

Post-War Singapore (Summary)

On 5 September 1945, the BMA took over the rule of Singapore from the Japanese Administration.

1) Problems inherited by BMA from Japanese war-time administration

Problem #1: Food shortages and other essentials

- After the war, shipping routes were disorganized, and neighbouring countries had no surplus to export
- Prices of essential goods soared to ten times the pre-war level, rice soared to 30-40 times
- In May 1947, rice ration was equivalent to the lowest point during Japanese Occupation

Problem #2: Overcrowding and housing shortage

- Singapore's population in 1945 was 1 million, double of pre-war population, partly due to new influx of immigrants
- Severe overcrowding in the cities and almost 100,000 lived as squatters or in slums
- 1947 survey revealed that only one-third of the population was housed satisfactorily

Problem #3: Unemployment and low wages

- BMA employed 102,000 as reconstruction workers but only at pre-war wages
- Many municipal employees such as firemen and harbour workers were not paid well
- Locals in the administration were also paid lower than British expatriates

Problem #4: Public health and welfare

- Damaged infrastructure led to poor drainage and sanitation
- Rampant spread of tuberculosis and other diseases
- Lack of awareness on sexual health and family planning, which compounded other problems
- Average household had 6 children, up to 20 children in extreme cases

Problem #5: Disruption to Education

- BMA quickly reopened English and Malay schools, Chinese community followed suit with Chinese schools
- However, there were still too many students as there was an **additional generation of overaged students** who did not attend school during Japanese Occupation
- Tamil and Chinese schools were still neglected
- The RI campus was also being used by the military at this time

2) 1948: Rise of Local Activism

Different communities in Singapore

Group 1: The Chinese Community

- Chinese schools continued to be neglected, overcrowded and understaffed
- After the Communist victory in China, colonial government banned visitors to China from returning back to Singapore
- Chinese-educated students had limited opportunities for employment and universities

- Fought unsuccessfully to have China-born residents to be given voting rights
- Eventually took things in their own hands and raised funds for a Chinese-language university, Nanyang University
- Chinese businessmen also formed their own political party to protect Chinese rights

Group 2: The Indian Community

- Being a minority, Indians were especially anxious about their future in Singapore
- Many of them were also inspired by political developments happening back in India
- Many English-educated Indian intellectuals formed the foundations of both the left-wing radical movement and the conservative movement
- 8 out of 15 candidates in the 1948 election were Indian

Group 3: Women

- During that time, women faced numerous challenges (like easy divorce) in society and even at home
- Constance Goh: Set up the first family planning clinic in Singapore, educated other women on contraceptives
- Mrs Mohamed Siraj: Fought on the behalf of Muslim wives; husbands can only marry additional wives with their consent, cannot divorce at will

Group 4: The Communists

- At the end of the Japanese Occupation, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was seen as heroes by the people
- The party that formed it, the Malayan Communist Party were also recognised by Lord Mountbatten as a legal party
- They saw themselves as the ones to lead the population to assert independence
- Established a newspaper, The New Democracy, which attacked the BMA and demanded independence
- MCP's General Labour Union organised demonstrations and strikes against unemployment and low wages
- Organised a successful strike by 7000 dock workers in Oct 1945
- However, the workers only wanted a better livelihood, did not share MCP's desire for independence

Riots in Singapore

Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)	Driving factor: Discrimination against Islam traditions	Maria Hertogh (from Dutch family) got adopted/taken care of temporarily by Muslim family during Japanese Occupation. Name was changed. Afterwards Dutch family sought to recall her in Kuala Terengganu. Ordered to Singapore. Also got married at age of 13 to Muslim. Placed under convent, and ruled that marriage was illegal. Rioters viewed it as discriminatory against Muslim traditions.
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Anti-NS Riot (1954)	Who: Chinese middle school students VS British What: Protest as students don't want to serve NS Why: Students view serving NS as 'colonial service', don't want to help defend for British who did not really care for their needs	12 May 1954: Signed petition to Government House but were prevented from doing so as police blocked their schools 13 May 1954: Protests started at Clemenceau Avenue → demonstration intensifies 18 May: 2500 students lock themselves in CCHS October 1954: Proposal to form Singapore Chinese Middle School Students' Union blocked, but allowed following year
Hock Lee Bus Riots (1955)	Who: SBSU, Bus workers (Leader was Fong Swee Suan) versus David Marshall and British officials* Why: Desired increased wages and better working conditions for employees	*British Officials Chief Secretary: William Goode Governor: John Nicoll Ex-bus employees surrounded gates of SBSU, bus stops, trying to get bus drivers to sympathise with their cause. David Marshall showed sympathy for these protestors, did not take much action (i.e. did not call in military, baton police)
SCMSSU riots (1956) – Chinese Middle School Riots	Trigger: Lim Yew Hock ordering deregistration of SCMSSU	- Lim Yew Hock took tough measures to suppress communist activities - Lim Yew Hock arrested Fong Swee Suan, Lim Chin Siong - Sent in police with tear gas

