

ADDRESS BY YAB TUN DR. ISMAIL AL-HAJ, DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA TO MEMBERS OF GERMAN
ASSOCIATION FOR FOREIGN POLICY AT ADENAUERALLEE
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6.00 P.M.

THE CHALLENGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am deeply honoured to have been invited to address this distinguished gathering in Bonn, the capital of a powerful and friendly country which, no less than mine, is preoccupied with the supreme and urgent tasks of strengthening cooperation and reducing tensions between nations.
2. I am happy to be with you, an elite group concerned with the study and analysis of foreign policies and international issues.
3. I am conscious that I stand here at a moment of profound and historic change in Europe where the forces of peaceful regional cooperation are irresistibly at work. Soon this great European Economic Community of Six nations is likely to be increased to Ten, a further dramatic consolidation of Western Europe's economic and political power which can only strengthen the prospects for world peace and stability.
4. But you in Western Europe are not content with building up this vast edifice of economic and political power in isolation. You are resolved, as your Government's Ostpolitik clearly manifests, to improve your relations with your Eastern neighbours,

recognizing no doubt that the chances of success very much depend on the Federal Republic's important place in an increasingly united and self-reliant Community.

5. The impending enlargement of the European Economic Community is likely to result in a change in the pattern of relationship in international affairs. On the other side of the globe, lies the People's Republic of China inhabited by a quarter of the human race. China's recent admission to the United Nations has also triggered off reappraisals within the chancelleries of the world. How will China behave in the United Nations? What impact will this have on the balance of power in Asia and elsewhere? What contribution would she make towards lasting peace now that she has been accepted into the international community of nations. Perhaps the answers to these questions would undoubtedly have a profound influence not only on the future of the Southeast Asian region but also the rest of the world.

6. The role China will play in the future therefore looms large in the foreign policy planning of Malaysia and presumably of other Southeast Asian countries. China's endorsement of the concept of neutralisation of Southeast Asian region or even an indication to agree in principle to guarantee that Southeast Asia should be a region of peace

and neutrality would in itself be a prelude to the opening of a new era in Southeast Asia if not the world.

7. Japan is another major factor since, among other things, that formidable nation is expected to outstrip the Soviet Union in industrial production by the end of this decade. Japan's policies towards Southeast Asia have yet to crystallize and, to the extent that they remain unclear, Southeast Asia's relations with her will continue to contain an element of doubt and hesitancy. Yet, the logic of Japan's needs as a giant and expanding economy and the relative proximity of Southeast Asia with its vast economic and human resources would appear to demand urgent agreement on mutually beneficial economic and political relations.

8. My theme tonight is The Challenge in Southeast Asia. I should like first of all to comment on certain misconceptions about this region to which Malaysia belongs. It is too often, regarded as a tottering, chronically unstable, divided region without reasonable prospects for survival in the future. Perhaps the mass media's over-concentration on the more sensational aspects of events of Southeast Asia is responsible for this.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Southeast Asia has gone through a slow process of economic and political evolution.

10. We in Malaysia have found this process not only slow but also painful. I can say without exaggeration that Malaysia has been through a baptism of fire in this process from the early days of colonialism to the era of independence.

11. First in the 40s there was the Japanese occupation which badly damaged our economy. Then following the liberation of the country by our people, we had a twelve year Emergency when the Communists tried to destroy our democratic way of life. And more recently we had the May 13 Tragedy when our two main racial groups - the Malays and the Chinese tried to settle their differences by violence.

12. Indeed we have suffered in the process - just as the German people have suffered from the experiences of the Second World War.

13. But just as the German people have done - we have emerged once again - stronger, more self-reliant, more tolerant and more determined that ever not to suffer a similar experience again.

- That is why we have to amend our Constitution.
- That is why we expend much needed revenue to contain the remnants of the Communist terrorists in the Malaysia/Thai Border.
- That is why we seek the neutralisation of Southeast Asia.

- That is why all our efforts are concentrated on developing our economy.

14. We have arrived at stage now where in the process of adjusting to a new situation and searching for an identity; we are getting more involved collectively with the future development of the area as a whole. Our struggle against colonialism has now given rise to another type of struggle - the safeguarding of our right to live in peace and security without external interference. The realisation has dawned on us that an uncoordinated Southeast Asia has left us weak and perpetually divided.

15. Our weakness and shortcomings in the past have made us easy prey to exploitation by foreign powers and their rivalries in the region. We realize too that these conflicts and rivalries are the source of tension and insecurity in the region. On this count Southeast Asian countries have manifested their desire to work through concerted efforts for the exit of these big power rivalries from the region in order to bring about peace and security.

