

Chapter III

His Politics

Modern writers on political science or political philosophy tend to distinguish between 'government' and 'politics'. 'Government' concerns the institutional framework of rule in a state, that is to say, the structure and procedure of the legislative bodies (in Malaysia, the Parliament), of the executive and administrative bodies (roughly, the Cabinet, other holders of ministerial office, and the civil service), and of the analogue institutions in local government¹. 'Politics' concerns the behaviour of groups and individuals in matters that are likely to affect the course of government², e.g., in voting, running and forming political parties, or in exerting influence in other ways over those responsible for the conduct of the government.

This definition is quite suitable for Kit Siang and his activities. As the opposition leader who checks, criticizes, condemns, and becomes the 'watch-dog' people's welfare, Kit Siang's varied roles as a politician is definitely a distinctive difference from those who work in or work for the 'government'.

For other writers, some defined Government as the system which is concerned with the institutions and the procedures of politics, and politics may be defined as the public issues which give rise to conflict. According to Peter B Harris, "Rarely for people live alone, separate from their fellow men, and when they meet, they sometimes agree and sometimes disagree on what they wish to do. When agree there is no problem.

¹ D. D. Raphael, "II : Politics and the State", Problems of Politics Philosophy, London : The MacMillan Press Ltd., p. 27.

² Ibid.

When they disagree the possible outcome varies. They may settle their differences quickly and shake hands. They may fight until one emerges as victor. Full scale war is only politics completely out of control... One aspect of politics is that it tries to ensure that people can settle their differences³.

In short, political science is of great value in the understanding of human relationships. In this particular case, we try to analyze Kit Siang's view and actions in the political arena which affect his political ideology, party, public issues and current affairs of the nation. However, we alerted to the remarks of J. B. Priestley, "The time has arrived when we must not poke fun at politicians. They can be rough with us but we must not be rough with them. They are the sacred white elephants of our era"⁴.

Nevertheless, Evelyn Waugh had contended that "If politicians and scientists were lazier, how much happier we should all be". Does Kit Siang's political career fall into this category of "unhappy job?" Is he capable of bringing happiness to himself and others? The answers lie in his roles and influences in the Democratic Action Party and national politics.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. B. Priestley, "Sacred White Elephants," *Thoughts in the Wilderness* (1957)

1. Roles and Influences

Apart from being the Opposition Leader in Parliament, Kit Siang is also the Member of Parliament for Tanjung, Penang. He is also the Secretary General of the strongest opposition party in Malaysia, the DAP, holding this important position since 1969.

Generally, Kit Siang's role as the Secretary General in the Party can be best illustrated by "Clause XII – Power of the Central Executive Committee," (second part) in the Constitution of the DAP⁵.

1. The Secretary – General shall be responsible for summoning the Party National Congress, Party Conference, any Party Special Congress, all meetings of the Central Executive Committee and Central Working Committee.
2. He shall conduct its correspondence under the direction of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Working Committee and shall keep a register of members.
3. He shall keep all Branches and State Committees fully informed of all important activities of the Central Executive Committee. He shall keep minutes of the Party National Congress, Party Conference and of any Party Special Congress and of the meetings of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Working Committee.

⁵ "Constitution of DAP", PJ : DAP, 1996, p. 20.

Nevertheless, the roles and influences of Kit Siang are far more extensive. We have often heard that "Lim Kit Siang is DAP and the DAP is Lim Kit Siang". In effect, he represents the DAP nearly on all occasions, determining the direction, policies and strategies of the party. In short, he is the most important person in the DAP. And this importance is best illustrated by the report of China Press on October 27, 1990, while Kit Siang was trying to resign from his position as a Secretary General. The paper had said, "Without Lim, the rocket of DAP seems to be have lost its direction and power..." In fact, this was also the opinion of most of the members of the DAP at that time. Nearly all of them thought that Kit Siang was the best leader in the party, and that none of them could replace him as the dynamic and influential Opposition Leader⁶. This fact was attested by the Treasurer of DAP, Mr Fung Kit Wing, a good friend and royal comrade of Kit Siang⁷. Also, the MP of Sungai Besi, Mr Tan Kok Wai, had noted that the decision made by the Secretary General was truly a sad event⁸.

Kit Siang was said to be the most influential, most representative and most important person in the DAP. Although he is ranked as number three in the party, his power and influence are definitely far more extensive than those of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman. Furthermore, the history of ups and downs and the records of failures and successes of the DAP are almost synonymous with the personal growth of Kit Siang himself⁹. If Kit Siang really resigns from his position as the Secretary General, two questions will surface :-

⁶ China Press, 27, October, 1990.

⁷ Interview with Mr Fung Kit Wing on May 20, 1994.

⁸

1. What will be Kit Siang's position and role after the resignation?
2. Who will replace him as the Secretary – General?

The first question is quite easily answered. Kit Siang has never mentioned that he is ever going to leave his political career. In fact, until today (1998), he is still the Secretary General of the party. If he wanted to, as had been predicted in 1995, he could be contesting to become the Chairman of the party. By the time of his resignation, Dr Chan Man Hin would have probably resigned or retired. Then, Lim could be well positioned to be the succeeding Chairman. Furthermore, through a slight amendment in the Constitution of the DAP, the Chairman's roles and influences could be enlarged. Moreover, Kit Siang could also be considered as the Adviser when the time comes¹⁰.

The second question, however, is not easy to answer. If Kit Siang really resigns, it is said that it is difficult to find a suitably qualified candidate to replace his roles and influences. Nevertheless, there are probable candidates such as Karpal Singh, Fung Kit Wing, Lim Guan Eng (his son), Wee Chee Keong, Tan Kok Wai and , Dr Tan Seng Giaw. These VIPs are said to be seasoned and experienced party cadres, but they are not yet as versatile or as capable as Kit Siang¹¹.

After replacing Goh Hock Guan as the Secretary General since 1969, the image of 'out-spoken' and 'dare to challenge' had successfully build up Kit Siang to conduct his political career over a period of nearly 30 years until today. In fact, in the 1990 election, the DAP only needed three more votes to take over the government of

⁹ Mister Weekly (387), July 25, 1994, p. 5.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

Penang. This was an effort, directly or indirectly, attributed to Kit Siang's roles and influences in the DAP and national politics.

Therefore, the motto of "DAP = Lim Kit Siang" and "Lim Kit Siang = DAP" is almost a self prophecy. If Kit Siang really leaves the party or his current position as the Secretary General, it would certainly affect the whole party and the opposition movement in local politics negatively, at least until a "replacement" is found. Just like the title of his famous book, there will certainly be a "TIME BOMB" in the DAP that will explode anytime in the DAP in the future!

Even in a column written by a MCA leader in 'Tong Bao', the writer did admit that Kit Siang is still the most important person in the DAP, playing the most crucial roles and projecting the most influential impact – both to his own party and his party's political opponents¹². The writer also mentioned that is very hard to believe that Kit Siang will ever let go of the Secretary General¹³ post, contending that even members of the DAP would agree with his view to a certain extent.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² 'Tung Bao', August 1, 1994, p. 4.

¹³ Ibid.

