

TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN
YEOW, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF EVERTON PARK HOUSING
ESTATE ON 8TH NOVEMBER, 1965.

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

It is always a problem when you have mixed gathering like this because you are talking to three or four different audiences: one, the English-speaking -- and beyond them, the English Press, then the correspondents who reside here, then on to the rest of the world. They are important -- the sympathetic milieu of the international friendships that we can cultivate. And this, of course, strengthens our position vis-a-vis our neighbours -- friends and foes alike.

But, more important is the audience on which our immediate survival depends -- the people for whom these houses are built, for whom we open up a glimpse of the future.

For those of us who have never lived in an attap shack, it is difficult for us to imagine the filth, the squalor, the degradation one feels ... as I felt over a decade ago when I went around this area seeking election.

It is an excruciating experience. You tramp into corners you never knew existed. The highway, Anson Road, is bad enough, with filth, rubbish, litter and the dirty walls. But worse, are the human beings heaped on top of each other behind the main highway, and the dirt, the squalor and the desperation and despair that is bred in young minds in those conditions. No one single factor therefore, can more change that climate than a glimpse of what is possible if we all get together and strive.

The Everton Park project is only the first phase of this projects. The second phase will provide another 500 units. In two years' time there will be another 1,000 at Blair Plain. In the end, 50 percent of the workers in the Port Authority will be provided with houses.

Then, there is a second programme. At present, we only rent the houses.

When we have completed the Everton Park project, there will be a second phase.

We will offer those who work hard houses that they can pay for by instalment.

When they retire they can own the houses. They will be satisfied. If they work hard, don't cheat and don't steal, after working for 25 years, when they retire they can own the houses. The first programme will have to be completed first. In that way our country can progress and we will live in peace and harmony.

But, as I said, it will be another two years before we complete the second phase of this projects and the adjoining plan for Blair Plain. And even then, we'll have only about 50 percent of the Singapore Port Authority workers housed, by which time more children would have been born ... In another two years, at the rate of 60,000 per annum in Kandang Kerbau, there would be 120,000 more children -- a frightening thought.

So you see, you solve something, but in the meantime another problem is in the brew. Nevertheless, you have leavened up men's minds, and you've given them a stake in the future.

The worst thing for any developing country is insecurity. If you have tents which can be folded up and all the gold and the rubies and the diamonds can be packed and they can all disappear tomorrow, then everybody develops that "run-away mentality"; the fly-by-night medicine peddler. You know, the man comes along, banging his gong ... and many politicians in this part of the world can be aptly compared to what that medicine mendicant does: he bangs on his gong, a crowd gathers; then he says, "Look at my potent yeast". He take a knife, cuts, pastes, strips and is cured. He says, "Buy one". The next day when are at home, you may cut your foot on a piece of jagged glass, and so you apply the paste. But the day after when you remove the paste, the wound is worse, and there is a

septic ulcer. You look for the man but he can't be found. And you end up in the General Hospital seeking free medical services from the Government.

You see, this gives more than just a sensation of permanence. This is permanent. It will be here a hundred years from now. We are not running away. I am not running away. They can't run away. Some of you can. Perhaps I can if I want to, but even I can't, you know. Not unless I want to lose my own soul. So, when they know that I'm not running and they can't run, then we dig our toes in and we fight!

This is something our neighbours in Southeast Asia must learn: that we are a fighting generation. We intend to fight for our stake in this part of the world. And if anybody thinks he can push us around, I say "Over my dead body." And, I don't mind if I am dead, provided there are a few other guys dead with me. That is what happened to us over these last few years.

We tried to be reasonable. We tried to make it work the rational way. But there were lots of irrational men. All right. So what? So, we run or we fight? and I say, we fight. And I do not care if there a 104 million Indonesians of whom 400,000 are armed. So what? Does it mean I can't sleep well of nights? Of course I can. I know that there are radar screens, I know that there ar

aircraft-carriers, and what is more important I know that in ten, fifteen years, I will breed a generation that can man missiles.