16. The critical situation which has developed between India and Pakistan to-day can also be related to the same pattern of uncertainty and tension caused by big power rivalry in Southeast Asia.

17. The Soviet Union, China and the United States all have a positive role to play in resolving the outcome

of this situation and it is to be hoped that they would consider their actions in the context of the interests of India and Pakistan.

18. India's recognition of Bangla Desh adds a new element to this conflict. This of course will complicate the issue further.

19. Although Malaysia can only contribute in urging a peaceful solution to this conflict, my Government fervently hopes that a solution can be found to this tragic conflict which will be satisfactory to the parties concerned.

20. This conflict provides a challenge for all peace loving nations to strive to bring about an amicable settlement to the problem. Southeast Asia provides a similar challenge.

21. It is true, of course, that Southeast Asia is no different from any other region in the world in the sense that there is no absolute guarantee of peace and stable progress particularly if economic development does not keep pace with population growth and if local insurgencies are not contained. However, it is my earnest conviction that Southeast Asia has proved its resilience during the past 25 years. Despite the debilitating effects of colonial domination, of often inefficient leadership, of endemic insurgencies, of rapid population growth, of Great Power rivalry - despite all this, the new nation-states continue to succeed in their struggle for survival.

22. Today, the drive towards ever-increasing cooperation in all fields, and especially in the economic sector is stronger than ever before. Revolutionary nationalist leaders who preferred external adventures to domestic development have been replaced by pragmatists who rely on technocrats to implement their development plans.

23. The new breed of Southeast Asian leaders realize much more clearly than their predecessors that the ultimate test of national independence is a high degree of self-reliance within a framework of effective regional cooperation.

24. The changing pattern of Southeast Asia with the reshaping of the power balance in the region caused by the emergence of China as a major power necessitates urgent rethinking and reappraisal of our policies with the view to establishing future relations with China and other major powers consistent with our regional interest.

25. It is with the realization of the above pattern that we look ahead with determination and strength to meet the challenges of future on the following basis :

Firstly, to ensure the success of our internal economic development programme to combat poverty and correct the imbalance between the haves and the have nots. We have to satisfy demands by building a viable and strong economy that would be the pillar of our internal strength and stability.

Secondly, our efforts and aspirations for regional cooperation, which is gaining currently will be greatly enhanced if we succeed in meeting the first challenge. The measure of our success in regional cooperation will depend on the coordination of these efforts by strong and economically stable individual countries in the region to work towards a harmonization of interests for the peace, security and economic prosperity of Southeast Asia as a whole.

Thirdly, Southeast Asia should be able to exist on its own as a region which can stand to its own security and future development without outside interference. The test will be in our ability to work together and to look after our own future.

26. Thus we have witnessed increasingly during the past few years a regional movement towards what is known as non-alignment. Non-alignment in Southeast Asia connotes neither a relapse into isolation nor an abdication of responsibility for the fate of individual States and of the region as a whole. Rather, it signifies a new mood, a new determination to secure for the peoples throughout the region a stable basis of national self-reliance, economic development and social stability.

27. As the Bangkok Declaration which established the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1967 proclaimed:-

"The countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and that they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form of manifestation in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples".

23. That was only four years ago. Since then, ASEAN has moved steadily forward. Increasing economic cooperation has paved the way for cooperation in other fields. These advances are relatively modest, especially when compared to the scale of economic and political cooperation in Western Europe. But what is important is that a firm basis for regional cooperation has already been established in Southeast Asia.

29. On the 27th of last month, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, and the Special Envoy of the National Executive Council of Thailand met in Kuala Lumpur. The representatives of the Five ASEAN countries made a joint Declaration which stated, among other things:

" (1) That Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers;

(2) That Southeast Asian countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship."

30. In their Joint Communique which the representatives of the Five ASEAN countries issued together with the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, they stated that the five countries "would continue to consult each other with a view to fostering an integrated approach on all matters and developments which affect the Southeast Asian region". It was also agreed that a summit meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the ASEAN countries would be held in Manila on a date to be announced later. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration will be brought to the attention of the other countries of Southeast Asia, namely, Burma, the Khmer Republic, the Kingdom of Laos, the Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the view to encouraging these countries to associate themselves with the aspirations and objectives expressed in the Declaration.

31. The Five ASEAN countries have also agreed to establish a committee of senior officials drawn from the five countries to

study and consider what further necessary steps should be taken to bring about the realization of their objectives. This committee will be convened in Malaysia.

