

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS (SLIGHTLY EDITED) WHEN  
SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIAN PAP LEADERS MET FOLLOWED BY  
A PRESS CONFERENCE AT CABINET OFFICE, CITY HALL, ON  
12TH AUGUST, 1965.

Dr. Toh Chin Chye:

Well, gentlemen, I am sorry to have kept you all waiting.

This meeting has been called to let everybody in Malaysia know publicly that PAP Singapore is now out of the political arena in Malaysia, and PAP branches which have been left in Malaysia will be organising themselves independently of us, and in so far as the relationship PAP Malaya with PAP Singapore is concerned, we are fraternal parties like socialist parties all over the world are fraternal parties. PAP Singapore is one of the many socialist parties, and PAP Malaya will follow the same ideals and objectives that have been written into our constitution. The political manifesto of PAP Singapore and that of PAP Malaya is virtually identical.

I do not wish to speak now on behalf of my ex-comrades in Malaya but who are still, I would say, fellow brethren. On the other hand I would just like to

say a few words concerning our previous happy association with our ex-comrades in Malaya. I must add that it has been very largely through the leadership of those whom you see present in this conference room tonight that we have been able to establish contact in Malaya during the elections in 1964.

Mr. Rajaratnam and I went down first to Malaya on the eve of the General Elections to lay the ground and to look for people who believe in the same objectives as we have. And I am very proud indeed that inspite of the difficulties and strains and stresses which we have gone through, our ex-colleagues in Malaya have stood firmly with us through thick and thin. When Singapore was evicted out of Malaysia, we sent members of the Central Executive Committee to the various branches to explain to them the reasons and after the initial shock had disappeared, their spirits rallied together, and I am glad indeed that they have promised to re-organise themselves and proceed with their struggle for achieving a Malaysian Malaysia.

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As far as PAP Singapore is concerned, PAP Malaya will now act independently of us, but that does not mean that our friendship has also severed. Far from it. We would like to be frank and need to organising itself. Here I may point to the distinction which must be made that in this sense we are not -- we do not intend to interfere as a Government in the political life of Malaysia. Far from it. Just as much as we have had Australian Labour Party's representatives

visiting us in Singapore, and we ourselves do not consider that as interference in our internal affairs, so also I hope that the Malaysian Government will not in any way believe that maintaining our friendship with PAP Malaya means that we are interfering with their internal affairs. Parties with the same political beliefs and ideologies must always have ties, and this is a tie which we have established not only with PAP Malaya, but which we have established with so many people whom we have met and to whom we have talked in Malaya.

And I would pass the microphone on to Mr. Devan Nair the only PAP Malaya member now represented in Parliament and who will from now onwards act as a spokesman. He will be responsible for re-organising PAP Malaya.

Mr. Devan Nair:

Gentlemen, when I arrived in Singapore this morning I had occasion to speak to some newsmen who met me at the airport and I told them that it was one of the supreme ironies of my experience that I should be visiting Singapore today as a foreigner, and that it was very discomfoting to find that I was married to a foreigner and that my children are all foreigners.

One of the responsibilities of the PAP Malaya will be to bring about a political climate in Malaya which will make possible the return into Malaysia of

Singapore on equitable terms. The PAP Malaya will not maintain any organic links with the PAP Singapore. Our links will be more of a spiritual fraternal character. We shall act as an independent organisation, and our objectives will be to bring about the creation of a free, democratic, non-communist and non-communal Malaysia, based on the Principles and ideals which have already been enunciated by the Malaysian solidarity Convention; in other words; for a Malaya in which differences of race, language, religion or culture will not stand in the way of the unity of all Malaysian, and I am certain that the logic of geography, history, economics and also the logic of political correctness will see us through the coming years and bring us to the realisation of the ideals of a Malaysian Malaysia.

The PAP in Malaya cannot accept the ejection of Singapore, because let us face it, what has happened is certain extremist politicians in Malaysia have manipulated -- manoeuvred -- a situation in which there was no alternative but for the PAP to be ejected from Malaysia and to accept that ejection of Singapore from Malaysia. We think it is supremely illogical that such a situation should have been brought about. We think that the forces of irrationality -- political irrationality preponderated and led to this situation being brought about, and it will be part of our responsibility as a political party in Malaya -- in Malaysia-- as

I said earlier to bring about a climate -- a political climate -- suitable to the ultimate re-unification of Singapore with Malaya. Thank you.

Question by Foreign Correspondents:

Q: Have you any idea how long this may take to re-establish this climate?

