

TRANSCRIPT OF THE SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER MR. LEE
KUAN YEW, IN ENGLISH AT THE SERANGOON GARDENS CIRCUS ON
SATURDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 1965.

Friends and fellow citizens,

May I briefly sum up the points which I made (in Malay).

First, the conditions obtained two and a half years ago, in June 1963, when I came here, and the conditions today are entirely different. The world has changed -- and changed very much for us.

Now, to begin with, we are responsible for our own separate destiny: we are independent. Not that we sought it; but independence was thrust upon us. As the saying goes, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness; some have greatness thrust upon them". Similarly, we had independence thrust upon us ...

And if it must be so, then I say, "Right. So be it. It is mine: I keep it; I defend it -- for you, for me". It belongs to all Singaporeans.

We wanted Malaysia to belong to all Malaysians. It led to a lot of trouble, a lot of debate, threats of blood-shed and so on. Finally, we got expelled. Never mind: that is not the end of the story. This is the beginning of a new chapter.

We start off, first, with Singapore, and make it a successful, multi-racial society. You know, there are two ways in which this thing can go. The other side plays communalism -- you know, nationalism disguised with emotional overtones appealing to one race, one language, one religion. And it leads to all kinds of adventures similar to what has happened in Indonesia. Wrapped up in the slogans of one language, one race, one religion, they went on the rampage. First, they went for the Dutch. Well, that's all right -- anti-colonialism. You grab the Dutch estates and chase them out. Then, having grabbed the factories and so on, you can't make them work because you haven't got the technicians, the skilled men ... It is like robbing a man of his Rolls Royce. It looks good.

Then you say, "Right, drive. I'm going to sit in the back". So, the man drives the Rolls Royce for you. But, he doesn't know quite how to drive, so the gears go wrong, the clutch goes wrong, he doesn't know how to clean the carburettor ... So that both you and he will soon be under the car, trying to fiddle around to make it work!

Then, instead of maintaining a stable currency where it is worth-while for people to come in -- fitters, mechanics, motor engineers -- you run into economic trouble. So you say, "Just don't worry. Print more notes". And the printing presses merrily print out more notes. So that today, if a shirt costs ten dollars, it will cost fifteen dollars the next week and, by the end of the year, one hundred dollars! The net result is nobody learns how to repair motorcars because that is too slow a way to make money, and instead of driving in the Rolls Royce, you and the driver will be pushing the Rolls Royce. Eventually, you get hold of two cows to pull your Rolls Royce. And then, you are on the downward path.

Then you say, "Ah, who has got money? Yes: the Chinese -- they have got money. They have shops. Loot the shops!" So, you chase them out, take their licences away, grab the sweets and the glitter and the gold in the shops.

But, the next week, when you're hungry and you go back to the shop, there will no longer be a shop-keeper with rice, vinegar and sugar to give you on credit whilst you are growing your padi. So there is disaster.

These things have been going on around us, and I have watched all with ever-growing anxiety as to our own immediate future. It was because of this that we sought Malaysia; sought for a rational basis, a solution in which everybody would get a share of what is left after one hundred-odd years of British rule ...

And it can work only if everybody is co-owner; and not if only one group make up the owners and the others are worker-ants for the benefit of the owners. That won't work.

Anyway, the end result was that we were kicked out of Malaysia after two years. And I say that we make it succeed -- from here. First, this belongs to all Singaporeans regardless of race, language, religion. Second, when there is progress, we ensure that the progress is spread equally, regardless of race, language, or religion. There will be the same schools for all, the same hospitals for all, the same low-cost housing for all -- regardless of whether you are brown, black, yellow, green or any other spectrum of the rainbow. Provided you are loyal, you belong, you intend to make this place tick, I say you are a partner with me in this enterprise. And, slowly, over the years, something is going to happen.

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You, see, either our neighbours make their own societies work, there is going to be a great deal of change. and when that moment of change comes, if we succeed as a multi-racial society, we are going to plant the thought in other minds throughout Southeast Asia that multi-racialism --a tolerant society-is the way forward.

