

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR S RAJARATNAM, SENIOR MINISTER
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE) AT THE HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI
DINNER-CUM-VARIETY SHOW ORGANISED BY THE CITY SOUTH DISTRICT
CITIZENS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES
AT THE RADIN MAS COMMUNITY CENTRE
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THE UNHOLY TRINITY

In all my 28 years as a politician I have always made it a point not to talk politics at religious gatherings or talk religion on political occasions.

This is because I know from history that mixing religion and politics has invariably brought untold sufferings to people. Separately, the two have, by and large, been forces for good. Each in its own way has given inspiration and added luster to human civilisation. But combined they make a deadly mixture. The belief that politics can improve religion or that religion can raise the quality of politics is like striking a match in a gas-filled room in the firm belief that it would provide much needed illumination.

We know from history that such disastrous combinations terminated in societies reverting to long periods of dark ages during which the survivors lost all traces of whatever civilisation and prosperity they once had. There are such places in the world today where cattle and sheep graze among the rubble of what may once have been flourishing cities and towns.

That is why all these years I have studiously refrained from making political orations on religious occasions or giving religious sermons at political meetings.

But tonight I want to bend this rule a little bit. I want to talk about religion and politics; about politicians disguised as priests and priests moonlighting as politicians. It is a sort of compromise between talking pure politics and pure religion.

I have entitled my talk: "The uses and abuses of politics and religion." It deals with what I will call: "The Unholy Trinity: Racialism, religious fanaticism and Communism."

This Unholy Trinity is not a bogey. It is real. It is real because this hybrid beast, red in tooth and claw, is today laying waste many lands. It is my considered judgement that racialism, religious fanaticism and a new and more dangerous form of Communism, are each competing, sometimes separately and sometimes in partnership for power, glory and loot in many lands. This is the triple threat with which more and more countries will have to contend with for the foreseeable future.

Am I exaggerating things? Am I describing a nightmare of my own making? Where are the facts?

All right let us look at the facts. Let me start with Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, what once began as a struggle for the unification of Northern and Southern Ireland has now degenerated into a brutal religious war between Catholics and Protestants. These two religious groups have lived in peace for centuries but are today

locked in a war which has now acquired near genocidal dimensions. The present mood of the combatants, should the intervening British Army withdraw, suggests that there can be peace only by the decimation of one religious faction by the other.

Further south in Spain, a racial war is going on between Spaniards and Basque separatists who, after hundreds of years of peaceful co-existence, have discovered that they are not Spaniards but a separate race - and they back this claim by indiscriminate and endemic terrorism.

In Africa, the new nation states the Western imperialists left behind are now being violently torn apart both by tribal-racialist wars and Muslim-Christian animosities. These wars, apart from loss of human lives, have created waves of unwanted human refugees in search of safe havens and mass starvation and famine to make the whole thing one of the greatest man-made tragedies in human history.

In the Middle East, there is war between Islam and Judaism; between Christians and Muslims; between Jews and Christians; between Arabs and Jews; between Muslims and Muslims; between Arabs and Arabs. In other words, race against race. Religion against religion. And waiting, and bidding its time is Communism - the religion without a god which believes that it is the only creed chosen by history to inherit the earth. Communism, like all religions, has itself split into many contending churches, fighting and scheming among themselves to spread their presence throughout the world. Some have succeeded in capturing power - in the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe and Indo-China. Elsewhere in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America and South East Asia the religion of Communism has recovered from its earlier defeats and is once again on the offensive.

In Latin America and in the Philippines, the priests of Communism today carry the Christian Bible in their right pocket and the Gospel according to St Marx in their left. Instead of a cassock and a cross our well dressed Communist priest who recites the Communist Manifesto faithfully every day today sports army fatigue and a deadly ak-ak rifle believing that this is a more effective way of amassing new converts.

Also in passing I would like to mention that in Singapore too there are the beginnings of "the Gospel" according to the Very Reverend Tan Wah Piow - but it is not my purpose tonight to deal with the works and thoughts of the Brother Wah Piow.

The war between Iran and Iraq is perhaps the most tragic example of the destructive power of mixing religion with politics. Only a few days ago, an Iraqi Minister estimated that at least a million soldiers have been killed in the fighting between Iraq and Iran. This is a war between Arabs and Persians; between Muslim and Muslim and there appears to be no end to the slaughter.

In Lebanon, we see not only a war between Jews and Arabs, but also a war between Arab and Arab over religion. This is compounded by a war between Islam and Judaism; between Islam and Christianity; between Muslim and Muslim. One of the most peaceful, dynamic and prosperous country in the Arab World is now a land seething with racial and religious hates and is slowly being reduced to rubble.

In India, racial and religious violence is increasing both in intensity and extent. It is no longer simply violence between Hindus and Muslims but between Indians who now believe they belong to different races. The irrationality and unpredictability of racial and religious fanaticism is revealed by its inability to distinguish

between friend and foe. For example, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated not by a Muslim but by a Hindu who was fanatically anti-Muslim.

Prime Minister Indra Gandhi was killed not by a Muslim but by a Sikh.

So in India, racialism and religious fanaticism is forcing some Indians to deny that there is one India and even question whether there is such a thing as an Indian - and this after years of living together as Indians first under British imperial rule and then for 40 years in an independent India.

And in Sri Lanka, the Tamils and Sinhalese who have lived together in the island from time immemorial are now locked in a brutal and seemingly endless war. The war in Sri Lanka is racial, religious and linguistic. In Sri Lanka too, the irrationality and blindness of religious fanaticism was demonstrated when Prime Minister Bandaranaike was assassinated not by a Tamil but by a Sinhalese Buddhist.

