

Chapter IV

The Status Quo

'Inside The DAP 1990-95' is a descriptive record written by Dr. Kua Kia Soong of his five-year period in the inner circle of the DAP. In the preface of this book published in 1996, he declared that 'this book must be read by the DAP cadres, voters, academics, students and progressives who want a genuine social democratic alternative to the Barisan Nasional'. This book is an enthusiastic attempt to answer such questions as 'Does the DAP really offer a social democratic alternative to Barisan Nasional?', 'What is multi-ethnic?', 'Can the DAP be reformed?', 'What is the source of the authority and power of the Secretary General (Lim Kit Siang)?' Of course, Dr. Kua was critical of the DAP; he attributed the persistent inefficiency and weaknesses of the DAP to her 'culture' – for which the Secretary General and the organizational structure of the party is principally accountable.

On 18 August 1990, a group of 27 civil rights activists including Lim Fong Seng, Ngeow Yin Yee, Yang Pei Keng, Wu Wei Xiang, Lee Ban Chen and Kua himself decided to join the DAP¹ in order to strengthen the Opposition Front and redress the sympathy or slant towards the Barisan Nasional, that was 'evident' during the run up to the 1990 general elections. According to Kua, nearly all of them, are civil rights activists, and most of them had been political detainees under the Internal Security Act.² Their self-confidence, experiences and collective stand on how the DAP and her leaders (especially Lim Kit Siang) should be reformed probably led to their dismissal from the DAP. But they remain adamant, insisting that they decided to leave the DAP.

Kua Kia Soong, Inside The DAP ~ 1990-1995, Kuala Lumpur: Potensi Serentak Sdn. Bhd., 1996, p. 3.
ibid.

In fact, Kua and his comrades received their first rude shock after their entry into the party at the welcome dinner party in the garden of the DAP headquarters. One of the DAP leaders 'obviously' still 'bore a grudge' against 'the Chinese educationalist' (Kua was one), due to the 1982 election campaign in Kepong when the Barisan Nasional candidate Kerk Choo Ting, had put up a very bitter election contest against him, supported by the Chinese educationalist movement. It is said that the leader concerned gave an intensely sarcastic speech to express his objection, viz., "unwelcome".³ Additionally, their first experience of a DAP Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting was also one of grave disappointment, contrary to their expectation of the highest decision-making body in the largest opposition party in Malaysia. Due to their dissatisfaction of the decision making system and frustration, Kua and Ban Chen finally resigned from the CEC meeting.⁴ The 'DAP cultural shock' and 'sarcastic episode' made them intensely uneasy, and finally, they terminated their relationship with the party!

³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

"No Man Is Good enough to govern another man without the other's consent"

~ Abraham Lincoln.

(a) Dictatorship Claims

Abraham Lincoln had said, "No man is good enough to govern another man without the other's consent." But, as David Lloyd George had observed, "A politician is a person with whose politics you don't agree with if you agree, he is a statesman." So, which one do we choose? A statesman or a great politician? A politician whose style is to control other people, by practicing the so-called 'dictatorship' type of leadership in order to achieve his party's vision or his own goals?

What is dictatorship? Who is a dictator? 'Dictator' is originally a Roman term, with no negative connotations. It means generally a person who is given supreme and autocratic power in times of emergency to effectively overcome the crises. Today, however, the term has degenerated into one almost synonymous with 'tyrant' or 'despot' (both originally neutral terms, too). It now means a single figure who wields immense political and personal power. A dictator is one who has seized power out rightly or opportunistically, perverting the constitution after being elected. The most outstanding dictators are Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. In today's political environment, there have been (and will continue to be) many dictators in a number of communist and newly independent countries, although personal rule is often disguised by claims to revolutions, anti-colonialism, socialism and freedom.

Since 1970, Kit Siang has been accused of practicing a dictatorial style of leadership in the DAP. At that time, it was said that there was a 'power struggle' between him and Goh Hock Guan who was then the Secretary General of the DAP. In fact, Kit Siang is thankful and indebted to Goh, as the latter had saved and liberated him during the International Socialist Conference in

London.⁵ He also praised Goh who had made the party as the largest opposition power after the election.⁶ But bad blood has already been drawn between them, when Kit Siang chose Lee Lam Thye as the candidate for DAP in the Ulu Selangor by-election, while Goh, as the President of the Selangor DAP, preferred Lau Dak Kee to become the candidate. Lau failed eventually, and this event deepened the crisis between Kit Siang and Goh.⁷

At the same time, two important leaders of the DAP – Richard Ho and Walter Loh – had also joined MCA, with the reason that “Lim Kit Siang is a dictator who is too recalcitrant”!⁸ At that time too, 13 other members of the DAP decided to lobby that Kit Siang be replaced by Goh. But Kit Siang finally expelled Goh Hock Guan and Dr. Soarian. In his letter to Dr. Chen Man Hin (the president of the DAP), Goh said⁹, “ I don’t want to have any relationship with Lim Kit Siang... We’re totally adverse in terms of viewpoints and personality... As long as Kit Siang is holding the position as the Secretary General of the Party, he would definitely and finally destroy the future of DAP.”

Besides Goh, Dr. Soarian, Richard Ho and Walter Loh, other DAP members who had left citing ‘Lim’s dictatorship’ included Ooi Eam Kwong (1982), Yong Eng Chai, Hj. Hassan bin Haji Ahmad, Wong Swee Oy, Fan Yew Teng, Yap Ghim Guan, Daing Ibrahim, Chan Teck Chuan and Ooi Ean Kwong.

On 16th March 1981, Kit Siang took a decision to expel Chan Teck Chan, the former DAP Political Secretary who had collaborated with Seow Hun Kin, Chin Nyuk Soo and Goh Lin Eam – those who were expelled by Lim openly on 26 February 1981 for publicly acting against the will

⁵ Krisis DAP - Kerana Kit Siang Membawa DAP, PJ: Karya Bistari, 1984, p. 15.

⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) . this bitter events have left Kit Siang with an indelible label, a label which his opponents used unsparingly. Compounding this situation, it was rumored that Kit Siang wanted to purge the Chinese educated elite in the party itself.¹⁰

The local Chinese Press, Tong Bao, had also criticized Kit Siang for his 'unfair treatment' of, and 'dictatorial decision' on , expelling one good party member after another, especially those who challenge his aspiration of being the Secretary General.¹¹ Finally, Seow Hun Khin, Chin Nyuk Soo, Goh Lin Eam and Chan Teck Chan also became victims of his purge.

On 29th September 1990, local politicians were all shocked by the announcement by Lee Lam Thye to leave the DAP, who was then the Deputy Secretary General of the DAP and MP for Bukit Bintang, and popularly known as 'Bapa Penjaja' (Hawkers Father) in Kuala Lumpur. He said, among others, ' a few leaders had hurt me from behind' and 'I can't stand any more...'¹² After this incident, Kit Siang ordered that all party members should 'shut-up', avoiding giving any comments, views or statements through the media.

Kit Siang's silence raised doubts and criticisms from the Chinese media. Nanyang Siang Pau said that his silence proved his dictatorship, and that there is no freedom or real democracy under his leadership.¹³ It is also said that Lim, who shouted for human rights and democracy in Malaysia, didn't practice what he preaches, as there was no spirit of democracy and harmony in the DAP. He is a dictator, who wants other people to obey him blindly without giving any freedom to speak or to protest.¹⁴ It also observed that although Lam Thye was the Deputy

¹⁰ Chong Siew Giaw, Pandangan Akhbar-akhbar Cina Terhadap Imej dan Kepimpinan Lim Kit Siang, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, Universiti Malaya, p. 62

¹¹ Tong Bao, April 5, 1981 and January 23, 1988.

¹² Chong Siew Kiaw, op.cit., p. 66.

¹³ Nanyang Siang Pao, October 5, 1990.

¹⁴ Tong Bao, October 11, 1990.

Secretary General, he was merely a figurehead, without any right and power.¹⁵ Under Kiang Siang's order, Lee Lam Thye was not allowed to give any views or comments of any dissatisfaction. It is often speculated that given Lee Lam Thye's impressive record and creditable public service, Kit Siang was apprehensive that his Secretary General post might be at stake. By expelling Lee, his action will certainly weaken the will of Lee's supporters to have Lee replace Kit Siang.¹⁶ Lee Lam Thye had been very gentle, soft and always seek guidance and advice from Kit Siang. He was also kind, honest and well motivated. If he had the motive of replacing Kit Siang, he would have already done so while Kit Siang was at Kamunting, following the 1987 Lalang Operation (Lee was the Deputy Secretary General then).

See Hua Daily News, however, doesn't agree that the firm attitude, the radical and aggressive style of leadership of Lim Kit Siang should be categorized as 'dictatorship' or 'anti-democracy'.¹⁷ Although Kit Siang is a principled man who stands very firm on his own views, it is too early to describe his behavior and performance as 'dictatorial'. Due to his perseverance, diligence and toughness, the DAP became the most powerful and influential opposition party in Malaysia.¹⁸ In fact, he is one of the most senior political actors in the Parliament House, as he has served continuously for 27 years (more senior than Dr. Mahathir) and fought for his political ideology.¹⁹ His success and that of his party are due to his

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See Hua Daily News, February 2, 1985.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Wong Ching Wei, Antara Lim Kit Siang dan Mahathir - Suatu Perbandingan, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Ekonomi dan Pentadbiran Awam, Universiti Malaya, Latihan Ilmiah yang belum diterbitkan, p. 126.

perseverance and his character as an 'iron man', firm, decisive and uncompromising.²⁰ In fact, it is necessary for the leader of any political party to be decisive. This is to ensure that all subordinates and party members are united and in consensus rather than being divided in their own views and directions.²¹

The 'fight for power' in any political party is unavoidable. Dr. Mahathir has also been criticized as a 'political Machiavellian' or 'dictator' – although he is so caliber, wise, and leading our country with visions and growth. He has been even condemned by western and local politicians as 'dictatorial' and 'recalcitrant', and also branded as 'accommodative' politician whose ideology is 'the end justifies the means'. But who care, anyway? On the one hand, without Dr. Mahathir, there will be no Vision 2020, the Multi-Media Super Corridor, an industrialized Malaysia, and the list goes on. On the other hand, without Lim Kit Siang and his strong personality, there would be no strong opposition party or alternative political movement in our country today, as well.

In the case of expelling the famous four leaders - Seow Hun Khin, Chin Nyuk Soo, Goh Lin Eam and Chan Teck Chan, the decisive action was not far away from correct.²² Since 1980's, Kit Siang had felt the threat of betrayal (towards the party) by these four leaders. It was only in March 1981 that he decided to take actions against them. This shows that Kit Siang had been tolerant for some time. However, when the problem worsened to an extent that any form of rectification would appear to be futile, Kit Siang had no choice but took the action he had decided - expulsion.²³

²⁰ See Hua Daily News, February 2, 1985.

²¹ Chong Siew Kiaw, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

²² New Life Post, May 30, 1981.

²³ *Ibid.*

Chan Teck Chan had accused Kit Siang of being a dictator in the party. But if this accusation is true, how is it that Kit Siang has remained popular, respected and strong in the DAP, – for more than 14 years ? Further more, there is not much disagreement about his leadership from the remaining members, especially from the leaders in the CEC.²⁴ In fact, if Seow, Chin, Goh and Chan didn't break the rules in the DAP, Kit Siang would not have any valid reason to expel them.²⁵ They were punished for disciplinary reasons, and this has nothing to do with the issue whether they are Chinese educated or not !²⁶

Generally, the public believes that Kit Siang would be 'stupid' enough to do anything without any valid and convincing reasons. The "Chinese – educated elite" is an excuse played up by his opponents. Tan Seng Giaw and Liew Ah Kim are also holding very important positions in the DAP. They are Chinese-educated and they have never been ignored by the CEC.²⁷ In fact, these two leaders strongly supported Lim's decision in expelling Seow, Chin, Goh and Chan. Kit Siang is wise and pragmatic; and he would not go against any "Chinese-educated elite" in his party due to cultural or linguistic reasons,²⁸ knowing, of course, that this will create hostility and suspicions within the Chinese society. After all, Lim and the DAP depend on Chinese voters in all elections. The DAP had set up a 'Chinese Education Preservation Committee' to study and supervise the pressures faced by Chinese education in Malaysia.²⁹

When Chan Teck Chan announced that he would form a rival political party to compete with DAP and Kit Siang,³⁰ this obviously exposed his intention and secret plan which he had

Kua Kia Soong, op.cit., p. 5.

