

The Sun - 23/7/2007

Kelantan Emergency of December 1977

WHEN PAS agreed to join the Alliance government in 1972, it was acknowledged that Kelantan would stay a PAS stronghold, but Umno would have a share in the state's PAS-dominated government.

The terms of agreement were reached in September 1972 between Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and the PAS leader, Datuk Mohamed Asri (see Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics*, 1976, p.406).

Strong opposition within PAS prolonged the negotiations, but the terms of coalition were finally approved by the PAS annual congress in January 1973 by a vote of 190 to 94 with 19 abstentions. PAS then joined the coalition government, with Asri as land development minister, while a number of PAS leaders were appointed to lesser federal posts.

The Barisan Nasional (BN), which replaced the Alliance, was formally registered in 1974.

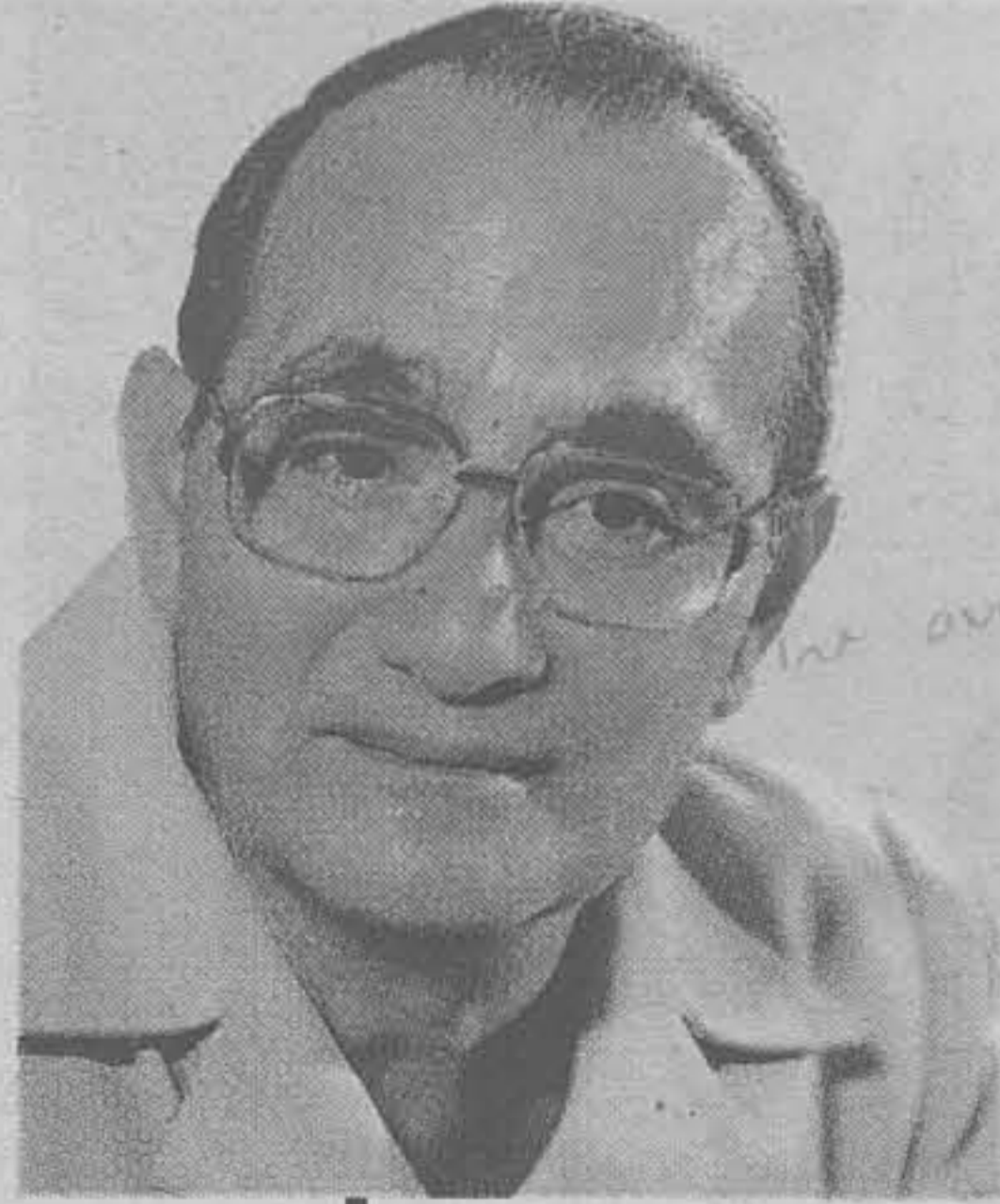
However, Umno's promise of non-interference in Kelantan was not observed for long.

Participation in the BN coalition appeared to benefit PAS leaders more at the federal than at the state level as Umno-PAS rivalries intensified in Kelantan, leading eventually to PAS's decision to remove the incumbent Menteri Besar Mohamed Nasir for defying party instructions in 1977.

Nasir appeared to be more a recalcitrant than an Umno convert, but his defiance towards the PAS leadership gave Umno great satisfaction. PAS called for his resignation, but he refused, and presented himself as the champion of an honest and clean government against corrupt and self-serving politicians.

A "no-confidence" motion was tabled in the Kelantan state assembly and carried by 20 PAS votes after 15 Umno and one MCA assembly members walked out in protest.

A legal impasse followed when Mohamed Nasir called for the dissolution of the state assembly. His supporters demonstrated in the streets, and violence and looting erupted. This led the Federal government to ask the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to declare an Emergency and a



Third Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn.



Kelantan Menteri Besar Mohamed Nasir.

curfew in the state capital in 1977.

However, before the emergency was declared, Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn - who had succeeded Tun Razak upon his death in 1976 - and Umno ministers attempted to negotiate a settlement with PAS federal leaders.

After several proposals were rejected, Hussein said he would impose federal rule in Kelantan for "public security".

An emergency bill for Kelantan, pending a new state election, was rushed through Parliament and passed with 118 votes in support, and 18 against. Of the 14

PAS members, 12 voted against while all six DAP members opposed the motion.

PAS members who held office in the BN government resigned but said they would remain in the BN. However, the BN Council decided to expel all members who had voted against the Kelantan Emergency Bill.

In the March 1978 state elections, PAS lost to Umno which then formed the state government.

Since the 1977 split, PAS has remained in the Opposition and all attempts to get it to rejoin the BN have failed.

The CPM's controversial role



Chin Peng

Banting folk keep the communists at bay in 1957.



SINCE the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM)'s armed struggle ended in 1989, public controversy has arisen over the party's armed struggle and its contribution to the achievement of Malaya's independence.

In 2003, CPM leader Chin Peng published his memoirs, *My Side of History*, in which he gives an insider's account of why and how the communist insurgency failed.

His application to return to Malaysia to launch his book was rejected by the Home Ministry. His appeal against this ban is pending before the High Court.

Born Ong Boon Hua in October, 1924 in Sitiawan, Perak, Chin Peng joined the clandestine CPM at 15 and became its

secretary-general, its highest-ranking member, at 23.

He adopted the alias "Chin Peng" as all secretary cell members had to conceal their real identity from the police. During the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the British offered a bounty of \$250,000 (Straits dollars) for his head.

In his memoirs, Chin Peng claims he was always a nationalist, saying the party's armed struggle was to free Malaya from British rule and obtain independence.

But, he takes responsibility for the thousands of lives lost and sacrificed in the struggle. This was inevitable, he says, because it was a "war" for national independence.