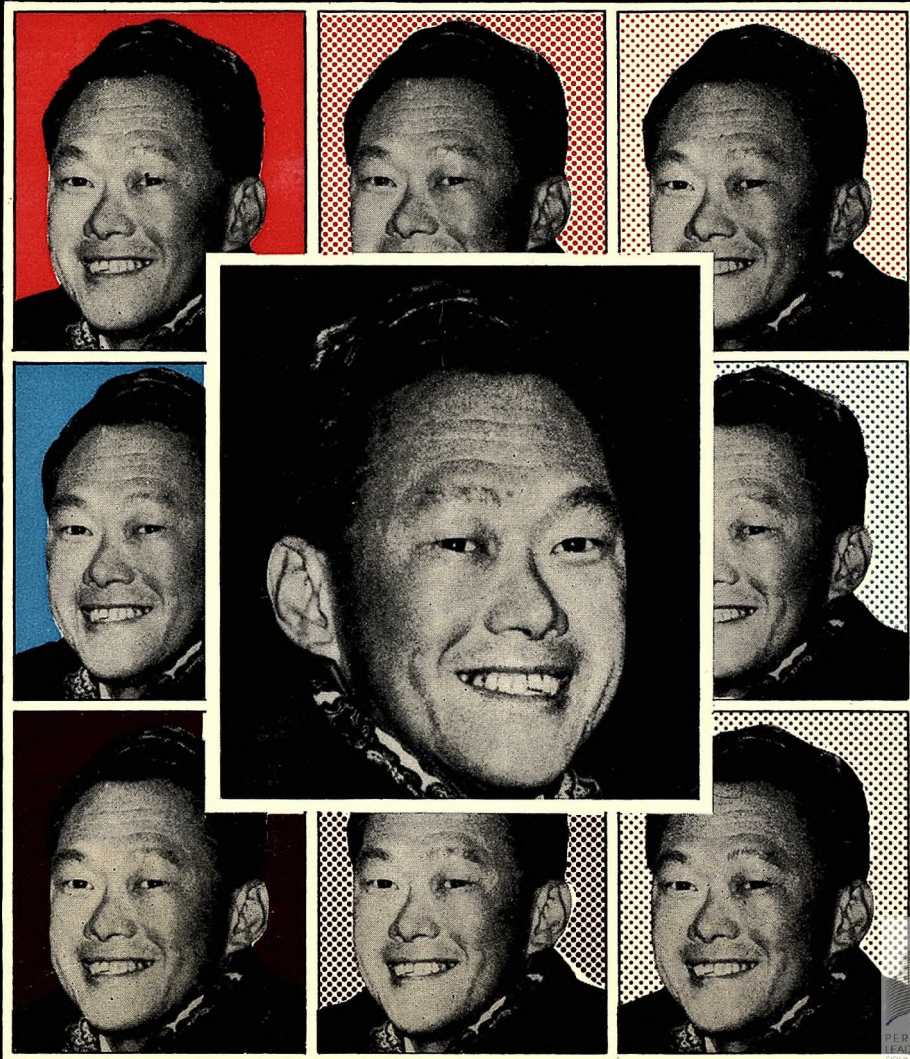
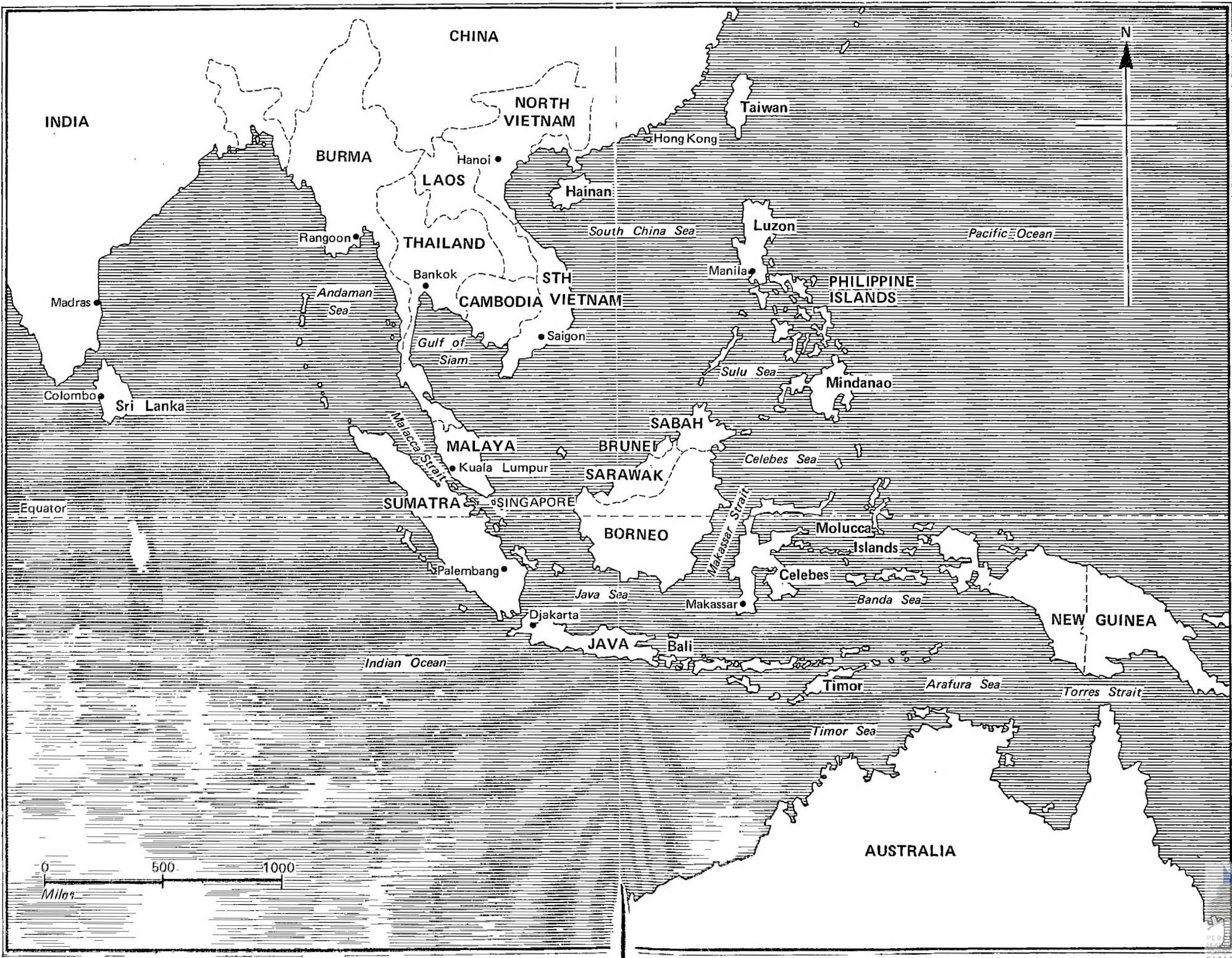


