

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT MC.JUN.22/66(PM)

Transcript of a talk given by the Prime
Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, on the sub-
ject "Big and Small Fishes in Asian Waters"
at a meeting of the University of Singapore
Democratic Socialist Club at the University
campus on 15th June, 1966.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

First, may I say that from the manner in which you have referred to the Singapore Police Force, I can assure you that they will be under no illusions whatsoever that you are talking as a small fish.

I think one of the facts of life is that no two things are ever equal either in smallness or in bigness. Living things are never equal. Even in the case of identical twins, one comes out before the other and takes precedence over the other! So it is with human beings; so it is with tribes and so it is with nations.

I have chosen as the topic of my discussion this evening the problem of big and small fishes co-existing in Asian waters because it struck me that Bangkok and the newspaper presentation of jubilation and peace and the way in which peace was heralded led to a certain degree of nervousness because people for the first time began to doubt and question the possibilities and the problems that may rise in this new situation.

If these matters had received more serious attention at an earlier stage, then the nervousness would never have come about because there were certain salient points in this given situation which give me reassurance for the time being. I think for the next five and possibly ten years, the position is reasonably secure.

What alarmed me was the fact that so many people who are thinking people - people who write editorials and so on and who are supposed to be well-informed in these matters, people who write captions to pictures of people embracing each other in jubilation, in joy, fear or in trepidation - they have obviously not spent time in contemplating the eternal forces at work in South-East Asia. And so it was that a Minister of the Malaysian Government went up to Penang and, it appeared, threatened to investigate how much capital had flown out of the country as a result of all this.

If I had capital - and I don't have very much - what little I have, I have not the slightest intention of letting it fly out of the country for quite a long while.

I hope this evening to explain to you - and perhaps, through you, ultimately to a wider circle for thinking people - why I think we are reasonably secure for five and possibly ten years, the big fish and the small fish in South-East Asia being what they are for the time being.

There are 140 odd nations who are members of the United Nations. If you look to forms and formalities, we are all independent, sovereign nations with equal voting rights and a lot of time is spent by all the bigger factions lobbying for support. And you say that so many people voted for this resolution and so many voted against that resolution. Whether you are a nation representing 230 million people like the USSR... Actually, they have got three votes: first, Russia; then the Ukraine and then Bylo-Russia; altogether three votes. The United States, with the 190 million people, has one vote while Malta with 400,000 people also has one vote. And, of course, we are all equal: we all pretend that we are all equal. But we are all acutely conscious of the fact that we are not equal.

In 1945, when the Allied Powers on the eve of victory convened a meeting in San Francisco to determine the shape of a world organisation to secure peace for mankind ever after, they drafted the present Charter of the United Nations. There were certain underlying major premises on which that Charter was based and upon which alone such a world body could have been effective. There were five big powers, permanent members of the Security Council. They were the Big Five in the last War: the United States of America, Britain, Russia, France, China.

And if you look at the pictures which were taken during the War of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill, you will find that Roosevelt is always in the centre and Stalin is to the right and Churchill is to the left of him. And when they took a picture with Chiang Kai-shek, he was on the outer rim.

All these things have a significance. There is a meaning behind all this.

The assumption was: if the five big fish in the world decide that this should be so, then it must be so.

There were, too, weaknesses in that system. First, it assumed that the five would always remain big; second, it assumed that the "big" on the other side that

had been defeated would always remain defeated. No provision was made for adjustment.

I think if there is another meeting now it would be slightly different.. If Roosevelt were to meet again with Stalin and Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek and with perhaps General De Gaulle, protocol officers very conscious of the juxtaposition of power would today say, "Right, front row Roosevelt and Stalin; back row, standing behind them will be Britain in the centre, France to the right and perhaps China to the left." Then, of course, the Chinese would take umbrage and absent themselves because that is not the way they think the power position is.

You see, the belief that dictating a peace treaty with unconditional surrender on the Germans and almost unconditional surrender on the Japanese would be able to determine things for all time is just not true. The same dynamism in culture, the momentum in either the genes or glands of a people that kept them pushing forward have brought the Germans and Japanese back to the forefront.

The ex-Axis Powers: there was Berlin, there was Rome, there was Tokyo. Nobody really believed by 1944 that Rome was a very serious pivot of the Axis - not after North Africa.

