

The Sarawak State Election, 1996: The Politics of Reconciliation

By

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INTRODUCTION

Politics in Sarawak and in Sabah, unlike in West Malaysia, are a great deal more dynamic, versatile and exciting. Since the formation of Malaysia in 1963, both these states have seen periodic changes in government. Politics here have also elicited more emotion and fire among the grassroots; and there is the ever-present element of surprises. The "politics of reconciliation" in this paper refers specifically to one of these political waves which inundates the state of Sarawak from time to time. The storm started in 1987 when politicians disenchanted with Taib Mahmud's leadership tried to stage a coup which came to be known as the "Ming Court" incident. The strongest component of this group was the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) which strongly felt that Taib Mahmud's government was discriminating the non-Muslim bumiputras—the Dayaks.

Though the coup misfired, the PBDS decided to breakaway from the Sarawak State Barisan, then known as the Barisan – Plus, to contest in the snap election called by Taib Mahmud to nullify the coup attempt. This was the time of the Dayak fire – more popularly known as Dayakism. Riding high on the wave of Dayakism, the PBDS captured 15 seats while its partner in the Kumpulan Maju group, Persatuan Rakyat Sarawak (PERMAS) managed only five. The total of 20

seats won by the Maju group was however insufficient to catapult the group into power, as Taib Mahmud's Barisan Nasional won the rest of the 28 seats in the contest.

In the course of time PBDS was severely weakened by defections. Undaunted, the party defiantly remained in the opposition at state level believing that the majority of the Dayaks still supported its crusade. Confident of capturing the Dayak vote by openly advocating a Dayak Chief Minister for the state (Projek Ketua Menteri Dayak), the PBDS decided to have a second go in the 1991 state election. The outcome however was miserable – the PBDS captured only seven out of the 56 seats in the state. The rest of the 49 seats were swept by the Sarawak Barisan Nasional Tiga (BN3). It was quite obvious that the fire of Dayakism was dead. Moreover the continuous process of the delineation of constituencies meant that the Dayaks were no longer in a position to control a majority of the State Assembly or Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) seats, even if the Dayaks voted with one voice, under one flag. Under these unpromising circumstances, Leo Moggie the president of the PBDS and other top leaders of the party decided that it would serve the interests of the party and the Dayaks better by mending fences with ruling coalition. After a long process of diplomatic effort, a reconciliation was effected in May 1994. Thus the Sarawak BN at once assumed total domination of DUN. It was from this position of strength and in the context of the politics of reconciliation that the Sarawak Barisan Nasional entered the 1996 state election.

BACK TO THE FOLD, 29 MAY 1994

Confronted with the political reality of the failure of Dayakism, Leo Moggie and his team had to painfully, but with sheer determination, steer back the PBDS into the political mainstream. Thus even as the vote of the 1991 state election was being counted, and as it became increasingly clear that BN3 was heading for a landslide victory, the PBDS leadership swallowed the bitter pill and publicly announced that it was willing to rejoin the Sarawak BN3 "without conditions".¹ The party leadership felt that Dayakism was a mistake as the Dayaks were hopelessly fragmented. An inkling of the party's reasons for the decision to rejoin was reflected in the editorial of the party's newsletter, *Berita Parti Bansa Sarawak*, of February 1992 as follows:²

The Sarawak State Election is over. The result is known to all. PBDS, in spite of what has happened, must not look back in anger...

The people of Sarawak have chosen. PBDS leaders, members and supporters must respect that choice. In a democratic country the choice of the majority reigns supreme, and the people who advocate that principle must abide by it.

PBDS respects that choice, and the move to rejoin the State BN is made, among other things, to acknowledge that respect.

The decision to seek readmission was received with mixed feelings at the grassroots. Nevertheless it is extremely interesting to fathom a sampling of such perceptions obtained from letters to the editor of the party's newsletter. For example, one respondent laid the blame for the rout of the PBDS squarely on the shoulders of the Dayak community as follows:³

I think it is unfair to blame the PBDS leadership or its election candidates for the party's failure to win all the Dayak majority state constituencies in the last state general election.

