

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW BY FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS
WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,
HELD AT TV SINGAPURA AT 1130 HOURS ON 30TH AUGUST,
1965.

Questioner : Richard Hughes of the London Sunday Times.

Questioner : Garry Barker of the Melbourne Herald of Australia.

Questioner : Gavin Young of the London Observer.

Questioner : Creighton Burns, the Melbourne Age.

Questioner : Arthur Cook of the London Daily Mail.

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Questioner : Mr. Prime Minister, just to open the show:

(Richard Hughes) I wonder, could you outline the changes and projected changes in internal security for operation and direction, following the Separation?

Prime Minister : Well, as far as internal security is concerned, I think we'll be far better off. You know, whilst the long-term thinker were unhappy because we think that in the long run it's against the trend of history, the people by and large were relieved. They felt oppressed and shrouded-over. And the less oppressed they feel; the less ground there is for the communists to cultivate. So, I would say, internal security-wise, the situation has immensely improved. I know Barisan Sosialis are greatly alarmed that we may call snap elections and win all their seats. And never forget that the Singapore Police Force plus the little Army which we must build up, maybe five battalions, under the command of someone whom we must nurture and build and select, is under the overall control of Dr. Goh Keng Swee who is not only an economist and knows that we can't go beyond a certain point or we break our economy, but was also a corporal in the last war. You know, Hitler was a corporal. I'm not suggesting that Goh Keng Swee is like Hitler, but....

Questioner : Hitler caused a lot of trouble.

Prime Minister : Yes. But Goh Keng Swee is a different sort of man. I think he's going to cause a lot of trouble for the communists, but not to non-communists. Democrats, investors, all will be well.

Questioner : You expect to tighten the relationship between the
(Richard Hughes) political direction and the organisational operation of internal security following Separation? In other words, do you think you'll have tighter control on the Army than there was before?

Prime Minister : Oh yes, undoubtedly. It goes without saying.

Questioner (Gavin Young) : With the danger of subversion and internal
National Archives of Singapore security problems here -- Communist activities and those of the Barisan -- how do you see the prospects for the future for democratic socialism in Singapore?

Prime Minister : If the Communists felt they could win by demoractic processes, I don't think they would have tried assassination -- which they did. Dr. Lee Siew Choh says Barisan members

who got engaged and involved in such activities have got nothing to do with him. Well, that's what he says. But the day we establish a nexus between them and him, that day he answers for it. But, let's be quite honest. They are -- not Dr. Lee, but the men behind Dr. Lee whom we are looking for -- are highly intelligent, determined revolutionaries. And, this is a revolutionary situation. They know they can't win. They lost in Hong Lim. 10th of July, they lost. If they can't win Hong Lim, can they win, can they retain their seats after being identified as traitors to the country? Men who are being trained by the Indonesians and leading the vigilante Corps, not to do National Service, not to defend the country, to abolish British bases and be prostrate, to be raped and ravished by our bigger neighbour. You know they are caught now like the Indians nationalists, the Congressmen, said, "No co-operation with the British." And, they went to jail for it. But, the Indian communist Party exhorted the workers to produce more munitions, Why? Because the oracle says so. Moscow says, "this is no longer an Imperialist war. It's a war for progressive forces, et cetera." Well, they are caught

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in that predicament. They are on the hook, and we intend to spotlight that and keep them on the hook.

Questioner (Gavin Young) : With these pressures and dangers, do you think that parliamentary democratic socialism is going to have a tough time here ?

Prime Minister : I don't think so. We put Dr. Lee Siew Choh on our television in the Hong Lim by-election. He was on television barely seven weeks ago with Mr. Devan Nair and Dr. Thio Chan Bee -- you know, he acquitted himself well, as a man who loved his country and his people. We put it on twice: once, before the elections; once after. I don't think he did himself or his cause any good.

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Questioner : Sir, could I take this into a broader field?

(Arthur Cook) Now, you mentioned bases, and you have in the past told me -- in fact, I think you've told practically every journalist -- you cannot do without the bases.

Prime Minister : Yes.

Questioner : Well, I'd like to look a little further, perhaps five or
(Arthur Cook) ten years ahead. Now, you have said that you cannot afford
to get rid of the bases because 40,000 workers depend on
it.....

Prime Minister : 50,000.

Questioner : 50,000 probably 200,000 people.

(Arthur Cook)

Prime Minister : Yes. Plus the multiplier effect, you know.

Questioner : Yes.

