

Indochina has decreased considerably, and American involvement in Viet-Nam has ceased completely. The Organization of African Unity celebrated the tenth anniversary of its founding and, in doing so, chose as its new Chairman our colleague, General Gowon. The Commonwealth nations in the Caribbean have taken an historic giant step toward closer co-operation.

During the same period, however, a number of the disturbing situations that faced us at Singapore have shown no signs of change: The Middle East remains as potentially explosive as before. The tensions created by the rigid policies of the racist regimes in Southern Africa have, if anything, heightened. The spectre of long-term food and commodity shortages continues as crops have suffered from damaging weather patterns. The economic gap separating the have and the have-not countries has not diminished appreciably, notwithstanding the admonitions of the third UNCTAD Conference.

If one is able to draw some broad lesson from this period of two and a half years, it may be that it is found in the abundant evidence that diplomatic initiatives, properly prepared and sincerely pursued, are capable of producing successful outcomes. The world is closer to peace today than it was in January 1971, and it is so because sufficient numbers of world leaders have come to recognize that force and aggression carried on in the name of government are incapable of solving any problems. Arbitrary policies that consciously deny dignity and freedom to any group of people are evil, and they are no less so for being clothed in elaborate wrappings of *la raison d'état*.

None of us in the Commonwealth is so powerful or so self-sufficient that he is able to act independently of the opinion or the assistance of others. None of us disregards the value of consultation and co-operation. We are able in these gatherings of heads of government, and, by extension, in those other groupings to which we belong, to ensure that we understand one another's problems and one another's aspirations.

That, to me, is the significance of our association. I am not, at this meeting, in search of a new role for the Commonwealth, or indeed any role. The Commonwealth is for many of us our window on the world. Over the years, its importance will deepen largely because it has no specific role, but emphasizes instead the value of the human relationship.

The nature of our meeting does not lend itself to the resolution of any crisis, or to the solution of any major problem. By looking to

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