasised, would "subscribe and practice the concept and spirit of Barisan Nasional."¹⁹

To accommodate PBDS into the state coalition government, Taib, despite strong opposition from SNAP, formed what he called "Barisan Plus" coalition [PBB, SUPP, SNAP + PBDS]. The inclusion of PBDS into the coalition, Taib explained, was to ensure that the Dayak community was not left out of the mainstream of development in Sarawak.²⁰ Whether unconsciously or by design, implicit in Taib's statement is the tacit recognition that PBDS represented the political vehicle for Dayak participation in the government. As an interim measure, those former SNAP ministers who were now in PBDS were retained in their respective posts pending a cabinet reshuffle after the anticipated state election at the end of 1983.²¹ The Prime Minister endorsed Taib's BN-Plus formula as "practical and logical", and would ensure political stability in Sarawak.²² However, it was not until January 1984, after the state election, that PBDS was admitted as a member of the Federal Barisan Nasional.

In the state election held in November 1983, SNAP and PBDS, both component parties of the state coalition government, contested against each other using their respective party symbols in the constituencies that were formerly held by SNAP. SNAP contested in all eighteen constituencies while PBDS contested in fourteen where Dayak constituted the majority. PBB and SUPP, the other component partners of the BN-Plus coalition, displayed no scruples in exploiting the schism in the Dayak community by fielding "independent" candidates in the constituencies contested by the two rivalling Dayak-based parties. At the end of polling, PBDS won seven seats while SNAP won eight. Thus between the two parties, they were returned in only fifteen out of the eighteen constituencies which SNAP held before the split. The remaining seats were all lost to SUPP-backed independent candidates. The seats won by these independent candidates were later formalised as legitimate gains by SUPP in the allocation of seats for the 1987 state election. These losses in seats were but only the initial price paid as a result of the split in SNAP.

"DAYAKISM"

One new word that appeared in Sarawak political vocabulary and which in the minds of the public is closely associated with PBDS is "*Dayakism*." The word obviously comes from the root-word "Dayak", which is a collective reference for the Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and other non-Muslim indigenous groups. When "*ism*" is added as a suffix to

the word "Dayak" however, it appears to assume a whole complexity of meanings.

It is often assumed that by adding "*ism*" to such a word, the word is then transformed to describe an ideology or a phenomenon, much like the word "nationalism". That was perhaps the intention. The exact origins of the term are rather blurred and it is not clear whether PBDS itself coined the word. It might well be, as has been suggested, that "*dayakism*" was first coined by opponents of PBDS to tag that party as racist and chauvinist but that later the term was taken up by PBDS as a positive political label, "intending by it a party and a cause not unlike UMNO's, i.e., a communal, essentially middle-class, nationalism, perhaps even bordering on chauvinism, that has as its primary programme the economic and political advancement of the Dayak, defined through the prism of modernity and development."²³ Whatever the case might have been, it is important here to discuss the context in which that term had emerged.

It should be emphasised that although grouped together as "Dayak", the Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu are actually quite distinct from one another, each having its own sets of cultural traditions and corpus of beliefs. The Iban, constituting some 30% of the total population and therefore representing the largest ethnic group in the state, are found along the major rivers throughout the breath of the state. The Bidayuh, constituting some 8% of the population, are found in the interior in the western end of the state. The Orang Ulu [literally 'people of the interior'], making up some 7% of the total population, are found deep in the interior of the Baram and the Belaga, in the eastern side of the state. Thus together, these Dayak groups make up some 45% of the state's population of some 1.7 million. The remaining 55% of the population consists of the Chinese, 29%, and the Malay/Melanau, 26%. Parenthetically, all Malays are constitutionally defined to be Muslims and because some 90% of the Melanau are Muslims they are, although a distinct ethnic group in their own right, often grouped together with the Malays.

Of the Dayak group, the Iban are the most uniform, sharing a common language, custom and corpus of beliefs. The same is not true of the Bidayuh and the Orang Ulu. The Bidayuh are divided into four more or less mutually incomprehensible dialect groups while among the Orang Ulu, there are at least sixteen ethnic tribal groups categorised under the sub-groups of Kayan, Kenyah and Kelabit. Unlike the Bidayuh and the Iban, which are generally egalitarian, the Orang Ulu community is

hierarchical. It is noteworthy that while the Bidayuh have always referred to themselves as "Dayak", it was not until the early 1970's that the Iban began to accept that label; the Orang Ulu continued to resist it until only recently. It is also interesting to note that while the larger identity of "Dayak" was boosted by the official recognition of June 1st as "*Hari Gawai Dayak*" or the Dayak New Year (corresponding to what was traditionally the harvest festival). "*Gawai*" is celebrated mainly by the Bidayuh and the Iban while among the Orang Ulu, it is celebrated only by those living in urban areas. In light of these observations then, "*Dayakism*" envisaged a unity of the disparate non-Muslim ethnic groups under one political party: *Parti Dayak*, as PBDS is also called in short. That indeed was the professed aim of PBDS leaders. "When we set up PBDS," Moggie explained, "our objective was to help the people identify us as the main spokesman of the Dayaks....It would be to the advantage of the Dayak community if they ...[were] to combine under one grouping."²⁴

Politics is essentially seen as a means with which to advance the social and economic standing of the Dayak community.²⁵ Some 95% of the Dayak live in rural areas²⁶ which, in most instances, are amongst the poorest areas in the state. Indeed, according to the 1982 statistics, some 75% of the Sarawak poor are Dayaks.²⁷ The incidence of poverty and economic development among the Dayak community have been documented in some recent studies²⁸ and need not be repeated here. James Masing describes the situation of the people living in the rural areas succinctly:

They are economically backward, lacking in basic amenities and infrastructure, far behind in education and haunted by the spectre of malnutrition, and under current development trends they have little chance of bettering their present living condition.²⁹

The plight of the Dayak communities appears especially glaring when juxtaposed against the relatively better standing of the Malay and Chinese communities.³⁰ In the State Legislative Assembly, PBDS members had continually pointed to the lack of attention given to rural communities and stressed the concomitant need to appropriate more funds for the development of the rural areas. In the elections of 1987 and 1991, rural development was the central theme in the party's campaigns. During the campaign in 1991, PBDS leaders, when asked by the press to clarify what "*dayakism*" meant, replied that it essentially meant "ruralism."³¹ There is of course no such word in the English

language. This notwithstanding, "ruralism" is nonetheless suggestive of the political orientation of the party.