T.J.S.George

Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore



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T. J. S. George

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Singapore*



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FOR
My Fathers and Mothers
AT
Nediuzham and Anithottam

CHAPTER ONE

The Making of a City State

The Victorian splendour of Singapore's City Hall - balustrades etched against lavender sky - is deliberate. From every step and pillar and veranda and colonnade, it exudes power. One of the more enduring features of imperial Britain was the lavishness with which it ensconced viceregal authority in three-dimensional solemnity, calculated to leave the passing native with no doubt about the fount of all power, all benevolence and all reprisal.

Ironically, Singapore is ruled today from a second-floor office of City Hall by a man unmoved by majesty, untouched by awe. Outside, the colonnades have lost none of their imperial grandeur, but his office holds no trappings of power. Lee Kuan Yew started as a shirtsleeve prime minister and remains so today.

How did he get there and what has he come to represent? What is the historical significance of Lee Kuan Yew? The publicity surrounding him and Singapore is such that answers to such questions tend to be simplistic: Lee got there and stays there through a system meticulously modelled on Westminster; he represents an Asian version of pragmatism and a set of socio-political values adapted to suit the special conditions of a developing country; his place in history is solidly based on his achievements which have made Singapore's level of prosperity second only to that of Japan.

By all accounts, Lee Kuan Yew is Southeast Asia's best-known political leader today. In many circles he is also the most admired. Lee owes this image to the West, always the anchor of his reputation. But it is useful to remember that when Lee was on the make, the West often denounced him; those were the days when he worked hand in glove with the communists, called himself comrade and made the mailed fist a symbol of his socialist fervour. Denunciation turned to admiration as Lee settled down in power; by then he had become a most effective instrument for the elimination of communists on the one hand and, on the other,

for the promotion of Western investments and business expansion in Southeast Asia.

Any suggestion that Western approval of Lee stemmed solely from selfish interests would of course be unjustifiable. Lee's emergence as a charismatic personality is also due to the fact that he genuinely compels attention. The West could look up to him as it could look up to Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In the 1960s Lee stood out as the only Asian leader with not only panache and style but also an indisputable record of achievement.

Lee had worked miracles in his country. He was not dependent on populist appeal and was thus free from any need to play to the gallery. He knew how to make more than slogans out of order and efficiency. True, there was a streak of arrogance in him. But he had plenty to be arrogant about. Lee was an outstanding leader by any yardstick and his Singapore had swiftly become a remarkable example of material progress.

