

The whole crux of the matter in Operation Cold Store, was to prevent the opposition from coming into power through peaceful, constitutional means and to ensure that the PAP carry on its power. All these talk of security and violence are just propaganda. The British secret archival documents have shown that there was no violence and no evidence of any communist conspiracy.

In the ninth year of my detention, the head of the Special Branch, Mr Wong Su Chi, told me “Dr Lim, you don’t have to deny to us that you are a communist; we know from our records that you are not a communist. I said “What the hell is Lee Kuan Yew talking about communism? He replied: “He had to say all that, otherwise he can’t justify your detention”.

To fully appreciate Operation Cold Store, one has to go back to the 1950s and appreciate the political atmosphere prevailing at that time in Singapore and throughout Asia. The Second World War ended in 1945 and the British returned to Singapore. During the Japanese Occupation, the only people fighting against the Japanese, were the Communist Party of Malaya. They were very brave in fighting the Japanese, who were very cruel in suppressing them.

After the war in 1945, the communists were operating with the sanction of the British. In fact, they had a very big headquarters in Middle Road, with a communist holding a rifle and a communist flag standing outside. The communists were very well-organised and were prepared to take over power from the British. Thus, in 1948, the British decided to clamp down on the communists. It was the British who started the emergency, not Chin Peng. If you read Chin Peng's book,¹ he said they were not prepared to fight and were caught unaware. The British suddenly arrested as many as they could lay their hands on. As a result, they went underground and started fighting.

I met Chin Peng about four years ago, when he came to Singapore to speak at the Institute of South-East Asia Studies. It was at the invitation of Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong. During the talk, he said that they were not prepared at that time. The British were arresting all the communists. He said when Lee Kuan Yew formed the PAP in 1954, he asked the Communist Party of Malaya to help him start the PAP. How did Lee Kuan Yew contact all these people? I don't know. Chin Peng said “We sent a few cadres to help him – Lim Chin Siong, Devan Nair and Samad Ismail.” So what role they played, I don't know.

Chin Siong was a member of the Anti-British League, which was a fringe organisation of the communists. He was not actually a member of the Communist Party. He said this frankly, without coercion or fear of retaliation or anything like that. It was in this context that the PAP came into being in 1954. At that time, it was just the end of the White Terror, which was imposed by the British in 1948 when they introduced the Emergency Regulations.² Between 1948-1954, there was hardly any open political activity. All political activities were suppressed in the name of suppressing communism. The anti-communist bogey was used to suppress all legitimate political activities. Lim Kean Chye and John Eber, leaders of the Singapore Democratic Union were arrested. The union was practically dissolved because they were not allowed to function. Eber left Singapore for England after his release. Kean Chye was detained for a while. An interesting fact about Kean Chye, a Cambridge graduate and lawyer is that the British asked him to take over Singapore. Kean Chye refused and was asked to disappear. If he had agreed, he would have been

¹ Chin Peng as told by Ian Ward and Norma Miraflor *My Side of History* Media Masters Singapore

² Emergency Regulations, 21 July 1948

cultivated by the British and Lee Kuan Yew would not have been of any assistance to the British. Kean Chye said “no, I will not become a British stooge.”

In 1954, after the Fajar trial¹ and after the Chinese School student demonstrations, there was a complete re-awakening of the political situation, something like what happened after the general election of 2011. In the wake of this political awakening, the PAP came into being. Everyone became politically alert.

So who formed the PAP at the beginning? It was mainly the workers led by Lim Chin Siong and the Chinese school students. Members of the Fajar editorial board, the University Socialist Club were numerically in the minority, although they played a very important role. When the PAP was formed in 1954, the main leaders were Lim Chin Siong, Lee Kuan Yew and James Puthuchery. K. M. Byrne and Toh Chin Chye were also there with Lee Kuan Yew. Lee Kuan Yew invited Tunku Abdul Rahman and Dato Tan Cheng Lock to attend the inaugural meeting of the PAP. They gave the PAP their moral support and made it appear as a Pan Malayan movement but essentially it was a Singapore movement. The activities of the PAP were very vigorous because the Chinese school students and the trade unions were there, and they formed the majority of the PAP membership. At that time, there was already a rift. Lee Kuan Yew knew that he was not in control of the party. The real person in control of the party was Lim Chin Siong.

