

Incidents that followed May 13
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I refer to the letter Two personalities prompted May 13. In introspection, the events that were to follow the May 13, 1969 incident showed that Umno continued to be wrought with internal party squabbles and animosity over the next 10 years.

This further suggests the direct involvement of senior party members in the tragedy as they jostled and elbowed each other for their rightful places in the post-Tunku regime. I would just list down the salient milestones (not necessarily in chronological order) for your readers to make out the riddles and nuances.

* The husband of leading actress was arrested under the ISA.

* Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam were "rehabilitated" back into Umno after being sacked from the party during Tunku's time.

* Abdullah Ahmad, a political secretary of Prime Minister Razak, was arrested under the ISA for being infatuated with communist ideologies and for propagating it. He was then a leading power broker seen as promoting Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (Ku Li), as a young man with 'prime ministerial material'. Ku Li's main rivals were Harun Idris and Ghazalie Shafie.

* Sidik Gauz, a political secretary of Mahathir, was arrested under the ISA for having a 'special relationship' with the Russian embassy. Mahathir's main competitor then was 'King Ghaz' (Ghazalie) and Ku Li.

* Harun Idris was convicted for corruption. On hindsight, looking at what some of his successors have 'collected' for themselves, he got convicted for chickenfeed. He was the Mentri Besar of Selangor and Umno Youth president. His main rivals were King Ghaz and perhaps Ku Li.

* King Ghaz was the Minister of Home affairs for a large part of the period under review. Handpicked by Tunku, he was a learned, ambitious and flamboyant young man in a hurry.

Ku Li was a dynamic and forward-looking aristocrat. Forever burning with ambition and energy to do something new to outshine his competitors. He is not a person to easily dirty his hands.

The most difficult task was left to Hussein Onn. This was on the demise of Razak when he had to choose his deputy. By tradition it must be from amongst the vice-presidents of Umno, then Ku Li, Gahfar Baba and Mahathir (then dubbed as a 'Malay Ultra' and one that was not favoured by the Tunku who was then still alive).

Quite mysteriously, Hussein Onn was for King Ghaz, even though he was not a vice-president. As a lawyer, he should have known very well the implications of breaking the Umno tradition. Some said he had in his hand the will from his predecessor for him to do so.

Fate, however, took for a turn at the last minute when Hussein conceded to the advice of the elders in Umno to elect Mahathir instead and hence uphold the party tradition. Ku Li was considered to be too young (hardly 35 years old then) and Ghafar was seen as not having the desired tertiary education.

Umno was able to free itself from being haunted of the delirium of May the 13 only after Mahathir took over as prime minister. With his agenda to improve the government administration, the Look East Policy, privatisation and Vision 2020, he built for us the foundation of a modern Bangsa Malaysia.

As I have always said, I am not a great admirer of him. However, I shall not deny his great contribution to our country. With this, let us just leave the past in the pages of history and march forward towards a united and modern Bangsa Malaysia. I have never felt complete without my Indian and Chinese friends.

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