

PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY

143-145, Orchard Road

Singapore, 9.

FROM : THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

27 April 1976

Dear General Secretary,

I shall send Mr. C.V. Devan Nair (and one other) to represent the PAP at the next Bureau meeting in London, which has been fixed for 28-29 May. I hope that nobody will be tempted to ask for a postponement. It is best if you get all those who have made these accusations against the PAP to come forward for a face to face confrontation.

You should get the Dutch Labour Party and the British Labour Party to ask Mr. Malcolm Caldwell who has written the main article for the FUEMSSO publication, quoted in the Dutch Labour Party paper, to be present. You wisely did not circulate this FUEMSSO publication.

I have written to Bruno Pittermann. Herewith a copy. I intend to release this letter to the press when you have received it. You are requested to circulate it to all Bureau members.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Kuan Yew

Mr. Hans Janitschek

General Secretary

Socialist International

88A St. John's Wood

High Street

LONDON NW8 7SJ

National Archives of Singapore

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Mr. Bruno Pittermann

Chairman

Socialist International

88A St. John's Wood

High Street

London NW8 7SJ

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Dear Bruno Pittermann,

I write to you as Chairman, Socialist International.

There are moves by a group in the Dutch Labour Party, supported by Miss Jenny Little, International Secretary of the British Labour Party, to try and mobilise support to expel us from the Socialist International.

These manoeuvres have been going on for some months. I learnt of them after 4 March, when Hans Janitschek saw our High Commissioner in London, Yong Nyuk Lin.

Since then, I have requested and got a copy of the Dutch Labour Party paper against the PAP. It is a distorted and absurd picture of the PAP painted by judicious excerpts. For example, it quotes, on page 14, from my speech to the Commonwealth Press Union to prove that we torture journalists in Singapore. (I enclose a copy of my speech, with the quote underlined.) It also quotes from (1) a book by a Marxist British Lecturer, Iain Buchanan; (2) a book by an Indian journalist, Thayil Jacob Sony George, based in Hong Kong; (both these books are freely on sale in Singapore, and obtainable in our libraries); (3) a stencilled loose-leaf paper publication in January 1976 by a so-called "Federation of United Kingdom and Eire Malaysian and Singaporean Student Organizations" (FUEMSSO). Some of the articles are scandalous, scurrilous and libellous. And the General Secretary, Hans Janitschek, was wise in not circulating the FUEMSSO publication even to the PAP. It includes the reprinting of statutory

declarations in various habeas corpus proceedings in Singapore, taken out on behalf of political detainees by a Ceylonese lawyer, T.T. Rajah, a well-known fellow-traveller in Singapore, detained in 1974 for involvement with the Malayan National Liberation League (MNLL), a subsidiary organization of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), now released for reasons of health; (4) a report by Amnesty International, which, besides listing out communist detainees, highlights the so-called "frame-up" of a former University of Singapore Students' Union President, Tan Wah Piow. Tan was convicted in open court, after a long hearing, protracted by his conduct of his own defence, for rioting, and sentenced. He did not appeal against conviction or sentence.

The Singapore government is aware that a communist-front group in Singapore has been feeding this distorted picture of the PAP to similarly inclined groups in Britain and Holland. These groups have got through into the Socialist International, working via Marxists and Liberal intellectuals.

The main object of this campaign is to mount pressure on the PAP to get the release of some top, tough communist political detainees. Allegations of torture made in statutory declarations are patently false. Our law courts are open, with appeals going to the Privy Council in London. Yet no civil or criminal action has been brought by anyone for battery and assault, let alone

torture. And there are quite a few pro-communist and even more anti-establishment lawyers ready to pick up cudgels on behalf of any aggrieved party.

Detention without trial for political activities of communists and their supporters has been part of the laws of Malaya, now Malaysia, and Singapore, because of the armed insurrection by the MCP which began in 1948 against the British and has continued ever since. Since then, the MCP has been outlawed in Malaya, now Malaysia, and Singapore, and is an underground party. From time to time, they infiltrate and penetrate legal open parties, trade unions and student associations. They use them as their united front for mass agitation in support of their armed revolution.