2. *Basic Ideologies*

An ideology is a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explains and evaluates social conditions, helps people understand their place in society, and provides a program for social and political action¹⁴. An ideology, in other words, performs four functions for people who hold it ¹⁵, that is,

1. Explanatory – offers an explanation of why social, political and economic conditions are as they are, particularly in a time of crisis.
2. Evaluation – to supply standards for evaluating social conditions.
3. Orientation – ideology supplies its holder with an orientation and a sense of identity of who he or she is, where he or she belongs, and how he or she is related to the rest of the world.
4. Political program – An ideology, finally, tells its followers what to do and how to proceed. It performs a programmatic or prescriptive function by setting out a general program of social and political action.

As John Maynard Keynes had said, “The ideas of economics and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else.”

¹⁴ Terance Hall & Richard Dogger, Political Ideologies a-d. The Democracies Ideal, New York : Harper Collin College Publishers, 1995, p. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

(a) Democratic Socialism

Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, socialism was, for the very most part associated with revolutionary political action¹⁶. The term 'socialism' could be counted a cause of tremour or panic in middle-class hearts. In reality, socialism and communism were sometimes essentially synonyms – that is to say, our current distinctions between these two concepts were yet to be made. Only slowly and falteringly did dissidents establish an alternative socialist agenda that rejected revolution and authoritarianism and instead committed itself to parliamentary democracy and individual rights¹⁷.

Sometimes, we are also concerned about the fashion of democratic and socialist ideologies that have become a major force in European politics roughly a hundred years ago. The heart of the social democratic argument can be simply stated¹⁸ as follows : "Political democracy is incomplete so long as profound economic inequalities persist". If political democracy is to be more than a fig leaf masking the real control of the haves over the have-nots, political equality will have to be matched by an economic bill rights. The right to basic material well-being is no less fundamental than the right to vote¹⁹. This, social democrats insist, is not merely a matter of elementary justice; but is also an essential implication of democracy itself.

This is why, Kit Siang had said that if Malaysia's election is going to be held in the period of 6 to 12 months from now, then the DAP would probably have a

¹⁶ Bernard Susser, Political Ideology in the Modern World, US : Allyn and Bacon, p. 106.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 107.

better chance to win²⁰, in view of the current 'economic crisis'. And usually in such times, opposition parties tend to fare better in their target constituencies. Kit Siang's political ideology is democratic socialism and there is a strong belief of 'economic equality and justice' in this type of socialism. Therefore, it is not surprise that in the speech of Kit Siang in Dewan Rakyat (in the debate on the Royal Address on Wednesday, March 25, 1998), more than 2/3 of his speech touched on issues such as the economic crisis, EPF funds, economic growth, financial turbulence and incompetence or inefficient governance.

In short, socialism is not a single coherent philosophy but a vague term covering a wide range of outlook. A socialist is almost anyone who is to the left in politics²¹. For a socialistic politician like Kit Siang, he is likely to stress community rather than individual interest, and to support state intervention in the economy, education, health and other general welfare issues.

Originally, the term "socialist" meant "marxist". Communist countries today term themselves "socialist" and would be scornful of its use elsewhere²². Nevertheless, in the non-communist world the term "socialist" usually refers to essentially non-marxist parties of the left such as the Labour Party in Britain or Social Democrats in Europe. Like the DAP and Kit Siang, these parties may still draw some of their ideas from Marx but they participate in parliamentary or 'liberal democracy'. Most importantly, Kit Siang and the DAP's road to the socialist millennium is constitutional,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Interview with Kit Siang in Parliament on March 25th, 1998, 6pm.

²¹ G. M. Spencer, Times Handbook of Modern Politics, Singapore : Federal Publications (S) Pte. Ltd., 1996, p. 26.

²² Ibid.

not revolutionary, and it usually takes the form of setting up a Welfare State, or "state are" – in all essential areas of life.

However, the term "socialist" is generally a term with good connotations, like the term "democrat". It is a label which can make any vaguely intentioned or oppressive regime sound respectable. So, in today's political arena, this term can cover a multitude of vices and virtues²³. Tyrannical dictators like Macias or Amin in Africa, Pol Pot in Kampuchea, Stalin and Hitler, and pacifists like Fenner Brockway, the fiercely anti-Communist George Orwell have all called themselves socialists. But no matter how, *governments* and *individuals* should be judged by *what they do*, and *not by what they aim to be*.

The character of social democratic parties has changed fundamentally since the days when they were adjuncts to crusading labor movements. No longer are their parliamentary representatives tough workers who leave the lathe or forge in order to speak out for their comrades' needs²⁴. The vast majority are presently university educated professionals. As we can see in the DAP's members and leader's biodata, this statement is true.

In retrospect, Kit Siang and DAP were trying to project the image of "democratic-socialist" – the speaker of the people's rights and freedom. What they want is a socialistic society which is democratic, fair and equal in justice. The DAP's political ideology, and Lim's too, is quite simple : to form a democratic and socialistic society in which there is fair, peaceful, justice and progressive in all aspects of life, politically,

²³ M Spencer, Op-Cit., p. 103.

economically, socially, culturally and educationally. It seems that Lim and his comrades are pursuing a 'uthopia' type of dream, which is too pure and difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, there are certainly some 'values of life' that back Lim and the DAP's political views. This can be seen through the objectives of the DAP :-

1. To strive by constitutional means for the establishment of a *democratic socialist* pattern of society in Malaysia.
2. To advance and protect the integrity and independence of the national *state* in Malaysia.
3. To preserve the *democratic state* of Malaysia based on universal adult suffrage of all those who are Malaysian citizens.
4. To abolish the unjust inequalities of wealth and opportunities existing in the present system, to establish an economic order which will give all citizens the right to work and full *economic returns* for their labour and skill, to ensure a decent living, and social security to all those who through sickness, infirmity or old age can no longer work.
5. To infuse into the people of Malaysia a spirit of national unity, self-respect and self-reliance, and to inspire them with a sense of endeavor in the creation of a *prosperous, stable and just society*.
6. To propagate all the above objectives through all *lawful and constitutional* means available including the publication and distribution of journals, newsletters and newspapers.

²⁴ Berbard Susser, *Op-Cit.*, p. 110.

In the speech given by the President of Socialist International, Mr Pierre Mauroy in the Constituent Conference of the International Congress of Socialist Youth (IUSY)²⁵, it noted that "Social democrats refuse to accept this world denominated and controlled by liberalism. Their role is to define once again new common international responses to create a new democratic and social future". In this light, as a motivator and the leader of the DAP, a democratic-socialist party, Lim's political ideology is the same as that of his party's objectives. According to Lim, many Asian countries were bedevilled by the basic problems of nation-building which broke out sporadically into racial, linguistic and religious conflicts²⁶. This was the result of the failure so far to impose a democratic socialist solution to the nation-building²⁷. This would give all races, religions, languages and cultures a free and equal place to grow and flourish. Despite the absence of an identical past, this could develop a common consciousness among the disparate groups through the shared aspirations of a common destiny²⁸.

In the Asia Pacific Socialist Conference held in Singapore 28 May – 1 June 1972, by the Asia Pacific Bureau of the Socialist International, Kit Siang²⁹ asserted that, "I believed that the future of democratic socialist movements in Asia would eventually depend on their ability to convince the Asia masses that democratic socialism offered the better solution to the problems of Asian poverty and backwardness – the fostering of basic democratic and human rights and the development of the full personality of every individual - in brief, that it was superior to the other two types of government in Asia, army dictatorship and the communist regime. In some countries the authoritarian army government failed to achieve economic progress for the masses. At

²⁵ 90th Anniversary of IUSY, Astrua : International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), 1997, p. 1.

