

**Suppression of the Left in Singapore 1945-1963:
Domestic and Regional Contexts in the Southeast Asian Cold War**

by

*Geoff Wade
Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore*

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Introduction

The period 1948 to 1963 was an age of great flux in Southeast Asia – a period of decolonization, of nation-building, and jockeying among the major powers for influence in the region, most obviously manifested as the Cold War. This battle between Left and Right, waged across the globe, was a major factor in the events and processes which shaped the polities of Southeast Asia through this period. This was as true for the British Crown Colony of Singapore as it was for the larger and more populous states of the region.

In an effort to understand some of the political evolution of Singapore from its status as Crown Colony post-World War II to the eve of the creation of a Malaysia which incorporated Singapore, this essay will address both the local processes of contention between the colony/state and the Left,¹ as well as the larger political forces at work, both regionally and globally. Specifically, by examining the suppression of representatives of the Left in Singapore in 1951, 1954, 1957 and in 1963, it is intended to examine how and why these actions proceeded domestically, and also to locate them within a greater Southeast Asian and global Cold War context. In this way, it will respond to various works which depict Singapore's history as essentially a domestic story of a man or a party, or indeed of mainly domestic contention between Left and Right.

The Beginnings (1945-1949)

Between 1945 and early 1948, as the British reinstated their political and economic control over Malaya and Singapore, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), a legal

¹ As Cheah Boon Kheng rightly notes, the terms “Left” and “Leftist” lend themselves to a wide range of interpretations and definitions. He defines the Malayan “Left” as individuals, student groups, publications, political parties and organizations in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo, which had ideological or institutional links with the international socialist and labour movement. See Cheah Boon Kheng, “The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s: 'an era of hope or devil's decade?'”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume

<http://www.informaworld.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/smpp/title~content=t713701267~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=7 - v77, Issue 4 December 2006 , pages 634 – 649. See p. 635.>

entity² under the Secretary-General Loi Teck, pursued a path which advocated constitutional change, urging movement toward self-government. During this period, the party was divided into two sections—one open and one underground, with the former engaging in the mass and united front activities. The Communists aimed to deprive the British not only of political power but also other influences, including economic, while other opponents only wanted to attain political power. “To meet this challenge, the British took the decision to relinquish control over all the social groups which the CPM had antagonised and to turn such into friends or allies to fight the Communists.”³ This then might be considered the beginnings of a British policy which was to continue right up until the 1960s in Singapore—that of passive suppression through actively supporting the enemies of the Communist Party and other political forces of the far Left.

However, for reasons which continue to be debated, in late 1947, the CPM Central Committee adopted a resolution entitled “Basic Issues in the Malayan Revolution,” setting down a theoretical explanation of how and why a “new democratic revolution” would be pursued in Malaya. Half a year later, in June 1948, the party initiated armed rebellion in the peninsula. In response, apart from military reaction against the rebel forces, a swathe of emergency regulations was instituted to assist the colonial power deal with this uprising.⁴ Further, on 23 July 1948, the Communist Party of Malaya, the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army, the New Democratic Youth League and the Malaya Youth League (PETA) were proscribed as subversive organisations by both the Federation and Singapore Governments. In this period then, and over the following several decades, the Communist Party and these other Leftist parties remained illegal. In addition, the Federal Legislative Council conferred upon the High Commissioner very wide powers under the Emergency Regulations Act of 1948, including an ‘omnibus clause’ which allowed him to make regulation of any issue he desired.⁵ Thereby, suppression of the Left involved both military response to Communist rebellion in the peninsula as well as legal responses, which limited the Leftist parties’ ability to organise in the urban areas including Singapore.

1950-51

In 1950-51, a spate urban violence was visited upon Singapore, with a member of the party’s Singapore City Committee attempting to kill the Singapore Governor Franklin Gimson with a hand grenade, with factories being gutted and cars and buses being burned. Police responses were *ad hoc*, but certainly sufficient to convince the far Left that urban rebellion had little future at that time. The CPM recognised that “The environment in which we are situated is a big town where the enemy’s strength is highly concentrated.... Our basic strategy is to expand and consolidate the Patriotic National United front in

² The party was recognised by the British as an organisation, and was formally exempted from registering under the Societies Ordinance in 1947.

³ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front: the Communist Struggle in Singapore 1954-1966*, Singapore, South Seas Society, p. 13.

⁴ The regulations and their evolution over the following decade and more are discussed in P.B.G. Waller, *A Study of the Emergency Regulations of Malaya 1948-1960* (Melno Park: Stanford Research Institute, 1967).

⁵ B. Simandjuntak, *Malayan Federalism 1945-1963*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 57.

order to mobilise the strength of the entire people.”⁶ To this end, the Anti-British League (ABL), which had been established in September 1949 as a front organisation, with branches throughout the colony, aiming at “fighting the foreign ruler—the British imperialists,” became a major avenue of political action. The Singapore Students ABL was involved in Chinese schools, while the Singapore People’s ABL had both Chinese-speaking and English-speaking divisions. It soon became clear to the British that a more sophisticated critique of colonial rule was emerging. By 1950, the English-language organs of the CPM’s “*Freedom News*” and “*Battlefront*” began publishing more focused local criticisms of the colonial administration, rather than simple critiques of British imperialism. The Benham report on civil service reform was labelled a “British swindle,” while some local members of the Legislative Council, including C.C. Tan, N.A. Mallal and Lim Yew Hock were branded as “running dogs” of the British. Concluding that the assistance of English-educated persons had been obtained for these publications, in January 1951 the Special Branch responded by detaining 34 members of the Singapore Teachers Union, the Singapore Co-operative Society and the University of Malaya.⁷

Most of the detainees were former members of the defunct Malayan Democratic Union (MDU), the first political party formed in Singapore after the war.⁸ Included in this swoop also were University of Malaya students James Puthuchery, Ong Cheng Piaw and Yap Kon Puck, who were charged with editing the allegedly pro-communist paper, *Malayan Orchid*. Other ABL leaders detained were *Utusan Melayu* journalist A. Samad Ismail and schoolteacher C.V. Devan Nair.⁹ None of the detainees was ever charged, perhaps because, as Justice Brown chairman of the Advisory Detention Committee admitted, the 34 persons were detained on suspicion rather than facts admissible in court. Some were detained for several years.¹⁰

Even faced with criticism from the conservative *Straits Times* over the arrests and a procession to Whitehall in London by the Malayan Forum, the colonial authorities chose to hold the detainees in prison, as a means of preventing “the spread of Communism to a new and important section of the community.”¹¹ This new and important section of the community was obviously the English-educated elite. Yeo Kim Wah concludes of this incident: “What is clear was that the government, obsessed with the armed insurrection and in particular with the spate of communist terrorism in the island, was determined to suppress communist and even extreme left-wing views altogether” He also notes the apparent effectiveness of the actions: “In any case, this action certainly discouraged many politically-conscious Asians from active politics, thereby delaying the formation of a

⁶ Quoted in Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55*, Singapore University Press, 1973, p. 224.

⁷ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55*, p. 226.

⁸ For an account of the history of the Malayan democratic Union, which dissolved itself in June 1948, see Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55*, pp. 88-98.

⁹ Cheah Boon Kheng, “The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s,” p. 643.

¹⁰ John Eber was released in 1953 and, under the terms of his release, left for Britain. P.V. Sharma departed for India and J.K.M. Tan freed in September 1952 became a doctor in Kuching. Devan Nair, Samad Ismail and James Puthuchery, who were released in 1952, were later involved in the founding of the People’s Action Party

¹¹ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55*, p. 228.

strongly anti-colonial movement. In particular, it strengthened the belief among University of Malaya students that it was judicious to eschew political views that might be considered 'dangerous' or 'subversive' by the campus authority or the government.¹² Other effects were observed by the Australian commissioner in Singapore who, when remarking on strikes in late 1951 noted that: "The apparent inactivity of the MCP in regard to the strikes is probably due to the series of arrests of Town Council members, members of the English-speaking Anti-British League, and propaganda specialists, which have taken place since January 1951."¹³

Other suppression activities during the year included the institution of Emergency (Newspaper) Regulations: The press release which accompanied the new regulations noted: "As of Aug. 1 this year all newspapers and magazines published in Singapore must obtain a permit from the Colonial Secretary to whom application must be made in the published form.... Under the regulations the Colonial secretary is empowered to withdraw a permit at any time at his discretion... These Regulations are intended to safeguard the public during the present state of Emergency from the dissemination of Communist propaganda and literature in their daily reading matter and from deliberate attempts to foster unrest and inter-communal misunderstandings."¹⁴ Protests against these new regulations were seen throughout Singapore.

It was also during this period that the British began to allow for limited election to the Singapore Legislative Council, whose members had, until early 1948, all been appointed. In that year, they had allowed limited elected members to the Council and, in 1951, the number of such elected members was increased.¹⁵ The British appointed Tan Chin Tuan of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, one of the forces vehemently opposed to the CPM,¹⁶ to be Vice President of the Legislative Council. In addition, in 1951 two Legislative Council members were allowed to sit on the Executive Council, the prime decision-making body of the colony. While these concessions were being made as early preparation for self-rule some time in the distant future, there was an obvious concern about the political affiliations of those who would be elected to these positions. In fact, by October 1951, the CPM had already issued a new directive which placed greater emphasis on political rather than military action. More stress was, according to this directive, to be placed on winning over the middle class.¹⁷ Further, the killing of the British High Commissioner in Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney, in this year in a Communist ambush at Fraser's Hill in Pahang, appears to have also pushed the British toward

¹² Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore 1945-55*, p. 227-229.

¹³ "Australian Commission Singapore Dept. Despatches 1-21. Min. Despatches 1-4 new series 1951", NAA, Series No. A4231, Control Symbol No. 1951/SINGAPORE, electronic page no. 75.

¹⁴ *Straits Times*, 7 July 1951.

¹⁵ The year 1951 also saw the first local government elections in Malaya, and in response the CPM's 'October 1951 Directive' which meant that its members could, with alternative non-party identities, take part in political and electoral activities.

¹⁶ Another body which the British gave tacit support to was the "Singapore Overseas Chinese Anti-Communist Resist-Russia Committee" established in 1951, with Tan Kok Chor as chair, and supported by associations and guilds. This body offered to help the government track down Communist fifth-columnists. See "Australian Commission Singapore Dept. Despatches 1951", electronic page 66.

¹⁷ "Australian Secret Service - Records on Singapore and Malaya. [Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS)", See NAA Series Number A7133, Control No. 6, electronic page 11.

promoting an anti-Communist united front and convinced the colonial administration of the need to defer any power transfer until the Communist threat was finally defeated.¹⁸

But the British certainly were not looking at the affairs of Singapore or Malaya in a vacuum. A meeting of all senior British diplomatic and service personnel from South and East Asia took place at Bukit Serene in Johore in December 1950 under the chairmanship of Malcolm Macdonald, British Commissioner-General for South-East Asia, at which it was "agreed that the taking over of Indo-China, or at least the whole of Tongking, by the Vietminh aided by the Chinese Communists --which on present indications could happen within six months or so--was likely to be followed with little delay by the collapse of organised resistance to Communism in both Burma and Thailand. While it was fully recognised that this would have extremely serious consequences on internal security and food supply in Malaya and the rest of South-east Asia, the Commanders-in-Chief are still confident that a Chinese Communist land attack on Malaya could be held at the Kra Isthmus, as long as control of the sea and air continues."¹⁹ In addition to these concerns which all world powers were paying attention to, were the ongoing Korean war, the possibility of PRC attacks on Taiwan, and concern over the movement of six Soviet divisions to the Far East in December 1950. In dealing with these regional manifestations of the Cold War, Britain had already begun to rely further on Australia, with Tom Critchley, the acting Australian commissioner, being briefed on matters by Malcolm Macdonald and participating in meetings of the Joint Intelligence Committee. As part of the growing cooperation, the Australians had stationed two Royal Australian Air Force squadrons in Singapore.

1952-1953

The new British High Commissioner General Sir Gerald Templer arrived in Malaya in 1952, tasked with "winning the hearts and minds of the people," a large part of which involved winning people away from the Communist Party of Malaya.²⁰ While his forces pursued guerrilla fighters in the jungles, in the major urban centres including Singapore, the CPM was involving itself in more of a "peaceful struggle." In addition to the immediate local exigencies, the CPM was responding to a new line in the international Communist movement. In the Soviet Union, Stalin had, by 1952, felt that a new mode of dealing with the West was necessary. He decided on the strategy of indirect struggle, the so-called peaceful struggle. Following Stalin's death in 1953, his successor Khrushchev also developed this line of peaceful struggle, linking it with "peaceful coexistence." Lee Ting Hui claims that the CPM "came under strong pressure from both Khrushchev and Liu Shao-chi to change its method of struggle, and complied."²¹

¹⁸ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 17.

¹⁹ "Australian Commission Singapore Dept. Despatches 1-21. Min. Despatches 1-4 new series 1951", NAA, Series No. A4231, Control Symbol No.1951/SINGAPORE, electronic page no. 5.

²⁰ It is perhaps not irrelevant that Templer had formerly served as director of British Military Intelligence.

²¹ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 17-18. Lee cites in evidence the "April 25th Statement" which was a 1970 statement made on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the party. See Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 358.

But, having been proscribed by the Colonial government, the CPM had to operate through, or in alliance with existing or newly-established Left-wing bodies. The Singapore City Council of the CPM now acknowledged that the Anti-British Leagues had no future, and concentrated efforts on penetrating labour unions and Chinese schools, as well as political parties and social groups. Most of the bodies the party operated through involved Chinese-educated persons, but certainly this was not exclusively so. The British responded to the CPM efforts to achieve influence through unions by stringently vetting union leaders. In May of 1952, strikes were already beginning, with three in that month including one by the Singapore Traction Company Employee's Union.

If the vetting of union leaders was seen to be an action against the Communists, other actions were even more so. The Singapore government, like its Kuala Lumpur counterpart, introduced a bill on 4 March requiring compulsory national service registration for males, for possible employment by military, police or civil defence forces. Again this bill created great disquiet in the society and induced protests. The Australian commissioner considered that the two governments likely had different planned uses for their conscripts, with the Malayan government being interested in using the persons thus registered to respond to the "existing threat from within", while "the Singapore Government on the other hand, now believes that it is in a position already to contain the Communist activity from within and fears chiefly the possibility of a direct attack from outside Malaya."²²

A more direct government attack on the Left came in the middle of the year when, on 14 June 1952, Mr P.M. Williams, a member of the General Council of the Singapore Labour Party, was arrested for supporting the Communist Party, rallying support for the party and promoting its legalization. No evidence was presented and he was eventually released. One interpretation of this was provided by the Australian acting commissioner, who noted: "The Government's attitude in this incident appears to be based not so much on Mr Williams' alleged political leanings, as on a new resolve, underlined by the Governor, to shake the complacency of Singaporeans about the menace of Communism in the Colony and to make it quite clear that the Government will no longer tolerate irresponsible fence-sitting or Communist affiliations....The Governor fears that his aim of creating a movement for the legalization of Communism, which Mr Williams insists is meant to be a Socialist but non-Marxist 'Third Force', would be a definite future threat to security."²³ Another Government concern about the Left this year was the number of Chinese students leaving for education in China, on the fear that after education in China they would return to Malaya indoctrinated.²⁴ This mellowed the general British critique of the proposed Chinese-language Nanyang University for Singapore.

The regional/global context of the struggles being waged in Singapore was reflected in a number of meetings. The 1952 Bukit Serene meeting at Malcolm MacDonald's

²² "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1952", NAA, Series No. A4231, Control Symbol No.1952/SINGAPORE, electronic page no. 28.

²³ "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1952", electronic page no. 53.

²⁴ "Australian Secret Service - Records on Singapore and Malaya. [Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS)", See NAA Series Number A7133, Control No. 6, electronic page 22.

house in Johore recognised that Communist parties all over Asia had moved away from violent struggle toward peaceful infiltration of organisations, unions etc. However, the major concern of the British diplomats present was how China would move in respect of Vietnam. The ANZUS²⁵ Defence Council meeting was held in Hawaii in August 1952 and was widely reported in the Singapore press. The Asian-owned press in Singapore represented the three-party agreement as not only being aimed at opposing Communism but also at bolstering colonialism. It was further criticised as being a regional pact with no Asian participation.²⁶ Finally, a tripartite intelligence conference, including Britain, France and the United States, with Australia and New Zealand as observers was held in Singapore in December 1952. The French expressed an anxiety to establish a combined intelligence staff, but the United States was less than enthusiastic on this front.²⁷ These meetings all had international Communism, and specifically Asian Communism, as their target, and it is unlikely that the British colonial administration in Singapore was not responding to such concerns in their actions detailed above.

1954

But given the exigencies of diminishing empire, the British had to pursue a process of decolonization, even if at a modest rate. By 1954, Templer had essentially achieved the military defeat of the CPM in the peninsula. With the improvement in the security situation, it was announced that new Constitutions would be drawn up which would provide partial self-government for Singapore and full self-government for the Federation of Malaya.

The new Singapore Constitution, which was known as the Rendel Constitution after then report published in February 1954, provided for the beginnings of self-government, and this obviously demanded a certain freeing of the political environment, allowing more ease in forming political parties, trade unions and other organisations, and it was this which the Communist party as well as other Leftists saw as an opportunity. Having lost most of its armed forces, the CPM had little option but to pursue "peaceful struggle." Thus over the period 1954-1966, the party pursued this peaceful struggle strategy in the urban centres of Malaya, including Singapore, in order to rebuild its strength.²⁸

At the same time, and some suggest because of the change of tactics by the CPM, students began to assert their opposition to the colonial government. The first major student protest movement was the 13 May Incident of 1954. "On 13 May, nearly 900 students from numerous Chinese middle schools clashed with riot squads over the colonial government's drafting of young people for military service against the Malayan Communist Party."²⁹ Later in the year, there were minor strikes and in February 1955 the first major strike was held -- by the workers of the Paya Lebar Bus Company.³⁰

²⁵ The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty grouping.

²⁶ "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1952", electronic page no. 61.

²⁷ "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1952", electronic page no. 120.

²⁸ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 15-16.

²⁹ Huang Jianli, "Positioning the student political activism of Singapore: articulation, contestation and omission", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume

In response to the new opposition, the political actions taken by the colonial authorities were combined with stepped-up police actions, with the lead in the latter being taken by Special Branch. By 1954, the Singapore Special Branch had captured 14 of the top 16 members of the Singapore City Council of the CPM, including its chairman Wan Fong. They also closed down organisations such as the Mayfair Musical and Drama Society and the China Democratic League and banned the newspaper *Nan Chiau Jit Pau*. Arrests and deportations of individuals were also stepped up. Between July 1948 and March 1953, 1,209 persons had been arrested in Singapore on political charges, 254 of whom were banished and 286 of whom were allowed to leave on a voluntary basis. Yeo Kim Wah concludes: "In other words, police repressive measures constituted the principal obstacle to communist expansion in the Colony."³¹

In this period, anti-imperialism was a key element in regional student activities, given that Singapore and Malaya were following India, Burma and Indonesia down the road to independence from colonial powers. As such, in addition to the locally-oriented student activism noted above, there were also regional concerns expressed by students on the Left, particularly those engaged in tertiary education. English-educated members of the University of Malaya in Singapore had in 1953 established a socialist club, which edited and published a journal named *Fajar* (Dawn).³² On 10 May 1954 *Fajar* carried an editorial entitled "Aggression In Asia," which condemned the signing of the SEATO treaty, noting that "we see signs all over Asia that the West is still a menace," and that "Now we are told that Asia is to be defended, whether she likes it or not." Noting that Malaya "is one more pimple on the face of Asia where a Colonial Power rules with the help of quislings" and that "our land is being turned into a military base," the editorial concluded that "if the conditions in this country are not that of a police state, the distinction is too fine for us to see."³³ Shortly thereafter, eight members of the *Fajar* editorial board were arrested by the police for sedition over the article.³⁴ The arrests were obviously also partly in response to the support for the 13 May demonstrators against the national service conscription proposals, which occurred in the same week.

The Vice Chancellor of the University, Sir Sidney Caine, bailed out the students, and reportedly both he and Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General for South-East Asia, advised the Singapore Governor Sir John Nicoll to release the students.

<http://www.informaworld.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/smpp/title~content=t713701267~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=7 - v77>, Issue 3 (September 2006), pages 403–430. See p. 403. In this article, Huang Jianli questions the binary division between Chinese-educated and English-educated students which recent histories, including that by the former Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, have drawn, as well as the correlation between the Chinese-educated student activists and Communism.

³⁰ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 242.

³¹ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 225.

³² A book project on the history of the University of Malaya Socialist Club is now being conducted by Singapore researchers Lim Cheng Tju, Loh Kah Seng, and Seng Guo Quan together with Michael Fernandez, a former member of the Socialist Club.

³³ *Fajar, Organ of the university Socialist Club*, No. 7, 10 May 1954, p. 1

³⁴ Those arrested were: Poh Soo Kai, James Puthuchery, Kwa Boo Sun, M.K. Rajakumar, Lam Khuan Kit, P. Arud Sodhy, Thomas Varkey and Edwin Thumboo.

In the event, the governor instead chose to inform the Colonial Office that it would be unwise to release the students. This suggests something of the concern which elements of the British administration in Singapore felt about English-educated Leftist agitation in the colony, and particularly Leftist criticism of Western policies in Asia. The case eventually went to court where the students were defended by Queen's Counsel, D.N. Pritt,³⁵ assisted by Lee Kuan Yew, later to become Prime Minister of Singapore. The trial strengthened Lee's credentials as a Left-wing anti-colonialist and it brought him to the attention of the Chinese student activists.³⁶ The case saw the students being acquitted by Justice F.A. Chua. Lim Cheng Tju provides, in one of the very few articles written on the *Fajar* case, a useful chronology of the main events during the arrest and prosecution of the students.³⁷

Again, like in 1951, the British administration was particularly concerned about English-educated Leftists and their possible effects upon the broader society, particularly in terms of how the populace perceived the colonial administration and more generally the Western alliance. It appears that this was the reason for the arrest, detention and trial of these students. However, again, like in the Williams case of 1952, it appears that this was as much a case of "killing the chicken to scare the monkey" as a real concern about the likely seditiousness of the *Fajar* editorial board.

The impending elections saw the acceleration of political organising. In July 1954, a Labour Front was created by Lim Yew Hock and Francis Thomas, under the chairmanship of David Marshall. The organisation brought together liberal members of the establishment. It sought a multi-lingual Singapore and a Singapore citizenship, but still pushed for an eventual Singapore-Federation merger. The orientation of the Labour Front can be gleaned from David Marshall's *Manifesto* of November 1954, which included: "I believe that self-government is better than colonial government, however enlightened....I believe dynamic socialism is this country's only answer to the creeping paralysis of communism. Those in this country who turn to that tyranny do so because they know no other outlets for the antagonism of Colonialism."³⁸

It was in that same month, on 21 November 1954 to be precise, that the People's Action Party was founded, with the 14 convenors including Lee Kuan Yew, James

³⁵ Pritt also defended the students arrested in the May 13th demonstrations against the new conscription regulations. Pritt wrote about the *Fajar* case in his book, *Spies and Informers in the Witness-Box* (1958). His *Autobiography* was published in 1966. See Lim Cheng Tju below.

³⁶ Other comments on the role of the court case included: "...the outcome of the trial was that the views of the Socialist Club were ventilated very widely in the papers. The whole *Fajar* editorial which was alleged to be seditious was read out in court and that was largely re-quoted in various daily newspapers both the English and the Chinese newspapers. And *Fajar* as a result gained wide publicity in our county..." and "...it raised the prestige of *Fajar* amongst members of the public and consequently the *Fajar* circulation shot up to about 5,000 copies per issue." See Lim Cheng Tju, "A Personal Journey In Search Of *Fajar*", *s/pores*, Vol. No. 1, April 2007.

http://spores.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/_personal_journey_in_search_of_fajar.pdf

³⁷ Lim Cheng Tju, "A Personal Journey In Search Of *Fajar*", *s/pores*, Vol. No. 1, April 2007.

³⁸ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 115.

- Puthucheary, Samad Ismail, Devan Nair and Lim Chin Siong.³⁹ The party's Leftist orientation was obvious and it adopted a strident anti-colonial stand, demanding immediate independence through merger with Malaya. "The Pan-Malayan objective helped to explain the presence at the meeting of Tengku Abdul Rahman and Tan Cheng Lock, two distinguished leaders from the Federation."⁴⁰ As the aim of the party was escape from the colonial situation, it was legitimate to cooperate with all forces, including the CPM, an attitude which made the PAP acceptable to many of the Chinese-educated Leftists. Only one party, the Singapore Progressive Party, an establishment party which had been founded in 1947,⁴¹ operated on the basis that Singapore should, on its own, move toward self-government. Lee Tin Hui notes that when the open united front struggle began in 1954, "there were only two groups of the Communist Party in Singapore which still functioned. The rest had already been eliminated by Government security action. The two groups were respectively responsible for student and propaganda work."⁴²

In the broader regional context, the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty (or Manila Pact) had been signed in Manila in September 1954 in response to the defeat of France in Indochina, and was intended as a mechanism to prevent further expansion of Communism in Asia. It came into effect in February 1955 with the Treaty's ratification by Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁴³ Through the Treaty, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was created as an international collective defence organization.⁴⁴ To assist in the group's aim of preventing the spread of Communism in Asia and the Pacific, Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam were later added to the list of SEATO signatories. Britain was thus engaged in a formal regional anti-Communist body from this time until the, and its actions in Singapore and Malaya more generally, would have appeared somewhat incongruous if they had not also been oriented in the same direction.

Beginning in this same year, the British began planning for the exigency of Thailand being invaded and incorporated into the Communist Southeast Asian camp. Regionally,

³⁹ Lim's name, however, did not appear on the list of convenors, and Lee Kuan Yew has explained this as being due to Lim considering it unwise as he had been detained in 1950. *Straits Times* 22 July 1961. Goh Keng Swee was also omitted from the list as he was abroad

⁴⁰ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 124-25.

⁴¹ The party was founded by C.C. Tan, John Laycock and N.A. Mallal.

⁴² Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 134.

⁴³ The "treaty area" of this treaty was "the general area of Southeast Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian Parties." Article 4, para. 1 of the Treaty provided: "Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations." The United States included the proviso that "its recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack and its agreement with reference thereto in Article IV, paragraph 1, apply only to communist aggression."

⁴⁴ SEATO was intended as an Asian version of NATO, but was without standing forces. It was staunchly anti-Communist, but ineffective in many ways and was wound up in 1977. Some consider that President Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was the primary force behind the creation of SEATO, expanding the concept of anti-Communist collective security to Southeast Asia.

they had created an Operation "Hermes," which was essentially a U.K. contingency plan "in the event of Thailand becoming Communist." The files in the Australian Archives relating to Operation Hermes extend over the period 1954-1960,⁴⁵ suggesting that this plan was long a very real consideration as the Western powers faced an expanding Asian communist bloc. Much closer to home, the Partai Komunis Indonesia had been making great strides, with membership well over 150,000 by this year, with their publications *Harian Rakyat* and *Bintang Merah* enjoying increased circulation, and with a party executive under the leadership of Dipa Nusantara Aidit, committing itself to the anti-colonialist and anti-western policy of President Sukarno. The British administrators in Singapore were thus not looking solely at possible threats from the north, but also keeping a very wary eye on the huge nation of Indonesia.

1955

The year 1955 was to be epochal for Singapore. Major strikes in the early months of the year included the iconic strike by the Paya Lebar Bus Company workers. The promised elections were held in April, with the Labour Front securing 10 seats and the PAP three seats, successful PAP candidates including both Lee Kuan Yew and Lim Chin Siong. The three founders of the Singapore Progressive Party all lost their seats. Through the support of the Alliance, Marshall's Labour Front formed a government and Marshall became Singapore's first Chief Minister. Even before the new government was formed, it faced further strikes and protests. In May, the Hock Lee Bus Company strike, which had been ongoing for months, ended in thousands of student supporters rioting and several deaths. With further strike action brewing and increasingly strident and anti-colonial unions, the British planned to arrest 300 pro-communist organisers and agitators.⁴⁶ As it turned out, reportedly following Marshall's intervention, it was agreed that the British would arrest only 6 persons, including Fong Swee Suan, of the Singapore Factory and Shop Workers Union. Marshall had other successes during this year, forcing the Governor to accept the Chief Minister's advice on constitutional matters, obtaining approval for further assistant ministers to be appointed and having the British agree that Constitutional talks would be held in 1956. But other forces of anti-colonialism were welling beyond the confines of the legislature. By the end of 1955, Yeo Kim Wah avers, "socio-political factors inherent in colonial Singapore and external influence from a turbulent Asia, especially Communist China, had been skilfully exploited by communist-oriented leaders to build up an anti-colonial movement" involving unions, Chinese school teachers, and women's groups." "By 1955, pro-communist and left-wing union unionists

⁴⁵ NAA A1209 1957/4250 ("Operation 'Hermes'") and 1957/5982 ("Operation 'Hermes': Outline Plan 1957-58"); A1838 TS687/1 Part 4B ("Operation Hermes- UK Plan in the event of Thailand becoming Communist") and TS687/4 ("Defence of Malaya- Operation Hermes"); A2031 222/1957 ("Operation 'Hermes'—Outline Plan"); A5799 161/1957 ("Operation 'Hermes' Outline Plan"); and A7942 M111 (Australia, NZ and Malaya Planning – Operation Hermes – Outline plan").

⁴⁶ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 246, quoting Goh Keng Swee from 1961. Very detailed accounts of the June riots and the government response thereto can be found in the reports of the Australian commission in Singapore.⁴⁶ In his report on the subject, the Chief Secretary W.A.C. Goode, noted; "The P.A.P. and their covert Communist supporters and backseat drivers wanted violence and bloodshed and industrial unrest," and proceeded to attack both Lee Kuan Yew and Lim Chin Siong for their roles in this violence. See "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1-8 1955, electronic pages 80-81.

- had effectively organised the industrial, largely Chinese-speaking, workers into a militant labour movement.⁴⁷ This movement appears to have had little support from either the English-speaking population or the political parties other than PAP, but “it was clear that to capture power, political parties would have to rely on this anti-colonial movement.”⁴⁸ It was these forces and their radical representatives whom the British most feared.

In response, September 1955 saw David Marshall introducing the Public Security Bill, which incorporated much of Malaya’s emergency regulations into Singapore’s legislation. At least 94 unions and many schools opposed the new regulations as “vicious and repugnant” He noted that: “We are not very hopeful that international communism will cease its efforts to seize by violence control of this strategic island.” He noted that the Director of Operations in Malaya (Lt. Gen. Sir Geoffrey Bourne) had emphasised that any relaxation of the anti-Communist laws in Singapore would make Singapore a ‘rest camp and rearming centre’ for the terrorists.” In the same speech Marshall accused fellow Council member Lim Chin Siong of being a Communist.⁴⁹ Given the prominence of senior British officials in the public validation of these measures, it is more than likely that their promulgation was intimately tied to British strategic considerations. In the same month an amnesty was offered in Malaya for any Communist who left the jungle to return to civilian life. The amnesty was also offered in Singapore

Meanwhile the CPM, having decided upon the peaceful struggle strategy, was considering ways to achieve the legal status it enjoyed in 1945-48. To this end, the party made contact with its opponents in an attempt to negotiate a peace. The meeting between the CPM leaders and the UMNO and MCA leaders from Malaya and David Marshall of Singapore was held at Baling, Kedah in December 1955. The CPM, represented by its Secretary-general Chin Peng, appears to have been attempting to secure a foothold in the independence negotiations, which were soon to be held between the Malayan leaders and the British Government in London. The CPM’s conditions for accepting the existing amnesty and disarming was that the party be recognised as a legitimate party and that its fighters would not be required to be screened by the police. The talks ended in a stalemate with neither side willing to meet the conditions of the other. Despite this rejection, the CPM leader Chin Peng later offered to end the insurgency if the government could secure the powers of defence and internal security from Britain, and the Tunku promised to pursue this aim.⁵⁰

In terms of the regional environments, 1955 was also a key year. As noted, the SEATO arrangements were implemented from this year, and on 4 February 1955, the prime ministers of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand met in London and reached an agreement on ANZAM⁵¹ planning for the defence of Malaya.⁵² It was agreed that

⁴⁷ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 240.

⁴⁸ Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore*, p. 248-49.

⁴⁹ *The Age*, 22 Sept 1955.

⁵⁰ Cheah Boon Kheng, “The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s”, p. 639.

⁵¹ Hiroyuki Umetsu argues that the revitalisation of ANZAM, including the creation of a Strategic Reserve in Malaya, was a response by the UK and the Pacific dominions both to the future diminution of British power in Asia and to the development of ANZUS. It could be argued, however, that the fact that the British forces were faced with insurrection in their Southeast Asian colonies as well as perceived threats of an

Australia and New Zealand “should accept that their primary aim in a general war should now be the preservation of the security of South East Asia; and that priority in planning should be given to the rapid deployment of land and sea forces to the Malayan area and to the protection of sea communication in that area. Secondly that a Commonwealth strategic reserve should be formed in Malaya where it would act as a deterrent to further Communist aggression in South East Asia and provide a valuable nucleus for the forces which would be needed there in war.”⁵³ The second element saw Australia committing troops to Malaya. The Commonwealth allies intended further to inform the United States of the serious deficiency of forces and equipment available for the defence of Southeast Asia and proposed that the United States should provide support for the defence of Malaya in the event of global war.⁵⁴ British defence planners were also engaged in a study of “The Urgent Military Preparations required in Malaya.”⁵⁵ An essential element of the plan was planning in the event that “Siam turned Communist,” and to this end there was discussion over an ANZAM force to be based at Songkhla, “which is the final position from which Malaya could be defended against a major land attack.”⁵⁶

It appears that a direct Chinese attack on Malaya was also planned against, as at a meeting with the British Defence Minister on 10 February 1955, Australia Prime Minister Menzies was reported as follows under the subject “U.S. Participation in the Defence of Malaya”: “Mr Menzies said it was essential that the extent of United States’ participation

expanding Communist bloc to the north provided a more immediate reason. The contingency planning organisation known as ANZAM was developed in 1949 after several years of negotiations between the British and Australian Prime Ministers. Based on Australian defence machinery, with the British and New Zealand armed services participating through their respective liaison officers in Melbourne, ANZAM was a service-level organization, and none of its participating countries was under any political commitment as a result of the planning. It was intended to provide the basis of wartime command should war break out in the ANZAM region, which covered the eastern Indian Ocean, Malaya, Thailand south of the Kra Isthmus, Indonesia and the area south of the equator bounded by the Cook Islands in the east. See Umetsu, Hiroyuki, “The origins of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve: the UK proposal to revitalise ANZAM and the increased Australian defence commitment to Malaya,” *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, December 1, 2004

⁵² Minutes of Meeting, 4 February 1955, See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic pp. 80-87.