The sense of discrimination and of marginalization, to be sure, was not limited to the rural areas but spanned the urban areas as well. However, while the concerns of the rural communities were basically the nature of their subsistence - the issues of land rights, subsidies for cash crops, infrastructure development, logging and the depletion of communal forest, basic amenities and so forth - urbanised, middle class supporters and sympathisers of the party similarly pointed to a sense of discrimination with respect to admission into vocational and tertiary educational institutions, awards of scholarships, and promotion in the civil service. Beyond this, in interviews with members of PBDS Youth in Kuching and Sri Aman, a frequent refrain was the lack of Dayak millionaires, doctors, lawyers, industrialists, bankers, and so on.³² It is noteworthy that these latter concerns echo similar refrains in Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's, *The Malay Dilemma* (1970).³³

To be sure, these senses of discrimination and marginalization did not appear suddenly in the 1980's. Nor were they articulated only by the formation of PBDS. In the 1970's, SNAP undertook to champion the interests of the Dayak community as *bumiputera* following the provisions of the Federal Constitution. This accorded them "special *bumiputera* rights" in the provision of scholarships, quotas and preferential admission into vocational and tertiary educational institutions, and in the civil service; and more importantly in terms of the applicability of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which aimed at uplifting the social and economic standing of the *bumiputera*. In the 1970's, however, SNAP members continually pointed out that the implementation of the policy by the Federal and particularly State governments were distinctly in favour of Muslim *bumiputera* as opposed to non-Muslim *bumiputera*.³⁴ PBDS sees itself as the true heir of SNAP's politics in the 1970's.³⁵

It is against this background of marginalization and frustration in its inability to influence the policies of the state with respect to rural development, coupled with the fact that the Dayak constitutes the largest proportion of the population in the state and could therefore, if united, wrest the political leadership of the state, that PBDS's politics in the later half 1980's and the early 1990's can be understood. In 1987 PBDS teamed up with Parti Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (PERMAS), a splinter group of the Malay-Muslim wing of PBB, in the effort to oust Taib Mahmud and with the hope of forming a new

government. In the 1991 election, PBDS campaigned under the slogan "*Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak*" (Chief Minister of Sarawak Project), to form an alternative government in Sarawak, one which was Dayak-led and whose policies would be more orientated towards rural development. PBDS derived significant inspiration from the successes of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in uniting the Dusun and Kadazan (who, like the Dayak, are non-Muslim *bumiputera*) and subsequently in wresting control of the state government in the neighbouring state of Sabah.³⁶ However, there was a significant difference between PBDS and PBS in that the platform of PBS was multiracial while that of PBDS was essentially communal. Perhaps herein lies the main reason for the contrasting outcomes in the struggles of PBDS in Sarawak and of PBS in Sabah.

Opponents of PBDS invariably see "*dayakism*" in a much different light. Dayak members within the state coalition government, for instance, pointed that PBDS hold no monopoly over the spokespersonship of Dayak interests; indeed, being in the opposition, it was in no position to do anything for the Dayak; and that Dayak interests could be served only through the BN.³⁷ Non-Dayak opponents, on the other hand, suggested that PBDS's brand of politics to be narrow and would harm the interests of other communities should PBDS come into power. SUPP, for instance, condemned PBDS as anti-Chinese, an effective strategy which evoked tight ethnic reponse amongst the Chinese electorates causing them to shy away from PBDS and vote the BN.³⁸

THE 1987 STATE ELECTION

The premature state election of 1987 was essentially a direct result of a long simmering dispute between the Chief Minister, Abdul Taib Mahmud, and his uncle, Tun Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, the former Chief Minister and subsequently the former Head of State, which exploded in public arena. The events involving the Chief Minister and his uncle leading to the calling of the premature 1987 state election have been described in detail elsewhere³⁹ and need not concern us here.

On the eve of the 1987 state election, PBDS left the state coalition government, though not the federal coalition, to team up with Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (PERMAS), a newly registered political party headed by Ya'kub, to form *Kumpulan Maju* (progressive group) in the effort to oust Taib from power. In all, twenty-seven State Assemblymen joined the *Kumpulan Maju*. These included seven from PBB, five from

SNAP, two from SUPP, seven from PBDS and six independents. Meeting at the Ming Court Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, these assemblymen declared that they no longer have confidence in the leadership of Taib and demanded that he resign as Chief Minister. Taib responded by dissolving the State Legislative Assembly and calling for a fresh election in April 1987.

The apparent reason for PBDS leaving the State coalition government to team up with PERMAS was Taib's purported neglect of the rural, which is to say Dayak, community. At the PBDS Triennial General Meeting in Sibu in March 1987, PBDS leaders came out openly to criticise the state government, a coalition of which PBDS itself was part. In his speech Moggie, for instance, declared:

The Dayaks, though Bumiputera by law, were not enjoying that status in the practical implementation of the New Economic Policy. The story is the same when you look at the intake into institutions of higher learning, recruitment and promotion in the Civil Service, participation in Government business and participation in the exploitation of natural resources. Whether by design or omission the NEP has passed the Dayaks by. Land resettlement schemes, the only viable alternative to shifting cultivation...if successfully implemented would be able to redress poverty in the rural areas. Land development schemes have long been publicised but yet to be seen.⁴⁰

PBDS leaders saw in the political crisis at hand an opportunity to redress the distribution of power in the state government via the *Kumpulan Maju*. Should the *Kumpulan Maju* come into power PBDS, it was argued, would be the back-bone of that government. Moreover, the crisis provided PBDS an opportunity to break out of the seven seats limited to it as previously agreed within the State BN government in the state coalition government.

PBDS was confronted with two major issues during the 1987 election. The first involved the issue of the Chief Minister-designate. Here, PBDS leaders understood that while it was the Dayak who provided the majority to unseat Taib, the Chief Minister-designate must be a Muslim and therefore would have to come from the PERMAS component of the *Kumpulan Maju*; otherwise the federal leadership would simply not permit the overthrow of Taib Mahmud. This indeed was a tacit

recognition on the part of PBDS leaders that the disposition of the Federal government in Kuala Lumpur is necessarily a restraining factor in the pursuit of "Dayakism" to its full conclusion. Indeed, that the *Kumpulan Maju* operated out of Kuala Lumpur and not Sarawak is particularly telling of the importance of the "federal factor." Thus Haji Nor Tahir, a former Minister of Tourism and Environment, was initially named the Chief Minister-designate. But after the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly, Moggie announced that PBDS would endorse the appointment of Rahman Ya'kub as Chief Minister in the event that the *Kumpulan Maju* was elected to power.⁴¹ Dayak opponents of PBDS exploited this decision to the utmost during the campaign leading to the polls, caricaturing PBDS as selling out Dayak interests to Rahman Ya'kub and PERMAS.

