Radical Malay Politics

Its Origins And Early Development

FIRDAUS HAJI ABDULLAH



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The original manuscript
was written
with fondest thought
for my beloved daughter
Amira Sariyati Firdaus
And for the spiritual support
of her loving grandparents
Haji Abdullah Jaafar
Hajjah Zubaidah Sharif
to them the work
is dedicated

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FOREWORD

Perhaps because Malaysian society differs so substantially from other societies in Asia, it drew the attention of many Western writers when World War II ended. Most of the writers tended to focus on two problems which Malaysia faced before the war but became more manifest at the end of 1945 – communism and communalism. In short, Western writers have found Malaysian politics fascinating.

But they have also tended to perceive it from the outside. Political scientists, in particular, are guided by the methodology of their discipline and, not infrequently, by their own ideological convictions. Unavoidably, they pass judgements, often failing to see things in the round and unable to understand the behaviour of the local participants.

Being English-educated and using primarily English sources, Western writers have mistaken the minority for the majority. Not unexpectedly, it is Malay politics which has proved most enigmatic to foreign observers. Since the Malayan Union issue loomed so large in the years between 1946-1948 most writers have tended to see Malay politics within the context of the Malayan Union struggle.

But the anti-Malayan Union movement was merely one aspect of Malay politics, important though it was. The Malays were politically divided even at the height of the movement against the Malayan Union proposals. At a more superficial level, politically the Malays were then seen to be divided into two groups: right and left. Often it is assumed that UMNO was right and the Malay Nationalist Party left. But, in fact, even within UMNO (until 1949 a coalition of several Malay political associations) there existed groups which did not see

eye to eye with UMNO's President, Dato' Onn bin Jaafar.

Between late 1945 and early 1946, numerous political associations appeared all over the country. It was not specifically the Malayan Union which sparked off the formation of political associations. Perhaps there were two other more important causes: firstly, the punitive action taken by the Malayan Communist Party against those they considered to have collaborated with the Japanese; and secondly, the outbreak of ethnic conflict during the early period of the British Military Administration. These political associations were actuated by the need for self-protection.

At the same time, there were Malay groups which saw in colonialism a greater enemy than communism. Many of them joined the Malayan Communist Party; others formed themselves into various political organizations which vehemently opposed UMNO's policy of working cordially with the British administration towards eventual self-government and independence.

Dr. Firdaus Abdullah's work deals with those groups diametrically opposed to UMNO. Although in more recent years there have been scholarly studies of these groups, innumerable questions still remain unanswered, if only because few have attempted a careful reconstruction of events.

In the present work, the author asks poignant questions about the Malay left. At the same time, he has attempted to fill in a number of gaps without which it would be difficult to understand UMNO's opponents who, although generally classified as the 'Malay left', in reality composed a number of groups which did not always cohere.

Malay politics is a fascinating subject. It is also very complex and this complexity cannot be easily unravelled unless it is perceived from within. In dealing with the Malay left, for example, it may appear that the ideological factor is of primary consideration since it apparently consisted of Malay communists, Malay socialists and Malays who pursued the Islamic cause. But ideology was often no more than a veneer. Scholars, for example, are still baffled by what Dr. Burhanuddin stood for.

Dr. Firdaus Abdullah's study is still largely exploratory in nature. But he has included material and discussed developments hitherto unknown to most students of Malaysian politics. He has also attempted to explain something of Malay political culture which has proved so perplexing to non-Malays.

Students of Malaysian politics perhaps will be inspired to delve deeper into the strangely neglected subject of Malay politics. Not even UMNO has been authoritatively studied. For too long, Malaysians themselves have been content to read the works of Western scholars. Although academically sound, these works nonetheless provided an external perception of Malay political culture. An internal perception is now urgently needed.

Prof. Khoo Kay Kim

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Firdaus bin Haji Abdullah

ABBREVIATIONS

AMCJA	All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
API	Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (Generation of Aware Youth)
ASAS 50	Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (The 1950 Literary Generation)
AWAS	Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Generation of Awaken Women)
CLC	Communities Liaison Committee
FMS	Federated Malay States
GPMS	Gabungan Penuntut-Penuntut Melayu Semenanjung (The Federation of Malay Student Unions)
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
KRIS	Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjong (Union of Peninsular Indonesians)
KMM	Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malays' Union)
LEPIR	Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat (Council for the People's Education)
Makindom	Majlis Kebangsaan Indonesia-Malaya (The National Council of Indonesia-Malaya)

MATA	Majlis Agama Tertinggi Sa-Malaya (Pan Malayan Supreme Religious Council)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MDU	Malayan Democratic Union
MIAGUS	Maahad Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul
MIC	Malayan/Malaysian Indian Congress
MNP	Malay National Party
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
Perpindom	Persatuan Pemuda Indonesia-Malaya (The Association of Indonesia-Malaya)
Pertindom	Persatuan Talabah Indonesia-Malaya (The Association of Indonesian and Malay Students)
Persindom	Persatuan Indonesia-Malaya (The Association of Indonesia-Malaya)
Pepermas	Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se Malaya (Pan Malayan Malay Economic Centre)
PETA	Pembela Tanah Ayer (Defenders of the Homeland)
PMIP	Pan Malayan Islamic Party
PMU	Peninsula Malays' Union
PPI	Perkumpulan Pemuda Indonesia (The Convention of Indonesian Youths)
Putera	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre of People's Power)

SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SS	Straits Settlements
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UMS	Unfederated Malay States

INTRODUCTION

Before the Second World War, the area which is now known as West (or Peninsular) Malaysia was a single unit only in geographical sense. Known then as "British Malaya" (which also included the present Republic of Singapore), in a political sense it was a "mosaic" of governments with different systems, at various stages of development. There were nine legally sovereign States, each with its own sovereign monarch. Seven of the monarchs were referred to as Sultans for the states of Johore, Selangor, Pahang, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perak; one as *Raja* (King) for Perlis and another as *Yang DiPertuan Besar* (The Grand Ruler) for Negeri Sembilan. But for convenience, all the monarchs were referred to as Sultans or Malay Rulers, the point being that diversity was often overlooked. Two other states, Malacca and Penang, since 1826 came under a single administrative grouping together with Singapore and were known as the Straits Settlements (SS). In 1896, Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan were brought under a federation known as the Federated Malay States (FMS). The other five sultanate states were known collectively as the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). In each of the states under FMS, the British had established *de facto* political control beginning in Perak in 1874 through a device known as "the residential system." Under this system, a British officer, called the Resident, was accredited to the Sultan's Court, and his "advice must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom."[1] With the formation of FMS, a Resident-General was appointed to act as chief executive officer with the function of supervising and

controlling the administration of each of the States. Unlike the states under FMS, the states under UMS (as its negative title implies) had no special inner ties among themselves. But, like the former, each state in the latter had a British officer, known as Advisor, whose role and power was similar to that of a Resident. All the Residents, Advisors and the Resident-General were responsible to the Governor of the SS who simultaneously held the post of High Commissioner of the Malay states. Thus, despite the euphemism, residential system, used to describe the relationship between Britain and the Malay states, it was for all intents and purposes a colonial situation.[2]

Concomitant with the British presence, there was a degree of socio-economic progress, along with the attendant malaise often associated with colonial rule. In the Malay states this malaise manifested itself in, and indeed, was exacerbated by, *inter alia*, the impact of British immigration policy, as seen specifically, in reducing the Malays to a peripheral role accorded to the Malays within their own society. Peripheral in the sense that they were excluded from the modernizing process of economic development initiated under the British rule. This exclusion, termed the "ruralization" or "deurbanization"[3] of the Malays, was inimical to the maintenance, and advancement of the Malays' economic position and social status. Thus, under colonial rule it is evident that the "protection"[4] of the Malays envisaged by the British proved detrimental, in the long run, to their interests. This is illustrated by the visible shift in economic power and demographic balance away from the Malays, in favor of the British sponsored and encouraged Indian and Chinese immigrants.

Thus the British political and administrative position in the Malay states was rapidly consolidated and the economic strength and demographic growth of the immigrant Chinese and Indians visibly increased in the first four decades of the 20th century. On another front, despite their general economic retardation, or perhaps due to that, Malay society was undergoing a period of growing social and political consciousness. On the surface, one might get an impression

of a "calm" political scene in the Malay States (especially when compared to the neighbouring countries). However, under the seemingly calm surface, one can discern the stirring of a strong social current. This can be exemplified, *inter alia* by the publication of not less than 147 Malay newspapers and journals between the years 1876 and 1941.[5] Most of these publications were manifestations as well as agents of social change, with their concomitant political ramifications. Among the most important of these publications was the *Al-Iman* (1906-1908) which was widely acknowledged as the mouthpiece of the pioneering Islamic reform movement in the Malay speaking world. Members of this movement had the "burning desire to renovate Islam in their society to make it fit instrument with which to respond to the social and economic challenges posed by alien domination."[6]

Such was the social milieu in the first four decades of the 20th century in which Malay nationalism evolved. Early studies of Malay nationalism classified it into three main streams, each led by three different elite groups, namely the English-educated traditional bureaucrats, the Islamic-educated teachers and writers, and the vernacular Malay-educated teachers and journalists. In the present study, these three streams are categorized into two main groups; namely, the conservative nationalists form the first stream, and the radical nationalists the second and third streams. It is generally acknowledged that the conservative nationalists enjoyed favorable treatment from the British colonial authorities and in terms of post World War II Malay politics, they are organizationally the backbone of the United Malays National Organizations (UMNO), a party which has been in power (with its coalition partners) since Malaysia (which until September 1963 was known as Malaya) achieved her independence.

The radical nationalists, on the contrary, had suffered various setbacks due to British colonial suppression, although during the Japanese occupation they received favorable treatment from the Japanese Military Authority. When Malaya eventually became independent, these radical elements made

up the opposition forces to the newly formed national government but with many lingering disadvantages.

Until recently, the study of Malay politics had somehow neglected the origins and the development of these radical elements.[7] As a result of this oversight, efforts to better understand contemporary opposition forces in Malay politics are severely hampered. Thus, this study is an attempt to partially overcome this problem.

In addition, this is also an attempt to draw attention to the various forms of political expressions in Malay culture which on the surface seem apolitical. In doing this – in order to capture the cultural nuances and subtleties – sometimes it is necessary to provide an "overdetailed" account of events and personalities. And for similar reasons, discussion pertaining to specific political science concepts and theories, *per se*, is kept to the minimum. However, the underlying theoretical interest of this study, namely political modernization, is always projected, specifically the emergence of contending elites in a transitional society, political participation, political socialization and political party organization. All these concepts are constantly borne in mind in the course of reconstructing the events and activities of personalities associated with the origins and early development of the radical Malay opposition movement in the Malaysian politics.

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[1] Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964), p. 121.

[2] For detailed accounts see *Ibid.*, especially chapters 3, 4 and 5. Cf. also C.D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Control* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[3] In recent years, these two terms, used interchangeably, have become popular among Malay intellectuals in their writings and speeches about the effect of British colonial rule on Malay society. See, for example, Ismail Hussein, *Some Aspects of Cultural Problems in Malaysia*, a speech delivered at a colloquium commemorating the 500th year of Tubingen University, West Germany, August 30, 1977, Mimeographed.

[4] See Emerson, *op. cit.* Cf. also Emily Sedka, *The Protected Malay States 1874-1895* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), esp. pp. 274-325.

[5] See William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals, 1876-1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[6] David Joel Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 325.

[7] Thus far, there are only two known published works that have given due attention to this matter. See chapter on *Partai Rakyat* in R.K. Vasil, *Politics in A Plural Society* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 167-182, and Anthony J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Experiment, 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No. 8, 1979). An unpublished study which I have not been able to see: Neil J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia 1945-69: A Case Study of the United Malays National Organization and the Pan Malayan Islamic Party*, M.A. Thesis, Monash University, 1973.

CHAPTER ONE

Politics of Radicalism: The Religious Fervor

In his acceptance speech on the conferment of honorary doctorate of law at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, in June 1971, veteran leader of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Tun Dr. Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, who was then Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, acknowledged the contribution made by the "radical nationalist" in the struggle for an independent Malaya, noting that:

> Freedom fighters in those years [immediately after World War II] were divided into two groups. One group believed that freedom could only be achieved through revolutionary means, whereas the other group believed in the constitutional process.
>
> British colonialists had two alternatives, namely, either to agree to granting independence to the moderate group or to take firm action in a continuously combative manner in the face of armed struggle.
>
> The British government decided to concede to the nationalist group which chose the constitutional path and possessed the basis for compromise with other ethnic communities in this country.
>
> It is true that independence was achieved by the moderate group, but history has also shown that the radical nationalist group also made its contribution towards the achievement of independence.[1]

The term radicalism as a political phenomenon is most commonly used to describe the advocacy of, and action towards sweeping, fundamental, and rapid change of laws, and methods of governing.[2] The "radical Malay nationalists" were described by a Western political scientist as those who "were contemptuous of traditional Malay elites and who wish to pattern Malay nationalism after the Indonesian nationalist movement".[3] Such an expression provides a convenient definition but it is an over-generalization,

thereby missing many subtleties. A main feature of the radical nationalist group was its unwillingness to cooperate with, and a deep distrust of the British. Thus, members of this group took pride in their adherence to *non-co politik* (politics of non-cooperation with the British). Coupled with their distrust of the British, was a disenchantment with the British-groomed bureaucratic elites, along with the traditional aristocratic elites.

At best, these elites were perceived as being indifferent towards the masses' aspirations, while harsher critics regarded them as *boneka penjajah* (colonial puppets)[4] or worse still, as *penghianat bangsa sendiri,*[5] traitors to their own kind.

In many ways, the English-educated Malay bureaucratic elites were indeed socially and culturally alienated from the masses. And above their stratum, the traditional aristocratic elites, or members of the ruling houses, by virtue of their feudalistic nature, were even further alienated from the masses.[6] This was sharply contrasted by events in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial era where the Western-educated intellectuals empathized with the masses politically and culturally, and spearheaded the anti-colonial nationalist movement. Whereas in Malaya, the "large number of Western educated Malays, most of whom were from the feudal families, indicated cultural and political indifference"[7] and until late in the game, left the struggle for independence under the leadership of primary school teachers and religious-educated "small time" leaders of peasant background. With their limited education, these leaders might have been inward-looking, but they certainly could identify themselves with the aspirations of the *rakyat* (common people) and, as such, "became natural leaders."[8]

In their sympathy with the plight for the *rakyat*, and in their anxiety to bring about improvement, these peasant-based leaders became impatient and frustrated with the existing socio-political structure to which both the indifferent British-groomed bureaucratic elites, and the traditional aristocratic elites, acquiesced. This, perhaps, gave rise to the notion that unlike elsewhere in Asia, the anti-colonial nationalist move-

ment in Malaya was spearheaded by the peasants with leaders of non-Western educational background. Whereas in Indonesia, for example, Western-educated leaders like Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Sjahrir, Hadji Agoes Salim, Yamin, and others, wrote books analyzing political, philosophical and social problems of their people. No such parallel could be found in Malaya.[9]

The preceding account provides a brief historical background against which the concept of radical Malay nationalism must be understood. The origins of this radicalism can be traced to two main sources, namely, the Islamic religious fervor of the *pondok* and *madrasah*[10] school networks, and the nationalist appeals of the vernacular primary school teachers' fraternity.

Two educational institution stood out significantly in nourishing this fervor. The more often talked-about of the two, Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) was dubbed, among others, as the "cradle of Malay resurgence and the center of Malay intellectual and literary life."[12] Originally, this College was meant to be an institution where "the sons of the peasantry and the poor, [undergo] training for return to the Malay-speaking world of the rural village school".[13] A sizable number of its alumni before the mid-1950's became famous writers, educators, administrators, and politicians. Among those presently occupying some of the most prominent positions in the Malaysian scene are: Speaker of the House of Representatives, Syed Nasir Ismail; Secretary-General of the ruling National Front coalition, Abdul Ghafar Baba; and Vice-Chancellor of the National University, Awang Had Salleh, who, although of humble origins, graduated from SITC and eventually obtained a doctorate from Stanford University. SITC was also reputed as the *alma mater* of the founders of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* KMM (the Union of Young Malays) the first pre World War II Malay political party to transcend state boundaries within the Malay Peninsula. Dissolved by the Japanese during their occupation, the KMM was "reborn" immediately after the War as the *Malay Nationalist Party* MNP, which, together with its satellite

organizations, is still considered to embody Malay radical nationalism.

The other institution which contributed to the religious fervor of the Malay radical movement was the *Maahad Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul* (MIAGUS), located in the northern state of Perak. Unlike SITC, which was primarily secular in its orientation, MIAGUS was prominently religious. More significantly, the former institution was run by the Government whereas the latter was privately operated. Yet another difference was that whereas the MIAGUS's political role was more "direct", that of the SITC was less so. If the SITC was to mainly provide "intellectual and ideological" preparation to equip its students when they entered the political world, MIAGUS' s political role in the life of the Malays went at least one step further. MIAGUS played a more direct political role in the sense that it not only hosted and organized several political meetings, but also gave birth to a couple of political organizations in the pre-independence period. Perhaps this was attributable to its "non-governmental" or "private" status, as well as to the explicitly political propensity of its principal, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir. However, in terms of inculcating social and political consciousness among its respective students, SITC and MIAGUS certainly had played equally significant roles.

By the third quarter of the 1940's MIAGUS had become so important as a center for radical politics that the conservative president of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Dato Onn bin Jaafar was prompted to warn his followers in these words: *Hubaya, hubaya bahaya dari gunung*[14] (Beware of the danger from the *gunung*, the mountain). *Prima facie* Dato Onn's reference to the "danger from the *gunung*, the mountain," might refer to communist guerilla activities originating from the jungle and the mountains. In reality, he was actually alluding to the mounting radical political activities centered in the small town of Gunung Semanggul, the home of MIAGUS. The daily *Utusan Melayu* reported this remark made on three different occasions, on at least three different issues. One of the reports quoted him

verbatim as follows:

> there have emerged some efforts in Malaya today using the name of religion, claiming to stand on religious principles, but behind this facade they were not free from political motives. We have seen the danger that came out from the jungle in 1945, and today we are going to see the danger descending from the *Gunung*, the mountain, on religious pretension.[15]

Dato Onn's allusion to MIAGUS in his remarks concerning *gunung*, underscored the potential role of Islam in radical Malay political activities. However, before a detailed discussion of the MIAGUS-centered activities is undertaken, a background of its predecessors and sister institutions throughout Malaya will help to place it in historical context and will serve to illuminate its origins and its widespread influence.

In a historical and developmental sense, religious educational institutions such as MIAGUS had their roots in the *pondok* boarding school system, which formed the most important and pervasive system of education throughout the Malay-speaking world before the introduction of Western school systems. In some places, the old-style *pondok* system was transformed into the reformist *madrasah* and *maahad* systems after the First World War. Together, *pondok* and *madrasah* were primarily responsible for disseminating Islamic legal and scriptural knowledge throughout the Malay-speaking world. The *pondok* counterparts in Java and Sumatra were variably known as *pasentren* and *surau* respectively. The main characteristic of the *pondok* was its teaching style which employed the "circle" *(halaqah)* method. The students sat cross-legged in a circle, if they were in the middle of a room, or in a semi-circle, if they were sitting against the wall. The teacher's spot in the circle was made prominent by a special small-sized carpet and a sitting-pillow. The "senior" or more knowledgeable students would sit close to the teacher. Students of all ages were included, but they were not stratified according to "grade" or "class". They would listen to the teacher, who would normally read his Arabic text sentence by sentence, followed by the translation, and elaborate often redundant explanations in Malay.[16] Basically, the lessons

consisted of generally incomprehensible recitation of the Qur'an, some elementary exegesis of the Qur'an, and *hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet), and Malay-Muslim ethical and behavioral precepts.[17] As the meaning of the Arabic originated term *pondok* implied, almost all students in the *pondok* schools boarded in small rudimentary huts (*pondok*) scattered around two main buildings in a compound of various sizes. One of the main buildings was supposed to be the teacher's house, and the other one was the prayer house-cum-classroom. The teacher was affectionately and reverently referred to as *tuan guru*, master teacher.

The reputation of a *pondok* school hinged upon the fame of its *tuan guru*, which was determined by various factors such as length of his stay in Mecca, and his association with other famous *tuan gurus*. It was not unusual for a promising young teacher to become a son-in-law of his own *tuan guru*. Understandably, a famous *pondok* would attract not only a large number of students, but also students from distant places. However, in spite of its important role as an agent of religious socialization, the *pondok* school system, as a rule with very rare exceptions, encouraged an attitude which is obsessed with life hereafter. Most of the alumni of the *pondok* school system were "conservative in their attitudes and narrow in the point-of-view".[18] This was largely due to the *modus operandi* and the educational subject matter covered by most of the schools.

As indicated earlier, there was no system of grades or classes, no systematic curriculum, no periodic assignments. Teaching had been a one-way communication where the students did not, or dared not, express different views from those of his *tuan guru*. More emphasis was placed on memorizing or learning-by-rote rather than "understanding" the subject matter. As a result, there was really no guarantee what degree of knowledge a student could achieve after a certain period of study. Thus, similarly to most of the *pasentren* or *surau* in Java and Sumatra, the level of achievement of each *pondok* student depended mainly on his own "natural" progress and the *pondok* he chose.[19] Perhaps this

was why an innovator of the system concluded that the *halaqah* method "could produce but one fine *ulama*, religious scholar, out of a hundred students."[20]

An "advanced" level student who felt that he had "learned enough" from a particular *pondok* would move to another *pondok*, usually in a different state, seeking the knowledge of another famous *tuan guru*. Such mobility, in the case of "outstanding" or "determined" students usually led to Mecca where they continued studying for a few years. The average student, however, after a few years' stay in a *pondok*, would return to his village to become a local religious teacher, and perform public religious functions for the villagers. Some of those who went to Mecca would stay permanently in the Holy City, while the others, after a few years, would return to Malaya as recognized *ulama*.

The study in Mecca, as an ultimate extension of studying in a far-away *pondok* within Malaya, conferred legitimacy upon those students desiring to become recognized *ulama* or *tuan guru*. This was comparable to Snouck Hurgronje's observation about the Achehnese is Sumatra. Upon his return from Mecca, or upon his "graduation" from several *pondok* within Malaya, an *ulama* would become either a *tuan guru* in a *pondok* or a religious official under one of the Sultans. In either capacity, he perpetuated the social system which produced a religious and a steeply conservative society.

By the turn of the 20th century, however, the predominance of the old-fashioned *pondok* school system in Malaya began to decline, a decline which accompanied the improvement of those that survived. This could be attributed to the advent of the Islamic reform movement, which sought, *inter alia*, to modernize the contents and the method of religious education. Another reason, the impact of which took longer to unfold, was the introduction of Western secular school system. In terms of providing Islamic education, the challenge posed by the reform movement could be considered as part of a "maturation" process of the *pondok* school system.

As has been briefly mentioned, the *pondok* school system

had many shortcomings in developing the intellectual and academic potential of its students. In spite of that and the challenges posed by the reform movement, the *pondok*, as a social institution continued to play an important role in religious as well as other aspects of life of rural Malays. This was especially so in the paddy growing areas of Kelantan, Kedah and Perak, even after the introduction of the *madrasah* and Western educational systems. And in the context of this study, the most significant of these roles was the influential position of a *tuan guru vis-a-vis* the villagers, even pertaining to non-religious matters. In the pre-independence era, when the social and educational services of the colonial Government were very limited, especially in the rural areas, the influential role of the *pondok* system in the life of the peasants could hardly be over-emphasized. "It was not unusual for the villagers to ask the *tuan guru* to keep their cash savings until they were ready to use them for pilgrimage expenses to Mecca, or for other expenditures".[21] In the post-independence electoral politics, in certain localities "a political party would feel safe if it could count on a *tuan guru's* support".[22] Thus, in spite of changes "of" and "within" the *pondok* system that took place as previously indicated, some of its characteristics persisted in the modern *madrasah* system, and in post-independence rural life.

In many ways, the *pondok* could be considered as the bastion of the conservative traditionalist religious group which, by definition, was opposed to the modernizing reform movement. Nevertheless, some changes had begun to take place in this old-fashioned system, perhaps as an indirect impact of the reform movement, or perhaps due to additional "exposure" and a higher level of knowledge of the *tuan guru*. A case in point was the modification of lesson content and method of teaching, like the one initiated by *tuan guru* Tok Kenali (1868-1933) in Kelantan.[23] This had a contagious effect on many other *pondok* schools in Malaya. At the same time, the old *halaqah* system in some *pondok* schools began to give way to some "crude" form of grade or class system, like the one initiated in the first decade of the

century by the advocates of the reform movement in Minangkabau (Sumatra), who were ideologically and intellectually in contact with their counterparts in Malaya.[24]

Besides the changes that took place "within" the *pondok* system, changes 'of" the system were also occurring, which paved the way for the "modern" *madrasah* system; thanks to the reform movement. To cite a few examples, the *Madrasah Manabi 'al-Ulum wa Matali' an-Nujum* at Bukit Mertajam, Province Wellesley, and *Madrasah al-Falah* at Pulau Pisang near Kota Bharu, Kelantan, were started by "graduates" of the famous *Pondok* Tok Kenali.[25] The famous MIAGUS was the successor of a local *pondok* school named *al-Rahmaniah.*[26] The modern *Thawalib School* in Padang Pandjang, Sumatra, grew out of the traditional *Surau (Pondok) Djambatan Besi* in the first decade of the 20th century.[27]

The aforementioned shortcomings of the *pondok* system were becoming increasingly noticeable by the first quarter of the 20th century. Some of these shortcomings were remedied as the religious schools were seeking ways and means of preparing their students for the modern world. The earlier changes "within" and "of" the *pondok* system had paved the way for more far reaching reforms which resulted in the modern *madrasah* system. This latter system, as an outgrowth of the traditional *pondok* system provided continuity within the rapidly changing social matrix. This was manifested in the continuous influence of the religious teachers in rural public life. Like their attitudes towards the *tuan guru* of the *pondok* system, the peasants regarded the *ustaz* of the *madrasah* system with spontaneous reverence and deferrence. The teachers were always looked up to for all kinds of advice. Naturally this would have its own political ramifications in time to come in mobilizing the peasants one way or another.[28]

Besides a more effective method of teaching, a yearly graded curriculum and a better organization of the school, an equally significant change wrought by the *madrasah* system was the new emphasis it placed on the importance

of temporal life *vis-a-vis* spiritual life. The latter had dominated the *pondok* educational system throughout its history. Unlike this system which had confined its lessons to purely "religious" matters, the *madrasah* system included "secular" subjects such as geography, history, elementary botany, speech making and literature. Some *madrasah* also taught vocational skills.

Thus the *madrasah* helped to create more "balanced" views among its students. While they no longer had the tendency to "abandon" the present world, their religious perception of the "other" world or their belief in God's reward and punishment in the life after death, gave them the propensity to be "altruistic" and to sacrifice for any cause in line with their religious belief. Such an attitude certainly had important bearings on radical politics. Incidentally, it should also be noted that in spite of their preoccupation with "purely religious" matters, some traditional religious schools, especially the ones that became the centers of *amalan tarekat* (the practice of mysticism), had often served as centers for rural rebellions.[29] This had happened especially in Java and Sumatra where the traditionalist religious teachers "through their secret mystical orders, built up a following which could resort to violence in order to drive away the Dutch".[30] In other words, though it rarely became explicit, the nature of student-teacher relationship in the religious schools contained some important ingredients for radical or militant political actions.

