Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the struggle between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist and their periphery organizations in Singapore Chinese society from 1945 till 1949. The author would highlight the various KMT and Communist conflicts and struggles happening under the realistic, dynamic mutual interactions of both macro and micro factors.

Both foreign parties originated from the beginning of the century. Both had been trying equally hard to influence overseas Chinese into their respective political camps through a variety of ways to act as Overseas Revolutionaries, supporting their political causes. Both underwent their ups and downs with the rules laid down by the British government, but gained legitimacy to exist as independent parties from fighting as guerillas in the Second World War against Japanese soldiers in Malayan jungles.

The KMT was the ruling party in China prior to 1949. Under the laissez faire British governance, before the state of Emergency was announced in 1948, all Singapore Chinese and the KMT organizations depended upon and rallied behind the Chinese consulate whose aim was to unite all Singapore Chinese in support of the Chinese government in all times. On the other hand, there were two different Communist forces in Singapore. The major one, which exerted the greatest impact, was the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) whose loyalty was firmly fixed on Malaya, Singapore grounds. The China Democratic League whose
influence was mainly within a smaller (as compared with the KMT supporters), yet no less influential group of Chinese community geared towards the communist party back in China.

The MCP flexed its muscle immediately after the war through organizing and infiltrating trade unions, using strike as the main tool to assist the labour population fight for better working conditions and rights against the colonial government and capitalists, who were mostly KMT members. An ulterior motive was to fight its way towards that of a “City Revolution”, putting the onus on the masses for eradicating colonial rule. However the change of party leader from Lai Teck to Chin Peng in late 1947 changed the revolution path to that of a militant, violent one. The MCP had to struggle against fast changing and harsh British policies directed towards it throughout the State of Emergency from 1948 till 1960.

Meanwhile within the Chinese community, the Kuomintang and Communist forces coexisted peacefully until the internal war in China broke out in 1946. The Chinese community, especially its leaders took political sides and struggle culturally via the three main pillars—Chinese associations or clans, newspapers and vernacular schools. During the post-war era, there was also a slow yet significant shift in loyalty from both the leftist and rightist camps to fight for their rights as citizens in Singapore, a country they had decided to plant their roots deeply in.