And so we are confronted with a situation, internationally, of a world organisation which was designed to achieve certain objectives assuming that certain assumptions were true; and, these assumptions have been proved false.

First, the Big Five are no longer the Big Five. And, in the United Nations, you have Formosa representing China with the veto. The make-belief is that the representative of the government of the Nationalist Republic of China - which means Formosa - is one of the Big Five that met in 1945. There is also the fiction that France and Britain are really equal to Russia and America. Everybody - including the Americans and the Russians - knows that this is not so. And the Germans are not even members of the United Nations because Germany has been carved between East and West and, to save embarrassment all round, neither East Germany or West Germany is a member of the United Nations.

Assuming that inequality is a fact of life, how then do we see our future in Asian waters?

I was discussing these problems with a very philosophical and erudite Indian gentleman. And he said, "Of course, you have got problems." But he added, " I do not believe that the role of the modern nation-states in Asia is forever to keep inviolate the territorial boundaries which European conferences decided for Asia. In the 15th century, Vasco de Gama came round the Cape of Good Hope, landed somewhere in the south-west of India and from then onwards, Asia was gradually truncated and carved up amongst the European powers.

Our borders with Indonesia - the borders of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak with Malaysia - were, in fact, decided at European conferences between the Dutch and the British.

All these frontiers inviolate? Is it a test of our national maturity to forever sustain these frontiers?"

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This is my Indian friend at his philosophic best, a man of considerable erudition. And, this is the question which we ask ourselves.

An age is passing. Frontiers which were held amongst European fishes now have to be maintained by Asian fishes. Bangkok did not take place because

of the juxtaposition of Asian powers. It was the resultant force of Asian and European and American powers.

The Japanese news agency executives came round in their cynical best. One said, "Well, you know, Mr. Prime Minister, there was this meeting in Bangkok and the Persians, you know, for the first time sat down, met and decided to resolve our difficulties." And I thought nothing was to be gained by keeping up this pretension because he didn't believe a word of what he was telling me and, if I pretended that I believed it, he would have thought the less of me. So I looked him straight in the eye and said, "Look, you know the Japanese army swept down the whole of Southeast Asia. And, if it is Asian forces who decide all this, you would still be here. It was because there were other forces invoked that you had to go back to your island home."

And, if it was only Asian forces in the confrontation of the 1,000 miles in North Borneo and the few hundred miles of water between Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia, then I don't think Bangkok would have taken place. That was because there were other forces; First, British forces to hold that frontier ... Let us be quite honest about it. And I think a great number of Dayaks, Ibans and Kadazans and others who are very conscious of this fact... The British held the wall against which no penetration was effectively possible.

Then came the desire of the new situation which emerged after the troubles in Indonesia last year. And, if Britain's allies in NATO and in other parts of the world were prepared to go in and help a non-communist and an anti-communist combination in Indonesia to proceed with economic improvement without caring for Britain's burden in Southeast Asia, then I think that so many things would have been different.

These are some of the facts of life. And what we have to ask ourselves - not in panic - but in preparation for what, so far as we can make out, is an inevitable drift in events as this: how does this situation rationalise itself in 10, 15, 20 years from now?

Now we have a pretty high authority from a person no less than the Finance Minister of the Federation of Malaysia, saying, "We can't trust the British any more. They are an effete, decadent, dispirited lot and they have lost the will even to govern themselves."...

My eyes literally boggled when I read this. I said, "Well, now anybody saying that.." When you have a staid, sober conservative Minister of Finance of a staid, sober government like the Federation of Malaysia's and he says, "These

are a dispirited lot, let us not depend on them any more... Let us think of a union of five big countries in Southeast Asia," then obviously we must start thinking! Some things are beginning to stir.

And, those of you who read beyond the headlines... and I hope you do because if you read only the English newspapers and the headlines and the captions for pictures, you will have a very different view of the world from what it is... From time to time, I am amazed, I am bewildered.

In fact, I think we should invoke the aid of the psychiatrists in the university and elsewhere and ask them, "Look, what happens when you read the newspaper and it creates one impression, and then you listen to Radio Jakarta and you get the contrary impression? Will there be conflicts in the human mind? Will there be intolerable tensions?"

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Those of you who have read Dr. Malik's note to me ... It is a very strange thing - First, it was referred to as a "Note" and then it was an "offer to recognise", then it was recognition and so on ... Progressively, the same letter meant more and more!

But, I think what was important and significant in the letter... This was not commented upon by any newspaper - not by the English-language newspapers, not because they don't know but because it is nicer not to mention these things, not by the Indian and Malay-language newspapers because perhaps, they say, "Well, let us ignore it," and not by the Chinese newspapers because you just terrify people and you might get yourself into trouble....

But I think it behoves you as a thinking and intelligent community to ponder upon the presentation of this Note. It is worth the reading, from "Your Excellency" right to ".... highest respects" etc.

And I commend to you, reflection on this one paragraph. First, the exposition: why we have not done it earlier, for a eight months we have had our problems, this, that and the other... It is a masterly exposition.

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You see, it is one good chess player watching another chess player and saying, "Ah, that was a good move". And this was. "We are together in this revolutionary struggle; we recognise you; you want to be independent; we want to make you more independent." "And," it says "We are convinced that our two states" - we are equals, you are equal, I am equal - " ... in gotong royong with other independent States in Southeast Asia..."

You can imagine "gotong royong" - all kinds of fish who are involved in all this, you see... " and in gotong royong with other independent states in Southeast Asia will eventually be able to bear responsibility" - Not to frighten us - "... for continuation of the life, the security and the safety of our respective peoples".

What does that mean? That eventually, you and I and all our independent friends in Southeast Asia - all in equality and in harmony, peace and friendship - will look after the life and security of ourselves? Is that understood?

In other words, out with the Seventh Fleet. Quite right, because that is a neo-colonialist weapon of coercion. Out with the British bases - not just yet though, because we are talking of "eventually" ... We have been talking about other things not "eventually", but since it couldn't be, so it has had to be "eventually".

So, what we have to ask ourselves is this: What follows the aftermath of a power vacuum which is inevitably the result of the withdrawal of one power not pushed out by indigenous powers?

The most significant point about what has happened in decolonisation in Asia is this: that there was, in fact no indigenous power which literally thrashed the European powers - except as they did the French in Indochina. It was a case of calculated withdrawal - perhaps prematurely but, from the European powers of view, they withdrew from India before the Indians could really smack the British Raj down - perhaps, they would have done it in another two years. But in Malaya they withdrew, in Singapore, they have withdrawn; and in Sabah and Sarawak they withdrew at least 10, 15, 20 years before they need have withdrawn. In Indochina, they withdrew after they were literally licked at Dien Bien Phu.

Even in the case of Indonesia: in spite of years of conflict against the Dutch, but for American pressure, I think the Dutch might well have been capable of further resistance. And perhaps it might have been better if both

Britain and the Dutch had stuck it out and slogged it out because then a tougher India would have emerged - perhaps an India completely different from what it is now - and a different Indonesia would have emerged.

And our problem really arises from the aftermath of empire. And, what is worse, from the idealism that India, under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, tried to live up to: a relationship between Afro-Asians not based on power.

For 17 years, Nehru presided over the destiny of one of the biggest, potentially strongest, nations in Asia: next to China, there is India.

What makes a nation great? It is its potentials in natural resources: land, minerals, agriculture, etc., and its human resources. A combination of that plus organisation brings about power.

And Nehru conducted his relations with small nations like Ceylon, not on the basis of big to small power but on the basis of equals. There was high idealism. And this is quite a remarkable thing. There are one million people of Indian descent in Ceylon. Not Jaffna Tamils, but Tamils who were brought there by the British Raj to work on the tea plantations. This is a problem which has been festering for years since the 1940s, and it has not been resolved yet. And here is a big power... And really, nobody can stop India if she decides to flex her muscles.... She can start confrontation - just like the Indonesians had confrontation against Malaysia: 100 million against 10 million. And this is 400 million against ten. Life could be made a misery; but no. Here was an attempt to strike a relationship on the basis of equality, of moral principles.

And the humiliation of that policy was in 1962 over the troubles between India and China on the Himalayas.

