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Mr. Vice-President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My wife and I are delighted to have this opportunity to meet so many prominent members of the Australian press, and I particularly am grateful for the kind words you have said in introducing me, and more so for giving me such an early opportunity to put over a birds' eye view of the situation in Southeast Asia as seen from Singapore.

The subject which I thought might be of mutual interest would be the broader one of how smaller nations such as Malaysia with an 11 million population, and Australia, can find their separate identification and fulfillment without being either absorbed or otherwise become satellites or vassals of other bigger powers.

This is a subject which must interest you as it passionately concerns us. For, in the long run, as we face the realities of big-power conflicts not just ideological conflicts, but big-power conflicts, sometime ideological and at other times not so ideological--where do the smaller nations find their own fulfillment?

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Twenty years ago, the Allied powers, overwhelmed by the tremendous sacrifices that two world conflicts had inflicted on them, and mindful that a third would be even more disastrous, set out to build an organisation which could prevent another conflict of big powers from engulfing the world.

The first decade from 1945 to 1955 was not unpromising. Small wars did take place. Wars on national independence which led to freedom for countries in Asia and which set an example which made it easier for the colonial peoples in Africa to achieve

their freedom with less strife. The French defeat in Vietnam at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was symbolic of that era. There were wars where conflict resulted from a clash of ideologies. And Communist aggression in South Korea in 1950 was checked and ultimately halted by the United States acting under the aegis of the United Nations and supported by a large number of Western and non-Western powers.

The high watermark of that age, the first decade, ended with the Bandung Conference in 1955. Then there was still hope that perhaps nations had learned the terrible lessons of politics based completely on big power considerations. And since big nations were unable to resolve their conflicts with other big ones by forces without disastrous results upon themselves, they sought to advance their positions by rallying support from the smaller ones. It appeared then just possible that nations would learn to resolve, or at least to contain their difference peaceably.

And with the entry of a growing number of Asians, and later, African nations into the United Nations, it appeared possible that the counting of heads could become a practice in relations between nations as it has been relations between citizens in some countries in the world.

But Bandung was really the high watermark of this age. The solidarity of Afro-Asia, of India and the smaller countries of Asia with China, and the states as yet to emerge in Africa, was demonstrated in resounding terms. Pantjasila was Afro-Asia's new code of international ethics. Afro-Asians affirmed their belief in peace, non-aggression and the solution of all problems on the basis of mutual respect and esteem.

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All these hopes of a brave new world based on justice and moral right have somewhat faded away. The United Nations is in a state of suspended confusion. The big powers are unable to agree that both sides would benefit equally by its continuance.

Fortunately the big powers, probably with the exception of China, as yet appear unable to agree that the dissolution of the United Nations would be in their mutual interest.

Meanwhile, the Indonesians having to find something as dramatic as the crushing of Malaysia when the cock was due to crow on 1st January,1965, decided to withdraw from the U.N. It appears that the world body needs “re-tooling". Just in what shape this re-tooling should take, nobody could ascertain, except that Malaysia should be out of the Security Council.

It is clear now that Afro-Asian solidarity was founded on a common antipathy against European domination. They had also proclaimed their solidarity for the virtues of peace, non aggression, non interference, mutual respect, regardless of size and power of all the newly independent nations which have and are yet to emerge from European colonial rule. But in less than a decade, many conflicts, some old, some new, between the different peoples of Afro-Asia led to disillusionment as Asians fought Asians over the Himalayas and Africans fought Africans over former French possessions between Algeria and Morocco, Somalia, and Kenya, and Ethiopia.

And so a new mood is emerging not only in Afro-Asia, but also amongst the European powers. All are conscious that the great divisions in the world need no longer be between Europeans and the rest. That would have been too simply, too dangerous for the European and too easy for the Afro-Asians. Nor is the division simply between Communist and non-Communists powers.

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Instead, the picture is a complicated one, for in any given instance, there is an overlap of many divisions of interests. There is the division between the Communist revisionists who want peaceful competition with the non-Communist world, and the Communist revolutionaries who despise the Communist revisionists even more than they despise non Communists.

Then we are told by the leaders of Indonesia that the great division is between the new emerging forces and the old dying forces. And from the way Indonesians treat their neighbours, not only Malaysia, but also young and bustling Australia is in danger of being classified under old dying forces.

One of the divisions which would interest Australia and Malaysia is that between big powers and small powers. Malaysia shares a common problem with Australia. Both have small populations. How are they to survive, seek their legitimate national aspirations without being destroyed or made vassals or satellites of big powers.

