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LEAFLET NO: 451  
LANGUAGE: CHINESE  
REQUEST BY: Head, Emergency Information Services.

### A MESSAGE FROM LAM SWEE TO THE WORKERS OF MALAYA

Dear brother and sister workers of the various races:

First of all I wish to give you all a “free democratic” salute.

Before 15th June, 1948, I shouldered the responsibility as the Chairman of the Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU) in the Singapore Office. When the MCP started its armed rebellion and the British authorities proclaimed its Emergency Regulations, the peaceful situation in Malaya became chaotic. The lives of the various classes of people in Malaya were menaced. Our democratic and free trade union movement was badly hit. The freedom and security of the labour leaders of the various races were threatened.

Under such circumstances I quite reluctantly gave up my duties and took to the jungle to join the Communists against the attacks by the British troops and Police forces. During these two years, I have clearly learnt that the armed policy of violence of the MCP Central Committee is totally against the will of the people. It is an erroneous policy that disrupts the freedom and peace of the people. Even the present MCP Central Committee is not of a legal birth within the Party. The MCP democratic consultative system is undemocratic in its proceedings. The so-called “for the interest of the people” of the MCP is purely wanton massacre of the people, robbing their property and disrupting their peaceful living. It drove the people to do things causing separation between husbands and wives and sons and fathers, hunger and desolation among them. “To fight for the people” actually means “to fight for the Party”, thus driving many illiterate young men to become scapegoats in the Party’s attempt to seize power by force.

My activities for more than ten years in the Malayan revolution have led me to understand clearly the true nature of the leaders of the MCP Central Committee. Now I am awake. I will be cheated and utilised no more by them. Hence I surrendered myself to the Police in Bentong on 27th June, 1950. There have been many surrenders and you know that there is great discontent and argument among the Communist leaders. It is now already four months since my surrender. I notice that those who have surrendered from the various states are being well treated like myself by the Government. They are not imprisoned. I wish therefore to take this opportunity to call upon them all to surrender also.

I. Let us recall 1945, when the Japanese surrendered and the Allied Forces returned to Malaya, the various communities were freed from the bloody Japanese Fascist rule. We the various classes of workers of the Malayan peoples, devoted much time and energy to the following:-

- (a) To support the UNO in maintaining peace in the world and striving for freedom and democracy for the Malayan peoples.
- (b) To elevate the social and political status of the workers; to strive for freedom and legal rights in the trade union movement, to raise the standard of living of the workers and to strive for better treatment.

As a result our brother and sister workers of the various races in Malaya were more united. Progress was shown in the Trade Union movement. The PMFTU was officially inaugurated in 1946 in Singapore at the first meeting of Trade Union representatives.

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II. After the inauguration of the PMFTU the social and political status of the Malayan workers were raised due to the efforts of trade union leaders and the interests shown by the authorities.

- (a) Trade Union advisers' offices were set up in Singapore as well as in the Federation.
- (b) Labour Advisory Boards were set up to investigate the living conditions and treatment of the workers.
- (c) Workers then had freedom and rights to organise and to stage strikes.

We achieved all these rights. As the result of the united struggle by the workers were able to raise the standard of living and improve the working conditions of the workers. We succeeded in striving for the enforcement of labour insurance and improvement in working hours, and holidays. We were also successful in getting wages for sick leaves and allowances for woman workers before and after confinements.

A review of past events in the Malayan trade union movement proves that all things were done in the interest of the workers.

Having recalled the past, let us now review the present condition of the workers.

III. In March 1948 the MCP decided to sacrifice the fruits achieved by the trade unions to seize power. Hence it urged the workers to stage illegal strikes which did little except threaten the interests and safety of the worker. For instance, the bloody incidents of the Slim Oil Palm Estate in Perak; the Puchong Dredge workers in Selangor, the Dunlop Estate workers in Tangkak, Johore; the Singapore dockers, etc. The MCP even resorted to the use of hand grenades. In one case a 14-year-old child was killed. I believe that all of you still remember these bloody facts.

In June 1949 we were greatly affected and menaced by the MCP rebellion. We had no safety and freedom anywhere. We went into the jungle because of the violent union policy of the MCP which was against the interest of the workers; the workers were forced to take to the road of death. The Malayan trade union movement was forced to indulge in illegal underground activities.

Under the control of the MCP workers lost their freedom and rights to organise trade unions. The Malayan Communists controlled the villages by armed forces and used these villages as bases to carry out their robberies, arsenic activities. This only revealed their political conspiracy in utilising the workers and farmers as scapegoats for seizing power. Now the facts are more revealing:

- (a) Workers and farmers living in villages who are under the control of the Malayan Communists, and cheated by their sweet words, are forced to serve them. But this only leads their families and relatives into being deported, imprisoned and sent to detention camps.
- (b) People staying in estates in suburban areas are taken into the jungle to be shot dead without inquiry if they are being suspected of helping the Government. This is a very common affair.
- (c) Burning down of factories, and disrupting of communications and production centres which affect the livelihood of the people are being carried out throughout Malaya.

My dear brother and sister workers of the various races!

Although I have left you for more than two years, yet there is not a minute which I do not take an interest in your livelihood, troubles and safety, particularly at a time when prices of things are so high and wages do not commensurate with work. I can imagine that you are living a hard life. The Malayan Communists will willingly sacrifice the lives of the people for their own ends. Hence

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you should realise that the fruits we have achieved in the trade union movement and your precious lives should not be exploited and used by the Malayan Communists as tools for their political achievements. We must maintain the spirit of cooperation as in the past, and continue to strive for the workers' interest. We must strive for peace and democracy, higher wages and better treatment for the Malayan workers. Therefore, let everyone of us be mindful of our duty.

- (a) Get away immediately from illegal Trade Unions which are under the control of the Malayan Communists and join the ones which are free and democratic.
- (b) Strengthen your unity. Hold fast to that and head towards expansion of the trade union movement. Strive for improvement of the standard of living of the workers.
- (c) Maintain our stand so that we may not be used by any party for its political ends.

Salute to you all.

(Signed) LAM SWEE  
Former Vice-President, Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions.