

TRANSCRIPT OF A PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE
PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT
BROADCASTING HOUSE, SINGAPORE, AT 1200 HOURS
ON MONDAY 9TH AUGUST, 1965.

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, after these momentous pronouncements, what most of us of the foreign press would be interested to learn would be your attitude towards Indonesia, particularly in the context of Indonesian confrontation, and how you view to conduct relations with Indonesia in the future as an independent, sovereign nation.

Mr. Lee: I would like to phrase it most carefully because this is a delicate matter. But I think I can express my attitude in this way: We want to be friends with Indonesia. We have always wanted to be friends with Indonesia. We would like to settle any difficulties and differences with Indonesia. But we must survive. We have a right to survive. And, to survive, we must be sure that we cannot be just overrun. You know, invaded by armies or knocked out by rockets, if they have rockets -- which they have, ground-to-air. I'm not sure whether they

have ground-to-ground missiles. And, what I think is also important is we want, in spite of all that has happened -- which I think were largely ideological differences between us and the former Central Government, between us and the Alliance Government -- we want to-operate with them, on the most fair and equal basis. The emphasis is co-operate. We need them to survive. Our water supply comes from Johore. Our trade, 20-odd per cent -- over 20 per cent; I think about 24 per cent -- with Malaya, and about 4 to 5 per cent with Sabah and Sarawak. And we cannot foolishly get into a position where we are confronted, or being confronted, by both sides. In other words, any settlement must be such as will not endanger our survival, mainly capacity to resist invasion and to call on friends, to have friends in readiness to help us if we are invaded. In other words, we must have the capacity to prevent a successful invasion. Bases not to be paid for by us - you know, it comes to about \$400 million a year, and Singapore's annual budget is only about \$120 million. And, secondly, we cannot jeopardise the security of the Federation, because that jeopardises our security. The water will be endangered. So we would like, within the limits

National Archives of Singapore

of our position, we would like to be able to bring about a settlement, both between Indonesia and ourselves, and between Indonesia and Malaysia. I mean, I think a settlement is only possible on that basis. A settlement between Indonesia and ourselves without taking into consideration the security and the future of Malaysia, particularly Johore -- I mean, to put it selfishly, South Malaya -- I think is a very short-sighted approach. But, because this is a -- if I may say so, you've bounced off the first and probably the most delicate of all questions -- I would not like anybody to interpret this as what one would call a carefully-worded policy statement. This is an attitude which stems from a realistic appraisal of our survival needs. Have I answered you?

Questioner: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lee: Does that meet your point?

Questioner: Well, I understand that it's rather early to frame a rather considered policy statement on it, but I was wondering whether you were thinking of any particular approaches to Indonesia in terms of some kind of...

Mr. Lee: Well, well. I would say that first of all Indonesia would have to recognise us as an independent, sovereign nation. I mean, if they consider us a neo-colonialist nation, then how do we begin to get off the ground at all, isn't it? Indonesia must first recognise that Singapore, as proclaimed by myself on behalf of the people and Government of Singapore today is an independent, sovereign nation with a will and a capacity of its own. A strong will, if I may be little immodest about the pride and the stamina of the citizens of Singapore in a capacity which is rather limited. But, nevertheless, within that capacity, and with help of all friends, Commonwealth friends who would help our survival, we intend to survive. And, once they have recognised us, and that we have a will and a capacity of our own, a separate mind of our own and not just puppets or pantomimes of, what-do-they-call, "lackeys of the imperialists" and so on, then I think we can discuss problems. And there are problems which can be resolved.

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, what is the attitude of the Singapore Government to the payroll and the turnover taxes which have been imposed by you?

Mr. Lee: By me?

Question: By the Singapore Government, I mean.

Mr. Lee No, no, no, no. Come, really! You know we fought the ... I mean, this is quite a serious moment, and I think this is a bit unfair to sort of -- you know -- bounce one off me like that. You know the payroll and the turnover taxes were imposed by the then Central Government of Malaysia in December, in the last Budget. And we opposed it strenuously. It is the intention of the Singapore Government to revoke the turnover tax forthwith. And, the payroll tax I think will be revoked as payroll tax, but we may retain some form of tax based --not tax, really contribution based on salary by the employer and the employee for an unemployment insurance scheme. I may also add that there are a few other things which may have to be put right which we disagreed with before and we still

disagree with now. I will be quite frank. I think that we ought to trade with every country in the world that is prepared to leave us alone to be ourselves. Not to subvert us, mind you. I mean, we don't want to be anti-Communist. Nor have we any intention to allow Communists to bring us down. I mean, this is a democratic state. In other words, it is non-Communist and follows democratic procedures. And, that having been said, like Britain we can trade with the world including Russia and China.

