

TRANSCRIPT OF A PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, GAVE TO A GROUP OF FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENTS ON 11TH DECEMBER, 1965, AT THE TELEVISION
SINGAPURA STUDIOS.

Good evening. There are four foreign correspondents here this evening to interview Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister. I am Dennis Bloodworth of the LONDON OBSERVER; then there is Arthur Cook of the LONDON DAILY MAIL; Bill Gasson of REUTERS and Patrick Killen of the U.P.I.

Mr. Bloodworth: Mr. Prime Minister, we are all very interested in Dr.

Subandrio's proposal that there should be bilateral negotiations over confrontation with Singapore, with Malaya,

and with the Borneo States -- all separately. What do you think motivates this? What is the reaction of your

Government to this proposition?

Prime Minister: I think it is more than bilateral, isn't it? It becomes quadrilateral.

Mr. Bloodworth: But all separately, I mean.

Prime Minister: Yes, yes.... Singapore-Djakarta; Kuala Lumpur-Djakarta; Kuching-Djakarta; Jesselton-Djakarta. Well, I am not qualified to speak for either Kuala Lumpur, Kuching or Jesselton. But we are ready to talk with anybody, at any time, at any place, in the pursuit of peace and co-operation,

Arthur Cook: But do you think this is a sincere offer, or do you think Dr. Subandrio perhaps is trying to drive the wedge deeper between -- perhaps -- yourself and Malaysia?

Prime Minister: I don't think we are the sort of people who require encouragement from outside either to go this way or that way. We usually sort out our own thoughts as to where our eventual interests lie. That doesn't mean that there are no grounds for believing that talks between them and us -- if they want to achieve certain short-term advantages -- may well be fruitful.

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Mr. Cook: You are saying 'short-term'. What about the long-term things? Supposing you agree to talk to them and Malaysia says, "No"? You have a common defence agreement with...

Prime Minister: Who are we to say whether Malaysia should or should not talk to them? I cannot say what Malaysia should do. But I am prepared to talk to anybody, at any place, at any time, to achieve peace and security for Singapore.

Mr. Bloodworth: I think, Sir, that what we have in mind is that there has been some indication from Kuala Lumpur already that they are against this whole proposition, and regard it with suspicion. It is in the light of that reaction, I think, that Arthur Cook was asking this question. What do you feel about it?

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Prime Minister: Well, mind you, the dice was loaded the way the offer was made, was't it? It was loaded against Sabah and Sarawak.

Mr. Cook: What about (yourself)?

Prime Minister: I think it is up to the people in Sabah and Sarawak to show their solidarity with Malaysia, if they feel that way inclined. If we were still a component state in Malaysia, were doing well under Malaysia and were progressing towards the kind of society we wanted, and they made us this offer, we would be outraged at the provocativeness of it. But, we are out of Malaysia and we have got to look at our little sector.

Mr. Cook: But as an independent state now, would you come to, say, renewing diplomatic relations, or in fact setting up diplomatic relations, with an Indonesia that is still at variance with Malaysia -- as Malaysia still is.

Prime Minister: No, I don't think the test is whether a Government is friendly with Malaysia, or unfriendly to Malaysia ... We want to be friends with Malaysia, but that does not mean that we have got to be unfriendly with all the people who are unfriendly to Malaysia. Their friends may be our friends -- Malaysia's friends may be our friends -- but Malaysia's enemies need not be our enemies. In fact, as you will see from the Policy Statement which was delivered by the Head of State last

Wednesday, we have made it quite clear that we want the maximum number of friends and the minimum number of hostile or unfriendly states. If we are going to be the enemies of all those (that) Malaysia are at enmity with, that will expand the number... (If) we are going to be enemies to all those (that) the British are unfriendly to, the number will expand further! And never forget: it is Britain that is helping in our defence, not Malaysia. Malaysia is having some trouble defending herself, and she cannot defend herself without Britain...

Mr. Cook: Let us get back to the point of my question.

Prime Minister: You are defending me; you in the sense that your nation, your people, your government....

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Mr. Cook: Yes, that is what...