The second involved the position of PBDS within the Barisan Nasional and the related issue of party symbols in the election. The *Kumpulan Maju* emphasized that they have no quarrel with the Federal Government and that they were merely opposed to Taib's leadership in Sarawak. Accordingly, the *Kumpulan Maju* fervently argued for a "free for all" contest and that the incumbent state government should not be allowed to use the BN *dacing* (scales) symbol. PBDS leaders were confident about the appeal of the party's symbol amongst Dayak voters. Moreover, the use of the Barisan symbol by the BN3, as the state coalition was now renamed, would work against PERMAS in the Muslim areas; the Malay/Melanau community had long displayed a loyalty to that symbol - the symbol of "government", and one in which the Malay/Melanau community plays a dominant role. The Prime Minister, as head of the National Barisan Nasional, decided that each of the Barisan Nasional component parties, including PBDS, could use the Barisan symbol so long as the as the parties did not contest beyond their allocated seats. As that decision would have confined PBDS to the seven seats it already held, the party decided to use its own symbol but was emphatic during the campaigning that PBDS's quarrel was with the leadership of Taib Mahmud and not with the Barisan Nasional.⁴²

The *Kumpulan Maju* contested in only forty-two out of the forty-eight constituencies, leaving out the six urban constituencies in which the Chinese form the majority. The DAP, a Chinese-based opposition party was to contest those seats. There was, however, no pact between the *Kumpulan Maju* and the DAP. Indeed, the crisis of 1987 may be seen as an essentially intra-*bumiputera* conflict. PBDS contested in twenty-one constituencies, by no means all of the Dayak majority constituencies, in order to allow PERMAS to contest in some of the Dayak majority

constituencies. Beholden to PERMAS for financial backing in the election, PBDS was not in any position to insist on contesting in all the Dayak majority seats. PERMAS, PBDS's partner in the *Kumpulan Maju*, also contested in twenty-one constituencies, including all the fifteen Malay/Melanau dominated areas, two Dayak Iban dominated areas, two Chinese plurality rural constituencies, one Dayak Bidayuh and one Dayak Orang Ulu majority constituencies.

In Dayak dominated constituencies, PBDS played on the argument that the Dayak were grievously neglected by the Taib administration and that a change in the state leadership would benefit the Dayak.⁴³ They argued that although the Chief Minister-designate of the *Kumpulan Maju* would still be a Muslim, PBDS would be the back-bone of the new administration and as such PBDS would exercise considerable influence over policies of the new administration.⁴⁴ Driven to the defensive, their Dayak opponents insisted that, while they are not members of PBDS, they too are Dayak; and charged that the top leadership of PBDS were self-serving and had only been too willing to sell out Dayak interests to Tun Rahman and PERMAS by agreeing to Tun Rahman's appointment as the Chief Minister-designate.⁴⁵

At the end of polling, the Barisan Nasional was returned to power but denied the crucial two-thirds majority that it required to pass new Bills or to make any amendment to the State constitution. BN3 won a total of twenty-eight seats, of which PBB secured fourteen, SUPP eleven and SNAP three. The *Kumpulan Maju* secured twenty seats: PBDS fifteen and PERMAS five. DAP, the only other major opposition party which contested in the election, failed to secure any seat. All the independent candidates lost their deposits.

PBB fielded a total of twenty-three candidates: fourteen in Malay/Melanau majority and plurality constituencies, six in Dayak Iban, two in Dayak Orang Ulu and one in Dayak Bidayuh area. They were returned in ten Malay/Melanau seats, two in Dayak Iban, one in Dayak Orang Ulu and one in Dayak Bidayuh constituencies. SUPP contested in a total of fourteen seats and were returned in eleven, that being the number of seats it held before the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly. SUPP won in all the eight predominantly Chinese majority urban constituencies and three in Dayak Iban plurality constituencies. SNAP contested in eleven seats and were returned only in three: one in a Dayak Iban and one in Dayak Bidayuh majority constituencies and the remaining one in a mixed constituency where the Dayak and Malay/Melanau form about an equal percentage of the voters. PBDS

contested in fifteen Dayak Iban, four Dayak Bidayuh and two Dayak Orang Ulu constituencies and was returned in eleven Dayak Iban, two Dayak Bidayuh and two Dayak Orang Ulu seats. PERMAS contested in fifteen Malay/Melanau plurality constituencies, two rural Chinese plurality constituencies, two Dayak Iban, one Dayak Bidayuh and one Dayak Orang Ulu plurality seats. It was returned in four Malay/Melanau and one Dayak Iban plurality constituencies.

The poll returns have been analysed in detailed elsewhere.⁴⁶ Briefly, it would appear that in predominantly Chinese and Muslim constituencies the poll returns were clearly for the Barisan Nasional: for BN-SUPP in Chinese areas and for BN-PBB in Malay/Melanau areas and against the DAP and PERMAS respectively. Chinese fears of the perceived threats of "*Dayakism*" evoked tight ethnic response from the Chinese community, arguing for them to vote BN. In areas where SUPP did not represent the BN, Chinese votes, it appeared, went to BN-PBB or BN-SNAP. Similarly, in Malay/Melanau majority constituencies, BN-PBB won with huge margins. As Michael Leigh has noted, for some two decades since the formation of Parti Bumiputera and subsequently Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, the Malay/Melanau voters have been repeatedly told that the political survival of their community depended on their unity behind PBB and in maintaining close links with the federal government.⁴⁷ Significantly, those Malay/Melanau constituencies which PERMAS won were the ones with significant percentage of non-Muslim native voters. In areas where PBB candidates did not represent the BN, Malay/Melanau votes appeared to go to other component parties of BN3.

Dayak votes, on the other hand, were not quite as clear cut. Of the twenty-five Dayak majority constituencies, Iban form a plurality in some seventeen constituencies; Bidayuh in five; and Orang Ulu in three. PBDS won fifteen seats, representing some 60% of all the Dayak majority seats; while those PERMAS candidates who succeeded had won in constituencies with a large percentage of Dayak voters. Michael Leigh suggested that while ostensibly this gave the impression that "*Dayakism*" swept PBDS candidates to victory, a closer look at the poll returns would suggest that Dayak support for PBDS was by no means solid. Leigh observed that one third of the fifteen seats were won with relatively narrow margins. Of the eight seats with the winning margin of less than 300 votes, one went to SNAP, two to PERMAS and five to PBDS. Leigh also observed that of the three Dayak component groups, Bidayuh votes were strongly correlated with support for PBDS, even though only two of the four Bidayuh plurality seats were actually won by

PBDS. The remaining seats were won by PBB and SNAP. Of the three Orang Ulu plurality constituencies, two went to PBDS whilst one went to PBB.⁴⁸

TO THE 1991 STATE ELECTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

PBDS' decision to leave the state coalition government and the subsequent failure of the *Kumpulan Maju* to come to power held immediate and far-reaching ramifications for the Dayak community. With most of the Dayak members in the State Legislative Assembly now in the opposition, the Taib administration became increasingly dependent upon SUPP, which is to say, the Chinese. This was reflected in the cabinet reshuffle shortly after the election. Before the 1987 election, three out of eight full cabinet ministers and four out of eight assistant ministers were Dayak. The full Cabinet Ministers included one from PBB, one from PBDS and one from SNAP, all three being Dayak Iban. The assistant ministers included two Dayak Iban, one each from PBDS and SUPP and two Dayak Bidayuh, one each from SNAP and PBB. In contrast, there were only two Chinese full ministers and two assistant ministers, all from SUPP. Following the reshuffle however, there were only two Dayak full ministers, both Dayak Iban from PBB, and two assistant ministers, one being Dayak Iban from SUPP and the other Dayak Bidayuh from SNAP. In contrast, there were now four Chinese full ministers and two assistant ministers. With the exception of James Wong, who is from SNAP, the rest were from SUPP.⁴⁹

The wider ramifications reverberated into the rural areas. After the election the State government decided that those constituencies which had voted in the opposition would not be allocated development funds, worth some RM350,000 per constituency annually. The BN3 government also proceeded to remove those community leaders who had supported the *Kumpulan Maju*. PBDS-appointed councillors in the various District Councils were removed and replaced with those whose sympathies were pro-BN3. The net effect of these decisions was the breaking-up and splintering of long-houses in the rural areas. For by breaking away from long-houses whose headmen were pro-PBDS, new long-houses with new headmen could then pledge support for the BN and thus qualify for certain government subsidies.

