

SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE BOOK "THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY REVISITED
1948-1960" AT MUZIUM KESENIAN ISLAM, KUALA LUMPUR,
9 MAY 2006

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO THIS LAUNCH TODAY. I BELIEVE IT IS ONE OF MALAYSIA'S MOST POIGNANT AND IMPORTANT HISTORICAL PERIODS. THE EVENTS WHICH TRANSPIRED DURING THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY RADICALLY SHAPED MALAYSIA'S HISTORY. IT PLAYED A LARGE PART IN PUSHING THE PEOPLE OF MALAYA TO UNITE AND CLAIM INDEPENDENCE FROM COLONIALISM AND AT THE SAME TIME, WRESTLE FREE FROM COMMUNIST TERRORISM. I WAS A 9 YEAR OLD BOY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EMERGENCY PERIOD AND WAS 21 YEARS OLD BY THE TIME IT ENDED. I STILL HAVE VIVID RECOLLECTIONS OF THAT CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS PERIOD, AND REALISE HOW FAR WE HAVE COME AND HOW MUCH WE HAVE ACHIEVED.

2. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT SINCE THEN, MANY BOOKS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE EMERGENCY, BUT MOSTLY BY FOREIGN AUTHORS. WHEN DATO' MUTALIB AND DATO' IQBAL FIRST CAME TO SEE ME ABOUT LAUNCHING A BOOK ON THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY, THE THOUGHT DID CROSS MY MIND: "ONE MORE BOOK ABOUT THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY?". I WAS TOLD, HOWEVER, THAT THIS BOOK WOULD BE DIFFERENT, AND I AM PLEASED TO SAY TODAY THAT IT MOST CERTAINLY IS.

3. THIS BOOK LENDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY. IT IS IN A VIVID PICTORIAL FORM, AND IT HAS A NARRATIVE BY MALAYSIANS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN FIGHTING OUR OWN WAR OF TERROR AGAINST THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA, AND HOW THAT WAR WAS WON BY THE HEART AND MINDS CAMPAIGN. THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS GENERATION IS NOT ONLY A MEMORY, BUT A HERITAGE THAT HAS TO BE TOLD AND RETOLD, ESPECIALLY TO OUR YOUNGER GENERATION, WHO MAY NOT KNOW OR REALISE THE EXTENT OF SACRIFICES THAT WERE MADE BY THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA TO PRESERVE PEACE AND SECURITY. THE PEACE AND STABILITY WE ENJOY NOW ARE BUT THE RESULT OF THE FIRM FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF OUR NATION. AND THE STRUGGLES DURING THE EMERGENCY PERIOD WERE JUST THE BEGINNING OF THAT FOUNDATION.

4. THE INSPIRATION AND PASSION OF DATO' MUTALIB AND DATO' IQBAL HAVE RESULTED IN PROBABLY THE FIRST PICTORIAL NARRATIVE OF THE EMERGENCY. I AM HAPPY TO LAUNCH A BOOK WHICH WILL ADD VALUE TO MALAYSIAN HISTORY.

THE VALUE AND ORIGINALITY OF THE BOOK ARE ALSO ENHANCED BY DILIGENT EFFORTS TO SOURCE RARE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EMERGENCY PERIOD FROM DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS AND COUNTRIES. A PICTURE INDEED TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS, AND THESE PICTURES THEN TELL A THOUSAND STORIES. WHEN I LOOKED THROUGH THIS BOOK, I AM TRANSPORTED ONCE AGAIN TO A PERIOD WHEN THE SEEDS OF NATIONALISM WERE TAKING ROOT AS A RESULT OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION, AS WELL AS WHEN ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD BEGAN TO FLOWER. THIS BOOK ALSO REMINDS US OF THE ATROCITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE, FOR WHICH WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER.

5. THOSE WHO KNOW ABOUT THE EMERGENCY AND LIVED THROUGH IT WILL APPRECIATE HOW WELL THE BOOK CAPTURES, BOTH BY IMAGE AND WORDS, THIS PERIOD OF DANGER AND ANXIETY. I AM SURE THESE PICTURES WILL BRIGHTEN THE FADING MEMORIES OF THE OLDER GENERATION. NO DOUBT THESE PICTURES WILL ALSO ENLIGHTEN THE YOUNGER GENERATION WHO HAVE NO MEMORY OF THE EMERGENCY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

6. THIS EVENT IS AN OCCASION FOR US TO REMEMBER AND HONOUR, ONCE AGAIN, THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR SWEAT, THEIR TEARS, EVEN THEIR LIVES, TO THE CAUSE OF DEFENDING OUR COUNTRY AGAINST COMMUNIST TERRORISTS. WE REMEMBER AND HONOUR NOT ONLY OUR OWN SECURITY FORCES, BUT ALSO THOSE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES WHO SERVED HERE AND FOUGHT THE INSURGENCY SIDE BY SIDE WITH US. WE REMEMBER AND HONOUR NOT ONLY OUR POLICE AND ARMED FORCES FROM ALL FORMATIONS AND DIVISIONS, BUT ALSO THE ORDINARY CIVILIANS WHO RESISTED THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA IN THE TOWNS, THE VILLAGES AND IN THE DEEP JUNGLE SETTLEMENTS. WE FEEL ONCE AGAIN FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND FOR THE LOVED ONES THEY LEFT BEHIND.