Prime Minister: It is your navy that sinks Indonesian barter traders coming in; not Malaysia's. And yet you have an embassy in Djakarta. You are trading with Djakarta insofar as Djakarta wants to trade with you.

Mr. Cook: Yes, of course..

Prime Minister: Why do you think it is such a heinous thing that we should want to have an embassy in Djakarta, and be trading with them....?

Mr. Cook: I am not arguing against that. What I am asking, going back to my original question, is: Do you think this is a move by Dr. Subandrio to put the wedge between you and Malaysia, and in fact to strain relations even more than they are strained?

Prime Minister: I cannot say what their motivations are until we have met them and talked to them, and probed them and discovered how far they will go. I think it would be the silliest thing on our part to foreclose, so to speak, before the 'probes' are out. We have got to find out what it is they intend...

Mr. Gasson: If you do meet up with the Indonesians somewhere, and at some time, would you be prepared to perhaps try and mediate

between Malaysia and Indonesia? (To help your Indonesian friends) and your Malaysian friends, would you not try to bring the two together? For the sake of security in the whole area?

Prime Minister: Well, Singapore has always been a kind of middleman. We help to complete big transactions and take a brokerage. But I think this is a bigger transaction than Singapore can handle because, however big the brokerage, I think this one is a little bit too heavy in the passage, and we will leave it to bigger and more competent nations.

But may I just round off my argument with this one statement, because I think we want to be quite sure where we want to

go... By "we" I mean Singapore. All that having been said, the overriding interest of the people of Singapore demands that they should never let down the people of Malaysia. I am talking about peoples now; not about the frictions between governments which may come and go -- which may change with time. The abiding interests of the one people now found in two states, two territories, two nations -- that can never be

lightly thrown away. So you see, it is against the longer-term interests that we must estimate what are the short-term advantages either for ourselves, and even for Britain -- because it might lighten Britain's burden if we were to come to a more neutral relationship with Indonesia for the time being. But all these things have got to be carefully weighed.

In other words, we are open to all propositions. They will be carefully looked into and seriously considered. And the decisions we will arrive at will be based on the long-term considerations which we can never afford to forget, and of course, on the short-term benefits which (it) may be worthwhile pursuing under certain circumstances.

Mr. Cook: You say the "long-term" benefits. Are you speaking politically or of trade? Because it is quite a possibility I would think, that if you are friendly again with Indonesia, there may be some possibility of trade coming this way. You have said a lot in the past that underlines that Singapore has to look after itself, and I think most people would agree with you on that. When you say the "long-term" benefits, are you thinking of trade or politics?

Prime Minister: Well, surely it must be in terms of survival. I mean trade is valuable insofar as it feeds our people and increases our national income. But if we take steps which end up with the Malaysian side of the one people coming to grief, then I think this is part of the implication behind the Yang di-Pertuan Negara's address: that Singapore, if it is unwise and shortsighted and plays (with) opportunist policies, may find itself surrounded by a hostile sea of obscurantist and xenophobic forces which will necessitate very drastic measures for survival. This situation should be prevented, it should never be allowed to arise. We must never forget our abiding destiny as part of the continent of Asia.

Mr. Cook: Again sir, I would like to get back to a tiny part of my first question. I don't think you answered that. Do you regard this as a sincere offer by Subandrio? Do you have any contact or anything behind-the-scenes (so) that you can gauge the sincerity of what is going on in Djakarta at the moment?

Prime Minister: As I have said, it is very unwise for anybody to pronounce on the sincerity or otherwise of an offer to talk and to come to

agreement. We can only assess the sincerity of an offer after we have put it to the test, in the actual details of the conditions on which they will cease to confront us. We are not confronting them: they are confronting us. And we would like to know it is that we can arrange a more amicable relationship.

But I don't want to dodge your other question. Yes, we have always been, from time to time...

Mr. Cook: I am talking about the sincerity of Dr. Subandrio

Prime Minister: I am unable to say that ...

Mr. Cook: But your past experience of him?

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Prime Minister: Well, I haven't met him since Malaysia. It is over two years.