You know, you must know electronics to learn how to work missiles. To learn electronics, you must pass in Trigonometry and Higher Mathematics, and learnt all about Calculus. These are very complicated things. I was very happy when I looked through some old picture of what is happening. You know, it's one thing taking a gun. Anybody can take a gun or just a rifle -- best of all is a single-bolt rifle from the First World War -- that's what I think. But it is another thing for you to work with complication missiles. That way, you don't need a big population to work them. And I say, in ten or fifteen years, we'll breed that generation. And meanwhile, there is no need for a big army. We are not going to invade anybody. Just a Volunteer Force, ten thousand, will be needed.

But you know, even ten thousand can be very useful. One year ago, riots broke out. We were hard-put. Some people thought we would lose our nerve and go crawling, and weep, and beg for mercy. We said, "No, either this is put down and this communal politicking stops, or this will spread throughout Malaysia, and all will die. They did not believe us. But in the end, they did -- when they discovered that we were not fudging it. If they wanted it that way, they would get it that way. So, we were, to use the words of the Prime Minister

of Malaysia, His Excellency Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, "kicked-out of Malaysia." So be it -- this time.

A Communist book, a little pamphlet I once had the title "Two Steps Backwards, One Step Forward". The Communists are prepared to do that. I spent a long time browsing through it and figuring out the intricacies of the thinking. I said, "Yes, there is something in this." All right. Well, this one is one step backwards. We concede that. Yes, so we lost. In the game of draughts, we lost a piece. But if this is a game of chess, not draughts, I don't think we have lost. This is a very long-term game: who checkmates who in what corner of Southeast Asia.

And, I read just now to our friends, in Hokkien ... I don't read the Reader's Digest -- my son reads it -- it is good reading for him. He's 13 1/2, he is learning English besides Chinese. I was looking at it yesterday -- it just arrived on Saturday -- because I must know what he is being fed with. And, it says here in the first article of the "Reader's Digest" for November 1965 -- I'm giving it a bit of publicity over Radio Singapore, but never mind, we are friendly people -- it says here "by Francis Vivien Drake" -- you know, after Francis Drake, the famous English player of bowls. "Here, on a world-wide scale are the crucial issues in Vietnam, which are still not fully understood by many, why we are

fighting in Asia. This man is the Reader's Digest Military correspondent. I have been thinking this a long time: that if we were Malta, or Fiji, then I say we would be in a very hazardous situation, because nobody is interested in Malta now. The British gave it the George Cross. The Island of Malta, as an island, got the George Cross for bravery and valour, in the last war. But that was the last war. The next war is not wanted. Nobody wants to go there, nobody wants to bomb it. So, I met the former Prime Minister, Mr. Don Mintoff, and I met the present Prime Minister, Dr. Borg Olivier, a nice gentleman. And he said, "What to do?" in a Maltese fashion, brave, but not important any more. And every year, out of a population of 350,000, some 50,000 Maltese are going away to Australia and to America. They have no future in Malta.

But, we are calculating on the basis that there will be 4 million people here in Singapore in another 15 years' time. Nobody is going away. They are coming in, you know, from Malaya. Last year, ten thousand came in from Malaya. And the Tengku said, "No, no. welcome to Malaya. Free land in Johore." I was saying to myself, "Well, here's a good chance to get rid of all the ultras. I hope they will take the free land." Not one family moved out. I felt robbed. Free land, and nobody went'. There was the heap of discontented people, seething with revolt and violent revolution, causing riots, and when it came to the crunch

and we said, "Right, leave -- free land." they said, "No. Please let me work in Singapore. It is a good life." And that is true.

What is worse, this year -- just the first ten months -- we have already reached 9,500 for the people coming in. Do you know why? Because, in August after the separation, the rate of increase from Malaya to Singapore doubled. Every month we got about 750 to 800. In August, it became 1,500. In September it was 1,400, and in October 1,400. This worries me. What are they doing? Do you see the number of pirate taxis with Johore numbers, Kuala Lumpur numbers? Then there the hawkers. First, from Johore Bahru, they come down to Bukit Timah. Then, from Bukit Timah they drift further and further in. We are solving other people's problem. But never mind. I will tell you why I say "never mind"; because I know that whilst some people 254 miles away have not worked out the equation, this man, Francis Vivien Drake, has worked it out.