And it was the failure of a policy, despite themselves and, what was worse, in Nehru's lifetime. They had to abandon this principle and say, "No. In fact, it is big fish, small fish, smaller fish".

Chinese proverb goes as follows: "Big fish eat small fish; small fish eat shrimps". So, the Indians decided that they just could not any longer afford to be other than what they believed they could be: big fish. And the process has started.

Of all the countries in Southeast Asia, the one country that has understood this is Thailand. They may internally, have a regime which is not quite in keeping with the principles of modern, democratic government. But if you talk to their ministers and to their officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, you will know that they really understand all this very well. They were never colonized probably because of a stroke of good fortune and also because they understood the mechanics of power.

There was a time not so very long ago when the Thais were in control of large tracts of Burmese territory - including Mandalay. Those of you who do history will know that. Even, in the course of the last 20-30 years, Thai boundaries have altered. The Thais have four Malay provinces in the south. And during the Japanese Occupation, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu became part of Thailand. On the west, they went as far as Mandalay. Then the British came in and altered the boundaries and said, "No, here is your boundary." On the east.. you know Cambodia and Thailand are always having problems over their borders. As you know, we are very good friends with Cambodia and my personal relationships with Prince Sihanouk are more than usually good. I would like to make this one simple point: that he is genuinely concerned about the integrity of his frontiers:.... And when I met the Thais, having come from Phnom Penh, they asked: "What are your Cambodian friends worried about?" I said, "Well, to speak quite frankly, they are worried about you." They said, "Why should they worry about us? And I said, "Because they feel that perhaps, history will now pick up from where it left off"....

Cambodia became a French protectorate towards the latter half of the last century. And then the boundaries between Cambodia and Thailand were decided, of course with the protecting power of France Participating.

The Cambodian fear is that the process which started and was stopped at that time will now resume. The Thais will move in and encroach from the west; the Vietnamese will move in and encroach from the east - which was what was happening until the French came.

Mind you, there is another point of view and that is the point of view of the Thais. They say, "Well look, we were in physical occupation of such and such a territory. Then we were forced by the British to disgorge Mandalay, this, that and the other. And, on the French side, we were asked to disgorge this, that and the other."

But, what is significant is this: that when the Japanese came in and displaced the French as the protecting power - the Thais have a very keen sense of anticipation of history - large chunks of territory were transferred from

Cambodia to Thailand. Just as the four Malay States in the North were given to Thailand as the Japanese Army went southwards, so parts of Cambodia were handed over. And, after the war, they had to be returned. Boundaries were redrawn.

The point we should constantly remember is this: never take the future for granted. Do not believe that decolonisation means going back to some idyllic,

romantic past; that before the white man came, we were all Asians together, loving each other, living in peace and helping each other and that all were happy. That just isn't true. Before the white man came, there were bigger fish chasing small fish and smaller fish chasing shrimps.

From time immemorial, that was the order of nature. And now, the big European fish are being pushed out so that the stage is set for local big fish to settle terms with small fish, and small fish with shrimps.

And we, having the smallest area in the region, must naturally be concerned.

There are various types of shrimps. Some shrimps stay alive...Species in nature develop defence mechanisms. Some shrimps are poisonous: they sting.

If you eat them, you will get digestive upsets.

Obviously then, some small creatures have got their own defence mechanisms. And we have got to discover our own survival techniques. First, as has been suggested, some small creatures are just not palatable. So, they are left alone.

Then, other small creatures attach themselves to big ones. You know, it is like a big animal which has a small animal in tow - so to speak. And, for the time being, I am here quite happy to have bases and warships coming to and fro ... That is all right, it suits us. From time to time, of course, you must take note of the fact that other people think that the British are becoming decadent, dispirited, incapable of ruling themselves. So we say, "Right, what shall we do in that eventuality?"

This brings me really to the conclusion of the point I want to make this evening. That there are some things worth pondering about and sometimes, it is as well that the future may not be quite so simple and straightforward for our neighbours and for ourselves. there is an element of uncertainty.

You see, in this situation, the slightest manifest or overt threat to the cultural, linguistic and ethnic survival of any group sets up nervousness, which is a natural quality. It is a defence mechanism. It happens with all peoples all over the world.

