TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY MR. LEE KUAN YEW ON "ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY" AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE HELD ON 24TH NOVEMBER, 1966.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was in two minds this afternoon as to the manner of my approach to my subject this evening. Either I took the University of Singapore and my students -- namely, Singapore Citizens in the University -- seriously, in which case I would do them the courtesy of knowing my subject, meeting them as equal intellectually, and reason, argue, convince or be convinced; or take them lightly as "light-weights", as students, as people who go to meetings more to be entertained than to be informed, more to be hilarious than to be intellectually stimulated.

I decided that I would take my own people seriously.

I spent three hours today in which I collected all my thoughts, went through all my voluminous correspondence with the whole series of Academic Staff Associations, vice-chancellors, students' union and read up the history of academic freedom in the Encyclopaedia Britannica and in other journals where people attempt seriously to define what they are talking about and not talk in terms of slogans ... From academic freedom which is tied up with the Suitability Certificate, it became "Down with the Thong Saw Pak report"; Down with the Wang Gungwu report"; "Down with the police"; "Down with the government"; "Down with authority"; "Why is Chinese Culture and civilization being obliterated".

And it is because you continue to live in your own little cocoon, divorced and unaware of the realities of life, that you continually lend yourselves as cover -- sometimes consciously and knowingly, at other times unwittingly -- for people who cynically talk about academic freedom when their examples of freedom are those from climates which would not suit you, such as Peking and the Red Guards, but who are skilful and cynical enough to know that academic freedom means nothing to the masses and spice it up with Wang Gungwu, Thong Saw Pak, "elimination of Chinese medium", "elimination of Chinese culture" and a mobilisation of mass action.

Since this is a meeting sponsored by the Historical Society, let me approach the subject of academic freedom in the University with some of the depth with which scholars try to present their ideas.

Do you know if we had called this the Academy of Singapore, all these things would not have arisen. It is because we chose to call this a University that it evokes a whole wealth of ideas -- Oxford and Cambridge really, you know, because they are, in the British Commonwealth and in all the former British colonies, the par excellence of what a University should be.

This started off as a Teachers' Training College called Raffles College. Then it joined up with the King Edward VII College of Medicine. After the war, there were hopes of making a real University after the style of Oxford and Cambridge. Carr-Saunders came and studied the problem. He thought of siting it in Johore, on a piece of high ground overlooking the Straits with a beautiful campus, quandrangles, students in residence: graceful living and high thinking.

It was never to be. And so you have the higgledy-piggledy block of buildings here, Dunearn Road hostel across, meant really to be sold. That is why it was built like that. The block was not meant for hostels, but only for

temporary accommodation and, when they moved across to Johore Bahru, all that would be sold as a housing estate and a proper University would be erected.

But even whilst Carr-Saunders was thinking those ideas out -- and he is dead now -- those ideas became obsolete in his own country. And what is now known as the Red Brick Universities came to the forefront.

Britain found herself overtaken by Russia and by America in the production of scientists and technologists. And she had a series of parliamentary commissions to decide what to do about the future of her own population.

Those were the early beginnings. Nobody had really thought about what kind of University this was going to be or what would be its role in servicing the community from whom taxes would be collected to sustain it at a very high cost. It costs nearly $7,000 per annum for one medical student, and $3,500 to $4,000 per annum for one non-medical student. No one thought on what it was designed to achieve.

Carr-Saunders and the report went down the drain because Malaya became independent in 1957, decided to scrap the idea of an Oxford style

University overlooking the Straits of Johore, and built up Petaling Jaya. It truncated this University and moved as many of the faculties as it could across.

Meanwhile in 1955, tremendous agitation began for the establishment of a Chinese language university.

At that time, two-thirds of our students -- and probably almost as many of the students in Malaya -- were in the Chinese-language schools. When they finished their Senior Middle III -- which is the equivalent of the Higher School Certificate -- they had nowhere to go. Against an enormous amount of official antipathy and antagonism and obstructionism, they collected funds and built a campus which today -- having just visited it recently -- would I think have been a credit to the University of Singapore ... But this is part of history ... And they built it on sheer public enthusiasm.

But, the scales have turned. Even as they worked up enthusiasm for that, partly because of job opportunities, partly because of the realities of the situation in SOUTHEAST ASIA, and partly because of our education policies, more and more parents were switching their children from the Chinese-language to the English-language schools. And now, for every one boy that goes to the Chinese-language school, two go to the English-language stream.

So if it was only a sheer counting of heads and numbers, you stand a fairly good chance -- except that, when it really comes to the crunch, it is not numbers that count. It is the quality of the digits -- each individual digit -- that decides whether one side or the other gives way. I have seen nothing in the last 15 years to dissuade me from the inevitable conclusion that although the virtues of an English language education are giving our multi-racial community a common media, a common milieu, perhaps even common values, it at the same time detracts from the verve and vitality, the cultural impetus of the people which the non-deculturalised groups have.