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"Why are we fighting in South Vietnam?" he asked. And he explains to Americans in simple language. You know, you have to explain to the Americans in simple language, otherwise they never understand. He says, "Vietnam is the key to the safety and independence of nations made up of 325 million free people, possessed of some of the world's greatest riches. Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines could all be forced into serfdom with the

collapse of South Vietnam and the expulsion of the United States." Well, all that interested me considerably, but what was, "Ah, here was the light."

"Even more critical, however, is the fact that Southeast Asia leads to the ultimate, little understood objective of the present conflict -- control of the great port of Malacca. This strategic highway, dominated by the great port of Singapore, is one of the prime shipping bottle-necks of the world. 600 miles long...." -- that is the Straits, not us; we are only 17 miles by 24 miles ... "60 miles wide at this narrowest point, studded with islands, it is a throughfare even more important to the United States than the Straits of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, or the English Channel, for it is the shortest and safest route from Pacific to the Indian Ocean. About 98 percent of the trade of the Orient flows through the Straits in a procession of ships carrying billions of the dollars' worth of merchandise to and from the world markets. In one year, more than 12,000 ships drop anchor in Singapore". That is why you and I will be here a thousand years from now, unless you can take a pair of scissors and cut off Singapore and paste it in the South Pacific, then say "solved"; otherwise, we are here.

You cannot take a pair of scissors and cut off the causeway and paste us in the South Pacific. What is more, even the British blew up the Causeway with no trouble at all, the Japanese repaired it within a matter of days. We are part of the

Asian continent, the Southernmost tip of the Asian continent, and we will be here a thousand years from now. Singapore will be here, physically, geographically.

My job and your job is to make sure that your progeny and mine -- our posterity - - is here a thousand years now, recognisable as such. This is important -- recognisable as such. You don't want to be emasculated -- de-humanised, made into serfs.

800 years ago, in the 12th century, this was a thriving little fishing settlement, and quite a centre of activity. Then the Javanese came and sacked it, and burnt it to the ground. It is part of the history of Temasek. And there are lots of people around who are not happy with our progress and prosperity. The more flats soar up, the more hearts stir around in the region. They say, "Yes, why not for us too?" And we say, "Yes, why not? surely it can be done." And so, men's minds are triggered off, and they say "Why not obliterate all this, sack

it, burn it, destroy it?" I say, if you are to insure your survival as is my intention, we have to join the Volunteer Corps.

There is no need to have a big army. It is a waste of money and causes more trouble. You can never de-mobilise big armies in Asia. An army can grow bigger, but you cannot make it grow smaller. And the moment you say "make it grow smaller", the army says, "I am taking over". Unless of course you are wise

enough like some people in Southeast Asia, and you make your relative the General. But even that is not all right, because some other General may pop up, and that is a lot of trouble. Now, I do not intend to have any trouble with any Generals. I have a colleague who was Finance Minister and has now become a Defence Minister. He is equal to any officer who thinks he can be a General in our army.

We can build a good militia. You work in the Harbour Board by day, and if anybody tries to be funny by night you can manipulate all the latest weapons. We can start off with British Army World War One weapons, Enfield single-bolt action rifles. I have been reading all this in the last few weeks, very busy seeing what is going for free. Never buy these things because it gets out of date, in the next few years the Australian Army will have a surplus of old weapons and so too the British army will have a surplus! Always start with the simplest. So, our Cadet Corps will have World War One single-bolt action rifles. But, for our Volunteer Corps we'll have World War Two rifles -- not quite single-bolt. You do not have to push the belt in after every single shot. After every shot you can fire another one. Then, in about five to ten years' time, other armies would have moved on, so we will take over.

Have you seen their pictures of Indonesia? Did you see the one in the Straits Times of a Chinese boy with two hands up, a brave Indonesian on his left and right and punching him, and even braver Indonesian soldiers in front and behind him carrying rifles watching this unedifying example of what is hardly an example of courage. I watched the rifles, the kind of rifle. I discovered that this is what is called an Armourlite. Our prison warders are equipped with an Armourlite after the riots in Pulau Senang two years ago. With an Armourlite, one press of the trigger and you can fire 30 rounds! "Brrr" -- it goes off. And, it will be pierce half-inch thick metal at 300 yards, which is quite something!

