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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE GUILD

OF NANYANG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES ON SUNDAY

6TH NOVEMBER 1960 TO MARK UNITED NATIONS DAY.

This lunch was originally to have been on October 24, United Nations' Day. However, though it is about a fortnight too late, we should do well to dwell on the future of the United Nations for it is intimately related to the future of mankind.

The events of the 15th session of General Assembly of the United Nations are still vivid in our minds. It was an unprecedented gathering of the leaders of the various peoples of the world. Its meetings were marked by unprecedented scenes, some dramatic, some comic but none edifying. And at the end, as the heroes of the various nations departed, all that remained was the feeling of sadness recorded by the commentators who had been there to report and relate the inadequacy of the leaders of men to resolve the problems of a world now brought closer together by science and technology than ever before in its history.

That is not to say that there were no able leaders of nations who attended the 15th General Assembly. Some were even great men in the history of their own nations. But in world terms, for all humanity they did not measure up to greatness. Or perhaps this last General Assembly did not bring out the greatness in them.

Cynics now call this the gathering of disunited nations. These nations who were all united in the last war against common Fascist enemies have now taken up new alignments. The Western bloc of anti-Communists, the Communist bloc, and the neutralist bloc, who whilst they are against lining up in blocs, are themselves thrown into a bloc. But, however cynical anyone can be, the fact that all nations want to get together in such an organisation, that nations old and new are fighting to get into the organisation and not out of it, is an encouraging indication that all nations realise the danger and folly of a disunited and warring world. Once no nation can, of its own accord and on its own account, settle differences and disputes by superior force the way it likes, then the struggle is on to enlist the material or even the nominal support from as many of the other nations as possible. And even though the nations are not united inside or outside the organisation, the fact that they are together in wanting a United Nations to manoeuvre within, is itself a step forward towards the ideal of a world of united nations.

We will hear and see more and more of the events of these last few weeks of the 15th Session. Once a third world war is ruled out as a means of settling the contest of both ideology and power between the two blocs, then the United Nations becomes an invaluable world stage in which points can be scored in this contest. With modern radio, T.V. and newspaper techniques, and the jet aeroplane, the United Nations General Assembly offers a wonderful world stage for a contest of the ability, skill and strength of nations, their ideas and their wills.

Fifteen years ago on October 24, 1945, the United Nations had 51 original members. And in those days the West had their resolutions their way, particularly with the votes of the Latin American nations. Now there are 99 member nations. Many of these new Afro-Asian nations are ideologically uncommitted, and not so easily persuaded to vote with the West as the Latin American countries. And to test the ground and make friends with the new African member nations, Mr. Khrushchev went to New York. And whatever the views on who collected more points at this last gathering of the world's leaders, there is no doubt that the game is going to be faster and more exciting in the new 99 nation General Assembly, than in the old 51 member one. And all the signs are that it is not impossible that the moral weight and strength the United Nations

may from time to time be used against the Western powers and not only against the Communist powers as in the past.

Here for example is an instance of what this enlarged membership of the United Nations can do. Although the West wanted Russia's proposal for immediate independence to all colonial territories to be sent to Committee, where the proposal could be debated with less of an eye for world propaganda effect, the newly independent nations having only just emerged from colonial rule and exploitation, voted to debate it in the General Assembly for full effect.

No one can foresee the political and national division of the world by the end of this century. Mr. Khrushchev hopes that the map will show a world of united Communist nations. The Western world hope to see the map unchanged except for a few more colonies becoming independent. The neutral countries are less bothered about the political divisions of the 21st century. They are more concerned in getting financial and technical aid from both blocs, to get on with creating more prosperous societies for their own people in this century. But however the ideological divisions turn out to be, one thing that is likely to happen is the alteration of the national boundaries of former colonial territories.

When the European colonial powers divided up Asia and Africa in the last hundred odd years, they blithely ignored geography of countries and the history of nations. Although this was more so in Africa than in Asia, nevertheless even in Asia the newly emergent nations are already facing troubles over frontiers with their neighbour. A nation is usually defined as a distinct race or people, characterised by common descent, language or history usually organised as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory. They have come to be what they were, because of the development of these peoples in particular territory. Mountains, rivers, oceans and other natural boundaries frame and limit their boundaries. But the European powers in their quest for wealth, raw materials and large markets for their products ignored these factors. The result has sometimes been curious in the extreme. No historian in his wildest nightmare would have prophesied that out of the British occupation of India would emerge two states, one of them Pakistan in two halves separated territorially by over 1,500 miles of independent India. And the surveyor's division on the map of New Guinea at 141° longitude East may well result in another freak situation there. The western half of New Guinea known as West Irian is at present under Dutch control and is being claimed by Indonesia as the successor state of the Netherlands East Indies. The eastern half not claimed by Indonesia because it was not under Dutch control passed from the German to Australian control and may find a fate different from its western half. These are the freaks of man made

boundaries of the colonial era that will have stand up to the realities of historical and ethnic forces, and the logic of geography. When the French and the Belgians divided the Congo along the line of the Congo river they ignored the fact that on both side of the Congo river near the coast lived and still live one people, with one history - the Bakongo. Now, as a result of this accidental division of African spoils, the Bakongo people find themselves as parts of two different independent territories.