I would like to discuss this problem first in abstractum.

What is a University; what are its relations to society? How did this phrase "academic freedom" come to mean what it means to you?

When people talk about academic freedom -- the English-speaking people, British people -- they refer to a system of education which grew up in Britain. It is conveniently collected in one document, the Robbins Report of 1961/1963. And he would be the first to admit that he was talking purely about the English system of University education.

I will read to you from page 230 of the Report, "Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Command 2154" -- all for 15 shillings ... You will probably find it in your library. Robbins says in paragraph 708:- "It must be granted that the position that most of us would certainly not call academic freedom is compatible with much that is excellent both in education and in research" ... He is referring to institutions across Europe where different systems prevail where the rectors of a University -- and some Universities like the one I saw in Prague are older than Oxford and Cambridge -- are appointed by the State ... And I read further: "The position of many institutions of higher education abroad, with their syllabuses, their appointments and their expenditure all subject to immediate, and sometimes detailed, control by the State, is certainly not a position of academic freedom in the sense in which it is understood here (meaning Britain). Yet it would be absurd to deny the quality of much that is done in such institutions, both in teaching and in the advancement of knowledge. Their contribution to the heritage of western culture is undeniable. Nevertheless, it is a cardinal feature of academic tradition in this country, (namely Britain) to distrust such arrangements and to regard them as fraught with real danger to the foundations of free societies. The quality of the work done elsewhere is not denied by responsible persons. But it is held that this quality is achieved in spite of, rather than because of, such conditions. And that experience shows what dangers they imply."

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The first thing I want to bring in you focus is the fact that this is a peculiarly British concept -- that a university is something sacrosanct. Not even in American social systems does it occupy the same place. And any scientist, any astro-physicist, will tell you that the quality of the work that is being done in Russian universities is equal to that which is being done in British and American universities. And even in Peking, where the Red Guards are going rampaging, those who are in charge of China's nuclear physics and guided missiles are left quietly outside the cultural revolution.

So, do not believe that you are quoting a universal truth when you say, "University autonomy, academic freedom". It is not. It is a peculiarly British concept and one which has been followed in varying degrees throughout the English-speaking world -- in Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada and, in lesser degree, in the non-white parts of the Commonwealth such as Malaysia, Singapore and Africa.

How did this system arise? If you can be bothered as historians -- as I believe some of the students this evening are students of history -- then you will know that this is a peculiar evolution between State and church, between scholarship and administration, which grew up in a British society. They were

given Charters; they were ancient monastries. If you go to the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, you will know that they were originally built as monastries, with walled colleges, closed gates, no women inside; with wine in the cellar, celibates living in quadrangles, churches for prayers, libraries. The University having got its Charter, gave its own degrees to which the State either chose to give heavy or lesser consideration. Eventually, a system developed in which the English gentry found that this was one way of breeding an elite. From private schools which they called "Public schools", where they are carefully tutored and nurtured, they sent their children to the great universities in Britain to be educated and then to be inducted into the civil services, the foreign service, public life, the Army, the Navy and so on.

So you have a whole social system interwoven into these universities. They are not distinct and separate from their society. And, as part of a great centre of empire, they take in a few 'coloured' students from India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Singapore and latterly, after the war, from Africa. They bred an elite designed to serve a British society, inculcated when you are there with traditions and values to make you a commander of men.

If was not designed to create a breed of scholars who are going to spend their time studying the universe and searching after truth. Of course, there is the

Cavendish Laboratory; of course, Russian nuclear physicists also studied in the Cavendish Laboratories. But they were nurtured and cultivated because they bred successive generations of rulers. And their teachers -- of course, you have the odd ones, the very brilliant Jew who ran away from Hitlerite Germany or Austria -- but they are all Englishmen determined to nurture British tradition. And, you don't need to tell the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford what he has to do to ensure that these traditions are maintained. He knows! You do not have to tell him!

There is a quiet appreciation of the role that is not spelt out in a book of words. Those of you who are Law students know MacNaughten's Rules on when madness exculpates a man from murder ... And I have seen it in operation here -- how lawyers, who are not bred in that tradition, go according to the book of words and murderers are acquitted. But those who know the spirit of the Law as the Recorder of Cambridge did, one Sir Roland Burrows -- no man who was ever convicted by him, succeeded on the appeal. He was a real lawyer. By the time he had decided what to do, he had drawn up a judgement and had taken the notes of evidence in such a way that you had no chance. You were sure to hang.

And some of our judges, sad to say, often want to hang and don't know how. This is true.

