SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE. KUAN YEW, AT THE BANQUET TO THE HONOURABLE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND MRS. ROCKEFELLER, AT THE ISTANA, ON 28 MARCH 1976

Mr. Vice President,

It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you, Mrs. Rockefeller, Miss Malinda Murphy, and members of your party to Singapore. I hope I can, in small measure, return the warm reception and hospitality I received each time we met, from the first time nearly a decade ago at Albany when you were Governor of New York, and the last time last May at your Vice Presidential office in Washington.

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At an exciting time in the United States with state primaries, week after week, this journey will offer you respite from the day-to-day alarums of the hustings. Perhaps you have found out how perplexing it is for Asians to understand the United States, a country whose President and Congress are, in election year, concentrating, perhaps more than usual, on issues which divide Americans to win votes away from other candidates, especially from candidates of the same party.

One major preoccupation of governments in Southeast Asia is the kind of relationship they should and can establish with the major powers. All are aware that a new balance of power is emerging in the world with immense significance for the region. Some are uncertain whether in the intermediate and longer term, it will be a balance between two or three powers in Southeast Asia.

We know that the Soviet Union, a super power, formerly excluded from the region, has made its presence felt. We also know that China has become a major factor. She is a part of Asia, with abiding interests in this region.

Southeast Asians have always assumed that the United States will continue to be a force in Asia. I hope it will not be long before Americans see Southeast Asia, not in terms of their memories of Vietnam, but in terms of the promise of a more positive and productive contribution to the economic and social development of the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia.

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In our discussions this afternoon, I was struck by the vitality and clarity of your exposition of the stand of the United States towards Asia, and the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and of the major issues of our contemporary world. You left me the impression that there were grounds for optimism, that Americans are an

indomitable and resilient people, and will rise afresh to the new challenges in this increasingly interdependent world.

The five countries of ASEAN are all geared to the economies of the West. We are now embarked on our first major co-operative effort. We have also taken to heart the lesson of Vietnam, that communist subversion and insurrection cannot be defeated by force of arms alone. Force is necessary to counter guerillas using force. But what is also needed is fairly rapid economic development and a much fairer distribution of the wealth development generates. This will melt the disaffection and discontent on which communists depend for enrolling recruits for violent revolution.

The recent meeting of ASEAN Heads of Government in Bali ended with a call to all developed countries to help ASEAN countries to help themselves in their plans for economic and social development. There is urgency in our fight against poverty, compounded by unjust distribution of wealth.

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For this task, the United States is well equipped to help. You have the financial and industrial resources. You have the scientific and technological resources. You have the vast markets to stimulate the growth of our developing economies.

Of course, the ASEAN countries must also accept the self-discipline and sustained effort that modernisation demands in the process of economic and social development.

Southeast Asia need not be an area of new conflicts or new problems for the United States or Japan or Australasia. We want to be free to choose our form of government, our way of life and our partners in technological progress. The more the external pressures a country is under, the more the consideration it should receive from the United States and her allies in the Pacific and in Europe in opportunities to expand its trade and to attract investments. This is the most significant contribution the United States can make to her friends in Southeast Asia.

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When the Presidential elections are over, I am sure your wisdom and counsel, the result of long years of public office spread over a wide spectrum of responsibilities and interests, will carry great weight by those who have to make the big decisions to achieve a durable balance of power and peace in the Atlantic and Europe, in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and last, but not least, in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, East and Southeast Asia, and Australasia.

Now I ask you to rise and drink to the health of the Vice President of the United States and his wife, Mrs. Rockefeller.

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