

# Manifesto

## Of The

# People's Action Party

### The Setting of the Problem

Since the end of World War Two some 570,000,000 Asians have become free. Empires which had held sway over Asia for centuries and which before the outbreak of war had appeared impregnable, tottered and crumbled to dust within less than five years of the ending of the war.

The swiftness and sureness with which these 570,000,000 Asians gained freedom was the result of the confidence and determination of the people to recover their self respect. No power on earth can hold down a people who have decided to be free.

This uncompromising faith in a people's right to be their own masters in their own country is the reason why colonial rule has come to an end in practically the whole of Asia except Malaya.

Malaya is still subject to colonial rule. It is one of the few countries in the world where so-called national leaders are found wrangling among themselves as to whether it would be wise for 7,000,000 Malaysians to have freedom too soon. They entertain us with pious bleats about the virtues of a free and democratic world. But when these rights are claimed for the people of Malaya these "leaders" proclaim their doubts and fears about democratic and independent Malaya.

The People's Action Party has no such fears or doubts. If 1,270,000,000 people in Asia can be free without disaster engulfing them, then the 7,000,000 people of Malaya need not tremble at the thought of a free Malaya.

### Immediate Task

The most immediate and urgent task facing any serious political party in Malaya is to end colonialism as swiftly as possible. Political parties whose proclaimed aim is to "improve" colonialism or to emulate the achievements of colonialism are merely fooling themselves and their innocent followers. Those who talk glibly of "modifying" the colonial system have not given serious thought to the nature and workings of colonialism. The controlling power is of necessity devoted to maintaining, for as long as possible, the

colonial type of economy and the colonial form of political society which they have established in Malaya. A bit of whitewashing here and a bit of tinkering there will not make a machinery designed for the preservation of colonial interests work properly in the interests of a free Malayan society.

This failure to grasp the essential characteristics of a colonial society has misled certain political parties and leaders into declaring that the Federation includes a number of "independent sovereign" states and that in Singapore colonialism is freely and deliberately obliterating itself.

The People's Action Party has no such illusions. It recognizes the fact that various constitutional changes have been introduced to bring the colonial machinery up to date so that it will still function efficiently as such in spite of growing political and economic discontent and a vigorous rising nationalism.

### Where ultimate control lies.

The constitutional reforms we have had since the war have not removed from the colonial power ultimate control over the affairs of this country.

Where there is a serious conflict between the interests of Malaya and those of Britain, our interests have been and will continue to be subordinated to those of Britain. Destitute control over rubber, though detrimental to Malaya's economic interests, was nevertheless imposed to satisfy the requirements of Britain's foreign policy. Malaya's substantial dollar earnings have been used largely to solve Britain's economic difficulties.

To have a grasp of the reality of colonial control we must lay bare the economic basis of imperial rule in this country. An understanding of the economics of colonialism is essential if we are not to be dazzled by the whitewash used to cover up the less pleasing facts.

It is not love which drives one country to control another. A colonial power does not expend its wealth and the lives of its soldiers on acquiring colonies because it cannot bear the sight of backward people languishing in poverty and barbarism. A colonial power has always been quick to detect the absence of such humanitarian zeal in a rival colonial power.

## Empire is commerce.

Colonies were acquired mainly for commercial reasons. They are retained for the same reasons. These economic motives have occasionally broken through the moralisings of colonial statesmen. "Empire is commerce," declared Joseph Chamberlain in the 19th century. Similar confessions have been made in the 20th century. In 1943, in the midst of a war for the Four Freedoms, Lord Cranborne, Dominions Secretary in the British Parliament, warned that "those who could not look beyond their personal interests should remember that their employment and standard of living depended mainly on the existence of empire." And in 1946, the late Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary in the First Labour Government in Britain, his socialism notwithstanding, declared: "I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire because I know that if the British Empire fell..... it would mean the standard of life of our constituencies would fall considerably."

The economic structure a colonial power creates and maintains in a dependent territory reveals the real motive of empire building. The primary function of a colonial economy is to increase the wealth of the mother country. The economy of a colony is designed to supplement the economy of the mother country and it is never allowed to develop in such a way as to jeopardize the economy of the mother country.

## Malaya's colonial economy

In this sense Malaya has a colonial economy and it will remain so until control over Malaya's affairs passes into the hands of Malaysians.

The essential feature of Malaya's economy is its over-dependence on the production of two raw materials — rubber and tin. Our wealth depends on our being able to dispose of these two raw materials in substantial quantities in foreign markets. Everyone, including the upholders of colonial rule in Malaya, agrees that our economy is precarious because it depends upon fluctuating markets in distant parts of the world. In effect, our prosperity depends on the capacity of America to consume our tin and rubber.