Question: And Indonesia?

Mr.Lee: And Indonesia. Surely, if they want to trade with us. And therefore, I in pursuance of this policy, I think we will

National Archives of Singapore

allow the Bank of China to continue. But, on the old terms.

You know, not people being sent into Singapore ostensibly on banking business but probably for other, extra-mural pursuits which may end up with a great deal of unhappiness.

But, using their Singapore staff, of Singapore citizens, who are known not to be security risks: no objection to trade. We welcome trade with everybody.

Question: Does it follow, Mr. Prime Minister, that you will permit the Russians, for instance, and the Chinese to have Consulates here, or trade set-ups?

Mr.Lee Well, I wish to give that more consideration. Let me put my position -- again, this is not a formulation of policy. I will put my position briefly as follows: if the Russians want to set up a rubber-buying mission, which was what they wanted to do before and that was refused by the Internal Security Council which consisted of Britain, the old Malaya, and Singapore -- Britain because you know I think Britain was selling rubber herself from London if they couldn't buy rubber here; Malaya because she honestly believed that Russians would subvert the whole place -- I don't really believe that if the man is a genuinely trade man, and not an intelligence man, one or two Russians coming to inspect rubber can't do much damage because as you know this is primarily an Asian city, and any un-Asian face can easily to detected and surveillance of any untoward activcities is very simple. But of course where surveuillance will be difficult because the thing can be lost ...

for instance, if tomorrow we re-established with Indonesia and suddenly two hundred Indonesians wanted to come. You know, they nearly had a hundred before. A hundred-odd of Consular staff. And, each man had about six or seven members of the family, the cook, the driver, and the whole retinue. That meant 7 or 800 people going around the place. Now, we must be quite sure that they -- that we can safeguard our security. Now if we get that sort of a position where a man can be lost in an Asian scene because he is an Asian, well it complicates matters and naturally security considerations are vital for our survival.

I think the Communists know very well -- Dr. Goh is the Minister for Defence and Security, which is a very important position, and his attitude to subversion from any quarter,

whether by pamphleteering or bombs and grenades and a burst of machine-gun or a bullet, is simply that it will not be allowed. But trade; by all means. In other words, I mean look: let us suppose the Indonesians want to set up a Consulate. I think one or two members we can exchange, to start with. It's quite safe. We must make quite sure, of course. As you know, the Philippines Government refused to

accept General Djatikusumo after what they knew of his record in Singapore and in Kuala Lumpur. And we must be sure of them. And I think really the best solution to all this -- I mean, if they are really sincere, they want trade, for instance China wants to trade with us, I mean we let the Bank of China go on. And they say they want to purchase rubber through Singapore, then there is a well known Chinese rubber merchant, Dato Lee Kong Chian, who had just been to China and they know him, they appoint him the agent and say "you please buy for me rubber, whatever it is." One, or two, I say by all means. But if you suddenly have a large platoon turning up, then the cost of the whole business of security becomes formidable. You know, we've already promised -- well, these discussions were not with me but Dr. Goh held discussions with Dr. Ismail and Tun Razak -- and we've promised that we will carry a fair share of the defence of the whole of the Malaysian area. And to do that, we've got to raise about one brigade. I'm not a military man. Dr. Goh was a former soldier. During the last war he was in the Volunteers, and so on, so he knows all about this. And this is going to cost us money, probably another two or three

National Archives of Singapore

battalions. And that costs money. I mean, one battalion, running-costs, ten-million dollars per annum. Three battalions, thirty-million dollars. To establish Garrison Headquarters and so on, is another ten to fifteen million dollars for each battalion. Similarly, with security, to keep one chap under reasonable observation, to see that he's not up to mischief, you may have to employ about ten fellows. You know, he disappears from A to B, from B to C. I'll give you an example of how Lim Chin Siong used to do it when we were in the Government. He knows he's followed. He comes to a traffic stop in a taxi. Car stops. He gets off the taxi, pays him, hops across the road, gets into the bus. The chap in the taxi is left behind. So chaps are chasing all around, you see, who did he meet and what for? And, for one chap, one key man, you may have as much as 20 people involved.

