

Y.T.M.TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN PUTRA'S TALK
AT THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE LEBANESE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION
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I am honoured to be invited by the Lebanese Public Relations Association to take part in the Second International Convention with the theme "The Role of Public Relations in Developing Nations". I hope my talk can be of some value on a topic which I consider is of great importance in the affairs of the world of to-day. New independent nations have found to their great sorrow how much they had been exploited by their Colonial masters, and they realise that unless they can do something to put the country right and correct all the imbalances, then they must be faced with terrible problems; and as time goes on these problems will mount and in course of time they could become unsolvable. Then the country will be torn assunder by revolutions, strife and unrest which will make life for the people hard and unbearable.

Governments which took into account this fact set their programme on development and all the means they can employ to provide for it. Many countries, yours and mine as an example, know exactly what we have to do and we set our minds on the tasks before us and conscientiously and assiduously prepared our plans and put them into practice. Lebanon is one of the most stable, progressive and happy countries in this part of the world, and so is mine in our part of the world. Lebanon and Malaysia are beset with problems of many kinds: there is the trouble with Israel and other elements prevailing in the Middle East and again your population is divided between Christian and Islam. So is mine, but not on the difference of religion but on race as between Malays who are Muslims and non-Muslims. But we are able to maintain good order, peace and harmony because



because we are conscious of our duties and responsibilities towards the peoples of the country and we know how to cope with the problem and make the best use of the machineries to maintain this happy relationship. We realise that strong and stable economy make people contented and happy.

When you arranged for a Convention on this subject, I thought to myself how wise the organisers and Government are because this subject in fact has become one of the important institutions which a nation that plans to go ahead must have.

When I talk to you on this subject, I talk from experience because for the years that I was the leader of my country I gave it a place of first importance.

Developing countries are countries with an average income of the people of \$300/- a year or less. Such countries are not underdeveloped in every sense of the word. It is commonly understood that they are economically way behind the rich and highly industrialised countries, such as the countries of Europe and America. On the other hand, these countries may be highly developed in other aspects of life, such as arts and crafts and other pursuits which their people have followed for centuries past - in fact the term "underdeveloped" or "developing" countries is not a derogatory term. All that it means to convey is that these countries have undertaken to lift themselves by their own effort from their present position to a higher level of development in social, economic and industrial fields.

There are many difficulties faced by these developing countries, and I will deal with them in the course of my talk. There are many things the Government can do to help their country develop in order to bring their people to the standard of living enjoyed by the peoples of European and American continents.

In Western Europe they have experienced the industrial revolution while the countries of Asia have not, because many have had the misfortune of being colonised by European nations. In the state of subjection, they were exploited by their Colonial masters. Their natural resources were exported, processed and returned to them in kind - like it or not, they had to accept the inevitable and buy them.

The industrial revolution was exported to Latin America and Japan and these countries took to industrialisation like fish to water, and Japan in particular can boast of a most outstanding achievement. It might safely be said that half of the world population are preparing - or at least, their leaders are trying to prepare them to go through the industrial revolution.

They have the amenities for taking these steps now, because there have been extensive and improved knowledge and communication in every developing country - roads, telecommunications, radios, planes, cars and modern transport - to make people aware of each other and events developing throughout the world. They understand that what was good enough for them before is not good enough now. They begin to sit up and compare their ways of living with those of the other people in other well developed countries. They long for important things in life and so too an improved method of livelihood and standard of living.

Most of these people have the right to vote and so they urged upon their representatives in Parliament to make known their needs.

There is too, a growing sense of interdependence in the world. The United Nations has given the underdeveloped countries new hopes and ambition. With the voice and a share

in world affairs, they are able to state their own problems and to demand help from United Nation organisations established for this purpose. They are able to find friends and alliances, and group themselves with these countries for mutual help towards development. Through conventions, meetings, seminars and courses, they are able to put up projects for acceptance and to obtain money for them. There is a sense of capacity and confidence in many developing countries, and a determination to help themselves and to make use of whatever available help world organisations or groups or organisations can provide for them.

Given a healthy climate for the purpose, most of these underdeveloped countries can make great headway.

