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SPEECH BY MR. L.P. RODRIGO, PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS ON THE
OCCASION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION'S
CELEBRATIONS OF UNITED NATIONS DAY ON 23.10.70
AT THE CULTURAL CENTRE AT 8.00 P.M.

United Nations Day this year has a special significance for members of the United Nations Associations the world over.

In New York, the Organisation is now commemorating the 25th anniversary of its creation, and in response to the appeal of Secretary-General U Thant to commemorate it in a meaningful way, the representatives of member-states are reflecting upon the accomplishments and failures of the Organisation and making their analyses in an attempt to establish the objectives and priorities of international co-operation for the next quarter century.

Likewise, we may want to pause on this occasion and ponder upon the relevance of the Organisation in today's world. In doing so, we may just want to recall the circumstances of the era which urged the creation of the United Nations twenty-five years ago.

There may be much of the history of mankind yet to be written. But the second world war, in which man demonstrated his ingenuity in self-destruction with consummate fiendishness will remain his moment of truth in history. At the end of the holocaust and when the reality of his own frightening power touched his soul, he reached out passionately for a world system and a world ethic which would ensure his survival in the future. The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the cry of mankind for a rational and humane world.

But the ideals of conduct for sovereign states and individuals which are embodied in the Charter and Declaration were conceived by their signatories in the political and moral environment which obtained a quarter of a century ago.

The nature of the political world now is so changed that the growing irrelevance of these ideals confront us. Even in 1945, when forty-six nations launched the United Nations in San Francisco, it was already fashionable to refer to the nation-state as an archaic framework of human government, and its attendant concept of sovereignty as the chief obstacle to a world order.

In 1945, the political world pictured distinct areas of powers and influence, and it constituted a reference of political reality for the formulators of the Charter.

Since then many colonial territories emerged as independent sovereign nations, and there is now in the United Nations a total of 127 nations.

Today the political and economic relationships of nation states

are so closely interwoven that the trend is an increasing intrusion by the great powers upon the domestic policies of other states. Many sources are of the view that the concept of the democratic issue in the Charter is a growing fiction.

There is wide acknowledgement that the Organisation has failed to live up to the lofty expectations of the Charter's signatories. In more than 56 conflicts in or between sovereign states since 1945, the United Nations has successfully intervened in only 6 of them.

Though this is perhaps the United Nations at its best in international politics, we cannot afford to despair in the Organisation for to do so would be to despair in our own potential to live in peace with each other.

In the economic and social fields, however, the United Nations exceeded the forecasts she made of her own efforts 25 years ago.

The world is not yet without hunger and starvation, but millions of people in the developing countries are being removed from such a tragedy through the work of United Nations missions and agencies. More important is the confidence that is being generated by the Organisation's relentless global assault against poverty.

The first development decade is concluded, and the second has begun.

In the second development decade, an average overall growth rate of 6% is set as the objective. The target is ambitious but urgent in view of world exigencies like population explosion and population imperialism.

In the developing countries, the problem of population imperialism is reaching critical proportions. It is estimated that if the present trend runs its course, by 1980 the urban population of developing regions will exceed that in industrialised countries by one million people. If such imperialism is not followed by sufficient industrial growth in urban areas to take in the surplus manpower, the result will be a dangerous restlessness throughout the developing country.

It is hoped that in this new decade the nationalisms of the developing countries will discard their penchant for rhetorics in the fruitless and futile and become development oriented.

In this regard we may indulge in the satisfaction of being able to declare to a truly successfully that policies of development are comprehensible and acceptable to the peoples of a developing country and that its end product in a socialist democracy is distributive justice of an impressive scale.

The United Nations will continue to be mankind's hope and his disconsolation at the same time because the United Nations will continue to embrace the problems of the world, and more often than not, she will fail to resolve them promptly.

But the primary achievement of the Organisation is certainly

the absence hitherto of a world war. While this may not be consoling, it is nevertheless comforting.

An effective world constitutionalism may become an unattainable ideal. It will nevertheless remain an ideal to inspire nation-states of the world to co-exist in peace and mutual constructive gain.

Whatever the defect of the United Nations as an institution for peace and progress, the world needs it, and as observed by our Minister for Foreign Affairs in the General Assembly last year, if the edifice is torn down mankind will in a short time construct yet another like it.

On that note, which I hope is sufficiently optimistic for the occasion, I have much privilege in declaring open the United Nations Association's celebrations of United Nations Day.

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