And so we can enumerate the follies and stupidities of colonial powers, carving up the peoples of the world and their territories. Even in more recent and more advanced times big powers continue to indulge in this game of map drawing by latitudes and longitudes. So we see North and South Korea divided on the 38th parallel. North and South Vietnam divided neatly on the 17th parallel. And not to mention the crazy pattern of East and West Germany with Berlin in East Germany again divided into East and West Berlin. The 7th Fleet in the Straits of Formosa is another curious example of a man-made frontier.

And so we can go on enumerating the fancies that map drawers of Europe in the last hundred years have shown. The point is that all these beautifully exact and simple boundaries of dismembered colonial territories now become incorporated as the national boundaries of the newly independent nations. Will they endure? Are national boundaries the result of the history of ethnic groups,

their military powers and economic powers as limited by the natural barriers of a particular geographical territory or can they be the beautiful lines which neat surveyors and map makers like to draw?

India and Burma have had their border differences with China who refuse to recognise the territorial lines drawn in British India days. And nearer home, fortunately the British in a moment of farsighted self-interest gave away Penang and Malacca to the Federation of Malaya in 1946. For these two territories were integral parts of the Straits Settlements of which Singapore was the capital. Otherwise we might well have had an independent nation consisting of these three former Straits Settlements. We might then have bettered Pakistan's two sections by at least one more, not to mention Province Wellesley which used to be part of Penang!

However, that is not to be. And history students and future generations may be grateful that it was not so. Anyway nobody in Singapore has yet laid claim to Penang and Malacca as our rightful inheritance. But had the British not given them to the Federation, Singapore can with full legal justification claim them as our West Irian.

This brings me to our own man-made frontier - the division between Singapore and the Federation. Had the British heeded the history of the peoples of Malaya and geography and economic realities, they would have put Singapore into the Malayan Union, just like Penang and Malacca. But they had other considerations in mind. A military base, the fact that an island of 224 square miles could be easily controlled militarily, and that although it may be difficult to deny independence to seven millions in 50,000 square miles of the Federation up in revolt, it may well be possible to maintain power for quite some time in an island of 224 square miles. And so by the fancy of planners and map-makers in London we are today out on a limb, the victim of a freak man-made frontier. For the time being the aims of these London map-makers look like being successful, at least in the immediate short term. For now the British are in the happy position of saying that it is the Federation Government that does not want Singapore and that is the reason why there is no merger. I would hazard a guess that if tomorrow a federation Government said it wanted Singapore, the British would be the most unhappy and unwilling people in the world.

But whatever the twists and turns of events in the immediate present, the relentless logic of geography and the force of historical, ethnic and economic forces must prevail. Throughout history, Singapore, or Temasek as it was called, was part of the Johore mainland. Raffles contrived to separate Singapore from

the mainland politically by settling with the Temenggong of Johore. And to this day, as part of this settlement, the Singapore Government has to pay the descendants of Sultan Hussein a yearly pension now about \$50,000 per annum. Never in recorded history has Temasek existed otherwise than as a part and parcel of the mainland in Johore. And in fact, in more recent history Singapore was the capital of the Straits Settlements from 1867, and the capital of the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States. And to formalise the link the causeway was built and completed in 1923.

It is trying and difficult to see historical trends being checked and reversed by man. But it would be sadder still if we ourselves out of exasperation were to join in trying to distort history. Some impatient and immature political parties are calling for the setting up of an independent Singapore under some kind of guarantee or other. Some crack pots want us to go under United Nations protection like the Congo has had to. We in the PAP owe it to the people of Malaya, the united peoples of Malaya, to face the facts of history. History is a long and relentless process, and there is no profit in trying to distort historical forces because of temporary irritations.

The absurdities of man-made frontiers of the colonial era, have spelt tragedies and cost the blood and tears of million of people. They may be swept

away in time. But it will have to be paid for by present and future generations. Let us carefully consider the possibilities and consequences. Above all it is our duty to calculate carefully the repercussions on the people of Malaya, both Singapore and the Federation before we embark on an enterprise contrary to our historical experience and against the broad sweep of our future destiny. Independent we shall be, and not a phoney independence of Singapore Island guaranteed by the United Nations or some other benevolent organisations, but a real one together with the rest of our people, our friends and relatives in the Federation.

We must not go against of what is historically inevitable. This does not mean that we passively wait for history to unfold itself. We must actively strive to accelerate the process of history. We can do this by creating the conditions conducive to dissolving this man-made barrier. We must combat communalism and opportunism and forge a Malayan loyalty and consciousness in the hearts of our people. Our objectives must be firm and steady and our policies should meet the changing conditions in our part of the world, for history never stands still.