I don't know... I expect he has got his own policies. I don't know how far they have been altered or changed in the new circumstances of Indonesia, and how far the new situation between Malaysia and Britain and us -- as three sovereign and independent countries engaged in the defence of

Singapore and Malaysia against confrontation -- I don't know how far these things have altered the policy, the objectives. We will have to wait and see. I will tell you all about it when I discover it. I don't know... I hope he is sincere. If he is, then there will be some value....

Mr. Killon: Mr. Prime Minister, under what conditions would you meet with the Indonesian Government at this time?

Prime Minister: Conditions? I will meet anybody anytime, any place to seek pace.

Mr. Killen: They would now...?

Prime Minister: Why should we lay conditions down?

Mr. Bloodworth: Now that the offer has been made by Dr. Subandrio, what do you see as the next step then? Is there any move that you would take in order to say, "Yes, we are prepared to meet you", or in order that the two parties should come together?

Prime Minister: Well, you know, from time to time, they make us overtures -- it is all very discreet -- and from time to time we give responses to these overtures. And no doubt, if they wish to pursue the matter further, an overture will be made. And I have already indicated that our response will be one of sincerely desiring peace without jeopardising our security, our integrity, and the survival of the one people now in two countries.

Mr. Cook: Would you expect to consult the British at the same time as you are consulting with say, Djakarta?

Prime Minister: Don't you think that would make me a neo-colonialist nation?

Mr. Cook: Not necessarily. I can think of

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Prime Minister: But, before we come to any decision which would affect Britain's interests or would jeopardise the interests of the people of Malaysia, I think we would be very unwise not to consult Britain -- if Britain's interests were in any way involved. And certainly, it would not just be unwise I think it

would be criminal folly if we allowed the Malaysians who are one people with us to go down the drain -- without considering what their interests will be. I think the Government in Djakarta knows our stand on the basis long-term factors or survival, and within that framework it may still be worthwhile to come to certain adjustments.

Bill Gasson: Before you meet with any Indonesians, anywhere, any time, would you expect Indonesia to formally recognise Singapore as an independent state?

Prime Minister: I don't think we really mind whether people recognise us, or don't recognise us. We are here to stay. The majority of the world recognises us, and those who don't recognise us, well, it is up to them. China has existed as a Communist Republic for 16 years; she has not been hindered by the fact that a large part of the world doesn't recognise her; and, in the same way, we have got so many friends in Afro-Asia and the Commonwealth....

Mr. Gasson: I thought this was brought up very early after the withdrawal from Malaysia.

Prime Minister: Yes, that was at another phase. You see, that was the early phase when, if Indonesia had shown a willingness, (been) forthcoming in welcoming us into the ranks of Afro-Asian nations, it would have helped so much to settle our problems of legitimacy as an Afro-Asian nation. But she don't do that. So we had to do it the hard way: convince all Afro-Asian nations, almost one by one in the United Nations and at Afro Asian gatherings. Well, that's been done, and whether a few countries around us or elsewhere recognise us or not I think is of little consequence now. We are here to stay and we have every intention of staying here for the next thousand years.

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Mr. Gasson: While we are on this relationship between Singapore and Indonesia, could I bring up the question of barter trade. There have been a lot of rumours that it might start soon, and that perhaps the Malaysian Government doesn't look too kindly on

this scheme. Could you perhaps give us the position as at present?

Prime Minister: I find it an extremely difficult question at present, because the matter is under close scrutiny first by the defence experts: British, Malaysian and ours. Security, defence must be assured. And when that is clear, then we can make such arrangements as we like to re-open trade or do whatever we want to do. Part of sovereignty is the right to decide what to do in relation to other countries. I don't know that made you say that the Malaysians were looking askance at this barter trade.....?

Bill Gasson: I didn't say askance, but they must have surely some reservations about this, and I think.....

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Prime Minister: Well, I am told by my colleagues, the Minister of Defence, that their objection is not (to) trade. They have no objections to trade at all. They are only worried about security, and I think we ought to go out of our way to assure them on the security aspect.....

Mr. Cook: Could I put it this way? It is suggested on many sides that you rather jumped the gun in announcing this instead of going through the channels first, and thereby put up the back of the Tengku; and possibly, there are bigger arguments now than if you had done it in a quieter way at the beginning.

Prime Minister: You know, I don't follow this kind of an argument. Who is responsible for Singapore? Who am I responsible to, in respect of Singapore? Am I responsible to the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Harold Wilson, for the survival of the people of Singapore? Must I consult Mr. Harold Wilson in trade and other matters which have very little concern with Mr. Harold Wilson?

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I understand the desire for wanting to be correct. But I think we don't want to be hypocritical about this. After all the hard feelings over so many months now (and) over the last few years....., what we can achieve would be a matter-of-fact relationship which would be polite, courteous, correct. There are long-term problems which are inter-related. But I

can't go and consult Mr. Harold Wilson before I brush my teeth in the morning, can I?

I can't ask him whether I can brush my teeth! These are things I have the right to do. I mean, I am independent or I am not. If I am not, then I am a satellite; If I am a satellite, which is the parent country? Britain? Do you want me to be a satellite of Britain? Where do we go from there? What kind of a creature would we be in the international world? What would happen to all our Afro-Asian friends if they were to come to the conclusion that we are a satellite, not even of Britain, but of something not as big as Britain? Are you seriously suggesting that I should consult Mr. Harold Wilson before I decide either to expand or contract trade with any country?

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Mr. Cook: No, No, No. I am not suggesting that..... What I am saying is that it has been said on many sides.....

Prime Minister: This is a free world.....

Mr. Cook: ... that you could have done it in a quieter way, without provoking Malaysia into saying, "We will stop it" -- even before they knew what it was all about!

Prime Minister: Now that, I think, discloses a very valuable link to the problems which arise in this region. It is not a matter of the rights and wrongs of it. It is a question of who decides; isn't it? And the first thing about sovereignty is -- he who is sovereign decides. Surely that is one of the first principles in this new game of chess: now, there are three sides. Before, there was Malaysia on the one side, and Britain on the other side. Now there are three sides: Malaysia, Britain and us. We are the smallest of the three connected with the security and defence of Malaysia and Singapore which we can see, straightaway is closely interwoven. But let this never be forgotten: it does not mean that the smallest can be overlooked, that it can be treated as a satellite. This is important. And, what you have conceded by the way you framed that question is that, in fact, ... if there is any objection, it is not because there is something to object to.

It is because of wanting to be "one up", one --
upsmanship”....

Mr. Cook: The way that you did it -- yes ...

Prime Minister: No, no, no ... Can we go back to the question: can I brush
my teeth without asking Mr. Wilson ...

Mr. Cook: I am not going to argue with you ...

Mr. Killen: I don't think you can compare Harold Wilson and the Tengku.
There is a different relationship between you and Harold
Wilson, and the Tengku.

Prime Minister: There is a different relationship between me and Harold
Wilson?

Mr. Killen: ... and the Tengku.

Prime Minister: ... and Harold Wilson and the Tengku? Or is it between me
and theTengku?

Mr. Killen: You and the Tengku ...

Prime Minister: I see ... Can I start off this way? Is there the same relationship between Harold Wilson and I, and Harold Wilson and the Tengku? Is it the same, do you think?

Mr. Killen: Possibly, but ...

Prime Minister: Possibly. But you think the Tengku's relationship with Harold Wilson is different from that which he has, or which he wants to establish, with Singapore?

Mr. Killen: I think the Tengku ...

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Prime Minister: No, no ... You are the man that is putting this serious suggestions that I am less than independent.

Mr. Cook: Would you say you are more friendly with Mr. Wilson than you are, at the moment, with the Tengku?

Prime Minister: No, no ... This is a pure ... I have always been more friendly with Mr. Harold Wilson because he is a socialist and so am I. But that is neither here nor there ... We will always be cordial and polite and correct ...