Devan Nair:

I fear that the determination of the suitable climate will not entirely be in our hands, but the desire and intention of the PAP to help bring about this climate is there and we hope that the stage is now set or will be set so that Malaya can go through a phase of greater liberality and flexibility.

Q: Will you be making your home in Malaya?

Devan Nair:

I am afraid there is no alternative but for me to make my home in K.L. and as I said, you know, Singapore -- it's like to visit a foreign country today.

Q: (Unintelligible)

Devan Nair:

I cannot tell you what is happening right now in the minds of the Malaysian Government leaders. We hope that the Malaysian as a Government of a country which professes belief and acceptance of the principles of parliamentary democracy. If they do bring obstacles in the way, we are not going to be depressed or demoralised. We in the PAP are used to facing obstacles and to overcoming them.

Q: (Unintelligible)

Devan Nair:

I think that nothing will grieve more in this situation than the fact that I will have to relinquish my leadership of the Singapore N.T.U.C. But I think over the past few years the labour movement in Singapore has been able to build itself up as a powerful and influential organisation which is capable of sustaining itself and generating itself, and that there are enough able, intelligent and dedicated leaders in the labour movement to keep it going.

Q: (Unintelligible)

Devan Nair:

I didn't believe that will happen at all. The rank and file of the organised workers in Singapore are quite definitely with the N.T.U.C. and I believe that the loyalty of the workers of Singapore to the N.T.U.C. is not based primarily on an individual but because of their appreciation of what the N.T.U.C. stands for. I am not in the least depressed about the future of the N.T.U.C. simply because I know that the N.T.U.C. is in the fortunate position of operating in a country which has got the best and most advanced labour legislation anywhere in South East Asia, and the Government in the State of Singapore which is essentially pro-labour in its orientation. And I am quite certain that there are enough leaders in the N.T.U.C. who will exploit that situation to their best advantage.

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Q: (Unintelligible)

Devan Nair:

Well, our intention is of course to expand and not to constrict ourselves; but how rapidly we do it will depend upon the capacity which we have from our

members there which we will obtain from them, and also on the nature of the obstacles which might be placed in our way, but whatever happens we don't intend to be brushed out or scrubbed out.

Q: (Unintelligible)

Devan Nair:

We will be an autonomous and independent political organisation. We will not for instance be taking instructions from the Singapore PAP. We will have to evolve our own policies and programmes in the light of the situation which exists in Malaysia and in the light of the objectives of our party. And our links with Singapore PAP will not be organic links but more as I said spiritual and fraternal links -- the same kind of links which we will have as a socialist party with fraternal democratic socialist parties in other parts of the world.

Q: Could you give us some idea of the strength of the PAP in the Federation?

Devan Nair:

We have branches in Penang, in Selangor, in Malacca, Seremban and one will possibly be set up soon in Johore Bahru. But what has encouraged me in the last few days has been the enormous fund of goodwill and support which exists for the PAP and for its programmes and policies among the people in the main centres of Malaya.

Mr. Lee Kuan Yew (Prime Minister) :

Well, gentlemen, for me this is a kind of au revoir to the PAP Malaysia. I am not saying this is goodbye because I don't believe this is goodbye. As I said geography, history and demography will bring it together again. It was not our good fortune to have done it. We did it but it was not our good fortune to make it succeed. I think others will succeed where we have not.

As from Monday I no longer give instructions from the Central Executive Committee of the PAP. As you know, it is constitutionally prohibited in Malaysia for any non-Malaysian citizen to speak in Malaysia, but it is vice versa, they can come and speak here. We don't mind. But it is by law prohibited. In other words, none of my colleagues in the Central Executive Committee with the exception of Devan Nair who is now only a fraternal colleague -- I mean he is a foreigner now -- none of us can speak there. But I

like to say we have no objections to anybody from UMNO. Malaya or MCA Malaysia or MIC Malaysia coming to Singapore to speak and we will give them full TV and Radio cover. We believe that in the end it will come together again, and the end is not so very far away.

You know, Singapore is the cockpit of a big power conflict between East and West. It is the hub of South East Asia, and you cannot legislate bonds of love and kinship just by two proclamations and new laws. We feel one people although we will now soon carry different passports.

