

**TRANSCRIPT OF A NEWS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME  
MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, IN THE AUDITORIUM OF RADIO  
SINGAPORE ON AUGUST 9, 1962.**

**Tamil Murasu:** Sir, in view of the London talks, do you think the Government White Paper merger proposals is strengthened now?

**Prime Minister:** I have always believed it was strong and I have always been of the view that the stand of the Government is completely sound, rational and unassailable. They took it to the United Nations, they got exactly nowhere. 17 critical minds brought themselves to bear on it and I think the greatest compliment the Russians paid us was to say that they had no questions to ask us. Had it been assailable, I think Mr. Obrenko, who is a very able and intelligent and well-informed fellow on South East Asian affairs and all colonial affairs, would have taken up us over the coals, but he didn't.

**Reynolds News**

**(Alex Josey):** Sir, you met the Russian delegate to the Colonial Committee could you tell us something about your conversation with him?

**Prime Minister:** Oh, I spent a fascinating one hour with him. Before that I had met him casually at the reception of the United Arab Republic's delegate and we exchanged a few bantering words. This was before the hearing began, and I agreed to meet him the next day to keep him informed of what was going on in order that he would be sure that he was going to take the right side. So, I told him much to his amazement that there is no question of us not wanting independence. We want independence, now and immediately through merger, and its these Barisan boys whose cause he was championing who didn't want independence but wanted a continuance of internal self-government, minus the Internal Security Council, and the bases to continue all under sovereign rights. So you see he was in quite a predicament. Here was this committee supposed to supervise the decolonisation of the world and here he was taking the wrong side.

**Press Trust of**

**India**

**(Muthukrishnan):**        Could you, Sir kindly refine your, or rather define once again the basic policies of your Party and Government now that you seem to have jettisoned socialism and you're now totally against Communism. You have for long been non-Communist, democratic. Even in regard to democracy, I understand you are against the one-man-one-vote now. Therefore, could you kindly redefine your Party and Government policies, please.

**Prime Minister:**        I am sorry I got you so confused, Mr. Muthukrishnan. First, it's all defined in the Party Constitution -- an independent, democratic, non-Communist, socialist Malaya.

I see no reason why we should redefine or alter our basic objectives. And just like Mr. Nehru, you know, the fact that I am a non-Communist doesn't mean I sit down quietly and get pulverised by the Communists when they come around to clout me with clubs and sticks and stones. I am entitled at least to dodge and to give a few blows back, and as for socialism, I see no reason whatsoever of abandoning

socialism. In fact, unlike the Communists, who want to keep Singapore separate from Malaya and, therefore, make it impossible ever to have socialism in Singapore, here we are straining every nerve and every fibre in our being to bring about this merger to give a socialist basis for our society. You see the paradox? All socialists, whatever shades of opinion, before they can have a socialist programme, they must have the economic basis for it, and I think Mr. James Puthuchery, the adviser to Barisan Sosialis, put it in an admirable way when he said that if you try and nationalise Singapore you end up by nationalising bits of furniture, stationery and safety pins and things like that, and sharing his views, we have sought to give ourselves a broad enough base for a socialist society, and it's they, the so-called socialists, who want to prevent this and make socialism impossible by keeping Singapore separate and distinct. So, just as Mr.

Nehru is not an anti-Communist because he has to stand firm against the encroachments of the Communists, neither are we anti-Communists. I see no reason for anti-Communism as such. We just stay what we are -- non-Communist socialist and democratic. And you still got the vote. We'll give you

the vote. No taking away of anybody's vote. We promise you that.

**Reuters**

**(Peter Smark):** Dr. Goh made a statement which made us so very curious when he came back from London, Mr. Prime Minister.

**Prime Minister:** Yes.

**Peter Smark:** -- he was talking about a "trump card" which you had up your sleeves?

**Prime Minister:** No, I never like to carry anything up my sleeves. I wear short sleeves as a rule, but if by that he meant that we have got several useful turns to play, several irrefutable and unchallengeable evidence of equality and fairplay for Malaysia, for everybody -- Chinese, Malays, Indians and everybody else -- then I say "Yes" we've got several trump cards before Malaysia is launched to prove to anybody who

has got an open mind that this is a fair and just solution to our problems.

**Radio Singapore**

**(S.C.Lim):**

Mr. Prime Minister, would you say that the common disability about voting rights regarding the State and Federal legislatures which would be applicable to citizens of North Borneo and Sarawak was one of the cards that has been played already?

**Prime Minister:**

I don't think that card has been played yet. No, that's one of the several cards that will prove beyond any doubt that there is absolute equality for all, but as you can see that's one of the evidence of absolute parity of treatment for everybody, whether in the Federation of Malaya, Singapore or the Borneo territories.

