

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD  
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

My speech is entitled: Holier Than Thou -a Mild Critique. It springs from the need for a leader from the Third World to say a few words about the First World, some of whose leaders and many of whose commentators and analysts continue to be patronising and unduly critical of us in the developing world. From their high pulpits they sermonise. From their comfortable armchairs they preach. And in the columns of their newspapers and in the pages of their books they lecture, expound, declaim on all that is wrong with the

Third World.

2. In my address I will more than imply that those who are without sin should cast the stones, that those who live in glass houses should ponder the state of their walls before they venture forth. Those who hurl abuse at the Third World ought to make sure that they speak from premises that are fair, assumptions that are correct, knowledge that is grounded in fact, understanding that is not steeped in ignorance and arrogance.

3. Jean Paul Satre wrote in 1961: "Not so long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word: the others had to use it. The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents: they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture. After a short stay in the "mother country" they were sent home, whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words... and some where in Africa or Asia lips would open. It was the "golden age".

4. He continued: "It came to an end; the mouths opened by themselves; the yellow and black voices still spoke of our humanism but only to reproach us without inhumanity. We listened without displeasure to these polite statements of resentment, at first with proud amazement. What? They are able to talk by themselves? Just look at what we have made of them! We did not doubt but that they would accept our ideals...." Jean Paul Satre exaggerated. But by how much? The world that he talked of was the world of Western domination, then of

decolonisation, of the previous hundred years and of the first quarter century after the Second World War, which witnessed the greatest period of liberation in the history of the world. I do believe that we have now seen the second great wave of decolonisation, mental and psychological decolonisation, when the Third World has already begun to think not only for itself, but also to evolve its own systems, and its own values, drawn from the wisdom of both east and west, from deep within its indigenous soul as well as the external intrusions.

5. I hope that the second wave is reflected in this speech, a speech I have been advised not to deliver, for fear of the international press, for fear of the international trade union movement, for fear of the strength of the strong in today's commonwealth of nations. What I say will, I fear, be distorted, taken out of context, misquoted and misconstrued. I will please neither the Right nor the Left. I will please neither friend nor foe. I will not please the First world, certainly. And I will not please even the Third World.

6. So why do I enter the lion's den? Why do I deliver this speech that is so unpalatable. I believe I must because it is time for the First World to come to terms with the new Third World something it cannot do from high among the clouds. For me it is part of the breaking of the chains of steel that cabin the minds of most Third Worlders and that crib our character and our faith in ourselves. I believe that this Oxford University is a good place for the exchange of some home truths.

7. Let me make certain things clear from the start. Let me make plain the point of departure, the context in which my remarks are set. Let me stress that I am no apologist for the Third World, of which my country is a member. I make no defence of the obscenities that take place in many developing countries, the failure of many of their governments, the profound weaknesses of many of their societies. I am no admirer of the Second World. I am deeply committed to the free enterprise system as a means for uplifting the multitudes from the indecency of poverty. And I fully believe that the West has given much to this planet in terms of political culture, in terms of the techniques of production, in terms of civilising values whose relevance and importance will conquer much that lies in their path.

8. No critique of the West should start without such an acknowledgement. But there is much that the West will try to give to us that is not altogether relevant, that is inferior. There is also much that the West can learn from the political culture of others, from the techniques of production of other societies and from the civilising values of the East and the Third World.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. In 1978 there appeared a book of outstanding accomplishment, written by Edward W. Said called "Orientalism". It was a work which analysed the ways in which the West discovered, invented and sought to control the East. "Orientalism", Said argues, is, among other things, a style of Western thought and a body of Western belief, conventional wisdom and prejudice contributed to by innumerable Western poets, novelists, statesmen, philosophers, administrators, political theorists, economists, social scientists and intellectuals in general over the ages to the present day.

10. Central to Orientalism is the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. Let one Malaysian now mount a minor assault against this bastion of conventional assumption, a conventional assumption that is the more pernicious because it is an assumption that is still dominant in many countries of the Third World itself.

11. The Orientalism that Dr. Said so meticulously chronicled in his book consisted of the sin of half truth added to half truth, misperception heaped on misperception to yield in some instances total untruth and complete misperception. There are elements of this in the Neo Orientalism of our times about the Third World. You all must know, of course, of the Third World that is generally a place of teeming millions, of mass poverty, of rampant corruption, of totalitarianism, arbitrary rule, authoritarianism, of anti-democratic regimes, of leadership by the few over the many, of oppressive exploitation, of chronic instability, of ethical degradation and moral decadence?

