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NSC BRIEFING

3 November 1959

BACKGROUND

SINGAPORE

~~(Based on NIE 69-59)~~

- I. Although ^{has many uncertainties but} long-term outlook is ~~gloomy~~, we believe ^{no} drastic change in ~~present situation~~ will not occur during next two years. ~~Current trend to left will probably continue, but we do not believe extremist wing of People's Action Party (PAP) will find it opportune to seize control of the government during this period.~~
- II. We believe the UK will, ~~for at least the next two years, make a substantial effort~~ ^{try to} protect its basic interests in Singapore. ~~if an extreme threat arises, we estimate the British~~ ^{and} will accept the risks and take whatever actions they believe necessary.
- III. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is 36 years old, ^{The leader of the Political Action Party} highly intelligent, a skillful lawyer and politician.
 - A. English educated, with a brilliant record at Cambridge.
 - B. ~~Appointed to Legislative Council 1954; shortly after took lead in organizing left-wing PAP, which is now governing party of Singapore.~~
 - C. In 1957, Lee and ^{his} moderate supporters lost control of party to pro-Communist element, and were unable to reassert leadership until ^{his predecessor} former government (later in 1957) arrested five key extremist PAP leaders ^{in 1957}.
 - D. Lee has since tightened control over party machinery, but party remains extremely vulnerable to pro-Communists who are ^{movement of power + funding} deeply entrenched. ^{28 yrs old} This leader ^{is} ~~him~~ ^{(take in}

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~~E. Lee's political philosophy is obscured by wide range of statements; some of very radical statements probably made to gain public support and maintain working relationship with extremist wing of party.~~

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1. In a speech on 29 October at Singapore's all-Chinese Nanyang University, Lee said that a resurgent China was becoming "an object of apprehension among the peoples of Southeast Asia."
2. He warned that Nanyang must not "symbolize an outpost in this region of Chinese dominance...."

H. Lee speaks English fluently--but his spoken Chinese is poor, making close relationship with Chinese-speaking masses difficult.

IV. Lim Chin Siong, top pro-Communist leader in PAP, is 28, highly intelligent, and an effective political leader.

- A. Arrested for subversion in 1956, and not released until PAP came to power in June 1959.
- B. Main area of influence is among trade unions; Lim and associates now believed to control organized blue-collar workers, Singapore's most militant labor segment.

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C. ~~Lim is not a rabble-rouser, but a soft-spoken, skillful operator; his youth, jail record, and record of agitation against British contribute to his wide popular appeal.~~

^{was}
D. ~~Lim~~ is hero of Chinese youth and is closely identified with Chinese-speaking masses.

V. Current trends.

A. Trend to left will probably continue over next two years.

1. Opposition to PAP lacks unity, leadership, and organization.

B. Main efforts of government likely to be devoted to achieving short-term economic gains to hold public support, and to consolidating influence over wide range of political, cultural, and economic activities.

C. Lim Chin Siong will probably develop sufficient strength to successfully challenge moderate leadership of PAP.

D. Despite this capability we believe extremists will decide to exercise their power indirectly by pressure and threats on the moderates for next two years, restrained by:

1. Adverse effect "radical" rule would have on conservative Federation of Malaya and on Singapore's prospects for merger with the Federation.

2. Risk that extremist take-over would provoke British revocation of Constitution and resumption of direct rule.

3. Desire avoid responsibility for probable worsening of Singapore economic situation during next two years.