²⁶ Alex Jasey, "Asia Pacific Socialism," Singapore : Asia Pacific Press, 1973, p. 74.

²⁷ Ibid.

great human cost and suffering the communist regime had turned within a short time-span, a back-word and underdeveloped country into an economic, industrial and even military power”.

In short, Kit Siang has a strong belief that “democratic socialism” is still the best amongst the political ideology systems that he had chosen. Hostility between democratic socialists and radical communist revolutionaries – each claiming to be the true standard bearer of the socialist cause – flared at the very outset and did not subside until the communist movement collapsed nearly a century later³⁰. Also, the Old Social Democracy has, for a long time, been criticized and ridiculed, on the other hand by the communists, who thought they could do away with everything on their path, and on the other by the neo-liberal forces, who were wrongly convinced that they embodied modernity. But Social Democracy has nevertheless survived much better than the first, and it is also much more representative today than the latter³¹.

Malaysia’s Democratic Socialist Movement, led by Kit Siang and his comrades in the DAP, is quite a unique and special movement. There are movements in South-East-Asia that seem to be democratic and progressive, but many of which had disappeared or have become the supporters of new authoritarianism with a democratic façade, such as in the case of Singapore led by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Kit Siang and members should be aware of this type of dangers!

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Berbard Susser, *Op-Cit.*, p. 106.

³¹ 90th Anniversary of IUSY, *Op-Cit.*, p. 15.

In Kit Siang's opinion, Democratic Socialists are the minority in Asia³². They are also weak, their leaders are mostly intellectuals with no deep contact with the masses. Many democratic socialist movements have no mass organizations too. Realistically, therefore, Kit Siang realizes that there is still a long way to go, in order to have the muscle and the capability to put into practice the democratic socialist ideals in his country.

As a democratic socialist, Kit Siang and the DAP are committed to the democratic way of life. They believe that it is only through the democratic process is it possible to bring about orderly changes in the economic and social systems and to build a socialistic society where poverty is abolished and where there is equality of opportunity and fulfilment for every man and woman to live with human dignity and a good quality of life.

Kit Siang also strongly believes that a precondition for the success of the democratic socialist movements in Asian countries without a fully democratic environment and established parliamentary traditions, is to transform themselves from an elitist movement with mass influence and support into a mass organization which have the 'muscles' and 'power' to establish a democratic socialist state³³.

In this spirit, therefore, Kit Siang and his party had from the beginning, given sympathy and support to the people of Bangladesh in their struggle to throw off the yoke of West Pakistani Oppression in the 1970's³⁴. While support and sympathy would

³² Alex Josey, *op-cit.*, p. 75.

³³ *Ibid*, p.75.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 76.

give heart to the down-trodden and oppressed in their struggle, there could be no substitute for the people's will to fight and die for their beliefs. Kit Siang also condemned the American escalation of the Vietnamese conflict – bombing North Vietnam and mining North Vietnamese ports³⁵. In his view, Bangladesh was a good example of the 'imperishable human spirit and quest for equality, freedom and justice despite the long rights of oppression and subjection'³⁶.

Democratic socialists like Kit Siang nevertheless accepted the challenge to oppose the forces of ultra-nationalism and communism. Kit Siang and the DAP definitely will play their roles and adopt methods that are flexible and in accordance with the requirements of existing political economic and cultural realities. In this regard, there are two phases involved. The first phase is to continue the role of a constructive opposition, exposing the unfairness and gaps in existing policies and pointing out the correct and fair way to achieve political equality, a better life for the have-nots, and general social and cultural stability. The second phase is to make a determined bid for power at the general elections. However, it would not be unrealistic to admit that there will be a delay between now and the time when the DAP could expect to hold power in Malaysia. Nevertheless, just as plants need water to grow and flourish, Democratic Socialism in Malaysia needs democracy to expand in order to reach a true flourishing dimension. To recognize that the world (or Malaysia) is changing is not good enough, Kit Siang and comrades should contribute to reengineering their efforts and policies towards greater justice for all.

³⁵ Ibid.

b) 'A Malaysian Malaysia'

Many writers and political analyst have categorized Kit Siang as a racist politician, who is only concerned about the rights and freedom of the Chinese Malaysians, Kit Siang's response is, "This is only a false accusation about me and my party. Actually, I'm fighting for a Malaysian Malaysia."

Although the DAP and Kit Siang suffered their worst electoral defeat in the April 1995 general elections, they remain true to their political ideals and they continue to fight for freedom, justice, equality and a better society for *all Malaysians*. For Kit Siang and his comrades, the country is still a long way from the vision of a Malaysia for which the DAP was founded 30 years ago – a Malaysia which not only belongs to all races, languages, cultures and religions who have made their home here, but a Malaysia where both political and economic opportunities as well as the nation's wealth and resources are shared equitably by all her people, regardless of status, class or gender. This political philosophy is seen in the "Message from DAP Secretary General", in an introductory Booklet titled, 'Towards Malaysian Malaysia', Kit Siang had said³⁷, "Dividing Malaysian into first and second class citizens according to race is not compatible to the vision of a Malaysian Malaysia. Refusing to recognize languages apart from Bahasa Malaysia as Malaysian languages or accept that Malaysia is a multi-cultural and multi-religious nation is not compatible to a Malaysian Malaysia". He continued,³⁸ "Similarly, dividing Malaysians into the ostentatious rich and the object poor, the have and have-nots is also not compatible to the vision of Malaysian Malaysia. Allowing

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Towards Malaysian Malaysia, Petaling Jaya : DAP, 1996, p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

exploitation as against women in the nation's law is not compatible to the vision of a Malaysian Malaysia. Refusing to recognize that all Malaysians are entitled to the full development of their potentials to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives in a democratic society is not compatible to the vision of Malaysian Malaysia ...”.

In short, what Lim and his comrades had pursued and is pursuing a democratic and free society, which there is no more exploitation, injustice and prejudice in any aspect whatever – whether languages, religions, cultures, races, gender, politics, economics, and technologies. Objectively, many of us would like to think that this ideal is too 'pure', or only an 'utopia' that would never be realized. But, according to Kit Siang and his supporters, they strongly believe in the 'Rocket' – which is the symbol of the DAP since 30 years ago until now, that is, the sky is the limit!

The 'Rocket' consists of a blue circle against a white background with a red rocket vertically across the circle. The *blue* circle stands for *the unity of the multi-racial people of Malaysia*. The white background stands for purity and incorruptibility; the red rocket symbolizes the party's aspiration for a modern, dynamic and progressive society and the four rocket boosters represent the support and drive given to the party objectives by the three major races – Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others³⁹.

During the celebration of the DAP's 25th anniversary, Kit Siang's basic ideology was clearly reiterated,⁴⁰ “The DAP has good reason to celebrate our 25th anniversary, for our contribution in the last 25 years is second to none in the battle of democracy, justice, equality and for a *united multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural*

bookcover, Constitution of DAP, PJ: DAP.

and multi-religious nation in Malaysia." It is evident, therefore, according to his own definitions, Lim is a democratic socialist who fight to pursue a "Malaysian Malaysia", minus any racial discrimination and together building a united, steady, progressive and prosperous Malaysia.

