

**Y.A.B. TUN ABDUL RAZAK**  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Tun Razak's contributions and achievements toward Malaysia Economic and Politic cannot be consider final in any assessment. Therefore, the publisher efforts is very brief and limited and the rest left to be judge. ?

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**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**OF**

**TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK BIN HUSSEIN**

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A BOY FROM THE KAMPONG,  
A MAN OF THE PEOPLE:

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TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK

*A biographical tribute to the late former Prime  
Minister of Malaysia*

CHAPTER ONE: Born to lead

The young Malay boy plodded barefoot along the muddy path leading from his kampong in the backwaters of Pahang to his attap-roofed school a mile away.

His right hand fingered the one cent coin in his pocket which his grandfather had given him as spending money for the day.

One cent only. But he felt rich in a way. For on some days there was not even this one cent in his pocket.

As he padded along the path his eyes caught the glint of water through the belukar besides him. It was a stream gurgling its way to the main river.



TRHT. pl. 1  
(?)

**Photo 1:**  
*The Malay school at Langgar where Abdul Razak received his early education.*

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The thought of a refreshing dip in the chilly waters tempted him but he knew he would be late for school if he stopped now. To him getting to school on time was an unbending obligation.

Life in a kampong set amidst secondary jungle could be very depressing for a frisky boy of seven. But Abdul Razak bin Hussein was daunted by village life and its meagre diversions.

To him life was full of promise. Things could change and be changed. Even at that tender age he had visions of what he wanted to be.

After all he was the son of the Datuk Shahbandar of the royal town of Pekan and came from an aristocratic family which had long served the state ruler.

Born in 1922 in Pulau Keladi, he was sent by his father to Kampong Jambu Langgar near Pekan to stay with his grandfather.

If he was aware of his lineage the boy did not show it in class. Most of his classmates and teachers described him as having been an ordinary schoolboy — in the sense that he did not behave or expect to be treated differently.

The memories of his early childhood consisted of sawahs, jungle, muddy paths, rickety bridges, an attap school, poverty and the stagnation of a hand to mouth existence.

That all these facets of kampong life in the twenties in Pahang made lasting impressions on the young mind is evident in his later recollections of this early life.

“You know what life is in the kampong: a few acres of rubber, a little padi and a little pisang or kledek. It is depressing. People live at subsistence level. Enough to eat but nothing more,” he told one interviewer.

On another occasion he spoke of his early visions of the future, of himself and his role in society: “I felt I had a duty when I grew up, to serve the people. As my father was in the civil service my main ambition was to follow his footsteps, to be a civil servant.”

Not surprisingly his idea of serving the people was moulded by his own experiences and he recognised the basic needs of the vast majority of the people as one of his major priorities.

His career-long devotion to rural development perhaps stemmed from those years in the villages of Pahang. To him what progress meant was building proper bridges, schools and roads in the kampongs.

To some degree his knowledge of regional affairs, international relations and ideological matters was rooted deep in his youth in Pahang.

His father being an important personage, he had the privilege of attending some of the ceremonies conducted by the British rulers of Malaya at that time.

One particularly bitter memory stuck in his mind. That of seeing everyone else stand except for two white VIP's during the coronation of the late Sultan Abu Bakar in 1932.

“The British put us on stage like prima donnas but with no part to play. This was our country, but they sat there and ruled it, and all that we could do was stand by and watch it. I remember that occasion very well.” He was to later recall.

Another picture indelibly etched in his mind was that of the British being driven away by the Japanese.

To him it meant that if Asians physically smaller than even Malays could defeat the British then why not the people of the country itself.



*Photo 2:  
The Malay College at Kuala Kangsar.*

## CHAPTER TWO: The school of hard knocks

The young Razak's spirits must have soared like a Kelantan kite when in 1934 his father dispatched him to the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar to prepare him for bigger things.

He and a friend were immediately dubbed the boys from the jungle of Pahang. But being in a school attended by sons of Sultans and scions of chiefs he took all this in stride and worked in earnest to prove he was not a 'budak ulu'.

The adolescent Razak began to show his brain-power from the first year. He was given gouble promotions every year for his brilliance and in four and a half years passed his School Certificate examination.

That he was very quick of mind often flabbergasted his aides when he finally attained power. As one of them recalled he was not only quick he also expected others to keep pace with him.

Studies however were not his only preoccupation in MCKK, as the alma mater is fondly referred to by those who have been through this school of hard knocks.

He was a prefect and later on became headboy — a major achievement in that he was younger than most of his final year peers.

Razak the school sportsman specialised in hockey — the start of a life-long devotion to the game. His personal and paternal stewardship of the game at national level after independence made Malaysia the third best Asian hockey nation and among the worlds top.

School certificate in hand he secured a job in the civil service. His boyhood dream of following in his fathers footsteps was attained — at the age of 17!