**Tamil Murasu:**

Sir, you hope that Singapore would have merged with the Federation by June 1963. But the Tengku has fixed the target date for Malaysia as August 1963. Do you envisage

the possibility that Singapore will merge with the Federation before the Borneo territories come in?

**Prime Minister:**

Well, I have been expecting that question, thank you.

Well, you know, we have always said that by June 1963, and the Tengku agreed on that date with us, but you know the Tengku is quite a sentimental man and he says 31st of August is a good, nice, lucky day. For the official promulgation of Malaysia, you know, there must be the due pomp and ceremony -- flags must come down, drums will beat, new flags go up and new national anthems are sung. But if you watch the formula closely it is not on the 31st August, it is by the 31st August, and June 1963 is by 31st August 1963, although, mind you, the ceremonial fanfare of trumpets will be better blown on the 31st August 1963.

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**A.F.P.**

**(Mr. Rashid):** How long you think this transitional period will take?

**Prime Minister:** Well, I wouldn't like to usurp the functions of this committee -- inter-governmental committee -- which is going to Borneo, I think, in a few days' time. You should await their views. It will be made known in due course.

**Reuters:** Mr. Prime Minister, could we ask you your ideas on what will be the citizenship terms on which the Chinese citizens of Singapore will enter Malaysia?

**Prime Minister:** Ideas? I think the whole thing has been so thoroughly canvassed backwards and forwards that there is no longer a question of ideas. As the formula is neatly put down in Paragraph 14 of the White Paper -- all Singapore citizens will have equal rights, all Federation citizens will also become like Singapore citizens -- Federal nationals -- will have equal rights, equal duties and so on under the Constitution, and we will spell it all out carefully to make sure there is equality,

there is parity with everyone -- Borneo, Singapore,  
Federation of Malaya.

**A.F.P.**

**(Mr. Rashid):** Sir, you said in a BBC interview that the establishment of Malaysia will help people in South East Asia to make their minds in relation to Communism. Can you elaborate on this?

**Prime Minister:** I don't think I said it in that way. I am sure I didn't. Who interviewed me, Mr. Derek Sington? I am quite sure I didn't say it that way. What I did say is -- with the establishment of Malaysia people got to make up their minds where they belong. Do they belong in Malaysia or do they not, because as I envisage things, progressively over the years the line will be drawn clearly between those who are for Malaysia as Malaysians, or who are for themselves and what they believe Malaysia should be on behalf of foreign ideologies and so on, and I think it's inevitable. It's in the nature of things. It's bound to happen. And therefore there will have to be a little bit more clear demarcation of everybody's stand. I mean, with rights, privileges, powers,

liberties and so on, comes the responsibility of defending the integrity of the State -- the State of Malaysia. And the will to uphold the democratic institutions of Malaysia which will give the right of freedom of expression, of even asking awkward questions and alleging statements which have never been said. I mean these are freedoms -- press freedoms. I concede them to my friend, Mr. Muthukrishnan. I mean he is still there smiling broadly. But I mean if we don't defend these things, very soon we will have a state of affairs where Mr. Muthukrishnan won't even be seen at press conferences, which is a bad thing. I will be very sorry to see that happen in Malaysia.

**Straits Times**

**(Jackie Sam):**

Sir, is there a possibility that one of your "trump cards" would be an increase of seats for Singapore in the new Malaysian Central Government?

**Prime Minister:** Well, you know this word “trump card” has been used by Dr. Goh. He is a much better bridge player than I am. I am not such a good bridge player. I know the game. I think Dr. Sheng and Dr. Lee Siew Choh, are also great bridge players, so they’ll understand. Dr. Goh is really talking for their benefit, just to tell them how many more tricks they are likely to lose. But, surely, whatever they are, they will be disclosed in the natural sequence of events that will lead up to merger and Malaysia by 31st August, 1963. Meanwhile, all I need say is that we are, if I may put it in common parlance, “sitting quite pretty”.

**Reynolds News**

**(Alex Josey):** Have you decided the date upon which the referendum is going to be held?

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**Prime Minister:** Well, no, not at all. Any time, as I have said, to give people time to understand what it’s all about, take it all in and before June 1963, at the appropriate moment and everybody knows what the issues are, what it really means to either have merger with local autonomy, which is Alternative ‘A’ or

complete and unconditional merger, which Mr. Marshall talks about, or merger, just like the Borneo territories, which Tun Lim Yew Hock talks about, and I no doubt think the people will find it is to their obvious advantage to have Alternative 'A' -- merger with large powers of local autonomy.

**Strait Times**

**(Jackie Sam):** Sir, your reply just now to the common disability, being applied to Singapore citizens.....?

**Prime Minister:** Common disability? No, no, these are fatal words to use, I mean. There is no disability. Common equality you mean.