⁵³ Minutes of Meeting 4 February 1955, See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic p.82.

⁵⁴ Secretary Australian Department of Defence Frederick Shedden to Gilbert Laithwaite, British Permanent Under Secretary for State, 21 Feb 1955. See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic page 14.

⁵⁵ General Sir Neville Brownjohn, British Ministry of Defence to Australian High Commissioner in London Frederick Shedden, 17 Feb 1955. See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic page 24. By April 1955, the Federation-Singapore Joint Coordination Committee reported that defence planning for Singapore and Federation was insufficient. Responsibility for producing the Pan-Malayan Defence Scheme, came under the Malaya-Borneo Defence Council, which “meets several times a year to review the progress of defence planning for the area by the several governments and the services...The Council decides on the action needed to comply with the strategic requirements of the area. Its other main functions are to ensure that the defence departments of the various governments and the service commanders have comprehensive plans in readiness in case of an emergency, and that these plans do not conflict.” It was chaired by the Commissioner General for South-East Asia.

⁵⁶ Report for Australian Prime Minister on “Stationing of Commonwealth Forces in Thailand in Cold War”. See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic page 27.

should be defined. If it should emerge that the members of ANZAM were unable to find the ground forces required, the U.S.A. might overcome its reluctance to commit their land forces to this area, rather than accept the risk of Malay being overrun. They would in any event have to contribute a major share of sea and air forces. The former were needed particularly to prevent enemy infiltration along the coast; the latter would probably consist of strategic air forces designed (and in the U.S. view fully able) to 'take out' the Chinese Air Force."⁵⁷

The promised Australian troops were obviously being provided at Britain's request rather than in response to any demand from the Singaporean or Malayan power holders. Rather, these troops were, according to press reports at the time, actually forced on the two polities. David Marshall, just elected as Chief Minister in Singapore declared in June 1955 that Australian troops would not be welcome in Singapore as they would be seen as the perpetrators of colonialism. The People's Action Party also opposed the stationing of Australian troops in Singapore. The Federation itself appeared less than enthusiastic to play host to troops they had not invited. The issue became a major topic of debate in the Australian Parliament, where repeated queries of Mr Menzies as to whether the troops had been invited or approved by Singapore and Malaya failed to elicit an answer. Some Australian parliamentarians supported the sending of troops as an action "preventing communist infiltration of Malaya," but there was a vote in the Senate in May to oppose the sending of troops to Malaya. It was defeated. The Australian *Herald* newspaper put the idea succinctly when it noted of the sending of troops to Malaya: "Now that Parliament has, in effect, redrawn the northern border of Australia through Malaya, more members should make themselves familiar with the problems of South East Asia."⁵⁸ This program was preparation for a major war with Communism, in defence of British dependencies and interests both in Southeast Asia and further south. It was not a force for fighting domestic insurgents.⁵⁹ We can thus see the intimate relationship between Britain's global and regional strategies and its arrangements at this time – political, military and otherwise – in Singapore and Malaya.

We are also able to glimpse at this time the future which the British were mapping out for Malaya. During the silver anniversary of the Sultan of Johore in 1955, a new prominence was assigned to the Sultans of the Malay states, by whom the British had been less than enamoured since the Malayan Union proposals. Suddenly they were being given a new profile and a new prominence in order to affirm Malay supremacy in the peninsula, thereby reducing the capacity of the Chinese (all seen as potential Communists) to pose a political threat in the federation.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Minutes of meeting between Sir Harold Macmillan, British Minister of Defence, and Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, London 10 February 1955. See NAA, series Number A5954, Control Symbol 1563/2, electronic page 42.

⁵⁸ *The Herald*, 7 May 1955.

⁵⁹ Australians were, however, also employed in assisting the British in this sphere. From at least this year, Australian police were involved in training at the Special Branch Schools in both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

⁶⁰ "Australian Commission Singapore despatches 1-8 1955, electronic pages 126-130.

1956

In January/February 1956 Tunku Abdul Rahman, who had been appointed as Chief Minister and Minister of Home Affairs in Malaya when the Alliance won elections in July 1955, led a delegation of Alliance members and rulers' representatives to London. Britain was anxious for the Malay-led Alliance to assume some responsibilities and the talks resulted in very rapid further local autonomy and the drafting of a Constitution for future self-government and independence "within the Commonwealth" by August 1957 if possible. The British Commissioner would maintain over-riding powers and Britain would be allowed to maintain forces within the country. Khong Kim Hoong explains the rapid agreement to independence was a product of the fact that "the only movement that had any mass support other than the Communists—the Alliance—was led by conservatives whose worldview had many parallels with that of the government. These men who were anti-communists were in favour of a free enterprise system and wanted a continuing relationship with Britain, albeit on a different level than before. Therefore, it was more to the advantage of the British government to concede to them and allow them to be a political counter force to the MCP."⁶¹ Now the British had to find the right partners for this in Singapore.

Constitutional talks on the future of Singapore were also slated for London in April 1956. The Colonial Office set down its stand plainly as to where it saw the danger of too-rapid movement towards independence: "We do not intend that Singapore should become an outpost of Communist China, and, in fact, a colony of Peking." On the Singapore side, David Marshall also stipulated his demands of full internal self-government by April 1957, while conceding that foreign policy and external defence could be left in Britain's hands.⁶² During the talks, which included both Lee Kuan Yew and Lim Chin Siong in the Singapore delegation, neither side was prepared to compromise on these issues and Marshall returned to Singapore empty-handed, resigning his position in June 1956, and being replaced as Chief Minister by his deputy Lim Yew Hock, who appears to have considered cooperation with the British as the most practical road to eventual independence. The British had by this time concluded that "integration of Singapore with the Federation was the logical objective to aim for.... Singapore left on its own was likely to drift towards Peking."⁶³

It was also at this time that the internal schisms within the PAP also became more obvious, with the Left becoming more assertive. On June 27, the Government of Singapore banned the People's Action Party from holding public meetings, on the grounds that they would likely lead to "racial antagonism." The July 1956 PAP conference saw an attempt by the Left to assign more power to party branches, where their own power lay, a proposal opposed strongly by Lee Kuan Yew. The resulting clash augured poorly for Lee Kuan Yew. However, the British had already made plans for

⁶¹ Khong Kim Hoong, *Merdeka! British Rule and the Struggle for Independence in Malaya 1945-1957*, Kuala Lumpur, Strategic Information Research development, 1984. p. 296.

⁶² C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore 1819-1988*, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 257.

⁶³ National Australian Archives. Australian High Commissioner London to Prime Minister, 28 March 1956, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, p. 22 and p. 24.

responding to local violent reactions to an unsuccessful outcome of the London talks – which went by the name of PHOTO (= FOTO-Failure of Talks Operation),⁶⁴ so they were already quite prepared militarily to deal with the likely reaction to a government purge of the PAP Leftist elements, if that became necessary.

Lim Yew Hock knew what the British wanted as the Governor Sir Robert Black had been feeding to him reports on the “subversive activities,”⁶⁵ and in September and October of 1956, he began a purge. His government, with all necessarily British blessing, dissolved seven Communist-front organisations, closed two Chinese schools, and expelled 142 middle-school students. These actions elicited immediate reaction from the Left, giving rise to sit-ins in six Chinese schools, student clashes with police, and riots throughout the island, leading to 15 deaths and a two-day curfew.⁶⁶ That troops were imported from Malaya suggests something of the ferocity of the events and the effects which they must have had on the colonial administrators. Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, James Puthuchery,⁶⁷ Devan Nair and Sandra Woodhull were arrested following the Beauty World Park riots in October 1956. Over 250 persons were arrested in total. The suppression of the Left on this occasion was obviously a meticulously planned special branch and police action. George Sweeney writes of it as manifesting “the cynical determination by the British to crush any threat to their continued control of Singapore” and noted that this was the first of three occasions where Lee Kuan Yew was saved by the executive actions of the Government.⁶⁸

The United States, engaged in its own Cold War throes around the globe, was apparently not very impressed by how the British were handling the situation in Singapore. The Australian commissioner in Singapore R.L Harry noted that the United States consulate staff “suggested that the most effective method of eliminating communism would be to ‘cut off the heads’ by arresting a few dozen of the leading communists in the Colony. They have even gone so far as to suggest that an occasion should be deliberately provoked to bring communists into the open so that arrests could be made.” He further noted that Mr Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State had the impression that Singapore was “80 percent Communist, that the situation was almost lost to the free world and that the British were doing nothing about it.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Detailed by Clutterbuck in *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya*, pp. 116-17.

⁶⁵ National Australian Archives. R.L. Harry to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 13 September 1956, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, p. 8.

⁶⁶ For a description of these riots, see Richard Clutterbuck, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya 1945-1963*, London, Faber and Faber, 1973, pp. 121-38.

⁶⁷ It was during his time in prison on this occasion that Puthuchery wrote his major work *The Ownership and Control of the Malayan Economy*.

⁶⁸ George Sweeney, “Singapore 1945-57,” in Mohamed Amin and Malcolm Caldwell (eds) *Malaya: The Making of a Neo-Colony*, Nottingham, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1977. pp. 199-215. See pp. 210-13. The other two occasions which Sweeney alludes to were the September-October 1956 crackdown on the Left and the August 1957 crackdown on the Communists, which left Lee and his colleagues in control of the PAP.

⁶⁹ National Australian Archives. R.L. Harry to Secretary, Department of External Affairs 7 July 1956, TS 383/5/3 Part 2 “British Territories in South East Asia – Top Secret Papers – Singapore, p. 2.

1957

March 1957 saw Lim Yew Hock leading a second delegation, which included Lee Kuan Yew, to London to discuss Singapore's constitutional future. Malaya had, as noted above, already negotiated its Merdeka with the British and that was already slated for August this year. It was during this visit that the Singaporean delegation agreed with a Colonial Office proposal that a seven-member Internal Security Council be established, with Britain and Singapore having three members each and the Federation a single member. All knew that this would be a "tripartite common front of the British UMNO and the ruling political party in Singapore against the MCP."⁷⁰ Apparently during these talks there were also discussions on excluding "subversives" from contesting the first legislative Council elections of the new Singapore state. The Australian Commissioner reported that he had heard suggestions that this had been suggested by Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew as a way to disqualify Lim Chin Siong from the elections.⁷¹ But more of this below.

Mary Turnbull suggests that it was the idea of a self-governing Singapore where control over internal security was in the hands of Britain and the Federation (and Lee Kuan Yew's support for such) that greatly upset the Singaporean Left—with protests being organised by the students of the new Nanyang University, with the CPM trying to revive its power in unions and with the Left wing in the PAP trying to oust the moderates. In the third annual conference in August 1957, the voting ended in a tie between the Communists and the non-Communists within the party, but the non-Communists refused to take office. Lee Kuan Yew and Toh Chin Chye stood down from the PAP leadership, forcing the Communists to assume the key posts.⁷²

With instigation as yet unproven, but widely accepted to have been the British, the Lim Yew Hock government again decided only ten days after the PAP Committee election to engage in widespread arrests of those they viewed as prominent Communists. The 39 detentions, which occurred on 22 August 1957, included five members of the new PAP Central Executive Committee and eleven PAP branch officials, as well as trade union leaders, students and journalists. Unlike in the 1956 purge, no organisations were banned. This action allowed Lee Kuan Yew and other "moderates" to retake control of the party.

By instituting new rules for who qualified as party cadres (Singapore citizens, over 21 years old), many of the more radical were excluded from voting for the executive committee, almost assuring Lee Kuan Yew and colleagues control of the party. Yet they continued to promise to have their colleagues freed from prison.

⁷⁰ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 144-45.

⁷¹ National Australian Archives. Harry to Minister of External Affairs, 17 April 1957. TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 85-87.

⁷² Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, pp 149-51. See also Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, pp. 269-71.

This remarkable coincidence of the Right-wing PAP leaders stepping down and the Lim Yew Hock government serendipitously arresting the radical Left PAP leadership has suggested to some people that there was some agreement between the British government, the Lim Yew Hock administration and the Right-wing PAP leaders on this matter. This suggests the continuance of a form of suppression of the Left which the British had practiced since the 1940s, and a divide-and-rule policy they had perfected over centuries. Cheah Boon Kheng cites Greg Poulgrain and T.J.S George, noting: "It has been alleged and never denied by Lee that during this period Lee was secretly working with the colonial chief secretary, William Goode and the chief minister, Lim Yew Hock to eliminate leftwing influence within his [the PAP] party."⁷³ Despite these suspicions, Lee still, at this time, retained quite some support from the Left.

In fact, during a meeting on 3 September of this year with R.G. Casey, Australia's Minister for External Affairs, a more detailed account of the alleged Lim Yew Hock -- Lee Kuan Yew alliance became available. Lim Yew Hock spoke openly of how, during their trip to London Lee Kuan Yew had expressed his concern about his position within the party and that, as a result, he had reached "an understanding" with Mr Lee. He noted how they had both expressed the opinion to the Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd that Lim Chin Siong and others detained for subversive activities should not be allowed to contest the next elections, but that it would be difficult for them to support such an amendment to the Elections Ordinance. They noted that they would support but would have to publicly attack any such proposal. Lennox-Boyd agreed to "carry the odium." Lim Yew Hock also advised that he and Lee Kuan Yew had discussed the best method to eliminate David Marshall from the political scene. Lim detailed for Mr Casey his method for arresting the "subversive leaders", and explained how he had devised tactics to bring them out into the open, and arrest them, thereby helping Lee Kuan Yew by eliminating five members of the P.A.P. Executive Committee.⁷⁴ The full text of the Australian report of this discussion is provided at Appendix 1. In his autobiography, Lee Kuan Yew decries any suggestion of alliance between himself and Lim Yew Hock. "By moving so swiftly after the pro-communists had taken over, Lim Yew Hock had put us in the dirt. We appeared to have betrayed the pro-communists by openly dissociating ourselves from their actions and leaving them fatally exposed. On 23 August, the government issued a white paper with a section on 'Communist penetration of the PAP'. To clear ourselves of the smear that we had been involved in the arrests, I proposed a motion to the Assembly, on 12 September, deploring its inaccuracies. I pointed out that the chief minister had suppressed the most important factor that had made him move, namely that his own STUC, his mass base, was on the point of being captured by Lim Chin Joo."⁷⁵

New City Council elections were held in December 1957, and control of this Council was also won by the PAP, with Ong Eng Guan, an ardent anti-colonialist being appointed as Mayor. The Council became in the words of one observer "A Chinese

⁷³ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s", p. 646.

⁷⁴ National Australian Archives. Record of conversation between the Chief Minister of Singapore and the Minister of External Affairs, 7 September 1957, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 90-94.

⁷⁵ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, Singapore, Times Editions, 1998. p. 271.

...carnival for baiting the British and cuddling the hawkers.”⁷⁶ In March 1959, the government took over some of the affairs of the Council and Ong Eng Guan and other councillors resigned. The rump City Council was later incorporated into the Singapore government.

1958

A third all-party Constitutional mission travelled to London in April 1958, with Lee Kuan Yew representing the PAP. The successive discussions led to agreement over the new Singapore Constitution, and later in the year a British Act of Parliament was passed which changed the colony of Singapore into the state of Singapore. This provided for responsibility for all domestic affairs except security which would continue to be controlled by the Internal Security Council. Lee Ting Hui assesses the importance of these talks and Lee's participation as follows: "By agreeing to the final drafting of the proposed Constitution for Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew showed once again that if his group came into power in the island when the new constitution was implemented, it would be willing to work with the British and UMNO against the CPM. It was held in Communist circles that during the talks Lennox-Boyd was particularly attentive to Lee Kuan Yew. The friendship between the British and the PAP non-Communists was cemented."⁷⁷ The British, it appears, were increasingly sensing that they had a new ally in the Cold War.

In terms of new tools for suppression of the Left, in August the Legislative Assembly passed the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Amendment Bill which allowed the Chief Secretary to detain a person without trial for up to 6 months, and any police officer to detain any person without warrant for up to 14 days. It was during the debate on this Bill that Lee Kuan Yew referred, without naming him, to Lim Yew Hock associating with secret society members.⁷⁸ Given the close association which developed in 1957, this allusion may well have been intended to allay any suspicion of collusion between the two politicians.

Regionally, there were continuing concerns about which way Indonesia was to move and rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi against Sukarno and his Communist associates, which were essentially anti-Communist actions, were supported, armed and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency.⁷⁹ The defeat of these rebellions by Indonesian forces supported by the United States would not have gone unnoticed by the British.

The Australians were by this year becoming somewhat concerned about the likely political future of Singapore. Their High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur Tom Critchley noted that, following elections, "a fully independent government of Singapore, even if it

⁷⁶ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 262.

⁷⁷ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 154.

⁷⁸ National Australian Archives. F.B. Cooper to Secretary Department of External Affairs, 14 August 1958, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 117-18.

⁷⁹ See details in Audrey R. & George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

did not begin as a Communist Government would be likely to become one within a short period of time and would form close relations with Communist China." He further commented that "if, despite our best efforts, Singapore and the Federation eventually go Communist – and it would be foolish to discount this long-term possibility – we would have to decide whether to urge the United Kingdom to weld the Borneo territories into a federation and build up base installations there or whether to abandon bases in South East Asia altogether and develop bases in Northern Australia. I would favour the latter course and agree that it is in our interests to prepare in advance for the possibility of the transfer of United Kingdom base facilities from Singapore to Australia."⁸⁰ The intimate relationship between domestic politics and the British Commonwealth strategic concerns is amply manifested in his comments.

1959

Early in 1959, the Education Minister Chew Swee Kee of the Lim Yew Hock administration faced charges in Parliament that he had received CIA funding. There were also claims that Lim Yew Hock was using secret society gangs to fight the PAP, and Francis Thomas, the Minister for Communications and Works, resigned to support Lee Kuan Yew's call for an enquiry into the Chew Swee Kee affair. It was rapidly becoming clear to the British that Lim Yew Hock and the Labour Front were not the force which would lead Singapore towards self-government. When Lim Yew Hock advised the Governor that, through Mr Marcus, Chief Administrative Officer of the City Council, they had acquired much "dirt" about the corruption and malpractices of the PAP, and intended to spread this information widely, the Governor strenuously objected to this. This tends to suggest that the British were already switching their hopes to the PAP. Whether it was the British who encouraged Lee Kuan Yew to offer Lim Yew Hock the position of Commissioner in London if he withdrew from the political scene is unclear, but Lim refused the offer.⁸¹

The results of the Chew Swee Kee enquiry were, again serendipitously, made known just before the 30 May 1959 election, suggesting that the British had already well changed horses by this time. The PAP contested all 51 constituencies in the election and won 43, setting off panic among the conservatives and business circles. This allowed the formation of the first fully-elected parliament in Singapore's history, and thereby the creation of a Singapore state. The new PAP government, however, refused to take office until eight Leftist PAP members arrested 2-3 years earlier were released from prison. Following their release and their signing of documents endorsing the non-communist aims of the PAP, Lim Chin Siong and others were appointed to innocuous positions within the government and excluded from the Central Executive Committee.⁸²

⁸⁰ National Australian Archives. Critchley to Secretary Department of External Affairs, 13 February 1958, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 103-106.

⁸¹ National Australian Archives. D.W. McNicol to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 21 March 1959, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 130-32..

⁸² Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, Singapore Marshall Cavendish International (Asia), 2005 [1986], pp. 192-93.

In the new Legislative Council, the new PAP Government declared its stand "to end colonialism and establish an independent, democratic, non-Communist, socialist Malaya."⁸³ The former British Governor Sir William Goode, in the position of Yang Di-Pertuan Negara (essentially President), likewise declared Britain's stand when he stated: "the future of Singapore lies ultimately in re-uniting with the Federation of Malaya as a state in an independent country."⁸⁴ Britain and the Right-wing of the PAP were thus ready to jointly pursue merger in a form which went directly against the aims of the PAP Left.

This refusal to consider an independent Singapore by either the Right wing of the PAP or the British government was obviously in part premised on practical considerations such as Singapore's economic future, but essentially it was the Cold War West's fears of an independent, essentially Chinese, polity that truly drove the policy. However, the Federation of Malaya was not overly enthusiastic about merger with this essentially Chinese polity run by what was seen as a Leftist party. The Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in South-East Asia Sir Robert Scott advised at the Eden Hall Conference in this year that "the Tengku hoped an alliance of South-East Asia countries [which had been discussed with President Garcia of the Philippines] would be effective in putting a 'straight-jacket' on Singapore and would stop this state from stepping out of line. The Tengku also seemed to be looking towards a closer political association between the Federation and the three Borneo Territories. The Governors of North Borneo and Sarawak did not favour this as they felt that their Territories had a separate destiny, either individually or as a Federation of the Borneo Territories."⁸⁵ These were all issues which the British were to address over the succeeding several years.

Under the new arrangements in the state of Singapore, Britain remained a powerful force, even though the position of Governor was abolished. The supreme British post was replaced by a Commissioner for the United Kingdom whom shared offices with the Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in South-East Asia. The Commissioner remained entitled to see all cabinet meeting agendas and all cabinet papers. Singapore, it seems, remained the major element in British Southeast Asian policy. There was also a growing recognition both among politicians and within the Singapore populace of how major was the contribution of the British military bases to employment and other aspects of the Singapore economy. However, the British were already making longer term Cold War calculations.

Sir Robert Scott, the Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in South-East Asia made some other proposals at the Eden Hall conference that efforts should be made to increase Australia's population and technical development so that it could serve "the whole Free World" by: 1) Providing a focus of Western influence in the area which would compete with India, China and Japan; 2) Providing a strong defence flank for both

⁸³ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 266.

⁸⁴ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 266.

⁸⁵ "Australian Commission Singapore Despatches 1-3 1959", See NAA A4231, Control No. 1959/SINGAPORE. Electronic page no. 4.

the United Kingdom and the United States: 3) Providing a strong Australia which would - be a rallying point for Asian countries in their resistance to Communism.⁸⁶

1960

Ongoing PAP efforts to tame the union movement saw Leftist enthusiasm for the Lee Kuan Yew leadership decline, while Ong Eng Guan's resignation from the party and subsequent victory in the Hong Lim by-election suggested that all was not well with the well-marked path to the future being laid out by the British and the PAP leaders. The Malayan leaders were also obviously concerned about the possibility of an even less desirable neighbour emerging from the fallout of a Left-Right tussle within the PAP.

1961

It was partly this which led the Tunku to announce in May 1961 -- and again it would have been almost unthinkable that there was no British hand or support involved in this action -- that "sooner or later" Malaya, Singapore and the Borneo territories should work for close "political and economic cooperation."⁸⁷ While the Singapore Government saw the future in the announcement, the Leftists saw only their demise. As a result, the schism which had always existed within the PAP widened. Initial manifestations included the failure by Lim Chin Siong and other Left-wing PAP members to support the Government candidate in the Anson by-election in July, giving their support instead to Lee Kuan Yew's old rival David Marshall. Marshall won the election on a platform of immediate independence, abolition of the Internal Security Council and removal of British bases, none of which the British or the PAP Government would countenance. The PAP merger plan was denounced as "reactionary and retrogressive."⁸⁸

Lim Chin Siong, James Puthuchery and others on the PAP Left took the opportunity of this crisis to visit the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia Lord Selkirk at his home at Eden Hall, seeking assurance that the British would not suspend the Constitution if Lee Kuan Yew was voted out of office. This assurance was apparently forthcoming, with the British representative saying that the agreed timetable would be adhered to, and only a "threat to life and limb" would invite intervention.