BN3 also argued for the expulsion of PBDS from the Federal Barisan Nasional coalition. The Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, however, was cautious, arguing ostensibly that the PBDS 'revolt' was

essentially an internal Sarawak affair and that PBDS, at least at the Federal level, still subscribed to BN policies.⁵⁰ Perhaps the real reason for Mahathir's cautious stance was that PBDS had secured fifteen seats in the election, which represented some 70% of the Dayak constituencies and almost a third of the total seats in the Sarawak State Legislative Assembly. To expel PBDS from the Federal BN not only would deny BN the parliamentary seats which PBDS could secure but, in addition, risked strengthening the appeal of PBDS as an opposition Dayak party in future elections. The historical example of SNAP's appeal as a Dayak-based opposition party in the early 1970's may have served to underline the point. As one foreign diplomat observed, "*Dayakism* was an important political movement and the federal government didn't want to alienate them[sic]."⁵¹

In any event, the scenario in Sarawak with regards to PBDS soon changed. Within a year after the election, eight elected State Assemblymen from PBDS defected to BN3, thus providing the State government the crucial two-thirds majority in the Legislative Assembly. Four were former SNAP members who joined PBDS during the midst of the crisis in April while the other four were original PBDS members. Of these eight, two rejoined SNAP while six joined PBB, thus greatly strengthened the Pesaka (Dayak) wing of PBB. PBDS was left with seven members in the Legislative Assembly, seven being the original number of its seats before it left the State Barisan. Following these defections the State Legislature enacted an anti-hop law providing that any member who changes his allegiance from one political party to another must resign his seat and face a by-election. The bill received unanimous support.⁵² Acting on the assumption that voters in the past election had voted for the party and not for personalities, PBDS leaders supported the bill thinking that this law would work in their favour in the next election.⁵³

In rethinking their strategies for the next state election, PBDS leadership concluded that while Dayak "sentiments" were with the party in the 1987 election, two factors had weakened the PBDS campaign. One was the party's backing of Rahman Ya'kub's bid to return to power. Accordingly PBDS decided to "go it alone" in the next election. The party's morale, dampened by the defections, was restored by the results of the Parliamentary election held in October 1990 in which it won all four seats allocated to the party under the Barisan banner, including one seat which PBDS won uncontested. In addition, four PBDS-backed independent candidates also won, two at the expense of SUPP and two at the expense of SNAP. Shortly following the election, its confidence

greatly boosted, PBDS launched what it termed "*Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak, 1992*" (Sarawak Chief Minister Project 1992), promising that PBDS would provide the next Chief Minister for Sarawak after the anticipated state election. Reminiscent of SNAP's politics in the 1970's, James Masing pointed out that the London Agreement had provided that if the Governor is a Malay, then the Chief Minister would have to be a Dayak and vice-versa.⁵⁴ However, given that the party leadership understood that Kuala Lumpur is more disposed toward a Malay-Muslim connection to head the state, the party's commitment to that slogan may be questioned.

The other factor which had weakened the PBDS campaign in 1987 was the virtual lack of Chinese support for the party. Chinese voters comprise a significant percentage in some seventeen constituencies in which PBDS contested in the 1991 elections; indeed Chinese votes were crucial for victories in some constituencies. In the 1987 campaign, BN3's caricaturing of PBDS as anti-Chinese effectively frightened the Chinese community into throwing in their undivided support for BN3. To rectify this, PBDS had set up a Chinese Affairs Consultative Committee (CACC), with the task of explaining the party's policies to the Chinese community.⁵⁵ In addition, in the efforts to woo Chinese votes, PBDS also toyed with the idea of forming a pact with DAP, a Chinese-based opposition party.⁵⁶ The idea, however, was soon aborted probably on account that a pact between PBDS and DAP in Sarawak would have grave consequences for PBDS's position in the Federal coalition.⁵⁷ Eventually, PBDS fielded seven Chinese candidates in the 1991 election. PBDS's manifesto for the 1991 election included pledges to safeguard the interests of the Chinese community.⁵⁸

Despite the decision to field Chinese candidates, PBDS was cautious about extending full membership to Chinese. In an interview with the press, James Masing stated that "personally" he thought the party "must be cautious about the move to admit Chinese members. We must do it slowly and carefully. Throwing the doors wide open is useless if no one comes in. We may even have people going out." Masing intimated that the party's decision to field Chinese candidates in the election would be used as a yardstick to gauge responses in the urban areas. "If the results are good after the votes are counted, we must think seriously about adapting to the prevailing situation. If Chinese acceptance of the party is proven, we can persuade even the hardcore members to accommodate the new members."⁵⁹

Ironically, while PBDS was focusing its attention on attracting Chinese votes and taking Dayak support for granted, the BN3 component parties, on the other hand, undertook to review their strategies with respect to attracting Dayak votes. The defection of the eight PBDS Assemblymen to BN3 notwithstanding, PBDS's galvanising of fifteen Dayak seats in the 1987 election had threatened to reduce PBB and SUPP practically into communal parties for Malay/Melanau and Chinese communities respectively; and with only three seats, SNAP's very survival was seriously questioned, let alone stand as a viable alternative Dayak party to PBDS. Winning back Dayak seats was therefore crucial for both PBB and SUPP if their claims to be multiracial, or multi-*bumiputera* as in the case of PBB, were to be upheld.

One early and subtle indication of this concern was the politicization of the *Gawai* celebration in the state capital in 1987, shortly after the election. Prior to this *Gawai* had always been organised by the Sarawak Dayak National Union (SDNU) at Rumah Dayak (Dayak Community Hall). SDNU is a strictly cultural, non-political setup but many of its top office bearers are members of PBDS. In fact, the President of SDNU then was (and the time of writing still is) Datuk Daniel Tajem. Accordingly the State government decided to organise its own *Gawai* celebration at the Dewan Sentapan Negeri (State Banquet Hall) - an annual celebration which now has become a "tradition." Tellingly, the State government has not attempted to do the same for the Chinese community on Chinese New Year.