What is equally remarkable is that Lee's reputation in the West appears to differ radically from his reputation in most Asian countries. If the West sees him as the most admired Asian leader, Asia sees him as the most controversial. There are other countries in Asia which have achieved economic progress no less impressive - South Korea, Taiwan, and of course Japan. None of them has produced among other Asian leaders the degree of resentment Singapore has generated. The Japanese miracle has struck many Asian governments as possibly foreboding a military threat, yet no one grudges Japan's achievements. Singapore poses no conceivable military threat to anybody, yet there is a widespread impression that its achievements are at the expense of other Asian countries. Above all, there are many who are deeply disturbed about the social and political basis of Singapore's economic prosperity.

The prime minister who presides over the running of a self-consciously prosperous city-state is not quite the barrister who started his public career as a hero of student idealists and a crusader against injustices. The question which arises is whether the changes which apparently have occurred in Lee's attitudes and methods are fully appreciated. Is what is known and cherished about him in the West seen in the perspective of present conditions in Singapore and of the geopolitical realities of Southeast Asia as a whole? Are Lee's obvious achievements their own complete justification or are there features in them which raise

doubts about their ultimate worth? Is the political philosophy on which Lee has built Singapore tenable? What are the ultimate values he holds up for his people and what are their long-term implications? What indeed is the total Lee Kuan Yew?

That office in City Hall tells something about the man. It is spacious but spartan: no panelling, no historical regalia, no priceless paintings on the walls, no seal of office - and no ashtrays. Its only luxury is air-conditioning. The large table at which the premier labours is polished, shining.

From his office window Lee can derive satisfaction from the view: it reflects not only his own personality and the hopes he has cherished for his country, but the Englishness so dear to his heart. It is the cleanest part of a clean city whose dwindling band of litterbugs faces heavy penalties such as a maximum fine of S\$500 for throwing a cigarette butt on the street. While indigent zeal has erased colonial street names in other Asian cities, Lee Kuan Yew still can look out over St Andrew's Road and, across a stretch of green, to Connaught Drive and Queen Elizabeth Walk.

That stretch of green is probably the most English green east of Suez. It is maintained with one careful eye on beauty and the other, in the best of British tradition, on cricket. Strewn around the *padang*, as this city green is called, is a string of cricket clubs. Lee Kuan Yew prefers golf, the common occupational disease of Southeast Asia's political leaders. But he looks benignly on cricket, which apparently agrees with his vision of Singapore.

Beyond the *padang* and Queen Elizabeth Walk, the harbour from which Singapore has drawn its historical prosperity glistens as if in prideful contemplation of its own worth. It now acts as dispersal point not only for the entrepot trade which the British conjured up but for the burgeoning manufacturing industries nourished by the Lee government, and ranks fourth among the world's ports. There was a time when a private yacht at anchor would inspire the alert government to send emissaries to the wealthy visitor, to ask politely whether he would like to invest in Singapore.

Down the road from City Hall and across the Singapore river, the converging point for Singaporeans is Raffles Place, a square named after the man who started it all. Thomas Stamford Raffles was just another young English explorer-trader when he set forth for the East. Stumbling upon Singapore, he quickly

TO

Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore

realized he was on to something good. Calling Singapore 'a child of my own' and announcing his intention to 'make this my principal residence and to devote the remaining years of my stay in the east to the advancement of a colony which ... bids fair to be one of the most important which we possess', he settled down to convert a tropical swamp into a profitable island in the sun.

That was in 1819. The Malay Annals which recorded the legendary origins of Singapore are somewhat less specific about the feelings of Sri Tri Buana, the discoverer who preceded Raffles, the colonial master. King Sri Tri Buana was rock-climbing off Sumatra in what is now Indonesia when he spied an island with sand so white that it 'looked like cloth'. This was Temasek, the sea town, which was to humble him before he could set foot on it. As his fleet approached Temasek a violent storm struck. 'When all else was thrown overboard to no avail, Sri Tri Buana cast his crown into the sea,' the Annals record. 'Thereupon the storm abated and the ships were rowed safely to land.'

That was Indonesia's first confrontation with Singapore.

The crownless king's conviction that he had landed on a special kind of island was confirmed by his first sight, a strange and beautiful animal which moved with spectacular speed and grace. It had a red body, a black head and a white breast, and it was strong and agile. The court pondered over this animal and Sri Tri Buana's chief minister recalled that ancient stories told of such a beast, calling it Singha. Sri Tri Buana hearkened to the call of history and named his island Singha Pura-City of the Lion. Stamford Raffles, like many other colonial administrators, liked to dispense with an Asian syllable or two whenever necessary, and his child grew up as Singapore. One hundred and forty years later, as a minor concession to historical nationalism, Lee Kuan Yew was to restore the last syllable and make Singapura the official name of his new republic.