To my former colleagues, to my friends, in Malaysia who under very difficult and under very different circumstances came out and took a stand ... Dr. Chen (Seremban), our Secretary, put me up knowing that it would incur official displeasure; Mr. Goh Hock Guan, our Secretary in Kuala Lumpur, architect, knowing that his plans may be delayed and that he wouldn't be required for any more future monuments. He designed the National Mosque. Am I right? (A Palace). Yes, Palace. Dr. Tu, medical practitioner who is also a member of the Chinese Board of Management of Chinese Schools of Malaysia ... Zain Azahari, you know is a lawyer -- lawyers are vulnerable -- and the pressure on him over the last one and a half years -- telephone calls, cater to the Malays, because he believes that this was the way out. He never flinched. I am glad that they now know. It is no use trying. He will not flinch. He will go on.

I don't want to speak about Devan Nair because I feel too strongly about him.

Dr. Seevaratnam (Seremban) gave up a lucrative medical practice -- half his practice in the afternoon, got a locum in order to build up PAP Seremban. He didn't do it for money.

Mr. Michael Kong, he is just a small businessman, sells sports goods amongst other things, put me up in Malacca, every time. He is Chairman of our branch, in Mr. Tan Siew Sin's home town; he is incurring official displeasure. And he did. And they will find out in Malacca that he is not a quitter. There are so many others around us today. I don't want to go through all their names. It is a bit painful. People who organised on the ground, people who marshalled the crowds and build up the growing corps of men. Well, now it's got nothing to do with me -- can't because it is against the law. And this is the end of a phase.

And I say it is the beginning of a new one.

I will answer a few questions, and I think I have had enough. It has been a very difficult few days, not difficult because the work was hard but because it is hard to let these things happen without feeling for it. Three questions...

Q: Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, I believe that Dr. Subandrio has said in Jakarta that, as far as Indonesia was concerned, their "Crush Malaysia" plan must still go on. In respect of the rather confused thinking we all have on Singapore's could you please give us some idea of your views on this; and how it will affect your ambition or your hopes to get back into a country which the Indonesians are still trying to crush?

Mr. Lee:

I think it is a very long question, that one . But if I could answer it very briefly: the first point I think that Dr. Subandrio said the "Crush Malaysia" policy. He did not say the "Crush Singapore" policy. I think that is a significant omission, and not accidental.

How we are to get back into Malaysia? I think it is very difficult question to answer at this moment. It will be a long and arduous task for Deva, Seeva,

Michael Kong, Zain, Too Shee Choe, Goh Hock Kuan and all the others.

But, it is our hope that we shall eventually, have a reunited Malaysia in which Singapore is part of Malaysia; not on the last terms. This business of twisting arms whenever they do not get their way: well, I do not think Singapore will take it any more. But, I hope, in the end we will convince our Indonesian

neighbours that they have to live in peace with us because it is the best thing for them and for us. We do not intend to be swallowed up by anybody.

Q: It was reported in Djakarta that you should go ... (Inaudible) ... do you have any plans?

Mr. Lee: I should go where?

Q: .... to Djakarta ...

Mr. Lee: I should go to Djakarta ...?

Q: It was reported in Indonesia .... the Indonesian press....

Mr. Lee:

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I am not even recognised yet ... Officially, how do I go to Djakarta? First of all, Let them acknowledge that we are a sovereign nation; not what they call a lackey of the imperialists. Why should they want to talk to me if they think I am a lackey of the imperialists? They had better talk to the British, the Americans and the Australians and New Zealanders. But if they believe that my voice is not the voice of Mr. Harold Wilson or Mr. Menzies or Mr. Holyoake -- I am not

saying Mr. Harold Wilsons has not got a good voice, or Mr. Menzies ... He has got a tremendous power and great timbre in his voice -- But I just happen to be a different voice, and to have a different mind. And when Djakarta recognised that and says, "Yes, We are a separate entity, an international person", then I will meet them anywhere in the world. We will go to the ends of the world to meet them and bring peace to South-East Asia. What have we got to gain by conflict?

Q: Would you say a word, Sir, about the future of Sarawak and Sabah? The other states of the Malaysian Federation?

Mr. Lee:

Now it is up to Devan and the others to set up the branches and to help mobilise opinion in Sabah and Sarawak. But if I were a Malaysian in Sabah or Sarawak with the 1,000-mile frontier with Indonesia, and bearing in mind the somewhat lack of the creature comforts of life in Indonesia, I would be a little bit chary of cutting adrift from Malaya or from Malaysia because cutting adrift means that very soon, they will be with President Sukarno. He is a great orator; he enthuses people; he inspires them. But eating corn and fighting for the liberation of East New Guinea is not the kind of proposition which I would find

attractive if I were a Malaysian in Sabah or Sarawak. But I do not know. It is up to them to decide. I should hardly think that that is a worthwhile proposition.