The other way, of course, is as they play communalism, we play a counter-communalism. In this case, Chinese chauvinism. We can play it. We can play it very easily. 75 per cent of Singapore is Chinese. We can play a completely Chinese line. And I say we are then ready for a major disaster in Southeast Asia. It was because we have calculated the consequences of this that we have said: "No, let us be very careful about these things." And so, we tolerate each others' languages, even though it is a tiring business having to say what you have to say three times over! Sometimes, it is four times over: since I cannot speak the fourth, we get an interpreter in to speak the fourth: But that is the only way to keep this place together, and we have just got to be patient about it.

And, it will work. We have made it work over the last seven years. Seven years ago, this place was going down-hill. The government then was looting the place. Ministers became rich.

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If you take six-million dollars, your secretary is bound to feel unhappy, because he says, "Look, something is going on. I've got to get something for myself." So your secretary puts his hand in the kitty. He takes 600,000 dollars for himself. It is very modest: You take six million, he takes six hundred thousand! And you end up the messenger taking home the postage stamps! That means

collapse. You know, that's why in some countries the houses cost twice as much as ours and the schools cost twice as much. Why? They never explain to the Accountant-General. Every year, the Accountant-General finds lots of missing sums. He cannot explain why. The net result is that the country goes down.

You know, for seven years we had strikes, riots, last year, we had two race riots! This was the first time in our history. They never happened before.

But, even in the midst of all that race rioting, twice in that one year, our national income went up by 10.7 per cent. That's something, isn't it? There was a week of curfew, with dislocation --nobody travelling at night --and yet, at the end of the year, in December 1964, when the accounts were drawn up, we found that we had lost 8.7 of our national income via Indonesian confrontation, but that we had made up that 8.7 and gained 2% in our national income.

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What has made it possible? Sweat. We have planted the trees and even the grass under your feet. Effort is made. Having planted the grass, we have got to look after it, nurture it and cut it. It is only in this way that you have a civilised community. Then, children go to school, and the sick are cared for. And, out of this, a civilized, advanced society will emerge because we've got an industrious people. You never see chaps sitting under a tree waiting for gold

to drop down from the sky. If you've got people like that, you're finished.

Because then, you keep on asking for aid. You say, "Please, give me". Why?"

You say, "I'm poor. Give me".

That's no good. You'll never get on. We ask no favours from nobody. But, at the same time, we tell those who are interested in our survival -- and there are quite a few -- that if we go down, if this place goes like Cuba and becomes a Communist island in Southeast Asia, there will be a lot of unhappiness for a lot of people. So we say, "Look, the world does not owe us a living. We start off with that. At the same time, we owe the world nothing". And, to those of the world who have an interest in a stable, secure Southeast Asia the lynch-pin of which is Singapore, to them I will explain how we can keep Singapore stable,

And it's very simple. We have to create, in one year, an additional eight to ten thousand jobs by building new industries. We have calculated it. We know just how much we have ... This year, all boys and girls aged 18 will come out from vocational schools, secondary schools, universities and so on - looking for jobs. How many were born 18 years ago? You get the Register, look it up and you say, "Ah, 45-thousand". Not all will look for jobs. Some will get married -- the girls, for instance ... Some will be partially employed. But we have calculated that, over and above what our society now gives, we need another

eight to ten thousand jobs. To create those eight to ten thousand jobs, we have got to sell abroad 120-million dollars' worth of goods. That's chicken-feed, you know. It comes to only twelve-million pounds. And the British, the Australians, the New Zealanders are wealthy people -- including the Americans. And they have just got to buy.

As I told the Australians who buy tyres, "Buy our tyres -- Bridgestone. They are made in Jurong, and as good as any in the world. If you give the British Commonwealth preference, the British tyres can go in, well then, I'm in the Commonwealth; please give me the same preference. If you don't then we go down. And then, that's "cheerio" for you!" And they know it.

I don't know how it's going to work out, but the logic of it is irresistible. And what this requires is careful calculation, which we will do as a government, and hard work from you.

Because if you get people in the factories going on strike for no rhyme or reason, nobody is going to open a factory. I ask a man to risk his capital and his machinery, and he brings engineers, technicians, to make, for instance, gears ... We've been calculating; can make gears. It requires a lot of human labour to make gears; and in some parts of the world, human labour is very expensive.