For Sri Tri Buana, Singapore was simply a pleasant place to set up court. With the arrival of European mariners in search of oriental wealth, its location at the far end of the Malacca Straits became its main attraction. With Singapore at one end of the straits and Penang at the other, Britain could command the sea-routes of the Far East. After leasing the island from the sultan of Rhio-Johore in 1819, Raffles assumed full sovereignty for Britain in 1824. The Dutch accepted this in return for a British withdrawal from Sumatra. It was not without reason that an

Economist article in 1971 described Raffles as 'a young visionary, self-confident enough to fly in the face of stuffy superiors and unscrupulous enough to do a bit of meddling in local politics'.

With the British came a problem which was to grow into a nightmare for Lee Kuan Yew: racial communalism. Sri Tri Buana's Singha Pura was an unpretentious fishing village inhabited by a hundred Malays. As Raffles began to mould it for a place in the empire, he was able to report that 'my city of Singapore is already attracting the peaceable, industrious, thrifty Chinese'. These were mainly poor peasants, fishermen and artisans from Kwangtung and Fukien provinces. They came in large numbers in the 1850s when China's Tai Ping Rebellion made emigration a pleasing proposition. Britain encouraged them, partly to counterbalance the Malays, partly to get for Singapore an industrious, economically productive people.

By the end of the nineteenth century a third national element had appeared - southern Indian labourers imported by the British to work the first plantations. It was simply sound rubber economics; in the golden age of colonialism no one paused to think of such things as the long-term implications of ethnic incompatibility. Indeed, Britain served its imperial interests by diligently keeping the three groups separate. Chinatowns bloomed in Singapore until much of the city fused into one big Chinatown. Serangoon Road was and is a little India, Gaylang a Malay pocket. According to the historian Victor Purcell, it was Raffles's declared policy to organize 'native divisions of the town' and earmark separate areas to the Chinese, the Malays, the Bugis and so on, stipulating that 'the first in importance of these is beyond doubt the Chinese'. Each cultural group naturally grew up in isolation, widening and confirming the inevitable racial schisms in an immigrant population. In time Lee Kuan Yew would try all known methods and then some to instil among these people a sense of national identity - only to discover how thankless it is to swim against the current of man's ethnic instincts.

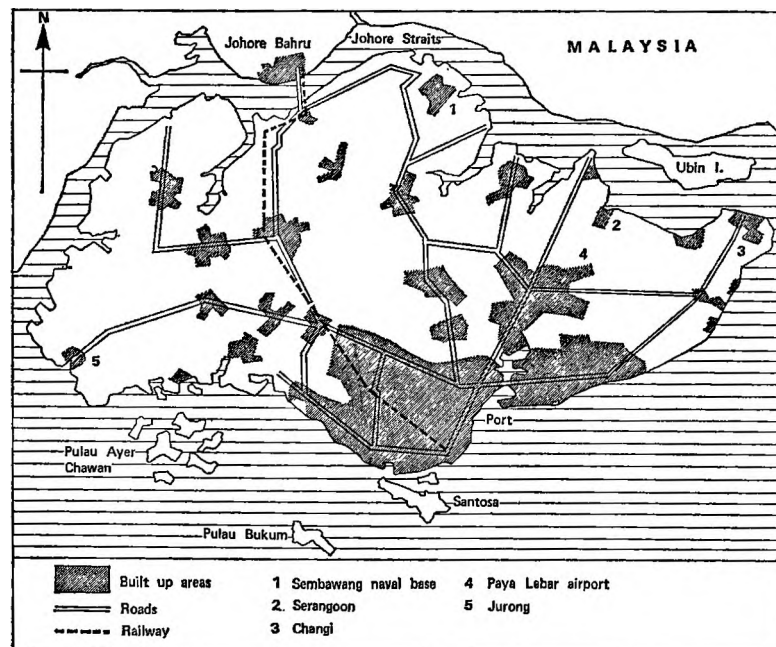
Racial divisions received another boost with the arrival of the Japanese. During the occupation, from February 1942 to September 1945, the Japanese assiduously cultivated the Indians and befriended the Malays, singling out the Chinese for contemptuous treatment and persecution. That policy did not contribute to Chinese friendliness towards the Indians and the Malays. More Chinese than any other ethnic group died fighting

the Japanese in Singapore. It was a blood pledge, a Chinese commitment to the city. Every layer of history seemed to be adding to the problem which was to haunt Lee Kuan Yew.