It is against the interests of Malaya to rely so heavily on a single American market. This becomes all the more culpable in view of the unstable character of the American economy. American demand for our two raw materials is stimulated only when international tensions increase. The price of our two commodities has increased when prospects of war increased and has declined when international tensions eased.

But instead of steering away from this lop-sided dependence on the American market, our economy is being lashed even more firmly to the fickle American market.

The reasons for this disastrous policy is the overriding needs of the controlling colonial power. Malaya's economy has been and is designed to bolster up and supplement the economy of Britain.

## Dollars for Britain

Britain needs American dollars to maintain her balance of trade. The need for American dollars has become very urgent in the post-war world. Britain cannot, on her own, earn enough dollars to sustain her economy and her high standard of living. Industrial America cannot absorb enough of the industrial goods that Britain produces.

Rubber and tin among the few commodities that an otherwise self-sufficient America will buy in substantial quantities. So since the war Malaya has concentrated on selling as much rubber and tins as the Americans could use or stockpile. This feverish drive to get as much dollars as we can for Britain has, more than ever before, increased our dependence on the American market.

Such an economic policy, however much it may suit the short-term interests of Britain, jeopardizes the long-term interests of Malaya. As long as Malaya is controlled by Britain our tin and rubber industries would be treated as adjuncts of British economy. There will be a relentless drive to earn dollars until American demand reaches saturation point. Even before then unemployment and the ruthless slashing of wages will increase as the demand for our two raw materials declines in the American market.

## British Investments

Diversification of our markets is the obvious remedy. But as long as control over Malaya's affairs remains in the hands of Britain the focal point for our export trade will be the American market.

Domination over Malaya's economy is exerted not only through decisive political control from Britain but also through direct British investments in Malaya. Three-fourths of rubber estates of over 100 acres (and these constitute about 60 per cent of the total acreage) are European-owned.

British capital is even more firmly entrenched in the tin industry. British capital, in other words, has a considerable control over our economy by virtue of its dominating interest in our two major enterprises — tin and rubber.

In addition control over Malaya's banking, insurance, shipping and export and import business is in the hands of foreign capital. Roughly about 70 per cent of commercial investments are in British hands thus securing for Britain a predominant economic control in Malaya's rubber and tin industries, in trade, banking and industry. British business interests can, through their representatives in the British Parliament, exert political influence over Malaya.

Our economy is dominated by a highly industrialized metro-politan power. Malaya has been developed as a source of raw materials for British and foreign industries and as an outlet for the capital and goods of the controlling power. Our financial, trade and tariff policies are subject to final control from Britain. Our currency is linked to sterling and our banking system is foreign-controlled.

In face of these facts it is difficult to maintain the pretence that Malaya is not a colonial country and that an economy such as this does not seriously restrict whatever political power may be given us through various constitutional reforms.

## Rice Industry

A colonial economy has meant a chronic inability to develop the economic potential of our country. Colonialism, whatever its past economic achievements, cannot create for us the economic structure necessary for the well-being of an independent Malaya.

Though the colonial government has done a great deal for the development of rubber, other forms of agriculture, such as rice, have been the objects of feeble and half-hearted efforts. At present only about 40 per cent of the rice Malaya consumes is grown in Malaya. The post-war world rice shortage stimulated some interests in increasing local rice production. But now that rice can be easily imported interest in local rice production has waned.

The neglect of the rice industry has meant the neglect of a large section of the Malays who are the backbone of our peasantry.

Symptomatic of the neglect of the rice industry has been the steady fall, in recent years, in the per capita output of rice.

Rice production has been regarded mainly as a means for enabling the Malays to subsist entombed

in the semi-feudal order which the system of indirect colonial rule through native chiefs had sought to perpetuate.

### Disintegrating peasant economy

It was never regarded as an industry to be developed, modernized and organized with a view to increasing the standard of living of the peasantry and satisfying the needs of the local market.

After all rice is not a dollar earner and has never been a field for lucrative investment.

The subsistence economy based on rice is disintegrating. In many parts of Malaya the evil symptoms of a breakdown of a backward peasant economy — absentee landlordism and peasant indebtedness — have clearly emerged.

Under an independent government which can and must put the interests of Malaya first, the rice industry will be made a major industry for the diversification and strengthening of our economy. Rice production should not be regarded as a means of providing a subsistence existence for those of our growing population who cannot be provided with a means of livelihood. Efficient production is achieved not by putting more and more people to work on the land but by increasing the output per acre and per man. The aim should be to increase the output of rice, not the number of people driven to eke out an existence from the land.

