

the national levels as well as in every town, village and kampong. There is no magic short-cut to success in our National Development but I am confident that with mutual trust and co-operation, goodwill and hard-work and determination on the part of all of us, both Governments and the people, Malaysia will continue to develop from strength to strength in order that our people will have a proper and rightful place in our country.

DEMOCRACY AT WORK IN MALAYSIA

HOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED NATIONAL UNITY

Democracy and Development in South East Asia was the subject of a Seminar held at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya on 21st February, 1966. In declaring open this seminar, Tun Abdul Razak made several interesting observations which are reproduced here. Delegates from India, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore and Australia were present.

We are all now at the crucial cross-roads of history but the choice between freedom and progress in all its aspects and totalitarian rule under which the people's hopes and aspirations for a happier, healthier and richer life are blunted in the midst of ignorance, poverty and disease.

Geographically South East Asia's strategic importance has long been recognised by all the great powers of the world. Because of this, peace and prosperity, security and stability of this region are of paramount consideration not only to all of us here but internationally in preserving democracy.

Never has militant Communist inroad in the name of equality, freedom and nationalism threatened with its open aggression, infiltration and subversion in certain countries of South East Asia the orderly development and progress of those countries.

With Communist China's emergence as a great military power a threat is posed not only to us in this region but to other parts of the world as well. So far pro-Peking forces are only active in

Vietnam and Laos but knowing the nature of militant Communist expansion we can expect further aggression to take place.

In this connection we have no time for philosophical resignation nor do we have any respect for the attitude of despair shown by some countries. Our role must be to dispel unwanted pessimism and to reaffirm by our policy that democracy can provide a better way of solving the social and economic problems of this region than militant and aggressive Communism can ever hope to do.

This Seminar signifies democracy in that so many of us from different friendly countries can come together and talk freely and frankly the way we wish our country to be governed and developed for the benefit of our people.

It is our view that the two greatest antidotes to counteract the poison of militant Communist penetration and subversion, is the practice of democracy and the implementation of a sound national development plan. In the practice of democracy it may not be possible, particularly, in a developing country like ours to move ahead so fast and achieve a standard of democratic practice as it has been attained in a more highly developed country in the free world because many of these countries have been practising democracy for centuries and the techniques that they have acquired were only attained after years and years of trial, error and experience. Therefore it is sometimes necessary for the practice of democracy to be modified from time to time, from country to country, in order to suit different national needs in different national transitional periods.

Assuming that the ultimate aim to be achieved in the practice of democracy is the principle that the people of our countries, the citizens and voters of a free democratic nation are the exclusive source of political authority and their consent is the foundation of the power of Government then I think that this basic principle of democracy is the one thing which will ensure the peace, prosperity and sensible leadership of the entire world.

Forexample, although I am myself, a democratically elected leader I find that the most sobering influence of the actions of a political leader is the fact that once every so many years on returning to the voters for a new mandate in order to continue governing the country the best record of leadership and purpose must be held up to the judgement of all citizens eligible to vote.

Therefore in democratic practice all political leaders who offer their services to the nation for another term of office have got to hold their breath while the people themselves decide. This breath holding is itself a good antidote to reckless dictatorship and misguided political leadership.

I would like to say that the launching of democratic way of life after the ending of colonial rule in Malaya and later Malaysia was perhaps more difficult because there were circumstances which apply particularly to Malaysia and perhaps do not exist in many other countries. These circumstances were two-fold. First, we had to build our democracy within a framework of a Federation of States like those of you in Australia know and our friends in America know even better. Government by federation can be cumbersome, can be frictional and can be frustrating unless and until it is maintained on a basis of maximum mutual understanding of its complement parts so that the parochial and local interests are made wherever necessary to become subservient to the higher interests of national benefit and national progress for the entire Federation as a whole.

The second circumstance which applies to Malaysia but does not apply necessarily to some other democratic nations which are lucky in that they comprise entirely of people of the same ethnic group, of the same language and of the same religion. But we here in Malaysia, in launching our democratic way of life immediately after independence, have to act and apply democratic principles almost three dimensional without at the same time lessening our national determination of development within a framework of a democratic way of life.

Not only did we have to learn methods of governing a Federation. we also had to learn the technique and skill of handling a mixed community and apply democracy with an electorate comprising Malays, Chinese. Indians and others and then blend this mixture into a mature nation. Malaysian in outlook. Malaysian in aim and altitude and back-stocked by a form of Federation so that we could forge forward in our democratic destiny.