3) 1948 – 1960: Malayan Emergency

- Fight between British and MCP guerrillas in jungles of Malaya
- **MCP guerrillas were violent**
 - Killed Sir Henry Gurney, British High Commissioner
 - Killed innocent villagers

Impacts

- New government regulations allowed arrest and detention without trial
- Organisations and even schools suspected of being anti-British were banned
- English-educated left-wing radicals were suppressed and arrested
- Caused Singapore's political scene to tend towards conservatism due to fear of being seen as anti-British
- Conservative, pro-British movements like the Singapore Progressive Party thrived

4) From BMA to Independence

Labour Front

Promises

- Creation of a Singapore citizenship
- Repeal Emergency regulations
- Increased social welfare
- **Most Importantly:** Immediate self-government

Challenges

- **Challenge #1 – Social Unrests**
 - Hock Lee Bus Riot was Marshall's first test
 - Torn between his sympathy for the workers and students and the need for order
 - Refused governor's instruction to send in troops, pursued talks
 - Eventually negotiated a compromise
- **Challenge #2: British Reluctance**
 - Marshall's key campaign promise was full self-government from the British
 - Had to convince the British that Singapore was stable and ready to govern itself

Eventual Contributions (by David Marshall)

- Made British recognise his authority as Chief Minister
- Appointed a committee to address Chinese education
- Drew up proposals for a single Singapore citizenship
- Passed a Labour Ordinance to restrict working hours

Lim Yew Hock's government

Challenges

- Lim's government was even shakier as two Labour Front MPs defected
- Only controlled 11 out of 25 seats, a minority government
- Needed a show of strength to legitimise his authority

Contributions

- Good Handling of SCMSSU riots (see SCMSSU riots section)
- Obtained full self-government with joint authority on internal security (2nd Talks)

Problems with Lim Yew Hock's government

- Lim's harsh stance on the unions angered the Chinese-educated and the workers
- This made him unpopular and he was accused of being a "fascist" and a "running dog of the British"

People's Action Party (PAP)

- Lee's PAP was ready to exploit Lim Yew Hock's unpopularity
- Started a pre-election campaign with weekly mass rallies
- Had comprehensive political, economic and social policies

- Accused the LF of corruption and misuse of funds (LF official switched sides)
- **Result of PAP's actions?**
 - **1959 GE**
 - Lim Yew Hock's rebranded Singapore People's Alliance won 4 seats
 - However, LKY's PAP, supported by Chinese majority, won by a landslide, securing 43 of 51 seats

Political Control in Singapore

Year	1948	1955 (Limited Self-govt)	1959 (Full Internal self-govt)	1965 (Independence)
Local representative s (No. of slots)	6	25	51	N.A.
Local Ministries	0	Chief Minister, 6 Local MPs	Prime Minister and Local Minister	N.A.
Area of Control (SG)	No local control	No control: Internal Security, External Security, External Affairs, law, finance	No control: External Security and External Affairs Shared Internal Security Vote share of SG:British:Malaya is 3:3:1	TOTAL CONTROL

5) 1956: First Merdeka Talks (Under Marshall's government)

- **FAILED**
 - Hock-Lee Bus Riots showed that David Marshall could not control communism
 - Merdeka Rally (Communists threw bricks at British Officials and sang communist songs when British officials landed at Seletar Airport)
 - Poor relationship between Marshall and Nicoll
 - All-party delegation to London failed.
 - Marshall resigned, as per promise