The *madrasah* combined an inculcation of interest in worldly affairs with religious reformist instruction and drew on the traditional student-master relationship and fanatical Islamic sentiments noticeable in the *pondok* system. This combination would eventually stimulate students' interest in political matters while providing a religiously implied motive and a ready made leadership. Thus the seeds of radical nationalism were sowed right from the start, in the *madrasah* throughout Malaya. It could be argued that when political interests were reinforced by religious zeal, this would amount to fertilizing the ground for sowing the seeds of radicalism.

Then a suitable leadership and the right atmosphere could, in turn, further determine the rates of such radicalization among the masses and the extent of its impact on the *status quo*.

In this connection it could be further argued that the emergence of the modern *madrasah* system as an outgrowth of, as well as a complement to, the extant *pondok* system marked the beginning of a slow if subtle politicization of the Malay peasants. The immediate or the middle range effect of such a politicization process might not necessarily be the arousing of "political consciousness" *per se*. Instead, the early effect could be described as the growth of "self consciousness and self-assertiveness".[31] Only as this consciousness and assertiveness increased in magnitude and intensity could it become full-fledged political consciousness characterized by the formulation and expression of grievances. In the case of the Malays, especially after World War I, these grievances were generally attributed to two main alien elements: the immigrant Chinese who flooded the country and dominated the local economy, and the British colonial regime. Among the general Malay population, the alien Chinese were the most visible threat and thereby a popular target for grievance and resentment. Among the emerging vernacular intellectuals, however, the British were no less resented and were bitterly criticized. The most prolific writer among the intellectuals was Zainal Abidin Ahmad – popularly known as ZA'ABA, 1890-1970, who was a product of both the *madrasah* and the Western secular school systems. A recent study of his hundreds of articles scattered in scores of publications over a period of more than 40 years, showed that his Islamic reformist ideas contributed considerably to the politicization of the Malays during the pre World War II period or inter-war period.[32]

Aside from the educational reforms resulting from religious reformism, these movements had further repercussions which contributed to the general politicization of the Malays between the wars. One such development was the conflict between *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction, representing

the modern, i.e. the Islamic reformist school of thought) and the *Kaum Tua* (The Old Faction, representing the conservative and traditional school of thought). The basic conflict revolved around interpretation of certain religious doctrines and the practice of certain rituals. However, it took on a political dimension when the *Kaum Tua* allied with the traditional aristocratic elites. This also meant that the *Kaum Muda* was in opposition to the religious officialdom in which many *Kaum Tua* adherents had vested interests.

In their enthusiasm for reform and progress, the *Kaum Muda* criticized many structural and other flaws in the religious administration in the various states. This was at least one reason why the Old Faction was perceived as an obstacle to progress based on Islamic reformist ideas. Thus, the alignment of forces was such that the *Kaum Muda* reformers were perceived as a threat by the traditional customary authorities. The intense polemics associated with this conflict, which were facilitated by various journals and other forms of publication, especially in the 1920's and 30's, created not only a stimulating intellectual atmosphere, but also indirectly generated, among the lay readers, interests in political matters.[33]

As will be further discussed in the next chapter, when the political consciousness associated with the reformist movement eventually found expression in a formal organization or political party, among the explicit objectives of the organization was a complete restructuring or reform of the religious administration. This is but one reminder that despite the dominance of "secular" leadership at certain stages in the long politicization process of the Malays, reformist Islamic fervor was not only an initiating force, but remained an important component throughout. Therefore, the religious reform movement should not be dismissed as a phase or an episode in the history of Malay nationalism. Rather, it should be regarded as a permanent force in the entire process with fluctuating but persisting impact.

As indicated above, rather than arousing immediate political consciousness *per se*, the lengthy Islamic reformist

process in its initial stage simply helped to increase self-consciousness and self-assertiveness among the Malays. But in the long run, the cumulative effect led to the eventual formation of a more assertive political consciousness which reached radical proportions in the mid 1940's as epitomized by a wide range of activities centered around MIAGUS, even though the quick repressive measures of the British colonial authority aborted the efforts of the radicals to alter the *status quo*.

The magnitude and the intensity of MIAGUS's political activities, especially in the 1940's, indubitably surpassed that of any other religious educational institution. The tradition of direct political involvement by religious boarding schools had started more than a decade earlier when the various branches of *Madrasah Al-Diniah* in northern Perak provided audiences to leaders of the radical *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM), Young Malay Union . Two future leaders of the Malayan Communist Party, the firebrand female politician Shamsiah Fakeh and Rashid Mydin gave talks, notably at the Kampung Lalang branch of the *madrasah* in which they passionately discussed the "ugliness of the (Malay) feudal class and the British rule".[34] Considered to be the first reformist *madrasah* in the state of Perak, *Madrasah Al-Diniah* was started in 1934 by a few graduates of the famous *Madrasah Al-Masyhur Al-Islamiyyah* established on the island of Penang in 1919.[35] At this point, the general remarks made thus far concerning the widespread relationship between the growth of religious reformist education and that of radical political consciousness in Malaya, can best be substantiated by an indepth look at the history, growth and activities of a few of the archetypal schools for which this information is available. As a reformist *madrasah*, *Al-Masyhur* was preceded by two of its kind in Malaya: *Madrasah Al-Iqbal* established in Singapore in 1907 and *Madrasah Al-Hadi* in Malacca in 1917. Since both proved to be short-lived, *Al-Masyhur* could be considered as the oldest reformist *madrasah* in Malaya to have a substantial impact on the community. It attracted students not only from Malaya, but also from Southern Thailand and Borneo. Over the decades since its

founding, *Al-Masyhur* produced generations of students who, through their wide-ranging activities, provided general ideological continuity to the religious reformist movement, with the concomitant political ramifications.

Regarding the political ramifications, it is relevant to note that beyond its regular comprehensive and "balanced" curriculum, the *madrasah* also encouraged extra-curricular activities among the teachers and the students such as the weekly *majlis syarahan* (Public talk) given by local or guest speakers, regular speech and debate competitions among the students, and periodical speech-making trips to other parts of the country. Among the effects of these types of activities was that the students of *Al-Masyhur* were inspired "with new soul and inflamed spirits in realizing their responsibility towards their nation and motherland."[36]

Perhaps this innovation should be attributed to the fact that *Al-Masyhur* had benefited from the direct leadership and personal involvement of several pioneers of the reformist movement in Malaya such as Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi and Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin. Hence this school had become a prototype, or a model, to many other modern *madrasah* which were founded in certain parts of the country, often by *Al-Masyhur's* own alumni.

One of the most fertile grounds for the growth of the *madrasah* which was politically active and *Al-Masyhur* inspired, was the district around Padang Rengas in northern Perak, starting with the *Madrasah Al-Diniah* in Kampung Lalang in 1934. In a matter of a few years several branches were set up in other villages such as in Kampung Boyan, Gapis, Keroh Hulu, Paya Lintah, Laneh, Kampung Pauh and in the small town of Padang Rengas itself. Among the prime movers behind the *Al-Diniah* network was a reformist religious scholar from Tapanuli (to the north of Minangkabau in Sumatra), Shaykh Junid Al-Tala. His future son-in-law, Mohammad Asri bin Haji Muda, was to become the longest serving president of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Shaykh Junid's personal friendship with the reformist religious and educational pioneer Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin

facilitated a close contact between the latter and the *Al-Diniah* network.

Shaykh Junid's encouragement of political radicalism did not stop in the educational sphere. He also encouraged economic entrepreneurship among the Malays in Padang Rengas. He initiated the arrival of a few *batik* textile businessmen and cobblers from elsewhere to start their business in the Padang Rengas area. As a result of this effort, in a short span of five years toward the end of 1930's, the area could boast of no less than 30 Malay owned and operated shops dealing with various kinds of business.[37] This drastically reduced economic dependency of the local Malays on the Chinese. It was a manifestation of resentment against the immigrant group as well as an economic expression of Malay nationalism which can be directly attributed to the religious reform movement.

In the bustling period of post World War II Malay politics, the *Al-Diniah's* identification with the radical brand of nationalism became further accentuated through the use of the courtyards of these schools for regular paramilitary drill by the militant *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API), Generation of Aware Youth . More of this will be discussed in Chapter Five. API's strength in the Padang Rengas district has been described by its supreme commander, Ahmad Boestamam, in his memoirs:

> The place I often visited was Padang Rengas, Perak, for the API movement here had been extremely strong, with hundreds of the military trained members ... In Padang Rengas I was still accepted by my followers as an important leader (even long after API was banned) ... And when I had to go back home from Padang Rengas I would be sure to be provided with gifts of money.[38]

In every village where *Al-Diniah* had a school, the MNP whose youth wing was API had a *ranting* (a sub-branch). For that matter, MNP sub-branches were to be found in almost every Malay village in northern Perak and in most villages throughout that state. Generally, in one way or another, the leadership was associated with either a local *madrasah* or, one of greater prominence. Boestamam's recollection concern-

ing the prevalence and pervasiveness of the MNP during its hey-day led one of its Perak leaders to remark more than 30 years later that the party could easily win a landslide victory if there was an election at the time.[39] In addition to the documentation provided concerning the positive correlation between Islamic reformist movement – especially through its school network – and radical Malay politics in Perak, similar examples in at least three other states are worth citing briefly. In Bentah district in the state of Pahang, a researcher was told by the former MNP president, Ishak Haji Muhammad, that the API local branch benefited by the local *madrasah* in terms of venue for meetings and paramilitary drilling as well as in terms of leadership provided by teachers from the *madrasah*.[40]

On the island of Penang which is part of Province Wellesley, the first MNP branch was formed in Balik Pulau district where there was a high concentration of Malay population in an otherwise predominantly Chinese populated island. Significantly, the meeting that gave birth to the party in the island took place in a mosque after the weekly Friday services, on November 23, 1945, and was attended by representatives from not less than 12 surrounding villages. Almost all of those entrusted to assume leadership in the newly formed MNP branch came from a reformist religious education background.[41] And at one stage of the party's existence in Penang, the post of the local treasurer was held by Haji Yusof Rawa currently serving as Vice-President of the PMIP and for three decades a noted and energetic publisher of religious books and magazines.[42]

In the state of Selangor, the MNP was particularly strong in Kampung Jenderam, a village with a highly politicized population. Such was its notoriety that the whole village faced forced resettlement for allegedly supporting the communist terrorist activities during the Emergency (1948 – 1951).[43] The roots of political consciousness of these villagers can be traced back to 1922 when a Minangkabau Malay, Haji Jalaluddin bin Ismail, started a religious school, *Madrasatul Ubudiah*, in the village.

Besides heading the *madrasah*, Haji Jalaluddin, who commanded the villagers' respect and affection, was also directly involved in the daily communal religious routine which centered in the village's main mosque. He took turns delivering weekly Friday sermons and giving religious uplift talks each evening. In the economic sphere of the village life, Haji Jalaluddin set up a communal fund to finance village administration. Equally significant was his initiative in starting a cooperative society in the transportation business. At least 200 villagers became members of the society which eventually owned two taxis operating between Jenderam and neighbouring small towns. Thus, Haji Jalaluddin was a very influential, popular, and important man in politicizing the lives of the Jenderam villagers. (His *Madrasatul Ubudiah* school was fashioned after the religious reformist schools which were mushrooming in Minangkabau, Sumatra, after World War I). Being educated in at least two of the Minangkabau schools, Haji Jalaluddin arranged for a significant number of graduating students in his *madrasah* to continue their education in Minangkabau in preparation to become teachers in their *alma mater* or elsewhere. Thus, the reformist social and religious outlook, together with the accompanying political heat radiated by the *Kaum Muda* activities – especially through their network of innovative schools – in Minangkabau had a direct impact on *Madrasatul Ubudiah* and thereby on the villagers of Jenderam.

Among the students of Haji Jalaluddin who went to Minangkabau for further studies, was Bakar bin Jali, who benefited directly from the teaching of a famous *Kaum Muda* politician cum educator, Mochtar Lotfi, the head of one of the most politicized reformist schools, PERMI.[44] It was Mochtar Lotfi who was mainly responsible for inculcating intense anti-British and anti-Dutch feelings in Bakar bin Jali. These sentiments were brought into fruition when the avowedly anti-British *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*, KMM was formed in 1937; Bakar bin Jali lost no time in starting a branch of the party in Jenderam, much to the delight of the politicized villagers. Not unexpectedly, committee members

elected to lead the branch were teachers or alumni from *Madrasatul Ubudiah*, a few of whom had received a relatively advanced education either in Minangkabau or at the Sultan Idris Training College, Tanjung Malim.

A further manifestation of the politicization of Selangor villagers through the medium of religious institutions was the development of an open conflict between the Jenderam *Kaum Muda* on one side and the Selangor state religious authorities on the other. This conflict had been preceded by months of "uneasy truce" between the two and was followed by a fierce legal battle. The conflict was precipitated by the villagers themselves. Thanks to the dynamic leadership of Haji Jalaluddin, Jenderam had become an object of envy among many neighbouring villages. But the *Kaum Muda's* ostensibly "deviant" practices in certain religious rituals had placed Jenderam in an unfavorable light in other villages. One of these "deviant" practices was the omission of praises of, and prayers for, the Sultan in the weekly Friday sermon. This naturally made the loyalist *Kaum Tua* supporters more unhappy, causing them to mount heavier pressure on the State Religious Authority to rectify this "deviance". Moreover, personal grudges between certain jealous personalities towards Haji Jalaluddin, were also at play. Finally, the "uneasy truce" between the Authority and the Jenderam *Kaum Muda* evolved into an open conflict when the former began legal proceedings against the latter in the Selangor State Religious Court. Haji Jalaluddin and his colleagues were accused of teaching and indulging in "deviant" practices concerning religious routine. Unresolved in the state religious court, the case was elevated to the Federal High Court in Kuala Lumpur. In the course of the trials, *Kaum Muda* supporters attended in impressive numbers, not only from Jenderam, but also from distant Singapore and Penang.

The High Court dismissed the case, but not long after that, in 1927, the Selangor State Religious Authority revoked Haji Jalaluddin's *surat tauliah* (letter of authority to teach religion). He then left for Southern Thailand, but nonetheless his *Kaum Muda's* legacy in Jenderam continued to exert an

impact on the political consciousness of the villagers. *Madrasatul Ubudiah* continued to operate under his former colleagues.

After World War II, when radical Malay nationalism found its organizational expression in the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP), Jenderam formed one of its most active branches in Selangor. Like the leadership post he held in the prewar KMM, Bakar bin Jali became *Ketua Satu* (Chairman) of the Jenderam branch. On the Selangor state level, Bakar bin Jali was elected *Ketua Dua* (Vice-Chairman). Aside from Bakar bin Jali, there were at least four other Jenderam villagers who served on the state level of the MNP leadership. These were four women who sat on the state committee of the party's women wing *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS, Generation of Awakened Women).[45]

One of the MNP Jenderam Branch's most significant activities was to host *Kongres Tani* (Farmers Congress) in May 1948, about three weeks before the declaration of the State of Emergency. National leaders of the MNP like Dr. Burhanuddin, Abdullah C.D. and Shamsiah Fakeh came to speak at the congress.[46] Not long after that, Abdullah C.D. and Shamsiah Fakeh disappeared into the jungle to join the communist guerilla movement, and are still believed to be in the jungle. Along with the emotionally charged political speeches given by local and national MNP leaders, in the early afternoon, Jenderam also witnessed a "farmer-peasant parade" around the village which started from the village mosque following the weekly Friday services. In the evening there was a *sandiwara*, a pot-pourri of performing arts, with heavy political overtones evoking *semangat perjuangan*, the spirit of struggle.

Hardly a month after the *Kongres Tani* was held, the British colonial authority declared a state of Emergency throughout Malaya and Singapore due to the mounting communist guerilla activities. The State of Emergency – popularly referred to as "the Emergency" – imposed a heavy constraint on social and political activities throughout the country, especially affecting those of "radical" or "leftist" inclinations.

The declaration of the Emergency was followed almost immediately by the mass arrest of the MNP leaders and their active followers on every organizational level.

The historically highly politicized Jenderam villagers were adversely affected by the Emergency more than any other single Malay village in the country. In the first few months of the Emergency at least 18 persons, including Bakar bin Jali, fled to the jungle to escape arrest and joined forces with the communist guerillas. It is noteworthy that at least another eighteen were arrested, ten in 1948 and eight in the following year.[47] Out of the 18 who went to the jungle, eleven died during armed combat with Government forces in various parts of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, one was captured and subsequently sentenced to death by hanging, and the other six were forced to surrender after a few years of fighting.[48] Those arrested were put under detention for a varied length of time in detention camps scattered across the country. Yet another severe social, emotional and economic disruption was suffered by the entire Jenderam village as a result of Government anti-terrorist tactics. In the early morning of February 15, 1951, without any prior notice or warning, approximately 1,500 people in the village were ordered to pack their belongings in just a couple of hours and be prepared to leave for unspecified destinations in 50 waiting military trucks. This was part of an operation to resettle the whole village in a detention camp in Kluang, Johore, because the Government claimed that, in less than three years since the declaration of the Emergency "there had been at least twenty-seven cases in which the villagers were involved in supporting communist guerilla activities."[49] The forced-resettlement of Jenderam villagers received not only news coverage, but also prompted critical editorial comment in the British newspaper *Manchester Guardian*.

The preceding pages suggest that, in the period under discussion, the villagers of Jenderam had a higher level of political consciousness than most other villagers in Malaya during the same period. This village apparently had developed its own particular political identity — assertive and consistent

with the *Kaum Muda* thought and practice that had become pervasive among its population. And, the roots of this politicization can be traced to the early days of *Madrasatul Ubudiah* which had been directly affected by the highly politicized *Kaum Muda's* social and educational activities in Minangkabau in the 1920's and 30's. It is in this sense that the *madrasah* could be considered as an important agent of the Islamic reformist movement with all its political ramifications in Malaya.

Other prominent examples of this process of politicization at the grass roots level through the *Kaum Muda* educational institutions can be found in modern religious schools such as the *Al-Masyhur* in Penang, the *Al-Masriah* in Province Wellesley, the *Al-Diniah* networks in northern Perak and many other less famous *madrasah* in other parts of the country. All these schools had been involved in the development of self-consciousness and self-assertiveness among the Malays which in turn evolved into an assertive political consciousness, thereby promoting Malay nationalism and, ultimately, winning independence for the country. However, as previously indicated, in terms of direct, explicit and distinctive political activities, either as a manifestation or a perpetuation of nationalism, *Maahad Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul* (MIAGUS) became the most prominent among the *madrasah*. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this particular reformist-oriented *madrasah* epitomized Islamic-based socio-political activities of the Malays after World War II.

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[2] Seweryn Bialer, "On the Meanings, Sources and Carriers of Radicalism in Contemporary Industrial Societies: An Introductory Remark", in Seweryn Bialer and Sophia Sluzar, eds., *Radicalism in the Contemporary Age*, Volume I (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), p.5.

[3] G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p.88.

[4]Ismail Hussein, "Kebekuan Kaum Intelek Melayu", in *The New Children*, organ of Raffles Society, University of Malaya, Singapore, (1956), p.43.

[5]Ahmad Boestamam, *Testament Politik Api* (Kuala Lumpur: L.T.A.P.I. Malaya, 1946) p. 16.

[6]Under the political and administrative arrangement with the British, the Sultans, who occupied the apex of the feudal houses in each state, were supposed to be in complete control (with no British intervention) on matters pertaining to Malay customs and Islamic religion.

[7]Ismail Hussein, "Malay Literature and Nationalism", *Opinion*, August 1969.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Ismail Hussein, "Kebekuan Kaum Intelek Melayu", p. 42.

[10]*Pondok* refers to traditional religious boarding school as opposed to *Madrasah* which is relatively "modern" in its orientation.

[12]Cheah Boon Keng, "SITC: Cradle of Malay Resurgence", *Straits Times*, June 12, 1973.

[13]William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 143.

[14]*Utusan Melayu*, June 11, 19, and 21, 1947.

[15]*Utusan Melayu*, June 11, 1947.

[16]Awang Had Salleh, "Institusi Pondok Di-Malaysia" in Zainal Kling (ed.) *Masyarakat Melayu Antara Tradisi Dan Perubahan* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publication and Distributors, 1977), pp. 33-49.

[17]W.R. Roff, *The Origins* . . . , p. 84.

[18]S. Husin Ali, *Orang Melayu: Masaalah dan Masa Depannya* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Adabi, 1979), p. 57.

[19]Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 300-302.

[20]Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra, 1927-1933* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesian Project, 1972).

[21]Awang Had Salleh, "Institusi Pondok". . . , p. 45.

[22]*Ibid.*

[23] William R. Roff, *Kelantan: Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 94.

[24] Taufik, *op. cit.*, p. 55; Deliar Noer, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

[25] Roff, *Kelantan* . . . p. 95.

[26] Nabir bin Haji Abdullah, *Maahad El-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul 1934-1959*, (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1977), p. 29.

[27] Deliar Noer, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[28] See Clive S. Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1838-1969* (ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). Also his article "Muslim Identity and Political Behaviour in Kelantan" in Roff, *Kelantan* . . . . pp. 272-313.

[29] Taufik Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[30] Deliar Noer, *op. cit.*, p. 301. See also Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasant Revolts in Banten in 1888* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

[31] William R. Roff, *The Origins* . . ., p. 211.

[32] Incidentally, my notes about him were among the portion of my data that were lost or severely damaged in the Bancroft fire mentioned in the preface. For some informative and analytical accounts about ZA'ABA, see U.A. Aziz, *Jejak-jejak di Pantai Zaman*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1976); and Abdullah Hussain and Khalid Hussain, *Pendita ZA'ABA dalam Kenangan*, (Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974).

[33] William R. Roff, *The Origins* . . ., pp. 58-90, and his article "Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction Amongst the Malays, 1900-1940", in K.G. Tregonning, ed., *Papers on Malayan History* (Singapore: Malay Publishing House, 1962), pp. 162-192. See also Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perdjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatra* (Djakarta: Penerbitan Djajamurni, 1971).

[34] Mohd. Sarim Haji Mustajab, "Gerakan Islah Islamiyyah di Tanah Melayu, 1906 hingga 1948" in Khoo Kay Kim, ed., *Malaysia: Sejarah dan Proses Pembangunan or Malaysia: History and the Process of Development*, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1978, p. 166.

[35] For further details on the *Al-Masyhur*, see Rahim bin Osman, *Madrasah Masyhur Al-Islamiyyah* in Khoo Kay Kim, ed., *Islam di Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Persatuan Sejarah, 1979 (?), pp. 75-85.

[36] Remark by an interviewee, Sheikh Ahmad Obaid Baladram, a former student and a long time teacher in the school, quoted in Rahim bin Osman, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[37] Mohd. Sarim Mustajab, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[38] Ahmad Boestamam, *Carving the Path to the Summit*, translated with an introduction by William R. Roff (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 133-134.

[39] Personal interview with Baharuddin Latif, Kuala Lumpur, July 21, 1980.

[40] Personal interview with Margaret Koch, a Columbia's doctoral candidate in history who conducted her field works in Pahang, 1977, New York, December 21, 1980.

[41] See Yusof bin Jusoh, *Gerakan Politik Kiri Orang Melayu Pulau Pinang: 1945-48*, an unpublished research paper for Course AE340, History Department, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977-1978 academic session.

[42] Personal interview with Haji Yusof Rawa, Kuala Lumpur, November 5 1976.

[43] For detailed historical account of the social and political activities of the village, see Mohd. Nor bin Mohd. Amin, *Jenderam – Korban Dharurat 1948-1958*, unpublished B.A. Honours graduation exercise, History Department, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977-78 academic session.

[44] For further information on PERMI and Mochtar Lotfi as well as for historical and analytical accounts of the *Kaum Muda's* activities in Minangkabau, see Taufik Abdullah, *op. cit.*, and Deliar Noer, *op. cit.*

[45] Mohd. Nor bin Mohd. Amin. *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-66.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

CHAPTER TWO

The Expanding Role of Islam: From being Agent of Politicization to being Source of Ideology

In the last chapter, the focus of discussion was on the role of Islam in awakening political consciousness among the Malays. The role was performed, through the agency of a series of private religious educational institutions imbued with Islamic reformist ideas. The self-consciousness and self-assertiveness created by these reformist-oriented religious schools developed into an assertive political consciousness among the Malays. This, in turn, promoted radical Malay nationalism which contributed significantly to the agitation for independence. Thus, we attributed this radical nationalism quite largely to the religious fervor brought about by fresh interpretation of Islam.

However, it should be noted that, so far only the role of Islam as an agent of political socialization has been discussed. Despite the widely acclaimed notion of the highly political nature of Islam with its comprehensive belief system, our observations thus far have not explored the role of that religion as a source of political ideology in Malay politics between the two World Wars. The political socialization brought about by Islam during the period thus far observed had resulted only in the creation of political consciousness manifested through political organizations which did not expressly profess to be Islamically based.

It was only after the Second World War, at the height of national agitation for independence from British colonial rule, that Islam in Malaya emerged as a direct source of political ideology. This occurred when a political party expressly based on Islamic ideology was formed in one of the reformist religious schools – the most famous and highly

political of all. That school, which will be the focal point of this chapter, is called *Maahad Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul* (MIAGUS), situated in northern Perak.

MIAGUS was established in 1934 by one Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir[1] who benefited greatly from the generosity and the cooperative spirit of the Gunung Semanggul population. Within six years, the school had grown significantly in almost every aspect – student body, teaching staff and property ownership. By 1939 it had four hundred registered students who came not only from the northern Perak area but also from elsewhere. By then also it had received donations in the form of seven acres of rubber plantation, one four-unit shophouse and another acre of land for the school premises. Organizationally, the school's position was enhanced by an association, *Persatuan Il-Ehya Assyarif*, which was formed in 1940 to provide a system of administrative and financial back-up for the institution.[2]

Close personal relationship between its principal, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, and *Kaum Muda* activists in Penang, Singapore and Minangkabau facilitated the regular and smooth flow of the *Kaum Muda* ideology to MIAGUS. Indeed, Ustaz Abu Bakar's initial effort to start the school was inspired and encouraged by his former teacher, an open-minded *ulama* and educator, Ustaz Abdullah Pak Ahim who headed the *Kaum Muda* oriented school, *Madrasah Dairatul Ma'arif Wataniah*, Kepala Batas, Province Wellesley.

Significantly, in 1937 – four years after its inception – the MIAGUS teaching staff was strengthened by seven graduates from reformist education centers in Egypt and Minangkabau. There were also teachers trained in Darul Ulum, Mecca, Saudi Arabia and *Jami'ah Milliah*, India, who had been well exposed to the Islamic reformist movement. Thus it was not surprising that there was a high level of political consciousness among the students even in the early years of the school. A number of more able students had articles on Malay social and economic problems published in widely circulating newspapers like *Utusan Melayu*, *Warta Negara* and *Warta Kinta*.[3]

Manifestations of student political consciousness became more explicit when, in February 1940, a group of them formed the nucleus of a KMM branch in northern Perak. But not long after that, MIAGUS's activities, like those of all other educational institutions, were drastically reduced due to the Japanese invasion and occupation. Students from distant places were forced to return home, abandoning their education. Then for almost five years, MIAGUS operated merely on a skeletal basis, serving only local students.