12. But do you know that there are more Whites than Blacks in the Third World? Rich people are never called "teeming masses" of course; there are in fact more people per square foot in New York's Park Avenue or some of Paris' choice places of residence than in the slums of Calcutta. There apparently are no "teeming millions" in Japan although Japan has more people per square mile than does India, with all its "teeming millions". Many countries in the Third World have higher per capita incomes than Britain or the United States. There are increasingly large numbers of citizens of the Third World who see more and more countries of the First World as the residence of ethical degradation and moral decadence.

13. When I think of some of the present conventional wisdoms about the Third World, I am reminded of what Lord Cromer said of the Oriental and of the Oriental mind. In the thirty-fourth chapter of his two-volume tome which sets out the majestic record of his awesome experience and magisterial achievements, entitled "Modern Egypt", Lord Cromer quotes Sir Alfred Lyall as having told him once that "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim."

14. Cromer concurs. He says: "Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind." So please bear this in mind, ladies and gentlemen, as you listen to me.

15. In stark contrast, Lord Cromer says: "The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism". Admittedly this remarkable piece of wisdom is from the good old days and is fashionably discredited by the West now. But it still influences and afflicts the Western mind.

16. Let me interject that we in the colonised world were indeed fortunate that not more Europeans studied logic. What would the world have been had all Europeans gone to Oxford to study logic! Let us savour more of the wisdom of Lord Cromer, of whom Balfour said: "Everything he has touched he has succeeded in". Cromer, who emerged as the paramount consul-general of the British Empire of his time, continues: "The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendents are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavour to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination."

17. I quoted Lord Cromer at some length so that you will understand why my reasoning will be of the most "slipshod description", why my explanations will "generally be lengthy and wanting in lucidity", why I will contradict myself half-a-dozen times before I am through and why I will break down under the mildest cross-examination. My simple proposition to you is that the moral voice of the West, the legitimacy of its preachings, would be of a different order if it were not guilty of many of the crimes and many of the vices for which it has lashed and will continue to berate the developing societies of the Third World.

18. For example, the Third World is constantly being criticised for their systems of inequality, for their unfair distribution of wealth, for the non-egalitarian character of their states. I concede that many are guilty on all counts. But is the West quite as innocent of these charges as it makes out to be? Let me take the example of the United States, a proud country which has many things to be proud about.

19. In the United States, one estimate is that one fifth of one percent of the American population own almost 60 per cent of the wealth of America. The super-rich, less than two per cent, own 80 per cent of all stock, 100 percent of all state and municipal bonds and 88 percent of corporate bonds. In the United States there are some sixty billionaires and more than 100,000 millionaires. Two hundred companies account for some 80 percent of all resources used in manufacturing. If you will allow me to quote Newsweek, not one of my favourite magazine, "the top 20 percent of Americans owns 80 percent of all that can be privately owned in the United States and the bottom 25 percent owns nothing (many of them, in fact, have debts that exceed their assets)." It is true that many Americans own shares. But the many own very few and the very few own a great many.

20. If there is constant talk that in Third World countries a few families corner massive wealth, and massive political power, something that is of course unjust, let us not forget that the DuPont family in America controls eight of the forty largest defence contractors and grossed over US\$15 billion in defence contracts during the Vietnam War. The DuPonts are said to control ten billion-dollar corporations including General Motors, Coca Cola, Boeing and United Brands. Over a million Americans work for the DuPonts, who are said to be the biggest contributors to Republican presidential campaigns.

21. Even more powerful than the DuPonts are the Rockefellers. They are said to control five of the twelve largest oil companies and four of the largest banks in the world. At one time or another the Rockefellers or their close associates have occupied the offices of the President, Vice-President, Secretaries of State, Commerce, Defence and many other cabinet posts, the Federal Reserve Board, the governorship of several states, key positions in the CIA, the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

22. I do not agree with the Marxists who believe that bourgeois democracies are merely systems in which parties and parliaments provide camouflage for capitalist rule. But just as it can be no surprise that trade often follows the flag it can be no surprise if political power often follows economic wealth.