As long as British rule lasted, the problem remained well below the surface. Britain made Singapore a flourishing centre for Southeast Asian trade, and political importance followed. Singapore became the seat of the Straits Settlements government and the heart of operations when Britain decided in 1874 to 'inaugurate the policy of intervention in the Malay states'.

The Malays, the original inhabitants of Singapore, could not have been happy at the inferior status to which they were reduced. But they could hardly do anything about it for the partnership between the British authorities and the Chinese traders was strong. It became a common jibe in Southeast Asian drawing-rooms that Britain ruled Malaya for the protection of the Malays and the benefit of the Chinese.

And, it should be added, for the safety of Empire. Long after Raffles became no more than a statue attracting dutiful sightseers, Britain still looked upon Singapore as a strategic military post. To keep it thus, she separated Singapore from Malaya after the Second World War. Lee Kuan Yew called this one of Britain's



biggest mistakes. 'For eighteen years it went on, from 1945 to 1963, until the two territories were brought together again [all too briefly, as it turned out]. The problems we are facing today need never have arisen if that artificial political division had not taken place. If the British government had not been persuaded that it was possible to hold this island base for perhaps three, four or more decades, then Malaya would have had to learn to live with Singapore much earlier and all our problems, which are merely problems of adjustment today, would have had to be faced in 1945, 1946, 1947 or 1948. Much greater stability would have resulted.'

It was the First World War which convinced Britain that it was imperative to build up a naval defence scheme in the East. By the time Lee was born, in 1923, Singapore was already blossoming into Britain's biggest base in the region. But the Second World War ended all that. A power distant, yet seemingly invincible, now lay humbled before the Japanese. Japan knew the importance of Singapore: its conquest put all of Asia at the mercy of Nippon. More significantly, the Japanese relished the opportunity to humiliate the white imperialists in full view of the natives. They renamed the island Shonan, City of Lights, and they ruled it ruthlessly.

History soon caught up with the Japanese, but it caught up with the British, too. In three and a half years of occupation the Japanese had effectively destroyed the concept of Western imperialism in Asia. Lord Louis Mountbatten was a picture of imperial dignity when he accepted the Japanese surrender in Singapore in a military ceremony, but Britain's prestige had vanished. The British Military Administration governed a Singapore now vastly changed, under profound communist influence and its ethnic groups conscious of political rights and economic directions. Restoration of civilian rule in April 1946 began the inevitable process of transforming Singapore's colonial pattern into a national political system.

Parties and politicians sprouted. First on the scene was the Progressive Party, which represented middle-class opinion in the conventionally colonial Legislative Council set up under the constitutional plan of 1948. The election seven years later - under laws which restricted the franchise to British subjects by birth or naturalization - limited voting rights to some 300,000 people and excluded the bulk of the local Chinese.

Lee Kuan Yew was nineteen years old when the Japanese occupied Singapore. He watched British prestige crumble and then, with growing fascination, perceived British attempts to usher in a parliamentary system of government. He saw the dawn of a new era and never doubted his role in it. He moved.

Of the three parties which emerged in time for the 1955 election, one was the People's Action Party. It was formed by Lee Kuan Yew with a handful of English-educated left-leaning friends. The other parties were the Labour Front and the Democratic Party. Lee knew 1955 was David Marshall's day, and that the colonial constitution would give elected representatives no power anyway. He put up only four candidates. Three, including himself, were elected. The rise to power had begun.

David Marshall's chief ministership was an honorific position with Britain showing no sign of relinquishing command until constitutional talks had run their full tortuous course and the country had been fully prepared for the responsibility of independence. There are many who believe that Britain was interested in prevaricating until the unpredictable David Marshall could be edged out of the scene, enabling someone with a 'safe record' to fill his place.

The waiting period was filled with recrimination and agitation. Chief Minister Marshall struck out for immediate self-government, but his prolonged discussions in London brought nothing but frustration until he resigned in disgust. Outside the assembly, pro-communist leaders wielded power through their strong trade unions under the umbrella of Lee's People's Action Party - PAP.

Lee Kuan Yew had one foot in the Legislative Assembly and another firmly in the trade union movement as the respected counsel for a number of militant unions. From within, he watched the operations of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groups, and drew valuable lessons from their mistakes.

Perhaps to dull the edge of the communist challenge, perhaps to speed the transfer of power, Britain negotiated a new constitution after Marshall's resignation, envisaging full internal self-government by an elected cabinet responsible to a parliament. Elections under this constitution were held in 1959. The People's Action Party received support from the pro-communists because it was vociferously leftist at the time, and from the establishment because Lee had already made firm contacts with the British. It romped home with forty-three of the fifty-one seats.

