TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH

MADE AT THE JOINT HARI RAYA/CHINESE NEW YEAR

CELEBRATIONS AT SIGLAP COMMUNITY CENTRE ON

29TH JANUARY, 1966.

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

I think it is a good custom, a good practice, once a year to try and generate goodwill, friendship and love for one's fellow human beings. And, therefore, the more sorrow it caused us reading all these unhappy things at this most auspicious time of the year.

I do not propose to go into the rights and wrongs -- who scolded us and why and for what. It really does not matter. What does matter is to know where we are going, and we must know that what we are doing will help us face the problems that are waiting for all of us in Southeast Asia.

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I was telling you just now what happened in Lagos -- how I bade the Prime Minister goodbye on Thursday morning, and on Saturday evening, he was whisked away. And I was reading, just the night before last, an account in some

well-informed London newspaper of how he was whisked away. And life can be quite a hazardous business in those circumstances. Today, you are host to a group of leaders of Government, heads of Government, trying to help some of the problems of the world. 24 hours after the meeting has ended and you feel that you should be given an accolade for what you have done for the cause of humanity and the peace of the world, a chap turns up in the middle of the night, in the early hours of the morning and says, "Get up." And, just to make sure that you understand what he is saying, a gun is there.

Now you ask yourself, "Is this unique? Does this happen only in Africa?" I don't think so. It happens in many other parts of the world. It is happening in one of our neighbouring countries. And, what is there to stop it from happening in more countries in Africa, in Asia and in other parts of the world?

I will tell you why it happens. Five have taken place in Africa in the course of the last 3 months. In the Congo, General Mobutu says, "what is the point of it? Why pretend that I am taking orders from the President when I am the man with the gun and I can tell the President, 'Look, you get out and I am telling you that you are getting out now. I, General Mobutu, hereby proclaim that I am the President'." And, the President was whisked off, locked up. Whereupon, he got so frightened that he sent a message of congratulations to the General!

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And so it happened in Dahomy, in the Upper Volta, the Central African Republic and Nigeria. Why?

All these are newly-independent countries. They have got to find a new balance. The balance has not yet been found. In mobilising hungry, dispossessed people to join you in fighting for freedom, you promise them paradise: "Join me, and that nice house and car will be yours. You can take that chap's radio and we will take his television set." So they charged ... They are in. And then you discover that it is not so easy ... It is all right for you take his television set. Two weeks later, when a valve is blown, you have to find the money to pay a man to repair the set. You must have the kind of income that will enable you to maintain a television set.

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It is a very simple thing to say, "Ah, that it is a nice Rolls-Royce. When I am in charge, I am going to take over that Rolls-Royce." And you can. But, within three weeks, the driver not knowing what the knobs are for, something goes wrong with the car. And instead of you sitting at the back of the Rolls-Royce and saying, " Peter, drive me to the Cathay," you and Peter will be twiddling round with the exhaust -- ending up with you pushing the Rolls--Royce! It has collapsed!

What is more, only a few people can get their hands on a Rolls-Royce and the television sets. And they are the new elite.

You can pick them out by their gold watch, gold chain. That is one of the signs. It is international.

I congratulate the Swiss. They have made a new status symbol: gold watch with a thick gold chain, 18 or 24 carat gold! Also, big gold pens, diamond rings. And you say, "Ah, the nouveau-riche-- the new elite."

But, the other little guys helped this man to get in didn't they? Before he become Minister and so on, there were lots of other little chaps who ran around climbing up coconut trees, mangosteen trees or mango trees in Africa, putting up banners, shouting away and saying, "Come on, let's dance for the new leader and sing songs." And, what does the little guy get?

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Perhaps you have your chief lieutenant something: you've taken the television set, and he gets the radio set. But, what about his lieutenant? And so it goes down.

Meanwhile, they see the boss-man building a new palace. They do, you know, in Africa... In Upper Volta, the new President built an executive mansion costing three million U.S. dollar -- that is nine million dollar in our currency -- with swimming pool and all. So the little chap sits down and says, "So this is what independence was all about!" So, what happens? You have got a second revolution!

And, that is what has happened in Indonesia. Mind you, it has been quite a skillful piece of pyrotechnics... with more speeches every day; "Liberate West Irian", "Crush Malaysia" and so on. But finally, the stomach tells, you know. If you eat too much maize or tapioca, something happens to your intestinal walls, your temper gets short. Your clothes get tattered and, one day, something happens. Then, it is gone.

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And so we watch all these things happening around us, and we say to ourselves, "Are we immune?" I don't think so.

So, when you see me going around looking like a scruffy worker, you must remember that there is merit in that! I like a tuxedo just like the other guy and there are times when it is necessary to show that we do come from a civilised part of Southeast Asia and that if we have to wear white tie and tails, we can afford it. But it is important that you, the people to whom my colleagues and I

have promised that we did this for your better life, you should never believe that we have defrauded you. If you believe that , then revolution number two is coming.

And this is what worries me ... How many countries in Asia had revolution number two? In Burma, the former Prime Minister, U Nu, took office because the first Prime Minister, General Aung San and his Cabinet were assassinated. At one stroke, the whole Cabinet was dead. When U Nu finally could not solve things, I am told that he consulted the astrologer every day and released pigeons and sparrows to earn merit...