Well, that's a lot of money, and I think Singapore.....you know us, an economical government because we've got to build a lot of things: schools, hospitals, homes, roads. So we've got to be very careful that we don't increase our security and defence costs more than is necessary. But trade, I say, to the limit.

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, how do you see the future of Singapore's economy? As I understood it, as long as she was in Malaysia there was tendency to move away from commerce towards industry, from the free-port status towards industry, exploitation of the Common Market. Now, presumably....

Mr.Lee: Could you speak louder? I can't hear.

Question: Sorry. I was asking whether the transference...

Mr.Lee: I wonder if you could come forward a little bit?

Question: I'll try and use this microphone. Can you hear me better?

National Archives of Singapore

Mr.Lee: Yes.

Question: I was asking, Sir, whether the question of Singapore transferring her economy from an entrepot free-port economy to one of a more industrial form of State to rely upon the common market which Malaysia was supposed to represent,

whether this tendency in Singapore would now be halted. Or, how you would see the economy developing so that as a sovereign State Singapore could be economically viable?

Mr.Lee: Well, I thought that -- you know, this one I have put it down in writing because I felt this was going to be a very important subject which a lot of investors, merchants, and workers will be interested in. So, I put it down in writing. "The years ahead will require that our two governments work" -- our two governments, Malaysia and Singapore -- "work in the closest co-operation, not just in the defence and security, but also in commerce and industry". And I was greatly relieved when the Tengku told me in my second discussion with him yesterday morning that he appreciated this point. And, he assured me that economic co-operation between our two countries was most necessary if either of us is to survive the pressures from common enemies. I think I'm paraphrasing the Tengku. I think I'm quite safe in that way, but I think he understood what was worrying me, and I think worrying a lot of merchants, investors, industrialists, and so on, that there must be a quid pro quo. I'll give you an example. This is

what Dr. Goh had in mind when he asked this question to be clearly put. Dunlop tyres from Petaling Jaya come to Singapore free. Free entry, we're selling. Bridgestone tyres made in Jurong can't go to the Federation because I think there's a quota restriction. Can't go. You can't get beyond a certain number. Now, in actual purchasing power -- this is not population; I mean, in population they are about 8 million in round figures, we are about two million; we are one-quarter -- but in purchasing power, number of tyres, television sets, motor-cars, and so on, we are 40 per cent, they are 60 per cent. You know, it's about half. So I think that if Dr. Goh feels very strongly about this when he was Minister for Finance and he failed to get any change in attitude, if Dunlop tyres want to come to Singapore, then there must be a quid pro quo. Bridgestone tyres must go to the Federation. We don't want to rush these things. I mean, it'll take time as you can see from the Agreement. There's a clause, we put it all down in writing; this is the Gazette Notification made today -- Extraordinary: "The Parties thereto" -- Article 6 -- "will on and after Singapore Day" -- which means today, or this morning one second after

National Archives of Singapore

midnight -- "co-operate in economic affairs for their mutual benefit and interests, and for this purpose may set up joint committees, committees or councils, as may from time to time be agreed upon". I mean, they are the bigger unit. Let us not pretend. That was the reason why we wanted to go into Malaysia and we thought that the thing must be worked together. But we are 40 per cent of the purchasing power of Malaysia. I mean, 60 per cent is there. Every worker here has got I would say roughly between double to treble the buying capacity of the average -- you know, because there's a large rural area, and this is a highly industrialised and commercialised urban area -- our purchasing power is about two to three times per person that of (average, I mean); between a Singapore worker and a Kuala Lumpur worker, there may not be all that much difference, although there is a difference. I mean, we pay our unskilled workers \$4.55 a day. And, people are washing bottles in Petaling Jaya for \$1.50 a day. So you can see that the purchasing power is three times. So I think there must be these joint committees and just councils, and the thing must be worked out together. And security really depends ... I mean, stability or security of

National Archives of Singapore

Singapore depends upon economic development. And economic development depends upon co-operation.