### Need for Industries

Our "surplus" population should be absorbed in new industries and enterprises. We believe that one of the urgent economic tasks before us is the creation of industries, based as far as possible on raw materials readily available in this country. Malaya has natural resources, both material and human, to develop industries so as to diversify her economy and increase her living standards. They may be high compared with sub-human standards elsewhere but they approximate the sub-human standards of advanced industrialised countries.

The need for industrialization has been stressed even by advocates of colonialism. Yet very little has been done about it — and very little, besides pious exhortations, will be done so long as the colonial structure is maintained in Malaya. A colony is primarily regarded as an outlet for the manufactured goods of the mother country. The colonial power cannot therefore be expected to be enthusiastic about the setting up of local industries which might seriously affect the import of manufactured goods from the mother country.

### Well-intentioned plans

The Six Year Development Plan for Malaya published in 1950 gave very little importance to the development of industries. Only 0.2 per cent of the total cost of development was earmarked for industry. Development is still thought of in terms of production of raw materials. It is significant that in surrounding Asian countries which have recovered their independence, plans and policies for industrial development are far ahead of Malaya. For once a country becomes independent it ceases to regard its economy as a supplement to the industrial economy of the imperial power.

But the full realisation of the agricultural and industrial potentialities of our country is not possible without the complete rejection of our colonial type of economy.

The very structure and spirit of a colonial economy makes impossible the carrying out of any grandiose and well-intentioned plans, whether it be the Six Year Development Plan or some project by the Colonial Development Corporation.

### Freedom First

However we cannot change the economic structure until we have freedom of political action. Such freedom can be achieved only through an organized mass movement. Independence will not be conferred on the Malayan nation as a gift. It will only be ours when we are organised and united in our fight for independence.

All the constitutional concessions granted so far have been particularly careful to protect and perpetuate the basic economic and political interests of the colonial power. The retention of basic colonial interests runs through all constitutional re-arrangements since the reoccupation in 1945.

When Britain re-occupied Malaya, colonialism was in retreat everywhere in Asia. The Malayan peoples were aware that the peoples of India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia and Indo-China were engaged in active struggles for freedom and that the Chinese people were in the throes of social revolution. That a Labour Government ruled in Britain encouraged the peoples of Malaya to hope that the British Labour Party would fulfil the promises of freedom for colonial peoples which it had made while in opposition.

### Colonialism revived

However the Malayan Union scheme, announced in October 1945, was the first clear indication that reimposition of British economic and political control rather than the liquidation of colonialism was the primary intention. To do this the colonial power lined up with reactionary and conservative elements and against progressive and democratic forces in Malaya.

The progressive forces demanded a fully elected legislature, on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The Malayan Union scheme stood for a legislature filled with nominees favourably disposed to the old-type colonial regime.

The democratic forces asked for a united Malaya. The Malayan Union scheme decided the separation of Singapore from the Federation.

When the reactionary elements led an "opposition" against the Malayan Union Proposals, the colonial power was only too ready to appease this opposition. For this opposition led by local reactionaries, for all its sabre-rattling was not indisposed to the re-establishment of the props of a colonial society shattered by Japanese imperialism.

### Malaya divided

Is it any wonder that the colonial power agreed to scrap the Malayan Union proposals in favour of the even more anti-democratic Federation Agreement? The Federation Agreement tacitly accepted the division of Malaya and the institution of a legislature amenable to the will and interests of the colonial power. It was agreeable to the re-imposition of colonial rule. Where it differed from the Malayan Union proposals was in enhancing the illusion that the Malay states were sovereign independent states.

Opposition to the Federation scheme headed by the All-Malayan Council of Joint Action and the Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat, the trade unions and other democratic elements in Malaya was brushed aside by the colonial power. The People's Constitutional Proposals, put forward by these progressive forces were ignored. These Proposals were unacceptable to the colonial power because they stood in the way of a re-imposition of colonial rule. These Proposals advocated a unified Malaya with a fully elected Legislature on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

### Unions banned from politics

The attitude of the colonial power towards trade unions was one of suspicion. It was particularly

alarmed over the alliance of trade unions with the movements for national emancipation. Any national movement which had the support of trade unions would not only have become formidable but would also have struck at the roots of colonial society.

To counter such a development, the Government re-imposed the pre-war laws prohibiting the direct participation of unions in politics. What bitter irony — that British workers whose trade unions sustained the British Labour Government in power, should deny to Malayan workers the right of political action!

The brunt of colonial exploitation has been borne by the workers. In times of prosperity they had to be satisfied with crumbs. In times of adversity they were the first to feel the crushing burdens of economic sacrifice.