With few exceptions if any at all, the PBDS' candidates fought very hard under severe lack of funds and logistics to try to win their seats.

It was the Dayak voters themselves who were not willing to fight hard to achieve a victory and, hence, a better bargaining for themselves in development.

PBDS leaders should feel no guilt if they should choose to stop struggling for Dayak unity and join the bandwagon. Save yourselves the headache. Less victimization for your family and your friends.

Other opinions ranged from total rejection of the PBDS decision to qualified acceptance whereby the party was reminded not to deviate from its ideals and objectives.

The BN3, flushed with a commanding victory, was in no hurry to consider the question of PBDS's readmission. Almost two years elapsed before any head-

way could be made. By late 1993 however, relentless diplomatic efforts by both Leo Moggie and James Masing, the senior vice-president of BPDS, began to bear fruit. The reconciliation efforts and the mutual confidence that ensued prompted both the PBB and SUPP to publish their support for PBDS's readmission. SNAP, and especially its president, James Wong, expectedly remained adamant. For the PBDS moveover, the issue had gained greater urgency by November 1993 as the leadership was keen to resolve the matter before the party's fourth triennial delegates conference scheduled for 15 and 16 January 1994. Pulling the feat would obviously enhance the credibility and ability of the leadership in the eyes of the party delegates.

Obviously out of deference to the PBDS leadership, Taib Mahmud brought the matter up for discussion at the BN3 supreme council which met on 24 November 1993. At the three – hour meeting all the top leader of BN3 agreed in principle to readmit the PBDS into the state barisan.³ However, the terms and conditions for such a move had yet to be worked out, and for this purpose a BN3 committee was set up headed by Datuk Adenan Satem, the state minister for Social Development. The other members of his team were Datuk Amar Leonard Linggi and Stephen Wan Ullok from PBB ; Alfred Yap, Datuk Ramsay Noel Jitam and David Teng from SUPP ; and Datuk Peter Tinggom, Dr. Patau Rubis and Peter Ghani from SNAP. The PBDS also established a similar committee led by James Masing with Wilfred Nissom, Clement Eddy and Sidi Munan as members.

The events were indeed great morale boosters for the PBDS leadership. In fact, Leo Moggie was returned unopposed as president for the fourth consecutive term when nominations for the party's presidency closed on 2 January 1994. He was nominated by 108 out of the party's total of 148 branches.⁵ Nominations for other top posts closed on 15 January. As further proof that reconciliation was on the cards, Taib Mahmud was invited to open the PBDS delegates conference. In the party election that followed, most of the incumbents retained their posts.

From henceforth the pace of negotiations proceeded with determination so that differences were ironed – out and agreement reached within five months. On 29 May 1994 the historic memorandum of understanding readmitting PBDS into the state barisan was signed by Taib Mahmud and Leo Moggie. The dramatic announcement of the pact was symbolically made by Taib Mahmud during the opening ceremony of the Gawai festival on 31 May 1994.⁶ It was a great

day for Leo Moggie personally who could now look back with satisfaction at having weathered the storm and successfully steered the PBDS back into the state's mainstream of power-sharing despite the overwhelming odds.

THE 1996 STATE ELECTION

On 15 August 1996, the Sarawak State Assembly was dissolved paving the way for the seventh state election. This was one of the rare times that the state government, now controlled by Barisan Nasional 4, was going in from a position of complete strength in the state assembly. The BN4 controlled all the 56 seats in the state legislature which had resulted with PBDS's readmission in 1994. Although the number of state constituencies had been increased from the exciting 56 to 62 for the 1996 election, the BN4 was confident of total victory.⁷

