

‘Operation Cold Store’: A Key Event in the Creation of Malaysia and in the Origins of Modern Singapore

Geoff Wade

1. Introduction

The police operation known as “Operation Cold Store” or “Operation Coldstore” was carried out in Singapore in the early hours of 2 February 1963. Through it and the 113 arrests and detentions it entailed, the political Left of Singapore was essentially eviscerated. The operation and the events leading up to it remain woefully under-studied and under-documented.¹ This is particularly so given their obvious importance to both the process of the establishment of the Malaysian state and to the creation of virtually every aspect of modern Singapore.

The sensitivity of the topic even until today is obvious from the scant attention the operation is given in Singapore’s own history writing, both official and otherwise.² This is also reflected in other official accounts of the period.³ As such, much secrecy still surrounds the events. From whence does this sensitivity and secrecy derive? It is intended below to provide a documentary history of Operation Cold Store, essentially from the British archival record to try and illumine the agendas, the events and the processes of the various players involved. The British papers, and particularly the records of the Internal Security Council, are valuable in that they were not written for public consumption and thus reflect quite “raw” accounts of the events as the British officials and their informants perceived them. The prejudices inherent in such British accounts can be revealed when other administrations begin to provide public access to their archival records. In the meantime, the extracts quoted below, held together by a thin mortar of my commentary, will have to serve as the best primary sources we have for Operation Cold Store as well as the events which led up to the operation

¹ Some notable exceptions include Mathew Jones, “Creating Malaysia: Singapore Security, the Borneo Territories and the Contours of British Policy, 1961-1963” in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, May 2000. pp. 85-109; Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front: the Communist Struggle in Singapore 1954-66*, Singapore, South Seas Society, 1996; the various essays in Tan Jing Quee and Jomo K.S. (ed.), *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, Kuala Lumpur, INSAN, 2001, and Tan Peng Hong’s B.A. Hons academic exercise at the National University of Singapore, “Reaching a Compromise: the Deliberations of the Singapore Internal Security Council (1962-1963)”.

² Lee Kuan Yew’s autobiography assigns the story of the detentions four pages. See Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Singapore, Singapore Press Holdings, 1998, pp. 470-73. Tan Tai Yong’s *Creating “Greater Malaysia”* allows the event, arguably one of the most important in the creation of Malaysia, just 17 lines of text. See Tan Tai Yong, *Creating “Greater Malaysia”*, Singapore, ISEAS, 2008, p. 193.

³ The collection of documents created by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, supposedly detailing the origins of Malaysia, essentially ignores the event. See Moreen Dee (ed.), *Australia and the formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, Barton, A.C.T.: Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2005.

and which subsequently derived from it. The inordinate length of the paper can perhaps thus be excused by its documentation aim.

2. The Left as a Threat to British Control in Malaya and Singapore

While the essence of the present account is the period from 1959 to 1963, a few words on the period prior to this are perhaps in order. Following the end of WWII, with the return of the British to Malaya, the relationship between the British and the Left, including the Communist Party, grew increasingly fraught. This was particularly so when Cold War concerns grew and global rivalries expanded. With the creation on 1 February 1948 of a Malayan Federation without any reference to the non-Malay peoples of the peninsula – as a Cold War bulwark against a Communism which was perceived as quintessentially Chinese — the British had marked out their agenda for the peninsula. It was not long after this that an armed revolt (or revolution) was launched by the Malayan Communist Party against British rule in the peninsula. The subsequent period of armed warfare is often referred to as The Emergency (1948-60). The political evolution of British policy in Malaya and particularly the establishment of an ethnocratic Federation of Malaya, with a structure which essentially excluded the Chinese community from equal participation in the constitutional process, appears to have been a major factor in pushing the Malayan Communist Party towards the adoption of a policy of armed struggle.⁴ Operation Cold Store, it will be suggested below, was also, in various ways, a product of Britain's engagement in a global Cold War. This element cannot be ignored as we explore the evolution of the events which culminated in the removal of one side of politics in Singapore in 1963.

While Singapore was established as a separate British Crown Colony in 1946 following WWII, many of the policies which the British pursued in the peninsula were also pursued within Singapore. In both places, the Left were certainly engaged in efforts to decolonize and push the British beyond Malaya and Singapore, while the British employed a variety of legislative, propaganda, police and military tools to directly harass and 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.

Within Singapore, specific actions of suppression included the January 1951 detentions of 34 members of the Singapore Teachers Union, the Singapore Co-operative Society and the University of Malaya, which was engineered 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 Communist Party of Malaya 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 action deriving from

⁴ For further details of this argument, see Geoff Wade, "The Origins and Evolution of Ethnocracy in Malaysia," *Japan Focus*, article 3259. <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Geoff-Wade/3259>; and Geoff Wade, "The Beginnings of a 'Cold War' in Southeast Asia: British and Australian Perceptions" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2009), 40 : 543-565.

the interests of the British, Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew.⁵ A key 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. It is from this period in the late 1950s that this account must begin.

3. Singapore 1959: A New Beginning

In early 1959, the Education Minister Chew Swee Kee of the Lim Yew Hock administration faced charges in Parliament that he had received CIA funding, and there were accusations that Lim Yew Hock himself was using secret society gangs to harass the PAP. Lee Kuan Yew, leader of the PAP, had taken in Francis Thomas, the Minister for Communications and Works, who had resigned to support Lee's call for an enquiry into the Chew Swee Kee affair. There were at this time accusations from both sides. 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. It was clear from this time that the British had concluded that Lim Yew Hock and the Labour Front were not the force which would lead Singapore towards self-government, and that they were already switching their hopes for Singapore to the PAP.

The results of the Chew Swee Kee enquiry were, 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 P.A.P. members arrested in 1956 and 1957 through agreement between Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew,

⁵ In September and October of 1956, Lim Yew Hock began a purge of the Left. 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. 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 Puthucheary, Devan Nair and Sandra Woodhull were arrested following the Beauty World Park riots in October 1956. Over 250 persons were arrested in total. In 1957, with instigation as yet unproven, but widely accepted to have been the British, the Lim Yew Hock government decided only ten days after the PAP Committee election in August 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. In a later meeting with the Australian Foreign Minister, 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. See Appendix 1 for an account of this meeting.

were released from prison.⁶ 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.⁷

In the Legislative Council, the new PAP Government declared its stand “to end colonialism and establish an independent, democratic, non-Communist, socialist Malaya.”⁸ 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.”⁹ In order that the Federation would not feel threatened, a scheme of merger devised to preclude Chinese political domination was proposed. The number of parliamentary seats assigned to Singapore was 15 instead of the 25 due in terms of population, and Singapore citizens were to not be allowed to vote in the Federation. Despite this, Lee acceded to the proposals, convinced that “the Communists could only be beaten if it was clear that Singapore could not have independence except through merger.” 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. The Left, both within and outside the PAP understood that with the British holding overriding power, there was no option but to pursue constitutional means to achieve power. The completely unjust plans for Merger were to become a key sticking point and issue for the Left on which to attack the PAP.

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 and access to water, but essentially it was the Cold War West’s fears of an independent, predominantly Chinese, polity that truly drove the policy. 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

⁶ In 1962, Lord Selkirk, the United Kingdom Commissioner stated that “Five members of the Executive Committee [of PAP] were also among those arrested by Lim Yew Hock in 1957 and this was always assumed publicly to have been done at Lee Kuan Yew’s direct request. See Secret memorandum (No. 244) from Lord Selkirk, United Kingdom Commissioner in Singapore to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 5 October 1962), NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 26-28 (electronic pp. 217-19).

⁷ Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, Singapore Marshall Cavendish International (Asia), 2005 [1986], pp. 192-93.

⁸ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 266.

⁹ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 266.

the Borneo Territories.”¹⁰ These were all issues which the British would have 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 had been abolished. The supreme British post was replaced by a Commissioner for the United Kingdom who 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 the Singaporean 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. The British were, at the same time, making longer-term Cold War calculations. And many of these were to be implemented through the Internal Security Council (ISC), a body which had been established under the Singapore Constitution and held its first meeting in August 1959. It included representatives from both Britain and Singapore and was tasked to “maintain the efficiency of all organs of the Government of Singapore which are concerned with internal security.” The Federation was soon to also have a representative on the Council.

Lee meanwhile was trying to break the back of the Leftists through extension of detentions and union de-registration. But he preferred not to be seen as the axe-man. In February 1960, with an Internal Security Council meeting pending on 4 February, Lee sought British acquiescence to have the ISC overturn an alleged Singapore Government decision to release the detainees whose detention orders expired on 6 February. The British were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Lee trying to use Britain and the Federation to take responsibility for Lee’s decisions, and advised that that Federation would object both to the release of these detainees and would equally object to being used by Lee to cover up his own desire to keep them incarcerated. The British paraphrased the Malayan response as: “Lee must play it straight.”¹¹ In a later ISC meeting in the Cameron Highlands in June 1960, Lee detailed the course which had led to the trade union de-registration he was engaged in and his aim of whittling down the Singapore General Employees’ Union (S.G.E.U.) and attacking the subsidiary headquarters of the Communists in the trade union field. He again urged that the ISC take on some of the responsibility. Yet again, in July 1960, he told the Acting United Kingdom Commissioner that he was “seriously worried about increased communist activities within the Trades Unions and that he may want to revive the suggestion that the Internal Security Council should recommend the detention of certain communists close to Lim Chin Siong. Lee Kuan Yew apparently thinks that the political risks involved in taking this step

¹⁰ “Australian Commission Singapore Despatches 1-3 1959”, See NAA [A4231](#), Control No. 1959/SINGAPORE. Electronic page no. 4.

¹¹ Secret telegram(no. 25) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 20 January 1960), CO 1030/1157 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1960-62”, pp. 272-73.

(which Ong Eng Guan would almost certainly exploit) are less than those he would face if he allowed communist activity in the trade unions to go unchecked.”¹²

On 3 August, at a speech within the Legislative Assembly Lee Kuan Yew noted that over the previous 14 months, there had been a “build up of the ground strength of Communist sympathisers and activists, who had gone undercover before the last elections, through cadres working within the trade union movement.” The danger, he pointed out, was that these “pro-C.P. activists”, being unable to persuade the P.A.P. to abandon its non-Communist principles, would engage in a struggle with the government.¹³

The alleged threat to society took on stronger tones when the Singapore Special Branch recommended in a paper of September 1960 early detention of some alleged Communists including members of the Singapore General Employees' Union.¹⁴ The ISC decided to discuss the paper its meeting in the Cameron Highlands in October. The British opined that: “It would extremely difficult not to go along with the proposals of the paper in the face of strong recommendation from Special Branch of the need for early action and the endorsement by the Singapore cabinet” but cautioned that “We must however satisfy ourselves of the merit of the individual cases, i.e. that they are communists engaged in subversion and not merely enemies of the P.A.P. to be detained as a warning to others. Lord Selkirk attaches particular importance to this.”¹⁵ This was to be a continuing British concern for the next few years.

The Internal Security Council met on 7 October 1960 and discussed the proposed detentions. The acting British Commissioner was satisfied that none of the individual cases “was put forward on party political grounds” and Lee Kuan Yew “expressed firm determination to go ahead with arrest of the trade unionists for their political subversive activities as otherwise whole operation would be pointless.”¹⁶ However, the British were concerned on two fronts. The Minister of State for the Colonies was concerned about the October ISC meeting as it had approved the arrest of trade unionists without any details of the length of detention, and without requiring Lee Kuan Yew to be considered one of the initiators of the arrests. They were also concerned about the response of the International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) to the arrests, as it was already investigating the earlier union detainees. Lee proposed a reply to the I.L.O. which disguised Singapore’s role in the arrests. The British Secretary of State for the Colonies then weighed in, noting: “Singapore Government’s proposed reply presents the facts in a way calculated (as you say) to conceal

¹² Secret Savingram (No 29) from McNicol, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Minister and Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 29 July 1960) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 9, pp. 58-59.

¹³ Confidential Savingram (No. 30) from McNicol, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Minister and Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 9 August 1960) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 9, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴ ISC (60) (S) 8.

¹⁵ Secret Telegram (No. 337) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 23 September 1960), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, p. 62-63.

¹⁶ Secret Telegram (No. 355) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 11 October 1960), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 171.

their own primary responsibility for internal security and to imply that whole responsibility rests with the Internal Security Council. In so doing, they would implicate not only H.M.G but the Government of the Federation, which is also a member of the I.L.O. but has not (so far as I am aware) yet been consulted in this particular case.”¹⁷

The battle continued in Whitehall, with J.S. Bennett of the Colonial Office opining: “.. from the international point of view as (I should have thought) from that of our general relations with the Singapore Government, it does seem to me of the greatest importance to ensure that the responsibility for this action is placed squarely where it belongs, on the shoulders of the Singapore Government. The action they propose is certainly oppressive, while we have been given insufficient evidence to judge whether it is wise; and I do not think H.M.G. should be saddled with the odium of defending measures of this sort in which they are not in fact effectively consulted.”¹⁸ The problem lay in that six trade unionists were still under detention and had not been brought to trial. These detentions did not accord with the recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association as approved by the I.L.O. Governing Body which required “prompt and fair trial by an independent and impartial judiciary.”¹⁹ Singapore responded to the I.L.O. that release of the detainees, who had been incarcerated since before 1959, was the responsibility of the I.S.C., a point which Selkirk, the U.K. Commissioner in Singapore acceded to in February 1961.²⁰

Another British concern was the legislation under which the detentions were proposed -- The Preservation of Public Security Ordinance – which allowed almost unlimited powers to the state. The British Colonial Office explained that: “The Preservation of Public Security Ordinance was put on the Statute Book in 1955 when we were in effective control of internal security. Detentions made under it in 1956 and 1957 ran into the hundreds and at the time of the last elections and the introduction of the new Statehood Constitution, few releases had been made. It was then decided, as an act of policy with which Lim Yew Hock and Lee Kuan Yew were closely associated, that the Ordinance should be renewed and continued in force after the State of Singapore came into being.” The Colonial Office’s concern was that “we have got to be sure as far as possible that the wide powers of the Ordinance are not abused for party political purposes.”²¹

However, following the on-going efforts by Lee to tame the union movement in 1960, Leftist enthusiasm for the Lee Kuan Yew leadership declined, while Ong Eng Guan

¹⁷ Secret Telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies to United Kingdom Commissioner Singapore (dated 8 February 1961), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, p. 32.

¹⁸ Internal memo by J.S. Bennett (dated 28 September 1960), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, pp. 5-6.

¹⁹ Secret Telegram (No. 219) from Commonwealth Relations Office to U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur. (dated 8 February 1961), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, p. 32.

²⁰ Secret Telegram (No. 43) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 15 February 1962), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, p. 28.