No plan for the political, economic and social development of Malaya can be formulated without the direct participation of the workers in politics, nor can any plan disregard the attitude of the workers towards the present economic structure with its great inequalities of wealth and its inherent instability.

### **End Emergency Laws**

The unions were the first to suffer under the Emergency Laws proclaimed in June 1948. So cowed and uncertain of their rights had the unions become under the impact of the Emergency Laws that the Government itself was forced to issue assurances to prevent the trade union movement from disintegrating altogether.

But assurances notwithstanding, the Emergency Regulations, the various Trade Union enactments and the oppressive colonial Sedition Laws based not on the English Law but on the old Indian Codes which they expanded and embellished are serious restraints on the activities of democratic trade unions and of progressive anti-colonial forces. How can vigorous political parties develop when the freedoms of speech, association and assembly are curtailed by Emergency Regulations and restricted by laws which even friendly critics maintain have converted this country into a Police State.

### **Arbitrary Powers**

When a government is armed with arbitrary powers of arrest and indefinite detention without trial few would take the risk that what they say and do would not provoke the Government into exercising the arbitrary powers it wields. For under the Emergency Regulations one takes a gamble when one seeks to exercise the elementary rights and privileges of a citizen in a democratic society.

There can be no winning of the "hearts and minds of the people" under the oppressive atmosphere of the Emergency Regulations. The Emergency Regulations have been with us for nearly six years and the people are becoming restive. They want to be free, not gagged and bound by such arbitrary laws.

Is it any wonder that under such conditions political parties should go about with an apologetic air and take great pains to avoid tackling the basic problems of national liberty and economic regeneration? Is it any wonder that political parties show a semblance of life only when Government opens the show on election day and exhorts local political leaders to simulate democratic fervour?

### **Defence of Malaya**

The crowning irony of the situation is that the Malayan peoples after having been brought back into the fold of an old-type colonial society, and after having been progressively deprived of even the concessions which obtained before the war, are now expected to perform what is euphemistically termed National Service.

We believe that it is the duty and privilege of every citizen to take up arms in the defence of his country. But he must do this as a free citizen fighting in defences of a society in the creation of which he and his forebears has had a direct and active part. And it is acknowledged that the fighting efficiency of an army increases in proportion to the extent it is aware that it is defending its national freedom and its real interests.

### **Cultural Freedom**

Colonialism acts as a restraint also on our full cultural development. It is perhaps difficult for the colonial power to sacrifice its own political considerations and preconceptions as to what Malayan culture should be and consider it objectively. The present education policy is based on giving pride of place to English even though Chinese, Malay and Tamil are languages spoken and understood by the overwhelming majority of the people.

Superficial regard is paid to vernacular education but the Education Ordinance passed in the Federation betrays its colonial genesis by the tacit assumption that "Malayanization" is to be achieved by the relegation of Chinese and Tamil languages to positions of unimportance and the countenance of Malay language at a slightly higher level of stagnation.

In short the "Malayanization" of Malaya is equated with cultural anglicization.

### **Linguistic Diversity**

This education policy is justified on the ground that an independent Malaya must be based on linguistic uniformity. Linguistic diversity, we are repeatedly told, is one of the great obstacles to political unity and independence. We repudiate the proposition that suppression of the mother tongues or their relegation to positions of minor importance is a prerequisite for national unity. Linguistic diversity is in no way incompatible with the interests of a united Malayan nation. The immediate barrier to unity and independence is not linguistic differences but colonial rule and the unequal and unbalanced economic development of the three main Malayan communities which colonial rule has engendered. Having regard to the racial composition of Malaya official recognition should be given to Chinese and Tamil languages together with English and Malay which are now the two official languages of the Government in the Federation.

### **Lingua Franca**

A lingua franca is necessary and moral, political and practical considerations make Malay, rather than English, the obvious choice. The alleged inadequacy of the Malaya language as a lingua franca is not disinterested propaganda. The Malay language in Indonesia, freed from Dutch colonial restraints, is rapidly becoming a comprehensive means of expression and communication in science and technology, commerce, industry and the humanities. By contrast the Malay language in this colonial country remains static.

### **The aims of the Party**

On the basis of the analysis and of the principles set out in our manifesto the People's Action Party call upon all peoples of Malaya, workers by hand and brain, to rally to our party to secure national freedom now. We must muster sufficient support and strength to force the issue. We cannot do much under a colonial system.

