

**A Modest Proposal**  
**www.time.com**  
**Sep. 24, 1965**

As head of the world's newest sovereign power, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew last week dispatched his foreign minister, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, on the nonaligned nations' diplomatic equivalent of the American Express Co.'s basic budget tour: the United Nations (to plead for admission), London, Moscow, and a modest selection of Eastern European and Afro-Asian capitals.

In case anyone still wondered what policies Rajaratnam would be promoting, after Lee's triple-barreled anti-U.S. blast last month (TIME, Sept. 10), the Prime Minister also called in a couple of Western newsmen and described anew the catastrophe that would result if the U.S. ever took over from the British out his way. This time he had a truly sensational alternative to propose. If Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman ever called on U.S. forces to replace the British in neighboring Malaysia, said Lee, "I'm telling the Tunku that I would consider offering Singapore as a base to the Russians—and I believe they should take it."

A Russian takeover of the huge British base at Singapore would not only produce "a stalemate" on the Malayan peninsula, as Lee observed, but also block the strategic Strait of Malacca and disrupt the entire balance of power in the Southeast Pacific. The idea was all the more surprising because a) Britain has no intention of leaving anytime soon, b) the U.S. has its hands full in Viet Nam, and c) the Soviet Union is so monumentally uninterested in Lee's problems that it has not even troubled to recognize the infant nation in the six weeks since it was forced to secede from Malaysia. As for Malaysia—well, said the Tunku angrily, "Lee is talking through his hat. He has not got a head."

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