Lee was only thirty-six when he became prime minister. No Asian leader had reached the top so young.

Both before and after his rise to power, Lee devotedly backed the Greater Malaysia scheme. Once he was in a position to do so he pushed it through with ramrod efficiency. For a start he built up an elaborate bogey of international communist conspiracy in Singapore and kept it going at red heat until both Britain and Malaya began to think it would be safer to make post-colonial Singapore part of a larger whole so as to keep the communists well under co-ordinated control; in security terms Britain was already treating the two units as one.

Lee then held a referendum in Singapore on the issue of merging with Malaya. It was widely recognized as a shotgun referendum, but what mattered was that Lee won the day. As he himself told an interviewer: 'I played ju-jitsu and I won.'

Singapore became part of Malaysia in September 1963 and its colonial status ended. In the event the shotguns failed to hold the federation together. Lee's policies, especially his decision to fight the 1964 Malaysian elections in the mainland constituencies in violation of an earlier agreement not to do so for at least five years, generated strong anti-Singapore reaction among the Chinese as well as the Malays of Malaya, and in August 1965, barely twenty-three months after union, Singapore was 'expelled' from the federation. On the same day, August 9th, Singapore proclaimed itself 'forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society.'

Some nations are born sovereign, some achieve sovereignty, some have sovereignty thrust upon them. For Singapore it was clearly a case of the last. A pocket republic of only 224 square miles with no natural resources, Singapore should logically have become at best a satellite, at worst a faceless also-ran in the surrounding Asian morass. Instead it became a model of efficiency and forward planning.

The British had built Singapore into a strategic base and a thriving entrepot city. Lee gave it a political dimension. After his plans for a federated existence in Malaysia foundered on the rocks of Malaysian suspicions about his motives, Lee's task became one of shaping a political rationale for his tiny city-state forced now to live by its wits.

CHAPTER TWO

The Making of a Man

I am no more a Chinese than President Kennedy was an Irishman. Slowly the world will learn that the Lees, the Tohs, the Gohs, the Ongs, the Yongs, the Lims in Singapore, though they may look Chinese and speak Chinese, they are different. They are of Chinese stock and not apologetic about it. But most important, they think in terms of Singapore and Singapore's interests, not of China and China's interests.

LEE KUAN YEW in America, 1967

Stanley Baldwin was prime minister of Britain, President Harding had just died and 'Honest Cal' Coolidge had moved into the White House, Mussolini's Italy had occupied Corfu and enraged Europe, fascists had risen in revolt against the monarchy in Spain, Germany was sinking into a financial crisis, the months-old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was seeking recognition from the British Government, India's nationalist leaders had called for a boycott of British goods, Sun Yat Sen was leading his troops in the Yellow River campaign, a typhoon and earthquake had wrought unprecedented devastation in Japan and the Singapore Cricket Club was about to begin work on its stadium when Lee Kuan Yew was born on Sunday, September 16, 1923.

The big news of the weekend in Singapore was the outbreak of faction fights among rival clans of rickshaw pullers - serious enough for the British garrison in the city to be put on the alert. Hundreds of coolies were injured and many killed. Finally the rioters were dispersed by Indian policemen under a European inspector assisted by Malay constables. It was a curiously appropriate manifestation of the racial juxtaposition in Singapore to herald the birth of a man who was soon to become the messiah of multiracialism.

The Lees are Hakkas. And that is worth remembering. Hakkas originally were northern Chinese who moved south to escape the

Tartar and Mongol invasions. In modern times they have been known as southern Chinese with Kwangtung province as their stronghold. Probably because of their background, they are an adventurous wandering people; Hakka means guests or sojourners. They are strong individualists, known for their pugnacity. The men are reputed to be courageous fighters and the women vigorous workers. Those who know Hakkas already know a great deal about Lee Kuan Yew.

By the time Kuan Yew was born, the Lee family had been in Singapore for almost a century. The family history in the island began with his great-grandfather, Lee Bok Boon, who moved to Singapore soon after Stamford Raffles arrived. He returned to his native Kwangtung province in China to die, leaving his wife and son, Lee Hoon Leong, in Singapore.

Hoon Leong made good. After an English education, he became a 'chin chew' (sub-agent) with a big shipping line. He later moved to another shipping company where he rose to be secretary, then manager and, finally, managing director. Trading mostly with Indonesia, Hoon Leong married into the Indonesian Chinese community. Doing business in the British colony and spending much time at sea, Hoon Leong grew to venerate the British, to respect Britannia's power over the waves. He lived to see the back of that power broken. His greatest shock came when little Japanese-made aircraft flew in and sank the mighty *Prince of Wales* in Singapore waters.