The last East European country I visited before I came back was Bulgaria. Before you go to a place, you try to read up about the place. And I read in the history books that they were originally not a Slav-speaking people. They came

from Central Asia and in the first millennium A.D., they migrated and they found some Slav peoples there. They came as nomads, conquered and settled there. And then slowly, they got assimilated and they adopted the Slav language that was already there before they came. And then the Turks came and knocked them down - the Ottoman Empire - Muslims - and so on. There are many mosques still bearing testimony to 500 years of Turkish hegemony.

What is astonishing is this: that after 500 years, the Bulgars are Bulgars. I thought to myself; perhaps this is what is necessary - a study tour for people who talk blithely in all these wide, sweeping terms of race, religion language, culture. They were down for 500 years, and they emerged only in 1918. And it might well have gone on for another 500 years - they would still be what they are.

This poses very grave problems. You say to yourself, Look, what is the future for us?"

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And, the answer really is: it depends upon first, what we do within this region - most acutely, what we do ourselves in Singapore and what they do in Malaysia and then what happens in Indonesia, in India, in China. Because this is really what it means: big fish, 700 million people, hydrogen bomb. If you really want to talk in terms of "seas of fishes" - as a real big fish this is what decides

it. Then, 450 million Indians; then 108 - whatever it may be - million Indonesians.

If we want to play these racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic loyalties, then you have got here the Balkan peninsula. The Malay peninsula can well become the Balkan peninsula of Asia.

The Balkans was a tinderbox because big powers were fishing around. After 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was destroyed, the Allied Powers decided that the Bulgarians should be free but that they should never come together with the Russians. So they appointed a German king to look after the Bulgars. This is the way life is. So they said, "Right, you are actually a Central Asian people who adopted the Slav language. If you go and join the Russians, that will make the Russians too big and more uncomfortable for the others. So, we will appoint a German to be your king..."

And we can play the musical chairs on the Malay Peninsula and life will eventually become utterly miserable for all of us - regardless of whether you are a big fish, a smaller fish or a still smaller fish.

The solution really, is multi-racialism. And, I believe this is the best way out. Any attempt to play ethnic, cultural, linguistic loyalties must mean disaster. And, even if it succeeds, it will bring unhappiness.

If you look at the map, you will find that between Bulgars and the Soviet Union are other countries, like Rumania. They don't share a common boundary with the Russians. But the Rumanians do. And the Rumanians are not a Slave-speaking people. They are a Latin-speaking people. And there is a great deal of comment at the present moment about how they are trying to do things their way. But what is even more interesting is that the Poles, the Western Slavs, the Poles and Czechs - they are Slavs, probably as much Russian as I am Chinese or what we will be in another two or three generations.... And the remarkable thing is: behind all the realism, the realistic appraisal of their survival prospects, they have decided that their danger comes from a Germany seeking revenge for the loss of the last war. And their friends and natural allies are the Soviet Union. Because if they go down, then the Soviet Union will be in trouble. And, in spite of all that, there is a definite desire to be what they are: Poles and Czechs.

What is even more significant is that the Czechs and Slovaks are distinct people. They are one people - both Slavs - who became separated for 700 years. One became part of the Austro -- Hungarian Empire and the other didn't.

And, you know, two distinct languages or variants of the same language emerged. And today in Czechoslovakia, there is autonomy in education and in many things for Slovakia - this for people of the same speaking language and culture and ethnic group.

What does it mean for us? We have really to sit back and think. And this is why I say that at least for five years, probably a decade, if I have capital, I won't flee from Singapore. In fact, I won't even flee from Malaya. Why? Because really, Malaya wants - or Malaysia wants - to be Malaysia. It does not want to be a small part of a larger whole. And this is the contradiction of all your intra-national and international problems.

Internally, people like the utmost freedom for themselves. And the more autonomy you have, the weaker the central power. Internationally, you like to meet your neighbours with the maximum of strength - to be equal. And, of course, everybody knows that we are all equal - and we are not really equal.

Now, if they don't want to be absorbed - as I don't think they do - then, certain accommodations become necessary. It is better to make certain concessions within your country and to your smaller neighbour like Singapore than to be absorbed. This is the problem.

You know, from time immemorial, the small fish is caught between the medium and the big fish; and he says "Which one shall I...? Best of all, I will be friends with both medium and big fish.