Now whatever the reasons for great power besides a large population and abundant natural resources, there would appear to be a fairly limited number of national groups in this world capable of achieving great power-- the Americans, the Russians, the Europeans, the Japanese and amongst those likely to emerge from the under developed countries of Afro-Asia and join the ranks of the great are the Chinese, the Indians and Arabs. These are peoples with an ancient past. Their past history indicates that they were, once upon a time, capable of intense endeavour and sustained effort to give them a pre-eminent position amongst nations. Given the right leadership and the opportunity, they will undoubtedly again vie for a leading place.

As nations, Australia and Malaysia, however well off they may be in natural resources and however advanced they may be as individual humans, are unlikely in the immediate future to achieve great power status on their own. So they must seek some shelter with one or more of these big powers.

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It is against this sombre background of big power politics that Australia's relations with Malaysia can be seen, I hope, in some fair perspective.

And as I have said we have a common neighbour, bigger in numbers that either of us, poorer than both of us, and likely to be in a state of unrest and turbulence for a long

while yet. But on the other hand the history and the cultural pattern of its peoples is not that of intense and sustained effort. So it should not be too difficult if it has to be for us to match the Indonesian will and test their patience, and let time work things out.

Malaysians can understand Australia's approach to the problems of Indonesia. Like Australia, we are aware of her size, her potential for advancement of her own people if her leaders bend their energies on constructive and economic progress, and her equally great potential for mischief if her leaders, for a diversity of reasons, prefer external diversion to internal constructions. And worse, if one or more of the big powers exploit their restlessness for other revolutionary ends the situation can become complicated and dangerous.

In the years before 1963 when Indonesian energies were concentrated on the acquisition of West Irian, we counted our blessings. We were left in peace, if for no other reason than that the Indonesians were realistic and they decided to take on one problem at any one time. Like Australia we were painfully aware of the perils inherent in that situation. But unlike Australia, because we are Asians and not Europeans, we were on the side of Afro-Asians as against the Europeans.

Malaysia is fortunate that both Australia and New Zealand, though not big powers, are sufficiently alive to their interests in peace and stability in Southeast Asia to have committed themselves to helping to uphold Malaysia's integrity. We know that military and economic aid cannot guarantee us our ultimate success, but at least it will buy us time.

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But we can use that time which is being bought to greater advantage than it has been used in South Vietnam. And I hope historians will never say that in spite of the bitter lessons of South Vietnam, Malaysia and her allies never learned to do better. There, eleven precious years bought at enormous sacrifices in economic and human resources, were frittered away. This experience showed that however massive the

military cadre, however enormous the economic assistance, if the leaders of the people who are to be saved do not set out to secure their own salvation, the end result is still perdition, both for the helper and the helped. If the exercise this time in Malaysia is to be successful, Malaysia's leaders must use the time they are given to consolidate the economy. And economic gains must be used to bring about social advance and a more stable social structure. Finally, a political system, sufficiently sensitive to popular feelings and aspirations must be evolved to make resistance to subversion and infiltration an enduring one. Only then is external military and economic aid worthwhile. For then, it can be reduced and eventually be dispensed with. Afro-Asian countries are only worth the saving if they can save themselves just as Western Europe used the Marshall Plan to save itself.

The picture of a small nation, like Malaysia, forever dependent on Western military and economic succour and sustenance is not one that uplifts the soul. If Malaysia is to be perpetually dependent on Western aid for its survival, then she is hardly worth the effort.

But I would like to explain why there are special factors in Malaysia which will make success the more likely. First, she has a plural society. The Malays and the indigenous people are largely in the rural areas. The Chinese, Indians and others of immigrant stock, are mainly in the urban areas. If leaders of the various communities in Malaysia are able to discern and identify their common interests, this plurality in her society could be used to great advantage in ensuring her economic advance and her political stability.

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People in rural areas all over the world tend to be less revolutionary in outlook if they own their land and get decent returns. The Malay rice farmer or rubber small holder if assured of decent life does not want revolution. So they form a natural ballast against revolutionary excesses.

Meanwhile, in the towns, the Chinese and the Indians nurtured in a highly competitive tradition, respond to the spur of enterprise and incentive, giving high performance and good returns.

Now it is true a growing urban proletariat having to pay the price for quick economic advance are sometimes tempted by Communist appeals of revolution, appeals for a completely egalitarian society, with power in the hands of the proletariat. But if the main political leaderships in Malaysia are practical and realistic enough to know that they need each other and others contribution and are prepared to find at least accommodation if they are unable to achieve co-operation then they can match and balance the naturally conservative rural base with the more revolutionary urban base to the advantage of everyone.