However, some personal political interaction, if clandestine in nature, was taking place in Gunung Semanggul, thanks to the constant communication between Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir and the prominent Malay nationalist leader, Dr. Burhanuddin. The latter was appointed Supreme Advisor on Malay custom and Islamic religion to the Japanese military authority in Malaya, and was based in Taiping, a relatively large town within commuting distance (about thirty miles) with Gunung Semanggul. Besides being old friends, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir and Dr. Burhanuddin shared a common political persuasion and were equally concerned about the advancement of the Malays in all aspects of life. Dr. Burhanuddin's new official position and his relative proximity to Ustaz Abu Bakar, provided both men a better opportunity to exchange views on common interests as well as to further cement their personal and ideological relationship. All this would prove to be consequential in immediate post World War II Malay politics, especially as it pertained to MIAGUS's political participation. In his frequent interactions with Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, during the war, Dr. Burhanuddin must have perceived that MIAGUS could offer Islamic nourishment to Malay nationalism.

When the war was over, one of the significant developments in the history of Malay nationalism was the formation of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) which will be dealt with at length in the next chapter. Here it is relevant only because the formation of the MNP prompted renewed interest in overt political activities among the staff and the senior students in MIAGUS whose numbers began to

increase again. It is noteworthy that at least three of the students who were to become actively involved in opposition politics (leftwing and Islamic) attended the MNP inaugural meeting in Ipoh, state capital of Perak, from November 10, to December 3, 1945. They were Baharuddin Latiff, Othman Hamzah and Yunus Yatimi, all of whom became noted for their leadership positions at various levels in the youth wing, API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*) or Generation of Aware Youths of the MNP, and later in the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Baharuddin and Othman have maintained a strong and consistent commitment to PMIP to the present day. Yunus gave up opposition politics in the early 1970's to take up a position in the Government's broadcasting department.

Interviewed separately about thirty years later, each one of them attributed the formation of their basic political attitudes and outlook to their years at MIAGUS. They also claimed that their *alma mater* had done the same for many of their peers.[4] Such a claim is supported best by a close look at MIAGUS's variegated activities in the postwar period.

Academically, the postwar curriculum of MIAGUS seemed to be deliberately structured in such a way as to arouse social and political consciousness as well as to develop a stronger sense of patriotism among the students. Most instrumental in serving such a purpose were four course subjects, namely, history, speech-making, *asuhan semangat* (the nurturing of spirit or consciousness), and *tafsir dan hadith* (exegesis of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet).

In the course of instruction in these subjects, students were constantly reminded about the existing backwardness of the Malays in various fields in contrast to their past prowess, the greatness of the Islamic religion and its past glory, the exalted nature of Islamic teaching, and the villainous behaviour of the Western colonialists and imperialists. In the *tafsir dan hadith*, verses and sayings for lesson purposes were carefully selected to suit patriotic and political motives of Malay nationalism.[5]

In an effort to foster a more cordial relationship between

the students and the surrounding society-at-large, MIAGUS organized *gotong-royong* (cooperative or collective voluntary activities) at least once a month where the students participated in community projects such as uprooting weeds in mosque compounds and graveyards, repairing irrigation channels for watering paddy-fields, building simple bridges, and other social service activities.[6] *Prima facie*, such *gotong-royong* activities might seem apolitical, but the political significance is less obscure when the *gotong-royong* is viewed as a small lab•atory for practical training in conjunction with the *asuhan semangat* course mentioned earlier. The *gotong-royong* also afforded an opportunity for the students, directly and indirectly, to lay some of their political ideas before the peasants. In this subtle manner, a mutual reinforcement of the political socialization process between students and peasants took place.

Another form of extracurricular or para-academic activity which explicitly aimed at arousing social and political consciousness was the publication of a magazine entitled *El-Ehya*. It has still to be ascertained if this magazine lasted beyond six issues. The first six issues, available at the library of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Language and Literary Agency) in Kuala Lumpur, are dominated by articles which seem to meet the syllabus requirement of an advanced level *asuhan semangat* course. In a lengthy editorial in its first issue, the magazine professed to be "educational and general knowledge" in nature. But upon probing the articles in the first six issues, a reader will quickly realize that the kind of education and general knowledge the editorial was referring to, was knowledge aimed at intensifying social and political consciousness among its readers. And if, as the managing publisher claimed, 5,000 copies of the first issue were printed, the magazine was obviously trying to reach a readership well beyond the compound of MIAGUS (with 400 or so students) and the boundaries of Perak. Hence, the political socialization role of the magazine would appear to be country-wide.

A substantial portion of the editorial in the first issue was

devoted to discussing education. It advocated free (and compulsory) primary and secondary education for all children throughout the country. The editorial also argued the need for a "Malay national educational curriculum for a future democratic government" *(Sukatan pelajaran kebangsaan Melayu untuk pemerintahan demokrasi di masa yang akan datang)*. Failure to institute such a curriculum, the editorial asserted, would render "our present struggle useless".[8] Though it was not clearly elaborated, perhaps what the editorial meant by "Malay national educational curriculum" was an education policy formulated to reflect, and cater to the economic, social and political needs of the Malay people. It concluded by admonishing that Malay children should be imbued with the Islamic spirit and should be reminded that Islam is not merely a religion for worshiping but it also encompasses all aspects of life.

In the first issue of *El-Ehya*, two articles commemorating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad emphasized the prophet's political role, and pointed out that he was "the foremost and glorious father of revolution who had accomplished the greatest and most startling of all forms of revolution."[9] One of the articles was entitled *Muhammad Rasulullah Penimpin Revolushen* (Muhammad The Apostle of Allah, The Leader of Revolution). This was followed by a flattering, but vague article about the progress of elementary education in Soviet Russia, which had been adapted from an article published in the *London Times*.

Another article, entitled *Merdeka* (Freedom), discussed various connotations of the term and made vague references to the French Revolution. Two other articles, one, in the "History" column, entitled "Islam was ruling in Europe", and the other in the "Qur'anic exegesis column entitled "The Faults of the Indigenous People and the Coming of the Invaders" were no less political in tone and content. In short, politics was evident on every page.

In the second issue, the politicizing intent of the magazine went a step further when it advocated the formation of an "All Malaya Muslim Student Organization", and offered a

regular column for the purpose of the organization when it materialized.[10] Two other significant items worth noting in this issue were an article entitled "Progress is achieved through struggle" *(Kemajuan diciptakan dengan perjuangan)*, and a reproduction of a news item from the national daily *Utusan Melayu*. Using an imperative headline, "Be on the move for the welfare of the nation", *(Bergeraklah Untuk Kebajikan Bangsa)*, the reproduced news item was actually a report of a speech by the Sultan of Perak at a mass rally of the Malay Nationalist Party in Teluk Anson.

Sprinkled liberally with hyperbole, and highly emotive, if vague, political terms, the magazine (based at least on the six available issues) unmistakably created an impression that the highly political tone of its articles was no accident. Its intent to politicize the Malays was conscious and deliberate. One gets an impression that besides being an extension of the *asuhan semangat* course in MIAGUS classrooms, the magazine (especially its first two issues) was preparing the ground for bigger events. And indeed, in the third week of March 1947, the big and significant event that took place in MIAGUS buildings and compounds was the "All-Malaya Grand Conference on Economics and Religion" *(Persidangan Agung Ekonomi-Agama Se-Malaya)*.[11]

As evident in the press release and the invitation letter, the principal aim of the conference was stated as being "to strive for the wider dissemination of (Islamic) religion and to strive for the promotion and the advancement of the Malay economy which has fallen almost completely into alien hands".[12]

The conference brought together a large gathering of Malays. About two thousand people from all over Malaya swarmed the little town of Gunung Semanggul. However, although invitations had been extended to all Malay organizations and prominent personalities including those in the religious bureaucracy, positive response came mainly from the supporters of the MNP. The religious bureaucrats and UMNO national leaders were conspicuously absent. Participating MNP national leaders, however, either remained in

the background or tried to appear non-partisan. Dr. Burhanuddin, who originally conceived the conference together with Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, deliberately maintained a low profile to lend an appearance of non-partisanship. In service of the same ends, flags of both the major Malay political parties were hoisted at the opening ceremony. About thirty years later, one of its active organizers, Ustaz Othman Hamzah, still insisted that organizationally the conference was independent of MNP although personally most of the participants were MNP supporters.[13] Nevertheless, MNP's dominance throughout the three-day conference could hardly be concealed. And an MNP founder member, Ahmad Boestamam, has claimed in his memoirs that the convening of the conference was an illustration of the MNP's concern about Islam and Malay economics.[14] Another claim to the same effect has been made by former MNP president, Ishak bin Haji Muhammad.[15]

The dissonance between Othman Hamzah on one hand, and Ahmad Boestamam and Ishak bin Haji Muhammad on the other, may appear trivial, especially when it is realized that Othman Hamzah was himself a strong supporter of MNP. Nevertheless, these dissimilar views are quite significant in illustrating the subtle differences between two "ideological" groups within the radical camp of Malay politics in the late 1940's. When Malaya was about to achieve independence in the mid 1950's, each of these two ideological groups – which in the mid 1940's were equally dominant within the MNP – founded their own separate political parties, namely, *Partai Islam Se Tanah Melayu* or PAS (Pan Malayan Islamic Party or PMIP) and *Partai Rakyat* (The People's Party). A detailed discussion of the crystallization or precipitation of these two "ideological" groups which led to these two distinct organizational clusters, will be undertaken in the last chapter of this study. At this point, as a preparation for that later discussion, it is relevant to examine, in some depth, the MIAGUS-hosted conference and its immediate political ramifications.

As the title of the conference suggested, after a day-long

opening ceremony on March 22, 1947, the second and third days were devoted to discussing Malay economic problems and matters pertaining to Islamic religion in turn. At the opening ceremony, at least twelve speakers from various regions in the country delivered addresses emphasizing the backwardness of the Malays in the various fields. One of the speakers, Haji Ahmad Perai, was to become a PMIP national leader and a Member of Parliament in independent Malaya.

In the afternoon of the opening day, participants were entertained with an elaborate demonstration of the Malay art of self defense, *pencak silat*. Thus, the afternoon cultural event seemed to complement or reinforce the morning nationalist rhetoric in stimulating a sense of patriotism and self assertiveness or cultural pride among the participants and observers.

The second day of the conference, dubbed *sidang ekonomi* (economic session), began with addresses by Ustaz Othman Hamzah and Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir speaking in their capacity as organizers and hosts. Like the speakers of the previous day, both also dwelt at length on the deplorable state of *bangsa Melayu*, the Malay nation, in all aspects of life. They also took the opportunity to assert the role of MIAGUS in stimulating the social and political development of the Malay nation at large, in addition to fulfilling its educational obligation to its own students.

The *sidang ekonomi* concluded with several resolutions demanding or petitioning the Government to pay particular attention to solving Malay economic problems. The Government was further urged to guarantee a clear majority of Malay representation in any governmental council or body. But the most important outcome of the second day was the formation of a *Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya* (PEPERMAS, All-Malaya Malay Economic Bureau). A general executive committee headed by Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir had been elected and two representatives from each of the nine states, except Negeri Sembilan, were chosen to assist the committee. Singapore, Malacca and Penang were similarly represented in the general committee. Notwithstanding its

subsequent lack of perceptible success in improving the Malay economy, the formation of PEPERMAS signified an important collective organizational effort on the part of the Malay *rakyat* (common people as opposed to social and economic elites) to unify in the struggle to break the yoke of their poverty. This was a giant step beyond mere newspaper polemics and podium rhetoric, thanks to the religious fervor of MIAGUS's dynamic leadership and the spirit fostered by its activities.

In addition to practical motivations, a religious or a theological impetus helped to involve these religious teachers in economic matters. This impetus can be found in two famous *hadiths*. One of the *hadiths* advises Muslims to worship the Almighty Allah to the full as though they are going to die the next day, but at the same time they are advised to strive for maximum wealth as though they are going to live forever. The other *hadith* admonishes that poverty would lead one to become an infidel. These two *hadiths* are among the most frequently quoted in Malay religious talks. They were not unfamiliar in the *asuhan semangat* course at MIAGUS. Thus, it was not surprising that the concern for Malay economic backwardness was enthusiastically discussed in the MIAGUS-hosted conference and a resolution made to institutionalize an effort for its remedy.

Besides PEPERMAS, the three-day conference gave birth to another organization, called *Majlis Islam Tertinggi Se-Malaya* (MATA, All-Malaya Supreme Religious Council).[16] Its membership was opened to individual Muslims as well as to Islamic organizations.

Just as the second day's meeting had ended with the creation of PEPERMAS, the decision to form MATA preceded by a day-long discussion during which numerous grievances were aired. Most significant of those were the general dissatisfaction concerning the structure and alleged incompetency of existing religious administrations throughout the country. In effect, this presented a challenge to the constitutional authority over Islamic religious matters of the nine Malay rulers. Certain actions or inaction of the rulers were considered to

have hindered the interests of Islam and the Malay people. This was the unmistakable view of the Islamic reformist movement which had hitherto found expression only in the pages of magazines and newspapers or in public speeches, but not in a formal organization. Thus, MATA became the first institutionalization of the reformist movement which explicitly demanded a series of radical changes in the religious administration throughout the country (especially in the nine Malay states). At the MATA inaugural meeting, it was specifically demanded that the Rulers should surrender their authority on Islamic matters to an elected body of *ulama* (religious scholar), so that the whole country would have a uniform and centralized religious administration. Another resolution passed at the meeting demanded the inclusion of elected Muslim representatives in all government policy formulation and execution bodies in order to safeguard and promote specifically Malaya-Muslim interests.

The significance of the demands lay not only in their radical tone but in the congressional circumstances of their formulation and in the organizational support for them that MATA was to provide. They marked a milestone in the history of the Islamic reformist movement in Malaya.

An executive committee elected at the inaugural meeting wasted little time in pursuing MATA's objectives, which seemed to expand as time went by. Originally, the committee was headed by a well-known *ulama*, Al-Sheikh Hussein Bakar al-Rafik, but due to his departure for pilgrimage in Mecca, he was replaced by Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir. Thus the latter headed both PEPERMAS and MATA and thereby MIAGUS became not only the birth place but also the nerve-center of both organizations.

Burdened with these dual leadership responsibilities and with other tasks as the head of MIAGUS Ustaz Abu Bakar's resources were, inevitably, thinly or unequally, spread. Perhaps this could be one of the reasons why PEPERMAS made little progress beyond making public statements on the issue of the need for a farmer's bank to stop unscrupulous moneylenders from exploiting poor Malay peasants. But nothing

concrete resulted. Branches of PEPERMAS formed in Kelantan, Pahang and Selangor proved equally inactive. Providing no substantial documentation, Nabir asserts that PEPERMAS did not make much progress because there were too many "political undermining and unhealthy intrigues perpetrated by UMNO".[17]

On the other hand, MATA proved to be far more active and expanded rapidly. Less than three months after its inception in Gunung Semanggul, a branch was formed in Penang and another in Kelantan. Significantly, but not surprisingly, two reformist oriented religious schools, *Madrasah Al-Masyhur* in Penang and *Madrasah Al-Almadiah* in Pasir Mas (Kelantan), became the sites of the inaugural meetings for these two early branches. Not long after this, towards the end of May 1947, another reformist oriented religious school, *Madrasah Dairatul Maarit*, Kepala Batas (Province Wellesley), hosted a general meeting of MATA as a follow up to the inaugural meeting in Gunung Semanggul two months earlier.

Primarily, the second meeting was meant to discuss ways and means of consolidating and expanding the organization and to reiterate its objectives. A third meeting of similar purpose, was held in yet another reformist school, *Madrasah Al-Akhlak As-Salam*, in Guar Chempedak (Kedah) on July 11th and 12th, the same year. One of the main results of these last two meetings was the formation of fourteen sub-committees to streamline administration and to lend vigour and efficacy in the pursuance of MATA's multiple objectives. The sub-committees were supposed to deal with matters pertaining to education, missionary work, translation, publication, *zakat dan fitrah* (the mandatory religious alms), welfare, finance, Islamic judiciary, women, youth, the aboriginal community (formely a nomadic and pagan Malay sub-ethnic group), etc.

Other relevant related matters discussed at these meetings were the need to institute a system of Malay secondary and tertiary education and to set up a scholarship fund for the needy Malay students. The necessity of creating welfare houses to cater to the elderly and abandoned widows and

divorcees was also given attention. And no less significant was the further reiteration, and more assertive reformulation, of a resolution adopted at Gunung Semanggul asking the Rulers to surrender their supreme Islamic authority to MATA.

MATA's concern about Malay education led to the convening of two further meetings, one in Alor Setar (Kedah) in September 1947, and the other in MIAGUS the following month. Attendance at the first, was a staggering 300 people, and the second attracted an equally impressive number. The main result of these meetings was the formation of *Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat* (LEPIR), the Council of People's Education . A series of resolutions were passed at the two meetings. Two of the most significant protested the government's regulation prohibiting political activities in schools, and requested the government to revoke the regulation that required a religious teacher to obtain a *tauliah* (authorization) from the Sultan before he was allowed to teach Islam outside his family circle. This is reminiscent of the reformist movement's struggle against the traditionalist Islamic establishment.

Following the Guar Chempedak meeting, MATA embarked on a more vigorous publicity campaign to mobilize mass support and to expand its organization. The result of all this was that less than a year after its inaugural meeting in Gunung Semanggul, MATA had managed to establish branches in each of the nine sultanate states as well as in Penang and Malacca. As its influence expanded and its presence became increasingly evident throughout the country, its original latent differences with UMNO became increasingly overt. Intense verbal battles between the two organizations was the result. One of the most telling illustrations of UMNO's concern about MATA's growing influence and the former's attempt to undermine the latter was Dato Onn's often quoted warning about the "danger from the mountain", mentioned earlier. At the same time, it is significant that while MATA's relationship with UMNO became openly and increasingly antagonistic, the cordial tone of its relationship with MNP became more prominent. Top MNP leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin and Ishak Haji Muhammad were conspicuously

present at major MATA-related meetings.

Amid this activity, MATA was showing a propensity to become more political. This culminated in its sponsorship of the formation of an expressly political party, called *Hizbul Muslimin* (Muslim Party) in the second week of March 1948.

Initial preparations for the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin* were made simultaneously with the preparations for the second annual General Conference of Religion and Economics which gave birth to PEPERMAS and MATA a year earlier. As in the previous year, the conference was held in the compound and premises of MIAGUS but on a grander scale and with a different name. It was now called *Kongres Rakyat* (People's Congress).[18] The driving force behind the annual congress as well as the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin* were two old friends, Dr. Burhanuddin and Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, together with a third prominent personality, Ustaz Abrab Tamimi. More than 30 years later, Ustaz Abrab Tamimi was described by the longest serving PMIP president, Datuk Mohamad Asri Haji Muda as the single most influential person responsible for shaping his political outlook.[19]

As a matter of course, the *Kongres Rakyat* made time for the annual meetings of PEPERMAS and LEPIR, but the most significant item on its agenda was the annual meetings of MATA, during which the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin* was discussed and agreed upon. One of the most significant aspects of the congress was the size and composition of the people who made up its attendance. The small town of Gunung Semanggul was inundated by the influx of some 5,000 people coming from all over the Peninsula and from Singapore. The prominent came by special invitation, either for what they were individually or for the respective organizations they represented. The rest came in response to an open invitation published in the mass media. Interestingly, and curiously, besides top leaders of MNP and affiliated organizations, other prominent political figures attending the congress included Gerald de Cruz from the Malayan Democratic Union MDU, Rashid Mydin from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), Musa Ahmad from *Barisan Tani* (The

Farmers/Peasants Front) who later became MCP's chairman, and a host of other personalities associated with left-wing politics in Malaya.[20]

Rashid Mydin was certainly present as more than a mere guest or observer. He gave a fiery speech in extremely strong terms condemning British colonialism. His verbal presentation was reinforced with a visual one wherein he exhibited dozens of pictures illustrating what he described as the arrogant attitudes and unjust acts of the British, who, he said, were contemptuous of the Malays.

During a mass rally marking the end of the congress, representatives from the attendant organizations were given the opportunity to speak about the latter. Included in the list of speakers was Gerald de Cruz, talking not only about MDU but also about the All-Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA), a coalition of non-Malay left-wing organizations. Not surprisingly, leaders of the MNP and its satellite organizations also made ample use of this opportunity to touch upon a variety of subjects. It is noteworthy that all speeches were united by a common theme, namely the desire for immediate *merdeka*, freedom from British colonialism.

It should be noted that, at this time, the other major Malay political organization, UMNO, had not openly declared its desire for *merdeka*. Whereas *merdeka* had become a popular slogan for the other political groups, UMNO steadfastly clung to its relatively innocuous *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live the Malays) slogan. And while the other groupings subscribed to *non-co politik* (politics of non-cooperation) with the British while at the same time advocating radical and drastic political change, UMNO chose to cooperate with British and basically was fighting for the return to the pre-war status quo of Malay politics within the framework of a British-protected policy. The conservative and aristocratically based leadership of UMNO must have recognized its differences with the supporters of the *Kongres Rakyat*. It was not surprising, therefore, that when, after the congress had taken place, UMNO president, Dato Onn, declared that while he could not stop UMNO members attending the

Kongres Rakyat, he was not prepared actually to permit them from doing so. Then, repeating his "danger from the mountain" warning, Dato Onn went on to say that the Islamic Party *(Hizbul Muslimin)* was "red", i.e. communist.[21] As was frequently reported in *Utusan Melayu*, *Majlis* and other vernacular publications, Dato Onn's preoccupation with attacking Gunung Semanggul-based political activities continued until those activities subsided as a result of country-wide mass arrests of MNP and *Hizbul Muslimin* leaders in July and August of 1948. Perhaps this is a major reason why, as late as 1980, many former supporters of the dissolved MNP and *Hizbul Muslimin* blamed Dato Onn for the arrest of their leaders.[22] To fully appreciate the extent of his influence, it is necessary to consider that when the mass arrests took place, Dato Onn was holding a "ministerial" post as Member for Home Affairs in the newly instituted "Federation of Malaya" which replaced the "Malayan Union".[23]

Dato Onn's apparent alarm about the political threat posed by the *Hizbul Muslimin* was not unfounded. Besides the readily available popular support from MNP followers, the new party also held a special appeal for the more religiously inclined masses who had hitherto been politically non-committal.[24] For UMNO and Dato Onn, this meant an increase in the strength of anti-UMNO forces. In the short span of four months, *Hizbul Muslimin's* growth had been indeed phenomenal, thanks to the existing branches of MATA which almost automatically either transformed or expanded themselves into branches of the new political party. In places where branches of PEPERMAS and LEPIR existed, in addition to those of MATA local *Hizbul Muslimin* organizations must have started on a stronger footing. Nor was this unforeseen, because at the new party's inaugural meeting at the *Kongres Rakyat*, it was envisaged that MATA, PEPERMAS and LEPIR would become *lajnah*, or bureaux, within *Hizbul Muslimin*. Each would be concerned with religion, economics and education respectively. However, for tactical purposes each of the three original organizations was to continue its "separate" identity. Because of that, it could be

argued that although the formal organization of *Hizbul Muslimin* was created in March 1948, in spirit, it already existed once MATA and PEPERMAS had been formed the previous year.

From the observations and discussion offered thus far, it is perhaps not too inaccurate to deduce that the religion-based, multi-dimensional activities originating at MIAGUS during the first three years following the Second World War represented a "political maturation" of the development of the Islamic modernist movement in Malaya since the turn of the 20th century. Like the long history of the modernist movement, the MIAGUS-centered activities started on an essentially religio-educational basis. But, the all-encompassing nature of Islam and the "multiplying awakening effects" of modern education, enhanced by an ever advancing media technology, led what were originally apolitical activities onto an explicitly political plane. As has been observed, this is how the pursuit of the religious, economic and educational interests of MATA, PEPERMAS and LEPIR, respectively, culminated in the formation of an over-arching religious-based political party which purportedly continued to pursue those interests as part and parcel of its broader and long-term political concerns. At the same time the formation of the party can be viewed as the outcome of a long series of religio-socio-educational activities of the Islamic modernist movement. Besides assuming an explicitly political dimension, these activities were now provided with organizational support system of a country-wide mass movement. More importantly, the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin* signified a new role for Islam in the life of the Malays. Religion had now become a source of political ideology as well as an agent of political socialization as demonstrated in Chapter One, and earlier in this chapter. Through the new party, the role of Islam in Malay politics came to be viewed as a means as well as an end, because *Hizbul Muslimin* was formed to strive towards "the creation of an independent Malay nation, the building of an Islamic society and the realization of a *Darul Islam*, an Islamic State".[25]

However, it should be noted that in those days there was no perceptible attempt to systematically spell out what was really meant by "Islamic society" and "Islamic state". Thus, when we say that Islam had become a source of ideology, it is meant in the sense that the religion then was consciously used to mobilize the masses and to make it as an emotional appeal for explicitly political purposes. It was only some ten or fifteen years later, when the political objectives of *Hizbul Muslimin* were revived in another organization, namely the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) that some attempts were undertaken to explain what is meant by "Islamic society" and the "Islamic state".[26] However, this is beyond the scope of this study.

The pursuance of *Hizbul Muslimin's* objectives was nipped in the bud because before it was barely four months old, the party was crippled to extinction when its national and regional leaders were arrested and detained under the Emergency Regulations. However, despite its short life, another noteworthy aspect about *Hizbul Muslimin* is that it lay the ideological and organizational foundation for another Islamically-based party namely the PMIP which was formed in 1951 but only began to have significant political impact from the mid-1950's.

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[1] Nabir bin Haji Abdullah, *Maahad Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul, 1934-1959* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Sejarah, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1976), p. 37.

[2] See *Peraturan-Peraturan bagi Persatuan Il-Ehya Assyarif Gunung Semanggul* (Penang: Al-Huda Press, 1940).

[3] Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab, "Gerakan Islah Islamiyyah di Tanah Melayu – 1906 Hingga 1948", in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin, Eds., *Malaysia: Sejarah dan Proses Pembangunan* (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1979), p. 167.

[4] Personal interviews with Baharuddin Latif, Kuala Lumpur, July 1980; Othman Hamzah, Kuala Lumpur, August 24, 1980; Yunus Yatimi, Kuala Lumpur, December 1979.

[5]Nabir, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 98.

[7]*El-Ehya*, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1947, p. 4.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[10]*El-Ehya*, Vol. 1, No. 2, March 1947, p. 20.

[11]*El-Ehya*, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 1947, the conference was dubbed *Persidangan Agung Ekonomi-Agama Se-Malaya* or *All-Malaya Grand Conference on Economics and Religion*. But Nabir omits the term *Agung* or *Grand* when referring to the conference. The following account is mainly based on Nabir which, among the existing literature, offers the richest detail on the subject.

[12]"Berusaha meluaskan penyiaran agama dan berusaha dalam rancangan susunan ekonomi untuk memajukan dan mempertinggikan ekonomi bangsa yang sudah hampir lenyap ke tangan asing" *Majlis* March 7, 1947.

[13]Personal interview with Othman Hamzah, Kuala Lumpur, August 24, 1980.

[14]Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan Ke Puncak* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Kejora, 1972), English Translation with introduction by William R. Roff, *Carving The Path To The Summit* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), p. 65.