(Arthur Cook)

Prime Minister : Who carry people into town, taxis, dry-cleaners.

Questioner : Yes. Now, what comes into my mind is that as

(Arthur Cook) you said, you can only live by economy.

Prime Minister : Yes.

Questioner : And you must get in as much trade as possible.

(Arthur Cook)

Prime Minister: Quite right.

Questioner : Now, what's going to happen if one day --

(Arthur Cook) next years, five years -- you've built up your economy to such an extent that you can absorb those people from the bases.

Then, what's going to happen to the British bases?

Prime Minister : I think the time will come when we'll be able to look after

ourselves, and we don't have to have this actual physical presence of British troops. But, we will have an arrangement whereby, in case of emergency, press button 'A' and tanks, helicopters and rockets, and all the rest, can arrive within a few hours.

Questioner : Yes, but if you were not friends with Indonesia,

(Arthur Cook) don't you think that they could possibly invade before you could get the British here?

Prime Minister: No, no. I don't think we were ever taken by surprise, either by the Indonesians, and not even by the Communists. I know exactly what they are doing, what they are planning. And, I know exactly what are the possible options before them. And, they've got an agonising decision now to say "Yes, let us all be nationalists. Support this Government. Let us be independent. Let us liberate "Malaya" -- which of course, means that their followers will vanish and become followers of the PAP.

Questioner : Well, again, then, on the bases, do you think that

(Arthur Cook) there may not be many years before the British may physically occupy these bases?

Prime Minister : I don't see the problem as my wanting to get rid of the bases, building up the economy so fast till I say "Well, I can absorb these 50,000. Please just leave your equipment behind."

You know, mothball fleet, moth ball guns, et cetera. When required, men return. And, I would have built up five battalions and probably a little navy to guard the waters; or a little air force to sort of do radar work. No. I see the danger as Britain's growing disillusionment with all this defence role East of Suez. And, if I were an Englishman, or a Britisher -- whether I were Scot or Welsh -- I would say I would think my bargaining position with the Americans much better if I can play a counter role here. And the British can play a very big role. Now, I want to be quiet frank with you here. If the British withdraw I am prepared to go on with the Austrialians and the New Zealanders. But, I am not prepared to go on with Americans.

Questioner (Creighton Burns): Why not, Mr. Prime Minister? Why do you think the Americans.....

Prime Minister: Can I put in this way: I think they are a highly intelligent, often well-meaning, people, and some of their leaders like Mr. Kennedy, the late President, had signs, of growing greatness, depth. But, by and large, the administration lacks

depth. But, by and wisdom which comes out of an accumulation of knowledge of human beings and human situations over a long period of time. That is lacking, and it is not their fault what have they got? Three, four hundred years of history, and they have become a nations just recently. I will tell you this. I have had three experiences, only three experiences, with the Americans. And, they did not intend any harm in each one of them. But, the tragedy was; they did real harm. First -- this is old stuff now -- we caught an American C.I.A. agent trying to subvert our Intelligence special Branch Officer, bribe him, so that the Special Branch Officer will feed the C.I.A. because the C.I.A. wants to know what what is happening. Subverting a Singapore office! The man might have succeeded. But I am proud, the officer, offered a large sum of money and continuing sums of money... this was in 1960 refused and reported the matter to his chief who reported it to me.

Questioner : Well, don't you think

Prime Minister : No, no. Let me explain. The British have 400 years of Empire, and I will come to that. This is crucial to the whole of my thinking on this. Four hundred human beings. If it had been the Americans in charge, I think today I would not be here, and you would not be interviewing me. Because, they lack what one calls wisdom of long experience. I will tell you this. Trying to do that! I told my officers, "Lay a trap: microphones, everything." The man was caught, arrested, enough evidence to send him to goal for anything up to twelve years. We had got them by the throat. The American Consul-General, shaking at his knees, knew nothing about it because this man flew in from Bangkok. And, the ignominy of it! He was not really trying. The man was looking for a place of assignation to seek comfort. Do you get confidence in an outfit like that? That is how the Bay of Pigs takes place, that sort of an operation. The man was caught, locked up, and it was on a razor's edge whether we would charge him in open court or not. Now, let me explain this. And, I told the American Government, "we keep quiet, you can take this man away, \$100 million to the Singapore Government for economic development.

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Questioner : Now.....

Prime Minister : No, no. you listen to me. I never speak to the Americans direct because they lack the finesse. They may say, "Yes, give it to you. Why to the Singapore Government? Give it to you.", -- to me, which would have ruined me. But through an intermediary they offered me and my party ten million dollars. The insult! I told them, "You can keep it." But I will say this for President Kennedy: that he said no, his Government would give me, if I wanted, publicly, but not because I got him by the throat. No, no I will say this for Kennedy -- I don't know if they have got other Kennedys coming; even Kennedy didn't have the full maturity. In the end, I decided to release the man because I charged him, the damage it would have done with our relations with Kuala Lumpur then -- we wanted merger, Malaysia, we fought for it -- and Americans would have worked on Kuala Lumpur and we would have been so antagonistic, merger and Malaysia would have broken. They probably never knew why we released the man. We just said, "O.K., get out." And the

Consul-General, who was a Rhode's scholar, I have forgotten his name now they sent a Rhode's scholar. They thought, a bit of the English polish on him, and he can get on. Well, he resigned -- or, he left, anyway. They sent a new man. That is when Mr. Gilstrap came. That is experience No.1.

Now, let me explain this to you. It is fundamental. If the British bases go, there will be no American bases in Singapore. This is a matter of the utmost importance for Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and for America to understand that.

Second traumatic experience: you know, again they did not mean harm, but they did a lot of harm. I should not go into the details. It is unkind perhaps, Dr. Goh and I were on our way to the United Nations, and we got stuck in Hawaii.

1962. The plane broke down. Delayed. So, our connection at Los Angeles was delayed. Mind you, they were polite enough to have a Minister of the Federal Government to meet us. V.I.P. lounge and so on. And, I said, "Look, I must get a telegram through to the Malayan Embassy in Washington,

and the United Nations Mission. Otherwise, I won't make contact with them." The chaps says, "No, no, no. Don't worry. We will look after it. We have got a special network," said he. Special network! We arrived. There was not a soul. Not a soul. But when we went to the Information desk, the chaps says, "Yes, sir." And do you know what had happened? Hugh Foot, formerly Sir Hugh Foot, now Lord Carrington.....?

Caradon... He need not have met me. But he did. And, he left a message, at every desk -- you know, Idlewild has twenty or thirty reception desks, and everyone had a message -- the moment the Singapore Minister arrived; Dr. Goh and me, please contact him. And, the British and, mind you, they were so discreet. You know, this is purely a courtesy, and so on, and so forth. But, your own network with this immense apparatus and you can't get my message through, a chance of aircraft. What is this?

And, I will give you my last experience very recently.

Somebody very dear to me -- just a matter of days ago -- was

in need of specialist treatment. And, our local professor said, "Well, I know Professor so and so of such and such a University who is probably the best technician in this job for this operation." And you know, I was a fool. I should never have done it. I had a word with an American representative - - not a low representative, mind you -- the Ambassador from Kuala Lumpur came down to discuss important matters, and incidentally I said, "Would it be possible for this person to come to help my professor to assess and then to decide?" He said, "Yes. we will try and see what can be done." Do you know what was the answer? The professor was busy. He recommends professor XYZ. But he does not know whether professor XYZ will come or not. Then, I get another phone call saying, "The first professor is going to Geneva,"

Professor A, who was recommended. And, if the patient was prepared to fly to Geneva, the Professor would look at him or her." You know, the impudence and the impertinence of it! But I was more sorry than angry, because I don't think that would have happened with a people with a background, a history, culture, cultured, civilized.

There is nothing new about men, tribes and nations. And, the British in 400 years of Empire learned a lot about human beings. But let me say this, that there is no villainy that they are not capable of if it was in their national interests. Suez, for instance. Nobody is going to tell me, after what I have read, both Endon's autobiography and other reports.....

Questioner : Nasser's book?

Prime Minister : Not Nasser's history book. No, no, no, no. Unbiased reports. Israelis' attack. French and British, conveniently there to stop the fighting.

Questioner : No, no, no, no.....

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Prime Minister : All right.

Questioner : I think you have that wrong.

Prime Minister : No, no, no.

Questioner : They had been there for weeks.

Prime Minister : Yes.

Questioner : But can I

Prime Minister : No, no. But no. But, as against that there was a basis for the phrases, "perfidious Albion". I mean, they are perfidious, when it is in their national interest -- by intelligently so. But, the Americans, they look depth. And, they don't understand the oversea Chinese. They don't understand the Vietnamese. That is why it is such a mess. If they were in charge in Malaya and Singapore, I would have been in goal, probably tortured and dead, and instead of Lim Yew Hock -- because Lim Yew Hock is not strong enough for the kind of job that they retired-- they would have had somebody more brutal than Lim Yew Hock, like Ngo Dinh Diem. And, when, finally they decided that their own creation was an embarrassment. They closed their eyes, looked the other way, and he got bumped off. I thought, well, they must have a plan, you know. Ngo Dinh Diem, bumped off. "A" takes

over. Then plan Alpha moves into operation. But, my god, they had no plans. There have been no less than 15 to 20 governments since Ngo Dinh Diem.

