

MALAYSIA FACES THE FUTURE ADDRESS BY
Y.A.B. TUN ABDUL RAZAK AT THE INTERNATIONAL HOUSE,
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It is now nearly ten years that Malaysia has been independent, for about half that time under the name of Malaya. Ten years is perhaps but a breath in the human scheme of things, but these turbulent and anxious times in which we live do not allow nations the comfort of a sheltered childhood of the luxury of an irresponsible adolescence.

The facts of survival are thrust on us from that first moment when our flags were hoisted as the midnight hour chimed. Malaysia has had its share - more than a fair share, I would say - of trials and excitements in its brief independent life in which our will has been tempered, our faith steeled, our energy and our unity to the test in the task of defending our sovereignty and of consolidating our independence.

In retrospect we may perhaps be grateful for the fact that having been through the fire of militant Communism, we have, like steel been tempered to high degree of tangible strength. We have learnt to steel our nation against intrusion by Communist because we now stand, four square and sure, facing the future.

Ten years ago, when we became independent, we were still in the midst of a grim and wasteful struggle against in Malayan Communist Party which chose to foist a war on our people. Then we were swept up by the excitement of the birth of Malaysia, to be accompanied unfortunately by the senseless and frustrating confrontation of Malaysia by the old order in Indonesia.

These were fateful tests. But through all the anxiety and the demands of those years, we in Malaysia never allowed ourselves to forget even for one moment, that freedom means the freedom to deliver the goods or it means nothing, at best a meaningless, futile gesture.

It is easy to talk of revolution. It is easy to mesmerise the people with the rhetoric of revolution. It is equally easy for foreign observers to misjudge the tempo and temper of a revolution because they listen to what is said than see what is performed.

We in Malaysia are not adapt practitioners of the oratorical art. We prefer to act. We believe that the winds of freedom must not only destroy the debris of the old order but also release the creative energies of our people to work our ploughs and our machines.

We must build school and hospitals and roads and bridges; we must open up the land; we must find sources of industrial power; we must diversify our economy; we must revitalise our literature and our music and our art - we must plan; we must act, we must produce results. If we merely talk, if we merely seek to enjoy the gilt and glamour of independence, if we merely attempt to divert the frustrations of our people instead of meeting their expectations, then when that inevitable moment of retribution comes, we shall deserve no sympathy and no help for we shall have forfeited the faith of our own people.

Malaysia, as you know, lies in the heart of Southeast Asia and has historically been the bridge of communication and occupies a strategic position on the trade and the military routes, between East and West Asia, between Europe and East Asia, Europe and the Malay Archipelago generally, Europe and this island-continent of Australia and the Pacific are beyond.

This fact of geography is reflected in the composition of our population, which numbers about 10 million, of whom about half are Malays, 40% are of Chinese, origin, 10% of Indian and mixture of Kadazans, D yaks, Ibans, Europeans, Eurasians, Arabs, - indeed, I suppose practically all the races of the world.

We find this diversity exciting and stimulating and I should be sorry indeed if the fabric of Malaysian life was not woven of this tremendous admixture of different civilizations and cultures and talents. It would nevertheless be futile to deny that however vibrant and exciting may be the vision of the future of Malaysian society and Malaysian civilizations, the immediate problem of bringing together peoples of different races, different languages, different religions, and different cultures, each rightly proud of their ancient history and heritage, poses challenges and opportunities which are potentially charged with emotions.

One of the central issues in Malaysia today is therefore to make our society safe from adversity and to ensure that each of the racial components of the society is allowed all the opportunity to make its contribution in enriching the quality and meaning of all our lives.

The issue of race touches very deep chords indeed. The political dialogue on this question, therefore, must be conducted with a scrupulous regard for the sensitivities of all concerned. It must be a rational dialogue, free from passion and prejudice, and away from the heat of the inter - party struggle in the political arena. It can only be carried on in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence without dramatic statements and challenges in the press and other organs of publicity.

Destroy that atmosphere of faith and you destroy also the political dialogue. What is more, you cannot then go back

immediately as if nothing has happened because you have dangerously aroused and influenced emotions and you have destroyed the painstaking labour of many years.

You do not solve the immensely complex and highly emotional question of race relations by angry declamation and accusations in the full glare of publicity.

You solve it by working patiently and quietly on the ground, by removing the cause of friction and conflict, by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence, by working together without public pronouncements or consideration of party interest, in exploring, devising and implementing at all levels of the society, all possible ways of teaching the people and bringing them together.

An important element in ensuring that the society thinks in progressive and forward-looking terms is a healthy and expanding economy. As you know, among the developing countries of Asia and Africa, Malaysia has one of the highest standards of living, well ahead of a large majority of other states.