Do you know that there are 1,000 Communist guerillas or armed bandits on the border? Their numbers range from between 500 to 1,000 and perhaps they could even expand to 2,000. They run schools for indoctrinating cadres; they run military courses and so on because the old guerillas are getting a bit middle-aged and they are not quite the same. They are just like some of your old revolutionary types in the university. You know, as they sit down, the waistline expands and they talk like the same violent language while the body becomes flabbier and flabbier - and often the mind gets flabbier too. This is happening there, and they run schools.

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And for the last six to seven years, there have been no end of conferences between the Malayans as they were and the Malaysians as they are now and the Thais to flush out these 1,000 chaps. And, in spite of all the blood-brotherliness of the northern Malay states and the southern Thai states - or perhaps, because of the blood-brotherliness - they have never succeeded in flushing out these 1,000 communist terrorists.

And we sit down and say to ourselves: you know, really the Thais know what this is all about.

You see, every country needs buffers. And really, life will become intolerable for the Thais if suddenly, things were to happen and you get irredentist movements and self-determination... The vote is taken, there is plebiscite and so on and so forth... What happens? I mean, four southern provinces may disappear!

And you know, with such and other different irritants, the four provinces will remain Thai. I have not the slightest doubts that it will be for a long while.

But, if Malaya were to be encompassed, then what will happen? So, you see, when people say, "Right, let us have a large Southeast Asia Union," I say I am all for it - if you can bring what are relatively, in Asian terms, diverse peoples together. If you talk in terms of Maphilindo then, of course, there must be a certain amount of unease because it implies so many things. It implies Malayness, which means Indonesianess because they are the largest component part of Southeast Asia. And it implies Islam and it implies the Malay language,

and so forth. And, the Tengku has quite rightly said - I am not saying this, the Tengku is saying this - "Forget it. It is a waste of time."

Why does he say that? It is as if a Chinese foreign minister from Peking were to proclaim, "Let's have a big union of China, Taiwan, Singapore." You know, based on what? On Chineseness! That we are all the same people - But, are we? We may have been. But are our interests the same? That is what I want to know.

But if you say, "Look, let's have the Thais in too." I say, "That's a good idea." Because my diet habits and theirs coincide. There are many Thai dishes which I had the last time when I was in Bangkok, and I tucked into them with great relish. This gives a broader spectrum to South-East Asian co-operation.

And, to sum it up, I would say that the future really depends upon how we, in Singapore, are able to see our long-term interest, Not as a Chinese people, not as an Indian people, not as Malay people - First, as a Singaporeans, what is our interest? And our interest inevitably must mean a wider horizon which means the interests of the people of Malaya. I am talking now in geographic terms not in political terms. So, I am using Malaya in the geographic and demographic sense of the word. And, of course, Malaysia - yes, excellent;

by all means, because that is a wider horizon. And then I say we look beyond to a wider horizon still - Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Yes. Burma, Laos, all the Buddhist states - there, I would say, is a very good admixture to a large South-East Asian whole for economic, cultural, social co-operation.

And eventually, what we want to do is to try and establish, within the decade, some semblance of a balance which can be maintained with the minimum of outside under-pinning.

And so, you see, if you spend a lot of time thinking about these contingencies, panic will not be the natural reaction to these developments.

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

QUESTION AND ANSWERS AT THE MEETING HELD AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE ON 15TH JUNE, 1966.

Question: Do you, sir, in the light of your speech, envisage the formation of an economic community among the big and small fish nations of Southeast Asia? If so, what part do you think this small poisonous shrimp of Singapore will possibly play in it? Thank you.

P.M.: There are two courses of possible development for Southeast Asia. One is the more natural in the sense that that is what human beings naturally want to do in the process of expansion and settling relationships in terms of big and small and the bigger absorbing the smaller on the periphery. And, if we can go through that phase as successfully as Europe has gone through it - I mean, you have Luxembourg, the principality of Monaco, you have Belgium, Holland and France, and you have Germany; and they all co-exist. If you get over that first phase such as when the Germans thought that they could make this one big Germany, then peoples' minds once they are reconciled to the fact that these are the political divisions for the time being relatively permanent - peoples' minds must begin to think that co-operation is the sensible way out.