Some of the PAP Leftists who had been detained in 1957 remained in detention. Harper suggests that "In mid-1961, therefore, to seek a way out, Lee suggested to the British that, in order to rescue some of his Leftist credentials, his government should order the release of all [the remaining] detainees, but then have that order countermanded in the ISC by Britain and Malaya."⁸⁹ The British apparently did not pursue this option. The acting British Commissioner, Philip Moore, stated that the British should not be "party to a device for deliberate misrepresentation of responsibility for continuing

⁸⁶ "Australian Commission Singapore Despatches 1-3 1959", See NAA A4231, Control No. 1959/SINGAPORE. Electronic page no. 5.

⁸⁷ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 270-71.

⁸⁸ Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, p. 232.

⁸⁹ Tim Harper, 'Lim Chin Siong and "the Singapore Story"', in Jomo K.S. & Tan Jing Quee, eds., *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History* (Forum: Kuala Lumpur, 2001), pp. 1-56.

detentions in order to help the PAP government remain in power." Moore suggested that the best solution would be "to release all the detainees forthwith." Lee, however, "was unwilling to present the left with such a victory." Moore suggested that Lee "has lived a lie about the detainees for too long, giving the Party the impression that he was pressing for their release while, in fact, agreeing in the ISC that they should remain in detention."⁹⁰

This and other tensions led to the inevitable showdown between the PAP Left and Right in Parliament in July 1961, which resulted in a vote of support for the government and the rebels leaving the party to form Barisan Socialis, with Lim Chin Siong as secretary-general. Many of the grassroots members went with the Barisan, which also controlled most of the labour unions. Lee wanted Lim out of the way. Lord Selkirk noted of this: "Lee is probably very much attracted to the idea of destroying his political opponents. It should be remembered that there is behind all this a very personal aspect...he claims he wishes to put back in detention the very people who were released at his insistence – people who are intimate acquaintances, who have served in his government, and with whom there is a strong sense of political rivalry which transcends ideological differences."⁹¹

In such straitened circumstances, the PAP Government had little choice but to pursue the merger they had subscribed to. However, with a simple merger promising as large a Chinese Malaysian population as Malay, both the Federation and Western interests had concerns about such an arrangement. Despite this, the principle of merger was affirmed at the regional conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Singapore in July 1961, with representatives from Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak. By November it was agreed that Singapore would be a special state within the Federation, but Singapore citizens would not become Malaysian citizens. The conditions agreed to further riled the Left in Singapore. In Britain, at talks held in November, agreement was reached among the various sides on the need to conduct a commission of enquiry on the inclusion of Sarawak and North Borneo in Great Malaysia.⁹²

While those who sought merger began to collaborate more closely, so did those who opposed it, with Barisan Socialis, David Marshall's Workers' Party, Ong Eng Guan's United People's Party and Partai Rakyat⁹³ finding common cause with the Malayan

⁹⁰ Harper, 'Lim Chin Siong and "the Singapore Story"', p. 32.

⁹¹ Tim Harper, 'Lim Chin Siong and "the Singapore Story"', in Jomo K.S. & Tan Jing Quee, eds., *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History* (Forum: Kuala Lumpur, 2001), pp. 1-56.

⁹² Matthew Jones, "Creating Malaysia: Singapore Security, the Borneo Territories and the Contours of British Policy 1961-63" in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28(2):85-109, 2000. p. 90. The Cobbold Report was delivered to ministers on 21 June 1962, with positive assessments of the inclusion of Sarawak and North Borneo within Malaysia.

⁹³ Partai Rakyat was a Malay-based Singapore party, linked to the CPM, which had been founded by ex-members of Angkatan Pemuda Insaf and the Malay Nationalist Party. These two organizations were both members (along with the CPM) of an anti-British front immediately after WWII. These two organizations were proscribed in 1948 along with the CPM. The Partai Rakyat first appeared in Malaya in December 1955, and a branch later opened in Singapore. Unlike UMNO it could admit non-Malays to membership. It called itself an agrarian socialist party. After the Ong Eng Guan-Lee Kuan Yew split occurred within the

Socialist Front, Sarawak United People's Party, the Partai Ra'ayat Brunei and, some claim, even the Indonesian Communist Party, who all opposed, for diverse reasons, the merger and creation of Greater Malaysia on the terms proposed.

Western interests and concerns over the proposed merger are probably best represented by the way Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies presented the issue to his cabinet. He advised them of the proposals by Tunku Abdul Rahman for a "Greater Malaysia", which would include Malaya, the territories of British Borneo (Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo) and Singapore. The Tunku had, Mr Menzies noted, promised that after merger, British bases in Singapore would no longer be at the disposal of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, but could be maintained as bases for the defence of the Commonwealth. In some ways, Mr Menzies' views mirrored those of Britain. Recognising that "the United Kingdom cannot maintain indefinitely the status quo in Singapore" and that "the longer Singapore's colonial status is maintained, the greater the likelihood of political power there passing to the extremists," the Australian prime minister recommended to his cabinet that the Greater Malaysia should be promoted. Menzies noted that: "Because of political, economic, geographic and racial circumstances, **the grant of independence to Singapore would almost certainly lead to widespread damage to Western interests.** Present trends in its internal politics suggest that an independent Singapore would be easily subverted by Communist China. It would in time almost certainly be governed by radical Chinese aiming at closer association with Communist China. A Singapore which was either Communist or closely associated with Communist China would be an effective base for subversion not only of Malaya but of the whole area and would seriously impair its security."⁹⁴ The inevitability of Singapore's incorporation into Malaya can be gauged by the fact that Mr. Menzies was here repeating the justifications expressed by Britain.

It was felt that a Malayan Federation government "would be less reluctant than any conceivable government of Singapore alone to take sustained action against Communist subversion in Singapore (the need for control by the central authority over internal security in Singapore is common to the Tunku's proposal and United Kingdom thinking)," but the Australians still considered that the "major danger of a Greater Malaysia is that, in trying to prevent the loss of Singapore to communism, it might bring about a Communist Malaya and Borneo territories."⁹⁵ Australia's representative in Kuala Lumpur urged action against the Leftists in Singapore by Britain as by allowing "the situation to drift and acquiesce in the emergence of a pro-Communist government, this would surely be more damaging to 'long-term Commonwealth interests' than timely repressive actions."⁹⁶

PAP in 1961, the CPM decided to use Partai Rakyat as a weapon against Lee Kuan Yew. They approached Pang Toon Tin and urged him to use the PR to act against the non-Communists in the PAP.

⁹⁴ Dee (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 3, para. 9-10.

⁹⁵ Dee (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 5, para. 18.

⁹⁶ National Australian Archives. T.K. Critchley to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 7 September 1961, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 254-56.

That the arrangement was essentially a Cold War expedient is underlined by a report of the Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee which had a month earlier concluded that: "The development of the proposed association [Malaysia] would be in Australia's general strategic interest provided that it retained a pro-Western alignment; this should be a primary objective."⁹⁷

The Western alliance⁹⁸ was, by 1960 and 1961 extremely concerned about the possibility of a communist takeover of Laos and Thailand. During Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies' visit to Washington in early 1961, he met with U.S. President John Kennedy, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He noted: "...the new President has a most alert interest in Australia and its problems. In particular we discussed the problems of SEATO and Laos and the relations between the Communist world and the democratic powers."⁹⁹ Menzies later travelled to London and on to Bangkok for the SEATO meeting. In his report to the Australian parliament, Menzies noted of the SEATO meeting: "Among those present were the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. Secretary of State, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, and the foreign ministers of France, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines. The principal subject was Laos. That country's future—in or out of the Communist orbit—is very important. It is one of the countries covered by the South-East Asian Treaty. It has a long common frontier with Thailand, a member of SEATO. It is vulnerable to aggression from North Vietnam and Communist China. The civil conflict is conducted by relatively small forces and in its own way, life goes on. In such circumstances, Communism has a happy hunting ground. But for SEATO, Laos is important in terms of defence. It provides a test for the significance and effectiveness of a treaty organization created to resist Communist aggression. For, if Laos passes into Communist hands, where does the process end? There are grim thoughts in this for Australia."

More covertly, the British Commonwealth countries had made major plans "to cover the deployment of the Commonwealth force to Thailand and Laos in Situation 1." Situation 1 was a Communist attack on Laos. Initially known as Plan Buckram, the proposed counter-offensive was renamed Plan Taffy in late 1961 and later Plan Ramah.¹⁰⁰ This comprised the Commonwealth forces component of SEATO Plan 5. It involved Commonwealth (British, Australian and New Zealand) forces massing in Singapore prior to a massive airlift of personnel and vehicles to Bangkok, Korat, Seno

⁹⁷ Dee (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 6, para 22.

⁹⁸ Great Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

⁹⁹ The former U.S. President Eisenhower had reportedly said to the incoming President Kennedy at a meeting in January 1961 that "Laos was the key to the entire area of Southeast Asia. He said that if we permitted Laos to fall, then we would have to write off all the area. He stated that we must not permit a Communist take-over." See Clark M. Clifford, "A Vietnam Reappraisal", *Foreign Affairs*, July 1969.

¹⁰⁰ Draft ANZAM Plan No. 1 (Buckram) – Part 4 (National Australian Archives Series A1945, Control symbol 15/4/9). The revised plans are provided on pp. 214-222, dated 1962. Details of the original proposed airlift are given on p. 166 of this file. Other files in the Australian archives relating to Plan Buckram/Taffy and later (1962-65) Plan Ramah include: Series Number M2576 (Control symbol 52); Series A5799 (control symbol 30/1961, 86/1961 and 95/1961); Series 8447 (Control symbol 33/1960, 37/1960), Series A1945 (Control symbols 15/4/8, 15/4/9 and 15/4/10), Series 1838 (TS 687/3/1 parts 1,2,3,4), Series A2031 (Control symbols 114/1960, 39/1961, 108/1961 and 112/1961), Series 1209 (Control symbol 1961/591).

and Vientiane.¹⁰¹ Plan Taffy also involved the planned involvement of a Pakistan contingent. The British and Australians were also anxious to be able to continue to use the Malayan bases for their SEATO-linked military activities after the creation of Malaysia, something the Tunku could not commit to given the domestic audience.

It can thus be clearly observed that the battles being fought out in the Legislative Assembly and the streets of Singapore were seen by the British and others of the Western alliance in a much broader regional drama, despite Philip Moore, deputy to Lord Selkirk, noting that "our impression is that Lim [Chin Siong] is working very much on his own and that his primary objective is not the Communist millennium but to obtain control of the constitutional government of Singapore. It is far from certain that having obtained this objective Lim would necessarily prove a compliant tool of Peking or Moscow."¹⁰² Britain was not anxious, however, to find out.

