SPEECH BY SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER AND SECRETARY - GENERAL OF THE PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, IN THE DEBATE ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS AT THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE COUNCIL ON 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1964 IN BRUSSELS.

Comrade Chairman, Comrades,

For me this is the first occasion and I am grateful for the opportunity.

I am a democratic socialist of a rising generation of the newly emergent nation. What we will emerge to, what we will inherit, depends upon how quickly we can learn from the experiences of those who have travelled similar roads before us, and found themselves confronted with similar situations in Europe and elsewhere.

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For many years, socialists who are not Communists, in the colonial empires of Europe, have looked upon the Socialist International with cynicism and disdain. Partly because we did not believe that there was something innately decent in human beings to rise above his own national interests. Partly because the prospect of a socialist in an anti-colonial movement being associated with

French or British socialists, who were oppressing Algerian and other freedom fighters in other parts of the world, was so abhorrent that we stood by on the sidelines.

Hence the emergence of what has been loosely called the non-aligned or the neutral group of nations. We are non-aligned if we are asked to choose between competing power blocs. We are non-aligned if we are asked to choose between the interests of competing ideologies of Communism or Capitalism. But we are not non-aligned, nor can we afford to be neutral, when our own existence, our happiness, and our future is at stake.

We are moving away from the first flush of the freedom movement. We are facing problems which are fairly well-known to all of you. Having acquired freedom, partly as a result of holding out prospects of a socialist paradise almost immediately after freedom, we have to resolve the problem of meeting rising expectations of better living when the only answer is distributing more poverty equally and more hard work to produce some of the things worth distributing.

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Fortuitously, the discussion today was opened by a German democratic socialist, two Japanese and a Britisher. I am here today because of what the predecessors of these three parties did, or did not do, some 25 years ago. Had

there been men like Comrade Willy Brandt in charge of German nation, then perhaps there might not have been Second World War in Europe. In which case, it is conceivable that if there were social democrates in charge of the destiny of the German people, perhaps Japanese militarists would not have been in charge of Japan, and Japan would not have unscrambled the empires of the British, Dutch and French in the Far East. But that was not to be. Social democratic forces in Germany were stifled, and in Japan were unheard of, and in Britain they were in alliance with reactionary forces fighting a patriotic war. Now this is all over.

In Asia and Africa today, there are over 60 new nations that have emerged and obtained independent membership of the United Nations. In the majority of these cases, the metropolitan power had a limited choice in choosing who is immediately to inherit the apparatus of the state, or at least to decide who is not to inherit it directly from him. Whether the successor government in the newly independent countries can live up to the original hopes of the metropolitan power when power was handed over is one which can be determined by the degree of assistance in wisdom and expertise, which distinguished social democrates or democratic socialists, such as you, can decide.

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Let me explain. Throughout Africa and Asia, the European empires were determined that the Communists, local Communist parties, shall not take over from them. There is only one instance where this happened. That was in North Vietnam, in the battlefields of Dien-Bien-Phu where power was wrested from colonial power by force. The lesson was learnt by all the other colonial powers, and power was handed over by consent before colonial freedom movements wrested it by force. So that left a limited freedom of choice as to who should succeed, and in the majority of these countries there were parties of the left, with varying degrees of crispness or vagueness in their socialism -- but nevertheless, leftwing parties, non-Communist in their affiliations and in their ideological beliefs.

Now they are faced with the business of making their anti-colonial revolutions succeed. They are faced with the problem of not having the revolution go one step further where all that existed of the colonial state would be dismantled and a Communist republic installed in its place. How is that to be prevented? By ideological contest, by talk of human values and humanism to a hungry and sometimes angry people or by giving them all the things that they could have hoped for under even the most benevolent of Communist regimes and at the same time having a system of government where human values are not trampled upon by an intolerant regime.

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I was impressed by the vehemence with which our first speaker, the famous Mayor of Berlin, stressed the importance of Berlin, of German reunification, of attitudes of firmness and flexibility in dealing with the East, by which he meant Russia. I would like to take a little bit of your time this morning to ask you to cast your eyes over to a similar situation in some different dimensions in South East Asia.

