

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND,
MR. NORMAN KIRK, AT THE STATE DINNER HOSTED
BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,
AT THE ISTANA ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1973

Thank you for your kind words. It is a great pleasure for me to be in Singapore once more. Needless to say it is particularly satisfying to be here in my present capacity.

My earlier visits to Singapore were all highly enjoyable and instructive. These past two days have been especially so.

I am pathfinding on this present trip to Southeast Asia. There is a new spirit -- almost I would say a pioneering one -- now guiding New Zealand's relations with other countries. For too long New Zealanders were content to look at the world and particularly this part of the world, through the eyes of others.

That is no longer so. We are, at last, attuned to the reality of our geographical situation. We are, belatedly, but with all the energy and imagination we can draw upon, moving to associate ourselves with the region --

Asia and the Pacific -- in which our destiny lies. That is the spirit in which I am making this trip.

For most of the past 30 years New Zealand's leaders have been accustomed to viewing Southeast Asia principally as a potential trouble spot. As a source from which might come a threat to our security. We no longer think in those terms but more positively.

We are aware, as newer before, of the exciting opportunities for political and economic co-operation through which the peoples of this region can share the means to enjoy their lives in peace and fulfilment.

I have been immensely stimulated on this trip to find how closely our perception of the region's future is matched by the vision others have of it. It was so in Papua-New Guinea and in Indonesia and Malaysia. The discussions that you and I had yesterday afternoon and those I had this morning with Mr. Rajarathnam and Dr. Goh, were fully up to my expectations.

Our talks were easy and informal. They were wide-ranging and, I think you would agree, constructive. We covered a number of important bilateral questions and a number too of regional and even broader significance.

It did, I feel, emphasise once more just how much our two countries have in common. Each of us has a relatively small population. Neither Singapore nor New Zealand can afford to indulge in isolationism, which is a negative and self-defeating policy for any country but especially for those of only three million or so people.

My purpose in coming to Singapore was to convey personally to you and your colleagues the thinking behind New Zealand's new independent approach to the region we live in. This is not a passing vogue. It will not be undone or reversed.

We are willing -- whenever it would be welcome and helpful -- to become more directly associated with the various regional groups which are working to promote political and economic developments. Our contribution to the Commonwealth Five Power defence arrangements is consistent with that spirit.

We are maintaining our participation in full and will keep our forces in the area for so long as they are wanted by the governments concerned. We will however be placing greater emphasis on the strictly New Zealand character of our contribution to the Five Power arrangements.

I have had little opportunity on this visit, Mr. Prime Minister, to look about in Singapore, but what I have been able to see has strengthened my admiration for what you and your countrymen have achieved.

Might I also compliment you on the weather you have arranged for our visit. I have been told that this was the rainy period of the year. But the weather has been splendid. Even had there been downpours, it would not have dampened our enthusiasm about our stay in Singapore.

For my objective throughout this trip has been to dispel any impression that New Zealand is a fair weather friend only. We can be relied upon. So far as the Asia/Pacific region is concerned we are determined to be men for all seasons. We hope you will so regard us.

National Archives of Singapore
Thank you, Prime Minister, for your generous hospitality to me and to my officials during the visit. In every respect it has been a thoroughly enjoyable and fruitful two days. I am most grateful to you and it is a pleasure for me to propose a toast to your good health.