1962

The furore around possible merger continued to build. February 1962 saw the convening of the Malayan Socialist Conference in Kuala Lumpur, to discuss the diverse issues surrounding the Merger plan "Representatives from the Socialist Front, the Barisan Socialis, the PAP, the United People's Party of Sarawak, the Partai Ra'ayat of Brunei, the Partai Raayat of Singapore and the Workers Party of Singapore attended. At the conference, the PAP insisted on their working paper supporting Malaysia be accepted by the preparatory committee. When the latter refused, the PAP withdrew from the conference. The final joint communiqué of the Conference noted that the territories of Borneo and Singapore should first be allowed self-determination and only after this, decide in a referendum whether they wished to join the enlarged federation of Malaysia with Malaya. In the meantime, the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesian Government and the People's Republic of China had come out strongly to condemn the Malaysia concept as a 'neo-colonial plot'. The Partai Raayat followed suit. When the leaders of Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia met in Manila to resolve their differences, they agreed in principle to support the concept of a wider 'Malay' confederation of their territories, called 'Maphilindo'."¹⁰³

In July 1962, a Council of Joint Action (CJA) comprising Barisan Socialis, the Partai Rakyat, the Workers Party, the United Democratic Party and the Liberal Socialist

¹⁰¹ The states of readiness for Buckram were: 1. Buckram Yellow – Ordered at first indication of operational requirement. 2. Buckram Blue – the Commonwealth element concentrates in Singapore. 3. Buckram Green – Operation ordered and B-Day nominated. B-day was the day on which the airlift would begin. See Personal papers of Prime Minister Menzies "SEATO Plan 5 and Plan Buckram" NAA, series number 2576, Control number 52, p. 9-10. These states of readiness were drafted by the Far East Defence Secretariat, the British Defence agency in Singapore. A new unit, the 274 Liaison Unit, which was a combined British-Australian unit was specially formed in 1961 to take part in Plan Buckram.

¹⁰² Harper, 'Lim Chin Siong and "the Singapore Story"', p. 39, citing Moore to Secretary of State, 18 July 1962 COI 1030/1160.

¹⁰³ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s", p. 641-42.

-Party was formed. This Council was created to oppose the terms of merger which the PAP had obtained from UMNO. It also sent a delegation to the United Nations to present to the Committee on Colonialism its case on merger and to oppose the referendum as proposed by the PAP. Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee also appeared at the UN to state their case. After hearing both sides, the Committee on Colonialism decided not to take action on the protests of CJA. How influential Britain and the other Western powers were in producing this decision is worthy of further study.

Key discussions on merger took place in London in July and August 1962 between the British, Lee Kuan Yew and the Malaysians. Tim Harper suggests that during these talks “both the Tunku and Lee Kuan Yew looked to the British to provide the conditions for the creation of Malaysia.”¹⁰⁴ More specifically, in his earlier discussions with the Australian Minister for External Affairs Sir Garfield Barwick, the Tunku had criticised “the British refusal to take strong measures against the communists in Singapore. He said the British wanted him to take over Singapore to clear up the mess but this was not fair and they should take action before Malaysia so that it could get off to a good start. For Malaysia to have to use the strong measures that were needed to deal with the Singapore communists would impose a heavy strain on the new state. **The Tunku stressed that his Malaysian proposals were designed to prevent communist subversion and help the British.** However, unless the British changed their policy, the task would be impossible. In that case, Malaysia would have to be postponed.”¹⁰⁵ The Tunku knew that he had the British over a barrel and he was not averse to utilizing that advantage.

Back home in Singapore, in his efforts to promote support for the proposed merger, Lee Kuan Yew had offered to the people of Singapore a referendum on three alternative versions of merger, but with no option to oppose the process. Held in September 1962, this referendum saw 71 percent of the population voting in favour of the merger mode being advocated by the PAP government.¹⁰⁶

The Australian Commission in Singapore commented that the “referendum questions and complete Government control of the propaganda machinery leave some doubt whether the people of Singapore genuinely accepted that the merger proposals represent the best arrangement for Singapore or were badgered into choosing least objectionable of three alternatives.” Perhaps optimistically it also noted that “Lee’s ability to cope with extreme Left has also been demonstrated.”¹⁰⁷

Other indicators, however, suggest that the PAP were not as secure as they might have liked to have been. They were faced with further travails, including further defections to the Barisan and the need to rely on Lim Yew Hock’s faction in the

¹⁰⁴ T.N. Harper, “Lim Chin Siong and the ‘Singapore Story’”, in Tan Jing Quee and Jomo K.S. (eds.), *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, pp. 3-55, p. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Dee, (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 18. Secret memorandum from Critchley to Tange, 4 July 1962.

¹⁰⁶ That “Singapore will be a state within the Federation but on special conditions (education and labour to be reserved) and a large measure of local autonomy.”

¹⁰⁷ Dee, (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966* p. 22. Cablegram to Canberra, 4 September 1962.

Parliament. That the government dared not call a by-election to fill a seat vacated by the death of a government minister suggests something of their concerns

A quandary therefore assailed the British. The Left were still powerful in Singapore, while the anointed successor of the British was feeling distinctly threatened; the Tunku was pushing for the British to eliminate the Communist threat in Singapore if they wanted Malaysia to come about; the Left had not done anything to warrant arrest; the merger was threatened by objections from some of the Bornean territories and the Cold War continued unabated. The Australian Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur passed on the grave concerns of the Tunku and Dato Fenner, the Commissioner of Police, suggesting that the Malaysians want to arrest the communists while the British oppose this. The Malaysians actually suggested arresting not only the Communists in the Barisan Socialis, but also those in the trade unions, the peasant associations and in the Party Rakyat. The British, and particularly Lord Selkirk, rejected this not only because there was no pretext for such, but because the arrests and ensuing riots would have adverse effects in Borneo. By September 1962, Selkirk was, at least in his writing still opposed to the arrests: "The fact is that no evidence at present that Communists or Communist sympathisers in Singapore intend to resort to illegal activities or violent action. So long as this remains the case, I do not see how the examination of individual cases can produce justification on security grounds for arbitrary arrest, nor is there a political case for arrests, especially in the light of the referendum result."¹⁰⁸ The British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Sir Geofroy Tory, was however a great supporter of the Tunku, and he noted that if Barisan Socialis gained power in Singapore the British would have to remove them before merger went ahead. "There is no doubt that in his heart the Tunku would regard Malaysia as dead if the transfer of sovereignty were in fact put off for more than a very short time and if the Barisan Socialis were during this time to displace the PAP."¹⁰⁹ The Special Branches from both Singapore and Malaysia met in Singapore in April 1962 and seemed to agree that the Communist united front leaders should be arrested. The difference lay in that "The Singapore view appears to be that the Barisan Socialis Party should be provoked into taking political action that would justify a policy of arrests."¹¹⁰ But how was this to be achieved?

It was then that serendipity again came to the rescue. In August 1962, elections had been held in Brunei, and the Leftist Partai Ra'ayat Brunei (PRB), led by Sheikh Azahari bin Sheikh Mahmud, who supported a Kalimantan Utara federation,¹¹¹ had won 54 of the 55 seats in the Brunei Legislative Council and voted to keep Brunei out of Malaysia as proposed by the Tunku. The PRB announced that a motion would be tabled in the Legislative Council in December, requesting the British government to return Sarawak and North Borneo to the sovereignty of the Sultan of Brunei, and to federate the three British Borneo territories. Azahari had also intended to internationalise the Kalimantan

¹⁰⁸ Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'" p. 41, citing a despatch from Lord Selkirk to Duncan Sandys, 8 September 1962.

¹⁰⁹ Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'" p. 40, citing Tory on 28 December 1962.

¹¹⁰ National Australian Archives. Australian High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur T.K. Critchley to F.J. Blakeney, Department of External Affairs, 18 April 1962, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 308-313.

¹¹¹ For a detailed study of the federation concept and its evolution, see Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia 1945-1965*, London, C. Hurst and Co., 1998.

Utara proposal at the United Nations.¹¹² However, on 7 December a revolt was launched, spurred, so Greg Poulgrain suggests, by the British Special Branch in Sarawak:

The decision to revolt against the British colonial authorities was in response to a seemingly urgent predicament. The head of Special Branch, Roy Henry, created this urgency by arresting several PRB [Brunei Party Raayat] members in Sarawak. Then, by 'leaking' information that he threatened similar arrests in Brunei, Roy Henry led the PRB leaders in Brunei to believe that they had only a limited time to act. Brunei was thus brought to an abyss while Azahari was in Manila.¹¹³

At almost the same time, the Special Branch in Sarawak raided the premises of the leftwing Sarawak United People's Party and arrested some 50 of its pro-Communist members.¹¹⁴ The revolt in Brunei saw the British send a brigade of troops and the revolt was suppressed within a week, with a large number of arrests and the banning of BPR.

Almost as soon as the revolt occurred, the Barisan Socialis and Partai Rakyat, as well as the CPM came out with messages of support. Rallies were also held in Singapore.¹¹⁵ But the Brunei revolt was a threat to Greater Malaysia and those on the Left were seen as responsible. Connections were quickly drawn to the Left in Singapore and Malaya. It was alleged by Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore that the Barisan Socialis had been planning a similar uprising, a charge dismissed by the Barisan as a "pack of lies."¹¹⁶ Dennis Bloodworth repeats accounts of Azahari and Lin Chin Siong discussing the sale of weapons over lunch in Singapore,¹¹⁷ and Richard Clutterbuck claims that the Brunei revolt "was undoubtedly encouraged if not actually sponsored by Indonesia."¹¹⁸ The Indonesian connection had been claimed by Tunku Abdul Rahman, a charge responded to by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio on 15 December, in a manner which was to mark the beginning of three years of *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) between Indonesia and Malaysia, which was considered a "tool of colonialism and imperialism."¹¹⁹ But regardless of the origins and connections of the Brunei revolt, it was the spark needed for

¹¹² Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi*, p. 280-81

¹¹³ Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965* C. Hurst, London, 1998. p. 280.

¹¹⁴ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s", p. 647. Cheah provides the following potted history of the Left in Sarawak, drawn from Vernon Porritt's *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Sarawak, 1940-1990* (2004): "The incipient communist movement in Sarawak had taken the form of the Sarawak Advanced Youth Association (SAYA) in 1956, and subsequently was known to the colonial authorities as the Sarawak Communist Organization (SCO). The SUPP was the first political party to be formed with official approval in 1959 by professionals Ong Kee Hui and Stephen Yong, but it was heavily infiltrated by members of the SCO. The SUPP, however, survived, but before long the conflict between the 'moderates' and the 'leftists' in the party led to the ouster of the latter. Many SUPP members soon fled to the jungle to join the Brunei rebels whose goal was to set up a North Kalimantan state."

¹¹⁵ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 256.

¹¹⁶ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Left-wing Movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s", pp. 647-48.

¹¹⁷ Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, p. 271.

¹¹⁸ Clutterbuck

¹¹⁹ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, pp 492-93.

suppression of the Left in Singapore and Malaya, long desired by the Malayan elite, the Special Branches and, overall, by the British, despite Selkirk and Moore's diffidence.¹²⁰

The Malayan Special Branch needed no urging but the British representatives in Singapore needed prodding from new evidence of Communist penetration and control of the Barisan. The British Prime Minister personally approved action in a telegram of 12 December, and the Internal Security Council met on 13 December and decided to begin a program of arrests on 16 December. Lee Kuan Yew, however, both added to and removed some names from the list supplied by Special Branch. He reportedly wished to add 28 persons but his Special Branch director reduced this to 15. He insisted that Lim Kean Siew, secretary of the Malayan Labour Party or Ahmad Boesteman, chairman of the Socialist Front, both Assemblymen in Kuala Lumpur, be detained as well. This failed to win support from the Tunku and as a result the unified action was aborted.¹²¹ Instead the Malaya police arrested 50 persons on their list. The joint action was deferred.

1963

On 17 January 1963, Tunku Abdul Rahman advised that Lee Kuan Yew had assured him that there would be internal security action in Singapore prior to that in Malaya. Lee also advised that he felt honour bound to give people concerned the opportunity to leave the country and to give Lim Chin Siong "the chance to leave Singapore, on scholarship to Indonesia." Tan Siew Sin apparently expressed the view that Lee Kuan Yew was making a mistake.¹²²

A further meeting of the Internal Security Council was slated for 1 February 1963, and preparations for "Operation Cold Store" began in earnest. Matthew Jones notes Selkirk's dismay when he discovered on the new list of 169 potential detainees the names of Ong Eng Guan and others of the United People's Party. However, he flew to Kuala Lumpur for the ISC meeting on 1 February, where the mass arrests were formally approved. The statement issued by the Council noted that "These Communists and their supporters in Singapore, working through the Barisan Socialis and associated United Front organisations, have done their utmost to sabotage the formation of Malaysia. ...they have professed to be working constitutionally for democratic ends. But their open support for armed revolt in Brunei and their close connections with leaders of the revolt show that they are ready when the opportunity occurs to depart from constitutional methods.." "Operation Cold Store" began in the early hours of 2 February, and a total of 130 persons were taken into custody. These included 31 persons in the

¹²⁰ As detailed by Matthew Jones in his "Creating Malaysia: Singapore Security, the Borneo Territories and the Contours of British Policy 1961-63" in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28(2):85-109, 2000.

