

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

IN SINGAPORE

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science
in the
University of Canterbury
by
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University of Canterbury

1991

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Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to Rob Steven whose theoretical insights, knowledge of educational process, and friendship made this an exciting and worthwhile venture. Thanks also to Bill Willmott for his encouragement.

To Maylene for her unsparing support, to Edna for her lunches and child-care, to Yi-Zhen for her lively company, and to many friends in Singapore and Christchurch for their assistance, I offer my thanks in the hope that this thesis may in some way repay their efforts.

ABSTRACT

Singapore is a highly controlled society. This thesis shows how the system of social control works as a whole. It does this by examining the details of social regulation in relation to political struggles, the phases of capital accumulation, and the alliance between the People's Action Party-state and foreign capital.

A theoretical consideration of social control critically examines traditions which have related economic strategies to political resistance and to the role of the state. This chapter acts as a resource to identify and address issues which emerge in the subsequent detailed study of Singapore.

The historical origins of current state repression are located in the British response to the anti-imperialist uprising in the post-war period. During the transition to political independence, the Lee Kuan Yew-faction of the People's Action Party built its alliance with foreign capital under the shelter of colonial-state violence.

A survey of theoretical approaches to Singapore's political economy favours an interpretation which sees local struggles as the driving force of change within the context of the latest phases of imperialism.

The greater part of the thesis concentrates on the concrete ways that social control has worked in Singapore since the PAP came to power. Major institutions are studied in depth: public housing, education, elections and parliament, and the law. Each highlights a major aspect of social control.

The system of state welfare provision through public housing and education stratifies society, forces people into wage labour and induces political loyalty. Parliamentarism and the forms of liberal democracy help to convert submission into consent. If consent is not forthcoming, then the coercive powers of the law and the military are applied.

The thesis concludes by showing how different political struggles were met by different forms of social control during the various stages of Singapore's economic development. The result is an overview of the way the whole system of social control works.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the nature of social control in Singapore and develops a way of understanding it theoretically in relation to Singapore's political economy. These tasks have not been attempted before in any comprehensive study either within or outside the country. This is partly because the dominant view of Singapore's political economy gives little indication that social control is an important aspect of social relations in the city state, which is seen as an economic miracle, a veritable haven of prosperity and contentment. The steadily rising standard of living is credited to the efficacy of People's Action Party (PAP) rule and often to the personal wisdom of Lee Kuan Yew. If noted at all, the authoritarianism of the government is seen as no more than the necessary imposition of discipline on a potentially fractious electorate for its own economic good.

Yet the political atmosphere in Singapore is one of nagging fear born of decades of repression. People are constantly aware of the political limits on personal behaviour imposed by the state. Almost every action of each government

organ, no matter how superficially insignificant, is analysed for its political implications. When the full weight of PAP-state power is brought to bear on individuals through the internal security apparatus, collective anxiety blooms into widespread fear.

The apparent contradiction between prosperity and fear stimulated this research. It did not take long to discover that this was no contradiction, that the price of the prosperity for the few is the fear of the many.

The Need for Social Control

Inequality is a major characteristic of Singapore society. The wealthiest ten per cent of households take about thirty per cent of total income, while the poorest ten per cent are left with two or three per cent of total income (Pugh 1989: 842). Furthermore, this inequitable distribution of household income has been worsened by the PAP-state's low-wage, high-technology policies for economic growth. Although official secrecy and PAP manipulation of statistics make reliable measurements very difficult, it has been estimated that "the population in poverty increased from some 25 per cent in the mid-1950s to some 35 per cent in the mid-1970s" (Pugh 1989: 850). This trend was worsened by the increasing exploitation of the labour

force which accompanied the so-called Second Industrial Revolution from 1978 onwards (Salaff 1988: 261). Only a minority of skilled workers improved their incomes, thus increasing the disparity between themselves and unskilled workers.

Between 1979 and 1983, income inequality widened between workers in different occupations and between workers with different educational qualifications. By 1983 the average earnings of administrative and managerial personnel were five times more than those of production and service personnel (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 331).

Inequality and poverty in Singapore are the results of economic development policies which have also affected its neighbours. Since colonial times, Singapore's economy has developed by means of raking off not only the surplus from its own productive sector, but also that of neighbouring countries. The country's strategic geographical location, both militarily and for the commodity trade, and the building of a highly developed infrastructure, enabled it to use Malaya and other Southeast Asian countries as its hinterland. Thus, the inequities of income distribution within Singapore are mirrored by the disparity between the working classes of Singapore and those in Malaysia and Indonesia.

This exploitative economic system requires guarantees, both within Singapore and regionally, of the process of capital accumulation. There is therefore a very clear need for a domestic system of social control which is part of a regional strategy to sustain Singapore's economic role, in the interests of both the Singapore capitalist class and foreign capital.

The Significance of Struggles

Implicit in this analysis of the need for social control is the fact that exploitation invariably meets resistance. People fight back. Singapore is no exception. The powerful nationalist, anti-imperialist movement after 1945 was a response to colonial plunder and rule and the movement could be subdued only by large-scale imperialist violence throughout Southeast Asia. Even then, Britain had to form an alliance with bourgeois nationalist leaders, hand state power to them and change its strategy for exploitation.

The relationship between accumulation, social control and political struggle is central to this thesis. The historical development of the alliance between the PAP-state and imperialism, first Britain and then the US and Japan, does not simply reflect the developmental phases of

Singapore's political economy from colonial entrepot through import substitution industrialisation to export-oriented industrialisation and the concerted attempt to join the ranks of the industrially advanced countries. It is also a periodisation of struggles and the attempts to regulate them.

Accumulation strategies have produced contradictions which have generated struggles, and social control has been directed at suppressing or displacing resistance. This thesis also holds that struggles in Singapore have exacerbated the contradictions, effected adjustments in accumulation and necessitated continual refinement and adaptation of social control. For example, both organised struggles such as opposition political parties or professional associations, and also uncoordinated struggles such as the response of working class Chinese in the 1980s to linguistic policies in education or middle class women's response to state breeding policies, have forced state policies to take account of the underlying contradictions of class, race and gender. Therefore, social control is seen in this study primarily as a response to struggles which also place limits on accumulation. In the relationship between accumulation, struggle and social control, struggle is seen as the driving force, the independent variable. Social control has not been simply a matter of imposing the social requirements of an

accumulation strategy on a quiescent population. Rather, both regulatory methods and strategies of accumulation have been forced to adjust to the upsurge of struggle.

Why Study Social Control ?

If struggle has such a primary role in Singapore, why study social control? By undertaking detailed research on structures of control and repression, have we not succumbed to what Cleaver regards as the blindness of Critical Theorists who, "despite the originality and usefulness of their research into the mechanisms of capitalist domination... remained blind to the ability of working-class struggles to transform and threaten the very existence of capital" (Cleaver 1979: 42)? Cleaver's argument is that the structure of working class power and a strategic analysis of its development are the priorities for study if one wishes to comprehend how that power can be increased.

Without an understanding of one's own power, the ebb and flow of the battle lines can appear as an endless process driven only by the enemy's unilateral self-activity. When the enemy regroups or restructures, as capital is doing in the present crisis, its actions must be grasped in terms of the defeat of prior tactics or strategies by our forces - not simply as another clever move. That an analysis of enemy strategy is necessary is obvious. The essential point is that an adequate understanding of that strategy can be obtained only by grasping it in relation to our own strengths and weaknesses (Cleaver 1979: 42).

The answer to this challenge is two-fold. First, the nature of social control in Singapore is not widely understood either within or outside the country. Analysing it is an important task in itself.

Poverty and inequality are not everywhere obvious in Singapore. Neither is the comprehensive, pervasive system of social control. Nor is the fear which links them. Historically, violence has been the final guarantee of accumulation in Singapore and regionally. The PAP-state emerged from the military suppression of anti-colonial movements and has perpetuated its rule by a system of social control imbued with violence and the threat of its use, a system of fear. Thus, revealing the nature of social control also entails accounting for the effective camouflage of state violence and the social relation which is its political root: the alliance between the Singapore capitalist class, represented by the PAP-state, and imperialism, represented by foreign capital and military power, against those who sell their labour power.

The second response to Cleaver's challenge is that studying social control is one way to understand the historical and potential power of struggles in Singapore. The PAP-state's grip on social organisation and information makes it almost impossible for anyone, Singaporean or foreigner, to study the structure of working class power directly and at close

range. However, the study of social control in Singapore yields a kind of political photographic negative of the dynamics of struggle. The development of regulatory institutions reveals the way people are organising to resist being pressured into activities required for their further exploitation.

Structure of Thesis

A theoretical consideration of social control follows this introduction. It critically examines theoretical traditions which have related accumulation to social control and struggle, and it asks basic questions about what social control is, how it is mediated and the role of ideology. However, the chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive study of all theories of social control. Rather it is a resource to help identify and address the issues which emerge in the subsequent detailed study of Singapore.

The following historical chapter deals with the post-war colonial period and the rise of the Lee Kuan Yew faction of the PAP. It reveals the colonial origins of the PAP-state, of the alliance with foreign capital and of the overall system of social control.

The various ways that Singapore's political economy has been analysed are examined in the next chapter. This is necessary because the way that we understand production and accumulation has implications for our understanding of their relationship to social control.

These initial chapters place the question of social control in its proper theoretical and historical context. This ensures that the subsequent investigation acknowledges the theoretical questions at stake and the political implications of the alliance with foreign capital. Otherwise, a study of the details of social control might produce the false impression of an omnipotent PAP-state with a cunning leadership impervious to the challenges of struggle.

The subsequent chapters form the greater part of this study and concentrate on the concrete ways that social control has worked in Singapore since the PAP came to power until the end of 1990, although there are some references relating to the first half of 1991. These chapters focus on major institutions: public housing, education, elections and parliament, and the law. Each is chosen in order to highlight a major aspect of social control. Both state and non-state (e.g. transnational corporations) institutions mediate social control. However, the dominance of state institutions and the largely successful suppression of

organised working class struggle in the workplace mean that struggles are mainly regulated by the state outside the workplace. Thus, state social control is the concern of this thesis; in particular, state control of the working class.

Public housing is examined first in order to understand how this major aspect of welfare cements state control and pressures people into wage labour. Education is studied next in order to show how Singaporeans are sorted, stratified and fragmented by this system.

The practice of voting within the context of parliamentarism is the subject of the following chapter in order to see how it acts as a major mechanism for manufacturing consent and preventing dissent.

The study of the law and related means of coercion is reserved for the final chapter because state repression and violence are the ultimate sanctions of social control.

The conclusion draws together the insights and themes which have emerged.

CHAPTER 1

THEORISING SOCIAL CONTROL

The task of this chapter is to develop a theory of social control in Singapore, where the role of the state is central. The Singapore state is the country's largest employer; it sets wage levels, regulates labour supply and controls all unions. It holds about 75 per cent of the land and has the power to take the rest. It has been the exclusive or major provider of infrastructure (utilities, communications, media, industrial estates, port and airport services) and of social services (housing, health and education). The government is the major actor in the domestic capital market, and state enterprises have included Singapore Airlines, a trading company and major joint ventures with foreign capital (Linda Lim 1983: 754-756). It also, of course, controls the apparatus of state violence: the police and the internal security organisations, the courts and the prisons, and a large military force. This reach of the state to every corner of Singapore society makes its institutions the major mediators of social control. It is therefore vital to know

how and in whose interests the state exercises social control if we are to understand its significance.

The PAP-state is often lauded for its success in enticing large amounts of foreign capital into Singapore. In fact, Singapore's productive sector is overwhelmingly dominated by transnational corporations (Mirza 1986), whose operations are controlled from abroad and which employ most of Singapore's workers. Therefore, social control by the state needs to be understood in the context of this relationship between the PAP-state and foreign capital. How does the maintenance of the PAP-state's political hegemony over the Singapore working class relate to the accumulation strategies of foreign capital and to the mode of production in Singapore? Theorising social control in Singapore necessarily involves theorising this relationship and the way it functions as an alliance.

We need a theory which will help us comprehend the role of the PAP-state in the context of this alliance. How is the maintenance of its political hegemony over an increasingly exploited working class within Singapore related to the perpetuation of its exploitative economic relations with its much larger, chiefly Malay, neighbours? How do changes in social control relate to shifts in the alliance, to changing accumulation strategies and to people's resistance

and struggles. Thus, the development of a theory entails a periodisation of imperialism and social control.

In addition, a theory of social control must address the relationship between violence and legitimacy. For example, the PAP continually claims political legitimacy on the basis of its overwhelming victories in successive general elections, yet it administers an oppressive and violent system of criminal justice and internal security. How do we understand choice and consent in relation to state violence and other forms of repression?

Singaporeans are encouraged to believe that the PAP-state governs in the national interest regardless of race, class or gender. Yet the PAP-state represents a patriarchal, Chinese capitalist class which cooperates closely with foreign capital. How do we understand theoretically the ideological impact of social control?

It is a major project to bring together these elements in a coherent theory of social control: the state, imperialism, accumulation, struggle, violence, choice, consent, class, race, gender and ideology. How are structures and mechanisms of social control to be identified and differentiated? What is their relationship to the mode of production and to struggles? How do they adapt to changes in the social relations in Singapore? In short, a theory

is needed which is able to focus on the complexities of social control while taking into account the whole political context of Singapore.

Mainstream Marxist political theory provides a useful starting point with its observations on the accumulation and legitimation functions of the state. It theorises that the state gives legitimacy to the accumulation process it facilitates by means of social control. When there are contradictions between these functions owing to class struggle or capitalist crisis, then the state tends to use violence to coerce compliance (Meiksins-Wood 1981: 95). Only recently have Marxists addressed the task of examining how these legitimation functions actually work. Much of their writing is exploratory. Nevertheless, there are some theoretical developments which provide useful analytical categories for such a complex exercise.

THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR POWER, STATE REPRESSION AND IDEOLOGY

Althusserian structuralism is the precursor of much contemporary writing on social control in the mainstream of Marxist theory. Althusser was a major critic of the

empiricism which maintains that only what is observable is real and which denies the primacy of concepts in understanding reality. By focussing on the reproduction of labour power, Althusser tried to identify the unseen structures or pressures underlying the social reality of capitalism. The relevance of his abstractions to a theory of social control lies in the link between the wage relation and the repressive power of the state.

"The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production," Althusser states in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" originally published in 1970 (Althusser 1984: 1). This refers to the reproduction of the productive forces (labour power and means of production) and the existing relations of production.

In order to explain this reproduction, Althusser uses the Marxist categories of infrastructure and superstructure to build his rationalist theory of social control. By infrastructure he means the economic base of a society. The superstructure is itself divided into two levels: politico-legal (law and the state) and the ideological (ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political) (Althusser 1984: 8).

Thus, for example, labour power is reproduced by wages at the level of the economic base. Wages are "only that part of the value produced by the expenditure of labour power which is indispensable for its reproduction" (Althusser 1984: 5). In other words, the worker is not compensated for the total labour time. The remaining surplus value is appropriated by the capitalist. The selling of labour power for a wage is thus a core mechanism of capitalism. What appears as a fair exchange of commodities, labour power for money, is in fact a social relation of exploitation of workers by capitalists. Not only are workers exploited by wage labour, but the wage is also the means by which they are recreated and controlled.

Labour power is also reproduced through the superstructure by the education system and other institutions which influence skill-acquisition and social conformity. "I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression." (Althusser 1984: 7).

In dealing with the question of the reproduction of the relations of production, Althusser locates the state in his dual-level superstructure. He sees the state as the

repressive apparatus by which the ruling class dominates the working class, enabling the process of surplus value extraction. He distinguishes Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which work mainly by ideology (education system, legal and political institutions, trade unions, media, cultural and religious organisations) from the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) which function primarily by violence and repression (government administration, army, police, courts, prisons).

Just as the reproduction of the skills of labour power are provided for "in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection" (Althusser 1984: 7) so, too, is the reproduction of the relations of production "secured by the legal-political and ideological superstructure" (Althusser 1984: 22). The RSAs ensure the political conditions for the operation of the ISAs "which largely secure the reproduction specifically of the relations of production" under the ideology of the ruling class (Althusser 1984:24).

Therefore, according to this theory, social control occurs at the level of the superstructure through political, ideological and repressive institutions. The activities of these institutions are determined by the economic institutions and productive activities which occur at the level of the base.

Critique and Alternative Method

Methodological objections to Althusser's tendency to deduce reality from abstract theoretical conceptions have been prominent among criticisms of his work (e.g. Godelier 1978: 88). Rather than helping to explain reality, his rationalist method has produced a kind of essentialism which is increasingly removed from concrete reality. For example, his splitting of society into separate compartments, as though politics and ideology take place in one part determined by economics in another, has brought problems of the nature of the inter-relationships between the parts. For example, it is never clear how political struggles at the level of the superstructure influence economic activity at the level of the base. His attempts to solve these problems by further elaboration of his rationalist theory include notions of the relative autonomy of the superstructure from the base and the recognition of the "reciprocal action" of the superstructure on the infrastructure. However, the "determination in the last instance" of the economic base is maintained (Althusser 1984: 9).

Thus, the two major problems of his theory remain. First, the methodology of deducing structures from the concepts of Capital prevents any critique of these concepts by concrete

reality. Secondly, the conclusion that structures serve the economic system, which is the independent variable determining all other activity including struggles, is biased towards presumptions of equilibrium and the almost impossibility of change. It is therefore to be expected that a major criticism of Althusserian structuralism is its assumption that structures tend to self-perpetuating equilibrium regardless of struggles for social transformation (Jessop 1988: 149).

An alternative methodology would need to refer constantly back and forth between the concrete activities or practices of institutions and the process of theoretical abstraction. Such a retroductive methodology (Sayer 1979) would enable the fit between the concrete and the abstract to be seen as provisional and always responsive to changing circumstances and new theoretical insights.

Reviewing Althusser's theory by this method makes it possible to gain much that is valuable. For example, we can see all institutions and concrete practices as part of the visible "superstructure". We can see the base as the unseen structural pressures, the relationships of power in a social organisation of productive activity, which we need to identify through theoretical abstraction (Meiksins-Wood 1981: 78-79). Thus, unseen infrastructural pressures or mechanisms of social control present themselves through

concrete institutions. The functions of social control change according to the social formation and the conflicts within it. This is reflected in concrete institutions or practices emphasising different functions at different times or with regard to different social groups.

The implications of these insights will be developed later in this chapter. It is sufficient here to note that, despite these criticisms, Althusser's contribution to developing a theory of social control has been influential in emphasising that there are structures to be identified, including structures which control people such as wage labour. While Althusser's methodology for identifying such structures might be flawed, this does not negate the possibility of their existence. Rather, it implies that a different method is required to identify them.

Althusser highlighted state violence, ideology and the reproduction of the wage relation as major aspects of social control. He has thereby made the relationship between the mode of production and institutions of social control a central theoretical concern. Understanding their inter-relationship remains an imperative for current theories of social control.

ACCUMULATION, REGULATION AND THE STATE

The pattern of Singapore's economic development suggests a correspondence between its accumulation strategy and its system of social control. The political alliance which has made Singapore's economy an adjunct of the capital accumulation processes of much larger economies (e.g. USA, Japan, EC) has apparently led to a remarkably stable political economy. In fact, the various phases of Singapore's development since 1965 have been refinements or differences in degree rather than qualitative transformations.

This relationship between accumulation and social control has been taken up theoretically by the French regulation school from the 1970s (e.g. Aglietta 1979). While owing much to Althusserian structuralism, they focus on "regulation" rather than "reproduction". The main concepts of this school are "regime of accumulation" and "mode of regulation".

An accumulation regime is a particular combination of production and consumption which can be reproduced over time despite conflictual tendencies; and a mode of regulation refers to an institutional ensemble and complex of norms which can secure capitalist reproduction pro tempore despite the conflictual and antagonistic character of capitalist social relations (Jessop 1988: 150).

Aglietta, a pioneer regulation theorist, states that the study of capitalist regulation

is the study of the transformation of social relations as it creates new forms that are both economic and non-economic, that are organised in structures and themselves reproduce a determinant structure, the mode of production (Aglietta 1979: 16).

That is, the whole system is the independent variable. The main theoretical contribution of the regulationists lies in their attempts to understand how the social relation between labour and capital is reproduced and regulated in different configurations over time so as to enable capitalism to overcome crisis.

The wage relation is seen as the basic feature of the mode of regulation. In his major study of capitalist regulation in the United States, Aglietta develops "a theory of social regulation under the dominance of the basic relationship which defines capitalism: the wage relation" (Aglietta 1979: 380). People are regulated by being in wage labour because it provides their subsistence on the condition that they surrender surplus value and thus ensures their conformity and obedience.

These regulatory functions of wage labour make it important that people remain in work, perhaps through a Keynesian state, even when it is not entirely profitable. Thus, like

Althusser, regulationists stress the role of the state in maintaining and extending the wage relation. Indeed, they emphasise its central role.

This overall organisation of society within the state, by which modern capitalism attempts a solution at the political risk of universalising its social conflicts, evidently gives rise to a strong totalitarian tendency under the ideological cover of liberalism. The socialisation of the conditions of life can be a support for accumulation only if the leading fraction of the capitalist class succeeds in imposing an overall management of labour-power by binding the conditions of its reproduction in a tight network of social controls (Aglietta 1979: 386).

Bonefield describes the role of the state as follows:

It is within the state that the regulative forms are condensed, homogenised, and their operation achieved. It is the state that carries through appropriate forms of disorganisation of the activity of labour which assure the channelling of class struggle into "suitable" forms of capitalist reproduction (Bonefield 1987: 100).

But, as noted above, the main proposition of the regulationists is that the structures of regulation, such as the wage relation, fit together with the structures of accumulation to form a system which minimises capitalist crises by forcing class struggle into institutionalised forms that do not threaten accumulation. This system may change internally according to shifting class alliances, the need for more or less coercion by state violence and the competitive pressures of capitalism. Nevertheless, the system is maintained over time by its internal flexibility

until it can no longer accommodate or contain the pressures generated by its contradictions. At this point the regulationists speak of a crisis of the whole accumulation regime and mode of regulation (Bonefield 1987: 104; Jessop 1988: 151, 1990: 309). That is, a crisis in one part becomes a crisis of the whole, requiring the transition to a new hegemonic system.

The restructuring of the regime of accumulation is posited as a qualitatively new phase of capital accumulation. This is particularly seen through the regulationist interpretation of the changing forms of the state, which they see as responses to qualitative changes in strategies of accumulation. They have conceptualised an historical transition from Fordist accumulation (mass production and mass consumption) and the Fordist state (corporatist, statist, welfarist) to post-Fordist accumulation (flexible labour practices and flexible all-purpose machinery producing a variety of products; economy of scope rather than scale) and the post-Fordist state (privatisation of the regulation of social reproduction, with the state focussing on repressive means of regulation) (Bonefield 1987).

Critique: Method and Class Struggle

The major criticism of regulation theory is that, despite protestations to the contrary (Jessop 1988: 150), it fails to escape the main theoretical and methodological problems of Althusserian structural-functionalism.

The whole capitalist system is seen as determinant. For example, Hirsch holds that, "Within the framework of its general laws, capitalist development is determined rather by the actions of the acting subjects and classes, the resulting concrete conditions of crisis and their political consequences" (Hirsch 1978: 74-75; my emphasis).

Holloway makes a similar point in relation to so-called "objective laws of capitalist development" and a deductive analytical method.

To emphasise the objective laws of capitalist development in the early 1970s was to emphasise the inherently unstable nature of capitalism. In the late 1980s, the appeal to [such laws] has become a reformist argument for adaptation to the inevitable restructuring of capitalism. In a world in which it seems that the objective laws of capitalist development have crushed the subjective struggles of the working class, it seems the only option open to Marxists is to choose between lamenting the growth of capitalist violence and repression or to argue for accommodation to the new "realities".... Both of these variations on the theme of postfordism have the same implications: struggle against laws of capitalist development is hopeless. The world is closed, the future is determined (Holloway 1988: 99).

Clarke notes that

the regulation approach has tended to adopt a structural-functionalist model of successive phases of structural integration and structural disintegration.... [Regulationists] recognise that economic relationships are socially regulated, but the regulation of social relationships is still subordinate to the functional requirements of the expanded reproduction of capital (Clarke 1988: 68, 69).

Thus, according to Bonefield, regulationists hold that it is the "development of capital accumulation which determines the environment for class struggle", and this "reduces class struggle once more to a subordinate factor". The working class becomes merely the object and victim of history (Bonefield 1987: 105, 123-4).

Reacting against the "lifeless determinism" of the regulation approach, Holloway states that it is not the objective laws of capitalist development implied by regulation theory but "the presence of the working class as an antagonistic force inside capital which is the key to understanding the development and instability of capitalism" (Holloway 1988: 101). Thus, the historical forms of domination reflect struggle; they are not the framework within which class struggle takes place. This means crisis does not develop apart from class struggle: "it is the crisis of the class relation, the crisis of the rule of capital over labour" (Holloway 1988: 102).

This critique has further implications for our understanding of the institutional forms which regulationists identify as comprising modes of regulation. The methodological problems of regulationists become most obvious in their understanding of the structures giving rise to the forms of social control. They deduce the significance of these changing forms on the basis of their rationalist assumptions about the over-riding importance of the whole system of accumulation. A retroductive methodology would require checking abstractions against reality more systematically, rather than trying to fit reality to the abstractions. This weakness has led to considerable doubt concerning the real existence of the structures of Fordism and post-Fordism (Clarke 1988: 62) and the comparative and historical typologies elaborated around them. Many of the political tendencies associated with them may be real ones, but the reification of the postulated structures behind them must be rejected because the tendencies are the result of struggle.

Therefore, in reality, the institutional forms of social control are institutionalised forms of struggle, significant for the indications they provide of the historical particularity of struggle rather than marking a qualitatively new phase of capital accumulation, such as post-Fordism.

The institutional forms identified by the regulationists are of fundamental importance to an understanding of the historical development of the capitalist mode of production. However these forms are best understood as institutional forms of class relationships, through which the quantitative determination of relations of production and exchange is subordinate to the struggle over the reproduction of capitalist class relations. "Modes of regulation" are better understood as institutional forms of class struggle, which certainly define the historical character of accumulation, but which do not define qualitatively different regimes of accumulation (Clarke 1988: 69).

Thus, class struggles, the expressions of conflict between parts of the social formation, are the independent variable. People's actions to resist or overcome exploitation can be seen as the motor of history.

The state must be included in the institutional forms which have developed in response to and need to be understood in terms of historical class struggles. Regulation theory has been challenged for deriving the form of the state from the nature of capital (Holloway 1988: 94), from the needs of the system of accumulation. Rather, the society-wide social control functions of the state should be seen as the results of struggles and as the reason why "the struggle over the forms of capitalist domination necessarily becomes a struggle over the form of the state" (Clarke 1988: 85). Further, the emergence of a crisis leads to

an intensification of the competitive and class struggles which develop in and against the existing

institutional forms of capitalist class domination, struggles which necessarily take on a political form and so impose themselves on the state. The state does not stand above these struggles, as the guarantor of the functional integration of the "regime of accumulation", for the state is an aspect of the institutional forms of capitalist class relations, and so is itself the object of struggle. Thus the state does not, and cannot, resolve the contradictions of capital, but reproduces them in a political form (Clarke 1988: 84-85).

The restructuring of the institutional forms of the state as part of an offensive to fragment the working class can therefore be seen as characteristic of the last decade in most advanced capitalist countries. This interpretation stands in contrast to the regulationists' view that the restructuring of the regime of accumulation (through neo-Fordist or post-Fordist forms of production) is the main development. The fragmentation has proceeded, according to Clarke, through

the attempt to confine the aspirations of the working class within the limits of capital by confining wages and social expenditure within the limits of profitability....The political stability of monetarism, no less than that of Keynesianism, has depended on the sustained, if uneven, accumulation of capital on a world scale which has enabled the state to isolate and fragment working class resistance, while capital has been able to concede a steady rise in wages to sections of the working class (Clarke 1988: 86).

Two main points emerge from this critique of the regulation approach in relation to developing a theory of social control. First, it is the outcome of struggles, rather than regimes of accumulation or modes of regulation, which

will determine the forms in which crises unfold. Regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation are the outcomes of class struggles.

Secondly, shorn of its Althusserian essentialism, regulationism does offer a way of seeing society as a whole system with class struggle as the determinant structural pressure.

THEORISING IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

In the earlier critique of Althusser's base-superstructure distinction, it was mentioned that the base could better be understood as the unseen structural pressures and the superstructure as all visible institutions and concrete practices. An implication of this perspective is that ideology might be understood as being produced by practices rather than as a pre-packaged set of beliefs imposed by specialised institutions. If this is so, then many different practices, such as actions of resistance generated by class conflict, will produce different ways of thinking about reality. It is important that these differing notions of ideology be further explored here because the relationship between ideology and practices is

crucial to our understanding of the way social control works to contain or overcome class struggle.

Notions of Ideology

Ideology in Singapore is often viewed as a set of precepts imposed by the state. In fact, the PAP-state itself appears to have an essentially idealist understanding of ideology. Its current search for the elements of a state-sponsored National Ideology (STW 13 October 1990) and the heavy-handed doctrine of Total Defence (GOS 1989a: 171) would seem to be predicated on the position that ideas cause action.

Such a perspective has led to the identification of certain social institutions as primarily ideological. In the West, theorists have often categorised the education system, the media and the church as institutions primarily concerned with ideological indoctrination (e.g. Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses). Similarly, writers on Singapore have seen the PAP-controlled education system as the major mechanism for imposing state ideology simply because of its pedagogical functions. It is "the most important item in the programme of thought control" (George 1984: 136) and the instrument of "elite ideology and mass indoctrination" (Busch 1974: 32).

This way of seeing ideology and specialist ideological institutions leads to a focus on the characteristics of the imposed ideology.

Political and social information and values are taught both in the relatively blatant forum of civics classes and in the more subtle context of such courses as history and literature. Such indoctrination is of great concern to the Singapore Government and, in particular, to the Ministry of Education, which develops textbooks and curricula designed to incorporate the official ideology in the educational process. Because the government is so intimately involved in the political aspects of schooling and because the values taught to pupils are the same as those impressed upon the general population, we must look at the ruling elite's ideology in order to understand the political consequences of education (Busch 1974: 32).

That is to say, because an imposed ideology causes people to engage in particular social practices, the way to understand what is happening to them is to examine the ideology as it has been formalised by the rulers. It must be assumed that ideological imposition is necessary and successful because people do not otherwise perceive such practices to be in their interest. Thus, according to this idealist approach, ideology produces practices or organised behaviour.

But this way of understanding the relationship between ideology and action does not fit Singapore's historical development. Let us focus on Singapore's education system

since, from this perspective, it is regarded as a primarily ideological institution. However, our analysis could apply to other institutions equally well.

The most striking characteristic of the PAP-state's education system is not the opposition to it but the extraordinary degree of cooperation and participation it achieved across the whole of society. This suggests that an increasing majority of people saw it as working in their interests. These factors cannot be adequately explained by the view that ideology was imposed and that people were pressured to behave in certain ways. Nor can the post-modernist position be sustained that discourse or language provide the ideological categories which primarily determine perception and thus what people do.

A rather more complex notion of ideology is called for. In developing it, we need to look at an alternative notion: that practices or activities produce ideology. This can be done by examining the example of wage labour, a central practice of social control.

The Example of Wage Labour

In Singapore, a city-state with no rural hinterland for peasants to eke out an existence, there are few

alternatives to wage labour for the lower classes. Subsistence is only possible either through personally engaging in wage labour or through dependence on a wage-earning family member. From the beginning of its rule, the PAP-state rapidly implemented policies of destroying the semi-rural subsistence economy of the parts of the island outside the main urban areas. Strict controls on street vending, destruction of squatter areas and fishing villages ensured that, for the vast majority, wage labour quickly became the only means to survive.

Wage labour is a practice which has specific and far-reaching ideological effects. When workers engage in wage labour, through their total involvement in the practice and the way it works, they come to think that they are being paid for their total labour time.

The payment of wages for the commodity labour-power creates the false appearance that the labourer's total labour time has been compensated. Here again it should be noted that this false appearance constitutes an ideological relation based on the material organisation of production (Fine 1980: 5).

This ideological effect conceals the real unjust social relation: the subordination of those who provide labour power to those who buy it.

A further ideological effect of wage labour is that workers think they have freely entered into the contract to sell

their labour by the action of exercising a choice between jobs. In reality, no matter which job a worker chooses, exploitation is present through the practice of wage labour. Ideologically therefore, the act of choosing becomes an act of consent to the relationship of exploitation.

The only choice which would avoid exploitation through wage labour and avoid giving consent to it would be not to work for any capitalist. But we have noted that, in Singapore, unlike countries with a rural hinterland or a welfare state, this choice is not available. This almost total integration of the lower classes into wage labour means its ideological effects have an exceptional grip in Singapore. Exploitation and control of people appears as an exchange of equal things: labour power for money. Workers think they have freely chosen to offer their labour power in exchange for a fair wage. Hence the practice of wage labour also produces the ideological effect that workers think the practice is in their own interests. The ideological perception arising from their own actions legitimates the practice. Thus, they do not need to be individually forced into a practice that is necessary to maintain the social relations which exploit them.

Ideology and Choice

From the example of wage labour, we can understand ideology primarily as the way people come to think about what they do, about the practices they are involved in. In this sense, practices produce ideology. Many practices perpetuate exploitative social relations while ideologically concealing and thus legitimating them. The most politically powerful practices in terms of legitimation are those which allow some degree of choice. This is because the ideological effect of an act of choice is consent.

This is the main effect of the parliamentary electoral system which we will study in detail. The act of voting, of exercising a choice, produces the ideological effect in voters that they have voluntarily consented, not only to the electoral result, but to the political system as a whole. Similarly, choosing a school or a course of study is to consent to the political objectives of the education system. To choose to drop out is an act of blaming oneself for failure.

Thus, practices which produce the most powerful ideological effect are those like wage labour, voting and education, which enable people to think they have voluntarily chosen to do what is necessary to uphold the hegemony of the

ruling class or to assist the development of capitalism. They do not have to be forced by ideas because they are pressured into practices which they see as in their own interests: a job means economic survival, education is the pathway to a good job, voting for stable government preserves this investment of effort.

Therefore, in order to understand the politics of ideology, we need to examine the concrete practices which ensure that the appearance of what is happening differs from the reality, from the real social relations. In order to understand the political effects of ideology, we need to understand how what people think about what they do differs from what they really do.

Practices and Institutions

One of the tasks of this study is to uncover the ideological effects of practices which appear to organise or control things or commodities (e.g. labour power, votes, apartments) but which actually control people.

Institutions will be seen as systematically organising these practices (preserving, mobilising, coordinating) and their ideological effects. The way people think about what they do as a result of doing it becomes ideological legitimation. Institutions formalise this ideological

legitimation. Since the practice of wage labour is basic to the fundamental social relation of capitalism, many institutions organise this practice and systematise its ideological effects. In Singapore, the most important of these are the transnational corporations (which will not be studied in this thesis) and the PAP-state bureaucracy, especially the Ministry of Labour and the National Productivity Board of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

In the area of welfare, the institution of public housing organises practices which have the ideological effect of engendering loyalty while in reality fragmenting the working class and binding it more tightly to the practice of wage labour. The ideological effects of the practices of parliamentarism are systematised into an ideology of popular consent and constitutional legitimacy by the institutions of liberal democracy. In fact, these practices marginalise or eliminate real political alternatives. The ideological effects of the practices of the criminal law are systematised by legal institutions into an ideology of universal justice while criminalising the working class and terrorising it into submission.

A Feedback Model

This discussion of notions of ideology and its relationship to concrete practices has favoured the perspective that practices produce ideology. This is because it appears to fit more closely with Singapore's development. Despite his early ambiguity on the matter (1985: 160), Clammer, a sociological specialist on the state and ideology in Singapore, also at times comes close to this position. For example, he states that "symbolic systems themselves reflect the practices which underlie and give rise to them" (1985: 165).

This notion also seems to fit our understanding of the relationship between accumulation, regulation and struggle. People are pressured to behave in certain ways which will advance capitalist accumulation. Their involvement in such practices shapes their ideas about what they are doing and legitimates the process of exploitation. This is a form of regulation or control, as we have seen from the example of wage labour. However, when people resist pressures to act in conformity with the economic strategy, they are able to perceive social reality differently. That is, people are able to think differently when they are able to behave differently. This different behaviour is political struggle and may be highly organised or be the uncoordinated actions of many individuals. Such resistance

arises from contradictions in capitalist social relations. Social control aims to prevent struggle by regulating the effects of such contradictions, through pressuring as many people as possible into practices which support capitalist accumulation.

However, it would be wrong to say that the formalised ideologies of institutions have no effects on people's behaviour. Particular ideas, discourses and representations are among the many pressures which might lead people to engage in practices. We may therefore postulate a kind of feedback model of the relationship between ideology and practices. Thus, people's involvement in concrete practices may be seen as the primary determinant of how they come to understand society. In this sense, activities produce ideology. But the formalised ideas arising from the institutionalisation of such activities may also be seen as pressuring people to behave in accordance with them.

THEORISING THE SINGAPORE STATE

There are two main ways of theorising the state, each of which represents a broad theoretical tendency. Neo-Marxian

and bourgeois theory derive the form of the state from the nature of capital. Mainstream Marxist theory sees the state as reproducing the contradictions of capital in a particular political form. In the latter theory, struggle is therefore the driving force of political developments.

But mainstream Marxist theory has, until recently, been largely preoccupied with the state in the advanced, imperialist countries. As a consequence, not much detailed work on the neo-colonial state has been done from the perspective of this tradition. Recent writers, therefore, often draw on neo-Marxian or non-Marxian categories, or a mixture of both, in theorising the Singapore state, because these traditions have focussed more on underdeveloped countries.

Many writers have merely classified the Singapore state in accordance with their own economic theories. This leads to some contradictory results. Milton Friedman, the free marketeer, has lauded the Singapore state as non-interventionist and as an example of economic liberalism. He approved of the PAP-state's incentives to foreign investment and its lack of restrictions on repatriating the surplus generated in Singapore. Ironically, John Kenneth Galbraith, the Keynesian economist, has held Singapore up as the ideal of the interventionist state (Linda Lim 1983:

754). The latter focussed on state domination and careful control of domestic capital accumulation.

The value of the work of other writers has come from what they tell us about the PAP-state in their search for a suitable label. For example, Paul Lim, writing in the European structuralist tradition, labours at great length to place the Singapore state within a comparative typology. He settles on "bureaucratic-authoritarian" as the favoured description. But he appears to do so deductively before studying the concrete realities of Singapore, since his categories often do not arise from his data (Paul Lim 1989).

The Bureaucratic-Authoritarian and Corporatist State

Other writers have also categorised the state as "bureaucratic-authoritarian" and have argued over whether or not it is "corporatist". Rodan (1989), writing in the Leninist tradition, and Mirza (1986), drawing on the neo-Marxian tradition, both settled on the bureaucratic-authoritarian classification. The term itself derives partly from Weberian theory and partly from a neo-Marxism which sees bureaucratic-authoritarianism as a developmental stage of Third World industrialisation. Following on from the oligarchic state, which is associated with export of

raw materials, and the populist state of the national bourgeoisie which results from import substitution industrialisation, there is a third stage of economic development which is characterised by the emergence of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state.

This is reached where the opportunities for small-scale investment in light industry have diminished. To solve this crisis of accumulation, large-scale investment in intermediate and capital goods is required. This "deepening" or vertical integration necessitates a relaxation of industry protection, the promotion of exports and the attraction of international capital....Requirements of this production are beyond the capacity of most nationally-based companies. Thus, not only is the national bourgeoisie edged out of the commanding heights of the economy, but a host of unpopular fiscal austerity and labour disciplinary measures are introduced to finance the new programme and attract capital. In these circumstances, the basis of political populism is undermined and a new alliance is formed between the military, civilian technocrats and the "upper bourgeoisie", a highly oligopolised and trans-nationally oriented fraction of capital. All three are committed to carrying forward their increased integration of the economy with the international division of labour (Rodan 1989: 9).

This analysis reflects real trends in Latin America and, to a lesser extent, in Singapore. But it is problematic. Rather than seeing the economic and the political as part of a whole social formation driven by class struggle, each particular state form is derived from a corresponding economic trend. Thus, the problem is not so much one of nomenclature but of method. The neo-Marxian tendency views the state as shaped by the developmental stages of the world economic system and thus loses sight of its role in

managing class relations and in being shaped by and responding to class struggle.

The debate between Mirza and Rodan over whether or not the Singapore state is corporatist also raises this methodological issue. According to Rodan, "the peculiar corporatist nature of the PAP is definitive of the Singapore model" (Rodan 1989: 29). Both Rodan and Mirza refer to Schmitter's definition of corporatism:

[Corporatism is] a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports (Schmitter 1979: 22).

However, they draw different conclusions from this definition. Mirza contends that the absence of the "high feudal exchange of rights and obligations inherent in corporatism" is absent in Singapore, since the government has total control over organised labour and, at the other extreme, is itself subject to the demands of foreign corporations (Mirza 1986: 72). He further states that there is no need for a corporatist framework, as all social groups are already under control.

Rodan, on the other hand, points to Schmitter's distinction between "societal" and "state" corporatism, the former applying to "the post-liberal, advanced capitalist, organised democratic welfare state", while the latter relates to the "antiliberal, delayed capitalist, authoritarian, neo-mercantilist state" (Schmitter 1979: 24). Under societal corporatism, the needs of capitalist production and accumulation are met by cooption and incorporation. State corporatism meets these needs by repression and political exclusion of the working class, usually in circumstances where the domestic bourgeoisie is too weak or divided to achieve them within a liberal polity. Rodan amplifies this approach with his own definition of corporatism, which he applies to Singapore:

[Corporatism is] the establishment of structures of selective and exclusive political representation which afford the state an enhanced capacity to define social, political and economic goals. This arrangement is usually supported by the ideological notion that through the state's direction the interests of different groups and classes can be reconciled and, indeed, must be reconciled for the benefit of all (Rodan 1989: 30).

Despite their different terminologies, there is broad agreement between the two writers. Both accept the vital role of the PAP-state in industrialisation and social control. Both see the need for a more exact description of it. Rodan adapts Schmitter's definition, while Mirza leaves the issue open after considering the PAP state's

role as comprador and also exploiter of the Southeast Asian region on behalf of Western capital (Mirza 1986: 73).

A major issue at stake in the above discussion is the nature of the relationship of the PAP-state to the Singapore bourgeoisie and working class, and to imperialism. To what extent is the PAP-state comprador or nationalistic, and how has the development of social relations in Singapore brought these characteristics about? What implications do they have for the role of the state in social control?

To examine these questions further and develop theoretical categories which more concisely relate the transformation of the Singapore state to class struggle, we need to take a step back from current writing on Singapore.

The Absolutist State and the Internal Bourgeoisie

Poulantzas' analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe (Poulantzas 1973a: 157ff) provides a useful categorisation of the transformation of the state resulting from the struggle between the nobility and bourgeoisie. He postulates the emergence of the absolutist state which had many of the characteristics of a capitalist state even though the bourgeois class was not yet the

dominant class (Poulantzas 1973a: 158). In this sense, there was a "non-correspondence between the political superstructure and the economic instance" (Poulantzas 1973a: 157).

The absolutist state is characterised by the fact that the holder of state power, normally a monarch, concentrates in his hands a power which is not controllable by the other institutions and whose exercise is not curbed by any limiting law....The state makes its appearance as a centralised institution, as the source of all "political" power inside a territorial-national domain. It is in this way that the notion of state sovereignty gradually takes shape: it expresses the exclusive, unique, institutionalised and strictly public dominance over a territorial-national domain and the effective exercise of central power....The fundamental characteristic of the absolutist state is that it represents the strictly political unity of a centralised power over a national ensemble....Furthermore, it is the absolutist state's relative autonomy in its structures from the economic instance which allows the state apparatus to function in a way that is autonomous from, indeed contrary to, its class membership (Poulantzas 1973a: 162, 165).

The bureaucracy and the military were central to the state apparatus, their roles determined by the capitalist structures of the absolutist state (Poulantzas 1973a: 164-5). The "non-correspondence" of economic structure and class relations is explained by Poulantzas in terms of the role of the state during the period of primitive capital accumulation.

In fact, these functions of the state (expropriating small landowners, financing, supplying funds for starting industrialisation, attacking seigneurial power, breaking down commercial barriers within the national boundaries, etc.) can be performed only by a

state with a capitalist character, by a centralised public power of a strictly political character. These are precisely its "national/popular" institutions which, to a large extent, permit it to function against the interests of the nobility, at a time when it still cannot clearly rely on the bourgeoisie. This role of "force" of the state in favour of the "emergent bourgeoisie", as Marx describes it, can only be analysed as the intervention of the absolutist transition state. In other words, it is not any state which could have had this role of "force" in fixing the limits of a not-yet-given mode of production. The transition, which assigns these functions to the state, allows them to be performed only by a state with a capitalist character (Poulantzas 1973a: 166).

In the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the underlying class struggle which shaped the absolutist state was that between the bourgeoisie and the nobility, as the former strove to become the dominant class politically and economically. The state ruled largely by force owing to its relative autonomy from the main conflicting classes. As it grew stronger, the bourgeoisie eventually came to govern through the bureaucracy and through the military.

In the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism in Singapore, the class struggle which shaped the neo-colonial state was that between the anti-imperialist lower classes and the British bourgeois ruling class and its imperialist state. The struggle for political independence forced the British to hand over state power to a fraction of the local capitalist class, in cooperation with whom it could continue to rule. Here my distinction between "ruling" and "governing" is crucial. The PAP-state has governed but has

not, by itself, constituted a ruling class. It could not rule without an alliance with imperialism. The local capitalist class in Singapore did not become, as we shall see in the following chapter, economically dominant. During the colonial period it was dependent on British trade and investment for its survival. The nationalist fraction of this class did not have sufficient economic and political power to advance its own interests in the transition to independence or subsequently and thus lost the opportunity for political leadership.

The pro-imperialist, English-educated fraction of the local capitalist class, led by Lee Kuan Yew, was therefore able to consolidate an alliance with the British and acquire state power. In this process, its main opposition was the anti-imperialist mass movement of the lower classes with which it initially made an accommodation. Hence, when the Lee group came to power, it was relatively autonomous from the nationalist fraction of its own class but reliant on imperialism as its main power base from which to defeat the mass movement and then to entrench itself in government. The economic policies of the PAP-state alliance with imperialism have kept local capital peripheral to the main productive sectors of the economy, even though some local capital accumulation has been encouraged.

The PAP-state has many of the characteristics of an absolutist state in its autonomy from local class forces; for example, its ability to expropriate land, to finance industrial infrastructure, to organise the working class and to override the interests of local capital.

But the historical development of class struggle in Singapore and the shifting alliance with imperialism has changed the line up of class forces surrounding the state. The nature of the pro-imperialist capitalist class and the interest of other fractions of the class in its political hegemony have changed since the initial transition to independence. Indeed, this shift is what lies behind the different perceptions of the PAP-state as comprador or nationalist. Rather than settle for one term or the other, it would seem more useful to acknowledge that both tendencies are present in the Singapore bourgeoisie, including the PAP.

Poulantzas has described a class with both tendencies as an "internal bourgeoisie" in his analysis of secondary, advanced capitalist countries like France:

This bourgeoisie, which exists alongside sectors that are genuinely comprador, no longer possesses the structural characteristics of a national bourgeoisie, though the extent of this of course differs from one imperialist formation to another. As a result of the reproduction of American capital actually within these formations, it is, firstly, implicated by multiple ties of dependence in the international division of

labour and in the international concentration of capital under the domination of American capital, and this can go so far as to take the form of a transfer of part of the surplus-value it produces to the latter.

On the other hand, however, it is not a mere comprador bourgeoisie....the internal bourgeoisie maintains its own economic foundation and base of capital accumulation both within its own social formation, and abroad. Even at the political and ideological level it continues to exhibit its own specific features....Significant contradictions thus exist between the internal bourgeoisie and American capital. Even if these cannot lead it to adopt positions of effective autonomy or independence towards this capital, they still have their effects on the state apparatuses of these formations in their relations with the American state (Poulantzas 1974: 72-73).

Szymanski has adapted this definition of an internal bourgeoisie to under-developed capitalist countries. "An internal bourgeoisie that both collaborates and manifests contradictions with the transnational corporations seems to be the dominant section of the bourgeoisie in most less-developed capitalist countries" (Szymanski 1983: 415).

Thus, we can understand the PAP-state as being a product of the struggle between the Singapore working class and the capitalist classes of the imperialist countries, with the rule of the latter classes being mediated through the internal bourgeoisie's governance. Because other sections of the local capitalist class did not have substantial vested interests in PAP governance, this rule has been marked by high levels of state violence and coercion.

Under classical imperialism, the local capitalist class had minimal responsibility for social control and was therefore able to be totally cooperative with imperialism. But under neo-colonialism when the local bourgeoisie had state power, this comprador character could not be sustained without undermining its social control. The neo-colonial state had to be more nationalistic in order to establish its legitimacy.

In addition to the categories of absolutist state and internal bourgeoisie, it will also be useful to keep in mind the bureaucratic-authoritarian and corporatist categories as we study social control in Singapore. However, the main conclusion of this brief survey of approaches to the Singapore state must be that there are some large theoretical gaps which arise from problems of methodology. If we wish to theorise the Singapore state in the context of its alliance with imperialism, we need to understand how the various state and non-state forms of social control are related and how they change as the alliance changes. We need to understand the nature of the PAP-state as the product of the social forces and conflicts which produced this alliance in order to comprehend how social control works. To imply that the form of the state is mandated by a particular stage of economic development is to lapse into a determinism which ignores the primacy of social relations. Our examination in the following chapter

of post-war British imperialism in Malaysia and Singapore will enable these questions to be taken up more completely in the subsequent chapter on political economy.

THEORISING SOCIAL CONTROL IN SINGAPORE

The ways of theorising social control outlined so far are not intended to be exhaustive of the contributions of all theorists or theoretical schools. Rather, my aim here is to discover theoretical categories and methodological parameters which appear most promising for the task of understanding social control in Singapore.

The primacy of struggle in relation to accumulation and regulation is a major insight. It enables us to have a means of understanding the development of the forms and practices of social control including the role of the PAP-state. Additionally, by placing a periodisation of social control within the political context of the alliance between the PAP-state and foreign capital, we will be able to comprehend how strategies of accumulation and patterns of regulation adjust to struggle both within Singapore and regionally.

Mode of Production and Regulation

More specifically, the debate between regulationists and their critics has yielded a rich supply of theoretical categories and methodological insights. Most important has been the emphasis on the social formation in relation to regulation; that is, the implications for social control of a mode of production involving wage labour and thus the reproduction of social classes which tend to be in conflict because of the exploitation involved.

We have seen that social control or regulation is vital for the reproduction of labour power and that the particular relation between capital and labour is related to the nature of the production process. Hence also the centrality of the wage relation to social control. The question of the correlation between Singapore's mode of production and its mechanisms of social control can now be taken up in this theoretical context, taking care to avoid the economic determinism for which the regulationists have been criticised.

Theory of Crisis

We have noted the regulationist tendency to see structures of accumulation and regulation as comprising a complete system which deals with crises by stabilising around specific forms of institutionalised class compromise. Such a construct implies an equilibrium impervious to struggle, because the system as a whole is seen to be the determining force with class struggle as a dependent variable.

However, the concept of such an interrelated system remains an important theoretical insight. It recognises that crises may occur at many points in the system and accumulate in many different ways. If one then sees class conflict as the independent variable, it follows that struggle in one part of the system may destabilise the whole and that, therefore, struggle may be effective at many points in the system. In fact, we will see later in this study that the PAP-state faces exactly this problem, as each struggle threatens to unravel the entire system of social control.

State Forms and Forms of Struggle

The notion that class struggle determines institutional forms of regulation or social control is related to this view of crisis. Since class struggle permeates and shapes

all institutional forms of social control, crisis in one part may indicate a crisis of class relations as a whole.

Our understanding of the PAP-state may be considerably enhanced by seeing the institutional forms of the state as shaped by struggle and as a site of struggle. The PAP-state's central and extensive role in social control, especially in the fragmentation of the working class, can be seen as a response to struggle. Similarly, its alliance with imperialism can also be seen as the product of particular struggles.

However, it must be noted that in Singapore there are forms of struggle related to race and gender as well as class. The existence of a predominantly Chinese state in a Malay archipelago has been secured by the alliance with imperialism. We shall see that the communal potential of Chinese dominance in Singapore has been exploited regionally in order to divert attention from anti-imperialist struggles. Within Singapore, racial minorities (Malay, Indian and migrant workers) are the most exploited sections of the working class. Their struggles against exploitation are related to the structures of racism.

Women are exploited for their breeding capacity and for their unpaid or cheap labour. Foreign investment has been attracted to places where the combination of reasonably

advanced technology, well-developed infrastructure and comparatively cheap labour enables high levels of surplus value to be generated. Women have supplied much of this cheap labour and are therefore subjected to the pressures of both patriarchal and capitalist social relations. We will see that contradictions have arisen between these structures of domination and exploitation, leading to various forms of struggle by women. Thus, in Singapore, struggles against patriarchy and racism are interwoven with class struggle.

Ideology, Method and Social Control

The relationships between choice and consent, between legitimacy and state violence, between practices and ideology can now be explored by means of the understanding of ideology outlined above. This feedback model postulates that determination is primarily in the direction of practices producing ideology with secondary determination in the other direction. Thus, struggle produces ideological consequences which have to be addressed by institutions of social control.

There are several methodological implications of this survey of some attempts to theorise social control. First, there is the regulationists' positive example of a

"research programme [which] shows a clear commitment to concrete analysis of concrete conjunctures through a rich and complex range of economic and political concepts directly related to the nature of the capitalist exploitation and domination" (Jessop 1988: 162). That is, the detailed study of institutional forms of social control is essential to the development of theory. There is a need for systematic investigation of new mechanisms and the discovery of new linkages between them. There is still much work to be done in order to understand how systems of social control work.

Secondly, it is clear that any process of abstraction must include a retroductive method of constantly checking theory against reality and reality against theory. Otherwise we risk lapsing into obscure rationalist formalism or mere empiricism.

Thirdly, the regulationists' periodisation of regimes of accumulation attempted to show that structures of accumulation and regulation fit together in different ways at different times. The developmental phases of Singapore's political economy noted in the introduction have been accompanied by changes in its systems of social control. Since Singapore's political economy is characterised by the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital, a periodisation of social control in this context

will necessarily be a periodisation of the phases of the movement of capital internationally and of the struggles against its effects.

Although it will be theorised in greater depth in the chapter on political economy, we must note here that the internationalisation of each circuit of capital (commodity capital through trade, productive capital through the operation of transnational corporations, and money capital through foreign direct investment) are political moves which express changes in social relations and represent stages of imperialism. The latest stage has involved the building of alliances between the capitalist classes of the imperialist countries and the capitalist classes of the neo-colonies. Imperialism creates new contradictions and political struggles. Thus, a periodisation of social control in relation to struggles will also reflect the historical development of imperialism.

It is just such a periodisation which is the focus of the following chapter: Singapore's transition from colony to neo-colony in the face of anti-imperialist struggle. This study will provide the initial test for many of the above theoretical categories.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROOTS OF TERROR: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ALLIANCE WITH IMPERIALISM AND THE RISE OF THE PAP-STATE

This historical overview examines the way that British imperialism attempted to retain the colonial pattern of accumulation and rule by using military force against the anti-imperialist movement. Ultimately British interests could be preserved only by building a political alliance with bourgeois nationalist forces and surrendering state power to them, thus splitting and diverting the struggle against imperialism. The building of this alliance with the Lee faction of the PAP is the focus of the second part of this historical analysis.

Studying the emergence of the alliance will assist us to understand the PAP-state's contemporary social control in terms of the reciprocal obligations of this relationship; especially the PAP's role in creating the maximal conditions for the development of capitalism in Singapore and the region. The linkage of PAP-state social control with imperialist military power has provided the ultimate

guarantee of social control in Singapore and, as we will see, has imbued all its mechanisms with the threat of violence. Unless contemporary social control is understood in this historical context, there might be a temptation to ascribe the present militarisation of the PAP-state and its continuing repression solely to PAP self-interest. Therefore this chapter throws light on the roots of contemporary social control in relation to accumulation and struggle.

SUPPRESSING ALTERNATIVES TO COLONIAL RULE 1945-55

The period 1945-55 marks a hiatus between the decline of British imperial pre-eminence through the loss of its colonies and the global assertion of US imperialism through its growing control over neo-colonies. The period's main feature was the British attempt to suppress strong anti-colonial forces unleashed by the Second World War which opposed reversion to colonial rule. It concluded with the search for local allies to which state power could be entrusted in return for the protection of Western interests. That is, the strength of nationalism and the anti-colonial struggle eventually forced Britain to revise its plans simply to revert to colonial rule. This period

was therefore the prelude to the formation of the alliance between a fraction of the capitalist class of the emerging neo-colonial state and the capitalist class of the former colonial power.

Immediately after the 1942 defeat of the British in Singapore and Malaya, the Colonial Office (CO) began planning for a "radical postwar re-organisation" of the territories to overcome the administrative disadvantages of the previous arrangement and to forestall demands by the US for the dismantling of its colonial rule in the area (Turnbull 1977: 220). By 1943, it had drawn up the Malayan Union proposals under which the Malay states and Straits Settlements, with the exception of Singapore, were to be united under one colonial administration. The CO decided Singapore should be kept separate "as a free port, an imperial defence base, and also because of the Malay states' long-standing fear of Singapore's domination" (Turnbull 1977: 220). In the short term it was thought Singapore would act as the main base for ten army divisions re-taking East Asia from the Japanese, remaining under military rule while Malaya reverted to (British) civilian control. In the longer term, it was envisaged that Singapore would be "a sort of District of Columbia", an enlarged municipality if not a full colony, from where the British Governor-General for Southeast Asia would

coordinate policy in British colonies throughout the region (Turnbull 1977: 223).

These colonial territories (Malay states, Straits Settlements and Borneo territories) were considered as a package, not only in settling on a new configuration of British colonial power, but as a strategic bloc for Western interests in the region. However, the US saw the continuance of direct colonial rule in the face of nationalist aspirations as a possible complication in the securing of imperialism's interests. It was no longer necessary and, because of nationalist struggles, often no longer possible, to hold state power in order to exploit a country's productive capacities. The US had discovered this much earlier than other imperialist powers and had long championed "open door" policies (e.g. in China). The latest phase of imperialism therefore no longer involved exclusive exploitation by a single imperialist power. Thus post-war Britain had to face a world economy dominated by the US, which was also demanding access to the markets and resources of the British Empire.

For a cash-strapped Whitehall, Malaya was by far the main dollar-earning colony, as Table 2.1 indicates.

Table 2.1: Net Surplus of Main Dollar Earners of British Colonies (1948)

<u>Colony</u>	<u>Net Surplus (\$ million)</u>
Malaya	172.0
Gold Coast	47.5
Gambia	24.5
Ceylon	23.0

Source: Hua 1983: 91.

In 1951 Malaya's rubber exports to the US were valued at approximately US\$405 million, while total exports from the UK itself to the US were less than US\$400 million. Malaya was termed Britain's "dollar arsenal" (Li 1982: 169). As an entrepot service centre for Malaya's exports and a strategic military base, Singapore's role was crucial. But this old imperialist model of holding state power in a colony in order to secure exclusive control of the surplus from natural resources could no longer be sustained because of nationalist struggle.

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its armed wing, the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), had cooperated with the British Military Command during the Japanese Occupation. Immediately after the War, the newly-legalised MCP made proposals to the British Military Administration (BMA), whose return it did not resist, for steps towards democratic self-government for a unified Singapore-Malaya.

However, it was obvious that after having made use of the guerilla forces during the Japanese Occupation, the British did not trust them once the Japanese were defeated. The British returned to reimpose their rule. They had no intention of handing power over to the communists, sharing power with them or even allowing them to play a complementary role. But they had to be treated cautiously.... After all, the MCP controlled an armed force of about 10,000 and its prestige and that of the MPAJA were high among the people. Faced with the problem of reestablishing the economy, the British could not very well afford to be confronted with an armed revolution (Khong 1984: 50).

By October 1945, the MCP understood the British position. By this time the British had closed down two Chinese newspapers and jailed their editors. They had also responded with troops and police repression to MCP-sponsored hunger marches and demonstrations for jobs, food and democratic rights, resulting in several deaths (Khong 1984: 52). One estimate puts the number of MCP supporters in Singapore in the immediate post-war months at 70,000 (Turnbull 1977: 228). The MCP-backed Singapore General Labour Union was established on 25 October 1945, and it quickly grew in strength with major strikes, beginning with a dockers' strike in November. The BMA's incompetence and corruption (it was termed the Black Market Administration) along with its repressive measures led to a general strike on 29 January 1946, and it was estimated that between 150,000 and 173,000 took part in Singapore alone (Khong 1984: 56; Turnbull 1977: 228).

The BMA exacerbated the situation by its political programme. First it brought forward the Malayan Union proposals, which simply reasserted colonial rule while keeping Singapore separate from Malaya. The MCP saw the separation of Singapore as "an attempt by the British to use Singapore's economic hold over the mainland to control the politics of the Malayan Union without having to bear the responsibility" (Hua 1983: 79). Despite vehement opposition from all quarters, the Malayan Union was created in April 1946 and Singapore reverted to civil administration as a crown colony. The continuing storm of protest in Malaya from all races and classes, including the pre-colonial Malay rulers, led to the British making a deal with the latter. The Federation of Malaya, which guaranteed the old rulers' interests while maintaining British control, replaced the Malayan Union in February 1948. But no other sectors of society were consulted. Anti-colonial protests built up. A nationwide shutdown and general strike on 20 October 1947 attracted widespread support in Singapore and Malaya.

Secondly, the British administration cooperated with employers, planters and agency houses to ensure that commodity production resumed to former levels and that workers were denied even modest improvements in wages and conditions. In response to both the constitutional proposals and the labour situation, the growth of unions

was phenomenal, with massive strikes and demonstrations in Malaya and Singapore from late 1945 (Hua 1983: 69-75). From 1 April 1946 to 31 March 1947, 1,173,000 work days were lost in Singapore due to strikes (Khong 1984: 125). The British reacted by applying the restrictive 1940 Societies Ordinance, which required all unions to register and operate under highly restrictive conditions.

The labour movement was much stronger in Singapore than Malaya and kept up pressure on the administration until the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions (along with the Pan-Malayan FTU) was banned under the Trade Union Ordinance on 31 May 1948. Throughout 1947 and into 1948, police repression of trade union activity was relentless, and workers were killed in several places in Malaya (Hua 1983: 85-88). With the heavy restriction on political activity and union organising, the British left the anti-colonial forces with little choice but open revolt.

Before outlining what I can only describe as the aggressively restrictive measures taken by the British to curb the MCP and its front organisations in 1947 and early 1948, I should emphasise the fact that MCP policy between August 1945 and early 1948 was that of a Peaceful United Front with the object of achieving a more or less constitutional takeover of power. The policy was predicated upon British acceptance of open political, trade union and similar activities which would be considered legal in Britain itself. It was no doubt partly predicated upon the MCP's retention of a significant administrative-cum-intimidatory power. I would argue that it was only when it became apparent that both major avenues of expression, political and trade union, administrative-cum-intimidatory, were almost completely to be denied to militant left-wing

groups that the MCP decided to reverse its previous policy (Stenson 1971: 8).

The colonial state pre-empted any final showdown on the streets when it dispatched Gurkha troops to Johor in early June 1948, and in mid-June the Governor-General declared states of emergency progressively throughout Malaya and Singapore (Chin 1983: 9; Hua 1983: 88). The Emergency Regulations empowered the government to detain without trial, ban publications, take possession of any building or vehicle, control all movements on the road, disperse any meeting, impose curfews, arrest anybody without warrant, impose the death penalty for possession of arms, punish anyone the police considered to be disseminating false information, confiscate businesses suspected of aiding the MCP, detain any villagers suspected of aiding or consorting with the MCP, use all force necessary to arrest persons carrying firearms or suspected of consorting with people who do, and finally, evict persons occupying state land (i.e., squatters) (Khong 1984: 151-152).

The MCP was proscribed along with other nationalist parties and organisations. Newspapers were closed and editors imprisoned. Thousands of political activists and trade unionists were imprisoned or deported. Banishment was legally possible because the citizenship status of many non-Malay residents was not yet finalised. Chinese and

Indian activists were thus deported to their respective countries of origin. Initially, this meant sending thousands of left-wing Chinese back to Kuomintang-ruled China. There had been more than 13,000 arrests and deportations by the end of 1948 and there was a net loss from Malaya to China of almost 29,000 persons between January and July 1949 (Hua 1983: 95). For the twelve years of the Emergency, one pro-British writer estimated the British "deported 90,000 communists and their supporters, and at one time detained 20,000 communists" in Malaya and Singapore (Josey 1980: 189). At a conservative estimate about twelve hundred Singaporeans were arrested and detained without trial between 1948 and 1953 (Turnbull 1977: 248). Most were Chinese-educated activists. But English-educated "radicals" from such organisations as the Teachers' Union and the University Socialist Club were also taken in.

Six months after the declaration of the Emergency, in December 1948, the MCP responded by launching its armed struggle. It had made the ideological commitment to armed struggle in March, but planned a longer preparatory period of industrial disruption than was possible once the British took the initiative in June (Khong 1984: 145, 148). Its armed wing, renamed the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA),

...comprised no more than 10,000 active regulars, against which, British imperialism ranged 40,000 regular British and Commonwealth troops; 70,000 armed police personnel; 300,000 Malay Homeguards; including aircraft, artillery and naval support, "...perhaps the largest armed force in proportion to population ever used in a colonial war, testifying to the support the liberation movement gained and the degree of the suppressive effort." The US gave full support to the British, and among other things supplied arms and helicopters. The [US] Griffin Mission of 1950 also recommended that immediate aid should be given for: radio and similar communication technology for the police; road building and earthmoving equipment; teacher training for Chinese primary schools and the revision of Chinese textbooks (Hua 1983: 97).

According to another source, "that Britain was hard pressed in Malaya was evinced by the fact that by March 1950 there were nearly 100,000 troops and police (both British and local) who were having only limited success checking the 3,000 or so guerillas" (Chin 1983: 11). In addition to anti-guerilla warfare, the methods used by the British included the extraction of information through torture, strafing villages and resettling thousands of Chinese squatters in guarded camps to prevent contact with the MNLA. These tactics were elaborated upon by the US a decade later in Vietnam.

The ferocity of the military repression indicates the geopolitical importance Malaya and Singapore had for Western imperialism in the face of anti-colonial struggles throughout Asia. This was also plainly stated in secret communications between British officials.

We should regard SE Asia as a whole and devise a coherent policy for dealing with it over the whole region....I feel that it is no exaggeration to say that this region has assumed a vast importance in the world-wide struggle between the democratic and communist causes, quite out of proportion to its industrial and political developments....We think - as we feel sure that you do - that a deliberate and planned effort must be made to hold the communist advance in Asia beyond the boundaries of Pakistan, India, Tibet, Burma, IndoChina and the Philippines, and to keep it away from Siam, Malaya, Indonesia.... To do that we must have a constructive policy in which all the governments in these countries can operate as partners....We need Asian equivalents to the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Pact that should offer the Asian Governments and peoples economic, political, and if necessary, military aid in their resistance to communism....To devise such a policy, all the governments concerned in the region should be invited to cooperate. In addition, the governments of the USA, Australia, and New Zealand should participate. The USA are particularly important because probably no Plan adequate on the economic and military side is possible without a large measure of help from them (Top Secret: Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner-General in SE Asia to Rt Hon Ernest Bevin, FO Despatch No 16, 23 March 1949, FO 371/1073 in Hua 1983: 91-92).

Commonwealth military cooperation in support of the British was formalised under the ANZAM (Australia, New Zealand and the Malayan Area) consultative framework established in 1948. Although the MNLA was largely defeated by 1955, the permanent stationing of Commonwealth troops in Malaya as part of a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve began in that year (Chin 1983: 8-22). This deployment was partly due to regional security concerns after the French defeat in Vietnam as well as continuing operations against the MNLA.

Armed struggle was, of course, impossible in Singapore with its small land area and its large British military bases. The Emergency therefore affected the anti-colonial struggle in Singapore by confining it to the narrow limits of permissible trade union activity and legal political parties cut off from the main weight of the Malayan anti-colonial movement. In mid-1948 the majority of the Singapore communist leadership went to Malaya where various levels of struggle could be continued. Activists who remained in Singapore suffered the repressions of detention without trial, deportation and police harassment.

The first side-effect of the Malayan emergency in Singapore was to cripple left-wing political movements and leave the stage to conservative politicians, who were willing to cooperate amicably with the colonial authorities in working for constitutional reform, modest social change and the retention of the colonial economy (Turnbull 1977: 238).

Turnbull is only partly right. British strategy in Singapore was also circumscribed; the colonial state could not use the same degree of violence as in Malaya. The active use of the massive imperialist military power present on the island would destroy the investments and infrastructure crucial to British interests in both Singapore and Malaya. Also the killing of political opponents would take place in front of the whole population and the world media. In addition, it was clear that direct colonial control of the state was no longer acceptable to

any section of society. Even the English-educated bourgeoisie began to see routine acts of police violence as counter-productive, as propaganda gifts to the left.

These limits on British rule provided some political space for the left. Hence the political irony of a resurgence of labour activism in Singapore at the same time as imperialist forces were gaining a military victory over the MCP in Malaya.

These tactical limitations also infused with urgency the British attempts to promote the bourgeois Progressive Party with its wealthy English-educated leadership. This marked a decisive shift in the British policy of social control towards handing over state power to a bourgeois nationalist party. Such a party would need to exhibit an ability to control the population in the interests of British capital before an alliance could be cemented and the state handed over. In other words, the strategy entailed using bourgeois nationalists to crush the anti-imperialist movement. This repression would no longer be seen as a foreign colonial power oppressing a tiny colony but as a national government governing in the interests of its own people.

The Progressive Party was encouraged to bring forward proposals for constitutional change. This came in the form

of the Rendel Commission, which proposed a partly elected legislative council without sovereign powers. It quickly became clear to the British, however, that the Progressive Party was not a credible vehicle for its political objectives and that the Rendel Commission's reformist proposals would not be tolerated for long.

The Chinese masses regarded them [the Progressive Party] as collaborators, supporting the colonial government's unpopular policies on education, language, immigration, citizenship, and national service....To the Chinese-educated and a minority of English-educated radicals the activities of the legislative council were unreal and irrelevant, and the genuine political issues of the time took place outside of the council chamber (Turnbull 1977: 244).

Unlike Malaya, Singapore did not have a local aristocracy to be transformed into a capitalist class.* There was no strong national bourgeoisie either. It was dependent on British commerce and was also split between the English-educated and the Chinese-educated. The former, represented by such political parties as the Progressives and later the Labour Front, were cultivated by the British as potential inheritors of state power. But they had no mass base and had such a genteel belief in liberal democracy that they were reluctant to use state violence for political ends. The Chinese-educated merchant class, on the other hand, were socially and politically marginalised by the British. They increasingly threw in their lot with the left-wing nationalist struggle. Perhaps they anticipated greater

influence and expanded business opportunities once British interests had been expropriated. There was, therefore, as yet no suitable bourgeois ally for the British in Singapore.

But the struggle had pushed the British to the point where they had little choice but to follow US pressure and hand over state power. They needed an ally with apparently contradictory attributes: mass support in obtaining state power and a commitment to British interests once in power. At the same time, the left realised they could get state power in the short term only by means of an alliance with bourgeois political forces that would lend them a legal cover in the contest but have insufficient mass base to take permanent state leadership from the left once in power. Lee Kuan Yew and his small coterie of English-educated bourgeois nationalists were able to exploit these political opportunities to their own advantage.

THE TRANSITION TO NEO-COLONY: FINDING AN ALLY

While studying in England in the late 1940s, Lee Kuan Yew realised that the mass-based, left-wing, anti-colonial movement continued to have popular support in Singapore

despite the intensifying suppression of the MCP in Malaya by British military force. In January 1950, shortly before his return to Singapore, he addressed a student discussion group, the Malayan Forum. His speech revealed his understanding that the British would need to find a reliable ally to protect their interests after they relinquished state power. He also revealed a clear understanding of his class interest: making a deal with imperialism would be the only way to guarantee the longevity of bourgeois nationalist rule against the wishes of the "masses".

We, the returned students, would be the type of leaders that the British would find relatively the more acceptable. For if the choice lies, as in fact it does, between a communist republic of Malaya and a Malaya within the British Commonwealth led by the people who, despite their opposition to imperialism, still share certain ideals in common with the Commonwealth, there is little doubt which alternative the British will find the lesser evil....But if we do not give leadership, it will come from the other ranks of society, and if these leaders attain power, as they will with the support of the masses, we shall find that we, as a class, have merely changed masters....

But our trump card is that responsible British leaders realise that independence must and will come to Malaya and that therefore it will be better to hand Malaya to leaders sympathetic to the British mode of life, willing for Malaya to be a member of the British Commonwealth and, what is most important, willing to remain in the sterling area. For the alternative is military suppression, a policy which another imperialist power has found impossible in Indonesia....

If we fail to fulfil our duty, the change that still will come must be a violent one, for, whatever the rights and wrongs of communism, no one can deny its tremendous appeal to the masses....But if the majority

of us choose to believe that Malaya can be insulated from the nationalist revolts that have swept the European powers from Asia, then we may find that there is no place for us in the Malaya that is to be after the British have departed (Minchin 1986: 46-48).

Reference to Malaya in this way so as to include Singapore was part of the creed of the nationalist struggle. Hence Lee was addressing Malayan as well as Singaporean colleagues. His advocacy of a class strategy to build an alliance with British imperialism was not new. The British deal with the Malay aristocracy two years earlier had shown their willingness to work through the local traditional ruling class in the face of popular revolt. The aristocracy's interest in maintaining its class position by becoming a capitalist class had also been widely understood.

What was significant in Lee's speech was his advocacy of the case for bourgeois Chinese nationalists to share state power with the Malay capitalist class in an independent Malaya. He was explicitly linking his own destiny as an English-educated, middle class Chinese to that of the Malay upper class and not to the anti-imperialist movement which had engaged the sympathies of most Chinese in Malaya. He was establishing a mutual interest in defeating the anti-imperialist movement and in consolidating a relationship with the British. But the way his class would reach this

latter objective in Singapore would be very different from developments in Malaya.

Building the Bourgeois Nationalist-Anti-Imperialist Alliance

After returning to Singapore in the early fifties, Lee and his student friends continued to meet. Regular discussions with Goh Keng Swee, Toh Chin Chye, S. Rajaratnam and others were held in Lee's basement dining room at 38 Oxley Road. Their main topic was how to obtain popular support in their bid for state power. In 1979, Lee recalled:

Our primary concern was how to muster a mass following. How did a group of English-educated nationalists - graduates of British universities - with no experience of either the hurly-burly of politics or the conspiracies of revolution, move people whose many languages they did not speak and whose problems and hardships they shared only intellectually? (Minchin 1986: 66)

Lee and his faction of returned students did their political reconnaissance thoroughly. They knew the bourgeois parties were proving weak and incompetent and lacked wide political appeal. They also knew that the Malayan Communist Party and its open mass organisations were the most popular and highly organised political force in Singapore. A wide range of unions, educational institutions, vocational and cultural associations were

sympathetic to the left and, being predominantly Chinese, to political developments in China. The political aspirations of the majority of Singaporeans were, they knew, represented by the left.

The Communists, although they had only a few hundred active cadres, could muster and rally thousands of people in the unions, cultural organisations and student societies. By working and manifestly appearing to work selflessly and ceaselessly, they won the confidence and regard of the people in the organisations. Having won the confidence and regard, they then got the people to support their stand (Lee, 1961: 21).

The Lee faction realised that it had to co-opt the popular legitimacy of the left in order to impress upon the British that it was capable of delivering mass support for a non-communist, pro-British post-independence regime. Without the left, the bourgeois nationalists could never come to power (Bellows 1970: 20).

At the same time, with their severely weakened central leadership after the onslaught of the Emergency in 1948 and the proscription of the MCP, the left needed a non-communist, legal, electoral front to give it a role in the transition to independence. It realised the impossibility of an extra-legal bid for power in an island garrison, and it thus recognised the need to be represented in the political formalities of transition.

This high-risk political alliance between the left and a group of English-educated nationalists had, as the Lee faction knew, been tried before with inconclusive results. The Malayan Democratic Union, formed in 1945, had been unexpectedly successful in mobilising popular support against the colonial government. It collapsed in 1948 with the beginning of the Emergency. "Within a few years, however, as aspiring politicians reviewed the MDU period, many perceived what they considered to be a winning strategy....Four ministers in the present PAP government were MDU members" (Bellows 1970: 70).

From the moment of his return, Lee had begun the process of showing how he could be useful to the left and thereby that he was a political leader to be taken account of by the British. He made contact with a variety of political movements and began to develop a public profile as a clever, aggressive young lawyer defending political cases in the colonial courts. His legal assistance to the Postal Workers' Union during their strike in May 1952 won him public recognition as an activist lawyer. He was eventually retained by over 100 unions and associations (Minchin 1986: 72; George 1984: 33).