**Photo 3 & 4:**  
*Abdul Razak (second row extreme right) with a group of Malay College prefects in 1938; and (seated second from the left) as captain of his House in 1939.*





*Photo 5:*  
*Students in London 1948. With Abdul Razak (centre) are, on his right, F.C. Arulanandom (now Mr. Justice Arulanadom) and, on his left, Taib Andak (now Tan Sri Taib Andak, Chairman of Malayan Banking).*

But his college days, the events in the country and a forthcoming event of major significance to not only the nation but the whole world broadened his visions and ambition.

A year after joining the much-respected civil service he was dispatched by the British rulers on scholarship to Raffles College in Singapore — then the only institute of higher learning in Malaya.

As expected he passed his first year without problems. But his studies and his future, as well as that of the country he was later to lead and mould, were transformed by war. The Japanese invaded and occupied Malaya.

The atrocities committed by the occupation forces against Malaysians are well-recorded by history. Razak had his share of experience of the war and his share of bitter memories.

“They made all sorts of promises which they never kept. They never administered the country properly. Instead they committed atrocities. People were bullied and tortured,” he remembered later.

During the occupation his father, being in civil service, had to help the Japanese and Razak served as interpreter. But the first chance he got he joined the resistance. In 1944 he made contact with Force 136 parachuted into the country by the British.

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It was a risky thing to pull against the ever-suspicious Japanese but, in Razak's mind, the country had to be liberated.

A resistance battalion was formed and Razak was marked out to be a company commander. But it was never to be. Before they could take up the fight the war ended and the British rulers came back.

The return of the British was no great event in one sense to the Razak of the forties. He was becoming more and more anti-colonial in ideology and more than ever convinced that Malaya must and could attain independence.

From interviews he gave in later years, it can be determined that the defeat of the mighty British by the small-sized Japanese showed him that no one, no power was invincible.

He also learnt the bitter lesson that Asian colonialism was no better if not worse than western colonialism. To him the destiny of the country lay in the hands of its people.

Remembering his earlier brilliance and his small but significant role in the resistance movement, the British dispatched him for law studies in London.

But from what he mentioned later, it was partly through his resilience and his persistence that he was actually sent. He was told to study Latin if he wanted admission to the Bar — and he did it in three months!

The dogged determination to patiently slog out until an aim was achieved was already evident in the Razak of his early twenties.

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### CHAPTER THREE: Learning to lead

Razak went to London on a Malayan Union scholarship to study Law and was admitted to Lincoln's Inn.

Keeping up his track record in studies thus far, he managed to get through the main portion of his law studies in 18 months!

Thus by April 1949 he passed his Bar final examination. That left him just the formal 'dinners' to attend for the remaining 18 months to be called to the bar. He was called in May 1950.

Yet, law was not the only thing he learned in London. With hindsight into what happened to him and what he did later, the political Razak was in some ways born in London.

Britain was under a Labour Party administration at this time and from what Razak gathered, this administration was favourable to handing back power to the colonies so the British could concentrate on post-war reconstruction.



**Photo 6:**  
*A Malayan Students Association Dinner in London. Abdul Razak is seated second from the left and opposite to him (extreme right) is Lee Kuan Yew, future Prime Minister of Singapore.*



SSKL 1

*Photo 7:  
Abdul Razak speaking at the opening of Malaya Hall in London in 1949. Seated on his left are Sultan Ibrahim of Johore and the Duchess of Kent.*

So the budding lawyer joined the British Labour Party. And that was not the only thing he joined while in London.

Of greater historical significance were his activities as a Malayan student in Britain. There were many students from Malaya there at that time and naturally they got organised.

Razak being the ever active kind could not possibly stay aloof. The first student union he joined was the Malay Society which was membered by Malays only.

Through this society he met a charming prince from the Kedah royal family named Tengku Abdul Rahman.

This was the start of not only the friendship and close bond of a life-time, but also the birth of a political alliance that nursed a country through its birthpangs, early childhood, bouyant youth and through a near disasterous transition to adulthood.

Perhaps it is significant that when Razak first met the Tengku, the latter was President of the Kesatuan Melayu and he asked the former to become his secretary in the society. That was an hierarchy that lasted through 19 years of national leadership.

"That was the first time we worked together. We thought and talked about the national movement. When he left England, I took over as President of the Union (Society)," Razak recollected once.

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If this was an omen of things to come, so was another of Razak's involvements in students politics. He discovered that there was a separate union for non-Malays in London from Malaya, called the Malayan Students Union.

Using his background in hockey, he started a team for all Malayan students there. Naturally, this he took one step further by forming a Malayan Forum bringing all Malaysians in London under one roof-making his first contribution to multi-racial nationhood.

He wanted a common body where all Malayan students could meet and discuss matters of common interest — discussions which must have built quite a few relationships that lasted through the years.

In keeping with the mood of the host country at that time, and with the emerging goal before the young Malaysians who joined it, the Forum was socialist oriented but devoted to independence of Malaya as a major aim.

