

Mahathir's tough stand: NST 23 NOV 1967 'The British are to blame'

From SAAD HASHIM: LONDON

THE British Government and firms have only themselves to blame when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad decided to harden Malaysia's attitude towards Britain.

An article in *Commonwealth*, a magazine published by the Royal Commonwealth Society, says the Malaysian attitude is perfectly understandable.

"The British Government and firms have taken Malaysia too much for granted since 1957," says the unsigned article in the October issue of the magazine.

The article adds that in one of the more conservative countries in Asia and Africa, multi-national companies

went on operating much as they had done in colonial days.

When last year Malaysia started to localise ownership the British firms reacted badly.

The British High Commissioner made unwise remarks that showed little understanding of the Third World.

In Africa, British firms long ago had come to terms with governments moving in as majority shareholders, but in Malaysia it seemed the *Raj* lived on, says the article.

It adds that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's policies are perfectly logical developments, and if the British had been on the ball they would have foreseen what had to happen sooner or later.

"Now they have to do some fence-mending," the article says.

On students' fees which is regarded as one of the issues that caused bitterness in Malaysia, the article says, the result was more Malaysians than ever before are now studying in the United States.

British Government Ministers, even those who fa-

voured the move originally, now privately admit they boobed in raising fees so heavily.

To give the Foreign and Commonwealth Office their due, says the article, they never liked the move, which was carried out by the Prime Minister and Education Secretary with little or no consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office would have advised that the move would badly affect Britain's Commonwealth relations (not to mention the long-term damage done by losing the good will of budding overseas businessmen who tend to go home saying: 'Buy British').