¹²¹ Jones, "Creating Malaysia: Singapore Security, the Borneo Territories and the Contours of British Policy 1961-63", p. 100.

¹²² Australian High Commissioner Critchley to Australian Minister and Department of External Affairs 18 January 1963.

political sphere, including Lin Chin Siong,¹²³ 40 trade union leaders, 18 from the education sphere, 11 from cultural circles, 7 members of rural committees or hawkers, 9 persons only identified as members of the CPM and 14 others.¹²⁴ Major figures included Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, Sandra Woodhull, Said Zahari, James and Dominic Puthucheary, Poh Soo Kai, Jamit Singh and Linda Chen. Singapore's S. Rajaratnam justified Operation Cold Store by stating that "Action was taken not because they are Communists but because of danger of subversion and violence by Communists in aid of alien interventionists."¹²⁵ The detentions left the field open for merger with little dissent, and removed the major objection the Tunku held to Singapore merging with the Federation.

The Malaysian Agreement concluded in July 1963 provided that Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah) would be federated with the existing states of Malaya to form Malaysia. Foreign affairs, defence and internal security would all be handled by Kuala Lumpur, while Singapore would retain control over finance, labour and education. On 31 August 1963, two weeks prior to its merger into the formal Malaysia, Lee Kuan Yew unilaterally declared Singapore independent. Lee also admitted that, to the Tunku's chagrin, he had urged the leaders of Sabah and Sarawak to "do something dramatic on 31 August to prevent any further postponement" of merger.¹²⁶ Malaysia was proclaimed on 16 September 1963.

Conclusions

1. The British state and its colonial administration in Singapore used a variety of legislative, propaganda, police and military tools to directly suppress the Left over the period between the end of World War II and the formation of Malaysia in 1963. The specific modes of suppression included arrest, imprisonment, deportation and execution. The period between July 1948 and March 1953, saw 1,209 persons arrested in Singapore, with some being banished, and others being allowed to leave. Such police action continued throughout the period to 1963.
2. If we summarise the specific actions of suppression detailed in this paper we can conclude that the January 1951 detentions of 34 members of the Singapore Teachers Union, the Singapore Co-operative Society and the University of Malaya was engineered by the British as a way of forestalling further support for the Left by the English-educated, as were the 1954 arrests of the University Socialist Club. The more serious detentions in 1954 of 14 of the top 16 members of the Singapore City Council of the CPM were the colonial administration's efforts at crippling the Communist Party's activities in the colony. The 1956 and 1957 detentions and banning of organisations appear to have been a combined

¹²³ Lee Kuan Yew apparently offered Lim Chin Siong the chance to leave for Indonesia on scholarship, which the latter refused.

¹²⁴ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 257.

¹²⁵ Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'" p. 41-43.

¹²⁶ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, Singapore, Times Editions, 1998. p. 499.

action deriving for the interests of the British, Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew. The Cold Store detentions in 1963, the final and most severe blow to the Left during the colonial period, were carried out to serve the interests of the British, who needed Singapore included in Malaysia, the Tunku, who needed a Singapore where the Left were under control, and Lee Kuan Yew who could pursue his own political path with his major rivals in detention.

3. An important British mode of suppression of the Left was suppression by proxy through provision of support to those who were opposed to the perceived aspirations of the Left. These included initially KMT remnants and businessmen in the early 1950s, Lim Yew Hock in the mid-1950s and Lee Kuan Yew from the late 1950s. Legislative and police means were utilised to assist those whom the British considered to be the most suitable leader in the anti-Left struggle.
4. The battles against the Left within Singapore were not fought in isolation. They were an integral part of a much larger battlefield which extended throughout Asia and across the globe. The examples cited above demonstrate how tightly were linked Britain's fear of expanding Communism throughout Asia and the expanding power of the left within Singapore.
5. The creation of Malaysia was a Cold War strategy by Great Britain and its Pacific Commonwealth members.¹²⁷ In the creation of this new nation, intended as a bulwark against Communism from the North and as a base for Western defence facilities, it was necessary to ensure that the polities of Singapore and the Borneo Territories were included. Elsewise they would become -- and this was even more the case for Chinese-dominated Singapore -- Communist pawns or satellites. To ensure the merger the British wanted, and in fact needed, the massive swathe of Leftist arrests throughout the component parts of the inchoate Malaysia was carried out.
6. And to prevent bulwark Malaysia from itself moving into the Communist camp, the domination of the Malay people over the Chinese had to be ensured through Constitutional and other forms. It was thus that the Sultans had to be assured of their special place and the Malay people were assigned a special status under Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia, to be defended by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the federal government
7. Malaysia -- and particularly Singapore's inclusion in it and then expulsion from it -- as well as the ethnocracy which marks the Malaysia state today were all, in diverse ways, direct results of the Cold War in Southeast Asia.

¹²⁷ Tom Critchley noted this precisely when he wrote in January 1963: "I believe that the basic reasoning behind Malaysia -- using the Federation as a base for strengthening the area against communism--is still valid." See National Australian Archives. Australian High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur T.K. Critchley to K. Waller, Department of External Affairs, 29 January 1963, TS 383/5/3 Part 2, pp. 362-64.

What this paper thus suggests are alternative ways of looking at the history of Singapore over this period 1945-1963, as well as at the creation of Malaysia, within a broader Cold War context. The conclusions advanced above necessarily remain tentative as many of the key documents essential for assessing and analyzing "the tough, clandestine deal-making"¹²⁸ engaged in during this period remain inaccessible within the British, Malaysian and Singaporean archives.

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APPENDIX 1 : Conversation Between the Minister for External Affairs and the Chief Minister of Singapore (National Australian Archives, British Territories in South-East Asia – Top Secret Papers – Singapore TS383/5/3 (Part 2) pp . 90-93)

Record of a conversation between the Minister (R.G. Casey) and Mr. Lim Yew Hock on 3 September 1957:

The minister asked Mr. Lim Yew Hock if he could give some background and explanation about the recent arrests, his present relationship with Lee Kuan Yew and the probable course of events in the next few months.

Mr. Lim recalled that when political parties were being organised in preparation for the first elections under the Rendel constitution he and David Marshall and others had organised the old Labour Party and other elements into the rather loose organisation known as the Labour Front. Lee Kuan Yew who knew that he could not shine in a party with Marshall had organised a separate party known as the People's Action Party.

In the early days of the Rendel constitution Lee Kuan Yew had believed that he could "ride the tiger" and control the communist elements within the P.A.P. He (Lim Yew Hock) had believed at that time that David Marshall could be useful to the Labour Front. The first important shift of opinion within the parties had come during the constitutional conference in London in May of last year when David Marshall had acted in a most independent fashion. On his way to London he had sat at the feet of Nehru and had devised the tactics of demanding full independence with cession back to the United Kingdom of powers in external affairs and external defence. In London he had tried to run the whole show and had accused everybody in the delegation of conspiring against him. Marshall's attitude had alarmed the U.K and the result as Mr Casey knows was that Marshall had resigned as Chief Minister.

His own objective had been to create the unit which Marshall had neglected. When he took his team to London it had a mandate based on the all-party conference. He had treated all members of the delegation equally (each member was allowed to a flag on his car and to act as spokesman in different subjects on the delegation's brief). He had found that Lee Kuan Yew was by this time concerned at his position within the P.A.P. and was prepared to co-operate with him (Lim Yew Hock) in obtaining the support for the

¹²⁸ Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'", p. 36

constitutional settlement. He and Lee Kuan Yew had told each other of their respective troubles and difficulties and although there was no formal "deal" he had reached an understanding with Lee Kuan Yew. Lee Kuan Yew had agreed that Lim Chin Siong and other left-wing leaders who had been detained for subversive activities should not be allowed to contest the next elections. They had privately exposed this difficulty to Lennox-Boyd explaining that it would be difficult for them (i.e. Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew) to support an amendment to the elections ordinance banning participation in elections by Lim Chin Siong and the others. Lennox-Boyd had suggested that his own shoulders were broad and that he could carry the odium. Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew had made it clear that they would have to attack any such proposal publicly although they would soft-pedal as far as they could. This they had done and means had been found to prevent too active a debate on this point in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to take similar action with the British press.

Mr. Lim said he and Lee Kuan Yew had discussed the best method of eliminating David Marshall from the Singapore political scene. Marshall had already got himself into a difficult position because he had received assurances of support from the extremist wing of the P.A.P if he attacked the constitutional settlement. On the other hand Marshall had decided to support the clause banning participation in elections by detainees. He, Lim Yew Hock, had full support of the Labour Front for the constitutional settlement including the subversive clause and Lee Kuan Yew managed, in spite of his suspicions within the P.A.P, that he might have taken an independent course in London (Lee Kuan Yew, unlike Lim Chin Siong did not send in reports from London of developments) to secure acceptance of the settlement apart from the subversive clause from the P.A.P.

Lee Kuan Yew had suggested that the best way to eliminate David Marshall was to challenge him to a by-election. Fortunately, David Marshall played right into their hands by himself issuing the challenge.

Mr. Lim Yew Hock said that there was a gentleman's agreement between the three parties that the contest in Tanjong Pagar would be left to Lee Kuan Yew and David Marshall and that an independent would be contesting in Cairnhill. However, when David Marshall, having lost his expected support from the left wing of the P.A.P. announced his complete withdrawal from politics, the Liberal Socialists decided to contest both seats and the Labour Front had to reluctantly nominate a man in Cairnhill. Also he felt that he himself had felt it best to escape from a difficult personal situation in which he might find himself if he remained in Singapore during the by-election and had gone to Geneva to attend the I.L.O. Conference. In the event, the Liberals had won Cairnhill and Lee Kuan Yew had been returned in Tanjong Pagar.

Since the by-election he had been seeking an opportunity to get behind bars the subversive leaders who had re-organised the Singapore Shop and Factory Workers Union into a group of five separate unions, the promoters and editors of the P.A.P. paper "Sin Pao" and the subversive leaders in the P.A.P. However, although these leaders were active they were being very careful to keep within the law. He had therefore devised tactics to bring them out into the open. This he had done in three ways. First, by

arranging for the T.U.C. to make overtures to some of the Middle Row (sic) unions. Secondly by starting a widespread campaign to the effect that the Labour Front was anxious for a coalition with the P.A.P. and thirdly by allowing it to be thought that he himself was weak and despondent. These tactics had been successful. The subversive leaders in the Trade Unions had been encouraged to attend meetings, "Sin Pao" had come out with more openly pro-Communist material and finally the subversive wing of the P.A.P. had felt themselves strong enough to oust Lee Kuan Yew from leadership. He had been able to pin point the subversive leaders concerned and they were now the guests of the Singapore Government.

Lim Yew Hock said that now he had been able to help Lee Kuan Yew by eliminating five members of the P.A.P. Executive Committee (the sixth member of the left wing, Mr. T.T. Rajah had resigned early that day). He hoped that Lee Kuan Yew might be able to move back into position as Secretary and clean up the P.A.P. within. In any event, the Government had eliminated most of the people who would have been dangerous at the next election and he expected that it would be possible to have a re-alignment of the existing political parties about the end of the year or early in 1958.

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