²¹ Memo from E Melville to Sir John Martin (dated 29 September 1960), CO 1030/1166, “Internal Security Council Singapore: Responsibility for Detentions 1960-62”, p. 32.

resigned from the party, registered a new party, the United People's Party (UPP) and subsequently won the Hong Lim by-election in April 1961, defeating PAP candidate Jek Yuan Thong. This proved a giant embarrassment to the PAP, particularly its leaders, and suggested that all was not well with the well-marked path to the Singapore and Malaysian futures being laid out by the British and the Malayan leader. Selkirk opined in the wake of the Hong Lim by-election that "Where the Government have chiefly fallen is over their complete failure to understand the mechanics of successful democratic government. The outstanding example is the manner in which they handled the case of Ong Eng Guan. Lee Kuan Yew thought that he must crush rather than tolerate him and tried to do this by casting reflections on his personal veracity and private life in a series of elaborate enquiries and debates. I warned him nearly three months before the election that all this publicity would inevitably result in Ong Eng Guan's re-election for the Hong Lim Constituency.." ²²

The Tunku was also obviously concerned about the possibility of an even less desirable neighbour emerging from the fallout of a Left-Right tussle within the PAP. By early 1961, the division between Left and Right in the P.A.P. was growing with the party's Sixth Anniversary souvenir booklet directly attacking the Communists ("Left-wing adventurers, some in Party Ra'ayat and some in trade unions") through several articles – particularly "The Fixed Political Objectives of Our Party" by Lee Kuan Yew and "The Open Conspiracy." These argued that "the Communists had a vested interest in increasing the misery of the people and instigating violence.....In contrast the P.A.P. is presented as a party devoted to the interests and welfare of the people." ²³

4. The Tunku Sees the Future: Malaya+ Singapore+ Borneo Territories = Malaysia

It was partly concerns with the growing power of the Left in Singapore 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", ²⁴ otherwise known as "Greater Malaysia." Reporting on a meeting with Lord Selkirk, the Australian Commissioner in Singapore noted "I asked Selkirk why the Tengku had made the statement at this time... He said that in the last few weeks two secret meetings had taken place between the Tengku, Tun Abdul Razak, Dato Ismail and Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee on this and related matters. The Singapore side had actually produced a rather inferior paper on a form of a confederation involving a central authority composed of representatives of the separate governments. Lord Selkirk said that in a sense the Tengku had put Lee on the spot. All along Lee had been talking about gestures from the Federation and now he had one. ... Lord Selkirk said he had heard that the P.A.P. had been thrown into some

²²Confidential telegram (No. 176) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Ian MacLeod, Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 19 May 1961), CO 1030/1149 "Political Situation in Singapore 1961" pp. 202-05.

²³ Confidential Memorandum (No 22) from G. Jockel, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 6 January 1961) NAA 3024/2/1 "Singapore: Political – General", Part 9 pp. 189-90.

²⁴ Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, p. 270-71.

confusion by the Tengku's forthright speech (which was a complete surprise to Lee Kuan Yew).”²⁵

By 9 June 1961, Toh Chin Chye, the chairman of the PAP, stated that the Tunku's proposal for closer political union between the federation and Singapore was also his party's policy. The cracks in the Singapore political fabric began to widen and, on 13 June, the big six TUC leaders issued a statement which was a challenge to the Deputy Prime Minister's statement. The opposition of the Left to merger was obviously aimed at preventing the fall of political power in Singapore into the hands of a right-wing Government in the Federation.

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.”²⁶ Lee Kuan Yew notes in his memoirs that the Left saw the Internal Security Council as a major obstacle, as at a meeting with the Plen, an ambassador of the CPM, on 11 May 1961, the Plen sought Lee's support in abolishing the Internal Security Council. The memoirs also make frequent reference to Lim Chin Siong's desire to eliminate the ISC.²⁷

While the Left were worrying about Kuala Lumpur and its aims, the Federation also began to express the need to arrest the Singapore ex-detainees such as Lim Chin Siong, Woodhull, and Fong Swee Suan to hamstring the Barisan Socialis, and to revive the fortunes of Lim Yew Hock with whom the Tunku felt he could work. These ideas were formulated towards the end of 1961 and by early 1962 the Federation Government was stressing to Lee Kuan Yew and the British Government the necessity of making the arrests before merger.²⁸

5. A New Force: The Barisan Sosialis (1961)

When Greater Malaysia was announced as an eventual aim in May 1961, there was rapid recognition on the Left that this would eventually lead to their submersion and inevitable destruction within a right-wing Federation of Malaysia.

²⁵ Secret record of Conversation between Australian Commissioner, Singapore and Lord Selkirk, U.K. Commissioner-General for South-east Asia (dated 30 May 1961) NAA A4539 221/6/2A, “[Jakarta] - Proposed merger of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei - The Grand Design (Malaysia)” pp. 7-8 (electronic pp. 254-55).

²⁶ Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, p. 232.

²⁷ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, pp 354-59.

²⁸ Claude Fenner, inspector general of Malaya's police, told the British that the real reason the Tunku wanted Singapore to take repressive action in Singapore was “to remove Singapore's potential political leaders before they can appear in the House of Representatives in Kuala Lumpur.” See CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 214-15.

In early July 1961, Lee Kuan Yew was facing pressure from within the party to release all pre-1959 detainees, an action he was unwilling to take because of the threat it posed to him. However, he wished to make it appear as if he was in favour of the releases and proposed “a manoeuvre whereby he would make an order for the release and the British and Federation governments would countermand the order in the Internal Security Council. The Federation Government were at first prepared to condone this plan as an expedient to keep Lee in power in the interests of the proposed ‘Greater Malaysia’ but they soon accepted the United Kingdom view that the proposal should be rejected.”²⁹ The acting British Commissioner, Philip Moore, stated that the British should not be “party to a device for deliberate misrepresentation of responsibility for continuing 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.”³⁰

Lim Chin Siong, James Puthuchear 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 on 18 July, seeking assurance, according to Woodhull, that the British would not suspend the Constitution or take strong action against them if Lee Kuan Yew was voted out of office.³¹ 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. According to an Australian report, “Selkirk has told Left Wing trade unions leaders that he will ensure the preservation of security. Otherwise he is treating the matter as an internal political matter. He has not much confidence in Lee Kuan Yew continuing to provide effective political leadership and he blames him personally for much of what is happening.”³² Goh Keng Swee denied that he had told James Puthuchear that British action against the pro-Communists was imminent, but claimed that there had been much interaction between Lim Chin Siong and Selkirk’s staff. Some suggested a “British Plot” against the PAP.

This meeting at Eden Hall caused all sorts of kerfuffles in Kuala Lumpur and within the PAP and even Geofroy Tory, the British representative in KL, opined that “we are in danger of losing Singapore and prejudicing the stability of Malaya and thus of the whole of the free

²⁹ Secret Telegram from Acting U.K. Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 12 July 1961), CO 1030/1149 “Political Situation in Singapore 1961” pp. 166-67.

³⁰ Harper, ‘Lim Chin Siong and “The Singapore Story”’, p. 32.

³¹ Confidential telegram (No. 294) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Commonwealth Relations Office (dated 15 August 1961), CO 1030/1149 “Political Situation in Singapore 1961” pp. 36-37.

³² Secret Cablegram (No 272) from G. Jockel, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Minister and Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 20 July 1961) NAA 3024/2/1 “Singapore: Political – General”, Part 10, p. 66.

part of South East Asia by sticking to the Queensbury Rules of Westminster in dealing with a lot of highly-educated but completely unscrupulous thugs.”³³

Lee Kuan Yew called a motion of confidence in the government on 20 July. During the debate, Lee accused the British of plotting with the Communists to overthrow the PAP government by engineering a collision between the non-Communists in the PAP and the Communists. To underline his Leftists credentials, Lee tabled a paper submitted by his government to the ISC in 1959 which recommended release of the detainees. However, this breach of ISC confidentiality resulted in the Tunku threatening to withdraw the Federation from the ISC.³⁴ After some torrid politicking following the debate the vote was taken and the motion was passed 26 to 25. The party split had become firm.

On 30 July, Barisan Sosialis was officially established with Lim Chin Siong as secretary-general, and a new political party had come into the Singapore firmament. Many of the grassroots PAP members went with the Barisan, which also controlled most of the labour unions. Lee, now even more, 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."³⁵

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. Discussions resumed in August and 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 which were agreed to by Lee Kuan Yew further riled the Left in Singapore, who saw the interests of Singaporeans being gradually whittled away for the sake of the Malaysians and Lee's political future. 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.³⁶

³³ Secret letter (2298/242/2) from Geofroy Tory, U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to Neil Pritchard, Colonial Office (dated 14 August 1961), CO 1030/1149 "Political Situation in Singapore 1961" pp. 36-37.

³⁴ NAA, Outward Telegram from the UK Commonwealth Relations Office (dated 4 August 1961) to Department of External Affairs, Canberra 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 10, p.150.

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ 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.

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 Rakyat³⁷ finding common cause with the Malayan 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.

If merger was to be achieved, the critics and opponents had to be dealt with. In August 1961, there was written for the Internal Security Council a paper on the security situation in Singapore.³⁸ It provided a history of the Communist Party of Malaya since 1951, detailed the possible parties which the CPM could use to achieve its goal of control of usurping constitutional power in Singapore, and the suspect individuals engaged with the CPM. It concluded that: "The Communist Party of Malaya constitutes the main security threat to Singapore." It urged that orders under the Banishment Ordinance be used to expel prominent communists back to the Federation if that is where they held citizenship. "For the present, any action which involved the use of the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance for the detention of open and active communist workers, particularly in the Trade Union field, would be unwise. The political and security outlooks are undergoing rapid change and in the present situation any attempt to intervene with a programme of mass arrests and detentions would provoke further unrest and possible industrial disorder... It is therefore recommended that detention under the P.P.S.O. should not be used as an overt weapon of attack; its use should be reserved for unobtrusive action against the undercover C.P.M. leadership and, if the security situation deteriorates, the individual cases which will arise." A Singaporean, G.E. Bogaars, took over as Director, Special Branch in Singapore, with the retirement of E.J. Linsell on 1 August 1961.³⁹

Even the neighbours were expressing the same opinion: In a letter to Canberra in August 1961, the Australian High Commissioner to Malaya Tom Critchley promoted the desirability of a Greater Malaysia, necessarily incorporating Singapore. "I assume that we and the United Kingdom are determined to prevent Singapore becoming a Communist outpost. This means that Singapore will have to be contained by either the Federation or the United Kingdom." Noting that the British were withdrawing from East of Suez, he concluded that the incorporation of Singapore within Malaysia "could make a major contribution to protecting out political and strategic interests in South East Asia." Mr Critchley then went on to suggest that "Since the conditions for Greater Malaysia are unlikely to be fulfilled in the

³⁷ Partai Rakyat was a Malay-based Singapore party, 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. 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.

³⁸ I.S.C. Paper No. (61(S) 5) dated 10 August 1961. The original Special Branch report, dated 3 August 1961, is available as "The Security Situation in Singapore" at CO 1030/1162, "Internal Security Council, Singapore: Papers and Notices 1960-62", pp. 143-57.

³⁹ "Director, Special Branch", CO 1030/1162, "Internal Security Council, Singapore: Papers and Notices 1960-62", p. 119.

near future if Singapore politics are allowed to take an uninterrupted course – that course must be altered by force. In the final analysis the force must be British force and the responsibility for making use of it should be taken by the British.” “I have indicated a possible course of action but I realise that the United Kingdom will be loath to grasp the nettle firmly.”⁴⁰ “It is with considerable reluctance that I recommend a policy of repressive measures in Singapore. But the basic interests in South East Asia of both the United Kingdom and ourselves are imperilled and I believe that we should bring pressure on the United Kingdom to face up to its present responsibilities. The Chinese are a pragmatic race and only if confronted with force are they likely to accept a situation that is vital to our interests.”⁴¹

In September 1961, Australian diplomats in London also spoke with London officials and reported “We spoke to Ormerod and Le Bailey (C.R.O., Malaya desk) on 6th September....Ormerod was inclined to doubt whether there would be any significant deterioration in the security situation before the assembly meets in November. He said they still assumed that the socialists hoped to come to power by constitutional means and them only....Ormerod insisted that it would be exceedingly difficult for the U.K. to take any action of the sort desired by the Malaysians. They could hardly suspend the operations of the constitution in present circumstances. Therefore they were compelled to act within the constitution and this means that if Lim and Fong were to be imprisoned, Lee would have to do it. He admitted that the Internal Security Council could stand behind Lee and could even, tactically, bear the brunt of the responsibility. He also admitted that the U.K. could, if it wished, take the initiative in the Council in suggesting such action. However, he made it clear that his Office did not at present at all favour or even contemplate this. He said that it was just about impossible to get round the question of constitutionality. If the Socialist Front behaved themselves, one could not easily find an excuse to lock them up. Critical opposition to merger as such or to merger on P.A.P. terms was hardly an adequate reason, and if it were given as a reason it would surely mean that people like Marshall would have to be locked up too.”⁴² The British Foreign Office also expressed concern at this time that Singapore was moving to the Left and that Indonesia was increasingly resenting the idea of Malaysia.

Western interests and concerns over obstacles to 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. Recognising that “the United Kingdom cannot maintain indefinitely the status quo in Singapore” and that “the longer Singapore’s colonial status is

⁴⁰ Secret Memorandum (No 942) from T.Critchley, Australian High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 18 August 1961) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 10, pp. 202-204.

⁴¹ Secret Memorandum (No 942) from T.Critchley, Australian High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 18 August 1961) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 10, pp. 202-204.

⁴² Confidential memorandum (No. 1578) from C.R Ashwin, Office of the High Commissioner for Australia in London, to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 11 September 1961). NAA A4539 221/6/2A “[Jakarta] - Proposed merger of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei - The Grand Design (Malaysia)”, pp. 68-70 (electronic pp.192-94).

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.”⁴³

That the merger 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.”⁴⁴

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. But, despite this, Philip Moore, deputy to Lord Selkirk, in discussing amendments to a public statement on Internal Security, noted that “The main purpose of these amendments is to make the point that while we accept that Lim Chin Siong is a Communist, there is no evidence that he is receiving directions from the C.P.M, Peking or Moscow. Our impression is that Lim 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 attained this objective Lim would necessarily prove a compliant tool of Peking or Moscow... I would like to take this opportunity to stress again that in Singapore today we have a political not a security problem. We know who most of the potential subversives are and they could easily be gathered in at any time they seemed to threaten the security of the state. Our problem however is to prevent left-wing parties from gaining control of the constitutional Government of Singapore by a chauvinistic appeal to the Chinese educated....Nothing could provide a more effective rallying point for the chauvinistic and moderate elements against merger and Malaysia than to arrest leading members of the main Opposition party without adequate cause.”⁴⁵

6. 1962: A Year of Living Dangerously

The furore around possible merger continued to build. The last days of January 1962 saw the Singapore Assembly debating a Government motion on Malaysia. During this debate the Barisan Sosialis argued that the Malaysia plan was unacceptable because it embodied a “phoney” merger, it was essentially a PAP attempt to stay in power, it prolonged the colonial

⁴³ Dee (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 3, para. 9-10.

⁴⁴ Dee (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 6, para 22.

⁴⁵ Top secret Telegram (No. 363) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 18 July 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 145.

role of the British in Singapore, it derived from the Federation's communalist fears and prejudices against the Chinese, and it violated the demands of the people of Borneo for self-determination. Despite the claims, the Government motion passed including support from Ong Eng Guan and Marshall.⁴⁶

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 Rakyat 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 Rakyat 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'."⁴⁷

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 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.

Meanwhile, by March 1962, Dr Ismail, the Malayan representative on the Internal Security Council, told Lord Selkirk "that the Internal Security Council had become a farce and that the Federation Government was in danger of becoming a 'laughing stock' through its participation in it... He wanted Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan and Woodhull all detained again in the immediate future. ..His recommendation to his Government was that the Federation should not stay in the Internal Security Council unless this happened and he was determined to maintain this position."⁴⁸ Mr Moore, UK deputy commissioner in Singapore,

⁴⁶ Confidential memorandum (No. 197) from G Jockel, Commissioner, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 3 January 1962). NAA A4539 221/6/2A "[Jakarta] - Proposed merger of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei - The Grand Design (Malaysia)", pp. 42-43 (electronic pp. 116-17).

