PRECIS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO THE CHINESE UNION OF JOURNALISTS ON TUESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1959.

September the 1st is Journalist Day. All of you are taking a day's rest. Tomorrow, in Singapore and Malaya there will be no Chinese newspapers. Thousands of readers will not have the day's news. They will not know the world's events. Even if there were important Government announcements, they would not be able to obtain details of them. From this alone we can see the importance of your responsibility. Without your diligence and effort in gathering news, arranging them and editing them for distribution, there will be no publication, and the Government will be the less able to convey its policy and information to the people.

National Archives of Singapore

It goes without saying that a newspaper is an instrument to arouse and educate the masses and awaken them. Journalists are an important group of workers in the cultural and educational fields. All news must be processed by you before they reach the people. Your responsibilities in the building of the new Malaya are heavy.

Because of my political activities, I have inevitably become a "man-in-the-news". But I am not well-versed in the techniques of journalism. I may be thought of trying to be too clever if I were to speak to you about the newspaper enterprises.

When I received your invitation my first impression was: why should there be so many Journalist Unions in Singapore? It is puzzling. For instance, today one may receive an invitation for lunch from the Singapore Union of Journalists, predominantly English Press journalists; tomorrow another invitation to give a talk from the Chinese Journalists Union sponsored by Chinese Press journalists, and perhaps yet another invitation from the Malay Journalists Union to give a lecture. In a small island like Singapore where there are only a few scores of journalists, there are two or three Unions!

National Archives of Singapore

There are English language newspapers, Chinese language newspapers, Malay language newspapers and Tamil language newspapers in this country. Although they use different languages to express their thought, the duties and responsibilities of the journalists are the same. Whether he is a reporter from the Chinese Press, the English Press, or the Malay Press, his duties are the same: to report facts, to arouse and enlighten the mass of the people and to educate them. Since they have the same responsibilities, there is no reason why they should not

form a united and strong Journalists Union. I sincerely hope that in the near future a Journalists Union representing journalists of all races and language groups will emerge.

The term "Singapore Chinese" contains an element of chauvinism. In Singapore today there are still many organisations, guilds and schools using the term "Singapore Chinese" or "Overseas Chinese". The organisations registered under such names imply, that they will protect the interests of the Chinese, and that other races are barred from joining them. Such terms are detrimental to racial unity. If every race adopts this close-door policy and forms small cliques or associations to protect their own racial interests, then it is difficult to talk of establishing a Malayan nation.

For although by what name one call's oneself is a small matter it nevertheless reflects the shape of one's thinking. We must realize that the position of the local Chinese here today is completely different from, say, that of 10 years ago. Previously the majority of the Chinese did not regard this country as their permanent home. They regarded this country as a place to earn a living, make some money to send back to China to buy land, farms, build houses, schools, and so on. This situation has changed after the war, particularly after the establishment of the Communist Republic of China. Travel restrictions

National Archives of Singapore

between Malaya and China were imposed. This has made the Chinese to decide which of the two places they regard as their permanent home and the object of their loyalty. The Chinese here have chosen Malaya as their permanent home and object of their loyalty. Therefore, we must approach all problems from the point of view of Malayans. That for many means actively to cultivate a Malayan consciousness.

Malayan consciousness is for many Chinese a new thing. Many still do not understand it and some find it difficult to accept. They may even feel that Malayan consciousness is being used as pretext to eliminate Chinese culture. Thus, as journalists it is your responsibility to educate the Chinese so that they will understand our Malayan nation and the meaning of Malayan consciousness. You should, through your presentation of facts and realities, educate the mass of the Chinese in Malaya and arouse their enthusiasm to join in building up our Malayan nation. At present no other work is more important than the work of journalists like yourselves. To accomplish this task you yourselves must first Malayanise in outlook and you must make an effort to turn your newspapers into Malayan newspapers. What we need is not a paper to convey the Chinese point of view but a paper using the Chinese language as an instrument to convey the Malayan point of view. We have only to look at countries in South East Asia to realise that the Chinese, and the Chinese newspapers are being suppressed and

National Archives of Singapore

victimized. Only in Singapore has such a situation been avoided, because the Chinese here have through their predominance in population gained a limited political security. But the lesson of South East Asia is that if the Chinese Press wish to continue to survive, they should identify themselves as part and parcel of the national culture.

Among you many were born in China and educated there. You have a wide knowledge of Chinese literature and history. You should utilize such knowledge to enrich our Malayan culture which is slowly being created. You should not use such knowledge to perpetuate the idea of "Great Han" chauvinism. In a plural society like Malaya, every race should make its cultural contribution to the national whole. In this process no single race should arrogate to itself a superior status.

National Archives of Singapore

The scope of the Malayan culture is very wide and it is big enough to enable the free development of the culture of all races.

The development of the various cultures should have a common aim though they may take different paths. They should move towards a common

target so that eventually they will merge and fuse into a young and vigorous new culture. The most important task of our journalists at this stage of the country's development is to promote the creation of this new Malayan nation and its own culture.

National Archives of Singapore