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& CO. (SINGAPORE)

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THE
MAY
13
TRAGEDY

A REPORT

THE NATIONAL
OPERATIONS
COUNCIL

KUALA LUMPUR
9TH OCTOBER, 1969

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28 FEB 2000
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

PREFACE

May 13, 1969 will go down in our history as a day of national tragedy. On that day the very foundation of this Nation was shaken by racial disturbances whose violence far surpassed any we had known. It was only the firm and prompt action of the Government, together with the loyal support of the Armed Forces and the Police, which quickly brought the situation under control. Had it not been for the immediate preventive measures, there is no doubt that the whole country would have been plunged into a holocaust.

For some of us the tragedy has a direct and personal meaning. But the significance of that day does not, and should not be allowed to, escape any one of us. On that day we were jolted into a sharp realisation that the racial problem in this country is a serious one and measures taken in the past to cope with it have not proved adequate.

Friction had always existed at the edges of the various communities, but we continued to live in the hope that the heat generated would not reach an explosive level. This faith in the good sense of every Malaysian, and our belief in the virtues of unfettered democratic processes, characterised the conduct of our affairs since Merdeka. We assumed that those who chose to participate in public life would understand the delicate realities of our society and consequently recognise the need for a certain degree of restraint and

maturity in their activities. It does not take much to realise that there are forces existing in our midst—the Communist agents, the secret societies, the communal extremists—who are out to disrupt our way of life for their own ends.

It was deeply saddened, therefore, to see the turn of events preceding the last General Elections. All the destructive forces were out: candidates courting support on racial lines with reckless abandon; Communist agents in the Labour Party turning a funeral into an arrogant Maoist slogan-shouting demonstration; and secret society members working with quiet but deadly efficiency in generating fear, inciting racial feelings and distributing weapons. These three ingredients made an explosive combination, and the Government sought to separate them and did everything possible to avert bloodshed.

During the campaign a number of Opposition candidates attacked the Constitution in racist terms. They twisted and misrepresented certain provisions in the Constitution, principally Articles 152 and 153. They agitated for the removal of Article 153 which provides safeguards for the special position of the Malays. This caused grave misapprehensions among the Malays. Malay extremist candidates, on the other hand, campaigned on the most far-out and impracticable proposals—of having a purely Malay Government—ignoring the multi-racial realities of our society and thereby caused much worry among the non-Malays.