Kin Kok Daily News, May 2, 1981 and Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 8, 1981.

Chong Siew Kiaw, op.cit., p. 63.

Ibid., p. 64.

Kin Kok Daily News, April 2, 1981.

Ibid.

'Interview with Lim Kit Siang' in Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 8, 1981.

contemplated for a long time. According to Kin Kwok Daily News (2nd April, 1981), he intended to 'destroy' the DAP before he was expelled. On hindsight analysis, Lim's action should be praised as 'decisive' and 'appropriate'!

The case of Lee Lam Thye is more interesting and in some aspects it is still shrouded by mystery. Kit Siang seems to have acted in the same manner as the former Chief Minister of Penang and the President of Gerakan, Dr. Lim Chong Eu who disallowed any effort or intentions to challenge him.³¹ Other political views mentioned that the resignation of Lee Lam Thye was due to his contrasting attitude and character in comparison to Kit Siang. Kit Siang is more radical and extreme, while Lam Thye is soft, gentle and friendly. Due to the difference of their leadership styles and personalities, the two men couldn't and shouldn't work together for the same party, although they remain good friends until today.

Others viewed that Lam Thye left because of some unknown reasons. If he couldn't tolerate Lim's style of leadership, he wouldn't have worked with him in the DAP for more than 20 years.³² The actual reasons of resignation can only be known if Lam Thye speaks out but he hasn't. It is reasonable to conclude that Lam Thye's resignation was not because of 'differences in ideology' and 'disagreements over viewpoints' but personal idiosyncrasies and leadership styles.³³ At one time, inside the DAP, rumors attributed the resignation of Lee to his family problems and his relationship with his wife.³⁴ It was also speculated that 'financial problems' and 'new political orientation and directions' were probably part of the important reasons, too.³⁵ It is a known fact, however, that Kit Siang will still welcome Lam Thye if the latter should decided to rejoin the

¹ International Times, October 4, 1990.

² China Press, October 4, 1990.

³ Chong Siew Kiaw, op.cit., p. 19.

⁴ *Interview with a Secretary* in DAP, February 1998.

⁵ Ibid.

party. The front door of the DAP is always open for Lee.³⁶ It seems that to clarify this situation, it is necessary for Lee himself to tell about the truth. Otherwise, opportunist will take this advantage to spread rumors and biased facts/news with irresponsible criticism, comments and all sorts of speculation, which would be detrimental to and unfair for the party, Kit Siang and even Lam Thye himself.

Lee Lam Thye, according to some rumors, was not happy about Kit Siang's decision to move him from Kuala Lumpur (his strong area), with an intention to weaken the influence of those DAP leaders who dislike Kit Siang.³⁷ If Lee is really loyal towards DAP, and give privilege to the interest of the party rather than his self-interest, he shouldn't played against Lim's instruction with emotional decision.³⁸ If Kit Siang can change his area from Melaka to Penang, there is no reason why Lam Thye couldn't follow his steps.³⁹ It was also said that if Lam Thye really disagreed with Lim's decision to materialize the 'two-party system' during the 1990 general election through the cooperation between DAP and Parti Semangat 46, this would prove that Lee Lam Thye was more concerned about his own benefits rather than the importance of DAP.⁴⁰

Many analyst predicted that by the resignation of Lee Lam Thye, DAP and Lim Kit Siang will be terribly affected. This would also adversely affect their performance in the 1990 election. But International Times disagree with this viewpoint. According to the paper, the voters supported DAP mainly because they trusted that DAP's leaders, especially Lim Kit Siang – dare to speak out people's dissatisfaction and voice out Malaysia's will in the Parliament.⁴¹ Although Lee had left DAP, DAP members will continue be in unity. The supporters and the members will

³⁶ Kwang Wah Yit Poh, April 19, 1991.

³⁷ Chong Siew Kiaw, op.cit., p. 71.

³⁸ Kwang Ming Daily News, October 12, 1990.

³⁹ Kwang Ming Daily News, October 12, 1990.

⁴⁰ Chong Siew Kiaw, op.cit., p. 71.

⁴¹ International Times, October 6, 1990.

be sad for one reason only, that they had lost a great MP who has served well for the whole community.⁴²

New Life Post had the same opinion as International Times. Although voters in Bukit Bintang had thus far given full support to Lee Lam Thye, they would have to make a choice. In this regard, they would have chosen the Party (DAP) rather than the candidate.⁴³ They need the opposition's voice to back them up, to fight for justice and their freedom. Above all, the overwhelming triumph of DAP candidate, We Choo Keong who replaced Lee Lam Thye in Bukit Bintang, spoke louder than words.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ New Life Post, February 2, 1991.

⁴⁴ Chong Siew Kiaw, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

"...but in case like mine the man can become bigger than the institution."

-Lee Kuan Yew-

(b) Party Reform

It was felt that after the 1990 general elections, with the sluggish attitude and low morale in the party, there was a need to overhaul the DAP. It is said that there was "no serious attempt to identify the structural reforms needed in the party", and "what followed was the same activity – oriented directives from the Secretary General in the groove he had been used to since the Sixties."¹ It is also said that the party had lost an invaluable opportunity to reform, which could have radically transformed the image of the DAP in the eyes of the Malaysia public.

