

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, TO MR. NEVILLE PETERSON
OF THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION ON 12TH
AUGUST, 1965, AND RECORDED ON THE SAME DAY AT THE STUDIOS
OF TELEVISION SINGAPORE.

Mr. Peterson: Sir, there is a belief in Australia that Indonesia can hardly be blamed for what has taken place in Malaysia. Yet, in Jakarta, they are hailing your secession as a victory in the "Crush Malaysia" campaign. What do you think about it?

Mr. Lee: What other victories can they claim? Their "Crush Malaysia" campaign was to crush Malaysia by breaking Sabah and Sarawak. They never objected to Singapore and Malaya, but
National Archives of Singapore
I mean, if you were the Indonesians, you would want to claim it as a victory, wouldn't you?

Mr. Peterson: What effect do you think Indonesia has had on the eventual break between the two of you? Are they in any way responsible?

Mr. Lee: Nothing whatsoever. It is just six men, six wild men, ultras who caused this. They squeezed the Tengku; and last year after the riots, I told the Tengku it was all up to him: anything he said. He should have smacked Ja'afar Albar down then. He waited one year: it is one year too late.

Mr. Peterson: Sir, you and your Government, of course, are very unhappy about what has taken place. What do you feel the people of Singapore feel about this? I am told there is quite a feeling of happiness, of rejoicing, that things might improve for them?

Mr. Lee: Well, like in all democracies, there is a difference in the thinking between the people who are concerned intimately with these problems and those who sort of look at politics in the daily newspapers at a glance and turn over to the sports page and the racing page. For them, as you know, there is jubilation because they were getting fed-up to the teeth with all this. But for us who are calculating in terms of fifty, or if not fifty at least twenty, thirty years, we know it was not the best way out ... I mean, looser federation ... you know, de-clutching for a while, taking the gears apart and stopping this

mad scream every day, this shrill cry based on "One race, one language, one religion" in the Jawi Press, You know the Arabic script ... Just stop that; and to stop that, you have got to smack down six wild men. One has been smacked down and I hope the other five are smacked down, Otherwise ... You see, the worst thing about it is this: true, I owe a primary responsibility to two million people in Singapore; but, you know, we represented a spark of hope to 5½ million nearly 6 million, non-Malays in the rest of Malaysia. And with us out, the thrust, the impetus -- for the time being, just for the time being- is gone. So, I would imagine if I were living in Penang and I had attended the rallies which were held and hears the PAP leaders speaking about the kind of future Malaysians could have, I'd feel very angry and very let

down... National Archives of Singapore

Mr. Peterson: What do you then feel are the chances of success for the rest of Malaysia now?

Mr. Lee: It is not for me to say. Technically, they are a foreign country... It is like asking a New Zealander what are the

chances of success if Australia chaps were suddenly to disappear... Not that I do not not know what I think is going to happen... but it is not fair, I cannot say what I think is going to happen.

I would, if say, the other five have a twinge of conscience, like Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar... 'Dato' means a feudal status which he got from the king recently; 'Syed' means that he was a descendant of the prophet; born in the Celebes; came to Singapore at the age of 30, and he has got the right to do all this...And I am born and bred here for a hundred years, and he said I was a guest and he was the owner.....

Mr. Peterson Sir, it's been speculated that Singapore's withdrawal from

National Archives of Singapore
 Malaysia might weaken your political support here in Malaysia and re-introduce the danger of communism. What do you think about this?

Mr. Lee: You heard the crackers, did you, on the proclamation? There is jubilation, joy, relief, from all the sense of oppression... you know, semi-Gauleiters, who came sown and squatted on

people here; letters unanswered; Singapore department which became federal departments and grew sluggish... Of course they are happy. Did you see Barisan Sosialis? They issued a statement condemning me, and saying they want to re-merge Singapore and Malaya. I say we go to the polls tomorrow, they are scrubbed out. I do not want to be immodest, but you know the Hong Lim by-election which took place recently. We lost this constituency three times in the 1961 by election to Mr. Ong Eng Guan, the former Mayor of Singapore in 1962, the Referendum, there was a high percentage of blank votes; in 1963, we lost again to Ong Eng Guan in the general election; in 1965 Ong Eng Guan resigned, the communist-front organization; the Barisan Sosialis, got 40 percent of the votes, we got 60. Tomorrow, if we go back to Singapore, I think we will get more than 60; and unless of course,... Malaya starts economic confrontation with us and the world refuses to trade with us and we die, I do not think Singapore will ever vote for Barisan Sosialis.

Mr. Peterson: But what, sir, if unemployment develops because of the worsening economic situation here in Singapore?

Mr. Lee: I think we have just got to grin and bear it. But the people: they know now... These 10, 15 years of political education, they know now that we are in the centre of South-East Asia; that this is the cockpit of power conflicts, big power conflicts, in South-East Asia; that economics is politics; and they are determined to survive.

Mr. Peterson: Sir, can I ask you now about the British bases here and overseas reports which say that Britain is worried about the future of the base, particularly if you re-establish relations with Indonesia?

Mr. Lee: Why? The British themselves have got an Ambassador in Jakarta. How does that jeopardies the base? Please assume that my colleagues and I are fairly rational men, reasonably educated in the ways of men and nations. I have got a little island with the highest standard of living in the whole of Asia outside Japan. It is like a suburban villa just placed in a tenement area with a very flimsy fence, and outside are a lot of hungry people and angry people who are being worked up

by all kinds of oratory; and they are looking into my orchard, seeing pineapples, bananas, papayas, rambutans you know, our equivalent of pears and peaches; they are seeing television sets; nice new two-piece suits, latest styles, the best tailoring out in South-East Asia; refrigerators filled with milk and honey. And all that I have got is two battalions, and the Indonesians have got 400,000 armed men. Don't you think that I have got a right to get some friends, to say: "Look, don't send all your dog handlers; and in case there's trouble, send more". We do not want to quarrel with anybody. We want to trade with Indonesians, and my relationships, personally not politically, nation to nation personally, ... the last time Dr. Sunbandrio met me in Singapore, he tapped my knee and he said: "the Tengku, he is my own blood; but I can't get on with him. You, you are not my own blood; but we are friends." That's personally, mind you... You know, in politics, the ways of men, you have got to know that even though Dr. Subandrio is my friend, it does not mean that the apparatus that surrounds him allows him to be my friends. The last time I met President Soekarno, we were friends. He took pictures with me, he smiled broadly, sent me around

Indonesia on his own Presidential aeroplane, a Russian Illyushin or something. But, again, he has got his problems and I have got mine. I want to be their friends, but I want to be able to say that the furniture in my house, the way I order it is my business. And what is more: most important, the master bedroom is mine. The guest-room: For the Ambassador? Welcome... come in for tea, come in for drinks, come in for dinner. But I am staying in the master bedroom. This is my house; this is my cook; I eat the way I like; I serve the food that I think they like; but this is my little own home. And I think two million Singaporeans is a small number, isn't it, just like New Zealand. Our capacity may be small, capacity to resist armed force, but our will cannot be broken.

National Archives of Singapore

Mr. Peterson: Sir, when you were in Australia earlier this year, you got to know a lot of Australians... when you were talking about Malaysian Malaysia. Many of them are confused about what has happened. You have any word or message for Australians after this situation that has arisen?

Mr. Lee: You know, I myself am a little bewildered, bewildered that we could not have found some more rational, more sane, more stable solution. I suggested a slight loosening of the bonds of federation; declutch, let the gears... Let us assume that we were going too fast: we are a city, sophisticated and moving fast. Well, let us declutch a little bit and go a bit slower. But they must stop this daily poison in the Jawi Press that goes into the kampong, that works up people on the basis of race, religion and language. Why could not that be done? I don't know. I think there were 6 wild men who had got into very strong positions and I am sorry for the Tengku and I am sorry for Dr. Ismail because he knows what it is all about... he knows who the long-term enemy is.

Mr. Peterson: Mr. Lee, thank you very much indeed.