

**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB OF AUSTRALIA  
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am deeply honoured for this opportunity to speak to you today. It is always a slightly frightening experience to speak to the gentlemen of the press for you represent such a vast collection of knowledge and wisdom, and you always have the right to the last word, right or wrong!

Australians, I have been told, are no-nonsense, down-to-earth people, and since coming here I have discovered for myself. So in speaking to you today I am going to be frank and down-to-earth, for I have always believed that is the short-cut to truth and better understanding.

My first vivid impressions for Australia go back to the days just before the last war when some of your soldiers arrived in Malaya and created a terrific sensation. In those days there lots of rickshaws in Malaya, and it was the local custom for a passenger to sit in a rickshaw and be pulled from one point to another by the rickshaw for a fee. But your boys decided to change that. One afternoon we were all amazed to find many of them - brawny young fellows - charging through the streets of Singapore, each pulling a rickshaw behind him. Sitting in the passenger seats were the shocked rickshawman who, of course, were protesting very vigorously. We were astonished to find that these chaps from the land of the kangaroo were more than the kangaroo itself.

And then we discovered something else - the rich, beguiling and bewildering Australian accent. It was different to anything we had ever heard so different that it crept up on some people in such a devious way that before long they were talking a Malayan version of "Strine"... As you see I'm well aware of your latest invention and what a wonderful word it is but I haven't yet been able to master "Ow yer goin", mate, orright", even though I was at Lincoln's Inn.

But underneath these superficial differences, we soon discovered that the Australians were very much like us warm, friendly, informal people, and we got to like your soldiers. When they became prisoners-of-war, many Malaysians risked their lives to help and console them whenever they could. Bonds of friendship created in such situations, like those born on the battlefield, endure for a very long time. Many of

your boys, as you know, lie buried in Malayan soil, and if I may adopt the words of Rupert Brooke, those corners of the Malaysian field shall be forever Australian. We shall always honour them as symbols of the common ideals which we share of freedom and democracy.

I did a little homework before setting out on this trip and was surprised to learn that the ballot box was invented in Australia more than a hundred years ago. The ballot box has now become a part of our system as much as of yours, and in Malaysia we have made the ballot even more powerful than the bullet. For twelve years the Communist tried, by force of arms, to change our government and they failed, but in the last eight years the ballot box has done it twice. I must add that on each occasion, the people of Malaysia decided that they liked my party and kept us in power and asked us to form the government again. Our enemies may say all sort of things about us, but there is one thing no one can deny - our elections are absolutely fair and honest. Thanks to Soekarno, even the United States once sent a team to check up on us and they give us full marks.

But the ballot box alone is not a guarantee of democracy. After all, it is used all over the world today, even in countries where there is not the slightest trace of democratic freedom. To be really meaningful, the ballot box must go together with something else - with a reasonable standard of living, human dignity and a spirit of independence. We live in a world where there is much poverty and misery and it is these basic inequalities that breed discontent and despair. If such abject conditions are allowed to continue they will induce despair and persuade the people to Communism since a hungry man has nothing to lose. Poverty destroys the human spirit. It wrecks human dignity and faith. It makes people to harbour the feeling if not the conviction that the concept of democracy as you and I understand and subscribe is not the answer to their problems.

One day when they can bear it no longer, they rush out into the streets to burn government buildings, overturn cars and attack policemen, and then everything is lost. Then their country becomes a liability to the democratic way of life, for poverty and hunger are poor advertisements for democracy. On the contrary, they make people wonder if some form of totalitarian government is not superior to the democratic form.

I am told that here in Australia the average worker is a singularly independent character. He is friendly, but if you rub him the wrong way, he is likely to respond with language that is extremely colourful, highly democratic but also highly unparliamentary. I am told that the Australian worker who is pushed around will not give his boss a chance to sack him. He will sack the boss and go and look for something else to do, and he do this because he knows there is enough

work, enough food and enough security around to sustain his dignity and his pride. I have read somewhere that the average Australian eats 230 pounds of meat a year and drinks 22 gallons of beer. So obviously, if the beef does not beef him up, the beer will. Now this is an essential ingredient of real democracy - conditions which give a man freedom of choice in every day life and not merely at the polls once every five years. Without it, democracy is a hollow shell.