On 26/27 October 1991, the DAP held a national leadership conference in Port Dickson specifically to discuss 'party reform'. The discussion resulted in a consensus that "there was an indisputable and urgent need for party reform within the next 24 months", subsequently, after the conference, the party began to voice the slogan "Party Reform through Self-Reform".²

The reasons for the urgent need for party reform, according to Kit Siang,³ are as follows: -

"We must admire that we have considerable weakness, defects and problems in our party, in relation to headquarters, administration, organization, publicity, publications, political education, finance, discipline, national and state leadership, the performance of DAP's MPS and Assemblymen, the Party's Youth and Women's wings, some of which have become more complex or acute after 25 years... We must be prepared to take a fresh look at ourselves and the Party after 25 years to so as to rebuild and prepare the DAP for the challenges of the 1990s and the 21st century."

¹ Kua Kia Soong, op.cit., p. 9.

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Ibid.

For Kua and his followers, who held the same political philosophy, they thought that “the party reform conceived by the Secretary General did not reach beyond exhorting the DAP leaders to ‘ make a PERSONAL COMMITMENT’ to participate fully in the reform movement”, though the official slogan was still ‘ Party Reform through Self- Reform’.

“There was no Structure Reform at all in the DAP” , according to Kua Kia Soong in his little book ‘Inside the DAP’. The basic problems and bottlenecks which had held back the party reforms were not touched on by the Secretary General. Perhaps the most important of these was the need for structural reforms to ensure greater democracy inside the DAP, especially with regard to the procedure for candidate selections, which is dependent on the discretion of the Secretary General. Further more, there were also problems of discipline which handicapped the party in various states. Other aspects of party governance required qualitative change and the CEC intervention.

Regarding the problem of discipline, when a very important leaders in DAP made a mistake, or had done something in contradiction to the party constitution, laws and regulations, there is a general consensus that ‘no necessary actions’ shall be taken including giving an advice or warning, unless the action is taken by the Secretary General himself or through his own suggestions.⁴ A good example was MP Wee Chu Keong. During an interview with a local Chinese paper, when he was asked, “Is there going to be a new DAP in the future? or is the party undergoing certain structural reform?”, the MP of Bukit Bintang , who is also the National Publicity Secretary of the party answered, “ Have any of you heard about new UMNO or new MCA ? There is no new UMNO, no new MCA. Therefore, I have never heard about New DAP!”⁵ In fact, in the August 1997 issue of the magazine entitled “ The conference of Democratic

⁴ An *interview with a young Leader* in DAP, headquarter, February 2, 1998.

⁵ Ibid.

Socialist Youth” published by DAP Socialist Youth itself, the theme is given as: “New Age, New DAP, New hope”, and the contents of the magazines include articles on ‘new direction of DAP’. But since the leader is quite well known and influential within the party, the Disciplinary Committee didn’t take any action against him for his remarks.

The closed system and structural problem in the DAP seem to conceal the problem of factionalism in the party, especially in states like Perak, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. This was never brought out to the public although there were occasionally ‘news and rumors’ published in local Chinese papers. In all of these ‘problematic’ states, political activities are hindered by ‘feet dragging’, and sometimes even sabotage by one faction or another. Furthermore, factionalism within the DAP, due to ‘no structural reform’ in various areas, no ‘personal reform’ or ‘self-awareness’, had almost nothing to do with left, right or center political differences.⁶

Yap Gim Guan in his book ‘Tanjong 3’ says,⁷ the most serious problem and most essential failure faced by the DAP is that there is no “reliable and effective leadership (or structure) at all” ! The quality of the CEC is very poor, until there is no logical reasons for any caliber leader to join in. The ‘elite of the DAP’ is only a myth, a lie made by the DAP itself. The followers (members) of the DAP never dare (or is not allowed) to question the decisions made by their leaders (especially Kit Siang); they would follow blindly, and there is no spirit of democracy at all in the DAP.⁸

In Penang, for example, the problems related to candidate selections are the main reasons for bottlenecks holding back political activities. This was said to prove costly for the ‘Tanjong 3’

⁶ Kua Kia Soong, op.cit., p. 11.

⁷ Yap Gim Guan, Tanjong 3, Kuala Lumpur: Lau and Son Printing and Publishing Sdn. Bhd, 1995, p. 58.

⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

project in Penang where valuable time was wasted between 1990 and 1995 because of differences between the so called 'young' and 'old' factions.⁹

Factionalism suggested the issue of party discipline, of which the CEC has been ignorant . As Kua had said, " The party was fixed in the groove they had become familiar with and which is inextricably linked to the monopoly of the power in the Secretary General (Kit Siang) to select candidates for the general elections. This has become a form of patronage dispensed by the Secretary General!¹⁰ What Kit Siang should do, just as Mahathir usually did, is to maintain a 'balance of power', and this has been developed into a kind of 'fine art' in the various states since 1960's.

Perhaps two of Aesop's famous stories, usually with moral overtures, can serve to answer queries posed on Kit Siang, that is, "Is Kit Siang a person who 'practices what he preaches?' " or "Is he only a lousy 'astronomer', looking far and searching for a utopia called 'Malaysian's Malaysia' and 'democratic socialist' country, without looking at the fundamentals and prevailing practices of his party and himself as well? "

Story 1 : The Astronomer

An astronomer used to walk out every night to gaze upon the stars. It happened one night that, as he was wandering in then outskirts of the city, with his whole thoughts rapt up in the skies, he fell into a well. On his hollowing and calling out, one who heard his cries ran up to him, and when he had listened to his story, said, " my good man, while you are trying to pry into the mysteries of heaven, you overlook the common objects that are under your feet."

⁹ Kua Kia Soong, op.cit., p. 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

Story 2: The fox and the lion

A fox who had never seen a lion, when by chance he met him for the first time, was so terrified that he almost died of fright. When he met him the second time, he was still afraid, but managed to disguise his fear. When he saw him the third time, he was so much emboldened that he went up to him and asked him how he did. Familiarity breeds contempt.

The problems arise from the root. The headquarters of the DAP should be reformed and restructured. Since there is a patronage system existing under the aegis of the Secretary General – Kit Siang himself, problems affecting personnel management in the party Headquarters, as well as poor public relations are endemic since five years ago, and should be resolved.

There is only a handful of staff left in the DAP headquarters after the 1995 election debacle.¹¹ Throughout the years, some very reliable staff were dissatisfied with the management of the headquarters, but this was somehow never seen as an impediment to the development of the party.¹² Kit Siang and the DAP CEC should have been more concerned about this matter.

