

SUBJECT: The Singapore Disorders of 1955: Communist Use Of Student Organizations to Harass a Government

1. Students and youth have long been particular targets of Communist parties in the Far Eastern countries and in other lesser developed countries. Since such students and youth are particularly susceptible to the blandishment of the anti-colonial and economic development shibboleths, they offer the Communist movement a fertile field for development and recruitment. In addition, in the Far Eastern area, racial issues are exploited by the Communist movement to appeal to youth and student groups. By organizing and controlling youth and student elements, the Communist movement develops useful instruments to affect public opinion, and by extending their interests beyond the normal ken of youth and student groups, these groups in a number of countries have developed a potential for affecting the political situation.

2. The attached paper is an example of how youth and student groups dominated by Communists and "left-wingers", acting in concert with left-wing labor groups, succeeded in harassing and embarrassing the Marshall Government of Singapore in 1955. Beginning their actions in support of a labor strike called by one of the left-wing unions, the youth and student groups had no particular demands of their own. However, they were successful in forcing the 1955 Singapore Government to back down from measures and counter actions aimed at containing the disorders incited by the "left-wing" groups.

3. The attached paper describes and discusses the tactics and maneuvers used by the Communist-dominated youth and student groups during the 1955 disorders. The tactics used included mass meetings, demonstrations, riots and sit-down strikes. The last named tactic describes the students' occupation of school premises from which they defied the Singapore Government's orders to vacate and disband.

4. The paper also contains a summary of the 1954 disorders incited by the same Communist-dominated student groups. In these earlier disorders the successful 1955 tactics were tested. Staged in opposition to the Government's requirement for registration for national service, the 1954 disorders were successful in delaying the registration requirement.

5. The study, in order to place the events and tactics in their proper perspective, presents some of the background to the 1955 events. It includes a summary of the earlier 1954 student disorders; a description of the role of the Chinese middle schools in the overwhelmingly Chinese population in Singapore; and a description of the links between the left-wing student groups and the international Communist front organizations for youth and students, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the International Union of Students. The concluding part of the paper contains a detailed chronology of the activities of the striking students and the Singapore Government's ineffective countermeasures.

6. The year 1956 presents a completely different picture of the relationships between Communist-dominated student, youth and labor groups, and the Singapore Government now headed by Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock. The Government from its 1954 and 1955 experiences had identified the leading suspect Communist and Communist-dominated groups, and was familiar with the anti-government tactics employed by the groups and individuals. Armed with this knowledge, the Singapore Government of 1956 acted firmly and confidently. The Government provoked the Communist-dominated elements into anti-government actions. Riots and demonstrations and other tactics, successful in 1954 and 1955, were staged by the anti-government groups. This time, however, the Singapore Government was ready and prepared, and moved quickly and with planned precision. The riots and demonstrations were quickly contained and dispersed by the local security forces. With support and approval from the leading Singapore citizens, including many Chinese leaders, the Lim Government methodically isolated and "deactivated" the subversive student and labor groups and their leaders. The riots and demonstrations never got "off the ground" and the leading Communist-dominated organizations were shattered.

7. The 1956 Singapore Government, in countering the subversive tactics, employed legal and psychological pressures, and a minimum of force. Acting under previously passed laws and regulations, the new Singapore Government banned several of the known Communist-dominated organizations, closed several of the centers of the Communist activities, and arrested a number of the known leaders of the Communist-dominated student and labor groups in Singapore. In addition by judiciously dispersing the quickly acting security forces, Lim Yew Hock prevented rallies and demonstrations from developing into bloody riots and disorders. Sites of sit-down strikes

were surrounded and outside support of the student strikers was prevented. Then, after the student strikers failed to heed parental requests and the Government's ultimatum to disperse, police units moved in and forcibly broke the sit-down strikes. The Government also closed several of the offices of the Communist-dominated labor unions. Simultaneous with these measures, the Singapore Government of Lim Yew Hock received overwhelming votes of confidence from the National Assembly, and approval from many of the leaders of the community, including leaders of the Chinese community. By its action, the Singapore Government succeeded in isolating the striking elements and leaders from the local population and succeeded in preventing the subversive elements from gaining any popular or mass support or approval of their actions. The anti-government tactics successfully employed by the Communist elements in 1954 and 1955 were unsuccessful in 1956, and the effectiveness and influence of the Communist-dominated student and youth groups were sharply reduced.