[15]Ishak Haji Muhammad, "Hizbul Muslimin ada jasanya tersendiri" in *Mastika*, November 1973.

[16]Like the title of the conference, the full title of this organization had also been subject to some variants. Ahmad Boestaman, *Carving . . .*, p. 65, refers to it as *Majlis Islam Tertinggi*; Nabir, *op. cit.*, p. 117, uses a longer version, *Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya*. But the *El-Ehya* magazine, No. 3, Vol. 1, April 1947, which is one of the oldest relevant documents available, referred to it as *Majlis Islam Tertinggi Se-Malaya*. But the acronym, MATA, a Romanized transliteration of its Arabic spelling is uniformly used for brevity.

[17]Nabir, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[18] See Datuk Mohamad Asri Haji Muda, "Kedudukan Hizbul Muslimin yang sebenar", *Mastika*, January 1974.

[19] Personal interview with Datuk Mohamad Asri, Kuala Lumpur, February 1, 1980.

[20] For an account of MDU and its left political activities, see Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades – A Study of Communist United Front in Malaya, 1945-48* (Singapore: Times Book International, 1979), especially Chapter 7, pp. 74-96.

[21] *Utusan Melayu* April 26, 1948.

[22] Personal interview with Baharom Basar, Lenggeng, January 15, 1980.

[23] See Chapter 5.

[24] Ahmad Boestamam, *Carving* . . . p. 100.

[25] Nabir, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[26] See for examples, Ahmad Azam, *Umat Islam dan Partai Politik* (Bukit Mertajam: Pustaka Semenanjung, 1957); Dr. Burhanuddin, *Agama dan Politik* (Singapore: Buana, 1954); Anwar Ibrahim, *Islam: Penyelesaian kepada masaalah masyarakat majmuk* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda, 1979); Dewan Ulama PAS, *Islam dan Politik* (Kota Baru: Parti Islam Se-Malaysia Negeri Kelantan, 1980); Kassim Ahmad, *Risalah Masalah Teori Social Moden Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan PENA Sdn. Bhd., 1980).

CHAPTER THREE

Radical Nationalism: Its Prewar Roots

As we have mentioned in Chapter One, for analytical purposes, radicalism in Malay politics may be divided into two categories. One was the outcome of political socialization in the reformist-oriented Islamic religious schools which were privately-owned and operated. The other form was that adhered to by those educated in "secular" schools run by the colonial Government. The former was imbued with religious fervor, the latter with nationalist appeals. There are certainly overlapping elements in this division, but for analytical purposes, such a division is considered to be useful. * The first category has been dealt with at length in the preceding two chapters. The task of the present chapter is to examine the second category which for brevity is henceforth referred to simply as radical nationalist or left wing nationalist, interchangeably.

The term "left wing" here should not be understood in the strict Western sense, which mainly denotes socialism and communism. In the context of this discussion, instead, the term is employed in its less strict sense to include both Western socialistic elements and indigenous "rebellious" elements in post World War II Malay politics. At the outset, however, it is appropriate to summarize some relevant points on existing accounts of this topic.

In the existing literature on radical Malay nationalism there is a tendency to indulge in stereotypes, which at best offer a superficial treatment of the subject, or at worst, outright distortion. There are many reasons for this. Besides the unavailability of relevant documents – either due to their loss as a result of poor maintenance or to official regulations

in England and Malaysia, which restrict access to what are considered as "security" or "sensitive" official records. The failure to appreciate indigenous political nuances and cultural idiosyncracies forms another barrier to an in-depth and less stereotyped study of the topic.

It is commonly known that the British colonial authority in Malaya kept a "confidential and secret file" on the activities of each of the important Malay radicals. However, it is still an official secret whether the files were taken back to England upon Malaya's independence, or were left behind with the newly independent regime, or were destroyed. The prevailing speculation among local scholars is that some of the files were taken back to England, some were left behind, and some were, indeed, deliberately destroyed. Most of what exists in England or Malaysia is still kept as "classified documents" under security embargo. Some that have been "declassified" and were available to researchers in the Public Records Office in London were found to be conspicuously incomplete.[1]

To date, two scholars, Short and Stockwell, have made extensive use of two different sets of official confidential and secret papers on Malay/Malayan politics in the mid and late 1940's.[2] The former's work benefited largely from exclusive access to secret government records on the communist insurgency. But the work has obviously neglected many aspects of Malay politics during the emergency. The latter's work, befitting its title, mainly concerned Malay politics, and benefited largely from a set of documents known as *Malayan Security Service: Political Intelligence Journal* (MSS/PIJ). These documents, available in England, seem to have recorded a close monitoring of Malay political activities in the immediate post World War II years. As one might expect, Stockwell's diligent use of MSS/PIJ has thrown new light on some hitherto obscure facts about Malay politics, including some activities pertaining to left wing movements.

It should be pointed out, however, that in the main, until fairly recently, scholars had neglected or had no access to a significant body of writings by or about the Malay radical

nationalists. One of the most important of such writings is Ahmad Boestamam's *Testament Politik API*, banned on its writer's conviction of seditious acts in 1947. Growing interest in the "rediscovery" of historical documents in Malaya in recent years has resulted in the surfacing of the long banished booklet. A closer look at this document will be attempted later in the next chapter.

Besides *Testament Politik API*, there were also voluminous articles by Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad, A. Samad Ismail, Dr. Burhanuddin, Abdul Rahman Rahim, Salleh Daud, and Dahari Ali scattered in various Malay publications in the mid-1940's, which form excellent sources for the study of the Malay left. These writers who could also be labelled as journalists-cum-politicians were facilitated in expressing their radical views by Malay-language publications, such as *Seruan Rakyat, Suara Seberkas, Pelita Malaya, Suluh Malaya, Fikiran Rakyat, Keris, Kenchana, Penyedar El-Ihya, Utusan Melayu*, and even by the English-language daily newspaper, *The Straits Times*.[3] Writings by Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, and Abdul Rahim Kajai in the daily *Majlis* and weekly *Warta Jenaka* and *Warta Ahad*, and to a certain extent by Zainal Abidin Ahmad (ZA'ABA) in various publications before World War II, provide an historical insight into the origin of the radicalism, which came to full bloom immediately after the war. All these writings help to provide a balanced view of the genesis and nature of Malay radical nationalism and thereby rightly question prevailing stereotyped notions on the subject.

One form of stereotype attributed to left wing Malay nationalists was that they were ardent supporters of the "Greater Indonesia" (interchangeably labelled as "Greater Malaysia") concept, and that their political orientations were Indonesian-influenced. While few would argue with the notion of support for "Greater Indonesia", many would take issue with a suggestion such as that "this (Greater Indonesia) idea relegated the Malays to the position of inhabitants of the periphery of the planned state".[4] Similarly, while the "Indonesian-influenced" elements in their thoughts

cannot simply be dismissed, the mode of this influence requires a more perceptive explanation. It is certainly inaccurate to think of the influence simply as a one-way process from Indonesia to Malaya as most writers have depicted.[5] Such an oversimplified notion makes the Malay nationalists appear inferior, always a follower who occupies the receiving end but never an initiator who is capable of independent thinking and action. It should be pointed out that besides providing arms to freedom fighters in Java and Sumatra, a significant number of Malay nationalists directly participated in the Indonesian revolution against the Dutch from the middle to late 1940's.[6] Among them, for example, are the *Giyu Gun* (Volunteer Army during Japanese occupation) leader, Major Manaf, writer Abdullah Hussain, politicians Othman Abdullah and Baharom Basar, journalists Abdullah Sanggora and Dahari Ali, and hundreds of others, who, unlike those just named, did not become famous.[7] At least two others, Ibrahim Haji Yaacob and Zulkifli Ownie, stayed on permanently in Indonesia after the revolution was over. Another, Karim Rashid, became Indonesian Ambassador to Manila, Bangkok, and Phnom Penh.[8] Thus, contrary to the popular impression created by hitherto prevalent accounts, Malay radical nationalists were not mere "followers" or "receivers" of "exogenous" Indonesian influences. They were also contributors to Indonesian independence which, in the spirit of *cita-cita Melayu Raya* (aspirations for Greater Malaysia), they regarded as the independence of their own fatherland. Therefore, what has been often described as "Indonesian influence" on Malay radical nationalists, should not create the impression that the influence was exogenous in the ethno-cultural sense. In other words, though in terms of "modern state" concepts, Indonesia and Malaya then were and still are two separate political entities, in terms of "nation" in Ernest Renan's sense or *ummah* (community) in the Islamic sense or of "ethnicity" and *adat* (custom) in the socio-anthropological sense, and equally, or even more importantly, in the linguistic sense, they form a large single entity.

In terms of the documentary record, the expression of the sense of "oneness" between the Indonesians and the Malays could be traced back at least to the year 1906 when the celebrated Islamic reformist journal, *Al-Islam*, published in Singapore, addressed its readers in the then British Malaya and Dutch East Indies in terms of "our religion" and "our community".[9] The sense of oneness was further manifested in organizational terms when in 1922, the first association of Indonesian and Malay students, called *Jami'ah Al-Khairiah* (The Welfare Society) was formed at Al-Azhar University, Cairo.[10] When the Society started another famous reformist monthly journal, *Seruan Azhar*, in 1925, it declared that the journal was "to bring radiance and light to our (joint) HOMELAND".[11]

The first issue of the journal urged editorially that "All our people . . . whether in Java, or in Sumatra, or in Borneo, or the Malay Peninsula, must unite and share a common purpose and agreement to strive for advancement to seek the best ways of doing this, and on no account allow ourselves to split into separate parties".[12]

Two years later, introducing the first issue of the third volume, its editor was more explicit and emphatic about the "our homeland" concept. It was stated that the journal "is for our homeland, because we recognize Indonesia and the (Malay) Peninsula as one community, one people, with one *adat* (custom), one way of life, and what is more, virtually one religion . . .".[13]

In addition to stressing the "oneness" and unity between Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula, the *Jami'ah Al-Khairiah*, through the journal and other forms of activities, became increasingly radical in its criticism of social and political condition in the "homeland". This prompted concern among colonial as well as traditional authorities in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.[14] Indirectly, therefore, the activities of the *Jami'ah Al-Khairiah* may well be considered the genesis of Malay radical nationalism, which came to full bloom in the second half of the 1940's.

Apart from these activities in Egypt, the Indonesian and

Malay students in other centers of learning as well demonstrated, organizationally or otherwise, their sense of "oneness" prompted by their *naluri rumpun Melayu* (Malay family/stock instinct).[15] In Saudi Arabia in 1940, they formed a *Persatuan Talabah Indonesia Malaya* PERTINDOM, Association of Indonesia and Malay Students .[16] About the same time, another generation of students in Egypt formed *Nadi Pemuda Indonesia Malaya* (Pulse of Indonesian and Malay Youth), which was later given a new name *Persatuan Pemuda Indonesia Malaya* (PERPINDOM, The Association of Indonesian and Malay Youths).[17] In Iraq, a similar organization was called *Majlis Kebangsaan Indonesia-Malaya* (MAKINDOM, National Council of Indonesia-Malaya). "Then MAKINDOM was transformed into *Perkumpulan Pemuda Indonesia* (PPI, Convention of Indonesian Youth), whereby the youths from Malaya regarded themselves as full-fledged Indonesians."[18] This calls to mind 1928 when, in the Dutch East Indies itself, various youth organizations formed on regional basis – *Jong Sumatra* (Young Sumatrans), *Jong Java* (Young Javanese), *Jong Ambon* (Young Ambonese), etc. – united themselves into the Young Indonesians.

In India and Ceylon, organizations similar to those in the Arab world were formed. In India, there was a *Persatuan Indonesia–Malaya* (PERSINDOM, Association of Indonesia-Malaya) in 1928. The Indonesian-Malay community in Ceylon at the outbreak of World War II was made up of at least 600 persons who were working as sailors, small traders, and also as employees of the Dutch and British military establishments. In 1943, they formed on organization called *Kesejahteraan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjong* (KERIS, Welfare of Indonesian and Peninsula People).[19]

All the above-mentioned organizations, with varying degrees of political commitment (from the apolitical KERIS in Ceylon to the highly-political PERTINDOM and PERPINDOM and *Jami'ah Al-Khairiah* in the Arab countries) possessed a common feature, namely, as Nasution described it, the *naluri rumpun Melayu*, the "Malay family/stock instinct" of their members whether they came from

Indonesia or the Peninsula. In the same vein, it should be noted that the influential prewar *Majlis* newspaper, published in Kuala Lumpur, referred to then Netherland East Indies (present Indonesia) as *gugusan pulau-pulau Melayu* (Malay archipelago).[20] Thus, in order to have a balanced view on the origin and the nature of "Indonesian influence" on Malay radical nationalists, all of this background data must be taken into consideration. Otherwise, a series of erroneous impressions would be created or perpetuated, such as, that the Malay radical nationalists were an "outpost" of an "irredentist" Indonesian movement in Malaya; or that the "Indonesian influence" was introduced artificially rather than as the product of long historical process in an essentially single large geocultural area. On the last point, perhaps it should be pointed out that until recent years, there has been a dominant tendency in the study of the history of the Malay world to be obsessed with the Western colonial era. Such an obsession, now rejected by contemporary indigenous Malay and Indonesian scholars, overlooks or neglects the long historical continuity of the *nusantara* (a politically neutral term used to denote the Malay Peninsula and insular Southeast Asia) which, during the "interregnum colonial era" was known as British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. Thus, within the context of the longer historical continuity, "Indonesian influence" should be perceived in terms not of the existing Indonesian polity, but should be seen in the sense of the "Greater Indonesia" ideal to which the Malay radical nationalists wholeheartedly subscribed.

Another possible error arising from stereotypes of the kind noted is the idea that the Malay radicalism that emerged in the second half of the 1940's was independent of the internal social processes occurring during preceding decades. During the inter-war period, the socio-economic landscape of the Peninsula underwent a series of drastic changes, entailing numerous concomitant political ramifications. The radicalism of the late 1940's, therefore, must be seen in terms of the political modernization or social development that the Malays had experienced since the turn of the 20th century, a

process in which the monopoly of social, economic and political resources enjoyed by the traditional aristocracy was gradually questioned and challenged by newly emerging elites who came from the deprived socio-economic class. As noted in Chapter Two, these emerging elites were characterized, *inter alia*, by their disenchantment with British colonialism, with the influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants, and with the "feudalistic" nature of the traditional political and religious establishments. The emergence of these elites was largely due to the relative democratization of educational opportunity between the two World Wars.

During these years, there was a significant increase in educational opportunity, either in Western-style secular education, or Islamic reformist-oriented religious education, for children of the common people. For religious-based education, increasing opportunities within the country were complemented by those in the Middle East, specifically in Cairo and Mecca, especially with Malaya's economic boom due to the increase of rubber prices in the second half of the 1920's.

In addition to increasing educational opportunity, there was an increasing growth of indigenous printed mass media. No fewer than 197 Malay and Arabic periodicals were published in the Malay States and the Straits Settlements between 1876 and 1941.[21] Fifteen of these were in Arabic and another nine, though in Malay, were meant for Christian missionary purposes. Thus, in the 65-year period at least 173 newspapers and magazines had entered the Malay life and inevitably acted, albeit gradually, as agents of change disseminating new ideas and eventually arousing new consciousness.

One of the most often quoted of these publications, namely *Al-Imam* (1906-1909), which is considered the pioneer in introducing Islamic reformist ideas to the Malay world, in the first issue explicitly stated its aims in these words: "to remind those who are forgetful, arouse those who sleep, guide those who stray, and give a voice to those who speak with wisdom".[22] Then throughout its monthly publication

for the next three-and-a-half years, from July 1906 to December 1908, in every issue, the journal would have at least one article "analyzing the ills of the community", pointing to "the backwardness of the Malays and their domination by alien races."[23]

Likewise, most other Malay journals, especially from the end of the 1920's and throughout the following decade, assisted the newly emerging elites to educate the masses politically, as well as to challenge, gradually, the traditional social and political structure. At the same time, more forthrightly, they reminded their readers of the increasing economic dominance and demographic growth of the immigrant races. These arguments must have had a self-propelling effect in developing a sense of radicalism among members of the new elite, and eventually among their followers.

There is yet another relevant point pertaining to the Malays' fear and resentment against the immigrant races that should be noted here. Besides increasingly gaining economic and demographic strength, the immigrant races had begun to make headway in political fields, especially in the early 1930's with the reconstruction of State Councils (i.e. the legislative councils in the various states where members were appointed rather than elected), which necessitated the "adding (of) non-Malay members, both official and unofficial".[24] Since the rationale for the reconstruction was "to secure a higher degree of competence. . . and to give representation to other elements in the society",[25] the non-Malay members were naturally recruited on the basis of merit rather than ascription. On the other hand, according to an article in a Malay journal cited by Emerson, "the Malay members of the State Councils have usually been chosen either on ground of birth or of subservience to the ruler and only seldom because of their ability and experience".[26]

To make things worse for the Malays, the non-Malay members of the Councils had become more vocal and aggressive in their demands for more rights and privileges. For instance, one H.M. Veerasamy, a representative for the Indian immigrants, stated in one of the Councils that his community

should be accorded rights and privileges like those of indigenous Malays.[27] Even more aggressive than H.M. Veerasamy was a Chinese member of the Straits Settlement Legislative Council, Lim Ching Yan, who was reported in the media to have questioned, though not during the Council meeting, the Malay ownership of the country. He pointedly asked and rhetorically answered. "Who said this is a Malay country? . . . We (the Chinese) have become one with this country. This is ours, our country".[28] Both Veerasamy's and Lim Ching Yan's remarks reflected, though in small measure, the growing assertiveness of the immigrant races who, in addition to their increasing economic dominance and significant demographic growth, had now gained increasing "political access" by virtue of their expanded number in membership of the State Councils. Understandably, this caused grave concern among many Malays and prompted vehement reactions in the Malay press, especially in *Majlis, Warta Malaya, Saudara, Majallah Guru,* and other journals.[29] Most vigorous in defending Malay rights and rebutting alien immigrant demands was the emergent non-traditional, radical elites. In various journals, they acted to "warn, exhort and call (the Malays) to take action".[30] The new counter-elite also began to use these journals to express disappointment and dissatisfaction with the Malay representatives in the various State Councils, who, as mentioned earlier, were chosen either on the ground of birth or of subservience to the ruler and seldom for their ability.

The twice-weekly paper, *Majlis,* was notably vocal in expressing this sense of dissatisfaction, especially towards the second half of the 1930's. On July 12, 1937, the newspaper published an article by Ibrahim Yaacob lamenting the deplorable role played by the Malay representatives in the Councils:

> . . . there is one thing that saddens me: i.e. . . . when one observes the lethargic Malay representatives in the State Councils, that some of them are there just to warm their seats. With due respect to these very learned Malays . . . some of them have been representing the Malays for years,

but we have not even heard them coughing. Are they carrying out their responsibilities?[31]

Ibrahim's concern was echoed by a number of other writers, and *Majlis* seemed to have given sustained attention to this issue. Some writers appeared to be extremely frustrated, even exasperated, with the performance of Malay councillors in the various legislative councils. On July 19, 1937, *Majlis* published an article by one Amal Kalam, who stated, *inter alia:*

> . . . we plead that Malay councillors be chosen from among commoners who are qualified and able, and are prepared to engage in debates with the Chinese and the Indians in order to defend the Malay rights.[32]

A noteworthy point here is that as modernization or political development began to gain momentum, the immigrant races involved themselves politically in the process with appropriate modernization values, i.e., spokesmen selected for merit and rational considerations. It should be remembered that, unlike the indigenous Malay community, the immigrant communities did not have a ready traditional infrastructure for recruitment to the legislature. Their leaders gained prominence by demonstrating substantive abilities.

By contrast, Malay involvement in the legislative process, as noted earlier, was still largely determined by traditional, pre-modern, modes and criteria of leadership recruitment. Several further implications followed from these initial differences. Thanks to their more vocal and able representatives, the interests of the immigrant communities were articulated and represented in a more effective manner. At the same time they were better equipped for entering a "modern" political process and in adjusting to the new *modus operandi* of politics and government. The token or symbolic Malay representatives in the various legislative councils, as noted by Emerson and the various articles in *Majlis* and other newspapers, were at best ineffective or at worst outrightly counter-productive in defending the interests of the general Malay population. Due to the prevalent feu-

dalistic norms, the Malays, unlike the immigrant communities, were ill-prepared to enter a "modern" political system.

Meantime, modernization as exemplified by increasing educational opportunities and the widespread dissemination of printed mass media, had created a non-traditional Malay elite whose aspirations could not be totally accommodated by such political change as took place. This brings to mind Huntington's notion of how modernization increases conflict between new elites whose status is "achieved" and traditional elites whose status is "ascribed" or inherited.[33] In the case under study it may be observed that this conflict became evident in the growing sense of disappointment felt by the new elite with the failure of the traditional elite to defend Malay interests in the enlarged legislative councils (from which the new elite itself was excluded). The new elite's exclusion from official representation and its frustration with the traditional elite induced in it a sense of alienation, accompanied by anger, eventually leading to radicalism.[34] This situation seems to illustrate Overholdt's assertion that "manifest inconsistencies between institutions and prevailing values or the prevailing social myths naturally stimulate radicalism".[35]

As the year 1937 drew to a close, *Majlis's* criticisms of the traditional elite became bolder and harsher. Even the Sultans now became the targets of its sarcasm. On December 24, in a free-verse "prayer" written in parody form, the paper was bold enough to insinuate that the Sultans, their noblemen and religious officialdoms would go to hell when they died due to their failure to perform their duties to the *rakyat*, the common people. The poem prayed, *inter alia:*

Oh, save the Sultans
and the noblemen and the wealthy ones
save the Malay *muftis*
and the *ulamas* (religious scholars)
oh, pray that
they are saved from going to hell
because of their negligence

in protecting
the welfare and the security
of the *rakyat*.

In addition to straight newspaper articles and occasionally "parody poems" of the kind instanced, social criticism and political protest from members of the emergent elite were also expressed in the form of fiction including short stories and novelettes. Among the famous names in this field were Ishak Haji Muhammad, Harun Aminurrashid, Shamsuddin Salleh and Abdul Rahim Kajai.[36] The first three were also actively involved in leadership positions in the radical political parties, *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM, Young Malay Union) and *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM, Malay Nationalist Party). Abdul Rahim Kajai's fame as a journalist overshadowed his direct involvement in political organizations. But as a social and political commentator from the late 1920's to the early 1940's he stands out among the Malays of the last five decades. His contribution in arousing a political consciousness which was to lead to the development of radical nationalism among the Malays in the late 1930's can hardly be over-emphasized.[37] Of the four names just mentioned, Ishak, was perhaps, the most versatile as a reporter, an editor, fiction writer, satirist and politician. Even today, in his early 70's, he still writes two weekly columns for the Arabic-script daily *Utusan Melayu* and the Romanized-script *Utusan Malaysia* in Kuala Lumpur. His two most famous novelettes, *Putera Gunung Tahan* and *Anak Mat Lela Gila* (considered to be minor classics in modern Malay literature) are heavily political in tone.

Putera Gunung Tahan was first published in 1937, and speaking of it some thirty-five years later, Ishak claimed: "I wrote *Putera Gunung Tahan* as a means to fight for independence, justice and to get rid of the colonialists".[38] Long before this, students of modern Malay literature had recognized the book as a "satire against British colonialists and the Malay aristocrats".[39] Similar comment would be valid for *Anak Mat Lela Gila*, which was first published in 1941 and since then reissued several times. Likewise, Ishak's

scores of short stories, didactic or exhortatory essays and satirical poems, scattered in various publications in the late 1930's and early 1940's, expressed his radical socio-political propensity and disseminated this radicalism among his readers.

It is evident here that newspapers and journals, which numbered 102 titles between 1930 and 1941, compared to only 70 in the preceding 54 years,[40] afforded the new intelligentsia an opportunity to voice criticisms of varying form and style against the prevailing social and political order. This criticism, in both content and manner, was a perceptible departure from the traditional deferrence heretofore characteristic of the Malay society.[41] Hence, it contained the germs of political radicalism.

An equally significant point regarding the printed media is that at least two of the journals had a special role in forming, and providing the sustaining publicity for, the first two "national" or country-wide Malay organizations that transcended state boundaries. The first organization was called *Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena Malaya* (PASPAM, The Brotherhood of Pen Pals, Malaya) and was billed as the "first Malay mass movement in the Peninsula".[42] It was directly initiated by the Penang-based newspaper, *Saudara* and the official date of its formation was April 15, 1934. Expressly literary in orientation, PASPAM's objectives were, *inter alia:*

- to encourage writing and-reading in the Malay language;
- to promote history, custom and the language of the Malays; and
- to establish libraries for the members.[43]

One of PASPAM's main activities was frequent personal correspondence among members in which they exchanged views on the social and political problems of the Malays. It thus helped to create and develop political consciousness.[44] In 1938, at the peak of its success (with a membership of 12,000) its headquarters in Penang started a monthly journal, *Pemberita Pejabat Paspam*, popularly known simply as PASPAM. This journal, containing news, views and original writings, was circulated to interested readers as well as

PASPAM members.[45] It further widened the dissemination of new ideas and thereby, together with the personal correspondence mentioned earlier, helped to generate a political consciousness which eventually contributed to radical nationalism within the Malay society.

At about the same time as the Penang-based paper, *Saudara*, initiated the formation of PASPAM, its Kuala Lumpur-based counterpart, *Majlis*, became involved in the formation of the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM, Young Malay Union). Although there have been differing views among historians on the actual strength and influence of KMM, there has been a near-consensus that it was the first organizational embodiment of radical ideas among the Malays.

Prior to KMM's formation (its inaugural meeting was in May 1937, and it was officially registered with the Registrar of Societies in August 1938), there had been quasi-political Malay organizations in almost every state in the Peninsula including Penang and Singapore. But these organizations were state-based, politically conservative and led by the traditional Malay aristocratic elites.[46] Nevertheless, the formation of even these state-based organizations was to a large extent prompted by newspaper polemics.[47] Perhaps they can be considered as the reaction of conservative and traditional forces to the new political developments. Despite their expressed desire to protect Malay rights and interests, these organizations stressed their loyalty to their respective Sultans and to the British Government. They wanted improvements for the Malays within the existing system; the idea of independence not having occurred to them, they never spoke about opposing colonial rule. Their sense of dependence on the British had become an obsession to the extent that one of their leaders, Tengku Ismail bin Tengku Mohd. Yasin from the Negeri Sembilan ruling house, analogized British rule of the Malay race as "indispensible as water to human life."[48] Although some efforts were made to unite the various state-based organizations into some kind of a federation, basically their supporters were still very parochial in the sense that their primary sense of self identification and loyalty was

confined to their respective states, i.e., confined within the traditional boundaries of the Sultans' realms of power. This obviously was the anti-thesis of the radical nationalist idea.

As noted, prior to KMM's formation, radical ideas had been expressed individually by members of the non-traditional elite by journalistic and popular literary means in the expanding Malay printed media. It was these media, especially from the early 1930's, that helped to sharpen many social and political issues which eventually prompted the Malays to take common, political-organizational action beyond mere literary or intellectual activities. Hence KMM came into being.