Hoon Leong's son, Lee Chin Koon, departed from the trading tradition of the family and joined a petroleum company. Foreign commercial firms enjoyed tremendous prestige in Singapore, as in other colonies, and a job with one of them was equated with high social status - the ultimate in security. That seemed to suit the quiet and self-effacing Lee Chin Koon. He stayed with the foreign oil company for thirty years and on retirement joined a Ceylonese-owned jewellery firm as a salesman.

Lee Chin Koon married young. His wife was Chua Jim Neo, a pleasant, colourful and independent-minded lady, known as a great mixer and talker. Her great-grandfather had married a Malay and the family thereafter was culturally Malay. This would explain her being completely racially unconscious and her prowess as a teacher of Indonesian-Malay cooking.

Chua Jim Neo had strong views. According to some relatives, she admired the British and maintained it was a good thing for

Chinese girls to marry Englishmen - a somewhat unusual view since, traditionally, purity of the blood line is important to Chinese. But she considered Americans inconsistent and unreliable, their university degrees not worth much. The seeds of Kuan Yew's multiracialism might have come from his parents, with Malay blood on the mother's side and Indonesian Chinese on the father's. The Indonesian Chinese community as a whole is heavily intermarried with Malays.

His parents had very little to do with Lee Kuan Yew after he became prime minister, certainly had no influence over him and no ability even to introduce people to him. The mother was full of admiration for him and recalled that, as a boy, he always wanted to take care of Singapore. She believed he was Singapore's saviour and that those who did not co-operate with the government should be arrested. She was said to have accepted that it was not easy for her and her firstborn to live in the same house because they were both headstrong. It has been Lee's habit to visit his mother only once a year, on Chinese New Year, because a visit means the police sweeping the whole area and that would be a waste of manpower.

Chua Jim Neo was only sixteen and Lee Chin Koon twenty when Lee Kuan Yew was born. Official records specify the precise address at which the birth took place - 92, Kampong Java Road, Singapore. But there are people who believe that Lee was in fact born in Indonesia. This tidbit found its way into print in January 1971 when an Indonesian newspaper, *Sinar Harapan*, published a series of articles on Singapore: a photograph of Lee Kuan Yew accompanying the series carried a caption which pointedly declared that he 'was born in Kudus [Java]'. It is not impossible that Kuan Yew was born in Indonesia; the family already had close links with Indonesian Chinese and his father had been posted to Indonesia for a period by the petroleum company employing him. The theory is that, for political reasons, Lee has chosen to sidestep his Indonesian origin: it could become a factor in charges that Singapore has shown favouritism towards Indonesian Chinese immigrants and it could further complicate Lee's none-too-smooth relations with the Indonesian government.

Lingering uncertainty over even such a simple matter as the prime minister's place of birth, and the difficulty in clearing up this uncertainty is typical of Singapore under Lee. Most people

do not know 'these unnecessary details'. Those who do are unwilling to talk.

Kuan Yew grew up as Harry. In all probability the parents followed the common overseas Chinese practice of giving children two names - one English, the other Chinese. Lee dropped his English name only after he became a politician.

The birth of the first child was a major event in the Lee family. Particularly excited was grandfather Lee Hoon Leong who, it has been reported, looked proudly at the bonny baby and said he should be educated to become the equal of any Englishman.

Kuan Yew's parents never forgot that instruction. With his mother in particular it became something of an obsession. Her own inclinations were in a similar direction. Apparently believing that Malay-Chinese stock produced only small shopkeepers and minor officials, she was determined to make a break from this pattern by making her sons professional gentlemen in the best English tradition. She raised the children on the English language, carefully following the common Chinese custom of skimping a little on housekeeping to save money for their education. Supplementing her savings with her earnings as a cooking instructor, she worked towards the objective of giving each of her sons, as they set out on their own, 10,000 Straits dollars as their start in life.

The elders' yearning to make model Englishmen of their children was typical of the times. The British were the ruling class, the fount of all power and therefore the repositories of all wisdom. They lived in style and brought their own language and literature with them. The closer the Asian got to the standards and style of the Englishman, the better would be his position socially and economically. To be English-educated meant to go up in life; to be educated in England itself meant becoming part of the truly privileged set, having the world at your feet. The Dutch found or created this attitude in Indonesia, the French in Indochina, the British in India, Ceylon and Malaya. Lee Hoon Leong was acknowledging the deep cultural impact of colonialism when he proposed a model English education for his grandson.