I say, " Well, never mind, don't worry about that." Eventually, in ten to fifteen years, if the British say that it is all too expensive and they are going away ... I do not think they are going in ten years, really, because there is too much at stake even for them. The Australians will suddenly wake up tomorrow and get nervous diarrhoea, dyspepsia, at the thought that this whole thing is going. So, we can be left in the lurch only if others are also prepared to be left in the soup. We let them do the worrying, you see. We worry about ourselves, they worry about themselves; and, because we matter to them, they will worry for us. So, they worry for their part of Southeast Asia. We worry for ourselves.

And first, ten thousand volunteers in five years. Nobody starts any trouble inside Singapore. Nobody lands on the beaches. In ten years, we may learn how to operate ground-to-air missiles. Dr. Toh has been watching the latest missiles, very big ones. Those are ground-to-ground. We do not want them. They are aggressive. If you fire them here, they will land on another capital and destroy it. That is no good. We only shoot from ground to air defensive missiles. If anybody thinks of doing us harm, we press button 'A' and it comes down from the sky! Solved!

Now, to do that, you must have an educated population, trained in Higher Mathematics and Electronics. You do not just take a missile like a gun and peer through the bottom of the missile and look for the aeroplane in the sky. No. You watch radar screens, and little computers are set to work, and you say, "Right, this is the direction, height, speed, all on the dial" then fire. Count-down, and shoot.

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We know that some of our neighbours can get this equipment. But, can they work it as quickly as we can learn to work it? And as I went round the schools and the universities and I watched, I said "All right, so be it. Let us see who can play this game called 'Chicken' with more verve." I say we will be here a thousand years from now if we do not overplay our hand.

We do not want to fight anybody. We do not want to be anybody's satellite stooge. We intend to be ourselves and to hold this part of Southeast Asia, and anybody who thinks we can be made pawns of is making a grave error of judgement. We are sovereign, independent and as the phrase goes, "forever and ever". That means a very long time in the history of man.

So for us you and I are concerned, "forever and ever" means for your lifetime, your children's lifetime, your grand-children's lifetime, for lives and lives in being, and for a thousand years thereafter. And these buildings are part of the guarantee, for you and for me -- that we intend to stay and fight. We do not build these multi-storey flats if we are going to run. We build this because we intend to stay, and more people who understand this in Southeast Asia, the better and healthier for all of us.

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You have seen what the Nantah students pasted on the streets. Raffles Square and other places. They shouted anti-national slogans. I do not think they are wise. What are they against? What are they opposing? What do they want to attack? Do they want to reduce us to ashes? Utter stupidity! You know, almost half of the students are from the Federation, born in the Federation, and I

fear that even if they were to graduate from the University they might not want to return home because they want to seek jobs here.

If they want to oppose anything, I say they should go back to their own country and talk truculently there if they wish and are allowed to. Singapore is stable, and what do they want to start trouble here for?

If you want to survive then you should not fall into these chauvinist traps. Do you know some of the propaganda tactics used by the Malay ultras? They say Singapore is a Chinese nation.

They also told the Americans: "We are Malaya and we are anti-communist, but the PAP are non-communist", meaning pro-communist, and the Chinese are unreliable.

I say, if the Nantah students continue this foolish political agitation when the Chinese language is guaranteed an official language status, they go it alone.

You have heard of some of the Barisan Sosialis leaders seeking refuge in Jakarta.

How have they ended up now? The Indonesian army is now brutalising them.

Where is their future? This is very sad.

Finally, may I say what a great privilege it has been to have been associated for such a long time with the Harbour Board worker or the Port Authority workers as they are now called. I came tonight for special reasons. I wanted to see the consummation of the first phase of this project. I am shedding the load. Mr. Barker is taking over. I seldom meet the members of the committee now. I meet them once in a while at NTUC gatherings. Otherwise my life will become a misery and I will do nothing but meet people. So, the load is being shed. But let me tell you that nothing goes on of any interest inside the Port Authority Union without my being made aware of it. It is my job to know. We meet, and whether they are ex-presidents who have gone bankrupt, or people who want to go bankrupt, who want to create trouble, I say, "Gentlemen, the world is full of troubles."

The reason we are alive is because we are always ahead of our troubles.

The more troubles we have, the more practice we get, and the better we are at handling the next one. And those who want to give us more practice, I say they are welcome to try.

Thank you. Work hard. We shall survive.

8th November, 1965.