Unfortunately dependent on two major products, rubber and tin, which are subject to the fluctuation of demand in the international market. Malaysia is further faced with the problem of an increasing population and an unevenness of income-distribution, and therefore of the comparative need for development, between East and West Malaysia, and between the urban and the rural areas. To reduce the dependence on the export of a limited number of commodity product, the government has attempted to promote traditional and new export possibilities, stimulate domestic food production and exploit the excellent possibilities which exist for industrialization for the domestic market and, it is hoped, the regional market as well.

We have made good progress in these directions. The political and financial stability of the country, the availability of domestic capital and local business skill, and the tradition of good administration and of law and order are the economic strengths of Malaysia which have enabled us to make progress and to utilise, efficiently and productively, foreign private investment and governmental assistance.

We have been particularly successful in pushing development in the public sector in that we have evolved our own technique of development plan implementation which has proved a success. Over the last few years we have been able to bring real and dramatic changes to both rural and urban areas. Today I can say with modesty that we have gone some way in providing our people with a measure of happiness and progress which they desire. However we must do more and we are determined to do more.

The progress must be maintained.

Again with some pride I can assure you that aid which Australia and other donor countries have so generously given to my country has been put to good use. Further you can rest assured that any future aid would also be put to the best use for the benefit of our people.

The needs of an expanding population must be met in terms of employment opportunities and increased social services. We are a going and a growing concern. But I must confess that, that very fact appears sometimes to be prejudicial to us: the richer and industrialised countries seem to be more interested in emergency rescue operations than in ensuring that these operation do not ever become necessary.

Nevertheless we in Malaysia are fully determined that by our own efforts and with the assistance of our friends, we shall continue to make progress along the road which we have successfully travelled this far to ensure the dignity and prosperity of our people.

Politics after all is concerned with the ordinary wants of the ordinary man. His fears and his dreams are what the whole business of politics is about. He is the source and the end of the political process.

This is our understanding in Malaysia of the political process. Hence to ensure the survival and the success of the democratic process is of fundamental concern to us. We believe that democracy is the finest system.

This, then, is Malaysia: a small country, comparatively young, multi - racial, democratic with a federal structure, economically prosperous but with a precarious dependence on a few commodity products, determined to shun the rhetoric of revolution but instead to channel the emotion of our people into positive action.

Consider if you will our efforts to wield together the multi-racial, multi-religious, components of our populations into a United nation, to make the democratic process work meaningfully in our society, and bring economic and social betterments to the lives of our people. I think we can justly claim that these efforts have been successful and we are now well launched. But the difficulties ahead are many and complex. I know that our efforts are being watched with sympathy by our friends - and with cold-eyed calculation by militant communist elements in our midst and those beyond our boundaries who support them.

Any error which we make- if we stumble or lack stamina or lose our discipline and our determination - will be turned to their advantage.

However, considering this question in the perspective of the history of the militant communist movement in the countries of Asia and Africa over the last twenty years, I am confident that at all times in an open battle with disciplined and dedicated nationalists, the militant communists will invariably lose out. But if the nationalists

slack and become flabby with the fruits of office, then the communists will strike out again for victory. The last twenty years have shown that the communists are like vultures who feed on the disappointed hopes and the tarnished vision of a lost revolution. They are concerned with power and are prepared to shoot their way to power.

Having said that, I think it is important to remember that the basic problem is the development problem, the food, the clothes, the houses, the schools and the hospitals for which they rightly demand. Solve the development problem and you largely solve the communist problem. In the political struggle between communists and nationalists, in the Afro-Asian countries in the last twenty years, I think it is clear that, provided they show equal dedication and determination and discipline, the nationalists will win because in the final analysis they are the people.

But the question remains - what is the conviction and the courage of democratic nationalists? What is the quality of leadership they offer? What is their response to the overwhelming problem of poverty and ignorance and disease under which their people have laboured for so long? Do they have the capacity, the will and the stamina to govern? If they prove to be inadequate, if they are easily seduced by the comforts of office or if they delude themselves that good intentions and brave words alone will ensure progress, then they will fail and, let there be no mistake about it, they will have deserved to fail.

We in Malaysia are determined not to fail. We have a clear vision of the kind of society we want, where there is political democracy, economic development and social progress, with unlimited scope for the individual to use his talents in realising his full potential. It is easy to indulge in frantic and foolish boasts: that, I hope, I have avoided. But I do want you to share with me our hopes and dreams and to understand the silent revolution that is ours, which believes that it is results, not words, which count.