Given their notions of what made for success, Kuan Yew's parents raised the children on the pattern of the 'King's Chinese', a community of Chinese in Penang who had been under the British Crown for one and a half centuries, had largely lost contact with China and had developed their own style of living. They were

considered particularly loyal to Britain and did in fact express specific patriotism to the Crown. In his childhood, on festive occasions Kuan Yew was decked out in traditional Chinese costume - brocade jacket, mandarin cap. He was sent to a small Chinese kindergarten near the Lee home. Otherwise, little Kuan Yew, which means Light that Shines, rarely came in contact with Chinese customs and Chinese society. His present command of the Chinese language is that of a man who learnt it as an adult.

His regular schooling began when he was eight, at the Telok Kurau English School. There were plenty of Malay boys in this school and Kuan Yew's friends were mostly Malay. Teachers of the time remember him as a lively boy, not over studious, but quite bright. Already, his strong point was English. He was a 'good mixer'.

Four years later, at twelve, Kuan Yew moved to the Raffles Institution. This school, founded by Stamford Raffles with the declared objective of making Singapore Southeast Asia's intellectual entrepot, had always been the most important educational institution in the city. It was synonymous with aristocracy, prestige and power. Everybody who was anybody in Singapore went to Raffles. It had to be the school for Kuan Yew, marked out from birth for the best England itself could offer.

At Raffles, Kuan Yew began slowly developing the qualities which were to become familiar in later years. He was no longer the non-studious type but developed into a hard worker. He was inclined to insist on having his way over other boys. Academically he was top of the class, his main areas of interest being arithmetic and English. A teacher wrote in his record that "he is likely to attain a high place in life'.

On the playing field Kuan Yew was noted as an aggressive competitor, although he does not seem to have attained extraordinary proficiency in any particular game. He played cricket. He also began to join in literary activities and made little speeches in Malay. People who knew him at this stage say that although he looked very Chinese he seemed more Malayan in his ways.

Raffles Institution prepared boys for what was then known as the Senior Cambridge examination. After passing it one went straight to university. Kuan Yew finished his course in 1939 with medals and honours. This was the time the parents had chosen to send him off to England. Mother Chua Jim Neo had her savings

ready and Father Lee was all set to take an advance against his pension from the oil company.

War intervened. With Europe in turmoil there was no question of sending the boy on the perilous journey to England. So he entered Raffles College, later to become the University of Singapore. He read an unusual combination of subjects - economics, mathematics and English literature. He also took an active part in union debates, impressing his teachers with his ability to make speeches in English. The ground work was being laid for what was to become one of the more important political assets of Lee Kuan Yew.

When he passed his school-leaving examination, Kuan Yew attracted public attention by emerging among the top and winning a scholarship. A little later a bright-eyed girl from the Methodist Girl's School, called Kwa Geok Choo, gained similar attention by standing first in all Malaya and winning a scholarship to Raffles College. The two merit scholars met at Raffles. They were impressed by each other's academic record; affection began to develop. Geok Choo, three years older than Kuan Yew, was to graduate from Raffles with distinction, win a Queen's scholarship and proceed to Cambridge at the same time as Kuan Yew. At Cambridge their affection grew into love.

Kuan Yew had entered Raffles College only to bide his time until the world situation improved and he could go on to England. But his waiting period turned out to be longer than expected. It also proved harrowing. For the Japanese came to Singapore in 1942.

The Chinese had long looked upon the Japanese as their natural enemies and the Japanese were ready to play this role to the hilt, as the Chinese of Singapore soon discovered to their consternation. Lee Kuan Yew was to recall many an atrocity committed by the occupation army on the local population, and especially on Chinese. There is no independent record whether Lee personally was ever a victim, but he has described one narrow escape. Every now and again the Japanese would herd Chinese youths into trucks, drive them to some convenient spot and shoot them. Once Kuan Yew, queuing up at a concentration camp, was ordered to make the death trip. He asked to be allowed to go home to collect his belongings and was lucky enough to be permitted. He never returned.

The war was a traumatic experience for Kuan Yew. He was a

Lee Kuan Yew has been Prime Minister of Singapore for twelve years and has led it to prosperity and order. Western reaction has often implied the thought 'If only there were more Third World leaders like Lee!'

T. J. S. George, however, examines Lee Kuan Yew and his city state from the Asian point of view, and while acknowledging his achievements, makes an alarmingly good case for believing them to weigh light against the disadvantages of dictatorship. He chronicles the Prime Minister's rise and rule in great detail, analyses his personality, aspirations and methods, and argues from well-marshalled facts, without rhetoric, that if Lee's political philosophy had been leftist instead of favouring opportunistic capitalism, the West would have greeted his performance with dismay rather than approval.

Mr George is political editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. His book, written with spirit and adorned with lively touches of humanity and wit, is the first full-scale study of Lee in action, and by far the best informed account of Singapore's recent history in any form.

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