⁴⁷ Cheah Boon Kheng, *The left-wing movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s*, p. 641-42.

⁴⁸ Secret Memorandum (No 474) from G. Jockel, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 10 March 1962) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11 pp. 35-37.

opined that the Federation was not particularly well-informed about events in Singapore, with only one junior liaison officer linking Special Branch in the two places, and urged greater liaison. Moore also noted that he had spoken to Lee Kuan Yew who had said that it would be “lunacy” to take the actions urged by the Federation at this time. “He [Lee] said that, nevertheless, he would encourage the Tengku to think that action would be taken in the period after the formal agreement had been reached on merger and before it came into effect. When Moore said that the U.K. could not be committed to this, reminding Lee that an Act of Parliament would be necessary to bring about the Constitutional change, Lee said that he took this position on the assumption that at that point the Communist elements would make trouble. If they did not then action should not be taken against them. Moore remarked that there could be no certainty as what in fact Lee would say to the Tengku.”⁴⁹

. The Alliance temporarily supported Lee in the Singapore Assembly but his position was uncertain and he pledged that he would hold a referendum on merger. Thereupon the Federation redoubled pressure on Lee and in March 1962 Lee accepted in principle the Malay view that arrests would have to be made before merger. The Tunku accused Lee of continuing to play a “double game” “condoning activities of known Communist and at the same time trying to get other people, namely Malaysians or British, to take action against them.” The Tunku also had negative comments on Lee’s planned visit to Peking and Moscow.⁵⁰ On the issue of the proposed referendum on merger, “one of the points that Dr Ismail had made was that the Singapore Government had got itself into a difficulty by promising a referendum and this made it the more important to detain the elements which would lead the fight for a ‘No’ vote.....Moore said that Lee was now taking the position that he was not going to sacrifice himself by forcing through a merger and his interests thus diverged from the U.K. and the Federation who would no doubt be prepared for this to happen.”⁵¹ It was obvious that popular opposition to the merger agreement was biting back hard.

During his visit to London in May 1962, Lee held a meeting with the Colonial Office confirming that he favoured some action soon to restrict the influence of the Left-wing extremists and deport the Malaysian activists to the Federation. He also spoke of how he would offer only limited options during the referendum on merger, frightening people with the alternative proposal of the “Borneo” option under which citizenship would be restricted and many in Singapore would lose their franchise.⁵²

Meanwhile, back in Singapore Toh Chin Chye made it clear to Moore in May 1962 “that he was opposed to repressive action in Singapore unless this was necessary to maintain

⁴⁹ Secret Memorandum (No 474) from G. Jockel, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 10 March 1962) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11 p. 36.

⁵⁰ Secret telegram from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Commonwealth relations Office (dated 16 March 1962), CO 1030/1157 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1960-62”, pp. 180-81

⁵¹ Secret Memorandum (No 474) from G. Jockel, Australian Commissioner Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 10 March 1962) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11 p. 36.

⁵² Notice of meeting in the Colonial Office Wednesday 16 May 1962, CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 218-22.

law and order. He was worried that any such action before merger would play into the hands of Barisan Sosialis and inevitably give them victory in the next Singapore elections. He was also concerned that the Singapore Government might be forced by a Federation threat of withdrawal from merger into presenting a Joint Paper to the Internal Security Council recommending repressive action. He hinted broadly that he thought Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee were rather committed to Federation and he was worried that they might agree to action which would not be acceptable to the rest of the PAP and would cause a split in the Government ranks.... If the terms of reference became known to P.A.P. assemblymen, it might not be possible to hold the party together. ” As to his opinion on the Singapore Special Branch paper “he said that this was a paper by officials and had not in any way been endorsed by Singapore Ministers.”⁵³

When Lee Kuan Yew returned from his trip to London for the Commonwealth Conference, he was apparently ready to agree with the Tunku in repressive measures against the Left. He first claimed that he had gained from the Colonial Office agreement that they would support through the ISC the arrests of Lim Chin Siong and his followers after the referendum and before merger, but subsequently withdrew that claim, reducing his statement to agreement by the Colonial Office that actions taken should make things better rather than worse.

Lee also claimed to have had secret talks with representatives of the Chinese Government. He claimed that the Chinese Government were prepared to say publicly that, while they did not necessarily approve of Malaysia, their advice to the Chinese overseas was to adapt themselves to the local conditions and not to seek an alignment with Peking. Moore warned him off mentioning these talks in his National Day speech, regardless of their political value to him, because of the Tunku’s concerns about any links with Peking.”⁵⁴

Key discussions on merger took place again 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.”⁵⁵ 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

⁵³ Secret Telegram (No. 260) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 17 May 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 156-57.

⁵⁴ Secret Telegram (No. 277) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 1 June 1962), CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 214-15.

⁵⁵ 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.

postponed.”⁵⁶ The Tunku knew that he had the British over a barrel and he was not averse to utilizing that advantage. The British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Sir Geofroy Tory, was a great supporter of the Tunku, and he told the Colonial Office that if Barisan Sosialis 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 Sosialis were during this time to displace the PAP.”⁵⁷

As the Tunku and Lee visited Britain, Lord Selkirk, the British representative in Singapore wrote to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies, with some very prescient thoughts: “The Malayan Government again talk of ‘neutralising communists’ in Singapore before Malaysia. There is however, neither agreement nor clarity in what is intended. The Malays talk of arresting 25 for security reasons; Lee Kuan Yew wants to arrest 250 for security and political reasons; in fact I believe both of them want us to arrest the effective political opposition and blame us for doing so. I must leave you in no doubt how dangerous I think this policy is for the following reasons: 1) Arbitrary arrest without convincing proof must strengthen the opposition in Singapore and disturb Lee’s colleagues, possibly causing him to fall. 2) It would become abundantly clear that Malaysia was being imposed by the British, regardless of the will of the people concerned. It will then be presented as our plan for preserving our bases with the Tunku allowing himself to be used as our stooge. 3) It will be very difficult to defend action of this character in Parliament here or in the United Nations where the Russians are working hard against Malaysia.”⁵⁸

A joint report on actions against Communists in Singapore was completed in May 1962 and submitted by the Federation and Singapore Commissioner of Police to the Malayan, Singaporean and British governments. The report stated that “Since I.S.C. Paper No (61 (S) 5) dated 10.8.61 on the security situation in Singapore was written in August 1961, there has been no change in the C.P.M policy in Singapore. This remains that of establishing by constitutional means a Communist state and achieving this end through United Front action.”⁵⁹ The police report called for intensification of efforts to expose the Communists and deny them facilities, culminating “as the steps towards merger become more irrevocable and before it is reached, in the following downright action as an agreed political decision: a) convincing documented exposure of the conspiracy; b) searches of all suspect organizations; c) detention of those shown to be Communist conspirators; d) restriction of movement and activities of suspect Communist conspirators; e) announcement of safeguards for the future.” Those to be detained would be limited but would include Lim Chin Siong at the top of the list, with a much longer list of persons to be subject to restrictions. Proposed “safeguards for the future” included restrictions on political activities by specified union committee members,

⁵⁶ Dee, (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966*, p. 18. Secret memorandum from Critchley to Tange, 4 July 1962.

⁵⁷ Harper, “Lim Chin Siong and the ‘Singapore Story’” p. 40, citing Tory on 28 December 1962.

⁵⁸ Secret Letter from U.K. Lord Selkirk to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 27 July 1962), CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 161-62.

⁵⁹ “Singapore Special Branch Paper: Report Communism in Singapore” (May 1962) CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 160-.

pre-censorship of specified publications, stricter control of public meetings, entertainment, societies, pamphleteering, signature campaigns etc and legislation to split up omnibus trade unions, and confine picketing to genuine striking employees.” The possibility of forgoing arrests and limiting action against persons to restrictions was considered but rejected, “because it would be considered a sign of weakness and because the problems of supervision would be too great.”⁶⁰ Selkirk in his report to London assessed the report thus: “The Singapore Special Branch have virtually failed to identify directly any communists during the last three years. Evidence on which to base repressive action is therefore almost entirely lacking.... I must, however, warn you that Lee Kuan Yew is quite clearly attracted by the prospect of wiping out his main political opposition before the next Singapore elections. I think therefore that you will find him advocating a policy of provocation on Lim Chin Siong and his associates with a view to forcing them into unconstitutional action justifying their arrests. I hope that you may be able to impress upon Lee the risks to merger of such a course and our doubts whether we could give our support.”⁶¹ In one report, a Special Branch member was quoted as saying the “Lee was envisaging about one thousand would have to be arrested to be sure of eliminating all the present Communist cadres.”⁶²

The Singapore Parliament had voted to endorse merger in Federation in January 1962, and subsequently in anxious 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. Moore noted in July of that year: “From the beginning the case for H.M.G. transferring sovereignty over Singapore to the Federation has been built on rather tricky foundations. On paper there is a government elected with a pledge for Merger and its detailed proposals to that end have been approved by a respectable majority in the Assembly. But there are weaknesses. First, the Government has suffered a dramatic loss of support within the Assembly on this very issue and it is well known to have lost much of its support outside the House too. Secondly, by a major tactical error the Government has obliged itself to ‘win’ a referendum and realizes it can only do this by devious means. There is thus a serious risk of the basis of popular consent to Merger being shown to be false....Everyone realizes that the undemocratic features of the Bill are a reflection of the Government’s inability to get a genuine vote in favour of its White Paper proposals.”⁶³ In the interim, on 13 July 1962, a no-confidence motion was launched against the Lee Government by Lee Siew Choh, Marshall and Lim Yew Hock for attempting to rescue itself through a “sell-out” merger. The motion failed.⁶⁴ That the government dared not

⁶⁰ Secret Telegram (No. 270) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 28 May 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 153.

⁶¹ Letter from Lord Selkirk, U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Reginald Maudling, Colonial Office (dated 28 April 1962), CO 1030/1157 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1960-62”, pp. 59-60.

⁶² Telegram (No. 522) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies” (dated 3 November 1962) CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, As quoted in S.J. Ball, “Selkirk in Singapore”, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10:2 (1999), p. 181.

⁶³ Secret letter (SEC/6707) from Philip Moore of Office of U.K. Commissioner Singapore to W.I.J Wallace, Colonial Office (dated 11 July 1962), CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 184-185A.

⁶⁴ Priority Telegram (No. 350) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 14 July 1962), CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 175-76.

call a by-election to fill a seat vacated by the death of a government minister suggests something of their concerns. But the referendum was soon to bring the PAP administration some happiness. Held in September 1962, the referendum saw 71 percent of the population voting in favour of the merger mode being advocated by the PAP government.⁶⁵

The Australian Commission in Singapore commented that the “referendum questions and the 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 the least objectionable of three alternatives.” Perhaps over-optimistically it also noted that “Lee’s ability to cope with extreme Left has also been demonstrated.”⁶⁶

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 news that 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. While Lee, the Federation and the Special Branch continued to push their case for detentions, Selkirk continued to affirm that “There is no important new evidence of subversive activity on which arrests at this juncture could be justified. We could not substantiate a charge that they are planning to use violence. In the absence of specific evidence of subversion the arrests would be construed as an attempt by HMG to stifle legitimate opposition.”

The British, and particularly Lord Selkirk, rejected the demands for arrests not only because there was no pretext for such, but because the arrests and ensuing riots would have adverse effects in Borneo. In September, Selkirk was still expressing opposition 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.”⁶⁷

Selkirk in an October 1962 letter to Sandys, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, played down any political threat to the Singapore administration: “In all this, the Malay motives have remained primarily political. Singapore has in fact been quiet during all this period and there is no immediate threat to internal security. The police and military are probably better prepared today in Singapore than they ever have been in the history of the

⁶⁵ 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.”

⁶⁶ Dee, (ed.) *Australia and the Formation of Malaysia 1961-1966* p. 22. Cablegram to Canberra, 4 September 1962.

⁶⁷ Harper, ‘Lim Chin Siong and the “Singapore Story”’ p. 41, citing a despatch from Lord Selkirk to Duncan Sandys, 8 September 1962.

Colonial empire. I have found that in all my conversations with Federation ministers and officials that while they stress the conspiratorial and subversive aspects of Lim Chin Siong and his colleagues, their real and understandable fear is that the Barisan Sosialis will gain political control in Singapore which will then become a base for undermining the federation and eventually winning political control in Kuala Lumpur. For this reason I have all along been urging the need for a proper assessment of the threat before any action is decided and I am glad to have it agreed at the last I.S.C. Meeting that the paper being prepared by the Federation and Singapore Special Branches should try to do this.”⁶⁸

It was then that Razak, the Malayan Deputy Prime Minister, called at short notice a meeting of the Internal Security Council on 8 September. “The Federation move flowed from the suggestion to the Malaysians in London that internal security measures should be progressed through the Council. So the Malaysians had decided to call a meeting of the Council, with the apparent object of testing Selkirk’s willingness to fall in with their views: if he would not, then they would go over his head to Sandys, whom the Malaysians considered sympathetic to their stand. The Malaysians still considered that actions against the Singapore Communists should be taken by the British before merger and they wanted the Internal Security Council to authorise the immediate arrest of the Barisan Sosialis leaders. They were now armed with a comprehensive report produced by Fenner and Blades. Goh Keng Swee, at least informally, opined that there was no immediate security threat and agreed that the threat was mainly political. “It was a question of making sure that the Opposition did not win the 1964 or any subsequent elections and thus open the way for a constitutional take-over by the Communists. As he put it, there was a long term political threat if the Opposition were left to take advantage of free and fair elections.” In further discussion the Singapore Commissioner of Police said that a paper under preparation would recommend 30 detentions and other restrictions, affecting about 165 persons. It was agreed that the two special Branches would work together on detailing any conspiracy which existed and the people involved.”⁶⁹

However, the U.K. Commission (and Selkirk’s) view was still, strongly, that it would be wrong and dangerous to proceed against the Barisan Sosialis unless and until there was violence to justify such action. The Referendum result had only served to strengthen the Commission’s view, as it indicated that the Communists in Singapore were being contained without repressive action. So why risk upsetting the apple-cart? Further, with the eyes of the U.N. on Singapore, actions at this stage against Opposition leaders would serve to justify the charges that the Tengku and Lee were acting as Imperialist stooges of the British in setting up Malaysia. The Commission considered that, as things stood, locking up the Barisan Sosialis leaders offered no long-term solutions for Singapore’s or Malaysia’s problems. The C.R.O./High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, was taking a rather different line, that the Federation would take action against the Barisan Sosialis (and other groups including

⁶⁸ Secret memorandum (No. 244) from Lord Selkirk, United Kingdom Commissioner in Singapore to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 5 October 1962), NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 26-28 (electronic pp. 217-19).

⁶⁹ Secret Telegram (No. 455) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 9 September 1962) CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp. 131-33.

Nanyang University) after merger anyway, so why not do it now and let the British bear the odium? If it were left to the Malays after merger it would lead to communal troubles and would imperil the whole basis of Malaysia. The Singapore Commission, according to Moore, had no desire to shirk its responsibilities, and would be delighted to take action if the Barisan Sosialis resorted to violence, but just was not convinced that action was yet necessary or desirable.”⁷⁰

The Australian diplomatic report on the situation continued: “With regard to the Singapore Government’s position, Moore said that Lee Kuan Yew had indicated his concurrence to action against the Barisan Social leaders now that he was in a strong position after the referendum. However, he had suggested that action should at first be confined to exiling or ‘rusticating’ non-Singapore citizens in the Federation. This would include Woodhull, Fong Swee Suan and others, but not Lim Chin Siong. The Malaysians would not have this and wanted Lim to be the first target. Eventually Lee had assented to this, but even so his real position and intentions were not clear. He had gone off to London leaving Mr Toh (Chin Chye) to attend the Internal Security Council in his place, although Toh was not known to share his views on the arrests. Moore said that he had asked Toh at the airport on Lee’s departure what he had thought of the police paper on actions against Barisan Sosialis leaders, and Toh said that he had seen the paper but the whole idea was ‘rubbish’ and ‘bloody nonsense.’ (Moore asked that this information be treated with care.) But whether he could sustain his attitude in the Internal Security Council with Goh Keng Swee present was not certain.”⁷¹

At the same meeting, on the post-merger situation of Mr Lee, Mr Moore opined that “The Tengku was known to be casting around for a new Prime Minister for Singapore, but apparently had been convinced that his favourite, Lim Yew Hock, was now a spent force. Lee appeared to have several illusions about the degree of popularity he enjoyed with the Tengku; in fact the Tengku did not like or trust him very much.”⁷²

The Singapore Internal Security Council met in Kuala Lumpur on 9 October 1962 (Selkirk as chair, Razak, Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee, Ong Pang Boon, Harris, Radford). Its main decision was to ban the conference proposed by SATU, the Leftist trade union group. This ban was proposed by Lee and initially Selkirk and Razak did not support it, saying Singapore could do this itself. But Lee insisted on Malayan and British support for his continuing actions claiming that “his programme of harassment would only be effective if the Malaysian government was associated with the decision.”⁷³ The ISC also agreed to ban trade union and university papers in order to minimize the publicity Barisan could assign to the

⁷⁰ Secret Memorandum (No. 1473) from W. Flanagan, First Secretary, Australian Commission Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 September 1962) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11 pp. 204-07.

⁷¹ Secret Memorandum (No. 1473) from W. Flanagan, First Secretary, Australian Commission Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 September 1962) NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11 pp. 204-07.

⁷² Ibid. p. 204.

⁷³ Memorandum (No. 1027) from T.K. Critchley, Australian Higher Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 12 October 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 22-23 (electronic pp. 222-23).

SATU conference ban. Apparently mainstream media had responded positively to a government request to reduce publicity given to Barisan. During the meeting Razak restated his stand that the federation could not accept an association with Singapore unless action was taken against the communists beforehand. Selkirk meanwhile continued to argue that the case for arresting people had still to be proved.⁷⁴ Selkirk averred that “This meeting has shown even more clearly that Lee intend in effect to make the I.S.C. primarily responsible for internal security between now and merger.”⁷⁵ Selkirk recognised that Lee Kuan Yew was the only viable political force in Singapore at this time and urged the Tunku to desist with trying to have the Barisan members arrested, and to desist in trying to discard Lee Kuan Yew and promote Lim Yew Hock. He wished to work in the months before Malaysia for effective alliance between the two prime ministers.

At this time, the Tunku was seeking any forces other than Lee to work with in Singapore, especially after his Moscow visit, and was backing Lim Yew Hock’s Singapore People’s Alliance (SPA). The British thought that a PAP –SPA battle would give more votes to Ong Eng Guan’s UPP or the Barisan Sosialis under new leaders. The British were thus urging a PAP-SPA agreement.

7. The First Attempt: A Failed Cold Store (December 1962)

The last months of 1962 saw many of the concerns of all sides sharpen. The Barisan Sosialis had adopted a policy of constitutional struggle and were apparently not going to be goaded into violence. This policy, repeated in Lim Chin Siong’s report to the party of 14 October, recognised that the merger would be “forced through” and that the party should now concentrate on marshalling “left-wing, anti-colonial forces” in Malaysia against the “British-Alliance” axis in order to gain control of the central parliament by constitutional means. They were thereby changing their focus to a pan-Malayan struggle, aiming to create a “united front” with the “progressive” forces of Singapore and the socialist and anti-colonialist forces of Malays and the Borneo territories. They proposed to pursue a “constitutional and democratic” road to power.⁷⁶ The Left indeed kept very quiet. The banning of the SATU conference had induced only quiet protests. There were no political rallies for the first anniversary of Barisan Sosialis, and Government Chinese Secondary IV examinations passed without any sign of trouble. In short, the Barisan was going out of its way to not give the Government any excuse for oppressive action.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Memorandum (No. 1027) from T.K. Critchley, Australian Higher Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 12 October 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 22-23 (electronic pp. 222-23).

⁷⁵ Secret Telegram from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 10 Oct 1962) CO 1030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962”, pp 78-80.

⁷⁶ Confidential memorandum (No. 2035) from W.K. Flanagan, First Secretary, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 24 October 1962). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 227-31.

⁷⁷ Secret memorandum (No. 2376) from W.K. Flanagan, First Secretary, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 1 December 1962). NAA 3024/2/1 “Singapore: Political – General,” Part 11, pp. 236-38.

Lee Kuan Yew also spelled out his plans to Philip Moore after the latter's return to Singapore in November 1962. He knew that his relations with the Tunku had deteriorated, he was concerned about Tan Siew Sin building up the M.C.A. in Singapore and he was concerned that the Tunku was trying to install Lim Yew Hock to run Singapore. He also spoke of his proposed electoral plans following the signing of the Malaysia Treaty in London, possibly in February, with elections for 15 Singapore representatives to Malaysian parliament to be held before the creation of Malaysia. "Lee also mentioned in strict confidence that once these elections had been held, he would probably resign as Prime Minister and hand over to Goh Keng Swee. This would achieve two objects. First he would be able, as Secretary-General of the P.A.P., to concentrate on recovering the lost ground in the trade union movement, Secondly he would be absolved of any personal responsibility for the arrest!"⁷⁸

Lee Kuan Yew had apparently advised Radford of the British Commission that any security action should be "as little as possible, as late as possible." The British subsequently reported to London of Lee Kuan Yew as follows: "1) He is content to let the British delay action until the coming Spring; 2) He cannot be relied upon to give any support when the action is taken (in spite of his former undertaking to state publicly that the action was regrettable but necessary); 3) He will do what he sees best for his own interests at that time." Apparently at this time Lee Kuan Yew was still pursuing his proposal for "rustification" despite it having been rejected by the Federation.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, following discussions within the Internal Security Council meeting at Kuala Lumpur on 9 October 1962, the Singapore government submitted to the ISC on 25 October 1962 a proposal entitled "Action against Communist United Front Publications" seeking the refusal of renewal of licenses of 10 Singapore publications.⁸⁰ This was proposed on the claim that they had urged communalism in politics and education and exploited racial feeling.⁸¹ The Singapore government wished the action to be presented publicly as action decided or supported by the three governments of the ISC.⁸²

All sides were also closely watching Sarawak where Sarawak Communist Organisation (S.C.O.) leaders had been arrested in December 1962, by Roy Henry of the Sarawak Special Branch.⁸³

It was during the contemplation of these many dilemmas that serendipity again came to the rescue, changing all the calculations. In August 1962, elections had been held in Brunei,

⁷⁸ Secret Memorandum Moore to Selkirk (Dated November 1962), CO 1030/1158 "Singapore Internal Security Council 1962", Document 33.

⁷⁹ Secret memorandum (No. 2158) from W.K. Flanagan, First Secretary, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 7 November 1962). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 233-35.

⁸⁰ The publications involved were: *Suara Kesatuan* (both versions), *Political Science*, *University Tribune*, *Wartawan* (both versions), *Fajar*, *Bebas*, *Varsity Youth*, *Dramatic Study*, *Social Knowledge* and *Pelopon*.

⁸¹ "Action Against Communist United Front Publications [ISC No. (S) (62) (6)], CO 1030/1162, "Internal Security Council, Singapore: Papers and Notices 1960-62", pp. 22-67.

⁸² Letter from U.K. Commissioner to Singapore to Internal Security Council (dated 1 November 1962), CO 1030/1162, "Internal Security Council, Singapore: Papers and Notices 1960-62", p. 21.

⁸³ See Vernon L Porritt, *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Sarawak 1940-1990*, Melbourne, Monash University Press, 2004, p. 85.

and the Leftist Partai Ra'ayat Brunei (PRB), led by Sheikh Azahari bin Sheikh Mahmud, who supported a Kalimantan Utara federation,⁸⁴ 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 Utara proposal at the United Nations.⁸⁵ 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 [Partai Raayat Brunei] 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.⁸⁶

Almost as soon as the revolt occurred, the Barisan Sosialis and Partai Rakyat, as well as the CPM came out with messages of support. A Barisan Sosialis statement reported in the press described the revolt in Brunei as "A popular nationalist movement for national independence and freedom from British Colonial domination," and continued, "The revolt is a measure of the extent of the people's feelings against the Malaysia plan which is designed to perpetuate British Colonial domination." It noted that the Singapore and Malayan Federation governments would stand condemned if they did not now oppose the British.⁸⁷ Meanwhile the Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in South East Asia reported in respect of events in Brunei that, "Singapore is quiet but we are watching position closely and have noted that Azahari saw Lim Chin Siong the day before he left for Manila."⁸⁸

Rallies were also held in Singapore.⁸⁹ But the Brunei revolt was a direct 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 Sosialis was planning a similar uprising, a charge dismissed by the Barisan as a "pack of lies."⁹⁰ Dennis Bloodworth repeats accounts of Azahari and Lin Chin Siong

⁸⁴ 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.

⁸⁵ Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi*, p. 280-81

⁸⁶ Greg Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965* C. Hurst, London, 1998. p. 280.

⁸⁷ Telegram (No. 569) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 10 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62", p. 135.

⁸⁸ Secret Telegram (No. 43) from Commissioner General for the United Kingdom in South East Asia to Colonial and Foreign Offices (dated 9 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62", p. 139.

⁸⁹ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 256.

⁹⁰ Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Left-wing Movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s", pp. 647-48.

discussing the sale of weapons over lunch in Singapore,⁹¹ and Richard Clutterbuck claims that the Brunei revolt “was undoubtedly encouraged if not actually sponsored by Indonesia.”⁹² 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.”⁹³ But regardless of the origins and connections of the Brunei revolt, it was the spark needed for 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.⁹⁴

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 Malaysians were anxious to have Lim Chin Siong arrested, seeking an ISC meeting on 11 December, but with Selkirk absent in Brunei, the British refused the request. His deputy Philip Moore noted that he had spoken to Lee Kun Yew who called the events in Brunei, the information on the recent contacts between Lim Chin Siong and Azahari and the Barisan Sosialis statement giving support to the revolutionaries in Brunei, “a Heaven-sent opportunity of justifying action against them.” Lee was said at this time to be “thinking in terms of relatively few detentions – about thirty or forty – and various restrictions on the smaller fry.”⁹⁵

By mid-December, Sandys in London had ordered Selkirk to take advantage of the Barisan Sosialis’ declaration of support for the Indonesian-sponsored insurrection in Brunei.⁹⁶ Thus, despite his earlier objections to British approval for mass arrests in Singapore, Selkirk now had to officially state their desirability, repeating the mantra that “the insurrection in Brunei provides the best possible background against which to take this action.” He concluded that “This is the best moment to do it... The emergency justifies a substantial number of arrests of persons who in one way or another constitute a danger to public safety.”⁹⁷ 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. At the same time, as a precaution, London was asking, given the dispatch of three major army units and two Commando units to Brunei and their relative weakness in Singapore, whether their High Commissions in Canberra and Wellington

⁹¹ Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, p. 271.

⁹² Clutterbuck

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

⁹⁴ 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.

⁹⁵ Top Secret Telegram (No. 572) from Moore for U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 10 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 133.

⁹⁶ See CO 1030/1364 UKC—Fortnightly summary No 21, 7th to 21st December 1962. As quoted in S.J. Ball, “Selkirk in Singapore”, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10:2 (1999), p. 182.

⁹⁷ Top Secret Telegram (No. 546) from Secretary of State for the Colonies. to U.K. Commissioner Singapore (dated 12 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 113.

would enquire of the Australian and New Zealand governments if their forces in the Commonwealth Brigade could be employed if necessary.⁹⁸ “We are now considering with Malayan and Singapore Governments in Internal Security Council early action (as a prophylactic measures) against suspected Communist fellow travellers (possibly including some parliamentarians) in Singapore in light among other things of Barisan Sosialis declared support for Azahari’s rebellion.”⁹⁹ However, the Australian Government responded that “Australia cannot put itself in a position of giving prior consent in principle to the use of Australian troops in support of the civil power in a civil disturbance.”¹⁰⁰ The New Zealanders adopted a similar attitude.¹⁰¹

Not everything was to go smoothly in the proposed detention operation. According to Dr Ismail, on 10 December, following the Brunei revolt, he had asked for an emergency meeting of the ISC. “He felt that the Council was justified in taking repressive measures against the communists in Singapore because of their unconstitutional involvement in Brunei.” A meeting was arranged for 13 December and Goh Keng Swee went secretly to Kuala Lumpur on 12 December to discuss with Ismail what could be done at the meeting. “Goh told Ismail that the Singapore Government was prepared to make mass arrests but considered that the action should be Pan-Malaysian and related to Malaysian security and defence. He pointed out that Sarawak was already making a series of arrests and all that was necessary would be for the Federation to join with Singapore in joint action against communist subversives. No suggestion was made that the Federation should accept responsibility for the policy and Ismail had no hesitation in agreeing to it.”¹⁰²

The 13 December meeting was held in great secrecy in Changi and Lee Kuan Yew indicated that he intended to make the most of Malayan and British anxiety for early action. He thus demanded that the Federation not only make arrests at the same time as Singapore, but on the same scale. He also stated that, in order to limit criticism in the Assembly he would have to arrest Singapore Assembly members and the Federation should also take similar action in arresting some of its own trouble-making parliamentarians. Lee also insisted that the Federation should take full responsibility for initiating the policy. He produced a draft public statement which he required Razak to make in the Federal Parliament on Monday 17 December, the day after the planned arrests. This draft placed responsibility for the

⁹⁸ Top Secret Telegram (No. 1558) from Commonwealth Relations Office U.K. Commissioner Singapore to British High Commissions in Canberra and Wellington (dated 11 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 122.

⁹⁹ Top Secret Telegram from the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canberra (dated 13 December 1962)

¹⁰⁰ Secret memo “Use of Australian Troops in Singapore for Internal Security”, prepared by Prime Minister’s Department, Canberra, dated 27 December 1962. NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 71 (electronic page 181).

¹⁰¹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 780) from Ministry of External Affairs Wellington to New Zealand High Commission, Canberra, “Internal Security Singapore”, NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 43-44 (electronic page 209-10)..