Optimism was rife amongst the leaders and supporters of the component parties of BN4 due to a number of factors. The most obvious was that unlike the 1987 and 1991 elections when Dayakism was a potent force, and the party championing it, the PBDS, was in the opposition, this time around there was hardly any serious opposition to be expected by the state Barisan. There was also a lack of explosive issues which could overturn the boat. The most volatile and sensitive ones concerned the position of the Dayaks, native customary land rights, the Bakun hydroelectric project and issues pertaining to the environment. Even these however were expected to lose their thunder in the light of the PBDS' new role as a component party of the state BN and due to the buoyant economy. In the light of these very favorable conditions no one could dampen Taib Mahmud exuberance for expecting a total and clean sweep by the Sarawak Barisan Nasional. A special article in *The Star* on the forthcoming polls in the state extolled the unassailable political position of Taib Mahmud as follows:⁸

No opposition in this election is credible enough to stop the East Malaysian political Supremo and his second echelon of leaders, no matter how others see his "Politics of Development" and Sarawak.

DAP'S NEW STRATEGY

The only organized and established party that could garner some opposition was the DAP. The DAP however had a miserable record in terms of making any headway in previous Sarawak state elections, although it had better luck in the parliamentary elections in Sarawak. Since entry into the Sarawak political scene in 1978, the DAP had persistently contested in the last four state elections but failed to capture a single seat.⁹ The DAP, for obvious reasons, could only hope to make a breakthrough in Chinese areas, but the Sarawak Chinese, dubbed as the "King makers" in Sarawak (they controlled at least 14 majority seats and determined the fate of another 11 in 1996) were solidly behind the SUPP.¹⁰ In the 1991 state election the SUPP won 16 out of 17 seats contested.¹¹ Since 1970, the SUPP also had been the closest political ally of the PBB, the controlling partner of the Sarawak state government since then. The DAP on the other hand was further lamed by the exist in 1995 of the 'soul' of the party in Sarawak, Sim Kwang Yang on "SKY" as he was more popularly known. Sim, the charismatic leader of the DAP in Sarawak, since its debue in 1978, had been the Member of Parliament (MP) for Bandar Kuching for three parliamentary elections. Many political observers were of the opinion that the chances of the DAP were further doomed with his absence. The acting state chairman of the party, Jason Wong Sing Nang, however announced that his party was redesigning its campaign strategies which would increase the DAP's chances of achieving a break-through. These included the decision to concentrate in fewer areas than before and to zoom-in into urban, Chinese dominated seats. Another psychological ploy was to appeal for sympathy votes from the electorate in the light of the certainly of the SBN winning a landslide victory. During the election campaign the DAP in fact used this tactic with great dexterity. It reminded the votes of the dangers of a one party state and prodded them to bravely create history by denying the BN total victory. On a milder and almost comical note it propagated that no serious harm would accrue if the electorate were to return a few DAP candidates!¹²

Another group that hoped to make some dents in the Barisan fort was the independents. As the Elections Commission fixed the polling dates as 7 and 8 September and nomination date as 27 August, political activity intensified. The Barisan Nasional quickly finalized the question of seat distribution. The allocation was worked out as follows:¹³

PBB	-	30 seats
SUPP	-	17 seats
PBDS	-	8 seats
SNAP	-	7 seats
Total	-	62 seats

Directly after nomination day, it became clear that the BN had already won 19 seats uncontested, leaving 43 seats for grabs. As usual, a large number of independents, numbering 60, lined-up to try their luck. The Barisan Nasional was obviously putting up nominees in all the remaining 43 seats. The DAP, in line with its strategy of concentrating in fewer areas, put up candidates in six constituencies only.¹⁴

INDEPENDENTS AND HOT SEATS

The chances of independents this time around of winning any seats were however particularly slim. Unlike in the past when member BN parties put up proxy independents with the hope of increasing individual party strengths (most times successful independents were absorbed by patron parties after the elections), this time the BN strictly outlawed the practice. In fact many BN hopeful candidates who had to be left out of the race as a consequence of the PBDS' re-entry and the subsequent seat allocation, decided to stand as independents and resorted to the very gullible and, in some cases, credible tactic that they had the support of particular parties. Some important constituencies where independents were purported to have claimed such support are discussed below.