But Lee undoubtedly knew that he was not fully trusted by the left or the community organisations he legally represented (Bellows 1970: 132). He was known as a

bourgeois nationalist. When he met with left activists, Lee recalled in parliament on 23 February 1977, "They denigrated me. They said I had an air-conditioned office and I slept in an air-conditioned room. I was bourgeois". He lived in a large bungalow near the city centre, he owned a Studebaker, bred German shepherd dogs and went on holidays to the Cameron Highlands. His contact with the dynamism of the mass movements unnerved him, and he could not cope. As a union adviser, he was often "out of his depth", sometimes begging activists to tone down their protests (Minchin 1985: 77). Not being able to speak Chinese himself, he sought advice from Chinese-speaking expatriates and expressed relief that he could attempt his united front ride to power protected by the presence of the colonial government (Minchin 1985: 71).

The People's Action Party was formally established on 21 November 1954 and included both the left and the Lee faction.

The PAP was organised by fourteen persons meeting over a period of months in the recreation room of Lee Kuan Yew's home. In essence, what the English-educated, middle-class, non-Communist majority of this coterie did was to establish a working agreement with individuals who had proven organisational skills and symbol-wielding abilities and were evidencing these aptitudes in the 1954-56 riots and demonstrations... . There was no way for the non-Communist PAP leadership to detach itself from the Communists if it wished to win the support of a majority of Singapore's electorate (Bellows 1970: 19-20).

The PAP's structure consisted of a network of local branches represented at an annual conference. The conference elected the governing body, the Central Executive Committee (CEC). The left had control of the branches of the Party and, by agreement in order to prevent proscription as a communist front, the Lee faction held the majority of seats on the CEC. The bourgeois nationalists had the head, the left had the body.

From the beginning, it was a coalition of convenience for each faction, and both intended to use the PAP as the electoral vehicle to carry them through to being the first government of an independent Singapore and, eventually, after merger, of an independent Malaya.

Building the Bourgeois Nationalist-Imperialist Alliance

Having achieved the alliance with the left as a stepping stone to state power, the Lee faction had to pursue its main task of building an alliance with British imperialism. The first stage of establishing this relationship was proving that the PAP, led by the Lee faction, could be trusted with state power. Lee and his colleagues therefore had to deliver to the British a bourgeois nationalist leadership which demonstrated an ability to co-opt left-wing mass support for its own political goals, to retain

control of the PAP, to operate competently in the legislature and to suppress unflinchingly the left's leadership and grassroots organisation. These attributes would get them covert British political endorsement, support from the colonial repressive apparatus and, finally, they hoped, state power.

The Lee faction had certain advantages in this task of building their power base. From 1951 or 1952, Lee was in touch with British officers in the Special Branch who had already decided not to arrest him on his return but to see how he developed politically (Minchin 1985: 63). He eventually established a close working relationship with the Director of the Special Branch. In the early days of meeting the left leadership, Lee was receiving briefings on them from these security contacts. Alex Josey, formerly of MI6, became Lee's close friend and eventually his prolific biographer.

Later, as the Labour Front administration weakened from PAP attacks and its own scandals and maladministration, Lee's ascendancy in the PAP made the Party increasingly acceptable to the British. Sir William Goode was made Governor of Singapore on December 11, 1957. As Singapore's Chief Secretary, he had controlled the Special Branch since 1953 and was intimately acquainted with Singapore politics. Lee maintained close contact with Goode in the year leading

up to the 1959 elections and is said to have obtained information from him. Goode had responsibility for handing over to a non-communist, pro-British leadership and it seems that he favoured the Lee faction over the failing and unpopular Labour Front. Goode's information is said to have given Lee considerable political advantage over the Labour Front as well as over the left in the PAP (Bellows 1970: 35; George 1984: 43). There is therefore every indication that, as the Lee faction increasingly demonstrated its political resolve and its capacity to deliver, the amount of British covert assistance increased. The ruthless duplicity and increasing success of Lee Kuan Yew's pursuit of his goals no doubt convinced the British that he was someone they could work with. By the time of the 1959 elections which brought the PAP to power, the alliance between the Lee faction and British imperialism had been forged. The British chose the Lee faction to inherit state power.

The Alliance-Building Strategy

Building an alliance with the British involved, as may be expected, a strategy of publicly supporting the left while undermining it in private. But it was more complex than this. For the Lee faction to retain control of the PAP at the executive level, the left had to be prevented from ever gaining a majority on the Central Executive Committee and thus taking over the party completely.

Secondly, in order to co-opt the mass movement to its political goals for as long as possible, the Lee faction needed to monopolise PAP representation in the legislative assembly. That is, the far more charismatic and popular left leaders of the PAP had to be prevented from using the officially sanctioned parliamentary institution as a political platform through which to establish national political leadership without the Lee faction's mediation. The Lee faction's monopoly would also have the important ideological consequence of enabling the rhetoric of bourgeois nationalism to dilute and divert the sharp edge of anti-imperialism. Lee and his colleagues could define their own political programme as socialist without fear of contradiction.

Finally, the British were unlikely to want to hand over to a party which would be taken over by its left wing as soon as state power was achieved. The Lee faction therefore had to put in place the security guarantees that would enable it to survive the left's inevitable counter-attack. The British would no doubt assist with establishing the necessary regulations and structures. But, more than this, they also needed to be assured that the Lee faction could and would use the state terror that British rule bequeathed them. On all these counts, the Lee faction delivered.

This is not to suggest that the strategy was so clearly thought out from the beginning. It must also be remembered that the alliance-building process was a mutual one and not simply a sustained act of political cleverness by the Lee faction. The British were actively seeking to support the faction that would serve their interests best. There was almost no way that any faction could have made it successfully to the 1959 election victory without their support.

The Lee faction performed the valuable function for the British of bringing the politics of the majority of Singaporeans into a parliamentary system which the British controlled in cooperation with a variety of factions of bourgeois nationalists. Before this, as a site for political struggle, the legislative assembly was largely irrelevant to the mass political movements. The parliamentary strategy of the Lee faction was to accept the mantle of the mass movement in the chamber while ensuring that the real left leadership never got a foothold there. To some extent this coincided with the political needs of the left, which needed the Lee faction to exhibit the acceptable face of bourgeois nationalism as a cover for them.

Collaboration and Betrayal

Thus, Lee was able to denounce the government's repression of the left while maintaining ideological distance from them. He spoke eloquently and frequently in support of democratic freedoms in the Legislative Assembly to which three PAP candidates were elected in 1955.

If it is not totalitarian to arrest a man and detain him when you cannot charge him with any offence against any written law - if that is not what we have always cried out against in fascist states - what is it?...If we are to survive as a free democracy, then we must be prepared, in principle, to concede to our enemies - even those who do not subscribe to our views - as much constitutional right as you concede yourself....What he [Chief Minister Marshall] is seeking to do in the name of democracy is to curtail a fundamental liberty, and the most fundamental of them all - freedom from arrest and punishment without having violated a specific provision of the law and being convicted for it (Lee quoted in FEER 2 June 1988).

This speech was delivered in September 1955 when the Labour Front government was proposing the Preservation of Public Security Bill, a milder version of Singapore's current Internal Security Act.

At the same time, the Lee faction was using its executive power in the CEC and contacts with the British to undermine the left and have its leaders imprisoned. The pattern of arrests and the way Lee always seemed to have the right information at the right time has been termed "fortuitous"

for the "moderates" (Chan 1985: 150). There was more to it than this.

On June 11, 1955, seven left-wing leaders were detained under security legislation before a general strike. While publicly requesting their release, the Lee faction privately expressed the view that the Labour Front government's actions were "feeble and lamentable in the extreme" because the Special Branch had recommended 300 detentions (Bellows 1970: 22). The left wing of the PAP quickly became suspicious. There was a "growing pro-Communist conviction that the non-Communists were assisting the government in its periodic security sweeps against the pro-Communists" (Bellows 1970: 21-22).

In order to avoid lending substance to the charge that the PAP was a communist front, the left did not put up candidates for the PAP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) elections on 26 June 1955. For the same reason there was an understanding that, when the left did eventually enter the CEC, it should maintain a minority position and not take any offices. On 8 July 1956 at the second Party Conference, the left won four of the twelve CEC seats and proposed redrafting the constitution to enable branches to nominate CEC members. This revision would have enabled the left to take over the CEC and, whenever it wanted, to curtail the Lee faction's ability to forge an alliance with

the British using the PAP as a base. However, three left-wing CEC members were soon arrested under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (Chan 1985: 149). Lim Chin Siong, the most charismatic opposition leader, CEC member and PAP member of the Legislative Assembly, was arrested on the night of 26 October 1956. He remained incarcerated until after Lee came to power in 1959 (Clutterbuck 1973: 130). Thus was the most powerful orator of the left excluded from the assembly as well as the CEC for the remainder of the decade.

In August 1957, the left made a stronger bid to take over the CEC because, by this time, the need to clip the wings of the bourgeois nationalists was very clear to the left leadership. This move was also precipitated by the All Party Mission to London in April-May 1957 at which Lee, representing the PAP, accepted terms for independence through merger with Malaya and the establishment of an Internal Security Council (ISC), which were against party policy. The arrangement agreed to by Lee would enable a conservative government in Malaya, the Lee faction and the British to clamp down on the left throughout a merged Malaya and Singapore.

To repudiate Lee's stance, the left needed to win the CEC elections. They won half the seats. Since they controlled the rest of the Party completely, this victory was

sufficient. Recognising this, the Lee faction initially refused to take up their seats. Ten days after the election, five of the left CEC members (and 30 non-CEC members) were detained under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (Pang 1971: 4). An embarrassed Lee denied the government statement that the arrests were to save the PAP from a communist takeover (Clutterbuck 1973: 146; George 1984: 43).

To ensure that Lee faction control of the CEC would never be under threat again and to obviate the need for any future purge, the party rules were amended to establish a cadre system. Cadres were chosen from among the party members by the CEC. Only cadre members could attend the party conference and vote for the CEC. The list of cadres was secret. The CEC could suspend, demote or expel any member. This reorganisation has been termed "the iron law of oligarchy" (Bellows 1970: 24). Lee himself put it well: "The Pope chooses the cardinals and the cardinals elect the Pope" (George 1984: 45). There has only ever been one pope in the PAP. Lee Kuan Yew has been secretary-general since the beginning and remains so.

In March 1958, with PAP electoral victory increasingly likely, the CEC decided to conduct a wholesale purge of the lower echelons of the party. It required all party members to re-register. By means of a Select Committee of six

persons from Lee's faction, a process was begun to weed out the left from the membership and to ensure that none rose to the higher levels of the Party. About 500 members were put on probation. While this action could not prevent left-wing control of the intermediate and lower levels of the Party, it did further secure the top level for Lee. To prevent future defections to the left, PAP candidates for the 1959 elections had to sign an undertaking they would resign from the assembly if they quit the PAP. Lee later introduced legislation into parliament which made it obligatory for all members of parliament to resign their seats if they left their party.

The way Lee manipulated the administration to secure his faction's position in the PAP and eliminate the more popular left leadership was revealed by the Chief Minister shortly before the 1959 elections which brought Lee to power.

The Labour Front administration was already severely weakened, and the opposition PAP was already certain to win the elections. The left leadership hoped to make a concerted bid to take over the PAP once and for all after Lee had won power. In the meantime they cooled their heels in prison. The exposure of Lee's role in putting them there came too late to affect the elections.

The Labour Front government (1955-59) under David Marshall and then Lim Yew Hock governed under the Rendel Constitution: severely curtailed powers had to be exercised within the limits of continuing British colonial rule. While the Labour Front tried to negotiate full independence, the PAP, especially Lee himself, castigated it with great flair for being a tool of the British. At the same time, the Labour Front was acting under pressure from the British and Lee to detain left-wing PAP leaders and thus save Lee from imminent political eclipse. That this must have been particularly galling for Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock is clear from his 1959 outburst in the Assembly. More importantly, his impassioned statement reveals the extent to which Lee was secretly collaborating with the British against his left-wing PAP colleagues.

The truth shall now be told. If one side can play dirty and begin to be dirty, I shall play the same game and do it too, and let the country and the world and God decide. The subversive clause was put in as a result of the Honourable Member [Lee Kuan Yew] and I seeing the Secretary of State for Colonies. (Colony of Singapore 1955-59: 3, cols. 2164-65).

Lim was pointing to Lee as one of the chief architects of the security provisions resulting from the constitutional talks in London, notably the clause that "persons known to have been engaged in subversive activity should not be eligible for election to the first Legislative Assembly of the new State of Singapore" (Clutterbuck 1973: 144). While

the Singapore representatives publicly objected afterwards to the provision for the purpose of maintaining credibility back home, it has been generally claimed that they privately welcomed it. Lim's claim that Lee was one of its main proponents has been accepted by a number of writers (Bellows 1970: 138; George 1984: 44; Minchin 1985: 83-84). By this means Lee excluded the detained left leadership of his own party from future political office and, until Lim exposed him, was able to blame the move on the British and the Labour Front.

The same talks confirmed that membership of the Internal Security Council "would be drawn up in such a way that ultimate authority rested in the hands of the British and Federation officials and that the ISC would remain an effective instrument to detain or in some other manner prevent the pro-Communists from coming to power legally or illegally" (Bellows 1970: 34). Thus Lee could take power in Singapore with the full weight of British and Federation security authorities behind him to suppress the left. This is the main reason he accepted independence through merger on these terms, even though there remained a considerable risk that they would relegate Singapore to a secondary role to Kuala Lumpur.

Later in his speech, Lim continued, "I did so many things for the good of the country. I did so many things for the

good of the PAP after discussions with the PAP. Such is politics in Singapore today" (Colony of Singapore, 1955-59: 3, col.2167). Of this statement, Bellows has observed, "In the passion of a moment [Lim] publicly stated that the non-Communists [in the PAP] informed the government on their pro-Communist associates" (1970: 133).

Lee is often credited with surviving this period by a mixture of luck and his own political cleverness. This is partly true. But, more importantly, the Lee faction was cultivating British support through the squalid game of squealing on those whose political support was essential to its own popularity. Thus, the Lee faction exhibited an early, if indirect, ability to use state repression and terror against political rivals even before coming to power. In return for taking control of the state on terms which protected British interests, the Lee faction was already receiving their security guarantee. The ultimate sanction of imperialist military violence, first the British and then the US, has remained a fundamental pillar of social control in Singapore ever since.

Consolidating the Alliance

The PAP's accession to power was an important achievement for the Lee faction. They had positioned themselves well.

They were able to give vent to radical rhetoric while, to save the PAP from British wrath, proclaiming their ideological difference from the left. They were able to defend the left leaders in public while betraying them in private. They were at the head of a popular political movement which swept them to power in 1959 while the most charismatic leaders languished in detention.

Critics called it cheating, admirers called it flexibility, neutrals called it opportunism, but the fact is that it was a competent display of sustained dissimulation lasting nearly seven years. And it was successful (George 1984: 40).

But it still remained to be decided finally whether the election was a victory for the bourgeois nationalists and imperialism or for the anti-imperialist movement and the left. The real struggle continued. The Lee faction was aware that the mass electoral support the PAP attracted

was largely indirect or constituent, being channeled through, and derived from, the multiple, pro-Communist-controlled secondary organisations. For the majority of the PAP electorate, secondary association leaders were political reality. Identification with the second-level leadership was the relevant and decisive affiliation (Bellows 1970: 26).

That is, the Lee faction had to consolidate its own domestic power base if it was to consolidate its alliance with the British. It had to prove its ability to govern in the interests of foreign capital and to implement the ISI accumulation policy. This entailed two tasks. First, it

had to win over other sections of the local capitalist class and as many of the lower classes as possible. Secondly, it had to destroy the left leadership, the mass movements and bourgeois rivals so that there would be no political alternative to the Lee faction and thus no other party for the people to support or the British to deal with.

Winning Over a Domestic Power Base

While the support of imperialism was and still is the most important power base of the Lee faction, the practice of governance required the support of other sections of the local capitalist class. The PAP government had to be Singaporean. Otherwise direct colonial rule through military coercion might as well continue. For the Lee faction, winning over the more pro-imperialist sections of its own class was not a problem. The dependence of the local bourgeoisie on British capital and therefore their comparative weakness as a political force is discussed in the following chapter. If Britain supported the Lee faction, they could do nothing to stop it and supporting it was also in their interests. Although they may earlier have regarded the faction as radical activist interlopers, they were reassured by the steps it took on gaining power. It must have become increasingly obvious to them that the Lee faction and the British had an arrangement. Lee went out of his way to reassure them prior to the 1959 elections

by stating that the real battle would start after the elections: "The ultimate contestants would be the PAP and the MCP" (Lee 1961: 30). By the 1963 elections, this battle had been joined and much of the local capitalist class, although not the more nationalistic Chinese-educated elements, was right behind the Lee faction.

In winning over the lower classes, the Lee faction also had several advantages in addition to its grip on the state security apparatus. First, for several years on the national stage, its members had articulated the ideology of bourgeois nationalism as a left-wing ideology. Even as it moved rapidly to ensure that the Singapore economy remained within the imperialist orbit, the Lee faction was able to characterise all its policies as truly socialist and in the interest of nation-building.

Linked to this control of the PAP ideology was the Lee administration's control of the PAP's political programme. It quickly began to implement some of the most popular aspects of this programme: educational reform, public housing, better health system, community centres and other facilities. The left leaders were forced into the position of critics of a government which was carrying out their policies. At the same time, increasing numbers of the lower classes were moving to take advantage of the opportunities they saw the Lee administration offering

them. They had supported the PAP in 1959 and saw no inconsistency in supporting it again in 1963 when it was delivering on its promises. Arguments about the difference between bourgeois nationalism and national democracy would have been academic.

The Lee leadership was also assisted by the fact that roughly twenty per cent of the labour force was employed by or dependent on the British military bases or related expenditure (Bellows 1970: 113; Krause 1989: 438). Furthermore, the alacrity with which the Lee administration used police-state tactics must have encouraged many to support it in 1963.

Eliminating the Left

To ensure that it could survive without popular support in the PAP, the Lee faction moved to consolidate its party executive powers with the full range of state power immediately upon election. More than that, it went on to the offensive to ensure that the left leaders were separated from their mass base once and for all. Then the state terror previously reserved for only the most implacable and powerful enemies of colonialism was slowly turned against the lower classes as a whole.

In order to carry the popular legitimacy of the left into the elections, Lee had been forced to promise that the

release of detained left-wing leaders was a condition for the PAP taking up the reigns of government if it was elected. He therefore set about to release some of these leaders and then to destroy those who would not accept his leadership or the bourgeois nationalist betrayal of national independence. That is, on behalf of the British and in their own political interest, the Lee faction eliminated the charismatic and organisational leadership of the PAP and the independence movement which had succeeded in mobilising so many forms of struggle and in forcing the British to hand over state power.

In the years after 1956, when he was lawyer for the detained left leaders, Lee had unusually free access to them and was able to gather extensive information for later use.

I used to see them there [in prison], arguing their appeals, reading their captured documents and the Special Branch precis of the cases against them....I also saw the official version in reports on them (Lee 1961:17).

This previous legal work for the detainees and full access to security files after assuming the reigns of government was the basis of a revitalised anti-communist campaign. It was a comparatively simple matter to label a political rival on the left as a communist or pro-communist and thus

as an anti-national servant of another power, terms which might better have described members of the Lee faction.

The characterisation of political rivals to the Lee faction as communist or pro-communist was a tactic of state terror. Lee himself has admitted that there were few actual MCP cadres in Singapore (Lee 1961: 21) and that he did not know who they were. But he also knew the political game that the British played before him and which now suited his purposes so well. As he said in the assembly while still in opposition:

Whether a person is a Communist or a Communist agent, only he knows and God knows. Between his conscience and God of course lies the Special Branch and it is up to them to show that these men whom they have arrested are Communists or Communist agents (Colony of Singapore 1955-59: 4, col.2598).

In histories of Singapore politics, especially those published in Singapore, the opponents of the Lee faction are usually labelled "extremists", "communists" and "pro-communists" as against Lee's "moderates" and "non-communists" (Pang 1971; Chan 1985). These labels tacitly recognise that not all, nor even most, of those on the left who were active in the PAP and in community organisations were MCP members. The left were, in fact, a broad spectrum of groups committed to some form of socialism and to national independence.

The history of the PAP from 1959 to 1961 is one of increasingly desperate efforts of a still powerful left leadership to wrest the PAP leadership and thus state power from the Lee faction. On occasions during these three years, the Lee administration came close to falling but it had the support of the British and of much of the local capitalist class. It also had the instruments of state power which it used with increasing effect. On his first day in office, Lee conducted a two-hour inspection of security arrangements and had a conference with the police commissioner and the director of the Special Branch (George 1984: 53).

By 1961, the left was thoroughly disenchanted. All the detainees had not been released, a new amendment to the Citizenship Bill rendered some of the left leaders stateless, and restrictive policies were being implemented with regard to Chinese educational institutions and the trade unions (the main bases of left power). The left began to campaign on these issues. The Lee faction carried the battle to them with proposals for merger with Malaya on grounds unacceptable to the left (Pang 1971: 13). The left retaliated by withdrawing support for a PAP candidate in a by-election resulting in a PAP defeat.

The final split came in 1961 after a vote of confidence in parliament forced by Lee on the merger proposals. The left

split from the PAP along with its mass base. Thirteen PAP Assembly members departed to set up the Barisan Sosialis [Socialist Front]. With them went more than 80 per cent of the PAP membership, all but two of the Party branches and nineteen of the twenty-three paid organising secretaries (Pang 1971: 15). According to other analysts, 60 to 70 per cent of the membership left and thirty of the paid staff (Bellows 1970: 28). Most cadres also left the Party (Chan 1985: 153) but there is disagreement over just how many. All agree, however, that not even the skeleton of the Party remained. The Lee faction was now the PAP.

One of the most important problems confronting the PAP in mid-1961 was that the party had lost most of its voter appeal....Once these [left] organisations pulled away from the PAP, the remnants of the party were unable, save in a few instances, to arouse in the electorate those reifying, personally meaningful connotations and associations which a party slowly accrues over time (Bellows 1970: 46).

Despite appearances, the situation was actually more serious for the Barisan than for the PAP remnant. Probably neither the Barisan nor the Lee faction recognised this, as the latter was surprised at the extent of the defections. But, by forcing a split with the left, the Lee faction had finally isolated its opponents so that the full weight of the security apparatus could be brought down upon them. By this action, the Lee faction was consolidating its power base with the British and the local capitalist class. Further, it was now possible to redouble government efforts

in education, housing and welfare in the certainty that these policies would win loyalty among the lower classes for the PAP and not the Barisan.

The Barisan Sosialis, for at least the next eighteen months, had the majority support of the Singapore electorate (Bellows 1970: 75). But the systematic harassment of its leadership by the state security apparatus, the de-registration of its grassroots organisations, the PAP's hysterical anti-communism along with its calls to national loyalty and solidarity in the face of Indonesian confrontation, all took a severe toll. The Barisan Sosialis was put on the defensive and, now being in opposition, had no capacity to deliver concretely on its political programme. Furthermore, it could not match the parliamentary performance of the bourgeois nationalists, who had ensured that the parliament became a central symbol of independence and who had out-manoevred the left on the constitutional issue of merger with Malaya.

The challenge for the PAP was to prove to the British and the Malay government in Kuala Lumpur that it could defeat the left and win an election. Only this achievement would give the PAP maximum political weight in the new federation of Malaysia.

With the departure of the mass organisations, the PAP had no way of reaching the local level with what remained of the party structure. It faced very strong Barisan Sosialis organisation at this level. The PAP government therefore established networks of government community organisations to replace the party organs it had lost. These organisations delivered both welfare services and government propaganda at the local level. By the time of the 1962 referendum on merger and the 1963 elections, the PAP had much of its party-state apparatus in place.

To ensure that its electoral chances were further enhanced, on 2 February, 1963, the PAP detained 111 opposition leaders without trial in Operation Coldstore, aptly named since some of them were kept for nearly twenty years. The charismatic Lim Chin Siong, who had been released after the 1959 elections but not given citizenship papers or PAP cadre status, was arrested again. In solitary confinement he became suicidal from torture and maltreatment, was eventually broken after seven years, forced to confess and beg for mercy in public and then whisked directly to England from Changi Prison "reduced to a vegetable" (George 1984: 69). His fate was similar to that of many others (Amnesty International 1980). More arrests followed later in 1963.

In addition, the PAP gerrymandered the elections and not merely by manipulating the state media:

Former detainees were physically prevented from nominating in the one hour available for their personal presentation of papers. The election was called with minimum notice and the campaign period of nine days included the holidays and festivities associated with Malaysia's inauguration. Sites and permits for rallies were hard to come by. Printing facilities for opposition parties were almost unobtainable. Notice was given of the deregistration of seven leftist unions and SATU [Singapore Association of Trade Unions] funds were frozen at the eleventh hour to prevent their being spent for electoral purposes....[At PAP rallies] searchlights were used to show up dissenters in the crowd (Minchin 1986: 130).

The PAP won the election with 46.9 per cent of the total valid vote and the headless, persecuted Barisan Sosialis gained 33.3 per cent.

This election formalised the exclusion of the genuine independence movement from state power. The left had failed to prevent the bourgeois nationalists from forming an alliance with imperialism. They had misjudged, thinking that they could simply take state power from the Lee faction after 1959. Too late they discovered that the alliance was solidly forged during the PAP's days in opposition when the left was under constant persecution. By 1963 the left had begun to lose its mass base and, without any bourgeois allies, came under direct attack from the combined British, Malayan and Singaporean internal

security apparatus. This ensured, as had been planned since 1958, that the left was unable to regroup and consolidate itself as a legal entity.

New Phase of Imperialism

The 1963 election result also indicated that the Lee faction, with the support of British imperialism, had established the basis of a long-term alliance. It had effectively transformed the PAP from an anti-imperialist party of the working class to the party of the pro-imperialist section of the capitalist class, and had helped complete the transition from classical imperialism to modern neo-colonialism. It had brought Singaporean politics into a parliamentary institution it controlled. It had sufficiently co-opted or suppressed the lower classes to win an election. In the process it had demonstrated the will and the ability for state repression. De-registration, banning, withholding or revocation of citizenship, deportation, smear campaigns, fixed elections, widespread secret surveillance, police intimidation, detention without trial and torture had become part of the PAP political repertoire. In short, the Lee faction had finally proved itself worthy of taking over state power from the British. The alliance was consolidated.

However, the PAP's future depended on it continuing to govern in the interests of imperialism. Its future in Malaysia depended on the political accommodation it could reach with the Malay capitalist class. Within two years the PAP was decisively rejected as a potential partner in the governing coalition. Singapore was expelled in 1965. But, since imperialism could work through either a unitary neo-colonial state or two separate neo-colonial states, this separation did not at all threaten the PAP-state alliance with foreign capital. In fact, it enhanced Singapore's role as a regional base for direct foreign investment and gave further impetus to the development of an absolutist PAP-state.

From 1965 the terms of the alliance were indicated by the conditions under which foreign investment entered Singapore. The strong incentives given suggest a highly cooperative internal bourgeoisie desperate for credit and technology and without the nationalistic leanings of its Malay or Indonesian neighbours. Not being accountable to a strong bourgeois class, the PAP-state was able to sacrifice not only workers but also local capitalists to the greater competitive power of foreign capital. That is, the PAP saw its interests as lying in the regulation of social conditions in Singapore to enhance the accumulation strategies of this alliance. The ways we might understand the political meaning of these strategies in relation to a

periodisation of political struggle and of imperialism are the concern of the following chapter.

Periodisation and Struggle

The transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism in Singapore demonstrates how class struggle has been the main force in determining the local character of imperialism and the nature of the state. Such a periodisation reveals not only the concrete political forces at work in a specific social formation at a given moment but, more importantly, their development over time as a result of local political struggle.

This periodisation of the twenty years from 1945 to 1955 also sets the scene for the detailed study of the institutions of social control under the PAP-state since 1965, which is the focus of this thesis. The development of each institution will be analysed within the framework of a periodisation of Singapore's political economy in order to trace the links between struggle, economic policy and social control within a changing social formation.

The following chapter gives an overview of the ways Singapore's political economy may be understood

theoretically and outlines the periodisation of its development which informs the later chapters.

CHAPTER 3

SINGAPORE'S POLITICAL ECONOMY

The previous chapter dealt with the colonial origins of Singapore's political economy. An alliance between a bourgeois nationalist faction of the PAP and British imperialism emerged from a period of prolonged struggles. That is, Singapore's political economy was understood in terms of the relationship between economic strategies and Singapore's social formation.

The earlier theoretical introduction noted the ways in which the dynamics of this relationship might be analysed. It focussed on the interaction between patterns of accumulation, systems of regulation and forms of struggle. It noted that the historical forms of domination reflect struggle. As they conflict or cooperate over economic policies, the relative strengths and weaknesses of social forces are institutionalised in the forms of social control. Therefore, an understanding of political economy, the relationship between accumulation strategies and the disposition of social forces, is essential to comprehending social control.

But it is not easy to find analyses of Singapore's political economy which illuminate this relationship. This is because the dominant approach among writers on Singapore is the neo-classical tendency of current mainstream Western economics. A minority of writers owe a theoretical debt to the neo-Marxian world systems approach or to the mainstream Marxist mode of production approach. Often these approaches are intertwined as analysts draw on more than one tradition in their writing. This chapter will distinguish between them in order to examine the theoretical themes and problems they raise in relation to Singapore. The chapter will also argue in favour of the mainstream Marxist approach as being more able theoretically to explain Singapore's political economy in terms of the relationship between accumulation strategies and the changing social formation in the context of political struggles.

THE NEO-CLASSICAL APPROACH

Most analysts of Singapore's political economy avoid even oblique references to theoretical questions in explaining its apparent success as a Newly Industrialised Country

(NIC). They content themselves with unequivocal assertions about the honesty, reliability and wisdom of the PAP government and its ability, through wise economic policy choices, to make the most of the "givens" of geographical location, an expanding regional or global economy and a hard-working population.

Typical of this literature is Milne and Mauzy's recent monograph on Singapore, which notes the PAP's success in making "quick and appropriate adjustments" to changing world conditions (1990: 132). It has been able to do this because Singapore

has leaders dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and the rewarding of merit, and Singapore has a hardworking labour force. Furthermore, the government encourages values that are essential for the successful conduct of trade - honesty, integrity, trust, credibility, and incorruptibility (Milne & Mauzy 1990: 132).

This explanation for Singapore's economic development rests on the wisdom and virtuosity of the Lee faction of the PAP. This perspective is shared by many other writers.

Chia Siow Yue recently ascribed Singapore's "competitive edge" to geographical location and "political stability, quality of administration and economic management, and harmonious industrial relations" (Chia 1989: 271). She

previously emphasised "an enlightened leadership" as the main reason for export performance (Chia 1972: 33).

Chen speaks of "an effective, honest government genuinely committed to economic development" which provides a model for all countries (Chen 1983: 7, 24). Lim Chong Yah, Professor of Economics at the National University of Singapore, Chairman of the National Wages Council and father-in-law of Lee Kuan Yew's younger son, has referred to the "fundamental causes" of economic development in Singapore as "political stability and correct economic policy" (Lim C Y 1983: 100). More recently he elaborated on these basic causal factors: "Singapore adopted a free enterprise system with an outward-looking orientation supported by an able and honest government that gave the highest priority to economic efficiency and achievement....The leadership of the state was crucial, critical and indispensable in this rapid transformation process" (Lim C Y 1989: 206-7).

Another writer accounts for Singapore's success by linking the economic wisdom of the PAP to the political discernment of the entire populace:

Lacking a rural hinterland with the safety valve of a still functioning agrarian subsistence economy and [a] reserve of undeveloped natural resources, Singapore's people had nothing to fall back on but their own energy, adaptability, intelligence and realism. They had the good fortune to produce and the good sense to

support a group of young, vigorous, efficient, and dedicated leaders (Geiger 1973: 165).

Similar emphases can be found in Lee Soo Ann (1973), Goh Keng Swee (1977), Drysdale (1984) and Vasil (1984).

Fundamental Assumptions: Free and Rational Choice

Although these studies purport to be purely descriptive, they share, perhaps unconsciously in many cases, the assumptions of the neo-classical approach to political economy. At the most fundamental level, this approach comprises a set of assumptions about human nature which are used as ultimate explanations for economic behaviour.

Humans are seen as atomised beings who individually choose freely and rationally to act in certain ways in order to satisfy personal desires. What we are as individuals is not a product of our upbringing, our social environment or economic circumstances. We are the product of our genes and exist in society only to fulfil the individual needs we are born with.

These assumptions have implications for the way most human activity is understood, from the reproduction of the species to the behaviour of the market. Since the PAP government also holds to these axioms, we will see how they influence its social control practices in the detailed

studies of some institutions later in this thesis. The main implications that we need to note in relation to writers on Singapore's political economy are those relating to "rational choice" and "free choice", the nature of the market and the neo-classical theory of value. In short, we need to comprehend the neo-classical theory of capital.

Individuals make "rational" choices in order to obtain their desired gratifications and they make these choices "freely". That is, every individual is assumed to have the same power to choose: equality is presupposed. If what people do arises from an equal opportunity to make rational (though sometimes mistaken) and free choices, then differences in human behaviour may be explained in terms of different individual values, preferences and tastes. Thus choices, not circumstances, explain behaviour. It is assumed that every individual is, or could if they wanted to be, in the same situation.

At a very general level, neo-classical theory recognises that people's actions are related to their endowments, their circumstances. But these factors are regarded as "givens", exogenously determined from outside the field of economics and thus beyond its scope. No attempt is made to explain the reasons for different endowments and preferences.

Because of the emphasis on rational and free choice, this approach has sometimes been referred to as the neo-classical/rational choice approach (Rodan 1989: 2). Its present dominance has also led to the simple name of "mainstream Western economics" (Szymanski 1983: 3). Its assumptions are easily detectable in the illustrations quoted above with their constant references to the correct policy choices made by the PAP-state and, always implied, by Lee Kuan Yew personally. No explanation is necessary for the Singapore "miracle" other than the observation that Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP freely made the right, rational economic policy choices.

Soon after 1959, the Singapore government made wise choices in directing industrial policy. It picked a high proportion of "winners" in deciding what sectors to emphasise (Milne & Mauzy 1990: 153).

Marginalist Theory of Value and the Free Market

For neo-classical writers, the main correct policy choice of this able government was the commitment to free enterprise and the free market. This introduces another set of assumptions: the classical and neo-classical theory of value. The value of something is determined by natural scarcity and subjective preference or desire. When something is plentiful, our desire for it is weak.

However, if it is a scarce commodity, we have a strong preference for it.

This notion of value is more commonly referred to as the theory of marginal utility. Utility is the satisfaction resulting from getting something. Disutility is the kind of negative feeling suffered from parting with something. The amount of utility or disutility is in direct correlation to the quantities of things involved and derives from its marginal units. Marginal utility refers to the value of a commodity at the margin, the pleasure or pain of getting one more or one less of a commodity than before. For this reason, the neo-classical approach is sometimes referred to as marginalist theory. This theory does not really distinguish between value and prices, thus both are determined by supply and demand or scarcity and desire.

The price of a commodity is thus determined by the subjective preferences of both sellers (supply) and buyers (demand), a process involving continual negotiation and change, since what is demanded at the margin (one more) depends on the price at which the marginal unit is offered, and vice versa. When everyone has perfect knowledge and freedom to alter their preferences in response to changes in one another's preferences, equilibrium prices are formed. These express the sum of everyone's tastes under conditions of perfect competition and freedom (Steven 1991: 3).

From these assumptions derive the notions of free enterprise and the free market. Marginalist theory sees

commodity exchange as a process that distributes "utility" to everyone provided they "freely" participate in it. The equilibrium price resulting from this kind of exchange is the optimum price, the right price: the price at which no one can get any more utility by making a different choice. Goods are exchanged until their relative marginal utilities correspond to their prices. This is termed allocative efficiency.

In other words, the market is the solution to natural scarcity or different endowments. The market enables us to obtain the things we lack in exchange for the excess supply of what we already possess. Marginalist theory thus sees the market as a natural, politically neutral institution through which everyone can potentially benefit.

The existence of a free market internationally through free trade leads, according to neo-classical and some world systems analysts (whom we will examine next), to countries specialising in industries or commodity production where they have a natural or comparative advantage. This is the hidden hand of the market ensuring allocative efficiency at the international level. Thus, correct economic policy choices ensure the development of production in "niches" where a country has a comparative advantage. The detection of such niches and the judgement on when it is time to move to another niche is seen as the stuff of economic wisdom.

A country such as Singapore needs a niche - an area of concentration that is just right for its stage of industrial development and capabilities and in which competition from other countries is relatively weak. But...in the industrial context there are no permanent niches. Indeed, a newspaper headline summarised a B.G.Lee [Brigadier General Lee Hsien Loong, Deputy Prime Minister and elder son of Lee Kuan Yew] comment in the words, "Get out of our present niche or we're finished!" (Milne & Mauzy 1990: 153-4).

Anything which interferes with the free market is seen as the enemy of free choice, of the right prices and of allocative efficiency. The free market or freely chosen exchange is seen as a moral end in itself. Hence the predisposition of neo-classical writers against state "intervention" in commodity exchange and against any other political force, such as a trade union, which organises individual choices into collective political power.

All these assumptions lie behind the neo-classical approach, which sees the wise policy choices of the Singapore government to be trade liberalisation, letting market forces set prices, reform of exchange rates and the provision of export incentives (Rodan 1989: 2).

The Contradiction of State Intervention

However, while they herald Singapore as an outstanding example of a free market economy, these writers have

difficulty in justifying at the same time the extensive intervention of the state whose leaders made the "right" choices. How can this be a positive contribution to free enterprise?

Lim Chong Yah deals with this contradiction through the simple expedient of embracing it. "Singapore has been able to grow so spectacularly in the economic field throughout the period because it has allowed a free enterprise system to flourish with government support and intervention where necessary" (Lim C Y 1984: 6).

Gayle, an advocate of market liberalisation, takes a similar route in his comparative study of Singapore, Jamaica and Costa Rica, but with a dash of cultural mystification added. Singapore is a "market socialist City State" which is "an economic success because accepted cultural traditions have permitted strong sociopolitical institutions to encourage entrepreneurial acumen and to attract foreign direct investment" (Gayle 1986: 100).

Lee Kuan Yew's prolific hagiographer, Alex Josey, notes the continuing support of "free enterprise" by "Singapore's pragmatic socialist government" (Josey 1980: 73).

Ariff and Hill deal with the contradiction more imaginatively:

The crucial difference between Singapore and, to varying degrees, the other four ASEAN countries is that intervention in the former facilitates the efficient operation of market forces, whereas that in the other countries frequently produces the opposite result (Ariff & Hill 1985: 154).

Somewhat tautologically, Singapore's economic success was achieved independently of government action which, owing to the efficacy of policy choices, merely assisted the operation of the market. Elsewhere in ASEAN, intervention has not led to positive results and therefore has distorted the market. As Rodan has pointed out, this is a no-lose position which makes impossible a serious analysis of the role of the state in Singapore's economy (Rodan 1989: 26). It only allows the conclusion that the actions of the Singapore state have facilitated rather than obstructed market forces which have, regardless, given the economy a position of comparative advantage.

A variation on Ariff and Hill's theoretical side-step is provided by Krause in his study "Government as Entrepreneur". In his view, government interventions aimed at "correcting market imperfections" have "often done more harm than good" (Krause 1989: 436), but he then concludes "Singapore, however, is an exception". For theoretical support he borrows the categories of economic historian Douglas C. North and defines Singapore as an "optimal or neutral state...which takes actions that would emerge with

perfect markets, which if accomplished by the private sector would require intense competition" (Krause 1989:436). It is then only a short step to saying, as Krause does, that the Singapore market is too small for perfect competition in private markets and the state is needed to protect against market failures. How has the state succeeded so effectively in Singapore especially in its economic intervention through SOEs (state-owned enterprises)? His answer: "The honesty and integrity of the present political leaders have never been questioned, and this also is carried over to the SOEs" (Krause 1989: 444).

A related solution to the contradiction of government economic control is to acknowledge its importance domestically but note the overarching power of global market forces. This is the explanation offered by Sandhu and Wheatley.

Singapore's economic success, despite the Republic's reputation as an exemplar of thriving free-market enterprise, has not been the result solely, or even primarily, of the operation of free market forces....There can be no doubt that the cumulative outcome of the dirigiste measures, irrespective of differences of opinion about individual instances, has been to render Singapore especially attractive to multinational corporations and to enhance the island's comparative advantage in export manufacturing and servicing beyond that which it could have attained in a milieu of completely free market forces (Sandhu & Wheatley 1989: 1088-9).

The assumption of neo-classicism that comparative advantage is something which merely awaits realisation by the correct policy choices of the state remains, but in a diluted form. The role of the state in actually shaping comparative advantage is hinted at. Later, however, Sandhu and Wheatley ascribe Singapore's success to global market forces marginally assisted by a competent PAP state leadership.

Surely the conclusion to be drawn must be that the economic success achieved by Singapore during the past quarter of a century has been the result principally of economic policies and practices imported from elsewhere and influenced only marginally, if at all, by indigenous cultural factors [such as the supposed Confucian work ethic]. Moreover, it is by no means certain that these policies would have proved effective had it not been for structural and situational forces prevailing in Southeast Asia and the world at large during the relevant decades, notably an expanding global economy, an increasingly open world trading system, and a relatively free transfer of technology between Asia and the West. Within this context Singapore has benefited immeasurably from the shrewd and perspicacious responses of its political and bureaucratic mandarinates....(Sandhu & Wheatley 1989: 1096-7).

The inability of such scholars to resolve the contradiction of free market and state interventionism lies in the ideological assumptions of the neo-classical approach.

Critique of the Neo-Classical Approach

This chapter began with the imperative of understanding the relationship between Singapore's economic development and its social reality. In this endeavour, the neo-classical approach has severe limitations. This is because it is essentially an ideology which covers up the politics of social reality in the interests of justifying capitalist social relations. It provides a polemic rather than a scientific method.

For example, the notion of free and rational choice focuses on one aspect of human behaviour, choice, in order to conceal the existence of inequality and the pressures which shape choice. Of course people do make choices, but these do not explain human behaviour. Rather, it is the circumstances within which choices are made which explain the reasons for them. People work for wages because they have no other means of survival, because the alternative is worse. People "choose" to be employers because they possess property.

Similarly, the Lee faction of the PAP chose an export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) policy after 1965 because of such circumstances as the persistence of political opposition in Singapore deriving from inequalities of class, race and linguistic tradition, the failure of the

PAP to conclude an alliance with the Malay capitalist class in Kuala Lumpur, the nature of the PAP's alliance with British capital and the changing pattern of capitalist production internationally.

Neo-classical writers would have us believe that PAP economic policy was merely a matter of the personal cleverness and uprightness of the leadership in making the correct choices. The political leadership is thus made the variable among the givens of economic reality. The personal abilities of PAP politicians and bureaucrats are made the basis of political legitimacy. While it is in the interests of the PAP-state to continue to generate such praise, the choices of one man or one party remain insufficient explanation for the development of Singapore's political economy. Rather, we need to understand such matters as the politics of struggles in Singapore or of the PAP alliance with imperialism in order to explain the actions of the PAP leadership.

There is also no scientific way of determining whether choices are free. There is only the ideological assertion that any state or trade union involvement in commodity exchange limits freedom and therefore is bad. This indicates the political bias of the supposedly neutral and purely descriptive neo-classical approach: it is an ideology which justifies the exploitation of labour by

capital and which aims to break up any social organisation which interferes with this relationship. The ideology of choice supplies the assumption of equal power to act in accordance with individual tastes and preferences by abstracting economics from the inequalities of power that accompany social reality. This ideology suits those in power because it propagates the myth of equality. Equality of choice, of opportunity, implies that social and political differences are irrelevant and can be ignored. Relationships of power in a capitalist society are thereby declared to be normal, uncontroversial, a fact of nature, a matter of political necessity. The social realities of differing power owing to class, race or gender are hidden beneath such notions as marginal utility, allocative efficiency and the free market.

Comparison with Marxist Theory

The deficiencies of marginalist theory as a scientific tool and its political partiality become apparent when contrasted with the Marxist theory of value, of the nature of production and of the role of the market. The categories of the marginalist notion of value are not scientifically testable. It is not possible to test whether something is chosen for the utility it provides, since the fact that it is chosen at a certain price is seen

as the evidence for the utility which was presumed to lie behind the choice. This is a tautological justification of all prices as the right prices on the basis that the purchasing agent was prepared to accept them.

The neo-classical approach also subverts a scientific understanding of political economy by conflating capitalist production and consumption. It holds that consumer tastes, not the capitalists' need to make a profit, determine production. Production is seen merely as a response to consumer taste, a consumption of inputs to achieve utility in the future. By giving primacy to consumption, which appears at times to be a matter of choice or taste, over production, divisions of class and conflicting interests become non-existent.

However, the Marxist approach to value takes into account the pressures of the social context, the circumstances which present the options from which choices are made. It seeks a scientific explanation of commodity exchange. At the centre of the circumstances of capitalist society is the capitalist production process based on wage labour and driven by competition among capitalists. The extraction of surplus value by capitalists through the exploitation of labour in the production process is a scientific way of understanding capital as a social relation. Consumption, the spending of workers' wages, can thus be seen in

political terms: the reproduction of labour power. The Marxist attempt to explain value and prices in terms of the socially necessary time for producing a commodity conforms to and reveals the reality of social experience rather than ascribing political realities solely to subjective feelings as neo-classical ideology does.

Through the Marxist theory of value, the concepts of demand and supply can be understood in their political context. When external circumstances induce capitalists to move from one industry to another in search of higher profits, the equilibrium between value (socially necessary production time) and prices is temporarily disturbed.

The most important political phenomenon of production is not this short-term influence of demand and supply on prices. It is the qualitative difference between capital and labour because their social situations are qualitatively different: one has power over the other, the wealth of one is acquired by means of exploiting the other. In terms of demand and supply, it is recognised that, on the demand side, workers produce surplus value which is appropriated by capitalists. On the supply side, Marxist political economy recognises that people without means of production enter wage labour out of necessity not after calculating the relative pain or pleasure of work or leisure as the marginalists would have us believe.

Capitalists make decisions about investment out of necessity to keep up with other capitalists or become bankrupt, not by weighing quantities of utility in the present against greater quantities in the future.

Thus it can be seen that neo-classical theory takes the concepts of demand and supply out of their true political context where they explain relatively little about production and exchange, and elevates them to the level of ideological principles. This has the effect of obscuring the way capitalism functions. Labour and capital are treated not as qualitatively different social relations but as qualitatively similar factors in production and exchange which are substitutable for one another at the margin. The conflicting interests of labour and capital are rendered invisible.

Marxist Theory of the Market

The Marxist critique of the neo-classical theory of the market reveals very sharply their opposing political positions. Marginalism sees the market as a kind of level playing field where everyone has equal power to act out their choices and tastes. It assumes the market functions for producers in the way it does for consumers.

Marxist theory sees the market as specific to capitalism and as serving its purposes. In particular, the market is where capitalists buy labour power. In order to survive, workers have to sell their labour power in a market dominated by capital. They have to give up their surplus product to capitalists. Far from being a terrain of equality, the market is the institutional mechanism through which the surplus is transferred from those who sell labour power to those who buy it.

Secondly, the market is where the competition among capitalists, which constantly raises the exploitation of labour, is manifested. A free market is where there is equal opportunity for all capitalists to exploit workers. This is not a politically neutral institution but one which ensures the subordination of labour to capital. Capitalists who do not exploit workers effectively do not themselves survive.

Thirdly, the market enables capitalists to translate goods into money, pure quantity which can be accumulated.

Thus, the marginalist theory of political economy is that the driving force is consumer taste. Capitalism is a rationally contrived system to overcome scarcity and to satisfy needs. The neo-classical approach does not provide a scientific method for the study of political economy.

Rather, it provides ideological sanctification for capitalism. For most studies on Singapore, this means implicit justification for existing economic policies and explicit approval of the political leadership.

On the other hand, Marxist theory sees the objective needs of production, constrained by the need to make a profit, as the driving force of capitalism. It seeks the politics behind economic forms, detecting a system of increasing exploitation. It sees capital as a social relation and therefore subject to the effects of political alliances and struggles.

The Value of Neo-Classical Writers

This critique of the neo-classical approach is not made in order to dismiss the work of writers who locate themselves within this tradition. Rather, the aim is to find an approach to political economy which will assist our understanding of the relationship between economic strategies and social realities and thus enhance our comprehension of social control in Singapore. The dominant assumptions of scholarly writing on Singapore do not advance this aim, but such descriptive writing does have some value. At best, it provides information for

subsequent political analysis; at worst, the political bias of the writing renders data suspect and unusable.

Also, in fairness it should be noted that Singaporean academics or foreigners resident in Singapore with a healthy concern for their own welfare would not find it in their interests to take a more critical approach to such a sensitive topic. Within these limits, some studies do provide helpful data and the occasional critical insight.

For example, Sandhu and Wheatley note three important aspects of Singapore's political economy. First, the vulnerability of the economy resulting from the heavy dependence on international capital (1989: 1091, 1092). Second, that Singapore has constituted itself as "a global city in the sense that it has forged economic linkages across the whole world, and has thereby created for itself a hinterland immensely more extensive than its rulers could possibly have envisaged prior to 1965" (1989: 1088). Third, that the increasing importance of the service sector "represents a resurgence, in the modernized and expanded form of sophisticated business services, of Singapore's original entrepot function, possibly only temporarily eclipsed by manufacturing in the government's early efforts to combat unemployment" (1989: 1088).

These observations of the dependence of the economy, the role of Singapore as a regional node for international capital and the significance of the service sector are helpful insights. However, the writers are unable to give a clear indication of their political meaning because they do not see capital as a social relation: that the dependence on foreign capital is the expression of a political relationship between the PAP-state and imperialism.

Koh Ai Tee raises the vulnerability of Singapore's "two tier" export profile: 79 per cent of exports are manufactured goods, a sector dominated by foreign companies, while the remaining 21 per cent are services dominated by local entrepreneurs (Koh 1989: 239). Chia Siow Yue also notes the dependence on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector:

Wholly foreign-owned establishments alone accounted for more than half the output, value added, and direct exports of the manufacturing sector. The dominance of foreign investment becomes even more pronounced when joint ventures are included. Foreign firms (wholly foreign and majority foreign) accounted for the bulk of gross output (70.4% in 1985), value added (64.8%), and exports (82.2%)....In 1985, among the top five industries in terms of value added, the foreign equity shares were 87 per cent in electronic products and components, 84 per cent in petroleum refineries and products, 55 per cent in non-electrical machinery, 43 per cent in fabricated metal products, and 22 per cent in transport machinery (Chia 1989: 259-60).

But what is the political significance of this foreign investment? Does its dominance matter to Singapore? Chia implies foreign capital has its own interests at heart more than Singapore's, and thus attempts should be made at building an indigenous industrial base as well by promoting domestic entrepreneurship (Chia 1989: 276). Further, she states that the "government needs to continue its catalytic pioneering role in high-tech investments in order to provide a countervailing power to foreign MNCs in the absence of a strong and dynamic domestic private sector" (Chia 1989: 275). But at the same time she raises a critique of the government's emphasis on high-tech industries, saying that "it is not apparent that Singapore has a comparative advantage in high-tech industries" because it lacks "an abundance of scientific skills, large expenditure on R & D, and the availability of venture capital and dynamic entrepreneurship" (Chia 1989: 274). She concludes that Singapore's future might "lie more in high value-added services than in high-tech manufacturing", noting that "market forces" have traditionally encouraged specialisation in services in Singapore (Chia 1989: 274).

This debate about technology, the relationship between manufacturing and services, and the future specialisation of Singapore as a services centre and major exporter of services rather than manufactured goods emerges in an increasing number of neo-classical studies (Koh 1989: 240;

Lee Soo Ann 1989: 293). It is undoubtedly critical to understanding Singapore's political economy. However, most writers deal with the issues descriptively and prescriptively rather than analytically, and many as a response to the government's own reassessment of its economic strategy after the 1985 recession. There is a theoretical vacuum when it comes to understanding foreign investment in terms of maintaining a political alliance or relating shifts in the pattern of accumulation to changes in this alliance or to political struggles. It is therefore necessary to proceed to an examination of other theoretical approaches to the political economy of Singapore which might fill this vacuum.

WORLD SYSTEMS/DEPENDENCY THEORY

World systems theory or dependency theory is the second most common theoretical tradition among analysts of Singapore's political economy. The most influential and earliest world systems theorists, Amin (1974), Frank (1978) and Wallerstein (1979), came from the Marxist tradition. However, contemporary writers on Singapore are more eclectic and are influenced by neo-classical economics as well as by the neo-Marxism of the world systems "purists"

above. One of the most popular forms of dependency theory applied to Singapore can be loosely classified as "developmentalism", a body of theory developed by liberals on the edges of both neo-classical and Marxist theory who sought a middle way between socialism and semicolonial status for developing countries (Szymanski 1983: 69).

Some world systems writers tend more to the neo-classical tradition, while others advance arguments more within the Marxist tradition. The differences between them are often matters of emphasis. It is therefore a fairly complex exercise to determine the theoretical debt of individual writers. However, our purpose here is more to evaluate the general notions of world systems theory in relation to an adequate comprehension of Singapore's political economy than to come to a judgement on individuals. Writers will therefore be referred to for the light they throw on the value of this tradition in understanding the relationship between patterns of accumulation and the social forces at work in Singapore. Our focus will be on the major tendencies and problems of dependency theory.

The World System Determines

The world systems approach acknowledges that the driving force of capitalism is the exploitation of workers by

capitalists and the competition among capitalists for increased profits. The distinctiveness of the approach is that it understands the way capitalism functions in any place in terms of the way it functions on a world level. Thus, the political economy of Singapore may be understood in the context of the world system of capitalism. But the emphasis is even stronger than this; Singapore's political economy is seen as dependent on the world system. Singapore's political economy can be explained in terms of the effect of the whole system, the world, on its parts, countries. In this regard, it has much in common with regulation theory, theorised on an international level. The social formation constituted by the mode of production, classes and class conflict is the dependent variable. The international world system of capitalism is the independent variable.

The world systems notion of dependence rests heavily on the theory of unequal exchange. Surpluses created by production in under-developed countries are distributed to the advanced countries through the way international trading prices function. This difference between value (the creation of surplus) and price (the distribution of surplus) is, in world systems theory, the main mechanism by which under-developed countries become poorer and advanced countries become richer. The major capitalist countries

are seen as the core of the capitalist world system and the under-developed countries as the dependent periphery.

The Problem of the NICs

Singapore and the other newly industrialised countries (NICs) therefore pose a dilemma for dependency theory. In their case, it appears that the direction of the surplus flow is not solely from the periphery to the centre but that a substantial proportion of the surplus is distributed within these countries. If this is to be explained in terms of a world system, then Singapore's industrialisation must be seen as artificial or exceptional. Dependency theorists must deny that any capital accumulation has occurred within the NICs, which is very difficult, or they must argue that it has been externally induced in exceptional circumstances.

However, even if it is accepted that the industrialisation of the NICs is due solely to external factors at the core of the world system (a "new" international division of labour, decomposition of production processes, technological development of communications and transport), "the differentiation in response to the objective conditions of the international system continues to be a thorn in the side of dependency theory" (Rodan 1989: 18).

In other words, if the nature and political effect of class struggles at the "periphery" are very secondary to the requirements of capital at the "centre", the particular attraction of some developing economies and not others to foreign capital and the location of production facilities remains unexplained.

Denial and Exceptionalism

Deyo is a scholar from the dependency tradition whose writing on Singapore has spanned both responses to this problem. His 1981 Dependent Development and Industrial Order elaborated on the traditional dependency approach, which causally links domination by the core countries to the emergence of authoritarian states on the periphery. With this kind of deterministic approach, local political and social conditions are considered as secondary if at all. Deyo sees them as the PAP having facilitated the entry of foreign capital.

Deyo sees both the pre-conditions and consequences of incorporation into the world capitalist system as trade union repression, wage controls and social atomism; in short, the institutionalised control and cooption of workers. Seeing the whole of Singapore as a "free

production zone" for export-oriented manufacturing (which he calls "world-market-oriented industrialisation"), Deyo notes the concomitant "generalisation of corporatist modes of political control from industrial enclaves to the larger political society", the expansion of national income and employment (reducing inequality and raising standards of living), the diminution of the local political influence of foreign corporations and a trend to "a popular-authoritarian form of political corporatism" in response to the problem of economic and political demoralisation (Deyo 1981: 115-6).

But Deyo's explication of the corporatist nature of the PAP-state and its relatively autonomous dealings with international capital is not an attempt to show how the social relations in Singapore were of primary importance in its economic development. Instead, he builds a case for the opposite conclusion: that repression is a norm of an imposed system of accumulation. It may be true that outside forces predominantly affect what happens within neo-colonies during certain periods. But Deyo regards this as the inevitable effect of a world system, rather than as the result of political struggles within each social formation (the imperialist power and the neo-colony). The purpose of his detailed study of Singapore politics is to show how this repression happened.

External Impositions Paramount

Deyo sees the external impositions on Singapore's political economy as paramount in determining its shape and direction. He generally concludes that world-market-oriented industrialisation results in "the creation of an increasingly ineffectual and dependent local bourgeoisie unable to effectively challenge ruling elites" (Deyo 1981: 111). Specifically referring to Singapore, he states:

[World-market-oriented industrialisation] has undercut the vitality and economic independence of local business classes which in other societies have tended to challenge authoritarian political rule, and it has disrupted local community structures which might have provided the leadership and social support for challenges to corporatist control of unions. Finally, it has led to the emergence of a highly atomistic industrial labour force that lacks the solidarity and commitment to organise against union and government domination (Deyo 1981: 93).

This is another way of saying that real industrialisation has not taken place, that no local capitalist ruling class has developed and repressed the populace in an alliance with foreign capital. The political formation of the PAP-state is ascribed largely to external forces. That is, political authoritarianism and systemic social control is put down to world-market-oriented industrialisation rather than to the internal resolution of social and political conflicts in the two decades following the Second World

War. Deyo's analysis renders him subject to the general criticism of dependency theorists that "policies in the Third World to promote exports or attract international capital investment are interpreted as outcomes of the imposed 'needs' of capital at the centre, not outcomes of local class struggle" (Rodan 1989: 18).

Strategic Capacity Model

Subsequently, Deyo has attempted to overcome the problem posed to dependency theory by the differentiated responses of developing states to these "imposed needs", especially the rapid growth of the Asian NICs. It would appear that his analysis of the NICs has forced him to recognise the weakness of world systems theory and he has made a move in the direction of the neo-classical tradition (Deyo 1987: 15). He has adapted the determinism of the world systems framework to the determinism of another framework which also has the mechanism of exchange, the market, as its focus. In doing this he moves further away from Marxist analysis to a synthesis of neo-classicism and dependency theory which he terms "development theory" and "a strategic capacity model of development" (Deyo 1987: 11, 227). His analysis accordingly becomes more descriptive and less theoretically able to relate the development of Singapore's

economy to the development of domestic social and political forces.

Explaining the NIC phenomenon, Deyo notes "the importance of a consistent, developmentalist, state-led strategy for economic growth and restructuring in South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore" (1987: 17). He then posits that the "strategic capacity" of these states to alter and ameliorate their dependence on the core is due to three factors: state coalitional autonomy, institutional consolidation, and the temporal sequence and nature of political and economic linkages to core societies (1987: 20). This appears as an attempt to explain exceptions to the general rule of dependency theory rather than as a search for a new paradigm. Political developments within the NICs are seen in terms of deviance from the normative dependence of peripheral states.

Singapore is seen as an exception within the exceptional Asian NIC category, both in terms of the destruction of a strong left movement prior to industrialisation and in terms of the continuing dominance of foreign capital in the manufacturing sector. This leads to further "exceptional" arguments: "Where labour movements were not already weak or controlled...labour-intensive manufacturing for world markets has indeed been associated with the imposition or intensification of repressive controls over labour" (Deyo

1987: 19). Thus, the emphasis in terms of the direction of causation has not changed, only the sophistication of the categories of dependency theory in order to accommodate the Singapore exception.

Technologyless Industrialisation

A similar, though in some ways more acute, analysis of Singapore's political economy has been developed by a scholar who might best be seen as a dependency theorist of a liberal rather than Marxist formation. In his early writing, Yoshihara Kunio exhibited his neo-classical roots by noting "effective" and "efficient" government as a major reason for the successful attraction of foreign investment into manufacturing (Yoshihara 1976: 17, 27). He concluded that it would be very difficult for Singapore to establish a viable indigenous export industry, but "not impossible" if its industries were integrated with the regional economy and dependence on foreign investment was reduced (Yoshihara 1976: 165).

Twelve years later, Yoshihara pronounced that Singapore had failed to industrialise and is, in fact, an example of "ersatz capitalism". As such, Singapore cannot even claim to be a genuine NIC. Instead, it is an example of "technologyless industrialisation" (Yoshihara 1988: Chapter

Five). He denies that Singapore's industrialisation is real.

Yoshihara's justifications for these claims are applied more broadly to the ASEAN nations, among which Singapore was then an exception in having its manufacturing sector dominated by foreign capital. In brief, Yoshihara holds that the dependence of this sector (whether dominated by foreign capital or not) on foreign technology, the concentration of indigenous capital in the tertiary sector, the small size of the manufacturing sector, and the role of local capitalists as "rent-seekers" or compradors of foreign capitals all add up to a kind of ersatz capitalism (Yoshihara 1988: 3, 112).

The building of a technological base which enables an economy to generate new exports one after another is regarded as essential to genuine industrialisation (Yoshihara 1988: 102). But, states Yoshihara, "Singapore can never build dynamic industrial capitalism of its own", because foreign companies with superior technology compete for skilled technicians with Singapore companies, because the service sector is highly developed and attracts most local skilled labour and because the small size of the manufacturing sector means there is insufficient research and development, insufficient industrial diversity and technological cross-fertilisation (Yoshihara 1988: 116).

But Singapore has registered more than two decades of high economic growth. Surely this points to the success of the EOI approach and the emergence of a local capitalist class? Apparently recognising where the surplus is created, Yoshihara notes the role of the manufacturing sector as the "engine of growth" of the economy (Yoshihara 1988: 100) which can drag the service sector up but not the reverse. However, he later makes an exception of Singapore which, he says, can make its service sector tradeable (Yoshihara 1988: 116). Since 1973, he states,

Singapore's growth depended greatly, if not entirely, on the prosperity of Malaysia and Indonesia, for which it acts as a service centre and an "oasis"...Foreign capital, which has set up offshore production centres there, gives it some independence from these two countries, but that sort of industrialisation is dependent rather than autonomous, as it is in the more genuine NICs of East Asia (Yoshihara 1988: 118).

Not denying the high growth achieved by Singapore, Yoshihara still claims that the Singapore economy has not been truly industrialised. Far from having the technological base required by genuine industrial capitalism, Yoshihara holds that Singapore's manufacturing export sector is sub-contracted out to foreign industrial capital.

Singapore is often regarded as a model of capitalism in South-East Asia, but it is certainly not a model of industrial capitalism. Practically all industrial capitalist institutions which have export capability

there are foreign-owned. Although there are Singaporean industrial capitalists, they are mostly inward-looking, producing food and construction materials (such as steel products, cement etc.) for the domestic market... If there is anything "industrializing" about Singapore, it is because it serves as the offshore centre for foreign capital (Yoshihara 1988: 115-6).

This last remark concerning Singapore's role as a centre for foreign capital (not just industrial capital) is crucial to understanding its political economy. Yoshihara does not elaborate however, nor does he place this insight within a theoretical framework which relates it to the political process of international alliance-building and the configuration of social forces in Singapore. The furthest he goes is the largely unsupported observation that social and political conditions are "largely responsible for having created the environment of the present situation of capitalism" (Yoshihara 1988: 4) followed by an historical outline of foreign investment in Southeast Asia. That is, despite his acute observations about the nature of foreign investment and the kind of industrialisation which has taken place, the ultimate emphasis of his argument parallels Deyo's. Deyo has been forced to recognise that Singapore has been industrialised and he moves towards the neo-classical position of development through the free market. Coming from the neo-classical position, Yoshihara has confronted the dependent nature of Singapore's industrialisation and has moved towards a world systems theory of dependency. For differing

reasons, both he and Deyo are constrained to understand Singapore's industrialisation as artificial or exceptional and that the global forces of capitalism have been the primary determinant of Singapore's political economy.

Proof of Neo-Classical Approach

Some world systems writers, faced with Singapore's economic development, are willing to abandon dependency theory altogether. Barrett and Chin compare the Asian NICs within the "capitalist world system" and note a "pattern of moderate, sustained external economic reliance" accompanied by fast, high growth, successful structural transformation, high employment levels and growing economic power of the state, all indicating declining dependency (Barrett & Chin 1987: 40). They conclude:

...these data generally run counter to dependencista predictions of long-term stagnation, growing inequality, deepening dependency, and a weakening of the state. To the extent that economic dynamism is seen as following from open economic development strategies centering on trade and linkage to foreign capital, these findings offer at least partial support for those working within a neo-classical perspective (Barrett & Chin 1987: 41).

Thus the apparent convergence of the countries on the semi-periphery with the core is seen as confirmation of the neo-classical position of market-led growth. This must be seen

as a reasonable conclusion for those who emphasise the adaptation by the state in the third world to the changing external pressures of the world capitalist system, rather than the indigenous social and political factors which affect the nature of the state and shape the relationship between labour and capital.

Trade and Investment

Some of the problems of the world systems approach can be ascribed to the conceptual separation of trade from foreign investment. For example, in a rather contradictory analysis, Haggard and Cheng regard Singapore as a "hybrid case" and a "deviant case" (Haggard & Cheng 1987: 90, 93, 94) which fails to conform to the general Asian NIC pattern in terms of the role of foreign multinational corporations in it, its dependence on foreign investment and its short-lived ISI strategy. Eschewing foreign investment as the form of dependence, they conclude:

More important have been the competitive pressures transmitted to the gang of four [Singapore, Hongkong, Taiwan, South Korea] through their extensive trade. Trade dependence has forced all four countries to adopt new industrial strategies that depend on technological capabilities (Haggard & Cheng 1987: 129).

But this amounts to saying that the market operating at the world level has forced the NICs to become dependent on foreign investment for production. These writers then also say that the same attention should be given to historical and political factors rather than treating them as residual (Haggard & Cheng 1987: 84). But, in the light of their initial conclusion that external pressures mediated through unequal exchange are the main determinants of the political economy, it is difficult to see how this might be done. Haggard and Cheng do not do it themselves.

With his "historical-structural" variation of dependency theory, Evans follows a similar path (Evans 1987: 221, 223). He notes Singapore as an exception among the Asian NICs because of the heavy foreign investment in production. But he holds that trade and aid are the more important forms of dependency.

For the East Asian NICs, reliance on trade has meant neither a stronger coalition of extractive foreign capital and agro-exporters nor the passive pursuit of comparative advantage based on natural endowments. Instead it has entailed a changing basis for comparative advantage engineered to a large degree by intervening states (Evans 1987: 211).

Evans appears to say that the capitalist world system has not engendered a coalition of foreign multinational corporations and the landed national bourgeoisie in the NICs as it has elsewhere. Rather, "reliance on trade" has

caused the growth of powerful states which have been able to shape production in accordance with their perceived comparative advantage in world trade. It is not clear how these states came about, what class interests they represent or why they are not also seen as partners in coalitions with outside forces. Later, Evans notes that:

...despite the "relative autonomy" of authoritarian states and the similarities among them, such states must be analyzed in the context of class configurations in which they operate and in light of the broadly defined development strategies that have emerged from those configurations (Evans 1987: 219).

Again it would appear that the primary direction of causation is in both directions. Evans' difficulties arise from trying to reconcile unequal exchange with foreign investment as a transfer of capital leading to genuine industrialisation and not just to further dependence. The world systems emphasis on global trade or accumulation on a world scale as the main determinant of political economy means the development of capitalism has to be explained mainly in terms of the spread of the world market through trade. Evans tries to keep this theory of causation in tension with the contradictory Marxist emphasis on class struggle.

Writers of the world systems school frequently provide a sophisticated analysis of the movement of capital internationally. But they tend to ignore that it is the

development of the productive forces assisted by foreign investment which enables greater exploitation through technological advancement. Through their focus on the market, they seem to miss the significance of the fact that much of world trade is internal to the corporations which invest in the NICs. Unequal exchange is therefore intimately related to investment. Furthermore, the mechanism of exchange, the market, is only one mechanism through which international capital operates.

The Fundamentals of Dependency Theory

Szymanski sums up the fundamentals of dependency theory in this way:

[Dependency theorists] all stress that the poorer countries have systematically been deprived of their wealth by the advanced countries with the consequence of the rich getting richer and the poor poorer. They all downplay a revolutionary role for the working class in either the less-developed or developed countries. They all claim a leading revolutionary role for the "most oppressed" in the less-developed countries (the lumpen, the semiproletariat, and peasantry). They all maintain that what classical Marxism defined as interimperialist rivalry among the capitalist countries has largely been contained....They are all pessimistic about an anti-imperialist role for the national bourgeoisie in the less-developed countries....Last, the Marxian-dependency tradition differs from the Leninist mainstream in maintaining that imperialism is not driven by the need to export capital in order to continue the capital accumulation process (Szymanski 1983: 92).

As we have seen, some world systems writers have tried to adapt these basic premises in order to take account of the NICs. But none of them has recognised that the export of capital is a stage of imperialism, an international shift in the social relation between capital and labour, shaped by political struggles between these classes in each country. The emphasis on a world system tends to depoliticise the analysis of capital into economic descriptions of the "internationalisation" of capital or a "new international division of labour" between core and periphery countries. Not only is trade separated from investment, but the economic (multinational corporations) is separated from the political (the state). The latter distinction derives from the dependency emphasis on multinational corporations as the main facilitators of trade. "Multi"-national is used to connote joint ownership by many nations. This terminology loses the political dynamic that these corporations represent class alliances with the dominant member based in a particular social formation, an insight preserved by the Marxist formulation, "transnational" corporation.

In comparison to the dominant role of the MNCs, the dependency approach relegates the state to a minor regulatory role. Hence, the strong states in Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea pose the same dilemma for world systems writers as they do for neo-classical writers.

Classes, class alliances and class conflict tend to disappear. Writers try to postulate a new world system rather than seeing local struggles affecting the productive forces in each country and collectively or cumulatively forcing a new stage of imperialism.

It is therefore very difficult for any writer with an intimate knowledge of political struggles in Singapore to find a theoretical "fit" in the dependency approach. Khoo Ee Hong is such a writer whose work is rich with descriptions of the various forms of social conflict in Singapore. But she is not well served by her theoretical approach. She states:

In Singapore, economic growth and political repression by the ruling elites work hand-in-glove. The type of economic strategies employed by the NICs necessitate authoritarian government within the context of [the] New International Division of Labour (Khoo 1990: 2).

Later she adds:

...the authoritarianism of a One-Party and One-Leader Rule developed independently of the economic model chosen. Authoritarianism laid its foundation during British colonisation and was further strengthened by the PAP when it became the government (Khoo 1990: 3).

She then notes that economic miracles are a mix of "historical, political and economic conjunctures that cannot be generalised into laws" (Khoo 1990: 3). The

contradictions inherent in these statements do not undermine the value of her study of the forms and strategies of struggle in Singapore. But the inability to relate local social forces to patterns of accumulation, a characteristic she shares with other dependency writers, does limit the theoretical impact of her work. It is this weakness that we seek to overcome in a more detailed examination of the notion of imperialism in the mainstream Marxist tradition of political economy. By contrast, the deficiencies of world systems theory will be even clearer.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF IMPERIALISM

The mainstream Leninist theory of imperialism focuses on the links between the productive forces in any place and the political alliances made by capital internationally in order to increase the rate of profit. That is, the unit of analysis is the particular social formation and the mode of production in it which constitute classes. The motive force is class struggle, the exploitation of labour by capital, which produces varying reactions and activities locally and internationally depending on the historical circumstances. These reactions may range from wars to

foreign investment to comprehensive systems of domestic social control.

In other words, because mainstream Marxism gives primary weight to the mode of production, the changing configuration of class forces in each context is seen as the main determinant, the independent variable, of the political economy. Causation is from the local to the international. This is the opposite emphasis from dependency theory which holds that what happens in every country is the effect of the functioning of the whole world system. In addition, the units of analysis in world systems theory are the countries rather than their class relations.

The mode of production theory of imperialism provides a wholistic framework for relating accumulation to regulation. By comparison, neo-classical theory regards social control as extraneous to political economy. With its tendency to external determinism, world systems theory, as we have seen, has considerable difficulty in accounting for local variations.

There are now several major writers on Singapore whose analysis is based on the mainstream Marxist approach. They show how the particular social and political relationships in Singapore have shaped the economy. Hamilton follows

this approach in a comparative study of the four Asian NICs (South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong and Singapore) identifying common patterns of growth but showing the uniqueness of historical factors in each case (Hamilton 1983). Rodan, in a more comprehensive study on Singapore's industrialisation, classifies his theoretical framework as the "indigenous classes and state autonomy approach" (Rodan 1989: 19). Mirza, who focuses on multinationals and the growth of the Singapore economy, also comes within this theoretical tradition (Mirza 1986). Robison, Higgott and Hewison make a comparative study of Southeast Asian economies focussing on the "interface of the international political economy and domestic political and economic interests" while noting "the inseparability of economic, political and social factors" (Robison, Higgott & Hewison 1987: 1, 15). Bello and Rosenfeld point to the specific historical conditions in each of the Asian NICs together with their relations with the United States and Japan in accounting for their economic success and also the impending crisis of their economic strategies (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990).

These scholars clearly differ from the dependency approach and place Singapore's industrialisation in the context of the history of its social relations. But they do owe varying degrees of debt to dependency theory's analysis of the movement of international capital, often using world

systems terminology in a misleading way. It is therefore important to distinguish the main features of the Leninist theory of imperialism before proceeding to a concrete analysis of the stages of Singapore's industrialisation. However, dependency writers have concentrated on analysing developing countries for at least two decades and much of their writing can enrich the analysis produced by the mainstream Marxist approach.

Leninist Theory of Imperialism

We have already noted the unit of analysis of the mainstream Marxist theory of political economy and also what it sees as the driving force of capitalism. The associated Leninist theory of imperialism understands imperialism as a stage of capitalism when capital is exported in an international political move resulting from crisis and class struggle. Each part of this formulation requires a brief explanation.

The breakdown of social relationships in imperialist countries and the inability of their capitalist classes to make money through increased exploitation in their own countries has led to the attempt to solve the problem of their own survival through some form of internationalisation. Hence not only the export of

commodities but the export of capital. More exactly, imperialism now involves the internationalisation of each circuit of capital within the circuit of the total social capital: commodity capital through trade, productive capital through direct foreign investment by transnational corporations and money capital through aid, lending and other operations of transnational banks.

Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism when capital becomes highly concentrated and centralised. Big corporations acquire the capacity to out-compete others because of their superior technology. This power is expressed in the forging of links between banking capital and industrial capital and thus the emergence of "finance capital". This merging of productive capacity and credit is concretely manifested in the relationships between transnational banks and transnational corporations and expressed in direct foreign investment. These relationships or alliances comprise one of the most important social forces behind the power of imperialism.

Just as imperialism is engendered by crises in class relations, so is its operation conditioned by political struggles within colonies and neo-colonies. Social control may be mainly exerted by non-state organisations such as corporations or by politically independent states. That is, the forms of the political economies of developing

countries are determined by the interaction between local class struggles and struggles within the imperialist power. These struggles also produce alliances between capitalist classes across international boundaries. In neo-colonies these alliances are often seen in institutional agreements between local capital, sometimes represented by the neo-colonial state, and transnational corporations.

Thus, the emphasis of Leninist theory is on seeing the internationalisation of capital politically and not just in terms of its economic appearance. For this reason, it continues to use the word "imperialism" even after the formal political independence of developing countries because the fundamental political relationship remains although in a changed form. Hence also the use of the word "neo-colony" in preference to "under-developed" country or "Third World" state.

This focus on the changing social formation over time provides a helpful periodisation of the stages of imperialism. Rather than attempt a general outline of these stages, we will now turn to an examination of the historical development of Singapore's political economy. This will enable us to theorise the stages of imperialism on the basis of a concrete example and to note specific aspects of the relation between accumulation and regulation which require further theoretical development.

Pre-Industrial Singapore: Imperialist Control of State

Power

The first phase of Singapore's political economy can be termed its pre-industrial stage before 1959 when Britain held state power. Borrowing from Buchanan (1972), Rodan notes that trade was largely through an intermediary class of local Chinese merchants involved in small scale collection, distribution and retailing, thus playing a complementary role to British-controlled primary production and trade. Singapore's entrepot economy maintained a remarkably stable structure during the period 1900-1960:

During this period between 70 per cent and 75 per cent of the workforce was employed in the tertiary sector, from which 80 per cent to 85 per cent of Singapore's income was generated. By contrast, the proportion of the workforce employed in manufacturing during the same period ranged from ten per cent to fifteen per cent, with this sector's contribution to domestic income varying between five per cent and ten per cent (Rodan 1989: 41).