¹⁰² Top Secret memorandum (No. 1303) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 21 December 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 61-66 (electronic pp. 186-89).

repressive measures squarely on the Federation. Lee agreed to say that the arrests were “regrettable but unavoidable.”¹⁰³

Selkirk reported on the 13 December ISC meeting in Changi noting that Ismail had advised that he had asked for the meeting to arrange for the arrests of the Communists in Singapore as a precondition for Malaysia. Lee Kuan Yew agreed that action must be taken and that “the perfect opportunity had been presented by the Brunei revolt.” Selkirk advised that the British had not previously been convinced of the need for a large number of arrests, but “new evidence which had been produced about the extent of communist control of Barisan Socialis”¹⁰⁴ had convinced them of the need for action provided it was taken quickly and all three governments accepted joint responsibility. Interestingly, Lee Kuan Yew was not able to confirm to Selkirk that members of his Cabinet shared his views. Lee also stated that it was necessary to present this as the arrest of anti-nationalists who had threatened the security of Malaysia. He stated that would be essential for the Federation Government to take the initiative publicly and to make it clear that they had pressed for the action. Selkirk was concerned that if this was presented as a threat to Malaysia, this “might suggest that the action was political rather than security.” It was agreed that about 180 persons would be detained as assessed by Singapore Special Branch in collaboration with the Federation Special Branch. The Federation agreed to simultaneously arrests a substantial number of persons. It was also agreed that the action would commence at 02.00 hours on Sunday 16th December.¹⁰⁵

Ismail advised that as the Federation had been arresting people for some time, it could not arrest the same number as Singapore who had arrested no one thus far. The matter of the arrest of Assemblymen had to be referred to the Tunku. Ismail agreed that the Federation should take full responsibility for the arrests including the provision that Razak would make a statement in Parliament. On the morning of 14 December, Ismail returned to Kuala Lumpur and reported to the Tunku, who apparently accepted the idea of arresting the Parliamentarians. Selkirk travelled to Kuala Lumpur on Saturday 15 December unaware that a crisis was brewing. That same day Malayan Special Branch produced for the Tunku dossiers on four Socialist Front Assemblymen – Boestaman, V. David, Lim Kean Siew and Ng Ann Teck. Fenner suggested that the case against Boestaman was good, that against David less convincing and those against the other two basically non-existent. The Tunku advised that he had no intention of arresting Parliamentarians against whom there was no proper evidence.

¹⁰³ Top Secret memorandum (No. 1303) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 21 December 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, pp. 61-66 (electronic pp. 186-89).

¹⁰⁴ This “new evidence” is nowhere in evidence or even referred specifically to in any of the available British papers. It was possibly invented to validate the new British policy.

¹⁰⁵ Top Secret Telegram (No. 582) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 14 December 1962 [British time]), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 96-99.

Lee Kuan Yew had secretly gone to Kuala Lumpur on Saturday 15 December and the parties all met in the Prime Minister's Office in Brockman Road at 10 pm on that evening, prior to the planned start of the arrest at 2 a.m. on Sunday morning. Dr Goh Keng Swee advised Lee that the federation now refused to arrest the Federation parliamentarians. Lee affirmed that the whole Singapore operation would be cancelled if the Federation Assemblymen were not arrested, rejecting a more limited scale of arrests. The British tried to convince Lee or the Malaysians, but Landsdowne was unsuccessful and Selkirk urged trying to address the Tunku on the issue. He was at this time holding a party next door, but refused to agree to arrests without strong cases. The British then accused Fenner of obstructing the arrests and demanded another meeting with the Tunku. This 3 a.m. request for a meeting was refused by the Tunku who later told Critchley that he "was convinced that Lee was trying to use him to justify the arrest of the Singapore opposition."¹⁰⁶ The Federation decided to go ahead with its arrests and 50 people including nine Socialist Front leaders were arrested in Malaya on Sunday 16 December.¹⁰⁷ The British had no option but to report home: OPERATION COLDSTORE: Operation did not (repeat not) take place"¹⁰⁸

The anger which these events induced among the Malaysians resulted in the Tunku drafting a letter withdrawing Ismail from the Singapore Internal Security Council. They were angry about the reversal of the high moral tone which Selkirk and the British had previously invoked when discussing the need for sufficient evidence for arrests. "As far as Singapore was concerned they considered that at best Lee Kuan Yew had tried to use them to arrest his opposition. At worst, they regarded the project as a dastardly plot by Lee to besmirch the Malaysian leaders so that his political position against them would be improved with the advent of Malaysia."¹⁰⁹

The United Kingdom High Commissioner Sir Geofroy Tory endeavoured "to persuade the Tunku that his letter withdrawing Ismail from the Singapore Internal Security Council should be withheld so that an attempt might be made to patch up the rift between the Governments and mount a security operation in Singapore.... Following discussions between British representatives and Lee Kuan Yew, Tory wrote to the Federation Government on January 17th suggesting that the Internal Security Council could now be reconvened in the near future to approve action against communist subversion in Singapore."¹¹⁰ Tory suggested

¹⁰⁶ Top Secret memorandum (No. 1303) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 21 December 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 "Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security", pp. 61-66 (electronic pp. 186-89).

¹⁰⁷ Details can be seen in *The Straits Times* 17 December 1962, p. 1. The arrestees are listed in Appendix 2 of this paper.

¹⁰⁸ Top Secret Telegram (No. 587) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 15 December 1962 [British time]), CO 1030/1160, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62", p. 80.

¹⁰⁹ Top Secret memorandum (No. 1303) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 21 December 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 "Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security", pp. 61-66 (electronic pp. 186-89).

¹¹⁰ Top Secret memorandum (No. 70) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 22 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 "Additional

a letter for presentation to the public which emphasised Malaysia and Brunei. The Australian High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Tom Critchley, who reported this, noted “It is worth noting that the emphasis in the draft statement on Malaysia and the Brunei revolt meets the British wish to present the policy to their Parliament and public in this light. Emphasis on Malaysia and Brunei also suits Lee Kuan Yew. I assume he is motivated primarily by the desire for political survival and finds himself in the cleft stick of having to go along with a policy that could be used against him in order to ensure merger without which he can have little hope for the future. He is clearly anxious to dissociate himself as much as possible from the policy and since he suspects that in the long run he will be opposed politically to the Alliance leaders, it suits him to put as much blame as possible of the Federation leaders.... Lees’ personal concerns are reflected in the statement. The reference to ‘defence’ for example was included at the request of Lee who wants Razak implicated in the action as the Federation’s representative on the Council. References to the previous Federation action and the ‘31st August’ are likewise intended to put the blame on the Federation.”¹¹¹

On 18 December Selkirk reported Lee as expressing his attitude to be one of “cold resignation”, and unwillingness to take any further steps unless the Federation was willing to arrest its Parliamentarians. Lee Kuan Yew gave his version of the events in a letter to Selkirk on 20 December, headed “Temporarily Secret” with the implicit threat that it could subsequently be made public.¹¹²

Prior to Lee’s departure from Singapore to play golf in the Cameron Highlands on 20 December, Selkirk spoke with him and ascertained that he considered a large-scale operation now untenable because of the refusal of the Malaysians to arrest their own Parliamentarians, but that action should still be taken against Communists in Singapore and that a smaller operation of perhaps 70 arrests with 28 persons to be “rusticated” to the Federation might be possible.¹¹³ Lee Kuan Yew went to Kuala Lumpur on 20 December 1962 with Norodom Sihanouk, on his way to the Cameron Highlands and “suggested to Razak reconsideration of a modified programme of arrests excluding Assemblymen. Ismail has told Razak that he is no longer prepared to support the original plan of operation which provided for the Federation taking full public responsibility for initiating the policy.”¹¹⁴

At the end of December, Selkirk wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies noting “I still think it would be wise to make arrests of Communists in Singapore as soon as

assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 80 (electronic page 172).

¹¹¹ Top Secret memorandum (No. 70) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 22 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 79 (electronic page 173).

¹¹² Top secret letter from Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore to Selkirk, United Kingdom Commissioner, Singapore (Dated 20 December 1962), CO1030/1160, pp. 23-25.

¹¹³ Top Secret Telegram (No. 596) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 20 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 26-27

¹¹⁴ Top Secret Cablegram (No. I. 32308) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Minister and Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 22 December 1962). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 67 (electronic page 185).

possible” and urged a smaller operation with perhaps 70 arrests. He set down three rationales: 1) The Relations between the Federation and Singapore were so poor, there was a chance that Malaysia would not take Singapore into Malaysia. 2) He was not happy about communist United Front people continuing to work in Singapore in the light of the Indonesian activities in Borneo. 3) The Brunei revolt still provided a good occasion to make the arrests, even though most of the shooting has stopped.¹¹⁵ Selkirk recognised that “arrests in Singapore at this time will be represented by Indonesia and other countries, and even by some people in the U.K., as further evidence that Malaysia is being imposed by the British, but he believed that it would be better to ride this criticism than to run the risk of the Tunku dropping Singapore from Malaysia.

The Tunku and Razak were also anxious that “the opportunity offered by Brunei Emergency was now slipping away”, but Lee Kuan Yew was busy on holidays in the Cameron Highlands. The Tunku said that he would take Brunei and the Borneo territories into Malaysia and leave Singapore out, but Tory advised “that this would not be acceptable to Her Majesty’s Government.” Tory opined to London that “I am even more certain than previously that Tunku will not accept Singapore until action has been taken against leading Communists there.... Tunku sees clearly that present circumstances in relations to Brunei offer Her Majesty’s Government the best opportunity they are ever likely to get to justify participation in internal security action in Singapore and he is almost maddened by the thought of Lee Kuan Yew playing golf in the Camerons while the opportunity slips.”¹¹⁶

Meanwhile in Singapore Goh Keng Swee was telling Philip Moore that there was no need for the Singapore government to do anything since the British would be forced by the Tunku to take the action on their own as a condition of the Federation’s final signature on the Malaysia agreement. Moore responded advising that no arrests would take place without the signatures of all three governments.¹¹⁷

8. Operation Cold Store (February 1963)

In January 1963, the Tunku expressed further concerns about the inclusion in the list of arrestees the Barisan Sosialis Assemblymen and other persons whom Lee Kuan Yew had personally added to the Special Branch list. “The Malaysians were extremely critical of Lee’s action in extending the list. According to the Federation Special Branch only two of the Singapore Assemblymen were on the original Special Branch list. Lee not only added a couple more but also included some members of Mr David Marshall’s and Ong Eng Guan’s parties over the protestations of the Singapore Special Branch. These additions helped to

¹¹⁵ Top Secret Telegram (No. 603) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 28 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 26-27.

¹¹⁶ Secret Telegram (No. 603) from U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 28 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 29-30.

¹¹⁷ Top Secret Telegram (No. 603) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 28 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 26-27.

convince the Malaysians that Lee wanted to use them to arrest his opposition.”¹¹⁸ Critchley continued his protestations on behalf of the Federation: “Apart from the fact that Lee has destroyed his standing with the Malaysians, I am worried about the effects of the fiasco on Malaysia. I would again sound the warning that it could be a mistake to expect the Federation to accept merger with Singapore unless the British and Singaporeans start action shortly to clear up the internal security problems of Singapore.”¹¹⁹

Lee Kuan Yew had by this time come to accept that “this was not the occasion for the action to be British inspired and that the British should stay in the background.” However, he insisted “that Razak should make the initial statement and ..that the action in Singapore should appear to have been dictated by the Federation.”¹²⁰ Lee was particularly worried that, after the arrests were made, the Tunku would decide either to not go through with Malaysia or to leave out Singapore, either because Singapore would no longer be a threat or the Tunku losing his nerve because of Indonesia’s threats.¹²¹

Following a three-day visit by Lee Kuan Yew to Kuala Lumpur in mid-January 1963, there were statements of consolation from both sides. On the issue of the potential arrests, the British considered that “things seemed to be moving toward a decision to proceed with the arrests in Singapore.” The Australian commissioner reported: “Lee’s position was now that the arrests must be given a Malaysian ‘presentation’, in the light of the Brunei revolt and its repercussions. He himself was not strong enough politically to bear a primary share of the responsibility. (He had previously used the same argument to try to shift the main onus on to the British.). Lee would give the move his full support provided that the main initiative should appear to come from the Federation, in anticipation of Malaysia. Lee also wanted the Internal Security Council to meet in Kuala Lumpur when the final decision was taken, with Razak attending.

To meet Lee’s position the British had prepared a new draft statement for the Internal Security Council, which had been generally agreed to by Lee and now awaited Kuala Lumpur’s approval. The issue presented the Malaysians with a certain difficulty as they were insisting on the Singapore arrests (as vital to Malaysia’s security), but were not necessarily wanting to shoulder the main responsibility, nor did they trust Lee to back them up in the last resort. An added complication was that Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were still really ‘not talking’ on the issue, and the British were having to act as go-betweens. Meanwhile, the

¹¹⁸ Top Secret memorandum (unnumbered) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 76 (electronic page 176).

¹¹⁹ Top Secret memorandum (unnumbered) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 76 (electronic page 176).

¹²⁰ Top Secret memorandum (unnumbered) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 76 (electronic page 176).

¹²¹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 13) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 5 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 7.

‘short list’ (70-100) was being gone over again by the two Special Branches. It was still not certain whether the four Parliamentarians on it would be included; their removal could possibly ease the Government’s problems in the Legislative Assembly. Moore’s present estimate was that the arrests would come off, although Lee did not really seem to want them at this stage.”¹²² The Tunku had apparently agreed in principle with the arrests but refused to take action against Boestaman, Lim Ken Siew, V. David and Ng Ann Tek, “not because they were Assemblymen but because there was no well-documented case against them.” Apparently Selkirk and Moore thought that the evidence against Lim Ken Siew was sufficient to warrant his arrest, but Fenner considered the evidence unconvincing. It appears that the British had recently been convinced of the dangers of subversion in Singapore through a joint paper by the two special branches.¹²³

The arrangements grew more formal with the Federation agreeing on 18 January that the agreed arrests be made (except for the U.P.P. members) and that Lim Chin Siong be offered by Lee Kuan Yew the opportunity to leave Singapore/Malaya after his arrest.¹²⁴ This suggestion had been made by Lee to the Tunku and Razak during his mid-January visit to Kuala Lumpur. When Moore in Singapore queried Lee as to why he wished that Lim Chin Siong be offered passage to Indonesia together with money, he avowed that it would be “in accordance with Chinese custom towards old friends who become vanquished enemies.”¹²⁵ Moore opined though that “Lee has always been very reluctant to have Lim Chin Siong detained in Singapore, largely I think because he has cold feet about Lim becoming a popular martyr and serving as a focus of Chinese-speaking agitation and political opposition. He has always greatly feared Lim’s popularity with the masses.”¹²⁶ Both the British and the Malaysians were concerned that Lee would allow Lim to flee prior to the operation, an eventuality which did not come to pass. Likewise unrealized was the planned arrest of Boestaman during a visit to Singapore at the end of January.¹²⁷

Lee Kuan Yew wanted the operation held before the Chinese New Year celebrations so that the subsequent festival would dampen any adverse reaction. The date of 2 February was decided upon, with the approving ISC meeting to be held the night before the operation.

¹²² Secret Memorandum (No. 196) from W.K. Flanagan, Acting Commissioner, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 23 January 1963). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 247-49.

¹²³ Top Secret memorandum (unnumbered) from Tom Critchley, Australian High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 8 January 1963). NAA TS 682/22/5/1 “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security”, p. 77 (electronic page 175).

¹²⁴ Top Secret letter from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Geofroy Tory (dated 28 January 1963). CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.72; and Top Secret letter from Dr Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman to Geofroy Tory (dated 29 January 1963). CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.73.

¹²⁵ Top Secret Telegram (No. 53) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 28 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 54.

¹²⁶ Top Secret Telegram (No. 51) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 24 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 50.

¹²⁷ Top Secret Telegram (No. 51) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 24 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 50.