BUKIT BEGUNAN

This seat was a hot seat in that it had created many upsets. Formally known as the Lingga-Sebuyan constituency, it had a majority of Dayak voters and since 1974, had been the stronghold of Daniel Tajem, till 1987. In that year when snap elections were held after the Ming Court affair, a new comer, Donald Lawan, also a Dayak, standing on a PBB ticket defeated the PBDS strongman. He represented the constituency from 1987 to 1991 and was duly rewarded for his feat. Lawan was appointed as political secretary to the Chief Minister. He

also earned a number of positions on boards of managements of government subsidiaries. In 1991 Daniel Tajem, riding high on the issue of Dayakism, wrested the seat back. In the 1996 case the situation became a little more dicy. In the pre-election BN allocation exercise, the Bukit Begunan seat was reserved for the PBDS, but its leadership decided to drop Daniel Tajem as the latter had already been appointed Malaysian High Commissioner to New Zealand in 1995. In his place, a younger man, completely new to politics named Mong Dagang, was nominated by the PBDS. It was a difficult decision for the leadership as there were other more experienced personalities available as well. In fact his choice created some disquiet and resentment within the PBDS camp itself. Leo Moggie himself gave a hint of the magnitude of the problem as follows:¹⁵

Initially there were so many names proposed to us and among them was Donald Lawan himself, apart from Mong, Anthony Belon (formely Leo Moggie's principal private secretary) and Marvin (Daniel Tajem's son). We listened to them and after much discussion we all agreed to nominate Mong.

According to Leo Moggie, Mong Dagang had all those qualities which the PBDS considered vital for the party's image; that is, he was a professional; he was humble and very moderate; and he was willing to work for the people. Donald Lawan, frustrated by the fact he could not be nominated for the seat on a PBB ticket, but believing he could create another upset against a non-veteran, decides to contest as an independent. As it turned out, it was going to be a straight fight between Mong Dagang and Lawan. Hoping to clinch victory, Donald Lawan was purported to have claimed that he was a PBB backed candidate.¹⁶

A similar situation prevailed in a number of other constituencies. In Meluan for example, Thomas Salang of the PBDS had to resign from his party to contest against the BN-SNAP candidate Geman Itam but still implied, at least in the beginning, that he had the support of the PBDS. The story was the same in Belaga and Batang Ai.¹⁷

TASIK BIRU

Another interesting battle that was looming was for the Tasik Biru constituency. The Bidayuh majority seat had been held since 1983 by a very charismatic but controversial figure, Dr. Patau Rubis of SNAP. Patau had risen meteorically in the ranks of SNAP by his often outspoken opposition and denunciation of PBDS as a racist party. He had become senior vice-president of the party and was also assistant minister for the Finance and Public Utilities in the state cabinet. After being more than ten years under the leadership of James Wong however, Patau began to suffer the same pangs of disillusionment that Leo Moggie and his group of Dayak leaders had experienced a decade before—that James Wong was in no mood to hand over leadership of SNAP to anybody else. Patau soon became recalcitrant and began to retaliate in his own fashion. In the 1995 parliamentary election, he was accused of having supported independent candidates against BN nominees. On this charge, Taib Mahmud, in consultation with the other senior members of his cabinet, sacked Patau from his cabinet post on 27 September 1995. The SNAP supreme council subsequently suspended him from the party's membership indefinitely. Patau retaliated by resigning from the party on 16 August 1996, a day after DUN was dissolved. He immediately also announced his candidature as an independent for the Tasik Biru seat. He subsequently joined the newly formed State Reform Party (STAR), but was unable to contest under its banner as the party could not be registered in time, for the polls. Tasik Biru was Patau's hometown. He was a Bidayuh intellectual and professional. He had built a large personal following in the place as a result of his practice, political career, and family and ethnic ties. For the SBN, Tasik Biru was considered the most precarious of all the constituencies. Moreover the SBN decided to pit a political novice, Peter Nansian anak Ngusie against the veteran. Peter Nansian, who was a Bidayuh himself, and who worked as assistant manager with the Bintulu Development Authority, was quickly brought in as the BN-SNAP candidate. To make matters worse, it was reported during the height of the election campaign, that "some" independent candidates in Tasik Biru were claiming that they had the support of top federal BN leaders, including the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad and the Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.¹⁸