There was heavy reliance on the Malayan commodity trade and entrepot services in the post-War period, but they were declining. Unemployment was rising sharply (Robison et al. 1987: 3) and, in the mid-fifties, plans were drawn up for an import substitution industrialisation (ISI) strategy (Mirza 1986: 29). The formation of a common domestic

market and political union with Malaya were central to this strategy, which eventually became a policy plank of the PAP in the 1959 elections.

There were obstacles to immediate economic re-structuring in the late 1950s: mainly the mobilisation of the populace in mass political agitation for independence. Also the political impotence of the local capitalist class was reflected in their inability to command the loyalty of the mass of the population. An ISI policy would require far greater control over workers than before. Thus, the implications of the lack of a strong domestic bourgeoisie were that:

Steps would have to be taken to nurture such a class and/or the state would be required to adopt policies to compensate for the lack of an industrial bourgeoisie. Certainly the state would in all likelihood have an important role to play in any strategy for industrialisation (Rodan 1989: 49).

These observations demonstrate the particularity of domestic social relations in shaping Singapore's political economy during this stage of imperialism. After the Second World War, the resurgence of nationalism in Malaya and Singapore meant British imperialism could no longer acquire the rent from raw materials through the simple mechanism of holding direct state power. It had to build an alliance with a local capitalist class to whom state power could be transferred. Economic access would come through the power

of its direct investment and with the security guarantee for the local ruling class of massive imperialist military power. The United States was already ahead in doing this.

Unlike Malaya, where the pre-capitalist Malay ruling class saw that it could maintain its position only by becoming a capitalist class in an alliance with imperialism, there was no existing class ally in Singapore with the social base to sustain a grip on state power. In fact, the nationalist movement in Singapore was so inspired by the revolution in China that it sought to prevent any such alliance being built, thus hoping for a nationalist and a socialist revolution simultaneously. This political movement was so powerful that it would need to be penetrated, co-opted and destroyed by any fraction of the local capitalist class which wished to govern. Only on the basis of this achievement could any alliance with the British be built. This was the route to power taken by the Lee faction which, on coming to power, had to consolidate its support in the local capitalist class and also its alliance with imperialism. The lack of a strong local capitalist class would be reflected in the eventual terms on which foreign capital, mainly from the United States, would enter Singapore after 1965.

The pressure for industrialisation in the 1950s came from the need to deal with the deepening political struggle fed

by the decline of the commodity trade and thus growing unemployment. It also came from the need for British capital to raise its profitability in order to compete with US capital. This meant the post-war regeneration of productive forces in colonies as well as in the U.K. To secure Malaya's wealth via Singapore, Singapore's class struggle had to be dealt with.

The war had, after all, been fundamentally over the competitive advantage supplied by the possession of colonies and the raw materials, markets and rudimentary production base they provided. Those imperialist powers who wanted to increase their productive capacity and thus their political strength had to acquire more colonies by conquest, by taking them from other imperialist powers.

Perhaps it is these political factors that Mirza has in mind in his discussion of Hongkong and Singapore as distribution centres within the global British empire when he states that "historical factors are probably the most important determinants of each country's development strategy" (Mirza 1986: 204).

Political Pre-Conditions for Industrialisation

The second phase of Singapore's political economy was the defeat of the anti-imperialist nationalist movement and the formal transfer of state power to the bourgeois nationalist faction of the PAP between 1959 and 1965. The acquisition of state authority and the merger with Malaya gave the Lee faction the power to eliminate the organisational structures of the mass movement and to defeat its electoral challenge. These political developments rendered the working class susceptible to greater control and exploitation. That is, this period saw the emergence of the immediate political preconditions to industrialisation.

As we observed in the historical introduction, the Lee faction of the PAP exploited the political opening provided by the weakness of the pro-British local bourgeois political forces and their inability either to comprehend or to co-opt the anti-colonial feelings of the population at large. Thus Lee Kuan Yew and his group were able to ride to power on the strength of the left through an alliance of convenience before mobilising state power to smash the left.

Executive power was subsequently employed by the PAP to extend its influence to all spheres of social activity, enabling it to establish control over all political groups. A virtual "state party" emerged which not only entrenched the PAP, but also conditioned economic and industrial policy... [By

1965] the political preconditions for an alternative economic strategy had been created. The supremacy of the PAP was the most important of these (Rodan 1989: 50-51).

The failure of merger with Malaya was the failure of the PAP to consolidate an alliance with the Malay capitalist class, which rejected the PAP's ultimate ambition to take state power in Malaysia as a whole (Minchin 1986: 115, 125-6). Singapore's expulsion in 1965 was initially seen as a severe blow by the PAP leadership: without a sizeable internal market and a hinterland, the ISI policy could not work for Singapore. Its economy appeared to be back where it was prior to merger. However, the social formation had changed. The PAP was soon to discover the favourable configuration of class relations nationally and internationally for an export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) policy.

By 1965 the PAP-state had largely defeated the left movement and was rapidly undermining the power of organised labour. It also had no debts to the weak and politically inept local capitalist class. The transitory nature of ISI in Singapore meant there was little chance to build up a strong local capitalist class ready to take advantage of the EOI strategy as in the other Asian NICs (Hamilton 1983: 62-3). This was to the PAP's advantage in the new circumstances. "The PAP enjoyed a degree of political autonomy which made incorporation into the new

international division of labour a feasible political project" (Robison et al. 1987: 14). That is, the PAP-state had the capacity to regulate an industrial working class independent of pressures from workers or employers. The lack of a strong local capitalist class meant that the PAP was simply able to represent imperialism.

Hamilton approaches the question of the political preconditions for industrialisation by asserting "the obvious structural fact that industrial capital dominates the production of surplus value. This raises the fundamental question of how this process of class transformation came about, for it is within this process that industrial growth occurs" (Hamilton 1983: 38). With reference to the four Asian NICs, he observes:

The political condition which enabled industrial development was essentially that industrial capital exercised political control over both other segments of capital and the working population. This is not to argue that the state evolved as the direct political representative of industrial capital but that its social and historical functions were ultimately and overwhelmingly favourable to the accumulation of capital through industrial development (Hamilton 1983: 67).

Both the form of the state in Singapore and the mix between state and non-state forms of regulation were shaped by the previous struggles in Singapore and Malaya. The absence of a significant capitalist class in Singapore with a vested interest in local accumulation through an ISI policy,

continuing working class militancy and the lack of any bourgeois alternative to the PAP - all meant that any alliance with imperialism had to be through direct foreign investment agreed to by the PAP-state. Therefore, the form of industrialisation was fundamentally influenced by the social and political structures which had emerged from the struggles of the past two decades.

The 1960s were also the years when imperialist powers began to export capital in increasingly large amounts in order to find production sites in favourable overseas locations. Under the neo-colonial system, the door was open to everyone and foreign investment was the only way to do it. It therefore became feasible for neo-colonies to attract both credit and technical expertise to establish manufacturing sectors.

Hamilton emphasises that "the state of the world economy in the key period of the '60s was decisive" for Singapore, Taiwan, Hongkong and South Korea successfully to launch an EOI strategy (Hamilton 1983: 55). Mirza similarly states that the PAP-state's move into EOI "coincided with an embryonic restructuring of the world production and trading systems....By creating the appropriate ambience Singapore has benefitted disproportionately from these trends" (Mirza 1986: 5). The historical confluence is best summarised by

Robison, Higgott and Hewison's assessment of the PAP state's change of economic strategy after 1965:

The assumption behind the state's high profile was that it could shape the factors of production, most notably through the enforcement of low wages, to give Singapore a comparative advantage in having labour-intensive production. This was taking place, of course, at a convenient juncture in the development of international capital. The absence of politically powerful vested interests to defend the import-substitution strategy, so characteristic of many other countries in the region, also made for a swift transition (Robison et al. 1987: 7-8).

Therefore the immediate post-1959 government reforms in housing, education, utilities and infrastructural development not only assisted the PAP to win electoral support and undermine working class loyalty to the left. There was also an emerging conjunction of these political needs of the PAP government with those of imperialism. The EOI strategy was the expression of this alliance of class interests.

Export-Oriented Industrialisation: A Class Strategy

The third phase of Singapore's political economy was the implementation of the EOI policy from 1965 to 1978. This was a class strategy of consolidating an alliance between the capitalist classes of imperialist powers and the Singapore capitalist class represented by the PAP.

Rodan holds that, having developed the corporatist state as a "pre-emptive measure...to curtail its political opponents", the PAP now deployed this power "to foster a particular social and economic strategy" (Rodan 1989: 30). The process was a little more complex. The PAP used the blunt weapons of state suppression inherited from the colonial administration to crush its opponents, while it constructed corporatist structures to ensure they could not stand up again. By 1965 these structures were largely in place and required only further application and refinement.

Thus, this period saw the birth of the one-party state and its ideology, repressive labour laws and the final destruction of autonomous unions, the manipulation of the electoral process, and the silencing of the press and educational institutions.

...the PAP exploited its considerable relative political autonomy to secure a monopoly over legitimate political action through certain representative bodies, such as the NTUC [PAP-sponsored National Trades Union Congress]. In this way, the PAP cultivated corporatist structures as a way of consolidating its relative autonomy rather than as a prerequisite for its political autonomy. It matters little that the NTUC, for example, is politically ineffective in representing a point of view to government; what matters is that the NTUC is the only legitimate channel through which labour is represented and that the objectives of the NTUC are effectively integrated with those of the PAP (Rodan 1989: 30).

Operation Coldstore in February 1963 (see Chapter Two) had rounded up more than one hundred trade union leaders and other opposition leaders. "Cold Store's aftermath was a 90 per cent decline in work stoppages between 1963 and 1964" (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 304). During merger with Malaysia, left-wing trade unions suffered wholesale, arbitrary de-registration and the pro-PAP NTUC was made the sole legal trade union confederation (Minchin 1986: 120).

The NTUC acquiesced to the outlawing of strikes in 1967 under the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) (Amendment) Act and subsequent legislation ensuring PAP-state control of the union movement (Vasil 1989: 154-6). The NTUC rapidly became a part of the PAP-state, with PAP leaders in its top positions. The position of Secretary-General of the NTUC eventually became a cabinet post.

The 1968 Employment Act and Industrial Relations Act removed many worker rights and protections, giving management full discretionary power over most aspects of labour relations including dismissals, promotions and transfers (Bello & Rosenfeld 1990: 304). From this point, working class struggle could no longer effectively take the form of labour activism. This legislation heralded a low-wage policy. The PAP-state's new control over workers and its offer of major tax incentives to foreign investors were successful in attracting foreign investment (Chia 1989:

266-70; Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 292). By December 1978, foreign investment accounted for 78.5 per cent of total gross fixed assets in manufacturing. For the period 1976-78, wholly-owned foreign companies produced over half of all manufactured exports; companies at least 51 per cent foreign-owned produced 87.4 per cent (Rodan 1989: 130). "By 1968, a range of comprehensive economic, social and political measures had been adopted to attract international capital to Singapore...[and] dramatic results had been achieved in industrial growth and employment generation" (Robison et al. 1987: 7-8).

In other words, after 1965, the PAP was in a position to build its alliance with imperialism without serious domestic opposition. Its possession of state power enabled it to suppress struggles and to re-shape Singapore's social institutions in conformity with its political goals. It had the power to conclude an alliance on terms unfavourable to the Singapore working class.

In contrast to other Asian NICs, EOI was undertaken almost exclusively through the inflow of direct foreign investment.

The expansion of Singapore's industry in the late '60s coincided with a large inflow of foreign direct investment and is almost wholly explained by this (Hamilton 1983: 57).

Foreign capital has so overwhelmed indigenous firms that the latter have played no role in most export industries and a small role in the rest (Hamilton 1983: 63).

That is, unlike other NICs where a local capitalist class had emerged with real political power to protect its interests, the PAP could ignore the demands of its local capitalist class as well as the working class. The PAP's base was foreign capital.

This inflow of foreign investment reflects several other political developments. First, the British surrender of state power to a local ally opened Singapore to exploitation by other imperialist powers. All major industrialised powers could now compete to conclude a class alliance with the PAP.

Secondly, the balance of class power in the relationship is revealed in the terms on which investment entered Singapore. The incentives offered by the PAP-state to foreign capital show that it was desperate for such an alliance in order to ensure its political survival. In its class interests, the PAP therefore exposed the workers of Singapore to massive exploitation. The PAP may have resented the need to make such an alliance especially as their Anglophile leadership reluctantly had to move the weight of their alliance from British to US capital during this period. But it had few alternatives.

Thirdly, this foreign investment was an expression of finance capital, the fusing of technological power and credit into an enormous social force. Singapore was an attractive proposition for investment in this stage of imperialism because it was a neo-colony which offered an unbeatable combination of infrastructure, disciplined labour and technical advancement. As a result of decades of development as an entrepot for the commodity trade, Singapore had a highly developed infrastructure. The defeat of the anti-imperialist movement and the imposition of a system of social control by a strong neo-colonial state produced a disciplined, docile labour force, thus guaranteeing that the exploitation of workers could proceed undisturbed by political instability.

The combination of infrastructure and disciplined, low-wage labour meant that, by bringing in advanced plant and equipment, foreign capital could achieve an absolute competitive advantage. That is, technical advancement in a neo-colony makes it possible to exploit more heavily than where technical backwardness continues. Foreign investment with its power of technology and credit takes place where exploitation can be the greatest. Hence the rapid development of the NICs because of their greater technical progress and higher productive forces. Low wages and advanced technology create an absolute advantage because of

the very high levels of surplus created. This analysis of the NICs based on their productive forces and the political alliances with foreign capital stands in contrast to the notion of comparative advantage with its emphasis on the market advantage of all countries in a global system of free trade.

Fourthly, as a regional node for finance capital, Singapore became a close-up platform for imperialist penetration of surrounding economies; an expansion of its previous role in the commodity trade. Thus, it must have been some compensation for the PAP that, although they could no longer aspire to state power in Malaysia, they could be a junior partner in a political alliance to rake off the surplus from its productive sectors. We will note a substantial increase in this function after 1985.

Fifthly, during this period, the imperialist military guarantee of this system of exploitation moved from Britain to the United States in accordance with the pre-eminence of US capital globally and in the region.

The Limits of the Alliance: the Failure of a Revolution

The PAP-state began to face the contradictions of success in low-wage EOI. The 1974-75 recession brought home the

vulnerability of its productive sector. Having solved its unemployment problem, Singapore suffered from a labour shortage by 1978. Facing increasing competition from other economies, a strong Singapore dollar and a high per capita income, the PAP-state changed strategy. It decided to move out of low-wage, labour-intensive manufacturing to capital-intensive higher-value-added manufacturing. The state's institutionalisation of its power made this move possible.

[By 1979] the PAP's systematic and pervasive influence over the industrialisation process was institutionalised through firmly established corporatist structures. Moreover, the relative political autonomy of the PAP state, and the successful dissemination of an ideology supportive of technocratic elitism, provided sufficient space within which a new direction could be speedily and effectively charted by chief policy-makers (Rodan 1989: 141).

The fourth phase of Singapore's political economy from 1979 to 1985 is thus the PAP-state's attempt to move away from reliance on labour expansion and from competition with other low-wage economies to a higher technological level of production. It recognised the importance of being on a higher level of technological development if its advantages in production were to be entrenched.

This strategy was termed Singapore's Second Industrial Revolution. Despite the mandatory high wage increases, the incentives for high-technology industrial capital, the intensification of control over labour, the media,

education and the political process, the "revolution" failed. Although productivity improved and there was some shift to higher value-added production, international capital, particularly Japanese capital, did not invest in the qualitative upgrading of Singapore's technological base that the PAP had hoped for. Manufacturers continued to rely on migrant labour and the manufacturing sector fell behind the service sector, leading to a major PAP re-assessment. Fortunately for the PAP, the economy remained a relatively low labour cost base for labour-intensive export-oriented production.

...there are real limits to this [upgrading]. In the case of US-based capital, which has largely led the upgrading, the most sophisticated processes are still retained in the US or Europe, alongside pools of advanced R & D manpower and the markets for the finished products. In the case of Japan-based capital, there has been considerable reluctance to upgrade operations. The primary concern to ensure access to the markets of Europe and the US has conditioned the evaluation of Singapore's production costs by the Japanese (Robison et al. 1987: 8).

What limited success the Second Industrial Revolution achieved (e.g. in the manufacture of computer hardware) "owes much to the speed and efficiency with which the Singapore state was able to mobilise resources in support of such investments. Such a capacity...derives from a broad set of social, administrative and political conditions, or structures, which have their origins in the historical circumstances of Singapore's earlier

industrialisation" (Rodan 1989: 187). It can now be added that the speed with which the PAP state overcame the negative results of this attempted shift can also be ascribed to the same factors.

But the failure of this state-sponsored revolution should be understood in political terms. The PAP tried unilaterally to alter the terms of its alliance with imperialism and discovered it could not. It discovered how its divergence from its low-wage high-tech role was not purely a technical process but fundamentally a deeply political one which put its hegemony at risk. The electoral challenges to the PAP and other forms of struggle which emerged during this period showed the critical linkage between the accumulation strategy and class relations. The limits to the alliance were therefore primarily set by the resistance of Singapore's working class to increased exploitation after two decades of industrialisation. Secondly, the accumulation strategy was limited by the breakdown in social relations within the imperialist countries, especially the United States, where workers were objecting to losing jobs and conditions to overseas production. These connected political struggles must be central to the analysis of Singapore's contemporary political economy.

Singapore's Contemporary Political Economy

To understand the latest phase of Singapore's political economy since 1985, we need to look more deeply at the limits to EOI growth and the reasons for the failure of the Second Industrial Revolution. We also need to comprehend, in political terms, the interaction between Singapore's political economy, especially its services sector, and transnational finance capital, one of the main forces through which imperialism operates.

Andreff and Jenkins have each provided a helpful theoretical entree to these issues through their observations about the world economic crisis of the last two decades. Despite their references to the internationalisation of capital, the new international division of labour, and multinational rather than transnational corporations, they tend to see this crisis in political rather than economic terms. Their theoretical contributions can therefore be understood as elaborations of the Marxist theory of imperialism. It is necessary, briefly, to outline their approaches before explicitly relating them to Singapore's recent development.

Restoration of Capitalist Order

Andreff sees the crisis of world capitalism referred to by analysts since the early 1970s as "a restoration of

capitalist order, and a provisional resolution of its contradictions" (Andreff 1984: 58). The "new" order being created is much like the old except that it involves

a higher degree of centralisation and internationalisation of capital, a deepening of the capitalist mechanism of unequal development, and the domination of transnational finance capital (TFC), based on ever-closer links between multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational banks (TNBs) (Andreff 1984: 58).

Andreff notes the Leninist roots of the theoretical hypothesis that imperialism is the epoch of finance capital and shows how transnational finance capital is being established as the core of capitalism by combining the TNBs' banking capital and the MNCs' industrial capital.

The essence of our theoretical view is that with transnational finance capital, money capital and productive capital are organically linked in their internationalisation: international production and circulation are more and more controlled by MNCs and TNBs merged in the form of TFC (Andreff 1984:66).

The effect of this process is indeed consistent with its aims: the maintenance of the profit rate of TFC. In addition, an international credit economy focuses on a few borrowers, and the crisis is transferred by TFC on to "other capitals, wage-earners and the Third World" (Andreff 1984: 59). That is, imperialism remains in a new form.

Mechanisms for Increasing the Rate of Profit

These insights are further built upon by Jenkins, who examines the relative significance of the mechanisms for maintaining or increasing the rate of profit.

...crisis is not simply a consequence of a fall in the rate of profit but also a way in which capital is restructured in order to restore (for a time) the harmonious relationship between production, distribution and exchange, and to bring about an increase in the rate of profit. For Marx the most fundamental mechanism whereby this takes place is through the scrapping of old production techniques and the introduction of new ones. It is also achieved by bankruptcies... It is these mechanisms for restoring productivity through increasing relative surplus value and depreciating constant capital, rather than attacks on the working class, which are central to the resolution of the crisis (Jenkins 1984: 41).

Technological development through constantly introducing the most advanced means of production is critical to the competitive lead of the advanced countries. Jenkins also notes that the export of the means of production from the advanced capitalist countries to the neo-colonies is an essential part of this stage of capitalist exploitation. However, the attractiveness of cheap labour for production is stated to be of limited significance both in terms of the restricted type of industries involved and the short term nature of this attractiveness. That is, as we have noted, it is the combination of disciplined cheap labour, infrastructure and relatively advanced technology (although not the most advanced) in a neo-colony which is most able to create large surpluses.

Integration of Capitals

Like Andreff, Jenkins sees the integration of the various forms of capital in this stage of imperialism:

The circuits of commodity capital, money capital and productive capital were for Marx three different aspects of the process of self-expansion of capital. In the context of the internationalisation of capital these three circuits have been identified with the growth of world trade, the growth of international capital movements, and the growth of the operations of the TNCs and the international circulation of products within such firms, respectively (Jenkins 1984: 41).

This theory of the internationalisation of capital and the formation of transnational finance capital reinforces our understanding of Singapore's political economy in terms of class relations. Through TFC, alliances were built between the PAP fraction of the Singapore capitalist class and the imperialist capitalist classes, especially the US, to enable the successful launch of export-oriented industrialisation.

The emergence of finance capital, the role of technology in maintaining capitalist competitiveness and the particular combination of productive forces in neo-colonies conducive to a successful EOI strategy - all help us comprehend the latest phase of Singapore's political economy. This phase can be understood in terms of the political limits to EOI

growth and Singapore's enhanced role as a regional base for imperialism. We will examine each of these in turn.

The Limits to EOI Growth

For almost two decades, Singapore's EOI strategy produced average annual growth rates of more than eight per cent (Chia 1989: 253). This success no doubt contributed to the PAP's sense of confidence in launching the Second Industrial Revolution. However, the failure of this initiative forced the PAP to recognise the political limits of the class alliance it had entered into. The PAP state had to realise that it could not be anything more than "a marginal component in the world system of production" (Robison et al. 1987: 11). These political limits are expressed in the limits to technological advancement which are interconnected with the limits to the attractiveness of a low-wage labour site. Further, there are the limits to the market penetration in the developed capitalist countries of the goods produced in the NICs. These obstacles forced the PAP and many writers to reassess the emphasis on the productive sector of the Singapore economy after 1985.

The structural relationship between technological advancement, cheap labour and protectionism has been noted

by some scholars. Hamilton sees it primarily as a problem of declining NIC competitiveness. In the early 1980s, he recommended attempts at upgrading the economy through the investment by the NICs of huge amounts of indigenous capital in high technology industries in order to force dominant capitals to make space in the new international division of labour (Hamilton 1983: 68). This is a repeat of the Second Industrial Revolution except, in Singapore's case, using state rather than foreign capital to do the job. Haggard and Cheng have suggested the development of an indigenous capacity for science and technology (Haggard & Cheng 1989: 127-8). Mirza has similarly opted for more self-reliance to lessen the economy's financial and technological dependence (Mirza 1986: 257, 263). These analyses fail on two counts.

First, dependence on foreign capital was, as has been shown, a source of political strength for the PAP, giving it the independence from local class forces to launch the EOI strategy.

Second and more important, these recommended solutions fail to take account of the deeper political realities behind Jenkins' analysis that technological innovation is the primary mechanism for restoring productivity and increasing the rate of profit (Jenkins 1984: 41). The enormous social

power of advanced capital cannot be matched by local capitalist classes in any of the NICs.

The weakness of supposing that Singapore could achieve the high technological advancement of an advanced capitalist country through export-oriented industrialisation has already be observed in the limited attractiveness of cheap labour to foreign industrial capital and in the reluctance of this capital to export the most sophisticated means of production to Singapore. This capital invested in a very limited range of industries in Singapore even before the attempt to upgrade to a high wage, high-tech economy. Furthermore, "the permanent threat posed by the possibility of re-importation of these labour processes to the centre as a result of technological innovation serves to increase doubts about the viability of this model of accumulation" (Jenkins 1984: 46). This trend was discernible in Singapore already by the mid-1980s with Fairchild returning integrated circuit assembly operations to Portland because new automated processes negated any advantage of cheap labour (Rodan 1989: 197). Thus the relocation of production to cheap labour sites has been limited temporally as well as in the type and level of technological transfer.

In its reassessment of economic strategy after the 1985 recession, the PAP itself publicly recognised this pattern in a statement by then Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong:

New technology, the microchip revolution and robotic slaves that do not go on strike for better pay and working conditions, have relieved the pressures on American, European and Japanese companies to seek sanctuaries outside their home (ST 27 February 1986).

In other words, although Singapore workers are not permitted to go on strike (unlike workers in advanced capitalist economies), they can still cost more than robots.

In addition, the PAP has faced the limits of protectionism. Singapore's export markets are not as diversified as the other Asian NICs with about one-third of its exports going to the USA (FEER 26 April 1990: 61).

Thus, the political pressures exerted by advanced capitalist economies through the with-holding of the latest technology, protectionism and the consignment of cheap labour sites to a marginal role in world production have ensured that the period of neo-colonies expanding their share of world industrial output was short-lived and confined to an intermediate technological level (Jenkins 1984: 47-8; Rodan 1989: 197). This does not necessarily

spell disaster for Singapore's manufacturing sector, but rather indicates the limitations on the economy's further growth through export production and its market vulnerability to protectionism or a recession in the developed capitalist economies. It also means continuing intense competition among NICs to be on the leading and most profitable edge of this intermediate level of production.

As has been noted, with the failure of the Second Industrial Revolution, the PAP recognised the vulnerability of the manufacturing sector in terms of technology and lack of skilled labour. The PAP state was unable to upgrade to significantly higher technology production and, after 1985, had to fall back to low-wage export production. It restored Singapore's international competitiveness through such measures as a wage freeze, reduction in employers' welfare contributions and corporate tax cuts (Rodan 1989: 194).

Since that initial rescue package to restore profitability and despite recent wage increases, Singapore has retained its competitiveness as a low-wage economy because it has been careful to ensure that unit labour costs remain lower than those of other NICs where wage rises have been greater, such as Taiwan and South Korea. It is therefore

still able to attract foreign industrial capital (FEER 26 April 1990: 61).

The Primacy of Political Struggles

But the tendency of the above analysis of the internationalisation of capital to minimise local political struggles must be resisted. Otherwise it would appear that the limits to EOI growth were externally determined when, in fact, it was the groundswell of political dissent and resistance within Singapore that was the major limitation. The Second Industrial Revolution required a sharp increase in social inequality that was politically unacceptable to the Singapore working class, who did not cooperate. The PAP-state faced a contradiction: its promises of prosperity in return for political loyalty could not be kept if Singapore was to remain competitive. The failure of its "revolution" was the failure of its attempt to make it appear that prosperity was increasing for all classes while the income gap was suddenly widened.

The PAP dealt with this crisis in its usual manner. The restructuring phase after 1985 was simply a reassertion of social control to suppress the political struggles which had emerged during this period of intensified exploitation.

Wage cuts and other attacks on the working class were political acts against political dissent.

Some writers see this rise in political resistance as marking a general crisis in the NIC accumulation strategy. Not only were the NICs' working classes objecting but workers in imperialist countries were reacting against the loss of jobs, conditions and living standards.

By the late 1980s, the NICs' external and internal environments had been radically transformed, and what had been key assets in the period of high-speed growth increasingly became liabilities. Protectionism was preventing export expansionism in the NICs' main markets, while the economic, environmental, and social costs of a strategy of industrialisation imposed from above by an authoritarian elite spawned increasingly powerful opposition movements that directly challenged the NIC model. Moreover, in South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, the technocrats were forced to confront the same profound structural dilemma that was unravelling the NIC economy: rising wage costs were making the NICs unprofitable as sites for labour-intensive manufacturing at the same time that their continuing technological backwardness severely obstructed plans to create a more capital and skill-intensive, high-tech manufacturing base (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 8).

The PAP recognised explicitly some of the social implications of this crisis and moved to reshape domestic social relations:

Singapore is not yet a developed country. A country's development cannot be measured only by its standard of living, or by its per capita GNP. These are only the manifestations of growth, not its driving force. The driving force lies in the factors such as the education level of the population, and the maturity of the structure of firms in the economy. In terms of

both these factors, Singapore has a long way to go (Economic Committee 1986: para 40).

Lee Kuan Yew noted again his country's lack of technological expertise and added that at least two-fifths of Singapore's key decision-making positions are occupied by non-Singaporeans (STW 5 May 1990).

Another indication that the PAP understood the domestic social limits to EOI growth was its preparation to invest in production in the developed capitalist countries and in its emerging competitors. This can be taken from Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's admonition that Singapore's next phase of expansion would be outside Singapore with Singapore-based companies "investing not just in neighbouring countries, but also in developed countries, Eastern Europe and China". By this means, the PAP aims to transform "a mere city state" into "a great international city state"; from "Singapore Inc." to "Singapore International" (STW 21 April 1990).

An accompanying editorial to Goh's statement, reflecting the PAP position, stated that this investment strategy would be led by government-owned companies and would use expatriate Singaporeans now resident in these countries. The strategy would supposedly give access to technology and skilled labour while overcoming protectionism.

This trend by NICs to invest in advanced production has been described by Jenkins in terms of the "interpenetration of capitals" (Jenkins 1984: 46). It is another attempt by the PAP-state to alter the terms of its alliance with imperialism. By following this trend, the PAP shows it has recognised the changes in the social and political conditions which made the EOI strategy initially successful.

This direct investment in productive activities abroad should be distinguished from the Singapore government's long-term investment of state pension funds in the imperialist countries in order to gain a distributional share of the surplus.

Regional Base for Imperialism

Because of its geographical location and its development of both the commodity trade and services, Singapore has always been a regional base for imperialism. In the latest stage of imperialism and with the development of its manufacturing and services sectors under the EOI strategy, however, Singapore became able to function as a regional node for the integration of the circuits of commodity capital, money capital and productive capital. That is, it was in a position to assist the penetration of

transnational finance capital throughout the region. Singapore's expanded and highly sophisticated service sector with its financial and banking infrastructure, transport and communications services facilitated the integration of the operations of transnational banks and transnational corporations.

Lee Kuan Yew noted this role in a speech to the French National Employers' Federation in Paris:

[Prime Minister Lee] said that Singapore was fortunate to have made the right economic choices, and by linking up with Europe, the US and Japan, had played a crucial ancillary role that had ensured its survival. It had made itself a desirable base from which multinationals could extend into other developing countries. The next key role was for Singapore to help accelerate the development of the region, for as its neighbours grew, it would grow too (STW 26 May 1990).

It is now possible to comprehend more deeply the context of Yoshihara's statement that "if there is anything industrialising about Singapore, it is because it serves as the offshore centre for foreign capital" (Yoshihara 1988: 115-6). Similarly brought into focus is Mirza's description of Singapore as an "internationalised" economy which plays the role of "peripheral intermediation" and exploiter of other ASEAN economies on behalf of Western capital (Mirza 1986: 1, 192, 73, 272). More exactly, through its alliance with international capital, Singapore's services sector has been able to collaborate in

penetrating the productive sectors of neighbouring economies and taking a share of the surplus distributed through Singapore to the imperialist countries. This is characteristic of a new phase of "multi-polar" imperialism when the NICs act as regional centres for finance capital.

The degree of Singapore's participation in this process is clear from its position as eleventh in the world for the hosting of both transnational corporations and transnational banks after the UK, USA, West Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Australia, Brazil and South Africa (Andreff 1984: 62). Singapore is the world's fourth largest foreign exchange market (STW 12 May 1990). Furthermore, over 90 per cent of the overseas activities of TNCs and TNBs are concentrated in the advanced capitalist countries and the NICs, and most foreign direct investment takes place among these two groups of economies (Andreff 1984: 61). In the advanced capitalist countries most of this mutual investment is in the unproductive sectors to get a share of the surplus as it is distributed. Investment in the NICs is directed more to securing the surplus in the first place, both within these countries and, in the case of Singapore especially, in the region.

Because of its entrepot role in commodity trading, Singapore's services sector held prominence in the economy

until the EOI strategy took hold and manufacturing became the engine of growth from the mid-1960s. Some writers have pointed out that services have always had the highest share of national output, with 76.1 per cent in 1961, falling to 65.9 per cent in 1972 and then rising to just over 70 percent in 1986. This compares with the secondary sector rising from 19.4 per cent in 1961 to a height of 32.1 per cent in 1981 before declining to around 29 per cent in 1986 (Lee Soo Ann 1989: Table 13.1). The services sector increased by more than six times between 1961 and 1985 (from S\$1,750 million to S\$11,250 million) despite little more than a doubling of the work force.

In 1985...the tertiary sector accounted for about 64 per cent of the employed labour force, which is lower than its 69 per cent share of the economy. The services sector, far from being diminished by the proposed industrialisation of Singapore, was highly productive despite [sic] employing a lower percentage of men than women... (Lee Soo Ann 1989: 283).

In 1984, the average value added per worker in the services sector was \$23,958 as against \$11,165 for the manufacturing sector (Lee Soo Ann 1989: Table 13.4). In these terms, the productivity of the services sector was twice that of the secondary sector. But this is to confuse surplus creation with surplus distribution. It is the manufacturing sector which creates the surplus and the services sector which distributes it. Without the manufacturing sector, the Singapore economy would have continued its decline of the

1950s and been unable to upgrade its infrastructure to take advantage of the penetration of the region by finance capital.

Rather, behind the above figures is the restructuring of the services sector in response to the influx of foreign investment. Commerce, both entrepot and domestic trade, was the lifeblood of the services sector in 1960 with 44.2 per cent of the sector's output. But this fell to 22.4 per cent by 1986. Transport and communications rose from 18.4 per cent in 1960 to 24 per cent in 1986. The biggest rise was recorded by finance and business services, which increased its share from 15.3 per cent to 30.5 per cent over the same period, or from S\$248 million to S\$3,778 million at 1968 factor cost (Lee Soo Ann 1989: Table 13.3). Despite the declining share of entrepot trade, it should be remembered that, in 1983, 85 per cent of intra-ASEAN trade was with Singapore (Mirza 1986: Table 5.9). Thus the main point to note is the enormous growth of financial and business services along with transport and communications, a growth which made these activities the backbone of the sector and gave it the capacity to facilitate the regional expansion of finance capital.

According to Mirza, the PAP promoted Singapore as a centre for offshore banking, finance and other services from the early seventies (Mirza 1986:120-189), while others date the

drive to establish Singapore as a financial centre from 1968 (Haggard & Cheng 1989: 121-2). Whatever the exact timing, it is clear that the PAP state itself was not fully aware of the potential of its alliance with foreign capital to rake off the surplus from surrounding countries through the services sector. "For many years the services sector has been moored in the backwaters of economic theory and its potential contribution to the development process has been overlooked" (Mirza 1986: 177). This changed with the 1985 recession and the failure of the Second Industrial Revolution which led to a reassessment of the productive sector in Singapore's development:

...the manufacturing sector is no longer expected to fulfil the role originally envisaged under the "Second Industrial Revolution". Instead, services were earmarked as the most important growth sector of the economy, with a far greater emphasis on regional economic integration (Rodan 1989: 189).

The PAP's economic committee, headed by the Prime Minister's son, Brig.Gen. Lee Hsien Loong, examined the reasons for the economy's sharp decline and gave particular attention to finance and business services and transport and communications which, together, made up about 40 per cent of the entire economy in 1985 (Lee Soo Ann 1989: 287). The Committee recommended that Singapore

move beyond our being a production base, to being an international total business centre. We cannot depend only on companies coming to Singapore solely to make or assemble products designed elsewhere. We need to

attract companies to Singapore to establish operational headquarters, which are responsible for subsidiaries throughout the region. In Singapore such headquarters should do product development work, manage their treasury activities, and provide administrative, technical and management services to their subsidiaries (Report of the Economic Committee 1986: 12).

Therefore services would be made a primary attraction for foreign TNBs and TNCs to locate in Singapore. But, more than this, the Committee recommended a shift to becoming an exporter of services:

Services account for an increasing share of our GDP, and our service exports have been growing as quickly as world trade services. Scope for growth is still huge. We need to promote not just Singapore-based activities like tourism and banking, but also offshore-based activities, like construction firms building hotels in China, and salvage firms operating in the Middle East... we have expertise in hotel management, air and sea port management, town and city planning. These skills should be systematically marketed....

Our greatest potential for growth lies in this area: banking and finance, transport and communications, and international services. It has been growing rapidly, and given positive support, should continue to do so. The government must promote services actively, the same way it successfully promoted manufacturing....(Report of the Economic Committee 1986: para 63 Executive Summary).

Usually, concentration on services depends on having strong local industrial capital. Singapore's location, however, compensates to a degree for the absence of "finance capital". Thus, the PAP state has been able to alter its economic strategy, not only to recognise the limitations of its EOI strategy, but also to maximise the benefits it can

gain from this new phase of imperialism. To do this it has had to recognise the dynamic of the integration of the circuits of capital in finance capital. In political terms, this means facilitating the exploitation of neighbouring economies by imperialist powers.

Asked what Singapore could do to promote prosperity in the region, [Prime Minister Lee] said the Republic could work towards becoming a training and back-up centre for multinationals operating in countries around it. It could also strive to be a "spark plug to fire off developments in new areas in the region", thus accelerating the pace of development and change (STW 26 May 1990).

Brig. Gen. Yeo, a PAP minister, has described Singapore as "a major switching node of the world" for people, goods, capital, financial risks and information (STW 9 June 1990).

One of the latest examples of facilitating the operation of TFC based in Singapore or operating through Singapore is the large industrial zones being constructed immediately across Singapore's borders in Indonesia's Batam Island (FEER 30 Nov 1989: 69-70) and Malaysia's Johor Bahru (FEER 26 April 1990: 52-3). The PAP state has assisted with infrastructural investments and promoted the projects with the respective governments. Its role has been to open up the cheap land and labour of its immediate neighbours to foreign capital. Singapore will be used for its services ranging from financial services to communications and port facilities, both in the construction of these zones and in

the export of their production. Lee Kuan Yew sees the "triangle" as "offering a rare mix of a ready supply of labour and land, backed by sophisticated business infrastructure". He advised that if Singapore employers needed unskilled labour, they might do better to consider relocating to Batam, where workers are plentiful and wages low (STW 9 June 1990).

In the case of Johor Bahru, Singapore appears as the second largest investor in approved projects up to 1989 with M\$335 billion committed (second to Japan's M\$408 billion). However, much of Singapore's figure is made up of the investments of Singapore-registered subsidiaries of foreign companies, especially US ones (FEER 26 April 1990: 52). It is unlikely that these projects will add significantly to the technological base of Singapore's manufacturing sector or result in significant economies of scale. They will, however, lead to considerable growth and healthy profits in Singapore's services sector.

Therefore, this latest phase of Singapore's political economy has seen the PAP-state moving to overcome the limitations of its EOI strategy and to strengthen its alliance with imperialism through cooperating more strongly in the exploitation of the region. At the same time, Singapore has to remain competitive in its productive sector and still "depends on foreign money for 90 per cent

of its manufacturing investment" (FEER 23 May 1991: 55). There is therefore no shift away from the close arrangement with foreign capital and no substantial growth of a local industrial capitalist class.

Imperialism, Struggles and Social Control

The aim of this chapter has been to discover a theoretical framework which establishes the connections between the changing strategies of capital accumulation in Singapore, particular political struggles against those strategies, and systems of social control which are adapted to suppress those struggles.

We have examined three main theoretical approaches to Singapore's political economy: the neo-classical approach, world systems theory and the mainstream Marxist focus on imperialism. It is the position of this thesis that the latter theoretical tradition best explains Singapore's political economy by providing links between accumulation, social reality and regulation.

It is now clear that neither "correct" policy choices by an enlightened leadership nor the external pressures exerted by a world system are sufficient explanations for Singapore's industrialisation. They do not connect

economics with Singapore's social reality. We have seen that the PAP-state could not have consolidated an alliance with imperialism and taken advantage of the global market environment without the particular social and political conditions which prevailed in Singapore. PAP political supremacy was itself an outcome of political struggles. These were not fought in anticipation of EOI or induced by international economic pressures for this purpose. But, having come to power, "the PAP state played a critical role in fostering extra-economic conditions favourable for EOI" (Rodan 1989: 209-210). That is, it constructed a tight system of social control to suppress struggles which emerged in new forms to limit its accumulation strategy.

Thus, the mainstream Marxist approach goes beneath economic forms to the politics of the social formation. It gives primacy to the configuration of social and political forces within Singapore while relating their historical development to the context of imperialism. The basis of social control can therefore be understood in terms of the historical movements in class relations resulting from political struggles and leading to the PAP-state's alliance with imperialist ruling classes. The Leninist tradition on imperialism provides the pointers for a periodisation of these changes in class relations, connecting the local and the international. From the ascendancy of the Lee faction to state leadership in 1959 until the present, we have

observed several distinct phases of Singapore's political economy. We have examined the transition from classical imperialism to neo-colonialism. The latest phase of Singapore's economic development reflects an attempt by the PAP-state to adapt its alliance to a shift in the pattern of imperialist exploitation. The sudden change from global rivalry between two super-powers to a multi-polar global economy has given greater political prominence to Japanese and European capital. Therefore, the PAP-state's alliance primarily with US capital has been moving towards a multi-faceted alliance with transnational finance capital from Japan and the EC as well as the US.

The relationships between this latest phase of the PAP's accumulation strategy and the social formation regionally and domestically are broadly clear. More regulation will be required, not less.

Domestically, two decades of industrialisation and ever-increasing exploitation of workers has fragmented the working class, creating under-classes of migrant workers, female part-time labour and unskilled Malays. The main mechanisms for restoring productivity function to increase relative surplus value (e.g. technological innovation), to cheapen constant capital (e.g. increasing machinery running time through shift work) and to socialise the costs of production (through state subsidies paid for by workers'

taxes) (Jenkins 1984: 41, 44). All these mechanisms as well as more direct attacks on the working class, such as wage cuts and state-run unions, have increased alienation and dissent. New forms of political struggle continue to require a high degree of social control.

For example, the growth of the services sector for the operation of transnational finance capital brings a new problem of regulation for the PAP-state. The domestic bourgeoisie are now concentrated in this sector and "the fortunes of this class are now more central to Singapore's development strategy" (Rodan 1989: 191). This class has constantly to upgrade local companies in the services sector to make Singapore competitive with the other Asian NICs. Thus, the PAP has to give the appearance of accommodating the desire of this class for a more open and democratic polity without in fact creating one. Hence the present contortions of Singapore's political system as the PAP attempts to suppress the political aspirations of the middle-class.

Despite the rapid development of Singapore's economy, the local capitalist class has remained relatively weak and subordinate to foreign capital. The rise of local capital has been carefully controlled by the PAP-state in order to prevent the growth of a more powerful and more nationalistic bourgeoisie which could threaten its alliance

with foreign capital. Singapore's political status as a neo-colony remains fundamentally unchanged.

The PAP-state's alliance with imperialism can therefore be placed in the context of the need for economic growth to guarantee its continuing political hegemony. The extensive PAP control over domestic capital accumulation through its grip on state power has meant that no other prospective partner has yet emerged with whom foreign capital can build an effective alliance. One of the main purposes of domestic social control has been to ensure that this situation remains. To prevent the emergence of any alternative, the PAP has tried to maintain absolute supremacy, not merely dominance. Hence the pervasiveness of state social control.

Regionally, the political implications of the increased regional cooperation with finance capital are apparent in the PAP-state's moves to guarantee its exploitative role. The "growth triangle" agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia seem designed to give the upper classes of these countries a long-term interest in Singapore's stability and economic growth. The initiative to minimise past political conflict with the Malaysian state leadership by collaborating in internal-security sweeps in 1987 (Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia 1988) paralleled increasing military cooperation. For the first time since

independence, joint military exercises with the Malaysian and Indonesian armed forces were held (STW 27 May 1989). But the ultimate security guarantee was sought through the invitation to the United States for a direct US military presence on the island (STW 7 April 1990) and followed by a formal agreement (STW 17 November 1990). The future military role of Japan within the region was recognised in the public endorsement given to the US-Japan security relationship by Prime Minister Goh (STW 4 May 1991).

In conclusion, the argument of this thesis is that shifts in Singapore's political economy have reflected shifts in class relations and thus changes in its alliance with foreign capital. Political struggles have been the primary influence on the accumulation strategy as the alliance with imperialism has continually sharpened contradictions within the social formation. The PAP-state's attempts to regulate these conflicts are the subject of the following chapters. By studying the relationship between specific institutions of social control, forms of political struggle and patterns of accumulation, we will be able to see the whole system of social control within the whole political context of Singapore.

CHAPTER 4

WELFARE AND PUBLIC HOUSING: THE POLITICS OF THE WORKING CLASS BARRACKS

The phases of Singapore's political economy have been characterised by particular struggles and particular mechanisms of social control which function to suppress them. So far, only the transitional period from colonialism to neo-colonialism has been examined in detail, and we have seen how violence was the main social control mechanism which functioned mainly through the institutions of the military and the police. Large-scale imperialist violence, police-state tactics and political sabotage were used to defeat the left-wing nationalist movement in Singapore and Malaya and to bring the PAP's Lee faction to power.

It is now time to look at the struggles which shaped the more recent phases of Singapore's political economy and the mechanisms of social control which emerged to combat them. In the post-independence period, welfare became the basis of social control, especially the institutions of public

housing, state pensions, education and health. In this chapter we will study the examples of public housing and, to the extent that it relates to housing, the state pension scheme. The following chapter focuses on the education system. But first it is necessary to set out the relationship of welfare to wage labour and the reproduction of labour power.

WELFARE AND THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR

In the first chapter, we noted that wage labour is the core mechanism of capitalism because it is the social relation of exploitation through which capital appropriates surplus value. We also noted that it is the fundamental mechanism by which labour power is recreated and controlled: regulationists see it as the basic feature of the mode of regulation. Here we must look deeper into the relationship between the reproduction of labour power and its regulation if we are to comprehend the links between social control and welfare.

Both the level of the wage paid to workers and the method by which it is paid are crucial to the degree of control that can be exercised over them. In general, the wage must

not be so high as to threaten profitability or so low that workers cannot consume enough to be recreated or are pushed into rebellion. Thus, capital has an interest in keeping wages as low as possible to raise the level of profitability, but not so low that stable and efficient production is affected. The wage level is therefore dependent on the rate of accumulation. However, it may be higher than the rate of profitability allows at some times or with some workers, as when the PAP-state raised wage levels at the beginning of its Second Industrial Revolution in an attempt to phase out labour-intensive, low-technology industries.

The way that conflicting tendencies between profitability and reproduction are managed through the mix between company and state regulation depends on the specific mode of production. In Singapore, the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital involves the latter supplying the capital investment for production and the former guaranteeing cooperation with the accumulation process. The PAP-state therefore has to ensure a continuing supply of cheap, disciplined workers with appropriate skills. It must also support transnational corporations' management practices by means of state-controlled unions and repressive labour legislation.

The PAP-state's has an interest in maintaining its political hegemony by increasing wage levels. It therefore tries to increase profitability by constantly upgrading the technical level of production and it has also taken a direct role in regulating wage levels through the National Wages Council (NWC). The NWC has consisted of government representatives (Ministries of Finance and Labour, Economic Development Board and National Trades Union Congress) plus representatives from the American Business Council, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the German Business Group and the Singapore Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Lim 1989: 1264-5). The NWC is therefore one of the major institutions which regulates workers and which coordinates the alliance between the PAP-state and foreign capital.

However, capital also has an interest not only in the level of the wage, but how it is spent.

There is, therefore, a potential conflict between the need to economise on outlays on variable capital in order to increase the rate of exploitation, and the need to control the labour force by strong economic ties of dependency. Only when the workers are totally dependent upon the capitalist for the maintenance of a reasonable standard of living can the capitalist fully claim the power to dominate labour in the workplace (Harvey 1982: 162).

There are some goods that workers must have if they are to survive: housing, education, health, pensions and other

social services. Through the way these welfare items are provided and alternative means of subsistence to wage labour are eliminated, control of workers can be increased. The provision of essential wage goods through state welfare can be seen as the collectivisation of consumption in order to manage consumption in a manner consistent with accumulation (Harvey 1982: 91). That is, welfare is provided in such a way as to maximise profitability and also control of workers.

Where welfare is provided largely through companies, workers are bound to them; where a great deal of welfare is obtained through the state, as in Singapore, political loyalty to the state is induced. Singaporeans are forced to purchase a large proportion of their subsistence requirements from the state. As we will see, this gives the PAP-state considerable power to ensure profitability on behalf of foreign capital, to manage crises by lowering or raising the level of welfare and to generate political loyalty.

The consolidation of an effective system of welfare provision also renders less and less necessary the use of overt state violence to cement control. Furthermore, the way welfare is provided by the state has the ideological appearance of philanthropy from which the PAP has also gained legitimacy. That is, institutions such as housing

and education manage the provision of welfare so as to minimise the contradictions between the PAP-state's functions of guaranteeing accumulation and of social control, and to legitimise both its own role and the entire economic system.

Regulation through the welfare system therefore parallels the effects of the wage system. The PAP-state's control of wages and welfare enables it to stabilise working class subsistence to ensure a level of material security that minimises political dissent. The PAP-state has facilitated the extension and reproduction of the wage relation in Singapore. As elsewhere, the extension of the wage relation has been "to the detriment of all other relations of production, and transforms the mode of life of the wage-earning class by destroying all communal conduct. New social norms must be centrally instituted, and these take on a state form" (Aglietta 1979: 32). One of the main mechanisms for reshaping and regulating social relations is the centrally-instituted state welfare system. The working class is tied into this system which links the need for a livelihood to the necessity to engage in wage labour and to be loyal to the state. Thus welfare is a mechanism to suppress struggle.

Public Housing and Social Control

The provision of public housing for approximately 86 per cent of Singapore's population by the construction of half a million apartments (GOS 1989a: 158; Yeh 1989: 826) is generally agreed to be the outstanding achievement of the PAP-state.

Indeed public housing in Singapore is the single most visible index of the government's outstanding performance; it is the de facto monument to the PAP government's success (Tay 1989: 860).

In Singapore, housing is a symbol of pride, of nationhood, of the political achievement of the People's Action Party, and of government benevolence towards the public interest (Pugh 1989: 837).

But what is not widely understood is the way public housing has functioned politically as a mechanism of social control. Yet, it is one of the main mechanisms by which the PAP-state has guaranteed labour power for its economic strategy and cemented its political supremacy. A periodisation of three broad and overlapping phases shows how the public housing system works as a regulatory mechanism and how different functions predominate at different times according to stages of political conflict.

The first phase can be termed "Violence and Forced Resettlement". It is the period of transition from colony to neo-colony, when the PAP had to consolidate its power

base. This period was from 1959 to about 1966, when it was by no means certain that the Lee faction could defeat the anti-imperialist mass movement. It was a time of routine state violence and the regular use of secret police tactics against political opponents. Welfare institutions also mediated state violence.

"Capital Formation and Proletarianisation" covers the period from 1966 to about 1978, from the end of the Barisan Sosialis as a political force to the beginning of the PAP's so-called Second Industrial Revolution. This is the phase when the PAP-state increasingly used the criminal law to suppress political dissent as it sought to stabilise working class subsistence and legitimate its rule. The defeat of left-wing political organisation had not completely suppressed the militancy of the labour force. State violence had to be turned against the working class as a whole and its punishments had to appear as the fault of those who transgressed neutral, universal laws and not as a defence of PAP political interests. The PAP was also trying to build up its support from local capital as an adjunct to its real power base, foreign capital.

"The Second Industrial Revolution and Tightening the Welfare-Loyalty Noose" is the third period covering from just before the election of J B Jeyaretnam to parliament in 1981 until the present. The increased inequality resulting

from more than a decade of industrialisation had undermined the PAP's legitimacy. Thus, the emphasis of social control moved to welfare, especially housing and education, as the PAP-state sought the means both to camouflage social reality and to enforce political loyalty.

VIOLENCE AND FORCED RESETTLEMENT

The early 1960s is often characterised by the PAP as a time of leftist violence. However, the violence of the state was immeasurably greater than anything that occurred in street demonstrations. The Lee faction of the PAP had inherited state power from the British who had held on by means of large scale military violence against the independence movement in Malaya and severe police repression in Singapore. The Lee faction had cooperated with the colonial authorities in this repression and now inherited the repressive apparatus for its own use.

This violent inheritance also included British housing policies of forced resettlement, especially the Master Plan (Yeung 1973: 14-15) to relocate a large part of the central city's population in a programme of "forced suburbanisation" (Yeung 1973: 78). This was a civilian

version of the military tactic of establishing militarised "new villages" in Malaya. Both were aimed at disrupting as far as possible the social base of opposition political organisation (Hua 1983: 96).

On coming to power, the Lee faction still faced a highly organised and popular anti-imperialist, nationalist movement on whose back it had ridden to power and which it had to destroy. The British Master Plan began to be implemented to destroy the sea in which the fish swam. It involved forcing resettlement of inhabitants from the two major Chinese quarters and the Indian quarter into satellite new towns beyond the city's green belt. The lush, rolling gardens and lawns of the British bungalow belt would have provided easier land for clearance and resettlement, but clearly neither the British nor the PAP had any intention of disturbing this preserve of the senior civil service and the rich (Gamer 1972: 169).

Hence rural land had to be cleared. But most of the suitable areas were already settled or under cultivation. This was not an obstacle but a positive benefit for the PAP, because these areas were also often opposition strongholds. In the 1960s the only major population centres outside the inner city were the British military bases (Wong and Ooi 1989: 794). But much of the work force which serviced them, and also the overflow from the

downtown area, lived in rural villages or squatter settlements. In fact, more than half the population lived in rural or semi-rural areas even though only about seven per cent derived their livelihoods mainly from agriculture or fishing (Chang 1976: 283, 287-8). This meant that farms and squatter settlements had to be forcibly demolished and the inhabitants rehoused in multi-storeyed concrete blocks. Resettlement involved the destruction of the homes and livelihoods of semi-rural people who actively resisted the process, and the suburbanisation of urban poor who were unaware of the social implications of public housing.

The Lee faction's housing policy gained greater urgency from the departure of almost the entire PAP party structure and grassroots organisations in 1961 to set up the Barisan Sosialis. The PAP remnant had to undermine both the urban and rural bases of the left in order to survive politically. It quickly came to realise the value of forced resettlement in state-controlled housing in order physically to destroy traditional social organisation which it could never hope to control.

...compulsory urban resettlement provided the PAP with the opportunity of breaking up established and potential opposition electoral communities by dividing up old ethnic, working-class communities for resettlement in dispersed locations (Linda Lim 1989: 183).

The HDB has been Lee's effective instrument in altering the political demography of Singapore - breaking up natural communities based on affinity of

race, clan, religion, language and dialect or on generations of friendly contact and shared work, and transferring the fragments into compact areas that are easy to monitor and easy to isolate should the need arise....(Minchin 1986: 249).

In 1962 and 1963 the PAP-state met the organised resistance to resettlement by farmers and rural dwellers with demolition teams accompanied by police riot squads. In the Kallang Basin and Toa Payoh, large crowds met the bulldozers. But public protests faded with the mass arrest of Barisan Sosialis leaders in 1963 and the dissolution by the PAP-state of the Singapore Rural Residents' Association, the Singapore Country People's Association and many hawkers' associations. The PAP labelled them all communist front organisations. A year later, the largely rural Malay population appeared to recognise that the destruction of their social and economic base was a special aim of the resettlement process. Race riots in July 1964 broke out in a district targeted for demolition (Chan 1976: 166-7). All Malay objections were ignored (George 1973: 102).

Any extended period of passive resistance to demolition and resettlement by a community invited another method of clearance. Serious fires broke out on several occasions. Coincidentally, few fire engines would be available, the water pressure would be low and the firefighters would have

defective equipment and engage in "rather odd target selection". During the 1960s, these incidents became known as "fires of convenience" (George 1973: 102; Pugh 1989: 849).

By 1965, the HDB had built more than 54,000 dwelling units which housed 23 per cent of the population (George 1973: 101). This aggressive housing policy therefore became as much a strategy to eliminate social organisation outside PAP-state control as a means to provide for the public welfare. Traditional social organisation in both urban and rural settings were fundamentally threatened and the social base of political opposition was effectively undermined.

Imposition of PAP-State Social Organisation

To consolidate the political gains of the forced resettlement policy, the PAP-state instituted a parallel process of imposing state social organisation on the new settlements. This was an attempt to regain a mass base which prevented the regrowth of political opposition and eventually mobilised support for the PAP by replacing with government agencies the grassroots organisation that the Barisan had taken away.

In 1960 the People's Association was established as a statutory board to oversee the Community Centres set up by the British. After the split with the left, the PAP-state used the PA, vastly expanding its network of Community Centres, to consolidate its power. Over 130 Community Centres were established in Barisan strongholds before the next elections in 1963. Besides the usual social and recreational functions of the Community Centres, the People's Association was charged with combatting communism and inducing loyalty to and identification with the government (Bellows 1970: 101-2). The Barisan community organisations were de-registered and similar services provided through the Community Centres. Each Community Centre had a television set and a radio, with large crowds gathering about the former since it was a new medium. The Community Centres became "institutionalized channels where the norms of the new political community envisaged by the PAP leaders would be fostered" (Seah 1985: 177).

The PAP government was inconvenienced by the eleven month strike by People's Association employees sympathetic to the Barisan after the split. But, after a purge, the government was able to expand the network and use the centres as a channel of political communication. The merger proposals with Malaya, military conscription and many other government initiatives were conveyed to the public via this network. It was of course a crucial means

of PAP campaigning for the 1963 elections, which the Lee faction desperately needed to win.

After the elections and the incarceration of the left leadership, the PAP-state consolidated its social organisation in the community. Community Centres were now constructed within the new public housing estates. In 1964, Management Committees were appointed to run the centres. Members were nominated by their PAP MPs, vetted by the security police (Seah 1985: 179) and appointed by the Prime Minister's Office. Many sub-committees were also established involving ordinary members of the community. Thus, by providing a limited response to basic community needs and involving the community in providing them, the government laid the foundation for an extensive network of communication and control which was more and more used for direct political indoctrination (Bellows 1970: 105). The People's Association and the Community Centres soon began to coordinate the "meet-the-people" sessions of PAP MPs, thus further blurring the distinction between party and state. The Community Centres were often also the site of the PAP branch headquarters. The PAP branches also set up kindergartens, youth activities and sports clubs (Linda Lim 1989: 184).

Citizens' Consultative Committees, or Constituency Committees, were set up on a constituency basis also as a

channel of political communication and control. By 1966 they were established in all constituencies. They incorporated influential local figures into the PAP government machinery, gathered political intelligence and defused local problems before they became points of political mobilisation. Again nominations by PAP MPs were security vetted and then appointments were made by the Prime Minister's Office. There are now 81 Constituency Committees (one for each MP) and they coordinate all the other government "grassroots" organisations (GOS 1989a: 215).

Needless to say, PAP members have become paramount in the leadership of these government organisations, although they do not necessarily publicise their affiliation.

...the webs of relationship and interaction between the PAP party branch and these grassroots institutions are strong. This aspect also explains why during periods of political campaigning, these grassroots leaders are usually found actively working with the other party members (Seah 1985: 191).

This imposition of state social organisation represents a takeover by the PAP-state of organisation and communication outside the workplace. That is, political organising normally takes place away from work and in the community through local autonomous organisations. The PAP-state's strategy of monopolising this space in its quest for a mass base, destroyed alternative organisation and precluded the

possibility of new autonomous non-state social organisation. We will see that this strategy had to be revitalised in the 1980s with the upsurge of political dissent.

Before turning to the next period, we should note that there definitely was a need for substandard housing to be replaced and this enabled welfare to be provided in such a way as to induce political loyalty. Also, the PAP housing policy did have popular support when it came to power in 1959. However, the way this policy was violently implemented quickly became unpopular (Minchin 1986: 128), and reflected the primary political goals it acquired: the political supremacy and legitimacy of the Lee faction. The strategy was also simple: opposition leaders were put in prison, their followers were put in government housing.

CAPITAL FORMATION AND PROLETARIANISATION

After 1966 and the split between the capitalist classes of Malaya and Singapore which resulted in separation, the PAP-state had to strengthen its power base within Singapore and its relationship with foreign capital. The export-oriented

industrialisation (EOI) policy was the expression of this period of political consolidation.

The PAP had destroyed the organisation of the left-wing opposition by 1966 but it still faced a militant labour force experienced in trade union struggles. In order to secure foreign investment and technology for production, the PAP-state had to guarantee a disciplined, obedient supply of wage labour. It had to tame the working class as a whole and it boosted the level of housing welfare as a means to achieve this.

The PAP-state enlisted local capital in the provision of housing welfare in order to stabilise working class subsistence and reproduce labour power for the productive sector of the economy dominated by foreign capital. Construction was an industry in which local capital could compete because importing houses is not usually an economic proposition. The contribution to GDP of the housing construction sector more than doubled to 5.4 per cent between 1960 and 1970. Investment in the sector constituted almost half the gross domestic capital formation (Hassan 1977: 15; Quah 1983: 204).

Thus, large-scale public housing construction enabled the government to stimulate and control domestic class forces even while embarking on an industrialisation policy which

relied on foreign capital. As the local capitalist class was organised, the working class was disorganised or fragmented in order to make it available for wage labour.

The main political effect of the implementation of the housing policy has been the production of a working class dependent on the PAP-state for housing and dependent on wage labour to pay for it. The former was achieved, as we have seen, through the physical destruction of all other forms of cheap housing and through forced resettlement; the latter was achieved through the elimination or restriction of traditional means of subsistence and the imposition of a comparatively high HDB rental. It is therefore possible to understand the PAP-state's housing programme as a kind of forced proletarianisation by means of the extended denial of alternative subsistence and housing.

It is also important to remember that in Singapore there was no large rural population ready to flood to the cities as in other Southeast Asian countries. There was a finite population to re-house and one which, initially at least, expected improvement to their lives through the rapid changes proposed by the PAP (Hassan 1977: 11-14). These positive factors enabled the PAP-state to develop public housing in tandem with its expansion of Singapore's industrial infrastructure and achieve remarkable results (Lee Soo Ann 1973: 41, 117).

One of the main ways that public housing rendered the lower class available for wage labour was through the isolation of the nuclear family as the basic social unit.

Isolating the Nuclear Family

Forced resettlement in HDB flats not only split up communities but, as the flats were designed for nuclear families, also split up generations and ensured that the nuclear family became the basic social unit. Thus HDB residents were moved from an extended family context with an active community life of mutual support and a sense of local identity and security into serried ranks of self-contained concrete boxes. "It was argued that what the citizen gained in running water, electricity, and a better roof, he lost in mutual, neighbourhood, support groups and community spirit" (Austin 1989: 918-9).

A detailed study of HDB residents in the 1970s revealed the extent of the isolation of the nuclear family and the loss of community. Hassan noted a sharp decline in relations with neighbours. He noted that less than ten per cent of children under ten years of age were allowed to play outside the flat and its immediate corridor. Around 60 per cent were not even allowed to play in the corridor but

remained indoors (Hassan 1977: 136). He recorded a prevailing sense of insecurity especially among the poorer families (Hassan 1977: 200) and the constriction of social life to the social confines of the nuclear family and the physical confines of the flat.

The most meaningful activities take place within the confines of their "flat" which they perceive as "safe", and less meaningful and more artificial interaction "outside", that is, at the "neighbourhood" level which is perceived as impersonal if not hostile and constricting. Their perception of the "outside" environment is that of increasing constraints which are gradually narrowing the margins which they can manipulate in order to obtain a certain degree of freedom. As these margins become smaller and smaller as a result of increasing fixed expenditures and cost of living, it imposes upon them a cognition of the environment which is ever restricting and over which they have little control (Hassan 1977: 201).

Hassan confronted a pervasive fear that his survey would somehow be communicated to the government (Hassan 1977: 203, 206). Would the government find out that there were more people in the flat than officially approved and take it away? Would the fact that a son is in prison affect the family? Was the survey a way of identifying household consumer items which could be taxed? Was this a check to see if electricity was being used illegally? Most residents also expressed a sense of isolation and fear: they were afraid to seek help for their problems, they did not want others to look down on them by revealing their financial hardship, they did not know anyone to ask for help in an emergency. They felt powerlessness and that

they had to accept whatever the government offered (Hassan 1977: 203).

For those evicted from their former homes, there was no apparent resentment but merely resignation. To this and many other questions they put up the same front of acceptance of the inevitable. It was pointless to ask them what they felt. Even if they had admitted that they preferred their former living quarters, when asked what they felt about their new residence and its facilities, they immediately assumed a puzzled air. Feel? What is there to feel? they asked (Hassan 1977: 205).

Hassan also found high levels of anxiety and stress along with the health problems associated with these conditions: 20 per cent of adults had frequent severe headaches, 40 per cent had trouble sleeping, 44 per cent had children who had trouble sleeping. The suicide figures in housing estates have become so politically sensitive that it is not possible to obtain accurate statistics. The isolation, fear, fatalism and sickness in HDB estates have been related to the social dislocation, the weakening of parental control (Pugh 1989: 851) and the sharp increase in crime (Austin 1989: 919).

But these problems were primarily related to increasing inequality: resettlement in public housing did not decrease poverty. Resettlement not merely transferred poverty from urban slum or rural squatter settlement but increased it. A 1958 study noted 25 per cent of the population below the poverty line. Twenty years later, when about 60 per cent

of the population were in HDB housing (Chen 1983: 15), a similar study found poverty had increased to 35 per cent (Pugh 1989: 850). The evidence suggests that the very poor were the worst affected by forced resettlement (Austin 1989: 919).

The reasons for the increased poverty included the inability of HDB residents to continue to supplement incomes through raising pigs and chickens (Hassan 1977: 203) or through planting their own gardens (Salaff 1988: 30). New regulations forced them to pay for hawker licences and they were unable to undertake any occupation requiring a motor vehicle owing to their high cost (Austin 1989: 924). An early comparative study of what were considered the "worst" slum area and the "best" HDB housing estate revealed that half the "slum" interviewees preferred to stay where they were and that many lived in adequate housing or better housing than they were being forced into. Of those already in the estate, a third said they could not afford the HDB rents (Gamer 1972: 167-8). Another study showed that the standard of housing in the estates depended on the ability to pay. Poor families, often the largest, were concentrated in one room flats. This pattern became associated with growing juvenile crime and low educational achievement (Hassan 1976: 253). Poorer families, the majority, found HDB flats more costly, transportation more

difficult and child rearing more problematic than the better-off families (Austin 1989: 924).

...some conditions worsened when the poor were rehoused from squatter dwellings and shophouses to HDB flats. They had lower room-occupancy rates in some pre-modern housing with 3.6 persons, but this increased to 5.0 persons when they were rehoused in HDB flats. The housing conditions in HDB housing and the poverty led to severe constraints on the chances of children, who prematurely left the education system to take low-paid jobs. The poverty also meant that for this section of the population, homeownership was not a realistic opportunity (Pugh 1989: 850-1).

The increasing poverty and the social isolation of the nuclear family in public housing combined to produce a closed, self-protective, atomised community.

For the poorer families the advantages and facilities available in the new housing environment are cancelled out by the increasing household expenses and ever increasing anxiety produced by this increase. The main solace for many of these families is that by living in flats among people they know little about, they can "hide" their poverty by keeping themselves aloof from their neighbours and the surrounding environment (Hassan 1977: 199).

The welfare institution with the ostensible purpose of ameliorating the most miserable inner city housing conditions actually reduced the entire working class to a position of dependence on the PAP-state's system of centralised welfare thereby providing highly controlled wage labour for the EOI strategy.

The transformation of a loosely structured labour force within an economy that turned on trading

activities to a regularised one employed in a diversified industrial economy is greatly assisted by the massive development of public housing. ...one of its consequences was to keep workers in regular employment. Simply put, regular employment is necessary to meet the monthly rent required by the landlord, the HDB, or the mortgage payment for ninety-nine year lease-ownership of the flat purchased also from the HDB (Chua 1989: 1011).

Thus the move from kampung (village) life to housing estate made the nuclear family the basic social unit. By forcing this unit to bear alone all the economic burdens of this transformation, its continuing consumption of state welfare was assured.

The way this proletarianisation functioned to fragment the working class on ethnic and gender lines and between citizen and migrant worker, creating a dual labour market, becomes very obvious in the following period.

HDB: Focus of Political Dissent

The government's political control was experienced most directly through the process of flat allocation by the HDB. The Singapore working class were forced to compete for housing with the centralisation of access to welfare in the hands of the state and the decline in self-reliant subsistence alternatives. Therefore, although much resettlement was forced in the early years, the cheaper

cost of HDB housing in comparison to private rental or purchase and the lack of any alternative led to long waiting lists for HDB flats. This gave the HDB enormous power through flat allocation (time of delivery, choice of neighbourhood, size and location of unit).

The government was also able to integrate HDB allocations with its political goals in a highly explicit manner. In addition to breaking up ethnic and traditional social organisation, it was able to advance its family planning objectives. For example, large families had to wait longer for flats in the 1970s because of the policy of encouraging small families. But in the 1980s, three-generation families were given priority as the PAP-state sought to relieve itself of the responsibility of housing the elderly (Linda Lim 1989: 183).

The changing regulations for flat allocation were highly sensitive political matters for the community at large. Public housing policy and the HDB itself became the focus of much political discontent during this period, and this was a major factor in the election of an opposition member to parliament in 1981.

Blocking the Exits

Having put people in their places physically, the government had to ensure that they stayed there and remained available for wage labour. This was done in at least two ways.

First, the government made sure there were no alternatives to HDB housing for the working class. By means of the Land Acquisition Act 1966, the PAP-state gave itself the power to expropriate private rights in land titles. The PAP-state could acquire land not just for specific public purposes but "for any residential, commercial or industrial purposes" (Yeung 1973: 38). Together with other legislation (e.g. the Planning Act 1970 and HDB legislation), this Act has enabled the PAP-state to increase its ownership from 26.1 per cent of Singapore's land area in 1968, to 67 per cent in 1980, and to 75 per cent in 1985 (Wong and Ooi 1989: 791; Linda Lim 1989: 185). Although this legislation may have been enacted initially to control land prices and facilitate the rapid development of industrial zones, housing estates and infrastructure, its application has also had the effect of ensuring that the working class have no access to cheap freehold land. In short, there is no prospect of returning to a semi-rural subsistence life-style. The only way out of the HDB estate

is to increase the family income exponentially in order to meet the very high cost of private housing.

The second way that the PAP-state tied people to public housing was through the Central Provident Fund (CPF). This institution of forced saving linked domestic capital formation (through the construction industry), forced housing and the supply of labour power.

Forced Saving, Forced Loyalty

Mechanisms of social control collectively must ensure that workers acquire the skills they need in the accumulation process, that they meet new demands for production and that they acquiesce to wage and job cuts. Control of their housing through welfare is one way to obtain workers' cooperation. But, if this is linked to their future subsistence when they are too old to work for a wage, then the power of capital's control over labour is further increased.

The PAP-state has to guarantee the subsistence of retired workers if it is to get the cooperation of existing workers. There are, as we have noted, few alternative forms of subsistence to wage labour. Retirement pensions are therefore an essential part of the welfare costs of

reproducing labour power and of the process of stabilising working class subsistence. Labour militancy and other forms of struggle have been undermined by ensuring that non-cooperation threatens not only workers' present subsistence through being sacked, but also their housing and their subsistence in old age.

The Central Provident Fund (CPF) is an institution to force worker co-operation through a scheme of forced savings. But, since these savings are deducted directly from workers' wages, it is more accurately described as a scheme for controlling workers by withholding their wages. The CPF forces them to pay in advance to support themselves when they are no longer productive. The political impact of the Central Provident Fund on the Singapore working class has been to tie workers and their families into wage labour and loyalty to the PAP-state.

The CPF was established to receive compulsory contributions from workers and employers (Table 4.1). The worker's contribution to the CPF represents that part of the wages paid by capital for the reproduction of labour power in the present but diverted by the state for delayed payment. This is done in order to ensure that retired workers can continue to be consumers and not become a charge on future capital expenditure either by the state or the

Table 4.1: CONTRIBUTIONS TO CPF
(percentage of wage)

	Worker	Employer
1955	5%	5%
1970	8%	8%
1980	18%	20.5%
1984	25%	25%
1986	25%	10%
1988	24%	12%
1990	23%	16.5%
1991	23%	17.5%

Source: Linda Lim 1989: 188; STW 12 May 1990, 20 April 1991.

corporations. Workers pay for their own future security by this means.

In short, the CPF is the means by which the government ensures that the working population pays for its own retirement, health care, housing, filial responsibilities...through its own forced savings and without charge to the government budget (Linda Lim 1989: 189).

The contribution by the employer may appear to be a generous gesture for the welfare of workers. In reality it is a state tax taken from the value generated by the workers themselves in production. The combined workers' and employers' contributions along with the remaining

portion of the wage comprise the total wage (immediate and delayed) necessary for the workers' subsistence.

The CPF is a scheme by which you get what you earn. There is no inter-class or even intra-class transfer of welfare schemes which guarantee a minimum income to all retired persons. Thus, the CPF reproduces social inequalities and reinforces the divisions which weaken the working class.

The control exerted by this forced saving mechanism is immense and works on several levels. First, as we have noted, the progressive elimination of traditional means of subsistence and housing has forced the working class to rely on wage labour just for survival. Singapore has no hinterland where workers can go and subsist when unemployed. This lack of alternative subsistence renders them susceptible to many forms of regulation mediated through the practice of wage labour, including compulsory membership of the CPF.

Secondly, the CPF has become the only practical means for the working class to provide for their retirement. The options of reliance on government welfare or family support are far less attractive. The government welfare budget is very small and very hard to qualify for: 90 per cent of recipients are single, elderly, unmarried and without family. The other ten per cent are handicapped, widows,

orphans or abandoned wives or children. Welfare payments cover 50 per cent of minimum household requirements of a single person which, for most, means reliance on a charitable institution for survival. In 1985 the Ministry of Social Welfare was abolished and merged into the Ministry of Community Development (Linda Lim 1989: 187). In addition, the traditional reliance on offspring during old age is severely restricted. For most of the PAP's rule, there have been strong disincentives to having more than two children. These disincentives largely remain in place for working class families, making elderly parents a burden on one or two low-waged young families.

Thirdly, the PAP-state controls access to the forced savings. It possesses and administers each worker's withheld wages, the only major financial asset each worker has to guard against penury in the future. This gives the PAP-state enormous regulatory power. It has administered the system to ensure that workers conform with its political and economic objectives.

The efficient administration of the CPF earns the PAP the support of workers who see the PAP-state as the guardian of their financial security. The legitimacy of the PAP-state is enhanced by workers having a financial investment in its stability and continuance. The PAP-state is not slow to

play on this electorally, pointing out the alleged danger to Singapore's economy of voting an opposition into power.

Finally, the right to use CPF credits as down payments and to repay instalments on public housing was granted in 1968 (Pugh 1989: 848). Less than a third of HDB flats were owner-occupied in 1970, but the proportion rose dramatically in the next period (Linda Lim 1989: 83). The way that home ownership through the CPF tightens the relationship between welfare and political loyalty will be examined at that stage.

In contrast to the way the CPF has been used to fragment workers and to force their cooperation through dependence on the state, it has also been used to consolidate local capital behind the PAP. Workers' delayed wages have provided a huge amount of cheap capital to fund other living costs (such as public housing), infrastructural development and to invest in income-earning enterprises. That is, withheld wages have been used to assist domestic capital accumulation and thus to consolidate the power of local capital.

In 1966 there were 417,000 contributors to the CPF, which stood at more than \$440 million. By 1985, 1.89 million contributors had total forced savings of \$26.8 billion (Ho 1989:677) and by 1988, 2.06 million contributors had forced

savings of \$32.5 billion (GOS 1989a:293). As government surpluses in the late 1970s became sufficient to finance public sector expenditure, CPF funds were increasingly used to boost Singapore's huge foreign reserves (Linda Lim 1989: 188).

Thus, through the CPF welfare scheme, the PAP-state mobilised both workers and local capitalists to build the infrastructure and provide the labour power for foreign capital to generate huge surpluses from its Singapore production sites.

In summary, the period from 1966 to 1978 was a time when the PAP consolidated its political gains over the broad opposition movement it had confronted in the period of transition from colony to neo-colony. Political struggle during this period was manifested through institutions which the PAP now had the power base to be able to coopt or suppress one by one. It had consolidated the local capitalist class through the domestic construction industry. It had re-formed the lower classes into an urban proletariat physically located in government housing and available for employment in the nearby factories of the transnational corporations.

**THE SECOND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND TIGHTENING THE WELFARE
-LOYALTY LINKAGE**

About 1978 the PAP launched its second industrial revolution aimed at a transition from a low wage economy to a high wage high-tech economy. It sought to develop an advanced industrial base and to phase out labour intensive industries with their increasing dependence on foreign labour. The government had to upgrade Singapore's infrastructure and labour skills which it hoped would attract the foreign investment to fund high-tech production.

This revolution required a sudden rise in productivity and thus in the exploitation of workers. It created a new degree of social inequality. Its failure exacerbated the sharpened social contradictions of class, race and gender, which resulted. It was therefore a period which saw the emergence of new forms of political struggle and of increasing resistance to the PAP. Both the working class and elements of the middle class began to register their dissent electorally. Bourgeois women established their own organisations (e.g. Association of Women for Action and Research - AWARE, Singapore Association of Women Lawyers - SAWL) and became active in others (e.g. the Singapore Law Society, Catholic community organisations). Minority-race

resistance became stronger as Malays managed to build residential communities in certain HDB estates.