For there should be enough wealth from the economic activity of the urban economy to ensure not only welfare benefits for the urban workers, but also a reasonable level of earnings for the farmers and the small holders. This will give time during which it will be possible to set up reasonable standards of community welfare to take the sting out of class bitterness and hatred and set us on the road to self-generating economic growth, which in the last analysis is the only basis to build a more equal and just society.

But let me admit that this plural society of Malaysia also in it lies the danger of her own destruction. If under external pressure of Indonesian confrontation, the leaders of the various communities in Malaysia respond not as Malaysians, but as so many Malays, Chinese, Indians and others, then the end must be disintegration. For instance, if the Malay leadership in Malaysia faced with Indonesian calls to Malay chauvinism tries to compete and outbid the Indonesians by being more Malay than the Indonesians, then pressures will be generated within which will divide the nation between urban and rural, between immigrant and indigenous, between economically advanced and economically not so advanced.

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What happens if disintegration sets in is too unpleasant to contemplate. Suffice it to say that theoretically there are three possibilities: first, Malaysia's absorption or conquest by a third power; second, the supremacy of one community over the others in Malaysia; and third, a drift towards segregation and ultimately the partition of Malaysia. All three have gruesome implications.

And so there is no going back either for Malaysia or her friends. Any regret or vacillation at the cost of upholding Malaysia's integrity against Indonesian aggression, would bring catastrophic result for all of us.

However divergent our views, we share a common interest to ensure that our common neighbour shall not bring greater strife into the region. We have reasons to be confident that Indonesia's military and economic pressure can never crush Malaysia. After nearly two years of Indonesian policy of blackmail and terror, Malaysia has shown that she has the resilience and the stamina to withstand the worst that the Indonesians can do.

The real danger, as I have said, is Malaysia's own internal weakness. For Indonesian political subversion is making a bid for the Malay community within Malaysia. And if Malaysia's leaders respond to this as so many Malays, Chinese, Indians and others, instead of responding as Malaysians, then complications arise. For the more the Malay leadership in Malaysia talks in terms of Malay nationalism, the more the non-Malays in Malaysia will be in doubt as to their future.

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And so it is a pity that these acute pressures should have come upon Malaysia so early. If she had been given more time, it is not unlikely that she would have found much more interracial solidarity to face Indonesia's threat to her existence. But be that as it may, we must now find the best way in which the different communities within Malaysia can discern and recognise their common interests, to identify who is their

common enemy, and to unite all the communities in Malaysia in defence of their collective interests.

There is no simple solution to peace, let alone prosperity for Malaysia. The only formula to success is firmness in the face of threats and acts of aggression and a patient search for the main areas of friction within Malaysia in order that they may be removed. If we do this it will generate confidence and unity, which in turn will help achieve economic and social progress, which in turn ensure political stability. And really this is all that the protective umbrella of commonwealth military assistance can really be designed for.

Australians have to make a choice between three courses of action, none of which are pleasant. First, to do nothing to help Malaysia and leave it all to the British, running the risk of the British effort failing, because it is isolated and labeled as being in pursuit of the interests of all old dying imperialist force. Second, to help Malaysia, and risk antagonising Indonesia. Third, to do both, be friends with Indonesia and at the same time fulfill Commonwealth obligations to defend Malaysia's boundaries.

If I were an Australian not unnaturally I would choose the third course as the best of all courses of action. Australian interests require that national boundaries should not be changed at the whim and will of the countries with bigger populations in the region, and Australian interest require that Australia should do this in a way so as not to antagonise either the people or the Government of Indonesia. Or if it is not possible not to antagonise the Government, at least not to antagonise the people of Indonesia. But the American experience in Indonesia tends to show that the Indonesians are in no mood to be rational or to act for more than just their short-term interests. The Americans are not even committed to the defence of Malaysia. But the Indonesian view seems to be that those who are friendly to Malaysia must be their enemies.

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Well, like Australians, Malaysians have to live with Indonesians for centuries. So if we continue to have an aggressive neighbour, I hope Malaysia's co-operation with Australia for their mutual interests will continue for centuries. We both want friends and we both want to be friends with our neighbours. But that friendship is only worthwhile, if it is acknowledged that we have a will of our own and that we have our own interests to safeguard. Vacillation in the face of veiled threats of what will happen to us because others have larger populations is not the way to get some semblance of international order in the region. We do not have to be truculent with an irascible neighbour. But we do have to be politely firm to help a sometimes bewildered and sometimes adventurist neighbour to come to some sober working relation with all round him.

Thank you.

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