

PRESIDENT JULIUS NYERERE'S SPEECH AT THE
DINNER IN HONOUR OF MR. LEE KUAN YEW,
PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE, ON
5TH SEPTEMBER, 1970

Mr. Prime Minister, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen :

It gives me very great pleasure to welcome an old friend to Tanzania. For although Mr. Lee Kuan Yew was not Prime Minister of the independent state of Singapore when he last came to Dar-es-Salaam, we did have an opportunity then to understand his commitment to unity among under- developed countries. In addition, some of us had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Lee Kuan Yew at the last Commonwealth Conference, where his outstanding ability and devastating frankness made him a valuable ally and friend but a very dangerous opponent. These things, Mr. Prime Minister, made me very glad that Singapore and Tanzania usually found themselves on the same side when the Conference was discussing international affairs.

But it is not only because of respect for the Singapore leaders we have met that I am happy the Prime Minister and his colleagues have come to Tanzania on their way to Lusaka. For the fact is that we in this country need to know more about developments in Singapore. Of course, we can read the reference books. We can learn that about 2 million people live on 225 square miles - which means a density of well over 8,000 people to the square mile in Singapore, as against about 36 to the square mile in Tanzania. We can learn, Mr. Prime Minister, that your country has the fifth largest port in the world judging by the amount of goods passing through it. We can understand - and envy - your very large provision of higher educational activities ; we can understand the unemployment problems of a state where rapid population increase cannot be met by calling for expanded agriculture. And we can see that industrialisation is a matter of human survival in your country, not just a question of balancing the economy and laying the foundation for future prosperity - as it is with us.

National Archives of Singapore

But these and other facts only raise questions in our minds. They do not answer very many. For you, Mr. Prime Minister, are known to be a socialist, and you lead the People's Action Party - a sociality party. We therefore want to know how you are tackling the capitalist industrial complex your government inherited , and how you deal with the problems

of socialist management of industry. Indeed, with a population density like that of Singapore, and the problems arising from rapid economic growth, we want to know how your Government and Party cope with the basic questions of ensuring human dignity for all your citizens.

Let me hasten to add, Mr. Prime Minister, that I do not expect you to answer all these questions this evening! But our desire to hear from you on these matters does not arise out of simple curiosity. Tanzania's problems are very different from those of Singapore, because our inheritance and our geographic and economic circumstances are very different. Yet we believe that socialists must learn from each other if they are to avoid unnecessary errors and achieve the maximum speed of advance. And we do have the need to establish an industrial sector of our economy ; otherwise, for all our natural resources, we shall remain with a degree of poverty that makes Singapore look almost rich by comparison. Therefore, we want to know in order to learn from your country.

There is , of course, the further factor that greater knowledge of each other, and greater understanding of our different roads to socialism, might well reveal areas of possible co- operation between our two countries, especially, perhaps, as regards trade.

All these matters will come out for discussion during your visit, Mr. Prime Minister. I suspect there will be a further subject too - world problems as seen from East Africa, and as seen from South East Asia .

This too can be a fruitful discussion. For although our priorities of concern are naturally different, both our governments are nationalist as well as socialist. The people of Singapore, as well as those of Tanzania, have experienced racial discrimination and the indignities of colonialism. Further, both our governments recognise that only through unity will the peoples of the Third World be able to defend their independence or overcome their economic backwardness.

Thus, Tanzania's priority concern with the problems of Southern Africa and the need to give support to the freedom movements of that area, I know, receive the full understanding and the co-operation of Singapore.

Southern Africa represents the 'unfinished business' of the African revolution. Our young states cannot concentrate on the problems of developing in freedom, while this colonial and racial domination continues on our continent.

Mr. Prime Minister : It is not really my task tonight to announce the agenda for our discussions. Nor do I wish to make a speech at you - I would rather listen to you. Let me conclude, therefore, by repeating our hope that your short stay with us will be beneficial to our respective peoples, and enjoyable to you and your colleagues.

I therefore ask you, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to our guest, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, and his colleagues, and to the President, Government, and People of Singapore.

National Archives of Singapore