Now, I want to read to you what an American publication -- but again largely the British, the English-speaking tradition -- calls academic freedom. And this is the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences to which I referred some of your students when they saw me recently. "It is the freedom of the teacher or research worker in higher institutions of learning to investigate and discuss the problems of his science and to express his conclusions whether through publication or in the instruction of students without interference from political or ecclesiastical authority or from the administrative officials of the institutions in which he is employed, unless his methods are found by qualified bodies of his own profession to be clearly incompetent or contrary to professional ethics. The freedom of opinion, speech and publication claimed for the University teacher is not in extent significantly different from that usually accorded to other citizens in modern, liberal states. And the reasons for maintaining it are, in part, the same. It is peculiar chiefly in that the teacher is, in his economic status, a salaried-employee and that the freedom claimed for him implies a denial of the right of those who provide or administer the funds from which he is paid to control the content of his teaching".

Now that is what 'Academic Freedom' really means. This is a scholarly work; you'll find, at the end of it -- the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences,

Volume XII -- a whole series of the bibliothica on which these conclusions are based. And, I am quite sure, whether it is in Harvard, or Yale or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or the Institute of Technology of California, or Berkley College, or Moscow or Peking, that if you want the human mind to flourish, to seek the truth, then you must establish certain conditions in which you do not pre-determine what is to be the result of a person's researches.

Of course, it varies. What should the person do research into? If you tell me you want to do research on whether birds and bees can be made more productive, well, who's going to pay for that; who's interested in that? But if you tell me that you can find a bee that can go into somebody's hydrogen bomb and let it off without the chap wanting to let it off, then you will find many chaps prepared to spend a lot of money so that you will discover the secret of getting bees to do the job for them.

Now, what does it, in fact, imply? Does it imply that your University is above the State?

You know, it meant in Oxford, Cambridge or even John Hopkins University, somebody died, left a vast fortune and said: "I have founded a University". It is as if Mr. Lee Kong Chian and Mr. Tan Lark Sye and a few

others thrown in together decided to leave the whole of their fortunes to found a University of the South Seas. And they say, "Right, dedicate it to research. Here is the money. Let us get the men together. What is it that we want to teach; what is it we want to search after?" But, you know, even in Oxford and Cambridge, even in Havard and Yale, it has long passed that point.

Research, teaching, is big business -- the business of Governments. You can produce a University -- Ngee Ann College can turn herself into a University even without a Charter. So what? You pass out, B.A. (Ngee Ann). You can make it 'M.A.' -- double it. Why not add a Ph.D. to it. So what? Where do you go from there? Does that entitle you to status in your society, to jobs? What is your worth, your value to society? It is determined by your usefulness, isn't it?

And so this problem arose in Britain. As the British discovered that they were being left behind in this technological revolution, they summoned a group of scholars and said, "Find out what can be done. Is it right that we should educate only a small group of our population, the children of the gentry -- the middle-class, civil servants, the professions, the merchants? Are we not being left behind in this? Are we right in spending all this time learning about Roman Law, the ancient history of Greece and the Egyptians when, in fact, man is reaching out for the moon and the stars?

And, as a result of all this heart-searching, you have these new Universities and an attempt to diversify, in specialisation, what their Universities do. And, very much in the English tradition, they try to keep a lot of the forms and the styles of the old while the content is being changed.

You can be the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. But the Master also happens to have been once, Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britian. He understands what the country's problems are and, without any prompting from the present Prime Minister who advised the Queen to appoint him. There's no academic freedom being infringed there, you know. The Master of Trinity College Cambridge is appointed by the Queen, on the advice of the Prime Minister. It's as simple as that. It's a Royal endownment ... And the Prime Minister does not have to tell the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge what to do. That man has been in public office -- before he was Lord Butler -- as Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, the man in charge of Economic Affairs and in high office for no less than 20 years. He knows what Trinity College, Cambridge is supposed to do for his country. It is not academic freedom in vacuo. But he is interested in nurturing in that institution a group of men who will staff all the top, key positions of the State. And when they talk, they talk in terms of concrete realities, not airy-fairy emptiness.

Let's start off from Square Root 1. Don't quote me the United Nations Charter and all the high-faluting words which goes into your treatises.

First of all, what are we talking about? Do I have to have a University? Let me first ask myself publicly this question: I have asked myself privately this question, very often with my colleagues. If, after spending nearly 15 to 20 million dollars a year for two Universities and one Polytechnic, you are going to produce a lot of mediocrities with none of the elan of a group with a sense of purpose, why not just send them on scholarships abroad? Get all the bright ones, send them abroad to Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand for Commonwealth traditions; or to America, it is English-speaking. It is cheaper. And they will probably come back with more windows in their minds -- which is most important -- with a broader perspective after seeing the world, after seeing how other societies live. They will probably come to know that really, they do not belong there but belong here, and come back the same way as my colleagues and I have come back, saying: "How do I make my society better?"

It is cheaper really, to do it that way: to send them abroad, the bright ones, pay their passages, their fees. And then, they come back.