The more telling and more important indication of the concern to win back Dayak seats on the part of BN3 component parties were the squabbles between SNAP on the one hand and PBB and SUPP on the other regarding the allocation of seats for the 1991 state election. The issue besetting the component parties of BN3 was not limited to the allocations of the additional seats in the expanded State Legislative Assembly (from forty-eight to fifty-six seats) but involved the reallocation of Dayak seats among the three BN parties. In the 1987 election SNAP was allocated eleven seats but was returned only in three. SNAP's poor showing not only worried its partners in the coalition but also, it would appear, provided an excuse for both PBB and SUPP to argue for an increase in their respective Dayak seats at the expense of SNAP. Fully aware that any significant decrease in seats allocated to it spelt political death SNAP, during the course of the negotiations, threatened to leave the BN⁶⁰. In the end SNAP was allocated a total of eight seats, all of them Dayak majority seats with the exception of the constituency of Limbang which has about the same number of Dayak

and Chinese voters. SUPP was allocated a total of seventeen seats including four Dayak seats. PBB thirty-one seats, including eleven Dayak majority seats.⁶¹

Another development which appeared to be related to the state coalition's strategy *vis-a-vis* Dayak seats was the sudden resurrection of Parti Negara Rakyat Sarawak on the immediate eve of the election, having been defunct for some seventeen years. Significantly, all the top leadership of this rejuvenated Parti Negara were Dayak Bidayuh with Nelson Kundai Ngareng as party President. Kundai had won on a SNAP ticket in the state election of 1970 but crossed over to join PBB shortly after and was subsequently appointed an assistant minister in the Ya'kub administration. For some one year and a half prior to the resurrection of Parti Negara, Kundai had attempted to form a Dayak Bidayuh-based Dayak United People's Party (DUPP), but for some reasons the project never got off the ground.⁶² The sudden revival of Parti Negara, along with its mysterious source of funds, gave to rife speculations that the party had links with BN3,⁶³ the intention being to wean away Dayak Bidayuh votes from PBDS candidates and thus isolate "*Dayakism*" as solely a Dayak Iban project.

Some one hundred and sixty-seven candidates were nominated in the election. The Sarawak Barisan Nasional contested in all fifty-six seats. Of these, thirty-one were from PBB, seventeen from SUPP and eight from SNAP. PBDS fielded thirty-four candidates, DAP eighteen, PERMAS twelve and Parti Negara twenty-eight. Apart from official party candidates there were also nineteen independent candidates.

Most observers expected PBDS to do well in the polls, sweeping most of the Dayak majority seats if not in fact to deny BN3 a two-thirds majority in the State Legislative Assembly. As mentioned earlier, Datuk Sopiee predicted that PBDS would secure as many as twenty-two seats. His premise was that the voters would vote along ethnic lines. He observed that "there are 703,076 registered voters [in Sarawak], made up of 280,668 Dayaks, 232,370 Chinese and 190,038 Malays/Melanaus." He further observed that of the 56 electoral constituencies Dayak voters form the majority in twenty-four, Malay/Melanau in sixteen, and Chinese in eleven. In the remaining five constituencies no single ethnic group constitutes more than 50% of the voters. Of these constituencies, Malay/Melanau form a plurality in three, Chinese in one and Dayak in one. Datuk Sopiee gave a detailed break down of his predictions as follows:

Of PBB's 20 Malay/Melanau candidates, I think at least 14 of them, contesting in the 16 Malay constituencies, will be successful. Of the other four, contesting in the other constituencies, three may succeed; in which case the number of PBB Malay/Melanau State Assemblymen will increase to 19, compared to 10 in 1987.

Four PBB Dayak candidates were successful in 1987. This time, of the 12 Dayak candidates they have put up, only a couple may succeed. That would make up a total of 21 PBB successful candidates, compared to 14 in 1987. Of the 13 Chinese candidates that SUPP has put up this time I think at least 10 should get through. Of their four Dayak candidates, only two may survive, making a total of 12 successful SUPP candidates, as compared to 11 in 1987.

In 1987 SNAP won three seats - one by a Chinese and two by Dayaks - for BN3. Of their eight candidates this time, perhaps only one may be successful....

On the basis of this forecast, the PBDS would be successful in 22 constituencies, if DAP and Permas failed to win any seat. Of these a couple would perhaps be Chinese.⁶⁴

Datuk Sopiee concluded that "if PBDS were to have 20 Dayak members in the Assembly it could claim to [be] more representative of the Dayaks than any other party in the state." In that event and "should SNAP be eliminated or reduced to a party with only one Dayak assemblyman, would it not be in the best interest of the state as well as the nation for PBDS to replace SNAP in the State Barisan Nasional in Sarawak. If PBDS were to return to the State Barisan Nasional, unity will be restored, and working together with the four [*sic*(three)] parties could pursue development in the state which will benefit every ethnic community."⁶⁵ This last observation and recommendation bespoke Datuk Sopiee's confidence that PBDS would indeed do well in the polls.

Datuk Sopiee, however, was proven wrong on almost all counts in his predictions. BN3 won a landslide victory, winning 49 out of 56 seats. PBB won all 16 of the Malay/Melanau majority seats, three Malay/Melanau plurality seats, and eight Dayak majority seats. SUPP won in all eleven Chinese majority constituencies, four Dayak majority constituencies and one in a mixed constituency having about the same number of Chinese and Dayak voters. SNAP won six seats, five in Dayak majority constituencies and one in Malay/Melanau plurality

constituency. PBDS secured the remaining seven seats, all in Dayak Iban majority constituencies.

The poll returns in the 1991 election resembles the return in the 1987 election. As in 1987, in predominantly Chinese and Malay/Melanau constituencies, the returns were overwhelmingly for SUPP and PBB and against DAP and PERMAS respectively. SUPP swept all the eleven predominantly Chinese constituencies while PBB swept all the sixteen predominantly Malay/Melanau constituencies and all the three seats where that community forms a plurality. In 1987, PERMAS had managed to secure four seats from the Malay/Melanau plurality constituencies but in 1991, all PERMAS candidates lost with rather large margins. As a party PERMAS had been in disarray for some two years before the election, with the party's leaders quitting one after another. In addition, the many UMNO leaders who came to Sarawak to campaign on behalf of BN3 continually impressed upon the Muslim community that their political survival rested with PBB which enjoys the support of the Federal government.

As in 1987, the poll returns in 1991 with respect to the Dayak constituencies were again less clear cut. Dayak majority constituencies remained at twenty-five: seventeen in Iban areas, five in Bidayuh and three in Orang Ulu areas. PBDS won in seven constituencies, representing some 35% of that total Dayak majority constituencies. Of the three seats where the winning margin was less than three hundred, one went to PBDS, one to BN-SUPP and the other to BN-SNAP. Significantly, all the seven seats which PBDS won were from predominantly Dayak Iban constituencies. While in the 1987 election PBDS secured two seats each from Bidayuh and Orang Ulu constituencies, this time none of PBDS's Bidayuh and Orang Ulu candidates succeeded. Ostensibly, this would give the impression that "*Dayakism*" had been reduced to as an essentially Dayak Iban project.