In 1955, there was a mass rally to welcome two British MPs who came to Singapore to assess whether our population was ready for independence. David Marshall was then the Chief Minister. He held a rally at Kallang. Kallang at that time was undeveloped - there was a very big open field. The PAP also held a rally. On top of the lorry we saw Lee Kuan Yew and Lim Chin Siong. The rally was very huge, I think at least 40,000 - 50,000 people. We were amazed at the big crowd but poor Marshall's crowd was very small, about 2000 people. Something happened to Marshall's stage ... it collapsed. People said it was a sabotage, some people came to cut the rattan support (of the stage) and it happened to rain. There was a lot of commotion.

A remarkable thing about the rally organised by Lim Chin Siong and Lee Kuan Yew, was that it was very well disciplined. They just used the megaphone, told them to sit down ... no disturbance. No riot at all. Very well disciplined. When told to disperse, they dispersed. No disturbance. They knew that if there was any trouble, the British would use that as an excuse to clamp down on all the organisations.

Lim Chin Siong and Lee Kuan Yew together with David Marshall, went to London for the constitutional talks to discuss independence. That talk was a failure, because Marshall demanded very rapid changes. The Internal Security Council must be in the hands of the Singapore elected members and not the British. The finance and foreign affairs should also be given to Singapore leaders. So, the British of course, were not open to entertain such demands. Marshall came back empty-handed and he felt that he lost face. He resigned. His second in command, Lim Yew Hock, took over.

Lim Yew Hock wanted to prove to the British that he could be relied upon to suppress the trade unions. He started provoking the Chinese school students the trade unions, and of course, it led to a riot. If you review the events, they were all systematic provocations. He expected them to protest and used that protest as an excuse for suppression. In 1956, there was a big riot arising from the clamping down of all the left-wing organisations, especially the banning of the Chinese school students' union. I was there at Bukit Timah, when the Chinese students camped inside Chinese High School. Students there camped for about one week. The government gave them an ultimatum

¹ Members of the Editorial Board of the *Fajar*, a publication of the University Socialist Club were sued for sedition.

to disperse. They did not disperse. That night, the ultimatum ended and the troops and police were outside the school. I was there with two other university students. The students did not create any trouble. They were all inside, but it was the crowd outside that booed at the police and started throwing stones at the police. The police charged and then, the riot started. Whether this crowd was agent provocateurs or whether they were genuinely dissatisfied with the police, I don't know. But that's how the riot started outside the school. Of course, that night, the police went into Chinese High School and dispersed the students, who were then forced down to Bukit Timah Road and marched to Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Their spirit was very high. I saw them marching down to Chinese Chamber of Commerce singing away.

The riot lasted for about one week and dozens of people were killed. It was almost a spontaneous riot. The population was very angry with Lim Yew Hock's government. Lee Kuan Yew of course, condemned the subsequent arrests. He praised the students and the workers. Lee Kuan Yew was on the side of those who were arrested. You should read his speeches in the Legislative Assembly, about how he condemned the arrests and talked about democracy - that you must put people on trial and not just jail them indefinitely. This is precisely the opposite of what he's doing now. It is very interesting, what he is capable of doing. He was then a very hard advocate of democracy, freedom of speech, of thought and assembly.

In 1956, there was a mass arrest of over 300 members of the Left-wing and trade unions. James Puthuchery, Lim Chin Siong, Devan Nair, S. Woodhull were arrested. In 1957, there was another sweep on trade unionists. That was a made-up affair, because they alleged the trade unionists wanted to take control of the PAP, which was not true. It was all instigated by someone inside the PAP. I was against the move and tried to stop it, but they wouldn't listen because I was not an important person at that time. They went ahead and started electing six members of the 12 Central Executive Council members of the PAP. Those six were all trade unionists. Lee Kuan Yew thought that was a threat to his position and he resigned to allow Lim Yew Hock to arrest all the six people namely Tan Chong Kim, Tan Kong Guan, Goh Boon Toh, Tan Say Kum, Ong Chye Ann and Lim Chin Joo except TT Rajah. After these people were arrested, Lee Kuan Yew came back, changed the whole PAP constitution to two strata of membership. One is the cadre membership and the other is the ordinary membership. Only cadre members can have the right to vote for the members of the central committee I appoint you so that you can elect me. It is a self-propagating system which Lee Kuan Yew justified was akin to the Pope and the cardinals in the Vatican. The system lasted for 2000 years.