This is the kind of democracy we are building in Malaysia, and I can tell you that the Malaysian worker is becoming a pretty independent fellow himself. He is just as capable of sacking his boss, or his mother-in-law, because he knows there are other attractive opportunities around the corner. And when it comes to unparliamentary language, he has a distinct advantage over you, because he can also say it in Malay, Chinese or Tamil which sometimes is far more expressive than English. This sort of attitude can be annoying at times to the bosses, but if it goes hand in hand with education and a sense of national discipline, then it strengthens the fibre of a nation, and strengthens its defences against all forms of dictatorship.

We learned this lesson a long time ago when the Communists started their insurrection. Perhaps I ought to pause here for a moment to tell you what our Communists are like. In Australia he may be the man next door who speaks in a peculiar jargon, ignores logic unless it's the Marxist form, believes that the end always justifies the means, helps sabotage his own trade union, sows the seeds of trouble among his own workmates, and is the leading "democrat" - I put the word in italics - behind the protest march, even though in his Communist state he would not allow a protest march. In Malaysia the Communist is a deadly creature who slashes rubber trees, burns buses, attacks policemen, organises violent riots and murders innocent people. He is the killer who kidnaps an 11 year old boy who is out catching grasshoppers for his magpie, and beheads the child because its father refused to pay three Australian dollars to a Communist extortion gang. That is not fiction; it actually happened in my country. Earlier this year, the Communists lured small groups of young people into their jungle camps in North Malaya to train them in sabotage and terrorism.

As I was saying a moment ago, we learned our lesson a long time ago - that you cannot fight Communism with guns and bullets alone. You have to fight the conditions which the exploit, fear, ignorance and general economic backwardness. We fought them on their own ground and we beat them, and in order to secure our victory for future generations, we are continuing our war against poverty.

Our method is basically a very simple one. The only effective way to fight poverty is the way you fight Communism. You must use

the techniques of total war. You have to summon up and galvanise the entire resources of your country, the government, the people, the political leadership, everything, in a concerted attack on poverty and only then can you succeed. We have realised that playing at it like a part-time hobby will get you nowhere, and so we don't play such games any more.

For us this is a deadly serious business not merely for ourselves but for the region in which we live. We would like to demonstrate to some of our brothers in Southeast Asia who may be losing faith in democracy that there is nothing wrong with the system, that in fact, it is far superior to Communism because it can provide good living with individual freedom and dignity. We would like to demonstrate that democracy is not something that can only work in the West. In our own small way, we would like to show that it works even in Asia if you really give it a try, provided you choose good honest leaders to guide you.

We realise that we cannot survive as a small successful island of democracy in a region growing sour with discontent and despair. Neither can you. We have a duty not only to ourselves but also to our neighbours, to try to generate as much success as possible in our part of the world. In Malaysia, we have begun to do this in a very small way by offering to share our experiences with other developing countries. Anyone who wants to study our methods is free to come, not merely to learn from us but also to teach us. In this way, perhaps, we can avoid many costly mistakes and find the shortcuts to progress.

I would like to give you one small example of the methods we use. Many of our rural people are either landless or land hungry. They are tenant farmers who don't always get a fair return for the work they put in, and being poor and ignorant, they often fall into the clutches of a vicious parasite - the money-lender. This is not a problem peculiar to Malaysia; it exists in more extreme forms in other parts of Asia.

To leave such a man to his own resources, to give him ten acres of jungle and tell him to start a new life, simply does not work. He starts off without the reserves of money, knowledge or sheer human spirit to undertake such a formidable task. He may burn down the jungle, plant a few crops and make a few dollars. But before long, the jungle, the money-lender, his own ignorance and despair come creeping up on him and drag him down again.

Our method is different. First we send in the surveyors armed with a soil map to find a suitable patch of jungle where rubber or oil palm or some other crop can be grown successfully. Then the bulldozers move in to clear the jungle, and roads are laid on, with piped water and in some cases electricity as well. Good wooden houses are built according to a village plan, with a school, a community centre

and a place of worship. Then the settlers move in together with a village administrator and they begin to cultivate high quality rubber or oil palm under the supervision of experts. While the rubber is growing they receive a small monthly allowance from the government which they supplement with earnings from their vegetable plots. After six years, when the rubber is ready for tapping, the village becomes a thriving community. The rubber is collected and processed under expert guidance and marketed for the settlers at the best possible price so that the middlemen and the moneylender will not be able to come in again and wreck the whole scheme. By this time the settler begins to earn about 400 dollars a month, and he can well afford to repay the government for his house, his land and the other expenses in developing the settlement. He pays the money back in small instalments over ten or fifteen years so that he does not feel the pinch. And although he may not realise it at the time, he begins to come under the attention of our Finance Minister who is in charge of income tax. Every settler has ten acres which he cannot sell or subdivide, and anyone who does not make the best use of his opportunity is kicked out, and his place given to someone more deserving.

