

STORMY PETREL OF OPPOSITION POLITICS AND TROJAN HORSE OF MALAYSIAN TRADE UNIONISM

He was born on August 26, 1932 in Kuala Lumpur of relatively humble parentage. The only son of the late Mr. S. Vethamuthu, David was raised at his birthplace - 3rd Mile, Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur - where his parents, both since deceased (he lost his father when he was in his very early teens and his mother breathed her last in 1977), had a small mixed farm and some cattle which he helped to tend for the family to eke out a frugal living. An old boy of the Methodist Boys' School in Kuala Lumpur, he pursued courses on the disciplines of Political Science and Industrial Relations at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, in the USA and simultaneously attended a labour training school in North Carolina.

Both sets of courses - the first made possible by a US Government grant and the other under the auspices of the Congress of Industrial Organisations, stood him in good stead in the years to come for his career as a professional trade unionist cum labour-slanted opposition politician. However, educational embellishments had emerged somewhat belatedly for Dr. David. It was only in 1980 that he had obtained the Master of Commerce degree (M. Com) from the University of New Delhi, India.

In June the previous year, however, he had obtained a Fellowship of the English Association of Secretaries (FEAS). But the plum of his academic achievements only came quite recently when his thesis on "International Relations", as an external Political Science student, was accepted by the Pacific Western University in Glendale, California, which conferred on him a Ph.D. Degree.

It was in the field of trade unionism where David first made his mark and his official biography tags him down as a trade unionist, although it is his avowed concept that trade unionism and politics run as parallel as twin carburettors of the engine of growth and development. He founded and led the Selangor Mill Workers' Union (SMWU) in as early as 1953 and in the following year transformed it into the Selangor Mill & Factory Workers Union (SMFWU).

In 1955 SMFWU went by the new name of the National Union of Factory and General Workers (NUFGW) which enjoyed a wider scope of membership, with David as its General Secretary. He held this office until the union was banned by the then Malayan Government in 1958 - a year after this country attained sovereign nationhood. He subsequently founded and led the Transport Workers Union (TWU) of which he is the General Secretary to this day.

Along with the ban on NUGFW, on 12th May 1958, David was clapped into internal security captivity (then known as the Emergency Regulations) for the first time. He was to experience this unwelcome incident again on three separate occasions. On 12 May 1958, David was arrested and thrown into the lock-up of the High Street (now Jalan Tun H.S. Lee) Police Station, Kuala Lumpur for five days. He was later transferred to the Ashby Road Camp in Ipoh and detained there until 7th July 1958. The budding unionist-politician was released on the conditions that he shall not take as active part in trade union activities for a year, during which he was also barred from visiting Singapore.

His second stint in preventive custody came about in February 1965, when the young, upcoming trade unionist-politician was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). David was arrested and kept in captivity at the Kepong Police Station. Despite the pressure exerted upon him, he kept his valiant spirits and refused to succumb to authority. He was released on 10th May 1965 after spending several days in fetters.

*"The woods are lonely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."*

- Robert Frost

**DEDICATED TO ALL FREEDOM -
LOVING MALAYSIANS**

545528

30 NOV 1980

Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

M
320.9595
DAV
545529

30 NOV. 1990

Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

FREEDOM THAT NEVER CAME

@ Copyright Reserved 1989

FIRST REPRINT -OCT. 1989

DR. V. DAVID

PRICE \$12.00

**Publisher: Stephen Chin
Petaling Jaya.**

Dicetak oleh:
**Kong Lee Printers,
34, Jalan Merlimau, 55200 Kuala Lumpur.**



FLASHBACKS

DAVID ARRESTED ON WAY HOME AT MIDNIGHT

STRAITS TIMES

Subversive activities of banned NUPGW encouraged by A.M.—Government

UNION LEADER SEIZED

Contacts: Known Reds

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues.—The former general secretary of the banned National Union of Factory and General Workers, Mr. V. David, has been arrested by the police on suspicion of subversive activities.

Police from Ipoh and other districts were called in to assist in the search for David.

Statement

It stated that David had been arrested on suspicion of subversive activities.

S. S. Times
 ...
 ...
 ...

SINGAPORE STANDARD

SINGAPORE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 1958
 Vol. VIII, No. 315. 13 CTS. 14 PAGES

EX-UNION HEAD FREE TO TRAVEL AGAIN: BAN LIFTED

KUALA LUMPUR, Wednesday.

The former general-secretary of the banned National Union of Factory and General Workers, Mr. V. David, is free again to travel anywhere outside the Federation.

The Government today lifted its year-old restriction on his travelling.

He is also free to hold an executive position in the trade union movement again.

An order to this effect was signed by Inspector W. Sebastian of the High Street police station today.

Insp. Sebastian told Mr. David that his order of detention was suspended without conditions.

Mr. David is now a Socialist Front State Assemblyman and a municipal councillor.

Government lifts all curbs on Mr. David



MR. DAVID

He was detained for 56 days last year for alleged subversive activities. He was released last June.

COUNCILLOR ARRESTED

*ENCOURAGED SUBVERSIVE
 ACTIVITIES OF UNION*

Govt. Says David Was Acting In Support Of Reds

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues.—Kuala Lumpur Councillor and General Secretary of the banned 15,000-strong National Union of Factory and General Workers, V. David, has been arrested by the Police Special Branch.

The arrest took place shortly after midnight last night while David was on his way home. He lives with his widowed mother in Klang Road.

According to Mr. Wong Han Teck, Secretary of the Ipoh branch of the Union, six officers of the Special Branch Headquarters in Ipoh Road called at the Union Secretariat at about 10.30 last night.

David was not in and while three officers waited at the Union premises, the others went to look for David. They stopped him on his way home.



V. DAVID