Malaysians were not the only students from the colonies in London during these years. There were students from countries like India which already had gained their independence.

There were also students from African countries which like Malaya had yet to gain freedom from the colonial yoke.

Razak also started getting involved in national politics while in London because it was a hard time for Malaysians back at home.

The British had tried to bulldoze the Malayan Union on the people and this had thrown people together in their move to oppose it.

The British were also moving against the Sultanate system and this directly involved Razak as his father was cheiftain under the Sultan of Pahang.

His father was also president of the Malay Association of Pahang and Razak was a senior officer in it.

It was the beginning of Razak's involvement in both national and anti-colonial, or international, politics.

If he had any ambition to continue with post-graduate studies in London, this was ended by the demise of his father in April 1950.

With his father's death, Razak inherited more than family responsibilities and obligations, though these too were an important part of his life from then on.

He inherited the title of Datuk Shahbandar of Pekan which made him a chieftain of Pahang state and a member of the aristocracy. He also was titled Datuk from then.

Razak also joined the civil service and was soon Assistant State Secretary. In six months he was made the State Secretary.

He was the most junior officer in the whole civil service in the State yet he held the seniormost post.

At the same time he took over the family obligations. And he was getting more and more involved in politics.

This was politics not at just the state level but the national movement to secure independence from the colonial power.

He had not wasted time in joining up with the forces which had formed the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) the first real national-level party for the Malays.

As with his other undertakings here too he rapidly made his mark and within five months of joining was made head of the Youth Section. Such involvement broke civil service rules at that time which strictly forbade civil servants taking part in politics. But he stood firm and it was the British who bent their rules.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: Struggle for Freedom Begins

By this time Datuk Razak had gathered behind him quite a political following not only in Pahang but also in other parts of the country which was why he shot so soon into UMNO's hierarchy.

And as UMNO gathered momentum day by day, the emerging political leader felt that he would have to devote more time to national trends and less to his job as State Secretary.

But he was, like his father, very close with the Sultan. So when he confronted the ruler with his dilemma of wishing to serve both state and country the royal assent was readily forthcoming.

Thus was born the untiring campaigner who divided the waking hours of his life between administrative work at his job and travelling around to meet the people and build on his base of support and that of UMNO.

Whatever else could be said of the British, they were keen judges of men's characters and abilities. So in 1951 they appointed Datuk Razak an unofficial member of the Federal Legislative Council — his first peek into parliamentary systems.

All this while, Datuk Razak was honing his skills at political organisation — leaving his office several days of the week to attend to party matters. Now he had to spend several days in Kuala Lumpur also.

He was one of the few Malaysians made unofficial members of the Legislative council and either because of this or perhaps to keep him busy, he was pushed into numerous committees.

If the British had hoped to keep him so preoccupied with Federal work as to let his party work lapse, they must have badly underestimated the energy of the 29-year-old Datuk Razak.

Not only did he continue his political involvement, in fact he began to make an even greater mark and play an increasingly important role in UMNO.

UMNO at this stage entered a period of deep division over a number of questions, especially the proposal by the then leader, Datuk Onn bin Jaafar, to open the party to non-Malays as well.

When he found his way blocked within UMNO, Datuk Onn split from the party with a few close supporters and set up the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP).

Datuk Razak along with other party cadres worried for the future of UMNO, which had originally been formed purely to wreck the British attempt to push the Malayan Union concept down the Malayan throats.

Despite his socialist leaning during his student days, when Razak had returned to Malaya in 1950 he had been faced with a choice: to join the Malayan Labour Party or the rightist UMNO?

But he had returned to a country where a full scale war was in progress between the colonial rulers and militant communists from the Japanese occupation days. The implications of a left-wing ruled colonial power fighting communist terror groups left him little choice.

The left was in disarray and the things he learnt in London about socialism did not apply to what was actually happening in the country.

Thus the impending problems for UMNO arising from Datuk Onn's departure made him think over everything again.

To secure independence from the British would require support of the masses and UMNO appeared to him to be the only political vehicle at that time capable of securing such grassroots support.

He had to do everything in his power to ensure UMNO did not falter now. Datuk Razak sought out his old student pal from London days, Tengku Abdul Rahman.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Transition to Freedom

Datuk Razak's life was by choice eventful from then on, to the point even that the one really personal event of his life in these hectic days was also marked by an 'incident' of sorts.

The year was 1952 and Razak accompanied by his mother and a wedding party were on their way to Muar, Johore, when he was to wed Toh Puan Rahah, the 17 year-old daughter of an inspector of religious schools.

As the entourage inched through the winding roads of Bentong, suddenly gunfire broke out on both sides of the road. The legend of the time had it that Datuk Razak had been ambushed by communist terrorists on his way to his wedding.