Lee suggested that he not be present at the ISC meeting, but was subsequently convinced by Moore to drop this idea.¹²⁸ But the Tunku was still very leery about the Singapore side. The Federation leaders stressed to Tory that if the planned operation failed, the Federation Government would try to secure Malaysia without Singapore. Lee meanwhile continued to stress to Moore in Singapore that he had to have the three U.P.P. arrests and that, if they did not fit the proposed ISC statement which described the detainees as “known to the security organizations of the Governments represented on the Council to be the most deeply implicated in the United Front,” then the I.S.C. statement need to be changed to “salve the British conscience.”¹²⁹

In late January, the Tunku advised Britain that Indonesians troops would infiltrate British Borneo with about 2,000-3,000 troops in the next two to three days. The British made arrangements placing artillery regiments, troop battalions and three squadrons of “V” bombers on alert. The list of arrangements concluded: “The problem of providing for Borneo complicated by need to secure Singapore and Selkirk’s idea of bringing forces from I.S. duties there.”¹³⁰ Phoenix Park discussed these issues on 24-25 January, with some sensationalist estimates suggesting infiltration of 30,000 Indonesian troops into Borneo within 30 days. But most assessments, including the J.I.C. (F.E.) assessment, was that only small parties could be infiltrated within a month and that Indonesian military intervention was not expected in the near-term.¹³¹ Were these perceptions key in the actions soon to be taken in Singapore?

By 29 January, the Tunku had advised that the Federation was prepared to go ahead with the operation with the exception of the three U.P.P. members (although they were somewhat flexible on this issue), and demanding that Lim Chin Siong be first arrested before being given the option to leave. The over-riding condition was that “all three governments will accept equal responsibility for the actions in both public and private.”¹³² The British were also firmly locked in, with the Secretary of State for the Colonies advising on 30 January that he “is not (repeat not) prepared to allow operation, and thus Malaysia, to founder on pretext of refusal to meet Lee and Tunku on Serials C4, C5 and C6 [the U.P.P. members].”¹³³

¹²⁸ Top Secret Telegram (No. 46) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 21 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 39.

¹²⁹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 53) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 28 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 54.

¹³⁰ Top Secret Cablegram (No. 100) from Department of External Affairs, Canberra to Australian Embassy, Jakarta (dated 28 January 1963). NAA A4359 221/6/2B “[Jakarta] - Proposed merger of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei - The Grand Design,” p. 2 (electronic p. 23).

¹³¹ Top Secret Cablegram (I.2532) from Australian Commission, Singapore to Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 29 January 1963). NAA A4359 221/6/2B “[Jakarta] - Proposed merger of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo, Sarawak, Brunei - The Grand Design,” pp. 4-5 (electronic pp. 20-21).

¹³² Secret Telegram (No. 133) from U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 29 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 58.

¹³³ Top Secret Telegram (No. 63) from U.K. Secretary of State for the Colonies to U.K. Commissioner Singapore. (dated 30 January 1963), CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.77. .

On the last day of January 1963, the Tunku wrote to the U.K. High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, withdrawing his objections to the arrest of the U.P.P. members and formally resuming their representation on the Internal Security Council, concluding the letter with the simple threat: “I must also reiterate that, in the event of the operation against the communists and their sympathizers in Singapore not taking place as planned, my government would feel compelled to abandon the proposed merger with Singapore and to make a public statement to this effect.”¹³⁴

Lee Kuan Yew was also active on this day, writing to the U.K. Commissioner in Singapore advising that the Singapore Government was prepared to agree to the Federation returning to the I.S.C., to agree that the six Legislative Assembly members in Singapore not be arrested (“the situation is now different and action against them should be deferred”), asserting the absolute need to arrest the three U.P.P. members,¹³⁵ to issue a statement in terms of the agreed draft, to agree that no other statements be made, and to agree that all Governments accept equal responsibility for action taken.¹³⁶ He also set down, in a separate letter, a list of “29 persons agreed between the security authorities of Singapore and Malaya” to be “immediately rusticated in the Federation if and when they are arrested in Singapore.”¹³⁷ See Appendix 3 for this listing.

But even by 29 January, Lee had not finally specified who in the Special Branch listing -- ISC Paper No. (S) (63)¹³⁸ -- he was proposing be arrested. At this date, the tentative list included the 100 in Category A (Hard-core organizers of the Communist Conspiracy), excluding the 6 Singapore Assemblymen, 32 in Category B (Leading Collaborators in the Communist Conspiracy) and seven in category C (Collaborators in the Communist Conspiracy), including the three U.P.P. members, making 133 proposed detainees.¹³⁹ The intense opposition which Selkirk felt for the inclusion of the U.P.P. members in the list of proposed detainees was detailed in a telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

“Lee in effect admitted that the object of the U.P.P. arrests was to strengthen his own chances of political survival. He tried to suggest that there was a danger that the U.P.P. might become a place of refuge for those communists or near communists who decided not to remain with Barisan Socialis. The Director of Special Branch admitted however that he had been directed specifically by the Prime Minister to select several members of the U.P.P. for arrest and that it would never have occurred to Special Branch to propose these names for

¹³⁴ Top Secret Telegram (No. 149) from U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to U.K. Commissioner Singapore. (dated 31 January 1963), CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.85.

¹³⁵ The UPP members targeted were C4 Yuen Puay Koon, C5 Tay Thiam Meng and C6 Na Ho. See Top Secret Telegram (No. 57) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 29 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 64.

¹³⁶ Top Secret Letter from Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to U.K. Commissioner in Singapore [dated 31 January 1963] CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.84.

¹³⁷ Top Secret Letter from Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to U.K. Commissioner in Singapore [dated 31 January 1963] CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.85.

¹³⁸ The Special Branch list of potential detainees (of unspecified date) can be found at CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council Singapore (1963-65)”, pp. 142- 230.

¹³⁹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 56) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 29 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 “Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65”, document 62.

arrest. It is clear therefore that Lee's purpose is to bring home to all who might entertain the idea of making political capital out of the arrests that they themselves might not be safe from arrest... The essence of the objection to these arrests is therefore that they are not to protect security but to serve notice to Ong Eng Guan to behave himself and to warn off those who might view his party as the next best vehicle for wresting power from Lee Kuan Yew.....It is apparent that there is no security justification for this."¹⁴⁰

Negotiations over the appropriate arrestees continued right up the day of the arrests. Lee Kuan Yew refused to budge on the issue of the arrest of the three U.P.P. members and said that if Britain voted against the arrest of the three, he would abstain on the remaining 169, knowing the effects that such a threat would have. The Federation was convinced that the British were stalling¹⁴¹ and also advised that they would abandon merger if the operation did not proceed.¹⁴² The British thus had to fold and Selkirk reported to London: "In these circumstances, I had no alternative but to agree that we would vote for the arrest of the three U.P.P. members. We are therefore flying to Kuala Lumpur for an I.S.C. meeting at which it is intended that the 169 arrests will be unanimously approved."¹⁴³

On 1 February, Selkirk received a letter from the Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew informing him that "With regard to paragraph 2 (ii), may I state for the record that I have been informed by the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya that his Government is also of the view that the persons classified in serials 4, 5 and 6 of Category C should be included in the action."¹⁴⁴

On the night of Friday, 1 February 1963, the Internal Security Council met in Kuala Lumpur at 23.00 hours. At this meeting, the Council approved the arrest of 169 persons, i.e. all persons in ISC Paper (S) (63) (1) with the exception of the 6 Singapore Assemblymen. Lee Kuan Yew proposed that his letter with an offer of passage to any country be sent to Lim Chin Siong and that the offer be open only for 24 hours. Ismail did not object and neither did Selkirk. The I.S.C. statement was also approved.¹⁴⁵

On the morning of 2 February, the police operation started at 2.15 a.m., with arrest parties being assembled 30 miles inside Johor to avert suspicion. Arrest parties crossed the Causeway at 3.15 a.m. and, by 9 a.m., 97 persons had been arrested.¹⁴⁶ A total of 130 persons were taken into custody. These included 31 persons in the political sphere, including Lin

¹⁴⁰ Top Secret Telegram (No. 56) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 29 January 1963), CO 1030/1576 "Internal Security Council. Singapore 1963-65", document 63.

¹⁴¹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 162) from U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to U.K. Commissioner Singapore. (dated 1 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.90.

¹⁴² Top Secret Telegram (No. 161) from U.K. High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur to U.K. Commissioner Singapore. (dated 1 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.89.

¹⁴³ Top Secret Telegram (No. 71) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 1 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.94.

¹⁴⁴ Top Secret Telegram (No. 77) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 2 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.102.

¹⁴⁵ Top Secret Telegram (No. 73) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 1 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.96.

¹⁴⁶ Top Secret Telegram (No. 77) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 2 February 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.103.

Chin Siong, 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.¹⁴⁷ 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 the danger of subversion and violence by Communists in aid of alien interventionists."¹⁴⁸ 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.

9. The Reactions to and Effects of Operation Cold Store

Following the action, the Internal Security Council issued a "Statement of the Internal Security Council" together with an annexe describing the nature of the Communist conspiracy in Singapore. The latter was drafted by the S.L.O. (Security Liaison Office?) at Lee Kuan Yew's request.¹⁴⁹ The text of these documents can be found at Appendix 4 to this paper.

On the morning of Sunday 4 February, the Singapore newspapers carried banner headlines on the arrests, citing "informed sources in Singapore" on the "links between the Singapore Communists and those of Indonesia", and "the intention of the Communists to use Singapore as a 'Cuban' base for a political offensive against Malaya."¹⁵⁰ "The sources said that the arrests of Inche Zahari and Mr Mahadeva 'nipped in the bud' overt moves to subvert Malaysia"¹⁵¹ Presumably this was all misinformation provided to the press by officials to validate the arrests for the public, as none of this had appeared in any of the Top Secret British correspondence prior to the arrests.

On his return to Singapore from Kuala Lumpur on the morning of 4 February, Lee Kuan Yew held a press conference at the airport claiming that open-front communist organisations were ready to mount violent agitation to coincide with events outside Singapore and that "concerted action by the Communists in Singapore and in places outside the State would have endangered the security of Malaysia." He was confident that their capacity to do anything was now "considerably diminished." His own responsibilities were denied with the claim "if left alone without outside factors, the Singapore Government would never have contemplated such sweeping action."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front*, p. 257. A listing of the known detainees can be found at Appendix 5 to this paper.

¹⁴⁸ Harper, 'Lim Chin Siong and the "Singapore Story"' pp. 41-43.

¹⁴⁹ Top Secret Telegram (No. 63) from U.K. Secretary of State for the Colonies to U.K. Commissioner Singapore. (dated 30 January 1963), CO 1030/1577, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p.77.

¹⁵⁰ Secret Telegram (No. 84) from U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 4 February 1963), CO 1030/1573, "Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65", p. 22.

¹⁵¹ *Straits Times*, 3 February 1963, p. 1 "107 Held in Singapore Dawn Raid"

¹⁵² *Straits Times*, 4 february 1963, p. 1, "Lee: Reds were Ready for Violent Agitation".

The Joint Intelligence Committee (London) reported on 6 February that 113 arrests had been made. The events of 2 February 1963 were described as follows in the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) report of 8 February:

13. In the early hours of 2nd February, operation 'COLDSTORE' the biggest security in Singapore since the end of the Emergency was mounted against the Communist United Front, following decisions reached at a meeting of the Internal Security Council (ISC) the previous evening. Out of an arrest list of 169, 108 have so far been detained. Some 34 of those still not accounted for are regarded as important hardcore Communist conspirators, but all the best know Communist leaders in the Barisan Sosialis were located and detained without difficulty. As agreed by the ISC, those born in the Federation have been sent to the Federation to be detained there. Premises of Left-wing political parties and trade unions were thoroughly searched.

14. Ten United Front publications, comprising mainly Communist influenced student and trade union papers have been banned. They do not include the Barisan Sosialis Press, and no organisations have been proscribed.

15. As also agreed at the Internal Security Council meeting, Lee Kuan Yew wrote to Lim Chin Siong after he had been detained offering to let him leave Singapore and not return. Lee's letter gave him 24 hours only to reply and it is understood that, as no reply has been received within that time, he will remain in detention. Albert Lim Shee Ping, the member of the Barisan Sosialis who has left Singapore on 1st February to attend the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Tanganyika, had his passport withdrawn by the British authorities (at the request of the Federation Government) at Nairobi where he was put on a plane back to Malaya. He was arrested on arrival at Singapore airport and now has been sent to the Federation for detention there along with other Federation citizens.

As anticipated, the situation in the first few days after the operation has remained quiet. The Barisan Sosialis and other left-wing parties have protested against the arrests and the Barisan Sosialis and other parties, including the right-wing Singapore People's Alliance, have asked for an immediate convening of the Assembly to debate the situation. Although the Government have agreed to convene the Assembly on ninth February, the Speaker has ruled that this would be constitutionally impossible. Dr Lee Siew Choh, the Barisan chairman, has suggested that it is now time for the people "to consider seriously whether the present arrests and repressive actions have not already closed all doors to the constitutional struggle". There is, however, as yet no indication that the Party will change to militant tactics. The Barisan Sosialis may, however, attempt to organize protest rallies, and sympathy strikes by left-wing trade unions are possible.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Secret Memorandum (No 336) from W.K. Flanagan, Acting Commissioner to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 9 February 1963), in "Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security" NAA TS682/22/5/1, pp. 83-84 (electronic pp. 168-69).

The Australian Commissioner suggested in his report that “From what the (expunged) told JIC (FE), on the 8th February it seems that the operation was not a complete success, particularly in the rural areas. A large proportion of those scheduled for arrest in these areas appear to have gone underground or in some cases have escaped from Singapore. The operation is of course continuing and a close watch is being kept on all points of exit.” “The Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, referred to this aspect of the operation at his first press conference on his return from Kuala Lumpur. He claimed that Lim Chin Siong had given a directive to leading cadres to change their residence daily in anticipation of an internal security swoop. As a result of this, eighteen important cadres had escaped. These, Lee imagined, ‘could really cause a lot of trouble’.” “There has been no violent reaction to the arrests in Singapore, and both JIC (London) and JIC (FE) suggest that protest rallies and strikes may occur at a later stage.”¹⁵⁴

Ahmad Boestaman, head of Party Rakyat in Malaya, was one of the earliest local critics calling the reasons put forward for the arrests “unconvincing, illogical and childish,” echoing Toh Chin Chye’s comments on an earlier Special Branch report, “rubbish” and “bloody nonsense.” He further urged that those arrested be brought to trial.¹⁵⁵ In March, Amnesty wrote to Sandys copying correspondence with the Prime Minister of Singapore, seeking humane treatment for the detainees and suggesting that Amnesty might take the case to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations.¹⁵⁶ Tan Chor-Yong, lawyer for 23 detained students wrote to Fenner Brockway of the Movement for Colonial Freedom in U.K. detailing the detentions and how he had been precluded from seeing his clients until 5 March. Tan urged Brockway to raise the matter in the British Parliament.¹⁵⁷ Questions were indeed asked in the British Parliament by Mr Warbey (Labour Party, Ashfield). Selkirk advised the Secretary of State for the Colonies to admit that 119 persons had been arrested and suggested further in response: “The number of persons still held in detention on the authority of the I.S.C. is 119. None of the detainees has been deported, but 17 of them are held in custody in the Federation of Malaya. The P.P.S.O. under which the arrests were ordered does not require that these detainees be charged with offences, but they are all known to be deeply complicated in the communist conspiracy.”¹⁵⁸ Of course, no conspiracy had been ascertained and thus the British government officials were essentially lying to their Parliamentarian.