Why have we not done that? Because surely, like all other countries, we have that pride in self. We want to create an institution which will be self-perpetuating, which can constantly and continuously produce a stream of trained and disciplined minds which are imbued with the values of our society, keenly alive to its problems and able to respond to it.

But what has been the result so far?

Recently, the Ministry of Education, partly at my prompting, wrote to the Vice-Chancellor saying, "How can we ensure that the University of Singapore more sensitively reflects the mood, the aspirations, of the people of Singapore? ...." We know from our figures that when we talk of the University as a corporate body, you are talking of a group of men whose academic qualities I would not like to challenge, but who are not really committed to this country. They come here to teach -- as a job -- to see a different part of the world, acquire experience and then move on.

Out of a total of 33 Heads of Departments as of the 1st of June 1966 (there might have been a few changes here and there), 11 were our citizens; that is, one-third. Of 24 professors, 8 were our citizens and that includes one expatriate who has taken Singapore Citizenship -- to his great credit, as far as I am

concerned. Of the 45 readers and Senior Lecturers, 19 were Singapore Citizens; of the 124 lecturers, 51 were Singapore Citizens. And in the Senate, out of a total of 45 members, 18 were Singapore Citizens.

So, apart from talking about other things -- about academic freedom, University autonomy, and you know what Oxford and Cambridge means and London University -- I ask myself: what would the Prime Minister of Britain feel if he were to hand over a large sum of money to a Grants Committee that annually doled large chunks of it to Committees, Senates, Heads of Department, two-thirds of whom were Austrians, Frenchmen, Americans, Australians or worse, Indians, Pakistanis, West Indians? What would he think? This is a very important question.

Now, how did this problem arise?

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It is all history now -- starting with Professor Enright, all before your time. You were probably, in 1959 .... If you are in your first year now, six years or seven years ago, you would be in Secondary I or Secondary II. And this is another thought which appals me, that every passing year, the gulf between youth and the political leadership widens. I have now got to explain what this is all about.

In 1960, your Professor in English delivered a lecture, some memorial lecture in which, unfortunately, he was reported in the local press to have referred in somewhat derogatory tones, to the efforts of our Ministry of Culture in wanting to create a Malayan culture ... Those were the days before Sabah and Sarawak and Brunei were in the picture and we were thinking in terms of one Malaya, not one Malaysia ..... And it offended the susceptibilities of my colleague, then the Minister for Culture, who came out in some very strident tones about the propriety of an expatriate officer in the University of Singapore passing derogatory remarks about the efforts of his Ministry.

I really do not want to bore you, but the long and short of it was that they said, "Ah! Academic freedom is involved." And I said to them then, "Just confine that to your teaching, your methods of teaching and the content of your teaching; and stay out of local politics."

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Well, it was all a storm in the tea-cup. But, you know, it is quite interesting reading it now in retrospect, six, seven years ago. And I don't think Mr. Enright would feel that I have, in any way, abused his confidence if I were to quote a portion of the letter he then wrote to me: "I can, with complete sincerity", he wrote to me on the 23rd of November 1960, "assure you that I

have no desire to interfere in local politics. For I am not speaking now as only an alien in any politics at all. Politics have been the bane of literature and of the teaching of literature. My own political views are rudimentary in the extreme -- merely the instinctive attachment to the left which is almost inevitable in anyone born into the British working-class in the early 1920's." And he goes on: "You will understand my feelings at the tone of the letter handed to me. I am not offended at being called a beatnik" -- a vague term which my Minister had used of him -- "or a mendicant." "I have never begged", said the Professor, "though, of course, this public description of me has made my public position very painful and difficult. But I most strongly resent the implication that I am one of those birds of passage from Europe or elsewhere who used to make it a habit of participating from superhuman heights of European civilisation." Then he enclosed his Inaugural Lecture to me as delivered and hoped it would interest me.

Well, I replied to thank him for his letter of the 23rd of November, and "I am glad", said I, "for not allowing this unfortunate breeze to upset your other happier experiences of Singapore. Most of us, whether of old or young civilizations, have our ultra -- sensitive emotive areas. And it was your misfortune to have provided the material for a sub-editor to titillate such an emotive area. I am sure both my colleagues, the Acting Minister for Labour and

Law and the Minister for Culture, would have been happy to have left your Inaugural Lecture alone and castigated the tendentious report. Unfortunately, your sense of propriety did not allow this and all the unpleasantness followed. However, I hope you will let this incident lapse and enjoy your years in the chair of English at the University."

He is there and I hope he has enjoyed it.

There was no more after that. Then the other brushes were on the problems of security. And they were, in part, the problems of our society. And it became acute because we, as a government, attempted new solutions for them.

One of our problems was a growing generation of highly-trained and disciplined and active Chinese-educated students with no outlets. They passed the Senior Middle III, equal any time to your English H.S.C. But then there were no jobs! No outlet! They could go to Nanyang, get a B.A. in Chinese literature, history, economics, commerce and mathematics. Then what? Teaching. And, when the teaching jobs are full, revolution! It is true. I will tell you the reason why there was no revolution.

One of the reasons is that from 1959, we said: "Look, all the doors are open to you." I told the then Vice-Chancellor of this University, "All the bright, Chinese-educated Middle-School graduates who want to do medicine, science, engineering, law -- let them in. One-year refresher course -- Pre-University -- to brush up their English." Intellectually, they are more than your match. It is just the language. But they can make the grade.

Then came Dr. Sreenivasan.

I do not want to open unpleasant memories. But I considered the appointment so important, that the man should understand what this delicate operation was intended to do and the dangers attendant upon it, that I spent one whole evening at dinner with him before we made him the offer that we would approve his appointment ... Because if we don't approve of the appointment, all we do, let me tell you quite frankly, is ..... Next month in December, if the Singapore Parliament refuses to vote the Head under Education, this University closes down. It is as simple as that. And those of you who are lawyers will know that there is another principle if we want to talk about abstract concepts. There is one concept called "The Supremacy of Parliament or the sovereignty of Parliament" -- which means Parliament as elected representatives of the people says: "We shall not give this money. Good luck to you!" I would like to see just how much faith your teachers and you have in academic freedom and University autonomy thereafter!

I am talking now of the realities of life. I said to Sreenivasan that this was necessary but that this entailed a danger because we were transporting active elements from one bloodstream into another with the very serious danger of contaminating and killing the other one which was in a healthy state ....

So we said, "Let them come into this university. Give them entry to the civil service, the law, medicine, the professions -- open all to them." It was the right decision. The previous Vice-Chancellor was not sympathetic to that point of view. When the next Vice-Chancellor came, he was. But he said, "I am not going to listen to you as to who I should admit and who I should not. I am going to admit them -- on my basis". I said, "But you don't know the background of these boys in the secondary schools. They run little cells, lending libraries. Not about Marx and Lenin alone but on how to cause a riot; how to barricade doors" ....

It is a different world, you know. I said to him, "Please, before you take a man in, be quite sure that you know his background. And be quite sure that you can contain the situation afterwards because we do not want a repetition of Chinese High School or Chung Cheng High School or Nanyang University in the University of Singapore." But he said, "No, no. Infringement of university autonomy." Who says so? The Robbins Report says so. What does it say? In admission of students, we have got full rights. I am a university ..... It says here that all British universities decide who should go in and who should not go in. And if you are going to tell me who should not go in, then you pass a law. Which, in the end, was what actually happened.

Now, do you know how this came to be in the Robbins Report?

There is a great controversy on in Britain now as to whether the great universities should continue to take a high proportion of their students from private schools which are called 'public' schools in Britain .... When they mean "public", it means it costs so much that only the really important members of the public can afford to send their children there... They take them in on the basis of family connection and wealth and social status. Even now they do! And the British Parliament, particularly under the present Labour Government, is agitating for this removal and it says, "You will not decide to restrict your entry on the basis of social status, on the basis of public schools or grammar schools or County schools". Robbins, of course, being an academic of no mean diplomatic skill, found the right formula. And he says: "Of course you know the great difficulties about admission of students ....." I am reading now from page 231: "It would obviously be an infringement of freedom were academic institutions forced to accept or reject any particular student. We should qualify this judgement if institutions displayed tendencies to reject on racial, social or other grounds extraneous to academic suitability: an institution which imposed a numerus clausus on any particular group or which deliberately excluded otherwise suitable candidates on grounds of social origin would have scant claim to unconditional subventions from public funds in a free society. However, it is

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essential that arrangements for the selection of students should not only be fair but also that they should be seen to be fair. But, subject to this, we hold that the institution should be free to choose those they teach." And, it is still true, you know.

I read recently about a young man whose father is a judge here. He has got into his father's old college. It is very difficult to get into an old English university now. But this young man got in because his father had been there.

And the Robbins Report says, in other words, "Well, we will make some changes but it is really for us to decide who we admit."

And on this, the Vice-Chancellor told me, "I will not listen to your security reports." All I wanted was that he should bring his mind to bear on this one factor: if you let in too many of these types, you will lose control -- which is what has happened in Nanyang.

There was another issue, about a University lecturer or professor of education -- Gregory. He has gone. I don't know really, whether he was of any significance but he was getting all kinds of literature from Moscow and it alarmed our security services. It didn't alarm me because I was getting literature

from Moscow myself. But it definitely alarmed my counterparts in Kuala Lumpur and those were the months just before Malaysia and they were not going to have any of this nonsense. So I told the Vice-Chancellor, "Look, this is the position. Better have a word with this man. Either he stops all his correspondence ....." And, what was worse, he was trying, I think probably innocently, to recruit a few students -- not our students -- Malayan students to go on some Youth Festival or some study tour in Russia and this alarmed their Minister for Education no end.

Now, this was the problem. Academic freedom, this, that and the other were raised. Finally, we had the University Academic Staff Association and a whole host of persons coming to see me. And this problem arose -- whether the university has anything to do with security.

Now, I want to read to you my contention and the contention of the then Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Staff Association.

I wrote to them after the meeting. I wrote to them on the 15th of February, 1963 to Dr. F.A.C. Oehlers, University of Singapore Academic Staff Association: "Dear Mr. President, I refer to our discussions, yesterday, the 14th of February, in my office between 10.40 and 1.10 p.m.

For the record, may I summarise our respective positions -- Academic Staff Association, Dr. Oehlers, Dr. Lebroy and Mr. K.J. Ratnam. One, the Association considered that security was not the concern of any academic institution and staff association. It was only concerned with the academic merits of the staff members. Whether a member of the staff like Mr. J.S. Gregory should remain in Malaya or not should depend entirely on his academic qualities for the job regardless of whether there was security objections to his continued staying.

"Two, any security objection was a matter entirely for the government and the responsibility should be that of the government alone. The Association was only concerned with academic freedom".

Then I went on to make this comment: "I regret the academic and unrealistic attitude taken both by the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Staff Association as being naive in the circumstances in which Singapore and the

Federation were in, and (the suggestion) that the university authority and the Staff Association are not concerned with security. And, further to say that a man's political loyalty and inclinations are irrelevant is akin to saying that it was irrelevant what Professor Pontecorvo's loyalty was as long as he was academically good".

Those of you who don't know about Professor Pontecorvo: just about that time, a very famous Italian Professor of Nuclear Physics absconded from Britain to Russia. And he was then, of course, working in the Cavendish Laboratory in (Cambridge).

Now, if this purist attitude was persisted in, there was bound to be growing difficulty between the government-in-charge of security and the University giving cover to Communist activities under the banner of academic freedom.

Then I went on to say .... In those days, I thought that after the 31st of August 1963, I would be relieved of this responsibility ... So I said, "Well, however, after the 31st of August 1963, security and immigration will be the responsibilities of the Central Government and the University must settle these problems with the Central Government ...." I didn't know it was coming back to

me very shortly afterwards .... And I pointed out: "It is not my intention to have friction with the Central Government on these matters", and so on .....

Well, in fairness to the Staff Association, may I say that they did not quite confirm in their reply that security had nothing to do with the Staff Association. They went on to say: "It is not our view that whether a member of the staff should remain in Malaya or not should depend entirely on his academic qualities for the job regardless of whether there are security objections to his continued stay. However, in our view, the appointment, confirmation and promotion of the Academic Staff of the University should be based on academic consideration alone.

"We agree that any security objection is a matter entirely for the government and the responsibility is that of the government. And if action on security grounds is to be taken, it should be by the government and the University should not be asked to act on its behalf by terminating or by not renewing the appointment of a member of the Academic Staff."

You know, what they said in effect was: I am not saying that security has got nothing to do with Academic Staff; but we will promote or do anything according to just purely academic merits and we will put a man in charge of

nuclear physics even if we know that he is going to study all about the secrets of nuclear physics, whip across to the other side, manufacture the bomb and deliver it back to you. Nothing to do with us but you, of course, as the government, you know security, you can arrest and banish him.

This is what I get. I do not think any British Prime Minister would have got that from the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Staff. It is not just of Oxford and Cambridge or Red Brick: they would not have written that. Because they are Englishmen to their core and their primary responsibility is to their society. They are not searching after truth in vacuo. Do you believe that Professor Oppenheimer and all his associates just search for truth in order that they can disseminate and teach the secrets of nuclear physics to mankind at large, so that the Russian can have it, the Chinese can have it, the Indians can have it, the Indonesians can have it? And everybody has got a little home-made bomb? Or do you think they have done this in order that the supremacy of their society shall not be challenged? It is as simple as that. They would not have written this.

This is a situation when there is no self; when 11 out of 33 heads of department are not my citizens. That is why it happens. It is as if somebody here is teaching all about the inshore waters of Singapore and how to land

frogmen and so on. And we have friendly neighbours coming here taking notes and the University claims it has got no responsibility. No connection with you as to how currents flow around our harbour; and how frogmen can go in and plant some plastic bombs on the sides of our shipping vessels there and blow up our port: he has got nothing to do with it! Surely it cannot be!

It really amounts very simply to this: do we understand first, the history of the problem?

You see, if we do not understand the background, then you and I, we will not even begin to know what it is we want to exercise, what it is we want to keep. Because if you just listen to me like this, you may think I want to get rid of the 22 heads of department who are not Singapore citizens! Nothing is further from my intentions. I want to attract more people of talent and ability here -- even if they only stay 3 to 4 years -- to give of themselves and to add to the international, the cosmopolitan flavour of this society. It is one of the qualities which we at the cross-roads and intersection of aerial and maritime sea routes must exploit.

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Now, we want to keep that. I want more men with talent, with the spark and the sparkle which only near genius can give. And it will light up this place.

But, let us also be acutely conscious of the fact that this policy, in turn, creates certain problems. For every one near genius or genius you get as an 'expat' teacher, you are going to get one or two mediocrities. It is inevitable. It is in the nature of things. And they develop all kinds of psychoses and neuroses and they belly ache. They feel insecure and so they propound a philosophy of universality: Universities International. We belong to an international community. Patriotism, nationalism are narrow, parochial and outmoded. I am a citizen of the world and, if you are a university man and I am a university man, the world belongs to us. This is what they mean. Not, we belong to the world!

They preach this pernicious doctrine partly because they half believe in it but mainly because they think they can thereby insulate the political realities from themselves.

And they preach this existentialist philosophy. I call it existentialist because I would never dream of leaving my country however badly off it is. This is mine; I stand by it. What I have is the result of what this society gave to me and what I can give, I will give to the society. Therefore, I have no sympathy for

people who leave their societies. But, if they want to leave and they have ability, I say (never mind) the brains drain; three cheers, I welcome you. I will pay you. But do not poison my young. I do not want my bright people believing that they are citizens of the world and we, having educated them at an enormous expense, they then go out believing that they belong to a world fraternity! And so, they also go grass-hopping from university to university because they are men of talent, ability, of scholarship -- you write up a thesis, get a Ph.D. and thereafter you are a man of scholarship! There are always African universities, who are looking for some senior lecturer or who might even promote you professor provided, of course, you can be sure that after the coup, you will still get money which is remittable!

Is that what I want? I say, if that is the purpose of this whole exercise, let us close down the university. Or, call it just the Teachers' Training College. Then there will be no trouble about academic freedom, autonomy and so on.

What do I want? I want administrators. All right; let us call this the Administrative Training Institute and send the bright ones abroad. Why run this? But I have enough faith in my own people to believe that out of this milieu, there will come a crop of men with the verve and the conviction to say, "Let us make this organism come to life. Let us fill this form with meaning." If I could spare

Dr. Toh and he wanted to go back to the university, I would let him. But unfortunately, I cannot now. Somebody has to man a very important sector of the country. If he were in charge or Dr. Goh were in charge, I would not worry at all about the university. He would do the worrying for me. He would know exactly what is right, what is wrong, and what has got to be done.

But I find it difficult to understand that when you have so many vital, urgent issues to agitate you, you are agitated about the Suitability Certificate.

You know it is intended .... Let us put it quite frankly -- the Nanyang University students know exactly for whom it is intended. It is for them! They know it. It is intended for the Chinese Middle School students particularly from certain schools in Malaya and from certain schools in Singapore, where cells have been established and where, in fact, the students are in charge of their own education or the Communist Party is in charge of the education. Let's put it quite bluntly. As recently as one month ago, they broke into Chinese High School... A student had participated in the Barisan Sosialis rally. He was convicted and expelled. He broke into the school, confronted the teacher. He said to the Principal: "Hand this over to the Ministry of Education"; and, when told to get out, he broke the school windows and a whole class-room. Who runs the school? This is just one month ago and the school is just up the road.

I often wonder whether you understand, whether you have a grasp of the realities of the society in which you are living. I have the feeling very often that because the administration is so effective, you are living, like fishes in aquariums, in a different tanks. And in your tank, there are only angel fish, a few black mollies, some red carps. And, in the other tank, are some tiger fish, piranhas, man-eating type of fish.

When we did this exercise and said, "Let them come into this tank," we were extremely anxious for your well-being. We told the Vice-Chancellor who knew nothing about this... (Poor man: all he knew was medicine, and a good medicine man he was!) And we said: "Look, this is a very delicate and gentle exercise, one which must be executed with a great deal of careful reservations and safeguards. Otherwise, you will find all your black mollies and your angel-fish all eaten up; dead." In spite of that, in spite of all the care which would not have been there if he had had his way -- in spite of that, do you know that the Political Science Society of the Polytechnic was captured by the Chinese-educated stream and a few who are pro-Communists?

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And your own University Socialist Club: if you look at the back-ground of its members, you will find a number of them from the Chinese schools. I am not

saying they are Communists -- because if they were, we would not have let them come in here -- but they have what we would call an "activist" background. Not necessarily a bad thing, because that is what I want this to have. I want all the black-mollies and all the angel fish to develop the vitality to meet the other fishes in the other tank. Then you will stand up -- because you will really believe when you say academic freedom, democracy: you will believe it. But when they say it, they don't believe a word of it. This is the irony of it.

