

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT NZBC HOUSE ON 11 TH MARCH, 1965.

Interviewer: This is the face of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister Singapore. Mr. Lee, although you yourself were born in Singapore your family originally came from China. How long ago were they settled in Singapore?

Prime Minister: Well, my great grandfather came from China in the last century in the 19th. He went back; but he left his son, my grandfather behind and that is how I am still there. That's about nearly a century I should expect since he first arrived in Singapore.

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Interviewer: You are about third or fourth generation?

Prime Minister: Third generation born in Singapore.

Interviewer: When you were a boy and being brought up in school, did you feel a sense of allegiance to Singapore

or Malaya as your native land, or did you look rather to China?

Prime Minister: I would say Singapore and Malaya then because we were part of the Straits Settlements and the Governor of the Straits Settlements based in Singapore also was the High Commissioner of the Malay States, And China was somewhere from whence my forefathers came.

Interviewer: Would it be true to say that many, if not most, people of Chinese origin in Malaysia today still feel some kind of sense of allegiance to China even if only cultural?

Prime Minister: Oh, I wouldn't put cultural affinity as allegiance. You can broadly divide the five million people of Chinese origin or Chinese stock in Malaysia into two categories; the first-generation immigrants born in China who have come out to make a living and have stayed. and those who are born and bred in Malaysia. The first is a dying group. You know, there is no more migration from China, very strict immigration control now. I wouldn't say

they would be more than 25% of the population. They would still have fond memories of their place of birth and where they grew up. But we are not concerned with them so much.

I mean, the future lies with the young, those who are born and bred in Malaysia. And if we are unable to make them belong, I mean, feel that they've got a stake in the future of China, then there will be a lot of problems in Southeast Asia.

Interviewer: Yes, I wonder whether if there were a clash of internal conflict in this area between China and Malaysia, a good many Chinese must feel a sense of divided

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loyalty.

Prime Minister: That is possible, but I think improbable. Because, as you can see right at this moment, the Chinese Government is supporting confrontation by the Indonesians against Malaysia. And do not think you can find more than five percent hardcore members in

Malayan Communist party and their supporters in Malaysia who are supporting confrontation as against the interests of Malaysia and people of Malaysia, whether they are Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis or Malays, and sooner or later, you know, it is your own interest and not the interests of your distant forefathers, who fairly count. I mean, it is the same with all human beings.

Interviewer: Does the increase in power and influence of the Communist regime in China worry you?

Prime Minister: Yes and no. Yes in the sense that this makes for greater dangers and miscalculation leading to wide conflicts. I mean, miscalculations on the side of

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Americans as to just how far the Chinese would go in backing revolution in Southeast Asia.

And no, in the sense that I do not believe that the Chinese-- if you read their history-- that they would want to conquer physically South and Southeast Asia. They are very big, self-possessed, completely

self-sufficient people with enormous patience. China means, in the Chinese language, the Middle Kingdom. I mean, they were the beginning and end of the world and the outer regions where the people paid tribute to China. And that's the way it should be. You know, elephant tusks and deer's horns from time to time, to the Emperors in Peking. And in return they gave bales of soap and jade and pottery and so on.

I think the problem is not so much Chinese aggression, I mean, the Chinese armed soldier marching down Southeast Asia. If that were to happen the problem would be much simpler because then communism is equated with Chinese imperialism., Then the rest of Asia is bound to gang up and fight this. They are much more subtle and you have got to take them at face value. The believe in revolution. They are going to help revolution as they help revolution in South Vietnam via North Vietnam. There is not one single Chinese soldier in South Vietnam. There never will be, unless there is massive intervention by the Western

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powers which justifies their massive intervention. But, you see, they are able to get proxies to carry the torch of revolution with tremendous fervour and zeal. The question is: are you able to get enough proxies in South and Southeast Asia to carry this light of the liberal, tolerant democratic open society. I believe in it because I think there are enough values of the humanist and intellectual freedoms which people like me, the educated, understand. But the mass of the people don't understand it. They want more food, more clothes, more homes, and a future for their children, And if whilst talking all about this tolerance and liberal values we are at the same time unable to satisfy their more basic, physical urges, then there just are not enough of people like me to stand up and fight. And this is really the problem of Southeast Asia.

Interviewer:

Mr. Lee, may I ask one final question? How highly do you rate today the chances of Federation of Malaysia holding together for say, the next five years?

Prime Minister: I would say, barring accidents, we intend to endure for the next hundred years. But, of course, if we are foolish and unable to contain some of our present irritations and irascibility, then something foolish may happen. I don't think so. I think at the back of all this divergence of views as to how Malaysia is to be run if it is to survive, if it is to become sturdy, you must never forget that we are all agreed that Malaysia means life and death to us.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Mr. Lee.

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