

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC.OC.39/66(DEFENCE)

The following statement was issued by the Ministry of Interior and Defence:-

NEW BARISAN SOCIALIS STRATEGY

In recent months it had become obvious that the Barisan Socialis and the Communist United Front in Singapore were losing ground in the open argument. Having lost the support of the people, they felt that "Parliamentary struggle" offered no future for them. It had also become increasingly apparent that Dr. LEE SIEW CHOH and other Communist United Front leaders were having serious thoughts about switching their policy from one of "Parliamentary struggle" to one of "mass struggle outside Parliament." Therefore preparations were made at ground level for the eventual withdrawal of Party M.Ps. by holding meetings with cadres and members, and instructions were also filtered through to other Communist United Front components to prepare their members for the switch in Party policy. Dr. LEE SIEW CHOH himself also made use of every available opportunity to talk to other Communist United Front organisations on the need for a major change of Party policy. For example, when he was invited to speak at the 11th anniversary of the Pro-Communist Singapore Restaurant, Bars, Eating & Coffee Shop Employees' Union on 3.10.66, Dr. LEE, in explaining the reasons for the Party's boycott of Parliament, said that the boycott aimed at showing the people that they could not rely on "constitutional form of struggle alone" and that this should be discarded in favour of an "alternative form of struggle."

Four days later, on 7.10.66, Dr. LEE SIEW CHOH called a Press Conference to announce the resignation of Party M.Ps. from Parliament. Dr. LEE indicated at this Conference that henceforth the Party would adopt a new strategy - "to continue its struggle outside the Parliament". Mr. CHIA THYE POH, who led an illegal procession to Parliament House the next day to hand in a joint letter of resignation on behalf of Barisan M.Ps. elaborated on this. He said, "You can say we are now taking our struggle to the

streets. We are going to strengthen our extra-parliamentary struggle. It takes various forms - street demonstrations, protest meetings, strikes."

The Party lost no time in translating its new strategy into action, and illegal street demonstrations were carried out for two days by the Party from the day of the resignation of Party M.Ps. Up to that stage, the demonstrators avoided open clashes with the police. However, a more militant line emerged on the night of 21.10.66 and 22.10.66 during the so-called "Aid-Vietnam Against U.S. Variety Concert" performances at the Gay World Stadium. On 21.10.66 two Customs Officers were prevented by the "ushers" (actually their strong-arm boys) from checking on one of their "ticket-collectors" who had allowed admission to certain spectators on the strength of so-called donation tickets. Customs checking is a routine practice to ensure there was no evasion of entertainment duty. While this was going on, the crowd inside the Stadium became unruly and some of them shouted "pak" (meaning to beat up). The police had to intervene to save the Customs officers from assault, and assisted in apprehending one of the officials for obstructing the Customs Officers in carrying out their duties.

On 22.10.66 at the third concert, at about 8.35 p.m. a Police Inspector and two policemen who had just gained entry into the Stadium in connection with their duties, were stopped by about 20 of the "ushers". Despite the fact that the police personnel produced their warrant cards to identify themselves, they were manhandled and bodily pushed out of the gate. They were also punched from behind and the Inspector had to draw his revolver to prevent the unruly crowd from further attacking him, but he did not open fire. Police presence at the meetings is routine and had not hitherto been resisted.

The same mob then turned their hostility towards another Inspector and a Police Constable, who were inside the Stadium. They surrounded the two police personnel and order them to get out. Although the Inspector identified himself and explained his presence, he was attacked and set upon by the mob. Other policemen on duty nearby who came to the Inspector's rescue were also set upon. Bottles, stones and chairs were used to attack policemen. Heavily outnumbered, the policemen retreated. Instead of allowing them to leave the mob advanced on them and continued to attack. The policemen had no alternative but to open fire in self-defence. The police fired several warning shots in the air and when this did not stop the mob from advancing the police had to direct their fire at the mob. Our Policemen are trained to fire in such a manner as to avoid inflicting fatal or serious injury and none of the persons hit sustained serious injury.

It is evident that this collision with the Police was deliberately contrived to whip up the feelings of Party supporters for the Party's militant line on the one hand and on the other to discredit the Government. The organisers were fully aware that one of the conditions of the licence was to allow free access to police and customs personnel into the show in connection with their duties, and yet they deliberately obstructed and manhandled these officers. This was meant as the signal for the beginning of more violent action against the police.

The following day, 23.10.66, in a Press Statement the Barisan Socialist described the Gay World incident as the start of a "blood-bath" and said that "the blood debt must be paid." They decided to carry out a number of illegal demonstrations in the night. Again the object of these illegal acts was to contrive further collisions with the Police. The police were on hand to deal with the incidents as they occurred and in some of them the mobs were particularly violent. Acid was thrown at the police and a policeman was seriously injured and taken to hospital in a coma. Because of the restraint with which Police handled these disorders, their casualties were more numerous than those of the illegal demonstrators.

It is now clear from the above incidents what is meant by the Barisan Socialist "mass struggle outside Parliament." This is aimed at creating chaos and disorder in Singapore. The Government of Singapore has a duty to ensure that public order is maintained, that law-abiding citizens are properly protected and that lawless elements are firmly dealt with.

OCTOBER 25, 1966.

TIME ISSUED: 1500 hours

=====