THE STAKES FOR BN COMPONENT PARTIES

Despite the confidence therefore, the SBN was facing potential problems in particular areas. The SUPP was also riddled by internal intrigue. Some observers were already warning the SUPP of complacency. The SBN leadership was extremely sensitive to the problems at hand and, except for ignoring the SUPP problem, left no stones unturned in taking counter offensive measures to minimize inter-party mistrust and a possible swing of votes to the opposition arising out of the campaign strategies of the independents. For individual BN parties it meant clinching all the allocated seat at all cost. Losing seats meant a reduction of seats allocated in the next election, a loss of power vis-à-vis the component parties and less bargaining power for cabinet posts.

To kill all speculation concerning the position of successful independents after the elections, Taib Mahmud categorically announced that they would not be accepted into the government. This was reinforced by Leo Moggie who stressed that former BN members who contested as independent candidates would not be re-admitted into the BN fold. It was however not enough disclaiming support for ex-party members. Component BN parties, especially their leaders, had to display their sincerity by tangible support. This often took the form of component party-led campaigns in support of fellow-party candidates.

THE BN OFFENSIVE

As a whole the BN campaign was pretty hectic relentless and massive; but in the "hot" constituencies nothing was left to chance. The Tasik Biru constituency for example, was singled out for particular concentration. The whole weight of the BN election machinery, including, support from federal BN leaders, was thrown into the affray. In fact Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister, himself came personally on 5 September to Tasik Biru to lend support to the SBN campaign. His visit was of utmost importance for the SBN as it was a demonstration to the voters that Patau's claims of federal support were bogus. Anwar however was very diplomatic. He advised Patau to let a new man, Peter Nansian, serve the Bidayuh now that Patau was no more with the government. They were still friends he said, but were now in different political camps. Dismissing the politics of confrontation as a thing of the past, he was of the view that it was now "time for politics of reconciliation"¹⁹

THE PBDS AND THE POLITICS OF RECONCILIATION

For the PBDS, the 1996-state election was significant for three things. One concerned winning back the confidence of the members of the state coalition. The slightest suspicion of betrayal, or sabotage would land the party in serious jeopardy. The party therefore had not only to honour, but give substance to the rules of the politics of reconciliation. It must be acknowledged that the PBDS took special care in cultivating the goodwill of the other member-parties of the SBN by such measures as forcing its own members to resign if they stood as independents; by refusing to lend any support to such candidates; and by conducting election campaigns for non-PBDS Barisan Nasional candidates. Secondly the PBDS sought to obtain an endorsement, especially from its Iban supporters, of its controversial decision to rejoin the SBN after having fought a bitter war against the state government beginning in 1987. Explaining this turnabout had been a painful process. The PBDS leadership intensified and justified its explanations in terms of Malaysianising the Dayak dream. Both Leo Moggie and James Masing campaigned that Dayakism had not only failed, but was a mistake—the Ibans were too scattered and too divided. PBDS's new thrust therefore, according to James Masing, was as follows:²⁰

We prefer to talk about coming under the bumiputra umbrella now. It's better and larger as it has a moderate effect. When on talks of Dayakism, there is always the danger of extremism.

Emphasising the politics of integrating the Dayaks into the Malaysian mainstream, the "Malaysian Family", James Masing quipped that the thrust of the campaign this time would be national unity where the drums of Bangsa Malaysia [not bangsa Dayak drums!] would beat louder.²¹ It was of paramount importance therefore for PBDS to score a 100% success by capturing the eight seats it was contesting as a demonstration that it still commanded the Iban hinterland.