Mr. Bloodworth: Can I ask you in this connection -- if we can take it away a little -- something about the other side of the question. That is to say, whether you think there is a possibility that Dr. Subandrio's proposals might, in fact, bring Singapore and Malaysia closer together rather than the reverse. I noticed, in the Yang di-Pertuan Negara's address, that there is a reference to the fact no common market can possibly be expected between the two countries. Do you think that with this problem over barter on the one hand, and the sort of proposals coming out of Djakarta on the other, that possibly Malaysia may modify her attitude on the question of economic relationships with Singapore, and there might generally, be a getting together a little bit more, making the relationship rather happier than it has been?

Prime Minister: I doubt it myself, because I think these are attitudes which Arthur Cook has so vividly described. That it is not a question of whether it is right or wrong, but of whether one feels (one is) one-up, and should be consulted before you brush your teeth or not ... This is really, not the relationships of what I would call the open society, but the relationships of a courtly society, where the twinkle of an eye, the nod of the chin, or the way in which the eyebrows are curled up are meaningful gestures ... They are lots of plebian societies, proletarian types of societies like Singapore. And I think we have just got to come to more working relationships. If I understood your question just now, there was a faint suggestion that we might well use the economic possibilities which will accrue from rapport with Indonesia, as a means whereby that (rapport) is abjured in exchange for rapport with Malaysia.

Mr. Bloodworth: Yes, naturally ...

Prime Minister: Well, I would say straightaway that I would consider such a policy to be completely unprincipled and unwise. I don't think ...

Mr. Bloodworth: I'm sorry ... which policy? ...

Prime Minister: Any policy on the part of Singapore to say well, in place of rapport with Indonesia, let us have rapport with Malaysia. I don't think that is a fruitful or meaningful policy. We want rapport with Malaysia, regardless of our position with Indonesia; and we want rapport with Indonesia regardless of our position with Malaysia.

Mr. Bloodworth: I meant though: would you think that the possibility of that rapport with Indonesia would bring from Malaysia an initiative in this direction?

Prime Minister: I don't know ...

Not that you should turn to Malaysia and say, "Ah, if you don't do business with me now, look, I have got another chum on the other side."

No As I know the present Malaysian Government, the leaders of Malaysia ... and I have known them for some time now -- I don't think that is the way they would react.

As I have said, it is a very courtly-minded sort of leadership in terms of what is right and wrong behaviour. And I wouldn't expect them to come dashing up and to say, " Here is another offer". No: I don't think so at all.

Mr. Cook: Has the Malaysian Government in any way tried, to let us

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say, get nearer you, or let us say, (nearer) Singapore, to?

Prime Minister: How much nearer can we get? We are (only) 254 miles (apart) already; it is that close. And how much nearer can we get?

Mr. Cook: Yes ... but I mean in talking. I think you will agree, Mr. Prime Minister, that the rift is pretty wide now. Do they ever make any attempt, or do you make any attempt, with the Tengku for instance, through emissaries or any other way, to try and get these two, you two together a little more?

Prime Minister: You know, I think it is rather unbecoming, my discussing purely personal relationships ...

Mr. Cook: I wasn't thinking of any personal ... As I said ...

Prime Minister: As far as the government-to-government relationship is concerned, I would say no stone is being left unturned in the putting forward of offer after offer. If one is not found attractive, we churn it up in a different arrangement -- add a few, subtract a few -- and on balance, offer them what we think is still a fair deal. And so it goes on. And we will continue, and we will persist and persevere to the end of time.

Mr. Cook: Do you get the same from them?

Prime Minister: Well, they are slightly different in the approach ... They don't make quick adjustments; you know, (if) one offer (is) rejected, then immediately it is recast, re-formulated and re-offered in another form with changes and modifications ... I don't think that is their style of working and therefore ... The frequency of the offer is more on our side ... But that means nothing at all. It just means we are that sort of people. I mean, if you don't like it this way, then we will present it another way -- provided we give nothing of the bull points away. And the bull points are -- first, we are independent; second, we have got the right, in any exchange, to have a quid pro quo. There is to be no giving away without some 'give' on the other side. There must be mutual benefit.