32. Analysing the results of the conference, from our stand-point, it is for the first time, that the five ASEAN countries have jointly and categorically stated aloud their determination to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. The Declaration, to this effect, is significant as it spells out the five countries' acceptance that the neutralisation of Southeast Asia is a desirable objective. To this end also it means a frame work is established within which there will be a greater concerted efforts by the Five to work together to foster an integrated approach to all matters that concern the future of the region.

33. In another important context, the document should be considered in relation to the coming Nixon/Chou En Lai meeting in Peking. This would certainly have effect of drawing attention of the two leaders to the objectives of the five countries to make Southeast Asia a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality free from any form or manner of interference by the outside powers.

34. Peking and Washington would also have to take cognizance of fact that in our calculation the Declaration envisages the

inclusion of the participation of other Southeast Asian countries who could subscribe to the Declaration.

35. When Malaysia first announced her proposal for a neutral Southeast Asia, it was received with scepticism by some countries. Such scepticism was understandable - if I may say so without being patronising - since some regarded the proposal as either too revolutionary or somewhat unrealistic. Too revolutionary because of the pessimistic assessment of regional realities. How could countries, for example those constituting Indochina, plagued and bedevilled by external intervention and grave internal problems, be expected realistically to accept neutralization? After all, had not the Geneva agreement of 1954 and 1962 visualized neutralization and proved to be singularly unsuccessful? Others having treaty commitments with the outside powers felt, not unreasonably, that while the neutralization concept was laudable it had little practical value in the short term although it could become a desirable long-term goal. But the recent Five-Nation meeting in Kuala Lumpur unequivocally endorsed the principle that Southeast Asia should and would become - and I quote - a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers.

This major policy pronouncement by Governments representing approximately 200 million Southeast Asians, among other things, reflects the widespread recognition of the need to keep pace with rapid changing developments affecting the region.

36. Non-alignment, as I have suggested earlier, is fast becoming the vehicle of increasing national self-reliance and self-confidence coupled with a growing awareness of the vital importance of regional strength and solidarity. Neutralization, in this context, can be regarded as the extension or concomitant of the determination by the peoples of the region to shape our own destiny by ourselves. This surely is the crucial difference between our neutralization policy which is based on self-reliance, and the neutralization schemes of the past, which however well-intentioned, were the fruit of the diplomatic ingenuity of outsiders. Such schemes were doomed to collapse since they were not rooted in national sentiments and aspirations of the people most directly concerned. In very simple words, ASEAN's call for a neutral Southeast Asia is genuine because it is native-based. It is the product of independent Southeast Asian initiative and judgement.

37. I am, therefore fully confident that neutralization as we perceive it is not only a desirable regional objective but

the hope of the future. It is born not out of fear - although the region will continue to be beset by disruptive challenges - but out of a deep and growing confidence and faith in ourselves.

38. And what, you may ask, are the specifics of the neutralization concept? They may take various forms depending on the detailed discussions that are about to commence. But Malaysia feels that a starting-point should be recognition by the three Great Powers, The People's Republic of China, the United States and the Soviet Union of their respective and collective interest in calling a halt to the old fashioned habits of Great Power intervention and rivalry. Surely in the past quarter century the Great Powers have received ample evidence of how extraordinarily difficult it is to mould Southeast Asian countries in their own image and likeness and, indeed, how indigestible even the smallest Southeast Asian countries are!

39. In conclusion, what we are asking for is very simple, namely an open guarantee by the Three Great Powers to respect the integrity and neutrality of Southeast Asia. This guarantee in its simplest form need only take the form of an oral pronouncement at the United Nations. We do not deny - indeed we are prepared in our own interests to encourage - the legitimate interests of all outside powers in the economic, social and cultural fields. This is not much to ask for and we profoundly believe that

rejection of our invitation would be contrary to the interests of all concerned including the Great Powers themselves.

40. The neutralisation concept has made provisions for this. We have already made a good start by the declaration of the five countries of ASEAN to have Southeast Asia recognised and respected as zone of peace, freedom and neutrality.

41. Eventually it is envisaged there will be a convergence of movements by countries in the region towards the same direction and unity on purpose - the unity of small countries who are integrated in every sense in their economic, social and political development. This in the final analysis would constitute the backbone of a strong and united Southeast Asia whose potentials and credentials would be a factor to be reckoned with in world affairs.

42. The tasks which lie ahead to achieve our plans constitutes a challenge - a challenge for the countries of Southeast Asia - to ensure that we be masters of our own destiny and not merely passive pawns in the policies of the major powers.

43. Equally, this challenge is not only for Southeast Asia but also one which will provide the Big Power with the opportunity of preventing the mistakes of the past from being carried into the future.

Thank you.