

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY
MR. POUL SCHLUTER PRIME MINISTER OF DENMARK

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 17 MAR 1988

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. Poul Schluter,
Prime Minister of Denmark;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia
allow me to extend a very warm welcome to you and other
distinguished members of your delegation. I am particularly
delighted by your visit as it rekindles the many pleasant
memories that I had brought back with me from my last visit
to your beautiful country. Indeed, your return visit is a
clear demonstration of your expression of friendship towards
Malaysia. We reciprocate this whole-heartedly.

2. It is my sincere hope that you will have a pleasant
stay in Malaysia just as it is our pleasure and honour to be
your host. I look forward to the discussions which we will
be having tomorrow which I believe will provide a clear
insight into our mutual and respective concerns, both near
and far. I would also welcome your views on bilateral and
international issues that would help generate greater
cooperation and understanding between our two countries.

Your Excellency,

3. A bilateral visit of this kind is certainly a good
occasion to review the state of our relations. It provides
us with an opportunity to assess the progress made as well
as the various shortcomings that need to be overcome to
further strengthen our bilateral relations. I must say that
the climate of political cooperation that exist between our
two countries continues to remain good and healthy. The
inherent goodwill on both sides engendered over the years
continues to find positive expression in the various
endeavours undertaken by our countries either bilaterally or
multilaterally.

4. I note that the record low prices of commodities
encountered over the past few years had brought about a
decline in value terms of Malaysia's exports to Denmark
although in quantitative terms the Danish market continues
to register increasing off-takes from Malaysia. Malaysia
hopes to overcome the persistent trade deficit faced so as
to establish a more balanced trade relations with Denmark.

It is also our hope to fully tap the growing potential of the Danish market and to develop Denmark into a major distributing centre for Malaysia's exports to the Nordic countries. I believe that cooperative efforts towards realising these objectives would be a positive step in increasing the overall trade between our two countries.

5. Whilst various incentives have been offered by the Malaysian Government, the growth of Danish investments in Malaysia has not reflected Denmark's real potential. I hope an attitudinal change could be effected by leaders of the Danish industry so that the quantum of Danish participation and investment in Malaysia could be significantly increased. It is indeed in our interest to welcome your capital and technology just as it is in your interest to partake of the benefits of our economic development.

6. Notwithstanding the modest bilateral economic collaborations, I am particularly grateful to Denmark for the positive attitude displayed in those areas of special interest to Malaysia. Your technical assistance and credit line facilities have been well received and beneficial to us, for which we would like to express our appreciation. Similarly, your steadfast opposition to the European Community's proposed levy on vegetable and marine oils and fats is greatly appreciated by Malaysia, as a major producer of palm oil. Malaysia too recognises Denmark's positive role in absorbing some of the refugees given first asylum by Malaysia. We are aware of the constraints and domestic pressures encountered by your government on this matter but would nevertheless appreciate Denmark's continued role in helping to reduce the number of refugees that Malaysia is presently saddled with.

Your Excellency,

7. I am pleased with the commonality of views that we have over a wide range of international issues of interest to both countries. Of particular concern to us is the state of East-West relations. We have a common need to exercise our influence, however limited, in shaping the course of events towards securing international peace and security.

8. The world has come a long way since the days of the cold war. We recall the brinkmanship displayed during the Berlin blockade and the Cuban missile crisis and how relieved the world was when statesmanship won the day. The question that faces us is whether the world today is any safer than in the days of the cold war. Are the big powers really sincere when they decided to remove and dismantle their intermediate missiles or are they merely discarding out of date weaponry in favour of more lethal state of the art weapons? Are we really heading for disarmament or greater sophistication in the big powers' capacity for mass destruction?

9. Whilst the superpowers grappled with their strategic

equations, seemingly in the interest of peace on earth, they seem to be involved directly or indirectly in a number of local conflicts. While the countries of the Third World welcome the INF treaty, we would like to reduce the proxy wars fought on our soil. We have no wish to be destroyed in order to prove which conventional weapon is most effective. We want peace in order to develop our countries and to give a better life to our people.

10. If the environment in Europe has seemingly changed for the better the environment in Southeast Asia has not. The end of the war in Vietnam should have brought peace to our region. But unfortunately, Vietnam decided to invade Kampuchea. We are still searching for a comprehensive political solution to this unnecessary and unfortunate state of affairs. ASEAN will persevere and is appreciative of the support extended by Denmark to all its efforts.

Your Excellency,

11. I trust your visit has afforded you the opportunity to gauge at first hand the dynamics of the social and economic engineering taking place in Malaysia. This onerous task has to be undertaken by us because we had no control over our population when we were colonised. Our multiracial population is by comparison to other similar population fairly harmonious. We would appreciate greater understanding of our problems by our friends.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. May I now invite you to raise your glasses in a toast to His Excellency Mr. Poul Schluter and to the lasting friendship between the peoples of Denmark and Malaysia.