Mr. Gasson: On this barter trade; just to sum up Mr. Prime Minister, you said that he who is sovereign decides. Well, being sovereign, has Singapore decided when to resume barter trade with Indonesia?

Prime Minister: I would say that we have decided on the fact of barter trade long ago.

Mr. Gasson: Is there any date set, or is it?

Prime Minister: As I have said, I have no intention of prejudicing what is going on at the moment. We would like to bear in mind the interwoven nature of our defence arrangements and so on. We would loathe to do anything which anybody would say would upset the defence structure. And if it has to be upset, we cannot be responsible for having been the cause of it. No avenue must be left unturned to try and preserve the co-operation ...

Mr. Cook: But you said that if it has to be upset, you cannot be the cause of it. Does this mean that you would, perhaps, not go on if it would upset, or does this mean that if it is upset, well?

Prime Minister: You are trying to ask me to tell you the decision of the Singapore Government before we have arrived at that decision!

Questioner: I was trying to get at the attitude, the frame of mind ...

Prime Minister: No, the frame of mind is quite simple. We have said: defence and security is closely inter-woven between Singapore and Malaysia. That is premise number one.

Premise number two -- defence and security is indivisible from trade and industry. But that premise number two will have to be left over for some time until the meaning percolates through.

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We would hate to do anything to upset premise number one, or to do anything which would go against that premise -- the oneness of the defence and security of the region. So long as there is any way in which we can live, we are viable, we are sound -- well we'll carry on.

But, to be viable and to be sound, we've got to live; and to live we've got to have markets and trade with all the world -- not just with Indonesia. The Indonesian trade was 8.7% of our national income. And we have made that up. But that is not the point.

There is a bigger principle at stake. Can somebody tell my people, that they will not trade with Russia, for instance? It may well come to that if we concede on one small point. Then, you know, there will be other objections on other points.

Supposing, let's say by way of example, both the East European countries and the Asian Communist countries decided, for a diversity of reasons, to expand their trade with Singapore. Now, we already have premise No.2 -- trade and industry is not separable from defence and security. But unfortunately, that premise has not been quite accepted yet, by some of the three partners in this defence arrangement: Britain, Malaysia, Singapore. Well, so we leave that aside. Now, let us suppose ... I am not saying

that this is likely or unlikely -- we don't know: we will have to wait and see -- but (if) Eastern Europe and Russia set up enormous training agencies here and, in that event, let us say China, North Korea, North Vietnam or the Mongolian Republic and so on, decided to do likewise ... Now, if I can't trade with Indonesia because Mr. Harold Wilson tells me that I can't trade with Indonesia. Well, Mr. Harold Wilson will come round and say, "But you can't trade with Russia -- it is dangerous! My bases will disappear!" Well, then I will turn around to Mr. Harold Wilson and (say), "I told you so -- that defence and security is not divisible from commerce and industry" We should have all these things in mind: that there must be a certain arrangement whereby Britain lives, and we live; and we are accustomed to living in relatively affluent terms in this corner of Asia. So you see, a lot of patience and perserverance is required before the penny will drop, as the saying goes, on this second premise.

Mr. Cook: Mr. Prime Minister, as we are switching more on the commerce -- How is Singapore doing now, commercially? On one side, you hear that we are doing wonderfully

everything is going along, swinging along here. On the other side, you hear some pessimists say, "Ah, but things are slowing up. Jurong is not going forward fast enough".-- Exactly how are we doing here?

Prime Minister: I think you should listen to the Minister for Finance's speech on Monday afternoon. I would say (from) what I have seen of the speech that it is a realistic appraisal. We intend to conceal nothing from our own people nor from our friends throughout the world -- in the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

Mr. Cook: So you are not going to ...

Prime Minister: No ... We are an open society. Our trade indices are open. There are monthly statistical returns. You can check whether a statement that has been issued is general euphoria or soundly based. I would say that once we establish some relationship with those who are interested in our long term survival as a non-Communist nation, and certain markets are

opened slightly to allow the passage of our goods, we will get along.