The PAP attempted to overcome this crisis of legitimacy by feigning equality. To this end, as we will see in later chapters, it gerrymandered the electoral system, marketed parliament as a forum of genuine political contest and boosted the meritocratic ideology of equal opportunity in education. In public housing, the PAP-state encouraged "home ownership" as a symbol of the way that its economic policies were supposedly benefiting every social sector.

This period of intensified exploitation tended to strengthen the local capitalist class, to increase the regulatory power of the state and to weaken the political power of the working class. But these trends were by no means without their contradictions; contradictions exacerbated by the failure of the "revolution". The social control mediated through public housing during this period reflects these developments.

Strengthening Local Capital

Again the construction industry was used to boost domestic capital accumulation with the CPF as the main financial resource. The early 1980s saw a sharp rise in CPF

withdrawals for home-ownership, with 28 per cent of CPF contributions for 1983 being withdrawn for this purpose. In the 1974-85 period, housing absorbed from 4.8 to 15.9 per cent of gross domestic product and some 11.6 to 34.1 per cent of gross capital formation. Public housing amounted to 92 per cent of all residential construction by the mid-1980s (Pugh 1989: 842).

The political meaning of this trend was again the consolidation of local capital behind the PAP-state's new economic strategy and a new level of control for the rest of the population. The CPF is clearly a powerful welfare mechanism of social control as a pension scheme. But its integration with public housing has made it even more central to the comprehensive system of social control. This is illustrated by the dynamics of HDB flat ownership.

The Politics of HDB "Ownership"

By 1985, more than 85 per cent of Singapore's population lived in public housing and more than three-quarters of them were owner-occupiers (Yeh 1989: 826; Linda Lim 1989: 183). This high incidence of home ownership has been touted internationally as symbolic of the PAP-state's success (Quah 1985: 248). In Singapore, the PAP-state has promoted home ownership as a sign of a migrant community

showing a sense of permanence and of commitment to the nation by investing in a home (Ong 1989: 937).

There are two main reasons why HDB home ownership increases the social control exerted over the owners. First, they are not owners in the sense of a private freehold sale. Rather they purchase equity in the flat in the form of a ninety-nine year lease which reverts to the HDB upon expiry. Owners are little more than tenants. But the HDB's hold over them is greater than over tenants because of the size of the investment that "purchase" involves and which owners do not wish to jeopardise. There are many rules and regulations which owners must follow.

For example, the HDB imposes limitations on the number and family status of people who can live in the units, has to approve their renovation, rental and resale, forbids the conduct of business in the units, and has the right to evict residents found guilty of morally inappropriate behaviour, not necessarily with compensation for their equity in the unit (Linda Lim 1989: 183).

Therefore, owners are not only subject to the same petty regulations as tenants in terms of restrictions on the colour they can paint their front door, the type of pets allowed and noise curfews. They are similarly liable to eviction (and imprisonment) for offences such as dropping dangerous litter over their balconies or for offending against the morality of the state. But, in addition to

sharing these regulatory burdens with tenants, owners may or may not be compensated for their investment.

Secondly, although the increasing availability of CPF funds for housing has latterly enabled poorer families to follow the better-off in purchasing flats, this has also had the effect of easing the majority of the working class into a long-term financial commitment requiring long-term fulltime wage labour.

Since poor couples and those of modest means find it hard to save, CPF enables them to buy a home without having to stint on necessities. The low proportion of their take-home pay spent for housing frees them to spend more on consumer goods. This painless road to property ownership ties a family into debt [to the state] and credit relations that require them to work steadily for years to come. But if they should lose their jobs, they will risk losing their payments and losing their homes (Salaff 1988: 242-3).

Thus HDB "ownership" puts many in long-term debt to the state and ensures a disciplined labour force at home as well as in the factory. Even those who pay off their debt do not have exclusive rights over their equity and may be deprived of it at the discretion of the PAP-state. That is, the fear of losing one's own home, which is usually also one's major asset, remains a fact of life for most Singaporeans. Under this constant threat, most Singaporeans are constrained to behave in their own homes as if everything is forbidden except what is expressly

allowed. This fear and the mechanisms which tie people into it have become one of the central pillars of the PAP-state's social control.

Furthermore, the PAP-state's launching of its "Second Industrial Revolution" in the late 1970s could not have been contemplated without already having about 80 per cent of the population within the grip of the HDB welfare system to ensure compliance with the process of capital accumulation.

Increasing Inequality: Fragmenting the Working Class

Although the Second Industrial Revolution largely failed to launch Singapore to the technologically advanced level hoped for, it did achieve significant social results. It stabilised working class subsistence and further fragmented the working class.

Poverty was hidden but it existed. According to one estimate, it was probable that over 30 per cent of Singapore's households were below the poverty line, thanks to HDB policies that had unwittingly promoted "shelter poverty", that is, poverty brought about when households had to deprive themselves of nonshelter basic necessities in order to meet the high costs of housing (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 331).

Salaff (1988) studied poor and "secure" families before and after the initiation of the move from labour intensive to

capital intensive industrialisation, or what she calls the "early development" stage and the "advanced development" or second stage. These stages largely correspond to the second and third periods that I have distinguished.

Salaff's observations show that the PAP failed significantly to upgrade the skills of the labour force while deepening the social alienation of the majority of workers and their families.

Many families she met in public housing estates during 1974-76 "exhibited the profile of Third World poverty" (Salaff 1988: 3) as well as many of the characteristics also noted by Hassan. By the mid-1980s, Salaff noted that the poor had been drawn more deeply into the wage economy and that "the income gap by social-class group remains virtually unchanged. Despite the uplift of some of the poorest, poor men still average about half the wages of secure men" (Salaff 1988: 226). Further, she notes that the increase in wages during this second stage has had the effect of increasing control over the nuclear family and of reproducing the class structure while differentiating the working class into a minority of better paid workers in core industries and a majority of poorer workers.

The new second-stage programmes root families ever more deeply in the capitalist mode of production, which opens them to control by the market and restructures them along new class lines. That the second-stage economic programmes bring workers more deeply into the market economy has been seen first by

the spread of wage work and the rise in basic wages earned. The proletarianisation of the men and women in my sample enables policies that promote certain types of industries and occupations to reach increasing numbers of workers. The policies then force the restructuring of the labour process. Within each of the social class groups, the earnings of workers whose skills are favoured (men and women in the core-sector industries and in technically skilled occupations) have improved the most. Such a realignment of opportunities occurs throughout the class spectrum. Thus the programmes of job creation, job finding, and retraining carry forward the major class divisions and inequalities (Salaff 1988: 262).

This study noted an increased consumption of welfare (e.g. housing and education) by all families. Most families had risen above the poverty line and, although still poor, were now consumers. However, while the outward appearance of family life has become more uniform, Salaff found that the divide between rich and poor has not narrowed and the class structure is maintained (Salaff 1988: 249, 261-2). That is, through the system of with-holding wages, working class subsistence was stabilised.

These conclusions have been verified by other scholars who have noted the persistence of poverty in housing estates despite the improving standard of flats and the growth in average incomes. This poverty remains concealed, mainly in one room HDB flats. The poorest ten per cent of the population still receive only two to three per cent of total income (Pugh 1989: 849-50).

The increase in poverty in the "early developmental stage" and its persistence to the present indicates that the reproduction of the class structure and the destruction of traditional working class organisation are not incidental but integral to the operation of housing welfare. That is, the increased consumption of welfare is necessary to shape the social conditions for the extension of wage labour. The isolation of the nuclear family and thus of the working class as a whole from its existing social and political organisation in the first stage was developed into further integration into the market economy and wage labour in the second. This integration involved further differentiation among the working class as already noted with regard to workers in industries targeted for up-grading. However, the HDB welfare system also enabled differentiation of other fractions of the working class throughout the two periods.

Women and Housing: Patriarchy and Industrialisation

The added burdens of nuclear family life in HDB flats have already been noted. However, it has not been pointed out that these strains primarily devolved upon women as part-time wage labourers and housekeeper-child-rearers who were now isolated at home without other adult company. Further, the physical design of HDB flats was not related to women's

needs in these roles nor to their values. Low-rise, high density housing would have been more appropriate to the tasks now loaded almost exclusively on to women (Pugh 1989: 840-841, 853).

However, the increasing pressures from the involvement of families in the money economy meant more and more women were compelled to work to buy consumer goods or furnishings and to help meet the increasing family financial obligations (Linda Lim 1989: 186; Salaff 1988: 233). The location of small manufacturing plants in flatted factories in housing estates encouraged women into part-time, low-paid wage labour.

In the 1980s, Salaff found that the increasing involvement of women in wage labour during the "advanced development stage" had brought the whole family under the social control of welfare mechanisms in a way that the wage labour of male workers had not yet achieved.

Whether new or old workers, through their market commitment women help bring their families more deeply into the new structures of the second-stage economy. The state social services, such as housing developments in areas where factories locate and birth control services, enable women to work.[sic] In turn, their wage labour increases their families' participation in the new state social services (Salaff 1988: 263).

While the politics of family planning will be pursued in greater detail later, it is important to recognise that women workers became a differentiated, low-paid sector of the workforce. The acquisition of skills in Singapore is linked to class so most working class women remain doomed to low wages. A full-time woman employee earns three-fifths of the comparative male wage (Salaff 1988: 236). More than this, women are increasingly employed in even lower paid part-time jobs.

Those women not already employed when the second stage was launched were further marginalised. Home-making became even more the sole work of the wife and mother and child-rearing became even more time consuming (Salaff 1988: 269). The PAP-state has begun to show concern about this burden on women, not because this labour is completely unpaid, but because, with the shortage of Singaporean labour, it wants to force more women into part-time employment.

Furthermore, the PAP-state can thereby extract more labour out of the nuclear family unit without an increase in the reproduction costs of that labour. A speech by Lee Kuan Yew further showed that the PAP-state wanted to push more women into wage labour without raising the level of welfare. He called on men to "change their cultural attitudes" and help out in the home. "Wives have jobs, wives have social lives of their own, wives cannot alone

carry the burdens of managing the home and bringing up the children," he said. However, he stated it was "too difficult for the state or private enterprise to help lighten the load by providing domestic help or good child-care services" (STW 7 July 1990). Soon after, the government said only 33,000, or three per cent of the workforce, are part-timers and that it wished to increase this to ten per cent (STW 18 August 1990). It had previously noted that 540,000 women were "not working" (STW 9 September 1989).

Thus the forced restructuring of social organisation through the HDB and related welfare systems has differentiated working class women into either poorly paid wage workers or unpaid workers at home, while increasing the burden of family responsibilities. The patriarchal relations of the nuclear family have been reinforced by the capitalist relations of wage labour.

Workers Without Housing: Creating a Dual Labour Market

The absorption of labour into the public housing construction programme and in industrial production from the mid-1960s enabled Singapore's unemployment problem to be solved by the early 1970s. However, the rapid growth of the economy then required more workers, skilled and

unskilled, than Singapore could supply itself. Hence the approximately 150,000 unskilled and semi-skilled foreign workers from neighbouring countries allowed into Singapore as of early March 1990 and the intention to allow more (STW 3 March 1990).

Most of these workers are denied public housing and other forms of welfare available to Singapore citizens and permanent residents. It is difficult to get statistical information on their housing conditions because this is a sensitive political subject. This sensitivity is attested to by the detention without trial of community workers in 1987 whose community work had begun to expose the misery of foreign workers.

However, simple observation of construction sites around Singapore reveals that most construction workers live in barrack-style temporary plywood sheds on site with a minimum of facilities. These workers are not members of the CPF and do not have the same labour rights under law as Singaporeans. Their poor living conditions came to the surface with the health problems of the 20,000 Thai construction workers. Since 1982 at least 220 of these workers have died suddenly in their sleep possibly due to their habit of cooking rice in PVC pipes lying around the building site (Singapore's official explanation) or due to the bad living conditions, stress and exhaustion (The

Economist 15 September 1990). The official explanation seeks to blame the workers but it in fact also indicates the poor living conditions they suffer.

The visible existence of a class of workers on very low wages and deprived of the benefits of the HDB housing welfare system has made it clear to the Singapore working class that the only thing worse than being in an HDB flat is not being in an HDB flat.

In short, the PAP-state, like its colonial predecessor, has found it useful to have a labour source it can turn on and off like a tap without any domestic political consequences. Thus, when unemployment rose from 2.8 per cent in December 1984 to 6.1 per cent in March 1986, the PAP-state reacted to the recession by repatriating foreign workers (Lim Chong Yah 1989: 213). There were no repercussions for the housing market (already in oversupply by 1985) because these workers were largely housed in company-built and government-approved squatter camps on or near building sites.

Furthermore, neither the PAP-state nor foreign investors bear any cost for the generational reproduction of this cheapest source of labour. Poverty and unemployment in neighbouring countries ensure a ready supply, and there is no need to invest in these workers' welfare either to

reproduce their labour or to control them. If they get sick or die, there are more where they came from. If they are foolish enough to agitate for better conditions, they can be expelled immediately. We will examine this underclass of the dual labour market in more detail in the following chapter.

Housing and Voting: Contradictions Emerge

Soon after the launch of the Second Industrial Revolution, the PAP faced the contradictions of its success in housing more than 85 per cent of the population in HDB flats by the mid-1980s. The entire working class (estimated at 80.2 per cent of the total population in 1976) (Chan 1976: 34) and much of the middle class was dependent on the PAP-state for its housing. Having stabilised the living conditions of the work force, the PAP-state moved to cut the costs of housing. That is, the move to upgrade the economy required greater productivity and less social expenditure. This was a further development of the trend resulting from the move from the ISI policy of the early 1960s to the EOI policy. Ideologically, this trend was mirrored in the PAP's switch from social justice rhetoric to the ideology of inegalitarian meritocracy.

The PAP-state cut its funding to the HDB. The state grant to the HDB in 1977-78 was \$68.5 million. In 1979-80, it was \$32.9 million (Pugh 1989: 849). At the same time there was building sector inflation, with price increases reaching 38 per cent in 1981 (Pugh 1989: 849). The HDB continued its high-handed treatment of its tenants, notably by evicting some residents from their flats in the Anson area to make way for a container port. Evicted residents were given no priority on the HDB waiting list. In addition, the government also continued the destruction of adequate non-HDB working class housing (Pugh 1989: 846), adding more disgruntled citizens to the waiting list. There were still 76,509 families on this list and they were now faced with sharply higher prices for HDB flats (Quah 1985: 248, 254).

The many grievances surrounding HDB policy and the lowering of state support for welfare led to a degree of political dissent the PAP had not anticipated. This was expressed most obviously through the by-election victory in 1981 of opposition leader J. B. Jeyaretnam, who broke the PAP's parliamentary monopoly. Working class voters sent a message of protest which shocked the government out of its complacency. It quickly increased HDB funding (Pugh 1989: 855).

However, the sudden release of CPF funds for private housing and the increase in HDB construction then led to oversupply and a decline in home values. This was also unpopular "in a nation where more than three-quarters of the population consists of 'home owners' whose homes constitute the bulk of their savings" (Linda Lim 1989: 186). This displeasure, along with other grievances, was reflected in a continuing trend against the PAP in the 1984 general election results and the election of another opposition member.

The PAP-state learned that, to ensure the optimal level of social control through state social organisation, a sufficient level of welfare needs to be available from the state. Without an adequate material incentive to balance the PAP's political threats, it is very difficult to use the electoral process to convert submission into consent. The PAP-state severely misjudged the level of welfare required when it launched its "Second Industrial Revolution" in the late 1970s.

If housing problems are not solved, those affected might demonstrate their dissatisfaction by not voting for the ruling party. This was demonstrated in the 31 October 1981 Anson by-election. Accordingly, the PAP government must continue to ensure that Singaporeans will be satisfied with public housing otherwise its legitimacy might be further eroded in the future (Quah 1985: 254).

The government also realised that voters felt they had nothing to lose by casting a protest vote. But the one political action the PAP-state cannot make illegal if it is to derive legitimacy from the forms of liberal democracy is casting a vote for the opposition. At the same time, to maintain its absolute political hegemony, the PAP requires a high level of electoral consent. It faced the contradiction of having made HDB flat "ownership" such a central part of its social control mechanisms: the working class was unable to build its own political organisation, but it could exercise with impunity its prerogative to withhold electoral consent. Closing off this form of struggle became a priority. The PAP linked housing values to political loyalty.

Restoring Legitimacy: Tightening the Welfare-Loyalty Link

The growing vote against the PAP in the elections of the 1980s indicated the resurgence of political struggle as the PAP's accumulation strategy intensified exploitation and repression. The PAP was no longer able to take the outward conformity of the working class to social control practices as an indication of political support.

Prime Minister Lee, at a 1988 election rally, put the issue in this way:

We are now facing a new problem. With every election, a growing realisation spreads across the population that, yes, we need a PAP government which is good, but there is also that itch to say let's put in a few sticks of chili and we will get a quicker response from the government....If you vote for the wrong man then I wish you well. You will soon find out (Asiaweek 2 September 1988: 34).

Since the government could not outlaw casting a vote for the opposition, it responded with administrative measures to tie the property values and standard of living of HDB residents to PAP electoral success. An early indication of this tightening of the welfare-loyalty link came during the 1984 election campaign when Lee Kuan Yew threatened that constituencies which returned an opposition member may lose some government services. He was responding to Jeyaretnam's election and to the groundswell of dissent against raising the age for withdrawal from the CPF, against the HDB's flat allocation policies and against family planning schemes which discriminated against the poor. After the election, in which two opposition members were elected, he said "the government would not be blackmailed" by the people and that, "to make sure the excesses [votes against the PAP] were not carried too far... it is necessary to put some safeguards into the way in which people use their votes to bargain, to coerce, to push, to jostle and get what they want without running the risk of losing the services of the government" (Asia Yearbook 1986: 226).

In March 1985, the National Development Minister announced that the Housing and Development Board would give priority to PAP constituencies in providing maintenance for lifts, water pipes, drains, roofs etc. He stated in parliament, "This is a very practical political decision....I make no apologies for it. As a PAP government we must look after PAP constituencies first because the majority of people supported us" (FEER 11 April 1985). The PAP-state moved to institutionalise this threat against dissenting voters and create an additional obstacle to future opposition victories by instituting a new level of local government.

Town Councils

Legislation to form Town Councils in housing estates was introduced on 25 May 1988 and passed the next month. The idea had developed in tandem with the Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) or "Team MPs" proposal after the 1984 election (see Chapter Six). It was proposed that the three elected MPs in a GRC would automatically form the Town Council, one of them as chairman. In the end, despite the hurried separation of the rationales for these schemes, the final legislation followed this initial proposal.

The power of the HDB to administer and maintain the estates was devolved to the Town Councils (TCs) which would be formed according to the parliamentary boundaries. There

would thus be TCs formed on a Single Member Constituency (SMC) basis as well as the GRCs. TCs would be formed in all GRCs and SMCs by February 1991. Each TC would be allocated a budget (SMCs \$3 million and GRCs \$9 million) and have the right to set maintenance fees, make investments, decide on new amenities and raise rates. The government would not subsidise deficits.

In parliament the PAP pushed the TC proposal as giving residents more say in the running of their estates, an example of grassroots democracy. However, the three trial TCs, begun in September 1986 and covering nine constituencies in the Ang Mo Kio area, were hardly democratic in their membership. Each had a PAP MP as chairman with the other two PAP MPs from the GRC as members. It would appear that the fact that MPs are elected to parliament gives sufficient licence to the PAP-state to claim that their appointment to other bodies is a democratic procedure. The other 18-21 councillors were selected by the MPs and were mostly from the government-appointed Residents' Committees or Citizens' Consultative Committees, the strongholds of PAP members and sympathisers (ST 14 September 1986).

Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong explained the TC legislation in terms of the government's two main concerns after the 1984 election: encouraging Singaporeans to

participate in "building an even better Singapore" and providing "stabilisers to our democratic political system" (Quah 1989b: 7). More bluntly he earlier stated this latter objective as forcing Singaporeans "to think a little more carefully before they cast their votes". This would neutralise the threat of "protest votes" being registered as in 1984 (Asia Yearbook 1988: 223).

Thus HDB residents were left in no doubt about the implications for their welfare of voting in an opposition member of parliament. The enormous task of administering the estates includes maintenance, renovation, regular repainting of the blocks, collecting rubbish, looking after the environment within the estate including parks, car parks and roads and formulating the rules and regulations about what one can and cannot do "not only in the estate but also within the inside of one's own flat" (SCMP 5 September 1988). The majority of TCs, being PAP-dominated, will have the back-up of the state administrative apparatus. The extent to which any opposition-controlled TC has this support will depend on whether the government wants it to succeed or fail in the eyes of its constituents. It is clear that the PAP-state has established the TCs as winner-takes-all bodies rather than ensuring a balance of political representation in order to be able to show the contrast between PAP and opposition TCs.

A well-run estate can flourish, while negligence and poor service will result in run-down flats, poor facilities, not to mention the dangers of corruption. Property values of such estates will rise or fall depending on how well or how badly they are run, the Government explains....Opposition parties which are financially weak and lacking in human expertise view it as a serious threat to their political aspirations.... Politics will be an entirely new ball game in Singapore (SCMP 5 September 1988).

The sole elected opposition MP after 1988, Chiam See Tong of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), may well succeed in running the TC in his SMC. The resources of his party can be focussed on the single constituency. The PAP-state regards him as an acceptable, tame opposition and it would benefit from allowing his Town Council to develop as an opposition show-case in order to authenticate its good faith in establishing the scheme. It would also benefit because the SDP would spend most of its energy doing this rather than mobilising citizens nationally on national concerns. But it is unlikely that the PAP-state would permit any future Workers' Party MP to be as successful because of the broader appeal of that party to the working class.

The Town Council scheme therefore introduces a new level of threat against HDB residents. The PAP-state, faced with individual actions which cumulatively could threaten its electoral legitimacy, has responded with a scheme which

ties continuing welfare (in this case the value of flats and adequate servicing of them) to political loyalty. If residents lose out, they only have themselves to blame. The PAP-state has introduced the strategy of the military reprisal into its welfare mechanisms: if the enemy is assisted, the whole village is punished.

In addition to this initiative, the PAP-state continues to reassure HDB residents that it will deliver improved property values to those who support it. In his last National Day Rally address as prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew promised Singaporeans that "the Government could double the value of their assets in 20 years provided they treated life like a marathon and stayed the course" (STW 1 September 1990). He was referring to the HDB's renovation and upgrading programme for existing flats which could eventually double their value.

Housing and Racism: Removing Demographic Threats

Having split up and resettled traditional communities in HDB estates, the level of emerging political struggle in the early 1980s induced the PAP-state to take new initiatives to ensure that no autonomous communities arose within them. That is, the PAP-state had to ensure the continuing disorganisation of the working class. In

addition to its Town Council scheme, it took steps to increase its political control over the working class in the estates and to undermine any growing sense of neighbourhood identity and security arising from minority ethnic affiliation which might be translated into an opposition bloc vote. It achieved these aims by imposing racial quotas, by extending state community organisations and by further militarising the housing estates.

Although a dispossessed and discriminated against racial minority, the Singapore Malay community nevertheless has had to be handled carefully owing to the geopolitical location of Singapore between two much larger Malay states. Malay resentment of their political and economic marginalisation and their cynicism about PAP Malay leaders (STW 6 October 1990) has been reflected in a consistent anti-PAP Malay vote. This dissent began to concern the PAP-state when easing the rules governing allocation of flats and their resale resulted in Malays gradually moving back to their favourite districts, thus concentrating the anti-PAP vote.

This problem was addressed by introducing HDB sale and resale regulations which discriminate on grounds of race in order to prevent or break up what the PAP-state calls "racial enclaves". This has been justified as a move to prevent racial conflict. According to the Minister of

Community Development, "To allow the races to regroup now would be to go back to the pre-1965 period when there were racial enclaves and racial riots" (STW 18 February 1989).

The HDB's post-1982 prototype new town is 625 hectares with 40,000 dwelling units (du) divided into neighbourhoods of 6,000 to 7,000 du which are further divided into precincts of 400 to 800 du (Yeh 1989: 826). The precincts generally consist of a number of high-rise blocks. In 1989, the PAP-state set racial limits for HDB estates.

Table 4.2: HDB RACIAL LIMITS
(maximum percentages)

RACE	HDB NEIGHBOURHOODS	HDB BLOCKS
Chinese	84%	87%
Malay	22%	25%
Indians/Others	13%	13%

Source: STW 18 February 1989.

The above limits are described by the PAP-state as non-discriminatory and as "a balanced racial mix" (STW 18 February 1989). By this logic a block which has 87 per cent Chinese residents is not a racial enclave, but a block which has 26 per cent Malay residents is a racial enclave. Or, to put it another way, it takes more than three times as many Chinese as Malays to make a race riot. Clearly the purpose of the limits is to prevent the growth of strong Malay community organisation, even at an informal level,

which would adversely affect the PAP-state's electoral legitimacy. Also a bloc Malay vote against the PAP would expose the institutional racism of the bourgeois Chinese state.

It should also be noted that the growing (mainly Chinese) middle-class has not been quite as susceptible to the threats of dispossession and criminalisation aimed at the Chinese working-class. The HDB's attempt to bring the middle-class within its social control mechanisms has been quite successful (Linda Lim 1989: 191). However, its initial elitist policy of building executive class flats together had the effect of concentrating professionals willing to vote against the PAP in particular blocks or estates.

With the move to providing more middle- and upper-income units, the HDB first segregated these units in like clusters, but more recently preferred dispersal - some believe in part to allow for the possibility that members of a like-income group (educated professionals, for example) might vote in a like manner, resulting in housing patterns biasing voting results (Linda Lim 1989: 183).

Thus the demography of housing remains thoroughly politicised despite the early forced resettlement dispersals of the 1960s and the imposition of exclusive PAP-state social organisation.

Strengthening Political Control of the Labour Camp

From the late 1970s another level of PAP-state social organisation was added to suppress struggle and induce workers to cooperate with the new accumulation strategy. Residents' Committees were launched in 1978-79 by the now familiar process of appointment through the Prime Minister's Office. By 1988, 359 Residents' Committees had been set up involving more than 5,600 residents, usually the "better educated among the population" (GOS 1989a: 216). Each Residents' Committee covers one zone of apartment blocks varying from 500 to 2,500 flats. Residents' Committees are officially categorised as part of "Social Defence and Community Relations" (GOS 1989a: 215).

As Singapore's population was increasingly relocated in HDB estates, the need to create new communities and monitor and resolve the problems of this large constituency of voters became paramount. By 1985, when 84 per cent of Singapore's population were living in HDB flats, housing problems had every possibility of developing into major political issues. Thus in addition to the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs), the Community Centre Management Committees (CCMCs), and the PAP party branches, 261 RCs were set up in constituencies with HDB populations. Each RC has responsibility for a zone of 500 - 2,500 housing units. Without this sensory system of the body politic, it is unlikely that the PAP could have provided effective and stable government for over two decades (Chan 1989: 81).

The value of imposing this social organisation on the HDB estates was attested to by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew:

Look at our new towns with community centres, parks and stadiums. Think of their channels of communication for the constituents to reach the HDB, PUB, TAS, the government ministries, and the administrators who manage them. They have their MPs, RCs, MCs, CCCs, who act like the network of nerves and sensors which monitors signals and feedbacks [sic] and sends out messages in return. It is these invisible ties that make for the sense of belonging, a sense of security of life in Singapore (ST 20 August 1984).

[PUB: Public Utilities Board; TAS: Telecommunications Authority of Singapore; MCs: Management Committees.]

Housing estate political control was reinforced in the 1980s by integrating policing with the activities of Residents' Committees. From 1983, Neighbourhood Police Posts (NPPs) were introduced to housing estates, with a total of 91 NPPs expected to be in operation by the end of 1989 (GOS 1989a: 178). Modelled on the Japanese koban system, NPPs have generally been sited on the ground floors of public housing blocks and staffed with 25 or more police officers. Constables are required to make personal contact with every family in an NPP's area and to join the activities of local community organisations (Austin 1989: 920).

The NPPs have close cooperation with the Residents' Committees which, as noted already, are appointed through the Prime Minister's Office. The Residents' Committee office is often located near or next to the NPP. Working with the NPPs, the Residents' Committees had established

71,974 Neighbourhood Watch Groups involving 288,217 households by October 1988 (GOS 1989a: 178; Ong 1989: 943).

This integration of policing and PAP-state political organisation within estates represents a tighter linkage between the provision of housing welfare, political loyalty and the apparatus of state violence. It was accompanied by increased surveillance of the working class in their homes and by further militarisation of the estates.

Total Surveillance: Nowhere to Hide

Capital produces and reproduces not only its social environment but also its physical environment (Harvey 1982: 403), an observation attested to by the architectural style and physical lay-out of HDB estates. The position and design of public housing renders workers vulnerable to surveillance and control, as well as making their labour power conveniently available. Often sited near the factories of transnational corporations, housing blocks are arranged in ordered rows on open land. There are long empty corridors with one door for each flat. This barrack-style design enables two or three police in the groundfloor lift lobby and stairwell of a twenty-storey block to seal off several hundred people. This may be a major reason why the PAP-state resisted low-rise, high-density housing long

after it had been shown to be cheaper, use space more efficiently and be more conducive to a sense of community (Pugh 1989: 852).

Placing a major segment of the population in barrack-style blocks provided the police with an opportunity to scrutinize citizen activity more efficiently from a distance (Austin 1989: 919).

Residence in an HDB flat renders a worker vulnerable to surveillance. Details of who is living in which flat are centrally computerised. Citizens must report a change of address to the authorities within two weeks or be subject to a \$5,000 fine or up to five years imprisonment or both (Austin 1989: 916). This monitoring is backed up by electronic surveillance.

For example, all citizens on reaching the age of twelve years are finger-printed. This print is centrally recorded and is also placed, along with a personal photograph and signature, on an identity card (IC) bearing a personal number. Any citizen must be able to produce their IC when officially requested. Its number is used in all dealings with the PAP-state (CPF, HDB, utilities, telephone, educational authorities, hospitals, income tax, driving licence, passport). During 1990 new ICs began to be issued to coincide with the introduction of a computerised, automatic fingerprint-identification system. Thus, all citizens will have their prints in this computer which is

accessible to the police and security authorities (STW 18 August 1990; GOS 1989a: 178; SAWL 1989: 36).

Physical surveillance was also upgraded when, in 1988, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) acquired "a sophisticated video system...for better and more extensive crowd surveillance" (GOS 1989a: 178). In addition to the various types of police surveillance, other state agencies also help regulate the estates. For example, in 1989 there were 24 anti-litter squads, each of four officers, patrolling the estates watching for residents who drop litter from their flats (STW 20 May 1989).

Furthermore, the PAP-state occasionally admits (GOS 1986: B154) its bugging of private meetings and telephones, interception of mail, reviewing of personal records, use of a very large network of informers, shadowing of citizens and the harsh incognito interrogation of suspects by its secret police, the Internal Security Department. This much-feared force is merely one of the internal security and intelligence organs of the PAP-state. Their organisation and operations are kept largely secret except on such occasions that a mass arrest is conducted to suppress political threats (GOS 1989a: 177).

With the induction of all males into military service and the encouragement of paramilitary organisations in

secondary schools and the community, the estates are also highly militarised through the inclusion of the working class itself in the repressive state apparatus.

Consequently, it is highly unlikely that many residential blocks are without a number of police-orientated citizens nearby (for example, retired officers, reserve officers, voluntary constables, or prospective recruits) to aid citizens or the regular police in time of need (Austin 1989: 922).

In 1968, approximately 15 per cent of Singapore's land area was taken for defence and security, much of this occupied by the British (Wong and Ooi 1989: 791). Today, the development of the barrack-style HDB estates and their militarisation means that they can also be regarded as military bases. Public housing estates are places where worker-soldiers live under discipline. One result of the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital has been to make the perimeter of militarised areas congruent with the boundaries of the country.

PUTTING PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACES

The development of public housing was essentially a process of physically putting people in their places. The early period saw opposition leaders put in prison while the lower

classes were forced into public housing both to improve their standard of housing and to isolate them from political mobilisation. In the second period, these housing estates were rapidly expanded and transformed into labour camps for transnational corporations. The focus of social control became keeping workers in their flats through the CPF and blocking all alternative forms of subsistence. Neutralising the political struggles arising from intensified exploitation was the main task in the latest period. The restoration of PAP legitimacy required a new degree of regulation.

This exposition of public housing as a social control mechanism is not meant to imply the conception and implementation of a master political strategy by the PAP-state. Rather, as it struggled for political hegemony and then to build a successful alliance with foreign capital, the PAP-state used the welfare mechanisms at its disposal to advance these goals. It seized the opportunities as they presented themselves. As we have seen, policies had unforeseen consequences: the PAP misjudged the level of dissent in the early 1980s, it cut welfare expenditure at the time most likely to undermine its own support, and it did not comprehend the politics of Malay resettlement patterns early enough to avoid explicitly racist counter-measures. That is, the PAP-state did not always comprehend the dynamics of its own systems of social control.

Nevertheless, public housing has undoubtedly been a powerful regulatory mechanism:

...social welfare provisions have, as the government itself admits, been used as political instruments to ensure social stability and greater political support for, and less effective opposition to, the governing party. Housing is a prime example....(Linda Lim 1989: 191).

More specifically, we have noted that the institution of public housing has facilitated the following:

- the consolidation of local capital behind the PAP;
- the forced disorganisation of the working class by physical isolation and creating dependence on wage labour for welfare access, thus guaranteeing the reproduction of obedient labour power;
- the differentiation of the working class into grades according to race, gender and national origin with varying access to welfare and wages, in order to raise the level of exploitation without raising the level of welfare;
- the suppression of immediate political struggles by tying housing to loyalty to the PAP-state;

- the long-term control of the working class outside the factory by imposing state social organisation and linking it more closely to the apparatus of state violence.

These will be controversial conclusions for Singaporean scholars who have disputed the findings of Buchanan (1972), Gamer (1972) and Hassan (1976, 1977), which relate to the problems experienced by HDB residents. Chan Heng Chee (1976) refers to a government survey in order to prove how happy residents are with the HDB and to refute Buchanan. Quah (1983, 1985), in two similar articles, uses an HDB-university survey of 1968 and a 1973 survey by two Singapore academics to rebut Buchanan, Gamer and Hassan. While there may be room for improvement of research methods or refinement of conclusions, these criticisms appear as apologetics for the PAP-state.

For example, Quah claims the benefits of resettlement include ethnic integration, equating forced dispersal of minorities among the overwhelmingly dominant Chinese population with a move towards national unity (Quah 1983: 206). However, the beneficial effects of this process for the Malays or Indians (as opposed to the greater control accruing to the state) have been widely questioned (e.g. Willmott 1989: 589). Also, the persistence of Malay

resistance to PAP rule admitted by the regime itself would place this in question.

Furthermore, some Singapore scholars have attempted to minimise the social effects of high-rise living (Quah 1985: 250-2) or to enhance the political legitimacy of the housing policy and the PAP-state by pointing to the correspondence between the high levels of satisfaction expressed to HDB survey teams and the general election results (Stephen Yeh and Pang Eng Fong 1973).

However, our conclusions do not require us to deny that the HDB has supplied a comparatively high physical standard of housing to the working class. Rather, our analysis enables us to place approval or disapproval ratings gathered in official surveys in their proper political context: the alliance between the PAP-state and foreign capital. That is, when Yeh and Pang quote 70 per cent approval for HDB housing and for the PAP-state, this figure can be seen to sustain the central argument of this study: public housing has enhanced the PAP-state's powers of social control for the purposes of political hegemony and the development of capitalism in Singapore. By tying welfare to political loyalty, the PAP-state has been able to convert the forced submission of the working class into a high degree of formal consent. This has been a major ideological effect of public housing. When consent has not been forthcoming,

housing welfare has also been linked to the coercive apparatus of state violence.

But new social contradictions have emerged in this process. New struggles have emerged resisting state racism, resisting the reinforcement of patriarchy by capitalism and opposing the intensifying exploitation of the lower classes. These struggles permeate other regulatory institutions, such as education, which also have powerful ideological effects. An understanding of social control in Singapore comes not from examining one institution, but from seeing the links between institutions and how they function together as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

EDUCATING FOR SUBMISSION

Just as housing is the main social control mechanism for putting people in their places physically, the education system is the premier institution for putting them in their social places. Unlike public housing, education deals with all classes. It therefore has to regulate the contradictions of class, race, language, religion and gender across the whole of society. This means it has to repress, divert or co-opt many forms of struggle. We will see that it does this by reinforcing divisions of class and race as well as by strengthening patriarchal relations.

Furthermore, we will see that the goals of the education system are determined by the alliance between the PAP-state and foreign capital. This chapter will investigate the development of educational practices by placing them in the context of the historical shifts in this relationship influenced by domestic resistance.

In studies of Singapore's education system, it has become common to observe that changes in the PAP-state's education policy have been determined by the requirements of the economy. Linda Lim has said that the PAP-state followed the "human capital" theory that investment in the improvement of the quality of labour is investment in future high growth rates (Linda Lim 1989: 172). Tham has noted that the post-1965 educational policies allowed "the full play of economic forces in determining educational outcomes" (Tham 1989: 480) and Gopinathan has stated that educational objectives have been tied to industrialisation (Gopinathan 1976: 74).

True as far as they go, these observations fall short because they fail to identify the fundamental social relations which are being maintained by the practices of the education system. It is changes in these social relations (i.e. struggles) which necessitate changes in social control mechanisms.

The PAP-state has facilitated the rise of a patriarchal, Chinese capitalist class (with token representation of other races), which has flourished by building an alliance with foreign capital and by jointly exploiting a mainly Chinese working class. The practices of the education system have played a crucial part in reproducing this race, class and gender structure. Struggles in Singapore and the

movement of international capital have caused changes in education policy. That is, as the development of political hegemony and capital accumulation has been conditioned by local social forces, so have educational practices changed. This is the proposition which this chapter aims to explore in some detail.

THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

In the introductory discussion of practices, institutions and ideology, it was noted that the predominant function of the state-controlled education system is not to impose a pre-packaged ideology. Its crucial institutional function is its role in the reproduction of labour power by coordinating the "people-sorting" mechanisms or practices which put people into the jobs which provide their welfare.

Therefore, these practices are necessary to shape a social structure favourable to the development of capitalism in Singapore and the maintenance of PAP hegemony. Education sorts people into upper class, middle class and working class. That is, it sorts class agents, people, into class positions, jobs. Within the working class, people are sorted into either the core (employed), or the reserve army

of labour (unemployed) (Hill 1979: 7-8; Steven 1983: 178-9).

In Singapore, the core of the working class is increasingly comprised of Singapore citizens who are skilled and predominantly male. The reserve army is in turn further differentiated into floating and latent labour. The floating reserve of labour results from the periodic adjustments to the number of workers needed by particular industries or companies which are related to short-term fluctuations in the rate of profit. Workers in the floating reserve can generally move from adjusting or failing industries to expanding firms. They therefore usually experience only short-term unemployment, unless there is a general economic decline. If they cannot find another job, they may enter the latent reserve.

Latent workers are those who are unemployed and are always ready for work but who are able to survive in the meantime. Singapore's latent reserve reflects the existence of a dual labour market. One part of it is comprised mainly of women whose subsistence is usually guaranteed by means of another family member (e.g. a spouse, a parent) being engaged in wage labour. The other part of the latent reserve is the lower classes of surrounding countries who are unable to get employment at home but who can survive by subsistence agriculture or other non-capitalist forms of production

which are possible in Asian countries with a rural hinterland. There is no real reserve of stagnant workers in Singapore who, in other countries, are those unemployed workers lacking alternative means of subsistence.

The education system therefore sorts people into opposing classes, fragmenting the working class in the process. We have observed the social consequences of this classification process within the HDB estates, especially during the Second Industrial Revolution. Women and foreign workers have become favoured for their cheap labour power because welfare costs for the reproduction of their labour are minimal and they are deprived of job security.

In Singapore, race and gender are additional categories by which the education system also sorts class agents into class positions. For example, the Chinese patriarchy has to be reproduced while ensuring that no other possible capitalist class fraction emerges as an alternative to the PAP to build an alliance with foreign capital. The labour power of the Chinese working class has to be reproduced, while the geopolitically sensitive Malay underclass has to be excluded not only from the capitalist class but from the core of the working class as well.

Educational practices therefore have the task of sorting people according to their class, race and gender into their

positions on either side of the social relation of exploiter or exploited. It is not, as Clammer (1985: 165) suggests, ideology which sorts or classifies people, but rather it is concrete practices organised within institutions such as the education system which do it.

Furthermore, because the education system is the main people-sorting institution in the reproduction of labour power, other mechanisms of social control with the same primary function interact with it. These include the population planning mechanisms for sorting out those who should be born and those who should not, and for sorting out from among those born outside Singapore, those who will be permitted to be exploited by Singapore-based employers and those who will be kept in the reserve army of latent workers outside its borders. In short, these mechanisms include the practices of state family planning and the employment of migrant labour. By these means, people are also put in their social places or excluded from having any place at all.

Ideological Effect

People are happy to be involved in the education system because they recognise it is the only pathway to jobs and economic survival, the only means to obtain welfare. This

ideological effect of educational practices is achieved by the necessity of having to acquire an education to get jobs, the appearance of equality of opportunity and social advancement on the basis of merit. The PAP-state's absolute control of the national education system enables it to define the ostensibly neutral criteria of merit. Therefore, not surprisingly, the most meritorious people in Singapore are English-speaking (and, secondarily but increasingly important, Mandarin-speaking as well), Chinese and male whose parents are already in the upper class. The least meritorious are monolingual Malay women and migrant workers.

It is structurally impossible for all Singaporeans to attain a high level of scholastic success because the education system is designed to achieve different ends. The political goals of class stratification stand in contradiction to the educational aspirations of the majority of the population.

Thus, the education system produces the ideological effect of enabling people to think that they are advancing their own interests, while in fact they are doing what is necessary to uphold the hegemony of the capitalist class and assist the development of capitalism. The way this ideological effect has been produced is examined in detail in this chapter along with an examination of the ideology

of equal opportunity and merit. A fuller comprehension of the ideological effects of educational practices will be obtained by studying the ways in which the education system changed in relation to the effect of struggles in Singapore and to shifts in the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital.

THE FORMS OF STRUGGLE

A notable characteristic of the Singapore education system is the frequency with which it has undergone substantial change. It was undoubtedly a difficult task for the PAP-state to bring a racially and linguistically complex society under centralised state control in order to guarantee the provision of a cheap, disciplined labour force and be able to respond to the changing needs of the alliance.

The rigorous control required to achieve such a result should not be under-estimated. Singapore's population of 2.65 million (June 1988) consists of 2.01 million Chinese (76 per cent), 401,200 Malays (15.1 per cent), 171,800 Indians (6.5 per cent) and 62,800 others (2.4 per cent) (GOS 1989a: 25). Traditionally, the Chinese population has

been socially differentiated according to language groups: mainly Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Foochow, Malay (Straits Chinese) and English. Although there are regional variations among the Malay community, the mother-tongue of Malays can be taken as Malay. The Indian population includes a large Tamil-speaking community and also smaller communities speaking Malayalam, Punjabi, Telegu, Hindi, Bengali or English as their mother-tongue.

It seems the task of social control in such a complex society took precedence over a higher increase in educational attainment, because Singapore has been unable to achieve the increase in educational levels reached by Hongkong and South Korea.

TABLE 5.1: COMPARATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

		Singapore	Hongkong	S Korea
Literacy	1978	75%	90%	93%
Secondary school enrolment	1965	45%	29%	35%
	1983	69%	68%	89%
Tertiary (20-24 year-olds in tertiary education)	1965	10%	5%	6%
	1983	12%	12%	24%

Source: Linda Lim 1989: 179.

Education has been required to regulate so many forms of struggle in Singapore that it has achieved a less than impressive increase in educational levels. The British colonial state faced a wide array of anti-imperialist forces: a mass-based left party, unions, community organisations, ethnic-linguistic associations, Chinese schools, left intellectuals from both Chinese and English-educated backgrounds and bourgeois nationalists. After the pro-imperialist faction of the PAP won the contest for state power and suppressed its former allies, the forces that these other forms of struggle represented have not necessarily gone away and new forces have emerged. Thus, as we examine the historical development of the education system, we will note new forms of struggle.

For example, the growth of an English-educated middle class has produced a generation who expect parliamentarism to guarantee liberal democracy. Hence the emergence of a new phase of liberal democratic dissent through opposition parties, professional and Christian organisations. Middle class women have also become more organised and vocal, particularly dissenting from government-imposed breeding programmes.

These struggles have been accompanied by the emigration of skilled workers and professionals. "People just get tired

of living in the sixth form the whole of their lives," said one emigrant (Elegant 1989: 18). This new form of struggle is to get out of the whole system: people feel they have no real choice any more, that there is no place in Singapore that they want to be put and so they leave if their skills are marketable in an advanced country. This is a social breakdown of serious proportions, because of the significant numbers involved (The Economist 10 March 1990: 37), thereby undermining the PAP's growth strategy of skills upgrading. It also signifies a crisis in the ideological influence of the government if prospective members of the bourgeoisie no longer believe they can realistically expect to join it or have lost interest in doing so.

The Malay minority's struggle against exploitation by the PAP-state-foreign capital alliance has taken the form of refusal to support the PAP electorally, with-holding community support for Malay leaders chosen by the PAP and attempting to retain the integrity of their ethnic community by means of geographical concentration in public housing estates.

Chinese working class struggle has generally been unable to take the form of labour activism since the union movement was made part of the PAP-state. The main indication of working class dissent is the growing opposition vote which

reached 37 per cent in the 1984 general elections. Despite a comprehensive gerrymander of the electoral system and PAP threats against opposition voters, this dissenting vote rose to 38 per cent in 1988 (GOS 1989a: 232).

But the main form of working class struggle has been the attempt to rise out of the working class. This form has become dominant because the ideological effect of the education system has made it appear as a real possibility for everyone. The crucial significance of the education system for social control is that it places people in their class positions while giving them some hope of bettering this position. Like a lottery, enough people "win" their way to the middle class to convince the majority that their efforts at upward mobility are not in vain. The real social relations between a tiny capitalist class and a mass of exploited workers not only remain unchanged, but are reinforced by the aspiration to get out of one's class. This form of struggle is therefore politically encouraged by the PAP.

In order to understand the relationship between struggles and the education system, it is necessary to study them both in the context of the historical phases of the PAP-state alliance with imperialism. As with our analysis of public housing, these periods will be used as a general indication of the changes in social relations in Singapore.

First is the phase of transition to a neo-colony, when the PAP-state established its political hegemony (1959-1965). This is followed by the implementation of the EOI policy (1966-1977) and the consolidation of the alliance with US imperialism. The third phase is the Second Industrial Revolution (1978-1985), which in turn overlaps with the current period of adapting to the new phase of multipolar imperialism. But, initially, it is necessary to outline the legacy of the colonial period inherited by the PAP-state.

THE COLONIAL LEGACY: THE EMERGING NEED FOR AN ALLIANCE

Before 1939, the British colonial government had no political need to establish a structure of universal education to secure social control. The Chinese capitalist class was largely dependent on the British-controlled commodity trade. Unskilled, migrant workers were adequate for commerce and services. Most of the Chinese were not British subjects and could be disposed of through deportation when not required. In short, the absence of an independent national bourgeoisie or ruling class in Singapore and the plentiful supply of migrant labour meant the British did not need to rule in alliance with local

political forces. The colonial government simply imposed its will.

The system of elite schools established by Christian missionaries provided an English education "largely to supply clerks for Western commercial houses and the government" (Busch 1974: 28). The Chinese education system set up by language groups or clan associations along traditional lines emphasised cultural identity and Chinese nationalism. After the Chinese Revolution of 1911 these schools became increasingly nationalistic and anti-colonial. The emphasis on Mandarin as the unifying language of Chinese nationalism dates from this period (Shotam 1989: 507). In the 1930s the schools were ideologically influenced by the rise of the Communist Party in China. The schools in Singapore were self-governing, self-funding and provided their own textbooks and teachers (Busch 1974: 29). The British colonial government had very little control over them and had no apparent desire for it until, on its return in 1945, it faced a highly organised independence movement. The rudimentary educational infrastructure which had developed during the first decades of the century then became the site of serious conflict during the post-war anti-colonial struggle.

Education and Communalism

The pre-War communalist strategy of building links with the Malay aristocracy in Malaya and largely ignoring the welfare of Chinese migrant labour in Singapore had to change when confronted with the popular surge towards self-government. British educational policy in Singapore after the war must be seen in the context of its broader strategy to defeat the left throughout Malaya and Singapore by manipulating communal factors of race, language and religion to prevent the further development of unity among the lower classes.

The British in Malaya had to solve the problem of how to hand over political power and simultaneously keep its economic interests intact. But as we have seen, the only credible and consistent force leading the nationalist movement was that rooted in a militant left-wing working class....Consequently, it was essential for British imperialism to find an alternative to these class forces. The Constitutional talks after the war represented the limit of the colonial state's communalist strategy; namely, the 'institutionalisation' of communalism in the country (Hua 1983: 76).

The separation of Singapore from its Malayan hinterland and emphasising its special character as a predominantly Chinese city-state was an important part of the British strategy to keep Singapore as a separate strategic colony.

Tham has euphemistically described the post-war colonial education policy as aimed at obviating "the threat of

social and political divisiveness" (Tham 1989: 495). On the contrary, the British administration aimed to maximise communal divisions so that the strong left movement in Singapore would have minimum impact on the peninsula and the Singapore Chinese working class could be isolated and suppressed. Within Singapore itself, this strategy meant maximising the divisions within the Chinese community and between Chinese and other races.

Tham is correct, however, in that the British worked to consolidate pro-British forces and to minimise the contradictions between them, so that the suppression could be effected over the long term after the end of direct imperialist rule.

Thus, in education, the colonial state had two aims. First, it wished to take control of the Chinese education system, in order to remove a major institutional base for Chinese ideological formation and anti-colonial mobilisation. Related to this objective were the plans emerging during the 1950s for an Import-Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) policy. The post-independence Chinese working class would gain citizenship and the franchise and thus change from a migrant labour force to a stable, permanent majority of the population. A state system of education would be required to regulate this class for wage labour.

Secondly, the colonial government aimed to improve the system of English education to consolidate a local capitalist class sympathetic to British commercial interests (Wilson 1978: 240). As the colonial administration began to accept the inevitability of passing state power into local hands, it began to test out local political forces and to attempt to shape them.

This communalist strategy meant deepening the already wide gulf between the English-educated upper-class and the Chinese-educated upper-class, and eventually destroying the social base of the latter. It was obvious after the war that the English-educated upper-class had a monopoly on good jobs and that an English education gave access to and the support of the British administration (Shotam 1989: 507). Government favouritism towards English-medium schools and their graduates added to the grievances of the majority Chinese-educated community. Discrimination against Chinese education and culture became a major political issue for both the Chinese-educated upper-class and the Chinese lower-class (Wilson 1978: 114-178).

The government advanced its aims by such administrative devices as the application of the Registration of Schools Ordinance, which empowered the Department of Education to close any school used for "unlawful purposes" (Wilson 1978:

159). In addition, Chinese schools became eligible for government grants if they also accepted government control. However, aided Chinese schools on average were given 30 per cent of the amount per pupil received by English schools (Wilson 1978: 210). These tactics were bitterly resented by the Chinese community.

In 1954, however, when this conflict was at its height, the number of enrolments in English-medium schools overtook those in Chinese-medium schools (Shotam 1989: 510). This reflects the new education strategy to consolidate an English-educated industrial working class in Singapore and to widen the social distinction from Malaya.

The vernacular-educated (Chinese, Malay and Tamil) were being systematically directed to technical and vocational training and were unable to break into higher status and higher paid jobs. But this method of sorting people into two opposing classes by means of language medium was now being progressively replaced. The fact that English-medium schools had a majority of enrolments meant that, not only was an English-educated upper-class being formed, but also that the English-medium state education system would increasingly put all classes of Singaporeans in their respective class positions. The criteria would remain the same: linguistic facility in English would still determine class position. The difference would be that the process

would be completely in the state's control through a centralised, English-medium education system.

But the Chinese education system still had considerable political power to mobilise the lower classes. Therefore this policy could not be made explicit in the face of a highly organised left movement espousing a Malayan nationalism.

The Pretence of Accommodation

In 1955, the partially-elected Legislative Assembly appointed the All Party Committee to review education policy and recommend an appropriate policy for an independent Singapore. The origins of the PAP-state's education policy lie in the report of this committee. Lee Kuan Yew was a member of it. In 1956 the Committee recommended:

- the equal treatment of the four main language streams (English, Chinese, Malay, Tamil);
- the introduction of bilingual education (for most, mother-tongue and Malay) in primary school and trilingual (plus English) in secondary school;
- the use of Singapore/Malaya oriented textbooks and syllabuses;
- the designation of Malay as the national language;
- priority be given to science and mathematics as the

basis for an industrial society (Tham 1989: 478).

The government agreed to much of the report which, in effect, was recommending two common languages, Malay and English. But, in line with its policy of keeping the politics of Singapore separate from that of Malaya and maximising the chances of the English-educated, the colonial government in practice declined to give higher status to Malay, to implement the suggested bilingual and trilingual policy in full or to open up better jobs for the vernacular-educated. While pretending otherwise, it stuck firmly to English as the priority language. That is, it yielded to the appeal for equal treatment for all language streams only in order to lower the political temperature and enable it to acquire more complete control of the Chinese education system. This was achieved by a new funding policy: Chinese schools had to accept full government funding (and thus complete control) or none at all (Wilson 1978: 220). This policy was successful in bringing almost the entire Chinese education system under the Education Department within a few years. Malay and Tamil-medium education remained virtually ignored. There were no Malay or Tamil-medium secondary or tertiary institutions.

Thus, the colonial administration used the ideological cover of a multi-lingual education policy to move towards

its goal of a centralised, state-controlled education system which would be most likely to produce a cooperative English-educated capitalist class (mainly Chinese but including a few Indians and fewer Malays).

The Appearance of Choice

This centralisation process would help the state to put the Chinese working class in its place. By emasculating vernacular education systems (Gwee 1975: 89-91) and excluding their graduates from social advancement, the vast majority of the population could be transformed into wage labourers, an industrial working class.

But it did not appear this way. Parents were told they had the right to choose an English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil education (Wilson 1978: 218). If their choice was not possible, it was because they were not rich enough to afford the fees, or their children were academically or linguistically deficient, or their community had not been sufficiently far-sighted in providing the schools, or the Education Department had not yet caught up with the demand.

As it became clearer that the job market increasingly favoured the English-educated, resistance to education policies became increasingly vociferous. But the

government refused to take steps to provide better opportunities for the Chinese-educated, saying that employers had the right to choose whom they wanted to employ, and their preference happened to be those who were English-educated. The government ignored the fact that it was the largest employer on the island and therefore was able to establish the main linguistic criteria for employment. On the contrary, it encouraged schools "to abandon curricula and syllabuses which are politically and pedagogically outmoded" (Wilson 1978: 220). As the increasing enrolment in English-medium schools showed, more and more people were moving towards the state education system in a pragmatic assessment of the better chances they perceived it offered for their children. Thus the ground was already moving from under the Chinese educational lobby as it fought to survive.

Wilson states that educational policies of this period were "a determined and partially successful attempt to remove the cause of considerable social injustice" (Wilson 1978: 231). The official education policy may have given this impression, but the actual effect of the practices of the restructured educational system was in the direction of greater social control and the undermining of existing social organisation based on ethnic affiliation and working class solidarity. It was obvious that social advancement

was open only to the pro-British, English-educated who previously formed a tiny minority.

Contradictions of the Contest for Power

Although the PAP was led by an English-educated faction, there was a contradiction between the PAP policy of the time and that of the government. The PAP, which then also included the legal left, was pushing for Singapore's independence as part of Malaya and therefore emphasised Malay as a future common language. This was a logical policy for a party committed to a programme of import substitution industrialisation in a region where Malay was the lingua franca and in which the predominantly Chinese PAP had aspirations to be a major political force in a federal Malaysian polity.

The British, however, were still planning to keep Singapore as a separate strategic colony; hence the policy of making English the primary language. As we have noted, the colonial government largely ignored the All Party Committee proposals on bilingual and trilingual education which amounted to recommending two common languages, Malay and English.

However, on coming to power the PAP pursued this policy with its emphasis on Malay in order to establish its Malayan nationalist credentials. After its expulsion from Malaysia, there was no political gain to be had from the policy. Its primary interest in its alliance with international capital was an English-educated work force. It thus reverted to the British colonial communalist strategy: official recognition of all four languages as mediums of instruction but practical provision for only English as people "chose" this "option".

Lee Kuan Yew himself indicated he understood the logic of the British position if Singapore was kept a separate state from Malaya, when he said in the Assembly in 1956:

If we had to solve the language problem in Singapore alone, I think the solution [would] be somewhat different from that which would be arrived at if [we] solved it on a Pan-Malayan basis. And I still wish to talk on a Pan-Malayan basis because the other alternative is uncomfortable (Legislative Assembly Debate 1955/56 col. 1900-1909, 12 April 1956).

That is, the communalist education policy of the British colonial state was determined by its interest in maintaining it as a strategic colony. It failed to achieve this. The PAP's policies were determined by the political alliances it hoped to make: first with the Malayan ruling class and subsequently solely with British capital. It failed with the first and succeeded with the second.

Colonial educational practices, with their manipulation of language and race for political control, therefore formed the legacy which the PAP-state refined to suit the contingencies of its political ambitions and its alliance with foreign capital. The ascendancy of particular practices and their ideological effects varied according to the phases of this alliance and the strength of resistance against them.

**DESTROYING CHINESE EDUCATION: THE PAP'S COMMUNALIST TACTICS
1959-65**

While the colonial state had to control Chinese education, the PAP-state had to destroy it. Initially, the PAP government had the advantage of not being seen as an alien regime in the way the British were. But the 1961 split and the formation of the Barisan Sosialis left the PAP bourgeois nationalists exposed culturally as well as politically. The English-educated Lee faction faced the problem of not appearing authentically Chinese in comparison to the Barisan leadership which had emerged from the Chinese community's own institutions. Also, with internal security still in the hands of the British, the

PAP risked appearing as their puppets when it cracked down on the left.

The Lee faction therefore pursued a two-pronged strategy to consolidate its political hegemony and ensure the survival of its class. First, it used the criminal law and police-state tactics in a concerted attempt to destroy the movement comprising an alliance between elements of the Chinese upper-class, the Chinese working class and the intellectual left. Secondly, to deny this movement one of its major institutional bases and to prevent continuing doubts about the PAP's cultural legitimacy, the Lee group set about destroying not only the autonomy but also the cultural integrity of Chinese education. This was done by replacing the traditional elements of Chinese education with the standardised state-approved syllabus. The PAP-state was still able to claim that the option of a Chinese-medium education remained; a claim which obscured the rapid destruction of Chinese education.

We will examine in some detail the steps taken to achieve these goals during this period. However, it should be noted that this policy proceeded as part of broader educational initiative to ensure that the state education system became a primary sorting mechanism across the whole society. That is, primary education had to be made universal. The increased access to education began as part

of the socialist welfare programme of the PAP and proceeded, after 1961, as a means to wean the lower classes away from the Barisan.

Thus, the PAP-state largely continued the educational policies of the colonial administration. This is hardly surprising, since, with the departure of its mass base, the Lee faction relied more on its alliance with British imperialism. The PAP's political survival rested on the success of the broader British communal strategy with regard to the formation of Malaysia. PAP-state educational policies were therefore framed within the parameters of this communalist policy.

The 'merger' solution in 1963 was a realisation of imperialist strategy which completely ignored the democratic demands of the masses in the respective nations. Once again communalism was employed by British imperialism in the application of this neo-colonial solution to incorporate Singapore and the North Bornean states.

The inclusion of Singapore by itself would, in numerical terms, have tilted the communal equation in favour of the Chinese, but this was unacceptable to the Malay rulers. Now, with the new possibilities for gerrymandering by the inclusion of Sarawak and Sabah, the time was ripe for merging Singapore with the Federation. It was the ideal solution to enable British imperialism to maintain its hold on the rich resources of the North Bornean states (oil, timber, pepper, tobacco, gas) and at the same time deal with the left-wing threat in Singapore (Hua 1983:135).

Thus the Lee faction's attack on Chinese education mediated the racism of imperialism in an even sharper form than the

colonial administration. The transition to neo-colonial status exacerbated communalism.

Discrimination through Integration

To destroy the Chinese education system, the PAP-state continued the British policy of funding only schools which accepted its complete control and of arresting the main anti-government leaders. But it had to go much further.

In 1959, the programme began of integrating two or more language streams within a single school, ostensibly to aid the inter-mingling of races (Gopinathan 1976: 72). But the main achievement of integrated schools was to open all language streams to standardisation and centralisation. In response to the First State Development Plan 1960-64, there was an immediate emphasis on mathematics, science and technical subjects, and bursaries were made available to those willing to take subjects, in the words of the Education Minister, "considered desirable by the Government" (Wilson 1978: 234). The need for vocational and technical streams was officially recognised, and it was recommended that only twenty per cent of primary school graduates be channelled into the academic stream (Gopinathan 1976: 74; Seah & Seah 1983: 242). The academic stream consisted overwhelmingly of the English-educated.

Control through Standardisation

In 1960, the PAP-state introduced the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). It was a standard examination for all four language streams and therefore assisted in the enforcement of a standard syllabus. It was also an educational hurdle controlled by the government which all students, regardless of language medium, had to cross in order to continue their studies.

In 1961, Chinese schools were instructed to follow the English-medium school pattern of primary, secondary and tertiary education. Examination boycotts by Chinese-medium students followed, but failed (Arumugam 1975: 63). By 1963 there was a standard system of education to which all language streams had to conform: six years primary, four years secondary and two years pre-university.

In addition, the government undertook a crash programme to build public, Chinese-language schools so that no longer would parents desiring this type of education have to send their children to radical schools. Rules of accreditation were also arranged so that schools defying government control could not provide the same benefits to students of more compliant Chinese-medium institutions. More (though still not enough) job opportunities were provided to Chinese-medium graduates so that potential opposition leaders were increasingly drained away from communist-affiliated organisations. Finally, the structures surrounding the school system were also attended to. School committees that had provided funds for Chinese education and had managed the schools had also afforded a means whereby local elites could have their status recognised and where they could exercise leadership. Similar committees were organised by the

government to perform these functions - but under government control....The point emerging from all these developments is that the government breached the structural integrity of the Chinese community, undercut its radical leadership, and established a far-reaching organisational basis for its support (Busch 1974: 128-9).

The cruellest blow to Chinese education was the frontal attack on its premier institution, Nanyang University. Established in 1956 as a Mandarin-medium university for Southeast Asian Chinese, Nanyang became a vibrant centre of classical Chinese learning and left politics. Funded by wealthy Chinese entrepreneurs, the Hokkien clan association and even by taxi and trishaw drivers who contributed a day's earnings to its foundation, it was the symbol of Chinese educational achievement (Turnbull 1977: 247; Chew 1982: 65).

Students and faculty were arrested, expelled or deported for their political activities. The imposed curriculum re-organisation of Nanyang in 1964 led to widespread protest which was summarily suppressed. The citizenship of its prime benefactor and millionaire founder, Tan Lark Sye, was revoked because, said the government, "out of extreme racialist sentiment he knowingly allowed himself to be used by his associates to advocate the communist cause in Malaya". In fact, Tan helped to finance some Barisan Sosialis candidates in the 1963 elections (George 1984: 131, 138). Ngee Ann College, another Chinese tertiary

institution founded by the Teochew association in 1963, was quickly brought into line with similar imposed changes in 1966 (Arumugam 1975: 63).

Multi-Racialism and Equal Opportunity

Apart from its emphasis on Malay, the PAP-state pursued the destruction of Chinese education and the extension and centralisation of educational practices under an official education policy very similar to the previous government's. It had four aims:

- equal treatment of the four streams, namely, Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English;
- establishment of four official languages with Malay as the national language of the new nation in an attempt to unify the multi-racial community;
- emphasis on the study of mathematics, science and technical subjects designed to equip youth with requisite skills, aptitudes and attitudes for employment in the industrial sector; and
- building of loyalty to the nation (Seah & Seah 1983: 241).

Under these policy priorities the PAP-state claimed to be building a just, multi-racial society. But, as one observer puts it, "it was form rather than substance that dominated the educational scene during this period" (Tham 1989: 478). The policy of equal treatment for all language streams appeared fair and thus came to be accepted by the

public. But it was in fact an ideological cover for an all-out attack on Chinese education and for the reproduction of a Chinese-, Malay- and Tamil-speaking industrial working class and an English-speaking capitalist class.

Since there was already an efficient Chinese education system, equal treatment for all streams could well have meant increased state funding to set up autonomous education systems for Malay and Tamil streams. But the political interest of the PAP-state was to undermine the autonomy of Chinese education and, as a side product, to win Malay support by portraying itself as genuinely multiracial. Chinese educationists therefore were lambasted as communalist chauvinists and as antagonistic to the interests of a multi-racial society (George 1984: 138). There was equal treatment of all language streams in that all were brought under a standardised, centralised PAP-state education system. This was the actual effect of educational practices designed to exploit the contradictions of communalism for political purposes.

In addition, the apparently non-communal policy commitment to Malay as the national language and to bilingual and trilingual education disguised the fact that English would continue to be the language of business in Singapore (Tham 1989: 478). To those being sorted by these practices, it seemed fair to be learning two or three languages and that

all language streams received standard treatment. This provided the ideological legitimation the PAP-state needed. What was not yet obvious to the ordinary citizen was that a deeply discriminatory, meritocratic education system was being set up to serve the interests of the PAP-state's alliance with British capital.

Political Objectives of Extending Welfare

During this period, the PAP-state built up the state school system to provide universal primary education, improving facilities, classroom resources and teacher training (Wilson 1978: 235). As a demonstration of its sincerity in aspiring to be part of a Malayan nation, the PAP-state introduced Malay as a second language throughout the English and Chinese streams. In 1960 it announced a scheme to provide free education for Malays up to university level (Gopinathan 1976: 72). It also began to provide secondary education for the Malay and Tamil streams. In 1960, education took 23.5 per cent of total government expenditure, the largest item. By 1963-64 education expenditure reached its peak of 32 per cent of government expenditure, a level it has never again attained (Linda Lim 1989: 178). The PAP-state had to deliver on its election promises to provide higher levels of welfare, especially in housing and education, to attract popular support to itself

and away from the Barisan Sosialis. Real improvements had to be made if the PAP ambition to be a major force in the politics and industrialisation programme of a federal Malaysia was to be realised.

Failure of Communalist Tactics

In federal Malaysian politics, the PAP was using the same strategy of heightening communalism for political ends under the guise of preaching the merits of multi-racialism. But, instead of threatening Chinese educationalists for their alleged chauvinism as in Singapore, in Malaya the PAP played to Chinese chauvinism in its attempt to supplant the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). The MCA was the Chinese bourgeois party which had built an alliance with the Malay capitalist class to form a governing federal coalition which itself ruled in cooperation with British capital. In the federal parliament, the PAP was in opposition but aimed to replace the MCA in the governing coalition. It therefore sought to attract Malayan Chinese to its support by increasingly communalist appeals.

It was quite evident that the PAP's challenge of 'Malay Special Rights' was basically an appeal to the communalist sentiments of the non-Malays in its attempt to extend its interests in the mainland....[T]hroughout 1963-65, Lee and the PAP created a highly-charged atmosphere of communalism within Malaysia (Hua 1983: 142-3).

Lee was hardly advancing the cause of multiracialism when he threatened the Malay leadership in Kuala Lumpur:

"Supposing we real, virile Chinese unite, there would be trouble in five or ten years, because there are five million Chinese, forty-two per cent of the population"

(George 1984: 78).

But the PAP miscalculated by raising the political temperature in Malaya to the point that the Malay ruling party, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), expelled Singapore from the Federation. The Lee faction's racist policy failed on the federal level.

Thus, the PAP's extension of social control through a system of universal education had aimed to produce both political supremacy and labour power for import-substitution industrialisation in a federal Malayan polity. But the contradictions of the PAP's communalist policies led to its failure to build an alliance with the Malayan capitalist class.

FROM RACISM TO MERITOCRACY 1966-77

Singapore's expulsion from Malaysia did not mean the end of racist or communalist education policies. Rather it led to their incorporation into a more sophisticated meritocratic sorting process.

The PAP-state's forced independence marked the conclusive failure of its attempt to consolidate an alliance with British capital through an alliance with the Malay capitalist class. The Lee group therefore sought to build an alliance directly with foreign capital. The form of the alliance was the export-oriented industrialisation policy. The terms of the alliance included the provision of a cheap, disciplined labour force by the PAP-state in return for foreign technology and credit. Education played a major role in restructuring political relationships in the island-state in accordance with the requirements of this alliance.

English: The Language of Merit

Immediately, this direct alliance between the English-educated, mainly Chinese, PAP fraction of the capitalist class and foreign capital (increasingly from the United

States rather than Britain) began to reinforce the importance of English literacy, of being Chinese and of loyalty to the PAP, all attributes that had begun to acquire a certain relativity in a Malaysian polity. Without the large Malay and Indian populations of the Federation, the PAP had a simplified task in sorting its majority Chinese population.

In education, the PAP-state jettisoned one of the major political objectives it was previously required to meet as a Malaysian state. That is, the emphasis on Malay as the national lingua franca and the upgrading of Malay-medium education could be dropped in practice, although regional geopolitical sensitivities required continuing lip service to it.

The shaping of the education system for centralised control and people-sorting according to the needs of international capital and PAP-state hegemony could thus proceed with simplified criteria of merit. English, the language of foreign capital, would be the indisputable and sole language of merit. Facility in English (or the lack of it) would be the ostensibly neutral criterion for placing Singaporeans in their social places. But since English was the language of the Chinese and Indian bourgeoisie, an educational system which favoured English would continue to reinforce the connections between class, language and race.

English would cement the upper class across ethnic divides while excluding the working class of all races. In this way, the "neutral" criterion would ensure the reproduction of the capitalist class and the consolidation of an industrial proletariat.

This re-assertion of meritocratic educational practices also involved the intensification of control over the newly centralised, standardised education system and the mopping up of the remnants of the Chinese education system. By 1965, much of the groundwork had been done. The period of merger with Malaysia had achieved one of the PAP's objectives: the final rout of the left and the destruction of its political organisation. It remained for the PAP-state to institutionalise its political gains by refining the mechanisms of meritocracy and systematising their ideological effects.

Bilingual Policy: Strategy for English Dominance

With the complications of Malaysian political life behind it, the PAP-state was able essentially to revert to the 1956 colonial educational prescriptions: the reproduction of an English-educated capitalist class and the formation of a technically skilled working class with sufficient facility in English to perform the labour required of them.

The promotion of bilingualism and technical education put the mechanisms of social control in place to bring this policy to fruition.

The post-Malaysian period formed the watershed in the history of education as the emphasis on both bilingual and technical education was stressed with political independence and the resulting need to restructure the economy so that Singapore could become economically viable as an island state (Seah and Seah 1983: 242).

The bilingual policy meant that one of the languages learnt by every student would be English, which would then be the common language. The speed with which English gained ascendancy as the de facto lingua franca was justified by the PAP-state on the grounds that it was an international language and the language of modernity (i.e. science and technology). Apparently no longer the hated language of colonialism, it was, according to the English-educated PAP leadership, a neutral language for use by all racial groups. In this way, the PAP strove to characterise its policy as inter-communal and internationalist rather than as favouring the international language of imperialism. However, the PAP did also explicitly justify English on the basis that it was the language of investing industrialists, and that its continued use would mean continuity in records, administration and law in Singapore (Gopinathan 1976: 76; Wilson 1978: 236).

Singapore thus appears unique, in Southeast Asia, in encouraging the use of the language of its former

colonial rulers, and it is tempting to suppose that, although nowhere clearly stated as a matter of policy, this has been the aim of the Government. By 1970, enrolment in English-medium schools was considerably in excess of that in all other schools combined (Wilson 1978: 237).

Mathematics, science and technical subjects were emphasised by the PAP-state as the basis of education for nation-building and industrialisation. In 1966, mathematics and science were required to be taught in English in the first-year classes of non-English-medium primary schools (Seah and Seah 1983: 242). By 1969, all pupils were streamed into academic, technical or vocational schools after their primary education, essentially on the basis of their aptitude in English.

Therefore, the emphasis on English and science effectively downgraded both a vernacular-medium education and a Western liberal arts education. Not only might these latter social formations render students susceptible to political mobilisation against the PAP-state, but they also excluded the core "language" of imperialism: science and technology. English was the way to this deeper "language".

The First Language of Bilingualism

The bilingual policy ensured that English would eventually gain almost complete supremacy as the first language of the

education system and the national language of inter-communal communication. In 1966, all first-year secondary pupils were required to learn a second language. From 1969 all students had to offer a second language in the school certificate examinations. By that time, over one quarter of primary and three quarters of secondary schools were of the integrated type which combined language streams within one school. These schools failed in their stated aim of fostering better inter-racial contact and of ensuring students became effectively bilingual. Non-integrated English-medium schools were seen to maintain higher academic standards (Arumugam 1975: 64-65). In fact, the bilingual policy encouraged parents to send their children to English-medium schools because they could be assured of a higher standard of English learning and thus better job prospects, while still being taught their mother tongue as a second language.

By 1968, 57 per cent of Chinese students were in the English-medium stream and 43 per cent in the Chinese-medium stream. By 1975 all schools, regardless of language medium, were required to teach mathematics and science in English at all levels while other subjects such as history, civics and geography could be taught in the second language (Arumugam 1975: 66-67).

Thus, by the early 1970s, the "four-stream educational system [English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil] was converging towards a single stream" (Tham 1989: 481). The political economy of Singapore had made the alliance with imperialism the ladder to personal success. The subjects of merit were mathematics and science. The language of merit was indisputably English; English was the language of the politics of Singapore's economy.

Mandarin, The Second Language

The bilingual policy meant that the PAP-state could avoid a community's last-ditch resistance to the loss of their vernacular by promising that it would always be available as a second language in the education system. This was a comparatively simple matter with the minority Malay and Indian communities who spoke mainly Malay and Tamil and could be forced to fall in line with state policy.

But the bilingual policy raised some contradictions for the majority Chinese community with its entrenched dialect affiliations (Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Foochow and Malay). These were the mother-tongues of the Chinese working class and they exerted a powerful political force in terms of kinship and other primary social relationships. To disorganise the Chinese

working class in order to render it more susceptible to direct political control, these linguistic communities had to be dissolved. The bilingual policy achieved this by unilaterally laying down that the mother-tongue of every Chinese was Mandarin.

Yet less than one per cent of Singapore Chinese had Mandarin as their mother-tongue (Chew 1982: 66). The PAP was manipulating the symbolic importance of Mandarin. Mandarin had been the symbolic language for uniting Chinese linguistic communities around the political agenda of the left. As we have seen, the cultural integrity of the Chinese education system which nurtured this tradition had been destroyed by the PAP. But the language itself remained in a few prestigious Chinese-medium institutions which were potential bases for a cultural resurgence. The bilingual policy provided both the rationale for finally dismantling the institutional remnant of Chinese education and the means of coopting Mandarin to the PAP-state's political use.

From 1969, the bilingual policy made it possible for the PAP-state to appease Chinese public opinion with the encouragement of Mandarin as a second language to English while, at the same time, completing the demolition of the Chinese education system.

For example, the government stated that students of Nanyang University must be effectively bilingual in English and Chinese (Mandarin). Under this justification, all first-year classes were conducted in English from 1975. In 1978 first-year classes were combined with the English-medium University of Singapore. The same year the real agenda was stated by a PAP minister: "The medium of instruction at all tertiary institutions is and will be English" (Chew 1982: 65). By 1979, only Chinese language and literature were taught in Mandarin. In 1980 Nanyang was forced to merge with the University of Singapore to form the National University of Singapore. As final ignominy, Nanyang's prestigious campus was made into a technical institute as had that of Ngee Ann College before it. By this time Nanyang had already been starved of the highest calibre of faculty and students, and its financial base had been eroded.

The previous destruction of the left and this systematic dismantling of the Chinese education system now made Mandarin available for the political agenda of the PAP-state. Some observers have seen the second language policy of Mandarin as having the objective of building up ethnic solidarity and pride among Chinese. By making all Chinese equally proficient in Mandarin, the PAP-state may have hoped to ensure their loyalty and negate the entrenched Malay resistance to PAP rule (Busch 1974: 112). There may

be some truth in this observation that, once again, the PAP was engaging in communal tactics to ensure its own political longevity.

But a more important reason may have been the PAP's determination to open Chinese communities to the use of English by denying them their own mother-languages at any point in the education system. The mandatory Mandarin bilingual policy immediately restricted actual Chinese mother-tongues to domestic use within each community and these languages are now being progressively eliminated as children are schooled in English and Mandarin, languages unknown to their parents and grand-parents (FEER 20 June 1991: 17). In addition, the Mandarin policy gave the PAP-state added power to put Chinese in their social place. Instead of using Mandarin as a unifying language, the PAP has used it as a weapon to break down Chinese social structure and to reconstitute the community as an atomised working class. This has led to the historical irony of the English-educated PAP section of the capitalist class now wielding the cultural authority of Mandarin and, in its own political interests, imposing the language as the sole language of intra-community communication.