State Committee leaders are told to hold “party reform conferences” in every state. This would be carried out as a duty to be performed for the Secretary General, as an alternative to the practice that each state resolves its own problems, seeking guidance, and building mutual understanding, cooperation and interstate joint effort between the state and the CEC. The power and decision-making authority should be diversified, systematized and understood by all members, especially those in the CEC.

The constitution of the DAP should contain a clause to the effect that “any appointment of the CEC members should be voted, and any candidate for election should also be selected through

¹¹ Kua Kia Soong, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

¹² *Ibid.*

a more democratic and equitable 'system of voting' ". Also, the Secretary General should not have to be burdened with the responsibility to determine every post in the CEC. Instead of doing so, he can just let the various posts to be elected openly by the CEC members. In Kua's experience, at his first CEC internal convention (i.e., after the delegates had elected their CEC members), he was shocked that every post in the CEC was announced by Kit Siang. They were even told that this was the way things had always been done in the DAP!¹³

Political education plays a deep part in any party reform. The party reform, however, fizzled out in 1993 without anyone in the party feeling that he or she has been revitalized by the whole process; in fact, many are not aware about 'what's going on'! It is said that the main reason was simply that the DAP had no modus operandi other than the traditional operation which has become associated with the DAP culture and its activities. It seems therefore that the whole top leadership, ranging from Kit Siang to all members in the CEC, need a 'mental revolution' to begin a new and daring step!

When Sim Kwang Yang and Kua Kia Soong proposed that the posts in the CEC be elected rather than appointed by Kit Siang (in 1993), the faces of the DAP stalwarts including Kit Siang himself, turned scarlet.¹⁴ This sounded, for them, like a coup, even a 'major revolution'. But actually, this is only reflective of 'basic democracy' which is practiced in all DAP branches and state committees.

In the 'Postmortem of the 1995 General Elections' submitted by himself to the CEC, Kua said, "It is more instructive for us to identify the party's weaknesses and to carry out meaningful and structural reform of the party if we are to succeed in our political task ahead."¹⁵ He added

¹³ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

that, this is also the best opportunity for the DAP to make meaningful changes which would not be possible if they had won handsomely.¹⁶ If the DAP had won comfortably in the last elections, the conservative elements in the party would still be basking in their complacency and refusing to admit that there is a need for 'change'. Amongst other opinions, the DAP (or rather Kit Siang's leadership) should be reformed along the following few points:-¹⁷

1. Reforming the Chinese image of the DAP

The DAP's work among the Malay urban settlers in recent years is not enough. The BN propaganda always portrays the DAP as a " Chinese chauvinist" party. In fact, the pullout from Gagasan Rakyat did not help to form a multiethnic image of the party. At the end, the BN continues to associate the DAP with Semangat 46 / PAS and therefore, the DAP leaders who tried to explain that this was an opportunistic yet necessary move to "try to survive this election" had failed finally.¹⁸

DAP in fact should try to 'win' as many friend as they can, as many allies as possible among the opposition parties and the NGOs. If the purpose and main direction of DAP is to provide an alternative government, and not only to play its role as "an opposition party" forever , the 'Chinese chauvinist' image of the party should be reformed. The very first step is to reform the party itself – her image and strength; then to achieve the reform and coalition amongst all opposition parties and groups, and finally, to reshape the Malaysian political structure as a whole.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 80-85.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

2. A Better Alternative

'Permanent opposition' is another negative image of the DAP. DAP should produce its alternative programme or manifesto during all the general elections, and not only depend on Kit Siang to proceed with all his 'statements' and to 'issue' different types of political strategies. In fact, the DAP's 'minor – full liberalization' campaign theme was actually an admission of their 'permanent oppositionist' stance and image. By right, DAP should produce an alternative vision for the country and its people.

For a political party which claims to be founded upon democratic socialism, the notion and concept of "in no way we can change the government" should be dismissed. In reality, there is no political party in the world which contest in a general election without a firm, clear and systematic manifesto, and which functions as a platform laying out its policies, direction and vision.

The DAP and its leaders should not deal with scandals, issues and negative aspects of the BN, or his complacent with just being MPs or SGs. The DAP should emphasize on its efforts to gain support of the intellectuals and academicians, the elites in the NGOs and universities who can be part and parcel of the task of devising an alternative wholesome programme.¹⁹ A fully developed and mature ideology propaganda of "social democratic programme" should be enhanced. An alternative policy system, which is concrete and different from that of the BN, should be provided; for example, different fiscal policies, different public spending, policies on issues such as human rights, democracy, social and economics, housing, education and public welfare.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 81.

3. Experience from Tanjong 3

According to Kua,²⁰ “there was absolutely no excuse for not having an alternative programme for the people of Penang in the Tanjong 3 project. The motto of “Chief Minister with power” message or “Robocop” should not be efficient and attractive enough.

As an opposition party which offers the slogan of “Malaysian Malaysia” and “Democratization”, it should also offer different specific programmes for different classes for the people in Penang (which is different from those of the BN) – if DAP’s project and vision to replace the BN government is to be started in this state.

The CEC members of the DAP seemed to be completely ignorant of the Tanjong 3 project’s manifesto.²¹ They emphasized only on the slogan of “Chief Minister with power” and the employment of the Robocop’s image. A realizable, reasonable and concrete programme attractive to the people of Penang (or any state) should have been worked out soon after the 1990 general elections. Nevertheless, after the failure of DAP in 1995 general elections, experiences should be gained from here as an arch to build upon. Any “Tanjong 4” or similar political projects or programme should not repeat the same mistakes again! As Oliver Wendell Holmes said, *“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”*.

All types of reforms should start with a mental revolution or a paradigm shift. As Albert Einstein said, *“Imagination is more important than knowledge”*, and *“the significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”* Therefore, “inside-out” or “self-transformation” from or within the minds of every DAP leaders and members is of crucial importance.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

²¹ Ibid.