23. How about the poverty and the income gap that we hear so much about in the preachings of those who are holier than thou? The University of California completed a study in 1975 which showed that one million American babies and young children were suffering from brain damage from malnutrition arising out of extreme poverty. Black Americans, who only form 13 percent of the US population make up some 40 percent of those below the officially designated poverty line. To quote Newsweek again, in 1977 the richest 10 per cent of American households received 26.1 per cent of total American income while the poorest 10 per cent received only 1.7 per cent. Lest the British say "we are

different," let me just add that in the UK, the bottom 10 percent earn 2.1 percent of total income, while the top 10 percent earn some 25 percent of all income. In the United States, Blacks generally earned 69 percent as much as Whites; women who worked full time earned only 56 percent as much as men. In a land of plenty, almost one out of every ten Whites and nearly one out of every three Blacks, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos lived below the poverty line.

24. To be sure, poverty and income gaps in most developing countries are generally a great sight worse, but the top ten percent of all US households received 15 times as much income as the bottom 10 percent. Lest other states in the First World look askance at the American situation, the ratio for Japan was 10, the ratio for West Germany 11. And the honour for the highest degree of inequality among the industrialised countries went to France.

25. The question that I would like to ask is what are you doing for your poor? Why are you spending so much on prestigious projects and weapons?

26. Let me now turn to the hallowed ideal of equality under the law, and the rule of law, principles that rightly are hallowed and that are violated in many Third World countries. Let me ask of the First World, how often is crime defined, in a continuous fit of absent-mindedness, as something which the have-nots commit against the haves? In how many countries is legal service something which best serves those who can best pay for it? Who gave preventive detention to the Third World? And how many of the civilised countries of the West would introduce it if the conditions demanded it? Is there preventive detention in Northern Ireland? And let us not forget that twice, in two World Wars, the British (in my view, justifiably) suspended general elections.

27. What happened to Nixon and his band of merry men? Resignation was enough punishment for the leader. Herbert Kalmbach, Jeb Magruder and John Dean were handed sentences of between four to six months. Richard Kleindienst, once Attorney General, the highest legal officer in the land, who was guilty of perjury before a Senate committee was given a thirty-day suspended sentence and a \$100 fine. And a commendation for distinguished service from an American court. By and large the high and the mighty are spared.

28. Having caused so much offense thus far, let me now tilt at the towering windmill of the Western media whose power over the minds of the entire world is so massive and so utterly pervasive. As a Third Worlder I ask: Why must this entire planet be seen from the Western, Orientalist perspective? Why must the Third World be judged day in and day out only according to the self-righteous values of the West and its media? Why must so much sheer arrogance and sheer ignorance wreak so much havoc on the Third World? Is Freedom of the Press, a value which I have been taught to treasure, nothing more than the right of a few

editors and a few owners to censor and to decide what we all should read, listen to and watch?

29. Let me turn your mind to the bastion of the Freedom of the Press, the United States. I have read in a book published in 1977 -no doubt it is an exaggeration - that five New York banks own controlling shares in America's three national television and radio networks: NBC, CBS and ABC. I have also read -and no doubt this too is an exaggeration -that the magnificent five are also powerful shareholders of the New York Times, Time, Columbia Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox. In 1972, only four percent of American cities had competing newspapers under separate ownership. The trend is ever downward.

30. Another writer, this time writing in 1983, argued that twenty American corporations control more than half the 61 million daily newspapers sold every day; twenty corporations control more than half the revenues of the country's 11,000 magazines; three corporations control most of the revenues and audience in television; ten corporations in radio; eleven corporations in all kinds of books; and four corporations in motion pictures. In this no doubt jaundiced view, fifty Americans control more than half the information and ideas that reach 220 million of their countrymen. It has been argued, no doubt wrongly, that the primary function of the media is to make money for their owners.

31. One must of course never forget the thousands of professionals who actually do the editorial work. To forget and insult them is to risk the gravest consequences. They are the men who vet, headline and determine the slant. They can literally make or break people and organisations. Indeed whole Governments can be brought to their knees by the people who determine what and how events should be presented in the media. Incur their wrath and you will pay a very high price indeed.

32. Why, one wonders, did it take a year and a half for the My Lai massacre story to see the light of day? Could it have anything to do with the fact that two wire services, several American magazines and news weeklies, one TV network and several major newspapers in Boston and New York turned down and simply were not interested in the dull story of how hundreds of defenceless old men, women and children were slaughtered in a village in Vietnam? I shall not tell you about the objective views of the Western media on the Arabs since we all know that they consider them as a bunch of shiftless and untrustworthy malcontents.