Mr. Bloodworth: Have you had reactions, Mr. Prime Minister, to that sort of proposal ... I mean, this plan which we have heard about, which envisages that certain countries which have an interest in Singapore will in fact open their markets (and) make special exceptions, in some cases, to let Singapore goods come in?

Prime Minister: No, no. It is not a matter of "special exceptions". I gave this example of tyres, for instance, and Commonwealth preference.

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I am not asking for something over and above what Australia gives Britain. I am just asking for the same as what Australia gives Britain. If British tyres can go in on Commonwealth preference, surely, we who have put ourselves into this open position of mutual defence and mutual help can? ... What good is all this mutual defence and mutual help if I have gone under the sea? Buying a few tyres won't hurt them. And I

am not asking for something special -- just (for) what they give Britain. Am I not a member of the Commonwealth? Or is it (that) Commonwealth preference means only white Commonwealth, and so on? I think we are on fairly rational grounds, and I would be surprised if the Commonwealth consisted of irrational leaders I think they are very rational people.

Mr. Bloodworth: But weren't you thinking also, to some extent, in terms of the United States, for example, as a market? After all, as a country which has an interest in the stability of Singapore also?

Prime Minister: Yes ... And I would think that they are learning very quickly.

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You know, they learn. The Americans are intelligent people, and when they find they have got to buy goods instead of buying people -- as they do in some other parts of Asia -- it may be cheaper in the long run for them.

Mr. Bloodworth: Have you had any sort of favourable reaction from the countries which you particularly envisage?

Prime Minister: I think a formal reaction must await a formal proposal; and a formal proposal will be forth-coming the moment we have crystallised a pilot plan for certain specific products which we are manufacturing and which we feel can enter this network of commonwealth preference.

Mr. Cook: But sometime ago, I rather got the impression, probably it wasn't only me, that you had a great personal bitterness towards the Americans. I think it was when we were on television some time ago ...

Prime Minister: My personal bitterness is irrelevant in matters of national policy.

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Mr. Cook: How are the relations now? Are they improving at the moment, do you think? Because at that time it was at an all time low: you were just slanging at Washington, sir.

Prime Minister: No slanging at Washington

Mr. Cook: Well, they were slanging with you

Prime Minister: Putting the respective positions right ... One does not conduct national affairs on the basis of personal likes and dislikes. If you do that, then you perish. Whether I like Mr. Arthur Cook personally or otherwise is irrelevant to my policy with Britain and the Daily Mail. And if I want to get into the Daily Mail, however much I dislike Mr. Arthur Cook, I am nice and polite to him. Mind you, I don't have to give you a drink at the same time. But I can stay polite. Sometimes when you know the other chap ... You know, after a paper has been maligning you and so on, you can give him a dose once in a while to remind him, and yet continue amicable relations. We have got to grow up in this world. Where we are born, in this part of Asia, we grow up very quickly. It doesn't matter to us at all whether the other man likes us or doesn't. We just carry on business.

Mr. Bloodworth: On the other side, Mr. Prime Minister, you did mention the hypothesis of the greater interest in Eastern Europe and Russia in Singapore. Has anything in fact come of the early

tentative exchanges on the subject? Are we going to have a Russian mission ...?

Prime Minister: Yes. There will be. We just discussed it the other day, when my colleagues came back -- Dr. Toh, Mr. Rajaratnam and Rahim Ishak. We had an appraisal made and the times at which the various missions will come next year. Because we want to space them out so that we can give each and every mission our full attention.

Mr. Bloodworth: These would be visiting missions, would they?

Prime Minister: I would say that the Russian mission would stay. A few leading figures will probably come and visit and then go; but it is a firm mission as far as I was made to understand; and we welcome it. We have told them. We have written to them formally and said, "please come".

Mr. Bloodworth: And has any arrangement been agreed upon yet in terms of Russian economic interest here? There have been some rumours that, for example, the Soviet Union would offer

certain types of installation in Singapore -- you know, offer to set them up completely here ...

Prime Minister: No. I think we will first get the Russian to come and visit us, assess what their attitudes should be, in view of what their interests are, and our potentials in relation to their interests.

