

THE BATTLE FOR MERGER

by LEE KUAN YEW

NEW

- Message from Lee Kuan Yew
- Historical background
- Guide to key players, places and events
- Audio recordings of radio talks (in MP3 format)





*A series of twelve Radio Talks on the
struggle for independence through Merger
between Singapore and the Federation
of Malaya*

The transcripts of the twelve radio talks and twelve appendices in this book are an exact reproduction of *The Battle for Merger*, 1962. To retain the authenticity of the original work, no part of it has been changed.



*The Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, at the microphone
at Radio Singapore.*

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By **LEE KUAN YEW**



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BATTLE FOR MERGER

A series of twelve talks broadcast by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, over Radio Singapore between September 13, 1961 and October 9, 1961.

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MESSAGE

Mr Lee Kuan Yew

The story of merger, our ejection from Malaysia in 1965 and our subsequent struggles to survive is well known. Less well known are the crucial years of 1961–1962, when the PAP government was in a precarious position, and the future of Singapore hung in the balance. The story is worth retelling.

Fighting for independence through merger with Malaya had always been part of the PAP platform. It was on this basis that we were elected in 1959. We needed merger in order to remain viable. We needed a common market, access to the Malaysian hinterland, and also basic supplies like water. The idea of a sovereign, independent Singapore that could survive on its own was not yet something that had widespread currency.

Until 1961, the goal of merger seemed remote. It is difficult to convey now how much the political winds at the time seemed to be blowing to the left. Sitting on the fence, large swathes of the Chinese-educated ground had little confidence in the long-term prospects of the moderate socialist PAP, thinking that the communists and radical left would be the ultimate winners. For their part, the communists knew full well that merger with Malaya would deal a fatal blow to their chances of capturing Singapore politically. PAP leaders saw first-hand the anti-merger agitation stirred up by the communists and their trade union proxies, following the pro-communists' break with the PAP in July 1961.

Something had to be done to persuade the people there was a viable alternative: a non-communist, democratic socialist PAP in charge of a Singapore that was part of Malaysia. We had to expose the communist manoeuvrings and show what they were up to in reality. Some effort was needed to convince the people where the long-term political tide was heading. We had to show confidence and persuade the people that ultimately, and despite appearances, it was the PAP which would hold the winning cards.