In 1959, the elections came. The left-wing gave their full support to Lee Kuan Yew's group because there was no other available group in Singapore at that time. Lee Kuan Yew was elected. PAP won 43 seats out of 54. Very big shift. That was predicted, because Lim Yew Hock and all the other groups were not organised at all. The Chinese school students, the trade unions, were all very well-organised when they started the elections. After being elected, they released eight detainees – Lim Chin Siong, S. Woodhull, James Puthuchery, Devan Nair, Fong Swee Suan and a few others. What is important was that immediately after Lee Kuan Yew took over power, he gave a talk at the Internal Security Council where he, Lee Kuan Yew, gave his thoughts about how to deal with Lim Chin Siong's group. This was recorded in the British archives. Already at that time, he was thinking of how to deal with this group.

The British understood Lee Kuan Yew's position. In fact, prior to this, we did not know he was already in collusion with the British Special Branch, Richard Corrigan. We didn't know at that time that he was playing a double game, with the British and at the same time, posing himself as a very Left-wing, radical, democrat and rebel. He was very inspiring at that time. At least I was very inspired by him. Very democratic and fierce with uncompromising anti-colonial stand. When he came to power, he was supposed to release all political detainees. There were 20 odd detainees who

were not released from the 1956 batch. The trade unions were asking him to release them. Under pressure, he pretended that he wanted to release them, but secretly again it was revealed in the British documents that he was telling the British that “I will ask for their release and you, Lord Selkirk will counter that they will not be released”. So you take the blame and I play the good guy. Selkirk refused to be a participant in this deception. According to regulations, the Internal Security Council had to wait for the Singapore government to propose release and the British were ready to release them but Lee Kuan Yew refused to propose, and put the blame on the British and Malayan government. Eventually, Ong Eng Guan, who was quite a treasure in the PAP as he was a very good Hokkien speaker, attended one of the Council meetings. He proposed that those detainees be released. That shocked Lee Kuan Yew because it was against his plans - to hide the whole truth. Subsequently, Ong Eng Guan was not allowed to attend the Council and only Lee Kuan Yew could speak at the Council.

Ong Eng Guan was then expelled from the PAP. That was in 1961. He resigned and contested the by-election in Hong Lim, on the basis of those demands, very good demands – release of political detainees, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, anti-colonialism. He put forward 16 demands which we could not oppose. Lim Chin Siong was caught in a dilemma because he could not openly support Ong Eng Guan as he was still with the PAP. So he called for unity of the party, and at the same time, quietly demanding Lee Kuan Yew to release the detainees. Ong Eng Guan won the by election by a very wide margin. Lee Kuan Yew was very upset. Two months later, there was another by-election as a PAPMP Baharuddin bin Ariff had died. Under the constitution, they had to call for a by-election in Anson. David Marshall stood in that election. This time, the left-wing did not oppose David Marshall, in fact, they were demanding the release of detainees. The electorate took the hint, defeated the PAP and elected David Marshall. These two electoral defeats made Lee Kuan Yew very upset. In fact, at that time, he was proposing to the British ... and this is clearly in the records. In conversation with Selkirk on 28 July 1961, at the time of the formation of the Barisan Sosialis, the Assistant Commissioner reported Lee Kuan Yew's tactics in the following terms: “He went on to suggest that in order to avoid the Communists taking over, he will create a situation in which the UK Commissioner would be forced to suspend the Constitution. This might be done either by the Singapore Government inviting a Russian trade mission to Singapore thus forcing a constitutional crisis, or by instigating riots and disorder, requiring the intervention of British troops. I did, however, form the impression that he was quite certain he would lose the general election and was seriously toying with the thought of forcing British intervention in order to prevent his political enemies from forming the government.”¹

This is Lee Kuan Yew. It was evident at that time, that he was thinking of stopping the election or doing something to prevent his opponents inside the PAP from taking over the government. The British of course, refused to go along. At that time, it must be remembered that anti-communism was at its height. The war in Korea, the war in Vietnam, and the American encirclement of China ... the Bamboo Curtain was imposed by America and not by the Chinese ... all these rabid anti-communism was very rife in this area. So to send a trade delegation to Russia or to invite a Russian delegation was something unthought of, a very radical thing. That was what Lee Kuan Yew proposed to do, just to give the British an excuse to ban the Constitution, ban the election, so that he need not have to lose the election. Subsequent to that, he was trying to get the British to do something to prevent the election from being held in 1963.

The British gave him a saving line - a merger of Singapore with Malaya. This pan Malayan merger was something the British thought of in 1945, before the end of the war. They called it the Grand Design. They wanted to put the Borneo territories and Singapore with Malaya as one big

¹ Poh Soo Kai, Tan Jing Quee & Koh Kay Yew Eds *The Fajar Generation* Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, Petaling Jaya p. 171

component. Using the Malaysian government to control these territories on behalf of the British. This design was not unique. In South Arabia, they also had this kind of design where they put South Yemen under North Yemen. South Yemen had a very left-wing party while, North Yemen was very conservative. They wanted to merge these two so that North Yemen could control South Yemen. Today, there are lots of trouble in South Yemen. Also, in the West Indies the British had this kind of design where they put a big conservative government to control the radicals, including British Guiana now Guyana.

In 1959, the British thought it was time to bring out the Grand Design. They persuaded Tunku Abdul Rahman to accept. Tunku Abdul Rahman was initially reluctant for two reasons. Firstly, there were too many Chinese in Singapore and they were all not loyal to Malaya. Secondly, there were too many communists.

The Barisan said, that as far as the Chinese were concerned, nothing could be done about it. They were part of our people. We had to accept them whether or not there was merger. As far as communists were concerned, we said: "You name the communists." The Tunku said there were 300 communists. Lim Chin Siong replied that they could put all those communists in prison and merge the two countries. We would not object. That was a serious statement - put all the 300 that you name in prison, so long as you accept the merger for the two territories. Of course they wouldn't do it. The problem facing the Tunku was how to accept merger while limiting the political influence of Singapore.

All kinds of tactics were made. At first they wanted to have two types of citizenship – Malayan citizenship divided into two: one Malaysian, one Singapore - but it was too obvious. Later on they wanted to change to Malaysian citizenship: one Malaysian, the other Malaysian (Singapore). These Malaysian (Singapore) citizens cannot have voting rights in Malaysia. They cannot have proportional representation - they cannot take part in Malaysian politics. That was not a real merger. It was a sham merger. And there would not be proportional representation in the federal parliament. We were allowed only 15 seats when our population would have entitled us to at least 25. Barisan opposed merger on the basis of those two issues. If you have a general merger based on uniform citizenship and proportional representation, we would campaign for merger. Of course, the Tunku refused. But Lee Kuan Yew wanted merger because he wanted the Tunku to arrest all the left-wing while posing himself as an innocent, innocuous person. He wanted the arrests to take place, but making the Tunku as the person responsible for the arrests. In fact, he wanted to do the dirty job but did not want the responsibility for it. The Tunku of course, was not that stupid. He said, you want it, you have to take the responsibility and you have to arrest those people before merger. Lee Kuan Yew wanted merger to take place, then the arrests so that he would emerge as though he was an innocent person. In the end, the Tunku forced him to have the arrests before merger.

All the debates about the merger, the conditions for merger, were all very ridiculous. It is all in Lee Siew Choh's speech in the Legislative Assembly¹ where we tore down to bits all the PAP lies. Then they had the referendum. It was a ridiculous referendum. The PAP's merger plan, the so-called Barisan merger plan, which according to their interpretation meant 2/3 of the Singapore citizens would be deprived of their citizenship and without any proportional representation. The third option was on the Borneo territories, the conditions of which at that time were not spelled out. So how do you consider it a choice when you don't know the conditions? You had to vote for one of those three choices. Voting was compulsory. You cannot vote against any of them, you have to vote one of them and if you don't vote, it is a crime. If you put a blank vote, it was considered a vote for the government's proposal.

¹ Legislative Assembly 2 September 1962

I went to the United Nations to speak about that referendum and they all had a good laugh. They used the sham referendum to give them the excuse that the people were supporting the government's proposal. After that referendum, they were going to arrest the left-wing. They were still not sure because Selkirk was saying there was no evidence that they were doing anything subversive. There was no evidence they were connected to the Communist Party. In fact, the documents in the British Archives confirm that there was no evidence at all to justify a repression. What were they going to do? How to justify the arrests?

The Brunei revolt broke out, on December 8, 1962. Lee Kuan Yew jumped on that, saying that it was a god-sent opportunity to arrest the left. The Brunei revolt had nothing to do with the Barisan. They said the Barisan was an accomplice to it. That's not true. A.M. Azahari, had been coming to Singapore ever since 1954 or '55. I met him several times. He came to the University Socialist Club to give a talk. He was openly talking about armed revolution. I thought he was a joker. How could he be an armed revolutionary when he talked so openly. When the Barisan Sosialis was formed in 1961, he came and gave an address at the inaugural meeting. A few days before the Brunei revolution on 3rd December, he came to Singapore to see Lim Chin Siong and Said Zahari. They had lunch at Rendezvous Restaurant in Bras Basah Road. That lunch was monitored by S.R. Nathan.