7. THE STABLE AND PROSPEROUS NATION THAT WE HAVE TODAY IS BUILT ON THE SACRIFICES OF THESE GALLANT MEN AND WOMEN, THEN AND NOW. THE STERLING PERFORMANCE OF OUR SECURITY FORCES DURING THE EMERGENCY YEARS, AND THEIR CONTINUED DEDICATION TODAY HAS ENABLED US TO PROGRESS THIS FAR. WERE IT NOT FOR THEM, WE WOULD NOT BE PRACTICING OUR DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE, WHICH THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA THREATENED. WE CONTINUE TO DO BATTLE AGAINST CRIME AND CORRUPTION, AND WE ARE DETERMINED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF OUR SECURITY FORCES. BUT WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT OUR CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES ARE GENERALLY SAFE AND THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES WITHOUT FEAR OR UNDUE CONCERN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

8. ANY BOOK ON A DEFINING MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF A NATION IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT AND WELCOME. BUT A BOOK ON THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL AT PRESENT GIVEN THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE WORLD WITH TERRORISM TODAY.

9. WHAT MEANING DOES THE 1948-1960 EMERGENCY HOLD FOR MALAYSIA AND MALAYSIANS?. INDEED, WHAT LESSONS CAN MALAYSIA AND THE WIDER WORLD DRAW FROM IT?. LET ME HIGHLIGHT JUST THREE.

10. THE FIRST, AND PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR MALAYSIANS, IS THAT WE MUST TREASURE THE PEACE AND THE STABILITY THAT WE NOW ENJOY. WE MUST NEVER AGAIN DESCEND INTO CONFLICT. IT IS EASY TO TAKE FOR GRANTED WHAT WE HAVE NOW. YOUNG MALAYSIANS ESPECIALLY, WHO HAVE NEVER WITNESSED ARMED CONFLICT, MAY NOT REALISE THE FULL WORTH OF THE PEACE THAT THEY HAVE KNOWN ALL ALONG. MALAYSIA IN FACT HAS EXPERIENCED NO LESS THAN FOUR EPISODES OF SERIOUS CONFLICT AND TURMOIL IN THE LAST CENTURY – THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION, THE THREAT FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA, KONFRONTASI, AND THE MAY 13 ETHNIC RIOTS. CONFLICTS TAKE A TERRIBLE TOLL ON LIVES, LIVELIHOODS AND RESOURCES. THEY SET US BACK MANY YEARS AND DECADES. SOME NATIONS NEVER RETURN TO NORMALCY. THEY IMplode AND BECOME LESS THAN THE SUM OF THEIR ORIGINAL PARTS. HOWEVER, SOME NATIONS BECOME STRONGER AND MORE UNITED. FORTUNATELY, MALAYSIA FALLS INTO THIS LATTER CATEGORY.

11. THE SECOND LESSON I WOULD TAKE FROM THE EMERGENCY AND FROM EXPERIENCE WITH TERRORISM ELSEWHERE, IS THAT TERRORISM AND TERRORISTS DO NOT BELONG TO ANY PARTICULAR ETHNIC GROUP, ANY PARTICULAR RELIGION, OR ANY PARTICULAR NATION. THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS, OR C.T.S. AS THEY WERE KNOWN, WERE MAINLY CHINESE, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE ALSO MALAYS AMONG THEM. THEY WERE NOT LABELED AS CHINESE TERRORISTS. THE COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY THEY PROPAGATED WAS A SECULAR, NOT A RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY. THIS FACT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO NOTE AS THESE DAYS, TERRORISM IS SEEN AS A RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON AND IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH ISLAM.

12. TERRORISM IS AN ACT OF ORGANISED VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS TO ACHIEVE A POLITICAL END. THIS METHOD HAS BEEN USED BY GROUPS REGARDLESS OF RELIGION, ETHNICITY, IDEOLOGY OR NATIONALITY. TERRORISM HAS BEEN PRACTICED BY MANY GROUPS – EUROPEAN, AMERICAN, AFRICAN AND ASIAN. IT IS A HUMAN REACTIONARY MECHANISM. TERRORISM HAS EXISTED AMONG NOT ONLY MUSLIMS, BUT ALSO CHRISTIANS, JEWS, HINDUS AND BUDDHISTS. THE TERRORISM THEY PRACTICED VIOLATED THE TEACHINGS OF THEIR RELIGIONS, FOR NO RELIGION CONDONES VIOLENT ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS. ISLAM IS CERTAINLY CLEAR ON THIS MATTER.