Contradictions of Promoting English

Following the linguistic agenda of foreign capital also brought contradictions, especially in administration and political control.

The administrative complexity of promoting English, while pretending otherwise, in such a linguistically diverse society inevitably brought contradictions and shows forms of struggle. In the early years of its rule, the PAP state found that some of the changes it imposed on the education system failed to achieve the expected results and had to be changed. Sometimes changes were obstructed. Often those most involved in the process of education, such as principals and teachers, were not consulted and subsequently disagreed with or did not understand the point of the changes.

The PAP-state therefore formalised the channels of "consultation" under its control through which educational advice would be acceptable, thus rendering other responses ad hoc, unacceptable and politically hostile. For example, the Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development was set up in 1970 for the "harmonising of subject objectives with overall objectives" (Wilson 1978: 238). But such actions merely contained dissent. The contradictory effects of policies which aimed to reconstitute the whole linguistic

configuration of the population demanded frequent changes to educational practices. This instability, as we observed at the beginning of the chapter, undermined the overall increase in educational levels.

More worrying for the PAP was the fact that English is an international language which increasingly opened the local community to outside influences as more people learned it. This introduced a major problem of political control.

The PAP leadership knew that English gave access to liberal democratic values, having themselves been introduced to parliamentary politics by this route. The ferment of student and worker uprisings in Europe and the anti-Vietnam war movement in the USA at the end of the decade, as well as the counter-cultural movements, no doubt added to their fears that these social and political traditions would become more widely accessible within Singapore as English usage spread.

The authorities see industrialisation and modernisation of the island and the consequent spread of English as having brought in its train unacceptable values and practices which, if left unchecked, would undermine the work ethic and the values of achievement, social and personal discipline, endurance, etc., which they had sought to promote (Gopinathan 1976: 77).

This concern was focused on Chinese students more than Malays, and the PAP framed the problem in terms of losing

Asian culture and values. In these terms, Malays were less likely to lose their culture because of their residence within the geographical area of their cultural heritage. But, in reality, the PAP had already consigned the Malays to a vernacular-speaking under-class who had little access to Western political traditions anyway. Also, having demolished the Chinese education system, the PAP-state's real concern cannot have been the preservation of Chinese culture. Rather, its project was the consolidation of a larger English-speaking Chinese bourgeoisie while restricting its politicisation to the PAP programme.

To achieve this end, the government suppressed the local media, restricted the foreign media, controlled local non-government organisations and prevented international NGOs (such as Oxfam) from locating regional headquarters in Singapore (Asia Watch 1989). In education, it attempted to use the mother-tongue strategy to portray outside political influence as alien and un-Asian and to prevent the development of international links.

As early as December 1966, the Ministry of Education began to plan a comprehensive programme for moral education and social discipline (Chan Heng Chee 1971: 52). From 1972, the learning of the mother-tongue was promoted as reinforcing traditional Asian values. The latter appeared to be the PAP-state's answer to questions of morals and

discipline. While English was necessary for economic success, the mother tongue, according to Lee Kuan Yew, was necessary for "the ethics, values of work and discipline in an orderly society" (The Mirror 20 November 1972). Thus, the mother-tongue emphasis was fundamentally aimed at providing a political prophylactic.

In 1974, as the English-educated students at the University of Singapore were launching their doomed demonstrations in support of retrenched workers from TNC factories, the PAP-state launched its Education for Living (EFL) and Civics courses into primary and secondary schools respectively (Chiew 1983: 257). These courses aimed to instil Asian moral values of thrift, filial duty, obedience to authority and loyalty to the government.

These traditional values, supposedly absorbed through the device of language lessons in the mother-tongue, have been termed "cultural ballast" by the PAP-state (Gopinathan 1976: 77), a revealing term that it has continued to use (GOS 1989a: 187). Ballast, while assisting the navigation of a steady course, is also, by definition, dispensable and unimportant in itself. This reinforces the analysis that English, mathematics and science were the core of education, while the "mother tongue" (relegated to the position of "second language") and Asian values were merely dispensable weightage for controlling the course set by the

priorities of the alliance with foreign capital. Thus, from the early 1970s, schools were enjoined to supply an English education geared to serving export-oriented industrialisation while simultaneously being required to build into the minds of students the supposed means of psychological control and thus political legitimation.

The outbreak of political dissent in the 1980s would appear to mark the partial failure of this initiative.

Controlling Three Forces

In suppressing dissent within educational institutions, the PAP-state was aiming to control three forms of struggle which were often related: socialism, communal self-determination and liberal democratic humanitarianism. As we have seen, it had crushed the left movement, demolished educational institutions nourishing communal independence and coopted linguistic and cultural traditions. But the existence of strong, English-medium, liberal democratic institutions like the parliament and the university raised the possibility of all forms of struggle using such institutions as avenues for a resurgence.

During this period of 1966-77, the PAP-state therefore tightened its grip on such institutions. It mainly used the

criminal law in combination with administrative restructuring, personal threats, police action and violence.

These direct methods of control were also required during the decade in order to ensure that the refinements of the meritocratic mechanisms were set in place and loyally administered. To prevent obstruction by unsympathetic professional educationalists and to ensure that a different political strategy or an alternative political leadership did not emerge through the newly-centralised education system, the PAP-state established direct political control of all educational institutions during this period.

On one level, the benefits of conformity to the criteria of merit were explicitly connected to political loyalty through the introduction in 1966 of a flag-raising ceremony, recitation of an oath of loyalty and the singing of the national anthem every day at every school. The expansion of uniformed cadet units at schools followed in the late 1960s (Gopinathan 1976: 74) along with the introduction of military education for all males in the form of National Service, which began in 1969 (Chew 1982: 196). These innovations not only assisted the PAP-state to generate a sense of crisis concerning the survival of the nation; in focussing on loyalty to the PAP-state, they also obfuscated the reality of the subordinate relationship of

the PAP-state to foreign capital, the alliance which necessitated imposition of the meritocratic criteria.

On another level, the PAP-state went to considerable lengths to ensure that the education system could never again become the base for political opposition. Entrance to university was made conditional on the issuance of a political suitability certificate issued by the internal security police. Individual dossiers were maintained on all students by the security authorities which were referred to at the time of employment (George 1984: 137; Wilson 1978: 238-239). In 1970, Lee Kuan Yew told students not to take political science, philosophy and sociology but to take more useful subjects (such as science, medicine and law). The following year the Public Service Commission stopped all bursaries for students taking these subjects. Since that time the arts and social science subjects have attracted those who could not get in to the more prestigious, officially-approved subjects (Clammer 1985: 160).

PAP operatives and infrastructure were inserted at all levels of the system. PAP members were introduced into the university administration, faculty and student organisations. Expatriate faculty were marginalised: some were expelled, and all were forbidden to be involved in local issues. The University of Singapore Vice-Chancellor

resigned over state interference in the university. In 1968 he was replaced by Dr Toh Chin Chye, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the PAP, who continued to hold his government posts concurrently. The departments of history and political science were combined and headed by another cabinet minister (George 1984: 137-138).

University students were severely warned about the inadvisability of opposition to the PAP-state.

[Prime Minister] Lee personally saw to it that students were left in no doubt that they were sticking their necks out if they took an interest in what did not directly concern them. Whenever he addressed a student meeting his tone was intimidating. If a question rose from the floor, he would first insist on knowing the student's name, citizenship and subject of study. If a questioner said he was Malaysian, Lee would say he had no right to ask questions. If the questioner said he was studying chemistry, Lee would chastise him for asking questions on politics. It did not take students long to realise that silence was golden (George 1984: 141).

When Lee received an unfriendly reception during an address at the university in 1969, he ordered a subsequent meeting of first-year students to be held. At this meeting he warned the students against their seniors and their teachers and said that the government knew everything that happened inside and outside the classroom. He said he would not allow dissent on the fundamental issues of national security, National Service, multiracialism, economic survival and the political system. Lee met the

executive of the students' union beforehand and threatened that any student who stepped out of line during the following meeting would be called up for two years' National Service immediately (George 1984: 199).

By means of its Senior and Junior Pyramid clubs on campus, the PAP-state monitored faculty and students in discussion programmes and recreational activities, using these clubs as recruiting grounds for the PAP and government service. Alternative political societies were suppressed, especially the long-established Socialist Club, which came under attack from the PAP-state as early as 1963, when its journal was banned. In 1964 the Democratic Socialist Club, patronised by cabinet members, was established as an officially-approved counter-organisation. In 1971 the Socialist Club was finally suppressed through deregistration.

The internal security police kept the universities under close surveillance to the extent of recording lectures and watching the extra-curricular activities of lecturers and students (George 1984: 139; Wilson 1978: 239). Some student activism was still possible through the students' association, as evidenced by the student protests over retrenchment of workers by foreign companies in 1974. This linkage between the English-educated middle class and workers was clearly too much for the government. It

resulted in a stage-managed trial of student leaders on fabricated charges, imprisonment and deportation (Tan Wah Piow 1984, 1987a, 1987b). Legislative changes then removed the last vestiges of autonomy from the students' association.

The significance of these events lies very much in the fact that they represented a direct attack on essentially middle-class institutions, and a firm recognition of the extent of middle-class disenchantment and potential for political opposition. The government was attacking not only the radical left, but also the liberalism of English-stream students, and the assertion of Chinese culture among Chinese-stream students....To repress the left wing, and minimise its influence among the lower classes, the government has extended tight control over areas of life which are middle class in character. In doing so, it has alienated important sectors of the intermediate middle-class - for whom repression of the radical left wing is perfectly legitimate, but repression of liberalism is quite another matter, and so too is repression of culture (Buchanan 1972: 215).

Busch notes the tendency of English-educated students to regard the process of politics to be as important as the benefits it provides. The alienation of this elite from the PAP, he observes, "may be a serious problem for Singapore" (Busch 1974: 90-91). The leadership of liberal democratic dissent in the mid-1980s by these same students and also their emigration in large numbers has proven him correct.

It remains for us to examine the ideological effects of the educational practices of this period from 1966 to 1977.

How did students and their parents come to understand the educational process? How was this understanding systematised into a formal ideology of the PAP-state? But to comprehend the difference between ideological effect and actual political results of educational practices, it is necessary first to note these political results in general terms. In other words, we must see what people were constrained to do before we look at what they thought about their actions.

Political Effects of Meritocratic Educational Practices

By the end of this period from 1966 to 1977, the PAP-state had used its centralised control of the educational system to restructure social relations according to the criteria of merit most congenial to its own political hegemony and the needs of its alliance with foreign capital. The capitalist class being consolidated was to remain English-speaking and pro-Western. The working class was left in no doubt that learning English and a technical education were necessary qualifications for access to the material benefits of industrialisation.

To these ends, the education system deprived all but the capitalist class a formal education in their own cultural and linguistic traditions. Communal factors of race and

language were systematically correlated with class position through the bilingual policy and the emphasis on science and technology.

That the Government of Singapore makes deliberate use of the education system for purposes of social engineering can hardly be doubted....The shape of society which is beginning to emerge seems not so very unlike Plato's perception of the ideal city-state in which "the wise shall lead and rule, and the ignorant shall follow". Certainly, the school system is rigorously competitive and selective, with a series of examinations resulting in the channelling of the overwhelming majority into one or other of the technical/vocational streams (Wilson 1978: 238-239).

The schooling selection process of universal examinations ensured that the working class were denied significant opportunities for upward mobility, thus remaining available for training for wage labour. Only 71 per cent of pupils passed the Primary School Leaving Examination according to a 1978 Ministry of Education report. Of these, only 35 per cent completed secondary school, while the remaining 36 per cent failed or dropped out. That is, 65 per cent of primary school entrants did not successfully complete a secondary education. From the 35 per cent who completed, only 14 per cent gained entrance to pre-university level and only nine per cent then went on to tertiary study (four per cent to university, five per cent to polytechnic or teachers' college) (Seah and Seah 1983: 246-247; Gopinathan 1976: 75).

Thus, the education system was fulfilling its political function of extending access to education in order to ensure that all citizens were subject to the sorting process and that the working class and ethnic minorities acquired only the minimal level of education necessary for the reproduction of labour power. The task of the education system was then to fail this majority in order to make their labour power available to capital.

This political function is a widely recognised task of meritocratic education in industrialised countries:

The main reason why schools do not seriously attempt to undermine the process [of discriminatory education] is that the upward and downward cycles of brightness training and dullness training actually facilitate the schools' task of reproducing society's class structure....Their task is to produce in each age cohort a differentiated body of graduates who can be fit[ted] into existing occupational roles and statuses with a minimum of friction. In this way, the basic structure of social classes is recreated even though particular families may rise or fall in the hierarchy from one generation to the next (Blum 1978: 176).

In Singapore the education system was successfully recruiting failures.

The Ideological Effects of Meritocratic Educational Practices

The draconian labour legislation of 1968, the drop in average wages in 1967-69, the loss of 75,000 jobs and more than thirteen per cent of GDP with the departure of the British military at the end of the decade (Buchanan 1972: 83, 87) would not seem the ideal time to intensify educational practices which fail the majority of students. The reason this process assisted the PAP-state's social control rather than undermined it lies in the ideological effects of the practices. The education system ensured that people blamed themselves for not being in the capitalist class.

The experience of being processed by the mechanisms of educational social control produced ideological effects that students and their parents internalised as explanations for what was happening. That is, it appeared that the criteria of merit were neutral objectives available for all to satisfy by means of their own efforts. Students who were literate in English and did well in academic examinations in mathematics and science were the most meritorious and deserved the success they so quickly attained in terms of status and jobs. Those who did not succeed could only blame themselves. Even the realisation that the English-educated Chinese upper classes were

overwhelmingly the most meritorious did not lead to questioning of the basis of the definition of merit. Rather, it encouraged the trend towards English-medium education.

English is regarded by all ethnic groups as providing the best job opportunities, a belief justified by the socio-economic disparities that continue to exist between the English and the non-English-educated and which has led to reduced enrolments in the non-English streams (Gopinathan 1976: 76).

The PAP-state's policy of maintaining the pretence of four equal language streams, its promotion of second languages and its imposition of streaming and universal examinations fostered the belief that there was real choice and real opportunity: that the success of a student was up to the parents' judgement and their child's personal intelligence and application. This perception has been shared by academics who have also failed to see that the practice of providing choices conceals the real selection functions of education.

The wisdom of governmental non-interference with the existing educational provisions was never more dramatically revealed than when more and more parents voluntarily chose to have their children educated in English-medium schools (Tham 1989: 481; my emphasis).

Seah and Seah are more circumspect in their observation, indicating that choice is constrained by political considerations.

The flow of command in the overall education system is thus unidirectional from the political leadership down to the Ministry of Education, to the principals and teachers and finally to the parents of the schoolchildren. Ironically, democracy is still practised at the tail-end of this chain of command in that parents supposedly can decide or choose ultimately between the options available in the education and school system (Seah and Seah 1983: 257).

As part of making parents and students feel personally responsible for their educational success or failure and thus their social position, the experience of educational practices actively shapes students' perceptions of themselves.

[Schools] attempt to align students' self-conceptions with their eventual job prospects so those in lower-class occupations will feel they are capable of nothing better and will not feel cheated. All this can be achieved more easily if students are quickly stratified into ability levels and trained in such a way that those in the higher levels learn more than those in the lower ones. An interactive process which has this effect may diminish the learning capacities of many students, but nevertheless be functional for reproducing the class structure....Since schools are expected to display no favoritism toward any particular group, they tend to recruit their failures from among the children who are initially hardest to teach; these being the ones who lack familiarity with middle class lifestyles and speech patterns (Blum 1978: 176-7).

In Singapore, those selected to fail and then ideologically conditioned to accept this are the working class and racial minorities. Salaff noted that the poor "accept the authorities' evaluation of their children's abilities.... By accepting the power of the school system to determine

their children's occupational future, the working-class becomes further involved in the new industrial order" (Salaff 1988: 246). That is, their ideological formation assists their proletarianisation.

This derivation of self-worth and vocational prospects from educational practices also produced an insidious internalisation of racism by its victims. In his study of legitimacy and ethnicity in Singapore, Busch concluded that ethnic self-denigration among the Malays was severe, many of them regarding themselves as inferior to Chinese. Malays tended to see the reason for educational failure in culturally-acquired laziness rather than in educational practices which discriminated against them or in the worthlessness of Malay-medium education within the PAP-state's economic plan (Busch 1974: 85-86).

Thus, the experience of meritocratic educational sorting processes produced the ideological effect in students that they were being sorted correctly according to their own abilities. The ideology produced by these practices has been systematised or formalised by Singapore's institutions and political leaders. Politicians, technocrats, teachers and the media constantly provided students with the ideological categories which appeared to accord with what they were experiencing.

Meritocracy: The Formalisation of Ideology

The systematisation of the ideological effects of Singapore's education system had its own characteristics but was by no means unique. Similar practices have produced similar effects elsewhere which have been formalised into meritocratic ideologies. In addition, Lee Kuan Yew and many of his peers in the PAP leadership were ideologically formed by their experience of the colonial and elitist educational practices of Britain. They naturally interpreted the practices they introduced in the same ideological terms.

Equal Opportunity and Merit

A crucial ideological principle was that of equality of opportunity regardless of race, religion, class or linguistic heritage. The ideological perception of choice legitimated the PAP-state's role as apparent neutral guarantor of meritocratic advancement. This became ideologically formalised in the rhetoric of equality of opportunity. What an individual did with this opportunity was dependent on personal merit.

There was constant emphasis on merit as the criterion for upward mobility and privilege. It was asserted that Singapore had to be achievement-oriented and that the island could neither afford nor tolerate shirkers in its quest for progress - "from each his economic best, to each his economic worth" (Gopinathan 1976: 75).

Equality of opportunity logically leads to social inequality, since individual abilities differ. The recognition of individual merit leads to a just society. A just society is an unequal one.

[M]ore and more the young are showing that they want to be equal in order that they can strive to be unequal. What they want is not to be equal throughout life but to have equal opportunities, so that those whose ability and whose application are better than the average can become more equal than the others....Our immediate task is to build up a society in which man [sic] will be rewarded, not according to the amount of property he owns, but according to his active contribution to society in physical or mental labour. From each according to his ability. To each according to his worth and contribution to society. This is the first step to a more equal and just society (Lee Kuan Yew in an address to the Socialist International, quoted in Josey 1980: 68-69).

Thus, because there was no legal bar preventing the working class and ethnic minorities from entering elite institutions, Lee and other PAP leaders claimed that equal opportunity existed for all classes and races. They clearly felt their role as arbiters of a person's worth and contribution to society according to such criteria as their facility in English, their loyalty to the PAP and to capitalism, to be a neutral one. Failure to take advantage of "equal" opportunities could therefore, in their view, be due only to the weaknesses of those who failed in the attempt.

As noted before, this ideology is not new.

The general notion of meritocracy uses two related arguments to depict the class structure of western capitalist societies as natural and socially desirable. First, it pictures society as providing opportunity for all to rise in the occupational hierarchy. Inequalities of wealth, power, and status exist because people differ in how intelligent and industrious they are. Such differences are the cause of inequality, and since they themselves are the product of nature, the inequalities which exist must also be natural.

Secondly, it contends that society benefits by recruiting the most capable individuals into the most responsible jobs. These jobs must offer much greater prestige and salary than others as a way of attracting capable persons. Hence, the existing inequalities perform the necessary function of conserving scarce talent and directing it where it is most needed. Individuals employed in upper class occupations deserve their wealth and privilege because their contribution to society is especially valuable. Conversely, the poor are poor because they are lazy and unintelligent. They merit nothing better than bare subsistence living because they contribute little to society, and it is in society's interest not to improve their position substantially (Blum 1978: 162; my emphasis).

The ideology of natural differences determining merit and causing inequality sanctifies the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few on the basis that they individually merit it. The blame for being poor and powerless correspondingly is laid squarely on those who are. This ideology dissolves the issue of class.

However, the PAP came to power with a socialist programme, and the Lee faction faced the problem of switching from a public commitment to egalitarianism to outright capitalist

meritocracy. It also confronted the need to consolidate a technocratic capitalist class around the PAP-state, since the Lee faction had no mass support and did not represent a strong bourgeoisie. Lee was equal to the task. He stated that the socialist aim of "putting the economic power of the State into the hands of the people as a whole" could be achieved by an elite providing "the direction, planning and control of this power in the people's interest" (Josey 1980: 69). Lee then set about consolidating this elite.

Class Ideology of Meritocratic Leadership

Between 1966 and 1977 it became obvious that Lee Kuan Yew's understanding of his own educational formation accorded with the kind of people-sorting mechanisms that the PAP-state was introducing into the education system. Lee has never been especially modest about his own abilities. It seems he concluded from his experience at the elite local Raffles College and then at Cambridge University in the 1940s, that such institutions for reproducing the ruling class act as neutral sorting mechanisms for advancing to their proper level in society the most intelligent and those most gifted with leadership qualities. Since many of those with whom he studied later became the political leaders or the senior bureaucrats of Malaysia and Singapore, such a belief is perhaps understandable. However, by 1967, Lee had generalised this ideological perception to a belief that, in any society, there is an

elite of "no more than five per cent" who are "more than ordinarily endowed physically and mentally".

It is on this group that we must expend our limited and slender resources in order that they will provide that yeast, that ferment, that catalyst in our society which alone will ensure that Singapore shall maintain its pre-eminent place in the societies that exist in South East Asia - and the social organisation which enables us, with almost no natural resources, to provide the second highest standard of living in Asia (Lee Kuan Yew quoted in Eastern Sun 26 June 1967).

The year before, in a speech to school principals, Lee indicated that he expected the education system to unite Singaporeans in support of the state regardless of their race, language, religion or culture. Yet, at the same time, it functioned to divide them according to class, race, language, religion and culture. That is, he required the education system to perform its customary role of both reproducing social relations and legitimising the process. But his emphasis was on the formation of a paternalistic ruling class.

Our community lacks in-built reflexes - loyalty, patriotism, history or tradition....[O]ur society and its education system was never designed to produce a people capable of cohesive action, identifying their collective interests and then acting in furtherance of them....The reflexes of group thinking must be built to ensure the survival of the community, not the survival of the individual, this means a re-orientation of emphasis and a reshuffling of values....We must have qualities of leadership at the top, and qualities of cohesion on the ground....The ideal product is the student, the university graduate who is strong, robust, rugged, with tremendous qualities of stamina, endurance and at the same time with great intellectual discipline and most important

of all, humility and love for his community (Lee Kuan Yew 1967 in George 1984: 136).

A decade later, Lee observed that all the top people in Singapore could be accommodated in one jumbo jet and that, if it crashed, that would be the end of Singapore (Caldwell 1979: 14). In his last National Day speech as prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew returned to the theme, saying that only the top three per cent of Singapore are capable of political leadership.

It's a small place, no more than a total of those within the ages thirty to forty-five, at the most 800 people. We can put them all into one little lap-top computer, all the basic data (STW 1 September 1990).

Of the current PAP leadership, he stated:

Our right to govern is based on merit. We have to show that we are manifestly qualified to govern by our abilities, our training, our character, our ability to deliver the goods, and that we exercise power for the common good (STW 8 September 1990).

These statements are but echoes of an early address by Lee given at Chatham House in London in 1962.

At a time when you want harder work with less return and more capital investment, one man one vote produces just the opposite....[In Asia this system] has been superceded by systems which give power effectively to one man or group of men for an indefinite period. Government to be effective must at least give the impression of enduring, and a government which is open to the vagaries of the ballot box when the people who put their crosses in the ballot box are not illiterate but semi-literate, which is worse, is a government which is already weakened before it starts to

govern....If I were in authority in Singapore indefinitely without having to ask those who are being governed whether they like what is being done, then I have not the slightest doubt that I could govern much more effectively in their own interests. That is a fact which the educated understand (George 1984: 114).

It is therefore hardly surprising that the PAP-state's educational initiatives produced meritocratic ideology. Lee's 1965 proposal for "the establishment of an Eton-style boarding school in which Singapore's brightest students would be groomed for future command" (Buchanan 1972: 290) is an early example. This proposal met with considerable opposition (ST 4 May 1965) but eventually came forward in 1969 in the modified form of four elite pre-university colleges.

It was stressed that such schools were not for children of the wealthy and privileged in society - bright children would qualify, so long as they satisfied certain requirements, regardless of what stratum of society they came from (Buchanan 1972: 291).

The "certain requirements" were, of course, the criteria set by the PAP-state's definition of merit. These elite establishments accordingly filled up with the children of the wealthy, the English-educated, the capitalist class and the emerging middle-class (George 1984: 186).

The Ideology of Class Hatred

If equal opportunity enables individuals to achieve the level they merit, then it is a short step to claiming that people actually do reach the level of their ability.

Therefore, once meritocratic sorting practices are spread across the whole of society, it is only a matter of time before the whole of society is sorted according to their natural ability. Thus, some proponents of meritocratic education, including Lee Kuan Yew, claim moral justification for it on the grounds that it overcomes hereditary class divisions and leads to divisions based on actual ability.

Singapore is a society based on effort and merit, not wealth and privilege depending on birth. There is nothing in the life-style of the employer which is not open to the worker (Lee Kuan Yew STW 14 October 1989).

The viciousness of this ideological position can be seen when the implicit connection between intelligence, biological heredity and race or class is made explicit. Herrnstein, an American scholar, has given academic comfort to those who argue that social inequality is a necessary consequence of hereditary meritocracy.

The privileged classes of the past, based on religion, title, property, race, even physiognomy, were probably not much superior biologically to the downtrodden, which is why revolutions had a fair chance of success. By removing artificial barriers between classes, society has encouraged the creation of biological barriers. When people can take their natural level in society, the upper classes will by definition, have

greater capacity than the lower (Herrnstein 1971: 201-2).

This ideology has been soundly criticised as nothing more than "a bare assertion that the ideology of capitalist society accurately expresses universal traits of human nature, and that certain related, implicit assumptions of behaviourist psychology are correct" (Chomsky 1972: 29). In Singapore, it soon became clear that the lower classes and minority races failed overwhelmingly in the education system. The PAP leadership concluded that they are therefore naturally lacking in ability. Lee revealed his view of working class Singaporeans in his frequent public references to them as "digits" (George 1984: 132). He made his view of education for the poor brutally clear in a 1967 address to a community centre meeting:

We will be to blame if youngsters ten years from now become hooligans, ruffians and sluts. They can be trained to be otherwise. Even dogs can be trained as proved by the Police Training School where dogs, at a whistle, jump through a hoop, sit down or attack those who need to be attacked (George 1984: 194).

Dressed up with the pseudoscientific principles of intelligence levels (I.Q.) and eugenics (Chee and Chan 1984), this ideology has legitimated class hatred and racism in Singapore.

The Ideology of Eugenics

From our earlier study of the fundamental assumptions of neo-classical theory, we know that this capitalist class ideology of political economy holds that we are the product of our genes, not of our social circumstances. We can now see how the ideology of eugenics arises from a meritocratic system which legitimises capitalist social relations.

Many of the practices most closely related to Lee's eugenics ideology are more prominent in the next phase of education, where they will be dealt with in detail. It is sufficient to note at this stage that, once society is properly sorted, and if intelligence (or the lack of it) is hereditary, then it makes no sense to let the lower classes and minorities increase the proportion of meritocratic failures in the population by irresponsible breeding. Hence, when the PAP-state wanted to maximise its human resources in the late 1960s in order to launch the export-oriented industrialisation policy, it introduced abortion and voluntary sterilisation laws aimed at the poor and ethnic minorities. In Lee's words:

Free education and subsidised housing lead to a situation where the less economically productive people in the community are reproducing themselves at rates higher than the rest. This will increase the total population of less productive people.

Our problem is how to devise a system of disincentives, so that the irresponsible, the social delinquents, do not believe that all they have to do is to produce their children and the government then

owes them and their children sufficient food, medicine, housing, education and jobs....Until such time when moral inhibitions disappear and legislative or administrative measures can be taken to regulate the size of families, we must try to induce people to limit their families....

One of the crucial yardsticks by which we shall have to judge the results of the new abortion law combined with the voluntary sterilisation law will be whether it tends to raise or lower the total quality of our population. We must encourage those who earn less than two hundred dollars per month and cannot afford to nurture and educate many children never to have more than two. We will regret the time lost if we do not now take the first tentative steps towards correcting a trend which can leave our society with a large number of the physically, intellectually, and culturally anaemic (Abortion Bill, Third Reading, 29 December 1969, Select Committee Report: 321-3).

The possibility that the social control mechanisms of the education system, together with socio-economic conditions, actively discriminated against the educational achievement of the working class, women and minority races, had been ideologically concealed. Meritocracy was the formalised ideology for the institutionalisation of class hatred and racism. Lee Kuan Yew's ideological position has a disturbing affinity to that of a previous political leader:

Since the inferior always outnumber the superior, the former would always increase more rapidly if they possessed the same capacities for survival and for the procreation of their kind; and the final consequence would be that the best in quality would be forced to recede into the background. Therefore a corrective measure in favour of the better quality must intervene (Adolf Hitler 1942: 161-2).

Racial Hatred and the Ideology of Multiracialism

The formalisation of the application of eugenics to Malays was done explicitly by a Malay politician, Mahathir bin Mohamad, now the prime minister of Malaysia, in a book entitled The Malay Dilemma (1970). He "proved" that inbreeding has made Malays intellectually inferior to Chinese. For this reason, he concluded, Chinese control the economy. His book was essentially an apologetic aimed to explaining the economic subjugation of Malays and at motivating them to do something about it.

But, in Singapore where Dr Mahathir studied and where racist educational and other practices continue, their ideological effect is to legitimate Chinese dominance and enshrine racism against Malays as a scientific principle of genetic inferiority. As Busch states, "Repeatedly, I heard this theme from Malays in Singapore, even from secondary school pupils who had never heard of Dr Mahathir and his book" (Busch 1974: 59; see also Nasir and Chee 1984).

Lee Kuan Yew has also never attempted to hide his racism, since he also regarded it as scientific reasoning. He has accounted for the superiority of East Asians (over Malays) in terms of "innate ethnic qualities" (The Mirror 21 October 1968). He has isolated other factors as well:

Climate and diet may have given East Asians a cultural edge over Southeast Asians in coping with modern

economic development. They may account in part for the intense, thrifty, and largely secular societies of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam (Lecture at Columbia University, New York reported in Eastern Sun 23 December 1968).

Lee frequently made reference to his 4,000 years of cultural history in comparison to equatorial races who would go to sleep in the afternoon (George 1984: 168).

But the predictable failure of Malays in a racist educational system established for highly competitive, individualistic, English-educated Chinese has needed and acquired more sophisticated ideological legitimacy than thinly disguised racial hatred.

The legitimation of the results of educational sorting by meritocratic ideology has been complemented by an ideology of multiracialism which portrays Malay failure as being for the common good. It might be expected that the principles of a multiracial policy would emphasise the right of all racial communities to order their own affairs in culturally appropriate ways. However, the PAP-state advanced principles of multiracialism which emphasised the reasons why minority racial communities may not have this right.

The official PAP policy after independence was to recognise Malay rights as equal to those of other races and to note that their educational needs were greater. But the PAP-

state no longer had to accommodate the Malay politics of the peninsula. It merely had to contain the politics of its own Malay minority. Therefore, despite specific constitutional guarantees to the Malays, it stood by the principle that "there can be no distinction between majority rights and minority rights" (Parliamentary Debates, cited in Betts 1975: 136) and that the greatest danger to minorities is "not tyranny by the majority, but pursuit of minority rights" (Straits Budget cited in Betts 1975: 137). Furthermore, the PAP held that if the Malays objected to the principle of equal rights, the Chinese majority was automatically released from adherence to this principle (Chew 1982: 206). Just as the policy of multiracialism had been used against the Chinese education system, it was now turned against the Malays as an ideological weapon which would label objections to the high rate of Malay educational failure communal and subversive of multiracialism.

However, because of the glaring racial inequities of meritocratic education in Singapore, academic apologists have had to claim that racial injustice is fair and that doing anything about it would be unfair. In justifying the ideology of meritocracy as "a denial of the norm of equity in favour of the norm of efficiency", Tham proceeds to state:

First, it ensured that critical areas of the economy would have men and women of proven ability and performance; and secondly, it suggested to the public at large fairness and justice irrespective of ethnic differences. Seen in this context the underlying logic of meritocracy seems unassailable. There was, of course, the question as to whether certain groups such as the Malays should merit special government intervention to ensure their effective participation in the economy. Such a step, if proposed at all, would have militated against the government's thinking concerning how best to improve the Malays' economic status. Any multiracial party in power would have been loath to employ group-focused economic-development policies since it would most certainly have been unpopular with the majority. In any case, there was also the belief that Malays would be better able to compete in future if they developed the qualities of hard work and self-reliance (Tham 1989: 481).

This ideological rationalisation assists greatly in connecting the ideology of meritocracy with the PAP-state's ideology of multiracialism and of welfare. In fact, of course, "group-focused economic-development policies" exactly describes meritocratic practices which ensure that, in Lee Kuan Yew's words, "we must expend our limited and slender resources" on the "no more than five per cent" of the population who happen to be overwhelmingly Chinese and members of the capitalist class. Tham is justifying the PAP-state policy of not wasting money on those who are genetically unable to improve their intellectual level, the same justification used by Lee for restricting physical reproduction by the poor.

This position accords with the PAP-state's actual fiscal priorities which saw the education budget progressively

decline from its peak of 32 per cent of total government expenditure in 1964 to less than nine per cent in 1980 (Linda Lim 1989: 178). Having achieved political hegemony and begun to sort the Chinese working class, the PAP-state did not waste its money on those other races quickly identified as total meritocratic failures. Thus, in Singapore, the ideology of meritocracy incorporates ideologies of multiracialism and welfare which legitimate Chinese domination and a racist state.

Broader Ideological Context

The ideology of meritocracy was systematised in the broader ideological context of a PAP-generated crisis of national survival after expulsion from Malaysia (Chan Heng Chee 1971: 53). There was a call to unity for the sake of survival. This call contained at least four elements: fostering a multiracial democratic ideal; building a rugged, tightly organised and modern society; developing a sense of Singapore identity; and having a commitment to change. With the diplomacy which made her Singapore's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Chan notes that:

There is little doubt that the ideology has been consciously formed and articulated to achieve particular ends but it cannot be asserted with similar certainty that the primary intent of PAP ideology is

to ensure the survival of the party, although admittedly, an ideology stressing unity would tend to maximise the ruling party's power (Chan Heng Chee 1971: 53).

The implications of this ideology have been noted more emphatically by Rodan.

This 'ideology of survival'...insisted on the inseparability of economic and political survival and the necessary subservience of all other considerations. Above all else, survival demanded the internalisation of an entirely new set of social attitudes and beliefs which embodied self-sacrifice for the 'national interest'. An important aspect of the new ideology was the acceptance of the PAP's sole right to determine this interest and the belief that the PAP's own political survival was paramount to Singapore's survival (Rodan 1989: 88).

In short, the PAP exploited the public insecurity resulting from its expulsion from Malaysia and the later British military withdrawal to systematise an ideological climate favourable to its political survival and the objectives of its alliance with foreign capital. Great emphasis was placed on raising skills, on social discipline and on foregoing short-term benefits for long-term gain. The 'rugged society' was the regime's shorthand for this.

By this is meant the exercise of self-discipline and social responsibility by individuals so that the needs of society can, when necessary, take precedence over individual desires....Out of such industrious cooperation is supposed to emerge a 'rugged society' able to cope with a different international environment because it has mobilised its human resources - the only resources Singapore has (Busch 1974: 33-4).

In this ideological context it was possible to suppress claims for the redress of grievances or attempts at anti-PAP political mobilisation with contemptuous caricature.

When we are trying to survive in a tight situation there is very little place for harmful or even meaningless activities. At best they are irrelevant eccentricities; at worst they lead the young into a world of fantasy and make them unfit for the strenuous exertions that may lie ahead (Goh Keng Swee in The Mirror 17 April 1967: 5).

Furthermore, the withdrawal of British forces gave the PAP-state the opportunity to launch a massive militarisation programme with the assistance of Israeli advisers. The decision of the PAP leadership publicly to proclaim that they were building a garrison state on the Israeli model seemed calculated to maintain communal tension in the Malay archipelago and thus deflect anti-imperialist movements. The aggressively anti-Islamic implications of explicitly imitating Israeli militarism heightened anti-Chinese feeling in Malaysia and Indonesia, providing a distraction from class politics most convenient for foreign capital and local capitalist classes. The PAP-state thus took over the role of the British in advancing a communal strategy on a regional scale to fragment class solidarity.

This militarisation also ensured domestic stability for the attraction of foreign investment (Buchanan 1972: 261, 267; George 1984: 192). In 1969, defence expenditure surpassed

education expenditure as a proportion of total government spending (Linda Lim 1989: 178). Lee Kuan Yew made it clear that he regarded Singapore as the "linch-pin" for Western interests in Southeast Asia and for the future prosperity of Malaysia and Indonesia (Josey 1968: 427-428). Furthermore, he made it plain that part of the educational commitment to science and technology was related to military priorities:

We intend to fight for our stake in this part of the world, and [to] anybody who thinks they can push us around, I say: over my dead body....I don't care if there are 100 million Indonesians of whom 400,000 are armed. So what? What is important, I know in ten, fifteen years I can breed a generation that can man missiles....We know that some of our neighbours can get this equipment. But can they work it as quickly as we can work it (ST 10 November 1965)?

Later Lee stated:

We opted for the Israeli fashion, for in our situation we think it might be necessary not only to train every boy but also every girl to be a disciplined and effective digit in defence of their own country (Eastern Sun 21 October 1967).

Thus the ideology of meritocracy was formalised within a highly repressive atmosphere to legitimise not only educational practices but also the entire political programme of exploitation and repression developed in alliance with Western imperialism. The PAP-state was able to proceed with its undermining of local working class organisation and conditions with justifications of

pragmatism and necessity. Its control of educational institutions and the media enabled it to produce and formalise a congenial ideological consensus for the legitimisation of its political objectives. As Buchanan noted during this period, "this has been the most decisive effect of the Government's 'social development' policy - not greater social welfare, but greater social control, and the creation of a cheap, disciplined labour force" (Buchanan 1972: 69).

The consolidation of the meritocratic practices of education between 1966 and 1977 had effectively proletarianised the lower classes and minorities for export-oriented industrialisation. The formalisation of meritocratic ideology had legitimised the practices which produced it. But, by 1977, some of the contradictions of these practices had become obvious as the PAP-state's economic ambitions responded to intense international competition.

THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD 1978-85: A NEW EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Second Industrial Revolution to upgrade the Singapore economy to higher value-added production was predicated on the PAP-state's grip on the mechanisms of social control. It had used education radically to restructure Singapore's population during the previous two decades. Not only had it sorted class agents into their class positions but it was changing their linguistic and cultural heritage to suit the industrialisation policy. Educational practices had transformed people's perceptions of their social place and altered their social aspirations.

But, if political struggles were not to emerge in new and more threatening forms within Singapore, the PAP had to continue to deliver continuous economic growth which both justified and required increasing control.

In the late 1970s, it seems that the PAP felt it was able to improve its position in the alliance with foreign capital to that of most senior junior-partner among other Asian states, if not that of an equal. If previously the PAP-state had responded to the perceived needs of foreign capital in education, now it sought unilaterally to move up the scale of industrialisation away from the increasing

competition from its Southeast Asian neighbours in labour-intensive, low value-added industries.

Such an initiative required a qualitative change in the Singapore labour force through a sudden intensification of the social control practices it had consolidated during the previous phase. To equip its workers for the great leap forward, the PAP-state launched educational initiatives to take its labour force to a higher level of skill and, through that, exercise a greater degree of control. This sudden shift meant more rigorous categorisation of people and more concise targeting of educational resources. It also entailed re-organisation of the reserve army of labour.

However, the most remarkable strategy for ensuring a highly skilled and largely self-reliant labour force was the linking of sexual reproduction to educational sorting mechanisms. The government implemented a eugenics policy through an official breeding programme of incentives and disincentives. That is, the PAP-state decided to introduce a selection process even before the education system by deciding who would be permitted to be born and who would not.

However, the PAP was confronted with a resurgence of political struggles as it sought to implement these

measures and was therefore severely limited in what it could achieve. We examine each of the above initiatives and their political and ideological implications.

A Failing System

By 1978 there was general recognition that the education system had become clogged up by the simultaneous stress on bilingualism, technical education and English proficiency unmatched by enough highly qualified teachers and adequate facilities (Seah and Seah 1983: 243). It had also suffered from frequent changes to the method of implementing the bilingual policy, changes which were handed down from the top political leadership, often the Prime Minister himself, to an increasingly demoralised Ministry of Education and thence to schools which obediently put into practice directives they knew to be ineffective or contradictory (Seah and Seah 1983: 255). But even Lee appeared to recognise that the sorting mechanisms of education were working too well: an English-educated technocratic elite was being created but everyone else was dropping out without achieving even the minimal standard of education required. "Only the bright rise above all the overload and break through, and the average give up," he noted (Asia Yearbook 1979: 289).

The results were seen in drop-out and attrition (drop-outs plus failures) rates far higher than those of Taiwan (Tham 1989: 488), in low literacy levels and in ineffective bilingualism. At one stage the army had to issue badges to national servicemen indicating which languages they understood in order to assist communication (Seah and Seah 1983: 250). It could not be assumed that completion of a bilingual education had rendered the students effectively bilingual.

In 1979, an Educational Study Team chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee presented a report on the education system along with recommendations for change. While noting many of the problems outlined above, the Goh Report's main concern was expressed in terms of "educational wastage": failure to achieve expected standards and premature school-leaving (Tham 1989: 488). That is, the Team was not concerned that the people-sorting mechanisms of the education system were structured in favour of reproducing the capitalist class by assisting the educationally-advantaged to reach their proper station in life. Nor was it concerned that these mechanisms reproduced the working class by discriminating against the Chinese-educated and ethnic minorities. After all, the education system was designed to achieve these objectives and was achieving them successfully.

Maximising a Scarce Resource

Rather, the Goh Report focused on the system's failure to extract "the maximum potential from a scarce resource" and on the need "to fill up the education gap in manpower requirements before Singapore can successfully join the ranks of brain and technology-intensive nations" (Seah and Seah 1983:248-9). In other words, the problem was not that members of the working class were being ejected from the education system as failures. The problem was that when the academic-stream students graduated they had not achieved a sufficiently high educational standard. Similarly, when the working class students were ejected from the academic stream into vocational and technical education and thence into the labour force, they were still insufficiently skilled, linguistically (in English) and technically, to sustain the great leap forward into high-tech industrialisation. In the process of launching the Second Industrial Revolution, the PAP-state realised that approximately 600,000 workers of its one million strong labour force had not reached Primary Six level, the final year of primary education (Chiew 1983: 253). In the eyes of the PAP leadership, Singapore was not maximising the use of its major resource, people.

But the PAP-state was facing a form of struggle. Both working class and middle class students were reacting against the alienating educational selection process by not learning. Singaporeans were demonstrating their reluctance to learn both languages required by imperialism: the English language and the language of science and technology. The working class was not inclined to learn a foreign language so that foreign bosses would find it easier to order them around. They had to be further pressured to learn the above subjects so that the alliance with foreign capital could be sustained.

Goh's Education Study Team consisted mainly of systems engineers aged in their thirties or younger, not professional educationalists. It is therefore perhaps understandable that they decided not to continue wasting government expenditure on giving all children the same quality of primary education up to the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in Primary Six. Instead they decided on intelligence tests to grade children after the third year of primary education, at the age of eight or nine years. The government then put in place graded streams of education designed to give each group an education suitable to its expected station in life. In this way the government tailored educational practices to "the needs of private companies engaged in, or moving towards, higher value-added production" (Rodan 1989: 149).

That is, I.Q. tests, which generally work against working class children, racial minorities and girls, were used to sort out the future adult members of the working and capitalist classes at this stage.

This system of early sorting ensured that education became even more elitist: a Gifted Education Programme was introduced for the most talented eight per cent, and the best educational resources were directed to them and the next 30 per cent. At the same time, more funds were immediately directed to tertiary education. Total enrolments in universities and colleges rose by 49.4 per cent and in technical and vocational institutes by 7.5 per cent from 1979 to 1983. Over the same period, engineering course enrolments rose by 2,104 at the National University of Singapore and by 10,232 at Singapore Polytechnic (Rodan 1989: 149).

The lower streams were given a year or two longer to pick up basic English skills (Seah and Seah 1983: 258-260). This aimed to ensure that more skilled labour could be extracted from the largest part of the "scarce resource" before it was finally ejected from the system. Between 1979 and 1984, the proportion of those entering the labour force with only primary level qualifications or less declined from 43 per cent to 26 per cent (FEER 25 August 1988: 59).

Government expenditure on education rose from \$32.75 million in 1978-79 to \$374.68 million in 1982-83, a 1,044 per cent increase (Rodan 1989: 149), or from less than nine per cent of total government expenditure in 1980 to 14 per cent in 1985 (Linda Lim 1989: 178; STW 18 March, 25 March 1989). This should not be seen as a reversal of the PAP-state's welfare ideology. Much of the expenditure was targeted at the tertiary and technical levels, not at programmes to assist working class primary students to get into the academic stream. It was also a temporary infusion of state funds to kick-start the economic upgrading process. Towards the end of the 1980s, the government introduced policies to reduce the level of educational funding.

Ending the Myth of Equal Treatment

The PAP-state's rigorous campaign to upgrade the education system ended the myth that the four language streams were receiving equal treatment. This period saw the official assertion of the major educational requirement of the alliance with foreign capital: the supremacy of the English language as the educational language for all Singaporeans. The PAP-state increased the pressure to learn English and

science as it sought to overcome people's reluctance to do so.

In December 1983, the PAP-state announced the "National Stream" of education. That is, English-medium education would officially overwhelmingly predominate, even for ethnic minorities such as the Malays. All workers were forced to learn some English. Also, instead of some Malays failing through their own vernacular-medium education, they would all henceforth drop out of an English-medium system, thus saving the government the cost of Malay-medium schools.

By 1985, the round figures for student enrolment in the various language medium streams were 97 per cent in English-medium and 3 per cent in Chinese-medium. Barely recordable were the 0.04 per cent enrolled in Malay-medium and 0.01 per cent in Tamil-medium (Shotam 1989: 510).

The new system of education appears in total consonance with the economic requirements in terms of manpower provision. With the emphasis in English which will become the first language of 80 per cent of the Primary I cohort and the remaining 20 per cent grounded in at least oral English, the harnessing on to science, technology and international business communication will satisfy the economic needs of the global economy. (Seah and Seah 1983: 262)

At the same time, the government had to clear the path of bilingualism for English speakers whose second language was

not up to standard. Some were faltering on the thresholds of secondary school and university because they were failing their second language. The requirements for the second language at PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination) level and for entrance to university were therefore watered down in 1985 (ST 14 July 1985: 1). The government continued to be adamant that it was pursuing a bilingual policy (Tham 1989: 490). The dilution of the bilingual policy was also necessary for a patriarchal state because girls were achieving much higher linguistic standards than boys and thus gaining entrance to the university in greater numbers.

As well as intensifying the meritocratic practices of the education system, the government also tried to extract more from the rejects of the education system. It put considerable effort into improving the skills of those who had already been rejected: the 60 per cent of the overall labour force without primary-level education. In 1979 the Skills Development Fund was set up by imposing a levy on employers for each employee (Rodan 1989: 144). Other schemes were also started such as the Basic Education for Skill Training (BEST) programme. This began in July 1982 with an initial intake of 500 workers who were taught English and mathematics up to Primary Six level by means of two sixty-hour courses (Chiew 1983: 253).

The Reserve Army of Labour

As already noted, these educational initiatives were part of an attempt quickly to upgrade the quality, in meritocratic terms, of the total population. This process could not ignore the large numbers of migrant workers who had come to Singapore since the early 1970s. They were treated as a latent reserve being admitted for short periods and regularly rotated. They were not permitted to bring their families with them or to have offspring in Singapore to be sorted by Singapore's education system.

Migrant workers had been permitted to come to fill job vacancies created by rapid economic growth, and wages were kept low in labour-intensive, low value-added industries. These workers were concentrated in construction and the dirtier, more dangerous or more monotonous jobs.

Officially, there were 40,000 foreign workers holding "work permits" in Singapore in 1978, but there may actually have been more than double that number (Asia Yearbook 1979: 292). One estimate of Malaysians working in Singapore was as high as 120,000 (Rodan 1989: 138), but some of these may have been salaried "employment pass" holders, a category for business people, technicians and professionals not subject to nearly as severe discriminatory regulations as work-permit holders. Between 1970 and 1980 the proportion

of non-citizen, non-permanent residents went up from 2.9 to 5.5 per cent of the total population (Yap 1989: 466).

Regulations were already in place to prevent migrant workers from having access to PAP-state welfare and thus from acquiring a degree of permanence. Any work permit holder wishing to marry a Singaporean had to gain government permission. This was rarely granted. If permission was granted and the worker had been in Singapore less than five years, then both husband and wife had to agree to be sterilised after their second child (Yap 1989: 466) to prevent them disproportionately lowering the quality of the population.

In 1978 there was still a labour shortage, with approximately 40,000 jobs being created each year and only about 30,000 Singapore workers entering the work force (Rodan 1989: 137). Nevertheless, the PAP-state's high-wage policy from 1978 was aimed at phasing out low-value-added industries, and it saw this as an opportunity to cut its reliance on foreign labour.

It especially wanted to cut out non-Chinese migrant workers altogether during this industrial restructuring. The government's euphemism to cover its racism was "non-traditional sources". The traditional source was Malaysian Chinese, to whom many Singapore Chinese are related. The

PAP-state aimed to use the upgrading process to lessen its dependence on non-Chinese workers from other neighbouring countries.

But by 1982 it was clear that the attempt to curtail foreign labour was undermining the PAP-state's support within the local capitalist class. The construction industry needed these workers (Asia Yearbook 1982: 232-3). The PAP-state relented but began to introduce ever more stringent measures to control migrant workers and to ensure they did not get a permanent toe-hold in Singapore.

Thus from 1978, the PAP-state took major initiatives to improve the level of each educational stream, especially the academic and technical tertiary stream. It also took steps to raise the skill level of those who had already been sorted and failed. Furthermore, it tried to minimise the possibility of low-skilled Chinese foreigners contributing disproportionately to lowering the quality of the permanent population through their offspring. It tried to eliminate this possibility altogether for low-skilled non-Chinese foreigners.

But two sections of the population that the PAP-state decided to target specifically in its intensification of meritocratic practices were women and the generation yet unborn. This policy was the most remarkable feature of the

PAP leadership's social engineering initiatives which accompanied the great leap forward.

Ante-Natal Streaming

In his 1983 National Day address, Lee Kuan Yew expressed alarm that the well-educated in the population were reproducing at a slower rate than the less-educated. Women university graduates were averaging 1.65 children while uneducated women were averaging 3.5 children. If this continued, he declared, "levels of competence will decline. Our economy will suffer and the society will decline" (ST 15 August 1983).

Lee elaborated:

We gave universal education to the first generation in the early 1960s. In the 1960s and 1970s, we reaped a big crop of able boys and girls. They came from bright parents, many of whom were never educated. In their parents' generation, the able and not-so-able both had large families. This is a once-ever bumper crop which is not likely to be repeated.

For once, this generation of children from uneducated parents have received their education in the late 1960s and 1970s and as the bright ones make it to the top, to tertiary levels, they will have less than two children per ever-married woman. They will not have large families like their parents (Lee Kuan Yew 1983: 5).

He was expressing a view consistent with meritocratic ideology elsewhere that "after several generations of meritocratic selection, those left at the bottom are, biologically speaking, the dregs" (Blum 1978: 178). Lee clearly believed that more than two decades of PAP sorting had seen the able and intelligent rise to positions of wealth and power in Singapore society, while the rest had found their true level beneath. That is, the divisions between upper class, middle-class and working class now corresponded exactly with levels of intelligence. Furthermore, since he regarded intelligence as hereditary, the failure of those in the upper classes to breed in sufficient numbers to reproduce themselves was a threat to the PAP's ambition to build a developed industrialised country. The educational sorting mechanisms needed more high quality raw material.

As we have seen before, such observations have an unavoidably racist implication. Those breeding too much were not only working class, but ethnically were also mainly Malays and Indians. Lee must have noted that, while the early family planning policies aimed at the poor in the 1960s and early 1970s had a devastating effect on the birth rates of Malays and Indians, their rates were moving back up to replacement level (Yap 1989: 462) which they reached in 1985. Meanwhile the Chinese rate continued to decline

and had been insufficient for replacement since 1975 (Yap 1989: 457).

A system of incentives and disincentives had been in place since the 1960s to prevent the working class from breeding too much.

The disincentives were: an increase in delivery charges in government hospitals for each additional child beyond the second; no paid leave for working women expecting their third or subsequent child; no income tax relief for the fourth and subsequent children; large families not to be given priority in public housing and not to be allowed to sublet rooms in their HDB flats; and higher antenatal care fees for those women with two or more children. The incentives were benefits accruing to those who had undergone sterilisation, namely higher priority in the choice of primary school; waiver of delivery fees; paid medical leave, and unrecorded, full paid leave (Quah and Quah 1989: 112-3).

We have already noted in the earlier observations on eugenics, Lee's justifications for the later introduction of abortion and voluntary sterilisation in 1970. Abortion on demand was allowed from 1974. By 1983, the production of parents' sterilisation certificates at the start of primary school was a fact of life (Wilson 1978: 239).

But Lee concluded these measures were not enough. The government needed to encourage educated Singaporeans to breed more, thus expanding "the talent pool" (ST 15 August 1983). That is, he wanted the Chinese capitalist class to reach replacement level. In January 1984, the government

announced that graduate mothers with three or more children would receive top priority in registering their children in the best primary schools. In March, "working mothers" with a degree (i.e. not working class mothers) and a third child were given 30 per cent tax relief (Quah and Quah 1989: 114).

But working class women were not forgotten. In June the government stated it would pay \$10,000 into the Central Provident Fund of any mother under thirty years of age with little or no education who was willing to be sterilised or ligated after their first or second child. Both parents had to be Singapore citizens or permanent residents with a combined income of under \$1,500 per month. The money could be used towards the purchase of an HDB flat. There were 311 enquiries on the first day this policy came into effect (Asiaweek 7 September 1984: 44; Quah and Quah 1989: 114).

This income limit avoided a pitfall of the previous incentives to be sterilised: better educated women, that is, middle and upper class women, had disproportionately been willing to get sterilised and make use of the primary school priority registration. Non-graduate mothers (working class women) had not been so keen, so that by 1983 there were 37,000 non-graduate mothers with four or more children and low incomes (Quah and Quah 1989: 114). The new policy of paying poor women to be sterilised was aimed

at reversing this situation and would, at the same time, tie the working class more tightly into public housing.

This system of incentives and disincentives to breed was a sorting practice which amounted to a kind of ante-natal streaming. Working class parents were encouraged to choose to have only one or two children so as not to pollute the talent pool too much. Third and subsequent children were streamed out and not permitted to be born, by sterilisation, extra taxes and deposits on HDB flats.

To ensure the availability of working class women for wage labour once they had bred up to the government limit, the suggestion of full-day schools for their offspring began to be raised from the early 1980s (Seah and Seah 1983: 249, 262). Until then, most schools ran two sessions daily. With children away all day instead of half a day, working class women would be able to go out to work without any child-care costs accruing to the state. Middle and upper class women employed foreign women, domestics, the lowest paid workers in Singapore to care for their children. Therefore the change in schooling pattern was primarily designed to obtain the labour power of working class women in the work place as well as in the home and to achieve this objective without increasing the costs of education and other welfare expenditure. In fact, it was a way to cut the overall costs of reproducing the working class.

The government wanted to spend its resources on high quality children and therefore encouraged middle and upper class women to produce more of them. These children received preferential treatment from before birth and throughout their school careers. Before birth, they were placed in the academic stream.

From Mother-Tongue to Father-Faith

The PAP-state realised that the intensification of meritocratic practices from 1978, and their extension into the most personal aspects of people's lives, required a new degree of ideological legitimation in the face of continuing forms of non-cooperation in the education system and in the labour force. This realisation surfaced in the 1978 Goh Report which concluded that the teaching of Education for Living and civics in the mother-tongue was, by itself, insufficient to instil traditional values in the young. The more intensive exploitation of their labour involved in upgrading the economy required an ideological basis for forcing people to stay in their social places and not seek escape. The PAP-state searched for a collective ethic to use against those who gave priority to their personal interest in avoiding increased exploitation and exercised their political rights to do so.

This initiative may have been related to a corresponding move in labour relations during the same period when Lee Kuan Yew called for greater "team spirit" among workers (ST 1 May 1981) and urged that the Japanese system of industrial relations be followed. Since there was a labour shortage in Singapore, workers regularly changed jobs in response to marginal incentives offered by rival employers. Foreign companies complained about job-hopping. Thus, an "East Asian" ethic of company loyalty was encouraged along with Japanese methods of raising productivity through increasing the exploitation of workers by means of more "collective" work methods such as quality control circles.

Therefore, behind these government moves lay a new form of political struggle. In a situation of full employment, workers who could not escape their class position were nevertheless able to find the least exploitative job conditions available by choosing between employers. "Job-hopping" forced foreign companies to compete with each other for workers by offering marginally better conditions. Since the PAP could not legislate to force workers to stay in their jobs without undermining the whole ideology of its wage labour system, it hoped to instil a higher degree of selfless obedience in the next generation of workers through its ideological formation of school students. The

PAP sought their long-term cooperation in their own exploitation.

The Goh Report stressed "moral education" in addition to mother-tongue learning while also indicating that something more was needed in the area of cultural education.

A society unguided by moral values can hardly be expected to remain cohesive under stress. It is a commitment to a common set of values that will determine the degree to which people of recent migrant origin will be willing and able to defend their collective interest. They will not be able to do this unless individuals belonging to the group are able to discern that an enlightened view of their long-term self-interest often conflicts with their desire for immediate gain.

[W]hile moral education would help to give school children a set of values which could guide them in their adult life, this may not be sufficient to provide the cultural ballast to withstand the stresses of living in a fast changing society exposed to influences, good and bad, of an open society such as ours. With the large scale movement to education in English, the risk of deculturization cannot be ignored. One way to overcoming the danger of deculturization is to teach children the historical origins of their culture (Report of the Ministry of Education 1978).

In 1979 a moral education programme was launched which had been developed by a Catholic priest. It dealt with an individual's awareness of self and of her or his relation to society. It encouraged young people to identify the values underlying the choices facing them, to make the choice they wanted and to accept the consequences. But some of their parents chose to vote for the opposition in

the 1981 Anson by-election, and the PAP-state decided this choice should not be encouraged. It stopped the programme.

While the young people were being taught responsibility in decision-making, they were also being initiated in the concept of rights, individual and social. This was really too dangerous. In 1982 the programme which had already been developed for secondaries one and two was stopped (Voices from Singapore December 1990: 3).

The PAP-state then appeared to conclude that a moral and cultural grounding which would minimise the assertion of individual political rights could be supplied by the formal teaching of religion from an academic perspective.

This unsentimental, pragmatic view of religion as a means of social control potentially at the disposal of the state was not disguised. The PAP-state's lack of sentiment for religious tradition had recently been well proven by the demolition of a 120-year old Chinese temple by the Housing and Development Board for a swimming complex. In 1977 the central Sikh temple had been destroyed for another HDB complex. Both acts had been strongly opposed by the respective religious communities (Asia Yearbook 1979: 289).

In 1982, Education Minister Goh Keng Swee introduced compulsory religious education as an examination subject in secondary schools from 1984. Every student had to study at least one subject from a list which included Confucianism,

Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. At the same time the general population was subjected to an extended government campaign on Confucian ethics, relating the topic to the use of Mandarin and to Chinese identity. This was the government's ideological conditioning of Chinese Singaporeans for the 1984 general elections: an attempt to stem the electoral tide towards the opposition which the Second Industrial Revolution had accelerated. It was a response to political struggle and the message was that parliamentary opposition was not merely un-Asian but anti-Asian.

In the third quarter of 1982, eight Confucian scholars were invited by the Ministry of Education to help draft guidelines for the subject of Confucian Ethics. They gave public talks on the subject in English and Mandarin, and held discussions with relevant bodies such as the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the National University of Singapore. The Chinese dailies published, almost every day for months, articles and comments on the subject....[S]ome of these Confucian scholars (from the United States) expressed their impressions obtained from ethnic Chinese pupils in the secondary schools they visited that most Chinese would choose to study Confucian ethics (Chiew 1983: 257; my emphasis).

In other words, the PAP-state succeeded in letting Chinese students know that another subject of merit was Confucian Ethics and that there was no doubt at all that this was their cultural heritage. Since it was expected that students would take the subject most relevant to their own cultural heritage, the majority of Chinese were thereby induced to take courses in Confucian ethics, which stressed

the moral rectitude of loyalty to the patriarchal state even at the expense of one's personal well-being.

Confucius, according to Goh Keng Swee, "believed that unless the government is in the hands of upright men, disaster will befall the country. By the way, in this respect, the PAP also believes the same thing" (ST 4 February 1982). The implication was that if a government is in the hands of "upright men" like the PAP, then it should not be questioned but respected and obeyed (Rodan 1989: 172-3). Announcing the scheme, Goh Keng Swee threatened that any parents who did not want their children to study any religion or system of ethics would be personally interviewed by him (FEER 19 October 1989).

This use of religion also had a deeper purpose beyond that of undermining immediate parliamentary dissent or inducing conformity in the young. Confucianism and the major religious traditions all sanctify hierarchical, patriarchal familial relations. Thus, this ideological reinforcement of male power was also aimed at the increasing opposition of women who were refusing to breed and work at the new intensity required by the PAP.

Political Achievements of Meritocratic Intensification

The more rigorous and targeted sorting practices of the new education system achieved some useful results for the PAP-state. Educational levels improved.

TABLE 5.2: EDUCATIONAL LEVELS
(% total labour force)

	less than primary	secondary	post-secondary	tertiary
1974	40.3	19.7	6.2	2.4
1985	22.8	29.3	11.0	5.2

Source: Linda Lim 1989: 178.

However, these levels remained markedly behind those of Singapore's competitors. South Korea and Taiwan remained far ahead in tertiary education (FEER 25 August 1988: 59; Linda Lim 1989: 179). Those educated to university level in Singapore constitute 12 to 13 per cent of the population, compared to 32 per cent in South Korea and 20 per cent in Thailand (Elegant 1989: 18).

The political effects of this sharp intensification of exploitation and social control were also very clear in terms of the social structure and of suppressing struggle. Salaff's study of Singapore families before and after the launching of the "second stage" economy showed three major effects: the reinforcement of the class structure, the

increased use by the poor of welfare mechanisms, including the education system, and further fragmentation of the working class.

She discovered that poor parents used the school system more than previously, but that their children remained at the bottom of it. She noted their disadvantages in planning their childrens' education, in employing tutors for private tuition and in choosing schools (Salaff 1988: 249).

Salaff's examination of the new skills training programmes showed that the poor "are least likely to upgrade their jobs through training programmes" and that men without diplomas could not compete for the better jobs (Salaff 1988: 230, 263). She found that few firms hired women graduates of training programmes and that working class women were generally doomed to low wage labour (Salaff 1988: 234).

A family's ability to buy a home in the public sector and the extent of its use of educational and family planning programmes turn on income, education and property....Thus the Singapore development strategy has changed outward appearances of family life-style more than internal relations....families retain their distinct positions in the class structure and in wage labour (Salaff 1988: 262).

With the attempt to upgrade skills, the opportunities for upward social mobility were taken by some better-off

elements of the working class and of the lower middle class. According to Salaff, this only worsened the fragmentation of the working class.

[N]ow that sections of the formerly poor are advancing, and with the meritocracy as the overarching ideology, the community of the poor is not cohesive. Families that have bettered themselves contract their ties to a small circle....[V]ery poor families have lost their supportive community (Salaff 1988: 268).

Other writers have also noted the sudden increase in poverty and inequality.

Between 1979 and 1983, income inequality widened between workers in different occupations and between workers with different educational qualifications. By 1983 the average earnings of administrative and managerial personnel were five times more than those of production and service personnel (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 331).

Therefore, in terms of the PAP's political agenda, there were positive developments. Educational and skill levels were improved, though not enough. At the same time the working class was tied more firmly into the educational sorting mechanisms, and its capacity for class solidarity was further undermined by increased inequality.

It would appear from early trends that initiatives for ante-natal streaming of the working class were also having the desired effect. But the associated attempt to raise

the fertility of capitalist class (educated) women failed (Yap 1989: 470).

The imposition of Confucian ethics achieved some degree of legitimation of the PAP-state's welfare objectives. The sudden concern to re-assert patriarchal relations through emphasis on the extended family and filial piety, which the PAP-state had previously been instrumental in breaking down, included the pedestrian aim of relieving the government of the increasing cost of welfare expenditure on the elderly (Linda Lim 1989: 180). This came at a time when it wanted to increase its funding of infrastructural developments.

The government's promotion of filial piety was certainly to some extent motivated by the expected shortfall in land available for public housing. It also provided justification for government attempts to curtail welfare spending which would enable increased expenditure on economic development (Rodan 1989: 173).

This enlargement of the nuclear family by tacking on elderly parents, was an attempt to lower the overall cost of welfare by loading more costs on to the primary social unit. This objective was eloquently expressed by Senior Minister Rajaratnam:

We want to teach people the government is not a rich uncle. You get what you pay for. We are moving in the direction of making people pay for everything....We want to disabuse people of the notion that in a good society the rich must pay for the poor (Vasil 1984: 168).

This was not a genuine attempt to recreate the extended family, since that would entail the recreation of autonomous communities with their web of kinship relationships. Not only would such a development be against the social control interests of the PAP, but it would also be impossible without major changes to Singapore's capitalist social relations.

However, Confucian ethics and religious instruction in schools was primarily concerned with legitimating the new level of exploitation by engendering obedience and loyalty and reinforcing patriarchal relations against the interests of women. The success of this primary aim was doubtful.

By 1985 it was clear that PAP-state's rigorous control of the centralised education system had indeed enabled it to initiate rapid change to meet the labour requirements of a high technology economy.

The new educational programmes overtly support the high technology economy. They not only train the next generation of workers and structure their goals for the future but also bring parents at each class level into the social order in support of the second stage economy (Salaff 1988: 264).

But it was also clear that Singapore had fallen short of the objective and new contradictions had arisen.

A Crisis of Legitimacy

By late 1985, the contradictions of the PAP's policies had produced political effects which amounted to a crisis of legitimacy. The struggles which had arisen resulted from contradictions between the strategies for reproducing the class structure, for reinforcing the subordination of women and for racial domination. Aspects of all these strategies had been implemented within the education system in a way which sharpened conflicts of interest and undermined the ideological legitimacy of the process of social sorting. With the recession in 1985, the PAP could no longer disguise the fact that the crisis in social relations had undermined its accumulation strategy. The PAP-state faced a crisis of considerable proportions. We will now examine the contradictions behind the struggles which emerged, before looking at how the PAP-state has sought to restore its legitimacy.

Education and Class

The ideological power of meritocratic sorting comes, as we have seen, from its appearance as a natural social ordering process and from its appearance of being in the interests of all individuals. The Second Industrial Revolution's sudden shift of policy, necessary to forestall the dissent arising from fifteen years of the EOI policy, meant it was not possible to portray these objectives as always in the

interests of the groups singled out. The sharp, ruthless and explicit targeting of different sectors of society for different treatment revealed the PAP's real political objectives. Neither was it possible for these developments to seem a natural progression of existing practice. Far from negating rising opposition, the Second Industrial Revolution further stimulated it.

For example, the ideological impact of early streaming was to heighten the sense of competition at all levels of education and to increase the fear of failure as well as, for the working class Chinese and Malays, the certainty of failure. This certainty began to undermine the ideological assumption of equal opportunity. The priority scheme for children of graduate mothers alienated both educated women (i.e. of the upper and middle classes) who felt classified as mere breeding machines, and working class women who felt deeply discriminated against.

The most visible manifestations of the struggles which created this crisis included electoral opposition, with the loss of the 1981 by-election and a twelve per cent swing against the PAP in the 1984 general election. In addition, by the mid-1980s, about 2,000 families per year were emigrating to Western countries. After 1985 the outflow increased considerably, and the government estimate of around 10,000 families between 1986 and 1989 is probably a

very conservative figure (STW 21 January, 26 August, 16 December 1989). In 1989 itself, an estimated 4,700 families (16,000 people) emigrated (Elegant 1989: 18), a figure proportionately not far below the exodus of the middle and upper classes from Hongkong, who faced an uncertain future with China (The Economist 10 March 1990: 37).

This loss of educated Singaporeans represented a serious blow to the PAP's industrialisation policy of upgrading the educational level of the population. Lee Kuan Yew spent much of his 1989 National Day address on this issue, making a very emotional appeal for loyalty. The Straits Times headline read: "PM, close to tears, tells nation: Singaporeans must have conviction that this is their country and their life". Directly addressing emigrants, Lee declared: "You are a washout." The foreign media noted, "leaving is perhaps the cruelest of opposition gestures" (The Economist 11 November 1989: 41).

Escape as a form of struggle reflects the realisation of the middle class that their or their children's chances of joining the capitalist class are minimal. Mass emigration indicates a breakdown in the educational ideology of meritocracy as well as a conflict between the political needs of capitalism in a neo-colony and the ideology of bourgeois liberal democracy. People realised that no

matter how often they voted against it, the PAP would not relinquish control. While it relies on the forms of liberal democracy for its legitimacy, it cannot loosen political control if its accumulation strategy, its alliance with imperialism and its political hegemony are to be guaranteed.

Patriarchy and Capitalism

By 1985 the PAP-state also faced struggles arising from the failure of its linkage of population policy to educational practices in order to reproduce the class structure. The results of ante-natal streaming showed that, while the government could to some degree discourage poor Chinese women from breeding, it had less effect on racial minorities, especially Malay women. Also, its attempts to raise fertility among the better educated had largely failed (Yap 1989: 470).

Over the long-term, the Population Planning Unit of the Ministry of Health estimated, on the basis of the birth rate, a 25 per cent decline in the 15-29 age group from 816,000 in 1985 to 619,000 by the year 2000. In 1986, 60 per cent of clerical workers, 40 per cent of production workers and 30 per cent of all service workers were under 30 years of age. Hence the manufacturing, financial and services sectors would be hard hit by this decline (FEER 25 August 1988). Combined with the slow rise in educational

levels, this trend made the government's short-term aim of having 20 per cent of the labour force in professional or technical jobs by 1995, compared to less than 14 per cent in 1980, look increasingly unrealistic (The Economist 15 August 1987: 22). The total population was forecast to peak in 2010 at 2.9 million and then decline by the end of the century to half its present size (Asia Yearbook 1988: 223).

In short, the PAP-state faced a crisis not only of its attempt to improve the skills of the existing labour force but of maintaining the class and race structure of that force over the long term. The reproduction and strengthening of a highly educated Chinese meritocratic capitalist class was threatened by the exodus of Chinese professionals and the refusal of the remaining educated Chinese women to reproduce their race and class at replacement rate. A declining proportion of Chinese in the population would undermine the legitimacy of a Chinese capitalist class in a Malay region.

But the political objectives of the ante-natal streaming policy need to be placed primarily in the context of the PAP-state's aim of extracting the maximum potential labour power from women. Put bluntly, it wanted more labour from working class women and fewer of their babies, and it wanted both more labour and more babies from middle and

upper class women. That is, the government had identified women who were not presently in wage labour as a significant labour source as well as being crucial to its eugenics strategy for reproducing workers. Working class women with fewer babies would pollute the talent pool less and be more available for wage labour, much of it part-time and low paid with below average welfare costs, thus generating greater surplus value.

The refusal of middle and upper class Chinese women to reproduce was the main form of struggle behind the failure of this PAP policy. They refused in a number of ways: by not getting married at all, by marrying late and having few children, if any, or by escaping the PAP-state's breeding controls altogether. The latter option included emigration, marriage to a foreigner, or both. The social and political sanctions against unmarried women having children have rendered the single parent family without patriarchal dominance almost impossible.

The openly discriminatory nature of the graduate mother scheme, arising from its explicit connection between class and educational privilege, was a major stimulus of this struggle. But the conflict between patriarchy and capitalism went deeper than this one policy.

It is first necessary to understand the priority of the patriarchal system of social relations as control of women's breeding.

Patriarchy's dynamic power is centred in the controls which are developed to limit women's options in relation to motherhood and mothering (Eisenstein 1980:46).

The first appropriation of private property [in human history] consists of the appropriation of the labour of women as reproducers (Lerner 1986: 52; her emphasis).

In contrast, the priorities of capitalist social relations are the exploitation of labour power in the work place and of unpaid labour in the home. Thus, women in Singapore are required for their reproductive labour, their wage labour and their unpaid domestic labour. Working class women are under pressure to deliver all these forms of labour.

Middle and upper class women are under pressure to deliver more babies than working class women as well as to engage in paid work. However, often they employ foreign women as domestic workers and are thereby increasingly freed from such unpaid work themselves. Through the levy paid to the government, which is in addition to the maids' wages, the PAP-state has ensured that educated women reimburse the cost of reproducing this labour.

Thus, Singapore women are subject to two systems of power organising in relation to each other. Eisenstein points

out how conflicts between patriarchy and capitalism are proof of the autonomy that each system must have from the other in order for each to act in the interests of both. Otherwise they tend to undermine each other (Eisenstein 1980: 52).

Referring to the United States, she examines particular conflicts

as representative of the tensions between the capitalist economy (and its supportive liberal values of equal opportunity and rugged individualism) and the patriarchal relations of the hierarchically-organised sexual division of labour and its related protective values. The state's objective is to try and create cohesion between these systems as they need to function as one, with one set of priorities...protecting the capitalist patriarchal order. But at present the cohesion is disrupted by conflicts between the relations of patriarchy and the ideology of liberalism, i.e., the lack of opportunity for women in patriarchy vs. the ideology of equal opportunity; the relations of capitalism and the ideology of patriarchy, i.e., the need for women wage workers vs. the ideology of woman in the home; and between the ideology of patriarchy and the ideology of liberalism, i.e., the ideology of women's inequality vs. the image of equal opportunity (Eisenstein 1980: 53).

These tensions exist in Singapore. As women have internalised the capitalist ideology of meritocracy with its individualistic values through their involvement in education, they have come into conflict with hierarchical male dominance both at home and in the work place. The pressure to work has emphasised the similarity between husband and employer in terms of subordination. The

pressure to breed has exacerbated the contradiction between personal achievement through paid labour and the patriarchal state's appropriation of their reproductive labour. These conflicts have undermined patriarchal relations just when the development of capitalism to a new stage needed them.

The government's promotion of patriarchal ethics and religion also back-fired by sharpening the contradictions between patriarchy and capitalism. The social ethics of Confucianism and major religious traditions, with the exception of forms of Christianity deeply influenced by capitalism, are generally based on the pre-capitalist self-sufficient home where the patriarchal family was an integral part of the system of production. However, "the capitalist patriarchal family is based on the distinction between domestic and wage labour, and hence is represented ideologically as separate and apart from the world of work (wage labour)" (Eisenstein 1980: 50).

Religious education undermined the ideological separation of home and work, as did the explicit PAP demands to produce more children for the work force. There was a widespread feeling among women that the state had intruded too far into personal matters (Quah and Quah 1989: 114). Thus, many middle class Chinese women were prepared publicly to oppose Confucian ethics as anachronistic,

oppressive and alien. Some Chinese Christian women were drawn to liberation theology and Christian feminism as an ideological critique of PAP policy. Since the PAP-state had officially encouraged religious education within the state education system, it could not immediately suppress this dissent which the contradictions of its own policies had stimulated.

Middle and upper class women were able to vent their opposition to the linkage between breeding, education and religion because they faced less risk of censure and could do so without directly attacking the PAP's accumulation strategy. Probably, their greater investment in meritocratic education made them more aware of the contradictions than working class women, who were not only more exploited but also subject to greater social control. Thus, bourgeois women did not connect their dissent to class and race in a fundamental critique of PAP economic policy. For example, the alternative policy of expanding welfare provisions to ensure greater educational opportunities for the disadvantaged after they were born, and thereby obtaining the required talent from all sectors of society, was not central to their critique. Therefore, even with regard to a deeply unpopular policy, the government did not lose the political initiative completely. Nevertheless, women did not cooperate with its breeding policies.

Racism and Class

The racist priority of the PAP-state to reproduce the Chinese capitalist class faced, as we have noted, the contradiction of an increase in the Malay and Indian birth rate. Since the overwhelming majority of these races are consigned to the working class by the education system, the refusal of women of these races to put up with state control of their mothering by cutting their reproduction rate, can be seen as an act of political resistance: a long-term attack on the capitalist class as a Chinese preserve.

The linkage of education to reproduction patterns in the graduate mothers was detected as racist by Malays who were aware of their low achievement rate in the education system. The public emphasis on Mandarin and Confucianism during this period also alienated them, as it clearly exhibited the racial priorities of the government.

Furthermore, the PAP exacerbated these tensions by imposing religious education. This added another explosive factor to the fraught equation between ethnicity and language which the government had already politicised within the education system. Now each student's official classification according to ethnicity, language and religion determined at least two of the subjects taken and also the chances of educational success. Malays were

forced to take Malay language as their second language and Islamic studies as their religious subject. Neither had any value in the scheme of the PAP's political economy, a fact made abundantly clear by the PAP's constant and almost exclusive emphasis on Mandarin and Confucianism.

The combination of racism and class discrimination suffered by Malays ensured strong electoral opposition from this community. This added to the PAP's crisis of legitimacy. Their disloyalty did not go unnoticed by the PAP as we have seen from the racial quotas imposed in HDB estates soon after. But the PAP was not fundamentally concerned about this minority (or the smaller Indian community), which it could suppress relatively easily, provided Malays did not increase their numbers as a proportion of the total population. It would appear that the PAP realised it would never have legitimacy in the eyes of the Malay working class. It thus merely aimed to contain them within the lower sections of that class, including the latent reserve, while ensuring that a token few entered the capitalist class to enhance the legitimacy of the PAP's multiracial image.

Regulation of foreign workers was the other focus of state racist practices. Employment-pass holders, overwhelmingly Caucasian and Chinese middle class professionals and business people from Malaysia and elsewhere, were able to

bring their families to Singapore, to marry Singaporeans, to use the education system and to join the CPF (an incentive to foreigners who could take out the total amount in cash on departure). Work permit holders, mainly working class production workers, construction labourers and domestics, from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, were stringently controlled and routinely denied the rights accorded employment-pass holders. This fragmentation of the working class, engendered by racist policies, had advantages in cementing social control over the whole class.

But, by 1985, the PAP faced a crisis arising from the contradictions of its own policies of encouraging communalism, class discrimination and patriarchal domination. By linking these policies within the education system, it had stimulated the growth of new struggles against itself and ensured the failure of its revolution.

The Failure of the Revolution

The failure of the Second Industrial Revolution became starkly obvious in 1985 with hardly any technological upgrading of the economy taking place, a 40 per cent decline in investment and slackening demand for its manufactured products. Singapore suffered its worst

recession in twenty years, and its gross domestic product declined by almost two per cent (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 299). The high wage policy had forced many Singaporean companies out of business and caused foreign investors to seek cheap labour elsewhere.

Unit labour costs [in Singapore] rose by 40 per cent in 1980-85, four times faster than in Taiwan and the US, while South Korea's costs stayed the same and Hongkong's actually fell (Asia Yearbook 1987: 236).

With the prospect of a highly skilled labour force still decades away despite the refinement of the educational sorting mechanisms, Singapore's labour remained less educated and less skilled than its main competitors while its cost was greater (Linda Lim 1989: 179). Thus, the new educational practices had failed to achieve their goals.

If the PAP-state leadership had harboured any illusions about its partnership with foreign capital being a relationship between equals, these had been dispelled.

[I]n reality foreign capital was the undisputed senior partner in the alliance, as underlined by the dismal results of the PAP state's ambitious effort to upgrade Singapore's industrial structure from labour-intensive to high-tech manufacturing in the 1980-85 period (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 297).

The PAP-state discovered that it could not, of its own volition, change its role in the partnership with foreign capital. It had to continue to accept a subsidiary

position. In particular, increased dependence on Japanese investment and the reluctance of this capital to upgrade its technological quality forced a shift in the alliance with imperialism that the PAP-state was not ready to deal with.

The task facing the government in 1985 was to regain international competitiveness and to consolidate its position at the leading edge of NIC production. We have already noted in the Chapter Three how the PAP took steps to achieve this. But it also had to shore up its political legitimacy at home to overcome the struggles which had caused the failure of its economic strategy.

RESTORING LEGITIMACY: PRIVATISING THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

After a period of reassessment, the PAP-state took a range of steps to restore its legitimacy. In education, this adjustment is not obvious from the priorities and content of the educational practices. The requirements of the alliance with foreign capital continued to be consolidated. However, the education system was de-linked from its explicit connections with the class-based state-breeding strategies which had previously undermined its legitimating

meritocratic ideology. Instead the PAP-state moved to integrate more systematically its control of women's reproductive labour with immigration policy to ensure the long-term consolidation of the Chinese capitalist class and to meet its adjusted prescription for the structure of the working class. The PAP-state also distanced itself from direct political responsibility for the educational process of sorting class agents into their class positions. It began a programme of privatisation of education. At the same time, the PAP-state re-aligned its communalist education strategy to suppress current political resistance. Finally, it sought to achieve ideological hegemony through the formalisation of a state ideology and it gave up the attempt at using religion for this purpose.

The above actions were the major initiatives taken to restore the legitimacy of the education system and of the PAP. They did not address the fundamental contradictions of PAP policy. Rather they constituted a counter-attack on the forms of struggle which had arisen and which were the political manifestations of these contradictions. After 1985, we can observe the PAP-state counter-attacking each kind of political resistance, not only those which surfaced in education.

For example, it also adjusted the mechanisms for the legal expression of dissent, this is, voting in parliamentary

elections. As we noted in Chapter Four, the government introduced the Town Council scheme to prevent HDB residents from casting opposition votes without a cost to themselves in terms of services and property values. As we will see in the next chapter, it restructured the electoral system to prevent opposition votes being translated into opposition seats, and it criminalised opposition politics to discourage anyone from standing for these seats.

In this section we will examine each initiative in turn: the consolidation of educational priorities in accordance with the political economy; the adjusted strategies for reproducing the capitalist class and the working class; the privatisation of education; the re-alignment of communalist policies; and the formalisation of a state ideology.

Consolidation of Educational Priorities

Since 1985 there have been several reports re-affirming the educational priorities of the Second Industrial Revolution. The 1986 Economic Committee report called for a more skilled and creative labour force. This was responding to the realisation that, even to keep at the leading edge of NIC production, something more had to be done about the fact that roughly half the Singapore labour force still had only primary-level education or less and also that National

University of Singapore graduates were better at following manuals than dealing with concepts or thinking for themselves (FEER 25 August 1988; STW 25 March 1989: 12). A 1990 report Building a Firm Foundation was based on a study of Japan and Taiwan and recommended a more rigorous streaming process, single session schools, teacher upgrading and more moral education (STW 4 August 1990). The Minister of Education went on record that "there was a need for Singapore's education system to move away from the British-American model - which provides a general liberal education for all - to one akin to the German-Swiss system which stresses technical and/or vocational education for the majority of students" (STW 28 July 1990). He later stated:

It is clear, therefore, that maintaining and, indeed, improving levels of achievement in Mathematics and English must be a primary task of the Ministry of Education. If levels of achievement in these two subjects drop, we will suffer an overall decline in the educational performance of our children, which will have long term adverse economic consequences for Singapore (STW 17 November 1990).

These statements and reports show no deviation from previous practices, only refinements and re-affirmations of them. In spite of popular resistance, the PAP remained committed to increasing social control through more rigorous sorting, and forcing through an educational agenda politicised by its links with imperialism.

In line with these priorities, there were steps to "improve" the education system, such as the establishment of a second university (STW 7 March 1990), and students at the National University of Singapore were awarded marks for speaking in tutorials as a way to promote creativity (STW 13 October 1990: 7). More worker training schemes were launched, such as the Worker Improvement through Secondary Education (WISE) programme set up in 1987 to give the 600,000 eligible workers, 53 per cent of the labour force (including the 23 per cent who had no schooling at all), basic competence in English and mathematics (Asia Yearbook 1987: 236; The Economist 15 August 1987; GOS 1989a: 196).

The main innovations in educational content reflected the shift in the internationalisation of capital. The growing importance of Japanese and European capital in a multipolar imperialist alliance was recognised in the opportunistic encouragement of French, German and Japanese language learning. This was the PAP's formal acknowledgement in educational practice of the need to attract more capital from the European Community and Japan (STW 1, 22, 29 September 1990).

Bourgeois Women in Labour: De-Linking Education

The PAP did not draw back at all from its determination to reproduce the Chinese capitalist class. Neither did it lessen the pressure on middle and upper class Chinese women to have more babies. If anything, the pressure increased as a major source of racial replenishment was drying up. Educated Malaysian Chinese now, in Lee Kuan Yew's words, "leap-frogged" Singapore for the West (STW 26 August 1989).

But, in 1985, the government did withdraw the graduate mother priority scheme in the face of sustained public anger. It continued to pursue the same objectives but without the explicit link between class and educational privilege that this scheme demonstrated. Instead of using educational qualifications to target the class of women it wanted to breed, and instead of using priority entry for their children as an incentive, the PAP-state switched to targetting income levels.

In 1987, the government introduced income-related incentives for bourgeois women to have children. Tax relief for a third child was increased and a tax rebate of \$20,000 added. That is, if your household income was sufficient to attract more than \$20,000 in tax, then you received that amount back as a rebate. In 1988, tax reliefs for children were doubled to \$1,500 and extended to

a fourth child. The same rebate was made available for a fourth child (STW 11 March 1989, 16 June 1990). In 1990, a tax rebate of \$20,000 was offered for couples who have their second child early and the five year claim period for the \$20,000 rebate for third and fourth children was extended to seven years (STW 22 December 1990). Although the child reliefs were aimed at maintaining the birth rate of the Chinese working class, the major incentives of tax rebates could only apply to those on high salaries, since only they paid sufficient tax to qualify for the rebates.

This was a policy switch from targeting class reproduction through educational levels to targeting it directly through income levels. It was a variation on the previously noted income targeting of the poorest in the working class for sterilisation whereby a maximum income level established eligibility for sterilisation cash incentives.

This tax strategy avoided the odium attracted by the graduate mothers scheme. As Lee Kuan Yew pointed out when congratulating the new generation of PAP leadership, the same political objective had been reached by other means:

Giving them [graduate mothers] preference for their children in school became very unpopular and very objectionable. So do we change? All right, we concede. But the principle to get more educated women to have more children has not changed. And income tax reliefs have been given, which means it's all fair, in accordance with what you pay the government.

If you don't pay, then obviously you can't afford to be given relief. So in that way, they [the new PAP leaders] have been able to get their objectives.... We have given not blanket incentives, not maternity leave for the third child which will encourage people who can't afford the third child to have one. So we give it to those who can afford.... It has produced results. That is the joy of working for Singapore (STW 1 September 1990).

Differentiation on the basis of class through income was ideologically acceptable to Singaporeans because it accorded with the ideological effect of meritocratic practices. A person's individual economic success was perceived as determined by their individual ability and efforts. The decision as to whether to take advantage of financial incentives was also seen as a personal one, not a discriminatory policy imposed by the state.

Having removed the ideologically damaging link with education, the PAP-state then went on the offensive. In a speech to a university audience on 12 December 1986, Lee Kuan Yew expressed concern about the step before breeding: marriage. That is, not enough single educated women were getting married: 39 per cent of women with a tertiary education were choosing to remain single. He also produced charts to show the "lop-sided" birth rate with Malays more than reproducing themselves, Indians nearly doing so and Chinese far behind. He further showed that the children of graduate mothers and graduate fathers were consistently at

the top of all educational levels, ahead even of those whose fathers but not mothers were graduates.

The primary, if convoluted, message to the assembled students was directed at male students, telling them to avoid marriage to non-graduate women:

[R]emember when you get married, be prepared, as Bernard Shaw says to an actress, to have your daughter as stupid as your wife and as ugly as you instead of as pretty as your wife and as smart as you. Now if you're satisfied with that, then marry her and vice versa. If you are not, then think again because there are shared attributes. Some 250,000 genes go into one chromosome. They don't come from outer space. It's the method of biological transmission whether it's fruits, animals or human beings (ST 16 December 1986: 25).

Lee recognised that in a patriarchal society, men can, by marriage, raise women of inferior class status to their own class level. The reverse can rarely happen. This mechanism for acquiring the reproductive labour of working class women is in conflict with the meritocratic practices of capitalism. It lessened the pressure on educated women to have their reproductive capacities appropriated by men of their own class.

Furthermore, it seemed that middle and upper class men were showing an increasing preference for their female social "inferiors". Local educated men were apparently reluctant to marry women educated to an equal standard as themselves,

because these women had internalised the individualism of meritocracy. They were a threat to patriarchal relations within the family. Lee sought to close off this form of female escape from social control by encouraging men to marry within their class.

Lee also re-affirmed that the government would not waste money on an equal standard of education for the working class:

Do these statistics lie? Every year it can be repeated. The West knows this. But the Western liberal says let's not talk about it, then we won't spend money on those who need that extra help. Well, maybe they can lavish their resources away. We can't. We've got to know what are the profiles. What returns for what investment (ST 15 December 1986: 19).

The above encouragement to students to marry within their class (and therefore race) and the statement that the government would spend money on them rather than the poor were not, of course, particularly offensive to them or the English-educated public.

The outcry came when Lee turned to the problem that upper class marriages, even if properly intra-class, yielded few children. He appeared to endorse an obvious solution.

Three years ago I was talking to some journalists, analysing these figures for them....And [a woman journalist] said to me, "But, Prime Minister, if a man wants to marry me for my genes, I don't want to marry

him." And I thought to myself, "What a silly ass of a girl."

When the Japanese zaibatsu chairman says, "Find me a son-in-law" to the vice-minister, he is wanting to ensure that his grandchildren will measure up. And the way the old society did it was by polygamy. The successful...had more than one wife. In fact, you can have as many as your economic status entitles you or can persuade people to give their daughters up to you. In other words, the unsuccessful are like the weak lions or bucks in a herd, they were neutralised.

So over the generations you must have the physically and the mentally more vibrant and vital reproduce. We are doing just the opposite. We introduced monogamy. It seems so manifestly correct. The West was successful, superior. Why? Because they are monogamous? It was wrong. It was stupid.

When Mr Tanaka was asked in the Japanese Diet five, six years ago, "You've got another mistress with children there?" he nodded in vehement agreement. He said, "That's quite right." And the more Tanakas there are in Japan, I have no doubt the more dynamic will be Japanese society (ST 15 December 1986: 19).

Four years later, in his final National Day address as prime minister, Lee again addressed a form of political struggle by women which offended his racial sensibilities and raised the spectre of a significant non-Chinese presence in the capitalist class: the marriage of educated women within their class but to Caucasian foreigners. He warned:

The Singapore woman is not stupid. She knows that white men marry you freely, they also divorce you freely. (Applause) And I believe the children will also be a plus because they are going to be highly competent and well-trained persons. Of course, you know there are innate prejudices. And I don't pretend that I don't share those prejudices. I do. If one of my sons had come back and said, "I've got this American lady whom I met in America, my first question

is, what colour is she? (Laughter) (STW 1 September 1990; parentheses in STW report).

Despite the racial pollution involved, consistency in its eugenics ideology demanded that the PAP-state recognise that the offspring of such intra-class unions would be highly intelligent. In order to keep the resultant high quality babies, permanent residence regulations were relaxed to enable such couples to remain in Singapore (STW 8 September 1990). Nevertheless, Lee lamented:

That 50 per cent of graduate girls will either marry down [less-educated men], marry foreigners or stay unmarried, it is a very unhappy position for any country to be in (STW 1 September 1990).

That the other 50 per cent of graduate women were marrying graduate men was, however, an "improvement" over 1983 when only 37.6 per cent did so. The increase was partially due to the establishment in 1983 of the government's Social Development Unit (SDU) which was an officially sanctioned and promoted dating service aimed at suppressing the two main forms of struggle by bourgeois Chinese women: remaining single and marrying foreigners. The SDU provided an education programme in how to have normal personal relationships, an area of knowledge previously denied to many young educational achievers. Educated single women and men in the civil service, statutory boards and major companies were pressured to register with the SDU and to attend its functions. Initially popularly lambasted as

standing for Single, Desperate and Ugly, the official pressure paid off to the extent that 240 couples were married through its auspices in 1988 (STW 29 April 1989).

Thus, in its initiatives to maintain the Chinese capitalist class, the PAP-state used the category of educational level to ensure intra-class unions. But the success rate of its official programmes remained far from solving the problem perceived by the PAP leadership. This was because the trends towards a single life style and fewer children were themselves a product of economic growth and meritocracy and of upper class membership. The conflict between patriarchal and capitalist social relations remains.

This conflict reached its most intense when the PAP-state arrested twenty-two middle class professionals and community workers in two security sweeps code-named Operation Spectrum on 21 May 1977 and a month later. They were detained without trial under the Internal Security Act and harshly interrogated, leading to an international human rights campaign for their release (Asia Watch 1989: 18). Twelve of the detainees were women, almost all single and/or childless. Politically, this act of repression can be seen as mainly directed at women who had risen to professional status in the meritocracy but had no desire to earn a lot of money and join the capitalist class, and who were not under patriarchal control through mothering.

Several days of continuous interrogation in underground cells was partly aimed at enabling the government to understand this political phenomenon, as well as being aimed at obtaining the usual forced confessions of complicity in a plot to overthrow the PAP. The PAP-state had minimal means of control over such people and resorted to brutal secret police tactics to suppress this form of struggle, which was subversive of both capitalist and patriarchal social relations. Furthermore, the detainees were involved in legal and welfare assistance to foreign workers and domestics, the most exploited section of the working class.

Adjusted Strategy for Working Class Reproduction

After 1985, the PAP-state changed the structure of the working class and its strategy for reproducing it to accord more closely with the pressures of its accumulation process and to suppress dissent.

The core of the working class would remain Chinese and male. Women would continue to be pressured into low-paid, part-time wage labour and used as a latent reserve. To help make up for the 120,000 Chinese babies short of replacement level since 1975 (Lee Kuan Yew in STW 26 August 1989), the reproductive labour of the better-off sections

of the working class would also be encouraged through child tax relief and adjusted school times. The government followed up on its plans to introduce single session schools to release women from child care during the day (STW 1 September 1990). It also brought in "full-time benefits" for part-time workers (STW 18 August 1990) in order to draw some of the 540,000 women not in wage labour into the labour force (STW 9 September 1989).

The breeding efforts of working class Chinese women would be supplemented by encouraging the immigration of Chinese skilled labour from Hongkong and elsewhere. Malays would be consigned to the bottom of the resident working class and little money would be wasted on the education of this core of political opposition.

Non-Chinese, temporary, foreign workers would be accepted as a permanent sector of the working class and, in light of this, would be even more rigorously controlled to prevent any individuals from gaining permanent residence status. Presumably, the denial of "full-time benefits" to this large sector of the working class enabled their provision to Singaporean Chinese women.

The encouragement of Hongkong migrants and the acceptance of a permanent, rotating sector of foreign workers need to be understood in the context of a racist policy to

undermine both the strength of the resident Chinese working class and of the Malay community.

Importing Chinese Breeding Stock

The PAP-state took advantage of the 1997 deadline and the post-Tiananmen panic to offer permanent residence to 100,000 Hongkong Chinese skilled workers (STW 15 July 1989). There is no quota limit for professionals. This was an attempt to acquire pre-sorted and skilled Chinese "breeding stock". The success of this scheme remains open to question, since Singapore is not a first choice for most Hongkong people. A year later, of the 14,500 skilled workers granted permanent residence, only 1,300 were living in Singapore. Of them, 950 were already working in Singapore when they applied (STW 24 March, 28 July 1990). Many Hongkong Chinese see Singapore as a Chinese island in a Malay sea and have doubts about its long-term stability. In addition, a Mandarin-English speaking Chinese society is not especially attractive to Cantonese speakers (STW 16 February 1991).

This scheme was justified as keeping Singapore's racial "balance" (STW 29 July 1989). Guaranteeing 76 per cent Chinese dominance was more accurately but less often referred to as keeping the racial status quo, as in the report of Lee Kuan Yew's 1989 National Day speech when he

sought to reassure the populace about the Hongkong migrant scheme:

"Let us just maintain the status quo. And we have to maintain it or there will be a shift in the economy, both the economic performance and the political backdrop which makes that economy possible." Mr Lee said statistics showed there will be significant differences in the economy of Singapore if the ratio were transposed. "You look at the educational levels of the performers. It has got to do with culture, nature and so many other factors. But year after year, this is the end result. Let's leave well alone. The formula has worked. Keep it."

Disclosing that a straw poll had indicated that Chinese Singaporeans favoured the new policy while Malays and Indians were against it, he said race was a human instinct that would not go away (STW 26 August 1989).

Lee knew the value of a racist policy in preventing working class solidarity.

Temporary Workers Become Permanent Sector

By the early 1980s it was already obvious, as we have noted, that Singapore could not survive without migrant workers to supplement the working class. That is, not only were the educated Chinese not reproducing themselves, but neither were the Chinese working class increasing their rate of reproduction to meet the demand for labour power. This is not surprising considering the government's family planning programme targeted at the working class. Labour shortages persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By 1991 there were an estimated 200,000 foreign workers in

Singapore out of a labour force of 1.3 million (FEER 21 February 1991).

These workers are divided by race into two very clear categories: traditional source (working class Malaysian Chinese) and non-traditional source (Thai, Filipino, Indian etc.). Malaysian Chinese are permitted to work in the service sector, although they may not exceed ten per cent of the workers in that sector (STW 10, 24 March 1990). Other races (nationalities) are restricted by government regulation to manufacturing, construction, shipyards and domestic help. To induce employers to restrict their reliance on foreign labour and to upgrade their technological level, employers must pay a levy to the state of \$300 per month per worker (to increase to \$350 per month from April 1991) (STW 10 March 1990; FEER 21 February 1991). This levy is part of the surplus created by the foreign workers and thus can also be seen as their reimbursement of the daily costs of their reproduction. Furthermore, in order to ensure that foreign workers do not acquire roots in Singapore and that the government is not liable for any welfare benefits for them, they are not permitted to join the CPF.

These workers are controlled by draconian immigration legislation (STW 28 January, 4 February 1989) which was first used in 1989 when the government expelled 9,800 Thai

workers and 1,900 Indian workers (STW 20 May 1989) on pain of caning and imprisonment. This initial use of the legislation was merely to ensure that immigration mechanisms exerted full control over all migrant workers in Singapore. Many of those expelled were later permitted to re-enter properly documented.

The regulations covering migrant workers ensure that they may not bring their families or breed in Singapore. All female workers, especially foreign maids, have compulsory AIDS tests and six-monthly pregnancy tests (STW 14 April 1990). Men may not marry without government permission on pain of immediate repatriation. Thus they have no children to be sorted by the education system and there are no welfare costs to the state.

The acceptance by the PAP-state that a significant and rising proportion of the population will consist of temporarily-resident foreigners is a major development of the late 1980s. The move to allow foreign workers into the services sector was a result of the failure of the attempt to upgrade the economy and the subsequent emphasis on services. In other words, it is an attempt to contain the emerging working class struggles which threatened the Second Industrial Revolution. The racial disadvantage, as perceived by the PAP, of having such a large number of non-Chinese workers has been offset by their political function

in fragmenting the working class. They have no political rights to exercise and are only interested in saving their wages to take back home. They also keep down wages in the industrial sector, and the government pays nothing at all for their generational reproduction.

This new policy also means that the education system and other welfare institutions no longer extend their regulatory mechanisms across the whole of Singapore society. The primary regulatory mechanisms for foreign workers are the immigration laws and their contracts with employers. This is a reversion to the practices of the colonial state.

Lee Kuan Yew acknowledged this role of feeding off the cheap labour and misery of surrounding countries as a permanent feature of Singapore's polity.

In another ten years, we will not get workers from Malaysia or Thailand. In another fifteen years, no more from Indonesia. We may have to go to Burma, Sri Lanka, because I don't think their problems are going to go away that easily (STW 1 September 1990).

The PAP-state's sale of arms to Burma's military junta appears as some insurance of Lee's veracity (FEER 3 November 1988). The government had also already initiated discussions with Burma for the purpose of finalising an agreement for labour supply (FEER 16 August 1990).

Therefore, the acceptance of 200,000 temporary foreign workers as a permanent low-paid sector of Singapore's working class meant the PAP-state no longer had to concern itself with the generational reproduction of this sector of the population or with using welfare regulatory mechanisms to shore up its legitimacy. But these problems remained with regard to the rest of the population.

Privatising Meritocracy

The 1984 election results and the public anxiety created by the intense competition for education precipitated the privatisation of education. The extreme politicisation of the state's delivery of this type of welfare was undermining its legitimacy. The government could not meet the raised expectations of the whole population and, as its graduate mother priority scheme demonstrated, it had no intention of doing so. The period since 1985 has therefore seen the PAP-state drawing back from direct political accountability for educational practices. This process has strengthened, not lessened its control. At the same time the elitism of the school system has been systematically reinforced. Thus the privatisation of meritocratic practices has intensified them but overcome the ideological problem of the PAP-state appearing to decide who succeeds,

even though it still does. Once again, it would appear to be by merit alone.

Privatisation refers not to the sale of state assets but to the devolution of the final individual selection decisions to schools which have been granted a restricted degree of administrative autonomy from the Ministry of Education. It also refers to the gradual withdrawal of state funding for education and the transfer of school financing to parents in the form of higher school fees. This accords with the PAP-state's policy of lowering the level of state welfare once sufficient educational infrastructure has been put in place to ensure the reproduction of a sufficiently skilled labour force. In 1989, the education budget was 14.6 per cent of total government expenditure, and the government wanted to reduce it (STW 25 March 1989).

As we have seen in previous periods, the competition to enter the top schools is intense and therefore highly politicised. It is no coincidence therefore that the PAP-state raised the idea of making the top schools "independent" in 1986 (Tham 1989: 492-3) and has proceeded to grant limited administrative autonomy to the six most prestigious high schools. The stated purpose was to "shift the focus of education innovation from the Ministry to the school" (Tony Tan, Minister of Education, STW 11 January 1987). To this end, the government is assisting the top

schools to upgrade their already high-grade facilities. Perhaps as a final realisation of Lee's desire in 1965 for elite "Eton-style boarding schools", the government has funded construction of hostels at some of these schools (Buchanan 1972: 290; STW 8 September 1990).

Although the Ministry of Education still controls who gets on the waiting list for these independent schools, the final decision on entrance is made by the school itself. Photographs of principals interviewing parents and their families have appeared in The Straits Times (STW 22 December 1990). The responsibility for rejecting aspirants to the top educational stream is now seen to lie with the schools, not the government. This ideological effect will be reinforced as more schools become "independent".

Soon after gaining independent status, the schools raised their fees by between 300 and 800 per cent within two years. From a common base of \$25 per month, fees have risen to as high as \$200 per month (STW 2 December 1989, 15 September 1990). These fees do not include the cost of books, uniforms or transport (FEER 17 January 1991).

There has been considerable publicity to convince the public that the schools are open to all who reach the required educational standard regardless of income. The government announced subsidies for "needy" students among

the 4,000 combined annual intake of the independent schools (STW 8 September 1990). But this is a public relations exercise which disguises two facts. First, it avoids questions as to the desirability of such an elitist school system. Secondly, it camouflages the role of ethnicity and class in determining merit.

For example, the poor cannot afford the years of private tuition which is now the norm for middle-class children from kindergarten through primary school. It is not unusual for a middle-class kindergarten child to be privately tutored three afternoons a week or for a primary school child to have three or four tutors in different subjects at a cost of \$200 to \$300 per month (STW 14 September 1987). Accordingly, the fee subsidies will go to a few lower middle-class children at no great expense to the government which at the same time reaps a huge dividend in terms of making the system appear equitable.

Lowering State Welfare Costs

The justification for the astronomical fee increases is to help the schools offer more educational choices and thus a more creative programme. But creativity will be for the rich; true to its word, the PAP-state is making quality education the preserve of the capitalist class. The fee hike for independent schools (which are still state-funded)

was the precursor to lowering state funding for all schools.

This strategy for the withdrawal of state welfare took another step forward with the announcement of the Edusave scheme in December 1990. The government said it would establish an endowment fund of one billion dollars which will generate sufficient income to pay about \$100 per year to every school child between six and sixteen years of age. Within a decade it is hoped the fund will grow to five billion dollars, and thus the annual amount remitted to each child's Edusave account will grow accordingly. The money can only be used for payment of school fees and for official extra-curricular activities (not private tutoring). The annual education budget of \$1.8 billion can be expected to drop as Edusave takes effect (STW 25 March 1989).

Announcing the scheme as a personal grand gesture of generosity after his ascension to the prime ministership, Goh Chok Tong said:

I have come up with the Edusave programme because I want to temper our meritocratic, free market system with compassion and more equal opportunities.

Under the free market system, the able and talented are encouraged to put their talents to maximum use. They will do better than those less able than them. Naturally, their children will have advantage over others.

With Edusave, all children, rich or poor, are brought to the same starting line. This is the philosophy behind the Edusave scheme (STW 22 December 1990).

The rhetoric of Goh's speech reveals the extent to which political struggles had forced the PAP to adjust its educational strategy. No doubt the pretence of humanitarian concern will have some effect in restoring PAP legitimacy. But, more importantly, Edusave will financially tie school children into a state controlled welfare mechanism. It gives the PAP greater power to put class agents in their class positions through education. The regulations for withdrawals from Edusave accounts will no doubt ensure that each student goes to that part of the education system that the PAP-state wants her or him be in.

Furthermore, the amount supplied by Edusave will be insufficient to meet future school fees at any school. As Goh pointed out, Edusave does not mean the beginning of a welfare state or handouts. Parents will still have to contribute to their children's education. It can therefore be anticipated that fees at all schools will increase as Edusave becomes available and the government progressively withdraws its funding. This also means that income will determine even more the quality of education that each family has access to. Edusave will provide just enough support to enable poor parents to send their children to the worst schools. For the upper class parents who can

already afford high school fees, the Edusave scheme will be a useful extra, sufficient perhaps to pay for ballet lessons for their children. Of course, to give the impression of equal opportunity every child will receive the same amount. This is the reason the government quickly rejected calls to give Edusave to the poor alone (STW 29 December 1990). But, in reality, the working class will retain the equal opportunity to remain unequal.

Thus the PAP-state's objectives in launching Edusave is to shift the cost of education directly on to parents, to restore its legitimacy by retaining control of the sorting practices at one step removed and to entrench meritocratic educational practices on the basis of income now that society has been initially sorted. It will not be fully funding the schools and it will appear not to be running them even though it will maintain a tight grip on educational policy. Its political control over education will thereby increase without the corresponding problems of direct political accountability and legitimacy.

The Edusave initiative will achieve with regard to primary and secondary education what the PAP-state has already begun to implement in tertiary education by means of fee increases and declining government subsidies. Similar control has already been extended with parents' CPF

accounts permitted to be drawn upon for tertiary fees (STW 18, 25 March, 1 April 1989).

Re-Alignment of Communalist Policies

After 1985, part of the PAP-state's response to the rising level of liberal democratic dissent in the population was to re-assert a communalist strategy in order to break up the political resistance that had emerged in various forms. It began to use Chinese-medium education against the English-educated Chinese. It persisted with strident "Speak Mandarin" campaigns which alienated non-Chinese. It also launched a public offensive against Malay educational and political discontent.

The increasing political activism of the English-educated middle class, especially women, surfaced through opposition parties, the Law Society, church community work and cultural groups. The trend towards liberal democratic dissent was countered with the usual means of repression: arrests under the Internal Security Act, forced televised confessions of a Marxist conspiracy, legislative suppression of the civil and political rights of targeted groups (Asia Watch 1989). At the same time the PAP-state increased its public ruminations about the values taught through Chinese-medium education and took initiatives which

suggested Mandarin should be taught at the expense of English (FEER 24 January 1991: 19-20). This was an attempt to destabilise the English-educated middle class.

Mandarin Against the Rest

The small number of Special Assistance Plan (SAP) Chinese-only primary and secondary schools were the subject of major debate in parliament during 1990 (STW 21 July 1990). SAP schools teach both English and Mandarin as first languages only to Chinese students. Nine Chinese schools were preserved by direct order of Lee Kuan Yew a decade previously in order to preserve a remnant of the Chinese education system (Seah and Seah 1983: 255, 262). These SAP schools were expected to transmit the values of "hard work, obedience, filial piety, respect for authority, moral rectitude, mutual support and a sense of social duty" (Tham 1989: 484, 496). In addition, Lee's motivation may have been to ensure a sufficiently high standard of Mandarin was maintained in one part of the education system to take advantage of long-term commercial opportunities in China.

In 1989, ten primary schools were chosen as "seed" SAP schools for teaching both Mandarin and English at first language levels and for transmitting Chinese values to Chinese students (STW 25 March 1989). Five more schools were added in 1991 (STW 16 February 1991).

In 1990 the Chinese-only SAP schools were the centre of a PAP-sponsored discussion in parliament about the problems of Western influence on the English-educated, the poor standard of Mandarin being achieved in the mainstream education system and the implications of monoracial schools for multiracialism (STW 17 March 1990). A statement by Goh Chok Tong about the possibility of introducing Mandarin-medium primary schools because Chinese teachers "are very good transmitters of values" seemed calculated to raise fears that the rules were being changed again (STW 29 September 1990). Not only were non-Chinese already disadvantaged by the emphasis on Mandarin and English, but placing Mandarin at the top of the meritocratic education tree would now disadvantage the Chinese middle and upper class who had not taken Mandarin seriously.

One government MP, with the clear backing of his superiors, entered the debate to push the importance of Mandarin-medium education, noting that non-English-educated Chinese "do not champion human rights and do not know much about their own legal rights, but they do have a strong sense of right and wrong, based on traditional Chinese values" (STW 27 October 1990). The aggressive "Speak Mandarin" Campaign of 1990 went beyond the encouragement of Mandarin instead of dialects to encouraging Mandarin to be spoken instead of English in the work place among Chinese (STW 6 October 1990). These initiatives had a predictably negative effect

on the upper and middle class, as well as minority races who perceived them as Chinese chauvinism (FEER 9 February 1989: 42; 24 January 1991: 19). But the main message was a warning to the upper and middle class to realise that their interests lay with the PAP and that they were not necessarily secure in their assumption of a place in the capitalist class. The PAP was letting them know it could change the rules. A regional journal pronounced:

[T]he generally younger English-educated segment of the population seems to increasingly hanker after a more open political system....Some observers say the PAP might have now decided to play its "Chinese" card against the demands for a greater degree of democracy from the English-educated electorate (FEER 24 January 1991: 19).

The PAP-state was using the communalist potential of its existing bilingual policy rather than implementing a new policy. It was lighting the fuse of the "Chinese language bomb" (Shotam 1989: 517) to scare those who had shown a tendency towards supporting the opposition.

Ethnicity and Language: Promoting Communalism

By the late 1980s, the bilingual education policy had not only promoted English as the de facto common language and the language of economic success; it had also produced English-Mandarin as the pre-eminent linguistic combination.

...Chinese has penetrated into the magic economic (as opposed to cultural) circle that English has dominated thus far. This opportunity has been provided by the

official correlation accorded the language and economic opportunities on the Chinese mainland. Further, there is a growing suspicion that employers discriminate in favour of those who have had an English-Mandarin bilingual education (Shotam 1989: 512).

The promotion of Mandarin as the symbolic language of all Chinese, whether or not they spoke it, set up a communal equation of ethnicity and language which had not previously existed: a united Chinese population against all others, especially against Malay indigenous opposition. The 1985 "Speak Mandarin" campaign made this equation explicit with its slogan "Mandarin is Chinese". The 1990 slogan offended even more non-Chinese and English-educated Chinese with its slogan "If you're Chinese, make a statement - in Mandarin" (STW 6 October 1990).

Thus to enforce a neat correlation - between English-Mandarin and ethnic Chinese, English-Malay and ethnic Malays, and therefore English-Tamil with ethnic South Indians - is inadvertently to keep the embers of language burning, so that the fires can easily be stoked up again (Shotam 1989: 517).

However, this policy was far from "inadvertent". The PAP-state has consciously pursued a racist policy to maximise communal manipulation by preventing Chinese students from studying Malay or Tamil as a second language and vice versa. The ethnic distribution of students and their second language options is a classified state secret, but the pattern is clear: language choices are officially predetermined according to race (Shotam 1989: 513, 517).

Under the guise of equal treatment of the major languages, the bilingual policy has therefore preserved and entrenched communalism with the second language option becoming a means for determining social mobility according to ethnicity. English-Mandarin is of first importance with English-Malay as a poor second and English-Tamil as a distant third. English-Mandarin is also, now, superior to English alone.

Thus current educational initiatives can be seen as PAP-state manipulation of communalism to ensure not only preservation of Chinese dominance, but the gradual replacement of an English-educated capitalist class with an Mandarin-English speaking semi-Chinese educated capitalist class. Minority races have put a lot of their resources into attaining a higher level of English proficiency. Now they are being faced with a Chinese-Mandarin ethnic-linguistic bias which excludes them. In addition, the primarily English-educated Chinese middle-class seeking liberal democratic political rights have been put on the defensive by the call to Chinese unity under the Mandarin banner. Previously seen as an empty slogan, this call is being backed up by substantive changes to educational practices.

The proposal for a new three stage primary education system with equal emphasis on English and mother tongue learning

(which means Mandarin for 76 per cent of the population) has to be understood in the context of this communal strategy and of the building blocks already put in place by the SAP and "seed" schools (STW 17, 24 November 1990). Statements by Lee Kuan Yew and other ministers that English will continue to be the common language and that other races can have exclusive schools if there is a demand, do not preclude this communal strategy (STW 25 March 1989, 3 November 1990).

On the other hand, the PAP cannot go too far down this path. It is sacrificing a higher general standard of English in order to undermine middle class political struggles. In the long term, it must maintain the standard of English or change its economic policies.

Consigning Malays to the Reserve Army of Labour

The implication of the Mandarin-English policy for Malays is that the inferior status of the Malay-English combination will be permanent. Despite the assurance that special schools will be established for them if they want them, the argument has been advanced that, since Malays already speak their mother tongue, such schools are not necessary. Hence, Mandarin-English Chinese-only schools will be the elite of all schools and Malays will be shut out on ethnic grounds.

This writing off of Malay education is extremely provocative and has been accompanied by other initiatives. To lower the cost to the state of Malay tertiary education (a paltry \$1.4 million per year because few Malays make it that far) and to remove it from direct political responsibility, the PAP-state has privatised the scheme and introduced means-testing (STW 9 June 1990).

Racial slurs against Malays in the education system have also been intensified. Malays have been told they should work harder on learning English and that, according to Lee Kuan Yew, the answer to Malay boys' under-achievement is more parental discipline (STW 25 August, 13 October 1990). Examination results have been publicly analysed according to racial composition by the Education Minister, who noted that Chinese achieve three times better than Malays in "A" levels. This was put down to "socio-economic factors, the importance placed on education by parents of various races, the different make-ups and aptitudes of the various racial groups" (STW 17 November 1990).

The number and frequency of PAP-state direct attacks on the Malay minority since 1985 indicate a new twist in the communalist strategy. The state visit of President Herzog of Israel in late 1985 seemed calculated to heighten communal tension in the region, with objections coming from Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Malays in Singapore.

However, the PAP smoothed over its regional government-to-government relationships with vague statements of regret while taking the opportunity to question local Malays' loyalty to the nation. Said Lee Kuan Yew of the Singapore Malays' negative reaction:

Are we sure that in a moment of crisis, when the heat is on, we are all together, heart to heart? I hope so. But we ought to have a fallback position and quickly fill up all the missing hearts if some go missing (Asia Yearbook 1988: 222).

Subsequently, the sensitive question of low Malay involvement in the Singapore Armed Forces (e.g. no Malay fighter pilots), because they could not be trusted to fight other Malays on behalf of Chinese, was raised openly (ST 23 February, 6 April, 18 May 1987). After the 1988 elections, Goh Chok Tong and other PAP leaders attacked the Malays for not voting for the PAP and said that various educational schemes to assist Malays would need to be reconsidered (STW 1, 22 October 1988).

Since then the issues of preventing racial enclaves (i.e. Malay concentrations) in public housing estates, the SAP schools, the Speak Mandarin campaigns and the recruitment of Chinese migrants from Hongkong have added to Malay grievances. The long-standing Malay resentment of PAP-co-opted Malay leaders has also surfaced publicly (STW 9 February 1991). Most recently Malay loyalty has again

been questioned by a Straits Times survey showing that most Malays did not support the war against Iraq whereas most Chinese did (STW 27 January, 9 February 1991). Despite Malay outrage at being singled out for criticism, the PAP has persisted in stating that the Malays are wrong and are not yet thinking like Singaporeans.

The PAP has no interest in permitting the cohesive Malay community to organise politically or advance educationally and economically, except on PAP terms, terms it has not accepted. Previously, the PAP-state strategy has been one of containment.

If we were less skillful, [a Malay opposition party] would have emerged. Because there was, even today, even in the last election...I know we didn't win more than fifty per cent of the Malay votes; we never did....But had there been a Malay group that emerged, and they would have emerged easily if we had proportional representation and not first-past-the-post in each constituency, you consider the polarisation that would take place as they expound Malay rights and Malay language, and the policies which they think should prevail seeing what goes on around us (Lee Kuan Yew at National University of Singapore, reported in ST 16 December 1986).

Now the PAP has decided simply to consign the Malay community permanently to the bottom of the working class. However, to ensure the continuing credibility of its claims to multi-racialism, it has also suggested that the brightest top ten per cent of Malay pupils should be "nurtured" through the education system by special

subsidies (STW 9 February 1991). This modest expenditure will guarantee a token Malay presence in the capitalist class.

The Malay minority can now be written off in this way because of the shift in the PAP's alliance with foreign capital. With the United States being unable to sustain its high level of military dominance in the region and the new importance of Japanese capital in Asia, the PAP-state has had to reconsider its long term security guarantees.

It has therefore attempted an accommodation with the capitalist classes of Malaysia and Indonesia by ensuring they have an increasing interest in Singapore's economic growth. Hence the "growth triangle" agreement between the three states jointly to develop Johor state and Riau province (especially Batam island) as an industrial hinterland for Singapore to soak up cheap labour and highly polluting industries.

The PAP-state also sought to minimise its past political conflict with the Malaysian state leadership by collaborating in internal security operations in 1987 to suppress liberal democratic and anti-communist dissent in both countries, using the stigma of alleged Marxist conspiracies and communalism. A common interest was thus re-affirmed in exploiting communist and red-scare tactics

to suppress legal, democratic dissent at a time that both governments faced a crisis of legitimacy (Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia 1988; The European Committee for Human Rights in Malaysia and Singapore 1990). Lastly, as we noted in Chapter Three, the PAP-state began military exercises with the Malaysian and Indonesian armed forces for the first time since independence (STW 27 May 1989).

The new relationship between the PAP-state and Malaysia and Indonesia has undermined the geopolitical potency of local Malay dissent. The PAP-state's communalist strategy has been aimed both at heightening tension in the region to divert attention from anti-imperialist movements and at suppressing domestic dissent among the Chinese working class. The current strategy moderates the regional thrust while intensifying domestic contradictions to prevent the emergence of inter-racial working class solidarity.

The intensified attack on the Malays is therefore related to the process of breaking up the liberal democratic political consensus emerging among the English-educated Chinese and Indians which would become an powerful political force if linked with entrenched Malay dissent. The schooling of Chinese in separate schools in Mandarin and the even greater class separation of Malays through

educational deprivation is a concerted attempt to block the long-term development of such political solidarity.

Thus, the re-alignment of communalist strategy together with the adjustment of population policy and the lowering of state welfare were among the changes associated with the shift to a multilateral alliance with foreign capitals which produced new demands for ideological legitimation.

The Search for Ideological Hegemony

As we have seen, capitalist and patriarchal systems of power which worked through differing and at times conflicting practices, had undermined each other's power base in the social structure. Together with communal and liberal democratic forms of struggle, these conflicts had threatened the ideology of meritocratic education and the legitimacy of the PAP-state.

But the PAP-state did not comprehend the relationship between practices and their ideological effects. Its view was that ideology was a pre-packaged system of beliefs that people held from intellectual choice or from forced exposure. It was this misunderstanding of ideology that led to the debacle of its religious education policy and

which has not been corrected in its attempt to regain ideological hegemony.

By 1988 the PAP-state decided that its introduction of religious education had been a mistake. Religious education had assisted in communicating to the young that there were higher authorities and allegiances than the state and had also given them, to varying degrees, an alternative ideological comprehension of society. The government realised that the values being taught somehow did not fit with life in a meritocratic, authoritarian society and were capable of being further developed in a manner outside its control.

Religious institutions had been among the last community organisations to remain comparatively autonomous in their own affairs and, with cultural and political life suppressed at all other levels, the young had been attracted to them and their ideologies. The spread of English made Christianity more accessible to young Chinese and, as a religion well-adjusted to capitalism, gave it an image as a modern religion. The number of Christians rose from 10.3 per cent of the total population over ten years of age in 1980 to an estimated 18.7 per cent in 1988 (Kuo, Quah and Tong 1988: 9; Ling 1989: 693; STW 22 April 1989). An estimated 60 per cent of Christians are converts. More significantly for the PAP, it has been estimated that 40

per cent of National University of Singapore students are Christian (75 per cent of medical students), 30 to 40 per cent of professionals, executives and managers are Christian as are 40 per cent of the general population between 15 and 25 years of age. Four cabinet ministers, more than a third of members of parliament and many senior government officials are known to be Christian. With 35.8 per cent of Christians being university-educated, it is the religion with the most highly educated following (FEER 2 July 1987; unofficial church sources). Christians are overwhelmingly English-educated Chinese middle and upper class members.

The rise in adherents was accompanied by the increasing influence both of progressive Christian social teaching in the Catholic church and of Protestant fundamentalist demands for evangelistic freedom. Both traditions were claiming the right publicly to judge the righteousness of government policies. The PAP-state realised its religious education policy was assisting the consolidation of autonomous institutional power bases which would threaten both its political and ideological hegemony (FEER 19 October 1989).

The government also had a continuing concern to contain the incipient Malay nationalism assisted by Muslim teaching,

especially in view of the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia and the Middle East.

Therefore, on 6 October 1989, the government announced two measures to deal with the situation. First, the Education Minister announced that Religious Knowledge was to be phased out and replaced by a civics course. Also, for the first time, voluntary religious education would be forbidden within school hours. This prohibition was aimed at Catholic church schools.

Secondly, in parliament on the same day, the Home Affairs Minister announced that legislation would be introduced to restrict the involvement of religious groups in politics (STW 7 October 1989). This was eventually passed in the form of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill, which enables the government by executive decision to suppress almost any activity of a religious institution or leader (GOS, Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill, Bill No. 1/90 1990; FEER 18 January 1990; STW 24 February 1990). We will examine this provision further in the final chapter which deals with the criminalisation of politics.

The government maintained it was taking these steps of abolishing religious education and criminalising religious dissent in the interests of racial and religious harmony. Yet ethnic minorities were the primary educational

casualties of the abolition of religious education and the government knew it.

A study done by the Education Ministry indicates that had there been no religion courses, there would have been 13 per cent fewer Malay students, 15 per cent fewer Indian students and 15 per cent fewer students from other minorities (including Eurasians) at pre-university institutions. The study also indicated that only four per cent of Chinese students used the religion courses to fulfil admission requirements (FEER 19 October 1989).

There could be no convincing argument that the initiatives were not politically motivated. The PAP belatedly saw the potential of religion as a unifying force against the state. Undoubtedly the role of the Catholic Church in the overthrow of President Marcos had precipitated the PAP-state's initial move against church community workers in 1987 and led to the realisation that religious education was not necessarily a passive instrument for shoring up the legitimacy of the state.

Unwittingly, by abolishing religious education, the PAP removed one of the educational practices which had exacerbated the conflict between meritocratic and patriarchal values. That it was unwitting can be seen by the reintroduction of this ideological tension in its newly formulated state ideology.

Ideology in Context

It appears that the PAP at least partially understood the reasons for the failure of its religious education policy. It saw that the formulation of ideological principles needed to be more closely related to the social and cultural context of the practices they were designed to legitimate, if not to the real ideological effects of the practices themselves. Religious ideology was too diffuse. People were able to think about their actions and their social context in ways which did not directly support capitalist social relations or which even opposed them.

Under the guise of formulating a national ideology suited to the religio-cultural context of Singapore, the PAP-state has proceeded to impose an ideology which it hopes will legitimate its political actions. Hence, the moves from October 1988 to develop a national ideology, leading to a Green Paper on National Ideology in 1989, a White Paper on Shared Values in 1991 (STW 24 June 1989, 12 January 1991) and numerous government-sponsored academic papers (e.g. Quah 1990).

According to the White Paper, the National Ideology is intended to provide the ideological content of moral education, mother-tongue language learning and civics in the education system, as well as the ideological parameters of the mass media. The National Ideology has been

variously described as being composed of "key", "shared" or "core" values which are common to the major ethnic and religious groups of Singapore and which are identifiably Asian rather than Western in nature (ST 6 January 1991).

These shared values are:

1. Nation before community and society above self.
2. Family as the basic unit of society.
3. Community support and respect for the individual.
4. Consensus not conflict.
5. Racial and religious harmony (ST 16 January 1991).

From the above it is clear that the PAP-state has elaborated a set of ideological principles far more closely related to the legitimation of its policies than derived and diffuse religious dogma. The "values" have been carefully chosen to accord with the PAP's past and present political strategies to reproduce the division of labour amenable to its alliance with foreign capital.

Under the first principle, wages can be lowered, individual human rights restricted and the grievances of minority communities ignored. The inevitable equation of the nation with the PAP-state is to ensure political loyalty. The interests of the local capitalist class and foreign capital

are identified as the national interest. As the President of Singapore said to parliament regarding this value:

Putting the interests of society as a whole ahead of individual interests has been a major factor in Singapore's success....If Singaporeans had insisted on their individual rights and prerogatives, and refused to compromise these for the greater interests of the nation, they would have restricted the options available (ST 6 January 1991).

The second value has been explained in the following terms:

The family is the best way to provide children with a secure environment to grow, and to look after the elderly. Singaporeans must not also uncritically adopt the "alternative lifestyles", such as casual sexual relationships and single parenthood (ST 6 January 1991).

This value seeks to legitimate the capitalist preference for the nuclear family because it is the social unit which can supply and reproduce the most labour power at least cost. It also reinforces patriarchal relations and thus male control of women's sexuality, specifically excluding the life patterns which would enable women to escape domination through parenting. In addition, the official denial of HDB flats to single people or single parents can continue on moral grounds while encouragements to breed can increasingly be given the moral tone of national duty.

The inclusion of grandparents has become especially important in avoiding higher welfare costs to the state in terms of child care as well as pensions and health.

TABLE 5.3: PROPORTION OF POPULATION AGED 65 AND OVER (%)

	1989	2025
Philippines	3.0	7.5
Indonesia	4.0	8.7
Malaysia	4.0	9.1
Thailand	4.0	9.1
Singapore	6.0	17.0
Japan	12.0	23.8

Source: STW 24 November 1990.

The third value reinforces the responsibility of the "community" rather than the state for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged. As the White Paper states:

[C]ommunity support for individuals will keep Singapore a humane society. At the same time, it helps us avoid the dependent mentality and severe social problems of a welfare state (ST 6 January 1991).

The fourth value legitimates the labelling of political dissent or even parliamentary opposition as anti-national and entrenches the PAP's supremacy. It promotes a petitionary political process rather than a participatory

one. Only the PAP-state has the political reach to organise national consensus.

The fifth value will be used to legitimate the PAP-state's communalist strategies and to suppress the grievances and political demands of the varying racial and religious groups.

It can therefore be expected that the PAP-state will attempt to consolidate its ideological hegemony through intensive educational initiatives based on the National Ideology. However, the PAP-state has not differentiated between the actual ideological effects of its educational practices (and other mechanisms of social control) and their desired ideological effects as represented by the National Ideology.

For example, common experience of meritocratic educational practices produces the shared ideological perception articulated by the Prime Minister's political secretary:

Competition in school is the natural result of Singapore society becoming more and more classless. The son of a noodle-seller can become a top manager in a large company provided he works hard and earns his qualifications (STW 9 December 1990).

Whether the National Ideology value of "society before self" will be perceived as consistent with this ideological

effect is dependent on the educational practices. That is, personal success can only be seen as a contribution to society as long as personal success is perceived by everyone as a realistic possibility for everyone. However, with the communalist shift in educational practices, the ideological effect for an increasing minority will be that no matter what they do, they will not be permitted to succeed. The reality that people succeed by putting themselves first (or their race and class) will be a more widely shared perception in contradiction with the National Ideology. Similarly, the changing patterns and perceptions of family life will continue to be shaped by the actual practices of the patriarchal family and patriarchal state, not by imposed values.

If the contradictions become too great, once again the government will undermine its own legitimacy by attempting to impose a set of beliefs which do not conform with people's perception of their own experience and which, because of possible alternative interpretations of the shared values, is susceptible to mobilisation against it. Already legal opposition parties (ST 16 January 1991) and the remnants of suppressed Catholic community groups have been criticising the National Ideology as an ideological weapon for PAP supremacy.

The national ideology is nothing more than a life-line for a party determined not to lose its hold over the

electorate and fearful of the people's increasing demand for democracy and human rights (Voices from Singapore December 1990: 8).

The PAP-state may then regret this official attempt at a systematic ideological statement of the social relations conducive to its alliance with foreign capital.

Education and Social Control

This examination of the historical phases of the PAP-state's alliance with imperialism has shown how shifts in this relationship have affected the educational practices that contribute to the maintenance of social relations in Singapore. The forms of struggle in Singapore have been a major influence in shaping and limiting the possibilities for capital accumulation arising from this alliance. That is, the forms of regulation have been directly related to the forms of struggle and of accumulation during each phase.

Educational practices have had the primary function of sorting agents into class positions for the reproduction of labour power. This sorting has been carried out by means of a meritocratic education system integrated with state breeding and immigration programmes. We have seen that all

these practices have operated in a racist and patriarchal manner.

The working class has been fragmented into a labour hierarchy. A core of mostly Chinese, mostly male workers has been created above a subsidiary floating reserve of Singaporean women who move in and out of the latent reserve. Beneath them are the foreign workers who also move between the floating and latent reserve; when they float or they enter the latent reserve they do so by leaving the borders of Singapore.

Meritocratic educational practices have maximised the advantages of wealth and linguistic heritage of the upper class while also focussing on the reproduction of a skilled, obedient middle class.

Legitimation of these practices has been achieved through their ideological effects and by the formalisation of these effects into the ideology of meritocracy by politicians and institutions. The struggle to lift oneself out of one's class through educational advancement, the dominant form of struggle, also legitimates educational practices rather than challenges them.

However, sharp contradictions have arisen. Using English-medium education to demolish Chinese education and destroy

Chinese working class political opposition has produced an English-educated middle class with a desire for liberal democracy as a potential basis of unity. The recent re-introduction of Mandarin as a weapon against them yields the irony of the English-educated middle class being a threat to the PAP. But it also lights the fuse of communalism to an extent that may prove to be beyond even PAP control.

As a means to produce submission through the imposition of ideology, the historical saga of moving between civics, moral education, values education, mother tongue learning, religious education and latterly the National Ideology, has also led to contradictions. The most serious disjunction to emerge may be the difference between the ideological effect of highly individualistic, class-based and racist meritocratic practices, the axioms of collective loyalty to the state and the needs of a system of patriarchal social relations.

Related to this contradiction is another: the conflict between tight authoritarian control and the aspiration to be a regional services and information centre.

Unimaginative technicians have been the product of an elitist, competitive, rigid system with a high drop out rate. Many writers have noted that this contradiction is an extremely serious block to the PAP-state's aspirations

(e.g. Rodan 1989: 205; Tham 1989: 492; Sandhu and Wheatley 1989: 1099; Linda Lim 1989: 181). Although government officials have often talked of the need for more creativity, the government appears to be seeking it by means of exacerbating the contradiction, as has resulted from its move towards independent schools and the privatisation of education.

As we have seen, the privatisation of education is an attempt to restore legitimacy in the face of many forms of political struggle. It is also aimed at reducing government welfare expenditure while increasing control. That is, it is aimed at "shifting the electorate's judgement of the PAP's performance away from its ability to provide ongoing and expanded social welfare programmes" (Rodan 1989: 164). But this move may create new contradictions. It may again undermine the ideological perception that educational success is possible for all Singaporeans even as most Malays and the lower rungs of the working class realise the reality of their exclusion.

The racism inherent in educational and population policies has both legitimated and undermined these practices. The visibility of racial classification has functioned to consolidate the perception of the superiority of the dominant race and assisted its sense of unity. But, at the same time, the clear exclusion of Malays and Indians from

social advancement on racial grounds will engender new contradictions which may again expose the class-sorting function of education.

Similarly, the PAP-state's fostering of middle-class male political, business, professional and military leadership and a male core of the working class increasingly exposes its patriarchal nature. Its harassment of educated, single, middle class women with dating and breeding programmes has fuelled resentment and undermined its legitimacy.

The education system has been required to regulate many forms of struggle while reproducing the class structure. The many contradictions which have arisen have produced new conflicts which continue to threaten PAP hegemony.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong recently stated the necessity to get Singapore's politics right before the country could focus on the key to its future - education. He expressed his concern that Singaporeans might vote against the government in the next elections because they were unhappy about certain policies and were succumbing to envy when the "talented" get special attention. He said, "It is very dangerous. But it is already a trend. Can we reverse the trend?" He also said that minorities should not "impose their views on the majority" as when Malays have objected

to "Speak Mandarin" campaigns. He concluded, "Education is the key to the future. This is assuming that the politics are right" (STW 27 July 1991).

Thus the PAP-state recognises its primary objective of social control continues to take precedence over educational achievement. The strength of political struggles has prevented Singapore's increase in educational levels from matching those of its regional competitors. These struggles are likely to continue as long as the nature of the education system is determined by the needs of international capital accumulation.

CHAPTER 6

ELECTIONS, PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT: THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Parliamentarism took on an especially significant role from the early 1980s when education and other welfare mechanisms were failing sufficiently to suppress political struggle. However, the system of parliamentary politics has played a vital role in social control since the PAP came to power by providing the mechanisms by which people formally assent to their own subjection and exploitation. It therefore provides legitimation for the PAP's rule and the PAP-state's entire repressive apparatus.

We have seen how public housing and education keep people in their physical and social places and how the ideological effects of these institutions serve to legitimate the practices which produce them. The institutions and practices of liberal democracy, which the PAP-state inherited and partially preserves, function to keep people in their political places while legitimating the whole process of government by one class. The political place of the working class is as a subject, powerless labour force.

Through elections, parties and parliament, the PAP has been able to claim the right to govern and to interfere in all aspects of people's lives in order to perpetuate this class hegemony. It sees this right to have been freely granted by many acts of individual choice at election time when voting, like education, further helps to transform submission into consent. The ostensibly democratic procedures of parliament then confirm the legitimacy of the continuing process of governance.

This chapter examines in detail how this process works in Singapore. It also analyses the development of the political system in response to political struggles, concluding that liberal democracy is failing to legitimate PAP rule at crucial points. We will see that political struggles have brought contradictions between the legitimating and ruling functions of both the party and parliament. These contradictions explain why the PAP has found electoral opposition so threatening, and they also help us understand its latest political initiatives.

Elections, parties and parliament will be examined in the context of the phases of Singapore's political economy to see how they were influenced by political struggles. But first it is necessary to place liberal democracy in its historical and theoretical context.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND CLASS

Western liberal democracy developed out of the liberal state and capitalist society. The understanding of the human being as an atomised, self-interested individual was fundamental to this society, an ideology that we earlier observed to have preoccupied neo-classical writers today.

Before the capitalist state yielded to working class pressure to extend the franchise, liberal principles and practices were already entrenched: "both the society as a whole and the system of government were organised on a principle of freedom of choice" and on the politics of competition and the market (Macpherson 1965: 6). In other words, society was already divided according to class. Some had the accumulated capital to employ others who had insufficient means to support themselves. Social inequality thus meant some had more freedom of choice than others.

Nineteenth century liberal democracy developed as:

a logical requirement for the governance of inherently self-interested conflicting individuals who are assumed to be infinite desirers of their own private benefits....[H]is [sic] overriding motivation is to maximise the flow of satisfactions, or utilities, to himself from society, and that a national society is simply a collection of such individuals. Responsible government, even to the extent of responsibility to a

democratic electorate, was needed for the protection of individuals and the promotion of the Gross National Product, and for nothing more (Macpherson 1977: 43).

Liberal democracy was a form of government adapted to a class-divided society from the beginning. It did not develop a new kind of society or inspire a vision of a new kind of humanity. Furthermore, it developed because the pressure for universalising the franchise became irresistible and because the ruling classes of Europe and America realised that it posed no threat to their property and thus their power. For them, democracy no longer meant rule by the wrong class, the working class.

What the addition of democracy to the liberal state did was simply to provide constitutional channels for popular pressures, pressures to which governments would have had to yield in about the same measure anyway, merely to maintain public order and avoid revolution. By admitting the mass of the people into the competitive party system, the liberal state did not abandon its fundamental nature; it simply opened the competitive political system to all individuals who had been created by the competitive market society. The liberal state fulfilled its own logic. In so doing, it neither destroyed nor weakened itself; it strengthened both itself and the market society. It liberalised democracy while democratising liberalism (Macpherson 1965: 11).

From these beginnings grew the now-familiar "pluralist, elitist, equilibrium model" of liberal democracy (Macpherson 1977: 77). Macpherson draws an entrepreneurial market analogy to explain its dynamics. He sees liberal democracy as a market mechanism, with voters as consumers and politicians as entrepreneurs, which maintains an

equilibrium between the demand and supply of political goods. It is elitist because groups of self-selected leaders take the main roles. It is pluralist because individuals are pulled in various directions by various group interests at different levels (in parliament and outside), and these interests compete for political power. It has thus become "simply a mechanism for choosing and authorising governments, not a kind of society nor a set of moral ends" (Macpherson 1977: 78). The choosing and authorising is done by the practice of voting under the universal franchise.

Choice as Consent

In our previous discussion of neo-classical theory, we noted the ideological implications of the concept of free and rational choice as both explanation and justification for human behaviour. The practice of voting in liberal democracies reinforces this ideology, but also goes further; it converts individual choice into consent for the actions of others. Thus, on the basis of elections, governments are able to claim a mandate to govern. Voters can be said individually to have consented in advance to the decisions of the government. In this sense, voters do not directly decide political issues for themselves, but they authorise others to do the deciding.

On this basis, Pateman argues that liberal democratic voting is essentially a promise to obey. "The essence of liberal social contract theory is that individuals ought to promise to, or enter an agreement to, obey representatives, to whom they have alienated their right to make political decisions....liberal democratic voting is a series of renewals of the promise to obey" (Pateman 1979: 19-20). Pateman distinguishes between "self-assumed obligation as the free creation of a relationship, and self-assumed obligation as consent", rejecting the supposition that liberal democratic theory and practice coincide in voting (Pateman 1979: 21, 82).

Pateman is right in her observation that voting fabricates consent while really being an act of obedience. Before elections in Singapore, voters are continually reminded of their accountability to the government. Nevertheless, the ideological effect of voting on voters is that they have consented either to the government in power or to the whole system of governance, or both. Furthermore, this ideological perception is constantly reinforced by the formulations of liberal democratic principles which are articulated by those within the parliamentary system.

But the practical possibility that voters can replace one government by another is essential to the legitimating

power of this ideology. Without this possibility, voters will see that their votes are meaningless even if the franchise includes every adult individual. As Macpherson puts it, "the extent of the franchise is a measure of democratic government only in so far as the exercise of the franchise can make and unmake governments" (Macpherson 1977: 23). Liberal democratic ideology holds this effect of individual electoral choice to be the individual citizen's protection against tyranny. But it is no protection against the rule of one class.

The reason that the democratic franchise did not bring about working class government in Western democracies was that the chief function of the party system

has been to blunt the edge of apprehended or probable class conflict, or, if you like, to moderate and smooth over the conflict of class interests so as to save the existing property institutions and the market system from effective attack (Macpherson 1977: 65).

Political parties have maintained upper class rule by blurring social divisions and by standing between governments and their direct responsibility to the electorate.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND SINGAPORE

The forms of liberal democracy bequeathed to Singapore by British colonialism fit well with the ideology of the political economy and the increasing inequality in society. But there is a fundamental difference between Singapore and the Western liberal democracies: under-development. The Singapore capitalist class does not compare in strength to those of the West with their centuries of accumulation and class rule.

First, despite the PAP-state's attempts to build a capitalist class, it does not have a strong basis of class unity. The core of the capitalist class is not a strong nationalist bourgeoisie but a party organisation which rules for foreign capital, governing mainly through the state and much less through direct ownership of the means of production.

This is why, even after the destruction of working class political organisation in the early 1960s, the PAP could still not afford to lose an election. If it had, at the very least, the uneasy accommodation between the PAP and the Chinese-educated bourgeoisie would have been threatened. With the rise of local capital under the PAP-state and the growth of a larger bourgeoisie with vested

interests in the alliance with foreign capital, the Singapore capitalist class may now have a sufficient unity of interests and depth of historical control at all levels of society to guarantee its perpetual political hegemony. This means that the PAP faction no longer needs to retain power to secure this hegemony.

The local capitalist class is now strong enough to field an alternative bourgeois party which would continue the alliance with imperialism, but break the PAP's supremacy. The possibility of a bourgeois party with a mainly Chinese-educated leadership remains. Perhaps the current move towards a Mandarin- and English-speaking upper class is partly a move to insulate against this possibility. The years of suppression of Chinese education and the consistent priority given to foreign capital over local capital could be useful political weapons against the English-educated PAP. Such a party would have considerable potential for co-opting working class dissent to its electoral banner.

Secondly, in order to sustain itself as a capitalist class, the PAP has had to rule in alliance with imperialism. Without foreign credit and technology, production would rapidly decline and the political economy would collapse.

The PAP knows that imperialism is not particularly concerned over which section of the capitalist class seeks its partnership so long as control of the working class can be guaranteed. Should the PAP lose an election, foreign capital would cooperate with any new government that had the same economic priorities. If there were such an alternative capitalist party, imperialism would have no special interest in maintaining the hegemony of the English-educated upper class should it lose popular legitimacy in liberal democratic elections.

These two reasons, both related to under-development, explain why the PAP has not been able to allow liberal democracy to function as it does in the advanced countries. This means that the way the PAP has governed has been determined by the specific class formation of Singapore. The PAP knows that there are real political alternatives within its own class but has prevented them from organising effectively and sought to coopt them into the PAP. However, it may yet allow another bourgeois party to emerge more strongly if parliamentary struggle continues to intensify and the alternative is a party linked to the working class.

Singapore and Advanced Capitalist Countries

While the above factors constrain liberal democracy in Singapore, there are important similarities with the advanced capitalist countries. The convergence is in the "creeping authoritarianism masked by the rituals of formal representation" which now characterise these countries as they move away from Macpherson's model of modern liberal democracy. Oppositionists in Singapore often appeal to Western liberal democracy as a political ideal for Singapore without realising the nature of political developments in the countries of its birth.

Social democracy has progressively assumed those postures of pragmatic and creeping authoritarianism, which had, as one of their effects, a gradual suspension of many of the traditional bases of democratic representation and countervailing power: but coupled with their formal preservation, as the means by which a passive popular consent is secured (Hall 1980: 160).

Hall develops Poulantzas' description of the tendency to "authoritarian statism" in advanced capitalist countries by identifying "the steady and unremitting set of operations designed to bind or construct a popular consent into these new forms of statist authoritarianism", which he renames "authoritarian populism" (Hall 1980: 161). His description of the ways in which the development of popular democratic initiatives have been limited and a "popular" consent to

authoritarian regimes constructed has many similarities with the strategies of the PAP in Singapore.

Thus, the similarity between Singapore and advanced liberal democracies lies in the extent to which these states are becoming like Singapore in their effort to "shift the previously existing disposition of social forces...to construct the movement towards a more authoritarian regime from a massive populist base" (Hall 1980: 182). Like Singapore, they use liberal democratic mechanisms to preserve "the inequitable social relationships of [the] capitalist economy" (Pateman 1979: 90). Singapore differs in that the PAP did not have to deal with entrenched social democratic practices.

But Singapore stands out in its use of the forms of liberal democracy because fear is present at every level in order to prevent people from exercising even the limited political rights these forms afford.

Fear, Legitimacy and Governance

The PAP's own fear of demise in the face of political struggles has come into conflict with its need to legitimise its rule. It has had to maintain Macpherson's pluralist, elitist, equilibrium model of liberal democracy

on the ideological level while denying it in reality. The PAP has no trouble with the elitist prescription, but it has not allowed the substance of plurality or even of intra-class equilibrium.

It has not permitted a plurality of political forces to flourish at all levels, a dynamic that would throw up pressure groups as well as alternative governments.

Without a strong class base, the PAP-state could not easily contend with this kind of grassroots politics and prevent the organisation of the working class against it.

Political pluralism has therefore been suppressed outside parliamentary politics. We will see in the next chapter how the PAP-state has criminalised all politics outside parliament to ensure that there is no sea for political fish to swim in. But, as Macpherson has noted, for electoral choice to be ideologically effective when the franchise was extended to the working class,

There had to be freedom of association - that is, freedom to form political parties, and freedom to form the kind of associations we now know as pressure groups, whose purpose is to bring to bear on parties and on governments the combined pressure of the interests they represent. And there had to be freedom of speech and publication, for without these the freedom of association is of no use (Macpherson 1965: 8).

Thus, although in practical terms these freedoms are denied through being severely circumscribed, the PAP-state is constrained often to claim that they are not. The reality is that there are two kinds of politics in Singapore: legal (inside parliamentary politics) and illegal (outside). This division is supported to some degree by the ideology of consent under liberal democracy.

Contemporary consent theory is firmly in the Lockean tradition, offering only the alternatives of all-embracing consent or revolution. It is argued that all those who make use of the electoral "method of consent", and all those who refrain from illegal political activity, are consenting....

Contemporary consent theorists who identify consent and voting leave themselves no alternative but to treat all dissent that falls outside the "method of consent" as revolutionary activity. Again, this blurs the distinction between other existing regimes and the liberal democratic state with its "consenting" citizens, and it also means that consent theorists are, for example, unable to distinguish urban guerillas from non-violent civil disobedients because both engage in illegal activities (Pateman 1979: 90-91).

In the hands of the PAP-state, which does not want to distinguish non-violent civil disobedients from urban guerillas (but tactically prefers to combine them in one category), the ideology of consent is both an ideology of legitimation and a method of political marginalisation. Those who do not specifically dissent are taken to consent. Those who do not follow the prescribed "method of consent" are enemies of the state and are therefore dealt with by the secret police. This is a tactic of political fear.

But having channelled all politics into parliamentarism, the PAP still has to suppress political pluralism (but not the illusion of it) within this system in order to deny the electorate the evidence of a credible alternative government. The PAP has structurally built in threat and fear at all levels of the electoral system precisely to ensure that individual citizens do not freely exercise their democratic rights. Exactly how this has been done we will see later in this chapter.

This parody of liberal democracy is a political exercise fraught with contradictions between the tasks of governing, maintaining hegemony and keeping legitimacy. To understand these tensions, we need to identify the broad functions of elections and of the PAP as a political party.

Elections and Legitimacy

If it is not to lose legitimacy altogether and reveal its effective dictatorship, the PAP-state cannot take away the act of voting as a legal expression of political choice. Elections have been the primary mechanism for establishing the PAP's constitutional legitimacy, for claiming that people have consented to its rule. To ensure this ideological effect, it has to make sure that people do vote. Therefore, voting is compulsory (GOS 1989a: 56). Also, as pointed out above, if the legitimating ideology of

the franchise is not to break down, the electorate has to perceive that it has a real chance of changing the government through voting. Because the PAP, for reasons of self-interest, has not permitted even an intra-class change of government, it has had to ensure that electoral opposition could never unseat it while, at the same time, keeping the appearance that it could.

By holding elections, Lee Kuan Yew has been able to say, "If I had been autocratic and authoritarian, I would not have won eight consecutive general elections over a period of thirty years" (STW 11 November 1989). While the PAP won these elections precisely because it had been ruthlessly authoritarian, the act of voting and the resulting electoral statistics have shored up the legitimacy of the regime.

The ideological effect of Table 6.1 from the Ministry of Communications and Information is extremely useful to the PAP because it highlights the fact that there was a plurality of parties contesting each election and that the PAP won a high proportion of votes and therefore of seats. Citing the 1988 result, Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong stated, "What we do is with the consent of the majority", an echo of PAP functionaries since 1959 (The Bulletin 21 March 1989: 132).

TABLE 6.1: GENERAL ELECTIONS SINCE 1955

Date	Seats	Parties Contesting	Party Returned	Seats Won	% Votes Won
<u>Legislative Assembly</u>					
1955 2 Apr	25*	5+11(I)	Labour Front	10	26.74
1959 30 May	51	10+39(I)	PAP	43	53.40
1963 21 Sep	51	8+16(I)	PAP	37	46.46
<u>Parliament</u>					
1968 13 Apr	7+(51)**	2+5(I)	PAP	58	84.43
1972 2 Sep	57+(8)	6+2(I)	PAP	65	69.02
1976 23 Dec	53+(16)	7+2(I)	PAP	69	72.40
1980 23 Dec	38+(37)	8	PAP	75	75.55
1984 22 Dec	49+(30)	9+3(I)	PAP	77	62.94
1988 3 Sep	70+(11)	8+4(I)	PAP	80	61.76

*1955 Legislative Assembly consisted of one Speaker, 3 ex-officio members, 25 elected and 4 nominated members.

** Uncontested seats in brackets
(I) = Independents

Source: GOS 1989a: 232.

But the table plays down the fact that, in the first four elections of the independent parliament, the PAP won all the seats. It provides no explanation for the result in 1968, when the highest percentage vote was gained, but only seven seats were contested. The analysis also blurs the fact that, in 1988, nearly 40 per cent of the vote

translated into just one opposition seat. However, the number of seats uncontested in each election is a major anomaly in a liberal democracy. The inclusion of these statistics presumably derives from the PAP's assumption that readers will understand the failure to contest as a mark of contentment with its rule.

But, overall, such a statistical presentation assists PAP legitimacy by avoiding the necessity to inform the reader of the most vital information of all. Just as neo-classical political economy separates choice from socio-economic circumstances, so do electoral statistics fail to take account of the circumstances in which votes are cast. Not only the statistics do this, but the system of voting ideologically represents each individual's vote as equal without regard to the unequal power of different classes to organise electoral support.

Table 6.2, derived from the preceding table, demonstrates how much is left unexplained. It shows the control exerted by the PAP over the electoral process. The results suggest submission rather than consent, acquiescence rather than authorisation. From this perspective, voting in Singapore is an act which attests to the accountability of the individual citizen to the PAP and not of the government to its electors. To understand this relationship, we need to

TABLE 6.2: GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS 1968-88

Date	% Vote Against PAP	Oppos'n Seats	PAP Seats	Total Seats
1968	15.57*	0	58	58
1972	30.98	0	65	65
1976	27.6	0	69	69
1980	24.45	0	75	75
1984	37.06	2	77	79
1988	38.24	1	80	81

* Opposition boycott; only 7 seats contested.

examine the function of parties more closely, specifically the PAP.

The Governing Party

In elections, voters believe they are choosing who will represent them in parliament. In reality, parties make this choice and the voters are merely given the opportunity to confirm the choice of one or other of the parties. Singapore is different because the PAP chooses not only its own candidates but those of the opposition as well. We will see that it tried to do this first by keeping all opposition members out of parliament and then, when it failed, by using its apparatus of political repression to choose which opposition candidates it would let through.

The other special feature of the PAP is that it is not simply an electoral organisation. Its leadership also governs through the party, and the state apparatus is an adjunct to the party apparatus.

We noted in Chapter Two how, in 1957, Lee amended the PAP's rules to establish a cadre system completely under the control of the Central Executive Committee. By this action he created a central ruling authority entirely under his control. Only cadres could attend the party conference and vote for the Central Executive Committee. Only the Central Executive Committee could choose the cadres, and the list was and is secret (Bellows 1970: 24). As Secretary-General of the PAP, Lee has retained central and undisputed authority over the ruling body. He oversees who is admitted and who is expelled as well as the entire system of party patronage. The operation of the PAP is largely secret and therefore without the open annual conferences of the opposition parties. There is no mass base of party members, since membership is by invitation only. In other words, the PAP is not so much an electoral party as a governing clique secure from any democratic challenge. As we have seen, this structure was necessary for the survival of the English-educated faction of the capitalist class, because it did not have a sufficient social base to guarantee its political survival. This mechanism is still necessary to prevent the PAP from factionalising and to

exclude other class interests. Thus, the Central Executive Committee of the PAP, not cabinet or a ruling majority in parliament, is the core of its power.

As Lee has admitted during the recent debate on introducing an elected presidency, it is not the official titles of state which are fundamental to his power, but his control of the PAP:

Given me and my links with so many people, all I have to do is stay secretary-general of the PAP. I don't have to be president (Asiaweek 26 August 1988: 43).

He reiterated the point shortly afterwards but rather less directly:

I belong to that exclusive club of founder members of new countries; first prime ministers or presidents of a new independent country. And even from my sick bed, even if you are going to lower me into the grave and I feel that something is going wrong, I'll get up. Those who believe that when I have left the government as prime minister, that I have gone into permanent retirement, really should have their heads examined (Asia Yearbook 1989: 212).

In Chapter Four it was noted how the PAP extended its party organisation in the form of branch offices and state-sponsored People's Associations, Community Centres, Residents' Committees and so on, into the housing estates. The entire working class and much of the middle class have the party-state apparatus directly imposed on them in their

own localities. This ruling function is common in other political systems, but not in liberal democratic ones.

...it is crucial to recognise that the long years of partnership between the PAP and the civil servants have undoubtedly accelerated the fusion of the party and Government identity, a development which quite clearly can lead to the institutionalisation of the party as synonymous with State (Chan 1976: 224-225).

The fusion of the "identity" of the party and the state is a euphemism for the ruling function of the party and the auxiliary function of the civil service. This fusion may have assisted the realisation of the political goals of the PAP but it has, at the same time, destroyed those other illusions of liberal democracy, the apparent neutrality of the state and the non-political image of the civil service.

The electoral and ruling functions of the party have presented it with special problems in terms of legitimation. That is to say, the PAP's problems of legitimacy arise not only from the process of getting elected to govern but from the fact that it never stops getting elected to govern. It is a permanent governing party around which the state apparatus has developed.

Other governing parties in the region (e.g. in Malaysia and Indonesia) have been able to minimise the conflict between these roles and win popular support as an electoral movement as well as loyalty as a governing institution.

This is because they can, in varying degrees, claim historical legitimacy as the parties which led the nationalist struggles for independence.

But the PAP was deprived of this mantle in 1961 when the working class and left-wing intellectuals deserted it to form the Barisan Sosialis. The PAP later also lost the ideological legitimacy of the nationalist struggle in 1976, when it withdrew from the Socialist International shortly before its impending expulsion (Minchin 1986: 187).

[The PAP] did not have to its credit a long history of a nationalist struggle for independence and of personal sacrifices by many of its leaders. Furthermore, it was not viewed by the populace as the unchallenged leader of Singapore nationalism....None of them [the Lee faction] had a special charismatic appeal and a mass base (Vasil 1984: 9-10).

Making a virtue out of necessity, the PAP has eschewed the popularity it could never attain in favour of justifying itself on its record: a party willing to take the tough decisions in the interests of the people even if they do not like it.

I am often accused of interfering in the private lives of citizens. Yes, if I did not, had I not done that, we wouldn't be here today. And I say without the slightest remorse, that we wouldn't be here, we would not have made economic progress, if we had not intervened on very personal matters - who your neighbour is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit, or what language you use. We decide what is right. Never mind what the people think. That's another problem (Lee Kuan Yew's speech at National Day Rally 1986, ST 20 April 1987).

Thus, the PAP and its academic supporters have resorted to extolling its material achievements and the wisdom of its leaders over the past thirty years as the historical basis for its legitimacy and its right to govern in perpetuity:

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, along with his two advisers belonging to the first generation leadership, Goh Keng Swee and S. Rajaratnam, has presided over the government. A unique personalised system of government has been built up around the personalities of these three, Confucian, wise and dedicated rulers who are viewed as the repositories of the national will and the custodians of the nation and its interests. The Prime Minister is acknowledged as the embodiment of the party and the government and the person who provides and sustains the credibility of the government as a performer. He is the creator of modern Singapore. He is seen to enjoy a special, higher and overriding mandate from the people of Singapore (Vasil 1984: 154).

Slightly more soberly, Vasil notes the PAP's "spectacular achievements in the social and economic spheres" (Vasil 1984: 48). Chan, in a more rigorous study, refers to this source of legitimacy as the "performance variable" (Chan 1976: 14) or the successful management of "important political issues in the process of governance" (Chan 1976: 165).

We will examine the success of these claims to legitimacy in the context of the historical development of Singapore's political system. This history focuses on the institution of parliament and its changing role in social control

during the phases of Singapore's economic development. There are three main phases in the history of the Singapore legislature: the period of transition from colonial assembly to independent parliament from 1955 to 1965; the consolidation of the party-state from 1966 to 1980; and the resurgence of parliamentary struggle from 1981. The first two periods will be referred to briefly, mainly in order to establish the new significance of parliament in the latter period. From 1981, Singapore's political system has been transformed by renewed political opposition, creating a crisis of legitimacy to which the PAP has been forced to respond. The shaping of the electoral process and the role of political parties are central elements of these developments.

FROM COLONIAL ASSEMBLY TO INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENT 1955-65

We have covered the events of the decade from 1955 in some detail in the historical introduction and need only note here the major characteristics of the parliamentary system. It was a period of genuine political contest between political forces within the Legislative Assembly. The British established a liberal democratic system as a form of government congenial to their objective of consolidating

a local capitalist class while bringing working class politics into a forum they could control. They used the colonial legislature as a proving ground for local parties in order to test their support in the electorate, their administrative competence and, most importantly, their suitability as a future partner after independence. Thus, although conducted within the parameters of imperial rule, the electoral contest for power was real. There was a plurality of legal political forces organising outside the legislature as well as within, and decisions in the assembly, like electoral results, were by no means foregone conclusions.

TABLE 6.3: LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

DATE WON	NO OF SEATS	PARTY RETURNED	NO OF SEATS
2 Apr 1955	25*	Labour Front	10
30 May 1959	51	PAP	43
21 Sep 1963	51	PAP	37

* 1955 Legislative Assembly consisted of a speaker, 3 ex-officio, 25 elected and 4 nominated members.

Source: GOS 1989a: 232.

One of the continuing influences of this period is the tactics the British and the PAP used to prevent political opponents getting elected to parliament, and the use of the

state bureaucracy and social organisations to mobilise PAP votes.

The detention of left-wing leaders in 1959 and 1963 prevented the most popular leaders of the working class from even standing for election. But when the Lee faction had control of the electoral apparatus in 1963, this tactic of state terror was accompanied by a comprehensive subterfuge of the electoral process.

The PAP enhanced its control of who would get elected to the assembly by:

a) restricting the campaign period to the constitutional minimum of 9 days, a restriction which effectively applied to the opposition only, since Lee, as prime minister, began a tour of all constituencies in November 1962;

b) ordering state festivities for the proclamation of Malaysia during the campaign, giving the government leadership maximum publicity from the festivities but effectively reducing the number of days for campaigning by the opposition to four and a half;

c) blocking off all printing facilities with urgent government orders for Malaysia Day, making it impossible for the opposition to print in bulk in the short time

available after the election date was announced (the PAP got their printing done in Hongkong three months in advance);

d) pressuring the printer of the official Barisan publication to cease publication;

e) obstructing the booking of public places for opposition rallies and the granting of police permits for them to be held;

f) freezing the bank accounts of the three largest Barisan unions three days before nomination day;

g) dissolving by government order two of the Barisan's biggest community organisations, the Singapore Rural Residents' Association and the Singapore Country People's Association;

h) possibly starting and certainly not countering the rumour that a Barisan victory would bring in federal troops and Singapore would be ruled from Kuala Lumpur;

i) arresting and detaining without trial under the ISA all the main Barisan leaders during the months before the election (throughout 1963 over 130 opposition organisers and community leaders were arrested) (George 1984: 66-68).

Such tactics were necessary because, after the split within the PAP and the loss of its mass base, the PAP could not be sure of winning an electoral competition with the Barisan. Although the Lee faction had largely defeated the Barisan through mass arrests and the de-registration of trade unions and other supporting organisations, and the PAP had built more right-wing support by the end of merger with Malaysia in 1965, it still lacked a strong electoral base (Minchin 1986: 138). For this reason it has continued such tactics until the present.

Also, as we have seen, it developed the state bureaucracy to replace the grassroots party organisation. By virtue of its increasing power at the local level, this party-state organisation was able to mobilise electoral support with increasing effect.

Bellows claims that the 1959 elections were "the last general elections in Singapore in which [either of] the two major competing parties would have been allowed to form a government" (Bellows 1970: 5). However, the British commitment to the PAP was not necessarily unconditional in 1963 (Minchin 1986: 115). Whatever the truth of these judgements, it is clear that by 1965 the PAP had been transformed from a mass party into an exclusive governing group which had yet to consolidate an organisational mass

base it could depend on. Electoral victory and dominance of the legislature was essential to its legitimacy and to its political power, because it still ruled through the Assembly. The PAP's power could still be limited by a lost vote in the Assembly.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE PARTY-STATE 1966-80

In December 1965 the thirteen opposition Barisan Sosialis members left parliament in protest at the obstruction and harassment their party was subjected to. They boycotted all proceedings and all but two members of parliament had formally resigned by October 1966 (Bellows 1973: 96-97). The two remained in hiding from late 1963 in fear of detention and were unable to present their resignations personally as required by law (Bellows 1973: 195). For the next fifteen years, there was no opposition member in Singapore's parliament. The PAP had succeeded in acquiring not merely dominance but total supremacy in the legislature.

It was during these years of uncontested legislative power that the PAP consolidated its party-state apparatus of control and used it, along with the criminal law and

political detention, to suppress all forms of organised dissent outside parliamentary politics. These included the unions, educational institutions, student movements, the print media and professional societies (Asia Watch 1989; International Mission of Jurists 1987). This is also the period of large-scale public housing and educational initiatives to reconstitute the social formation in consonance with the EOI accumulation strategy.

To consolidate control in order to increase exploitation of the working class, the PAP-state therefore suppressed the pluralism of liberal democratic politics. Because it could not allow any growth in working class organisation, the legal channels for releasing popular pressures of dissent outside parliamentary politics were minimised.

But, to sustain the illusion of liberal democratic political contest within parliamentary politics, some opposition parties were permitted to exist. They were constantly harassed to keep them fractious and weak.

Opposition parties have been badly bruised and mauled. The Prime Minister and Rajaratnam [PAP minister] have ridiculed their activists and candidates, labelling them "jokers" and "opportunists". They have been infiltrated by security and intelligence agents; they have been charged with receiving foreign funds and engaging in "black operations"; defamation suits have been filed or threatened by PAP ministers to avenge or discourage alleged excesses (Minchin 1986: 217).

In these circumstances, elections became a ritual legitimisation of PAP rule with the leadership claiming them as ratification for their most recently announced or implemented policies. For example, the 1968 elections, in which only seven out of 58 seats were contested, were claimed to be an endorsement of the new draconian labour laws depriving workers of many rights and conditions. Over the next three elections (1972, 1976, 1980), which the PAP ensured were contested rather more vigorously, the total opposition vote declined from around 30 per cent to about 25 per cent. The number of uncontested seats rose from eight in 1972 to 37 in 1980 (GOS 1989a: 232).

These figures reflect the intensified control and the climate of fear that had been generated. Voting for the PAP was an act of obedience to avoid any negative consequences, since the party-state now directly controlled the housing, the schooling, the breeding habits, the local community organisations and the pensions of the working class.

In these circumstances, parliament became merely a forum for making announcements about what the PAP-state had done or was going to do.

...from 1966 to 1981, its legislation underwent little thorough scrutiny....Sittings were kept to a minimum, the Prime Minister was often absent, and when he intervened he swamped the matter at hand. The quality

of a member's contribution to debate suffered from the lurking thought that it made no difference to the outcome. PAP back-benchers were encouraged, sometimes orchestrated, to ask questions and even to play at being a loyal Opposition. But only a hardy soul would willingly risk the Prime Minister's or Dr Goh's [Deputy Prime Minister] wrath if he exceeded the bounds (Minchin 1986: 218-9).

Parliament was necessary to prop up the legitimacy of democratic process. But its proceedings were no longer a matter of public moment. Backbench members were engaged in other full-time employment. Without any opposition, it was not the site of genuine political struggle. As an institution it functioned at a minimal level and faded from the public eye.

When it had exclusive control of parliament, the PAP found it a most convenient ruling mechanism. Whatever the PAP decided could be implemented with a full constitutional imprimatur. The centre of executive power was the small group of senior members of the PAP's Central Executive Committee who were also cabinet ministers (Pang 1971, Chan 1976). Parliament enabled the stamp of democratic legitimacy routinely to be given to their decisions.

The rapid economic growth was seen by the PAP as sufficient justification for their extension of social control throughout the society and their evisceration of democratic institutions. The material achievements did indeed enhance their legitimacy. But, by 1981, the sharp increase in

inequality had spawned new political dissent which, because practically all other forms of legal expression of grievances had been proscribed, surfaced through renewed support for the enfeebled Workers' Party (WP).

The WP is a social democratic party with working class links and, not being a total creation of the security police, it had been constantly pilloried and harassed. Nevertheless, it had been permitted to exist, presumably because the PAP had a low estimate of the political abilities of its leader, J.B. Jeyaretnam, and of its political prospects. The declining opposition vote in the 1970s was misread by the PAP as growing approval for its policies rather than conditional acquiescence out of fear. With the resurgence of political struggle in the early 1980s in response to the Second Industrial Revolution, the disposition of parliamentary political forces changed rapidly.

Each new example of persecution or discrimination, each episode of the PAP pack baying at one or two isolated figures, each litany of actionable offences, [now] draws more Singaporeans to join or sympathise with Opposition parties (Minchin 1986: 217).

The defeat of the PAP in the 1981 Anson by-election ushered in a new period in the development of Singapore's political system.

PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE AND THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY

The PAP's general election victory in 1980 with 75 per cent of the vote, enough to take all the seats, proved to be false reassurance that all was well with the comprehensive system of social control they had put in place. In 1981, the WP's Jeyaretnam won Anson in a by-election precipitated by the PAP incumbent, Devan Nair, assuming the presidency. With 51.01 per cent of the vote in a three way contest (GOS 1989a: 232), Jeyaretnam entered parliament much to the venomous displeasure of the PAP leadership (Minchin 1986: 219).

Behind the PAP's reaction lay its shock at having its governing preserve, parliament, breached. Even if only one opposition member is in the House, it again becomes a site of political struggle rather than of routine legitimisation of PAP rule. The PAP had failed in its strategy to control who entered parliament.

This opposition victory loosened the grip of fear on the electorate. Although the majority might be scared by the numbering of the ballot papers in an election (FEER 30 May 1985: 21), an increasingly entrenched minority, loyal and obedient in every other respect in their outward behaviour, felt more and more able to risk dissenting in the one legal

political activity still open to them: the act of casting a ballot.

This 1981 breach of PAP control marked the beginning of a decade when the PAP was forced by democratic dissent to change its pattern of governing through parliament and the party-state structure. It brought a conflict between its method of governing and its means of acquiring legitimacy. The 1984 and 1988 general elections conveniently demarcate the decade as the PAP tested various ways to overcome these contradictions.

Attempting to Exclude Opposition 1981-1984

In early 1982, following the Jeyaretnam victory, the government made a confidential study of voter opinion which showed most Singaporeans wanted to see more opposition members in parliament and that the government was "seriously out of touch with voter sentiment" (Asia Yearbook 1983: 239).

The PAP's first reaction to this finding was to put off all pending by-elections indefinitely. Then it quickly moved to counter-act the growing public desire for an effective opposition as well as a PAP government. The PAP-state could not portray this objective as disloyal because the

aim was not to unseat the government but to make it more accountable. In response, ministers promulgated a new theory of parliamentarism: an opposition prevents good government. Second Deputy Prime Minister, S. Rajaratnam, part of Lee's "Old Guard", stated to government unionists in 1982:

The theory of democracy as opposition is founded, at least as far as Singapore is concerned, on intellectual dishonesty....No opposition enters parliament to help a government govern well....Put bluntly, the role of an opposition is to ensure bad government (Asia Yearbook 1983: 239).

In August 1982, Rajaratnam tried to frighten people away from the opposition. He warned that Jeyaretnam's Workers' Party would provide a cover for subversive elements (Asia Yearbook 1983: 240). Social democratic opposition in the eighties became routinely tarred with the same brush of national disloyalty as those of the sixties, many of whom had spent years in detention without trial (Amnesty International 1980).

The PAP-state also tried to convince the electorate that an opposition was not only damaging but unnecessary because of the quality of PAP government. This strategy had two thrusts, electoral and administrative. The electoral thrust was to claim that the PAP embodied all legitimate political forces in Singapore and was therefore above party politics. In 1982, this exclusive, cadre-based party

declared itself "a national movement dedicated to the service of Singapore and to the advancement of the people's well-being" (Minchin 1986: 210). It later set about establishing peripheral PAP organisations without democratising its core structures (Chan 1989: 83).

The second thrust was to show how the government had learned its lesson and would now be more responsive in its administration. In 1982 the government began its attempt to humanise the image of the party-state. Public relations officers were employed in ministries and concern for the individual was stressed in the media. Defence Minister Goh Chok Tong was quoted saying "We do care" (Asia Yearbook 1983: 239).

However, it would appear that the PAP saw Jeyaretnam's election as an exceptional event and not indicative of a trend. It therefore took only cosmetic measures to accommodate what it thought it was temporary phenomenon which could be removed by the full power of the PAP-state's electoral apparatus at the next election.

By 1984, the year of election, the PAP must have concluded that, with the faltering economy and rising dissent, it had to adjust its approach. It tried to convince the public that, while an opposition might be desirable, actually voting for one was not necessary. It amended the

constitution to establish the position of Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) (Pillai and Tan 1989: 663). In the event that less than three opposition MPs were elected at a general election, this amendment made provision for the appointment of up to three NCMPs to make up the difference. The NCMP seats would be offered by the PAP-state to the losing opposition candidates who scored the highest percentage of votes. By this legislation the government stated that it was ensuring that there would always be at least three opposition MPs in the House.

However, this new-found PAP commitment to the traditional theory of liberal democracy was aimed at forestalling the electorate from casting a protest vote in the 1984 elections. The government's logic was that everyone could vote for the PAP and there would still be a parliamentary opposition. But an NCMP is not permitted to vote on fiscal, constitutional and confidence matters and is therefore very much a second-class MP. By this constitutional ruse, the PAP was not only hoping to maintain control of all who entered parliament, including opposition members, it also aimed to protect matters central to its governing authority and legitimacy from direct political contestability by a credible opposition. In this way it could give the impression of political plurality that constitutional legitimacy required, without granting the substance of it. But, because it would be the

opposition members who were not popularly elected, it would be their legitimacy that would be in doubt, not the PAP's, which was generously accommodating them.

This short period before the 1984 elections was therefore characterised initially by PAP-state resistance to any form of parliamentary opposition. Its main objective was to be rid of Jeyaretnam at the next polls and purify the chamber once again. But, at the last minute, it was forced by political dissent to accommodate opposition in a politically castrated form of NCMPs, a strategy that failed.

Accommodating Plurality While Destroying It 1984-1988

The 12.6 per cent swing against the PAP in the 1984 elections was a major blow to the government. Although only two opposition members were elected as against 77 for the PAP, it meant that the PAP-state had not succeeded in keeping popularly elected oppositionists, including Jeyaretnam, out of parliament. Furthermore, the opposition spurned the offer of an NCMP seat.

The 1984 elections finally alerted the PAP to the magnitude of dissent in the community. As soon as the election results came out, an angry Lee Kuan Yew went on television

and declared that the universal franchise may have to be reconsidered. The underlying reasons for his anger lay in the risk that an emerging political alternative may eventually threaten not only the PAP's ability to rule unchecked, but also its alliance with foreign capital.

In 1985 First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said, "I hope the day will never arrive when waiting for the general election result is like watching the flipping of a coin." He implied that a strong opposition vote would undermine the nation's stability and erode the confidence of foreign investors. The ideal he advocated for stability was a broad-based mainstream party, the PAP, with a few "serious-minded" opposition parties. "I would not apologise...if the PAP will be returned for the next 25 years, better still for the next 50 years. If we tell investors that, they can plan their future in Singapore" (FEER 15 August 1985: 10).

Thus, the PAP accepted that it could not avoid having an opposition presence in the legislature, but it was to be one of its choosing. The PAP modified its approach and began to implement a more carefully planned strategy: a public impression of plurality and political accountability while systematically blocking any opposition with a working class base and all future possibilities for it. In this way it tried to make use of the situation to enhance its

ability to control as well as to regain legitimacy after a serious recession in 1985. We will now examine this strategy in detail.

Plebiscitary Politics Not Real Accountability

After its setback in the 1984 elections, the government institutionalised its previous public relations campaign in a highly controlled process of public consultation. It aimed yet again to convey the ideological message that a parliamentary opposition was unnecessary in the light of the government's responsiveness to public opinion. In other words, the government attempted to divert public opinion away from its political accountability in parliament to a paternalistic process of consultation which it completely controlled.

The government, stated one Singaporean academic, was moving towards "a more consultative style of government, initiated by the younger PAP leaders after the 1984 general election" (Quah 1989: 1). The government Feedback Unit, headed by a PAP MP, was established in March 1985 ostensibly to assist voters to convey their views to the government. But it functioned as another mechanism for the PAP to gather political intelligence.

On February 18, 1987 Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister's son, launched the National Agenda "to

enable all Singaporeans to participate in formulating the means of attaining the goals identified in the Government's Vision of 1999" (Quah 1989: 2). The rest of the year was taken up with a government media blitz, Feedback Unit-sponsored seminars, forums, presentations and discussions on "the goals which we wish to achieve together and the challenges which we have to overcome as a nation" (Goh Chok Tong in GOS 1988b: 7).

In presenting the "Agenda for Action: Goals and Challenges" to parliament as a green paper on February 15, 1988, Goh Chok Tong stated that "the ties between elected leaders and the people...must be constantly nurtured through continual discussion, feedback and explanation [so that the Government] will have a close feel of the mood of the people, and the people will understand thoroughly what is at stake and what needs to be done" (GOS 1988b:7).

When announcing the government's adoption of the Agenda for Action in parliament on February 25, 1988, Goh stated that the four goals it identified (nation-building, economic growth and progress, human resources and education, and social and cultural development) could best be reached by the appointment of six advisory councils each headed by a cabinet minister. The councils were given carefully depoliticised areas: culture and the arts, sports and recreation, family and community life, youth, the

handicapped and the aged. Each of these advisory councils then began its own process of public consultation throughout 1988.

In this way, the PAP tried to take the focus off its political accountability in the forum of parliament where it had to deal with real political challenges on more equal terms. The plethora of quasi-governmental consultative bodies established a plebiscitary political dynamic whereby the government could say it had heard public opinion and do anything or nothing about it.

Also, in 1988, the government began to use the same technique inside parliament through its parliamentary select committee system which had previously been in disuse except for occasional political show trials (e.g. Parliament of Singapore 1986). It encouraged public submissions on a widely unpopular proposed electoral change. The legislation was introduced to the House on November 30, 1987 and read for a second time on January 11, 1988. Of 99 written representations received by the Select Committee, twelve representers were chosen to appear before the Committee for a nationally televised public hearing on March 7-9, 1988 (Quah 1989: 3-4; FEER 24 March 1988: 26). The legislation (amendments to the Constitution and to the Elections Act) was then passed without substantive changes

in May 1988 with the government claiming that the voters had been consulted adequately.

Thus the PAP began to use processes both outside and inside parliament which it completely controlled (only one, if any, opposition member would be on a select committee), to give the impression of accountability. It made a virtue of its controlled public consultation by portraying itself as seeking consensus and national unity and depicting the opposition as contentious and divisive (STW 14 January 1989: 6). Consensus and unity were later formalised as an ideological weapon in the PAP's armoury in the National Values (Quah 1989: 19).

Plurality, Contest and the Media

From March 1985, the PAP had parliament televised by its state-controlled media. During parliamentary sessions, summary excerpts were screened during a special programme every evening. Proceedings were extensively covered in the newspapers, also PAP-controlled. The PAP-state had decided to make the most of the opposition presence and show that parliament was a forum of real political contest between differing forces. It may have calculated that the uninspiring performances of the opposition members would be sufficient to dent public confidence in them. However, some observers have maintained that the televising of parliament "backfired on the ruling party", because it

increased the public perception of the two opposition members as besieged underdogs (FEER 11 July 1985: 34). In fact it did both things. It did strengthen the illusion that the PAP would allow real political plurality and this, in turn, reinforced the public desire for more opposition.

While helping to legitimise the overall process of parliamentary politics, media coverage also helped to undermine the PAP's legitimacy as a party. We will see later that the PAP's use of the media for electoral purposes and to crush opposition members always had both advantages and disadvantages for it.

The PAP Chooses the Opposition

During the 1984-88 period, the PAP-state reverted to traditional liberal democratic theory and accepted that an opposition is supposed to help governance. But it decided to provide that opposition from within its own ranks and from opposition candidates of its own choosing.

The government brought into play nine Government Parliamentary Committees (GPCs) in 1987 (Chan 1989: 85) (increased to ten in 1989), consisting of all backbench PAP MPs, except three who had "distanced themselves from current PAP policy" (FEER 26 March 1987: 23). These committees were encouraged to take on the role of a critical presence in parliament. The "chairmen" of the

GPCs sat alongside opposition MP Chiam See Tong on the front bench opposite the PAP cabinet "to counter the impression that the chamber is merely a rubber stamp". By this time, the stronger Jeyaretnam had already been excluded from parliament on framed-up charges in the courts. Only the more cooperative Chiam remained. The GPC chairmen stated they must not appear to "collude" with the government if they were to be credible and might even abstain on some issues. Goh said that some of the chairmen might become "a bit of a threat" to ministers (FEER 26 March 1987: 23).

By 1989, it appeared the public were not very convinced by this pretence. Goh stated that GPCs faced the "unfortunate misconception... that they were not independent because their members came from the ruling party" (STW 1 July 1989: 2). The Straits Times further reported his statement as follows:

Asked if GPCs were meant to displace the Opposition and render it irrelevant to the political system, Mr Goh said it was his belief in the continued dominance of the PAP that prompted him to set up GPCs as a way of ensuring that Government policies would always be scrutinised (STW 1 July 1989: 2).

Thus, the PAP was concentrating on supplying the forms of parliamentary plurality and accountability but not the substance. It was enhancing its ability to provide an acceptable opposition and to exclude members of any

strength and integrity if they managed to get elected. Thus, the persecution of Jeyaretnam continued unabated until he was criminalised by the courts and deprived of his seat (Asia Watch 1989: 73). His strength derived, not merely from his dogged concern for the poor, which somewhat overcame his lack of skill as a debater, but, more importantly for the PAP, from his party's base in the working class. Scrutiny of PAP legislation was to be permitted by a fabricated and tame "opposition" chosen by the PAP, which would never dig too deep or have a popular base among the working class. Political accountability could quickly be transformed from illusion to reality if connected to autonomous working class political organisation outside the House. The rightist, middle class base of Chiam's SDP and his own lack of political fire and clarity, rendered him an acceptable opposition member. He was therefore "chosen" by the PAP in the sense that the harassment of his party was routine and the PAP decided not to eject him from parliament. If political struggle forced the PAP to permit the rise of an alternative bourgeois party, it is likely the SDP would be the most acceptable of all existing parties.

Lee Kuan Yew put the distinction more colourfully. In 1986, he differentiated between Chiam, whom he likened to the English-educated liberals with a gentlemanly approach

to politics, and the "riff-raff", the "fly-by-night politicians" such as Jeyaretnam (Asia Yearbook 1987: 64).

Limiting Political Contest in Parliament by Fear

As we shall see in the next section, the PAP took steps to ensure greater control of the electoral process in order to prevent opposition members being elected. But after 1984, it was faced with the immediate problem of an increasingly effective Jeyaretnam, who now had another opposition member to second his parliamentary motions. The moves to criminalise him in the courts and remove him were taking time (Asia Watch 1989: 71-81) and he had to be silenced in the meantime. However haltingly, Jeyaretnam was beginning to develop a public critique of the PAP's use of the institutions of liberal democracy including parliament, the judiciary and the police. To silence him and any future opposition member, the PAP removed the protection of parliamentary privilege. As Lee said on television, "I think I am slowly convincing my colleagues that the only way to get a skunk is to skin him and nail his skin" (Time 8 September 1986: 17).

During the debate on the privileges amendment, Foreign Minister Dhanabalan stated that "the aim of the bill is not to stifle democracy but to enable it to work in our particular circumstances". Explaining this later, he said, "There are certain key institutions in Singapore that must

be beyond reproach - parliament, courts and so on" (FEER 8 January 1987: 55). Lee's accusation that Jeyaretnam's comments about the judiciary were "totally treasonable" reveal the centrality of liberal democratic institutions to the PAP governing strategy and show that Lee recognised the crisis of legitimacy that was being precipitated (Asia Yearbook 1987: 234).

The legislation increased the penalties that could be imposed by the parliamentary Privileges Committee. In six hours on 25 August 1986, amendments to the Parliament (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act were passed through three readings. These changes increased the possible fine from \$1,000 to \$50,000 "if a member is found guilty of dishonourable conduct, abuse of privilege or contempt" and they gave parliament the right to imprison a member for the remainder of the session (FEER 4 September 1986: 12-13). The amendments maintained the penalties of suspension for the remainder of a session and of reprimand. A provision was added which gave parliament the right to remove a member's immunity from civil action for a specified period. Thus a member could be silenced for fear of civil proceedings.

The power to deal with contempt cases summarily was extended from parliament as a whole to the Speaker and any chairman of any committee, that is, to the PAP exclusively.

In the same session, the government introduced constitutional amendments which denied the right to counsel for any member accused of contempt (Time 8 September 1986: 17) and denied members the right to be brought before a magistrate within 48 hours of their arrest. Members could therefore be held incommunicado. Further, the seat of an expelled member would automatically fall vacant (Asia Yearbook 1987: 234). In short, the legislation gave the PAP the power to silence any member it disapproved of through the fear of heavy penalties and criminalisation in the courts and to expel them from the House at its convenience.

The amendments were introduced hurriedly before a Privileges Committee hearing on Jeyaretnam's questioning of the independence of the judiciary. Noting the impending hearing in his introduction of the amendments, Dhanabalan stated that the hearing should not be allowed "to become a forum for another debate, an opportunity for more smears or a platform for histrionics". He continued, "By all means take the government to task, scrutinise its actions. But don't resort to defamatory statements which cannot be proved and which only undermine our institutions" (FEER 4 September 1986: 12). Consequently, Jeyaretnam could be cited for contempt if he repeated before the Privileges Committee his original comments in the House.

At the end of the televised Privileges Committee hearing in 1986, during which Lee fulminated against Jeyaretnam for several days, the opposition MP asked whether Lee hated him and thought he had to be destroyed. Lee's answer: "Politically, yes. You have to be debunked, exposed as a charlatan, as basically dishonest, as immoral and utterly unscrupulous, that you make any allegation against anybody, so long as you are protected [by parliamentary privilege]. But the moment you bear the consequences, you flinch and you cringe, which is shameful" (Asia Yearbook 1987: 233-4). The prime minister spoke under privilege.

Although this televised show trial may have earned sympathy for Jeyaretnam, it also demonstrated the limits to parliamentary opposition and the power of the PAP's continuing ability to exact revenge. Asked whether the government was making a political mistake in turning Jeyaretnam into a martyr, Dhanabalan replied, "Even if Jeyaretnam is made a martyr in the eyes of his supporters, we have still made a point to the others, and that is what we are interested in" (FEER 8 January 1987: 58).

Thus the government used fear to set the limits to parliamentary opposition. Criticism of specific policies of the government could be countenanced, but the development of a political critique of the corruption of

the institutions of liberal democracy in Singapore could not.

The Washington-based human rights organisation, Asia Watch, a guardian of liberal democratic values, criticised these new measures:

it is especially troubling because that Parliament's members come almost exclusively from the ruling party (and so control the disciplinary process); because there are no clear definitions of what constitutes behaviour that warrants disciplinary action; and because decisions of Parliamentary disciplinary bodies are not reviewable by the judiciary. Our concerns are only heightened by the fact that, at least in recent years, Parliamentary disciplinary actions seem to have been reserved exclusively for members of the miniscule opposition in Singapore (Asia Watch 1989: 79-80).

These measures, for all practical purposes, removed parliamentary privilege for the opposition and meant that opposition MPs must be able to prove every statement they make in parliament according to legal standards of proof if they are not to make themselves liable for action under the privilege provisions.

Subverting Opposition Members' Effectiveness

While the PAP-state had to allow the public semblance of parliamentary opposition, it continued its efforts to undermine the performance of opposition members. Obstacles placed in the way of these MPs included:

a) Delaying the granting of office space in the government-administered housing estates where more than 86 per cent of the population lives. Jeyaretnam obtained an office eight months after his election in 1981. Chiam was elected on 22 December 1984 and obtained his office on 20 November 1985 (FEER 30 May 1985: 21; ST 30 November 1985). It was not possible to obtain offices prior to election as an MP.

b) Ensuring that annual publication permits for party organs and police permits for holding rallies is usually an uncertain and lengthy process often resulting in rejection (Asia Watch 1989: 80).

c) Bringing politically-motivated criminal charges for mismanagement of funds, illegal assembly and so on, or charges for defamation and libel against opposition leaders who have little hope of defending themselves successfully in front of a compliant judiciary (Asia Watch 1989: 71-81). These frequent prosecutions are aimed at keeping the opposition impoverished and criminalising the most effective leaders.

d) Denying reliable information from the civil service to opposition MPs and parties, making it more difficult to criticise government policies from an informed position and to develop alternative policies (ST 3 March 1984).

e) Placing party officials under constant surveillance by the Internal Security Department and infiltrating the parties (Minchin 1986: 217).

f) Using the government-controlled mass media to report minimally and negatively on opposition party affairs.

g) Excluding opposition MPs from government-controlled community organisations which monopolise local affairs in each constituency.

The latter exclusion is hardly surprising, since these government bodies, a system of community centres, consultative committees and residents' committees in each area or housing estate, are a vital governing mechanism of the PAP. As we noted in Chapter Four, they are all appointed by the Prime Minister's Office. He has been the chairman of the over-arching coordinating body, the People's Association, since its inception in 1960. PAP MPs head the local committees and PAP members hold the influential positions. Yet Lee, when faced with a complaint about this from Jeyaretnam, stated that these organisations must be insulated from "interference by political parties or opposition MPs" (ST 30 June 1985).

To protect this governing structure from also becoming a forum of political struggle, as parliament had, the PAP-state refused the repeated applications of both Chiam and Jeyaretnam to join these bodies which PAP MPs routinely sit on in order to have access to local community affairs (FEER 30 May 1985: 21; ST 30 June 1985). The PAP could get away with this refusal because, in this case, liberal democratic ideology worked in its favour: the civil service state apparatus was not supposed to be the place where political forces vied for supremacy whereas parliament was. Thus, the PAP was able to continue the public fiction of a separation of party and state in order to maintain the legitimacy of this governing mechanism.

Blocking Opposition Votes

The PAP's strategy of strengthening its power to select its own opposition while using the opposition already in parliament to demonstrate its commitment to democracy was also pursued by changing the electoral rules, heightening manipulation of the election campaigning and outright threats against voters. By these means it attempted to entrench its control of the legislature and prevent the 1988 general elections bringing any more unpleasant surprises, as Jeyaretnam's victory had in 1981.

The PAP-state therefore engaged in the time-honoured liberal democratic process of changing electoral boundaries

to its own advantage. But it also changed the whole voting system by way of amendment to the constitution. The Group Representation Constituencies scheme (GRC scheme) (Chan 1989: 86), passed by parliament on 18 May 1988 by amendments to the Constitution and the Elections Act, was designed to raise the threshold of votes needed by the opposition to get members into parliament in the first-past-the-post electoral system. Its aim was to "dilute opposition votes by combining constituencies with dominant opposition sympathies with neighbouring constituencies which strongly support the PAP" (Linda Lim 1989: 184). The PAP was thus insulating itself from a further swing to the opposition.

First mooted during the 1984 elections, the GRC scheme created 13 GRCs from 39 constituencies. That is, a group of three constituencies became a single voting block. To contest a GRC, a party must put forward a slate of three candidates all of whom become MPs if they obtain the most votes combined.

When the scheme was implemented in 1988, eight of the ten most marginal PAP seats from 1984 were placed in the ten contested GRCs along with safe PAP seats. In the boundary changes associated with its introduction, the solidly opposition Anson constituency of recently expelled MP Jeyaretnam was abolished even though he was still appealing

his case. Two other constituencies were abolished (Rochore and Telok Ayer), which were the seats of increasingly critical PAP backbenchers and former senior ministers, Toh Chin Chye and Ong Pang Boon (FEER 4 August 1988: 22; 1 Sept 1988: 20).

The government initially justified the scheme in terms of its proposal to set up Town Councils (see Chapter Four), but the punitive implications of the proposal for the opposition was immediately obvious and provoked a strong public reaction (FEER 26 March 1987: 22). The government then switched its ground. It stated that the GRC scheme was actually to ensure minority race representation in parliament and that this had not been said initially for fear of stirring up racial tension. Each slate of candidates was then required to have at least one minority representative. The PAP government went to considerable lengths to convince the electorate of its sincerity in this. It released cabinet papers dating back to 1982. Using the media once again as a support for the government's legitimacy in the face of dissent, Lee Kuan Yew staged another "political TV spectacular to put his case over" (FEER 24 March 1988: 26). The parliamentary select committee hearing on the legislation was televised each evening from 7 to 9 March 1988.

However, the Malay and Indian communities were prominent in opposing the proposal on the grounds that they did not want the PAP to define either who is a Malay or to choose their representatives (FEER 4 August 1988: 22). In addition, as Jeyaretnam pointed out in 1984, all the PAP's minority race candidates had won. The only two PAP candidates defeated were Chinese and one of them was defeated by himself, a member of a minority race (FEER 10 December 1987: 14). The voting figures from the previous three elections (1976, 1980, 1984) showed that PAP Malay candidates polled only marginally fewer votes than the average for all PAP candidates (FEER 11 February 1988: 32-33).

As Jeyaretnam implied, if the PAP's concern for minority representation was genuine it could easily have nominated more minority representatives to its own safe seats. Furthermore, the 1988 elections with the GRCs in operation produced exactly the same number of minority race representatives in parliament as before (sixteen), and reduced the elected opposition members by 50 per cent, from two to one. In 1988, the number of Malay MPs increased from nine to ten, Indian MPs stayed at six and a Eurasian MP did not stand.

The condition that each slate of candidates must include a minority representative made it harder for the opposition to put forward slates. Being the most exploited and

insecure community in Singapore, Malays are reluctant to enter politics for the PAP or for the opposition (FEER 4 August 1988).

The GRC gerrymander achieved its real goal of neutralising the increasing opposition vote in 1988 as a survey of the closeness of some results shows. Without the GRC scheme, there would have been a sharp increase in opposition members.

TABLE 6.4: MARGINAL RESULTS IN 1988 ELECTION

Seat	No of MPs	% of valid votes			
		PAP	WP	SDP	Other
<u>PAP VOTE BELOW 55%</u>					
Eunos GRC	3	50.9	49.1	-	-
Paya Lebar	1	52.4	-	47.6	-
Bukit Gombak	1	53.5	-	46.5	-
Bedok GRC	3	54.9	45.1	-	-
<u>PAP VOTE 55-60%</u>					
Aljunied GRC	3	56.3	-	43.6	-
Bukit Panjang	1	57.3	-	30.8	-
Nee Soon Central	1	57.6	-	38.4	-
Tiong Bahru GRC	3	57.8	42.1	-	-
Fengshan	1	57.9	42.1	-	-
Braddell Heights	1	58.8	-	41.2	-
Hougang	1	59.0	41.0	-	-
Chua Chu Kang	1	59.3	40.7	-	-
Changi	1	59.4	40.6	-	-
Whampoa	1	59.5	-	-	40.5*
Punggol	1	59.9	-	40.1	-

WP= Workers' Party

SDP= Singapore Democratic Party

* National Solidarity Party (split from SDP)

Source: FEER 15 September 1988:16.

The PAP secured all but one seat in parliament on the basis of 61.8 per cent of the total vote (GOS 1989a: 232). The remaining 38 per cent secured a single seat. This extreme distortion of the plurality system of voting meant that it took an average of 12,290 votes to elect a PAP candidate, while it took an average of 494,406 votes to elect an opposition candidate (election results, STW 4 September 1988).

Through this manipulation of the electoral process, the government was able to exclude most opposition candidates and choose one of its preference. It was able to prevent the strongest and working class-linked opposition party from winning a seat, the Workers' Party, and to permit the re-election of PAP-approved opposition member Chiam See Tong (Singapore Democratic Party). The PAP decided not to include his single member constituency (SMC) in a GRC.

In addition, the PAP seats could be protected from future anti-government by-election swings under the GRC legislative provision that by-elections need not be held in GRCs until the entire team of MPs ceases to hold office.

Threatening Voters and Potential Opposition Candidates

We noted in Chapter Four how, during the 1984-88 period, the PAP-state moved to tie welfare to political loyalty by linking housing values and services to the Town Councils

scheme. Since local MPs automatically head the Town Councils, voting for the PAP candidate would be the only way of ensuring maintenance of the same level of services to one's housing estate and thus the preservation of property values.

But there were more direct threats as well. The detention of 22 young professionals and community workers in May-June 1987 was partly aimed at preventing the effective mobilisation of intellectuals and the working class behind the Workers' Party. Several of those detained had been assisting the party (International Mission of Jurists 1987). Their detention served as a warning to opposition party workers as well as supporters.

The subsequent detention without trial in 1988 of one of the detainees' lawyers, Mr Francis Seow, who had declared his interest in standing at the polls, was also aimed at discouraging him and other capable candidates from doing so. Seow was a former attorney-general who had fallen out with Lee. As president of the Law Society in 1986, he had the best of Lee in a televised select committee hearing on legislation designed to force his resignation from the Society's presidency (Parliament of Singapore 1986: B60-B94). "My arrest and detention under the ISA [Internal Security Act] has frightened many potential candidates

away," said Seow after his release shortly before the elections (Asiaweek 2 September 1988: 34).

Manipulating the Electoral Campaign

These threats and obstructions set the scene for the 1988 election campaign. On 17 August 1988, the President announced the election date as 3 September, sixteen days hence, and nomination day as 24 August, thus allowing a nine-day election campaign.

The Electoral Act forbids campaigning outside of the campaign period. However, again, this effectively applied only to the opposition. August 9 was the National Day celebrations. August 14 was the Prime Minister's National Day Rally speech in which he described, in the words of the Straits Times headline "How the Reds can hit us a second time" (STW 20 August 1988: 13). Deputy Prime Minister Goh's National Day message included a warning about ensuring political stability or else "economic growth would take a plunge and that extra [Christmas] bonus may disappear" (STW 20 August 1988: 2). August 22 was the Prime Minister's highly publicised address to university students widely seen as a pitch to the new generation of voters. August 27, during the campaign and one week before the election, was the Orchard Road "Swing Singapore" Party. Sponsored by the government and planned by the US public relations firm Ogilvy and Mather to soften the stern image

of the PAP, it was a free extravaganza to which 250,000 people turned up (FEER 8 September 1988: 16).

On the announcement of the election, the deposit for candidates was raised more than 200 per cent from \$1,500 to \$4,000. During the campaign, the Workers' Party and its star attraction, Seow (released from 72 days detention under the ISA on 16 July), regularly drew crowds of 15,000 to 18,000 at its rallies. The PAP rallies, even with the Prime Minister speaking, attracted crowds of only a few thousand. However, the Straits Times and the television gave considerable prominence to Lee and barely mentioned Seow (FEER 8 September 1988: 18). On election eve, the media did suddenly give prominence to government allegations that Seow "was financially untrustworthy, had criminal acquaintances, and might be disqualified from taking his seat should he be elected" (The Economist 10 September 1988: 30).

With this kind of systematic crippling of opposition organisation, it was extremely difficult for the opposition to mobilise its supporters and to inform them of its policies. The opposition vote nevertheless increased by one per cent (GOS 1989a: 232).

Two NCMP seats were offered to the two highest polling losers: Francis Seow and Lee Siew Choh, both from the

Workers' Party. They had narrowly failed to win the Eunos GRC where the PAP won by 50.9 per cent of the vote (STW 4 September 1988). They accepted the seats. Dr Lee had been a leader of the Barisan Sosialis in the mid-1960s and his erratic leadership then had been a political gift to the PAP. He was therefore permitted to enter parliament after the election. However, Seow was disqualified from his seat before he was able to take it up, owing to tax charges brought against him by the PAP-state after he was released from political detention. Seow escaped to the United States before the court proceedings began (STW 24 December 1988). The PAP recognised that, even as a second-class MP, a person of Seow's eloquence and skill would provide too serious a challenge and act as a focus for dissent. Both Jeyaretnam and Seow were excluded from parliament.

Thus, from 1984 to 1988, the PAP-state moved decisively to protect its ability to rule through parliament. While, of necessity, acknowledging the place of an opposition in parliament, it went to considerable lengths to undermine genuine opposition and to fabricate political plurality. It used threats and fear to prevent opposition members being effective in parliament and to prevent the electorate voting for them. If they persisted in casting an opposition vote, this was structurally neutralised by the GRC electoral gerrymander. The PAP-state ensured that no

member of an opposition party with a strong base and working class links was elected.

Separating Functions: Parliament and the Presidency

Since 1988, the PAP-state has reinforced its previous policy of constructing an acceptable opposition in parliament. It has also taken steps to take the most important governing functions away from parliament and hand them to an elected president. Thus the legitimacy derived from the existence of the legislature will not put at risk the PAP's executive authority. In this way the PAP hopes to remove the contradiction between the two parliamentary functions of governing and legitimating.

Continued Fabrication of Opposition

The PAP must have calculated that a five per cent swing against it in the next elections may still bring into parliament some opposition members it regards as undesirable. It cannot manipulate the voting system much more without the electoral process losing complete credibility. It has therefore decided to create another category of MP: the non-elected MP (NMP). This plurality of statuses among MPs will have the effect of undermining the status of popularly elected opposition members. There will be so many categories of MPs, that the line between

government and opposition, between popularly elected and appointed, will be blurred. This, of course, must be the objective.

On 6 October 1989, Deputy Prime Minister Goh introduced an constitutional amendment to provide for the appointment of up to six non-elected MPs (NMPs) for two-year terms and with the same restricted voting rights as NCMPs. A Special Parliamentary Select Committee headed by the Speaker will choose the NMPs, who will then be appointed by the President. That is, the PAP will choose the NMPs. The first NMPs would be appointed as soon as practicable after the passage of the legislation (STW 14 October 1989: 8).

NMPs were first mooted in parliament in January 1989 by Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong who termed them "non-partisan" MPs. He put the idea forward as a way of making Singapore's democracy "as stable, as well supported and as feasible as we can contrive" (STW 28 January 1989: 6).

NMPs could make a contribution by representing the views of various sectors such as community leaders, university dons, workers and employers, noted Lee. In May, Goh raised the issue again, stating that people who did not want to spend their whole career in politics could make a contribution through becoming short-term MPs (STW 20 May 1989: 2).

This is a reversion to nineteenth century concepts of rule by the "educated" rather than the "ignorant". Everyone should have a vote, but some should have more votes than others (Macpherson 1977: 57). The NMP scheme is a way of giving more votes to the upper class. This is an echo of John Stuart Mill's meritocratic political theory of more than a century ago, which held that "those who had already attained superior station in life must not be made to yield their power to the rest" through equal voting power (Macpherson 1977: 60).

The junior Lee has put forward the view that the NMPs will mean that Singapore "will not be the same as other people's democracy because the circumstances are different" (STW 28 January 1989: 6). This statement seeks to avoid the criticism that the government has dispensed with the fundamental liberal democratic principle of universal suffrage. However, the PAP is on firm ground domestically because the opposition have already agreed to this through their acceptance of NCMP status in the House. The NMPs can henceforth be used against the opposition by claiming that they are neither government nor opposition and thereby neutral and non-partisan.

The benefit to the PAP will be considerable because the political effect of having yet a third category of MP in parliament will be to undermine the democratic concept of

opposition. With the Government Parliamentary Committees also pretending to be in opposition, there will be a confusion of political accountability. Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was reported as stating that the "GPCs, together with the non-constituency MP scheme and the recently proposed non-elected MP scheme, will make up for the small number of Opposition MPs" (STW 1 July 1989: 2).

The number of NMPs can also be increased to counter any increase in popularly elected opposition members. The number of NCMPs has recently been raised to four (STW 29 June 1991). In addition, changes to parliamentary privileges and procedures (for example, cutting down speaking times and requiring four members to support a call for a division) are also designed to hobble the opposition. But there is also another possibility for the PAP to undermine genuine opposition.

Shifting the Ground of Political Struggle

It may also be possible at some stage to move the ground of political struggle from inter-party and intra-parliament to intra-party. That is, the controlled "opposition" role allowed to the GPCs could be developed into one or more ostensibly opposing factions within the PAP, possibly using the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party or the Indian Congress Party as models. By focussing on these contrived political rivalries, the PAP government would add to the

illusion of political contest and of PAP responsiveness to popular opinion. Further, the contest would be mainly within the controlled environs of the party itself and parliament would be the showplace for exhibiting it. Such artificial political contest would no doubt provide a training programme for rising PAP leadership, as do the present GPCs.

The unprecedented statement by Lee Kuan Yew that the PAP could possibly lose power if there was "a split in the leadership over policy, not a personality clash, but a real difference over economic or political policies" (STW 28 October 1989: 13) may presage such a development or may simply be justification for an executive presidency.

This strategy fits well with the government's view that it has to create an opposition in its own image which would wait on the sideline as a kind of emergency replacement team. "In terms of the thinking of the first generation leadership, it essentially means the creation of a PAP 'A Team' and a PAP 'B Team'" (Vasil 1984: 185). Because such an opposition "must share the ruling party's philosophy and differ only in membership" (Asia Yearbook 1989: 214), the policy debates between the PAP government and the PAP opposition are likely to be fake. The risk for the PAP, of course, is that after the departure of Lee, they may not stay that way.

Whatever strategies the PAP may choose, it is clear now that it has created enough kinds of MPs and illusory opposition politics to have many options open to it as occasion demands. However, its main concern has been to protect its governing powers over the long term.

Parliament and Presidency: Separation of Functions

The PAP's main insurance against either an increasing opposition vote or a real split in its own ranks which would restrict its ability to govern, is its proposal for an elected presidency. In April 1984, Lee Kuan Yew stated that the government was "seriously thinking about amending the Constitution to introduce a blocking mechanism so that foreign reserves could be spent only with the assent of the President and a special committee" (Quah 1989: 17). This soon developed into a proposal for an elected presidency (ST 20 August 1984).

After the December 1984 elections, it was increasingly suggested that the elected president should also have the role of safeguarding the integrity of the civil service. The White Paper presented to parliament on 29 July, 1988, spelt out the government's rationale and intentions in detail.

Any government, even a temporary coalition which comes into power by a majority of only one seat in

parliament, has complete legal access to all the levers of power and decision-making....It can do anything it wishes to the financial assets and reserves. It can also change any appointment in the civil service.... Overnight, everything can be dismantled (GOS 1988c).

The PAP could not contemplate what it has termed a "freak" election result (FEER 8 September 1988: 18). That is, it might actually lose and another party govern. As we have noted, the PAP cannot afford to lose its grip on executive power because it has an inadequate class base. It therefore has assigned the key decisions in controlling the PAP-state apparatus to an executive president over whose election it would have complete control.

The White Paper proposed that the elected president would have a six-year tenure, with the right to veto the spending of the country's assets and reserves which the government of the day had not itself accumulated, the right to make appointments to all senior positions in the civil service (including the judiciary), the military and statutory boards, the right to attend and make speeches in parliament and the right of access to all government offices (Quah 1989: 17; Asia Yearbook 1989: 213).

The financial assets entrusted to the president have generally been alluded to as the foreign reserves. On a per capita basis, Singapore's reserves are the highest in the world. Even then they are grossly understated (US\$16.9

billion in 1988) because Singapore is said to value its instruments at purchase price rather than current value (e.g. gold at US\$35 an ounce rather than current value of about US\$376) (FEER 25 May 1989: 68). Thus the amount to be guarded by the president is considerable.

However, the implication of the White Paper was that the assets to be so protected include even more:

assets and reserves (including land and immovable property) of the government, the reserves and foreign exchange assets managed by the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation/the Monetary Authority of Singapore/the Board of Commissioners of Currency, Singapore, the capital assets and surpluses of the statutory boards, the capital assets and surpluses of government companies and those arising from any extraordinary measures which involve raising loans in the local and international markets and pledging the credit of Singapore (Low and Toh 1989: 21).

This proposal was clearly much more than "an elected president without executive powers to perform a custodial role" (Quah 1989: 17). It was a proposal "to divest Parliament of its powers and reinvest the powers in one man" (Low and Toh 1989: 25). Public reaction was very negative before the 1988 elections, as the proposal appeared tailor-made for Lee Kuan Yew. This reaction forced Lee to say that he would not necessarily be the first elected president (FEER 15 September 1988: 15). After the elections, Goh announced that legislation on the proposal

was a major priority but would not be rushed (Quah 1989: 19).

When finally passed into law through a constitutional amendment (STW 5 January 1991) and the Presidential Elections Act (STW 6 July 1991), further provisions had been added. Among the powers of the president are:

- the right to veto government expenditure bills; this veto can be overturned by a two-thirds parliamentary majority only if a majority of the president's six-member Council of Advisers does not support the president;
- the right to veto budgets of the government and key statutory boards and government-owned companies, and bills raising loans, incurring debts or providing guarantees on the part of the government; this and subsequent veto powers below may only be over-turned by both a two-thirds majority in parliament and in a referendum;
- the right to veto any bill that changes the investment powers of the Central Provident Fund Board;
- the right to veto such key public service appointments as Supreme Court judges, the Attorney General, Public Service Commission members, the Auditor General and Accountant General, members of the Armed Forces Council, the Chief of Defence Force, the Chiefs of the Air Force, Army and Navy, the Commissioner of Police and the Director of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau;
- the right to refuse a recommendation from the government to declare a state of emergency, since this may enable the government to circumvent his powers;
- the right to veto bills he considers are circumventing his blocking powers;
- the final say over release of political detainees, the issuing of prohibition orders against religious leaders (under the new maintenance of religious harmony law) and the investigation of cabinet members

for corruption (GOS 1990; STW 1 September 1990: 8; Asia Yearbook 1991: 204).

The presidential system is therefore entrenched because changes can only be made by a two-thirds majority both in parliament and in a referendum if the president does not concur. The president is bestowed with the powers of executive authority because he has the final say on all major financial and personnel matters. No government can rule without his cooperation or can eject from power the present governing fraction of the capitalist class.

The composition of the Council of Presidential Advisers ensures the perpetuation of PAP rule. Of the six members, two will be chosen by the President (one of whom will be chairman), the Chairman of the Public Service Commission (who owes his job to the president) will nominate two members, and the prime minister will nominate two (GOS 1990).

The current head of state has become the first elected president and his term will end in 1993. Voting for the presidency will be compulsory (STW 6 July 1991: 1). Only those persons screened by a three-member Presidential Elections Committee and granted an eligibility certificate may stand for election (STW 6 July 1991). However, there are exceptions, most of which are appointments under the direct control of the executive president.

He [sic] is automatically qualified if he had served at least three years in one of the following positions: Minister, Chief Justice, Supreme Court Judge or Judicial Commissioner, Attorney-General, PSC [Public Service Commission] Chairman, Accountant-General, Permanent Secretary, Chairman/CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of one of nine major statutory boards, or Chairman/CEO of a company with paid-up capital of at least \$100 million. (STW 15 September 1990: 9)

The WP and SDP have objected to the legislation but mainly on the grounds of the stringent qualifications for candidacy (STW 3 August 1991: 4). The qualifications for candidacy ensure that only a PAP-approved member of the capitalist class may stand for election.

Thus, the PAP-state has successfully transferred its core governing powers to a mechanism it completely controls and which cannot be breached by any number of opposition members in parliament. The president will also have the legitimacy of being popularly elected even though the circumstances of his election will be anything but democratic. This ideological effect is enhanced by the PAP's tactic of coining the title "Elected President".

Whether or not Lee Kuan Yew takes the presidency is not of major significance. As he has noted, his control of the PAP as secretary-general is more crucial to his power (Asiaweek 26 August 1988: 43). Through this position, he can determine the membership of the Council of Presidential

Advisers (perhaps even becoming Council chairman himself), the membership of the Presidential Elections Committee and thus the presidential candidate.

More importantly, the PAP has set in place a system similar to the British colonial administration whereby the levers of power remain in the hands of a democratically unaccountable capitalist class faction through their control of a "governor" and his appointed advisors. The legislature retains only residual powers. The similarity does not end in the structure. The PAP can sustain this rule because of its alliance with imperialism, its extensive control of the weak local capitalist class and the working class.

However, should liberal democratic struggle continue to increase in strength through the demand for an opposition, the PAP is now in the position to concede seats in parliament without any immediate risk to its political hegemony. No future government can rule without the support of the PAP-selected elected president.

FEAR AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

This examination of recent developments in Singapore's political system has revealed its use of liberal democratic forms of parliamentary democracy to enable the PAP-state to rule with legitimacy. We have seen that Singapore's social formation, specifically the weakness of the capitalist class through under-development, has so far prevented the genuine liberal democratic process of intra-class competition.

The PAP has held on to power by maintaining a cadre-based party without a mass base which rules through the party-state apparatus. Because of the PAP-state's power to control parliament, legislative legitimacy became PAP legitimacy. Parliament was both the vehicle and the legitimator of PAP power.

However, the democratic practices which ideologically legitimated this arrangement were thrown into crisis by increased political struggles in the 1980s which required the substantive realisation of political rights. The PAP's response has been to intensify repressive measures and the fear they stimulate. It has also created the illusion of plurality and political contest while undermining the substance of it. The PAP-state has moved

decisively to solve the contradiction between legitimacy and governance by separating these functions into two institutions, parliament and presidency.

This study of the political system has shown the functioning of the process by which people agree to their own subjection and exploitation. Just as public housing and education have put people in their physical and social places, the political system ensures they stay in their political places. But there is another institution of social control which supplements these. The law focuses the repressive power of the state on the working class to force its members not only to stay where they are put, but to cooperate with the accumulation strategy.

CHAPTER 7

THE LAW, COERCION AND TERROR

The ordering of society is most effectively achieved by consent. However, when consent is not forthcoming or the ordering process requires rapid break-down of existing social relations, then various degrees of coercion become necessary.

The PAP-state's priority has been the re-ordering of Singapore society in consonance with the economic strategy of its partnership with foreign capital. This has involved, as we have seen, sudden reconstitution of the relations of production. These changes have required increasing state control both to initiate them and to secure them. With its unbroken control of the legislature, the PAP-state has been able to place the force of law behind its re-structuring of the social formation. Even its most violent methods of engendering terror to force submission and obedience have been legitimated by the law.

To understand how the law and its administration have developed in Singapore, we need first to comprehend more generally the relationship between the law and the state in a class-divided society.

THE STATE AND THE LAW

In a class-divided society, the relations between the classes need to be regulated, and the working class not only put in its place, but forced to cooperate with the mode of production. This may take the form of general social discipline or more extreme forms of coercion. Thus consent is backed up by force.

In a system based on capitalist reproduction, labour has, if necessary, to be disciplined labour;...[I]n a society of "free individuals", men and women have to be disciplined to respect and obey the over-arching framework of the nation-state itself. Coercion is one necessary face or aspect of "the order of the state". The law and the legal institutions are the clearest institutional expression of this "reserve army" of enforced social discipline (Hall et al. 1978: 202).

The law functions to produce conformity to the new social structures that capitalism requires. It does this by administering the key relations of capital (private property and contracts), defining and upholding the public

order necessary for the steady reproduction of capital, defending the state against its enemies and raising "existing social norms to the level of universal norms" (Hall et al. 1978: 208).

That is, the law legitimates the state's use of force in regulating the social relations of capitalism. This is achieved on one level by the state itself appearing to be organised in the common interest and thus independent of any class interest. This appearance enables the state to define rights and obligations which it labels universal but which, in fact, guarantee particular class interests.

Thus, the relationship between the state and the law in liberal democracies is not that of the state openly using the law to impose the will of one class against the interests of another. Rather, the state serves the supremacy of the ruling class and the development of productive forces while maintaining the appearance of neutrality, of standing above politics and society in order to act as an impartial moderator of conflict.

The unequal extraction of surplus value in production appears as a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work" at the level of the wage contract. So, also, the "reproductive" work which the capitalist state performs on behalf of capital, assumes the appearance of the class neutrality of the state - standing above the class struggle and moderating it - at the politico-juridical level (Hall et al. 1978: 198).

As we have seen, legitimating ideological effects are produced by concrete practices. In parliamentary politics, the appearance of control by one class is avoided by the separation between the state and the legislature and through the competition of political parties in parliament. The ideological effect is of a state above class politics.

Ideology and the Law

In the case of the law, this effect is reinforced by the separation of the making of law from its administration; that is, the separation of the executive of the state and the legislature from the judiciary. The state appears to make laws in the common interest. It has the power to define what is legal and illegal and what is a crime. This ideological power is legitimated by its apparent lack of class interest and its separation from the process of administering the law. It is the judiciary which imposes sentences and subjects people to state violence in order to force their compliance with the social norms set by the state. Thus the "independence" of the judiciary from the state is a crucial ideological effect which is produced by the actual functioning of the law and covers up the real relation.

The political neutrality of the judiciary is a myth, one of those fictions our rulers delight in, because

it confuses and obscures....The judiciary does not of course call its prejudices political or moral, or social. It calls them the public interest (J. Griffith "The Politics of the Judiciary" New Statesman 4 February 1977).

Furthermore, the law itself does apply to everyone, rich and poor alike. The fact that some members of the upper class are criminalised along with large numbers of the working class is a concrete practice which covers up the law's class interest and attests to the state's neutrality.

If the law is evidently partial and unjust, then it will mask nothing, legitimise nothing, contribute nothing to any class's hegemony. The essential precondition for the effectiveness of law, in its function as ideology, is that it shall display an independence from gross manipulation and shall seem to be just (Thompson 1975: 263).

Again, at another level, the way the administration of the law is organised produces this effect of equality of justice. The legal apparatus is divided into three main areas of law: administrative, civil and criminal.

Administrative law is that law administered directly by the government to ensure that executive decisions are obeyed and to protect the direct interests of the state. The ideological effect of this practice is that, since every citizen has an interest in the smooth operation of the "neutral" state, these powers of regulation are normal and uncontroversial.

The civil law mainly regulates capitalist exchange. The distinction between civil and criminal law enables "normal" capitalist competition to avoid being heavily criminalised, and simply to be regulated for the efficient operation of business.

The criminal law criminalises forms of appropriation outside the control of the state and the capitalist class, along with other forms of social behaviour which threaten the existing social order. As the state has the power to define the common good and the law focuses on an individual's actions (taking individual circumstances into account only to a limited extent), the operation of the criminal law generates an ideological consensus that it is combatting social ills on behalf of society. The criminal law produces the ideological effect that crime is the fault of those who are punished for it. The particular class interest behind this imposition of social discipline is thereby obfuscated. The "illegal" activities of the working class are heavily criminalised; an ideological sanction which legitimates the use of state violence against the poor.

By operating strictly within judicial logic...[the law] constantly brackets out those aspects of class relations which destroy its equilibrium and impartiality in practice. It equalises...things which cannot be equal. In the famous words of Anatole France: "in its majestic impartiality it forbids the rich and the poor alike to sleep under the bridges of

Paris". It addresses "class subjects" as individual persons (Hall et al. 1978: 208).

Thus, these practices of the law and their ideological effects enable the state to criminalise the activities of a group or class that it wishes to control while at the same time disguising its class interest.

In a class society, based on the needs of capital and the protection of private property, the poor and the propertyless are always in some sense on "the wrong side of the law", whether actually they transgress it or not. (Hall et al. 1978:190).

The law thereby creates a hostile social environment for the working class.

Class Struggle and Singapore's Legal Inheritance

The above analysis of the state, the law and ideology would appear to provide Singapore with a legal inheritance ideally suited to the PAP-state's political objectives. However, the British colonial government left behind a system of law and a body of statutes which contained contradictory influences from class struggles in England and in Singapore.

In the nineteenth century, the victories of British working class resistance to the new set of class alliances

established by the transition from landed to industrial capital, came to be formalised in concessions within the legal system. The distancing of routine legal practice from the direct intervention of the executive did secure a greater measure of justice for the poor, while at the same time giving the law greater power to regulate on behalf of capital (Hall et al. 1978: 193). Real concessions were won in the administration of the criminal law, such as the right to be tried by one's peers (the jury system), the rules of evidence, the right not to incriminate oneself, the right to legal representation and restrictions on the powers of the police. The extension of the rule of law, the freedoms of speech and assembly, the right to strike and organise in the work-place were also gains of working class struggle which were raised to social norms by the law. More recently, the abolition of the ultimate terror of capital punishment and the trend towards judicial review of executive decisions in administrative law, reflect further concessions to political struggle.

But, in Malaya and Singapore, the British colonial state confronted a different social formation and mode of production. Chapter Two alluded to colonial emergency laws by which the state "temporarily" negated many of the above legal developments in order to suppress class struggle. The state gave itself arbitrary powers to suppress dissent: it was able to act without the normal processes of judicial

criminalisation which were slow, individualised and uncertain of successful conclusion (conviction) in all cases. That is, the powers of the state under administrative law were vastly increased through granting itself such rights as the right to detain without trial and to kill on sight. Thus the extreme powers of administrative law were used to destroy anti-imperialist politics. This entailed destroying class organisation, not just disciplining individuals of a certain class, which is the function of the criminal law.

The contradictory influences of the criminal law and the administrative law, each shaped by class struggle, were the legal inheritance of the PAP-state. This inheritance reflected the mix of consent, accommodation and coercion of two different social formations. In deciding the weight to give to the various influences in this combination, the PAP-state is right in claiming it had little choice if it was to follow the EOI strategy. It could not allow the victories of another working class to prevent the PAP-state exploiting its own.

Parliamentary system, parliamentary procedures, sophisticated election systems, bill of rights, rights to counsel - do you find these in our histories?....all these are alien concepts. But overnight, they've been put in a constitution, drafted, bound and given to us at the birth of our nation. And we're supposed to use that constitution and work it and run the nation without any departures from these Western notions.

But can it work? Will it always work? Will it be the recipe for our growth? Not necessarily. In Western societies, they may be able to work it, they may be able to harbour some of these communist, Marxist or other tendencies. But we have seen, as I have shown, our short history since independence has been replete with all sorts of special problems, special circumstances. So, in the ultimate analysis, we will have to devise our own solutions to deal effectively with our own peculiar threats and problems. (Home Affairs Minister Jayakumar justifying the detention without trial of 22 professionals and community workers to a PAP Youth Wing Seminar, 5 July 1987, GOS Press Release).

Lee Kuan Yew has made the point more concisely on many occasions, although sometimes more personally.

Certain liberties in a developing nation sometimes have to be sacrificed for the sake of economic development and security and to prevent communist oppression (The Times London 25 May 1977).

I spent a whole life-time building this and as long as I am in charge nobody is going to knock it down (FEER 26 December 1980).

To reconstitute the social formation and discipline the labour force to suit its economic policy, the PAP-state not only had to move in the direction of greater coercion and thus greater executive power, but it had also to use the judicial terror reminiscent of eighteenth century England. Therefore, Singapore law has regressed through the removal of many of the gains made by the British working class which had been incorporated into the law.

This study of the development of Singapore's legal system will focus on two areas: administrative law and criminal

law. This division, as pointed out earlier, is essentially one of function. Politically, administrative law enables the state to criminalise and suppress class politics. The individuals involved are not targeted primarily for individual criminal actions which could be dealt with under the criminal law. Many victims of executive law have not committed any such offence and cannot be criminalised in this way. The state therefore uses this kind of law primarily to suppress political organisation.

Criminal law enables the state to criminalise a whole class by criminalising individuals. This area of law essentially imposes social discipline by punishing individuals for actions which disrupt the social relations imposed by the state. These transgressions are overwhelmingly by the working class. In this sense, if administrative law is the criminalisation of politics, then criminal law is the politicisation of crime. The criminal law is aimed mainly at the "indiscipline" of one class.

This distinction between administrative and criminal is not an absolute one, but a matter of emphasis when seen in the context of suppressing class struggle. We will see that both areas of law come into play in some cases, while both commonly use coercion and terror as an integral part of their imposition of social control.

This examination will not be periodised in the manner of earlier chapters as it will be obvious that, within in each area of law, there has been intensification of executive control and continuous removal of working class protections as the PAP-state required more and more control to implement its economic strategy. In addition, as political struggles resurface in the 1980s, we see that the legal system becomes part of the crisis of legitimacy which the PAP attempts to solve by even greater repression.

Before examining the political development of administrative and criminal law in detail, we will set the context of the specific relationship between the state and the law in Singapore.

Rule by Decree: The State and the Law in Singapore

In liberal democracies, the state's constitution is held to entrench the fundamental liberties of the individual citizen and thus can be appealed to against abuses of executive power. Appeal is normally through judicial review of executive decisions. Singapore has removed even these modest limits to executive power and thus extended the reach of administrative law.

Law and order is another basic goal for both political and economic transformation, and the Constitution was

adapted to provide for the smooth passing of legislation which would facilitate the implementation of government policies. The removal of the two-thirds majority requirement for constitutional amendments in 1965 was crucial in this scheme of things. The government needed also to expedite the passing of legislation without being unduly hampered by procedural delays by the Opposition (Pillai and Lee 1989: 658).

The PAP-state may also have been concerned that, despite its best efforts, the Barisan Sosialis might increase its members at the next elections. In 1965 the PAP had only three more members than a two-thirds majority (57 to the BS' thirteen). As it happened, with the BS boycott of parliament, the removal of this provision proved unnecessary and the PAP-state has changed the constitution numerous times since then (Pillai and Lee 1989: 660-663).

The existence of a constitution, even if it can be changed at will, has the ideological effect of appearing to provide an ultimate guarantee for liberal democratic rights in Singapore. The PAP-state is deemed to operate within the procedural and substantive limitations of Singapore's written constitution. "It is commonly assumed that in Singapore the Constitution is the supreme law and that Parliament...can only enact legislation which is consistent with the Constitution; legislation which is inconsistent with the Constitution is liable to be struck down by the Courts. This view is held, as far as I know, universally" (Harding 1983: 351).

However, it has been argued by Harding that "the accepted notion of constitutional supremacy as the guiding principle in Singapore's Constitution is an illusion which rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of Singapore's constitutional history" (Harding 1983: 367). He holds that Singapore is an example of "legislative supremacy" and has been so since 1965, from which date "the Constitution could be amended simply by a law enacted by the legislature" (Harding 1983: 354).

Therefore, the PAP-state has not been at all confined by entrenched provisions of the constitution because it has changed the constitution at will. However, it continues to derive legitimacy from its appearance as a constitutional democracy.

In 1979, when the PAP was confident of its continuing legislative supremacy, the two-thirds provision was restored (Pillai and Lee 1989: 661). However, this did not mark a democratic advance, not only because of the PAP's overwhelming parliamentary majority, but because the PAP-state had other reasons to be confident of the safety of its executive decisions from judicial review.

While administrative actions in many states with a British common law tradition are becoming subject to judicial

review, no such trend exists in Singapore. Administrative law remains undeveloped in this respect in Singapore in comparison with other Commonwealth states, such as Zimbabwe, India, the United Kingdom and Australia (Goldring 1988: 489). This is because, in Singapore, judges are kept directly accountable to the executive.

The Singapore judiciary has retained most of the pomp and ceremony of the British colonial courts. This gives the impression of a powerful, independent arm of the state. However, whereas the judiciaries in other jurisdictions administer the law in favour of a particular class owing to their unity of class interest and the bias of the law itself, judges in Singapore have additional and less subtle reasons for doing so.

The Singapore judiciary's lack of independence begins with its structure....By granting short-term appointments that may or may not be renewed at government discretion, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has ensured that fully half of the twelve judges on Singapore's Supreme Court are kept on a short leash.

Three of these have been named so-called "judicial commissioners", a designation which amounts to a one- or two-year probationary term during which the government can review a new judge's rulings before entrusting him with full tenure....[T]he necessity [for this] seems to evaporate when loyalty is not at issue. In July, Yong Pung How, a long-time crony of Lee, gave up his highly successful business career to be appointed not a judicial commissioner but a fully tenured judge. The preferential treatment was not due to his legal prowess, since Yong has not practised law for eighteen years.

The three other judges with limited tenure - including the chief justice - who has the all-important power to

select which judges hear sensitive cases - have all passed the retirement age of 65. They continue to serve as judges, and to receive full judicial salaries rather than their smaller pensions, solely at the discretion of the government, which decides whether to renew these appointments every three years.

Matters only get worse at the lower-court levels, where judges enjoy no tenure and are routinely shuttled back and forth between the judiciary and government service (Sidney Jones, *Asia Watch* in FEER 21 September 1989).

A year later, Yong was appointed chief justice (FEER 13 September 1990), becoming the second to hold the post since independence.

The independence of the judiciary became a political issue in 1986 when it was raised in parliament by opposition member Jeyaretnam. This added to the growing crisis of legitimacy for the PAP-state. It therefore sought to squash the debate by disciplining Jeyaretnam and by holding a commission of inquiry into the subject. The sole commissioner was a Supreme Court judge, Mr Justice Sinnathuray. The propriety of a judge enquiring into his own independence could not be a matter of public comment, as the alacrity with which the government serves defamation writs is well known. Sinnathuray was widely known as one of the most politically reliable on the bench. He had convicted student leaders of rioting on framed-up rioting charges in 1974 (Tan Wah Piow 1987b) and had since presided over internal security act procedural reviews of detainees' cases. He concluded that Jeyaretnam's allegations were

"wholly unfounded and scandalous" (International Mission of Jurists 1987: 5). The parliamentary Privileges Committee then convicted and fined Jeyaretnam for breach of privilege. This had the effect of criminalising any discussion of the issue.

Thus, judicial review of executive decisions is unlikely either to be initiated or to succeed if initiated. First, judges are directly controlled by the PAP-state. Secondly, in the rare event that they do allow appeals (probably in the knowledge of the executive's political strategy), the government can immediately change the constitution and the relevant law, retrospectively if necessary (e.g. Asia Watch 1989: 27). Thirdly, legislation enacting administrative law aimed at political suppression now routinely carries clauses excluding judicial review (e.g. the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act 1990).

The administration of the criminal and civil law continues to be legitimised by the august panoply of the judiciary and its separation from the executive of the PAP-state. However, when local struggles force the judiciary to encounter the executive directly in the area of administrative law, their identity of interest is revealed. Unlike industrialised liberal democracies, the PAP-state is too insecure to yield any ground in its discretionary powers and the ideological effect of the separation of the

two arms of the PAP-state breaks down. Hence the need to prevent any judicial review in this area of law.

As we noted in the last chapter, the creation of the Elected Presidency is a recent development which takes increased control by the executive a stage further. The president's executive actions are immune from judicial review (with minor exceptions) (Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment No.3) Bill 1990, Clause 22J). His constitutional powers are entrenched.

Therefore, the two-thirds majority provision for amending the constitution, originally intended to safeguard individual liberty and to restrain the executive, is now safe-guarding the executive powers of the PAP against the rise of democratic opposition. The latter has to get not a simple majority but two-thirds of the seats in the House to rescind those powers.

Although the formal separation of state and judiciary continues to have an ideological effect in Singapore, in reality the PAP-state has few checks on its law-making and law-administering powers. In fact, the situation amounts to thinly disguised rule by decree.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW: THE CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

The criminalisation of politics through the administrative law is an attractive option for the PAP-state since executive discretion is the basis for all decisions and, as we have noted, there is no effective legal redress for victims. Criminalisation through administrative law is primarily aimed at destroying political organisation through denying freedom of association. It takes place on two levels. The first level is that of sorting out legal from illegal politics and criminalising the latter. The second level is suppression of illegal politics by the imposition of state terror. The ideological effect of terror, fear, also permeates the first level as it is intended to do.

Legal and Illegal Politics

Liberal democracy usually functions in a political environment where there are many sectoral organisations and pressure groups attempting to influence public opinion. A citizen therefore has many ways to participate politically. The administration of political discipline in Singapore suppresses this political pluralism by declaring what is legal and illegal politics. It prevents the growth of any

autonomous political association in the community. It defines all non-PAP political action outside of political parties as illegal and subversive. It steers all political activity into parliamentary politics, preferably the PAP, or proscribes it. One of the legal mechanisms for doing this sorting between legal and illegal politics is the Societies Act.

Any group or association of ten or more persons must be registered under the Societies Act if it is not registered under another law such as the Companies Act. In applying for registration, information must be supplied concerning the aims, the constitution and rules of the society and the names and background of office holders. The Registrar of Societies will often request more information or require that aspects of the proposed constitution be amended to suit government criteria.

A society will be refused registration if the Registrar is satisfied that "the rules of the society are insufficient for its proper management and control" or "it would be contrary to the national interest for the society to be registered". Registration may be refused if "a dispute exists among members of the society as to the persons who are to be officers" or "it appears to him [the Registrar] that the name of the society to be registered is likely to mislead members of the public as to the true character or

purpose...or is in [his] opinion... undesirable" (Section 4, Societies Act). The Registrar is not required to give reasons when he rejects an application. The UK-based development organisation, Oxfam, had an application for the registration of a local section rejected without explanation after a two year wait (Asia Watch 1989: 39).

If an organisation succeeds in becoming registered, it also requires the Registrar's permission to establish branches, change its name or place of business, amend any rules or use a flag, symbol, emblem or badge or other insignia (Sections 9, 11, 13, Societies Act). By this means the PAP-state controls the organisational strength and the ideological impact of the organisation.

The Minister of Home Affairs may deregister and dissolve any registered society if he is satisfied that it is being used for unlawful purposes or purposes incompatible with its objects and rules, or it is a political organisation with "such an affiliation or connection with any organisation outside Singapore as is considered by the Registrar to be contrary to the national interest".

