

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT LENINGRAD
ON 22ND SEPTEMBER, 1970, ON THE EVE OF HIS
DEPARTURE TO PARIS

Question : (Translated)

Mr. Prime Minister, we are a group of newsmen accompanying you. We represent the TASS Press Agency, the APN Agency and Moscow Radio. Could you give us your impressions of the visit to the Soviet Union now that your visit is nearing its completion?

Prime Minister: Any impression I give, of course, is the result of the places I have seen, the people I have met, as imprinted upon the preconceptions which one has as a result of reading and seeing pictures of the Soviet Union. In brief, it is one of quick construction and progress in which a considerable amount of sacrifice has been made in order that the present standard of accomplishment has been achieved, and in order also that the future will achieve even higher goals.

Question : (Translated)

Mr. Prime Minister, the relations between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Singapore, are young. They are beginning to shape. What could you say are the prospects of development of these relations in the light of those discussions you have had with the leadership of the Soviet Union?

Prime Minister: I think there will be growing economic ties for our mutual benefit, and as the world gets smaller, both by the frequency of air travel and passenger and cargo sea travel, we are bound to develop not only closer trade links but also better appreciation of each other's points - of - view and culture and ways of life. This is going to be, in spite of the fact that there is a huge land mass between the frontiers of the Soviet Union and Singapore, and there is a very long sea route before one can get either from the Black Sea or from the Baltic Sea to Singapore, with the Suez Canal closed. And that only reflects the growing air and sea transportation capabilities of the Soviet Union and the number of things that you have to export and the number of things you are prepared to import.

Let me explain this. For instance, East Africa is much closer to us than Moscow or Leningrad, where we are speaking today. But because they have not got the technological capacity for communications and transportation and the ability to absorb our exports, or to give us in their exports what we may find useful, so the links are much farther apart. So it is an indicator of your industrial and technological progress that despite these vast distances, you've got the ability to maintain the contact and you have the capability to make the contacts worth maintaining.

Question : The last question, Mr. Prime Minister. What do you think of the idea of the establishment of a collective security system in Asia, as expressed by Soviet leadership?

National Archives of Singapore

Prime Minister: We have always expressed a positive interest in this proposal, and would welcome further elaboration of the way in which peace and security can be consolidated for the countries of Southeast Asia.

Voice: Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister: Thank you.
Any other questions?

Voice: No question.

Prime Minister: (In Chinese) Any question in Chinese? Do you have any question?

National Archives of Singapore

Question: In Sochi, you referred to tangible results that could arise from your 8 - day tour of the Soviet Union – raising trade representation to ambassadorial level and possibly sending students to the Soviet Union. Could you elaborate a little...?

Prime Minister: Well, first... I think as an elaboration of my answer to the question put by the Russian press representative is the fact that the Soviet Union represents a highly - world - conscious nation and a government as keen to expand its trade and cultural connexion to the rest of the world and it has the capacity to do so. And , because we happen to be one of the major naval sea and air junctions, so our links with them, in terms of trade and cultural exchange, will probably be more than the links of the Soviet Union with countries even nearer to the Soviet Union, say, just across the Himalayas, for the very simple reason that we are able to offer facilities for either the distribution or the collection of goods and other things which they may wish to have and may wish to sell.

And also because we are on the main jet route, so their cultural troupes, whether its ballet or music or the circus, will find it convenient to stop for several days on their way southwards to Australia or eastwards to the other countries in the region, like the Philippines or Japan.

We, on our part, of course, are very anxious that we should expand and diversify our trade and economic ties, in order

that our dependence on any particular tie shall be that much the less, because the more ties that sustain us economically, the greater our freedom of action and the less leverage any single tie can exert on us.

National Archives of Singapore