Then, General Ne Win one day said, "Right, U Nu, you are going to jail now ..." And he is still in jail.

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You know, before Ayub Khan became the President of Pakistan, he was just an ordinary soldier, like all the other soldiers. Then, he caught hold of the Prime Minister one day and said, "Out with you."

So, where are you? That is number two gone.

In South Vietnam, something is happening every other week. You know, Air-Vice Marshal Cao Ky missing for a few days and rumours started. So he went to a shop, it seems, to buy an expensive lacquer bowl -- just to show people that he is around!

Life is quite hazardous in this situation. Soekarno woke up one day to find his own Palace Guards saying, "Come on. We will fly, Bung. Your life is in danger..." Nobody has yet deciphered what happened, how it happened but it has happened... One year ago, what he said was law. Now what he says is sometimes not even published in this newspaper which are run by the Army. So he says, "Nasakom" and the Army says, let us massacre the " -Koms"! What is happening?

Let us take note of all this. We view what is going on with considerable interest. Not the interest of a spectator who is watching a spectacle which either amuses or bores us but we are watching with the deep and abiding interest of a participant who may be embroiled in all this.

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Our chances of insulating some of there problems from coming on to us are only good if all the time we are thinking ahead of the problems.

It hurts me having to do this registration for new identify cards, work permits, and to have school fees for non-citizens. It hurts me more than it hurts the people who are responsible for these non-citizens because we are really one people. But we have an immediate and direct responsibility to Singapore to see that in the long-run, what we believe in survives and triumphs. And if we allow this unrestricted drift into Singapore to go on, what we believe in will be lost.

On the 7th of August, I met the Tunku for the first time after his return from London. He told me , "Well, this is the only way." I said, "Is there no other way? Could we not have a Confederation? A looser federation in which we look after ourselves... You look after Malaya, we look after Singapore and then co-operate in economic matters and have a common market, common development, common defence, common foreign policy?" He said, "No, no. This is the only way." And I remember this vividly and will remember this to my dying day -- he said, "Well, you know, Kuan Yew, there is no other way. Look, the Malays who don't like Chinese rule in Singapore can come to Malaya, and the Chinese who don't like our rule can go to Singapore". I thought at that time that it was the stress of the moment. It was a very painful moment for all, as it must have been for him too, because it was an admission of failure of what we had together set out to do.

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But, you know, when after Separation he went on, in pursuance of these thoughts, and offered the Malays in Singapore land in Johore and said, "Come, those of you who do not like it. Come back to Johore. Here you are -- land!" -- I began to wonder whether it was just the stress of the moment.

Well, we kept quiet. These were very delicate and very sensitive issues. I never said anything on it. Up till today, I have never told the Malays in Singapore to go or not to go. I hope they do not go, because we want them. They are a part of us. We made a pledge to them before Malaysia and during Malaysia that we will work an equal, a just society, a society that will give them a chance as educated equals.

Well, I don't know. The last I heard it said that 800 people have applied. Whatever it is, I know nobody has gone. But ever since then,I have asked our officers at the Causeway to keep a check, a tally. We have one of these little clocks. Every time a man passes by, you click. I do not have the latest figures, but between the 9th of August till the 11 th of December -- which was a period of four months -- when I made a speech in Parliament...you know, clicking it both ways. We have a net gain of 50 thousand people, you know. It is not a thing to be laughed away.

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It is true some came, caught aircraft, and went away. Some came, caught ships, and went away. But then, after a while, they must come back again in aircraft and ships too. But one thing is definitely certain: since the 9th of August till the end of December, we have had an average of 2,000 people a month changing addresses in their identity cards -- 2,000 adults mostly in their twenties and thirties. 2,000 coming in.

In December it was 1,810. In November it was 2,315. In October it was a thousand-odd. In September it was a thousand-odd. In August it was 1,500. Now, the other way, we know how many of our citizens changed addresses to that side. It is less than fifty -- about forty a month. So, it is a net gain for you and me. If what we want is more population, then every month we are winning by 1,960 persons, which if you work it out by the year (you multiply it by 12) well, let us round it off at 20,000 -- 20,000 people who were born 20 to 30 years ago.

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20 to 30 years ago our population's annual natural increase-- which you can check up with the Registry of Births and Deaths -- was 40,000 people. 40,000 babies were born in Singapore 20-odd years ago. Assuming a few hundreds die, we still have 40,000; let us say 39,500. You add another 20,000 and that is increasing your population by fifty percent, isn't it? Overnight -- just like that because of people taking the buses in.

So, my mind went back to the 7th of August and I said, assuming that this thing which was propounded, which I thought was propounded more in anguish, does come about, do you know what the exchange will be? We exchange 250,000 Malays for about nearly five million non-Malays. And so you and I will find that we are suddenly a big, populous nation. Well, I don't know if that is the way we are going to achieve what we want ...