The formation of KMM thus marked the beginning of organized efforts to propagate radical political ideas among the Malays. In a nutshell, its ultimate objectives were the early termination of British colonial rule in Malaya and the realization of *Melayu Raya,* the Greater Malay nation-state encompassing all the territories known then as British Malaya and Netherland East Indies.[49]

KMM's founder-president, Ibrahim Yaacob, claimed that even before the organization was officially formed in 1938, it had already existed as an amorphous underground movement as early as 1930.[50] He did not elaborate on the activities of this underground movement but it is widely known that the alumni of the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), who were scattered all over the Peninsula, Singapore, and the British Borneo territories, were in constant contact with each other either by direct personal correspondence or intellectually through the various journals and others forms of publication. This communication was further reinforced when the practice of personal correspondence was institutionalized through PASPAM as described earlier.

Thus, PASPAM and the SITC alumni fraternity (whose membership overlapped to a significant extent) had laid the groundwork for KMM membership recruitment.[51] It is not surprising that within less than two years from its official registration KMM had formed branches in Penang, Malacca and in all the nine sultanate states except Perlis. In Selangor,

besides school teachers and journalists, it also attracted lecturers and students in the Kuala Lumpur Technical College and Serdang Agricultural College. In other states, besides SITC alumni, senior students and teachers in the various reformist religious schools proved to be equally enthusiastic supporters.[52] And, indeed, KMM local leadership consisted almost exclusively of *cikgu* (teachers in the government primary schools) and *ustaz* (teachers in both primary and secondary religious schools). On the national level, the leadership team was dominated by well-known journalists and writers. Contrary to popular or received impressions, a majority of those in the highest echelons of leadership were educated in English-language schools. However, the greatest common denominator among KMM leaders and supporters was their social origin, their non-aristocratic and peasant background.

With regard to its activities in pursuing its ultimate objectives it is not clear, due to the absence of documentary evidence, whether KMM had a specific and systematically planned operational program for the attainment of these. Malek's interviews with a number of key personalities – cross-checked against each other – ascertained that members of the organization were stratified into three "circles", namely, an inner, an outer, and an ordinary circle. Understandably such stratification was intended for maintenance of secrecy and organizational efficiency.

Members of the "inner circle" were supposed to plan the party's program and strategy, which could not in all respects be divulged to the other two circles. Thus the main known activities was dissemination of anti-British feeling, propagation of the *Melayu Raya* concept, and criticism of Western-orientated aristocratic Malay bureaucrats and defense against the increasingly perceptible aggressiveness of the immigrant races. All this was done through the printed mass media and through speeches at frequently-held KMM meetings at the various levels.

Some members of the "inner circle", notably Ibrahim Yaacob himself, also established secret relationships with

Japanese agents, especially in Singapore. It was in this connection that the Japanese helped Ibrahim to buy *Warta Malaya* newspaper which he used as Editor-in-Chief, to intensify the anti-British campaign.[53] To supplement all the open activities, especially the anti-British campaign, KMM also formed an "intelligence branch" to gather secret information about British military establishment. This intelligence network was supported by the aboriginal tribes who lived in the jungles where British military training operations were often held. Prostitutes in certain cabarets in the major towns, especially Kuala Lumpur, which were frequented by British military men, also assisted the KMM intelligence activities.[54] (This explains why when the British special Branch arrested and detained about 150 KMM leaders and supporters between December 13 and 18, 1941, about 15 bartenders and cabaret dance hostesses were included.) [55]

The detention crippled KMM activities until the Japanese invasion in February in 1941, which was followed by the release of the detainees. Ibrahim then tried to reorganize and reactivate KMM and adopted a cooperative policy with the Japanese while clandestinely collaborating also with the Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan People Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA). But the Japanese authorities proved to be unhappy with KMM, and decided to ban it. They also continued to have cooperative relationships with KMM leaders. Noted for their anti-British stance and also remembered for their "fifth column" roles before the Japanese invasion, KMM leaders remained the most suitable conduits for the Japanese in their efforts to establish rapport with the Malay masses.

A few months after KMM was banned, the Japanese decided to form *Giyu Gun* (Volunteer Army) and the *Giyu Tai* (Volunteer Corps). Ibrahim Yaacob was chosen to help establish both organizations and later was commissioned as Commander-in-Chief of *Giyu Gun* also known in Malay as *Pembela Tanah Air* (PETA, Avengers of the Motherland). With his new position, Ibrahim was conferred the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

To the Japanese authorities the establishment of *Giyu Gun* and *Giyu Tai* was meant to supplement the *Heiho* (Auxiliary Servicement) to assist their forces with the labor services. But to the radical Malay nationalists, they were more than that. Through the *Berita Malai* newspaper and the *Fajar Asia* magazine, both editorially managed by former KMM leaders and supporters, PETA *(Giyu Gun)* was given intensive publicity and in the course of the publicity Malay nationalism was stirred among the readers. Thus, in a sense, the banned KMM's programs were continued albeit in a different ambient.

In terms of postwar development of radical Malay nationalism the existence of PETA and *Giyu Tai* had another significant bearing. PETA, especially, became "the nucleus of a youthful, ardent, and potentially violent nationalism embodied in the militant organization, *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API, Generation of Aware Youth)".[57] API and its parent organization, *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* or PKMM (Malay Nationalist Party or MNP) became important hallmarks in postwar radical Malay nationalism. This will be the subject of our next chapter.

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*This division does not in any way imply that the second group was anti-Islamic or irreligious, but is simply meant to say that its orientation was more secular than religious.

[1]Historian Khasnor Johan from the National University of Malaysia, who was researching in the Public Records Office in the Spring of 1980, testified to this fact. Interview with Dr. Khasnor at the National Archives of Malaysia, August 1980.

[2]Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960* (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1975).

Anthony J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No. 8, 1979).

[3]For basic information on the Malay publications, see Drs. A.M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad, comp., *Persurat khabaran Melayu, 1876-1968* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1973), pp. 54-60.

[4] A. McIntyre, "The Greater Indonesian idea of Nationalism in Malaya and Indonesia" *Modern Asian Studies*, No. 7, Vol. 1, (1973), p. 75.

[5] Cf. *Ibid.*, Yong Mun Cheong, "Indonesian influence on the development of Malay Nationalism, 1922-1938". *Journal of Historical Society* University of Singapore (December 1973).

[6] See Keris Mas's *Memoir* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980), p. 18. Also, personal interview with Baharom Basar, Lenggeng, Negri Sembilan, January 1980); Also, see Dr. Ishak Haji Muhammad, "Kata Pendahuluan" in Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air* (Kuantan, Pahang: Percetakan Timur, 1975), p.8; and Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa* (n.p. (Djakarta?): N.V. Alma 'arif, 1951), p. 63.

[7] Abdullah Hussain, a prolific writer up to the present, narrated his experiences as an active participant of the Indonesian revolution in North Sumatra in a semi-autobiographical novel, *Peristiwa* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1965). Othman Abdullah, who was initially a very important leader of the *Pan Malayan Islamic Party* and later, in 1961, crossed over to UMNO and eventually became a Deputy Minister. He was involved in the revolution in Central Sumatra, both on the military and on the propaganda fronts. Abdullah Sanggora served as a psychological warfare broadcaster for the revolutionaries in Central Sumatra. Baharom Basar, with strikingly unassuming disposition, served as a courier and helped to smooth the transmission of arms from Malaya to Sumatra. Dahari Ali, now a senior journalist in *The New Straits Times*, after participating in the formation of the radical Malay Nationalist Party, left Malaya to become a Staff Officer in the Sumatra Command of the Indonesian National Army, from 1946 to 1948. I have interviewed each and every one of them in my research. And by "accident", I also learnt of the involvement of one Pakchik (Uncle) Bakar in the Indonesian Revolution. Pakchik Bakar is now a clerk-cum-porter at the First Residential College, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. I was told that there are hundreds of others in Malaya like Pakchik Bakar who participated in the Indonesian Revolution.

[8] Ibrahim Yaacob, *Nusa* . . .,

[9] Quoted in William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 56.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[11] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 88.

[12] Quoted in Roff, *Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's* Indonesia, No. 9 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1970), p. 73.

[13] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 77.

[14] *Ibid.* pp. 74-78.

[15] Dr. A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Bandung: Disjarah-AD dan Penerbit Angkasa, 1977), p. 52.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

[20] Mohd. Taib bin Osman, *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akhbar Akhbar Melayu Hingga Ka-Tahun 1941* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1946), pp. 74-80.

[21] See William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals 1876-1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[22] Roff, *The Origins* . . ., p. 56.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[24] Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia – A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 1964), p. 341.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

[27] Mohd. Kornain bin Hashim, "Soal Kaum Immigren Dalam Akhbar Melayu 1930" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin, *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Historical Society, 1980), p. 97.

[28] Quoted by Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1896-1941". *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 1960), p. 11.

[29] For further discussion on this, see Mohd. Kornain, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-104.

[30] Zainal-Abidin bin Ahmad, "Malay Journalism in Malaya". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch*, xix, No 2 (1941), p. 248.

[31] Quoted in Rustam A. Sani, *The Origin of the Malay Left – An Analysis of the Social Roots* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kent, 1975), p. 69.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 39.

[34] For further information on the origin of radicalism, see William H. Overholt, "Sources of Radicalism and Revolution: A Survey of the Literature", in Seweryn Bialer, ed., and Sophia Sluzar, ass. ed., *Radicalism in Contemporary Age*, Vol. I (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), pp. 293-335.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

[36] For detailed discussion on each of them, see the following: Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, *Ishak Haji Muhammad: Penulis dan Ahli Politik Sehingga 1948* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1977); Hussein bin Mahmood, *Shamsuddin Salleh Sebagai Penulis Novel Sebelum Perang Dunia II* (B.A. Honors Graduation Exercise, Malay Studies Department, University of Malaya, 1965); Firdaus Abdullah, "Cherita-cherita luchu Pak Shamsuddin Tentang DKA dan DKK", *Berita Minggu*, July 14, 1963; Ismail Hussein, "Abdul Rahim Kajai", *Dewan Bahasa*, Vol. III, No. 12 (December, 1959), pp. 585-597; Drs. Li Chuan Siu, *Ikhtisar Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Baru: 1830-1945* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1966).

[37] See Hashim Awang, *Cerpen-cerpen Melayu Sebelum Perang Dunia Kedua* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975), especially pp. 75-99.

[38] Abdul Latiff, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[39] Drs. Li Chuan Siu, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

[40] See Roff, *Bibliography . . .*

[41] For an informative and analytical discussion on the Malay traditional mode of deferrence, see Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector? – An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in the Leader-led Relationships Within Malay Society* (Penang: Aliran, 1979).

[42] Syed Hussin Ali, "Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Bahasa dan Sastera Melayu (di Singapura) Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua (Hasnya ASAS 50)", *Bahasa*, Vol II, No. 2 (March 1960), p. 8.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[44] Personal interviews with two former active members: Haji Mohammad Tahir bin Dato Bandar Abdul Rahman, Seremban, January 14, 1980; and Haji Yusuf Rawa, Kuala Lumpur, November 5, 1976.

[45] Roff, *Bibliography . . .*, p. 16.

[46] For further discussion, see the following: Roff, *The Origins . . .*, Radin Soenarno, *Malay . . .*,

[47] Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Nusa . . .*, p. 59.

[48] See Amat Johari Moain, *Sejarah Nasionalisma Maphilindo* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1960), p. 175.

[49] Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Nusa . . .*, p. 59; *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka* (Djakarta: Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka, 1957), p. 25.

[50] Ibrahim, *Nusa . . .*, p. 59.

[51] Abd. Malek Hj. Md. Hanafiah, *Sejarah Perjuangan Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (unpublished B.A. Honors graduation exercise, National University of Malaysia, 1974), p. 155.

[52] See *ibid.*, pp. 157-192. This work based on extensive interviews with KMM major participants on both national and local levels, also included lists of committee members on the various levels.

[53] See "Mustapha Hussein: Dari KMM ke UMNO", *Nadi Insan*, No. 17 (September 1980), p. 5; also Malek, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-200.

[54] Ahmad Boestamam, "Gerakan Nasionalisma di Malaysia", *Dewan Masharakat* (November 1977), p. 26.

[55] Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

[56] Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Japanese Occupation in Malaya 1941-45: Ibrahim Yaacob and the struggle for Indonesia Raya", *Indonesia*, No. 28 (October 1979), p. 102.

[57] See Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, p. 34; also Roff's introduction, p. xii.

CHAPTER FOUR

Radical Nationalism: Its Postwar Manifestations

In Chapter Three, we discussed the prewar roots of radical Malay nationalism, which is sometimes referred to as the "Malay left". The historical background is necessary in our attempt to give a proper perspective to and provide a better understanding of the development of the postwar left-wing movement, especially in the 1945-1948 period when it was in full bloom. In terms of ideology, there is no doubt that the postwar movement was a direct if more vigorous continuation of its prewar antecedent. Four of its main characteristics, "Malay stock instinct", an uncompromising anti-colonialism, an intense desire for immediate independence, and disenchantment with the traditional social and political structure, became more salient with postwar developments. Added to this was a tendency to be explicitly more militant. One prewar characteristic, namely, intense resentment against the immigrant races, was somehow overshadowed by the other four. Indeed, there was a kind of a *detente* between the Malay left and the non-Malay left, during which they formed a coalition to oppose Britain's postwar constitutional proposals.

In terms of leadership too there was a great measure of continuity. The postwar Malay leftwing movements very much benefited from the experience and continued active participation of those who had initiated the movement before the war. A few of course gave up, and left for Indonesia, but many remained to continue the struggle.

Organizationally, however, there have been disagreements as to whether the postwar radical *Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*, PKMM, Malay Nationalist Party, or MNP

was or was not a direct rebirth of the prewar radical *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM, Young Malay Union). Until recent years, the standard view was in the affirmative. But one important participant, Ahmad Boestamam, who was actively involved in both organizations, has asserted the negative, claiming that not one person who attended the founding meeting of the MNP thought of the newly reformed party as a continuation of either the prewar KMM or the Japanese-era KERIS. He argues, "Apart from myself and Ibrahim Karim, who were associated with KMM none of those present at the founding of the MNP were ex-members of either KMM or KERIS".[1] Boestamam is inaccurate on one point, and open to question on another. It is not true that he and Ibrahim Karim were the only KMM members who attended the MNP's founding meeting. His account gives the impression that Musa Ahmad was also present, and Musa had certainly been a KMM member.[2] Also, it is questionable how certain Boestamam can be that nobody at the founding meeting "thought of" the MNP as a continuation of KMM.

Boestamam's contention would perhaps be acceptable if it were argued that nobody at the MNP inaugural meeting explicitly spoke of the new party as a continuation of KMM. Nevertheless, analytically, one can still show that in terms of ideology and leadership there was a definite link between KMM and MNP. Indeed, Boestamam seems to contradict his earlier contention when he later admits that "it is true that a great many ex-members of both KMM and KERIS subsequently became members of the MNP, and furthermore became leading figures".[3] From this we can also assume that in terms of organization, too, there was a link and a continuation between the pre and postwar Malay left-wing movements. The most notable difference between the movements lies in the vigor or intensity with which they conducted their struggle. To a large extent, this change was attributable to the extraordinary events during the Second World War.

Throughout the war, the radical nationalists, as noted in the last chapter, cooperated with the Japanese Military Administration, which ruled Malaya. At the same time, they

maintained a clandestine relationship with the Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan People's Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA). Among themselves, the former KMM leaders and supporters continued to cherish the *Melayu Raya* concept and subtly exploited the situation for the realization of an independent unified Malaya – Indonesia. It was obvious that they were operating in a politically delicate situation maintaining three different and contradictory commitments at the same time.

Such a delicate situation and other unusual wartime incidents during the Japanese occupation had a direct bearing on postwar development of radical Malay nationalism. Drastic social and political changes occurring during the Japanese occupation accordingly changed many aspects of Malay beliefs and perceptions. The myth of white (British) superiority or military invincibility was destroyed almost instantly with the Japanese invasion. Japanese propaganda for Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere became muddled up with their violent, and sometimes brutal, propensities. Important official posts were given by the Japanese to members of the non-traditional Malay elite who had been excluded from the governmental process during British era. This gave them not only additional political confidence but also a degree of administrative experience. On the other hand, there were also cases where prominent Malay leaders were physically ill-treated. For example, an incident in which the KMM Vice-President, Mustapha Hussein, was physically abused by a Japanese military man almost led to the disruption of cooperation between KMM supporters and the Japanese authority.[4] Such examples of inconsistencies or contradiction in Japanese-Malay relationship can be augmented with many folds. But the main implication would still be that in a relatively short span of three-and-a-half years (February 1941 – August 1945), the Malays underwent a series of shocking experiences and were forced to face a series of delicate situations all of which had profound impact on their world view and self-perception. This was the immediate historical background against which their

radicalism in the second half of the 1940's should be viewed.

As awareness of the impending Japanese defeat in the Pacific War became widespread in Malaya, one of the politically significant steps taken by the radical Malay nationalists was to publish a daily newspaper called *Suara Rakyat* (The Voice of the People) in Ipoh, the capital town of Perak.[5] The idea was originally conceived by Ahmad Boestamam, one of the figures who personified Malay radicalism in post World War II Malaya. When the idea materialized, three other people – Dahari Ali, Mohammed bin Hanif, and Musa Ahmad – as well as Boestamam himself controlled the policy and content of the paper. Except for Mohammed Hanif, all became prominent figures in Malay politics in the next 35 years, although they went their separate political ways after 1948. Publication of *Suara Rakyat* became physically possible with the availability of the press of the Japanese sponsored *Perak Shimbun*, an English-language daily in Ipoh which had been part of the Japanese propaganda infrastructure. Like many other government-related organizations that rose under the Japanese regime, *Perak Shimbun* ceased to function after August 1945.

In a matter of weeks, *Suara Rakyat* found its readership stretching beyond the limits of Ipoh township and in some cases even beyond the state boundary of Perak. But in an even shorter time, its candid criticisms of the newly installed British Military Administration (BMA) had caused the editor to write letters of apology to the Chief Military Administrator in Ipoh. Whenever that authority was not happy with the news coverage or editorial content of *Suara Rakyat*, Boestamam was summoned to the Chief Administrator's office and asked to make a public apology in the newspaper. The first time this happened, the Chief Administrator agreed, after negotiation, that it was sufficient for Boestamam to apologize only by writing him a letter to this effect. This practice went on almost every other day throughout of the life of the paper.[6]

The significance of *Suara Rakyat*, however, lay in more

than its critical stance against the new British administration. It is best remembered for its instrumental role in the formation of the first political party in post World War II Malaya. This was the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* or PKMM (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya, or MNP). MNP's formation was formally announced on October 17, 1945, following a preliminary meeting by its founding members in the *Suara Rakyat's* editorial office.[7] The idea to form the party was first mooted by a certain Mokhtaruddin Lasso who became financial backer of *Suara Rakyat*, one or two weeks after the newspaper started its publication. He was a communist and a leader of the Malayan Communist Party's guerilla organization MPAJA (Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army). When he first offered financial assistance to *Suara Rakyat*, Boestamam and colleagues were ambivalent because they had no previous knowledge of him. After being assured that Mokhtaruddin would not interfere with editorial policy, but was interested only in the survival of the paper with its existing editorial disposition, then only did Boestamam and his colleagues accept the offer. Henceforth, a formal but cordial relationship developed between Boestamam's and Mokhtaruddin's groups in the newspaper organization.

When the preliminary meeting to form the party took place in *Suara Rakyat's* editorial office (Boestamam in his memoir called it "founding meeting"), both Boestamam and Mokhtaruddin brought their respective supporters. Both were conscious of the latent rivalry between them despite their common desire to form the party. During the meeting their differences surfaced when Mokhtaruddin's group declared that it wanted the new party to be named *Partai Sosialis Malaya* (Malayan Socialist Party), whereas Boestamam's side wanted it to be *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*, or PKMM (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya), the latter eventually being agreed upon by majority vote. A pro tem central committee was formed at the same meeting, with Mokhtaruddin being elected President and Dahari Ali (Boestamam's man) Secretary-General. A former KMM leader, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, was elected Vice-Presi-

dent in absentia. Boestamam himself was elected to the central committee to be in charge of the youth section.

Within less than three months of the founding meeting, thanks to *Suara Rakyat* and to the sense of fraternity among former KMM members, MNP had received enthusiastic support from all over the country. This support became more apparent when the party held its inaugural congress in Ipoh about two-and-a-half months after the preliminary founding meeting in *Suara Rakyat's* editorial office. More than 300 people from all over the country attended the congress, which was held from November 30 to December 3, 1945, at the Ipoh Town Hall. Three main outcomes of the congress were: the endorsement, or confirmation of the pro tem central committee and state commissioner appointments, approval of the party's constitution, and the passage of a series of resolutions as discussed below.

Mokhtaruddin Lasso for some mysterious reason did not appear until after the congress had endorsed the pro tem committee as the party's permanent leadership for the next year.[8] As with Dr Burhanuddin, who had been elected Vice-President in absentia at the preliminary meeting, Mokhtaruddin's presidency was confirmed by the congress in his absence. As subsequent events showed, Mokhtaruddin's commitment to the party proved to be weak because two months after the congress, he departed for Indonesia, seemingly for good. This resulted in a substantial rearrangement of MNP leadership towards the middle of 1946 with Dr. Burhanuddin becoming President, Ishak Haji Muhammad Vice-President, and Ahmad Boestamam Secretary-General. For the next two years, then, these three – all of whom had held important positions in KMM and in government-related posts during the Japanese Military Administration – became leading figures in the radical Malay nationalist movement.

In addition to confirming the pro tem leadership (later reconstituted), the congress also approved the party's constitution, which began with an eight-point manifesto written in a somewhat prolix language.

The eight points were:[9]

1. To unite the Malay nation *(bangsa Melayu)* and to inculcate national feelings in the hearts of the Malay people *(orang-orang Melayu)* with the ultimate aim of making Malaya unite with the big family, namely, the Republic of Greater Indonesia *(Republik Indonesia Raya).*

2. To strive for freedom of speech, press, assembly and freedom to pursue knowledge.

3. To uplift the Malays' economic position by promoting industry, commerce and agriculture.

4. To strive for freedom of agriculture in the sense that no tax should be imposed on agricultural land and farmers should reserve the freedom to market their products as they like.

5. To strive towards the granting of complete freedom for the Malays to establish their national schools using their language as the medium of instruction.

6. To encourage the publication of books which will promote democracy and at the same time enhance the Malay political position and the sense of nationalism.

7. MNP should foster friendly relations with other domiciled races in this country to create a united and prosperous Malaya as a component member of *Republik Indonesia Raya.*

8. To support the Indonesian nationalist movement for the achievement of independence.

Elsewhere in the constitution, the desire to make Malaya a republic and subsequently a component member of *Republik Indonesia Raya*, was further reiterated. Another significant point mentioned in the constitution was the need to intensify mass political education by means of public speeches, newspapers, stage plays, and pamphleteering.

As if certain provisions in the MNP constitution were not adequately stated, the inaugural congress deemed it necessary to adopt separately four other resolutions, the essence of

which had already been incorporated in the constitution. Briefly, the resolutions stated the congress's agreement that:

1. Malaya is part of Indonesia;

2. The red and white flag (Indonesian national flag) is (Malaya's) national symbol;

3. Malaya should be a unitary state (as opposed to a federation); and

4. Friendly relations with other races in Malaya should be fostered.[11]

Another significant aspect of the MNP inaugural congress was that its opening ceremony was attended and addressed by representatives from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), all of whom were Chinese. There was also an Indian representative. The tone of the speeches was leftist, and unity of races was urged to fight colonialism. According to Cheah Boon Kheng, at least one of the non-Malay speakers asserted "that to maintain that Malaya belonged to the Malays was to disseminate narrow nationalism".[12] This last remark notwithstanding, the MNP inaugural congress showed some signs of change in attitudes (or in tactics?) of the radical Malay nationalists towards the immigrant communities. As developments during the next two years illustrated, their supposed closeness to the immigrant communities subjected the radical Malay nationalists to various political attacks by their conservative aristocratic rivals.

Within less than six months after the inaugural congress in Ipoh, five significant developments were to directly affect the MNP:

1. The formation of its youth wing, *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API, Generation of Aware Youth) in the middle of February 1946;[13]

2. The transfer of its headquarters from the Perak state capital of Ipoh to the national capital of Kuala Lumpur a few days after the formation of API;[14]

3. The convening of the first Pan-Malayan Malay Congress attended by thirty-nine Malay organizations including MNP, which subsequently gave birth to the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in early March 1946 in Kuala Lumpur;[15] and

4. The reconstitution of MNP top leadership,

5. The publication of a daily, *Pelita Malaya*, and weekly, *Suluh Malaya*, to upgrade the party's propaganda infrastructure.[16]

Each of these five developments had its own far-reaching effects on MNP, and therefore, on Malay radical nationalism for the following few years. The second, fourth, and fifth developments on the above list, dealt with the organization and propaganda activities of the party; whereas the first and third items on the list were more political and ideological in implication.

The transfer of its headquarters from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur was a matter of course for a political party with the national ambitions of the MNP. In addition to being relatively centrally located, Kuala Lumpur was also the administrative center of Malaya. Commercially, it was second perhaps only to Singapore in importance. All this implied Kuala Lumpur's adequacy in terms of transport, communication media, and other aspects of social infrastructure. Hence, it met the needs of an operational base for a country-wide organization. And MNP leadership reckoned that "if they wanted to confront the British and make an adequate impression, they must be at the administrative center in Malaya, that is to say, Kuala Lumpur."[17] As subsequent developments showed, it was after its headquarters moved to Kuala Lumpur that MNP's activities gained increasing momentum.

The rearrangement or reconstitution of the party's top leadership was significant in the sense that after the departure of the founding President, Mokhtaruddin Lasso, the "nationalist" group (as opposed to the "socialist" or "communist" group), which had been dominant since the founding meeting, was now further entrenched. Although communist

elements such as Musa Ahmad, the head of Peasants' Bureau, Abdullah C.D. (Labor) and Shamsuddin Salleh (Social),[18] were still present in the central committee, the composition of the new top leadership (President, Vice-President, and Acting Secretary-General) guaranteed a better unity of thought and action than previously. The top trio, Burhanuddin, Ishak and Boestamam, were noted, in terms of personal propensity, as religious and philosophical, secular and bohemian, and militant and youthful, respectively. But in the main they projected a public collective image of unity which was relatively contagious to their respective constituencies among the general public.

Dr. Burhanuddin and Ishak were described by one of their important followers as "genuine nationalists", with the former more inclined towards Islamic reformist thoughts and the latter towards Western social democratic ideals. Both elements in their thought, according to Keris Mas, were badly needed to make the Malays a dynamic and democratic independent nation.[19] Hence, their differences were more of an asset than a liability. Added to this was the fact that they had a history of a common political commitment and aspiration since KMM days. Thus, organizationally the party's leadership was now more cohesive.

With the transfer of its headquarters to Kuala Lumpur, the MNP found it less easy to make efficient use of the party's organ, the Ipoh-based *Suara Rakyat*. This necessitated the publication of *Pelita Malaya* in Kuala Lumpur, which started on March 4, 1946, under the general management of Zulkifli Ownie, another ex-KMM leader.[20] Ishak Haji Muhammad, was the Editor-in-Chief, assisted by Boestamam, Salleh Daud Dahari Ali, and party President himself, Dr. Burhanuddin.

With the slogan, "Towards Truth, Peace, and National Freedom", the inaugural issue of *Pelita Malaya* stated its objectives as, *inter alia:*

(i) To provide information to the common people *(rakyat jelata)* in the states of Malaya, especially those who live far away from towns and cities, and who are deprived of knowledge of any news of real incidents and of

changing conditions in their homeland. It is for such common people – peasants, small farmers, and domestic animal rearers, hawkers, fishermen, and rubber-tappers – that this paper is meant. We hope they will be more informed, and that this paper will add to their reading list which thus far had been confined to materials such as *Syaer Kiamat* (Ballads of Doomsday), *Hikayat Nabi-nabi* (Stories of the Prophets), and *Cerita-cerita Sang Kancil* (Anecdotes of the Mouse-deer).

(ii) To be the mouthpiece of MNP and its political struggle which is based on the axiom that Malaya belongs to the Malays.

The first objective stated above certainly contained some telling points. In specifying the kind of readers it was trying to reach, *Pelita Malaya* was already political and polemical in tone. The employment of such phrases or clauses, as "deprived of knowledge . . . in their own homeland" was intended to hold the authorities' negligence or deliberate inaction responsible for keeping the "deprived" masses ignorant.

The enumeration of social types like farmers, fishermen, hawkers, and rubber-tappers as an elaboration of the term *rakyat jelata* (common people), which already had a strong proletarian connotation, seems to have been deliberate in *Pelita Malaya's* attempt to identify itself with these social categories. Lastly, the reference to traditional reading materials which projected either pessimism or escapism to the *rakyat jelata* was indicative of the newspaper's intention to generate attitudinal change among the masses and politicize them.

However, in fulfilling its two-fold objectives – to provide information for the *rakyat jelata* and to be MNP's mouthpiece – *Pelita Malaya* was more attentive to the latter. Perhaps this was due to the then political situation in which the MNP, despite its growing popularity among the *rakyat jelata*, found itself confronting two political forces that stood in the way of pursuing its political objectives. These forces

were the returning British colonialism and the traditional aristocratic Malay elements embodied in the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). But, before we discuss these confrontations there are a few other side effects or latent functions of *Pelita Malaya* with some indirect political significance that need to be noted here.

Not long after the emergence of the daily *Pelita Malaya*, which was printed in Romanized script, it was followed by the publication of the weekly *Suluh Malaya*, printed in Arabic script. In a sense, the latter was the weekly, or weekend, edition of the former, and to suit weekend reading it contained, besides normal political news and articles, literary columns where creative works – mainly short stories and poems – with deliberate political tone were published.*

The literary columns proved popular among young adult readers and at the same time helped to discover talented young writers. One such was Kamaluddin Muhammad, better known by his pseudonym "Keris Mas", who began as a stringer reporting mainly MNP-related news from his home state, Pahang. Then he started writing short stories which quickly made him popular among the youthful literary enthusiasts all over the country. The tone and theme of these stories were clearly political – with titles such as *Revolusi Sosial* (Social Revolution) and *Wasiat Orang Bangsawan* (The Will of a Nobleman), and the like – arousing anti-colonial and anti-feudal sentiments among the readers. When he later became a leading member of MNP, Keris Mas's fame as a short story writer proved to be a useful political asset to the party. In a speech-making tour to win support for MNP in the northeastern states of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan, his popularity as a literary figure gave him an added attraction which drew bigger and more attentive audience.[21] Thus, his political salesmanship was enhanced by his literary fame. In this sense, Keris Mas can be considered as continuing the prewar tradition of Ishak Haji Muhammad, as noted in the previous chapter. He was also laying the groundwork for a mode of political expression which would prove to be useful a few years later when the colonial regime imposed stringent

restrictions on overt "leftwing" political activities.[22]

The publication of *Pelita Malaya's* inaugural issue on March 4, 1946, coincided with the last day of the first Pan Malayan Malay Congress in which MNP was one of the 39 participating organizations. This Congress was convened as a result of widespread Malay resentment against the Malayan Union scheme to cover the entire Malay Peninsula which had been imposed by the returning British authorities as soon as civilian replaced military government in early 1946.

The Malayan Union proposal was first announced on October 10, 1945 in a brief statement in the House of Commons in London.[23] Among other things it broadly hinted at the possible extension of citizenship to the immigrant races, which provoked growls in the Malay press as soon as the news reached Malaya. One day after the announcement, a British Government representative, Sir Harold MacMichael, arrived in Malaya to obtain the signatures of the Malay rulers to the new arrangements. His arrival in the Kelantan, Trengganu, and Johore state capital found him confronted with tens of thousands of protesting demonstrators.[24]

When the full details of the proposal were disclosed in a White Paper released on January 22, 1946, Malay anger was further inflamed and this resulted in an unprecedented upsurge of feeling. The Malay press highlighted especially two aspects of the proposal, which they believed would have grave consequences on their political status as the indigenous people of Malaya. These were:

(1) The surrendering of the Sultan's separate sovereignties to the British whereby even the symbolic and ceremonial political powers they had previously enjoyed would be stripped from them and their status reduced to that of priest-kings with some control over religious affairs; and

(2) The immigrant races were to be given practically unrestricted opportunity to obtain citizenship.

The growth in the Malay press, the protest demonstrations

in various places, and increasing public anger as a result of the proposal finally led to the convening of the Congress mentioned above.

MNP's position on the Malayan Union scheme appeared on the surface to be inconsistent because its initial reaction was to state its support for the concept of a union or a unitary state for the Peninsula. It was on this basis that the party announced its "fundamental agreement" with the scheme believing that it would accelerate the pace towards independence. However, upon realizing the full implications of the scheme, and that it was going to perpetuate British colonialism, MNP clarified its stand by emphasizing several qualifications for the kind of unitary state it wanted. These included complete independence and a democratically elected legislature, and were thus tantamount to complete opposition to the Malayan Union scheme. So in his speech to the Congress, MNP's spokesman, like others, voiced his party's unequivocal opposition to the scheme. At the same time, MNP proposed that the Congress adopt a resolution for the pursuance of a "one hundred per cent Independent Malaya". This proposal, however, was rejected, and as a sign of protest, the MNP delegation staged a one-day "walk-out" from the Congress.[25]

In opposing the Malayan Union scheme, in its final resolutions, the Congress nevertheless spoke with a unanimous voice. Another important outcome was the resolution to form the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) which formally came into being with the signing of its charter by representatives of participating organizations in another Congress held in Johor Bharu on May 11 and 12, 1946. Dr. Burhanuddin and Zulkifli Ownie signed the charter on behalf of MNP, but hardly two months later MNP withdrew from UMNO. The precipitating incident for the withdrawal was disagreement over the UMNO symbol, which MNP insisted should be a red and white flag, the symbol of MNP itself and identical with the national flag of the Republic of Indonesia. But behind this issue there were serious and substantive disagreements over policy.

The withdrawal was dramatically announced at another UMNO meeting in Ipoh, on June 29 and 30, in which MNP's proposal for the symbol was defeated by one vote. Following the defeat, Boestamam gave a lengthy speech restating his party's stand on several political issues, especially on full independence for Malaya and on unity with Indonesia. Immediately after ending his speech by firmly waving his fist in the air while at the same time shouting his party's slogan *Merdeka* (Freedom, or Independence), Boestamam and all other MNP representatives and supporters walked out.

MNP's final break with UMNO was not at all surprising. The disagreement between it and the dominant forces within UMNO, indeed, involved fundamental issues. The incident over the flag was only an excuse for breaking away, because for the preceding few months MNP had found it increasingly impossible to remain inside UMNO while at the same time pursuing its political objectives.[26] The differences had been evident since the first day of the first Pan Malayan Malay Congress on March 1, 1946. But, according to Dr. Burhanuddin, MNP had wanted to "give it a chance and also to prove its sincerity in maintaining unity among the Malays in order to perform national responsibility".[27] Nevertheless, after a few months of cooperation, it became obvious that MNP's political struggle to achieve immediate independence was wholly incompatible with UMNO's desire to return to the pre-1941 political status quo. The logical alternative, then was to part and to pursue their different objectives separately, although the MNP was "convinced that the Malay *ummat* (nation or community) will one day reunite".[28]

The separate ways that MNP and UMNO took, accordingly and expectedly, evinced separate and different reactions from the British. UMNO's opposition to the Malayan Union scheme received accommodative and consultative treatment in the sense that the British agreed to open a dialogue with UMNO and the Sultans to discuss alternative arrangements. These dialogues or constitutional talks took place through a special body called the Working Committee, which consisted of six British Government members, four Malay Rulers, and

two UMNO representatives. The outcome was a set of recommendations embodied in the Federation of Malaya constitutional proposal to replace the Malayan Union. Following the publication of the Working Committee's report – after two-and-a-half months of deliberations – another committee was formed to hear the views of other persons or organizations wishing to be heard on the proposed constitutions. This second committee, styled the Consultative Committee, excluded Malays from its membership and obviously was intended as an attempt to appease the immigrant communities, who felt unhappy with the Working Committee's recommendations. In the event, however, attempts at appeasement failed, for leaders of the immigrant communities formed an All-Malaya Council for Joint Action (AMCJA) to boycott the Consultative committee and to oppose the new constitutional proposals.[29] MNP was also unhappy with the Working Committee's recommendations but for different reasons which we will discuss presently.

While the immigrant communities' opposition to the Working Committee's proposals was due to what they perceived as the "pro-Malay" bias of the Committee,[30] MNP's objections were based on other considerations. In a lengthy article published in an English-language newspaper, Ishak bin Haji Muhammad in his capacity as head of MNP's political department, spelt out the party's rejection of the proposals.[31] Ishak argued that the proposals would still make Malaya "a cleverly camouflaged British colony and breeding ground of imperialism." He resented the failure of the proposals to fix a date by which Malaya would attain the status of a fully self-governing, if not independent, state. And there was no provision for a National Flag, a National Anthem, and National Army and other national preparations for future independence.

Ishak also went to great lengths to question the "legitimacy" of UMNO in claiming exclusive rights to represent the Malay masses. He alleged that:

> The UMNO does not represent the majority of the Malays. Members of the remaining associations that are still affiliat-

ed to UMNO mostly entered the association through threat or coercion. This is because most of the officials of these "UMNO associations" are the Government functionaries, such as Malay District Officers, Assistant District Officers . . . There are several instances in which Malays who refused to become members of these "UMNO associations" have had their rice and sugar rations stopped; threatened with dismissal or stoppage of (salary) increments, etc.[32]

It was obvious that, apart from the lack of "national preparations for independence" proposed by the Working Committee, a key cause for MNP's resentment was its exclusion from the Committee in favor of UMNO. Ishak also alleged that the Committee was insensitive towards the social and economic needs of the "Malay public at large and the men in the mud (the peasants, workers and fishermen)". [33]

Almost two months before the publication of Ishak's article, another writer, under the pseudonym "A Member of the MNP", had explicitly stated that "the (British) Government should have accepted a coalition representative of the Rulers, UMNO and the MNP to present Malay viewpoints in the political working committee. But the MNP was deliberately left out of the picture". [34] This latter article had been written to rebut an editorial in *Straits Times* which alleged that the MNP was "tinged with Communist ideology and radical in every sense". In reply to this allegation, the author stated:

It is radical, yes; but not "in every sense". It is radical only in the sense that it chooses to be progressive in outlook, whether political, economic, social, religious or cultural.

It is radical only to a conservative mind and from an imperial viewpoint; otherwise, it is just a young political body run by an intelligent, politically conscious but not irresponsible section of the Malay people – not by the **pure Indonesian elements,** since they have an organization all their own to look after their interest . . . **The first task of the MNP is therefore simply to prevent Malaya from being a colony any longer than necessary.**[35]

From newspaper reports, it is apparent that, in their

attempt to discredit MNP, the party's adversaries (either UMNO supporters or the pro-British press in Malaya) found it expedient to exaggerate its association with the communists and to portray the party as an Indonesian fifth column. Responding to the former accusation, the party stated that it did not "follow the set course of either communist or fascist", but it professed to "a decided tendency, in principle, towards the kind of socialism that is now being attempted by Britain herself".[36] It asserted that the party's program, based upon the general improvement of the Malay laborers and peasantry should not be construed as "tinged with communist ideology". Notwithstanding these disclaimers, it should be pointed out that the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) did seriously try to infiltrate MNP especially through the former's Malay Affairs Bureau. Due to the dominance of nationalist and Islamic elements within the MNP's leadership and rank and file, the MCP's attempt did not meet with much success in this endeavor, though a cordial but somewhat formal relationship with MNP leadership was maintained.[37]

It was MNP's explicitly stated aspiration for a united Malaya-Indonesia within the political framework of a *Melayu Raya* (Greater Malaysia) or *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia) that subjected the party to accusations of being an agent for the then newly independent Indonesian Government. But whereas MNP's *Melayu Raya* aspiration was conceived within the historical continuity of past Malay empires in the Malay archipelago, its opponents had taken it out of its historical context and made it sound like irredentism.[38]

Responding to a hostile *Straits Times* editorial on this matter, "A Member of the MNP" stated:

> As to Indonesian influence in the Malay Peninsula, I can only register my pleasant surprise at the ignorance you show as to this influence on our history. If we are only a community now in this part of the Malay Archipelago, we have been a nation once, even in this tiny spot, able to hold our own against possible aggressors. We too had our golden age represented by the Malay Empire of

Malacca. And who would ever believe you if you tried to suggest that we are an agent of Indonesia, now or at any other time?[39]

Not long after publication of this rejoinder, the *Straits Times* came out with an equally lengthy editorial saying, *inter alia*, that MNP's demand for independence or "self-government" showed "lack of realism and practicality". Complimenting UMNO for "steering the right course" and suggesting that "MNP ought to be backing up UMNO", the newspaper stated that "it is time the MNP got down to practical politics instead of merely emitting hot air".[40]

Answering this subsequent *Straits Times* editorial, a reader signing himself "MNP Member" alleged that the editorial writer knew very little about either UMNO or MNP, especially when he suggested that the latter ought to be backing up the former. "An MNP Member" claimed that:

> We stand for the dumb Malay masses and the down-trodden impoverished peasantry; the UMNO is interested in the conservative diehards and the selfish decadent aristocracy.[41]

Although this MNP supporter was writing in the first place to refute the *Straits Times* editorial, the opportunity was taken to unleash additional criticism against the Malay aristocracy and UMNO:

> The UMNO apparently has the blessing of the British Government, but I ask you, what is the sense of supporting a movement that champions the cause of the degenerate Malay aristocracy? . . . For years the aristocracy has stood as a bulwark against Malay progress, sacrificing Malay interest for the sole purpose of enriching itself both in wealth and privileges. Everywhere it seeks its own selfish motives. Responsible government posts are reserved for it, rich lands are given away by it, and education is reserved for it. While their subjects groan in dire poverty, the Malay nobles live amidst wealth and splendor . . . At present the UMNO leaders are engaged in picking the Sultans' chestnuts out of the Malayan Union fire.[42]

In a similar vein, but more subtly and exercising some self-restraint in language, Ishak Haji Muhammad wrote in a Malay journal about the prewar "indifferent to or anti-*rakyat* (common people) attitude" of the UMNO leaders. He contrived to insinuate that such attitudes persisted even after the war.[43]

The verbal (or rather the "ink") battle in the columns of the English – and Malay-language press between MNP and its opponents went on from the end of 1946 to the middle of 1948 and forms as we have seen, a useful guide to the issues arising. On other fronts, outside the realm of printed media, while (UMNO) representatives were engaged in constitutional negotiation with the British, MNP's activities were increasingly subjected to British Special Branch surveillance. Nevertheless, the party escalated its campaign for *merdeka* and Malaya-Indonesia unity, and stepped up its efforts to instil political consciousness among various social groups, especially youths but also women, laborers, peasants, and even children. This was carried out by means of printed mass media, small group political courses or political pep talks, occasional stage shows (performing arts), paramilitary drills and marches, and mass rallies.[44] Both national and local leaderships of the party would find any conceivable – and sometimes seemingly lame – excuse to hold a mass rally, for example, to celebrate the completion of six months of Indonesian independence on February 17, 1946[45] and to welcome Dr. Burhanuddin home from the the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947.[46]

Annoyed with its exclusion from both the Working Committee and the Consultative Committee, and having disagreed with many aspects of the constitutional proposals, MNP decided to close ranks with what it perceived as the "left-wing" forces in the country to oppose the proposals. As stated earlier, the immigrant groups had already formed the All-Malaya Council for Joint Action (AMCJA) for that purpose. Officially formed during Christmas vacation 1946, the AMCJA (initially it had been called Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action, or PMCJA) was a coalition of

various political organizations, predominantly left-wing in orientation.

MNP was involved as an indecisive participant in the early stage of its formation. When, later, it decided to withdraw from the AMCJA, MNP sponsored a coalition of "left-wing" Malay organizations called *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (PUTERA, Center of the People's Power). Its formation on February 22, 1947, was reported in a one-paragraph news item in the Kuala Lumpur *Sunday Times* which simply stated that the decision to form PUTERA, the Malay equivalent of the AMCJA was reached by 49 delegates representing various associations in all States and Settlements except Malacca and Kelantan.[47] Another newspaper, *Sunday Tribune*, however, displayed the news prominently, stating that the meeting was attended by "representatives of over 100 Malay associations from the Malayan Union and Singapore, and of the 100,000-strong Malay Nationalist Party and *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*".[48] The opening speech by MNP president, Dr. Burhanuddin, was extensively quoted, alleging *inter alia* that "UMNO had committed itself to a plan which would deny the birthright of Malays and national sovereignty in their own country".[49] The *Sunday Tribune* also published in detail eight principles adopted by the conference. These were:

(1) A united Malaya, including Singapore;

(2) A popularly elected central Government and state councils;

(3) Malay Sultans to have real sovereign powers, responsible to the people through popularly elected councils;

(4) A constitution for a new Malaya to provide special privileges for the advancement of Malays politically, and economically;

(5) Malay customs and religion to be fully controlled by the Malay people through special councils;

(6) Equal citizenship rights to be accorded to all those

who considered Malaya their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty;

(7) Malay to be the official language;

(8) The people of Malaya to have a national flag and national anthem.

Yet another newspaper, the *Sunday Mail*, in a fairly lengthy article highlighted two other significant points in Dr. Burhanuddin's speech. These were: indirect criticism of the Sultans, and an appeal for "sympathy and sincere co-operation from brother Asians". On the first point, the MNP president was quoted as saying that his party "cannot be indifferent to or forget the irresponsible action taken by Their Highnesses the Sultans in hastily signing the MacMichael Treaties (the Malayan Union proposals) without prior consultations with their own people".[50] It may be recalled that representatives of the Sultans were a formal part of the Working Committee. As such, reference to the Sultans' "irresponsible action" in endorsing the Malayan Union is tantamount to questioning their credibility in representing the *rakyat's* views and interests in the Working Committee. On the second point, the reader might gain the impression that Dr. Burhanuddin was coaxing the immigrant communities. "The Malays in Malaya", he said, "will always need the sympathy and sincere cooperation of their brother Asians in Malaya in their struggle for national freedom and independence. The ties of Asiatic friendship and collaboration between the Malays and the other races through their merchants and traders dates back even before the fall of the famed Malay Empire of Malacca."[51]

Such a remark by the MNP president at the PUTERA formation conference was an auspicious prelude to the PUTERA-AMCJA coalition which materialized two or three weeks later. One of PUTERA-AMCJA's initial joint activities was to send a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London protesting the manner in which the constitutional proposals had been drawn up. The letter also stated

six basic political principles to which PUTERA-AMCJA subscribed. Essentially, these six principles were similar to the ones adopted at PUTERA foundation meeting listed above.[52] At the same time, as soon as they agreed to join forces, PUTERA-AMCJA lost no time in organizing mass rallies all over the country in order to mobilize public opposition to the Working Committee's constitutional proposals.[53] The height of PUTERA-AMCJA's mass agitation against the proposal was the sponsoring of a country-wide one-day *hartal* in October 1947. As a result, on the day chosen, "business was at a standstill and all places of amusement were closed".[54]

A still more important episode of the PUTERA-AMCJA alliance was its drafting of a well-known document, *The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya*, drawn up as an alternative to the Working Committee's proposals. The title page of the document stated that it was drafted by representatives of PUTERA and AMCJA between May and August 1947 and approved by two conferences of delegates from both organizations on July 4 to 7, and on August 10, 1947. Boestamam, however, in his memoirs gives credit for the initial drafting work to the leaders of the Malayan Democratic Union (MDU), a member organization of AMCJA.[55] And although according to Means the AMCJA and PUTERA joint proposals "either ignored or glossed over some communal differences",[56] two other observers, Thompson and Adloff, considered that "they offered what was probably the widest possible area of agreement to which all Malayan liberals could then subscribe".[57]

From the Malay nationalists' point of view, one of the most significant aspects of the *People's Constitutional Proposals* was the use of the term "Melayu" to describe the new citizenship and nationality. Although the anglicised version of the term, i.e. "Malay", had been widely used for the indigenous people of the Peninsula, the choice of the Malay-language "Melayu" was more than mere semantics. It implied an assurance that the immigrant races were willing to be assimilated to *Melayu* culture once they adopted *Melayu*

nationality and citizenship. It implied also a recognition of historical right of the Malays. The *People's Constitutional Proposals* noted:

> Our Conference unanimously agreed that it was only just and proper that the new national status should be designated by the historic name of the indigenous people, and that the acceptance of the new designation should therefore fall on those of the non-indigenous people who, regarding Malaya as their home and as the object of their loyalty accepted citizenship, leaving intact to "the indigenous people their historic name".
>
> Our Conference unanimously accepted the term "Melayu" in preference to the term "Malay" in view of the fact that the historical name of the indigenous people is "Melayu" and not "Malay" which is merely the anglicised version of the term "Melayu".[58]

From a decolonization point of view, if accepted, the PUTERA-AMCJA proposals, with provision for a popularly elected Federal Legislative Assembly, [59] would have been tantamount to giving self-governing status to Malaya. The British Commissioner General in Southeast Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, described the proposals as "idealistic and impracticable".[60] *The Straits Times*, however, in spite of its normally critical stance against the PUTERA-AMCJA commended the proposals as "the first attempt to put Malayan party politics on a plane higher than that of rival racial interests and also the first attempt to build a political bridge between the domiciled non-Malay communities and the Malay race".[61]

However, as subsequent developments showed, the *People's Constitutional Proposals* was totally rejected by the British. And on February 1, 1948, the abortive Malayan Union was officially succeeded by the Federation of Malaya, based almost exclusively on the Working Committee's constitutional proposals.[62] This marked the failure of PUTERA-AMCJA constitutional struggle. Nevertheless, their joint activities in the course of 1947 have been described by one

historian as "the high point of left-wing constitutional politics" in Malaya.[63] But it should also be pointed out that besides engaging in "constitutional politics" a certain section of the left-wing forces within the PUTERA-AMCJA coalition was also engaged in "unconstitutional" politics on the basis of the principle of *Merdeka Dengan Darah* (Independence or Freedom Through Blood). The section we are referring to is the MNP youth wing, *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API, Generation of Aware Youth).

API came into being almost by accident.[64] It all started when MNP wanted to demonstrate its strength in the middle of February, 1946. Boestamam, who was then head of the youth section in the MNP Central Committee, and a few colleagues found an excuse to hold a procession and mass rally in Ipoh, where the MNP headquarters was then located. They agreed on a date, February 17, which marked six months of Indonesian independence, and gave them an occasion to celebrate.

With only two days' notice, Boestamam managed to mobilize no fewer than 500 youths to participate in the procession, which resembled a military parade around Ipoh. Many of the marchers were ex-members of the Japanese-sponsored volunteer army *Giyu Gun or Pembela Tanah Ayer* (PETA), mentioned in the preceding chapter.

In the course of mobilizing the youths for the February 17 procession, Boestamam started spreading the idea of forming a youth front for MNP. And when the procession proved a success beyond all expectations, it was regarded as the inauguration of the front, known thenceforth by the symbolic acronym, API, which in Malay means "fire". At the time API was formed, the parent MNP itself was only four months old. And since API was supposed to be the youth wing of MNP, after the February 17 procession, branches of the former emerged almost automatically wherever the latter had branches. Thereafter both organizations expanded simultaneously, though API tended to be increasingly militant in its outlook and activities. The moderates in MNP thought the youth front and its founder-leader, Ahmad Boestamam,

"too violent".[65] This led to the formal separation of API from the MNP at the latter's second congress in Malacca in December 1946, when Ahmad Boestamam was relieved of his job as MNP Acting Secretary-General.

One of API's primary activities was providing paramilitary training for its members, who wore special uniforms and sang marching songs. Every member was required to take an oath of allegiance consisting of the words: "In the name of Allah, I swear that I join the struggle of API of my own free will to sacrifice my body and soul for the sake of religion, nation, and homeland".[66] Instructors for the paramilitary drill at the local level were trained in special training camps, the foremost of which was Kesang Tua in the state of Malacca.[67] And the British Malayan Security Service reported the existence of additional jungle training camps in Ulu Langat (Selangor) and in Singapore.[68] Significantly, the Security Service also reported its anxiety lest "API should undermine the influence of UMNO".[69] Indeed, the numerous Security Service reports cited by Stockwell show increasing concern over API. Accordingly surveillance of its activities was stepped up. This surveillance culminated in the conviction of Boestamam on charges of sedition in April 1947 and the eventual banning of API the following July. Boestamam was convicted on three charges, namely, uttering seditious words, abetment of publishing, and abetment of printing a seditious document.[70] All three charges pertained to a 26-page pamphlet entitled *Testament Politik API* (Political Testament of API). According to newspaper reports, he committed the offences in the State of Selangor on December 21, 1946. This date appears on the introductory page of the pamphlet, though on the last page it is stated that it is issued "in commemoration of the first congress of API on December 22, 23, and 24, 1946 in Malacca".[71] Reading through the pamphlet one gets the impression of a transcription of a long political speech delivered without a prepared text but with the help of several index cards. It is marked by hyperbole, and certain passages are vague and repetitious. But its contents were radical and even militant. Five

objectives of API were stated as follows:

(1) To unite all awakened youths under one organization;

(2) To strengthen the fighting front of the nation and the motherland;

(3) To give training in politics – both physical and spiritual – to its youths in order that they may be able to lead whenever required;

(4) To rebuild Malaya in accordance with genuine democratic principles and people's sovereignty;

(5) To obtain the right of representation in the Government of Malaya.[72]

The list of these five objectives was concluded with a reinforcing sentence: "In short, API wants to struggle towards the attainment of independence for the nation of the motherland through all means open to us, in a gentle manner if possible or with violent acts if we are forced to."[73]

A few pages later, this idea was repeated in a more forthright sentence: "Independence cannot be attained through saliva (by talking) or by begging, it has to be wrested by spilling the blood of youth."[74] The phrase "independence through blood" which formed the subtitle of the booklet was repeated over and over. And in the trial that ended Boestamam's conviction, it was this phrase that became a principal point of discussion between his counsel and the Solicitor General. They were arguing over whether the connotation of the original Malay phrase *merdeka dengan darah* was really seditious (as the Solicitor General maintained), or whether it was simply a call for altruistic sacrifice, as Boestamam's counsel alleged. Boestamam lost the case, and was sentenced to a fine of $1,200 or nine months' jail. He paid the fine from money raised by his family and friends, including some in the Malayan Communist Party, which was then still a legal organization.[75] It may be recalled that this trial took place not long after Malay and non-Malay left-

wing forces had institutionalized their cooperative relationship by the formation of the PUTERA-AMCJA coalition. The court case thus provided an opportunity for Malay and non-Malay left-wing forces to show their solidarity. In this connection, it may be noted that Boestamam's counsel at the trial was John Eber, a Malayan Democratic Union (MDU) leader described by Thompson and Adloff as a "brilliant and constructive thinker"[76] mainly responsible for drafting the *People's Constitutional Proposals*.