Many factors may be attributed to PBDS's rather poor performance in the election. The sheer might of the BN's election machinery, BN control of the media, the funds at its disposal, and authority to approve or give projects on the spot in rural areas, undoubtedly all contributed to the victory of the BN3. Aware of the influence that the community leaders had over the electorates, the BN3 government had shrewdly announced a salary hike for these community leaders shortly after the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly.⁶⁶ In addition, the practise of counting the votes at the various polling centers may have also intimidated voters not to vote for the opposition for the new system of counting votes

would allow the government to identify those areas that had voted for the opposition and subsequently to isolate those particular areas from receiving any government aid. Moreover, the federal government threw its weight in support for BN3.

Quite apart from these extraneous factors, the flaws in PBDS's strategies also worked against the party. One was with respect to what might be termed "the Chinese factor." Chinese voters comprise a significant percentage in many of the constituencies in which PBDS contested; indeed Chinese votes were crucial for victory in some constituencies. PBDS's fielding of Chinese candidates, it appeared, did not help much in attracting Chinese votes or even in softening the image and stigma from the 1987 election of PBDS being anti-Chinese. BN3 and SUPP in particular exploited to the hilt the fact that Chinese were not admitted as full members but only as "associate members" in the party as indication that PBDS was not sincere in opening up to other ethnic groups. One PBDS candidate who contested in a constituency with a significant percentage of Chinese voters and lost by some six hundred votes to BN-PBB candidate attributed his defeat to the virtual lack of Chinese support.⁶⁷

Perhaps the more serious problem lies in the central theme of the PBDS campaign, "*Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak*." This theme subjected PBDS to merciless ridicule by BN3 when Datuk Moggie did not resign from his federal cabinet post to lead his party in the election.⁶⁸ Nor did the party name a Chief Minister-designate. The reason given why Datuk Moggie did not resign his federal post was so as to provide a link between the Dayak community and the central government.⁶⁹ But this did not explain the party's failure to name an alternative Chief Minister designate in place of Moggie. As James Masing put it, "We entered the fight without a known leader. You must go into battle with a general."⁷⁰ Moreover, in the months leading to the election there was open talk about the likelihood of PBDS returning to the state coalition government after the election.⁷¹ All these raised doubts that PBDS was sincere in its "Project Ketua Menteri".⁷² Indeed, contesting in only thirty-four constituencies, giving BN3 a head start of twenty-two seats is hardly a credible strategy of fulfilling the project. All these, inevitably, affected the appeal of PBDS in the election. Thus, while it was PBDS' subservience to Rahman Ya'kub that had dampened PBDS's performance in 1987, it was the party's "*Projek Ketua Menteri Sarawak*" that worked against it in 1991.

Moggie's position was indeed delicate. In retrospect, however, his decision not to resign from his federal cabinet appointment would appear to have been politically correct, particularly given the dismal performance of the party. As Moggie himself explained, even had he contested in the election, it might have boosted the party's performance by a few more seats, but it would still have been far short of winning a simple majority needed to form a new government; meanwhile, PBDS would have lost a valuable representation in the Federal Cabinet.⁷³ Indeed, in the months leading to the election, BN3 had again stepped up pressure on the Prime Minister to dismiss PBDS from the Federal coalition.⁷⁴ If the Prime Minister had been cautious about dismissing PBDS before the election, the election results would have dispelled that caution. As James Masing categorically stated, "What we treasure most is the federal-state relationship."⁷⁵

However, what caught observers by surprise was the announcement by Datuk Moggie on the very evening that the results of the election became known that PBDS would be applying to rejoin the State Barisan Nasional and that PBDS's application was without condition.⁷⁶ While the eventuality of such a move might have been generally expected, it was the timing of the announcement which caught most observers by surprise. One would not help but speculate that Moggie was presumably acting under pressure from the federal government. Tellingly, at the very time Moggie made his announcement from the PBDS Headquarters, Datuk Mohamad Rahmat, UMNO Secretary General and the Federal Minister of Information, made a statement to the effect that PBDS will now have to decide whether or not it wanted to rejoin the State Barisan Nasional.⁷⁷

At its meeting in April 1992, some six months after the election, the Supreme Council of PBDS endorsed the decision to rejoin the State Barisan Nasional. "...[T]he prospect for rural development and the improvement of the quality of life of the rural community," Moggie explained, "would be better served if rural based political parties and their supporters are part of the Government." Moggie also emphasised that as a political party, PBDS "still retains a credible level of support particularly among the rural people of Sarawak." He pointed out that among the twenty-four Dayak plurality constituencies, PBDS obtained some 46% of the total votes as compared with the 26% obtained by PBB, 16% by SNAP and 13% by SUPP. "In terms of ensuring national unity such a level of grassroot support cannot be allowed to feel alienated from the mainstream of development."⁷⁸

Moggie knew his statistics but the unenviable position of PBDS is particularly glaring. The party command only seven seats; with forty-nine seats, the State Barisan Nasional did not need PBDS to rule. Yet, for PBDS, remaining in the opposition would only deny those constituencies which had voted in PBDS any development long denied to them and run the risk that PBDS would not be returned to the state legislature in future elections. Thus quite apart from wanting to participate in the government so as to be able to exert some measures of influence over the state's policies, seeking readmission into the state BN even without condition is clearly a self-preserving strategy for PBDS.

PBDS's decision to rejoin the State Barisan Nasional was reiterated at the party's Extraordinary Delegates' Conference held in March 1993. At this meeting it was also decided that PBDS amend its constitution and open its membership to other ethnic group, thus transforming PBDS into a multi-racial party. As Moggie put it in his speech, "In fact the amendment is merely a logical extension of what PBDS already is, in spirit as in practice, for many years." He pointed out that Sim Choo Nam, a Chinese, was elected on PBDS ticket in 1987 and Datuk Sng Chee Hua, also a Chinese, in 1991. "However, because PBDS's Constitution restricts membership to members of the Dayak community the party has conveniently been labelled with a racist hue....[T]he removal of [that] Constitutional restriction...will remove an excuse which has been used by others to paint us with a false communal stigma."⁷⁹

In January 1994, Taib consented to officiate the PBDS Triennial General Meeting, where he lectured his audience on the evils of communal politics allegedly practised by PBDS. The party was formally readmitted into the state coalition government, appropriately, on June 1st, 1994.