The idea of economic development is to obtain the best possible result out of the country's economic productivity and resources. The effort must be concentrated on what the country can best produce or what natural resources it has. Malaysia, for instance, depended on rubber for its main source of income. So it set up research stations in the country and outside, to find out how best to improve the yield and what best use can be made of rubber, and also how best to compete against synthetic rubber.

Therefore the development has been on the problem of how to husband resources so as to invest in the most productive part of society, working on the principle that capital must generate more capital. At the same time economic development of the country must keep pace, bearing in mind that the goal of planning is a balanced growth of all sectors of the society.

Working on this basis, agriculture and primary sectors must be modernised, so that fewer cultivators can grow more food, and some of the agricultural population can be released to work in secondary and other industries.

In Malaysia with techniques which have been so improved, an acre of rubber land can produce five times the yield obtained before and twice as much as those obtaining in other rubber growing countries.

A new nation, when it decides on development, begins with a communication system, telecommunications and other mass media in order to reach their people - people who live in villages and drowse in their traditional patterns of life where life is so different from the cities. A country bent on development must spread widely its purpose and intent, for it must have the active participation of its people. They are asked to decide for modernity and to change their lives and beliefs accordingly. They are asked to accept new ideas, new attitudes, new practices and new responsibilities. They will require both information and persuasion. Information must flow smoothly and changes must be discussed between the leaders and people at the lowest level, and the people must also be put in a position to discuss with one another intelligently the development they are asked to undertake for their own good and for the good of the country. The people must be allowed to study afresh the situation of their country. Every sector of society has something new to learn in respect of agriculture, mining, literacy, health and other matters of social upliftment. Teachers from among trained men are required to give these lessons.

This is where mass media communication is essential and it must be made use of properly if it is to be of service. The Government must ensure that information flows not only to the people in all strata of life but also from them to the authority concerned so that their needs can be known and met. In other words, every effort must be made and every step must be taken to ensure full participation of the people if any project the Government have in mind to help improve the standard of living of the people is to be carried out.

Generally speaking, mass media communication will play a very important part in social and economic development. It helps to spread the message of the Government to the people and it also helps to put new ideas into the minds of the people; it helps to change the attitudes to which they have been used to for the past ages. It helps to give them knowledge more rapidly than before. The information that goes out must be such that the people can understand what is intended and what the people are required to do. The flow must be adequate and also it must ensure the adequacy of the communication. Mass media, in fact, are one of the chief hopes of all nations in helping in the process of economic and social upliftment and nation building.

We come therefore to the point as to what are the integral and the important parts of the machinery of mass media. It is understood by all that when we refer to mass media communication, we mean newspapers and other reading materials, radio, television and films. The idea is to extend all these facilities from the cities to the people in the rural areas. I take them in this order :

(1) Newspapers. Newspapers provide information on what goes on in the country and what goes on outside. Some newspapers in developing countries carry the messages of the Government, criticisms by the people and views that can be of help to both sides. Therefore newspapers play an important part in the successful story of any developing country. In some such countries the Governments subsidise newsprint as a help to newspaper publishers and this enables some newspapers which otherwise could not afford to pay their way to carry on with the good work in the process of nation building. Some countries like U.S.A. which is highly developed provide free postal carriage within a certain geographical area and this enables wide circulation of these weekly newspapers to operate profitably and to serve a wide audience. These newspapers must be allowed freedom but not license so to speak to do what they like or to say what they like, because the reverse would be the effect of their role in nation building.

We have seen the happenings in some countries where newspapers are allowed to publish what they like. The conditions in that country become unsettled which makes the climate for national development unsuitable and impossible. This has happened in some countries in Asia where before independence such a country enjoyed peace and prosperity but with independence the people are given so much freedom of expression, encouraged by the press, that the Government become continually embarrassed and got involved in quarrels, so much so that no time is given to constructive planning. Therefore while the newspapers can be regarded as an important medium of communication, they can also be a source of danger to peace. The press must be made to understand its duties and responsibilities because the developing nations of Asia and Africa cannot be put on the same plane as the advanced and highly developed nations of Europe and America.