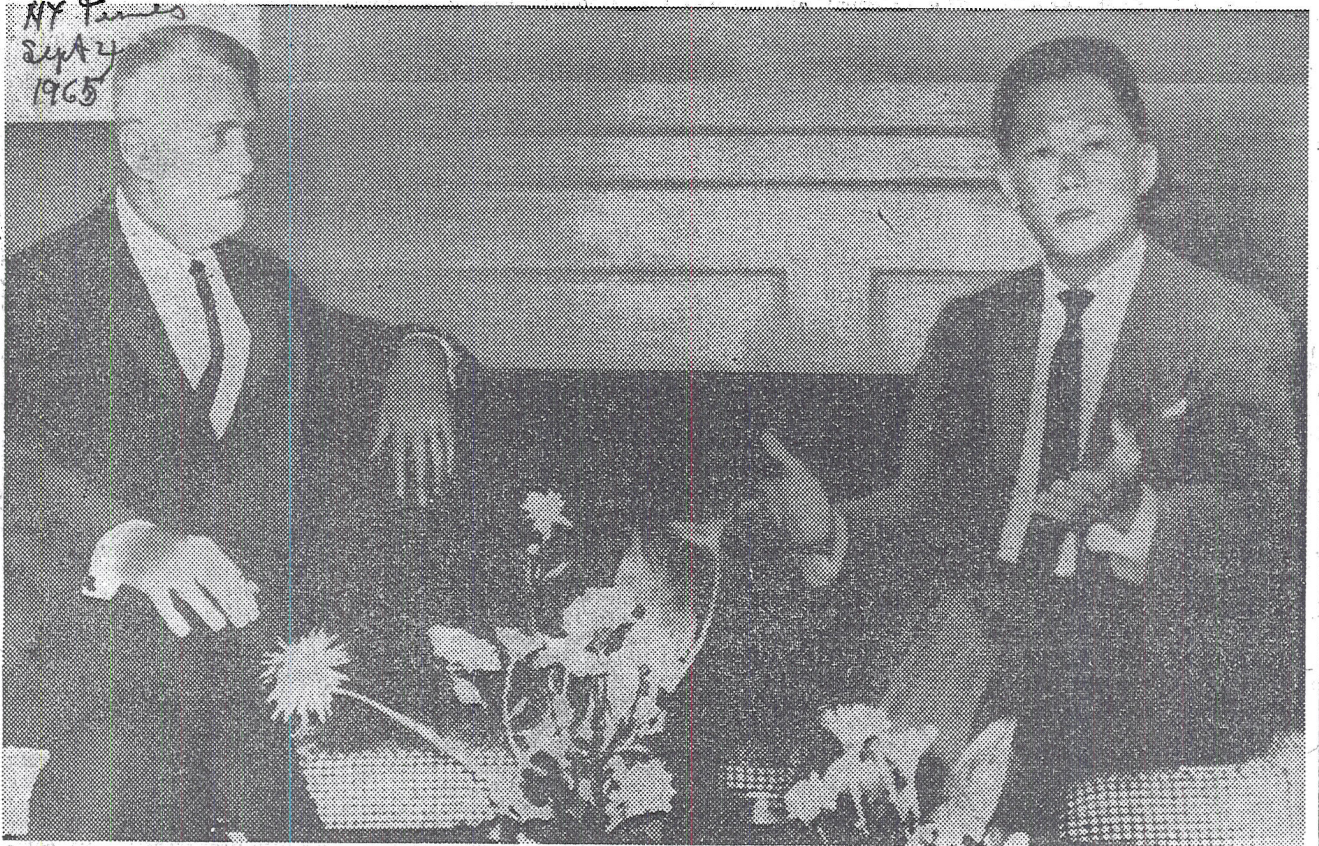


U.S. Envoy Sees Singapore Prime Minister in Atmosphere of Strain



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore gestures to newsmen during meeting with Ambassador James D. Bell. Associated Press Wirephoto

Special to The New York Times
 SINGAPORE, Sept. 3 — Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew met with a United States official today for the first time since making his charges of improper Central Intelligence Agency activities in Singapore. Mr. Lee met with Ambassador James D. Bell in

what appeared to be an icy, inconclusive encounter. Mr. Bell had flown from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to meet with the Singapore leader, who forced the United States State Department to retract its denial of the 1960 activities after he produced a four-year-old letter of apology from

Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Neither Mr. Lee nor Mr. Bell, who had also denied the allegations, would comment on the 30-minute talks, which began with a grim-faced handshake and a gruff exchange. Mr. Lee sought to stage the meeting before a battery of television cameras

and reporters, saying he thought the press should see at least the early stages of the talks. "Otherwise there may be a lot of misunderstanding," he explained. The Ambassador replied stiffly: "I have discussed problems

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which I cannot talk about while the press is here."

Mr. Lee assumed an amazed expression and countered, "but I have nothing to hide."

Mr. Bell remained silent, and Mr. Lee motioned for newsmen to leave. The American envoy emerged alone afterward. Striding quickly to the elevator, he brushed off newsmen, saying "Not a word, not a word."

American officials maintained strict silence on the 1960 affair, in which Mr. Lee said a C.I.A. agent was arrested for having tried to buy information from a Singapore intelligence officer. The Prime Minister also said the United States had offered him and his party \$3 million to release the C.I.A. man quietly — after he had asked a price of \$33 million for economic development.