Q: Sir, one of the arguments for the formation of Malaysia was that Singapore might become an Asian Cuba. Is the situation still the same or how it is different ....?

Mr. Lee:

Sometimes, history is a long and devious process. I must confess I never imagined that the communists could have been so stupid. Otherwise, we would not be alive. I ever believed that they would openly identify themselves with Indonesian terrorists and infiltrators and paratroopers, and expose themselves -- these are their phrases, their lines --expose themselves in the eyes of the people as enemies of the people; traitors who lead Indonesian terrorists and paratroopers to destroy, maim, injure their own countrymen.

You saw what happened in Hong Lim. We lost Hong Lim three times running. In 1961, Mr. Ong Eng Guan, the former Mayor won. We, as the expression goes, bit the dust. In 1962, in the Referendum for merger, Hong Lim had a high percentage of blank votes; in 1963, in the General Elections, Mr. Ong

Eng Guan, for no apparent rhyme or reason--but I am quite sure there was some very good reasons of a very cogent and probably attractive character---resigned suddenly, leaving the contest between Barisan and us in which Mr. Ong Eng Guan and the whole weight of the Alliance was pitted against us.

Singapore will always have to be grateful to the people of Hong Lim. If we had lost Hong Lim, I think the course of history would have been different. They wanted to make us lose; to cut us down to size. They could not beat us, but they could get the communists to cut us down to size; and having cut us down to size, then "kaput".

Well, they were wrong. Singapore is a virile, vigorous, resilient place, a place with very determined people and highly conscious in political affairs. And they know the nexus between politics and economics. And we won 60 percent -- in a place where we lost. Do you believe Barisan or any other communist front can come back and bluff the people, and say that they represent the masses and we are oppressors of the masses when they are leading the Indonesian infiltrators into the country? Who put the bomb on the bicycle outside the US Consulate? An Indonesian knows which is the US Consulate? I do not know who put it there. But I know that this is the US Consulate, and when the bomb explodes, that this

is the anger of the people! Well, the bomb didn't explode, and now with us in charge of defence and security, I give them fair notice: don't try.

If they resort to this kind of terrorism, helping the enemy destroy us, then I say they must be prepared for the consequences. But I think Singapore has had enough of them. Singapore has seen what they stood for; Singapore knows what is at stake.

The thing that really grieves me is this: that whilst two million people in Singapore rejoice because the stuffiness ... the shroud that made them feel stuffy in Malaysia is over and fresh air has blown through, we have, in effect, let down or made it more difficult for eight to nine million of our brethren in the other states of Malaysia. That is why I am sad. I am not sad because of Singapore. We will work harder; we will make better progress. I have no doubts about it. But I am sad because we have made it harder for our friends, That is the pity of it all.

Q: Mr. Prime Minister, just one more question. Will Singapore be Republic? You said in your Malay speech...,

Mr. Lee:

Yes, the Malay reporter ... I think it is Utusan Melayu ... First of all, may I say I am going to allow Utusan Melayu to carry on, I am not going to stop it. I am not going to ban it. It is going to carry on. But unlike before, when it contravenes the law, it will have to answer in a court of law: evidence under the Sedition Ordinance which provided that if you are inciting people of one race against another on the basis of religion or language or race, then it is sedition. And you can go to jail for as long as 12 years.

The editor in Kuala Lumpur cannot go to jail. But there is an editor here. Every newspaper has an editor here, and he is registered. The publisher here is also registered. And I have told them they can carry on, but they must follow the law.

Do you know what happened after 1963? They thought they were the law; so these things ... But this man thought he would ask a funny question ... "We have a Sultan?" sort of question. Well, we never had a Sultan in Singapore; not even when Stamford Raffles came here. There was a fishing village here; there was no Sultan. There was a Temenggong living somewhere in Johore exercising a vague kind of sovereignty over Singapore, and for a mess of pottage, he sold it to Stamford Raffles. There never has been a Malay Sultan; there are no Chinese kings or emperors in Singapore; there are no Indian maharajahs;

and we do not propose to have them. It is simple as that. Therefore, it is a Republic. We will have ....

Q: You will have a President in the normal ...

