

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: THE BANQUET GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY HIS EXCELLENCY
MR. PIERRE MAUROY PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FRANCE

VENUE: PARIS

DATE: 23 JAN 1984

TIME:

I wish to thank Your Excellency, the Government and the people of the Republic of France for the warm welcome and the generous hospitality that has been extended to my wife and I, as well as to the members of my delegation. We are indeed happy and honoured to be here in your lovely country. I am particularly delighted to have this opportunity to meet again and to renew my acquaintance with Your Excellency.

2. Just over one year ago I had the pleasure of welcoming you to Malaysia on the occasion of your official visit to our country. Your visit has contributed greatly towards strengthening the relations between our two countries. Late last year I was in Paris and we had an opportunity to meet and discuss a few matters. This time I am on an official visit together with a number of my officials. More extensive discussions will be held between us and also between the officials. These increasing number of contacts between leaders and officials of our two countries will surely promote greater understanding between our two peoples and help to overcome and remove the barriers of language and culture.

3. To my mind, it is most appropriate that in the past one year our cooperation has developed significantly in the field of education. Our two sides are in the process of finalising the agreement for the programme whereby Malaysian students will pursue their higher education in France. I believe that the initiation of this programme will lay the foundation for much closer relations between Malaysia and France in future.

4. At the same time while looking towards France and other developed countries, both in the East and the West for their knowledge and expertise, Malaysia desires to enter into genuine partnership with these same countries in the field of economic development and trade. As a growing nation, we offer opportunities for those who have the technical know-how and the means to participate actively in our economic development. We certainly welcome French interest in this field.

5. I am certain that you share my hope for the expansion of two-way trade between our two countries. We should not fail to take advantage of the growing cooperation between our two countries to allow the growth of such an active two-way trade. In this, however, while we have reason to be happy with the development of our bilateral relations in many fields, we must address ourselves to the fact that the volume of trade between our two countries have not been very encouraging. This is attributable in part to the lingering recession, but at the same time we cannot ignore the effect of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. There is truth in the argument that certain industries do require governmental assistance to promote their growth, but the widespread usage of these measures to protect too many sectors simply cannot have a positive effect on international trade, and consequently on the recovery from this recession. This problem is not confined to one or two or a few countries, but to many groups of countries. I believe that it is a negative trend, and one that cannot solve any economic problem with any permanence.

6. France, as an important member of the EEC, plays a major role in European affairs and it is a strong proponent of European unity. It is currently the President of the EEC Council, at a time when the Community is addressing itself to many economic and political questions, in intra-community affairs, as well as in matters between the Community and other countries and groups of countries. The Community itself is about to be enlarged with the admission of two new members, namely, Spain and Portugal. I would like to extend to you my best wishes and to express my confidence that under the Presidency of France, the Community will achieve progress in its endeavours.

7. The last few years has witnessed the growth of economic cooperation and trade between the EEC and ASEAN. Malaysia, and its partners in ASEAN, value this cooperation between the two groups. We are confident that the existing dialogue and regular meetings held between us will prove to be mutually beneficial both to the members of the EEC and to the countries of ASEAN. Even though this cooperation is not without its problems, in particular certain restrictive measures on the part of the Community, it nevertheless provides for meetings of minds between the two sides. Such on-going dialogues provide the means for a mutually satisfactory solution.

8. The need for on-going dialogues to resolve problems and points of disagreement is also applicable to the one problem that is causing great concern to Europeans, as well as to the whole world, namely that of security. I am referring to the suspension of the talks on arms reduction between the two superpowers as a result of the stalemate over the question of intermediate missiles in Europe. The world has been following the progress of these negotiations with much more than just academic interest. We in Malaysia share the concern that is felt by all countries over the suspension of

talks on arms reduction. The two superpowers and the world cannot afford an escalation in nuclear rearmament. The discussions must go on no matter how difficult. Malaysia is watching the development with bated breath, for already there is sufficient nuclear arms to destroy all living things on this planet.

9. In the Middle East, the question of Palestine, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, remains unresolved. As a means to start the process that would lead to the establishment of an independent state of Palestine, Malaysia urges for the convening of the International Peace Conference on West Asia, as called for by the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Geneva International Conference on the Question of Palestine. We are convinced that the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Geneva Conference provides the basis for a just and comprehensive peace and would lead to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

10. One of the consequences of the unresolved question of Palestine is the on-going tragedy in Lebanon. Malaysia is aware that France plays a key mediatory role in the crisis in Lebanon and in efforts to achieve a long term solution to the Palestinian problem. In the pursuit of these efforts, France has not so long ago suffered a tragedy when so many of her sons were killed. I would like to express my condolences at your loss and salute the bravery of those who lost their lives in Lebanon. We appeal to all parties concerned to renew the efforts at bringing about national reconciliation and peace to Lebanon.

11. Within our own region of Southeast Asia, we continue to face the unresolved problem of Kampuchea. The Vietnamese military occupation of Kampuchea prevents the establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, or ZOPFAN, in Southeast Asia, free from any form of foreign interference that Malaysia and her partners in ASEAN has been striving for. The unresolved problem of Kampuchea is the source of instability in our region and it threatens all of us in the region with the unwanted possibility of big power interference in our affairs. Malaysia, therefore, looks to her friends for their continued support for the efforts to resolve the Kampuchean issue peacefully and speedily in accordance with the declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea and other relevant United Nations resolutions that have been endorsed by the international community.

12. The question of Antarctica, the continent that is the last unsettled frontier of mankind, has been gaining international interest. The recent session of the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution that the Secretary-General undertakes a comprehensive, factual and objective study on all aspects of the question of Antarctica. Malaysia firmly believes that Antarctica should remain the heritage of mankind, that its future regime

should promote international harmony and not discord, cooperation and not conflict, and that the exploitation of its resources should benefit mankind as a whole. We realise that France has a different perception on the question of Antarctica, but we are confident that the study undertaken by the United Nations Secretary General will take into full account the positions of all the countries in the world.

13. Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen, may I now ask you to join me in a toast to the good health of His Excellency President Francois Mitterrand, His Excellency Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, to the Government and the people of the Republic of France, and to the continuing close friendship between Malaysia and the Republic of France.