The third consideration was consolidating its position in the state cabinet. This issue was deployed both as a polls strategy and as an objective. As a campaign strategy, Leo Moggie impressed upon the Iban voter the urgency of returning all the six PBDS candidates as it would strengthen the party's negotiating position for more portfolios in the state cabinet. Campaigning in Kanowit Leo Moggie predicted that the prospects of all the PBDS candidates winning their

seats was bright. He was therefore confident that the Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud would increase PBDS' representation in the state cabinet after the elections were over.²² This was a powerful suggestion to the Iban voter. The desire to increase its representation in the government was but a logical objective of the politics of reconciliation.

SUPP: OVERCONFIDENCE BRED COMPLACENCY

The Sarawak BN machinery therefore was geared for allout assault in such "hot" seats as Bukit begunan and Tasik Biru. The SUPP was not considered to be in danger as its main challenger was the DAP which had an unimpressive track record in Sarawak state elections. The SUPP was also challenged in a few seats by independents, but none of them had the charisma and political clout as Donald Lawan and Patau Rubis. The only seats where the SUPP expected some tough opposition were Padungan and Bengoh. In Padungan the incumbent, Datuk Song Swee Guan of SUPP was challenged by Ng Kim Ho of the DAP and Eric Lee an independent. In Bengoh a bidayuh majority seat neighbouring Tasik Biru, WilliamTanyuhak Nub, the SUPP incumbent was involved in a four-cornered fight with three independents. Though both the SUPP candidates had strong grassroots support, the DAP was expected to provide a tough challenge in Padungan as it was the only seat contested by the said party in Kuching. Bengoh could be affected by the spillover of the Patau Rubis and Bidayuh factors.²³

With the exception of some problems in these two seats, the SUPP was considered unassailable in the rest of the 15 constituencies. Yet not everything sounded well with the party. Some political observers forwarned that there was an 'inner struggle' going on between the two groups dominating SUPP politics; the Hokkiens and Foochows. One observer believed that the SUPP had become complacent and had consequently become "less responsive to the grassroots aspirations".²⁴ There were also accusations in the papers that Ekran Berhad executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing was backing independent candidates against the SUPP in Meradong. Pek Khiing vehemently denied these accusations.²⁵ Further proof that something was seriously amiss with the SUPP was the bewildering and unnerving news that the party president Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Wong Soon Kai and another SUPP stalwart, Datuk Wong Soon Koh received mafia - style death threats on the eve of the polls. Both were warned

not to stand in their respective nominated seats of Bukit Assek and Bawang Assan.²⁶

THE POLL RESULTS

The election results confirmed what was expected – a landslide victory for the SBN; but they also produced many shockers. Overall, the SBN captured 57 seats; the DAP three and independents two.²⁷ One stunning news was that the independent favourites', Donald Lawan and Patau Rubis went down to comparative novice BN candidates.²⁸ The sheer might of the BN election machinery and the politics of reconciliation ultimately sealed the fate of these two independents in the said constituencies. Equally unexpected was the victory of two independents who did not receive the limelight given to Donald Lawan and Patau Rubis. These two personalities were Yu Chu Lik who defeated the SUPP candidate in Maradong and Keping Wan (former political secretary to the chief minister) who defeated the BN-PBB candidate in Telang Usan.²⁹

But the greatest shock of all was the defeat of the SUPP chairman, Wong Soon Kai in Bukit Assek at the hands of an unknown DAP candidate, Wong Ho Leng by a majority of 226 votes. The DAP on the other hand created history by not only unseating Wong Soon Kai, but by capturing three state seats in a row and by for making its debut in the State Assembly for the first time in 18 years.³⁰

THE ELECTION RESULTS

Performance by the Sarawak Barisan Nasional Parties

Party	Seats Allocated	Seats Won	Seats Lost
PBB	30	29	1
SUPP	17	13	4
PBDS	8	8	0
SNAP	7	7	0
Total for SBN	62	57	5

