

TRANSCRIPT OF ITV COLOUR TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH
THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, BY MR. EMMON
ANDREWS, IN LONDON ON 27TH NOVEMBER, 1972

Mr. EMMON ANDREWS: Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, is in London this week for talks with the Government. Here at a time when events in Vietnam seem to be moving towards a climax. But what impact would a settlement in Vietnam have on events in Lee Kuan Yew's part of the world?

Mr. Prime Minister, how do you face the prospects of a total American withdrawal from Vietnam?

Mr. LEE KUAN YEW: It is just a question of time. It has to happen. And if it can be agreed before Christmas and the 400 wives can meet their husbands before the end of the year, well, that means the Americans ought to be out by about February.

ANDREWS: You think this is pretty well a fact?

MR. LEE: Well, in defeat, defiance; in victory, magnanimity. And Mr. Nixon won a famous victory in America, not in Vietnam, and he can afford to be magnanimous.

ANDREWS: But most people see it as an ultimate extension of the powers of Vietcong. What is your reaction? How do you see the creeping extent of communism in Southeast Asia and, particularly, in your own country?

MR. LEE: I think, first, it is not the power of Vietcong that brought about this situation. The power of the North Vietnamese Army, supporting the Vietcong. And one of the snags that they are trying to iron out in Paris is: Does the North Vietnamese Army withdraw together as the Americans withdraw.

ANDREWS: But whatever the military solution, do you not see -- as the bitter opponent of communism yourself -- the extension of the power of communism over the borders of Vietnam?

MR. LEE: Well, when you have Mr. Nixon shaking hands with Chairman Mao and Mr. Brezhnev, nobody is a bitter opponent of communism. We are all in a very fluid situation. But I wouldn't like to be communised, if that's what you mean by 'an opponent of communism'. I, too, would shake hands with everybody who wants to shake hands with me.

ANDREWS: But you have been a little more forceful than shaking hands?

MR. LEE: Ah, yes, that's when they want to do me in. Then you can't afford to shake hands. But I think it is a fact of life that in a situation like Vietnam, unlike Korea, where the Japanese were extremely thorough in weeding out possible communist cells years and years and years before they handed it over to the Americans and the Russians, in Vietnam the communists have eaten into the fabric of society, and they are there, not strong enough to take over, but gradually to bring the house down.

ANDREWS: But you see President Nixon shaking hands with Mao, and you see Britain seemingly having trust in China that wouldn't have been believable five years ago. Are you mistrustful of this seeming Western trust?

MR. LEE: No, I think it is the fact of life, isn't it. You got to live with what's there. And you have got a China that is not going to be uncommunist or non-communist. You have got a Russia that is prepared to talk reason and agree on parity for nuclear weapons. And you just got to live with this world as it is, not as you'd like to be.

ANDREWS: But do you welcome the fact that China is now taking a greater place in the affairs of the world?

MR. LEE: I think it has to come. And the earlier it comes about, the better for the rest of the world. We have got to adjust to the fact that there is this power.

ANDREWS: But let us come to another adjustment that is being made now, and the subject must be uppermost in the minds of many Commonwealth Prime Ministers. That is, within a month or so, Britain will be in Europe. Do you think it's worth pursuing the old Commonwealth ties in the light of Europe?

MR. LEE: First of all, we got no time for either sentiment or nostalgia. I think if I were an Englishman I would vote to go into Europe because that is where the expanding market is. That is where trade has expanded from 1958 to 1972 by something around 550%. And you might as well join them if you cannot beat them. But you having joined them, I have got to get to know them quickly because we have got to sell now, if we are going to sell at all, not just to Britain but to Europe.

ANDREWS: That is why you are going down to Paris and to Brussels?

MR. LEE: Yes.

ANDREWS: You are obviously a realistic Prime Minister. In your realism, and not a sentimentalist in this area, are you concerned that a lot of people were concerned here in the last week about the redefinition of aliens, about better welcome for the Common Marketees than to the Commonwealth members?

MR. LEE: Well, that's the aftermath of a very long and glorious period when you seeded great civilisations overseas -- the whole of North America is English-speaking -- Australia, New Zealand, large chunks of Southern Africa. And you cannot abandon that kind of a past without some spasmodic reluctance in some people who feel that perhaps you cannot just chuck friends and relatives who fought with you in two world wars just like that. It makes good reading. If I were an Australian I feel slightly comforted. But I think they would still face a Britain -- that they have to sell wool or mutton or butter to, as part of EEC.

ANDREWS: Let me turn to life in Singapore. You hit the headlines many times, you know. One of the most recent was your campaign against long hair and the outstanding Cliff Richard fell by the wayside. What is your point in all this?

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MR. LEE: Well, you know, it is an association of ideas. We are a very exposed society. You can have either closed or exposed societies. We are at the crossroads. I mean, what I am telling you now in reply to this question will be carried by the wireless or cable to Singapore in a matter of seconds, and this videotape could be in Singapore in twenty hours. And we get this constant influx of TV films which is, of course, the easiest way to fill up

time. And the actual tourist are now no longer the wealthy elderly couple spending their life-savings seeing the world, but the young chartered-flight passengers -- long-hair.

ANDREWS: Yes. But why are you against this? Are you taking a leaf out of Chairman Mao's cultural book ...?

MR. LEE: No, no.

ANDREWS: and against the decadent West?

MR. LEE: I am not sure that the West is all that decadent.

ANDREWS: Why do you dislike long hair then?

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MR. LEE: Well, because it is associated, at the moment, with drug and escapism -- dropping out of it. Mind you, but

ANDREWS: The last man in the world is Cliff Richard -- Billy Graham's friend -- would ever be associated with drug.

MR. LEE: Yes. But this is changing a little, isn't it? Well, Mr. Nixon kept his hair fairly trimmed. Mr. McGovern had a very pronounced sideburn. And Mr. Nixon won. If you can show me an astronaut with long hair, I think

ANDREWS: I think they have got long hair by now. Let me ask you one last question, Prime Minister, before we finish. You are a great Anglophile and yet you are quite critical of this country. Briefly, in your few days here, Sir, how do you feel the scene?

MR. LEE: I think it is a great country which is going through the pangs of change in its world role being the centre of great decisions. It changed the course of history in the last war. And the London of 1945-46 was the London aware that it was the centre of great events. I think there is a slight loss of the sense of importance. And it may be recaptured in a broader, wider context.

ANDREWS: Thank you, Prime Minister.