Questioner : Well, very true, you know. But

Prime Minister : In January 1964, I remember that because I was in Cairo when the message came through that he was butchered.

Questioner : Sir, could you say something

Prime Minister: But I will tell you something about the British... no, no... Let me say this to show you that I am not an Anglophile. True, I know their culture, their history, their civilisation. I have read all about the dafodils, and the bumble-bee, and, "Heigh-ho, merry ho", and all the rest of it. It is part of my schooling. They pumped it. And, I hated what they did, and I joined up with the communists to get rid of them. But, you know, they had wisdom. When I came back from London as a student on August the 1st 1950, just over 15 years ago -- it was done so politely. The Immigration Officer whose name I remember to

this day, Mr.Fox, kept me waiting for one hour, and then looked at my passport, flicked through in a very civilised but cutting sort way, in that way warning me that if I went on with what I was doing and saying in Britain, I was in for trouble. But I was prepared, not just for trouble, but for death if necessary, to get rid of British colonialism. And, we joined in with the Communists -- Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan and the rest of them -- and they knew that I was not a Communist, they were Commuinsts, that if the British are defeated we have got to scrap it out among ourselves.

If it were the Americans, they would say, "Ah! Commie! Fellow-traveller! Lock him up." But not the British. You know, this is a personal tribute to a man on whose report

perhaps I was spared: Sir William Goode, Chief Secretary in charge of the Special Branch, and later, last Governor. And, I was the spokeman for the first strike that started the series of strikes in the 1950's. 1952, early '52, February, the postmen went on strike about striped trousers and pay, and so on. And, we met across the table. And he's a "toughie", you know. He's a boxer. Well, I don't look a toughie because,

you know, only Englishmen can look that tough. The Chinese usually look like gentle people. But, he learned over the years that we were quite determined. And, he watched every move, every speech, every statement. He was in the Assembly with us, watching me, the difference between me and Lim Chin Siong. And Lim Yew Hock wanted to scrub the lot of us out. And he said "No". I'm sure he must have said "No", because otherwise it was easier for Lim Yew Hock, Mr. Lim Yew Hock, sorry, Tun Lim Yew Hock, for the PAP not to be there to contest the elections in 1959. But Bill Goode was calculating in terms of 20, 30, 40 years of trying to get a group of people to emerge who can hold the situation. He knew that if we took power and the communists wanted that power, either we had to go along with the Communists in which case they would really have to do something, or we would have to fight the Communists. It was a calculated risk. He released several senior officers who were close colleagues of mine -- Dr.Goh amongst them -- from the Civil services, to contest the 1959 elections. And we won. He stayed on for six months as Yang di-Pertuan Negara. He did a good job for the British. He didn't do it for me. He did it for Britain. Let's

Prime Minister : Well?

Questioner : Now, just a moment, Sir. I will again like to get back
(Mr. Cook) to British based here.

Prime Minister : Yes

Questioner : The Americans are saying that they are holding
(Mr. Cook) that corner of Southeast Asia.

Prime Minister : Well, they are not

Questioner : Now, just a moment. They expect us, the British, and the

(Mr. Cook) Commonwealth, hold this corner. Now, one of the crucial
spots is Singapore and the Singapore bases. When you think
of the future, are you taking into consideration Singapore's
part, or the part of the bases or the Commonwealth, in
holding up this corner of Southeast Asia against
Communism?

Prime Minister : Well, what do you mean? Which other parts? Vietnam, you mean?

Questioner : The Vietnam corner.

(Mr. Cook)

Prime Minister : You know, my position on Vietnam was stated clearly.....

Questioner : Sir, I don't mean only Vietnam.

(Mr. Cook)

Prime Minister : What were you thinking of, then?

Questioner : I'm thinking of the whole overall question of Southeast

(Mr. Cook) Asia. I think it's generally known if South Vietnam falls,

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they'll probably go then into Thailand. If Thailand falls, then down the Peninsula to Singapore. And what I'm saying is, what are your views in regard to the British bases, and the future of propping up this corner....

Prime Minister : I'm all for my own survival and the survival of my people, for whom I feel very strongly. But I am quite sure the

Americans can't do it. I will tell you this. This is something which requires long experience. You see, I'll tell you what happened. Monday the 9th when we proclaimed independence, the British never tried to contact me, never tried to intervene. Dr. Lee Siew Choh said that it was a British plot, and all this. The man is near mad, I think, and those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. But, I'll tell you this. I had a polite call -- my secretary had a polite call -- from Kuala Lumpur, at 9.30. Thirty minutes before the proclamation, the news had leaked in Kuala Lumpur. My secretary said to him "The Prime Minister is not available".

Questioner : Who was telephoning?

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Prime Minister : I think Lord Head. But he asked if he could see me after the proclamation and so on that afternoon. But I was busy: press conference and so on. And I said he had a choice of two dates: three o'clock or eight o'clock. He could not make it at three o'clock he made it (at eight.) In fact, he rang back and said "Could we make it earlier: 10 to 8?" I said, "Yes,

by all means," because I would have had a light dinner and we would be ready to talk. And you know, one of these Pullman cars with the front seats and big flag flying ... You have got British troops here; tomorrow I can be knocked out, locked up: finish. But not one bit of intimidation. But mind you, all the panoply of power was there

Mr. Cook: Troops

Prime Minister : Oh, Yes, troops. It is what comes out of having been great power for a long time, isn't it?

Mr. Cook: Do the other ambassadors go around like that.....?

Prime Minister : No, no.....The first question I asked him..... He started

talking this, that and the otherAnd I asked him the first question: "Who are you talking on behalf of?" And he said, "Well of course, you know, I am accredited to a foreign Government." I said, "Exactly. And have you got specific authority to speak to me about Singapore's relationship with Britain?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, then this is a 'tete-a-tete" -- it is a chit-chat." He said, "well, if you like to put it

that way." And it was that way. And he took it very nicely. He is a toughie you know: a Brigadier in the army; former Defence Minister, men in charge, once upon a time, of a force of half a million people scattered all over the world! But he never showed the mailed fist, not once, except for this flag. I went out -- sent him to the door after one hour -- and I looked at the flag. If he is not accredited here, what is the flag doing there? Who is he to fly that flag? I looked at the flag. We kept quiet. He knew what I was thinking. We were both too polite..... He has got 400 years of empire, and my ancestors have got 4,000 years of written, recorded history. There is no human situation between individuals, between tribes, between nations -- love, hate; greed, envy; power, fear -- that cannot be reduced in the Chinese language to either four or eight letters. You know, millions of minds have worked on it; polished and re-polished. And we knew what we were. He knew exactly where I stood. He knew that it was the time of day and the part of the world to do a Cuba: the Bay of Pigs was not possible in Singapore. All the whole thing would have come crashing down. And I said to him: "You know, of course as far as I am concerned, I will prefer

my first recognition from an Asian country such as India.

And if I were you, I would get in touch with the British High Commissioner in India, Mr. John Freeman of whom I happen to be a friend and tell the Indian Government that the British really cannot intervene. Once the British say that, the Indians will recognise me." He did not do that. He whipped back to Kuala Lumpur. I do not know what signal he sent back to London, but within 17 hours, I got recognition from the British Government. Mind you if it were a Tory Government, it might have been a bit delayed because I think they would have just toyed around with a few ideas like -- supposing the brigadier has a coup -- not the British brigadier, mind you -- the local brigadier

Questioner : (interjection)

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Prime Minister : ...a million pounds, and if it fails you can run away! It has been before: King Farouk refused to sign, tanks appeared; King Farouk signed. Right?

Mr. Cook:Whose tanks could appear here?

Prime Minister : You have got a lot of them....

Mr. Cook: Not The British won't get involved.

Prime Minister : No, no, no There are two things: one, the political-military milieu; second, the reality of power and the reality of power is yours. If you quit, the Indonesian fleet sails into Singapore harbour and I will have to be at the Clifford Pier to receive the admiral and to bow deeply and hand over and shake his hands and hand over the keys. Right?

Mr. Creighton Can we get back to this base thing for moment,

Burns : Sir? You are saying that if the British pull out, then you

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prefer not to have the Americans because they lack, as you see it, wisdom. But you are content with the Australians and the New Zealanders

Prime Minister : Yes, the Australians and New Zealanders, if I may put it without being offensive to the Americans. You see, they are like the overseas Chinese. They are young nations, but they

carried over with them when they bundled into the brigs and the sailing-ships and the tongkangs that came to South East Asia and you went to Australia and Sydney Bay and so on...They carried with them the accumulated data. The Americans started off with very little. Mind you, they have got enormous power, enormous wealth to buy and sell anything. But one thing they cannot buy; and that is a corps of men who understand human beings and human situations.

