

IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

Lee Lam Thye is Deputy Secretary-General of the DAP and has served the party in various national positions since 1974. After serving as Executive Secretary of the National Union of Commercial Workers he entered full-time politics in 1969 and was elected SA for Bukit Nenas, Selangor, in the 1969 General Elections at the age of 23. In 1974, he was elected Member of Parliament for Kuala Lumpur Bandar and successively re-elected as MP in 1978, 1982 and 1986. He is now serving his fifth term. During the period when Sdr. Lim Kit Siang was detained under "Operasi Lalang" in October 1987, he served as Acting Parliamentary Opposition Leader and Acting Secretary-General of the DAP. He has attended numerous international conferences both as a parliamentarian and on behalf of his party, and has also travelled extensively as guest of foreign countries. In 1986, he was chosen as a recipient of the Ten Outstanding Young Malaysians Award by Jaycees Malaysia. A life member of PEMADAM, he was appointed as a member of the Anti-Dadah National Council of PEMADAM in June 1989. Currently, he also serves as honorary adviser of numerous trades, community and welfare associations in the Federal Territory.

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The Lam Thye Magic: A national and international award-winning Press photo titled 'The Saviour', showing a grief-stricken urban squatter clinging to the MP for Bukit Bintang.

Photographer: Alfred Quek. 1985

FOREWORD

Sdr. Lee Lam Thye has proved that he is a first-rate political leader when he held the Democratic Action Party together during the Party's darkest days in the 18 months of Operation Lallang from October 27, 1987 to April 19, 1989, when virtually the entire political leadership was removed from the scene.

DAP went through its greatest political trauma in its 21-year party history when 16 DAP leaders, including 10 DAP Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen; involving the National Deputy Chairman, one National Vice Chairman, the Secretary-General, one Deputy Secretary-General and six DAP State Chairmen, were detained under the Internal Security Act in the Operation Lallang dragnet.

With such a vacuum in national leadership, and at a time when fear stalked the land, it was no easy task for anyone to hold the DAP together, and it is a tribute to Sdr. Lee's leadership qualities that he has proved the prophets of doom wrong in their forecast of the inevitable disintegration of the DAP. On the contrary, Sdr. Lee was able, during the period, to infuse into the Party a fighting spirit and continuing sense of purpose, showing to Malaysians a dimension of his political leadership and character unknown to many.

This is why at the first meeting of the DAP Central Executive Committee which I attended after my release from Kamunting Detention Centre, I tabled a motion to place on record the Party's appreciation and thanks to Sdr. Lee for his sterling performance as Acting DAP Secretary-General during the trying months of Operation Lallang. This motion was unanimously adopted by the Central Executive Committee which met in Penang on 21st May 1989.

This book is a collection of speeches and statements made by Sdr. Lee during the 18 months under Operation Lallang. They relate the political developments which proved a nightmare for democracy and human rights. After the arbitrary and undemocratic arrests of leaders and representatives from a whole spectrum of national life, both in the political opposition and the non-partisan civic groups, a relentless process was started to erode further whatever was left of the fundamental rights of Malaysians as guaranteed by the Malaysian Constitution.