But as he himself related to an interview later on in life, it had been nothing more than a British troop out for firing exercise.

of course, at the scene itself there was panic as everyone dived for cover. Datuk Razak, then 29, however remained in the car with his frightened mother.

Toh Puan Rahah was a shy teenager at the time of their wedding. Datuk Razak then was state secretary of Pahang, Deputy President of UMNO and many other things.

She had been brought up in a family which went by strict religious discipline so the transition of being wife of a prominent civil servant must have been quite a shock. But from her own account she adapted quickly to the new life and began the task of building a family life for the emerging national leader.

Besides Datuk Razak's wedding, 1952 also saw a marriage of another kind, a political marriage that laid the foundation of the politics of this country and still forms the backbone of national political life.

UMNO at that time of course was operating on its own as the champion of the people in the fight for independence.

The Chinese in Malaya then had their own network of guilds, associations and political groupings of which the Malayan Chinese Association was emerging the strongest.

Both UMNO and MCA leaders realised that there was strength in unity and they arrived at an electoral pact which eventually led to the formation of the Alliance party, the predecessor of the National Front.

Together they swept all the local elections held from 1952 onwards as local politicians were granted more and more say, and power was restored to the Sultans and Chief Ministerships created in each state.

When the Malayan Indian Congress joined forces with the two to make the Alliance tripartite and representative of all the major communities, the end was nearing for British rule.

The Alliance demanded early popular elections and the British as usual stalled. But the growing strength of the Alliance left them no choice and elections were called for 1955.

The party swept all but one of the 52 seats when the nation went to the polls on June 27, 1955 for the first time ever. With the granting of independence now inevitable, Tengku Abdul Rahman was allowed to become Chief Minister with a cabinet from elected representatives and colonial officials.

The Tengku summoned Datuk Razak and told him to take charge of the very strategic portfolio of Education. With the consent of the Pahang ruler, Datuk Razak for the first time went into government at the centre to start what was to be a long innings at the nations helm.

Schools under the British were means of producing the 'educated' locals they needed to fill the lower-ranking jobs in the civil service.

They did not see any need for any uniform system of schooling or even an education policy of any sort.

Therefore the task before Datuk Razak, the 33-year-old Education Minister was massive. There were all kinds of schools scattered around the country using various systems of education, though basically suited to British needs.

Exhibiting the first signs of his enormous capacity for foresight and planning, he won approval for the creation of a National Education Policy Committee and headed it personally.

It eventually published the Razak Report in 1956 and so thorough and far-sighted were the recommendations it contained that till today it remains the basis of national policy on education.

The various races in Malaya at that time had lived and developed separately, partly because of their customs and traditions but partly through the design of the British.

Thus if racial integration was to be achieved, a common language was a must. Malay was already the lingua franca. It was thus decreed as the national language and the eventual sole medium of instruction in educational institutes.

But Datuk Razak did not arrive at this and other conclusions in lonely reflection. Hundreds of memorandums were sieved through, dozens of representatives from various communities testified at committee hearings. There was resistance but he persisted in his vision.

The need to build schools in rural areas where the vast majority of the indigenous populace lived was also emphasised. Upliftment of the rural people was at the heart of Datuk Razak the boy from the Pahang villages.

In the meantime Razak continued to actively build up UMNO and help the Tengku in his negotiations with the British on a transition to independence.

In January 1956 he was a member of the Merdeka Mission to London led by Tengku Abdul Rahman, who rightly was hailed as the father of independence when August 31, 1957 was set as Merdeka Day.

Datuk Razak, always the quiet planner, worked in the background throughout this transition to freedom.

He was not in the forefront when the British colonial flag was finally lowered but he was there.

The raising of the red, blue and white striped flag of the Federation of Malaya meant the end of an era in history but the beginning of a new life for a new-born nation. There was much to be done.

The Tengku playing the role of the father figure was popular first Prime Minister. But he needed someone at his side to help lay the foundations of nationhood. The choice was natural and thus Datuk Abdul Razak became Deputy Prime Minister.

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*Photo 10:  
Tun Razak, the President of UMNO, presenting a plaque, with a message written in gold to Tunku on behalf of UMNO for Tunku's services to the nation. Tunku was on a short visit to Kuala Lumpur from Jeddah on 12 August 1972.*

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## CHAPTER SIX: Beating communists and winning people

The Tengku and his colleagues in the cabinet let the jubilation of victory, a peaceful victory, settle down before they set about the job of forging a new, united nation able to stand on its own feet.

But there was one immediate task which needed to be handled expertly and efficiently right away. So together with the Deputy Premiership Datuk Razak was given the job of Defence Minister.

The task was enormous from any point of view: the Malayan Communist Party which had helped in the fight against the Japanese wanted to gain power in the newly independent country.

They had built an intricate infrastructure in the jungles during the years of underground resistance against the Japanese. Their members were mainly Chinese but the fight against Japanese occupation had brought them many Malay supporters too.