33. Having offended the Right, let me now turn to offending the Left and making some remarks about Freedom. Personal freedom is of course a value of all peoples, Brown, Black and Blue. As someone who struggled against the British, as someone who spent many years in the political wilderness, I need no lecture

on freedom. Many colonial peoples need no lesson from our former oppressors. But it surely ought not to come as a surprise to you that there are hundreds of millions, indeed billions, who believe that an Economic Bill of Rights is even more important than a Political Bill of Rights. It ought not to come as a surprise to anyone that to those who hear the growls in their stomach and who feel insecure, prosperity, development and order come before being able to go to the polling booth every few years, writing letters to newspaper editors, raising voices in the air and assembling under the trees, newsworthy attractive though some of these things are.

34. Let me also say that freedom from oppression is more than freedom from the tyranny of the government; it must also mean freedom from the tyranny of particular interest groups and movements, and sometimes the tyranny of the minority. Governments need to be checked and put in their place. Power cannot but have a corrupting tendency. But Governments cannot contribute when they are cowed and intimidated. In how many countries in the West are governments cowed by the power of the military-industrial complex, intimidated by the big money men, browbeaten by trade union leaders, harrassed and terrorised by the Press so intimidated in fact that they are deflected from doing what is necessary and what is just. After 1933, the majority of the governments of Western Europe knew that war was on the horizon. Why did they not re-arm, thus possibly preventing a mad man from bringing untold misery to the world? They were defeated by public opinion largely preformed by the media and the knowledge that the steps that were necessary would not be approved by their electorates.

35. Let me now turn to the really big one: the constant criticism that the Third World does not practice democracy and the constant pressure for all of us to adopt the system of "participatory democracy." Let me state quite categorically that I am in favour of democracy, of government of the people, by the eople, for the people. At the same time, I believe that in practice, each nation must seek its own path to democracy. Neither the British form of democracy nor the American form of democracy two distinct and different forms of democracy can be exported whole and installed, ready made, in a very large number of countries. What a hue and cry there would be in Britain were the Americans to force their particular brand down British throats. What a big shake-out and a big shoo-in at the top of the civil service every time a new President is elected? Judges to be chosen by the people? Non-members of the Commons to be chosen as Ministers of the Crown? A clear division of powers between the Executive and the Legislature? An end to party discipline? Heavens.

36. Harvey Wheeler, in his book, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Democracy*, published by the American Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, wrote: "During the nineteenth century, America made a great commitment to a

special, and indeed historically unique, form of democracy. It backed its gamble with some of the most indigenous governmental and political institutions known to history. Today, these institutions of populism and progression have been all but dismantled. They appear embarrassingly Victorian in retrospect like those monuments of Victorian architecture we are now busily tearing down.

37. "However, it is harder to eliminate beliefs and institutions than buildings. We still carry the participational commitment in two ways. First, a few of the institutional arrangements we developed to facilitate democratic participation are still with us, though often atrophied or modified. The direct primary (election) is the most prominent example.

38. "Second, and more important is the fact that even though in one part of our minds we realise that our participational experiment has failed, and even though we sometimes ridicule it, nonetheless as a nation we still hold to it, myth though it is.

39. "Participational democracy is the only really distinctive contribution America has made to politics and we seem fearful of admitting its failure. When we state the basis of our opposition to Communism, it is that Communism does not provide for democracy as we have understood it, and therefore is not a "true" democracy.

40. "But the democracy we foist on others is one we ourselves no longer have. Despite our inner knowledge that our own participational forms no longer work, we continue to base our cold war on the claim that the non-Western World should adopt these forms forthwith, and when we look at the political systems of the newer democracies in the underdeveloped areas of the world, one of our chief criticisms is that they are not sufficiently participational as in our special Victorian sense."

41. It may surprise you, but I do believe that Wheeler overstates. But let us look at voting in the US primaries, one of the few remnants of what he calls participational democracy. It is by no means unusual to find less than 20 per cent of registered voters turning out to vote. Let us take the US Presidential elections: This time around, 89 million Americans out of a total voting population of 174 million went to the polls, i.e. around 51%, a drop from 1980's 53 percent. Out of the 89 million, President Reagan won 52.6 million votes. Since the population of the United States was 235 million, this means that only 26 per cent of the American people actually and actively chose Mr. Reagan. If these figures appear exceedingly low, it should be noted that voter turnouts for Congress are substantially lower, and turnouts for elections at the lower level are very much lower again.

