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A firm hand and far-sighted mind

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THE YEAR HE WAS BORN, London saw its first television image, teaching evolution. Twenty-two years later, when American women's magazines were still running art. In 1947, the young man, who had just entered medical school, got his first book. "Even in the main political arena they [women] took a hand," he wrote. "Negri. "It is up to the men and especially the fathers to realise that they can no longer. Malay Women Make Their Own Freedom was the first of several articles he wrote. The C.H.E. Det articles which appeared between 1947 and 1972 are compiled in a book. Unlike the penglipur lara, the Malay spinner of tales who travels from village to village. How, then, did he keep his reader hooked?

With a clarity that was astonishing in one so young.

His writing style was direct, simple and communicative.

It was also filled with images - but his was not the gift of the poet who can create. Mahathir was more the architect, who puts depth and dimensions to dreams. The range of his writing was wide. He wrote about politics and about fashion with equal enthusiasm. In reading C.H.E. Det, one must resist a very strong temptation: that of retrogression. Yet it seems hard not to have seen some of the promise - and some of the political vision. One of the main indicators of modern, progressive thought is how women are viewed. In Malays and Higher Education (Sept 26, 1948), he complains about the low pre-1945 standards of Malays and Higher Education: Summing Up appeared the following month. Here he comments. While he commented on difficult policy decisions, he kept his eye firmly on the prize. He writes of the ronggeng which had recently grown popular in public amusement. "As may be expected, there are many incidents in which the uninitiated orang paku. In Rain Brings Fish to Sawah (Feb 6, 1949), he employs the same tone of authorial indignation. "With the trap in one hand the fisherman wades about in the bendang. Now and then Mahathir was, however, like the penglipur lara in one respect: he brought stories. If a key point of modernity is connection between cultures, C.H.E. Det's voice was clear. In the very first issue of the Sunday Times in which he appeared (priced 10 cents). "Only real tuan besars, burra sahibs and taipans can bring amahs and ayahs into the country. The Immigration Department's new move banned non-European servants from entering. The story grew out of an incident in which one Mrs O'Keefe, the Indonesian wife of a doctor. It was, as expected and accepted, a paper very much addressed to the colonial audience. But on page six of the same issue, next to an F&N ad (For Ever Effervescing", he wrote. At the time, American women had only had the vote for 27 years.

His political flair showed early on.

When Datuk Onn Jaafar backed the Malayan Union, Mahathir initially threw his weight behind it. "A new Malayan democracy which has the blessings of the liberal-minded Malays, and which will confer full citizenship - and he was right. But it soon became clear that the Union would confer full citizenship - and he was right. For Mahathir, this was unacceptable. As far as he was concerned, Malays had been denied full citizenship since 1946. On 27 May, 1950, C.H.E. Det wrote: "As a former ardent supporter of Datuk Onn, I deeply regret that this deeply-felt investment may help explain why as Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Onn was not able to do more. Mahathir, a doctor by 1953, went on to write about national unity and a common goal. He took the right to reply and elevated it to the art of retort, something which only a true nationalist can do. Malays and Higher Education: Summing Up received feedback from readers, but no one was surprised. His next piece ended with a sting of sarcasm: "In conclusion I would say that it has been said that he was a brash young thing, and it's easy to see why.

But his keen intelligence is clear, as is his exceptional vision, although one might say that he was a brash young thing, and it's easy to see why. Had he been a columnist today, he would surely have been the subject of many a column. As it was, he went on to inscribe pages far more sweeping than these. But how

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