SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW
AT DINNER FOR VICE-PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH
& MRS BUSH ON TUESDAY, 27 APR 82, AT ISTANA

Mr Vice-President, Mrs Bush,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my privilege to welcome you, your wife and party to Singapore. This is your second visit to an ASEAN country within 16 months of the Reagan Administration, a welcome demonstration of US support for and interest in ASEAN.

Yours, Mr Vice-President, is a distinguished record of public service: US Permanent Representative in the UN, Head of the Liaison Office in Beijing, Director of CIA, and Chairman of the Republican Party. You have transcended the rivalries of your contest for the Presidential nomination of the Republican Party and have gained the full confidence of President Reagan. Hence the many assignments and tasks beyond that of previous vice-presidents.

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The Reagan Administration's resolve to restore American strength and influence has given heart to America's friends. Public support in America for this revival has been crucial. The President's deep commitment to a strong defence and to a halt in further concessions and retreats has come against new problems. Both abroad and in America, the anti-nuclear movement seems so one-sidedly in favour of the Soviets. Next, no end to martial law in Poland is in sight. Then, Western Europe's different interpretations over the source of guerilla violence in Central America have not helped in calming America's own domestic critics. And now, with the Sinai withdrawal completed, the balance in the Middle East, always so precarious, may become more difficult to maintain.

Yet, despite all these pressing problems, America must not overlook her strategic interest in Southeast Asia. It must not be forgotten that there is a low intensity but long haul struggle in Southeast Asia between the Soviet Union, through Vietnam, and the PRC. An adverse outcome of this struggle will have grave consequences for ASEAN and for Japan. And Japan's security, as Secretary Weinberger has recently reiterated in Tokyo last month, is of key importance to the United States.

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Relations between ASEAN and the United States have been good. As is the nature of such relationships, they are not free from problems. For example,

the sales of the US tin stockpile recently caused anxiety and dismay amongst ASEAN, especially the tin producers. A more sympathetic American posture would not have been misplaced. ASEAN's economic progress has had a positive effect on other countries of the third world. It is demonstration of the benefits of free trade and free enterprise in bringing about development. And America's will to maintain free trade despite all the pressures to qualify or modify the principle is important to all countries in the non-communist world. The non-communist system cannot go through another bout of protectionist retaliations without irreparable damage. Fortunately, there are indications that the American recession may be bottoming out. If the recovery is sustained, the frictions between American and her allies and friends will be greatly reduced.

Finally, my wife and I hope that Mrs Bush and you will find your visit to Singapore useful and pleasant.

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May I now ask you all to join me in a toast to the President of the United States and Mrs Reagan, and to our distinguished guest, his Vice-President, Mr George Bush, and Mrs Bush.

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