In 1982, Lim strongly expressed his disagreement with the Barisan Nasional government's "One Language, One Culture" Policy. In fact, for Lim and his comrades, this was the one and only issue fought by the DAP in the historic Kepayang by-election in Perak on November, 1982⁴¹. The landslide victory of the DAP candidate in this by-election, Lau Dak Kee, was historic in that it was seen to have served a public notice to the Barisan Nasional Government that its "One Language, One Culture" Policy will be rejected by the non-Malays, even though MCA, Gerakan and MIC have given their support to it in Cabinet⁴². For Lim also, if there is no DAP, Bukit Cina in Malacca would have been demolished. Although the 'Bukit Cina' issue is quite a controversial one, Lim insisted that the issue of Bukit Cina is not about one cemetery hill in Malacca; it is about the cultural and historical rights, roots and heritage of all races in Malaysia as well as their future status in the country⁴³. Lim's political status as a champion of cultural and social democracy was then at its heights!

In Lim's political views, Malaysia can only be a successful country if she allows the identity and uniqueness of "multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural" to continue to flourish and develop, until we reach the stage of a "Bangsa Malaysia" the (Malaysia Race). Replying to the 1980 Yang Dipertuan Agong's opening

⁴⁰ 25th Anniversary, PJ : DAP, 1993, p. 272.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

speech in Parliament⁴⁴ that suggested, "We have succeeded in laying a strong foundation for the evolvement of one citizen, one language and one culture, it is on this foundation that we build a greater Malaysia," Lim said that this type of country is definitely not a 'Malaysian Malaysia', the "One Culture, One Language" policy is truly hard to imagine, and therefore was unacceptable. If we follow this kind of policy, then our lovely country would definitely lose her identity as a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country⁴⁵.

Indeed, if there were no DAP in 1985 to champion the basic rights of non-Muslim Malaysian parents to the unfettered custody over their children below 18 years, and to take a public stand against a series of attempted forced conversions of non-Muslim Malaysian children below 18 years without parental knowledge and consent in states run by UMNO Menteri Besar or Chief Minister, the religious position of non-Muslims in Malaysia would be quite different today⁴⁶.

In 1970's when UMNO leaders were demanding not only that there had to be quotas for student intake for local universities, but that such quotas and restrictions should also apply for Malaysian student going to overseas. For Kit Siang, this was in fact the cause of the great migration of Malaysian professionals and entrepreneurs, especially to Australia at that time⁴⁷. Again, in Kit Siang's view, if there had been no DAP and him, asserting their firm stand on both inside and outside racial quotas and restrictions being applied to Malaysian students going overseas for higher education, many more students

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lim Kit Siang, Malaysia – Crisis of Identity, Petaling Jaya : DAP, 1986, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ 25th Anniversary, op-cit., p. 273.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 272.

would have suffered the brunt of the quota system. As Kit Siang had said,⁴⁸ “This would have meant that in the last two decades, hundreds of thousands of our children would not have been able to get higher education overseas (at their own expenses) which would not only have been a grave injustice to our children, but a great self-inflicted injury to the nation.”

On the whole, the DAP and Kit Siang have uphold the belief that success in the nation-building process must depend on the adoption and implementation of the principle of racial equality at all levels of national life and in all fields of national endeavor - political, social, economic, cultural and educational. In Kit Siang’s view, the first thing to do if we are to get our principles of nation – building right is to get rid of racial hegemony by one community in a multiracial society. It is both undesirable and not practical. According to Lim, racial hegemony in a multi-racial society is certainly an undesirable principle to be adopted anywhere in the world. The very composition of Malaysia’s population also makes it impracticable, for any single group to claim to enjoy an overall majority.

Classifying citizens into “bumiputeras” and “non-bumiputeras”, according to Kit Siang, is discriminating against citizens in matters of appointments and promotions (either in the public or private sectors) on grounds of race. This will never contribute to strengthening a sense of national consciousness and solidarity in our multi-racial nation⁴⁹. Thus, Lim not only works for the Chinese, Indian or Malay community, but he also fights for the rights and freedom of “orang asli” (the true ‘sons of the earth’ – the bumiputeras) as well. In his speech, when debating the Royal Address on March 25, 1998, he said,⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.339.

⁵⁰ Kit Siang’s Parliamentary Speech on Wednesday, March 25, 1998, p.6.

"The orang asli community, comprising some 92,000 people, is a very deprived socio-economic groups and should receive the fullest attention of the government to ensure that they are beneficiaries rather than victims of the process of development. However, if after 44 years (since 1954), the government is still unable to appoint State Directors of the Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA), it is not surprising that the orang asli continue to be a deprived community, with their aspirations for land rights and socio-economic upliftment largely ignored".

In the name of social justice, therefore, Kit Siang urged and requested that there should be a conscious policy in the country to appoint orang asli to all levels of government, starting with orang asli representation at the local government where there are orang asli settlements, reaching up to the national level, with orang asli serving as Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Secretaries, Deputy Ministers and even in the Cabinet Level⁵¹.

Kit Siang's speech and view coincided with the voice of the orang asli themselves, as witnessed in a National Conference on the Indigenous People in Malaysia, held in Tapah. Among the resolutions passed, the following are noteworthy and quoted ad verbatim in Bahasa Malaysia – the original medium of communication throughout the Conference :-

1. Orang Asal/Asli hendaklah diberi hak sepenuhnya untuk menentukan masa depan mereka sendiri.

⁵¹ Ibid.

2. Persatuan Orang-orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM) hendaklah diperluaskan ke Malaysia Timur untuk mewakili orang-orang Asal dari Sabah dan Sarawak. Orang-orang Asal Malaysia Timur hendaklah diwakili dalam Persatuan ini (Nama baru POASM hendaklah ditentukan selepas perwakilan diperluaskan).
3. Perundingan dengan Orang Asal/Asli hendaklah terlebih dahulu diadakan dan persetujuan daripada mereka diperolehi sebelum apa-apa hal atau perkara yang ada kaitan atau berkenaan dengan Orang Asal/Asli hendak diputuskan.
4. Perkara 153 Perlembangan Persekutuan hendaklah dipinda untuk memuaskan orang Asli sebagai kaum yang juga layak untuk keistimewaan yang dinikmati oleh orang Melayu dan pribumi Sabah dan Sarawak. Keistimewaan-keistimewaan yang diberikan kepada orang Melayu dan kaum perbumi hendaklah juga dibuka dan dilanjutkan kepada orang Asal/Asli.
5. Jabatan Orang Asli hendaklah diterajui dan dikendalikan oleh orang Asli sendiri. Peralihan untuk mengambilalih Jabatan Orang Asli oleh orang-orang Asli sendiri hendaklah dibuat secara berperingkat-peringkat. Pengambilan alih sepenuhnya Jabatan Orang Asli oleh Orang Asli sendiri hendaklah siap dalam tempoh masa 10 tahun.
6. Orang Asal/Asli hendaklah diwakili di Dewan Undangan Negeri (melainkan Negeri tersebut tidak mempunyai jumlah terlalu kecil orang Asal/Asli Parlimen dan Dewan Negara).
7. Satu Suruhjaya ditubuhkan untuk mengkaji dan menentukan keperluan dan kehendak orang Asal/Asli dan Kerajaan Persekutuan hendaklah

mengambil langkah-langkah yang perlu untuk memenuhi keperluan dan kehendak orang Asal/Asli.