Yet in spite of these circumstances I am happy to stand here today and say with modesty that both democracy and development in Malaysia have got off to a very good start. Perhaps the same principles which require to be learned for the successful working

of a democratic Federation such as Malaysia are the same principles which will guarantee stability, democratic development and prosperity in South East Asia and these principles are based on the same determination to achieve the maximum mutual understanding, together with the ability to accentuate our similarities with the definite positive attempt to follow the areas of mutual agreement and the determination to minimise our differences.

What is required in my view to achieve this is a type of moderate and balanced leadership which will focus the attention of our people on the main ideal of mutual understanding and the major goals of development so that the greater aims of our destiny are forever foremost, and our petty differences appear trivial against the back-drop of the greater task to be achieved.

To us in Malaysia and I hope a similar realisation everywhere else the need is urgent and ever evident for people who cherish freedom and peace to give force and momentum in preaching and practising democracy that will gather fervour and faith and, if necessary, the will and determination to fight in its defence. In other words democracy must be regarded as an ideology to be taught and exemplified. Therefore in the common interest of all of us there is need for better unity among the people of this region and of Asia as a whole. The achievement of this unity is a challenge; a unity of practical co-operation for which we have the capacity and resources to build.

We cannot be isolated from one another and the peace and prosperity in our region is of concern to all of us not only in our interest but in the interest of the world in whose affairs we now have an increasingly important part to play. It was in the pursuit of this regional co-operation that our Prime Minister proposed the formation of the Association of South East Asia in 1961. Though ASA has suffered some initial setback it is hoped that its importance will be realised soon and that other countries friendly to us, dedicated to peace and progress would join the Association.

ASA has already proved itself a constructive ideal and the only practical idea that can benefit all the members in a wide sphere of co-operation and friendly relation. In ASA, we can claim to have made constructive efforts in regional co-operation.

Let us contribute to the stability of South East Asia through social and economic progress by carrying out policies of goodwill and co-operation.

It is now recognised that regional co-operation is one of the best means of economic progress as well as the best guarantee of political independence. There is need for every peace loving nation in South East Asia to work and co-operate with one another in their efforts for economic progress or for other purposes on the basis of mutual interest and for the future peace and well-being of our region. Malaysia's foreign policy is primarily directed to the strengthening of relationship with foreign countries and the neutralisation of forces hostile to us. All of us must feel that there is room for everyone and that we can live in peace with one another provided of course we respect one another's rights, provided too, we realise that we owe one another for the good and well-being, the progress and happiness based on the peace and security of this region.

As I said in Malaysia we have achieved national unity of our multi-racial society through the practice of democratic institution in which our national policies are all geared to create a Malaysian consciousness and our action in the fields of economic development and social services is the reflection of our desire to preserve this institution for the happiness and well-being of our people. The successful working of democracy is due to tolerance and goodwill of our people of many racial origins living and working together in a healthy spirit of friendship and co-operation.

Ours in an age of extraordinary fluidity in South East Asia where our interest must be constantly assessed and re-defined to meet the desire of our people and in order that our free institution is safeguarded. There must be a continuous search for peace and happiness and a smug satisfaction with the existing state of affairs can only lead to difficulties and disaster. Apart from good leadership we must have the ability to govern the speed and nature of change taking place around us. What is called a great social revolution is happening now but by revolution I do not mean the too familiar slogan chanting revolution which means hunger, chaos and disturbance.

A nation's greatness is not prompted by empty shouting. We in Malaysia are content only with a silent revolution and the success of our development programme is a living testimony to

the righteousness of the course through which we have steered our nation following independence.

In the field of development, most countries nowadays have the expert means to produce sound economic national development plans but plans in themselves are of no value unless they can be fully implemented and financed.

With regard to the implementation of Development we have in Malaysia tried to evolve our own technique of translating our Development Plan, from paper into action, in order to achieve results on the ground.

With regard to the financing of Development and the raising of funds to give the people of South-east Asia, both urban and rural, a better way of life, it seems to me a wanton waste of money to have to pour funds into tanks and training for military purposes directed at death, when they could be directed towards Development.

I am sure that all delegates of this Seminar, from our fellow freedom-loving nations of South-east Asia, will agree with me that in our mutual desire to see Democracy and Development thrive in this part of the world, we only ask the Communists to allow us one thing, and that is to leave us alone to run and develop our own countries.

If they do not agree with our democratic way of life, and our sincere desire for Development, they should at least have the courtesy to *co-exist* with us rather than ruining the peace and prosperity of the world with their aggressive ambitions.

I don't care about Socialism. Communism. neo-Colonialism or Capitalism. I give you what is the most important-ism not only in Malaysia but in South East Asia today. It is Alliance-ism. It is the unity of purpose of every clear-thinking citizen of this country. It is an example to the world of what real progress can be made. Development is our defence, discord is our danger. Give us your support together we will secure the destiny of Malaysia!

— *Tun Razak speaking on National Development in April, 1960*