The communists not only had a membership of several thousands but also a comprehensive network of support groups, cadre groups, fighting units and a supply system linked to Chinese settlements.

It had begun its revolt against the British in earnest in 1948 and scored some measure of success but after nine years the British had failed to suppress the terrorism.

Within a year of taking on the task, Razak had brought the revolt down to manageable proportions. He knew the countryside well and applying his quick mind, found strategies for breaking the CT infrastructure.

By 1960 many of the guerilla units had been wiped out — with help from some of the remaining British forces and the emerging Malayan army and police structure inherited from the British and quickly built up.

Most of the remnant units fled to the Thai border areas to regroup and plan for future re-insurrection.

Datuk Razak foresaw this strategy and realised:

“On July 16th, 1960, the emergency ended. As soon as that happened I started the Ministry of National and Rural Development. I thought having won the war, we must now win the peace.”

Here again the brilliant administrative mind of Datuk Razak, the boy from the kampong, set about planning strategy in a manner which later was copied by other developing countries.

He had fought the guerillas through the operations room system inherited from the British. Using that system one could identify where the major problems lay and mark them out for action.

So he introduced an adaptation of the operations room but this time for development. The areas to be developed were vast and far-flung. He needed to know what was happening everywhere at any time.

Thus was born the concept of the ‘ops room’ as it came to be fondly known and the wall-sized maps covered with multi-coloured pins indicating varying stages of development or lack thereof.

He held that portfolio for ten years and laid the infrastructure for a comprehensive national development effort that goes on till today. Schools, bridges, water supply, electricity, roads, clinics, community halls, irrigation canals . . . . . these and many more small infrastructural projects were carried out everywhere. They changed the way of life of people.

“That’s my element. It’s my real ambition in life: to help improve conditions in the villages, since I know from experience how hard life is there,” he told a journalist in 1971.

He held the National and Rural Development portfolio from 1959 up to 1969 when of course the results of the progress he brought to the villages and the emergence of a post-independence generation brought forth new and more pressing problems.

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On a personal note, 1959 also marked a watershed year for Datuk Razak. He was awarded the Seri Maharaja Mangku Negara which carried the title of Tun — the highest national award other than that given to heads of state.

From then he became known to one and all throughout the country as the Tun. There were other national luminaries also with the title Tun but somehow it appeared on him the title fitted naturally and he was 'the Tun'.

During these same ten years he continued to hold the Defence Ministers post and built up the Armed Forces from a rag-tag army into a fighting force to reckon with, if not in numbers then in efficiency.

The RMAF and Navy were launched and built up slowly as the defence needs of the nation grew with her nationhood.

Tun Razak travelled widely during his tenure as National and Rural Development Minister. He became a familiar figure in all parts of the country.

He normally sported a bush jacket, a reflection of his devotion to efficiency rather than polemics, action rather than talk.

His smooth face began to wrinkle from the long hours out in the open, the constant study of details

and the concentration on every detail of a project he was inspecting.

He was sarcastic in some ways but it was sarcasm delivered with a velvet glove. You worried if he was angry but you knew he must have a reason. He never lost his temper unnecessarily.

Soon the Tengku set him other tasks — that of representing the nation at various international conferences or as a roving envoy to countries with which Malaya had dealings. He was often in London to discuss one thing or another with the British.

As he began to develop an outlook in foreign affairs, he was more and more employed by the Prime Minister in important international matters as a trouble shooter.

In 1962 he was made deputy chairman of the inter-governmental committee on the Formation of Malaysia, which of course unleashed Soekarno's confrontation. Here Tun Razak as Defence Minister worked to hold Indonesian incursions to a minimal level.

At the same time he was learning the facts of international power politics and the germ of regionalism must have been planted in his mind about then too.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: Trouble brews at home

The rapid growth of Malaysia under the Tengku's paternal guidance and laissez faire principles, and Tun Abdul Razak's energetic pursuit of development internal security, defence and foreign policies gave Malaysia a blissful era of peace.

Politics was never out of Tun's mind however, busy as he was with the various policies and projects. The elections of 1959 saw some inroads by the Labour elements. But these were reversed in 1964 when a more energetic effort by the Alliance brought it greater victories.

The painful 'abortion' of Singapore in 1965 after some ugly incidents was taken in stride by the nation and the people without creating any major problems.

The opposition parties such as the Labour Party, the ultra PMIP, the mainly urban Chinese People's Progressive Party, fared badly in 1964.

With Singapore pullout from Malaysia, remnants of PAP's attempt to sink roots in the Peninsula continued under a new banner, the DAP. In 1964 PAP's Devan Nair won the sole seat on the mainland, Bungsar.

The lack of voice in Parliament forced some opposition forces to rethink and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, a multi-racial but basically urban party was born. It brought several prominent opposition faces under a single roof. The DAP began expanding its base too.