Our party opposes the new constitutions to be inaugurated in the Federation and Singapore because they still retain the essential features of colonialism. We shall use every constitutional means to get a constitution for an independent democratic state, one which recognises the unity of Singapore and the Federation and which places ultimate control over the

affairs of this country in the hands of a government elected by its nationals and responsible only to them.

Our party will seek to release the tremendous social and political energies of the people by removing the restraints imposed on us by the Emergency Regulations and by amending the repressive local laws of sedition to accord with the laws prevailing in England.

We believe that a national movement should embrace the broadest masses of the people. This can be done only by permitting the working class organisations to participate in the political life of the country. We shall seek the immediate repeal of those sections of the Trade Unions Ordinance prohibiting Trade Unions from direct participation in politics. We shall also resist any attempt to pass on to workers, by way of wage-cuts, the burden of any economic recession.

We shall support any move for the diversification of our economy by strengthening and reorganising our agriculture or by giving encouragement, support and protection for industries.

The organisation of economic life must conform to the principles of justice to the end that it may secure a decent standard of living for every man and woman. The right to employment must be recognized by the state and the economic structure of the country must be such as to ensure that people are not subjected to the privations and degradations that go with unemployment. It should be the duty of the state to provide for the sick, for those who for one reason or another are unable to work, the young and the aged or those disabled through industrial injuries.

We must reduce inequalities of wealth and ensure that workers by hand and brain get the full fruits of their industry and enterprise.

Though, because of the division of Malaya into two territories, we are technically a political party operating in Singapore we shall in all our approach to the problems of this country disregard the constitutional division. We are as actively interested in the problems of our fellow Malaysians in the Federation as we are in those of Singapore. When Malaysians in the Federation who agree with our aims join us we shall work throughout Malaya.

We are also prepared to co-operate with other political parties who are genuinely interested in achieving real, not spurious, independence for our country.

We believe in the unity of the economy, political and cultural interests of the Malayan people. The tin-miner, the rubber tapper, the peasant on the sawah the small holder, the clerk, the professional man, the small businessman, all workers by hand and brain, have a vested interest in national freedom because only through national freedom can we now remove the restraints that colonialism by its very nature imposes on our economic, political and cultural advancement. We believe in the establishment of equal citizenship, regardless of race, religion or language to all those who are prepared to give undivided loyalty, to Malaya. We believe in the establishment of a single Malayan nationality based on the principle of *jus soli*. As long as this country is under colonial rule we shall continue to have the comic-opera of having something like nine to ten "national" states with spurious

and unreal pretensions to sovereignty.

We believe that every citizen should have the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for any purpose that does not intend force. No person shall be deprived of his liberty nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered or confiscated save in accordance with the law.

Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience to profess and preach, through constitutional means, any political, religious or philosophical creed.

Real and effective democracy is possible only on the basis of a literate and educated nation. Having regard to the fact that more than half Malaya's population is under 21 the spread of compulsory and free education is vital. Any government that is unable or unwilling to provide every Malayan with an education will remain an obstacle to Malayan democracy and independence. We believe that the education of our children should be carried out at any cost. The failure of the two colonial Governments in Malaya to give education to every child as a matter of right is one of the gravest indictments of the colonial system and its hangers-on.

Self-government means self-administration. A good indication of how far this country has been allowed to progress towards self-government by the colonial power is the extent to which Malayanisation of the civil service has been carried out. As in the political and economic sphere, so in the sphere of administration the spirit of colonialism prevails. Ultimate direction and control of administration is still in the hands of expatriate officers by virtue of their holding key posts in the administration. One cannot very well expect the upper hierarchy of the civil service to hasten the day of their own demise. What is required is a popularly elected government which really believes in the urgency of self-government and to this end is prepared to carry out a genuine policy of Malayanisation of the civil service. At the moment Malayanisation is Malayanisation at the lower rungs of the civil service. The inner sanctum is still the monopoly of the expatriate officers.

Every true Malayan with any self-respect left in him must desire freedom in the same way as millions of our fellow Asians have desired it. National freedom is not a luxury because it is something which the overwhelming majority of humanity now enjoys and which it is prepared to defend with its very life. It is colonialism which is a "luxury" in the sense that it is a condition of existence limited to a small and diminishing group of peoples. We number among that group. Everywhere in Asia its peoples are marching forward under the stimulus of their newly won freedom. Pride in their worth as human beings and confidence and ability to direct their destiny as they wish are part of the forces of the Asian Renaissance.

Can we of Malaya afford to sit and watch the proud procession of free peoples of the world march past us? Must we crouch together trembling while so-called leaders warn us of the perils of being free?

Our party is not afraid of freedom whether it be tomorrow or to-day. Far from fearing it we thirst for national freedom — NOW.