I am not saying that this will happen in this crude way. I mean, to begin with, none of the quarter million Malays has made a move to leave. And we do not want them to leave. We are a multi-racial society. We do not believe that our Singapore Malays will be happier in Malaya than they are in Singapore, and we are glad that our thesis has proved right.

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So, you see, we do have to take these unpleasant steps. They are necessary if we are to survive. Most of these things we have learned from our neighbours. In Sabah you have got to have a Work Permit before you can get a job. So we say, "Oh well, I think we ought to think about that" -- and we say. "anything above $750, no need for a Work Permit." In Sabah, you need a Work Permit whatever your salary is. That is Malaysia to us. You and I, we cannot go to Sabah without a special permit. You cannot go, let alone take a job. And we say

"Yes, please, welcome." But we now say, "please,if you are taking a job which is less than $750, please let me know, will you, what kind of a job it is? Perhaps I have one of my unemployed citizens for whom we are directly responsible. He ought to have a job first I think." That's what you voted me in to do.

But, somehow, this is thought to be uncharitable and wrong. Well, it is wrong really. And even in Europe they knew this was wrong. They formed an Economic Community, called the E.C.C.,by the Treaty of Rome -- the " European Economic Community" -- which the British recently tried to join unsuccessfully. When they had this Common Market, they said, "Right, labour can move freely." Italians went to Germany to get jobs. Frenchmen went to Germany to get jobs. Italians went to France to get jobs. They sell their goods freely to each other. If a particular place in Bremen is good for making ships, well, all Europe buys ship from Bremen and Hamburg. And if a particular spa in France is good for Vichy-water, why try and make water better than Vichy-water when there is Vichy-water. So, all Europe buys sparking water from the South of France, and so workers go there and help bottle them and label them.

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You know, we went into Malaysia for that. Spent two years in it! And just after the first list of 200 items were prepared, settled by an independent chairman of the Tariff Advisory Board, with three vice-chairmen, one from

Malaya, one ours, one Sabah and Sarawak ... just before implementation, we were given notice to quit. And now, with even less ceremony than before, we are told,"don't we dare be masters of our own household! " Well, these are part of the problems of adjustment.

We have got to get used to this new situation, and we have got to get used to taking these things in our stride. We must pursue our objective without being thrown off-course. We may have to change and make adjustments. But eventually, we believe that those of us who have forgathered in Southeast Asia over 150 years,we are here to stay. And since we have to stay, I think we had better stay happy and friendly with each other, and slowly over the next 150 years build up a consciousness of belonging. First, that the country belongs to us; second, that we belong to each other. If we make a mess of our lives, we all suffer.

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We shall weather the storms ahead. I am quite sure we will if we show sufficient resolution and sufficient anticipation of the social, economic, and the political forces and work; forces urging towards a new society; forces which have already been set into motion when the Japanese came and toppled down the old order. We can either go down like so many other Republics in Africa and in Asia have gone down, or we can overcome these difficulties and emerge the

more stable, the more steeled to meet the problems that we have inherited -- a multi-racial community with high expectations of life and already, a taste for good living.

We had to consider how much allowances to pay for our People's Defence Force... those who volunteer will be getting, for about three or four parades and drillings a week, about 50 or 60 dollars a month. It is a lot of money if you turn that into Rupiahs. It is very big money. And if you turn it into any currency you like in Asia, it is good money, particularly if you do it through the black-market. But, we worked out that any other method of payment will not bring about the same kind of appreciation.

This is a society which has got used to it. And this is the reason why they abandoned the stupidities of armed revolution and Communism. You know, one thing about Singapore these days is that you see less of the school-girls with the pigtails, don't you?

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In the old days, you always saw these little girls. They looked thin with bitterness. All their adrenalin glands pumping away, and two pig-tails tied up in a bunch, with prim white skirts and prim frocks -- all in white -- and breathing hate and revolution. There are less and less of them, and I am in favour of that. I

used to meet them in my mass rallies, and I recognise some of them. Over the years I see them in printed frocks sporting permanent waves, and with rouge and mascara. I say to myself, "Three cheers for Singapore!" They've got something to want to be pretty about.

By the time a young lady in her teens thinks of running around breathing hate, that society is offering her very little indeed. But when she feels, apart from wanting to do good for her fellow-men and fellow-women, it is worthwhile looking pretty for herself and the boy she wants to meet, then I say, well,the society is progressing. And, that's what we have got.

I know we have not got big monuments. We do not have a big flyover or a Parliament Building. But it does not matter. You would feel prouder if we had these big things, but I think only if you had these big things and better clothes, better lives, big television sets, washing machines, and homes and jobs. But if I make you have less of these things, which we could easily do by fiddling the Finance Policy, we could have some very big monuments to the stupidity of man erected in Singapore.

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You do not want that, and we do not want that. I say, let us have more of this. There are no monuments more worthwhile and more enduring than the ones

we are building for the well-being, for the welfare of the generations to come after us, in schools, in hospitals, in clinics, in community centres, in homes, in factories, in jobs that will give them wherewhithal for a modern, civilised community.

So, for 1966, I say "One Step Forward" towards consolidation of the things we know we want and we know others around us want and we hope one day we can help them get it.

Thank you.

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