

# Lunch with the FT: Lee Hsien Loong

By Gideon Rachman

Singapore's PM talks about Japanese aggression, Ukraine's revolution and why nanny states are not all bad

As the Singaporean prime minister settles into his seat for lunch, I am fussing with my tape machines – two of them, just in case one fails. Lee Hsien Loong smiles faintly and says: “The NSA will give you a copy.”

It is an unexpectedly subversive remark from a man I had expected to be the epitome of earnestness. The prime minister has a reputation as a cerebral technocrat, without a frivolous bone in his body. He even looks austere – tall, slim, grey hair and dressed in a dark suit and tie. So the biggest surprise, during our lunch, is how often Lee laughs. Over the course of the next hour, a variety of grim subjects provokes an incongruous chuckle or a broad smile – the Japanese occupation of Singapore in the second world war, the west's mishandling of the revolution in Ukraine, China's fear of separatist movements and the bankruptcy of Iceland. It is not, I conclude, that the Singaporean prime minister is a callous man. It is just that his way of taking the edge off the most difficult topics is to laugh while discussing them.



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## Edmund Phelps, economist

By Martin Wolf

Over pumpkin soup, the Nobel Prize-winning economist talks to the FT's Martin Wolf about creativity and innovation



I have arranged to meet Edmund (Ned) Phelps, director of the Center on Capitalism and Society at Columbia University, at the Kongress Hotel in Davos during the World Economic Forum. It is old-fashioned and very Swiss.

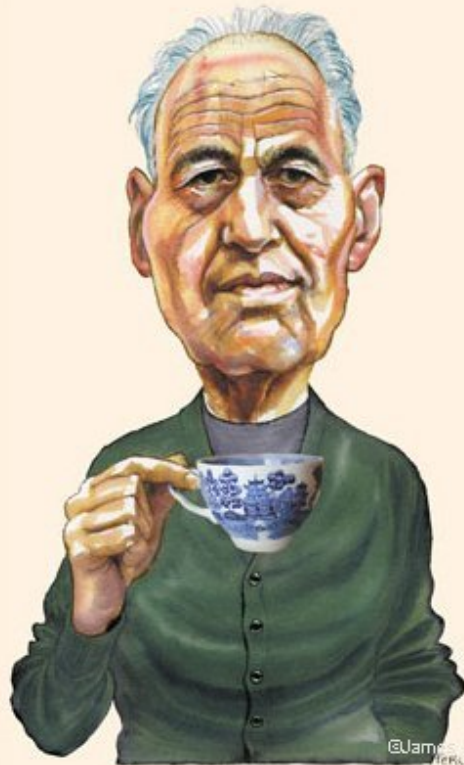
I sit at our reserved table in a still-empty restaurant slightly before Phelps arrives. At 80, he is grey-haired but slim and active, physically and intellectually. I have long admired his originality, disarming modesty and courtesy.

Phelps won the 2006 Nobel Memorial Prize in economics for path-breaking work of the 1960s, particularly on the “natural rate of unemployment” – the

# Lunch with the FT: Frank Auerbach

By Jackie Wullschlager

## The reclusive 81-year-old artist shares prawn sandwiches with Jackie Wullschlager



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FERGUSON

“This will be the most uncomfortable lunch you’ve ever done,” Frank Auerbach apologises as he opens the door to a ground-floor flat in a Victorian terrace in Finsbury Park, north London. Dressed in Auerbach colours – dark green cardigan, buttoned up, and earth-brown corduroy trousers – he is immediately engaging: bright, inquiring eyes; self-deprecating, toothy smile; oval face; wisps of grey hair; long hands.

With a slight stoop, using a stick, the 81-year-old shuffles down a dark corridor, past a front room bare but for a single bed and some easels, into a narrow, unmodernised kitchen. “Would you like wine, tea or coffee?” he asks in a German accent thicker than I had imagined – he

arrived in England aged eight, a refugee from Nazi Berlin, in 1939. I request water and he searches for a glass, finds a dirty one, washes it up, pours me some tap water, and makes himself tea in a willow-patterned cup.

## Lunch with the FT: David Adjaye

By Edwin Heathcote

Between meeting the Obamas and designing for Putin, the globe-trotting British architect talks to Edwin Heathcote over lunch at Dinner in London



The name of Heston Blumenthal's restaurant at London's Mandarin Oriental makes text messaging exchanges difficult. I confirmed Dinner on Friday with David Adjaye. Lunch would be better for me, he texted back. Yes, yes, I text, it's Lunch with the FT – Dinner is the name of the restaurant. Lunch at Dinner. And so on. Luckily, when Friday comes, the napkin ring at the restaurant explains everything. Dinner, it tells us, was once the name for breakfast. Then for lunch, then for supper. "I'm learning something all the time," grins Adjaye.

The 45-year-old African-British architect, one of the highest-profile and most consistently interesting of his generation, has recently returned from Washington, DC, where he attended the groundbreaking ceremony for his biggest blockbuster building to date, the Smithsonian's

National Museum of African American Culture and History – due to open in 2015.

There he met, and was profoundly impressed by, Barack and Michelle Obama. "He's a consummate politician," Adjaye says, "very personable and very smart. I never met Bill Clinton but I think Obama has that same sense of being able to create an intimacy in a room that you heard about [with Clinton]. And Michelle is incredible. She manages to get around to everyone – embrace those who need a hug, very warm, very careful, and they're very obviously in love. It looks like a new, more intimate model of statesmanship."

Adjaye, I suggest, has become something of a statesman himself with buildings for high-profile international institutions from the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo to the Skolkovo School

## Lunch with the FT: Mikhail Baryshnikov

Louise Levene

Over Dover sole in London, the ballet legend-turned-photographer talks about being the same weight as he was at 18, preferring to watch others dance and hanging out in the White House

Regent's Park Road is blocked by a film crew for Alan Bennett's *The Lady in the Van*. A few photographers are hoping for a glimpse of Maggie Smith but ballet legend Mikhail Baryshnikov slips into Odette's restaurant unobserved. "Nobody's interested in a 66-year-old man," he says. "I am very lucky in this respect, I can go anywhere. The paparazzi lost interest in me 40 years ago."

The self-effacement is habitual and not always entirely convincing but Baryshnikov talks readily and laughs often. He has just arrived from Milan where he has been discussing a play based on Ballets Russes legend Vaslav Nijinsky with avant-garde director Robert Wilson but this four-day stopover in London is centred on another of his creative outlets: his dance photography.

He smiles, already relaxed. "We don't *have* to talk about photography," he says, then tells me he was given his first camera 40 years ago, shortly after his defection from the Soviet Union to the west during a tour to Toronto in 1974.

"For the first few years it was just friends, places, like a travel notebook. I never – not once – photographed dance but something clicked in the Dominican Republic [where he has a