As the process of reform progress, important leaders of the DAP should have the habit of “begin with the end in mind” ²² to work in the flow of their political visions and directions. The most fundamental application of “begin with the end in mind” is to *begin now* with the image, visualization or paradigm of the visions or objectives of the political realities that they want to achieve. Each part of their political life and experiences – today’s philosophy, tomorrow’s conference, next weeks behavior, next month’s project, next year’s vision – should and can be examined in relation to the whole concept, of what really matters and important to the party and its ideology. By keeping that end in their minds (their objectives, vision and the ‘ultimate direction’), they definitely can be certain that whatever they do in any particular situation or circumstance does not and will not violate the criteria they have defined as supremely important political philosophy or ideas, and that each day of their political activities and orientations would definitely contribute in a meaningful way to the vision of their political life as a part, and the direction and future achievements of the party as a whole.

“To begin with the end in mind” also means to start with a clear understanding of the party’s destination. It means to know where one is going, so that all the members would understand better where they are now at and what steps they should take to moves in the right direction, in the right place, and at the right time. Remember that it is incredibly easy to get caught up in an “activity trap”, in the “busyness” of political live, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of activities. But as Stephen R. Covey had said, “ *It is possible to be busy – very busy – without being very effective.* ” The DAP reform must be alerted to this shortcoming .

The future and achievements of Kit Siang and the DAP will be very different from now, if they know what is really important for the party. Keeping the ‘reforming’ and ‘revolutionary’

²² Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, New York: Simon and Schuster Building, 1990, p. 97.

open mind in heart, Kit Siang and the DAP should manage themselves every day to do that which really matters to the party, it's vision and the 'Malaysian's Malaysia' ideology. If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step they take will just bring them to the wrong place quicker. Kit Siang and the DAP must be wary that *"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."*

*"The military don't start wars.
The Politician start wars."*

-General William Westmoreland

(c) Favoritism and Factionalism in the DAP

The incumbent Selangor State Committee leadership was said to be not having a close relationship with 'central' DAP because, after the power struggle during 1987-88, the Chairman who was 'close' to the 'central' had been ousted.

Ku a Kia Soong's experience regarding the above matter was cited in his statement as follows:¹

1. "The DAP Selangor State Committee, in which I was Deputy Chairman from 1990 to 1995, provides an example of the party at the state level. It gives us an insight into the nature of factionalism within the DAP, which is also prevalent in varying degrees in the other states."
2. "Some of the dirt from the pre-1990 factional politics stuck to the State Committee meeting agenda for at least two years after that event. This included outstanding bills from a dinner at Kapar organised before the 1990 general elections, rental for tents, printing cost of invitation cards, etc."
3. "Throughout my five years in the Selangor State Committee, meetings were often taken up with discussing factionalist problems between individual leaders in Klang and in Serdang with "investigation Committees" set up to clear up these petty problems."

From the above statement, it is quite clear that factionalist squabbles were serious problems in the DAP. The 'battle' between factionalist groups was due to 'favoritism' practiced by Kit Siang, and his 'traditional power' in the DAP in selecting his favored candidates in the

¹ Kua Kia Soong, op.cit., p. 17-19.

CEC for certain posts. Even Kua himself admitted that he was seen as a 'helicopter' entrant who had been airflown by 'Central' as part of the civil rights group in 1990, although he was not a part of the 'central' faction.²

From the beginning, Kua and Ban Chen (The State Vice Chairman) tried to unite the State Committee by steering clear of factionalism. Although the 'Central' faction crucially need both of them to take control or be in charge of the state leadership,³ they decided to continue to work with the incumbent leadership in the state. But the peaceful state of affairs didn't last for very long. All the latent factionalism began to emerge and the unity in the Selangor State Committee proved to be illusory.⁴

Besides that, each general election marked the climax of each cycle of the DAP leader's activities, who jostled for positions within the State Committee – to ensure a better bargaining position when the time came for the selection of election candidates.

On 12th October 1994, the Selangor DAP State Committee held a General Elections Preparatory Meeting to shortlist the candidates for the seats to be contested in the coming elections.⁵ Each committee member was allowed to nominate one candidate (for each constituency) by secret ballot. The first round did not produce any conclusive results, since there were more than one candidate voted for each constituency; and each candidate was also proposed for more than one constituency. From the results, it is deduced that there had been some "backdoor canvassing".⁶ One of the 'central' members even decided to abstain from this

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶ Ibid.

procedure because he knew that he was unpopular amongst most of the State Committee Members, and therefore should rely on his links to the "Central" to be selected as a candidates.⁷

Anyway, the attempt to achieve some form of democracy (to select the most suitable candidates instead of following the traditional DAP style of leaving it to Kit Siang) met a setback when some of the dissatisfied and annoyed members of the State Committee reported the event to the Chinese dailies, with the results of this first round of candidate's election. It is said that the sensationalist write-up focused on factionalism in the Selangor DAP raised the negative and not the positive aspects of the 'democratic' attempt for 'change'. At last, the event provided an excuse for the DAP 'Central' and Kit Siang to discredit Kua and his friends' attempts to depart from their "tried and tested" traditional method of leaving the selection of candidates to the Secretary General at the last moment. It was believed by the 'Central' that, by following the "traditional way", the collateral damage due to factionalist disgruntlement could be minimised.

Anyway, factionalism within DAP had nothing to do with left, right or centre political ideological differences. In all 'problem states' like Selangor, Perak, Wilayah Persekutuan, Penang and Negeri Sembilan, the political battle was normally hindered by "feet dragging", harsh speeches, and even sabotage between one camp with the other. This had wasted a lot of time, money and energy. Furthermore, it weakens the unity amongst the members of that state, creating misunderstanding between the State DAP and 'Central', and allowing political enemies or opportunists to take advantage. This proved costly especially for the "Tanjong 3" project in Penang, where valuable time was wasted between 1990 and 1995 because of differences between the so-called 'young' and 'old' factions. The event was reported in detail in local Chinese Press,

Ibid.

and therefore provided the public with an impression that "The DAP is a weak-from-inside and no unity Party".

The DAP, is divided into three factions; the minority who support the Secretary General, those who are against Lim silently without voicing out their disagreement, and the 'majority' consisting mainly of opportunists – those who try to gain their own power by supporting incumbent influential parties.⁸ These people are those who live without any political ideology and direction.

The DAP and its leadership would only select its candidates when the election is forthcoming. It is said that "there is no proper procedure" or "systematic project" to choose the candidates.⁹ This situation indirectly provides another opportunity for the opportunist to begin and develop their factionalist struggle. It is predicted that the DAP will become the best battle field for the opportunistic politicians to "kill each other".¹⁰

Although the National Convention of the DAP will only be held on September 1998, the elections of the CEC members had caused a lot of power struggle amongst and within various states. It is beyond all doubt that Lim Kit Siang alone has an overwhelming voice in the CEC. On 21st September 1997, following the widespread enthusiasm to reform the Party into the so-called "New DAP", during the Perak State Convention, Kit Siang publicly urged that Liu Teck Gee, former State President and Chan Che Ming to resign in order to 'open the road' for newcomers like Ni Ke Han and others. This has aroused serious discontent within the Perak DAP.¹¹ In the ensuing battle, Liu who gained 1/3 of the support lost heavily. Only two members from his camp succeeded to enter the State Committee. The other camp, which also gained 1/3 of the support

⁸ Yap Gim Guan, op.cit., p. 9.

⁹ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹ China Press, August 2, 1998.

(lead by Chan), won in the State Party election. Nevertheless, this camp is divided into two groups during the re-election. Chan lost the chance to become the State President finally.

After knowing that he had lost his opportunity to become the State President, Chan publicly declared his anger and dissatisfaction with the DAP President and the CEC. He accused Lim Kit Siang as being the manipulative controller behind this State-election.¹² He also angrily stressed that the Secretary General should not intervene in the re-election of the State Committee!

To prove his full support to the new leadership, Kit Siang has founded the "Central Supportive Group" – comprising 12 members. But it is said that the group has not gain any formal approval from the CEC. Following this event, it is predicted that the 'wave' of factional battle will 'spread' into various state like Melaka, Wilayah and Selangor. It's a challenge to the Secretary General's *Emotional Intelligence*(EQ), patience and intelligence to solve these harassing problems.

¹² Ibid.

(d) Restoring Party Stability

It is important to know that 'stability' is a key for the growth and expansion of any party. If the Party is always faced with crises and dilemma – especially those created by factional squabbles, the vision and objectives of the party can hardly be achieved. Therefore, the Constitution of a party is the most fundamental guideline to maintain the unity and consensus amongst the party's members in acting together. The purpose of the constitution is to standardize the actions and behavior of its members, in order to stabilize the relationship amongst themselves basically.¹³

But the stability of a party should not become a static state, in which the members may become unable to progress or move on. Stability is also not necessarily 'the balance of power', nor is it a trick of giving chance to a leadership to maintain its 'status – quo' and power by ignoring all suggestions or attempts that against it. False reasons like "to protect the party" , "to maintain the stability" may be used as excuses to protect oneself.

But the constitution alone is not enough to maintain stability. "The spirit of the law is definitely more important than the letter of the law". Therefore, the unwritten consensus amongst most members or majority of them is of utmost importance.¹⁴ This includes the guideline of how to act and move, the basic principles of interaction, and communications on how to strive together for oneself and the party's objectives. When this type of 'unwritten' consensus is shake, factionalist activities will begin to dominate. Aneunn Bevan has said, " Politics is a blood sport"¹⁵,

¹³ Wan Mohd. Mahyiddin, Garis Perjuangan Parti, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications and Distributors, 1978, p. 90.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Wan Mohd. Mahyiddin, op.cit., p. 11.

the disunity amongst members or groups of members will normally ends up as 'battle of politics' between various factions in the party.

In the DAP, the difference in opinions and ways of doing thing is quite normal and usual; in fact, they are unavoidable. As long as the problems do not reach the extent as to affect the unity of the party, they will not be as harmful as we think.

The unity and stability of DAP will be damaged and destroyed if there is serious factionalism inside the party, where conflict and crisis happen endlessly, in which case the Secretary General and the CEC would therefore be busy in spending money, time and energy in solving these unnecessary problems. There are many reasons which cause conflict and crisis. "Striving for power" is an important one.¹⁶ To fight for fame, power and position (self-interest) is the heart and soul of the game called "politics". But the only difference is the way it is done : through a peaceful process or a radical and extremely one which would then affect the image and the stability of the party.¹⁷

Of course, the first method is most beneficial for all. Usually, politicians and members of any party tend to forget the importance of this 'peaceful way', due to attachment and greed for one's own interest and importance. When unhealthy competition arises in chasing for certain posts in the party (like SG) or to become a candidate in general election, crisis would develop and then the spirit of harmony and unity will be jeopardized. Criticizing one another (between 'old' and 'young' factions in the DAP, for example), to stop the step-up or growth of certain state party, to hinder the progress of one's friend's political career, using harsh word to offend each other

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁷ Ibid.

without valid reasons or reliable logic, to “buy” votes, and to divide the parts among followers are emotional actions by those who strive for power in the party.¹⁸

Perhaps the factionalist are not satisfied with incumbent leadership, or they consider that the present style of leadership should be replaced with a more dynamic and effective system. Perhaps; too, what they want is only more liberalization, more justice or more right to speak out in the party. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “*Riots are the language of the unheard*”. Therefore, it is important for leaders like Kit Siang to really observe, communicate, understand and solve the ‘hidden’ emotional problems of party members, especially those who have tremendous influence in branch, state, and the Central Executive Committee.

Furthermore, related to the problem of labeling party ideology and direction is the problem of internal unity.¹⁹ A party may be strongly issue-oriented (like the DAP, by the effort of Kit Siang and other leaders), in the sense that its leaders all take definite stands on the major issues of main event, and yet be so divided by factionalism that the net result is that the party as a whole is effectively without any issue.²⁰ As a democratic – socialist party which emphasizes the importance of ‘democracy’, ‘liberty’ and a ‘Malaysian’s Malaysia’, the DAP would be criticized as being a “hypocrite” or “not practicing what it preaches”, if its leaders do not exercise self-control and discretion in pursuing their political career, but instead indulge themselves in fighting for name and fame. Perhaps there is an urgent need for ‘political education’ here, which would redirect the orientation of ‘factionalists’ towards a more important scenario and goal – to fight together as a powerful opposition party, to work as a team and to realize the vision of a ‘Malaysian Malaysia’, say, before the end of 20th century (there must be a target date as well).