Question: Would you go so far as to say that perhaps with the situation perhaps clarified by this move today the move towards better interchanges might be speeded up, that things may go little faster rather than slower?

Mr.Lee: Can I again paraphrase the Tengku -- I think it was yesterday morning when he said this. He said this to me when I left. He said, "when you are no longer -- or tomorrow" -- this was yesterday, and he was talking about today -- "when you are no longer in Malaysia and we are no longer quarrelling either in Parliament or in the constituencies, we'll be friends again, and we'll need each other, and we'll co-operate". And it is my earnest desire that this should be so. And, most important of all, that the Tengku's colleagues in charge of these departments and all the officers right down the line will slowly get to understand the Tengku's mind. I mean, it may take some time and I don't think we're going to have a sudden change tomorrow. It will take six months, nine months,

before a thaw sets in. But, there is a nice balance between security and stability. And, there is an inexorable nexus between security and commerce and industry: economic development, jobs, and so on, and if there is no stability..may I put it in another way? I made a note. I think this was important. Yes. "If perchance this were not to happen" -- in other words, economic co-operation, defence co-operation were not to happen. I beg your pardon. If for instance there is defence co-operation but economic co-operation does not keep pace with defence co-operation -- "then, whatever Government Singapore has, whether it is Socialist or otherwise, whether non-Communist or anti-Communist that Government must seek a living for its people by trading with the devil to survive". Even with the devil if he is to survive he has to trade. These are the facts of life. That's what I feel about it. I may be wrong. You might get an anti-Communist Government here that's prepared to see workers unemployed, disaffected, and just keep them down, discontent down, by repression. But you know the PAP We can't do that because we don't believe that it's the final kind of Government in Singapore surviving other than by the gun

National Archives of Singapore

which of course is a very expensive business. If Singapore could have been governed by the gun indefinitely without breaking whoever tries to do it, you know, either financially or militarily, I think it would have been tried -- either by the British before, instead of granting independence and merger, and Malaysia, or I think by us or by the former Central Government. I think everybody understands that. And, we can help Malaysia's development on a fair basis. We don't want all the industries. It's not good for us have all the industries because the impetus to come to Singapore..... You know, last year, the change in the identity cards, the difference, was a nett gain to Singapore of 10,000 persons. 10,000 persons, most of whom are in the age group 20 to 30. Which is about 25 per cent of our populations of that age

National Archives of Singapore
group born 20 to 30 years ago.

Question: And are you going to allow immigration to continue, Mr. Prime Minister?

Mr.Lee: I would say yes. I would say we carry on as usual. Look, why upset things. We've gone on so well so long. We can

prosper. Rubber goes out to Singapore, workers come. Well, they don't get certain benefits, mind you. I mean, social welfare benefits. But, within limits, I mean. They want to come, it doesn't matter. Mind you, I'll put it in another way. Whilst we are not all together happy about having a nett gain of ten thousand. I mean, it's a large figure. In that ten thousand, there are I should imagine -- there must be about 100 to 150 able, trained technocrats, engineers, doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, who made a contribution to us, able men who for various reasons seek an outlet in Singapore, because it's a bigger city and people drift to cities. I say, we lose nothing. And I hope this will go on in a reasonable way. But we can't have a flood. Supposing tomorrow we had 100,000 workers coming down from Johore. We'll have to ask Dr. Toh, who is in charge of immigration now he's come back, I mean Dr. Toh will have to see Dr. Ismail about this because what will happen? We'll have shanty towns going up, all will increase because these chaps for months or years will have adjustment here and there. In other words, the important thing now to survive for them and for us is to face reality and be reasonable to each other.

Question: Could you outline for us the train of events that led to this morning's proclamation?

Mr.Lee: Yes, I'm speaking partly from memory and partly from some notes which I've made which I thought would come. It's bound to crop up. I made it in a hurry. I said, when I first met the Tengku at 12.30 on Saturday morning, I was still not convinced that in spite of everything Dr. Goh had told me because he had been for a few days in discussion with Malaysian ministers, that was, I did not believe that there was no other way. I believed then that I could still convince that Tengku that there were a number of other ways of reducing communal tensions in Malaysia, such as a looser Federation.

