

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC. OC.9/61

EMBARGOED: NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 1900 HRS.,
OCTOBER, 4, 1961.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S BROADCAST ONOCTOBER 4, 1961, AT 7.30 P.M.

You will remember that the fight between the P.A.P. and the M.C.P. started after June 9th when we refused to agree to the Plen's call through Lim Chin Siong for the abolition of the Internal Security in 1963. When we did not agree to their line to abolish the Internal Security Council, they persuaded a group of Assemblymen in the party to try and capture both the party and the Government and switch our non-Communist policy to a pro-Communist one.

They used Dr. Lee Siew Choh as the front leader of this group. Dr. Lee had told Dr. Goh and me that he was convinced that so long as the British bases were left untouched, it would be perfectly all right to run a pro-Communist Government with Communist support in Singapore. He said that the British were only interested in peace and stability and their bases. Lim Chin Siong and his friends

had been convinced of this by Lord Selkirk to the point where they exposed themselves right out in the open to capture the Government. They, in turn, convinced Dr. Lee. As a result Dr. Lee has embarked on the most hazardous gamble of his life.

As the fight went on in Anson, Lim and his friends became more and more anxious because they knew we were winning. They wanted us to lose in Anson for two reasons. First, because they wanted to lower the prestige of the P.A.P. in the eyes of the people. Second, they wanted to demoralise our party and our Assemblymen and make them believe that the P.A.P. was on its way out so that more would join them. Lim Chin Siong, Fong and Woodhull made numerous statements. But their statements had no effect on the people. Chok Ko Tong, the former P.A.P. Branch Organising Secretary, told them that we were still going to win in Anson.

National Archives of Singapore

In the end they resorted to treachery to bring about our defeat. On the eve of poll, they got 8 P.A.P. Assemblymen to betray the party by denouncing the P.A.P. in a statement which was calculated to cause confusion and disillusionment among voters in Anson.

We lost by 500 votes. There were 1,500 abstentions - the people who were disillusioned and confused because of these treacherous acts. After they had succeeded in making the P.A.P. lose, they hoped to capture the party and the government. And so at that time they did not want the government to resign and have general elections.

Meanwhile 5 more Assemblymen were being weakened. By the 20th July we had decided to take the fight into the open and draw the line clearly between those who were prepared to make a stand and fight, and those who had either defected or were not prepared to take a stand and face the consequences.

On the night of the debate on the motion of confidence, we knew that 8 had already defected. We could have taken a soft line with the others and avoided any more joining the eight. But we knew that there were severe trials ahead of us. And it was better to face these trials with men who are prepared to face up to them. Besides the eight, five others abstained on the vote of confidence. These 13 Assemblymen asked for the motion of confidence to be withdrawn arguing that it was unnecessary. What they really wanted was more time to try and capture the Government from within the P.A.P.

You may ask, why did 13 Assemblymen decide to go over and join the other side? There are 13 different sets of reasons. But none of these reasons had anything to do with their public allegations of "lack of intra-party democracy" or "discredited leadership". Only 2 months previously at a party meeting held in May after the Hong Lim By-election, these same 13 Assemblymen had expressed their full confidence in the party leadership.

The Communists have a wide range of persuasion and pressure for the manipulation of human beings. They won over S.T. Bani partly because their zeal and ceaseless work in the unions convinced him that he did not have a chance competing against them, partly by the argument that the world is being slowly absorbed and converted to Communism, and finally by the constant pressure of persuasion and argument wearing down his nerves. He came to see me in hospital in July last year. He said we had made a great mistake in taking office, and that we should get out of office as soon as possible. At that time there were acute conflicts in the TUC Secretariat between Lim and Fong's pro-Communist faction, against Kandasamy and Devan Nair's non-Communist faction. Bani was then on the side of Kandasamy and Devan Nair who was his closest friend. Devan and Bani were such close friends that only last year they rented adjoining houses. But by October last year we slowly discovered that

something had happened to him. He had gone over to the Communist side. Now he is not on speaking terms with Devan Nair although he still lives next door.

Dr. Lee and Dr. Sheng are politically naive. They entered politics and joined the PAP in 1959 when the Party was winning all round. When the PAP lost in Hong Lim they thought they were likely to have a bleak future with the PAP. Why not join hands with the Communists who had their cadres in the unions, who could provide mass support? They were all for taking a pro-Communist policy and co-operating with the Communists. Since the Ministers were not prepared to do this, they were quite happy to take over and become Ministers.

With the exception of Bani, few of these thirteen Assemblymen even understand the Communist theory and ideology. But with persuasion from the Communist cadres in the unions they believe that if they take the Communist line they will get the support of the people in the organisations under the control of the Communists and they can survive politically, win the next elections and continue as Assemblymen.

For instance, for some months before the Anson by-election we knew that some people were writing speeches and articles for Tee Kim Leng

(Assemblyman for Pasir Panjang) and Lin You Eng (Assemblyman for Moulmein). These speeches were not in their usual style and all of them took the Communist line. Neither Tee Kim Leng nor Lin You Eng are even remotely Communists. But some Communists were writing for them. I had to reprove them at Party meetings of Assemblymen for allowing their names to be used in this way. They apologised. But after the party's bad defeat at Hong Lim they were insuring themselves all round for their future and they slowly drifted away from us. So it was with most of the 13 others.