13. AND LET US NOT FORGET TOO, THAT TERRORISM CAN ALSO BE DRIVEN BY SECULAR IDEOLOGIES AND BY EXTREMISTS OF ALL KINDS. SOME OF THE WORST ACTS OF TERRORISMS AGAINST CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN PERPETRATED BY STATES, NOT GROUPS OF PEOPLE.

14. THEREFORE, MALAYSIA'S STAND ON TERRORISM IS VERY CLEAR. WE STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM THAT ACTS OF TERRORISM REPRESENT.

15. THE THIRD LESSON THAT WE LEARNT FROM THE EMERGENCY WAS THAT TERRORISM CANNOT BE DEFEATED BY MILITARY AND COERCIVE MEASURES ALONE. THIS FACT IS AMPLY ILLUSTRATED IN THE BOOK THAT WE ARE LAUNCHING TODAY. THE LESSON COULD NOT BE MORE RELEVANT FOR THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN WHICH MALAYSIA IS COOPERATING AND SUPPORTING.

16. TERRORISM MUST BE CONFRONTED WITH ALL THE INSTRUMENTS AT OUR DISPOSAL. INTELLIGENCE IS CRITICAL. WITHOUT INTELLIGENCE, WE CANNOT ASSESS THE ENEMY'S STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESSES OR KNOW WHEN THEY WILL STRIKE. OUR SPECIAL BRANCH HAS BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED AS ONE OF THE BEST INTELLIGENCE SERVICES IN THIS REGARD. DURING THE EMERGENCY PERIOD, WE ALSO LEARNT THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTIVE AND COERCIVE MEASURES, SUCH AS DENYING LOGISTIC SUPPORT TO THE ENEMY AND ENGAGING IN COMBAT.

17. BUT ABOVE ALL, WE LEARNT THAT WE COULD NEVER DEFEAT THE ENEMY WITHOUT ADDRESSING AND NEUTRALIZING THE FACTORS THAT DROVE PEOPLE TO TAKE UP ARMS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT WHEN THE MILITARY OR TERRORIST MOVEMENT IS RELATIVELY LARGE, AND DRAWS SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FROM THE PEOPLE, AS THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA ONCE DID. WE CANNOT DEFEAT IT WITHOUT TACKLING THE ROOT CAUSE AND THE GRIEVANCES THAT NOURISHED THE MOVEMENT. THIS IS THE "HEARTS AND MINDS" BATTLE STRATEGY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

18. WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO PREVAIL OVER THE COMMUNIST TERRORIST THREAT ONLY WHEN WE ADDRESSED THE TWO PRIMARY POLITICAL FACTORS THAT IT EXPLOITED. THEY WERE THE PEOPLE'S OPPOSITION TO COLONISATION AND THE LACK OF POLITICAL STATUS FOR THE CHINESE COMMUNITY. WHEN THE BRITISH LEFT AND THE CHINESE WERE GRANTED CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA HAD NO MORE ISSUES TO EXPLOIT. IT LOST THE FUNDAMENTAL PLATFORM OF ITS STRUGGLE AND WAS UNABLE TO GET SUPPORT OR SYMPATHY FOR ITS CAUSE. FROM THEN IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT SUCCUMBED.

19. SIMILARLY, THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM WILL NOT SUCCEED UNLESS WE CONFRONT THE FACTORS DRIVING IT AND MAKE THE NECESSARY DIFFICULT DECISIONS. IT WILL REQUIRE POLITICAL COURAGE. SO LONG AS WE CONTINUE TO DENY OR TO CONFUSE THE ISSUES IN ORDER TO AVERT ATTENTION FROM THE REAL ISSUES, INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM WILL PERSIST. THEY MAY EVEN GROW. WE WILL CONTINUE TO LOSE THE BATTLE FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES WILL MOUNT. COSTS WILL CONTINUE TO ESCALATE AND WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME UNSUSTAINABLE FOR ALL OF US IN THE WORLD.

20. WE MUST RESOLVE THE ISSUES OF PALESTINE AND IRAQ WITH CAREFUL THOUGHT AND REASONING. WE MUST END UNLAWFUL OCCUPATION, INJUSTICE, OPPRESSION AND MARGINALISATION OF PEOPLES WHEREVER THEY EXIST. ONLY THEN WILL INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM TRULY SUBSIDE. WE SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE AND SUCCESS IN OVERCOMING A PROTRACTED INSURGENCY WHICH ALMOST UNDERMINED OUR VERY INDEPENDENCE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

21. LET ME END THIS SPEECH BY AGAIN COMMENDING THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PRODUCING THIS BOOK. DATO' MUTALIB, DATO' IQBAL AND THE EDITORIAL BOARD HAVE DONE A SPLENDID JOB. THIS BOOK WILL BECOME A PART OF OUR DOCUMENTARY TREASURE. BY FAITHFULLY RECORDING A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF OUR PAST, THIS BOOK BUILDS UPON THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR NATION. AND BY DOING SO, IT CONTRIBUTES TO OUR FUTURE.

22. I THEREFORE TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN LAUNCHING THIS BOOK, "THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY REVISITED 1948-1960".

THANK YOU.