

TEXT OF THE SPEECH BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER MR. LEE KUAN YEW, OVER THE ABC IN THE 'GUEST OF HONOUR PROGRAMME' BROADCAST BY ABC ON 21ST MARCH, 1965 AND 23RD MARCH, 1965, BROADCAST BY RADIO MALAYSIA (SINGAPURA) ON 23RD MARCH, 1965 AT 10 P.M.

Good evening.

Some 20 years ago in February 1942, the Japanese armies overran Singapore and some 90,000 Commonwealth troops, British, Indians and Australians tramped into captivity. I saw them tramping along the road in front of my house in Singapore for three solid days -- an endless stream of bewildered men who did not know what had happened, why it happened, and what they were doing there in Singapore in any case.

I was bewildered too. We were all unprepared for this. We thought Singapore was an impregnable fortress and the British Navy was supreme. No one expected the Japanese to march down Southeast Asia and capture us. Nobody has warned us of this.

It was a shock. For myself as perhaps for those Australians who marched wearily in front of my house to three-and-a-half years of near hell on earth, that was an experience not easily forgotten.

Looking back over these 20 years, reading the memoirs of the generals on both sides who fought that battle, I thought that if only we had known what was coming and had been prepared for it, we would all have given a much better account of ourselves and avoid the miseries of defeat.

We must never let this sort of thing happen again either to you or to me. We must know what are the perils around us, where our troubles are likely to come, from, and how we can prevent unpleasant things happening to us.

There are already some Australian troops in Malaysia, some in Malaya, some in Sarawak. You may ask why? What for? First, what are we fighting against? Second, what are we fighting for?

We Malaysians are fighting against terrorists and guerilla platoons, trained and armed Indonesians, some members of the regular Indonesian army. They come across our borders to pillage, murder and destroy, to sneak into bank buildings in Singapore to plant time bomb, or drop out from the skies by parachute to form marauding bands in the jungles of Malaya to wreck havoc on my country.

By any standard of international practice, or just plain civilised behaviour, this is wanton aggression. Malaysia is a nation of 11 million people. Australia has about the same number. Separating our two countries is, with over 100 million people. What has Indonesia to fear from either Australia or Malaysia? We are outnumbered by 10 to 1 in population, and by 40 to 1 in soldiers. Indonesia has armed forces of about 400,000 while Malaysia has only 10,000.

Without allies, we would soon be conquered, or in the jargon of the Indonesians "liberated", in the same way as the Japanese once "liberated" me in February 1942. I have no use for anyone "liberating" me. So what I am fighting against is aggression which the Indonesians euphemistically call "confrontation", fighting against conquest which Indonesia calls "liberation".

What are Malaysians fighting for? Well, to be left in peace in our own country, to work and build a tolerant, democratic and a relatively prosperous society out of the 11 million peoples of Malaysia - Malays, Chinese, Indians, Dyaks, Dusuns, Muruts and

others who have come to live together in Malaysia as a result of over 100 years of British rule. Left alone, we have enough natural resources and sufficient human skill, industry and enterprise to build a happy and prosperous community. Today, we already enjoy one of the highest standards of life in South Asia, although it is still far below what you enjoy.

You may say this is good reason why Malaysians should fight for Malaysia against Indonesia. But you may ask should Australians be involved in defending Malaysia? What do Australians get out of sending their men and aircraft to give us some moral and physical support?

Your leaders are the people best qualified to answer these questions. And you have able and experienced leaders both in Government and in Opposition to do this. My guess is that it is more than just for reasons of charity and human compassion for another small country.

In helping us defend ourselves, you are asserting the principle that nations with smaller populations have the right to be left alone. In other words, nations with larger populations have no right to harass, coerce or conquer their neighbours with smaller populations. If this principle is upheld, then the danger to Australia of being involved with a more populous neighbour wanting to have her way with Australia would be that much less. But people and their governments do not just fight to uphold principles, if, in fact, the fight cannot be won. They only do so if they can also win. And Malaysia can win and in the process of winning re-affirm the right of all nations with smaller populations to live in peace unmolested by their bigger neighbours.

The progress in Malaysia's economic development, its relative wealth in a very poor region, together with a people by and large hard-working, thrifty, ingenious, living in tolerance and harmony between our different races, these are sound foundations for enduring success.

I know that a few Australians are uneasy over Australia being involved in conflicts taking place in Asia. Some are fearful that by supporting Malaysia, Australians may, like the Americans in South Vietnam, be said to be supporting a reactionary corrupt and decadent regime all for Western military and strategic interests. And this will bring odium upon Australia from the many countries in Afro-Asia with whom you want to be friends.

Well, no one can be sure that Australia will not get into this position by helping Malaysia. But let me tell you that a large number of Malaysians are also acutely aware of this danger. For then we Malaysians will be isolated from the rest of Afro-Asia and will be branded as reactionary elements used as stooges by colonial, imperial powers.

So we spend a lot of our time checking any incipient sign, any tendency, towards these dangers. We also spend a considerable time letting ourselves be known in the rest of Asia and Africa for what we are, a small nation engrossed with our own economic and social progress and wanting peace in order to get on with our work.

If not only the Government of Australia, but more important also the people of Australia made it generally known that what they are supporting in Malaysia is not a particular Malaysia Government but the people of Malaysia and their right to self-determination, then there should be little risk of Australia's help being misunderstood. This misfortune of the Americans in South Vietnam was to allow the world to believe that they were supporting a reactionary, autocratic regime run by one man called Ngo Dinh Diem and supported by his family and all this was in aid of America's strategic interest to contain Communism. Whatever American intentions were, they allowed Afro-Asia to believe this, with catastrophic results, both for Ngo Dinh Diem and for the Americans who came to help him.

This is not the case between Australia and Malaysia. You are helping a representative Government in Malaysia chosen by the people in democratic general

elections, which must be renewed every five years at least in order to renew its mandate from the people. This is all provided for in Malaysia's Constitution.

So if we can let this be known to the world, we can win a great deal of sympathy and support from the uncommitted nations. Our two peoples, one of European and the other of Asia descent, living in the same region, facing common problems have the right to pool their resources to overcome common dangers. If we get this message across, there are very few governments who will be against us. And these few will be the governments who would be against us in any case.

So, Malaysia deserves your help. Malaysia will survive.

Good night.

National Archives of Singapore