¹⁸ Ibid.,p. 91.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kay Lason, The Comparative Study of Political Parties, New York: St, Martin’s Press, 1976, p. 139.

Like any party, internal party factions are not always based on ideology (left, right or centre). Some are simply loyal followers of different leaders, others are structured according to generation.²¹ But in the case of the DAP, factionalism is not so serious until each faction begin to publish its own paper; the French Socialist party before World War II is a good example.²²

Parties normally granted their factions institutional legitimacy, carefully parceling out party posts and candidates to different subgroups, proportionate to the strength of each. This is exactly what Kit Siang has always been doing, the so called "balance of power". The Christian Democratic Party of Italy also routinely grants places to different party factions in forming party lists for elections.²³

In understanding the nature of factionalism in his party, it is suggested that Kit Siang should have an in-depth knowledge in sociology and psychology such as that which touches on age, race, attitude, emotions, value, character and personality²⁴ to be able to handle those factional problems effectively, or at least, to be the 'middleman' in resolving the situation. Certainly, it's not advisable for him to formally intervene in the State's DAP electoral event, or to publicly support certain candidates as he had done in the Perak DAP. Basically, he needs to have good Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to handle factional-related issues more effectively!

The leaders of any party should always remind their members of the importance of "avoiding any crisis" or "to fight with each other". Fighting to bring about 'change' in a new style of leadership is the main cause of any crisis, but nevertheless, it is also the dynamic force for growth and change.²⁵ If there is no competition at all, the 'silence' syndrome of members would

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 39.

²³ Jean Charlot, *L' U. N. R.* Paris: Armand Colin, 1967, p. 37.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Wan Mohd. Mahyiddin, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

definitely become an unhealthy culture. The party could never grow and have a bright future. To a certain extent, the DAP culture seems to have stifle 'growth', the majority of its members being 'silent' except for Kit Siang who is vocal,; so, too, his son, Guan Eng.

Therefore, competition and 'struggle for power' are necessary and acceptable. The most important thing is to avoid allowing any event to become a crisis. 'Healthy competition' is also a good way to avoid unhealthy factionalism. A member could compete for an important post or fight for a place to become the candidate. But he should definitely do so by introducing his plan and projects, without any cunning attempt to outwit his competitor. For those who are holding important positions, he could also strive to maintain the power without being destructive. Win, lose or draw – the spirit of a 'gentleman' is very important. It tends to reduce tensions and to minimize conflict. Mutual understanding, stability and unity can then be gradually restored.

The existence of factionalism in the DAP is not necessarily a dangerous phenomenon, since it is human nature to form groups with different opinions and interests. The dangerous activities are lobbying, voting "fishing", power brokering, or labeling faction as "old", "young", "progressive" and "recalcitrant". This division of values or ideology could be very harmful, and may even reach the extent of destroying or splitting the party.²⁶ Differences in viewpoints and interests do not necessarily create factions. As long as the direction and ideology of the party is clear and undisrupted, different steps (i.e., different styles and people) can still dance together by following the same rhythm.

To a large or small extent, factionalism is an unavoidable phenomenon. However, factionalism may not in itself prevent the aggregation of interest and the formulation of coherent party policy; it can be viewed as a positive stimulus, employed to motivate a party to approach the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

issues on hand in different constructive ways. Of course, the tolerance of different voices and an acceptable democratic system are of crucial importance here. A party that can work out acceptable compromises to coordinate with its internal struggles may offer a more realistic and satisfying program than other party.²⁷

Factionalism and other relationship problems in any organizations is the result of a flawed paradigm. A leader usually tries to get the fruit of cooperation from a paradigm of competition and if the results turn out to be different, he wants a quick fix, an instance antidote. But one cannot change the fruit without changing the root. Working on the attitudes and behaviors would be like hacking at the leaves.²⁸ So Kit Siang and the DAP should focus instead on producing personal and organizational excellence in an entirely different way to develop a reward system which will reinforce the value of unity and cooperation.

There are six paradigms of human interaction and cooperation in any organisation: ²⁹

1. Win-win – agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfactory. All parties feel committed to the action plan. Everyone sees the group as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. It's based on principle, rather than power or passion. Win-win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. In short, win/win doesn't believe in factionalism squabble.

2. Win-lose – an authoritarian approach which suggests that, "I get my way, you don't get yours" or "if I win, you lose".

²⁷ Kay Lawson, op.cit., p. 139.

²⁸ Stephen R. Covey, op.cit., p. 206.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 206-207.

3. Lose-win – “step on me again, everyone does” or “I’m a loser, I’ve always been a loser”.

4. Lose-lose – when two win-lose people get together, that is, when two inflexible, stubborn, ego-centred individuals interact, the result will be lose-lose. Factionalised squabbles ending up in this way will damage the whole party.

5. Win – what matters is, ‘I get what I want’, losing and winning for the others is irrelevant here.

6. Lose - “nothing is gained, all is lost”; there are no winners!

The best choice here depends on reality. The challenge is to read that reality accurately. Most political factional problems or situations are in fact a part of an interdependent reality. In this instant, the win-win is really the most viable alternative of the six paradigms. In short, to encourage the cooperation and to ensure unity among its members, to overcome or reduce factionalism in the DAP, Kit Siang and his comrades should try the, “Win-win” style of leadership on all occasion in every area of their political endeavor. Above all, Kit Siang and the DAP must now begin to change with the tide of the coming of the Information Age. Admittedly, they are the first of the political parties on the internet to capitalize on a new medium to propogate their cause and to air their grouses. But they, as people-human beings , must be more sensitive to the needs of those around them, their party members who remain loval to the DAP and its mission despite the trials and tribulations of factional interests, resignations and expulsions, negative press coverage, and personal vendetta.