We already have more than sixty such schemes in West Malaysia for over ten thousand families, but this is not enough. We need to start many more not only in West Malaysia but also in Sarawak where, as you may have heard, we are having some trouble with Communists terrorists. If we can resettle Sarawak's landless people in such schemes, the problem of Communism will automatically disappear in time. Unfortunately these land schemes cost a tremendous amount of money. We have worked it out and the figure is something like four thousand Australian dollars a family. If rubber is doing well, we would have no difficulty, but unfortunately, we are having the same problems with rubber as you have with wool. The price has been falling over the years, thanks to large releases from the American stockpile and the over production of synthetic rubber. We have increased our rubber production by 20% in the last five years, but because of falling prices our earnings from rubber have fallen by nearly 20%. And the same thing has been happening to tin.

Unfortunately, the prices of our rubber and tin have been dropping just when we have found it necessary to spend more on economic development, on education and on defence. Not many people realise that we have nearly two million children in school today - the two million out of a population of ten million. As a result, education alone takes up about 20% of our national budget.

In addition to this, we have new defence commitments. Malaysia, with the new states of Sabah and Sarawak, have brought added

responsibilities. We are very grateful to Britain, Australia and New Zealand for helping in our defence, especially during confrontation, but the time has come when we must do more for ourselves. We have to expand our military forces and this, believe me, is a tremendously expensive business.

So what do we do in a situation like this? Do we cut back on development, education and defence, or do we press ahead and try to find the money somewhere. We realise from our own past experience and looking at the map today that to cut back would be dangerous in the long run. We must push ahead somehow and hope that some of our friends will come to our aid in the present difficult period.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would now like to turn your attention to another challenge we face. In Malaysia, about half of our population consists of indigenous people and the other half is made up of immigrant races. We have Malays, Chinese and Indians, Kadazans, Dayaks, Eurasians, Arabs, Europeans, and many others. It is a rich variety which makes life extremely colourful, interesting and challenging for us.

When the British first came to Malaya over a century ago, they found the Malays quite satisfied with their rural existence as farmers and fishermen and left them alone. They brought in thousands of Chinese and Indians to work as organised labour in the rubber estates and tin mines and in other rapidly growing sectors of the Malayan economy. As a result, the Malays made little progress while the Chinese in particular went forward rapidly and became very strong in business. This had caused an unhealthy economic imbalance between the Malays and the Chinese which can easily be exploited by anyone who wants to create trouble.

In order to correct this imbalance we have had to adopt special measures to help the Malays, for otherwise the gap between them and the Chinese would grow wider all the time. Just because we have done so, some unfriendly critics have accused us of adopting racial policies which endanger communal harmony. This is absolute nonsense, for we have always worked to maintain racial goodwill. Mark you, I use the words "to maintain", because we are and have always been a happy country. Go anywhere in Malaysia, to the playing fields, the beaches, the schools and restaurants and clubs, the offices and factories, and you will find people of all races working, playing, eating and studying together totally unconcerned about their different racial origins, without a care in the world.

In the ten years that we have been independent in West Malaysia we have lived together without any racial upset. Of course it is possible to start such trouble any time. All you have to do is to get a Chinese and a Malay to fight, and if you have prepared the ground sufficiently

well with your mischief, the trouble can spread rapidly. But the fact is that no one will find it easy to do so, for the people of Malaysia are fully aware of the danger of this sort of thing, and no one more so than the government. At the slightest hint of trouble - and there have been one or two such occasions - we rush all available policemen to the trouble spot, and we bring down a curfew and lock everyone in until they cool down and come to their senses. In this way we have always been able to prevent anything getting out of hand. This is our record, and we ask only that we be judged by our record rather than by the gloomy predictions of people who pretend to be experts.