In Berlin, you had, on the Western side, complete cohesion, understanding of the problem, and definition of the objectives of the Western alliance, and unity in its policies. Sixteen or 17 years ago, when the first fight over Berlin broke out, I did not understand how that conflict had anything to do with me. I was not aligned. Today, I understand that had that fight been lost, I would not perhaps have emerged in South East Asia.

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The problem that worries me is that I think the West is not sufficiently alive to the acuteness of the conflicts which have now shifted to South East Asia. There you find the West in disarray. The Americans are committed to contain. There are military bases in Formosa, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines -- to contain what we sometimes fear is the uncontainable. The British play a secondary role, partly committed to contain, partly hoping to strike out in some

new more positive direction. They tentatively made what was an intelligent move when they exchanged diplomatic representation with China, recognising China, hoping to open up windows in the Chinese mind to other ideas, and other perspectives in the world. Perhaps, had the Americans embarked on that policy there might be very little to choose today between President Ho Chih Minh and President Tito of Yugoslavia.

Conflicts have arisen and our situation is bedevilled by a rift even in the Eastern camp. The Dutch, the Germans, the French have different and divergent assessments of the situation and of what is to be done. The French President, in his wisdom, has proclaimed neutralism as the panacea for all the ills of South East Asia. Whether this simple pill will work in such an advanced state of cancer in south East Asia is dubious. Nevertheless it illustrates differing assessments of what is wrong with the patient, and whether he needs medical or surgical treatment.

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The Dutch and the Germans at the moment have embarked on helping the Indonesians recover their economy. I do not blame the Dutch and I am sure the Germans do it with the best of intentions. But I wonder if they can be so completely and blissfully unaware that for a diversity of reasons both the Communists in China and Russia are agreed that the Indonesians should be helped to put Malaysia into a situation like Vietnam and Laos.

Today I read that some 30 paratroopers, probably of the Indonesian Army, have landed in my country. Thirty is not much, but if it goes on with increasing virulence over the years; within one corner of South East Asia, they would have checkmated economic progress and brought about more misery and degradation. They hope thus to bring about final despair as men's minds turn to desperate remedies for their almost lost position.

Need this necessarily be so? Should there not be a clear and sharp definition of the problems and should there not be more unanimity in the policies that are to be implemented to prevent a deterioration of the situation?

I listened to the first four speakers with great attention on the urgent need for disarmament, for containment of armaments, for the abandonment of force as the decisive factor in determining international problems. Perhaps in the developed countries of the West, governments are abashed to embark on a gun-running policy to pursue their own nationalist ambitions. But in South East Asia, whilst Mr. Khrushchev preaches disarmament and the banning of nuclear weapons, he sends to Indonesia out-dated cruisers -- such as the one that took him to Britain one decade ago -- and out-dated guns, but unfortunately good enough to kill socialists or others effectively and without discrimination. He has

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now helped to build up a force in Indonesia that would make for instability and unhappiness, leading ultimately to localised wars, which must in turn lead to wider conflicts.

I have no solutions to these problems. All I wish to say is that they are not new. They are variations, different permutations and combinations of the age long problems which you have already faced in Europe. Perhaps if democratic socialists who have had more experience in these matters were to allow us to compare notes with them in a more systematic and effective manner, we might avoid some of the pitfalls which otherwise are waiting to ensnare so many of the over 60 new nations.

They can be won over to your side, and my side. They are like-minded men and women who seek salvation for their own people, who are increasingly conscious of the fact that they live in very small world, ever growing smaller, and that the problems of the East and West, the problems of nuclear war, of disarmament, are so closely tied up with their problems. They seek development, technical skills and industrial capital to create a little more of the material things of life, which can make their people travel the democratic and socialist path to prosperity and happiness.

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If democratic socialists, or social democrate as we used to call them, are only pre-occupied with their own little problems, are only concerned with their own immediate neighbours, then the over 60 new nations, non-aligned, neutral though they may be, must eventually drift to the other side. Polarisation is almost inevitable. What is not inevitable is that they should drift that way. If you give them sustenance, succour not only in ideas, although they are important, but even more important in intelligent policies of the have nations helping the have-nots, to reach a fair level of economic development without undergoing the tribulations of violent Communist revolution, they will be tempted to go along with you.

It is in this hope that I have made these remarks this morning.

3rd September, 1964.

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