When you say, "Academic freedom, University autonomy," they say, "Excellent. Right, by all means." But, being very sharp 'agit-prop' boys, they say, "Well, this is not going to move the masses. Let us add in "destruction of Chinese education," culture, language literature and so on. That will get the masses excited." And they did in 1954, 1956. Many of you were probably in primary schools. But the whole of the Chinese High School -- just up the road -- they were camping in. Parents were outside, ten years ago, handing in their children's laundry and vegetables and eggs, cheering their children on because they really believe Chinese education and culture were going to be exterminated. The police finally went in with tear-gas and batons and the children were singing 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'Unity is Strength' inside their class-rooms. They marched down that road, Bukit Timah Road, in the early hours of October 1956.

I will never forget it because I was there on that evening: I passed by. I watched it all and I swore that I was never going to be caught in that trap.

If you tell the people of Singapore today that I want to kill Chinese culture and education and you can get the people to believe you, then I say you are a 'miracle man'. Because I have pulled the fangs out: the venom has been pulled out of the cobra. I kill Chinese education and culture after my having spent 10 years mastering that language, in adult life? After systematically re-scheduling my school curricula in order to make sure that I do not produce a de-culturalised and enervated generation which I know so well? The wind has been taken out; so, they were isolated, 200 Ngee Ann students and 110 Nanyang University students. And so they will continue to be inert.

But that alone is not good. Two-thirds of my population are being brought up in the English language schools and they will come here. Am I going to be confronted -- if I am going to hand over in 10 years and I must in 15 years, inevitably -- by a weak-kneed, fumbling generation? We, having wrested it and held it so firmly -- to hand it to a flabby generation that cannot hold it against these thugs? That is not my intention.

That is why I want you to grow up. And you can only grow up when more windows are opened and the breezes come in -- and some foul air with it. And you will face the reality of life.

You will notice that three years ago, we re-instituted what were called the Queen's Scholarships. We call it now the President's Scholarships. From H.S.C., we send them off straight to Oxford and Cambridge. I completely supported and endorsed that decision because I have decided that we were more likely to produce men of quality that way. In other words, my conclusion was: going on the evidence of the products and the teachers and the reports, and the people that I meet, this University is getting itself into a sterile 'cat-chasing-tail' kind of situation.

You know, it is 'against' the Government. What for? What is it about? You have a challenge; you have got to meet it. Can you meet it? All they are interested in is to posture: pure, great academics.

This place does not lack talent. I used to be in these buildings when there were only 200 students in Raffles College and, from that one generation -- the year that I was in -- there are now 4 Ministers in the Singapore Government and

3 in the Malaysian Government. It was quite a generation then. I do not believe there is no talent.

But I believe that talent is being diverted into futile and sterile pursuits. Your pre-occupation is not academic freedom, University autonomy and the Suitability Certificate. What goons are you? The people who have cause for complaint are those who did not get to Nanyang University. And if we had let them in there -- the number that wanted to go in there -- the position would have been lost. You are not involved in this.

But we are concerned that some of them should come here and stimulate you -- but not too much in case they capture you.

You mean to tell me that I do not understand what a frustrated intellectual means, what it means to deny a person a Suitability Certificate and make him more embittered against society? Is that really, in our long-term interest?

You know, Mr. Lim Chin Siong's brother was in St. John's Island and I went to see him. He was a very bright young man -- and still is -- and he wanted to come out and join the University of Singapore to do Law. I said, "No. You will do no such thing. I will give you a scholarship to the University of

Auckland." He said, "No, I don't want to go." He did not want to study Law. He wanted to come out here, and generate revolutionary fervour. In prison he passed his LLB (London) without any teachers; just with text-books. Today, we are employing him in the Registry of Deeds. We start off at a very safe level first. But I wanted to give him an opening and eventually, the day I am convinced that he wants a democratic, open society, and he will defend it against those who want to destroy it, that day I will say, "All the doors are open to you."

This society has the talent, has that verve. What is lacking is the catalyst to set it off in the right direction.

I have been trying very hard over the last few years and I will continue to try for a few more. But I am quite sure, given the right ingredients -- a few teachers with more than ordinary dedication to their people, not just to their students, and given sufficient encouragement, this thing could blossom forth. And this is what I want you to pre-occupy yourselves with: what is your role in this society?

I will give you all the freedoms you want provided, at the end of the day, all the public expense which is as I told you -- $7,000 per annum for a medical student, $2,500 for an Arts, $3,500 for a Science student, per annum -- (that is

just in money cost not in terms of social cost) -- all this provided you show me that that effort is worthwhile. If it is not, then I will say, "let us send our students abroad." It must flourish because there must be that sparkle in at least 1% of our student population, and it is that 1% that can make the whole difference to our society.