Competition between the MCA, Gerakan and DAP for the urban Chinese votes began to build up keenly from 1967 onwards especially.

The keen battle for the urban chinese votes among these parties forced some of them to resort to exploiting blatantly racial issues to win support.

The questions of citizenship for non-malays, the special position of the indigenious Malays, the distribution of jobs in the civil service and numerous other issues

with racial overtones were drummed into hot campaign platforms.

Meanwhile, the MCA and MIC with their moderate leadership, continued to plug the old line of unity and strength, and that everyone had a place in Malaysia. They tried hard to refute as many of the racial issues as they could.

But being responsible parties in the government with inside knowledge of the thinking and functioning of government and its policies, the two parties sounded weak against the oppositions' racial haranguing.

The constant drumming of the racial issues by the non-malay opposition had its backlash effects on the more radical Malays who retorted with questions over why non-Malays held the riches in a country that was dominated and originally peopled by Malays.

The incidents and events that led to the shocking days after the May 10, 1969 elections are history. Tun Razak watched all this closely because in 1967 Tun Dr. Ismail had left the government and the Tun had taken on his Home Ministry job as an additional portfolio.

The Ministry, police and government leaders constantly had warned during the campaign against the ill-effects of racial politicking. But the pleas fell on deaf ears and the damage was done.

The racial riots of May 13, 1969 shook the nation to its foundations. Immediate measures were needed to pull the nation together and put it on its feet again and ensure such disasterous events never recurred.

Tengku Abdul Rahman, who had called himself the happiest Prime Minister in the world until then, became the unhappiest. Heart-broken and sickened as he watched the nation he and his colleagues had built being torn apart he sought Tun Razak's help again.

An emergency was declared, the constitution and parliament were suspended and a National Operations Council created to rule the country by decree until the people were brought to their sense.

Curfews were imposed and the military and police called in to quell the rioting in Kuala Lumpur. Tun Razak was given full dictatorial powers as Director of Operations. There was no one else to do the job.

Tun Razak was a reluctant 'dictator'. But he saw what needed to be done and quickly, to quell the flames of racialism. He called on Tan Sri Ghazali in turn to help him do the fire-fighting. Tun Dr. Ismail agreed to rejoin the government and took over the Home Affairs Ministry at once.

Quick action limited the rioting to the capital and the rest of the country though shaken, was relatively unscathed by the rioting. The immediate problem was over, now came the long haul back to normalcy.

With parliament abrogated, Tun Razak issued a series of directives to set things right. Most of these dealt with preventing the recurrence of racial politicking.

Tun Razak promised to return the country to parliamentary democracy, albeit a changed democracy, as soon as was logically possible.

A national consultative council was created, made up of prominent leaders from all races and walks of life,



Photo 12:  
Abdul Razak's first Cabinet after becoming Prime Minister, with his deputy,  
Tun Dr. Ismail, on his right.

to discuss the root causes of the racial problems. Tun Razak chaired every session and all members were told by him to speak their mind.

From the council too emerged the germinal ideas for the new Economic Policy, put into operation under the second Malaysia Plan in 1971. From it too came the Rukun Negara, the five principles comprising the national philosophy.

Tun Razak, as expected, worked extra hard to rid himself of the dictatorial powers which other personages in history had fought to obtain and keep. He did not want to keep this job.

Meanwhile sentiment grew within UMNO that the

Tengku must step down and like true patriots he too realised his time had come. In Malay tradition an elder is never told to step down until he himself does so.

Thus it was that in the middle of 1970 the Tengku announced to a standing ovation at the UMNO general assembly that he was stepping down in favour of Tun Razak. On September 22, 1970, Tun Razak became Prime Minister.

Having served under the Tengku 19 years in the Party and 15 years in government, Tun Razak was supremely prepared for his new job. The man who had for so long been Deputy was now the Chief.