Lee drafted a further ISC report in April for presentation to the Singapore Parliament. The U.K. Commissioner in Singapore recorded his comments to Lee that: “The fact is that the interrogations have so far produced little new evidence about the communist conspiracy

¹⁵⁴ Secret Memorandum (No 336) from W.K. Flanagan, Acting Commissioner to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 9 February 1963), in “Additional assistance by Australia and New Zealand in Malaya and Singapore internal security” NAA TS682/22/5/1, pp. 83-84 (electronic pp. 168-69).

¹⁵⁵ Extract from *Straits Times* 5 February 1963 “Boesta: Arrests Unjustified, PAP is now Living in Fear” CO 1030/1573, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, image 159.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Peter Benenson of Amnesty to Duncan Sandy, Commonwealth Relations Office (dated 12 March 1963), CO 1030/1573, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.56.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Tan Chor-yong to Fenner Brockway (dated 16 March 1963) CO 1030/1573, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.64.

¹⁵⁸ Secret Telegram (No. 162) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 11 March 1963), CO 1030/1573, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.50.

or the link between the Barisan Sosialis and the Brunei revolt.” For use in the Assembly, Lee eventually accepted no useful new paper could be published.¹⁵⁹ Instead the original “Statement of the Internal Security Council” of 2 February was reprinted and presented to the Legislative Assembly by the Prime Minister in early April.¹⁶⁰

On 22 May, the undetained Barisan Sosialis members took their anger to the streets, holding a demonstration outside City Hall. In the mêlée which followed, and in subsequent days, nine Barisan assemblymen were arrested: Ong Chang Sam (Chua Chu Kang); Tee Kim Leng (Pasir Panjang); Wong Soon Fong (Toa Payoh); Lin You Eng (Moulmein); Hoe Puay Choo (Bras Basah); Fung Yin Ching (Stamford); Tan Cheng Tong (Jalan Kayu); Leong Keng Seng (Serangoon Gardens); and Dr Lee Siew Choh (Queenstown). All except Dr Lee were charged with “attempting to overawe the Government by criminal force with intention of forcing it to refrain from exercising powers under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance,” being a member of an unlawful assembly, rioting and assaulting police officers. Dr Lee and the Barisan legal adviser, T.T. Rajah, faced three charges of abetment. The Australia Acting Commissioner, Richard Woolcott, noted in his report to Canberra that Lee Kuan Yew will “be open to criticism in Singapore and overseas that he is using the law to dispose of his political opponents during the important months leading up to the establishment of Malaysia.”¹⁶¹

The 30th meeting of the ISC was held on 26 April 1963 with congratulatory messages from the Chairman to Singapore Special Branch and police of the Singapore and Federation over Operation COLDSTORE. He noted that there had been little reaction apart from a riot at City Hall on 22 April and there was discussion that there needed to be a stern public pronouncement on this. The Press Communique following the meeting included this note: “All members of the Council agreed that prompt preventative action should be taken against any person who might attempt to instigate, organize or otherwise engage in any violent or unlawful action in Singapore.”¹⁶²

The May Day rally in Farrer Park proceeded peacefully with 39 left-wing unions represented and perhaps 10,000 people. S.T Bani, the President of SATU urged that a general election be held in Singapore under United Nations auspices, a suggestion which neither the

¹⁵⁹ Secret Telegram (No. 214) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 2 April 1963), CO 1030/1573, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.75. Lee’s proposed ISC paper can be found as Document 70A of this file.

¹⁶⁰ “Statement of the Internal Security Council” Misc 2 of 1963, Presented to the Legislative Assembly by the prime Minister. Ordered by the Assembly to lie upon the Table 2nd April 1963. This text is the same as that provided in: “The Communist Conspiracy” (Embargoed until Monday 4 February 1963) Republic of Singapore, Prime Minister’s Speeches, Press Conferences, Interviews, Statements etc 1962-63. The final text can be found in Appendix 4 of this paper.

¹⁶¹ Confidential memorandum (No. 1020) from R.A. Woolcott, Acting Commissioner, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 1 May 1963). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 284-85.

¹⁶² “Draft Minutes of the 30th Meeting of the Internal Security Council 26th April 1963”, CO1030/1574 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1963”.

British, nor the United Nations took up! Australian diplomats had visited Lim Chin Siong in Changi gaol and he had expressed disapproval of the City Hall riot.¹⁶³

It was reported in late May that seven of the detainees including the three from the U.P.P were to be soon released. Moore, the deputy British Commissioner advised at this time that “in the British view, there had never been any justification on security grounds for the arrest of the U.P.P. members and that they had only been included in ‘Operation Cold Store’ on the insistence of Lee Kuan Yew.” The Government had completed interrogation of the detainees and nine had been deprived of citizenship. Eight of these were to be banished to India or China while the ninth, Wahab bin Haji Sharikh, president of Party Rakyat, had already been sent to the Federation. Court proceedings were to begin on 31 May.¹⁶⁴ Other Cold Store detainees were to be kept imprisoned for up to 17 years.

But the detainees were not forgotten. On 2 February 1971, on the eighth anniversary of the Operation Cold Store arrests, a demonstration took place outside City Hall. “Those involved in the demonstration were again female relatives of political detainees who shouted slogans and distributed leaflets calling for the release of all political detainees. The leaflets also condemned the Cold Store arrests and drew attention to the endurance of those detainees who had been in prison since 1963.”¹⁶⁵

Even 14 years later, human rights groups were levelling accusations at the Singapore Government. The Hamilton (Canada) Group of Amnesty International wrote to Malcolm Fraser, Prime Minister of Australia in May 1977, asking him to press for the release of Poh Soo Kai, who had spent 10 years in prison (1963-73) for “verbal, non-violent criticisms of the government” and was rearrested again in 1976 and remained in prison, uncharged.¹⁶⁶ In 1977 a NSW senator in Australia was asked by a constituent to seek Australian intervention in the case of Said Zahari who had been held without trial or charge in a Singapore prison since 1963. The Australian foreign minister advised that this was an internal matter for Singapore.¹⁶⁷

10. Some Afterthoughts

The entire process of events leading up to Cold Store can be summarized into a few phenomena:

¹⁶³ Secret memorandum (No. 1044) from R.A. Woolcott, Acting Commissioner, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 4 May 1963). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 284-85

¹⁶⁴ Confidential memorandum (No. 1177) from Lance Joseph, Third Secretary, Australian Commission, Singapore to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra (dated 23 May 1963). NAA 3024/2/1 Singapore: Political – General, Part 11, pp. 297-99.

¹⁶⁵ JIC (FE) report for Singapore. NAA A1838 3024/2/9/2 Part 1A, “Singapore - Internal security - UK intelligence summaries - Internal security and political detainees” p. 173 (electronic p. 91).

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Harriette K Wallace of Amnesty International Hamilton Group to Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, “Regarding Dr Poh Soo Kai, Political Prisoner in Singapore” (dated 11 May 1977). NAA, “Singapore - Internal security - UK intelligence summaries - Internal security and political detainees” p. 216 (electronic p. 69).

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Australian Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock to Senator Baume, NSW (dated 1 April 1977), NAA A1838 3024/2/9/2 Part 1A, “Singapore - Internal security - UK intelligence summaries - Internal security and political detainees” p. 203. Many more appeals on behalf of Said Zahari can be found within this file.

1. The British wished to create Malaysia as a way of ensuring an anti-Communist bulwark in Southeast Asia in their process of decolonization during the Cold War. They had provided an ethnocratic advantage to UMNO through the Federation of Malaya which excluded non-Malay people from its planning, and this structure was to be carried through to the future Malaysia. The need to incorporate the colony of Singapore (Chinese and therefore potentially Communist) in the new Malaysia meant that the British had to devise ways to ensure this. Lee Kuan Yew provided them with their best chance to assure this merger. The inclusion of the Borneo Territories in Malaysia was a sop to allow the Tunku to have a clear non-Chinese majority in the future Malaysia. Who wanted and needed Greater Malaysia? Only the British, for Cold War strategic purposes. The Tunku was quite happy to have a Malaysia comprising the peninsula and perhaps the Borneo territories, while the Singaporeans on occasions expressed the possibility of going it alone (as Singapore eventually did in 1965). Thus the claims of the Left that the “Greater Malaysia” pursued by the British was a “neo-colonial” undertaking were not all without merit. The efforts by Selkirk and Moore to preserve some social justice in Britain’s actions in Singapore were eventually over-ridden by greater perceived British interests.
2. The Tunku wished to maximize his own power and that of UMNO in the future Malaysia and he did this by ensuring that Singapore participation was on his terms. This included the need to eliminate the Left in Singapore prior to merger. He held firm to this principle throughout and achieved what he wanted. The British had to bend to his requirements and order Operation Cold Store despite having no legitimate basis for such an action.
3. Lee Kuan Yew, throughout this process, sought ways in which to maximize his own political power vis-à-vis the Left in Singapore, while trying to avoid where possible any suggestion that he was responsible for the suppression or detention of members of the Left. His desire to be rid of the Left echoed the wishes of the Tunku. After failing to have Barisan Assemblymen included in the list of detainees, Lee took advantage of the Cold Store action to arrest political opponents in the U.P.P. who none of the security forces considered had any Leftist credentials at all. On 31 January 1963, just three days before the arrests, Lord Selkirk, the British representative in Singapore, stated: “We are proposing to take action against people ‘known to the security authorities of the three Governments represented in the Council to be deeply implicated in the United Front working for communist subversive ends.’ It is clear that none of the security authorities concerned believe the three U.P.P. members to be communists, communist sympathisers or involved in any form of communist conspiracy.... There is no record of communism in the U.P.P. It is significant that Ong Eng Guan did not give his party’s support to the Council of Joint Action that Barisan Sosialis exploited at the time of the referendum.”¹⁶⁸ But the three were arrested, as required by Mr Lee. Mr Lee’s use of the draconian detention legislation

¹⁶⁸ Top Secret Telegram (No. 65) from Lord Selkirk to Secretary of State for the Colonies (dated 31 January 1963), CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.82.

the British had introduced to pursue party political advantage had been a concern of the British since 1960.

4. The Left in Singapore tried to win power through party politics and tried to ensure that they did not act in any ways which would induce ISC action against them. They generally managed to do this, with the British repeatedly advising the Tunku and Lee Kuan Yew that they could not arrest those who were solely involved in constitutional politics.

Some essential questions arise from the documents presented above:

1. Was there a conspiracy or plan to rise in militant action by the Singapore Left?

There is no suggestion anywhere in the British record that the Barisan or other components of the Left in Singapore had the intention or the ability to stage any sort of revolt or rebellion in Singapore. In fact there is quite the opposite claim—that the threat to Lee and the PAP from Barisan was essentially political and there was no basis for arrest or detention. In July 1962, the British noted that while they accepted that Lim Chin Siong was a Communist, there was no evidence that he was receiving directions from the C.P.M., Peking or Moscow. “Our impression is that Lim 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 attained this objective Lim would necessarily prove a compliant tool of Peking or Moscow...”¹⁶⁹ The Special Branch also concurred. A report completed in May 1962 stated that “Since I.S.C. Paper No (61 (S) 5) dated 10.8.61 on the security situation in Singapore was written in August 1961, there has been no change in the C.P.M policy in Singapore. This remains that of establishing by constitutional means a Communist state and achieving this end through United Front action.”¹⁷⁰

The claimed Conspiracy seems therefore to have been based solely on the Left’s continuing efforts to oppose merger. No detainees admitted to any conspiracy to overthrow by force any legitimate administration in Singapore, but all would undoubtedly have expressed concerns about merger on the ground which Lee Kuan Yew had accepted for them.

2. Were the arrests under Cold Store legal?

In formal terms, the arrests were legal through the provisions of the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (25 of 1955) “under which a person may by Order of the Minister, be detained without trial, in effect indefinitely, or subjected to various restrictions, including restrictions on movement, place of residence, employment and activities... with a view to preventing that person from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaya or the maintenance of public order therein or the maintenance therein of essential services.”

¹⁶⁹ Top secret Telegram (No. 363) from Acting U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 18 July 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 145

¹⁷⁰ “Singapore Special Branch Paper: Report Communism in Singapore” (May 1962) CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, pp. 160-.

“Under this ordinance, the Singapore Government may detain or impose restriction on the movements or activities of any persons who threaten to act against the security of Malaya or the maintenance of public order and essential services. Provision is made for periodic review of such cases by advisory committees under the chairmanship of a Judge. Detentions are for an indefinite period. Detention orders are made by the Minister for Home Affairs and he also has the legal power to amend and revoke them. In the case of the present operation, however, the Federation Government have laid it down as a condition (to which Lee Kuan Yew has agreed) that any action subsequent to the arrests, including presumably any releases, would have to be taken on a recommendation of the tripartite Working Party of the Internal Security Council.”¹⁷¹

3. Were the arrests under Operation Cold Store legitimate?

There are frequent statements in the late 1962 documents from the British, from the Tunku and from Lee that the Brunei revolt offered “the best opportunity” for the arrests. Lee Kuan Yew called the events in Brunei “a Heaven-sent opportunity of justifying action against them.”¹⁷² That the three sides sought not a reason but a pretext for the arrests is both obvious and telling. Selkirk continued to hold to the idea that the arrests were illegitimate until his superiors Sandys in the Colonial Office ordered him to take advantage of the Barisan Sosialis declaration of support for the Indonesian-sponsored insurrection in Brunei.¹⁷³ The legitimisation as presented in the “The Communist Conspiracy” was, as Boestaman suggested, “unconvincing, illogical and childish.” To cite just one example, the “Conspiracy” after excoriating the Leftists for engaging in plans to overthrow the state, notes, without comment or apparent irony, that after Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan were released from detention that they were given appointments in the administration after the 1959 election..

There was, it must be underlined no basis for arresting people in Singapore simply because they were Communist. The Office of the United Kingdom Commissioner affirmed in 1962 that “There is no law in Singapore under which it was an offence to be a Communist or under which Communism as such is unlawful.” However, the Malayan Communist Party was an unlawful society and it is an offence punishable by law to be a member of such a society. “Unfortunately, it is unlikely to be possible to prove that the people the Malaysians are anxious about in Singapore are members of the Malayan Communist Party.”¹⁷⁴

The arrests were claimed to be precautionary, safeguarding “against any attempt by the Communists to mount violence or disorder in the closing stages of the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia and will ensure that Singapore enters Malaysia on the 31st August, 1963, in a more secure and sound state.”¹⁷⁵ Precautionary arrest without trial and without

¹⁷¹ Memo “Internal Security, Singapore”, CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p78.

¹⁷² Top Secret Telegram (No. 572) from Moore for U.K. Commissioner Singapore to Secretary of State for the Colonies. (dated 10 December 1962), CO 1030/1160, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1960-62”, p. 133.

¹⁷³ See CO 1030/1364 UKC—Fortnightly summary No 21, 7th to 21st December 1962. As quoted in S.J. Ball, “Selkirk in Singapore”, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10:2 (1999), p. 182.

¹⁷⁴ Secret Letter from R.E. Radford of the U.K. Commissioner’s Office in Singapore to C.S. Roberts, British Colonial Office, (Dated 22 October 1962), CO030/1158 “Singapore Internal Security Council 1962” p. 49.

¹⁷⁵ Statement of the Internal Security Council, 2 February 1963.

charge under laws allowing for indefinite detention might be seen by some as somewhat draconian.