Buddhism historically one of the most peaceful of religions can, when mixed with politics, be just as lethal as any other politicised religion.

In fact, one of the curious features of racial and religious fanaticism is that when roused to a sufficient pitch of frenzy it will not hesitate to kill its own kind as well. Some of the Tamil guerillas have reportedly killed Sinhalese and Tamil civilians with an impartiality that only blind emotions can achieve.

Predictably, the other component of the Unholy Trinity - the cleverest and the

most calculating of the Trinity has re-entered the fray in Sri Lanka - the dedicated Marxist. The ruthlessness of the Marxist is cold blooded, never emotional. The good Marxist is a man with many faces. He can be Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Saint, Monk, Bishop and even, if the situation required it, a rabid anti-Communist.

And nearer home, in the Philippines, there is, in addition to the war between Muslims and a Catholic Government, a new threat which has serious implications for Singapore. This is because Philippines is an ASEAN partner. Also the recent arrest and detention in Singapore of some 22 people is a warning that what is happening in Philippines can, if we are gullible and unprepared, happen in Singapore too and elsewhere in ASEAN.

In the Philippines, we are witnessing the greatest of all Marxist disguises. It is a dangerous one because it is almost fool proof. Only those with the sharpest political perceptions can see through the disguise. In Singapore, we were lucky to have unmasked the first of what was intended to be an army of Marxists in clerical collars.

The new Marxists have abandoned ideology for theology. They call it Liberation Theology. It was spawned in Latin America and found its way into the Philippines a few years ago. Those we detained last month in Singapore were Liberation Theology novices.

I do not propose tonight to talk about this new Marxist theology though we will, if we want to survive, have to pay close attention to it in the coming months and years because this theology will dog our footsteps for a long, long time.

All I need say now is that Liberation Theology has been condemned by the Pope and Vatican as an attempt by the Marxists to use Catholicism as a cover to confuse people into unwittingly supporting a Communist revolution.

Stated briefly this theology claims that Christ was really an anti-capitalist and believer in class war and that Marx despite his denunciation of religion as the opium of the people was either a disguised Catholic when alive or that he had undergone a posthumous conversion. The shattering discovery that there was an after life after all may have accelerated the conversion of the penitent Marx.

This preposterous theology has apparently won sufficient following in the Philippines for the Philippine Communist Party to launch a Marxist Holy war against a Government overwhelmingly elected recently by the people. We know now that the goal of the Philippines Communists was not just the overthrow of the corrupt Marcos regime but the imposition of a Communist dictatorship with aid of bullets and assassination squads.

Let me end my talk by pointing out a few odd features connected with the recent arrests in Singapore:

- (a) The Government has received protests from some 200 organisations from the United States, Europe, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

The largest number of protests have come from the last four countries situated in the Asian side of the Pacific.

There have been no protests from Moscow, Peking, Hanoi, Pyongyang, Singapore and the Vatican - in fact from the rest of the world.

So the first question we should ask is this: Why are some 200 organisations from all over the world making such a fuss over the 18 largely unknown people still under detention? What is so special about them to warrant a world-wide fuss. One must assume that world-wide stakes are involved.

Their reply is that they are protesting because they are, in principle, opposed to detention without trial.

If this is an honest reply then why have not these organisations, including Malaysian organisations, raised a hue and cry over the four Singapore Malays we detained under the Internal Security Act about the same time on a charge of attempting to spark off race riots.

Why this discrimination?

If I may hazard a guess, it is that the four are not political blood brothers of the protestors. Only comrades-in-arms should enjoy the privilege of not being detained without trial - or detained even after a trial as in the case of Tan Chay Wah, the Communist terrorist who was tried

and sentenced to death by Malaysian courts for possessing firearms. There were protests against the execution by many of the organisations now protesting against the Singapore government.

- (b) The second curious fact is that 10 of the 16 detained in the original sweep were described as Catholic Church workers. Yet when a proper count was made only three of the ten turned out to be Catholics. The other seven were not Catholics; not even Christians.

They had no religion.

Catholic workers who are not Catholics! Not only is this odd but down right suspicious. This is classic Communist penetration technique.

This reminds me of the story of the fox which was cornered in the chicken pen one dark night. As the suspicious farmer peered into the chicken pen to investigate what was going on, the fox said in a falsetto voice:

"There's nobody here, boss, but us chickens."

The 200 protesting organisations also claim that those we rounded up are innocent chickens even though Vincent Cheng has admitted he was no chicken but a Marxist fox.

Perhaps the most reckless and dangerous feature of the Marxist conspiracy which we have temporarily broken up was the potential for religious conflict and bloodshed it carried.

By dragging the Catholic Church openly into the political arena by way of the Workers Party the conspirators would no doubt have encouraged other religions to follow suit. The Catholics constitute less than five per cent of the population. The far more numerous Buddhists would naturally demand their share of the political action. So would the Muslims, the Hindus, the Sikhs, the Spirit Mediums, the Faith healers, theosophists and all with claims to some involvement in matters of the spirit.

Once religious parties find their way into our Parliament it must become a dangerous arena for competing and contending religions. A parliament of debating Buddhist monks, Christian bishops, Hindu priests and Imams will, I submit, make Singapore a pretty unsafe place.

Were this to happen, that would be the end of Singapore as we know it - an outcome which the new Marxists in theological garb would no doubt welcome as a gift from Heaven. The total destruction of capitalist Singapore is a necessary precondition for the church that Brother Wah Piow intends to erect for the greater glory of those who created him.

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