Mr. Creighton

But the trouble is, Sir, they have deterrent power in

Burns :

South-East Asia. Australia... you were talking of five battalions in Borneo recently. Five battalions is roughly what Australia has.....

Prime Minister : Let us be quite frank. If you think the British are going to let

you get away with that forever and then I think I do not know both of them very well. In fact, we call each other by first names, and that's one of the reasons, incidentally--I would like to say--Why the recognition came within 17 hours, because they knew me; What I stood for, what I will fight for.

Mr. Cook : What is meant by "re-negotiating" the pact, the bases? our Government did mention this last week; "re-negotiate".

Prime Minister : Mr. Rajaratnam, you mean?

Mr. Cook : Yes.....

Prime Minister: My colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Cook : What is the implication, or anything possibly new?

Prime Minister : Well, I think most important of all this.... you see, negotiating with a group of people in Kuala Lumpur is like negotiating with Nuri Ei-Syed; you know, the man in Iraq, who finally was running in the streets disguised as a woman, caught, hung?

Mr. Cook : Yes.

Prime Minister : Nuri Syedthat is one thing. They are dependent on you, and they go in for the sake of power. I am not interested in being Prime Minister. I told Dr. Toh on the 7th of August, after I had showed the Tengku's letter, "Look, the Tengku won't see you, but if you don't trust my judgment -- that really I think he will not be able to hold the situation --then I will become your deputy and you become Prime Minister and you take the full responsibility for what I am sure must be a deliberate build-up towards a blood -bath." And Dr. Toh has not the slightest --intention of wanting to be Prime Minister -- he said; "No, no, let's not talk in that way." I said to him; "The Tengku doesn't want to see you." I said to the Tengku; "Will you see Mr. Rajaratnam?" He said, "No, I will not see Mr. Rajaratnam." And they all feel very strongly

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Mr. Ong Pang Boon.....

But I told them this....and I tell you honestly; the thing I fear now is not Singapore, we are all right; We can live. Look, this city was built out of mud flats human skill, effort, endeavour; and you have got the skyscrapers. You can go out of this room and I can get you London, New York,

Washington, even Moscow, within a matter of minutes on the telephone. It's men on the job, on the ball. You cannot do it the Nuri El -Syed way that sort of thing. Oil kingdoms is one thing, but with us, we are in power for certain specific purposes, the first of which is the preservation and the enhancement of the interests of the people whom we consider our people. We feel for them because they are part of us, and it is not just two-million people in Singapore. There are millions of Malaysians, 11 million Malaysians....well, nine million now that Singapore is out. We feel one with them; and it is their interest that we must advance; their interest ultimately to emerge into a modern, open society.

Mr. Cook : What are you going to re-negotiate on? On the length of

time?
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Prime Minister : No,no,no....There are certain things on which, as I have said, silence is golden. Talking ad lib, just blurting away, on things where a slight crudeness of phrase can set chain-reactions, loss of confidence--that's not the way my colleagues and I do it.

Questioner : I understand.....

Prime Minister : When Mr. Rajaratnam says, "re-negotiation", he meant re-negotiate, and he consulted my colleagues and I when he said that. And, you know, the emphasis is; the bases are for defence. Whose defence? The defence of the interest of the people that we consider one; namely, two million Singaporeans now and nine million Malaysians; two, the people who have been friendly to us, who are very close to us because of geographic proximity and historic experiences, the same administrative pattern, legal system values; Australia, New Zealand. They are taking a risk. But the bases to be used as threats to blackmail Indonesia or from which to launch an attack and destroy China... Bong! rocket goes off and Chinese atom bomb-sites destroyed No. You know, you may have the guns but Lord Head knew, and I knew that he knew without my having to tell him, that the people of Singapore would listen ... They are politically alert and alive; and with all the base workers with us, we can paralyse the base like that if we want ..., Never mind the legalities. We want to re-negotiate it for reasons of sentiment... Afro-

Asia; the presentation. You know , as it stands now, you can jolly well do what you like-- nearly. Well, after it is re-negotiated, the world will know -- and I want my friends in Afro-Asia to know -- that I will not allow these bases to be used as jumping-points for aggression, not even aggression of Indonesia. And I say, look.....

