TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT A LUNCHEON GIVEN HIM BY THE FRENCH DIPLOMATIC PRESS ASSOCIATION AT HOTEL GEORGE V, PARIS, ON 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1970

Mr. Edwin Forte, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After such an eloquent and diplomatic speech, I think it is wisest if I am brief in order that I shall not disprove the many kind things you have said.

I would like to say briefly a few things about my part of the world, because there I am able to, at least, pretend to have some knowledge of the position; and perhaps, it might amuse you to know how different the situation there is from that in any other part of the world.

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It is completely different from Europe because the Europeans, including the Russians beyond the Urals, are highly developed – technologically, in social organisation and in standards of living. But the contest between ideologies has been muted, and both sides know that a line has more or less been fixed for quite

some time. They will try and push it, one way or the other, but spheres of influence, political systems are established.

The contest is very acute in the Middle East at the moment, and perhaps there will be more difficulties before it is resolved in more or less a permanent way.

But the contest in Southeast Asia is more complex, likely to be very prolonged because, as one of the French dignitaries I met said to me in a very French way: " Two were invited to dinner, three came." And nobody concedes where the lines should be. So the contest is on for influence, for the spread of ideology and the proliferation of political systems.

I think one of the great pities about the area is that those who knew it well – the Europeans who knew it well – have retreated so rapidly from the region – the British, the Dutch and the French, in alphabetical order, not in order of importance or influence – and those who knew nothing about the area they have gone in , massively and at great cost to themselves –the Russians in Indonesia, the Americans in Vietnam. And in both cases, they did not have the depth of understanding of the nature of the peoples they were dealing with, the culture, the way of life, and so all the present problems and difficulties.

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How Vietnam is to be resolved, nobody is in a position to say, because too many parties have already come to dinner. But how it is resolved has a crucial impact on what happens to the neighbours.

And I would like, if it were possible, that it should be resolved in a way which makes the Vietnamese people masters of their own right to choose their own political system – the Americans have not lost, the Russians have not lost, the Chinese have not lost, the Vietnamese have won the right to live their lives. And if that can be reproduced with the Thais, with the Malaysians, then we are likely to continue to live and prosper in Singapore.

Now, I would try and answer whatever you like to ask me.

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