CONCLUSION

Within ten years of its formation, PBDS appeared to have moved one full circle. The party initially rejected "multiracialism" in favour of a communal set-up; and in 1987, it left the state coalition government to team up with PERMAS to form the *Kumpulan Maju* in the unsuccessful bid to topple the Taib administration. By early 1990's, however, the party reverted to "multiracialism"; and with its application and subsequent acceptance to rejoin the state coalition government, PBDS has completed one full circle.

In retrospect, the crisis within SNAP which culminated in the formation of PBDS, not only exposed the untenable contradiction of being "multiracial" and "ethnically-based" at the same time, but also underlined the limits of the pretensions to multiracialism among the political parties in Sarawak. Despite the claim to multiracialism by virtue of their constitutions, all the political parties in Sarawak are essentially communal parties. Indeed, given the ethnic composition of Sarawak, it is perhaps inevitable that political parties and electioneering politics in the state would be communally oriented.

The slogan "*Dayakism*" was perhaps unfortunate. It laid open PBDS to charges of chauvinism. Moreover, coming into currency after the break-up of SNAP, the term appeared to be sadly ironic, indeed a misnomer. "*Dayakism*" necessarily envisaged the unity of the disparate Dayak groups under one political party, an objective which PBDS had aimed for but was unable to attain. Indeed, after the split within SNAP and the formation of PBDS in early 1980's, the Dayak community became even more fragmented than before. Even at the height of its strength in 1987-88, if the strength of a political party is to be measured by the number of seats it control in the legislative assembly, PBDS did not hold as many seats as SNAP had held before the split.

The currency of the term "*Dayakism*" in the 1980's and early 1990's appears all the more ironic particularly in light of the salient realities of Malaysian and Sarawak politics. PBDS leaders, evidently, clearly understood that the federal leadership was more disposed toward a Malay-Muslim connection to head the state in Sarawak, and that that predisposition was necessarily a restraining factor in the pursuit of "*Dayakism*." Thus in the 1987 state election PBDS, despite providing the numbers to unseat Taib, deferred to PERMAS on the issue of the Chief Minister-designate. It was also largely for the same reason that "*Project Ketua Menteri Sarawak*" in the 1991 election was still-born. By the same token, it was the recognition of these restraints that PBDS leadership redefined "*Dayakism*" as "*ruralism*" in the 1991 election. In other words then, "*Dayakism*" was far from being muscle-flexing or a war-cry as has been alleged, but was rather a cry of long neglect and marginalization.

To be sure, PBDS, as an opposition party, did not pose a serious threat to the state coalition government. However, the cry of "*Dayakism*" that the party had raised should not be dismissed out of hand. The mere act of readmitting the party back into the state coalition government does

not promise to redress the issues of political stability in the state. It was the issue of rural development and marginalization of rural communities which, arguably, had fuelled PBDS's politics in the 1980's and early 1990's and it is here that the problems need to be redressed. Indeed, with thirty years of nationhood, communal and ethnic rights should no longer be the issue; instead the real issue facing the state and country is nation-building.

NOTES:

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- ¹ Datuk Mohamad Sopiee's Column, *The Sunday Star*, September 15, 1991; *Sunday Tribune*, September 15, 1991.
- ² *The Sunday Star*, September 29, 1991; the *Sunday Tribune*, September 29, 1991.
- ³ Interviews with members of PBDS Youth in Kuching, November 30, 1989 and in Sri Aman, November 28, 1989. Also see the report by Clement Hii, *Sarawak Tribune*, September 9, 1991.
- ⁴ Interview with Sim Kwang Yang, Kuching, August 28, 1991.
- ⁵ *The Star*, September 30, 1991. Also see the statement by Datuk Leo Moggie, *Sarawak Tribune*, September 29, 1991 and his speech at the PBDS Supreme Council Meeting in Kuching, April 1992.
- ⁶ *The Star*, October 6, 1991.

- 7 In addition to Datuk Sopiee's column, see also the report by T.L. Cheam and Wong Chun Wai, *The Star*, September 27, 1991. Datuk Mohamad Rahmat, UMNO Secretary-General and the Federal Minister of Information was reported to have expected BN3 to win only 42 seats. *The Star*, September 30, 1991
- 8 *The Star*, September 30, 1991; *Sarawak Tribune*, September 30, 1991.
- 9 SNAP, which have been in the opposition since 1966, was invited to join the government, both State and Federal, in 1976. Datuk Endawie, as President of the party, was appointed Deputy Chief Minister III in the state government.
- 10 On October 8, 1978, Ya'kub announced that he would step down as Chief Minister. With the intention of replacing Ya'kub, Endawie issued a press statement calling all the Barisan Nasional State Assemblymen to meet to select a new Chief Minister. Perhaps due to the Federal leadership's unfavourable disposition on Endawie's candidacy, SUPP and Endawie's own party, SNAP, were both split on the issue. In mid-October the Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn, announced that Rahman Ya'kub would remain in office until such time that a decision is made on Ya'kub's successor. Ya'kub was eventually replaced by his nephew, Abdul Taib Mahmud, Deputy President of PBB and long-time federal Cabinet Minister, in March 1981. Meanwhile, Endawie resigned both as President of SNAP and as Deputy Chief Minister III and was eased out of Sarawak politics by appointing him Malaysian High Commissioner to New Zealand. See James Ritchie, *A Political Saga: Sarawak, 1981-1991*, Singapore: Summer Times, 1993, p. 74.
- 11 *Sarawak Tribune*, December 4 and December 5, 1981.
- 12 Interview with Datuk Daniel Tajem, November 27, 1989; Interview with James Masing, November 29, 1989.
- 13 Nobert Rabar Sumuh, "Sejarah Perkembangan and Perjuangan Parti Bangsa [sic] Dayak Sarawak, 1983-91", B.A. Honours thesis submitted to the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1991, p. 4.

- 14 *Sarawak Tribune*, December 7, 1981. Also see the article, "SNAP- The Tension Within" *Sarawak Tribune*, December 10, 1981; Letters to the Editor, *Sarawak Tribune*, September 24, 1991.
- 15 *Sarawak Tribune*, December 8 and December 9, 1991.
- 16 See especially "Letters to the Editor", *Sarawak Tribune*, September 24, 1991. One recent study notes that Taib was perceptibly more favourably disposed toward PBDS than toward SNAP. See Neilson Ilan Mersat, "Sentimen Perkauman Dayak Dalam Pilihanraya DUN Sarawak (1983-1991)", Hairany Naffis (ed.), *Amalan Politik Malaysia: Esei Pilihan*, Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, 1993.
- 17 Speech by Datuk Leo Moggie at the Official Launching of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, Kuching, September 15, 1983.
- 18 The distinction between PBB and PBDS was that the former is multi-*bumiputera* while PBDS, prior to 1994, was exclusively Dayak.
- 19 Speech by Datuk Moggie, Official Launching of PBDS, Kuching, September 15, 1983.
- 20 See the Chief Minister's speech at the opening of the PBB Youth and Wanita Convention in Kuching on September 9, 1983. *Sarawak Tribune*, September 10, 1983.
- 21 *Sarawak Tribune*, August 11, 1983.
- 22 *Sarawak Tribune*, August 22, 1983.
- 23 Khoo Kay Jin, "Some Notes Towards An Understanding of 'Dayakism'." Unpublished paper. School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang (mimeo). See also Jayum Jawan, *The Sarawak State Election of 1987: The Dayakism Factor*, Kuala Lumpur: Majutulis, 1987.
- 24 PBDS Publication Bureau, "Leo Moggie. The Thoughts Behind the Man", July, 1991 p. 22.