Mr. Lee:

No, we will have a Head of State. The Yang di-Pertuan Negara will be the Head of State with fairly considerable powers. He already is now, because all the powers in the Agong are invested in him; and there will be an elected Government which will have to answer to the people at regular intervals. And my colleagues and I will answer to the people at the appointed time, which is at the latest three months after September 1968. September 21st 1968, our term of office expires, and General Elections must be held 3 months thereafter. And I guarantee you, I give you my word and the word of my colleagues that we never run away from the people.

Q: But will you make an official declaration of this problem that you are working out?

Mr. Lee:

These things are very intricate matters of phraseology and so on, and we are getting a group of lawyers in fact. If I could just sort of by way of ... this is just being formulated. The Chief Justice of Singapore is going to Sydney for a conference of Chief Justices and lawyers. And I've asked him yesterday to see if he could get a group of Commonwealth Chief Justices together with our own legal luminaries or our own jurists to recommend to the Government a constitution which will ensure that democratic practices prevail; that everybody has got his rights guaranteed whether he is Malay, Tamil, Sikh, Ceylonese, Eurasian, Chinese -- whatever he may be. They will all be equal Singaporeans; and guaranteed with constitutional processes to establish those rights. It will be completely apolitical ... But there will be one proviso -- that the Communists will not be allowed to abuse the democratic processes to establish an undemocratic state. That is the only proviso I will put and I've told the Chief Justice that that is absolutely necessary.

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I mean, Dr. Lee Siew Choh you know, he can go along ... I read with some amusement at ... The Tengku said Mr. Devan Nair could stay around in Parliament because he is quite an interesting follow. I hope the Tengku will find Mr. Devan Nair more and more interesting.

But I will tell you this: that I think Dr. Lee Siew Choh -- he is an asset, you know to democratic practices in Singapore because he is a pro pseudo-Marxist. You know, he tries to be a Marxist Leninist. But he really doesn't know what it is all about. From time to time, he's got to take instructions; and the moment the situation changes, he doesn't know what to say, so new instructions have to be given.

But I would like to tell the people who give him these instructions that for them, there are no -- I repeat -- no avenues for undermining the democratic state; we are not going to allow it. Dr. Lee Siew Choh rampaging around, and shouting and screaming his head off is all right. He can go back to Rochore and meet my colleague, Dr. Toh and I. I am quite sure Dr. Toh can look after himself and the PAP.

Q: Mr. Lee, do you think that there will be a new Constitution?

Mr. Lee.

No, no, not a new constitution. The constitution will remain more or less the same. But I want certain built-in safeguards: one, for minorities -- Indians ... Tamils, Sikhs, Punjabis, Pakistanese. Malays build in provisions to ensure that any elected Government must continue the policy of the PAP Government to

raise the economic and education levels of the Malays. I cannot promise you that the PAP will be in power for ever and ever. I can't promise you that I will be alive for ever and ever . But I can promise you that as long as my colleagues are in charge, we will do these things. And I want to add to this Constitution certain safeguards which will make it necessary -- whatever party comes into power-- to honour and respect minority rights. This is a multi-racial nation. This is not a Malay nation which some people tried to make it, and this is not a Chinese nation.

Whatever happens, if my colleagues are not in office, if another non-Communist party -- not a Communist party or a Communist front party -- if another non-Communist party or an anti-Communist party beats us in the elections, they take over, they must honour these special provisions to protect those who otherwise, because of difference of race, language, culture and so on -

- may be swamped.

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We went through this. You see, Singapore had the unique experience of now knowing what it is to have a group where the Army and the Police trying to have one voice. We now know what it meant. We fought it and we would have gone on fighting it. And I want to make sure that even after we are dead and gone -- as we must one day ... there will be more than one voice in Singapore at

any one time. Therefore, I am hoping that my Chief Justice will be able to persuade some of the Commonwealth Chief Justices like Sir Garfield Barwick who is not only a lawyer of some great eminence but also a man versed in the affairs of politics and the affairs of nations. The Chief Justice of India I hope.

I don't know, I have left it with him; he's meeting them all but I want these safeguards built in. And if these safeguards are broken, then the Army or whoever is the supreme authority -- the Police will be told that there must be new elections. It is as simple as that.

We are going to build up a system in which nobody can come in and say 'One Voice'. Nobody can say "satu bangsa, satu bahasa, satu agama". You know what that means? Once race, one language, one religion. I tell these people, "Look, better see the optician; and, having seen the optician better go and see the ear specialist". Because if you go to any coffee-shop, you will hear more than one language. That is what we are trying to do.

I hope we will sort of be a little beacon -- a small beacon, but I hope a bright one for Malaysia.