You know, even at the time it hard to believe that there was no other was no other way. But, after my talk with the Tengku -- and with the Tengku alone, mind you, the other members, some other ministers who were there, they were in another room. I thought it's better we let our hair down and speak frankly to each other, because their ministers had been talking to Dr. Goh for a few days; now I was meeting the

Tengku for the first time -- after what he told me when we were alone, I realised there was no other way than what he thought was the solution, that we had to leave Malaysia. And, I knew from what he said, and he has an intuition about these matters, that we would all be in for big communal trouble if Singapore or if I and my colleagues insisted in going on with Malaysia as it is. And, I'll be quite frank -- any other kind of Malaysia than a Malaysian Malaysia is unacceptable. You can't get people to accept it. Well, perhaps now with Singapore out, there could be a Malaysia because the process would be much slower, will be much more gradual. The impetus of a highly urbanised and a politically sophisticated city and 2 million people in it maybe set a pace which was too -- well, which they thought was too fierce, but too rapid.

I didn't think so myself, but -- because this.....unless a stand was taken about all these outpourings every day in the Jawi newspapers, I mean, everything would be lost. But I mean, that's all over and done with. We don't want to raise the matter. 'Utusan' can come on and sell in Singapore. I don't mind so long as we don't have any trouble. Let it go on.

We've got to be reasonable. But I would say that the Tengku

convinced me and he told me that he could not go on holding the situation much longer and that he could see real trouble in Malaysia if Singapore continues to be in it. Well, I met the Tengku again yesterday morning because a number of my colleagues felt very strongly against this. And, I told the Tengku so. And everybody knows that a good they feel passionately about what they consider to be their homeland. I mean, they came, they settled here, they got jobs, they became Singapore citizens, they have become Singapore Ministers. They are basically Malaysians, or Malayans. I think Dr. Toh who is Chairman of the -- who was Chairman of the Solidarity Convention would not have signed, and I told the Tengku so, unless the Tengku convinced him that there was no other way. And so I think -- I don't know whether Dr. Toh was to disclose; I think he will have to disclose this letter eventually, but the Tengku put it very simply to him that there was no other way, and that there will be a great deal of trouble if we insisted on going on. And I would like to add one... You see, this is a moment of ... everytime we look back on this moment when we signed this agreement which severed Singapore from Malaysia, it will be a moment of anguish. For me, it is a moment of anguish

because all my life.... you see, the whole of my adult life.... I have believed in Merger and the unity of these two territories. You know, it's a people, connected by geography, economics, and ties of kinship..... Would you mind if we stop for a while.

(RECORDING WAS STOPPED FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO REGAIN HIS COMPOSURE)

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, now that Singapore is a sovereign State, I take it that your Government will be applying for her admission to the United Nations, and sending diplomatic representatives abroad. Could tell us something about that: Where you are likely to send the representatives?

Prime Minister: Well, we have not given this matter very detailed consideration: it has happened in the last few days, and Mr. Rajaratnam is probably in Seremban and other places,... going around the branches explaining this. I will have to wait for him to come back and I think the cabinet has got to sit down and think it out. There are financial limitations for a country of two million people even though our per capital

income is high compared to the rest of Asia. But I would say off-hand, straightaway: I think once we have established our position... As I told you, I have written to these Prime Ministers whom I know personally, and I have informed the Consular Corps to tell their governments -- and off-hand I would say India, perhaps Pakistan. I am not sure whether we can afford ..to have two missions for India and Pakistan. I would say Burma, Rangoon and to cover probably Bangkok at the same time; the one in India may have to cover Ceylon. The one in Cambodia -- in Phnom Penh -- to cover Laos. I hope one in Japan because we are having more and more trade and industrial exchange. Then of course, our Commonwealth links: with Britain ... I am not sure whether we can afford Canberra and New Zealand, but if the Australian Government is ... I do not know what the cost of a mission in Canberra is, but I hope perhaps the one in Canberra to cover Canberra and Wellington, and the one in New York for the U.N. to cover Canada and perhaps the United States. One of the most important of the list, of course, is as I mentioned earlier Cairo and Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa will cover all the African territories. I do not know what the attitude of the

communist countries will be. If they are prepared to acknowledge facts as facts -- that I have got the right to survive, Singapore has the right to survive, has the right to call on help from anybody in order that it shall live and not be eaten up by its neighbours and that it can have bases -- then I see no reason why we cannot have trade and consular exchanges with some of the Eastern European countries. We might get some of the Eastern European countries to trade with us; Russia, China to trade. But mind you, nothing must be done.... You have seen the Agreement: We will do nothing and enter into no treaty which in any way jeopardises our defence arrangements. That is basic and fundamental. Without that, I do not think, we will last long. If we try to be clever and play both sides one against the other, if Djakarta is able to come to terms on an honourable basis -- that we are not stooges and lackeys of the imperialists -- then Djakarta.... We had a trade mission there before.