The most illuminating fact which struck me was the fact that the East European countries, communist though they may be, are extremely anxious to diversify their

trade connections. They wish to do this not just with Afro-Asia, not just with Singapore, but equally as much with the West. They want to sell to Germany, to France, to Britain, to the United States. They want to get foreign exchange, buy the kind of equipment which they cannot get from the Soviet Union - sophisticated electronics, big machines which could mean doing things in 5 years which may take it 15 years. And one of the phenomena of post World War II is that modern techniques of production and technology leads to the emergence of super powers. The self-contained national unit, national self-sufficiency, is old-fashioned and out-of-date. It does not work unless you are a really big land mass like the United States of America or the USSR. Britain is too small and is really thinking seriously of going into Europe. France knows she is too small and that she has got to go in with Europe.

Modern techniques of production means that you must have a big market. 50 million people is not considered big enough. You know, the British aircraft industry

probably illustrates this most vividly. They were the first with so many aircraft: the turbo jet, the Britannia - but almost before they go it off the drawing boards, they were overtaken. They were the first with jet aircraft, the Comet - and they were overtaken. They haven't got the market. The Russians and the Americans have. Their domestic market is enough to give Boeing and Tu104 a large enough market and then with a surplus they complete and break Britain on the export market. British Comets are out. All the East European countries buy Ilyushins and all the Western countries buy Boeings or DC 8s.

Your VC 10s can't sell. I mean, loyal members of the

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Empire may buy. Malaysian Airways buy Comets. We have to support our friends. But, you know, Qantas

doesn't buy them. Qantas buys Boeing. So Britain

combines with France to try and break through and build

the Concorde - the supersonic passenger jet aircraft.

Just as in passenger jets, so with every mass manufacture of every article and of every commodity. What is your market of 10 million in Ceylon or Malaysia? What is your market of 1000 million in Indonesia? But with regional co-operation you lump together about 300 million people, and everybody stands to gain. And today there are two large trading blocs: the western bloc are signatories to GATT: the eastern bloc, Comecon. As for China, I am not quite sure whether really she is Comecon or not. And then there is the Afro-Asian world that tries to throw links to both sides. But in the end if we get the point established that nobody can swallow up the whole and that we have to co-operate, then I say Singapore could be the catalyst that could help speed up the course of economic development for all her neighbours in the region. But you can only do that if you first establish the fact that this must be accepted.

Second, our separate existence having been accepted and conceded, we then deal with them on equal and fair

terms. Now, this is important. One of the points for bitterness was the fact that our merchants did not deal fairly with the Indonesians before confrontation. This is the fact. It was a point, which the then Prime Minister of Indonesia, Dr. Djuanda, raised with me when I went there in 1960. Our merchants were in collaboration with Indonesian merchants and perhaps, with even some Indonesian officers of agencies in actively defrauding the Indonesian Government of their foreign exchange. The goods arrived, and in fact the Indonesian Government should have got the foreign exchange. But, through some devious means, the foreign exchange was either left here or in Hong Kong or in Switzerland, and the spoils were shared. And you had a situation where you could literally go in to Indonesia with nothing in your pocket. Everybody did it, including Afro-Asians in Bandung. They did that regularly.

You know, all those revolutionary types in the University of Singapore in those days, they talked about

revolution and of helping each other, and just before they left for Bandung they made arrangements with their friends to pick up rupiahs in Djakarta when they arrived. And, of course, for about \$10, you could buy a whole trunk load of valuable goods and just bring it out for nothing.

I think it is in our long term interests to rationalise our trade relation. From time to time if you listen to Radio Jakarta, there is an emphasis on this point that we cannot go back to the old relationship; namely, where for various short-sighted reasons both their officials and our merchants engaged in all kinds of hazardous ventures - highly profitable to the parties concerned but

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not to the Singapore government, because we did not get any of the foreign exchange... It just went overseas to the individuals concerned.

In the long run, if we can strike a realistic relationship, a sober appraisal of our inter-independence must give

hope for the future - after we have established that the boundaries remain.

Question: Sir, you said that eventually only the big Asian fish will swim in Asian seas. I would like to know, are you pre-supposing that America is going to withdraw from Vietnam; and if so, in what manner and how soon?