Seats Won By Different Political Parties

Party	Seats Won
SBN	57
DAP	3
Independents	2
Total	62

CONCLUSION

The politics of reconciliation which became the backbone of the SBN's political philosophy in the 1996 election symbolized and affirmed a number of major phases in the history of the political culture of the state. Firstly it marked the end of the possibility of the Dayaks ever catapulting to power in the state purely on the basis of Dayak strength – either upon the aspirations of Dayakism or on the basis of Dayak majority seats. The fire of Dayakism, even at its height in 1987 and 1991 could not and did not, unite the Dayaks. By 1996 not only was this fire almost extinguished, but the slow reduction of Dayak majority seats to about 20 out of 62 state constituencies in the on-going delineation exercise sealed the fate of Dayakism. In the 1996 election, the politics of reconciliation had reduced the danger of a strong opposition from the Ibans. There was however a strong possibility that resentment might come from the Bidayuh because of the Patau Rubis factor. The results of the election showed otherwise: the Bidayuh voted for the SBN. It was a fitting analysis therefore when Taib Mahmud commented that the electorate had rejected the politics of factionalism (I would say the politics of ethnic nationalism).

Secondly, the politics of reconciliation and the 1996 election symbolized a trend towards an end to the severe partisanism that had existed for a long time within the bumiputra community along Malay-Muslim/Dayak lines. The PBDS now favoured operating within the context of a bigger bumiputera umbrella. For Taib Mahmud and the PBB it was a confirmation of the validity of their united bumiputera policy and the politics of development.

Thirdly, the politics of reconciliation have produced a paradox in Sarawak politics. For while there seems to be a patchup in the bumiputera camp, the

Chinese camp seems to have begun to split either on Hokkien-Foochow lines, or on SUPP-DAP lines. Nevertheless, as an observation and on a comparative note with Sabah, it would appear that the politics of consolidation would describe the developments in Sarwak, while "politics of attrition" may fit in well with the scene in Sabah. The politics of reconciliation is a phase, but a vital and significant watershed in the overall movement towards "the politics of consolidation" in Sarawak.

NOTE

- 1 *The Straits Times*, 30 September 1999, and *Sarawak Tribune*, 30 September 1999.
- 2 *Berita Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak*, February 1992, Bil. 0001/02/92.,p.1.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
- 4 *The Star*, 25 November 1993.
- 5 *The Star*, 6 January 1994.
- 6 *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 June 1994.
- 7 *The Star*, 16 August 1996.
- 8 *The Star*, 17 August 1996.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 It is interesting to note that James Wong Kim Min, president of SNAP claimed a similar honour for SNAP saying, "We may not be the king but we are the king-makers". *Sunday Star*, 11 August 1996.
- 11 *The Star*, 16 and 17 August 1996.
- 12 *The Star*, 17 August 1996; and *The Borneo Post*, 7 September 1996.
- 13 *The Star*, 20, 21 and 23 August 1996.
- 14 One in Kuching, three in Sibü, and one each in Miri and Bintulu. *The Borneo Post*, 4 and 7 September 1996.
- 15 *Sarawak Tribune*, 5 September 1999.
- 16 *The Borneo Post*, 4 September 1996; and *Sarawak Tribune*, 5 September 1996.
- 17 *The Star*, 3 September 1996; and *Sarawak Tribune*, 5 and 6 September 1996.
- 18 *The Star*, 20, 23 August 1996 and 3 September 1996; *Sarawak Tribune*, 5 September 1996; and *The Borneo Post*, 7 September 1996.
- 19 *Sarawak Tribune*, 6 September 1996.
- 20 *The Star*, 17 August 1996.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*, 9 September 1996.
- 23 *The Borneo Post*, 7 September 1996.
- 24 Views expressed by writers Diana Rose and Wong Chun Wai in a special supplement on the Sarawak State elections, 1996. *The Star*, 17 August 1996.
- 25 *The Borneo Post*, 4 September 1996; and *Sarawak Tribune*, 10 September 1996.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 7 September 1996.
- 27 *Sarawak Tribune*, 9 September 1996.
- 28 *The Borneo Post*, 9 September 1996.

- 29 *Sarawak Tribune*, 9 September 1996.
- 30 *The Borneo Post*, 9 September 1996.