TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE STATE BANQUET GIVEN BY THE JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER, MR. EISAKU SATO, IN TOKYO ON 15TH OCTOBER, 1968

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sato, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife and I would like to thank you and your government for the warm welcome and hospitality which we have received since we arrived yesterday.

I was reminded as I landed in Tokyo that it was almost to the day a 100 years ago on the 13th of October 1868 that the Meiji Emperor took formal possession of the Shogun's castle in Tokyo. It underlined the speed of the transformation that Japan went through to achieve her place in the top league of the industrialised societies of the world.

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A 100 years is a very short time in the long history of Asian civilisation. However, it has been suggested that the longer the continuity in the history of a people, the deeper the traditional values, attitudes and modes of thinking and ways of doing things. This makes it the more difficult to shake off the debris of the past and to accept the changes necessary to catch up with science and technology flowering in other contemporary civilisations.

I have, from time to time, reflected on the Japanese phenomenon, wondering whether the Japanese transformation has any lessons relevant to Singapore. Insofar as Japan's spectacular success was due to the innate qualities of her people, there is nothing others without these qualities can do about it. But perhaps there could have been other factors – the compactness and cohesiveness of the society, the intense sense of national and community purpose, the keen group desire not to be left behind down in the lower rungs of civilised societies, the lack of natural resources which was compensated for by a keener human performance. Is there a lesson to be learned about the difference between what a Swedish social scientist has called "soft societies" and their opposites, of which Japan is a distinguished example? What makes some societies soft? Why are others more hardy? Is it the social organisation and cultural values? What makes societies like Japan have that limitless capacity to endure hardship for future gains?

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The past is a valuable indication of future performance. Japanese research on nuclear physics and its peaceful uses, rocketry and space communications, are indicators of Japan's pre-eminent position in the technological post-industrial societies now emerging in the developed and affluent countries of the northern hemisphere. Add to this the restless search that Japan is making for new trading and economic arrangements in the Pacific basin, both for her prosperity and for her long-term security, then few can doubt that Japan has both the intention and the wherewithal to stay in the top league. I hope these attributes will bring not only greater progress to Japan and prosperity but it will enable that prosperity to flake off on to the lesser developed countries in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Prime Minister, you have referred to the changes that have taken and will yet take place in Southeast Asia. They are part of a tide of history. Our connections with the British, who founded Singapore, are many and of mutual benefit. The departure of their forces at present planned for the end of 1971 does not mean the end of the many economic, educational and cultural links of value to both. However, it will mean a slowing of our rate or economic growth until the slack has been taken up.

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Last year some 14% of our Gross National Product was generated by expenditure of the British military bases. Fortunately, this was less by 6% as against 20% it generated in 1965, two years previously.

I find encouragement from what you have said of our efforts and from the example you have drawn of Japan's own experience of rebuilding from the wreckage of the last war. Our confidence is reinforced by the fact that there was a prosperous and thriving centre of commerce and communications in Singapore before the British built their bases. Indeed, only after the treaty of Washington in 1922 between America, Japan and Britain did the British move their principal naval base in the Far East from Hong Kong to a big one they built in Singapore in the 1930s. If in the next three years, our economic growth can be sustained at over 9% per annum as it has done in the last three years, then all should be well.

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We are seeking, as you have suggested, increasing bilateral co-operation with such countries as can help us industrialise. We are conscious of the need for regional and sub-regional groupings to meet industrial and technological advances where economies of scale require mass production for mass markets. This can only be achieved if there is a pooling together of resources and markets to make economic development complementary and

efficient, not duplicative and wasteful. At the same time, we are not unmindful of the political realities of the new nations and it may take some time and more than some patience to bring about meaningful economic regionalism.

And now, on a personal note, may I say how impressed I was, Mr. Prime Minister, when I read of your career. For more than two decades after the war, you have been in the forefront of the Japanese political leadership that rebuilt Japan. You have held an impressive series of high offices, culminating in four years as Prime Minister of Japan. What struck me most was that you commenced on this part of your distinguished career at the age I now am, in the middle 40's. And you are so vigorous and robust.

If this is the result of the innate qualities of the Japanese people then there is very little in it I can learn from. But perhaps it could be in part the result of a way of life, an attitude of mind. Then perhaps, besides what I am hoping to learn from Japan about her economic miracle, you may perhaps be generous enough to let me into the secret of political durability.

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Finally, may I ask Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the good health and continued success of the Prime Minister and Mrs. Sato

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