**Jackie Sam:** For citizens of the Borneo territories -- would apply to Singapore, wouldn't it?

**Prime Minister:** Yes, that's in our merger proposals.

**Jackie Sam:** Could you elaborate, then?

**Prime Minister:**

The proposal now quite clearly is that the Borneo territories want to have some kind of control over migration into Borneo and they can envisage a time when they will want to have, with considerable economic development and expansion, large numbers of skilled workmen coming from the Federation and Singapore into Borneo to help the development, but they don't want people to go there immediately to vote in their elections there and probably outvote the local citizens. So, there will be a certain amount of balance, maintained by everybody voting in the place of their domicile or residence. And that's fair and equal -- the Federation man votes in the Federation, the Singapore man votes in Singapore; and the Sarawak, Brunei, and Borneo men vote in Sarawak, Brunei and Borneo. And if anybody wants to interchange or swap his voting rights, then he qualifies under the voting laws of that particular state where he resides in, or where he has assumed residence.

**Reuter****(David Chipp):**

Sir, no one is surprised at the knowledge and interest of the Soviet Union in this part of the world. Did you find on

this trip in New York and London that there was greater interest in this part of the world than before and understanding and realisation of the importance of what was going on here?

**Mr. Lee:**

Well, that is a question which I have to answer in several parts. First, amongst those who ought to know, you know, delegates, ministers people who have got to deal with this part of the world. I was not surprised at the keen interest, shown not only by the Russians and the Poles, but also by the Afro-Asians, the Tanganyikans, the Syrians, the Ethiopians, the Cambodians, the Indians. They are fully aware of the dangers of things going wrong in South-East Asia, creating situations much more serious than, say, the Laotian crisis. And so it was in London, the ministers who had to deal with Singapore with their officials, are fully alive to the urgency of the problems in South-East Asia, I mean, it's better to meet these problems before there is a 14-nation committee in Geneva to discuss South-East Asia. The English press has been more concerned with Africa. It is and quite naturally, it's the remarkable phenomena of two births a

month -- two independent nations every month regularly born in Africa. And it's unusual in the annals of human history. But in the long term -- in the long run -- after all there's 200 million people in the whole of the African continent, about 100 -- million of which live South of the Sahara, so to speak, the northern half comprising of, we can say -- Egypt, Algeria and so on. Well, they have always been in the news. The southern half has forged itself forward -- Ruanda- Urundi was born a few days ago, next month something else; two years ago Nigeria, one month more another nation, and so on. But, everything said and done, there are 100-million people in what one calls, the lower half of Africa, and do you know, there are near a thousand million Asians, just in South Asia excluding China. If you include China there is a thousand six hundred or near a thousand seven hundred million people. So if you come to decide where the history of the world is going to be decided. I would put my guess more at Asia than Africa in the long run, partly because of the immense role that large numbers of peoples with very ancient and high orders of civilisation will play when they enter the industrial age. It's something like the Middle East but only in a bigger form.

Egypt, UAR, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, the Lebanon. These are people with ancient civilisations with a written history that goes back thousands of years. You get Arnold Toynbee going there and talking about their history which dates back to the pre-Pharaohic age, and these people have rediscovered their souls. They've now got the image before them of the Aswan Dam, for instance, in the UAR -- 17 times bigger than the largest Pyramid; and that vision of great future, bigger than the past, galvanises a whole people into action, and similarly in Asia, for instance the Chinese history of civilisation goes back to over four thousand years, and so does the Indian history of civilisation; and but, for the humidity of the tropics, so would the Indonesian civilisation go back a long way with the old Majapahit Empires of Sri Vijaya Empires and I would have thought that in the long run it's going to be Asia that is really going to be more important and I think the Russians know that.

**Tamil Murasu:** Sir, it was agreed in the Singapore Legislative Assembly that one of the three proposals to be put to the people at the time of the Referendum shall be that merger will be no less

favourable than the Borneo territories. On what terms will the Borneo territories join Malaysia. The people do not know as yet, Sir? Perhaps these forms may be decided in the next six months?

**Mr. Lee:**

I think I disagree with you. You will notice in part of the announcement made in London that all, or nearly all the majority recommendations of the Cobbold Commission have been accepted. Do you remember that phrase? I don't know if you saw the statement. So, you can safely assume that all the majority recommendations of the Cobbold Commission will be accepted and they just by themselves without going into any further details constitute the major framework of the Borneo territories. In other words, if I may put it loosely and broadly, paying special attention to Borneo and Sarawak desires for control of migration and special conditions regarding religion because there is a very strong Christian trend amongst the indigenous peoples there, they would become more like one of the eleven states in the Federation of Malaya. I mean, their reserve powers will be much less than Singapore. They will have reserve powers over migration;

they will have none over education, they won't have any over labour, once the transition period is over. So, if you read the majority recommendations you've got the constitutional framework for the Federation of Malaysia as regards the Borneo territories.

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9th August, 1962

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