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'Beware lest the people are divided'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The future is bright — but beware lest the people are divided.

This advice was given by the last British adviser to Selangor, Frederick Victor Duckworth, more than 50 years ago but it still remains relevant today.

Speaking on the eve of his premature return to Britain in May 1956 due to severe heart problems, Duckworth had warned that apart from the threat of communism, the only serious danger for the federation would arise from the divisions among its own people.

Duckworth may not be around to witness the country's growth in the last 50 years, but his 65-year-old daughter Rosemary Duckworth is here to honour her father's efforts.

Rosemary, who is here with some friends, said her father's concerns about potential disunity among the people of Malaya stemmed from what he experienced in India as a boy.

"My father's biggest horror was what happened in India. He grew up at the foothills of the Himalayas during the Amritsar Massacre. And then, there was the enormous clash between the Muslims and the Hindus leading up to the partition in 1947.

"And so, he was very cognisant of what could happen here," she told the *New Straits Times*.

Duckworth had also aimed to correct the belief among certain quarters that the British advisers were in the habit of giving political advice with the intention of furthering British interests.

Instead, he said the advisers, who commonly had between 25 and 30

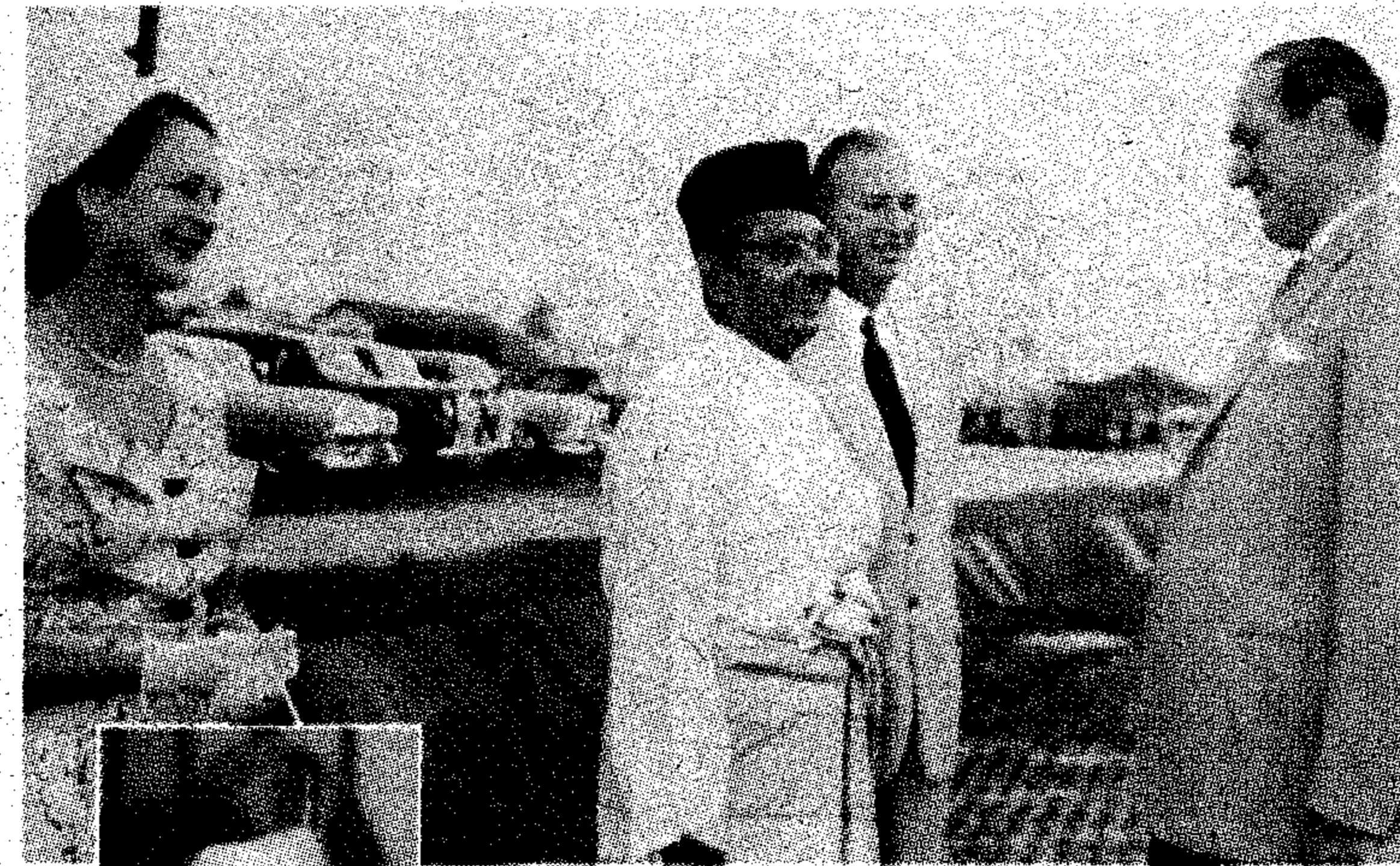
years' experience in the country, imparted considerable administrative experience and knowledge for the effective running of the state.

Duckworth, who was made adviser in 1953, was not replaced in accordance with the agreement reached at the Merdeka talks in London.

This paved the way for Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was the country's chief minister at the time, to move into the Residency — the official residence of the British adviser.

Duckworth, who arrived in Malaya in 1924, rose through the ranks, holding the posts of district officer, magistrate and commissioner for labour before he was made adviser to Selangor in 1953.

He escaped the Japanese invasion in Singapore in 1942 but returned in September 1945 with Lord Mountbatten under Operation Zipper.



Tunku Abdul Rahman with the last British adviser to Selangor, Frederick Victor Duckworth (right) and his wife Margaret. (Inset) Rosemary Duckworth