To return to *Testament Politik* API, although its "seditious nature" was mainly associated (especially during the trial) with the connotations of the often repeated "independence through blood" phrase, some of its other significant radical and militant aspects should also be noted. In addition to its demand for immediate termination of British colonialism in Malaya it advocated a "classless society", [77] an "absolutely state controlled economy",[78] and "total land reform to terminate land monopoly".[79] And as if Boestamam already had a premonition about his and many of his colleagues' pending detention, *Testament Politik API* called for the "abolition of political detention camps" as well as for the abolition of regulations that restricted freedom of the press.[80] Regarding exploitation, Boestamam enumerated, in addition to colonial exploitation, the following types that API members should strive to abolish:

- exploitation by members of one's own race who allow themselves to be colonial stooges;
- exploitation by the feudalistic class;
- exploitation by traditional-conservative religious functionaries;
- exploitation by the capitalistic class whether made up of members of one's own race or of other races.[81]

Like the ways and means he advocated for the attainment of full independence, Boestamam advocated the pursuance of these and other objectives through "gentleness if possible

or violent means if we are forced to." Thus, even without the provocative slogan "independence through blood" the pamphlet no doubt advocated violence in pursuit of a drastic and fundamental restructuring of society. Hence it increased the anxiety of the Security Service which had already been aroused by API. An important inference to be noted in this respect is that the presence of an enthusiastic and militant youth organization in rural areas where the presence of the Government was only remotely felt must have created an exaggerated idea of API's importance and status among the peasantry. The extended time during which API's para-military training – with uniforms, the clinched fist arm band, the violent slogan, marching songs and fiery speeches – was allowed to continue without overt police action (except in certain places) must have strengthened the notion that API was at least tolerated by the Government. However, all this came to an end when on July 16, 1947 the Governor of the Malayan Union, Sir Edward Gent declared API to be an unlawful society which "was being used or likely to be used for a purpose incompatible with the peace, good order or welfare of the Union".[82] Thus API became the first political party to be officially banned in post World War II Malaya.[83] It is interesting to note here that the proscription of API occurred before that of the Malayan Communist Party. Obviously this was testimony not only to the former's militancy but also to British fears of its influence among the Malays. This tends to bear out Anthony Short's observation with the political activities of radical Malays after the war.[84] Short also suggests that if the Malay community had supported the Communist insurrection in Malaya to the extent that it was supported by the Chinese, the British forces might not have been able to clamp it down. [85] Perhaps this was why a Security Services' report in July 1947 noted that the banning of API was "well timed".[86] Another relevant point about API worth noting here is that, as one realizes in retrospect, it commanded the allegiance of potentially intelligent and talented youths. A significant number of these youths became prominent figures in the public life of independent

Malaya/Malaysia. Two became cabinet ministers, namely, Mohammad Asri Haji Muda and Abdul Ghafar Baba. Malaysia's present Chief Secretary (the highest civil service post in the country) Abdullah Ayub was also an active API member. This list can be prolonged with such names as those of Keris Mas and Asraf Haji Abdul Wahab (in the literary field), and Dom Madzi (in broadcasting). A former leader of API's women's section AWAS (*Angkatan Wanita Sedar* or Generation of Awakened Women), Aishah Ghani, has been a cabinet minister for almost ten years, holding the Social Welfare portfolio. The significance of all this is that with talented and intelligent youths comprising its rank and file, a militant API would naturally pose a considerable "security threat" to the colonial authority.

Despite, or perhaps also as a result of the progress made in the constitutional negotiations with traditional-conservative Malay political forces, the British in Malaya were confronted with mounting political agitation from other sectors throughout 1947. As noted in Chapter Two, reformist Islamic forces became more and more political in their orientation and more vocal in their opposition to colonialism and Malay traditional authority. Earlier in the present chapter we noted the collaboration of Malay and non-Malay left-wing forces in the constitutional struggle and other forms of public agitation against the British. On another front, the Malayan Communist Party was mounting its insurgent activities.[87] Thus it was not surprising that the British should take increasingly repressive measures against Malay radicals and other left-wing elements.

The conviction of Boestamam and the proscription of API were early manifestations of these increasingly repressive measures in so far as they concerned radical Malay nationalism. They were followed by more frequent harassment of MNP supporters and former API members, culminating in the Government's declaration of the Emergency in June 1948 and the arrest and detention of more than one thousand Malays including Ahmad Boestamam, labelled as leftists, communists or sympathizers in June and July 1948.[88]

Among those arrested was Ishak bin Haji Muhammad, who had been elected president of MNP during its third annual congress in December 1947. The Government, however, did not link Ishak's arrest with his activities as MNP president. Rather, the explanation given for his arrest was that "Government holds evidence that, in his private capacity, he has been working with Communist elements for the overthrow of the Government and the establishment of an alternative Government by force. For this reason he has been detained under the Emergency Regulations".[89] About the same time as the mass arrests took place, the Government gazetted the proscription of the Malayan Communist Party, two of its front organizations (The New Democratic Youth League and MPAJA ex-Comrades Association) and the *Ikatan Pembela Tanah Ayer* (League of Defenders of the Homeland),[90] a youth organization which was supposed to succeed API. It is a matter of curiosity that in spite of the arrest of the MNP president and hundreds of his followers the party itself was not banned together with the organizations just mentioned. It continued to function, albeit in a desultory manner, under an Acting President, Taha Kalu, until early 1950[91]. But with many of its local leaders under arrest or gone underground to join the communist insurgency, and with the stringent Emergency Regulations that restricted political activities, MNP was eventually paralyzed. With that development, the radical Malay nationalists were politically disorganized for the next six or seven years. Their ideals and aspirations continued to enjoy attention, but found different forms of expression, at times seemingly apolitical. This will be the subject of our next chapter.

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[1] Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan Ke Punchak* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Kejora, 1972), English translation with introduction and annotation by W.R. Roff, *Carving the Path to the Summit* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Unversity, 1979).

[2] See Abd. Malek Hj. Md. Hanafiah, *Sejarah Perjuangan Kesatuan Melayu Muda, 1937-1945*, (unpublished B.A. Honors graduation exercise, National University of Malaysia, 1974), p. 145.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[4] Abd. Malek, *op. cit.*
Also see Mustapha Hussein: "Dari KMM Ke UMNO", *Nadi Insan*, No. 17 (September 1980), p. 5.

[5] For a detailed account on the emergence of this newspaper, see Boestamam *Carving . . .*, pp. 5-9.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[7] *Utusan Melayu*, October 23, 1945; Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 22-27. Boestamam does not mention a date, but gives a fairly detailed account of the proceedings at the preliminary meeting. He does note that the day after the meeting, *Suara Rakyat* prominently published news of the new party's formation. I have not been able to see that particular issue of *Suara Rakyat*. G.P. Means is incorrect in giving October 1946 as MNP's formation date. See his *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 89. Dr. Burhanuddin (who successively held the posts of Vice-President, President, and Supreme Advisor to the MNP) in his two booklets, *Perjuangan Kita* (Singapura: Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya, 1946), and *Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (Bukit Mertajam: Pustaka Semenanjung, 1954), gave October 17, 1945 as MNP's formation date, which was similar to the date in the *Utusan Melayu* report.

[8] Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Melayu Raya* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Kejora, 1972), p. 3.

[9] A copy of the constitution can be found in UMNO file SG. 96/1946, Malaysian National Archives, Petaling Jaya. In translating the manifesto, I have maintained, as far as possible, the original syntax, even though it is somewhat imprecise.

[11] Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *Perjuangan Kita . . .*, p. 53.

[12] Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades* (Singapore: Times Book International, 1979), p. 65.

[13] Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 34-39. The acronym API in Malay means "fire".

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[15] Mohammad Yunus Hamidi, *Sejarah Pergerakan Politik Melayu Semenanjong* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1961), pp. 10-57.

[16] Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 52-57. Also see Adnan Hj. Mohd. Nawang, *Pelita Malaya*, in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin, comps. and eds., *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Historical Society, 1980), pp. 133-149.

[17] Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, p. 47.

[18] Cheah Boon Kheng, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[19] Keris Mas, *30 Tahun Sekitar Sastera* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979), p. 31.

[20] Adnan, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

*It should be noted that although the literacy rate among the Malay *rakyat* (common people) was low, the illiterate majority benefited from a newspaper or magazine by listening to someone reading it in the local coffeeshop which had become a kind of an "institution", as a favourite gathering place in the village. See Zainal Abidin Ahmad "Malay Journalism In Malaya", *Journal of the Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol XIX, Part II, (1941), pp. 244-250.

[21] Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-35. Also cf. Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 54-55.

[22] See next chapter.

[23] The Malayan Union has been extensively discussed elsewhere and our purpose in briefly mentioning it here is only to show its connection with the Pan Malayan Malay Congress which became a prelude to the postwar adversary relationship between the conservative and radical Malay nationalists. For further accounts of the Malay Union and the Pan Malayan Malay Congress, see A. Samad Ahmad, *Sejambak Kenangan – Sebuah Autobiografi* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981); Anthony J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malaya Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph No. 8, 1979); Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malayan Region 1946-1965* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1974); James de V. Allen, *The Malayan Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Monograph Series, No. 10, 1967); Ishak bin Tadin, "Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1960.

[24] A. Samad Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[25] For further information on the MNP and Malayan Union, see Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 46-51; Mohammed Yunus Hamidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-68; James de V. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[26] Personal interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, August 1980. MNP's proposal for the Red and White Flag as the UMNO symbol was formally tabled by Ishak at the Ipoh June 19, 1946 meeting. Cf. Boestamam, *Carving.....*, pp. 70-71. Another reason given for the withdrawal was that "though the most numerically powerful of the [UMNO] affiliated organizations [MNP] had a voting strength no greater than that of the small local associations with a fraction of membership of the MNP". See *The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Ta Chong Press, November 1947), p. 2. A full copy of this document can be found in M. Noordin Sopiee, ed., *The Battle of the Federation of A Historical Source Book*, n.p., n.d.

[27] Dr. Burhanuddin, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] This matter has been extensively discussed elsewhere. Apart from the literature on the Malayan Union referred to above, see also Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), Chapters 5, 7, and 8.

[30] Means, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[31] *Malaya Tribune*, Kuala Lumpur, January 8, 1947. The following account is largely drawn from the article.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] A Member of the MNP, "The MNP in Malaysia: A Reply", *The Straits Times*, November 28, 1946.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] See Cheah Boon Kheng, *The Masked Comrades*.

[38] For a detailed discussion of the MNP's *Melayu Raya* aspiration, see Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (Bukit Mertajam: Pustaka Semenanjung, 1954). Cf. also Ibrahim Haji Yaacob, *Musa dan Bangsa* (n.p. Djakarta? : N.V. Alma'arif, 1951) and *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka* (Djakarta: Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka, 1957).

[39] *Loc. cit.*

[40] *The Straits Times*, December 4, 1946.

[41] *The Straits Times*, December 7, 1946.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Ishak Haji Muhammad, "Jawapan Kepada Hidup Melayu" *Majallah Keris*, Bil. 8 (1946), p. 6.

[44] For detailed examples of MNP's activities at the local level, See Yusof bin Jusoh, *Gerakan Politik Kiri Orang-orang Melayu Pulau Pinang: 1945-1948* (unpublished B.A. Honors graduation exercise, Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977-1978 academic session), and Mohd. Nor bin Mohd. Amin, *Jenderam – Korban Kharurat 1948-1958* (unpublished B.A. Honors graduation exercise, Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1977-1978 academic session).

[45] Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, p. 34.

[46] Yusof bin Jusoh, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[47] *The Sunday Times*, February 23, 1947.

[48] *Sunday Tribune*, February 23, 1947.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *The Sunday Mail*, February 23, 1947.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Malay Mail*, March 27, 1947.

[53] For detailed, and rather picturesque, accounts of these activities, see Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, pp. 103-105.

[54] *Malaya Tribune*, October 21, 1947. Also cf. "Minutes of the 3rd Delegates Conference of the PUTERA and AMCJA, November 3, 1947", available in Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, *A Historical Source Book*, pp. 198-200.

[55] Boestamam, *Carving, . . .*, p. 117.

[56] Means, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

[57] Virginia Thompson and Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1950), p. 146.

[58] *The People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya*, p. 20.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[60] Cheah Boon Kheng, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

[61] *Straits Times*, September 23, 1947.

[62] See Mohd. Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to . . .*, pp. 30-25.

[63] W.R. Roff's introduction in Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, p. xviii.

[64] For a detailed account, see *ibid.*, pp. 34-39.

[65] Harry Miller, "History of API", *The Straits Times*, July 17, 1947.

[66] Personal interview with a former Selangor API leader, Baharom Basar, who provided the wording of the oath. Lenggeng, January 15, 1980.

[67] Yusof bin Jusoh, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[68] Stockwell, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] *The Straits Times*, April 1, 1947.

[71] See Ahmad Boestamam, *Testament Politik API – Merdeka dengan Darah* (Kuala Lumpur: L.T.A.P.I. Malaya, 1946).

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[75] Boestamam, *Carving . . .*, p. 90.

[76] Thompson and Adloff, *The Left Wing . . .* p. 146.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[82] *The Straits Times*, July 17, 1947.

[83] Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

[84] Short, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

[86] Cited by Stockwell, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] Cheah Boon Kheng, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

[89] *The Straits Times*, July 28, 1948.

[90] Means, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[91] See *The Straits Times*, July 26, 1948.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Politics of Frustration: Its Various Manifestations

This chapter will identify and analyze significant events and personalities in the first half of the 1950's in an attempt to illustrate the political mood and tempo of the Malays which ultimately proved relevant to the formation of *Partai Rakyat* (People's Party) and the consolidation of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) in the mid-50's.

The actual events and personalities are sometimes, perhaps, not as important in their impact on current politics as they may be in serving as background to the current political milieu. I emphasize this because many of the figures I will discuss have faded into political oblivion and many of the ideas and ideals associated with them are today frowned upon or banned from public discussion. Some of them have even been labelled racial and seditious.[1] Only a few have proven potent enough to pose a challenge to the electoral strength of the ruling coalition. In view of all this the reader could well believe that these events and personalities of the 50's are of slight importance or consequence. However, I will argue that, while it is often impossible to demonstrate a direct link between an event or personality in the 1950's and a particular political development, later it is also a fact that a number of personalities and events discussed here created a mood and a climate which helped the formation of the present day PMIP, and generally indicated the content and direction of the Malay opposition politics to the present. This has been often alluded to but never fully investigated. As an example of this, an obituary of Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy may be noted which suggested that he "might have left a different legacy to Malaysia had circumstances been

different in the hey-day of his political career".[2]

It is the composition and complexion of these "circumstances" which is the main concern of this chapter, because as has been emphasized before, of their impact in generating political ideas and ideals which ran counter to the principles and policies of the ruling majority party.

In several ways, the first half decade of the 1950's can be considered an important watershed in post World War II political history of Malaysia (Malaya). It was during this period that the struggle for the achievement of *merdeka* (independence) gained momentum. This period also witnessed the beginning of political cooperation between the major ethnic groups as exemplified by the electoral pact between the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in the 1952 Kuala Lumpur municipal elections. Subsequent events confirmed the pact's significance as a forerunner of close cooperative relationship between the two parties not only in winning elections but also in conducting a successful constitutional struggle towards independence. In addition to bringing cooperation among certain groupings, these years also brought frustration and failure to certain other groupings. This was the period when one of the most prominent Malay leaders immediately following the Second World War, Dato Onn bin Jaafar, began to lose his appeal. This eventually led to his resignation as leader of the political party he had founded. Subsequently, he made two further attempts at forming rival parties which proved futile. Almost about the same time another prominent Malay leader, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, staged a come-back to the political scene to assume the presidency of the largest party of Malay dissent. Both these events indicated growing frustration and impatience on the part of Malay radicals.

The growing frustration of the radicals was manifested in a number of other ways including the activities of Taha Kalu, Dr. Burhanuddin and others and events such as the *Nadrah riots* in Singapore in 1950, the formation of several new political parties, and the convening of various conferences

and congresses. Two common threads, namely, disenchantment with the prevailing political situation and a sense of apprehension about the future of the Malays, ran through all of these events. In a limited sense, another factor underlying these events was the generally similar historical background and perception of many of the participants. Besides being frustrated, the Malays in Malaya were generally confused, and a significant number feeling leaderless in the political wilderness of the late 1940's and early 1950's. For example, those who were influenced by radical political ideas, either members of or sympathizers with the "leftist" MNP and its satellite organizations, were left confused and intimidated by the dissolution of their organization and the detention of their leaders as a result of the Emergency. The Emergency not only restricted political activities but also imposed a considerable constraint on social and economic enterprises. Among the radical nationalists, such state of affairs prompted a sense of alienation and cynicism.

The conservative nationalists, supporters of political ideas embodied by UMNO, too were subjected to a sense of confusion, but for different reasons. One of these reasons was the involvement of its founder president, Dato Onn bin Jaafar, and some of his closest colleagues, in an elite multi-racial informal grouping called Communities Liaison Committee (CLC). This Committee – initially named Malay-Chinese Goodwill Committee – was initiated by the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, with the aim to achieve "inter-racial goodwill and harmony".[3] Although, as stated in one of its press releases, the CLC was "an unofficial group of individuals representing only themselves",[4] nevertheless members of the groups were, influential individuals occupying important public positions. Following its first meeting at Dato Onn's residence in Johore Bahru on December 31, 1948, the group met from time to time and made recommendations on matters of public or political importance such as citizenship, economics, education, language and politics. Specifically on citizenship, the CLC recommended a

more liberal policy than was acceptable to UMNO in order to allow more non-Malays to become citizens.[5] However, Dato Onn failed to persuade UMNO members to accept the CLC's recommendations. He also failed to persuade them to open UMNO membership to the non-Malays. This led to his eventual resignation from the party's presidency and triggered a crisis within the organization.

Thus, generally, the Malay populace across the whole spectrum of political persuasion – was experiencing a period of confusion, characterized in the main by a leadership crisis. The confusion, however, did not dampen the demand for *merdeka* even among the conservative nationalists. It was even more acute among the radical nationalists. Resentment to continuing British presence was steadily building up among both groups of political activities. These sentiments were further fuelled by revolutionary, or anti-colonial (anti-European) fervor that flowed in from Indonesia in many modes and forms.

Although means of communication and transportation between Malaya (especially Singapore) and Indonesia in the period under discussion were much less sophisticated than it is today, the immigration control and other bureaucratic aspects of travel between these places were less stringent then than at present.

Increasingly, more than just radical Islamic and anti-colonial ideas crossed these waters. Singapore had become the entrepot for arms shipments to Indonesia's independence fighters. Arms were acquired by Indonesian agents acting in various disguises (mainly as barter traders) with the aid and cooperation of local Malay nationalists, particularly, members of the radical MNP.[6] Naturally, these types of contacts between Malay and Indonesian nationalists intensified the process of politicization and fuelled the eagerness to achieve independence among the Malays. This was further reinforced by other agents and modes of political socialization emanating from Indonesia in the form of literary materials, radio broadcasts and theatrical performances. The cumulative effect of Indonesian Nationalist influence was thus

evident in heightened political consciousness. However, it was almost completely overwhelmed by a rising sense of frustration caused in the main by the lack of leadership and organization necessary to actualize and direct this consciousness. The problem of the lack of leadership was further aggravated by the dissolution of MNP and the detention of its leaders.[7]

The most obvious and significant implication of these events is that, grievances and aspirations expressed by UMNO at the time were not the only ones affecting the Malay population. There were others, needing to be articulated, and expressed. On one level of analysis, these other grievances and aspirations can be seen simply as issues of conflict among contending elites. However, this is not so simple a matter. It should be remembered that before the Emergency was declared in 1948, UMNO had a potentially formidable rival in the form of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP). This party was suppressed by the British colonial administration until it was forced to dissolve itself. At its dissolution, some of its leaders and followers were arrested under the Emergency Regulation, a few joined UMNO, a few also went underground, but most were left without any party. They continued to cherish the ideals and ideas of the MNP and its satellite organizations.[8] And, to a considerable extent, these "ideals and ideas" of the MNP provided the impetus or formed the basis for opposition against UMNO in the subsequent years.

Contrary to popular belief, the MNP was not actually "banned" by the British in the strict sense of the word. Instead, it "voluntarily" dissolved itself when a large majority of those attending the extraordinary general meeting could not agree to formally register the party under the new society ordinance imposed by the colonial Government during the Emergency to curtail radical political activity. The meeting was characterized by highly emotional discussions. Voices were raised and tears were shed in anger and desperation, over the main issue, whether the party should apply for registration under the Government's new regulation or should refuse to do so.

The views against registration centered on these main points: (i) that it was most unlikely that the Government would approve the registration, (ii) that, if application for registration were approved, a "registered" MNP would be more vulnerable to the colonial Government's scrutiny and intimidation, and (iii) that, to apply for registration was against the national pride of *bangsa Melayu* (Malay nation) and could at the same time be seen as tantamount to the *de jure* recognition of the colonial Government. To do so would have been inconsistent with the MNP's philosophy of *perjuangan non-cooperation* (struggle towards attaining independence without cooperating with the colonial rulers).

On the whole, participants at the meeting viewed the new regulations as a deliberate government attempt to curb the political activities of the party. Therefore, they recognized that the party had no choice but to dissolve itself as a "legal" organization. However, they refused to abandon the party's objectives. Various views were then expressed as to how to continue pursuing those objectives in the absence of a "formal" or "legal" organization. There were speakers who were in favor of an open armed struggle or a guerilla warfare in combination with the outlawed Malayan Communist Party (MCP). But Dr. Burhanuddin, supreme advisor to the party stoutly advised against that course.[9] However, privately, there were occasions after this meeting when while thinking aloud, Dr. Burhanuddin wondered if he should declare Malaya's independence and then lead a government underground or in exile.[10]

The less "revolutionary" speakers in the meeting naturally suggested less violent means in pursuing the party's objectives. Some suggested the infiltration of UMNO, while others were of the opinion that, upon dissolution its individual supporters should continue *cita-cita perjuangan* (the ultimate aims of the struggle) individually in the manner and style that each felt suited him best. Besides the decision to formally dissolve the MNP, this latter strategy of individual struggle was the only measure agreed upon. Thus, although there was no

formal government announcement banning the MNP, the mass arrest of its leaders and supporters crippled the party at every level of organizational level. Those who escaped the arrest but still felt threatened or intimidated left Malaya for Singapore, Indonesia or fled into the jungle.

Those who preferred to remain at home, such as Mohammed Asri bin Haji Muda, who was later to become the president of the PMIP, deliberately maintained apolitical profiles and concentrated on teaching at the *sekolah ra'ayat*, on literary and religious activities, or on small scale farming, while continuing *cita-cita perjuangan*.[11]

Since Singapore was politically and administratively not part of the Federation of Malaya, the repressive measures imposed on the MNP in Singapore were less stringent than those enforced in Malaya. Thus, the party continued to formally function in the port city until May 1 1950, when there too it had to dissolve itself,[12] following rejection of its application for an exemption from registration.[13] Interestingly enough this occurred about seven months before the *Nadrah riots*. In the Malay "politics" of frustration that ensued following the dissolution of the MNP a significant number of its former top and middle ranking leaders became actively involved , because arguably they needed an outlet for their emotions. The end of their party did not mean that their own political lives had also come to an end. Indeed a reconstruction of their continued involvement in politics, or in selected political events, will demonstrate that what appeared as isolated and unrelated events during this period were inter-related thematically, forming a pattern or continuum, on the basis of certain political motives as they were actually pursued. In the event they generated a certain political climate which possessed the potency of a powder keg. A detailed exploration of some of the most important of these events will serve to illustrate the point. One such event was variably known as Maria Hertogh riots, in Singapore in December 1950. At a glance the *Nadrah riots* appear to be solely religious in motivation. A more careful study, however, would show that the riots were indeed not

without political significance of their own in as much as they demonstrate the potentially explosive force of religion (Islam) in the Malay political arena.

The involvement of the former leaders of the dissolved MNP in the *Nadrah riots,* was by no means accidental. The riots were in accordance with MNP political objectives, even though, as mentioned above, the party had ceased to exist as a formal organization within the Federation of Malaya about one year earlier. The formal dissolution of the MNP had not dampened the determination or dedication of its leaders and supporters.

Among the ex-MNP leaders associated with these riots were Dr. Burhanuddin, Mohd. Taha Kalu, Darus Shariff, Harun Aminurrashid and Abdullah Sanggora. They were all members of the editorial board of the *Melayu Raya* daily which is believed to have contributed to the riots by arousing Muslim passions through the tone and content of its coverage. The first three of these people were members of the *Nadrah Action Committee* which was responsible for organizing public rallies where passion-arousing speeches were often made thus building up momentum for the riots. When interviewed almost 30 years later, some of the MNP leaders who were involved in the riots, noted that they had hoped to make use of the incident to create a revolutionary situation which would destabilize British colonial administration and ultimately lead to a revival of the *Melayu Raya* scheme. As noted earlier, this plan called for independence from the colonial powers, to be followed by the Union of Malaya and Indonesia in one nation-state.

The violence of the *Nadrah riots* can be gauged from the damage it caused to life and property: 18 persons killed and 173 injured, 72 motor vehicles burned and another 119 damaged.[14] Three days of disorder characterized by looting, arson and other general chaos – in one of the busiest port cities in the world, caused serious adverse effects on communication, trade and business activities.

The riots were preceded by a prolonged legal battle in the Singapore High Court over the custody of a 13-year old girl,

Maria Hurbedina Hertogh, between her Dutch natural parents (Mr and Mrs Adrianus Petus Hertogh) and her Malay/Indonesian foster mother (Che Aminah binte Mohamed). Aminah was originally a servant of the Hertoghs when Mr Hertogh served as a sergeant in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army in Java prior to the Second World War. In the early stages of the war, the Hertoghs were arrested and interned by the Japanese, but little Maria was left in the care of Aminah who brought her up in the Muslim faith and in the Malay culture. Maria's name had been changed to Nadrah binte Maarof.

Years later, when the war was over, the Hertoghs tried to find their daughter with the intention of taking her back to the Netherlands. Through the help of the Netherlands consulate in Singapore and local authorities in the Malay Peninsula, Maria and her foster mother, Aminah, were located at Kuala Trengganu, a small town at north eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula. The Hertoghs' attempt to repossess Maria and bring her back to the Netherlands led up to a legal trial in the Singapore High Court. This trial was portrayed by the vernacular press, especially the *Melayu Raya* daily newspaper and the QALAM monthly newsmagazine, as a battle of pride and dignity, between Islam and Christianity.