When the Communists could not capture the Government by winning 26 Assemblymen over to their side their next objective was to bring the Government down, if possible by constitutional means and if not, then finally back to the rough house days of 1955-1956.

As late as the 19th August, Lim Chin Siong went to see Chor Yeok Eng, Assemblyman for Jurong. He spent hours trying to persuade Chor to defect and join his side. He said that the Government would then be left with 25 members, less than half of the majority in the Assembly. If Chor would go over they could through Barisan Sosialis rally the whole opposition of 26 members and bring the Government down. In between persuasion and arguments there was of course

the veiled threat as to what would happen to those who did not follow the mass line, i.e. the Communist line.

Chor had earlier complained to some of Lim's friends that the Communists are quite heartless about using people. As an example he had mentioned the case of Lim Chin Kok, former Chairman of the Singapore Shop and Factory Workers Union. Lim Chin Siong had been Secretary-General of this Union. Lim Chin Kok was banished to China after the purges in 1956. His wife and children living in West Coast Road were left destitute.

On the 17th August, Ng Kim Boo and Tay Cheng Kang, former committee members of the PAP Jurong Branch, told Chor that Lim Chin Siong had sent them to see him and to arrange a meeting between Chor and Lim. So the meeting on the 19th August between Chor and Lim was agreed. They also explained that the story about Lim Chin Kok was not true and that the unions did give monthly donations to the wife and children. But Chor had previously enquired and found out that this was not so, whatever the position may be now.

On the 19th August when Lim Chin Siong personally met Chor he said to Chor that he knew Chor was not happy about Barisan Sosialis because of certain persons in it. These matters can be properly "looked after" later. Lim said that

those like Chan Sun Wing and Ong Chang Sam who are disliked by the people had been accepted into Barisan Sosialis because of their recent actions which were good for Barisan Sosialis. Lim repeated that these persons can be properly "looked after" later.

This narrative is not meant for dividing the persons in the Barisan Sosialis. It was what Lim Chin Siong said personally to Chor Yeok Eng on the 19th August at Chor's house in Jurong Road. Lim wanted to buy over Chor so badly that he went to the extent of offering to sell out his own friend.

Unfortunately for Lim, Chor Yeok Eng was not persuaded nor intimidated. He told Ong Pang Boon, and me all about this. Chor was amazed at the cynical and heartless attitude of the Communists when they made use of people.

They tried with other Assemblymen too. Jamit Singh tried to persuade John Mammen, Assemblyman for Telok Blangah, to join the defectors and told him that he had a great future with the Barisan Sosialis. But just in case the carrot did not work, he dropped veiled hints as to what would happen to those who did not follow them. But Jamit does not understand that other people have basic loyalties, and political principles.

They has also tried to persuade Che Sahorah binte Ahmat, Assemblywoman for Siglap, Lee Teck Him, Assemblyman for Tiong Bahru, and Ismail Rahim, Assemblyman for Geylang East, to cross over and join them. They have failed. Not all people are devoid of loyalty or principles. But the Communists do not seem to understand this for they are still trying, although in vain.

In the end the Communists failed to capture the PAP Government or to bring it down. They have now to wait and make a bid for power at the next general elections. As long as they were trying and hoping to capture the Government, the defecting Assemblymen did not call for general elections. They could have done this simply by voting against the government on the motion of confidence. Instead they asked for the motion of confidence to be withdrawn.

Now they are calling for general elections even though they cannot get 26 Assemblymen to vote against the Government. What they really want is to prevent us from settling fair terms and conditions for merger between Singapore and the Federation. We have said, and everyone knows, that these terms and conditions will be presented to you the people for your acceptance or rejection. But the Communists fear that these terms and conditions will be fair and reasonable and in your best interests. They fear that you will endorse them. So

everyday they pass resolutions amongst themselves to ask for general elections so that the Government cannot bring about merger.

The irony of all this is that after the Hong Lim by-election in May this year when we saw no way out of our economic difficulties we wanted to resign, but the Communists wanted us to carry on. After the Anson by-election in July when we saw merger and Malaysia ahead we wanted to carry on, but the Communists wanted us to resign. On 23rd August we have successful talks with the Tengku. We wanted to carry on because we shall have both common market and merger in the immediate future, and we shall have a clear solution to our economic and social problems.

At a radio forum on 21st September, Dr. Goh Keng Swee of the PAP said that there should be a Referendum for the people to decide whether to accept or reject merger. A.P. Rajah of the SPA and even Ong Eng Guan of the UPP also wanted a referendum. A referendum means the people decide yes or no to merger proposals. But Dr. Lee Siew Choh for the Barisan Sosialis who have claimed they want the people to decide on merger, instead of wanting the people to say "yes" or "no" to merger, they want general elections. He said that the people are too ignorant for a referendum. What he means is that Barisan Sosialis hope that in a general election with over 300 candidates and myriads of symbols

contesting 51 constituencies, all on so many different programs, the merger issue will be lost. The Communists hope that in a general election no party will win a clear majority and no government will emerge with a clear mandate for merger. In this way they hope to postpone the unpleasant prospect of their Communist organisation being crippled by a strong Pan-Malayan Government.

But is all this in the interests of the people? Should they be allowed for their own selfish interests to endanger your livelihood by blocking merger?

Now the Communists have failed to bring the Government down, what are they doing? And how they are trying to block merger? I shall explain these things in my next talk.

OCTOBER 4, 1961.

(Time issued 1400 hours)

National Archives of Singapore