Azahari met Chin Siong at that time and privately told Chin Siong they were going to launch a revolution. He expected Chin Siong to engineer an event in Singapore to tie down the British troops here so that they wouldn't be sent to Brunei to suppress the revolution. Chin Siong told Azahari that we could not do that. We had to stick to a constitutional struggle. At most we could give moral support – issue statements and rallies. But we could not have rallies or demonstrations to create trouble in Singapore to tie down the British troops. At that time we were very restrained ourselves. We didn't want to give the British the excuse to arrest us. We were trying to preserve our strength for the general election in 1963 and certainly did not want any trouble. Azahari knew our problem and said, “Ok, do whatever you can within your means”.

When the revolution broke out, we gave them good publicity. I personally wrote an editorial in the Plebeian supporting the revolution. The Brunei Partai Rakyat won all 16 of the 33 seats in the Legislative Assembly. 16 represented the total of the elected members in the assembly. However, they were still in the minority (the British having the remaining 17 seats) even though they had the support of the population. They asked the British to get out but were turned down. So they had to revolt, something they had been preparing for the last five years. The British knew about the planned revolt as they were training openly. Why did the British allow them to have this preparation? I think they purposely let the revolt happen so that they can be clamped down. The British sent Gurkhas from Singapore, and the Tunku sent Malay policemen from Malaysia to Brunei. That was a sad blow to the Malaysian government, sending Malays to fight Malays in Brunei. It was bad propaganda for the Tunku.

Anyway, the revolt was put down very quickly and Lee Kuan Yew ridiculed the revolution in Brunei. He called them Lilliputian soldiers, from Gulliver's Travels. To us, that was a side show. It showed the people of Brunei were against merger with Malaysia. The reason was very simple. Brunei was an oil producing country. Every year, they get One hundred million dollar surplus. It would go to Malaysia if they merged. The Tunku, of course, welcomed it. In the end, Brunei refused to join Malaysia. Sarawak and Sabah were pushed by the British to join Malaysia. Singapore was all for it.

When the merger took place, Lim Chin Siong, me and all the leaders of Barisan had already been arrested. The arrest was very interesting. The government of Britain, Malaya and Singapore discussed the number of people to arrest. The three governments had three lists. PAP's list was the

longest – 180-200 people. The British list was not very long and the Tunku's in the middle. The arrests were supposed to take place in December 1962 but it happened in February 1963. Lee Kuan Yew had insisted that two MPs from Malaya should also be arrested to make it appear as a pan Malayan suppression. Those two were Lim Kean Siew and Ahmad Boestaman. Lim Kean Siew was the leader of the Labour Party and Ahmad Boestaman was the Chairman of Partai Rakyat. Ahmad Boestaman had previously been arrested and imprisoned for 8 years by the British. The Tunku was sympathetic to him and refused to arrest him again? He was not a communist. Neither was Kean Siew. Kean Siew was a Cambridge graduate in law. I think he antagonised Lee Kuan Yew at a forum at the University of Malaya in KL. I was there at the forum representing Barisan and Kean Siew represented the Labour Party. We irritated Lee Kuan Yew at that forum until his face was flushed red.

If you irritate Lee Kuan Yew once, he will get you when he has a chance. It was a personal vengeance and that is his personality. The Tunku refused to arrest those two persons. He refused to play the bad guy to make Lee look good? The plan fell apart and they postponed the arrests to February 2, 1963. Lee Kuan Yew wanted to make it appear as if the arrest was Tunku's idea not his.

The Internal Security Council had to have a final meeting regarding the arrests in Kuala Lumpur (KL), not Singapore. The police had to be assembled in Malaysia, and then come down through the causeway before midnight. At 2 a.m., they left Johor. When they had the Council meeting in KL, I received news about it. My friend in KL told me the arrest was going to take place that night. We had friends all over and the information was quite good. We anticipated the arrests that very night. I couldn't sleep the whole night waiting for the police to come. They came at about 4.30 to 5, and we were all taken to Outram Prison. Outram Prison is now demolished. That was the February 2nd arrests. We were all put into solitary confinement for 3-5 months and subsequently transferred to Changi Prison. More than 130 people were arrested.