# SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY M.R. KUKRIT PRAMOJ, PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND, ON FRIDAY, 25 JULY 1975

---

Mr. Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Singapore Government, may I welcome you, your Foreign Minister, Mr. Chatichai Choonhavan, and his wife, and other members of your party.

A great many changes have taken place in Southeast Asia -- some good and some not so good. Among the good tidings is the emergence in Thailand, after many years, of a democratically elected government which you lead as Prime Minister.

National Archives of Singapore

It is not just a change in form. It is a change of considerable substance. A government responsive to the needs of the people, whose collective interests you so eloquently express, is one of the factors for success in rapid change, without violent revolution.

I had the advantage this afternoon of hearing your views after you have met delegations from Hanoi and Saigon, and of your meeting with Chairman Mao. I was struck by your philosophical frame of mind. It helps to keep historic events in human proportions.

You have a shrewd understanding of men and politics. So long as those in high office do not confuse the unavoidable drama of politics with the realities of life, then things should be well. With your wry sense of humour, it is my impression that your vision is firmly on the realities.

The countries of ASEAN are at the crossroads. If we make the right decisions separately and collectively, then we may adjust, with less turbulence, to the great changes the region is facing after these momentous events in Indo-China. The converse is equally true, that decisions, taken in haste, may turn out to be against long-term interests, and will accentuate the unsettling effects of these events.

National Archives of Singapore

One valuable result of these developments is that the other members of ASEAN are drawing closer together in co-operation on the economic, diplomatic and political fields. We want to live in peace and amity with the new governments of the countries of Indo-China. The success of Thailand and the

Thai people in adjusting and accommodating to these new realities, without having to change the Thai way of life, or Thailand's system of government, will be most reassuring to the other partners in ASEAN. We wish the Thai Government and people success in finding the right balance between continuity of long established Thai institutions and traditions and change now necessary because of different external and internal circumstances.

We have never been conscious that the future of ASEAN countries is so interwoven. We should muster enough political will to take the decisions which will strengthen our cohesiveness as a group. This, in turn, will enable us to build a constructive and co-operative relationship with these countries in the region with different political and social systems. And perhaps the great powers, whose interests in the region are not always identical, may yet find it in their separate interests to let us go about our peaceful business, in amity with all of them.

National Archives of Singapore

Finally, I ask you all to rise and drink with me to the health of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Thailand, and the Prime Minister of Thailand.

---