It may be difficult for West European socialists to understand that communists in Southeast Asia are different from their own communists. They think of communists as somewhat odd and eccentric people who, having moved close enough to get into government in coalition with socialist and even non-socialist parties, have now become so patently democratic as to renounce the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Singapore, it is difficult to persuade the communists whom we have arrested, so as we can release them, to denounce communist use of terror and armed violence to bring about their dictatorship of

the proletariat. We do not try to persuade them to renounce the dictatorship of the proletariat as undemocratic in a multi-party system.

Two of these detainees, Dr. Lim Hock Siew and Said Zahari, are personally known to me from our anti-colonial united front days, from 1950 to 62, when the united front broke up. They know that I know that they are communists. One may admire them for the tenacity of their convictions, even if they happen to be misguided. But it will be reckless for the Singapore government to release them to work for those who are actively engaged in armed insurrection, unless they denounce the use of force to achieve power.

Four years ago, we arrested Dr. Lim's younger brother, Lim Hock Koon. He is a district committee member of the MCP. He was instructed to move from his hiding place in Indonesia to return to Singapore to carry out underground activities under the name of the MNLL. When arrested, he was co-operative. He agreed to persuade his elder brother Dr. Lim, to give up his communist pursuits. Instead, his doctor brother re-affirmed him in his communist cause. Now, we have two detainees instead of one.

Meanwhile, with the communist victories in Indo-China, the MCP has stepped up its campaign of assassination and terror in peninsular Malaysia, in

preparation for another bid at power through armed insurrection. Fortunately, their organisation in Singapore does not receive the kind of support it once did. Nevertheless, two men carrying explosives in a car to blow up the home of the manager of the Nanyang Shoe Factory, blew themselves up instead on 22 December 1974.

On 8 July 1975, at Loyang, in the northeast of Singapore, a cache of arms was found in earthen jars buried in the ground. They included 189 hand grenades, 210 detonators, one .38 revolver, one .25 Colt automatic pistol and 15 rounds of ammunition.

On 30 July 1975, at Jalan Tiga Ratus off Changi Road, in the east of Singapore, another cache of 109 hand grenades was discovered in two earthen jars buried in the ground.

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Booby traps with explosives are frequently put up for killing and maiming innocent people. They included a British RAF officer's daughter, Miss Katie Jane Salter, aged 7, killed on 23 April 1970, in Changi near her house.

These communist groups are mustering support abroad, posing as democrats. Alas, they now appear to be able to enlist some groups in the

Socialist International to help their United Front candidates in the next elections due to be held before the end of 1977. Significantly, they are enlisting the aid of West European Marxists, not of Asian socialists. I know that in fact they despise West European Marxists as 'petit bourgeois intellectuals', but whose support would nevertheless add grist to the communist mill.

One of their main issues in the coming elections will be unconditional release of these communist detainees. This is a matter for Singaporeans to decide. In successive general elections, the communist-front groups have made the unconditional release of these political detainees a key issue. On each occasion, they have lost. The overwhelming majority of people in Singapore are not in favour of letting loose these men who are out to re-create an atmosphere of turmoil and tension conducive to communist agitation, chaos and terrorism.

We were invited to join the International in good faith in the middle '60s. We believed then that the Socialist International was a clear-cut democratic socialist alternative to communism. It now appears to us that the Socialist International may, wittingly or unwittingly, become a vehicle to further the communist cause in Singapore. Perhaps the trend towards electoral united fronts between socialists and communists in France and Italy has had its wider effects and has changed the mood and attitudes of West European socialist parties.

We shall be sending Mr. C.V. Devan Nair to attend the next Bureau meeting on 28-29 May in London to face our accusers. I hope that our accusers will not be tempted to ask for a postponement.

At this next Bureau meeting, if Socialist International does not throw out the spurious charges put up in the paper by the Dutch Labour Party, and supported by the International Secretary of the British Labour Party, the PAP would not want to remain a member of Socialist International.

Our detractors have so far chosen to conduct their campaign in a devious and surreptitious manner. I see no reason for subterfuge. I propose to make this letter public and bring the issue out into the open.

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The PAP has been in office for seventeen years. We have reduced poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. We have banished despair and instilled dignity and pride in our people. We have created a better, more just and equal society than the one we inherited from the British. Our people have increased their support for our policies from 53% of the vote in May 1959, to 69% of the vote in September 1972. In between, we won two other general elections. PAP's record of honest and scrupulous government is not something my colleagues and I need apologise for.

Yours sincerely,

LEE KUAN YEW

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cc Mr. Hans Janitschek

General Secretary