(NB: These resolutions, in fact, cover resolutions number 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 16 and 18 in the original document)

In essence, Kit Siang and the DAP's views on "Malaysian Malaysia" is always very clear. It is the most important subject in their political declaration such as the Tanjung Declaration (1991), the Petaling Jaya Declaration (1981) and the Setapak Declaration (1967). It underlines the significance of a multiracial and multireligious orientation that is premised on non-discrimination and unfair/unjust practices which will continue to protect and to protect multiethnic identity and multicultural inclinations of the different races of Malaysia then, now and in the future. Of course, the DAP and Lim Kit Siang are still far from achieving their democratic socialist idealism unless they reenergize themselves and re-set their stage to make a more significant impact in the next election before the end of the century.

3. *His Contributions*

(a) *Protecting The Good Name Of The Country (Malaysia) And The Welfare Of Its People (Malaysian)*

It is important that a good politician should not only strive for his own fame or to pursue his idealistic vision, but also to fight for the country – to protect her good name and the welfare of her people. A politician should be judged by what had he done or said, not by what he thinks or what he thinks he has done. Just as the words of the Nabi Muhammad,¹ “In a man’s time wealth is the good he does in this world”. Therefore, the success or failure of a politician like Kit Siang should also be judged from this context. If everyone, like those who had fought for the independent and dignity of this country, is willing to offer their minds and hands in our country’s nation building we might be able to achieve our Vision 2020 much earlier. All we need is just a change of attitude, a ‘paradigm shift’ – from ‘tidak apa’ (doesn’t matter) to ‘bersungguh-sungguh’ (seriously involved). In the words of the late John Kennedy², “... *Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.*”

When we think of Kit Siang, we inevitably visualize him as a DAP leader and a democratic socialist who constantly criticizes the Government since 1966 until today (1998). He is branded unjustly as an ‘anti-government’ politician who likes to ‘cari pasal’ (find faults) in Mahathir’s leadership, is obsessed with socialist democracy, and likes to undermine the good name of the country. In short, he is seen as betraying the national interest, either by the mass media, his political opponents or other interest groups who, on the one hand, seem to admire his courageous stand on controversial issues and,

on the other hand, seem to hate his guts and candor about his multiracial and multireligious advocacy where all races are deemed to be equal beneficiaries of the Malaysian wealth and development efforts.

In a Press statement issued by Kit Siang on the June 8th, 1992, he fought back against an accusation casted by a leader from the Barisan Nasional who said that he is a citizen who doesn't know how to respect his own country. He replied unequivocally,³ "If being a Minister is the badge of loyalty, then Wong Chin Wey would be China's most loyal and patriotic leader as he was the head of the government in war-time China although he was a Japanese puppet!"

In 1992, when the Gerakan President and Primary Industries Minister, Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yeik, made a serious charge against Kit Siang, accusing him of wanting to commit disloyal acts in proposing to go on a world pro-Malaysian democracy tour in September, 1992, Kit Siang firmly asked⁴, "Is Keng Yeik saying that if I go on a world tour, I must tell untruths and claim that there is total press freedom, full human rights and complete democratic liberties in Malaysia if I am to be a 'loyal Malaysian?'" Actually, Kit Siang was scheduled for a world tour in Western and Asian countries to campaign for greater democracy, more press freedom and less corruption and to explain the financial scandals in Malaysia. In his mind, he was trying to help the country restore its dented pride and diminishing credibility by being candid and involved. However, many of his opponents see this act in a different and negative light.

¹ K-Das, op-cit.

² Ibid.

³ Nanyang Siang Pow, June 8, 1992.

In his defence, Kit Siang also used Nelson Mandela as an example. When Nelson Mandela came to Malaysia and spoke against the unfair and discriminating policies of the apartheid regime in South Africa, nobody regards him as being disloyal and a traitor to South Africa. In fact, Nelson Mandela was given an official reception by the Government and conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree by a local university. Here, in Kit Siang's view, he is comparable to Nelson Mandela – who is loyal, faithful, and patriotic towards his homeland. What he has done and said are basically along the same actions of Nelson Mandela, although he is different personality-wise, and in terms of nationality and age, too.

Regarding the issue above, the then Deputy Minister, Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba seems to adopt a more objective view. He openly admitted the importance of Kit Siang's political contribution, and respected him for conducting his pro-democracy world tour⁵. He said,⁶ "As a Malaysian, anyone is free to praise or to criticize his own country constructively. At last, the public will become the judge of the actions". And, of course, Kit Siang who regards himself as a patriotic politician, retorted,⁷ "Let me tell Keng Yeik that I am even more a loyal and patriotic Malaysian than him, because for my love, loyalty and patriotism for Malaysia, was I lost my personal liberties twice when I was detained under the Internal Security Act, and I am prepared to be detained again for a third time".

Here, we know that Lim Kit Siang always uses his past records, a record of sacrifices for the sake of loving his country, to defend himself against his critics. No

⁴ Lim Kit Siang, Battle for Democracy in Malaysia, Petaling Jaya:DAP, 1992, p. 40.

⁵ The Star, June 2, 1992, p. 2.

⁶ Ibid.

matter, how, and no matter where, he is ever-ready to sacrifice his own freedom and welfare in pursuit of his "Malaysian Malaysia", displaying a courage and conviction that John Gardner term as "When people are serving, life is no longer meaningless"⁸.

To arrest the migration of professional elites and the intellectuals overseas, Lim had urged the government to entice them back⁹. These people (especially scientists) are the national treasure of the country, and they should be appreciated, respected and welcome in certain ways in the interest of nation building and progress. In Kit Siang's view, those who left Malaysia during the 70's and 80's should not be considered as disloyal, because the political and educational problems at that time¹⁰ were very trying.

When the Maika Scandal happened, Kit Siang stressed to Mahathir that Samy Vellu should not be allowed to attend the Fourth International Conference on Telecommunications in Amsterdam¹¹. This was to enable an immediate full and detail investigation into the scandal; but most importantly, it was to protect the good name of Malaysia in International Forum. However, when the investigation by the Anti-Corruption Agency was halted, it was most shocking. To Kit Siang, this was outrageous and indicative of the lack of political ethics and morale standards in Malaysia¹². Lim urged that Samy Vellu be suspended from his post as the Minister for Energy, Post and Telekoms for encouraging so-called 'violence'

⁷ Kit Siang's press statement in Penang, 8 June 1992.

⁸ Kate Samperi, *Silver Linings*, New South Wales : Sally Milner Publishing Pty Ltd, 1992, p. 50.

⁹ *Kuang Ming Daily*, July 7, 1994, p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, 15 September, 1992, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

and 'gangsterism' in trying to suppress the RM120-million MAIKA Telekom Shares hijacking scandal.¹³ He also urged that the suspension should be continued, until the completion of a satisfactory investigation on the scandal was done. Although Kit Siang might have his own motives for his action, he should at least be given credit for disclosing such a shameful scandal that demolishes the trust and confidence of the Malaysian community. The image of Malaysia as a 'clean, honest and incorrupt' government is thus tainted, even if the culprits responsible were brought to justice. The fact remains that Kit Siang is again at the forefront of exposing questionable conduct of governance!

Of course, apart from opposing and criticizing, Kit Siang has also supported the Government. This includes the political decision made by Dr Mahathir on the veto power given to certain countries in the Safety Council of United Nations that should be controlled or reduced. Kit Siang had openly stated for his support and agreement¹⁴ on his issue. He also argued, with plausible, that the DAP would support any action that appeals for greater democratization amongst various countries¹⁵.