Question: Would you include South Africa in this and also have trade with South Africa?

Prime Minister: You know the position .. By the time a professedly right-wing Government in Kuala Lumpur wanting to get acceptance as an Afro-Asian country makes these postures of banning on South African goods, closing the South African Consulate few days before the Algiers Conference, do you think we who feel very strongly about these things, do you think we can tolerate it? Let us be frank

Question: What would be your attitude, Mr. Prime Minister, to having the TASS correspondent and the TANJUG correspondent based here?

Prime Minister: Well, you saw my two questions in Parliament which I put for today's sitting, but which

National Archives of Singapore

Question: Would you like to answer them...?

Prime Minister: .. will never be asked now because I am no longer a member of Parliament ... From the Proclamation, it is finished... As far as I am concerned, this is their business. I cannot afford to say anything now. But I will say, on principle, TASS,

TANJUG by all means. I met the TASS correspondent -- I think his name was Severi in Bangkok. All right, so he can go around snooping in Singapore and cause a revolution. The man looks so obviously....He stands out . . . you do not even have to have half chap to go and find out what he is doing. Provided of course, he is not a professional intelligence man which I do not think he is, what is the harm? TANJUG man: they had a man who covered for Phnom Penh -- I have forgotten his name -- he came here once on a short visit in the old days. And I knew their former Ambassador, Yugoslav Ambassador to Djakarta, Mr. Bebelov. He is a communist. But the Russians used to treat them with some distance. The Chinese and the other Eastern Asian group of Communist States say that they are traitors, "revisionists". I do not see him going around stirring up Lee Siew Choh. I do not think he is going to stir Lee Siew Choh. Lee Siew Choh might get very angry with him. What is the harm? And perhaps, if they are here reporting what is happening, we will have a better image of ourselves in these countries and, as a result of their Government knowing about these places, they won't think that I am Mr. Harold Wilson's friend, personal friend and

Arthur Bottomley's personal friend ... We are all colleagues in a democratic socialist movement, and I have spoken in British Labour Party election rallies in the old days when I was a student. Does that make me a stooge? Wilson is a stooge of the Americans, I am a friend of Wilson, so I am a stooge? You come here and see. What do I lose? Nothing. Well, of course, if they are going to send chaps here and start newspapers and other things not connected with reporting ... Just observing, reporting, buying, selling, I say we welcome everybody. But meddling and influencing the internal course of events .. I do not mind their influencing their own countries' attitude to us, but not influencing our people's affairs.

Question: This may be too hasty, but would you be considering seeking admission into the Afro-Asian Conference in November ..?

Prime Minister: What else? Are we to be outcasts? Surely we are not. And I would imagine that all the heads of Government and heads of State and Governments that I have met in Africa, in Asia will know that I am not a stooge. If I am a stooge, then you tell

me I may be offensive to somebody, but ... Let us compare the attitude of the Singapore Government -- the position, the policy with that of Nigeria or Uganda or Kenya .. There is, I would say, rapport between quite a number of these countries and us; and there is no difference basically in attitudes between Prince Sihanouk and myself. He wants to survive, he wants Cambodia to survive, I want my own people to survive. He has got bigger neighbours; I have got bigger neighbours. I think we understand each other. But his neighbours are slightly different from ours. He has got five million people and a relatively large piece of territory; I have got now -- I did not want this -- but I have got it now, 214 square miles which we intend to expand as much as we can by reclamation, the adjacent islands and so on. And there is no hope of survival if I do not have people who are friends, who are prepared whatever their reason -- they may be selfish reasons, that is irrelevant to me so long as I am not playing stooge to them -- but they ensure my survival, I say I have the right to have them with me. And I say the British Labour Government is my friend, openly. As I said this today to the Deputy, or the Action Deputy -- I do not know whether he is

National Archives of Singapore

acting or what the position is -- Mr. Mills ...I have told him to tell this to Mr. Bottomley and Mr. Wilson: how sorry I am that this had to be. I met Mr. Bottomley last when he came through here -- I cannot remember now... May; and we discussed, we agreed with each other that however difficult, there is a better chance of long-term survival --I am thinking in terms of 20, 30, 40, 50 years, not in terms of the next election -- if we held together and adjusted. And he was quite prepared to do his utmost to help in anyway he can; but the help is limited. We are an independent country now.