Without written permission from the Minister, officers of a dissolved society may not hold office in any other society for three years after its dissolution (Section 24, Societies Act). The Registrar also has the power to require any society to give him any information he

requests, such as documents, accounts or books. The Minister of Home Affairs may declare someone unfit to serve as an officer of a society because of a criminal conviction. The Act provides for summoning individuals to give information about societies and for entering and searching premises. Penalties for contravention of the Act include large fines and imprisonment (Sections 10, 12, 26-29, Societies Act).

In 1988, 176 societies were registered, four applications for registration were rejected, 45 societies were voluntarily dissolved and five societies were declared to have ceased to exist. There were 3,873 societies on the register as at December, 31 1988 (GOS 1989a: 185).

The above figures do not give an accurate picture of the deterrent effect of the Societies Act, as they show that the vast majority of applications succeed. The inclusion of "Registration of Societies" in the Information Ministry's 1989 yearbook under the heading "Internal Security" points to the Act's real function. The investigation of applicants by the Internal Security Department is widely known (Asia Watch 1989: 38). The successful applications are therefore recreational, charitable or professional societies, not public interest groups.

The conclusion which must be drawn from the government's registration figures is that citizens do not attempt to

establish organisations which in liberal democracies would be regarded as public interest groups or pressure groups on particular issues. The legislation forces any such group to register as a political association or to be classified as subversive and illegal. Those that do register as a political party then draw the full weight of the PAP-state's security surveillance system onto themselves. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the PAP has many other ways to control and suppress political parties. In addition to these, the Societies Act legally enables the PAP, a rival party, to know all the details of any party organisation and to monitor it constantly.

The Societies Act criminalises all political organisation which is not subject to direct government control or which is not criminalised by other legislation. Inherited from the British colonial administration, it was most used to sort out and criminalise existing political organisations during the 1960s and early 1970s when the PAP was securing its political hegemony and launching the EOI strategy. However, it continues in force as a preventive measure even though the sea of political pluralism was drained during that period.

Criminalising New Forms of Struggle

In the 1980s, at the height of resistance to the policies of the Second Industrial Revolution and when Jeyaretnam was

beginning to undermine the PAP's legitimacy in parliament, political dissent surfaced through organisations which the government had previously seen no need to criminalise: the Law Society and the Catholic Church. As institutions already controlled by the English-educated upper class and with a traditional role in the ruling structure, neither of these bodies was susceptible to proscription under the Societies Act. Therefore specific legislative measures were taken to suppress the organisation of struggle within these institutions without proscribing the institution themselves. The PAP-state imposed its own definitions of the legitimate and illegitimate actions and concerns of these bodies. It then used legislation to impose these definitions. By this means the boundary between parliamentary politics and pluralistic community politics was set within the organisational life of these bodies. Illegitimate actions and concerns could thereby be separated out as subversive, as the pursuit of parliamentary political objectives by clandestine means.

[W]hat the Government will not tolerate is sympathizers and political activists working their way into professional organizations and other bona fide organizations, establishing themselves in positions of influence, concealing their sympathies and activism from others, and using the umbrella of the organization for political purposes (Home Affairs Minister Jayakumar, GOS 1986: B105).

In 1986, the Law Society, the body established in law for the self-regulation of the legal profession, dared to offer

a dissenting opinion on a government legislative proposal, the Newspaper and Printing Presses (Amendment) Act, to restrict the circulation of foreign publications carrying critical analysis of Singapore politics.

In response to this criticism, the government introduced the Legal Profession (Amendment) Bill to force a change in the leadership and in the disciplinary procedures of the Law Society. This legislation also restricted the Law Society to commenting on legislation only when requested by the government. A boundary was put in place between legitimate professional concerns and "politics" to prevent this upper class organisation becoming the vehicle for bourgeois dissent.

In pursuit of this political objective, the government subpoenaed the entire Law Society Council to appear before the parliamentary select committee considering the bill in October 1986, in order to humiliate and intimidate them. They were interrogated by ministers, especially the Prime Minister, as if personally on trial.

If I come to the conclusion that...some activists, through the indifference of the majority of members, have misled the Society to wilful ways unconnected with the profession, then I will find an answer to it. Because it is my job as Prime Minister in charge of the Government to put a stop to politicking in professional bodies. If you want to politick, come out...You want to politick, you form your own party or join Mr Jeyaretnam. But if you stay in the Law Society Council and politick, and at the same time you

consciously or sub-consciously ally these activities to those of the Workers' Party, then inevitably damage must be done.... Because I am not taking flak from the lawyers without giving them as good a response as they would expect from me if I were a counter party in an action. Whether you are communist, Workers' Party or whatever, if you want a scrap with the Government, sure you will get one....You think you can be smarter than the Government and outsmart it, well, if you win, you form the Government. If I win, we have got a new Law Society. It is as simple as that (Lee Kuan Yew, Parliament of Singapore 1986: B114-B115).

Within two years of the hearing, the government established the Academy of Law headed by the Chief Justice to which all members of the judiciary, the law faculty of the university and members of the legal profession must belong (STW 13 August 1988: 4). It is poised to take over the regulatory functions of the Law Society.

Thus, using legislation, the government as an immediate priority removed the Law Society's leadership and then established a parallel government-controlled organisation to replace it. By this use of administrative law, the PAP-state imposed political discipline on professionals seeking to exercise bourgeois political rights. This was a necessary step for the government because an active, independent bar would soon expose the lack of judicial independence in Singapore. Uninvited professional comment was criminalised.

Criminalising Religion

The emergence of struggle through the Catholic Church was an altogether more threatening phenomenon, as it provided organisational links between upper class organisation and working class struggle. It further provided both a religious ideological rationale for political action and an organised group of adherents who were not interested in the middle class struggle to make more money and become members of the capitalist class.

In 1987 the government confronted the Catholic Church and forced it, by threats and intimidation, to close down its Justice and Peace Commission and its welfare centre for foreign workers, alleging they were bases for a "Marxist conspiracy" (International Mission of Jurists 1987: 13). Organisations within the church do not need to be registered under the Societies Act and the PAP-state threatened to change this policy if the archbishop "could not put his own house in order" (Lee Kuan Yew in FEER 17 December 1987).

To prevent religious organisations from being politically active in society, the PAP-state realised that the demarcation between legal and illegal kinds of politics would be insufficient, since church activities can always claim to be religious rather than political. The government therefore redefined religious activity far more

narrowly as the direct institutional concerns of religious bodies in their own organisational affairs. Religious activities concerned with changing Singapore society according to religious understandings of the nature and destiny of human beings were categorised as political and proscribed. On October 6, 1989 Home Affairs Minister Jayakumar announced that legislation would be introduced in the next sitting of parliament "to ensure that religion is kept out of the political arena" (STW 7 October 1989: 10).

To blur the issue, the PAP-state entitled its legislation the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act to create the ideological effect that it was responsibly moderating the relations between Singapore's religions. The provisions of the Act, however, focus on the relationship between religious bodies and the state, and give the government the power to suppress by executive decision almost any activity of a religious group or leader.

The Minister of Home Affairs is given the power to issue a prohibition order against any religious office-bearer to prevent that person from "addressing orally or in writing any congregation, parish or group of worshipers or members of any religious group", from "printing, publishing, editing, distributing or contributing to any publication produced by that religious group" and from "holding office in an editorial board or a committee of a publication of

that religious group". A prohibition order may be issued on the basis of such catch-all provisions as "carrying out activities to promote a political cause", "exciting disaffection against the President or the Government of Singapore" and "carrying out subversive activities under the guise of propagating or practising any religious belief". The maximum penalty for contravening a prohibition order is a fine of \$10,000 and/or two years imprisonment. Second or subsequent offences incur a fine of up to \$20,000 and/or three years in prison. The decisions of the minister are not subject to judicial review (GOS, Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill, Bill No. 1/90 1990; FEER 18 January 1990; STW 24 February 1990). This legislation was enacted on 9 November 1990 (STW 10 November 1990).

Thus, in the late 1980s, we see the PAP-state using administrative law to discipline ruling class organisations which seek to exercise liberal democratic rights and have the potential to connect with working class struggles. Because it could not proscribe the whole organisation, the PAP-state criminalised certain activities. The suppression of these organisations, as with working class organisation in the past, was accomplished also by the use of state terror which is the next level of the operation of administrative law.

Executive Terror: Suppressing Illegal Politics

Under certain laws, the PAP-state may arrest and detain without trial anyone it chooses for as long as it chooses. This power has two main functions. First, it physically removes from society those citizens who have refused to conform to PAP-state social and political organisation and who have established, or have the potential to establish, alternative forms of organisation. Secondly, it has a profound ideological effect on others who may have contemplated similar dissenting behaviour or have been actively associated with such actions. By arresting a few, terror can be struck into the hearts of many.

Detention without trial at the discretion of the executive is possible under several laws, most of which derive from the colonial administration's attempt to suppress nationalist struggle and some forms of autonomous social organisation among the lower classes.

Suppressing Working Class Social Organisation

In its quest for survival, the working class organises in ways which are classified as either legal or illegal by the state. Some of these forms of organisation, such as secret societies, are rooted in pre-capitalist traditions. Their present activities may not be socially benign, but this issue must be distinguished from the fundamental reason for

their criminalisation. For example, the line of legality between right and proper exploitation, which is what capitalists do, and extortion, which is what gangsters do, is not adequately explained in terms of the social worth of each activity.

Section 30 of the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act provides that the relevant minister, if satisfied that some person is associated with activities of a criminal nature, may with the consent of the Public Prosecutor, detain the person for a maximum (but renewable) period of one year. In addition, Section 33 of the Misuse of Drugs Act empowers the Director of the Central Narcotics Board to detain a person where it appears to him necessary to do so for the purpose of treatment or rehabilitation. There are also executive detention provisions in Section 4(1) of the Emergency (Public Order and Prevention of Crime) Ordinance 1969 (Tan Yock Lin 1987: 237-238, 243).

This legislation is justified as necessary to suppress Chinese secret societies and drug trafficking, as there is often supposedly insufficient evidence for criminal convictions and prosecution witnesses sometimes refuse to testify because of intimidation. In other words, the power of the state to control through the normal operation of the criminal law can be partially resisted by this level of social organisation. Secret societies are a form of

autonomous social organisation which, like the state, enforce discipline through violence. Drug trafficking is one of their economic strategies to accumulate capital. These alternatives have to be eliminated if the PAP-state is to ensure the distribution of the surplus on a class basis and to direct social control to the needs of industrialisation, namely wage labour.

By raising capitalist class social norms to the level of universal norms through the law, an ideological consensus has been generated behind the summary suppression of such organisations. The PAP-state has successfully criminalised this form of working class social organisation.

As at 15 August 1989, 1,228 persons were being detained in prisons without trial, of whom 740 were said to be drug traffickers and the rest said to be involved in secret society and criminal activities,...figures disclosed in parliament by the Minister for Home Affairs (Seow 1990: 7).

Since only 73 persons were detained under this act in 1988, and 31 in 1987 (STW 5 August 1989: 3), it must be assumed that most are kept for several years.

This category of prisoner was useful in the government's international public relations campaign to restore its legitimacy after detaining 24 middle class professionals under a different act (see next section) in 1987 and 1988.

In order to legitimate the practice of arbitrary executive detention, Criminal Law detainees were purposely confused with those who had been detained for liberal democratic political activities. In a speech to the Asia Society in Washington on 17 May 1989, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Brig. Gen. Lee Hsien Loong, attested to the beneficial effect of detention without trial:

Lee said when Americans talked about so-called repressive measures in Singapore, they were referring to "a couple of people" who had been arrested because of political problems.

"You may not be aware of it, but one reason why our streets are safe and joggers are not subject to mugging [a reference to a recent violent "wilding" of a woman jogger in Central Park, NY] is because we have a substantial number of people who are detained under criminal law provisions without trial," he said.

He said those detained without trial included gangsters, drug traffickers, murderers and those who had committed heinous crimes "against whom charges cannot stick in court" (ST 18 May 1989).

However, arbitrary detention of people on the basis of suspicion under the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act can be seen, in political terms, as a way of suppressing traditional Chinese social organisation in favour of the colonial institutions of capitalism inherited by the Chinese upper class.

Hostage-Taking: Suppressing Political Organisation

The Internal Security Act (ISA) is the administrative law targeted at political organisation which could directly

undermine the PAP's political hegemony. The provisions of the ISA include:

Section 8:

(1) If the President is satisfied with respect to any person that, with a view to preventing that person from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of Singapore or any part thereof or to the maintenance of public order or essential services therein, it is necessary to do so, the Minister shall make an order

(a) directing that such person be detained for any period not exceeding two years; ...

Section 74:

(1) Any police officer may without warrant arrest and detain pending inquiries any person in respect of whom he has reason to believe

(a) that there are grounds which would justify his detention under Section 8; and

(b) that he has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any way prejudicial to the security of Singapore or part thereof.

The definition of the security of Singapore is a matter of executive discretion. Once detained under these provisions, a person may be:

- held up to 30 days for interrogation by the Internal Security Department who have no obligations to inform family members of the detainee's whereabouts;

- issued with a detention order for up to two years which is renewable ad infinitum;

- issued with restriction orders so that even after release from detention, a detainee may be restricted to living in internal exile (an offshore island) or, even if permitted to reside at home, may have restrictions placed on their movements, employment, freedom of association and other civil liberties (Asia Watch 1989; Amnesty International 1980).

The terror lies in the constant threat of indefinite detention and the immediate threat of maltreatment, torture and public humiliation. The pattern of treatment of ISA detainees during the period immediately after their arrest has been systematically documented by international human rights organisations. It has usually involved:

- sudden arrest in the early hours of the morning;
- no access to legal counsel or family for several weeks;
- being held in solitary confinement underground;
- being interrogated in freezing underground rooms under jets of refrigerated air, lightly clothed in prison clothes or naked; cold water may be poured over them at frequent intervals and they may be forced to drink quantities before being beaten;
- being questioned by rotating teams of Internal Security Department (ISD) officers for 72 hour periods without breaks, given a 30 minute respite, and then interrogated for a similar period;
- physical beating which may be alternated with contrived concern for their welfare;
- interrogators concentrating on psychological blackmail techniques to make detainees feel guilty for getting their friends into trouble, saying that their families will be harassed if they do not confess or inducing detainees to implicate their friends;
- the threat of indefinite detention being frequently raised as a possibility;
- the continuation of this routine for as many days as it takes for the detainee to confess to whatever the ISD wants (Amnesty International 1980; International Mission of Jurists 1987).

After several days of continuous physical and psychological abuse, many detainees have admitted to the web of lies and insinuations put before them for their signature. Others have held out through punitive living conditions and repeated torture for many years. Lee Kuan Yew has described the interrogation process in a way which shows the results required:

All interrogations must wear down resistance of [detainees] by sustained psychological pressure, including physical fatigue, to get them to give leads to the next links in a well-established underground movement (FEER 24 February 1978).

It is not a practice, nor will I allow subversives to get away, by insisting that I got to prove everything against them in a court of law, or [obtain] evidence that will stand up to the strict rules of evidence in a court of law (ST 3 June 1987).

When the ISD has assembled the "confessions", the PAP-state may announce, as it did in 1987 and many times before, that a Marxist conspiracy has been uncovered which was threatening the stability of Singapore. The "confessions" have then been published in the media and the detainees have been forced to incriminate themselves and others on television. After this, the ISD has usually permitted lawyers and families to have brief but regular access (under surveillance). Ultimate release is predicated on the willingness of a detainee to "confess" and incriminate others, and on the political timetable of the PAP.

Attempts at judicial review of detentions have consistently been blocked by the PAP-state. Defence lawyers who persisted have been imprisoned under the ISA themselves (Amnesty International 1980: 43; Asia Watch 1989: 51), in order to intimidate the legal profession as a whole. A foreign barrister who forced the government to amend the constitution in order to avoid judicial review was barred from practising in Singapore (Asia Watch 1989: 51). In 1976, one lawyer who sought judicial review of detainees held under the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act was also detained under that act himself. Detainees who have taken legal action have been imprisoned for longer periods as retribution.

The ISA is essentially a terror tactic of taking hostages. It removes from their organisational base in society those individuals who are a political threat and incarcerates them as political hostages, held against continuing organised dissent.

Historical Pattern of ISA Repression

Derived from the British colonial government's Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (1955), the ISA and its use reflect the history of political struggle in Singapore. The British used executive detention during the anti-colonial struggle.

The PAP-state, as we have observed, used it before the 1963 elections to eliminate the top leadership of the Barisan Sosialis. Since the arrest of 133 persons in that year, many others have been detained under the ISA. However, no accurate statistics are available, since the PAP-state does not necessarily announce all detentions.

The PAP government has rigorously harassed all dissent and any potential opposition grouping in Singapore.... From 1963 to the early 1970s the number of political prisoners in Singapore fluctuated between a maximum of 250 and a minimum of 70. In the years 1963-1965, arrests far exceeded releases, whereas in the late 1960s this pattern was reversed. New waves of arrests occurred in 1970 and in the period 1974-76 (Amnesty International 1980: 15-16).

This pattern of detentions accords with the PAP-state's consolidation of its political hegemony as it launched the EOI strategy with foreign capital. A sweep of opposition MPs, journalists and trade unionists in 1966 cleared the path for the 1968 elections and the passage of anti-labour legislation. The last of those detained in 1966, Chia Thye Poh, a Barisan MP, was released into internal exile only in May 1989. He was kept as a constant reminder that the PAP-state could hold a person as long as it wished.

In 1970, more trade unionists were arrested as the final clean-up of independent union leaders who opposed the heightened exploitation of workers. In 1971, in preparation for the 1972 general elections, the main

editorial staff of the Chinese newspaper Nanyang Siang Pau were detained under the ISA and two other newspapers were closed down. This was to prevent ideological support in the media for Chinese education (International Mission of Jurists 1987: 3-7).

A similar pattern occurred prior to the 1976, 1980 and 1988 general elections, each sweep of arrests reflecting the government's attempt to suppress new forms of struggle. We have already noted to some extent the significance of the 1987 ISA arrests, in terms of suppressing activism by young English-educated professionals within the legal profession and the Catholic Church. This multi-functional security operation was directed not only at the institutions involved, but at new social sectors: professional, single or childless women, and both professional men and women who had no desire to join the capitalist class. As the PAP-state statements of accusation noted:

With major changes in our education system since the 1970s as a result of parents opting for English-stream schools for their children, recruits to communism are no longer mainly the Chinese-educated. The younger generation of Singaporean Chinese are bilingual and bi-cultural. This has enabled the disaffected, the disgruntled and the misled amongst them to draw concepts and methods from both the Chinese-based CPM and West European Marxist groups (Ministry of Home Affairs Press Release 26 May 1987: 9).

The charges against these detainees included references to forsaking "well-paid careers to take up lowly-paid jobs of

\$300-\$400 per month which would allow them to influence others" (MHA Press Release 26 May 1987: 9). One of the main reasons they were detained was their focus on the relationship between the PAP-state and foreign capital.

The Marxist conspirators also targeted their attacks against Singapore's economic system and industrial policies. In their articles, they adopted familiar communist arguments to denounce the existing capitalist system as "unjust", "exploitative" and "repressive", distort the working and living conditions of workers, and exaggerate the disparities between upper- and lower-income groups. In the 15 Sep 85 issue of the "Catholic News", Vincent Cheng [a detainee] alleged "wrongful beating up of workers by the police" and went on to suggest that the "poor are never born poor, they are made poor" by the existing system....[Other] articles attacked the role of MNCs [multinational corporations] in our economic prosperity....No mention was made of the MNCs providing employment and bringing new ideas and technology. Instead, the articles, adopting the communist line, denounced MNCs for allegedly exploiting the people and bringing misery to the country. With such distortions, it is only a matter of time before industrial strife will resurface (MHA Press Release Addendum 4, 28 May 1987: 2, 3).

Through this exercise of executive terror, institutions had their autonomy restricted, liberal democratic political struggle emerging among young professionals was suppressed and public discussion of the social effects of the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital was proscribed.

In addition to suppressing these new forms of struggle which emerged in the 1980s, there was an important shift in the strategy for suppressing "legal" opposition within the boundaries of parliamentary politics. Political leaders

from legally registered political parties were no longer detained under the ISA as they were in the 1960s. The PAP-state's recent strategy has been to criminalise such people under the criminal law as professionally negligent or as thieves, perjurers and bankrupts. An analysis of Jeyaretnam's convoluted battle against a series of trumped-up criminal charges reveals this change of strategy.

The Criminalisation of J B Jeyaretnam: A Chronology

1972	Workers' Party (WP) sues PAP MP Tay for libel.
1974	WP loses case.
1975	WP loses appeal. Ordered to pay costs but requests for payment lapse owing to WP poor financial position.
1981	Jeyaretnam (JBJ) wins by-election in Anson constituency.
1982 (Jan)	Tay demands full payment of costs within a week. Tay applies to court to seize WP assets but only \$18.47 in account.
1982 (June)	Consequent to Tay's application, receiver appointed for WP.
1982 (Aug)	JBJ & Wong (WP Chairman) signed that materials submitted to receiver were fair and accurate.
1982	JBJ found guilty of two breaches of parliamentary privilege but the government, recognising that its pursuit of JBJ was generating public sympathy for him, waived the penalties.
1983 (Aug)	JBJ & Wong charged with making false statement about WP accounts and fraudulently transferring WP funds to avoid creditors. Case involved three donations totalling \$1,600.

- 1984 (Jan) Senior District Judge Khoo acquits both of false statement charge and two defrauding charges. Convicts them on one defrauding charge involving \$400 and fines each \$1,000.
- Khoo transferred from Bench to Attorney-General's department seven months after acquittals.
- 1984 (May) Chief Justice Wee heard state's appeal.
- 1984 (Dec) JBJ re-elected in general elections.
- 1985 (April) Wee's verdict reversed defrauding acquittals and imposed \$1,000 fines. Ordered retrial on false statement charge.
- 1985 (May) Application to appeal verdict to Court of Criminal Appeal is rejected. (This would have opened the way for appeal to the Privy Council in London.)
- 1985 (July) JBJ fails in application to get retrial in High Court rather than District Court. (There is no appeal to the Privy Council from the District Court.)
- 1985 (Sept) At retrial Senior District Judge Foenander finds both guilty and gives each a three month prison sentence. Appealed.
- 1986 During parliamentary debate on amendments affecting jurisdiction of subordinate courts (Jan) and on the budget, JBJ stated more measures were required to ensure judicial independence and suggested transfer of Judge Khoo might be seen as politically motivated.
- 1986 (April) Presidential Commission of Inquiry appointed to investigate charges of executive interference in the judiciary. The commission consisted only of Justice Sinnathuray, a judge notorious for his pro-government political decisions on the bench. JBJ refused to appear before the Commission. Sinnathuray found there was no executive interference and that

the "wholly unfounded allegations of Jeyaretnam were scandalous statements that should never have been made" (FEER 31 July 1986, 13-14).

1986 (Aug) Just before Privileges Committee sits to consider disciplinary action against JBJ for his purported allegations against the judiciary, amendments to the Parliament (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act are quickly passed greatly enhancing the powers of the Committee and the penalties it may impose.

1986 (Sep) For five days Prime Minister Lee conducted the Privileges Committee hearing as a trial of JBJ and called his questions on the independence of the jury "totally treasonable" (Asia Yearbook 1987: 234). Proceedings were televised.

1986 (Nov) Justice Lai upheld convictions on appeal but changed sentence to one month's imprisonment and \$5,000 fine each, thus disqualifying JBJ from parliament. A fine of more than \$2,000 disqualifies an MP from parliament for five years.

BJJ serves prison sentence.

1986 (Dec) On 9 December the Speaker announced that JBJ ceased to be an MP on 10 November, the date of Lai's verdict.

1987 (Jan) Parliamentary Privileges Committee announces decision to fine JBJ \$1,000 for his purported allegations about the judiciary.

BJJ refused permit for opening ceremony of new WP offices on morning of ceremony. Opening proceeds. JBJ receives summons and is eventually fined \$3,500 under Public Entertainments Act. Fine is sufficient to bar him from parliament for another five years.

Soon after this JBJ was also fined \$5,000 by parliament for each of five newsletters he issued criticising the

parliamentary disciplinary proceedings. Then he was again fined \$1,000 on each of two counts for alleging in parliament in March 1986 that a person had been wrongfully arrested when they had not and for, in the same month, failing to declare his alleged pecuniary interest in a question he raised in parliament.

- 1987 (29 July) JBJ's application to appeal his case to the Privy Council is rejected by the court.
- 1987 (19 Oct) JBJ disbarred after a three judge court chaired by the Chief Justice declare him unfit.
- 1988 (26 Oct) Judicial Committee of Privy Council (UK) grants JBJ's appeal against disbarment. The opinion harshly criticised the conduct of the legal proceedings against JBJ and Wong, concluding:

"They have been fined, imprisoned and publicly disgraced for offences of which they were not guilty. The appellant, in addition, has been deprived of his seat in Parliament and disqualified for a year from practising his profession. Their Lordships' order restores him to the roll of advocates and solicitors of the Supreme Court of Singapore, but, because of the course taken by the criminal proceedings, their Lordships have no power to right the other wrongs which the appellant and Wong have suffered. Their only prospect of redress, their Lordships understand, will be by way of petition for pardon to the President of the Republic of Singapore" (Privy Council Appeal No.10 of 1988: 22).

Privy Council thereby reinstates JBJ to the Singapore Bar.

- 1989 Parliament amends relevant law and the constitution to abolish appeals to the Privy Council for disciplinary matters and for matters under the Internal Security Act.
- 1989 (April) JBJ petitioned President of Singapore for pardon.
- 1989 (May) President declines pardon citing reason that JBJ had not "expressed any sense

of remorse, contrition or repentance in respect of the offences" and that, according to the Attorney-General, "there has been no miscarriage of justice and no injustice has been done to the petitioner".

Sources: FEER 1984-89; Asia Watch 1989; Straits Times.

This criminalisation is a process of de-classing middle and upper class politicians to the working class level of the "common criminal". It is a strategy which enables PAP leaders to claim that legal parliamentary opposition politics is not suppressed by obviously political laws such as the ISA (e.g. Jayakumar, 5 July 1987, Ministry of Home Affairs Press Release). It also prevents opposition politicians from claiming martyrdom.

Excluding from the Nation

Provisions for executive detention are also included in the Banishment Act, which enables the PAP-state to revoke the citizenship of Singaporeans who are citizens by registration and naturalisation and to hold them "until he can be placed on board ship or other means of transport" (Section 6/4, Banishment Act). Since a large proportion of Singaporeans, including opposition politicians, were recent migrants from Malaysia, India or China, this legislation was used very regularly in the 1950s and 1960s to deport political activists. Banishment frequently rendered them

stateless. Those who refused to be banished, languished in jail. In 1978 Amnesty International estimated at least five people remained in this category, while at least 30 had been deported since 1965. It was common for ISA detainees who were not citizens by birth to accept release on the condition of deportation. According to Singapore government statistics, 90 persons were "released and proceeded to other countries" in the years 1960-1976 (Amnesty International 1980: 23).

Thus, during the years that it was consolidating its rule, the PAP-state was also able to suppress political organisation by removing people completely from the nation. They could never be part of organised dissent in Singapore again.

However, having sorted and graded the population by means of the education system and the immigration laws, the PAP-state has found less need for these banishment provisions. Instead, it has required a means, not to expel citizens from Singapore, but to prevent political exiles from remaining politically active abroad because they have the possibility of coming back. It has therefore legislated to exclude locally-born Singaporeans from the nation. The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Act 1985 empowers the government by executive order to deprive any Singaporean of their citizenship if they have stayed

away from the country for more than ten years. Thus, those who have escaped or are wanted under the ISA cannot contemplate participating in Singapore's political life ever again. Political exiles, such as 1974 student leader Tan Wah Piow, a charismatic political organiser and orator, now a London lawyer, have been deprived of their citizenship and cannot ever return to participate in Singapore political life.

This is a summary punishment which combines the old penalties of transportation and excommunication. While not carrying the physical terror of ISA detention, the deprivation of citizenship forcibly takes away a citizen's home for ever.

In the above ways, the PAP-state uses administrative law to restrict freedom of association and thus prevent or suppress political pluralism. The process was aptly described by Lee Kuan Yew in 1956, when speaking in the Legislative Assembly against the arbitrary executive repression of dissent by the colonial state:

First...you attack only those whom your Special Branch can definitely say are communists. They have no proof except that X told Z who told Alpha who told Beta who told the Special Branch. Then you attack those whom your Special Branch say are actively sympathising with and helping the communists, although they are not communists themselves. Then you attack those whom your Special Branch say, although they are not communists or fellow travellers, yet, by their intransigent opposition to any collaboration with

colonialism, they encourage the spirit of revolt and weaken constituted authority and thereby, according to the Special Branch, they are aiding the communists. Then finally, since you have gone that far, you attack all those who oppose you....

All you have to do is to dissolve organisations and societies and banish or detain the key political workers in these societies. Then miraculously everything is tranquil and quiet on the surface. Then an intimidated press...and the government-controlled radio together can regularly sing your praises and slowly and steadily the people are made to forget the evil things that have already been done. Or if these things are referred to again, they are conveniently distorted, and distorted with impunity, because there will be no opposition to contradict (George 1984: 111).

Administrative law gives maximum discretion to the executive arm of government and is legitimated by the ideology of the defence of the nation. Offenders against the state are thereby placed ideologically outside the law and physically outside the society or even the nation. Released detainees have been disqualified from political participation because of the indelible taint of their "disloyalty". In this way, a challenge to the PAP is transformed into a subversive act against the nation.

The suppression of class politics has been achieved by distinguishing between legal and illegal politics and by the selective terror of removing political organisers from society. This is the criminalisation of politics. But the disciplining of a whole class requires coercion and violence on a much larger scale. To exercise maximum control, torture has to be built in to the routine

operation of the law and the state has to be able to kill. Terror must permeate all aspects of working class life. This is the function of the criminal law and it is the politicisation of crime.

CRIMINAL LAW: THE POLITICISATION OF CRIME

In the introduction to this chapter, it was noted that the criminal law enables the state to criminalise a whole class, the working class, by criminalising individuals. As Althusser has observed on a general level, labour must be tutored to "the rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination" (Althusser 184: 6). The working class must be forced to conform to a pattern of life which involves continuous wage labour. Thus, the criminal law in Singapore controls the working class by imposing social discipline.

The rapid changes required in the social formation by the industrialisation policies of the PAP-state and foreign capital have meant that class struggle and the racial and linguistic contradictions within the working class have had

to be quickly suppressed. To some extent this has been done by other systems of social control, such as education, and legitimated by such PAP doctrines as meritocracy and racial harmony. But, to secure these rapid changes, judicial terror has been required as the final sanction.

However, neither the PAP-state nor foreign capital can be seen directly to torture and kill on a mass scale. The judiciary and its separation from the state executive produces the necessary ideological effect of a politically neutral system of justice. Combined with the individualisation of the criminal law, the system of judicial administration has the ideological effect of ensuring that members of the working class blame themselves for the "crimes" they commit. This is not to suggest that they do not commit them, or that their "crimes" are morally acceptable. Rather, the aim is to point out the politics of the system of criminal justice: that conviction and punishment for individual offences legitimises, by covering it up, a system of social discipline which mainly operates in the interests of one class and against the interests of another. This is why "the poor and the propertyless are always in some sense on 'the wrong side of the law', whether they actually transgress it or not" (Hall et al. 1978: 198).

Removing Legal Protections Against State Power

The EOI policy and then the Second Industrial Revolution involved, as we have seen, a process of increasing exploitation of labour and thus of increasing control. This intensification has been reflected in the criminal law by the progressive removal of legal protections won by the British working class over many decades. By this means, the PAP-state has been able to exert more direct control over the outcome of criminal cases to ensure that an increasingly tight regime of class discipline is enforced. There are many examples of this process but we will examine some of the landmarks.

Juries, Hearsay and Self-Incrimination

In 1960, a year after the PAP took power, jury trial was restricted to capital offences only. In 1959, during the parliamentary debate, Lee Kuan Yew criticised jury trials for the premium they placed on a lawyer's "skill and agility". He held that "Judges could make up their minds on facts as well as jurymen could, and the amendment would bring our system into line with Malaya's" (Phang 1983: 53).

In 1969, arguing against the jury system even for capital offences, Lee used the partial removal of an obstacle to state control as the rationale for its complete removal:

He was of the view that if judges could not decide questions of fact better than jurymen, then "grievous harm" was being done every day when single judges and magistrates were sitting alone deciding questions of fact in civil and criminal cases. Further, the jury seemed "overwhelmed with the responsibility of having to find a man guilty" when they knew that the death sentence was to follow (Phang 1983: 58).

The Minister of Law, Mr E.W.Barker (who retired from this position only in 1988), spoke of "the unreliability of the system of trial by jury". He said the chief justice and other judges supported the abolition, and stated that it was inconceivable for the government to "stoop so low" as to influence the judges in the absence of a jury system. Ten years earlier, in 1959, Mr Barker had assured parliament during consideration of the restriction of the jury system, that it was not the government's intention that the jury system be abolished (Phang 1983: 57-58). In 1970 the jury system was completely abolished.

In 1983, in the opinion of one Singapore legal academic from the National University of Singapore, "the criminal process, slightly over a decade after the abolition of the jury system, appears to be functioning extremely smoothly" (Phang 1983: 86). The removal of the "unreliable" public from the judicial process, except as victims, increased the power of the PAP-state to secure convictions in criminal cases especially when, as we have noted previously, the judiciary was directly under the executive's control. This

increased power enabled more class agents to be criminalised and punished as examples to their class.

Singapore's non-jury juridical system also may work against the poor. Low-income groups typically come before the court more frequently than do high-income groups, while judges themselves are governmentally appointed from the population's elite. Juries, which might include members of the lower class, have been discontinued (Austin 1989: 924).

In 1977, further protections were removed:

The traditional caution given to a person charged with an offence was abolished. The courts were enabled, with certain exceptions, to accept hearsay evidence. Silence on the part of the accused, either when charged or in court, can give rise to adverse inferences (Josey 1980: 57).

In a study of lower court criminal cases in 1979 and 1980, it was found that defendants with legal representation who pleaded not guilty were acquitted in approximately 50 per cent of cases. Of those unrepresented, only 20 per cent were acquitted. Most of those who pleaded guilty to start with were unrepresented and received, on average, more severe sentences than those who were represented (Yeo 1981: 41, 43, 48). Since class generally determines the ability to pay for legal representation, it is likely that a higher proportion of working class people are not only arrested for criminal offences but also plead guilty and thus are punished most severely.

However, the removal of many legal protections renders representation a far less potent factor than otherwise might be the case. The PAP-state took further steps to ensure working class discipline by removing judicial discretion in sentencing, thereby enabling the PAP-state directly to inflict a higher level of punishment on the working class.

Removing Judicial Discretion

From 1973, the government began to restrict the discretionary powers of judges by legislating for mandatory, minimum sentences. The first major legislation was the Misuse of Drugs Act which provided minimum sentences for drug trafficking and possession. The nature of the offence meant that the legislation was not controversial. However, mandatory, minimum sentences have since been extended to a great number of offences from car theft and letting off fireworks to rape, armed robbery and murder. The mandatory penalties involved in the sentences are mainly fines, imprisonment, corporal and capital punishment, with increasing emphasis on the latter two.

By removing judicial discretion in sentencing, individual circumstances cannot be taken into account. Individual cases cannot be treated individually: differences of background, personality, intention, intellect, and personal circumstances are irrelevant.

A young adult who, on request, passes a "joint" of cannabis to his host at a dinner party will receive the same minimum sentence of three years' imprisonment and caning as one who peddles small amounts of the drug to school children. A youth who steals a car hub-cap out of mischief will face the same minimum sentence of one year's imprisonment as a member of an organised syndicate of car thieves. A rejected lover who steals an involuntary kiss from his former girlfriend in a lift will be punished in the same way as a stranger performing the same act (Yeo 1985: clxxxix-cxc).

In arguing for mandatory minimum sentences, the Home Affairs Minister Jayakumar, a professor of law, stated that "the sentences meted out by our courts today appear neither to hurt the criminal nor are proportionate to the gravity of the offence" (Parliamentary Debates 43/1984: 1864-1865). The justifications of deterrence and community protection are routinely advanced by government spokespeople for this kind of legislation. Undoubtedly the effect of mandatory minimum sentences is to insert the power to punish more deeply into society. But it is increased power primarily to criminalise and punish the working class. While individual circumstances related to the offence are not taken into account, class circumstances are. The offences to which mandatory minimum sentences are applied are overwhelmingly "crimes" committed by the working class or, because of policing policy, more likely to be detected if committed by a working class person.

Examples of offences punishable by minimum terms of imprisonment and lashes of the cane are:

PENAL CODE (with effect from 31.8.84)

Robbery	Min.2 years, Max.10 years; <u>and</u> min. 6 strokes.
- if committed between 7 pm and 7 am	Min.3 years, Max.14 years; <u>and</u> min.12 strokes.
- attempt	Min.2 years, Max.7 years; <u>and</u> min. 6 strokes.
Assault or using criminal force during snatch theft	Min.1 year, Max.7 years; <u>and</u> caning
Theft of motor car or any part (including tyre, accessory or equipment)	Min.1 year, Max.7 years; <u>and</u> fine <u>and</u> disqualified from driving for min. 3 years after release.
Assisting in concealing or receiving stolen car (or component)	Min.6 months, Max.5 years <u>and</u> fine.
Extortion	Min.2 years, Max.7 years <u>and</u> caning.
Outraging modesty, voluntarily causing or attempting to cause death, hurt, wrongful restraint	Min.2 years, Max.10 years <u>and</u> caning.
- in a lift or against any person under 14 years	Min. 3 years,Max.10 years <u>and</u> caning

Voluntarily causing hurt or putting
fear of death or hurt in order to
commit rape with a woman under 14 years Min.8 years, Max.20
years;
Min.12 strokes.

Dangerous Fireworks Act (with effect from 1.5.88)
Letting off dangerous fireworks Min.\$2,000,
Max.\$10,000
or Max.2 years or
both.

- subsequent offence Max.2 years (no
fine) and max. 6
strokes.

Vandalism Act
Act (or attempt) of vandalism Max.\$2,000 or max.3
years and min.3
strokes, max. 8.
strokes.

Immigration Act (with effect from 31.3.89)
No valid entry/re-entry permit Min.3 months, max.2
years and min. 3
strokes.

Over-staying more than 90 days As above.

Minor Offences Act (with effect from 9 June 1989)
Touting for business in public place Min.\$1,000,
max.\$5,000 or
max.6 months or
both.

- subsequent offence Min.\$2,000,
max.\$10,000 or
max.1 year or both.

For drug trafficking and possession (e.g. possession of
over 15 grams of heroin regardless of circumstances),
murder (regardless of circumstances) and some firearms
offences, the mandatory minimum sentence is death by
hanging.

Mandatory sentences give far greater power to the prosecution and the police to extract pleas of guilty and confessions or to induce defendants to implicate others. They "provide prosecutors with too much bargaining power with which to influence or even coerce defendants into pleading guilty to other [lesser] offences", even if there is a good chance of acquittal on the original charge (Yeo 1985:cxc). That is, they increase state control through the criminal law.

Some lawyers recognise that "mandatory minima are regressive, replacing emphasis on individualisation and rehabilitation with punitiveness, incapacitation and deterrence - sentencing objectives that were common in the late 19th century but have proved to be ephemeral" (Yeo 1985: cxci). But, perhaps what is not so widely recognised, is that the political effect (in the short term at least) of such legislation is entirely desirable from the point of view of the PAP-state.

By the simple mechanism of passing laws setting mandatory minimum sentences for any offence, the PAP-state can now be confident that the level of legal repression of the working class will be instantaneously increased. Furthermore, the inability of judges to take individual circumstances into account increases the level of fear because of the arbitrary nature of punishment.

Crime as Struggle

As we have seen, the accumulation strategy of the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital led to intensified social dislocation and exploitation of the labour force. Non-cooperation with this strategy took many forms; crime was one of them. In this sense it is a form of struggle. The need for the added repressive capacity of the PAP-state to discipline workers during the Second Industrial Revolution is indicated by the higher incidence of this kind of non-cooperation, an increased crime rate, from the mid-1970s until 1980 (Austin 1989: 919). The limiting of this tendency can be attributed, not to better community cohesion, but to increased control (Austin 1989: 923). By 1988, Singapore had achieved a comparatively low crime rate.

TABLE 7.1: CRIME RATE 1987-88
Serious crimes per 100,000 people

Japan	2.70
South Korea	9.10
Thailand	18.88
Malaysia	45.26
Australia	57.88
Singapore	65.72
Hongkong	139.20
USA	225.15

Source: Interpol figures, Asiaweek 10 August 1990: 11.

The removal of legal protections for defendants in criminal cases accompanied the process of regulating more of the activities of daily life in order to discipline the labour force. With fewer defences against conviction, it was more open to control.

...the assumption that a government's use of law and control may benefit the middle classes and elite and yet be a detriment or misfortune to the lower classes, suggests that a conflict-theory approach may yield some worthwhile insights....Our findings reveal several features of formal justice which hint that Singapore's law and control may be understood from such a perspective. For example, a number of the minor laws may tend to discriminate against the lower classes. It is true that laws against littering may benefit society, but the street worker, for instance, labouring under the equatorial sun may find it more difficult to avoid tossing a cigarette or spitting than would the white-collar worker in an air-conditioned office. The laws against picking fruit from trees in public parks may work against those lower-income street people who frequent parks and who may also suffer more from hunger than do higher-income groups (Austin 1989: 924).

These minor laws or administrative requirements which, if not followed, result in criminal prosecutions, were multiplied in the 1980s in order to discipline the working class to "a regime of steady, regular, regulated, unbroken wage labour" (Hall et al. 1978: 210) and the social behaviour conducive thereto.

The plethora of petty laws and regulations carrying heavy fines or other penalties has been multiplied to enforce the

officially approved life-style regarding such matters as littering, smoking, spitting, hair-length, jay-walking, colour of front door, keeping of pets, and type of TV aerial. The maximum fine for urinating in a lift was made \$1,000. On 23 June 1988, The Straits Times reported that a man appeared in court for this offence. A "urine sensor" activated a jamming mechanism which sealed the man in the lift till the police arrived. A video camera in the lift "automatically captured the activity inside....The videotape recording of the camera confirmed that [the accused] was the culprit."

The same day, the newspaper announced: "Failure to flush the water-closet and urinal after use is considered a public nuisance under the Penal Code, Chapter 224. The penalty for committing a public nuisance is a fine of up to \$200." The photographs of six men, who had been booked by undercover environmental health officials for failing to flush a public toilet, appeared along with a story on their detection. (From 1 July, 1989 the maximum fine for repeated offending became \$1,000.)

The publication of photographs in the Straits Times of people convicted on minor morals charges became a feature of daily life. In June 1991, the newspaper carried the picture of a man who was convicted for masturbating in a public swimming pool (STW 15 June 1991) and of another who

stole women's underwear from a clothes' line (STW 22 June 1991). Thus, exemplary justice was extended to cover the most personal details of life, criminalising even those with psychological disabilities.

In 1986, legislative changes gave the HDB the right to acquire compulsorily an apartment if any authorised occupant was convicted of throwing heavy objects out of high-rise blocks or of harbouring illegal immigrants (FEER 14 August 1986: 18). Thus, in addition to the criminal penalty, a convicted person could again be penalised by executive order.

On June 21, 1989 a 32 year-old woman who threw three flower pots over the balcony of her flat when having a fight with her husband, was jailed for 3 weeks. The same day a 24 year-old man was fined \$14,400 for selling fruit without a licence on 111 occasions in 1987 and failing to turn up in court on 33 occasions. If he could not pay, he would serve 8 months in jail. Between January and May 21, 1989, 243 persons were arrested for touting their wares on the street (STW 24 June 1989: 5).

[The government] is bringing in a law under which any person who's caught begging twice will be produced before the courts, and if he's found guilty - and of course what defence can he have, he was begging - he'll be fined \$3,000 and, if he can't pay that fine, and how do you expect a beggar who's begging on the road to pay a fine of \$3,000, he can go to prison for 6 months (Opposition leader and lawyer, J B Jeyaretnam

speaking on "The Law Report", No.7, Radio Australia, 21 February 1989).

Control of all aspects of daily life was thereby extended, and criminalisation made more likely by the parallel removal of defendants' protections in legal procedure.

At the same time, the PAP-state moved to ensure that disobedience of administrative regulations restricting freedom of association could be dealt with as criminal offences along with burglary and soliciting. For example, 1989 amendments to the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act, previously the Minor Offences Act, set out substantial penalties for anyone who organises or assists in organising any assembly or procession which proceeds without a police permit or any person who participates in the same. The rules of the Act apply to any assembly or procession of more than five people in a public place intended:

- a) to demonstrate support for or opposition to the views of any person;
- b) to publicise a cause or campaign; or
- c) to mark or commemorate any event (Ministry of Home Affairs S250/89: 887).

If a permit for such an assembly is not obtained from the police, then guilt is assumed and a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment of up to three months or both is imposed.

This legislation covers such other "public order and nuisance" matters as parliamentary election meetings (similar rules apply), being on private premises without lawful excuse, touting and prostitution. Thus increased control of daily life was clearly related to the suppression of increasing political struggle during the 1980s as well as to non-cooperation arising from social alienation and dislocation.

Judicial Terror: Torture and Death

The above laws regulating daily social behaviour are additionally secured by the judicial terror of lashes with a cane and hanging. The terror imposed by these penalties (and executive detention) permeates the whole of society, strongly reinforcing obedience to the PAP-state and conformity to the discipline of wage labour.

Torture

The Singapore Government is not reticent about the details of "caning", a term which connotes schoolboy woes but is, in fact, a severe form of torture. In 1974, the Director of Prisons was interviewed in the local press.

[He] gave a blow-by-blow account of how criminals are caned so that they will walk with scarred bottoms for the rest of their lives...."As executors of this punishment, we would be failing in our duty if we did

not administer it in the spirit in which it was designed," he told a press conference (ST 13 September 1974).

He recounted how warders skilled in martial arts are trained for the task, how the cane is prepared and wielded, how each stroke splits the buttocks open and they become covered in blood, and how the trussed, naked prisoners struggle in agony.

Most of the prisoners put up a violent struggle after each of the first three strokes. Mr Quek said: "After that, their struggles lessen as they become weaker. At the end of the caning, those who receive more than three strokes will be in a state of shock. Many will collapse....Many will pretend to faint [in order to get a temporary respite from the half-minute interval strokes] but they cannot fool the prison medical officer" (ST 13 September 1974).

This punishment has been frequently described as an exemplary and appropriate treatment by a no-nonsense government:

Flogging is mandatory for nearly thirty crimes. According to the police, caning helps to restrain the vicious thug from committing physical violence and imposes a stigma on those who have been caned. The law exempts women, and men over fifty. Children taking part in armed robbery can also be caned, up to ten strokes with a light rotan. For adults, the limit is twenty-four strokes with a rotan no more than half an inch thick (Josey 1980: 56).

When legislation was passed imposing caning on foreign overstayers, Thai officials, concerned about Thai migrant workers in Singapore, said such a practice was "barbaric".

and unacceptable in civilised countries (FEER 6 July 1989: 14). A PAP backbencher, Heng Chiang Meng, showing unusual fortitude for any PAP member, also called caning a "barbaric act". But Trade and Industry Minister, Brig. Gen. Lee Hsien Loong denounced this sentiment as "mush" (Time 13 March 1989).

In 1989, an amendment was passed to the Misuse of Drugs Act which permitted caning as a disciplinary measure within drug rehabilitation centres subject to the discretion of the superintendent. In 1991, a man convicted of armed robbery stated that he had received 48 strokes of the cane in one session on 8 April 1988, double the legal maximum (STW 8 June 1991). Also in 1991, a young, working class man (Chinese-speaking only), who pleaded guilty to twenty charges relating to two cases of robbery and rape, requested that his sentence of twenty years jail and 24 strokes be reduced in return for voluntary castration (STW 13 July 1991). His request was refused. Such constant publicity in the media about the terror this form of torture induces, maintains the level of fear among the population, as does the extension of the penalty to more offences.

A common justification for caning was to give criminals "a taste of the violence they have inflicted on their victims" (ST 13 September 1974). But since the penalty has been

extended to letting off fireworks, vandalism, immigration offences, and drug rehabilitation, this rationale fails. Rather, caning has been and is a form of mass torture to secure social discipline.

Death

Death is not the maximum but the mandatory penalty for murder (Section 302, Penal Code), trafficking in certain types and quantities of drugs (Misuse of Drugs Act) or using firearms in the commission of an offence (Section 4, Arms Offences Act). If a person is convicted of one of these offences, regardless of the circumstances, the judge must impose the death penalty.

Death sentences may be imposed under other provisions of the above acts as well as under the Internal Security Act, for treason, for hurting or imprisoning the President and for perjury which results in the execution of another person.

As with caning, the number of capital offences is constantly on the increase. On March 27, 1989, Home Affairs Minister, Professor S. Jayakumar, stated in parliament that the government was considering making cannabis trafficking a hanging offence. Trafficking includes "to give without any connotation of monetary benefit" under the Misuse of Drugs Act. In December that

year, death was made the mandatory penalty for possession of more than 30 grams of cocaine, 200 grams of hashish, 500 grams of cannabis and 1.2 kilograms of opium. The capital sentence previously applied only to fifteen grams of heroin and 30 grams of morphine (STW 2 December 1989).

Executions by hanging are carried out at the Changi Prison across the runway from Singapore International Airport. Hangings are routinely announced in the newspapers. Accurate statistics are hard to obtain as those provided by the government may be incomplete. However, according to the PAP-state, 45 people have been convicted of capital drugs charges since 1975, of whom 28 have already been hanged (STW 19 May 1990). There must be considerably more awaiting trial or under appeal, judging from the regular arrests for trafficking announced in the media. Total figures for executions on other capital charges, such as murder, have not been obtainable.

POLITICS IS CRIME, CRIME IS POLITICS

The pattern of the law's development in Singapore is closely related to the PAP-state's phases of industrialisation. The social alienation and political

struggles arising from increasing exploitation of workers have required intensified social control. The law has provided the means to impose social and political discipline by constantly escalating coercion and terror.

The PAP-state now exercises direct control through both administrative and criminal law. In destroying political organisation, the administrative law has given the PAP-state discretionary power to act according to its own timing and political strategy. Ideologically, it has been able to claim its actions are in the interest of the nation as a whole.

In criminalising working class indiscipline, the removal of judicial discretion and of defendants' legal protections has enabled the government to increase the severity of punishments and to assert discipline more directly. The ideological effect of the "independence" of the judiciary has preserved the legitimacy of the civil law for foreign investors and of the state for the working class.

Permeating the whole system of administration of the law is the terror of indefinite detention without trial, state torture and state killing. These are the final sanctions of the PAP-state's complex system of social control.

The ideological result of this process is that crime and politics are now almost indistinguishable. Both have become offences against the government. Crime is not an offence against society but against the state. Politics is feared like a crime because it also attracts the penalty of state terror. In this context, it is possible to comprehend observers who label Singapore as a "city of fear" (Buruma 1988).

I have never met a more political people. They are political with a small "p", in that everyone is calculating their lives and actions in accordance with real or imagined hierarchies of power, worrying who is listening and how it will reflect higher up the hierarchy (Ladley 1987).

In advanced capitalist countries, there is a social space between ruling class social norms (regarded as civilised society) and the direct political interest of this class in social discipline. The outer limit of this space is demarcated by the threshold of illegality. Within this space, working class life styles, community politics and non-violent protest can exist. In Singapore, the boundaries of ruling class social norms, political interest in social control and the threshold of illegality have all been made to coincide in order to eliminate this social space and to control the working class to the maximum degree. This arrangement has been secured by the use of terror on a mass scale.

MILITARY FORCE: THE ULTIMATE COERCIVE GUARANTEE

If political struggle cannot be suppressed by the law, the military can legally kill in the name of the state.

Military violence is the ultimate guarantee of the PAP-state's accumulation strategy and the final sanction of its system of social control. The maintenance of a standing military force is justified as protecting the state from external attack and internal subversion.

Internally, the constant threat of overwhelming state violence reinforces less coercive mechanisms of social control, such as public housing, education and parliamentarism. Furthermore, in preparing for the use of military force externally, civilian life in Singapore can be militarised and workers placed under permanent military-type discipline.

Secondly, strong armed forces linked to imperialist military power provide a guarantee regionally for an accumulation strategy also pursued through an alliance with imperialism. The military form of the alliance reflects its economic form. We will examine both the local and regional levels of military coercion.

Militarisation of Singapore Society

By being conscripted into the military, the working class assists in enforcing its own submission. As indicated already, all males must enter National Service on reaching the age of eighteen years for a period of two to two and a half years. Most are conscripted into the armed forces, the rest into the police, fire brigade and construction brigade (GOS 1989a: 172). After completion of training, they remain in the reserves until the age of 40 years (or 50 years for officers) and serve in the military (or the police) for up to 40 days per year.

About 80 per cent of the Singapore Armed Forces are reservists. They are liable for call-up at any time and have to keep the Ministry of Defence informed of their whereabouts should they go overseas. Reservists can obtain passports with a maximum validity of two years compared to the normal ten year validity, and exit permits have to be obtained from the Ministry if reservists intend leaving for longer than six months. A closer watch has been kept on the movements of reservists since the computerisation of immigration records (STW 17 March 1990).

The active armed forces now number about 55,000 plus reserves of 200,000 and a People's Defence Force of 30,000. The Civil Defence Force of 100,000 includes regulars,

conscripts, volunteers and 34,000 former army reservists (GOS 1989a: 171-6, 179, 228-9; Asia Yearbook 1989: 214). Between 1967 and 1985, more than a quarter of a million males received intensive military training (Seah 1989: 954). Thus, most of the male population between 18 years and 40 years is under military discipline, and most of the remainder is under paramilitary discipline.

National Service is primarily a way of disciplining the working class and containing local political struggle. The external defence capabilities of the Singapore Armed Forces depend more on technical ability than on size. However, a state of overt military preparedness no doubt gives greater confidence to foreign investors that the PAP-state is ready to meet both internal and external threats while enabling the PAP-state to continue to generate a crisis atmosphere. Thus the government has opposed suggestions to shorten the training period for National Service.

A shorter period of NS may erode confidence in Singapore and affect economic growth, Brig Gen (Reservist) Lee Hsien Loong has said. This is because the reduced security resulting from this could cause the manufacturing and financial sectors to shrink as investors turn elsewhere (STW 17 March 1990).

The Working Class Barracks

In Chapter Four we noted many aspects of the militarisation of the public housing estates, from their architecture and physical position to community organisation and methods of

surveillance within them. We noted too that housing estates are the barracks of worker-soldiers who live under military discipline, making Singapore into both a vast military base and a labour camp.

In addition, there are also military or paramilitary activities within the estates which residents are forced to participate in. For example, community exercises are held regularly to prepare for emergencies, from street demonstrations to the outbreak of war. In 1989 a civil defence exercise was held involving 236,000 households in water cuts and food rationing (STW 13 May 1989), and military exercises impinging on civilian life are regularly held for such purposes as the requisitioning of civilian vehicles, the immediate mobilisation of reservists or the use of public expressways for landing jet-fighters (Seah 1989: 957). To maintain the atmosphere of crisis which justifies such a scale of military activity, large underground bomb shelters are routinely constructed under housing blocks (STW 7 July 1990) and air raid sirens are to be installed in all areas by 1992 (STW 21 January 1989).

The Militarisation of Education and Ideology

Secondary schools students receive military or paramilitary training through the National Cadet Corps or other uniformed services between the ages of 13 and 16 years. Such training may be chosen as one of three extra-

curricular options, the others being sport and cultural activities (GOS 1989: 187). Military training has to be taken seriously. It is counted towards final marks in school.

Eligibility for officer training in National Service is related to scholastic record and ensures that the structure of the armed forces reflects the class structure of society as a whole. The officers are from the upper and middle classes, and the working class constitutes the other ranks. Thus, military training reinforces the power relation that the working class must obey the capitalist class.

As National Service comes between school and employment, the PAP-state has also instructed civilian employers to take into account NS performance (e.g. rank attained) in recruitment and evaluation (Seah 1989: 952), thereby further entrenching the results of the education system's sorting of class agents into their appropriate positions.

The PAP-state's ideology of Total Defence is propagandised throughout the school system as well as in National Service training. It provides the formal ideological basis for the militarisation of civilian life and consists of five elements, each the responsibility of a particular ministry:

TOTAL DEFENCE	MINISTRY
Psychological Defence Information	Communications and
Social Defence	Community Development (includes social welfare, People's Association, political feedback unit).
Economic Defence	Trade and Industry
Civil Defence	Home Affairs (includes police and Internal Security Dept.)
Military Defence	Defence

Source: GOS 1989a: 171, 234-7.

This ideology integrates all aspects of civilian life into a military strategy which politicises all behaviour as either for or against the PAP-state.

The patriarchal exclusion of women from National Service, from the habits of unquestioning obedience and from the high level of exposure to Total Defence propaganda has occasionally been raised as a reason for their prominence in political struggles in the 1980s. It has also been said that child-bearing and rearing constitutes their National Service.

The Militarisation of Governance

In the unlikely event that parliamentary political struggle should threaten the political hegemony of the capitalist class, a final option is military rule. The systematic

preparation which appears to be under way for this eventuality may be to reassure foreign investors, or it may simply be that the armed forces are the best source of obedient technocrats. Whatever the reasons, military officers are being trained in civilian administration and politics.

This development is presented by Vasil as a way of ensuring that "the military did not feel left out" and therefore did not simply take over as in other Third World countries. This explanation is derived from Rajaratnam's statement to Vasil in 1983:

We definitely intend to introduce the military element into the Cabinet and Parliament....The intention is to give them direct participation in Parliament and the Cabinet. If they are directly represented in the highest levels of decision-making, they can't blame the politicians for the mess. They would form part of the ruling class (Vasil 1984: 188).

Vasil also relates this policy to "one of the key overall objectives of obtaining a dispersal of power" into a variety of institutions in order to protect Singapore in the future. He further quotes Rajaratnam as saying, "Anybody who wants to seize power now has not only to just set up a political party. Jeyaretnam, after the by-election, has been finding it out" (Vasil 1984: 188-189).

Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, Deputy Prime Minister and the son of Lee Kuan Yew, is the main link between the PAP and the military. Observers have noted the militarisation of Singapore's politics and bureaucracy as a consolidation of B-G Lee's political and administrative base. It has been noted that

this trend could have fundamental long-term consequences for politics in the republic and that the ascendancy of [the junior] Lee - lynchpin for the Mindef/ex-army officer group - to the heights of power may be quicker than expected (FEER 20 April 1989: 33).

By 1989, military officers or former defence officials, many of them contemporaries of B-G Lee, occupied posts in the cabinet as well as such positions as permanent secretary of Home Affairs (controlling the police and the Internal Security Dept), chief of the Central Provident Fund (administering the compulsory pension fund for employees of \$32 billion), the director of the ISD and the chairman of the Economic Development Board. The government was also continuing its policy of placing military officers throughout the civil service for two-year assignments, of giving the armed forces higher pay rises than the civil service and almost as many scholarships as the entire civil service (FEER 20 April 1989: 33).

Whether this mixing of military and civilian administration is to implicate the military in current government or to

prepare for military government or both, it remains a last option. If taken, this path involves no conflict between legitimacy and governance, since the right to rule is bestowed by supreme military force. However, it would be difficult for the military to improve on the oppressive system of social control already in force in Singapore.

Securing Singapore's Regional Role

The military alliance between the PAP-state and the US has enabled the Singapore Armed Forces to obtain a technical ability in advance of its neighbours. It has upgraded its "poison shrimp" military strategy (i.e. swallow at your peril) to the "porcupine" strategy (think twice about the cost of attack) with its purchase of early warning aircraft and the latest US combat aircraft. By the end of 1986, Singapore already had more combat aircraft than Malaysia and Indonesia combined (Asia Yearbook 1988: 224). It is constantly upgrading its defence capability; for example, in 1990 it acquired Hawk surface-to-air missiles (STW 19 May 1990).

The PAP-state's defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP is similar to that of the other Asian NICs, with the exception of Hongkong which still has the direct backing of the British armed forces. PAP leaders state that defence

spending will stay at around six per cent of GDP. However, even one of its own backbenchers has pointed out that this is a nominal figure which leaves out "hidden" items (STW 17 March 1990). Singapore's defence spending has been rising rapidly as a proportion of government spending.

TABLE 7.2: COMPARATIVE DEFENCE EXPENDITURE 1990

	Singapore	Taiwan	S Korea	Hongkong
% GDP	5.1	5.2	4.7	1.6
% Budget	36.7	20.1	27.9	12.5

Source: Asia Yearbook 1991: 9.

TABLE 7.3: SINGAPORE DEFENCE EXPENDITURE 1985-90

	% GDP	% BUDGET
1985	6.25	12.7
1986	6.25	15.4
1987	---	12.6
1988	5.7	21.00
1989	4.8	27.00
1990	5.1	36.7

Source: Asia Yearbook 1986-91.

Table 7.3 shows that the PAP-state began to spend much more on defence once the 1985 recession had been overcome and high growth rates returned. The reason for this lies in the ambiguity surrounding US strategic intentions in the region. Singapore sought to boost its capabilities to

compensate for these uncertainties. Hence also its attempt to improve regional military relationships through exercises with Malaysia and Indonesia (STW 27 May 1989) and its more positive statements about a future role for Japan (STW 4 May 1991).

If the US significantly cuts back its military forces in the region, this will not be a signal for Singapore also to reduce our forces. It will be reason for concern over a potentially destabilising change in the regional balance of power, one which may lead to other significant powers playing a more active role in the region....No other Asean country is slashing its defence expenditures, demobilising its armed forces or acting on the assumption that it no longer faces any external security threats. It would be foolhardy for Singapore alone to do so (B-G Lee in STW 24 February 1990).

The PAP-state now faces another transition. It began its EOI accumulation strategy with British security guarantees. This soon moved to a reliance on US military power. Now the PAP-state finds the more complex situation of multi-polar imperialism may require a multi-lateral approach to securing imperialist military support. Its agreement to have a US military presence in Singapore on a regular basis (STW 17 November 1990) can be seen as a transitional measure.

The regional political implications of this invitation to the US and the constant references by PAP leaders to threats from irrational leaders and irrational forces from

other countries have been well understood by Singapore's neighbours.

"Many Malaysians cannot help but feel that the Singapore leadership may be referring to Malaysia, perhaps Indonesia too, and what it sees as a threat from the forces of Islam or Malay nationalism," the UMNO vice-president and former defence minister [of Malaysia] said. Describing Singapore as the "most densely defended country in the world", Datuk Abdullah...said, "When you want to host US facilities here and when we perceive that you see us as a threat to your existence and your stability, then of course we see that the offer is directed as a deterrence against us. You are telling us: What you see is this sea of hostile Malays surrounding you and you are saying: 'Hey, don't meddle with us, we have the Americans behind us'. We feel a little hurt, a little suspicious of your intentions and motives, a little doubtful of your sense of commitment to Asean and the concept of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (Zopfan) and your sense of good neighbourliness" (STW 2 September 1989).

Thus, the PAP-state's regional military role remains that of securing an accumulation strategy pursued in alliance with foreign capital. As we have seen, this strategy involves facilitating imperialist exploitation of the working classes in neighbouring countries as well as its own. Local capital in Singapore also has interests in low-wage production in neighbouring countries which it wants to secure.

Thus, the ultimate sanction of military force functions at both the local and regional levels. Locally, militarisation is mainly a means of enforcing worker discipline and state violence is routinely mediated on a

mass scale through the law. Regionally, Singapore's arms build-up not only acts as a military deterrent but heightens communalism thereby diverting attention from the social consequences of Singapore's role in facilitating foreign capital's penetration.

CONCLUSION

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN SINGAPORE

This study has focused on several major institutions in Singapore through which the social welfare system, parliamentarism and state violence function to suppress struggles and induce the population to conform to the requirements of the PAP-state alliance with foreign capital. The main periods of capital accumulation, social regulation and political struggles have shown that social control in Singapore must be seen primarily as a response to people's resistance to exploitation. The outcomes of political struggles then place limits on future capital accumulation and themselves establish the context for future struggles. Struggle is thus the independent variable which has shaped the forms of regulation.

Social relations are always regulated in many ways, but in Singapore different institutions have predominated at different times as the forms of popular resistance have changed. Also, some institutions have suppressed struggle in a variety of ways at different times. As a result of

this detailed study, we can now identify the nature of this relationship between forms of struggle and forms of regulation during each phase of Singapore's economic development.

Anti-Imperialist Struggle and Military Violence (1945-59)

In the postwar pre-independence period, British imperialism's regulatory response to the strong anti-imperialist nationalist movement in Singapore and Malaya was large-scale military violence and police-state tactics to preserve an accumulation strategy of direct colonial plunder. But the partnership between the anti-imperialist forces in Singapore and the Lee faction of the capitalist class, together with the general decline of British imperialism in the face of struggles elsewhere in the empire, precipitated changes in both accumulation and regulation strategies in order to defeat the left and to protect the profitability of British investment. The nationalist struggle had developed to the point where British capital and Western strategic interests could be preserved only by an accommodation with bourgeois political forces and by supporting the import substitution industrialisation policy designed to strengthen the local capitalist class. Thus struggles in Singapore and in other

colonies undermined existing strategies and led to the 1959-65 period of transition to a neo-colony.

Parliamentary Opposition and The Law (1960-65)

State regulatory power was therefore transferred to the Lee faction which, while allied to the anti-imperialist movement, had manoeuvred to establish an alliance with British capital. After 1961, the PAP-state faced a strong and legal mass-based political opposition against which it used all the repressive legislative measures bequeathed by the British colonial state. Violence was mediated through legal coercion during this period, when the PAP-state consolidated its political hegemony. The law was used to declare legal organisations illegal and to render their leadership vulnerable to attack by the security police. Parliamentary opposition members, trade unions leaders, journalists and other community leaders were politically neutralised by means of detention without trial in order to secure the PAP's parliamentary dominance and thus the legitimacy of its grip on state power. Welfare institutions were also used to suppress organised political opposition and to destroy working class organisation in a violent way under the sanction of law. For example, public housing was implemented by forced resettlement and education was restructured by coercive measures against Chinese educational institutions.

The continued high level of violence and coercion was related to the Lee faction's lack of a reliable base in the weak local bourgeoisie. However, over the ensuing decades, as organised working class struggle was increasingly neutralised and local capital gained a greater interest in PAP hegemony, state violence was directed more towards disciplining workers to regular wage labour than to breaking up their political organisations.

Worker Militancy and Welfare (1966-78)

The suppression of left-wing political organisation enabled the PAP to monopolise control of parliament, a development which caused it virtually to disappear from public view for fifteen years because it was no longer the main site of political struggle. However, there remained a lower class with a tradition of militancy, with social cohesiveness stemming from linguistic and ethnic affiliations, and with a degree of economic independence derived from alternative means of subsistence. These gave it the ability to resist the export-oriented industrialisation strategy pursued by the PAP-state, which required cheap, obedient labourers.

Thus during the period 1966-78, the institutions of public housing and education occupied centre stage. They forced a

new degree of social stratification by cutting away social roots and by ensuring that access to welfare depended on working for transnational corporations. Alternative means of livelihood to wage labour were progressively denied. It became increasingly difficult to find any house except an HDB flat, and this could only be paid for by wage labour. Without educational qualifications, it became more difficult to find a job which paid enough to buy the essentials of life. Access to housing and education was controlled by the PAP-state and depended upon selling one's labour power to foreign capital.

The rapid sorting of the population into a rigid class system, which was achieved during this phase, helped to consolidate the PAP-state's alliance with foreign capital and to bring a period of sustained economic growth. The law continued to be used to crush the remnants of political opposition, especially in the press and educational institutions.

Non-cooperation and Parliamentarism (1978-85)

But the many contradictions created by the fragmentation of the working class gave rise to new struggles when the Second Industrial Revolution was launched in the late 1970s. There was a sudden increase in exploitation and,

despite the PAP-state's pervasive system of social control, people increasingly refused to cooperate. This non-cooperation took various forms and even included elements of the middle class. Workers did not reach the new productivity goals. Women widely refused to follow the state-breeding policy. Students did not perform to the required levels educationally. Malays attempted to rebuild their communities. People resented the control exerted by the HDB over their lives. This general resistance surfaced through increased electoral dissent and the election of opposition members to parliament. The new accumulation strategy failed and the PAP-state faced a crisis of legitimacy in the mid-1980s.

The 1980s were characterised by parliament once again becoming an important forum for political contest. While strengthening its control elsewhere, the PAP-state attempted to domesticate and control this dissent by giving it vent within parliamentary politics. It tied access to welfare more tightly to political loyalty. To discipline the working class into higher productivity, the PAP-state raised the level of mass violence administered through the law, increasing the offences which drew sentences of official torture and execution. It built up its military training.

Bourgeois Dissent and the Privatisation of Politics

(1985-90)

Since 1985, with the reversion to the export-oriented industrialisation policy, the PAP-state has largely been able to re-assert its authority over the working class. However, the urban bourgeoisie now wants the substance as well as the forms of liberal democratic political rights to be fully tolerated. The rise of local capital and the growth of a middle class concentrated in the service sector confronts the PAP-state with a challenge from within its own class.

The PAP-state faces the danger of a democratically-inclined fraction of the capitalist class building an electoral alliance with elements of a resentful working class, just as the Lee group did in the 1950s. The development of capitalism in Singapore may come into conflict with the rights of the individual increasingly proclaimed by the bourgeois meritocracy.

To date the PAP-state has moved to counter this potential threat to its control and to shore up its legitimacy through shifting public political accountability away from the PAP. Partly to address this threat, an elected presidency has been created to take the central powers of governance away from parliament. The PAP's Central

Executive Committee can now govern through the presidency, even in the unlikely event that it is forced to permit another bourgeois party to win a parliamentary majority.

One response to the problem of entrenched working class disaffection has been the privatisation of education which is the pathway to jobs and housing. This shift removes the PAP-state from direct responsibility for forcing the working class into wage labour by failing their children at school.

Multi-polar Imperialism and Militarisation (from 1985)

The end of super-power rivalry, owing both to worldwide struggles and to the emergence of a new multi-polar imperialism, has precipitated a shift in the PAP-state's strategy of regional social control. Although still reliant on its military alliance with the US, it must now conclude a more complex multilateral alliance with Japan and the EC as well. Also, the end of the Cold War has laid bare the main source of international conflict: the exploitation of neo-colonies by advanced capitalist countries. Singapore's role as a facilitator of this exploitation in its own region is in danger of being further exposed. Even while strengthening its military

capability, it has therefore sought economic and military accommodations with Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Success of PAP-State Social Control

A pattern has emerged from this periodisation of forms of struggle and forms of social control. It is now possible to identify the successes and failures of social control and to summarise the main ways in which it has perpetuated capital's dominance over labour in Singapore. PAP-state regulation has:

1. Fragmented the working class and minority races in order to integrate them into capitalist social relations;
2. Guaranteed working class subsistence on the condition of political loyalty;
3. Reproduced labour power by means of education and public housing, state-breeding programmes and migrant workers;
4. Made middle class social advancement conditional on political conformity;
5. Extracted the semblance of popular consent, especially through providing social welfare and through

parliamentarism;

6. Compelled compliance by constructing a powerful apparatus of state violence mediated through the law and the military;
7. Secured Singapore's regional role by aggressive militarisation and manipulation of communalism.

These are substantial achievements aptly described by Salaff's reference to the impact of welfare.

These many changes...enable even hard-pressed families to have a more "decent" life as measured by services and consumer goods. We can readily understand why the poor and people of modest means believe that public housing, a new school system, and small families give them more freedom. Small wonder that they accept the yoke of the market economy and view the social services as tools that liberate rather than oppress them. The market and centralised services integrate the full range of families into a single industrial way of life....[T]he market has claimed a tighter hold on all of them. They aim for recognisably similar goals and attempt to use the same means to attain them: the public services (Salaff 1988: 269).

This integration of the working class into the disciplined routine, the economic dependence and the ideological framework of capitalist social relations occurred rapidly enough for the export-oriented industrialisation accumulation strategy to succeed over more than two decades.

Furthermore, the idiosyncratic leadership of Lee Kuan Yew must be counted as a success. The authority he wielded and the fear of disobedience that he generated have been widely recognised locally and internationally as well as by the man himself. Expressing his displeasure with the 1984 election results, Lee stated:

They [the people] know they are unlikely to make any dent on me. Singaporeans know by now what kind of person I am (Asia Yearbook 1986: 226).

However, his personal presence has mainly been significant in how he set up a system of social control which can now survive without him. As a bourgeois nationalist who rode to power on the backs of popular forces only to take control of the state for his own class, Lee is unexceptional in the history of decolonisation. As an opportunist who failed to gain control of the larger Malaysian political stage, he can also be considered a failure. However, as leader of a faction which held on to power through its alliance with imperialism, he was the successful architect and builder of a comprehensive system of social control which will outlast him. The system he created has already suppressed struggle long enough for the PAP-state to take full advantage of the export-oriented industrialisation strategy.

Failures and Weaknesses

The most obvious failure of the PAP-state's system of social control is that repression has led to new forms of resistance, especially when the level of exploitation is suddenly increased. Working class organisation in the form of trade unions was demolished in the 1960s, but working class struggle re-emerged through non-cooperation both in the workplace (job-hopping) and outside it (refusal to learn technical and linguistic skills, electoral dissent and crime). Chinese education was suppressed in order to fragment working class identity but English-medium education has given greater access to liberal democratic ideas and to the international media. Other struggles have been only temporarily contained but not overcome. Malay alienation and resentment remains at a high level.

This failure stems partly from the PAP-state's attempt to use particular institutions to combat a wide variety of struggles all at once. The education system was used to change the linguistic habits of the entire population, to alter breeding patterns, to dissipate ethnic loyalties, and to enforce moral discipline - all while sorting people into their appropriate class positions. Contradictions arose between these regulatory goals, and the education system failed to produce the skilled labour force necessary for the accumulation strategy of the Second Industrial

Revolution. PAP legitimacy was undermined in the process and privatisation of education was pursued to restore it. But even this may raise new contradictions.

[The government's] fondness for multi-purpose measures extending over a plurality of policy sectors may sometimes cause privatisation in one sector to subvert government leverage in others (Sandhu and Wheatley 1989: 1093).

Social control has created both new divisions and new forms of unity resulting from new struggles. These struggles are manifestations of the fundamental conflict between capital and labour. The increasing levels of exploitation required by capital continue to demand greater and different regulatory efforts. With Singapore's highly centralised system of social control, each new crisis threatens to unravel the entire system of regulation. To decentralise the system is not really an alternative, since the PAP-state would lose its ability to direct the labour force in ways which have given capital in Singapore its competitive edge.

Overcoming Social Control

The PAP-state has been forced to adapt to the resurgence of electoral dissent by permitting genuine political contest in parliament. But it is simultaneously strengthening its

control in other areas. It is keeping a firm hold on the provision of welfare, especially housing and education (despite the "privatisation" of the latter). It is ensuring continued Chinese racial dominance and it is sustaining a hierarchy in the fragmented working class through the importation of 200,000 foreign workers. Finally, through the build-up of its military capacity and the increasing links between the military and civilian administrations, the final guarantee of PAP supremacy remains available. The recent unnecessary killing of hijackers at Changi Airport is a sign that the PAP-state does not hesitate to use ultimate force (STW 30 March 1991).

Even in the light of these trends, there are some ways that social control might be overcome. We have already noted that the removal of some powers of government from parliament to the elected president leaves the way open for another bourgeois party to gain a majority in parliament. The PAP can still protect its interests through the president. Thus, the pursuit of electoral objectives by bourgeois parties may now be more realistic than before. The PAP will not easily give way, but it may calculate that it is better to do so before a party with real working class links emerges more strongly. The current preference given to the Singapore Democratic Party over the Workers' Party already signals this priority. Therefore, the

capitalist class in Singapore has a possibility of securing enhanced liberal democratic rights for itself.

But the working class is not likely to be permitted by any bourgeois government to organise autonomously, either within the workplace or outside it, as this would threaten the export-oriented industrialisation strategy in which the capitalist class now has a considerable investment.

However, more concessions in terms of wage levels and working conditions might be granted, but this would be at the expense of the workers of neighbouring countries whose cheap labour is increasingly exploited by the PAP-state.

Working class struggle in Singapore is unlikely to alter the fundamental nature of capitalist social relations until there is a much deeper political and economic crisis, both within the major imperialist countries and within the region, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia. Although some writers claim that there is already such a crisis (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990: 336-7), it is difficult to see it as an immediate threat to the PAP-state's economic policies. The priority for working class struggle in Singapore must be the long-term building of links with workers in Malaysia and Indonesia and the overcoming of communalism. The social effects of PAP collaboration with foreign capital may then become more widely understood, and local struggles can be pursued in the awareness of their contribution to

limiting exploitation throughout the region. However, such questions are beyond the scope of this thesis which has only set the scene for their more systematic consideration.

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NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

- Asia Yearbook Annual publication of Far Eastern Economic Review, Hongkong.
- FEER Far Eastern Economic Review, Hongkong.
- ST The Straits Times, Singapore, including its Sunday edition, The Sunday Times.
- STW The Straits Times Weekly Overseas Edition.
- SCMP The South China Morning Post, Hongkong.
- Voices from Singapore Anonymous human rights newsletter circulated within Singapore.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GOS Government of Singapore (see bibliographical listing).