In protecting the good name and image of Malaysia, Lim sometimes stands solidly besides Mahathir. When our Prime Minister was labelled as 'recalcitrant' by the former Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating, Lim retorted that this disrespect was improper and rude. Through his statements in the newspapers, he openly asked Keating to give Mahathir his apology¹⁶, to avoid further misunderstanding between the citizens of both countries, and to maintain harmony and a 'win-win' business and

¹³ Lim, Op-cit., p. 120.

¹⁴ Nanyang Siang Pau, 28 August, 1992, p. 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

economic relationship between both countries. Most importantly, Lim's statements prove that he is really concerned about the image of his beloved country and the dignity of the Prime Minister.

His love for his country and its leadership, of whom he can be very critical is matched by his caring concern for the well-being and welfare of fellow Malaysians. This is attested to by his 'how to do' views on topics such as national unity (racial polarization, Malaysian nationality, reconciliation), democracy, Human Rights and the Constitution (Parliamentary freedom and responsibility), New Economic Policy (its strengths and weaknesses), the role of the Budget, the Bank Rakyat Betrayal, education, health and labor, illegal immigrants, transportation, corruptions and fraud. Actually, his principal concern revolves around the people's rights, freedom and equality which he sees being threatened by corrupt practices and insensitive governance.

On the recent water crisis, for example, he had urged the Government authorities to anticipate the drought and to make contingency plans to deal with the crisis, despite ample warnings in the past¹⁶. He stressed that there is an urgent need for an efficient water-rationing exercise for 207 areas in Klang Valley, as there are too many complaints that the announced schedules for the water supply for the areas were not being adhered to¹⁷. As this is a basic facility and service provided by the Government, it is unthinkable how mismanagement of this precious resource could have been allowed to happen, especially when the Association of Drinking Water (Kesatuan Air Minum) had announced that the shortage of water supply could have been prevented by the

¹⁶ Sin Chew Jit Poh, 28 November, 1992.

¹⁷ Press Statement by Kit Siang, 31st March, 1998.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Government¹⁹. Acknowledging that the water supply crisis was due to three reasons²⁰, viz., the decrease of water level in the dams due to severe drought, polluted water supply, and inability of water-supply projects to cope with rapid development of the country, the President of the Association, highlighted the third reason as the most important and that the Government should be held responsible and accountable. Furthermore, 28 Non-Government Organizations had signed a collective announcement that questions the inefficiency and slowness of the Government in handling the matter²¹.

The problem of the haze over the Klang Valley region, and elsewhere in the country are equally disturbing, threatening the health and well-being of Malaysian and their country's tourism incomes. As a practical solution, after issuing more than 30 statements and criticisms, Kit Siang and the DAP launched a 'Mass Petition by the people of Malaysia'²² on this issues as follows :-

"We, the undersigned Malaysian, DEMAND

1. That the 1997 Haze should be the worst haze in Malaysia history and that there would not be any future haze which is worse and more deadly.
2. That the Government urges the Indonesian Government to admit that it is incapable of singly handling the raging thousands of forest and plantation fires which has threatened the environment, livelihood, health and live of tens of millions of people not only in Indonesia, but also in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Philipines and Thailand, declare

¹⁹ Sin Chew Jit Poh, 6 April, 1998, p. 2.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 31 March, 1998.

- an international disaster and ask the United Nations for take over the emergency by forming an international haze-fighting team with full powers to fight the current and future haze.
3. That the Government conduct a costing of the damages which have been caused to the Malaysian economy and people by-the-haze and that a claim for compensation should be submitted to the Indonesian Government.
 4. That the Government present a Clean Air Action Plan for adoption by Parliament before the end of the budget meeting in December this year and to implement it forthwith.
 5. That the Government set up a Committee on haze-related diseases to study the short, medium and long-term effects of haze on the people, in particular cancer and chronic respiratory diseases and to make public its findings and recommendations.
 6. That the Government make public all available information about the adverse effects of haze on the health and environment, which should be comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date, whether to establish the public credibility of the Air Pollution Index (API), the various health effects of the API level on the people or the actual level of concentration of all the five pollutants which make up the API, viz. Carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone and particulate matter less than 10 microns (millionth of a metre) wide.

²² Lim Kit Siang, SG's Speeches and Statements, PJ:DAP, June 1997 (ss49), p. 20.

During the economic crisis faced by Malaysia in 1997-98, a constant subject of Kit Siang's criticism is that the Government has become adept in denying any 'crisis'. This 'denial syndrome' has become a hallmark of Barisan Nasional's governance. When Malaysia was experiencing a turmoil in its foreign exchange and stock markets in the late 1997, Kit Siang pointed out that Government leaders often blame foreign currency speculators for deliberately depreciating the Malaysia Ringgit, thus failing to appreciate the root causes.

However, they only admitted the "economic problems" as a "real crisis" publicly after March 1998. The Executive Director of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) and the Government's Economic Adviser, Tun Daim Zainuddin, has said in an interview with the Far Eastern Economic Review that "the problem" was "the worst crisis since the Second World War". In an effort to help the Government resolve this problem in the interest and welfare of Malaysians, Kit Siang recommended that the Cabinet should give priority focus on this matter immediately. In this Open Letter²³ to all Cabinet Ministers he suggested the following action plan :-

1. Conference – restoration.
2. Elimination of the information deficit through a liberalization of the mass media.
3. Drop the proposal of NEAC and instead have a National Economic Crisis Cabinet of technocrats and experts.
4. Establish a National Economic Crisis Consultation Council (NECCC), comprising representatives from all political parties, both government

and opposition, academicians, industry, commerce, trade unions, professional bodies, NGOs, so that it could be a nationally unifying force.

5. If the Cabinet wants to continue with the NEAC proposal, reconsider the appointment of Tun Daim Zainuddin as NEAC executive director.
6. Make the Senate an Elective Chamber.
7. A third 1998 Budget in an emergency meeting of Parliament this month.
8. Implement the Vision 2020 concept of Bangsa Malaysia during the national economic crisis as a unifying force for all Malaysians.
9. Good Government which adhere to the highest principles austerity, transparency and integrity.
10. All-Out War Against Corruption campaign.
11. Good and transparent national and corporate governance.
12. Accountability and transparency by Bank Negara and the banking and financial sector.
13. Full public debate on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) options.
14. Mechanism to protect interests of Malaysians against foreign workers over job lost to the latter.
15. Green-Book-Plan – Land for All on a First-Come First-Serve Basis.

²³ Speeches by Kit Siang in the debate on the Royal Address on March 25, 1998.

Although his proposals remain a record of his active involvement in political governance issues, Kit Siang is glad that the Prime Minister had taken note his strong objections to the NEAC being a body which supercedes or is equal to the Cabinet in the important areas of economic policy, thus seriously undermining the principles of Cabinet responsibility and parliamentary democracy. In this regard, he has alerted the public and the Government to a potentially dangerous threat to democratic governance and possibly a highly unconstitutional and challengeable situation in the courts. Indeed, this is typically Kit Siang – a man of words and action, even if momentarily this action is still dormant and undefined. What is significant is that he has jumped-start a consciousness – an awakening to potentially undemocratic practices that might undermine Malaysia's image.