6) 1957: Second Merdeka Talks (Under Lim Yew Hock's government)

- **SUCCESS**
 - Good Handling of SCUSSM Riot by Lim Yew Hock
 - His efforts greatly impressed the British, who felt Lim's government could protect Britain's strategic interests
 - ISC with Malaya having casting vote
 - 1957: Malaya Independence → confidence of communist threat being well-under control and going to be over

7) Merger between Singapore and Malaya (1963)

Why Merge (Singapore):

Economic Reasons	Political Reasons
1) Lack of natural resources like gas	To prepare SG for independence

Through Merger, Singapore can get raw materials and other resources from Malaya - Malaya had many raw materials such as rubber and tin - These raw materials can be imported to Singapore and made into finished products before being exported to other countries (including Malaya) 2) A rapidly increasing population leading to: - Increasing unemployment - Slow economic growth as a result in decline in entrepot trade - Declining trade with Malaya due to tariffs imposed by Malayan government Through Merger, Singapore would have a ready (common market) - A common market would allow Singapore to sell the goods at a lower price (no more tariffs to be paid) and become more competitive. - More competition will result in more goods being produced which means more people needed to work in the industries thus creating employment.	- Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP had promised the electorate that he would fight for full independence from the British - Failure to do so could result in the PAP losing popular support - However, the British were only prepared to grant Singapore full independence if it merged with Malaya While the Communists had been largely defeated in Malaya, they remained a significant political force in Singapore Through Merger, Malaya (strongly anti-communist) would have control over Singapore's Internal Security. Communist movement in Singapore would die off this way
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Why Merge (Malaya): *Malaya's political reasons were more serious than economic reasons*

Economic Reasons	Political Reasons
Merger with Singapore will give Malaya ready access to Singapore's ports for the export of its primary products.	Fear of Singapore falling into the hands of the communists esp after PAP's loss in the 1961 by-elections Merger would allow KL to take direct control of the internal security of Singapore and weed out the communist elements.

Opposition and Challenges to Merger

1) **Racial Balance**

- Singapore's population dominated by Chinese, who made up 70% of total population
- **Merger: Malays make up only 50% of the new Malaysia population**
- To solve problem: Include the Borneo territories (Sabah and Sarawak) in the new Malaysia, so Malays will remain the predominant ethnic majority in the new Malaysia. Borneo territories also had vast oil reserves

2) UMNO and the question of Malay special rights

- The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) was the ruling party in the Government of Malaya.
- It advocated a Malaya based on Malays having special rights.
- Many UMNO members feared that, should Singapore merge with Malaya, the special position and rights of Malays in the new Malaysia would be threatened as they would no longer be the majority
- As the leader of UMNO, the Tunku could not afford to ignore these concerns

1961 Singapore by-elections (Hong Lim, Anson) – Merger even more urgent for Malaya

- During the July 1961 Anson by-elections, Lim Chin Siong persuaded 8 PAP members to denounce the Party
- He also led the left-wing faction of the PAP to denounce the PAP and throw its support behind David Marshall
- Following its defeat at the Anson by-election, the PAP called for an emergency meeting of the Legislative Assembly to debate on a motion of confidence for the Government.
- Nearly half (25 out of 51) of the PAP's members voted against the motion or abstained.
- They were expelled from the PAP. They decided to form their own party, known as the Barisan Sosialis, which was registered on 13 August 1961
- The Barisan Sosialis strongly opposed merger on the grounds that the people of Singapore would not enjoy the same rights as the people of Malaya
- As the **Barisan Sosialis were also pro-communist**, they were also concerned for their own survival in the event that the Tunku, being a strongly anti-communist politician, were able to take over Singapore
- **This created a real possibility of a Communist takeover of Singapore's Government led by the Barisan Sosialis**
- From this point onwards in 1961, the Tunku began to **throw his support** behind the PAP's campaign for merger
- To make matters even worse: ISC launched Operation Coldstore, arrested those deemed Communist, further weakening the Barisan Sosialis

Final agreement on Merger (based on Referendum A)

- 1) Singapore could hold elections to decide its own state government
- 2) Singapore would have control over its own education and labour policy
- 3) Singapore would step up control of the armed forces, police and foreign relations to the central government in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia