

SUMMARY OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER

MR. LEE KUAN YEW AT SENNETT COMMUNITY

CENTRE'S 8TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

ON 8TH MAY, 1971

Let me tell you something about "black operations". Singapore has more than her fair share of "black operations". We happen to occupy a very important geographical position. We are right at the southern-most tip of Asia. To our west is the Straits of Malacca, leading into the Indian Ocean. There a contest is going on for naval supremacy. Our east is the South China Sea and the Pacific.

Several major countries have a deep interest in trying to get things in Singapore to go the way they want them to go.

First, I will tell you what Dr. Subandrio once told me before Confrontation. He passed through Singapore, before Malaysia, in the middle of 1963. Confrontation was just beginning. We met. He tried to persuade me not to go on with Malaysia. In the course of the conversation, he tapped me on the knee and said, "What is Malaysia? What is the Tunku and what are the British? I have more agents in Singapore and Malaya than the British and the Tunku can handle."

I knew he had agents. The former Indonesian Consulate officials were very busy -- giving satay parties, kenduris -- collecting supporters, fixing their "Kaki's". When we joined Malaysia, when Confrontation was full on, some of his agents caused trouble.

But the police had been following the activities of the Consulate, and were able to negate them before they could create big trouble. There was a White Paper, published by the Central Government in Kuala Lumpur, exposing all this.

Now a newspaper "black operation". Not so long ago, we received information that Chinese Communist agents in Hong Kong had given a certain Singapore newspaper proprietor nearly HK\$8 million -- an equivalent of \$4 million Singapore. We have checked and obtained corroboration of this.

Curiously, the newspaper took an anti-communist line. The communists allowed it to continue that policy. They are very patient people. They were not in a hurry. They were planning, not for tomorrow, but for next year, for ten year's time. They are watching what is happening in our schools. They know that more and more students, both in English schools and in Chinese schools, will read English language newspapers. So they wanted a foothold. They have other plans

in addition to this. We have not moved in, so far. The paper has not become effective yet. But we are keeping a close watch, before we act.

Let me tell you about another newspaper, the Singapore Herald. It has been taking the government on since its publication in July last year. The registered largest share of this newspaper belongs to a firm called Heeda & Co. in Hong Kong. It is not a limited company, but a registered partnership, with two names, dummy names.

Foreign capital coming to Singapore to start a newspaper does not take the government on, if it wants to make money. It is only prepared to take the government on, if it is after something other than money, and is prepared to lose money. We stopped government advertisements. We stopped press facilities. The newspaper carried on. Finally, realising its position would become too exposed and untenable, the editor, who was instrumental in organising the newspaper, stepped down, and went back to Kuala Lumpur.

Now, new investors are said to be putting money in. One of them is supposed to be Miss Aw Sian who owns a Hong Kong newspaper. She is said to have pledged 1.5 million Singapore dollars. She is a hard-headed business woman. So I had a chat with the new editor, Mr. Ambrose Khaw, who recently

took charge. I asked him who put up money, the first lot, from Heeda & Co., Hong Kong. He said he thought I knew, that it was Donald Stephens. I then asked whether he really believed that Donald Stephens -- sorry, his name is now Fuad Stephens -- would take 1.5 million dollars of his own money, to lose it in a Singapore newspaper which took the Singapore government on. He agreed that this was difficult to believe. I then asked whether he really believed Miss Aw Sian, a hard-headed business woman, would put her own money in a sinking newspaper. He said no. But he said the newspaper was only losing \$60,00 per month, and with more advertisements could break even. I asked "whose money is it?" He said, "I don't know". I finally told him, "well, when you know, come and tell me."

You may have read about the action taken against Nanyang Siang Pau. It is a very strange case. The general manager, Lee Mau Seng, who does not read or write Chinese, came down from Kuala Lumpur after the riots in 1969. Then a Chinese Muslim, called Shamsudin Tung, came from Kuala Lumpur in 1970 to join the paper. Immediately, crime in Singapore was played up, government news played down, whilst on the other hand, in their Malaysian edition government and political news in Malaysia were played up and crime played down. They also tried to bring in a known MCA activist from Kuala Lumpur to be editor of the Singapore newspaper.

Later, they worked up more and more Communist news, slanted and played up. And this was long before the ping-pong business. It had started in the latter half of last year. There was something fishy. We kept the matter under surveillance. By February 1971, this paper was getting bold, as nothing had happened. Unlike the other newspaper I told you about which was financed 7 to 8 million Hong Kong dollars, from Hong kong, this newspaper was in too great a hurry. It got hold of a well known opportunist and a Chinese chauvinist, called Ly Singko. He had repeatedly been warned when he was writing editorials in Sin Chew Jit Poh. Nanyang paid him more money to come over to work up, to stoke up heat over Chinese language, education and culture. This campaign was beginning to generate some heat among the Chinese-educated. We had to move in to check this "black operation". The case is by no means closed.

Why should all these things happen? Because we appear to be doing too well. Some people wanted to sour up our ground. Also, we are an important centre. So the capacity to generate emotions, can have an unsettling effect, and can be used to push the government one way or the other. This can be useful to whoever wants to influence us.

We would be foolish if we are not alert to all these furtive activities.
Perhaps, later, I may disclose more. But we do not take action for nothing.

Finally, I give this piece of advice to all those who are either willing or unwitting pawns: sooner or later the game will be up, and they will be the sorrier for it.

National Archives of Singapore