P.M. : I am sorry if I gave the impression that that would be the likely course of events. Because that is surely the course of events which would be highly uncomfortable for all the medium and smaller fishes in Asian waters. I would say that if people play the ethnic line, then in the end it must be decided on ethnic grounds. And in that case, it will be the big fishes that will really dominate Asian waters in the sense that ultimately the demographic boundaries will be decided by the big fishes in Asia. I would like to believe that there is sufficient wisdom amongst the leaders of the big and the smaller nations to realise that that means unhappiness for everybody for a

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very long time. What should emerge would be a new power structure in which the legitimate interests of the big powers are conceded, and the legitimate interests of the middle and smaller powers are respected - respected because it is in the interests of the big powers in Asia and because it is more so in the interests of the bigger powers in the world.

For that reason I do not believe that there would be any premature or precipitate withdrawal from Vietnam. But at the same time I think it will be unrealistic for us to believe that the Americans can keep on pouring in troops and men and resources indefinitely to hold - what? What are you holding in South Vietnam? A few

forts, a few cities. At what price? The number of

American troops is going up to 480,000 at the end of

this year - so they say. You know, American Presidents

have the unfortunate disability of having to face election

every four years. In 1968 there will be any number of

Robert Kennedys around to put all kinds of highly

attractive formulae for resolving all the discomfort of by

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then probably 3/4 of a million Americans. Can you imagine 3/4 of a million American families whose thoughts must be certainly anxious at the prospect of their sons going to South Vietnam to replace the people who are already there.

I don't know whether it was in the Straits Times or some other magazine that I saw a picture of two Australian soldiers going back to Sydney and they fell on their knees and kissed the good earth beneath them. That about sums up the emotional revulsion of what they went through in South Vietnam, and they were greatly relieved, probably incredulous, that they were back to the world that they knew.

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They fell on their feet and kissed the good earth. I wouldn't have thought that there was all that amount of enzymes and vitamins on the foreshores of Sydney. So, we want to be realistic as I think the Americans are.

You see, first there is what is meant for mass consumption. Then there are the think-pieces either in your weekly journals or in your quarterlies where people begin to rationalise and argue what this is all for and what is the next stage. Those who are optimistic believe that you can do in South Vietnam what was done in Greece, where a whole guerilla insurrection was crushed and a society refurbished. I am not quite sure whether that was necessarily what happened in Greece and I do not believe that the same conditions obtain in South Vietnam even if that was what happened in Greece. But if it doesn't happen before 1968, can you think of what will happen? In 1972 there must be another election in which President Johnson by constitutional limitation cannot be a candidate. Then the field must be open to so many forces. Even if it didn't happen in 1972 it would come in 1976, which is only 10 years away. You and I will be alive, well beyond 1976 unless we are knocked down by a bus. You and I have got to think beyond that. So, ultimately what you want is a formula which would give the Vietnamese their right of self-

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determination. The South Vietnamese should decide for themselves. And if they decide - after a period of grace which should be given so as to make quite sure that there was an exercise of free will - that they want to join North Vietnam, well so be it. But it is only worthwhile if there is a credible formula and a credible undertaking that the same process will not be repeated on the periphery after South Vietnam. If you look at that map, you will find that there is one reason why these chaps all belong to one camp. It is because they all share a common land frontier - Russia, Eastern Europe; Russia, China; China, North Korea; China, North Vietnam; North Vietnam, South Vietnam. If South Vietnam disappears, can you imagine the problems of Prince

Souvanna Phouma? He already has enough problems.

And what about so many of our other friends in

Southeast Asia? And the point which I made, I hope not

without some effect, was - "do you believe that the

Indians are stooges and lackeys of the Americans? Do

you believe that Pakistan is a lackey of the Americans?"

They are friends of China. There are Burmese - they are

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the best neutralists in Asia. How is it that none of them have really said that "this is a crime against humanity committed by the Americans". Of course! Hundreds of Vietnamese are dying every day - for what? For Vietnam? No! To decide that Vietnam shall not be repeated. That is why they haven't raised their voice in protest with the same indignation and rage. But whilst we buy time, if we just sit down and believe people are going to buy time for ever after for us, then we deserve to perish.

JUNE 18, 1966

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