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Strong stand on subversives a must

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FOR four years, as Malaysia's special envoy to the United Nations in New York (1996-2000), I had no direct contact though I did keep a close watch on developments at home.

I had been home since May, and to appreciate the current situation, I had to do a lot of relearning in order to understand why the Barisan National Government which had done so well all these years, suffered the way it did.

The Government as well as Umno have had many discussions on plans to regain the support of the people, especially the young.

The Minister of Youth and Sports Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein intimated to me last week about the current position and trends affecting youth, in particular the Bumiputera.

Hishammuddin is right: We cannot afford to ignore them for they can, in the next election, ignore us.

Field Marshall Lord Montgomery once told Churchill and Oliver Lyttleton (Colonial Secretary) that to win the emergency in Malaya, the British Government must have a plan and a "supremo" to carry out that plan to the desired conclusion.

Field Marshall (then General) Sir Gerald Templer, the most dynamic British general, was appointed "supremo" to lead the war against the Communists in 1952 - combining both civil and military powers in his hands.

Within two years, Templer turned the tide against the militant Communists, and three years afterwards, Malaya became independent.

As the Government searches for solutions to arrest and contain the political trends, if not wipe out the growth of political opportunism and virulent hate campaigns aimed at evoking the "mystico-militancy" of the young Malay Muslim, perhaps it is high time it took a really tough and no-nonsense stand against the demonisation of everything that is good, multi-racial, tolerant and harmonious.

Whatever the Government does against the Al-Ma'unah, the opposition and the Western meddlers would want to know why Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad did what he did.

Dr Mahathir should treat these Western meddlers as Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who will be calling on him in less than 20 days, always did.

The matter in the case of Al-Ma'unah is simple: A crime against the State and punishment. Criminals, agitators and the enemies of the State and those with intent to topple the Government had to be taught not to repeat their actions so that they would think twice about doing so.

For sure, some of the Al-Ma'unah members are courting excuses to die as martyrs or syahid. Last Friday, hundreds of pro-Pas students at the University of Malaya staged protests against two pop concerts at Stadium Negara and called for jihad to protect the sanctity of Islam (what against pop concerts?).

A poster reads Andai kita terkorban nanti, percayailah syahid menanti kita (Heaven awaits martyrs).

They called for the shedding of blood to impose their will on the majority of Malaysians when the population is only half-Muslim. Imagine if these people ever came to power.

The Government must learn from Singapore how to deal severely with any

religious group which is out at first to destabilise society, then start a revolution, capture the Government and lastly round up their enemies and ministers to shoot or hang them. Then a theocratic State will rule.

What happened in Grik and Sauk was disgraceful. What was exposed by Dr Mahathir is very disturbing and frightening.

Al-Ma'unah members, many of whom are Pas members, were ready to die as martyrs, according to their narrow perception of jihad, in their attempted and failed attack on the Batu Caves Hindu temple and the Carlsberg brewery in Shah Alam.

Pas, Al-Ma'unah and their sympathisers, from their utterances and statements, had indicated they are not on all fours with our present form of Government and want, instead, an Iranian-type of Government - a system rather popular with young Islamists and Pas members.

A militant Islam and theocratic nation is the luxury that only a country with a huge majority of Muslims can afford.

The majority of moderate Muslims and other Malaysians are happy with the present mode of Government in respect of religion and politics. Nothing more nothing less, otherwise either way it will spark trouble.

What is occurring in Malaysian politics is very, very dangerous, the direction of which is predictable unless it is checked drastically and fast.

Its development imperils national security and inter-racial and religious harmony which can eventually lead to the disintegration of our melting pot.

There is no doubt that Pas' politics of hate which starts early - from its kindergartens to the civil service corridors and even in the private sector - has borne fruit.

The politics of the Al-Ma'unah movement and that of the other satellite organisations are perhaps an extension of an irrational extremism (which unfortunately appeals to many misguided people) and militancy within Pas itself.

There are slaughters being carried out in the name of religion in Maluku islands and in Algeria. The Government must act now rather than later to stop similar situations ever happening here.

The terrorists, using Islam as a cloak, had jeopardised the security of the nation, committed torture and murder.

They deserve to be dealt with severely under Malaysian laws, and if necessary, even be detained under the Internal Security Act.

My colleagues and I were wrongly detained under the ISA in 1976 (admittedly by an ambitious politician - "Ghulam" - who had thought detaining us would catapult him into the Umno leadership in 1978).

I know what it was like to be in a political prison for five years, two of which were in solitary confinement - being deprived of even the most basic things and rights, degraded, assaulted and even tortured in some instances.

Still, I believe the use of the ISA and other emergency regulations is not only justified, but called for if the Government feels it is absolutely necessary to use these measures to arrest the dangerous trend that will, if unchecked with haste, turn this beautiful country into Maluku islands or worse, an extreme theocratic nation.

Pas, which openly advocates as does Al-Ma'unah, turning racially, delicately-balanced Malaysia into an Islamic nation in the fashion of either Iran or Afghanistan, and at best Saudi Arabia, won overwhelming control of Trengganu and regained Kelantan very easily in the November 1999 general election. It also won 27 seats in Parliament.

Pas now wants to capture the central Government. If it cannot do so through elections, and it knows it cannot, then its militantly-

indoctrinated young members and sympathisers will strive to cause civil strife and even commit assassinations.

Our multi-racial and moderate values and lifestyles are now under seige, which is evident everywhere.

I must be fair. Pas' indulgent attitude towards the Al-Ma'unah group is true to form. After all, as Dr Mahathir had observed, it is the direct consequence of Pas and its sympathisers' active overt and covert campaign of hatred against the Government, especially through Friday sermons and religious lectures.

As Dr Mahathir had said, the level of gravity is high. To them, actions speak louder than words.

The Government must not play down the gravity of the situation. Speak up and act fast and boldly.

Now, Malaysians, including Malay-Bumiputra know what Pas and Al-Ma'unah plan to do with the nation. And unless you are one of them, you are in peril.

Tough measures must be enforced by the authorities to sustain and enhance law and order in our society.

Dr Mahathir, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in his capacity as heir-apparent and Home Affairs Minister and Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin (he must provide the money) must take a very strong stand against aggressive militant subversives of any hue.

They must also act against those who either overtly or covertly support these destructive and subversive elements.

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