There was no evidence of militant plans by the Left, only efforts to attain constitutional power, expressions of opposition to merger and messages of support for the Brunei rebels in their “anti-colonial struggle”. Did any of these actions warrant arrest and detention without trial? Only if one was looking for a pretext. Essentially, the arrests and detentions under Cold Store were not legitimate and were carried out to ensure Lee Kuan Yew’s maintenance of power in Singapore and guarantee that he would lead Singapore into Malaysia, as required by the British and the Tunku. The Secretary of State for the Colonies saw failure of Cold Store to be equivalent to failure of Malaysia, while the “Conspiracy” document accused the Left of having “done their utmost to sabotage the formation of Malaysia.” We can see the essential function of the arrests from these statements.

The British, Malaysians and the Singapore administration all knew that a common account was necessary to maintain the line put forward in the Public Statement justifying the arrests. It was thus that Mr Lee demanded in his letter to the British of 31 January 1963 that “that no further statements (beyond that public statement agreed) be made at any time by any government represented in the Council, although it may be necessary to answer questions and otherwise reply to any debates in the Legislative Chamber. Nothing need be said publicly or privately which could be inconsistent with the agreed statement and the annexe attached thereto. However, in the light of subsequent developments outside, and in the light of the further information obtained from interrogation of the detainees, the Council may have to issue further statements.”¹⁷⁶ These are not the words of a righteous administration which believes that it is validating fair and just action.

*

*

*

*

Conclusions

We thus can see why secrecy and sensitivity continue to surround the issue of Operation Cold Store even until today. The arrest and detentions made under the operation were intended only to ensure that the British policy of Greater Malaysia was realised.

The documentary trail leading to Operation Cold Store suggests that the Singapore Prime Minister accepted conditions for merger which were grossly unfair to the people of Singapore in order to secure continued support from the British, that he conducted a referendum on the issue in ways which even the British termed “devious”, continually misrepresented himself and his positions to the PAP members, and utilized the Cold Store operation to remove his political opponents to ensure future political dominance. The fear

¹⁷⁶ Top Secret Letter from Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to U.K. Commissioner in Singapore [dated 31 January 1963] CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.84.

instilled and pretexts created during Operation Cold Store continued to be employed by the PAP in the subsequent decades of Singapore's development.

By essentially eliminating one side of politics in Singapore, Operation Cold Store created the conditions where a single political force could dominate every aspect of the Singapore polity. In addition, the maintenance of policies and laws mandated and utilised during the period leading up to and during Operation Cold Store have proven effective in ensuring that no effective political alternatives have subsequently been able to emerge or grow in the state.

It is thus to Operation Cold Store we must look today when trying to understand how Singapore has become an essentially one-party state where a single political force controls and dominates every aspect of social existence – from politics, to defence, to internal security, to education, to the economic realm, and to social policies, and has done so since 1963 (even during the “inter-regnum” of Singapore's incorporation in Malaysia).

I therefore urge that more studies on Operation Cold Store, its course, its causes and particularly its effects be encouraged, funded and pursued. Only thereby will Singaporeans and others be able to comprehend the processes and make their own assessments of this key event and period in Singaporean history.

*

*

*

*

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 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.

*

*

*

*

APPENDIX 2: Socialist Front Arrestees in Malayan Federation Swoop on 17 December 1962 (the failed Cold Store)

Selangor

Wong Kong Fan (Ulu Langat branch),

Low Peck Hwee (Batu Road branch),

Chan Hoong Kong (Ulu Selangor branch),

Hew Su Lim (Semenyah branch)

Negri Sembilan

Cheng Teck Hong (Bahau branch)

Lew Foo Thong (Titi branch)

Johore

Tan Chong Kow (Johore Bahru Branch)

Koh Kim Leng (Tangkak branch)

Tey Tiong Siah (Batu Pahat branch)

The names of the other detainees were not published and have not yet been ascertained

*

*

*

*

APPENDIX 3: List of persons to be “Rusticated” to Federation if arrested in Singapore under Operation Cold Store¹⁷⁷

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. S. Woodhull | Born Johore 2.11.32 |
| 2. Chan Chiaw Thor | Born Trengganu 6.3.31 |
| 3. Lim Woon Chye | Born Johore 15.11.31 |
| 4. Fong Beng Boo | Born Penang 1938 |
| 5. Wong Fah @ Wong Yoke Wah | Born Pahang 1.6.30 |
| 6. Chong Khee Chaw | Born Johore 1937 |
| 7. Ng Ah Kau @ Wong For | Born Johore 22.3.41 |
| 8. Tan Hai | Born Pahang 10.4.38 |
| 9. Loi Boon Heng | Born Johore 1937 |
| 10. Mah Keh Lan (f) | Born Selangor |
| 11. Yap Ser Jin | Born Johore 20.11.37 |
| 12. Wahab Shah (A Wahab bin Haji Sharikh) | Born Malacca 1932 |

¹⁷⁷ Top Secret Letter from Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to U.K. Commissioner in Singapore [dated 31 January 1963] CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.85.

13. Chew Ah Ming	Born Johore 17.2.37
14. Poon Kow Cheong	Born Johore 1934
15. James Puthuchear	Born India 25.8.22, domiciled in Johore. Acquired citizenship
16. Fong Swee Suan	Born Johore 1930
17. Tan Teck Wah	Born Johore
18. Lim Shee Ping, Albert	Born Pahang 13.4.31 (arrested on return from Africa)
19. Tan Chwee Seng	Born Johore 1930
20. Chan Kwong Chow	Born Trengganu 22.9.35
21. Dominic Puthuchear	Born India 27.5.34, domiciled in Johore. Acquired citizenship
22. Soh Jee Juay (Soh Teow Meng)	Born Johore Bahru 26.2.39
23. Lee Teow Meng (Hang Cheng)	
24. Jamit Singh	Born Perak 11.8.28
25. Tai Yue Lan (f)	Born Pahang 26.11.38
26. Han Tan Juan	Born Johore 1.6.42
27. Teo Tze Yen (Chang Tze Yen)	Born Johore 1936
28. Koh Siew Lan (F) (Kho Siw Lam)	Born Kelantan 28.5.42
29. Lim Onn Kiat	Born Johore 14.8.35

*

*

*

*

APPENDIX 4: “Statement of the Internal Security Council” and Annex “The Communist Conspiracy”, issued on completion of Operation Cold Store and dated 2 February 1963.¹⁷⁸

The Singapore Internal Security Council, on which are represented the Governments of the United Kingdom, Singapore and the Federation of Malaya, met on 1st February, 1963, in Kuala Lumpur to consider the internal security situation in Singapore in the context of the

¹⁷⁸ “Operation Coldstore”, Attachment “The Communist Conspiracy”, CO 1030/1577, “Internal Security Council Singapore 1963-65”, p.75..

threat to the territories of the proposed Federation of Malaysia following the outbreak of violence in Brunei.

Since the formation of the Barisan Sosialis in July 1961, it has become increasingly evident that the Party and associated United Front organizations are under the control of the Communists. These Communists and their supporters in Singapore, working through the Barisan Sosialis and associated United Front organizations, have done their utmost to sabotage the formation of Malaysia. They have continued their subversive activities even after the recent referendum in September in defiance of the wishes of a decisive majority of the people of Singapore. They have professed to be working constitutionally for democratic ends. But their open support for armed revolt in Brunei and their close association with the leaders of the revolt show that they are ready when the opportunity occurs to depart from constitutional methods and to jeopardise national defence and Singapore's security by joining with groups resorting to violence and to bloodshed as in the Borneo territories,

The Government of the Federation has consistently in recent years taken action against Communist subversive elements in the Federation, and recently this action has been intensified. The Government of Sarawak has also taken preventative security action recently. All Members of the Council agreed that actions must be taken to safeguard the defence and security of Singapore and of the territories of the proposed Federation of Malaysia. This action must be taken immediately and cannot be left until after 31st August, 1963. The Internal Security Council has therefore decided that certain persons known to the security authorities of the governments represented on the Council to be most deeply implicated in the United Front working for Communist subversive ends must be arrested and that certain United Front publications must be banned.

These measures, following upon the internal security actions in the Federation of Malaya and Sarawak, will safeguard against any attempt by the Communists to mount violence or disorder in the closing stages of the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia and will ensure that Singapore enters Malaysia on the 31st August, 1963, in a more secure and sound state.

Persons detained are to be held under the provisions of the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance. All those of Federation origin are to be sent back to the Federation of Malaya.

A memorandum is attached giving an account of the Communist conspiracy.

*

*

*

*

APPENDIX 5: Listing of 110 detainees of Operation Cold Store (including the three U.P.P. members) Source: Internal Security Council file CO 1030/1573

Lim Chin Siong *

S. Woodhull * +

Dr Poh Soo Kai *

alias Sakai

Chan Chiaw Thor *

Chiang Butt Tong *

alias Cheong Sair Cheng

Chok Koh Tong*

alias Chock Kit

alias Chua Koh Tong

alias Toh Khor Tong

alias Chok Kiat

alias Cheok Ho Tong

Ng Kim Han *

Wang Yang Peow *

alias Wong Guan Peow

Foo Chee Zee *

alias Foo Tee Boo

Tan Boon Kwee *

Chen Kern Yuan *

alias Tan Koon Guan

Yap Su Jin *

Sze Tho Chee Kong *

Kee Chwee Bun *

Tan Yam Seng *

Tang Song * +

alias Tong Siong

alias Tien Song

alias Theen Song

Mohd. Said Bin Zahari

K. Koya * +

alias Kadalakaran Koya s/o Ibrahim

Chia Yam Wee *

alias Tse Yim Fai

alias Tse Fei

Chan Kee Lon * +

alias Ricky Chan

Pang Toon Tin +

Tang Yoong Chiaw +

Wahab Shah

alias Abdul Wahab Shah

alias A. Wahab b Hj Sharikh

Fong Swee Suan * +

Tan Teck Wah +

Chen Tian Jan +

alias Tan Yit Mong

Chan Say Jame +

alias Ah Gong

Ang Kun Peng +

alias Lo Hung

Wang Cheng +

Alias Lee Thian Meng

Low Jee Peng +
Soh Teow Meng +
Albert Lim Shee Ping * + (arrested on return from Africa)
Dominic Puthucheary * +
Hussein Jahidin +
Lee Mei Ling +
Tan Siew Chwee +
Koh Ah Hock +
Salahudin Ghouse +
Chang Show Jen +
 alias Chang Sau Yen
Kam Siew Yee +
Lim Woon Chye
Chan Kwong Yeng +
 alias Chang Kong Yin
 alias Chan Kwong Yong
 alias Chan Kong Yong
Poh Choon Seng
 alias Foo Choon Seng
 alias Tiger
Tan Hai *
Chong Khee Chaw *
Lee Kim Yong +
 alias Lee Kim Leng
Seah Hoe Seng
 alias Hsiao Ho
Lim Seck Kian +

alias Suk Fun

Peh Tian Guan

Moh Swee Sang

alias Mok Nai Mon

alias Har Thou

alias Peter Mok Chew Singh

alias Peter Ong Lar Seng

Ang Sock Eng (f)

alias Hung Suk Ying

alias Hong Soo Yen

Tay Say Chong

alias Sek Wan

Fu Chiao Sian

alias Poh Chow Yen

alias James Fu

alias Tai Chee

alias Yik Yen

Mahadeva s/o Arunasalam +

Chan Sun Choy +

Chew Hwee (f)

alias Chew Siew Hwee

Chen Mong Hock (f)

alias Linda Chen

alias Mrs. Linda Tan

alias Mrs Tan seng Huat

alias F. Hanum

Cheng Mong Sing (f)

alias Cheng Sik Chung
Boh Chew Peng +
alias Put Meng
Liaw Huey Ching (f)
alias Leow Wai Cheng
alias Ah Liew
Lim Hock Siew *
Lee Thian Chye
James Joseph Puthuchear *
Chan Ee Fong *
alias Tan Ee Fong
Choy Yoke Say
Koh Lam Seng +
Chua Wee Puan +
Tseng May Yung (f) +
alias Chang Mei Yong
alias Ma Lai Kai
Lim Sin Aik +
Teo Beng Oon +
alias Teo Beng Boon
alias Teo Suih Boon
alias Teo Ming Boon
Ng Cheng Weng +
alias Ng Mang
alias Goh Chin Meng
Boh Tai Yong +
alias Mok Thai Hiem

alias Mok Tai Siong
alias Mok Tien Cheng
Chua Soo Hoan +
Yang Wai Wah +
Chua Siew Chuan +
alias Chua Son Cheun
Goh Kiam Teck +
alias Goh Peng
Foo Seak Boon +
alias Foo Tee Boon
Lim Chwee Pin +
alias Lim Chew Pin
alias Lim Sui Pan
Ho Toon Chin +
alias Ho Piao
alias Siu Ho
Chia Chek Sum +
alias Seah Chong Wah
Ang Eng Siong +
alias Ong Yong Seng
Tan Juay Kiam
alias Tan Looi Kian
alias Chan Yuet Chin
alias Tan Tu Phi
Yan Chiang Ding
alias Yan Chang Ding
Tan Seng Foo

alias Tan Hian Foo

alias Tan Yin Foo

Tan Sin Yang

alias Tan Choon Ling

Chong Boon Pin

alias Wen Ping

alias Lung Lai

Tan Kok Fang

alias Chan Kok Fong

alias Yee Ching

Haw Thar Heong

alias Toh Kar Keong

Kho Siw Lam (f)

alias Koh Siew Lan

Tai Yuen (This entry inserted later in manuscript)

alias Ma Loo

alias Ping

alias Yo Meng

alias Fu Chi

alias Wai Ngin

alias Fung Ping

alias Boon Siang

alias Kong Yin

alias Ko Leong

alias Wai Chan

Quay Kang Hoe (This entry inserted later in manuscript)

alias Kwok Kong Hoe

Chua Choon Yong

alias Chua Wee Kiat

Tay Ee Liong

Yuen Puay Koon

Tay Thiam Meng +

Na Ho

alias Wong Ho

alias Wong Oi

Hong Ah Mee * +

alias Fang Loo Khuay

alias Fong Yu Fei

Lim Yew Wee +

alias Yap Cheng Tiong

alias Yap Khim Chong

Tan Hock Seng +

Lim Hiang Eng +

alias Lim Seng Yong

Teo Siong Oon +

alias Chang Chan Chuan

alias Chang Cheong Yuen

Chua Siew Sung (f)

alias Ah Lek

Ong Sujo Kook

alias Ong Siow Kwok

Tay Kee Chuan

alias Cheng Kee Chuan

Wong See Kew +

alias Wong Nyuk See

alias Wong Yu Su

alias Wong Yee See

alias Wong Tin

alias Yoke Sai

alias Yi

Wong Eng Ee (f)

alias Wong Poh Heng

alias Pin

alias Wang Po Chin

alias Wong Yin Ku

alias Wong Hin Yu

Ping Lye Wah *

alias Png Lai Hua

Ho Fook

Tan Ah Yaw +

Alias Tan Chye Chong

The above listing is copied from a typescript list contained within the United Kingdom's Far Eastern Department file FED 115/416/01 "Internal Security – Singapore" 1963-65. This file was subsequently renamed as CO 1030/1573.

Some of the names are marked by either a * (indicating Barisan Sosialis membership) or a + (indicating trade union affiliation). All aliases listed above have had a manuscript deletion line marked through them in the original list. Further details of this list are available at CO 1030/1573 Documents 31 and 32. For details of the numbers assigned to the individuals in Document 32, see the Special Branch list of potential detainees (of unspecified date) which can be found at CO 1030/1576 "Internal Security Council Singapore (1963-65)", pp. 142- 230.

-- FIN --