(b) *Democracy and Human Rights*

The concepts of 'democracy' and 'human rights' are essential parts in today's modern world of politics. Some famous politicians²⁴ have used "democracy" as follows : "A Government that is big enough to give you all you want is big enough to take it all away" (Barry Goldwater, American Politician); "Democracy is based on the conviction that man has the moral and intellectual capacity, as well as the inalienable rights, to govern himself with reason and justice" (Harry S Truman, President of United States of America, 1945-53); "Democracy means Government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking" (Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of Britain 1945-51). It is therefore evident that different politicians define 'democracy' and 'human rights' differently, highlighting the meaning, interpretation and definitions they want in alignment with their purpose and mission.

In essence, "democracy" is a Greek word meaning 'rule by the people'²⁵. The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realize the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will²⁶. But the term really conveys very little, because immediately the questions arise as to *who* are the people and *how* do they rule? The simplest way to regard democracy is to define it as popular control, or control by the vast majority of the inhabitants of a country²⁷. Many people, however, would have heard of the famous definition of democracy by the

²⁴ Xu Mei, *Ming Ren Ming Ju Zhi Hui Lu* (English Mini Series), Hong Kong : Sheng Li Publications, 1991, p. 10 & 30.

²⁵ G. M. Spencer, op-cit., p. 23.

²⁶ Anthony Quinton (editor), *Political Philosophy*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 153.

²⁷ Peter B Harris, "*Foundations of Political Science*," London : Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1976, p. 203.

American President, Abraham Lincoln,²⁸ who said that it is "*Government of the people, by the people, for the people*", adding that it would not perish from the earth.

Examining Lincoln's definitions more closely, it is said that, "it is certainly possible to have a government of the people – since no government could claim that it does not have the support of the people to give it the legitimate status; and the whole idea of election is that they enable electors to choose their representatives from those recommended to them, usually by political parties²⁹. In practice, however, there are some states in Africa and Asia where the government has conducted questionable elections and claim to have the support of the people³⁰.

The next idea is that of 'government by the people'. Admittedly, it is impossible to have the 'people' to 'rule', not the 55 million in Britain, nor the 200 million, nor the 11 million in Malaysia. In practices, the people rule through their elected representatives, who are in turn guided by the Cabinet, or by their party.

The third element is government "for the people". This means that the government and the people's representatives rule in the best interest of the people, or also known as "public interest". Summarily, therefore, government of the people means government on behalf of the people; government by the people means representative government; and government for the people suggests governance in the interest of the people (public)³¹. In the latter case, often those who are trusted with governance tend to

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

enrich themselves at the expense of those whom they are supposed to serve³². In short, poor, irresponsible governance leads to corruption and corrupt practices that threaten the foundation of democracy itself.

There are some distinctions between 'direct' or 'indirect' democracy. Direct democracy refers to an idea of government (how long since shown to be untenable) by which all qualified citizens meet together periodically to discuss the laws required for the state and to give approval for them³³. This is practically practiced in a fairly small community (perhaps in tribes or villages today) – since it is possible to put such a simple system into effect. However, the community must be very small, usually not more than a few thousands. Indeed many write on democracy have insisted that it is a form of government which is suitable for small states only, true democracy being direct democracy which people can operate themselves.³⁴

Therefore, the "direct" democracy is a face-to-face democracy in which people can continually take an active part. The nearest equivalent to pure direct democracy is probably the variety advocated in the writings of Gandhi who wished to return to a simple, austere form of life – a particularly difficult task given the power of class and caste in India³⁵. Direct democracy is still to be found in Africa and Asia but rather more at the village or rural level than in the towns.

³² Ibid, 204.

³³ Ibid, 205.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

In contrast, Indirect Democracy is so named because the citizens are qualified to choose their own representatives to rule on their behalf³⁶. This is in fact a very complicated and subtle form of government which can very easily go wrong if not properly operated. Representative government, that is government by means of persons appointed to serve the interest of others, whether in a council, parliament or assembly, is a very old idea known to the ancients³⁷. Today, in a modern nation state, indirect democracy must involve the three following elements : the electorate – citizens qualified to elect their representatives; the parliament or assemblies – a smaller group of people to make laws on its behalf; and the executive – an even smaller group of a few exclusive people who are responsible for putting the decisions of the whole populace into effect.

Against this conceptual backdrop of democracy, we now examine Kit Siang's brand of democracy and human rights. These principles form the backbone of his political career and influence his vision of a "Malaysian Malaysia", the theme of which "Democratic Nation" is always foremost in his mind and in his party's campaign. In his book "Battle for Democracy in Malaysia", Kit Siang has said³⁸, "Parliament has become a travesty of democracy in Malaysia", In his opinion, our country doesn't have a 'real' or 'pure' democracy, or, in his own terms, it does not have the type of democracy he envisions.

He opines that, the government has been very successful in manipulating the minds and opinions of Malaysians at different times in the history of Barisan Nasional governance. It has done this without many people realizing that they have fallen victims

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lim Kit Siang, "Battle for Democracy in Malaysia", PJ : DAP, 1992, p.1.

to its mental manipulation and control. Regardless of the authenticity and truth of this observation, Kit Siang is quite daring in expressing his views of democracy. His statements often test the patience of his audience, and his opponents are quick to crucify him. But he has remained adamant, despite apparent unpopularity in this area. As Adlai Stevenson has said, "My definition of a free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular." In this respect, Kit Siang dares to be unpopular, sometimes.

Ironically, although Kit Siang is strongly against the current democratic system in Malaysia, he needs to thank this system for allowing him to express his controversial and anti-government views about democracy and a host of other issues, too! He continues his crusade, saying that, "Democracy in Malaysia has reached a very sorry state when Parliament could be used to suppress political and financial scandals in the country. What is sorrier still is that the majority of Malaysians are not aware that the Malaysian Parliament has become a travesty of democracy because of the tight content, censorship and manipulation of the mass media and the people's minds ... The Malaysian Press has reached a stage where it is free to print lies but not free to publish the truth³⁹".

For Kit Siang, the 'truths' include the following events : the mass detentions under the Internal Security Act under Operations Lalang in October 1987; the 1988 attack on judicial independence and the rule of law with the sacking of Tun Sulaiman Abbas as Lord President ; the denial of press freedom and the Manipulation of the mass media, resulting in the withdrawal of the 25-year printing permit of the DAP organ, the Rocket, for public sale and circulation; the victimization of the people of Sabah and Kelantan for exercising their democratic right to choose the state government

they want; the unilateral Johore Bahru Policy announcement by the Prime Minister on April 16, 1992, proclaiming the abandonment of the 35-year Federal Government policy to uphold the secular Federal Constitution. And the list goes on and on, taking different shapes or forms as the scenarios unfold in a fast-paced and corruption-prone development agenda for the next century.

For Kit Siang, 'democracy' means that a 'qualified' person should speak or fight for the truth of justice or equality. On so-called 'sensitive issues', he has his own definitions, viz., "When the government or the administrators take any action or measure which hurts the feeling and right of the different communities, cultures or religion, they would definitely be creating 'sensitive' issues. But these issues like culture and signboards are 'sensitive' not because they are made so by DAP but because they are created by the insensitive action of the Government and its officials. If we bring these issues to Parliament so that the Government can know the feeling of the people, on the ground that they are 'sensitive', then Parliament would lose its relevance and meaning⁴⁰". Therefore, nothing is sensitive if it can be openly and critically discussed.

Unless we can transcend the racial identities to forge a Malaysian identity, Kit Siang laments that we will fail in our Malaysian nation-building process⁴¹. Towards this end, he has urged many times for a national commitment to parliamentary democracy because the people are the 'final bulwark against forces out to destroy it'. He said,⁴² "The defence of the system of parliamentary democracy depends not only on the ruling parties

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lim Kit Siang, Malaysia – Crisis of Identity, Petaling Jaya : Democratic Actions Party, 1986, p. 188.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

and the Opposition, but even more importantly, on the people's commitment to a democratic society and system".

Lim rejected emphatically the argument of the MP for Pasir Puteh, Wan Najid that, because the ruling coalition has a parliamentary majority, it should not listen to the minority, for what is good for the ruling parties would be good for the people who has given them their mandate. For Kit Siang, this 'equation' is most dangerous and must be rejected, citing that the Watergate Scandal in the United States. He said, " When Richard Nixon had just been re-elected by the majority in history, by Wan Najib's argument, then what Nixon did in Watergate should be good for the people and nation!" This sort of sarcastic rebuttal is typical of a witty, political Opposition Leader who often draws parallels from outside Malaysia to floor his opponents.

History has shown the dangers of the 'tyranny of the majority'. The 'check and balances' must be done not only by opposition parties, but also by civic organizations and the ordinary citizens themselves. In Lim's opinion, it is only through instilling consciousness among the people that they have an important role to play in defending parliamentary democracy that we can ensure democracy's future in Malaysia. Regarding our country's international influences, Lim expressed his views ⁴³ as follows : "I hope the Prime Minister (Dr. Mahathir) would realize that the more undemocratic the Government becomes, the less credible he would become when he goes to address international forums".

⁴³ Lim Kit Siang, *Battle for Democracy*, p. 25.

Kit Siang had also set up a "pro-Democracy Fund" to propagate his ideas internationally. For him, it is very important that the Government should be committed in practicing 'real' and 'true' democracy in Malaysia. The closest to this would be to form a "Malaysian Race" (Bangsa Malaysia) society, free from any racial, language, cultural, religious and other discriminations. Of course, this is often easier said than done. But apparently Kit Siang remains undaunted by his cynics and his setbacks; he continues almost untiringly to propagate his campaign for "democracy" a la socialist type and for absolute human rights and freedom for the oppressed and the unfortunate beings.

4. *Significant and Observations*

The efficacy and significance of Kit Siang's politics stem from his roles and influences either inside or outside the DAP. In the Party, he is still the most important actor as the Secretary General, who control and decide most of the decisions, so much so that "Lim Kit Siang is DAP and DAP is Lim Kit Siang". Although he himself would like to deny the fact that he is 'number one' in the Party, other members agree that he is still playing the most important roles in leading the party – especially towards redefining the New DAP for the next millenium. He is a man of action for he, like William Shakespeare believes that "*Action is eloquence*" and eloquence does create lasting impressions of one's ability, capability and prowess.

Kit Siang's dedication and contributions to the Party – its ideology and visions, and to the people of Malaysia are embodied in his struggle to realize a "Malaysian Malaysia". As the most effective and influential Opposition Leader so far since independence, he is an important 'watch-dog' for any questionable government policy which he feels obliged to articulate publicly. His political involvement ranges from being a State Assemblyman to a Member of Parliament (MP) as well – a dual role he has adopted and adapted skillfully in the conduct of his public duties.

Kit Siang's contributions and dedications also stem directly from his ideological foundation of 'social democracy'. His actions, behaviour, speeches and statements, and political influences are all manifestations of his political philosophy and ideologies grounded in the search for social justice, democratic governance and equitable

distribution of wealth. As the American Philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson had said, "Life consists in what a man is thinking of all day", and Kit Siang has thought, and is still thinking a lot, about his ideal democratic Malaysian Malaysia for the future generation of Malaysians.

Interestingly, a camp of theories in the mid-1950's claim that the world was entering an era marked by the end of ideology⁴⁴. Since that time, there has been a sharp decline in extremist politics and radical ideologies; 'Give and Take' has also replaced 'all or nothing' as the key phrase of European politics. Political maturity has triumphed; ideology, like other unfounded prejudices, was on its way to extinction. But we cannot accept this conclusion due to four major reasons ⁴⁵:-

1. The 'era of ideology' argument has appeared – and failed – before.

The Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, Student rebellions, and the 'events' of May 1968' in Paris constituted precisely the revival of ideology that these theorists had discounted.

2. There are enough differences remain to keep ideological conflict alive for quite some time – though this conflict may be less severe and less threatening than it has been in the past, for which we can all be grateful!

3. What these theorists forecasted is actually not "the end of ideology", but the triumph of another particular ideology called 'liberalism'.

4. Ideologies are going to be with us for quite some time is that new challenges and difficulties continue to arise such as scandals,

⁴⁴ Chaim Isaac Waxman, ed. The End of Ideology Debate, New York : Funk and Wagnalls, 1968.

⁴⁵ Terence Ball & Richard Dagger, Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal, New York : Harper Collins Publishers, 1995, p. 257-258.

tragedies, and corruptions, all these will need a political response – or different political views in handling them.

The latter, of course, is still illustrative of Kit Siang's case, where his ideas and approach towards certain issues is definitely a total opposite of those advocated by the Barisan Nasional Leaders . Nevertheless, Kit Siang's ideology of democratic socialism needs to be sharpened and tested. As the Chairman of the DAP, Dr Chen Man Hin had said, there are a few salient political realities in Malaysia⁴⁶ that must be taken into serious account. The first is that Malaysia is a multiracial society with concomitant problems and requirements, the major one being that any government, to be successful, must advocate and follow a multiracial policy. The second is that there was a government now which is determined to stay in power as long as it can and by every possible means, constitutional or unconstitutional.

Realistically, however, there are some problems inherent in contemporary Democratic Socialism that often mar its effective practice.

1. In recent decades, there are signs that democratic socialism has lost its way. The shortcomings of nationalization and centralization have become a familiar cliché, and inevitably, this has caused a vacuum in democratic socialism. Social democratic practices have been forced to recognize private enterprise as the irreplaceable center of any modern economy. If capitalist competition is acceptable as indispensable, what credible program can social democrats (like Kit Siang) offer that is

both morally distinctive and practically workable? How do we translate social democracy's responsibility into an effective political program? All these create a dilemma to which there is no easy answer for Kit Siang and DAP.

2. Democratic socialism has ceased to be a fighting force because much of its fight has been won. Many of the issues it had fought for in the past (such as minimum wage, free education, labor unions, etc) have become common practices of today. They have also been taken up by many other ideological groups, making democratic socialism seem redundant and without a distinctive voice of its own.

Does democratic socialism stand for anything beyond a somewhat vague commitment to democracy, pragmatic policies and developed social conscience? Kit Siang and his comrades in the DAP should pause to research the answer to this critical question that challenges the ideological basis of Kit Siang's personal and political agendas.

However, "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the crest, leads to fame and fortune". Kit Siang and the DAP must now be prepared to reengineer and shift their original paradigms to seize the opportunities that come again in the wake of current economic uncertainties and growing doubts of effective and efficient governance systems and personalities. Unless they are ready, they might miss the next best chance to realize the practice of true democracy and human rights and freedom.

⁴⁶ Alex Josey, ed. Asia Pacific Socialism, Singapore : Asia Pacific Press, 1973, p. 46.