- 25 *Ibid.*, p.24; Interview with James Masing, Kuching, November 29, 1989.
- 26 James Masing, "The Role of Resettlement in Rural Development" in R. A. Cramb and R. H. W. Reece (eds.), *Development in Sarawak: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Clayton: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988, p.58
- 27 Khoo, p.8
- 28 See especially Jayum Jawan, *The Iban Factor in Sarawak Politics*, Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, 1993, Joseph Ko, "A Socio-Economic Study of the Iban Today", *Sarawak Museum Journal*, Vol. XL, December 1989. Also see the discussion by Masing, *op. cit.* and Khoo, *op. cit.*
- 29 Masing, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
- 30 For comparative statistics, see Jayum, *op. cit.*, especially chapter 5.
- 31 *The People's Mirror*, September 19, 1991
- 32 Interview with members of PBDS Youth, Kuching, November 30, 1989.
- 33 Khoo, *op. cit.*, p.8
- 34 On SNAP's politics in the 1970's, see Peter Searle, *Politics in Sarawak 1970-1976. The Iban Perspectives*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983, especially chapter 8.
- 35 Interview with Datuk Tajem, Kuching, November 27, 1989.
- 36 Interview with members of PBDS Youth, Kuching, November 30, 1989.
- 37 Interview with Datuk Alfred Jabu, Deputy Chief Minister II of Sarawak, Kuching, December 1, 1989; and with YB Micheal Pilo, Sri Aman, November 28, 1989.

- 38 In the 1987 election, for instance, SUPP alleged that during the campaigning in the rural areas PBDS leaders drank red cordial drinks to symbolize that they were drinking Chinese blood. DAP responded to SUPP's rather racist campaign by erecting several banners charging that "SUPP wants the Chinese and Dayaks to kill each other." Michael Leigh, "Money Politics and Dayak Nationalism: The 1987 Sarawak State Election", in Muhammad Ikmal Said and Johan Saravanamuttu (eds.), *Images of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial, 1991, p. 194.
- 39 Leigh., *op. cit.*, pp. 180-186
- 40 Speech by Leo Moggie at the PBDS Trenial General Meeting in Sibn, February 28, 1987, as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 188
- 41 *Ibid.*, p.190
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp 190-191. The text of Moggie's letter to the Prime Minister explaining PBDS's position regarding the use of its own symbol is quoted at length in the *Sunday Tribune*, April 5, 1987. For the *Kumpulan Maju's* position that it was "not anti-BN" but that it was "anti-Taib Misrule" see the campaign advertisement in the *Sarawak Tribune*, April 14 and April 15, 1987.
- 43 *Ibid.* p. 193
- 44 This was the central theme of PBDS's campaigns in the Second Division and presumably also in the other parts of the state.
- 45 BN3 campaigners in the Second Division, for instance, wore T-shirts with a drawing depicting an Iban man in traditional garb kicking the word "PBDS" which breaks under the impact of the kick. The caption on the T-shirt read, "*Aku Iban Tang Ukai PBDS*" ["I am Iban but not a member of PBDS"]
- 46 Leigh, *op. cit.*; Jayum Jawan, *op. cit.* (1987)
- 47 Leigh, *op.cit.*, p.195
- 48 *Ibid.*, p.198
- 49 On the Cabinet reshuffle, see *Borneo Post*, April 21, 1987

- 50 *Sarawak Tribune*.
- 51 As quoted in *Asiaweek*, October 11, 1991. Italics mine.
- 52 *Sarawak Tribune*, May 25, 1988.
- 53 Interview with Wilfred Nissom, December 1, 1989. Nissom was formerly Publicity Chief and subsequently Vice President of PBDS.
- 54 Masing is quoted in *Sarawak Tribune*, January 17, 1991. It should be noted that neither the London Agreement nor the Constitution of the State of Sarawak made any reference to the issue of the ethnicity of the post of Governor. There was, however, an unwritten "gentleman's agreement" among the signatories of the London Agreement which provided that if the Governor was a Malay, then the Chief Minister would have to be a Dayak, and vice-versa. For further details pertaining to the "gentleman's agreement", see Vinson Sutlive, *Tun Jugah of Sarawak. Colonialism and the Iban Response*, Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1991, pp.187-89. For a curious account, see Ritchie, *op.cit.*, p. 73.
- 55 *Sarawak Tribune*, September 9, 1991.
- 56 *Sarawak Tribune*, March 1, August 13, 29, 1991.
- 57 The Prime Minister, for his part, warned PBDS against making any pact with the DAP. *Sarawak Tribune*, August 29 and September 16, 1991.
- 58 PBDS' Manifesto, *Sarawak Tribune*, September 9, 1991.
- 59 As quoted in the *Sarawak Tribune*, August 12, 1991.
- 60 *Sarawak Tribune*, August 15, 20, 21, 23 27,29, 1991.
- 61 *Sarawak Tribune*. September 10, 1991
- 62 *Sarawak Tribune*, November 6, 1989.
- 63 *Borneo Post*, August 19, 1991.

- 64 *The Sunday Star*, September 15, 1991.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 *Borneo Post*, September 18, 1991
- 67 *Sarawak Tribune*, October 2, 1991
- 68 The Malaysian Constitution provides that a State Assemblyman who accepts a Federal appointment would have to vacate his state seat and conversely a Federal Minister who wish to contest in a state election would have to resign from his post. This provision however was later ammended in 1994 which allowed a Federal Minister to contest in a state election.
- 69 *Borneo Post*, August 27, 1991.
- 70 Masing is quoted in *Sarawak Tribune*, September 29, 1991.
- 71 *Borneo Post*, August 1,3, 17, September 6, 1991; *Sarawak Tribune*, February 2, August 6, 1991
- 72 Wilfred Nissom, PBDS Publicity Chief, was in fact quoted by the press as saying that PBDS was "actually never serious on the project," *Borneo Post*, August 27, 1991.
- 73 Interview with Datuk Moggie, March 1993
- 74 *Sarawak Tribune*, September 22, 1991
- 75 Masing is quoted in *Asiaweek*, October 11, 1991.
- 76 *The Star*, September 30, 1991.
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 Speech by Datuk Moggie at the Opening of PBDS Supreme Council Meeting, Kuching, April 12, 1992.
- 79 Speech by Datuk Moggie, PBDS Extraordinary Delegates' Conference, Sibu, March 27, 1993