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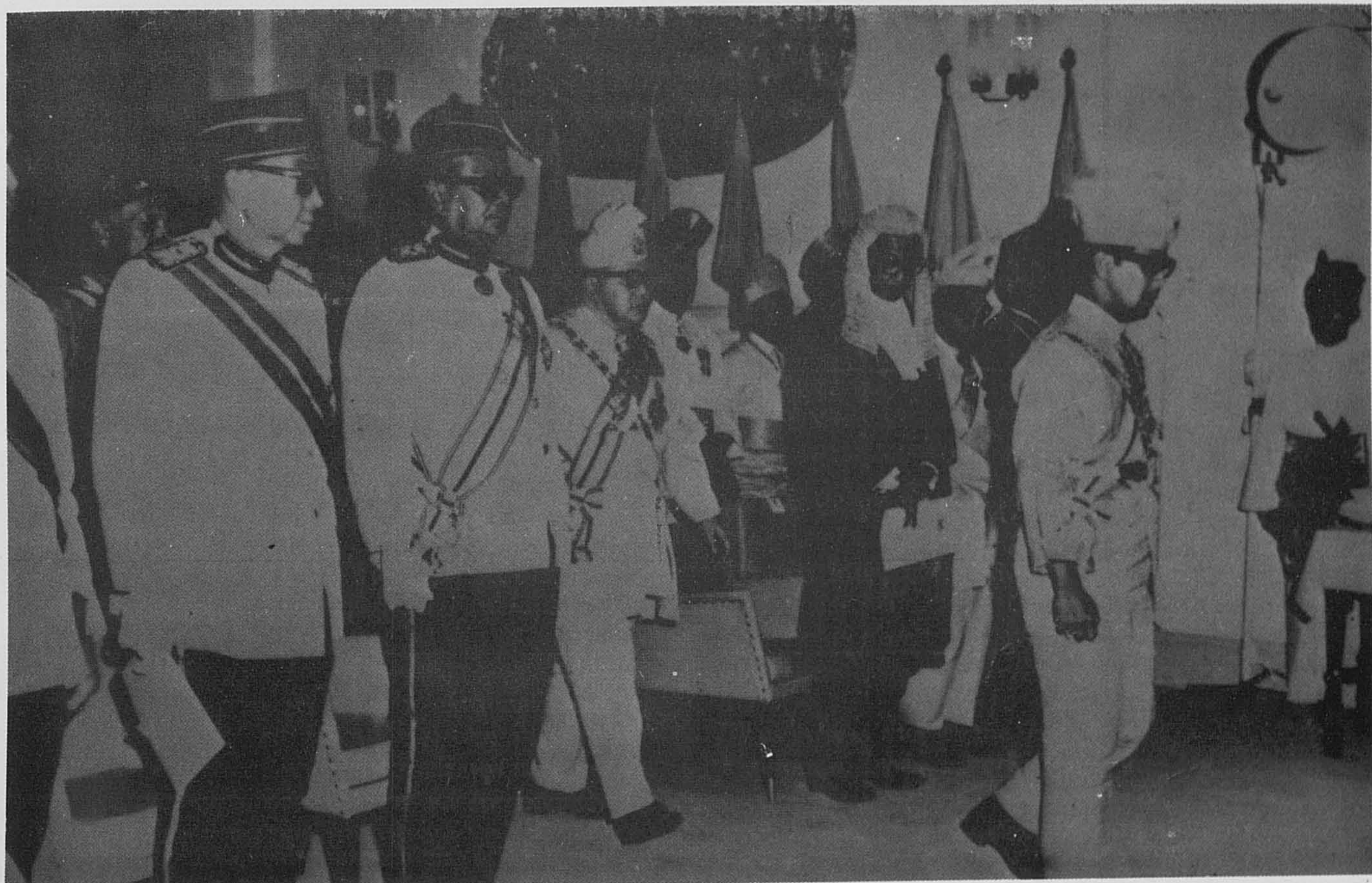


Photo 13:

*His Royal Highness Sultan Halim Shah, the Sultan of Kedah, followed by the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Sultan of Kelantan, proceeding to the Throne Room in the Palace, to take the Oath of Office. They were followed by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister and Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister, 21 September 1970.*

## CHAPTER NINE: The leader at work

Tun Razak buckled down to his new job with the same quiet efficiency that had become legendary of him. He did not announce any big policy changes of new philosophies. He did not need to, he had been instrumental in shaping all the policies he inherited from the Tengku.

He immediately set about returning the country to Parliamentary rule and symbolically set the day for February 22, 1971, the day after the Sultan of Kedah was to be sworn in as the country's new Yang Di Pertuan Agong.

Thus in two days Malaysia was given a new King and a new leader of Parliamentary life.

That was the only symbolism that Tun Razak allowed himself though. At the first session of Parliament he got down to business to promulgate as law all those decrees he had issued to restore racial stability.

This included amendments to the constitution placing certain sensitive issues beyond question inside or outside parliament, changes to the sedition law to prevent irresponsible debate on racial issues and related legislation.

He did not flinch from telling the world and all Malaysians that the new democracy was a guided democracy. Malaysia, he said, could not afford the luxuries of a western-style democracy while sitting on a racial powder-keg.

To him the opinion of the world and narrow-minded, power hungry politicians mattered less than the future of the nation he helped build.

Tun Razak also announced shortly afterwards the launching of the New Economic Policy: a two-pronged plan to eradicate poverty among all races and to restructure society to wipe out the long-embedded identification of race with economic function.

This was the first time the country had an economic policy as such because prior to that there was only

the National Development Policy and the Five-Year Plans.

The economic cake had been growing steadily but it was lopsided. Tun Razak wanted the cake redistributed. But now by depriving one community and giving it to others.

He wanted an expanded economic cake to be distributed so that the haves and have-nots of Malaysian society would all get a fair share.

That policy continues to be backbone of Malaysian economic policy to this day.

