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SPEECH OF THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE DINNER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA STUDENTS' UNION, SINGAPORE, AT ROSEE D'OR AT 8 P.M. ON 30TH NOVEMBER, 1961.

When I last had the privilege of addressing your Union on the occasion of its annual dinner, we met to discuss the question of academic freedom. A certain professor, whose name has probably already been forgotten by the general public, had wandered into unacademic fields, and with the help of the Press, a storm in a larger then usual tea cup raged for over a week in Singapore.

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Today we meet under happier circumstances, at least so far as the University of Malaya Students' Union, academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge in our institutions for higher learning are concerned. But a less academic struggle is going on at this moment on the fundamental rights of

students to take examinations, of their own free will, and not be interfered with, or prevented from so doing by organised force.

I am somewhat disappointed that your Students' Union that showed tremendous spiritedness on the last occasion in defence of academic freedom, have not as yet taken up this issue of the academic freedom of students unfettered and unhindered, to pursue their studies to a rewarding and successful conclusion, which everywhere in the world ends with recognised certificates, to hear witness to their academic attainments.

There is never a dull moment in Singapore. Perhaps it is because everybody including your Union have been kept busy on so many important things, like merger, the future of Singapore after merger, the future of education in Singapore after merger, that we tend to forget the importance of the future of Singapore before merger and the State of education in Singapore before merger.

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Perhaps when you have had time to consider this matter of the academic rights and liberties of your fellow students, you will in due course enunciate your stand not only on human rights, and student rights. I have no doubt whatsoever where the University of Malaya Students' Union and its members stand. For instance, Mr. Tommy Koh Thong Bee, who was recently mistakenly identified as

a supporter of the pickets, quickly cleared himself in a telegram to the Minister for Education that not only was he away from Singapore, but also that he was not against the 4:2 system. Further he added in his telegram that one of his brothers was taking the present examination.

This is the one good quality of the English educated, the instinctive respect for law and order and a desire not to be a party to unlawful and unseemly conduct which ends up in disorder and trouble for everyone involved.

And that really is the heart of the problem in Singapore, getting people unafraid and prepared to make a stand. For a long time since 1945 Communist organisation techniques of the silent intimidation, of the mass meetings of workers and student unions have cowed all opposition to them, that often although the majority are against them, because the majority are quiet not noisy they have appeared to be the minority. Many were cowed into silence by the fearful consequences which they dread would befall those who stand up to the Communists and to be recognised and later picked out for treatment.

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We are going through an extremely delicate and difficult phase of our history. In the coming months with increasing intensity and desperation, you will see the so-called "socialists" who always shout loudest about "democratic rights"

and "democratic freedom" becoming more and more undemocratic in their methods. Far from preaching the principle that man should not exploit man, you will see them ruthlessly climb on the backs of students, of workers, and of duped sympathisers both outside and inside the Assembly as they struggle to prevent merger in order to further their own selfish interests. They do all this cynically in the name of democracy, of human rights, of academic freedom, of rights of association, of freedom of the Press. For they are the first people to laugh at the folly and stupidity of the liberal and the democrat for his bourgeois political beliefs. Theirs is the hard philosophy of relentless struggle of a disciplined cadre party for a Communist world, where such bourgeois talk of academic freedom and freedom of expression can bring chilly memories of Boris Pasternak, Nobel Prize Winner, Lysenko of agronomist fame.

You as a Students Union cannot remain unconnected and divorced from this problem. Nobody in Singapore can. For many years in the past, the heart of Communist activities has been in the Chinese students unions. The first English-speaking Communist cells of the Anti-British League formed in the late 1940s were a mild affair compared with the fierce men who were then fighting in the jungles. But over the years since then, some of these men have toughened and have trained newer men in your midst. More men from the Chinese schools have inevitably, as a result of the policy of the Government of free intermingling of all

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streams of education, moved into the University of Malaya. Some of them are as tough as any in the Chinese-educated world because they have come from the Chinese-educated world. They have moved into the English educated world especially at university level to build general support and to win cadres in the English-speaking world. They are not only young men but also young women, and married women too, who are involved in this operation of preaching the gospel of Marx-Lenin-Stalin (now removed and re-buried). As we on our side are bridging the different language worlds on the nationalist and democratic side, so they on behalf of the Communist side are doing likewise for the Communist side. And the battle for minds will go on with ever-increasing intensity in your midst.

Ultimately, it is how you stand up as individuals, ordinary members, as union committee members, secretaries and presidents, how you react to the silent pressures of the persuasion and intimidation, that will decide the fate of our society. If we do not make a stand and fight for what we believe in, then we shall lose by default.

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It is because we had no intention to allow the battle to be lost by default, that we took on terrific odds against us when we decided to fight to win the last elections. We knew that we were fighting both the British and the Communists.

The only chance of survival and success is to unite the one strong and potent force that will overcome both Communists and the British, namely Malayan nationalism, the desire of our anti-racial people to live in peace and tolerance, standing up for what we will believe to be fair and just to everyone in Malaya.

The fight now going on in Singapore is not one between political parties in the Assembly. That is only the outward show. The real fight is between the forces of Malayan nationalism seeking to establish a democratic non-Communist nationalist Malaya and the Communists, and their supporters who want to establish a Communist Malaya. These Communists see in Singapore a valuable base from which to operate. It is the first step for an ideological and propaganda offensive from a liberated area, from which finally to overwhelm and overcome the Federation.

According to reports from London, Malaysia will be a reality by next year. If there is one group of persons that we should thank for having accelerated the process of merger and Malaysia, it is the left-wing adventurers in the political parties, in the trade unions, in the students' associations, like the University of Malaya Socialist Club, the Nanyang University Political Science Society, for their fierce utterances, their torrid publications and their revolutionary postures since May this year, which convinced that the Tunku and his colleagues of the

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dire peril the whole of his country is exposed to if Singapore and the Federation continued to be divided. By their own impetuous words and actions, they have brought about a swift reaction from those whom they want to devour.

But in a democratic society, it is not enough just to sit back and watch the champions in the rings slog it out. Your unions, your officials, your members and every one of you must take a stand, for by taking a stand you will make the battle less costly and less painful and success even more certain. For if the battle is lost, as I have reasons to believe that it is not, then you, your unions, your academic rights and academic freedom will all become so many empty words.

30th November, 1961. (Time issued 1800 hours)

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