42. To what extent can a government be said to be elected by the people when so few go to the polls? And what do we find when we break down the ranks of the electors? In the 1980 presidential election there was a 33 percent difference between the percentage of high school certificate holders and degree holders who voted. In all the Western democracies, the main abstainers are the working class, which is the way most Western commentators, with their love for participatory democracy, prefer it to be.

43. To what extent can government be said to be of the people when the costs of running for office are so high that it must be out of reach of the common man? In 1968, it cost an estimated \$100 million to elect a President from beginning to end. Were Lincoln alive today, he would be in his log cabin tweedling his thumb.

44. To what extent can government be said to be for the people when wealth and money are so important and when pressure groups, which generally cost so much money, play such an important part in the functioning of the modern western democratic political system? A most major flaw in the pluralist democratic heaven of the West is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper class accent. The pressure system is what determines most political outcomes and the vast majority of the people of the Western democracies do not have the money to get into the pressure system. The unorganised and the disorganised have a say once every four or five years, and as we have pointed out in many countries in the West, most choose not to have that say. For the most part, in these countries, the bargaining is between a presidium of elites.

45. Please allow me to end by outlining to you one or two thoughts on good government, good leadership and good political systems. I do agree that the real virtue of democracy lies in the fact that despite its awesome imperfections it is generally better than other systems, whose imperfections are generally even more awesome. Raymond Aron is right when he says that it is impossible to conceive of a regime that is not oligarchic in the sense that decisions cannot be taken by all but by the few. What makes a democracy different from other systems of governance is that in a democracy the governing oligarchy regards those whom they govern as their sovereign. It is a singularly important difference.

46. The type of democracy that is right for a particular country depends of course on the particular conditions that pertain. If in the United States the Republicans and the Democrats worked on the basis of strict party discipline as the parties of Britain do, government would only be able to function effectively if the man in the White House were to be of the same party as the one that has a majority in Congress. The American system only works, to the extent that it does, because the Republicans and the Democrats are not disciplined parties in the British sense. On the other hand, if a British Cabinet were to function in the

context of undisciplined parties, as the American Executive does, you can imagine how much attention will be devoted to courting every Member of Parliament and how little attention will be given to the task of governing. There will be many more opportunities for ambitious men to apply for the job of Prime Minister, as governments come and go, although it would be somewhat naive to believe there would be a drop in the number of applicants.

47. The much touted two-party system can only work if the adversaries are agreed on the basics and are not poles apart. Imagine the chaos that would result from the vacillation from a rampantly socialist party to a rampantly capitalist party and back again. Imagine the dislocations that would take place if every four or so years a country would have to veer from being an absolute theocratic state to one utterly secular. I should also point out to you that democracy and authoritarianism may not only live in peaceful coexistence. In fact many authoritarian regimes have been the expression of the democratic will, freely exercised. Many authoritarian governments have been elected by the will of the people, who want strong, no-nonsense administration.

48. The real challenge to all who believe in democracy is how to balance between the procedures of democracy and its content, between the differing competing wishes of the people, between what the people want and what needs to be done. The real challenge also lies in preventing the tyranny of the majority and the tyranny of minorities. How are political rights to be balanced against economic rights? How are rights like personal freedom to be harmonised with such community rights as order and security? The moral, just and effective way in which these challenges are to be met must vary according to the givens of the given systems.

49. Ladies and gentlemen, in this world today there are ultra-stable societies, ultra-unstable societies, and those societies which have been stabilised in various states of potential instability. On the criterion of task, there are also essentially three types of societies: maintenance-needy societies in which the main business lies in ensuring business as usual, reform-needy societies in which there is a need for reform over a broad front, and revolution-needy states where there is a need for system transformation of the most fundamental kind over the most comprehensive front. To insist that the requirements of leadership within ultra-stable and ultra-unstable states are the same must verge on insanity. To insist that leadership forms, style and content in revolution-needy and maintenance-needy states must be identical or even similar is ludicrous.

50. There is no denying that there are evil men and evil forces in many countries today. But there are many more good men grappling with difficult problems in impossible situations. It is not becoming of the comfortable to afflict the afflicted,

to scorn the efforts of many men in many lands who are trying their level best, in the best way that they know how, to pull their people up by their bootstraps.

51. Ladies and gentlemen, you have listened patiently to this lengthy, unclucid, contradictory presentation of views. I am now ready for your cross-examination.