They have separate and independent objectives -- separate (from) Britain, Australia and New Zealand; separate from Indonesia; and separate from other big powers in Asia and America. We are prepared to trade with them. And I think we have got to size each other up, and they have got to size us up as to whether we offer any long-term possibilities.

And we welcome them sizing us up.

National Archives of Singapore

Mr. Cook: (Regarding) long term possibilities Mr. Prime Minister: is it a policy of the Singapore Government to perhaps put some accent on being more friendly with the Communist side of the world than perhaps many other countries have in the past?

Prime Minister: I don't think there is any necessity for us to change our attitudes. Our attitudes were formulated in the early '50's, on the basis of being friendly to all: on the basis that Russia is there to stay, and China is there to stay, and so is North Korea and North Vietnam and lots of other parts of the world; and that we are going to live with them. It is not within our dispensation to decide whether they are to survive or they are to go under; and we assume that they will be there for the next thousand years and we will live with them. Similarly with Britain, the West -- they are there. We want to trade with them, live with them. But we want to stay out of either the East or the West. We just like to be ourselves. And I think we are in that particular phase in history where we have gone through the dullest phase -- when non-alignment was an immoral act. I think the Americans now realise that, in certain parts of the world, non-alignment may be a jolly good thing for them, because it saves them the cost of involvement. And it is not all that far-fetched Quite a number on the other side of the world -- the Russians and eventually even others besides the Russians -- may decide that non-involvement of countries like Singapore, and even

Malaysia, may be in their long-term interests. And that will suit us all fine.

Mr. Killen: Mr. Prime Minister, to get just on the one other subject here -- the situation in South Vietnam has changed considerably during the last 6 months. The American commitment has increased. What are your views now, towards that country?

Prime Minister: My views are exactly what they were six months ago. I think it is a very grim situation, because the will to resist is largely imported; the capacity to resist is also largely imported; but, what alternative is there for the time being? And I can only hope that we are not just buying time; but that the Americans will be able to do something besides just shooting everybody up; and, that at the end of it all, a coherent self will emerge consisting of Vietnamese ... And, whether they want to come together with North Vietnam or whether they want to stay distinct and separate -- I hope that the South Vietnamese will determine. But the first prerequisite is that nobody should impose a solution on South Vietnam as to what South Vietnamese should do.

Mr. Bloodworth: If we could turn to internal, political matters for a moment, Mr. Prime Minister, There have been rather interesting developments on the left-wing front. On the one-hand, the Barisan Sosialis have boycotted the opening of the Legislative Assembly -- as somewhat extremist action perhaps -- on the other hand, Mr. Lim Chin Siong, it appears, is taking a divergent view from some of the colleagues and one that has been described, for the sake of shorthand, as the pro-Soviet as against the pro-Chinese view. In other words, one of peaceful co-existence rather than active revolution. I wonder how you assess these two rather divergent events in the left-wing world of Singapore.

Prime Minister: I think it is a schism that was inevitable. It was in the making fairly early on, even in the 1960-1961 phase. They were at that time pursuing the soft line you remember -- hoping thereby, to capture the PAP and then go on to capture the Government. Well, that didn't work. And the question then arose for them whether they should go back to revolution. And I think those who were outside decided that they would

go on with the revolution and treat this constitutionalism just as a side-line. And, there were some, like Lim Chin Siong, who believed that this was futile and would lead to more unhappiness for them. But I think it is left to history to decide who is right and who is wrong. I am quite sure that both sides are wrong; that in this part of the world, neither brand of Marxism- Leninism is going to succeed. I think it is just who is more wrong, that is all. I think, fortunately for us, the chaps who are outside peddling this hard line -- you know, Singapore's independence is phoney; its existence is phoney; its policies are Fascist, and it should recognise and exchange diplomatic representation with Indonesia and China to the exclusion of all other; and the resolution and so on which they have put forward for debate and from which they have absented themselves in order not to debate it -- I think they are probably less sane than the other side. Well, bad luck to them.

Pressmen: Thank you very much.