

## Singapore Premier

# Lee Rips U.S., Tells of Bribe Offer in '60

From News Dispatches

SINGAPORE, Aug. 31—Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, in a vehement attack on the judgment and wisdom of the American Government, today accused Washington of trying to bribe him in 1960 in an effort to cover up an abortive CIA operation.

In a televised news conference with two British and three Australian correspondents, Lee also said that if the British abandon their Singapore base he would be prepared to invite the Australians and New Zealanders there, but not the Americans.

"This is fundamental," he added vehemently. "If the British base goes there will be no American base in Singapore."

### \$3 Million Offered

Lee, a 41-year-old Socialist and anti-Communist, whose country dropped out of the Malaysian Federation last month, claimed that in 1960 the U.S. offered him \$3 million not to reveal that a CIA agent had been caught trying to buy information from a Singapore intelligence officer.

U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia James D. Bell said in Kuala Lumpur that "there is no truth to it," and in Washington the State Department issued a denial.

Despite official denials, however, there appeared to be some truth to the Lee accusation, it was learned in Washington. At the time cited by Lee, CIA agents were operating in a more freewheeling manner than in subsequent years after President Kennedy's crackdown on CIA activities following the 1961 Bay of Pigs disaster.)

Lee described the alleged bribe as "an insult" and said he told the United States "You can keep it." But he said he had offered to keep the incident quiet if the U.S. government gave Singapore \$3 million for economic development.

### Incident Described

Lee said Singapore security

police had caught a CIA man after laying a trap for him.

"We had microphones, everything," he said.

The CIA agent, he said, was turned in by the intelligence agent he tried to bribe.

"The CIA man was caught, arrested, enough evidence to send him to jail for anything up to 12 years," Lee said. "We had got them by the throat. The American consul general knew nothing about it because the CIA man flew in from Bangkok."

He said it was decided to release the CIA agent because "it would have damaged our relations with Kuala Lumpur [the federal capital of Malaysia] and we wanted merger. See SINGAPORE, A22, Col. 4

with them." Singapore became part of the Federation in 1963.

"The Americans would have worked on Kuala Lumpur and we would have been so antagonistic that merger and Malaysia would have been broken."

### Scathing Words

In his scathing attack on the United States, Lee said: "If the Americans and not the British had been in charge in Singapore and Malaya before independence I would have been in jail, probably tortured and died a Commie." He emphasized his friendship and respect for Britain and his personal affection for Prime Minister Wilson.

The attack came after a question concerning the future of the large British air and naval base at the eastern tip of Singapore island. Negotiations are scheduled between the British and Singapore governments on revising their defense pact.

Referring to the Americans, Lee said: "I think they are a highly intelligent, well-meaning people and some of their leaders, like Kennedy, have had signs of growing greatness and depth, but by and large the American administration lacks the depth and judgment and wisdom which comes out of an accumulation of knowledge over a long period."

"The British in their empire learned a lot. Britain has got 400 years of empire and my ancestors have got 4000 years of written history. The Americans don't understand the overseas Chinese. They don't understand the Vietnamese.

That's why there is such a mass there."

### 2d Incident Mentioned

Lee mentioned another incident concerning a request he made recently to the U.S. Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur for an American medical specialist to come to Singapore to treat "someone very dear to me". The specialist sent word that he would be in Geneva and if the patient was flown to him he would look at him.

"The impudence!" said Lee. "I don't think that would have happened with a people with a civilized or cultured background."

(In Washington, it was reported that it was finally arranged to send a doctor to Singapore, but that the physician was not available for the trip until some time later this fall.)

Regarding the base, Lee said he would not stop any "aggression" from it. "The base is not to be used to blackmail Indonesia or destroy China," he said.

### "This Is Not Guantanamo"

Lee said he would paralyze any such "aggression" by withdrawing the local workers or serving 24-hour withdrawal notice on the British.

"This is not Guantanamo," he said, referring to the U.S. naval base on the island of Cuba. "This is our territory, not Britain's. If Cuba with an American base with American sovereignty is independent and not a neo-colonialist stooge, why should I be one? I want the base there to protect my people."

## *Bribery's Reward* *Pnt 9/1/68*

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore evidently is under pressure to exhibit his nationalism. That, along with perhaps some personal dissatisfaction, is the most likely explanation of his sudden outburst against the United States. An unnamed American official, he charged, had offered him \$3 million—which he spurned—to keep quiet about the fact that a Central Intelligence Agency representative had been caught in 1960 trying to buy information from a Singapore intelligence agent.

Despite initial denials there seems to be some truth to the charge. Even when it is acknowledged that bribery and the purchase of information are not unique in intelligence operations, such practices are difficult to defend (especially when the perpetrators are caught)—though Mr. Lee's disclosure that he asked for \$33 million in economic aid in return for silence makes it look as if he might have been merely haggling about the price. In any event the Kennedy Administration subsequently cracked down on the CIA's free wheeling.

Actually, Mr. Lee has been subjected to substantial strain since the Malaysian Federation booted out Singapore last month because of its large Chinese population. He may not particularly admire the United States, but he is an effective leader of high intelligence who, incidentally, is a staunch foe of the Communists. In view of our own apparent complicity, we can afford to tolerate a little tugging on the eagle's feathers if Mr. Lee feels this necessary to prove his independence. In short, when he blows his top the best thing we can do is keep our shirts on.