Malaysia is an independent country and Britain may help the Tengku, but the Tengku is independent. He does what he likes, and we have reached this agreement between ourselves

... It is the wish of the two elected governments ... What else

can be done about it? I am sorry that, against our own

analysis of what is good, this had to happen. I am very sorry

because I could not tell Mr. Bottomley although he has so

much at stake ... with all their heavy expenditure helping us ...

that I was not able to tell him before the event. I sent him off

a cable. But by the time it is decoded ... It was sent before

the event, but by the time it is decoded it is already after the

event. I also told Mr. Menzies and to Australia and New Zealand. But again it is coded, and by the time they decode it, they will have probably heard from their own offices here.

Question: When were the messages sent, Sir?

Prime Minister: Last night or early this morning: I cannot remember. I had dictated very brief, succinct once because there were about one to two dozen countries I was cabling to: Heads of state who personally knew me and whom I personally knew ... And the process of coding and so on

Question: At this stage, can you say what your Government's attitude will be towards South Vietnam, and the situation in Vietnam?

Prime Minister: South Vietnam? You know this is the most difficult situation... And I chose my words most carefully when I went to Bombay and I stand by that. I do not want to paraphrase it now because if I paraphrase it wrongly, people may think I have shifted my position. But that was a scripted piece. I scripted that passage and I think if you like, after this, we will get the passage and I say we stand by that.

Question: Mr. Prime Minister, could you at this stage say something about having a separate currency and a state bank for Singapore?

Prime Minister: Can I put it this way: we would like to have as little change as possible in everything: movement of goods, of people, currency ... Utusan Melayu ... Let it carry on. And I will say this: in the end, sometimes history takes many devious turns; just as a river loops and bends around mountains and valleys before it reaches the sea, so the history of a people takes many loops and bends before it reaches its destiny. And I say the nexus between Singapore and Malaya, geographical privilege to have brought about merger through Malaysia; to have helped the Tengku bring this about. It was Malaysia with Singapore in it, prosper and flourish as the states and the different races in Malaysia drew closer and closer together. But somebody else will do it. I am quite sure of it. I cannot do it. Nobody in Singapore at this present moment and for the next five may be ten years, can ever persuade Singapore to go back into Malaysia after our experience. But somebody will

do it one day, perhaps in a different form, under different circumstances.

I would like finally, if I may, just to speak not to you but really to the people of Singapore. I have been so busy in the last few days, I haven't had the time to compose my thoughts in writing to tell you what it is all about and why what has happened has happened.

There is nothing to be worried about it. Many things will go on just as usual. But be firm, be calm.

We are going to have a multi-racial nation in Singapore. We will set the example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everybody will

have his place: equal; language, culture, religion. And we will carry on helping the Malays as we promised to do

in competition with UMNO. We will still do it even though we know now that UNMO cannot compete with us because they are obviously unable to do anything. They have let down ... well, they are out. But we will still do it.

And I ask the Malays: don't worry. This was the Government that believed in multi-racialism and brought Singapore away from chauvinism into multi-racialism. Pity they turned out that; we could not achieve multi-racialism and integration in Malaysia. But we will achieve it in Singapore. We have all learnt our lessons.

Tomorrow, or perhaps day after tomorrow -- I am not sure whether I will have the time tomorrow -- I will compose my thoughts and I will tell you first what happened; why it happened; why what has happened will not change our security. The bases will be there, your protection will be there, co-operation in defence, security will be there and the water agreement is firm and solid, and guaranteed. And we will work together.

National Archives of Singapore

And finally, let us, really Singaporeans -- I cannot call myself a Malaysian now -- we unite, regardless of race, language, religion, culture.

11th August, 1965.