At the same time, on the political level Tun Razak began a series of consultations to bring more political groupings into the central and state governments. This was the emergence of the concept of the National Front. Eventually he wanted a stable central government of several parties which no one party could upset with threats or by poor performance at the polls.

Tun Razak explained his concept as a move to reduce politicking to a level where the country could get on with the task of nation building and development without undue political interruption.

Another example of his great foresight, the National Front, created just before it swept to an overwhelming sweep in the 1974 elections, remains stable today despite several 'storms' such as the entry and exit of Pas.

With the nation back on the road to political and economic recuperation in 1971, Tun Razak summoned a meeting of the ASEAN foreign ministers in November in Kuala Lumpur and the ZOPFAN proposal was born.

He campaigned for it through his Premiership, seeking international support for it as well as support from other Southeast Asian countries, communist and non-communist alike.

Now it has become a concept supported by all the major powers and in some ways also by the countries of Indochina. Tun Razak often stressed while promoting the concept that it was a long-term goal, not an overnight project.

He was right and it has taken many years to get it accepted by others. But it is starting now to gain substance, something he would have loved to see but knew he probably would not.

His international policy of friendship with all was

brought to a climax when in 1974 he visited China and paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations. The visit came just before the 1974 polls and the sweeping mandate he won from the people bore testimony to his having won the people.

All this while, Tun Razak never for once neglected his favourite project — national and rural development. He visited all parts of the country whenever he could to inspect projects and speed up development.



**Photo 14:**  
*Visiting a land development scheme as Minister of Rural Development and in the Johore State Operations Room.*

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**CHAPTER TEN:  
Statesman and leader to the end**

Tun Razak was a fairly private Prime Minister, when aligned against the easy-going, open tenure of his mentor and predecessor.

While Toh Puan Rahah was often in the limelight doing social work or accompanying the Tun, family life was kept as private as possible.

Between 1953, the year after their wedding, up to 1966 five sons were born into the Razak family, Mohamed Najib, Ahmad Johari, Mohamed Nizam, Mohamed Nazim and Mohamed Nazir.

They were seldom in the news, except perhaps for Nazir who was always at the airport whenever his father travelled abroad on one of his numerous working trips when the family stayed home.

Tun Razak's own birthdays were celebrated in quiet at Seri Taman with a few close friends. Tun Razak did not shun the people. He just did not have the time for publicity stunts and PR jobs.

To journalists he was often curt and cutting. To aides the Prime Minister was blunt and to the point. He did not like to waste words or time.

Hindsight may give us a different reason for his hurry, but at that time some even thought him arrogant, impersonal and sarcastic.

But from the time he became Prime Minister, he was living with a personal secret that would shock the nation and numb it with grief and sympathy several years later.

He was suffering from a rare disease of the blood commonly known as mononeucleosis. His doctors and perhaps one or two of his trusted aides were the only ones who knew at first.

Tun Razak would often travel to London for medical check-ups and holidays. No one suspected that he was going for treatment.

After the first few years of his premiership he probably knew that the time left for him to complete his dreams and visions was limited.

He was a man in a hurry to accomplish as much as he could for the nation in the short time he had. That must have been the reason for his curtness and hurry.

His mind was always churning with ideas, projects and proposals. Government servants often withered under his grilling — he was quick and he wanted others to be as quick, as one aide later said.

But in 1975 people close to him or those who often met him began to notice a change in him — he was looking more tired those days.

His bush jackets hung loose on his shoulders as he grew gaunt. The disease was progressing faster now. His jowls began to sag.

But still he refused to tell people, even close aides, to his personal problem. He did not want them to worry. He did not want the people to worry.

Tun Razak worried all his life for the future of his people. But even when he faced a question of his own life and death he did not wish to burden people with his personal problem.

By mid 1975 people began to ask after his health. I'm okay was his standard reply to many.

Other times he described his condition as pure exhaustion. Aides, not knowing any better, were unable to answer further queries from colleagues, friends and people in general.

Towards the end of 1975 his condition deteriorated. Word got out that Tun Razak was ill. People began whispering about it.

But still no word from the Prime Minister's office. He carried on with his job as if nothing was amiss.

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But he spent more and more time at home with his family and less at his office.

Meetings were held at Seri Taman instead of the office. Then came the word, privately to some people only, that Tun was planning a holiday in France and a checkup at the London Clinic.

One day an aide was seen going around town buying books for the Tun to read while on 'holiday'. The aide's face was ashen and drawn. He knew.

Thus it was one night in December, with only a few

close aides in attendance, Tun Razak left for the last time for Subang. Another trip.

Newsmen who knew, were told not to say anything yet. The Tun did not want the people to worry about him. He boarded a French aircraft specially diverted from Singapore to pick him up.

He had left the country on a final journey. Few knew he would never return alive to the nation he built and the people he loved. He was a quiet leader of men. He led quietly and went quietly.

# Advertiser's Index