Questioner : If you were attacked by Indonesia?

Prime Minister : Well, that's another matter-- if it's a big invasion, then there must be a counter-attack; right? We have got to weigh these things, but our views and our consent must be first obtained, because if we disagree, we can make the bases inert. And don't forget that this is not Guatanamo--you know, the

American base in Cuba?
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Questioner : Guatanamo....

Prime Minister : Guatanamo? Yes, that's American territory on Cuba. I played golf the other day in Changi by the sea territory, not British.

Questioner : Are you.....

Prime Minister : No, no, this is important, don't forget this . And this is why I have not the slightest doubt if my two colleagues, Dr. Toh and Mr. Rajaratnam, go on this tour of Afro-Asia -- which they will do as soon as the local affairs are settled -- I have not the slightest doubt that Afro-Asia will with us. If Cuba with an American base, with the American sovereignty, is independent, and not a neo-colonialist stooge, then we, the people of Singapore, owners of the British bases... I could give you a notice, 24 hours' notice, you will have to quit, or you are committing an act of aggression with very serious consequences, surely.....

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Question : I think, Mr. Lee, you know as many English

(Mr. Cook) phrases as I do.

Prime Minister : I am sure it is not possible -I spend so much time talking other languages, you speak only one...

Question : There is one very good English saying;

(Arthur Cook) You can't have the bun and the penny, too. Now, I would rather you made it a little clearer, when you say you will do as you wish with the bases?

Prime Minister : No, no, I never said that. You are putting words into my mouth. I said, you cannot do as you wish with the bases without consulting me. That is what I said--not I will do what I wish.

Question : But you want them there to feed your people?

(Arthur Cook)

Prime Minister : I want them there first, to protect my people because we have not got the wherewithal. We have got two battalions, 5,000 police and two or three reserve units with arms.

Mr. Cook : But I understood from you the first thing to think of was the economic side.

Prime Minister : No, no, no. The first thing to think of is physical survival; the second thing is; being physically able to remain distinct

and separate, we must have the economic impetus so that I can have Dr. Lee Siew Choh on television and he can blab away and say; "This is neo-colonialism". Malaysia was a neo-colonialism". Malaysia was a neo-colonialist plot, says Dr.Lee. That's what his masters told him to say. Now, Singapore's independence is "phoney" and is a British plot, says Dr. Lee. You know, the most worried man was Lord Head. A man with his enormous experience -- the Defence Minister is a very senior position in the British Cabinet-- in charge of this place, been here for nearly two years now; and this thing could happen right under his nose without him sniffing it till, according to the press... it was nine o'clock, he sort of gatecrashed the Tengku's private meeting somewhere. Well, he will have a lot of explaining to do and I don't think

Lord Head, if I may say so, in spite of the stiff upper lip and the flag fluttering, was quaking inside.

Mr. Cook : Don't you think you could have warned the British government, you know?

Prime Minister : I warn the British Government? What of?

Mr. Cook : That something was going on like this?

Prime Minister : I told the British Look, I met Mountbatten together with Peter Thornycroft when he was Minister for Defence; I met Duncan Sandys -- Commonwealth Secretary. I met Arthur Bottomley, I met Wilson, and I told them; "Look unless this communal politicking stops, this is ruination." Because we cannot give in, we cannot be brow-beaten, We will not allow another matter but, you know, to be emasculated.....

Mr. Cook : Can we change... we have got very little time left. There is one question I would like to ask which is much longer range than this, which is a small place. You have got the PKI obviously growing in power in Java; you have got a communist training school, as you have said yourself today, in the Thai border; what is your major worry over the next 20 years, then or 10 years, if you like?

Prime Minister : About 10 years, credit-debit for the British will be about even. Now it is still a bit credit because dollar earnings, balance of payments, rubber and tin,... democratic socialism and all that aside..... I am not saying that Mr. Wilson did not have, if may use the word, affection for the British Labour party and the British Labour Movement spawned in Asia that took root and developed . He did But what are the over-riding interests? In an open society which regularly goes back to the electorate for a mandate, and your electorate is told "Look , it is a waste of time and it's a waste of money -- what is all this for ? Why don't we let the Yanks do it? The British get nothing out of this.... They will sail in and sail out? What happens. Not worth it, isn't it? The economy is wrecked, cost goes up, income goes down. You say, "Well , okay we pack it up".... Actually, I do not like the word "O.K." also because I have developed such an aversion for all these things I saw on television all about this chap who walked about in space and said, " Oh, saddest moment of my life," when he was asked to come in It left me with the abiding impression of a people that will ultimately acquire depth. But when is " ultimately"? I don't know . But I am not going to

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have anything to do with them; and if they are in and help the racist groups there and brutalise the country as the communist phrase goes, we cannot stand by and do absolutely nothing and sit idly watching. We are one people. These are big problems. The next problem is debit-credit, British withdrawal; what happens? Australia, New Zealand: have you got the capacity?

(Interjection: inaudible)

Prime Minister : No, I think you have got to!

Mr. Cook : It is a big debit for Britain now.....

Prime Minister : Well, all right, so it has to be! But I am not going to have the Americans in Singapore and I hope not in Malaysia. And if they are wise -- and I have told them this officially; to their officials -- I said, "Look, you know nothing about this place. The British have been here 140 years and they do know something about the people and the history: whether you can twist a man's arm and he will yelp, or whether if you twist his

arm, he'll counter-twist yours and you yelp; you see?" Lord Head never tried to twist my arm. And I will tell you this quite frankly that whilst Mr. Harold Wilson sent me a message in the warmest of terms, he did add the phrase that he regretted that I did not find it possible at least to tell him of it beforehand.

Questioner : Perhaps.....

Prime Minister : But why should I? I told them in September last year. And they have got the firepower. Who is defending Malaysia? Whose troops are on the border in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak? Who is allowing these chaps to run around doing these mad things -- "One race, one language, one religion,"

Where is this going to lead to in a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious society? I can't stand for that. I have told them, I met Mr. Menzies and he was very good to me. He gave me two hours of his time -- first with his Cabinet, then with him alone; and I explained the position to him and I told him what I thought was the solution to this problem. Look, I have lived here all my life. I know Mr. Tom Critchley: he

has been here for a long time -- 7 years, 8 years; but I have been here my life-time which will be 42 on the second anniversary of Malaysia -- not the 31st of August, tomorrow. This is the fictitious anniversary. The real anniversary is the 16th of September, my birthday. I will be 42. I am not as old as Mr. Critchley: he is a wiser man. Mr. Hasluck, even Mr. Prichett is a very capable, highly able officer... Menzies said to me, "Look, you write to me what you have told me in a letter so that I have got it on a piece of paper and I can think over it." I did, but I waited... I came back from Australia on 2nd April. I waited three weeks; talked with all my colleagues. I knew the British's point of view; everybody's point of view, then I wrote to him. And I said to him the opening paragraph: I took three weeks to check and make sure to have a really balanced picture: an objective, a sober, rational approach. And I put down the problem and what I thought were the possible solutions in about seven pages single spacing on ordinary letter paper.

What more can I do? We are not children. This is not a game of bagatelle; human lives are involved. I run to Mr.

Wilson, and telegram Mr. Menzies: "Please rescue me?" No; I will never do that. Not even now if they say, "Well, we are going to withdraw." I'd say "Then, proceed. You withdraw. I will find a way to live." And this country has got... steel in it: the people have got steel in them. Singapore has got steel and that steel will come to a lot of others in Malaysia. It will survive; never give way! We will never be swallowed up by the Indonesians! We do not intend it to happen. What can I do? And he said to me, "Well, all right, we will meet at London, Prime Ministers' Conference".. This is not really confidential... What is confidential is what I told him, and what he wrote back to me.... That is secret anyway. But in 20 years, it is in the archives; it is in the museum. And I would like Mr. Tom Critchley and Mr. Prichett and Lord

Head and the others who knew this area and who were working here at that time -- I hope they will be alive and they will read this 7-page document. And they will know that my judgement based on a whole lifetime of this country and its people and its feelings and the quality of the various groups, the various leaderships -- some tough, flexible; some febrile, fragile -- they would know that if they had listened and taken

more seriously my analysis, this need never have happened.

There were so many other re-arrangements, alternative arrangements. I talked of them publicly. I could not spell them out.

Questioner: Tengku Abdul Rahman says that he is the only man who
(Mr. Cook) understands the people here in Malaysia

Prime Minister: I don't know... Did he tell you that?

Mr. Cook: Yes.

Prime Minister: Well, I say I hope it is so. Because otherwise, he is in for very big trouble; and I think insulated though we may be by the Causeway and the Straits, we will be involved in that trouble. I can only hope that what he has said was more than just -- what one would call, "a euphoric phrase".

30th August, 1965