Our method is to play down the racial issues and to sort out these problems in a cool, calm atmosphere, quietly in a committee room, avoiding all publicity until we have reached a solution. Questions concerning race are always explosive and if you try to argue them out on a political platform, using inflammatory language that can arouse strong emotion, then you are clearly asking for trouble. Our method is not so spectacular and it may not satisfy the Press for it does not provide sensational headlines. We have also been accused of operating a "closed society" but our method has worked for over a decade. Before we gained independence, there were experts who forecast that as soon as the British left, the Malays and the Chinese would tear each other apart. But we got together quietly and discussed our problems and were able to present a joint demand to the British. As a result we got our independence sooner than most people expected.

Everything we had worked for and achieved since independence was gravely threatened by friction between Malaysia and Singapore which began to arouse acute racial feeling. I don't wish to question the motives of Singapore but a very dangerous situation was created. If we had allowed this to go on there would have been dreadful race riots. Singapore's leaders realised this, just as well as we did, for they eventually agreed with us that there was no other way out. We did not throw Singapore out. We did not throw Singapore out. Leaders of both Governments agreed on separation. It was regrettable that separation had to come about for it meant the abandonment of an idea, the loss of a dream which we originally had striven to realise. But it was the only solution to a problem that was becoming intolerable to both.

We may be separated politically today, but we are still bound together by the strongest possible links. I promised to be frank, and so I must admit that we have been going through a difficult period of readjustment. I think this is inevitable when brothers separate for the agony of such a parting is so great that it takes time for them to adjust themselves to the new status. It is hoped they will realise that it is

wasteful to do and say hurtful things and then we will work closely together again.

We have another problem which you are familiar with in Australia. I am told that as recently as thirty years ago, West Australia began to feel neglected and wanted to break away. This, of course, is a problem you face in any federal system of government. If you leave a state alone to drift along in its own way, it may get to feel neglected like West Australia once did, and then you're in trouble. On the other hand, if you setp in and try to help it by preventing it from making mistakes, by guiding it along more profitable lines, it may begin to feel that you are interfering too much in its local affairs, and again you're in trouble. Here in Australia you have found that the answer to such problems is economic progress and prosperity. A state like West Australia today, which is becoming with new industries, with jobs for everyone and money flowing into the state treasury and a rising standard of living - such a state stops worrying about petty problems like secession. This is obviously the answer to some of the problems we face in our new states of Sabah and Sarawak which are inclined to be rather sensitive about state rights and resent being told what to do to improve themselves. But as I said earlier, this requires more money than we are able to provide from our own resources at the present time.

I have taken up quite a lot of your time, Ladies and Gentlemen, discussing my country. Our national budget has more than doubled since that time, while our gross national product has increased by nearly fifty per cent in the last six years. Everywhere you go, you will find progress in the form of new buildings, schools, hospitals, roads, power stations and irrigation works. We have been building roads at the rate of two miles a day and we have just finished one from Kuching to Sibiu with the help of your government.

You, of course, have done much better than us. Malaysia's population is only about two million less than Australia's, but your gross national product is five or six times ours, and your standard of living is very much higher.

As I said earlier, countries like ours cannot ignore the area in which we live, in which there is so much poverty and suffering. If we don't helop the others to raise their standards of living, they may pull us down with them one day. Thee battle for Southeast Asia cannot be won on the military battlefields, for the real war is not being fought there. It is being fought in the villages and rubber estates and rice fields, in the factories and slums of our cities, in our trade unions and political parties, which are all targets of Communist penetration. The real battle is the battle for economic and social progress, for a better life, and the young soldier who falls in military combat is often a



pitiful sacrifice to a futile cause. He would live to enjoy life if there were no poverty and misery for the Communists to exploit.

Those brave young soldiers being killed are doing no more than buying us time - time to provide our people with more rice and bread, more homes and factories and jobs, more education and better health, in short a better life. We should grab this opportunity. All of us, the countries of Southeast Asia, must get together in a common endeavour to improve ourselves. We in Malaysia are very conscious of the need to generate more economic well being in this region. We cannot afford much in the way of aid, but we are trying to make up for it by promoting regional cooperation. If we will only look to each other in a spirit of friendship and goodwill, in a spirit of give and take, there is so much we can do to help ourselves.

It has been very heartening to see that Australia has grown to realise that her destiny is bound up with this region, because there is much that you can contribute. We look forward to seeing you to play a greater role in the economic progress of Southeast Asia and we shall always be ready to join hands with you.