So, the gears become very expensive. We can, therefore, bring the metals to Singapore and we can make gears. They are very small parts. We then put them in ships for Australia, New Zealand and other places and we say, "Please buy. It saves you the trouble. We make them."

But, to do that, you must have a disciplined lot of workers ... people who understand what is at stake. And I'll tell you what is at stake -- your life and mine! If we fail -- never mind what happens to the Australians and the New Zealanders and the rest of the Free World --- and you and I are going to have a bad time --- I do not intend to fail, and I'm quite sure you don't, So we dig our toes in and take on whoever wants to take us on. This is ours. You were born here, I was born here -- this is mine, this is yours; we will build on it.

We have already built so much. We just cannot afford to run away and abandon this. If anybody disputes my claim to this, I say "Over my dead body" -- and I mean it!

That is why every time I see our young men doing the lion dance, full of vigour I say, "Three cheers for Singapore". That means more muscle to us! It is very necessary.

If you want your neighbours to be peace-loving, you have get it give them an inducement to be friendly and peace-loving. Because if they believe that we are weak, feeble, effete, and they see all this relative wealth in the midst of their own poverty, the temptation maybe too great for them! ...

In some parts of Southeast Asia -- Just go outside six or seven miles away --you come across real squalor. There are people now, in some of the islands around us, who have not even adequate fresh water. They used to come to Singapore to get fresh water. They've got lots of dirty rubber, copra, and so on, which they now don't know what to do with. And when they come here -- and they used to come here -- and they see television sets, nice suits, neck-ties in the shop-window, cakes and meat in the shops, they say, "Ah, this is a nice place". We say, "Yes, Come again to buy, please -- cash down. If you have no cash, never mind. Bring in the goods, we will exchange. But don't believe that by just pulling out a knife or a gun that I'm going to put my hands up and deliver all to you".

We have to leave our neighbours in no doubt that we are prepared to fight for what we have. Then we shall be left in peace. So, this year, we will train a few thousands volunteers -- a People's Defence Force. It is very necessary.

Work by day, train by night. Drop your hawker's pitch at the sound of a whistle, pick up your gun and run -- to fight.

Our Vigilantes work for nothing. And they require only a bit of drilling to put guts into them. Six months of it and you'll see them, chest up, stomach in, chin in, and knowing how to use whatever you will ... We start off with all old-fashioned guns ... The British, Australians, New Zealanders will give us free World War I rifles, World War II rifles, all out of date. Never mind. Let's start off with that. We can buy all these weapons, you know. It is no trouble at all. But you must learn how to use a weapon and use it effectively as the need arises.

And, within the next few years, we will leave nobody with any temptation in their minds. When they think of Singapore, they say, "What a nice, lovely place". We say, "Yes. Please come and buy again".

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They must not think of Singapore and say, "Ah, one day I'll form a gang, and we'll go back there and pick it up". That's no good for you and for me. And what we have built is worth keeping in Southeast Asia.

I've been around a lot of places in this part of the world, and I can tell you quite frankly there isn't a better place.

You can go to more posh hotels in other capitals in Southeast Asia. But the moment you step out of that hotel, you step out into filth, degradation and squalor. You don't do that in Singapore. You step out, and you still step out into relatively civilised society. Ten years from now, it will be better than now. Today, it is immensely better than it was ten years ago. It is better, even, than last year. And it is ours, provided we've got enough sense to be together, and nobody can keep down an industrious people to work and fight for its future.

If you start chasing each other, fighting each other, beating each other up because one is a Muslim, the other a non-Muslim and one does not eat pork and one does, that is the end of the works: it means misery for all.

If we succeed, all will succeed -- whether you are a Malay, whether you are an Indian, whether you are a Chinese, whether you are a Eurasian. What we have, we can build on only if we tolerate each other. And it is worthwhile doing it, for that way lies prosperity and security.

And finally, when we succeed, our neighbours must sooner or later be influenced. They will seek similar methods. If xenophobic slogans exhorting one race, one language, one religion, leading to the attempt to exclude all

others, end up in tears, then they will start again and try it our way. And we owe it to them to give example of what can be achieved.

11th December, 1965.

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