The Hertoghs' efforts to locate Maria and the subsequent trials that took place were preceded and surrounded by a turbulent social and political atmosphere characterized by socio-economic frustrations among the Malays and political antagonism against the Europeans. These were both compounded by the constant inflow of revolutionary fervor from Indonesia. As such, in order to fully comprehend the significance of the violent Nadrah incident (especially its political dimension) it is important to examine it while bearing in mind this already tense postwar/pre-independence atmosphere.

The MNP's formal dissolution in May 1950 did not in any way spell an end to its *cita-cita perjuangan*. Though they were now deprived of a formal organization and faced with various constraints because of the Emergency,

the bearers of *cita-cita perjuangan* never gave up their political principles or commitment. They retained their political consciousness and potential as a significant social force. We have seen this at work in the *Nadrah riots*, but it was just as evident in non-violent forms of agitation. The ordinary followers of the *cita-cita perjuangan* maintained their political consciousness, though they could not express it openly. Their undetained leaders continued to provide political leadership, though indirectly, through seemingly "apolitical" activities. This political process was reinforced by exposure to other, generally Indonesian, influences. Some kind of ideological or "perceptual" linkage between the leaders and the followers, as well as among the general bearers, of the *cita-cita perjuangan* was thus maintained.

The seemingly apolitical activities which the leaders engaged in included organizing and sponsoring the *bangsawan* (Malay opera) and other forms of theatrical performances, participating in public forums and discussions on educational, social and economic problems faced by the Malays, and even more significantly, sponsorship and participation in numerous writing and publishing enterprises.

The role of *bangsawan* performances as vehicles of political influence in the views and attitudes of the Malays, has been overlooked by most observers. (For example in her dissertation, Rahmah Bujang scarcely mentioned this dimension of *bangsawan).*[15] Many Malay and Indonesian political activists since the mid 1920s have used *bangsawan* and other forms of theatrical performances as an effective agent of politicization. As a cosmopolitan city and an important trade center, Singapore provided ample facilities and a fertile ground for such performances which were either produced by local amateurs or by roving professional groups. Among the latter, a group called *Bolero* led by Bakhtiar Effendi from Indonesia was noted to be most political in its orientation. Significantly, Bakhtiar was popular as a dramatist as well as a politician. For many years, he had been a political fugitive from the Dutch and Japanese colonial authorities. His most popular play in the late 1940's and early 1950's was called

Harimau Jantan (The Male Tiger). Presented in an episodic manner, *Harimau Jantan's* plot was similar to the Robin Hood theme. Mohammad Taha Kalu, while holding the post of Acting President of the MNP in late 1948 until right up to the outbreak of the *Nadrah riots* in December 1950 assisted his "personal friend Bakhtiar Effendy" in performing *Harimau Jantan* and other plays with heavy political undertones, all around Singapore. One of the more popular stages for such plays was the *Kota Raja Klab* in the compound of *Istana Kampung Gelam*. In many ways this had become the nerve-center of Malay political activities both openly and under the guise of promoting Malay language and literature.[16]

In addition to the professional *bangsawan* groups, such as *Bolero*, other youth, student and literary organizations were also active in staging shows which were consciously geared "to arouse the spirit and the consciousness of the Malay nation". Notable among such organizations were the *Persatuan Persuratan Pemuda-Pemudi Melayu Singapura* abbreviated 4PM SINGAPURA (The Literary Organization of Young Malay Men and Women of Singapore), *Gabungan Penuntut-Penuntut Melayu Semenanjung*, (GPMS, The Federation of Malay Student Unions of the Malay Peninsula), and *Angkatan Sasterawan 50*, (ASAS 50, The 1950 Literary Generation). These organizations were constituted within the period between the beginning of the Emergency and the outbreak of the Nadrah incidents and each was strongly committed to arousing the consciousness of the Malays in order to improve their lot educationally, economically and socially.

Some thirty years after its inception, one of the founders of 4PM SINGAPURA discussed how his organization resorted to various means in its efforts to awaken the spirit and the consciousness of the Malays. Performing arts were but one of them.[17] In their theatrical activities, members of 4PM fulfilled two needs simultaneously, one implicit, the other explicit. Members fulfilled the psychological need to express their own political feelings while presenting a subtle political message, designed to raise the political consciousness of

their audiences. This was actualized either in a *bangsawan*, a contemporary play or in a musical manner, usually a song by an individual or choir. In addition to that, it was a common practice in those days to open each performing event with a short speech, in most cases filled with political insinuations which pointed out the backwardness of the Malays in various aspects of life. In such speeches, frequent reference was made to Indonesia's successful struggle to achieve her national freedom. Thus the *cita-cita perjuangan* was kept alive and the political consciousness of the general populace was maintained, albeit masked. This is perhaps what Jaafar M. Ali meant 30 years later when he remarked while reflecting: "Malay nationalism in those days was invigorative but we did not know where to channel it because there was no suitable political organization."[18] He did not consider UMNO a "suitable" organization due to its conservative stance, and the aristocratic composition of its leadership. Until March 1951 UMNO continued to refuse to use *merdeka* (freedom) as its motto and slogan.

Besides performing arts, literary activities were also vigorously employed as a medium to continue *cita-cita perjuangan* by expressing personal political feelings and by subtly fostering politicization of the Malays. The most notable literary group in this respect was the ASAS 50 which explicitly declared that:

> The struggle of the 1950 Literary Generation is the struggle of the fans and enthusiasts of Malay language and literature which is launched with political and social consciousness and the realization that national unity is important to achieve national freedom, and that national freedom is a bridge towards social justice, peace and prosperity for the masses and all human beings over the world . . . and that language and literature is a vehicle for national unity in the struggle towards national freedom.[19]

ASAS 50 had been formed on August 6 1950, in a house belonging to a school teacher and short story writer, Mohd. Arif Ahmad. The idea for such a group was conceived by Mohd. Arif himself during his student days at the afore-

mentioned famous breeding ground of Malay "nationalism", i.e. Sultan Idris Training College, between 1946 and 1949. His desire to unite writers from the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Labuan and Brunei (he referred to all these territories as *tanah air,* the homeland) was communicated during these years, by means of personal letters, to scores of "[my] pen pals who were scattered all over *tanah air".* Upon the completion of his studies at the college, Mohd. Arif returned to Singapore to work as a school teacher and took an active role in *Kesatuan Guru-Guru Melayu Singapura* while occasionally contributing short stories and poetry to various vernacular publications. His extracurricular activities within the teachers' union and the literary field provided Mohd. Arif with the opportunity of being in close contact with a wide range of Malay intellectuals gathered in Singapore. These opportunities in turn, facilitated his pursuit of his college dream of uniting writers from *tanah air.* This led to the eventual formation of ASAS 50.[20]

A number of former API and MNP personalities were involved in the birth and early growth of ASAS 50. Noteworthy among them were Asraf, Keris Mas, Tongkat Warrant, Masuri SN, and Awami Sarkam. In one way or another each of these personalities was a bearer of the MNP's *cita-cita perjuangan.* Some 30 years later, three of them spoke, with nostalgic pride, of their involvement in API and MNP. Asraf for example reminisced about how he would save his school pocket money to buy street stall tea for his friends at API headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, which he visited almost every day on his way back from school.[21] Keris Mas, in his published memoirs as well as during several interview sessions, referred to his years when he was Chief Publicity Officer of the MNP in Pahang, as economically frustrating but psychologically rewarding.[22] Tongkat Warrant recalled how, as a police constable in Malacca in 1947 he became carried away emotionally – and almost forgot that he was on duty to keep the traffic in order – when participants to the MNP annual meeting marched with drums and trumpets around the town.[23] Thus it is not surprising that, when their radical

political parties were banned or dissolved, these writers, individually in their respective literary works, and collectively in their newly formed organization, ASAS 50, continued to transmit their political beliefs to their reading public.

Keris Mas affords particular insight into the motivation behind the content of ASAS publications as well as into the impact of the work of this organization. He described his role in ASAS as being "to arouse the consciousness of the masses by means of literary works" and to "continue the struggle of independence through writing".[24] Indeed, as noted earlier, even before the formation of ASAS and especially when he served as MNP Chief Publicity Officer for the North Eastern States of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan in 1947, Keris Mas's fame and prestige as a short story writer had proven to be a useful asset in facilitating the transmission of his political messages. During his tour throughout the three states to mobilize support for MNP, Keris Mas discovered that "interest and enthusiasm for poetry and short stories among the youth were widespread".[25] Youths were very eager to let Keris Mas know of such interest and he also discovered that in some villages certain individuals among the youths were given nicknames which correlated with the names of characters in certain short stories. Keris Mas noticed that among most of the youths he lectured to, or had dialogues with, there was an inseparable interest in both politics and literature. Perhaps this was why he believed that, in the absence of a formal political organization, he could still continue the struggle toward independence through literary medium. Evidently, his colleagues in ASAS 50 had similar beliefs as was demonstrated through the creative writings of individual members and through various memoranda ASAS 50 submitted to the Government, to various commissions and conferences, before, and after the *Nadrah riots*. One of Keris Mas's short stories, entitled *Pemimpin Kecil dari Kuala Semantan* (The small leader of Kuala Semantan) was widely acclaimed as an accurate depiction of the plight of the nationalist movement, i.e., "the youths and other freedom fighters who used to have radical attitudes were now deprived

of leadership and so, lost their sense of direction".[26] Admittedly, there was no way of measuring the exact impact of these literary works on the political attitudes of the youths and the freedom fighters just described. But one may infer that short stories such as the *Pemimpin Kecil dari Kuala Semantan*, written by a famous and politically committed literary figure who consciously chose "to continue his struggle for national freedom through literary writings" certainly helped sustain a sense of radicalism among the youths and freedom fighters who had once been his faithful audience at radical political meetings. The points made by Keris Mas regarding his own works are equally valid when applied to his colleagues in the field of poetry – a very popular genre of Malay Literature. Two of the most popular poems were Masuri SN's *Seribu Harapan* (One Thousand Hopes) and Tongkat Warrant's *Tanah Melayu* (The Malay Land).[27]

As can be gleamed from examples cited above, there was a clear ideological link – in terms at least of the continued pursuit of *cita-cita perjuangan* – between the dissolved MNP and ASAS 50. This point is further born out by the aims and membership of the latter. This relationship was further reinforced during an ASAS meeting to ratify its constitution and by-laws. At that time, ASAS 50 appointed two former top ranking leaders of the MNP as its general advisors. They were MNP's first national president and later, supreme advisor, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy and its former treasurer and chairman for cultural affairs, Harun Aminurrashid.[28]

The inclusion of the two former MNP national leaders at a high level in ASAS 50's affairs signified two main phenomena. First, from the point of view of the young writer who founded the organization, it signified their desire to use literature as a means of continuing the radicalism of in the MNP. Second, their willingness to accept the two former MNP leaders, vouched for their interest in continuing to play a leading role in radical Malay politics. Perhaps they regarded it as a necessary detour, as well as a reinforcement of *cita-cita perjuangan*. Indeed, anticipating the MNP dissolution, Dr.

Burhanuddin, Harun Aminurrashid and a few of their colleagues had already taken steps to diversify their efforts at politicizing the Malay populace outside the MNP structure. The most significant of their efforts was the setting up of a newspaper publishing company called *Syarikat Melayu Raya Press Ltd.* which was officially constituted at a meeting in a restaurant in Singapore on July 4, 1947. However, the company had to wait for more than three years to accumulate enough capital – by selling its shares to the public – before the first issue of the *Melayu Raya* daily went to press on August 29, 1950. While a number of other radical publications were printed in this period, I have chosen *Melayu Raya* as the example of a radical journal to discuss in depth its close and identifiable connections with the former MNP leadership. The newspaper bore the name of Harun Aminurrashid as its printer, publisher and managing editor. The inaugural issue contained a message from Dr. Burhanuddin in which, not unexpectedly, he whipped up Malay emotions by emphasizing that the Malays were the rightful owners of the country and therefore "[they] should be the ones to chart its course and its future".[29] He asserted that the Malay Language was the basis of *Kebangsaan Malaya* (the nationalism of Malaya).[30] The tone and the content of the message, was clearly reminiscent of the MNP years. Subsequent issues of this newspaper carried out the tone of Dr. Burhanuddin's inaugural message in editorial and news-coverage policy. Editorial columns in the second and third issues dealt with the problems of the Malay economy and Malay education, respectively. On other occasions, the editorials dealt with such nationalist issues as the plight of Malay fishermen exploited by Chinese middlemen,[31] the need to nationalize tin, rubber and other important industries,[32] and the need for Malaya to have her own national army in order to replace the British army.[33] In relation to this last subject, the newspaper openly criticized the British colonial administration which "pretended to adopt a liberal policy but at the same time was constantly suspicious of the growing political power of the indigenous people".[34] On page one of the same

issue, the newspaper prominently displayed a news story pertaining to a remark by UMNO President, Dato Onn, who criticized the British administration in Malaya for "not trusting the indigenous people and deliberately setting a low limit for their promotion within the Malay regiment" of the British Army.[35] On yet another occasion, the editorial column protested the attitudes of certain circles among the immigrant communities who had voiced their resentment over the Government's proposal to set up the Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA). RIDA was intended to improve the economic lot of the Malays especially in the rural areas. Typically, the editorial column strongly defended the Malays' position and interests, stating in rather strong language, that "the awakening of the Malays [who are] struggling to improve their lot should not be misconstrued as an act to monopolize (the economy) because in real fact, they are actually salvaging or securing what is left over [from what has been taken by others] of their (the Malays') rightful possessions as a community with a nation and homeland".[36]

Another remarkable feature of this newspaper was its high-priority treatment of news from or about Indonesia. There was hardly an issue without at least one news item about Indonesia on the front page and a few more on the inside pages. This created the impression that news from or about Indonesia was considered as if it was local news. Daily publication of detailed programming from *Radio Republic Indonesia Jakarta* further testified to the affinity the *Melayu Raya* had for Indonesia. Again, all these were a reminiscence of the MNP's *cita-cita perjuangan*, called for Malaya independence and union with Indonesia in a free republic.

Interviewed separately thirty years later, two of *Melayu Raya's* founders unequivocally referred to the newspaper as an extention of the MNP's politics. Mohammad Taha Kalu who was MNP's acting president when the party was dissolved, pointed out that *Melayu Raya* was set up to be the mouthpiece of the *orang-orang kiri* (the leftists) and to carry on the struggle of the MNP. The other vernacular newspaper,

Utusan Melayu, he claimed, could no longer be relied upon.[37] The same sentiment was voiced by Harun Aminurrashid although without the contemptuous remarks concerning *Utusan Melayu*.[38]

Though the former MNP leaders now had a useful organ at their disposal, the Emergency Regulations, nevertheless imposed various limitations on their journalistic freedom. Thus, in spite of their anxiety to vigorously pursue *cita-cita perjuangan* by journalistic means, they were constrained from provoking direct or open political agitation. Although, at times they seemed to get away with what could certainly be considered politically provocative coverage news, in general, the *Melayu Raya* journalists had to camouflage their political motives by taking care to write on subjects which on the surface appeared to be apolitical. Or if the material was political, it could not be obviously MNP-type radical stuff. Of course, there were exceptions every now and then. In early October 1950, *Melayu Raya* highlighted the concern of the Malay rulers about a proposed amendment to the citizenship law which, if accepted, would have resulted in most immigrants being granted citizenship.[39] Two days after, in an article heading, *Mana Ikrar-Ikrar Federation Malaya?* (Where are the promises of the Federation of Malaya?) another editorial questioned the constitutional provisions of the Federation of Malaya which were more favorable than those of Malayan Union Scheme to the Malays but whose implementation had been far from satisfactory to the Malays.[40]

News items and editorial comments on UMNO's activities, were presented in such a manner as to subtly propagate the MNP's ideals. For example, this can be noticed, *inter alia*, in the news reports and editorial comments pertaining to the criticisms levelled by an UMNO president regarding British attitudes toward setting up a national army for Malaya. Another example pertained to the movement within UMNO to change the party's slogan from *"Hidup Melayu"* (Long live the Malays) which was considered conservative, to the radical *Merdeka*, which had been the MNP's slogan from its inception. The idea had been only casually mentioned by

a delegate to an UMNO general meeting in Kuala Kangsar on August 29, 1950. There had been no formal motion. But, nonetheless, *Melayu Raya* not only made headlines out of it[41] but, a week later the matter became an editorial subject under the suggestive heading, *Jiwa Baru Dalam UMNO* (New Blood in UMNO).[42] This brings to mind some of the remarks made at the MNP's special meeting, which, among other things, suggested that when MNP was dissolved, its supporters should try to infiltrate UMNO. About seven months after the Kuala Kangsar meeting, in another general meeting on March 25 and 26, 1951, UMNO formally adopted a resolution by its youth wing to change the party's slogan from the conservative *Hidup Melayu* to the radical *Merdeka*.[43]

In dealing with explicitly political subjects, *Melayu Raya* seemed to be generally subtle in its agitation against the British, whereas on matters pertaining to education, economics, language and religion it was forthright and explicit. The emphasis was always on the state of deprivation and backwardness of the Malays. In early November 1950, the newspaper focused on the problems surrounding the disproportionately small number of Malay students in institutions of higher learning. First it reported a remark by the President of the Muslim Students Association at University of Malaya, Muhathir Iskandar, which pointed out that there were only 80 Malays out of the 750 students in the university. University Malaya was at that time located in Singapore.[44] Then, the next day, *Melayu Raya* commented on the generally deplorable state of Malay education, especially at the tertiary level. It pointed out that in the Serdang Agricultural College, for example, the number of Malay students had declined from 75% (of the whole student population) before the Second World War, to 15% after the war. In the Kuala Lumpur Technical College, the decline from pre to postwar period was from 50% to 15%.[45]

Another significant report about the deplorable state of Malay education was featured on September 11 of that year, which dealt with a special conference organized by the *Kesatuan Guru-Guru Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malay

Teachers Union) which, incidentally, had participated in the formation of ASAS 50. The main objective of the conference was to discuss the problems of education for Malays, and the *Melayu Raya* article viewed it as "a meeting which should be considered very important in regard to the fate of the language and the nation of the Malays in the future". The presence of several prominent political figures, such as Saadon Zubir, Mohammed Taha Kalu and P.V. Sharma, was specifically mentioned in the report.[46] Taha Kalu was later detained because of his alleged involvement in the *Nadrah riots*, while P.V. Sharma met the same fate because of his alleged activities in the communist movement.

From the tone and content of the *Melayu Raya's* journalism related above, it is obvious that in spite of the various constraints imposed by the Emergency Regulations, the newspaper spared no effort to politicize, albeit subtly, any issue which would possibly arouse socio-political consciousness of its Malay readers. Thus, it was not surprising that, during the progress of the Nadrah trial, this newspaper became deeply involved and was considered to have substantially contributed to the bloody riots which eventually took place. To the radical Malay nationalists the case was certainly a handy issue for fuelling grass-roots resentments against the British. Although the Nadrah trial primarily involved a Dutch family, the Malays saw little difference between Dutch and British colonialists.

It was apparent that the basic consideration of *Melayu Raya's* operators, who were almost identical with the former MNP leadership, was to capitalize on the issue as part of the continuing effort to pursue *cita-cita perjuangan*. In the beginning, however, the most prominent figure in the leadership, namely, Dr. Burhanuddin, regarded the Nadrah case as a purely religious issue and was not sure if he and his colleagues should politicize it. By way of contrast, two of his colleagues, Harun Aminurrashid and Taha Kalu, felt very strongly that the incident "was an opportunity to continue the MNP's struggle because the issue can be utilized to build up resentment against the British".[47] After a couple of short

meetings among these three politicians and a few others, at the former MNP headquarters on Palembang Road, they finally agreed to become actively involved in the case which had by then become a unifying symbol to scores of Malay/Islamic organizations on the island. The former MNP leadership decided that not all of them should openly identify themselves with the Nadrah agitation campaign. It was resolved that Dr. Burhanuddin, Mohammed Taha Kalu and Mohammed Mustaza would openly and actively lead the agitation, whereas Abdullah Zawawi, Hamid Haji Abdul and Harun Aminurrashid would remain in the background, where they would be ready to continue providing leadership should the front line leaders be incarcerated. However, all of them maintained regular, frequent contact to assess the situation and to plan the strategy for further agitation. Of course, the participation of these men was best facilitated by the *Melayu Raya* journalistic infrastructure which included a crew of reporters who had been active supporters of the dissolved MNP. One of them, Abdullah Sanggora, even had two years of experience as a guerilla warfare broadcaster in Sumatra, during the Indonesian armed struggle against the Dutch in late 1940's.

The position of Dr. Burhanuddin and his colleagues in the agitation campaign was further strengthened by his close relationship with the leaders of the various sub-ethnic communities in Singapore such as the Boyanese, Banjarese, Javanese and Minangkabaus. He was truly a leader of nationwide stature. As an *ulama* (a religious scholar) he was widely revered and his sermons at the Prophet Muhammad's birth celebrations held thousands of listeners spellbound.[4 8] And as a former president and general adviser of the dissolved MNP, his homeopathy clinic at the site of MNP headquarters had become more like a classroom for political tutorials for his fans and followers who came to Singapore for short visits from all over the country. During the pre-riot agitation period, perhaps due to the *Melayu Raya's* news coverage and to the frequent rallies at the historic Sultan Mosque on the junction of Sultan Street and North Bridge Road, Dr.

Burhanuddin's relationship with all these various groups was renewed and intensified. His two prominent colleagues, Harun Aminurrashid and Taha Kalu, each had his own constituency as well.

As a prolific writer and a former teachers' college lecturer, Harun Aminurrashid was popular and influential among the vernacular intelligentsia, while Taha Kalu, a former high ranking indigenous officer in the police force, still maintained a close rapport with many of his former colleagues and still commanded considerable respect from the Malay rank and file in that time. These credentials enabled the three personalities to become effective leaders of anti-British agitation. Above and beyond this was their perception of the suitability of the Nadrah case, which on the surface seemed merely to be a religious issue, as a basis for an elaborate political agitation against the British.

Dr. Burhanuddin, however, had an additional reason which encouraged him to take a leading role in generating such agitation. As an experienced, leading politician, whose party had just been forced to disband as a result of suppressive British policies, Dr. Burhanuddin realized that the British colonial regime in Singapore would not wait too long before it clamped down any activity which it perceived as undermining its authority. He further believed that the British would have done the same regarding the Nadrah agitation campaign had it not been that Karim Ghani, who preceded Dr. Burhanuddin as leader of this campaign, was a personal friend of Sir Malcolm MacDonald, the British High Commissioner for Southeast Asia, stationed in Singapore. This friendship, Dr. Burhanuddin believed, helped to sustain the agitation campaign a little longer. Such perception gave Dr. Burhanuddin an extra incentive to actively involve himself in the agitation, before the Government interfered.[49] And in spite of his initial hesitation at politicizing what was perceived as a religious issue, he was now eager to make use of it. He told one of his disciples and confidantes that he intended to use it as a barometer to test "if there were still any more Malays and Muslims in Singapore".[50] And as the

barometer of public reaction in Singapore and throughout the Peninsula showed, during the agitation campaign, and especially during the three-day riots, there were certainly still Malays and Muslims in these places. The Malays were in fact there as a "perceptual group" which could readily be transformed into an "identity group",[51] and which could then be translated into a significant political force.

However, as events during and immediately after the riots demonstrated, the Malays lacked the effective and coherent leadership, especially at the regional and local levels with which to make the final transformation to a significant political force. The major cause of this leadership problem was the aforementioned mass arrest of a sizable number of MNP's supporters in 1948 under the Emergency Regulations. And as a result, what Dr. Burhanuddin and his colleagues accomplished in the Nadrah campaign, fell short of their ambitious, if unrealistic, targets. Of course, almost three decades after it occurred, leading personalities in the agitation campaign took pride in discussing how they had "managed to put the colonial Government machinery in Singapore out of control for at least three days",[52] and had proven that "the Malays were not a bunch of eunuchs but were ever ready to sacrifice their lives in defense of their national honor and religious dignity".[53] But what they hoped to accomplish was definitely more than just that. From their own statements, it is obvious they wanted to revive and sustain the anti-British (European) feeling which was widespread at the hey-day of the dissolved MNP. They wanted to take revenge for the repression inflicted upon the MNP and many of its leaders. They wanted to tap and direct the frustration of the populace toward sustained revolutionary activity. They wanted to create a revolutionary situation and to revive interest in the idea of a Greater Indonesia which would include Malaya. Furthermore, Taha Kalu believed that, with "adequate preparation and proper coordination", they could have really seized power.[54] However, reflecting 30 years later, another leader of the rioters, who was actually out in the street, using a Malay proverb,

admitted that the power equation was like the *durian dan mentimun* [55] (a tough, thorny fruit against the soft and perishable cucumber). And indeed, although the Malays who formed the majority of the rank and file in the police force had explicitly shown their sympathy for the rioters, the whole power structure in the colony was, without doubt, impenetrable, especially by internal disenfranchised challengers.

Perhaps to satisfy himself, two days after the riots broke out and after yielding to the Government's request to speak over Radio Singapore appealing to the rioters to restore order, Taha Kalu made a trip north in order to assess the situation and the impact of the incident in the Peninsula itself. Along with him were Karim Ghani and Mohammed Mustaza. All of them were members of the Nadrah Action Committee which, together with the daily *Melayu Raya* was the major generator of the agitation that led to the bloody riots. They went north as far as Tanjung Malim stopping in major towns and villages which had been MNP strongholds.

Their general impression of this trip was that there existed a widespread sympathy for the Nadrah case but that the time was not yet ripe for the revolution which had been prematurely stunted by the arrest of MNP's leaders. Taha Kalu believed that, had this situation been slightly altered, the leaders of the radical nationalists would have seized the opportunity provided by the popular support of the Nadrah cause, to declare independence for Malaya. Aside from what has been mentioned above, he felt that the alterations necessary for a revolution would have included proper co-ordination and the realization of a promise made by Malay personnel in the British Army and the police force.

Today, Taha Kalu's perception of the reality then, might sound like day-dreaming or wishful thinking. But, such perception must be viewed in the light of two inter-related factors. Firstly, the mythical account of Indonesian freedom fighters, who were successful against the Dutch despite being armed mainly with *bambu runcing* (sharpened pointed bamboo stick), had a considerable impact among those who shared Taha Kalu's political perception. Secondly, former

supporters of the banned *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API) who had sworn to snatch independence by blood, still made their presence felt, despite their disorganization. They were still fond of singing their march songs and reminiscing their paramilitary activities prior to the dissolution of their organization.

Another significant factor that should be taken into account in assessing Taha Kalu's assessment of the revolutionary climate was that at the height of the Nadrah agitation campaign he was approached by representatives of various groups offering numerous types of support. Among the more important of these groups were two Chinese men who claimed to have come on behalf of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). Another was a mysterious man dressed all in black who conveyed to Taha Kalu a *kris* (Malay dagger with wavy blade) which he claimed to bring on instructions from the famous mystic Kiyai Salleh from Batu Pahat.[56]

Taha Kalu declined the MCP's package offer but accepted support in terms of food, drinks and manual armoury, such as *parang* (long heavy knife) and *cangkul* (chisel with long handle). These were forthcoming particularly from members of the Chinese community in Singapore. Understandably, the *kris*, purportedly sent by Kiyai Salleh, was highly symbolic. And indeed, according to at least two other accounts, a band of Kiyai Salleh's followers (who were believed to be highly skillful in the Malay art of self defense and at the same time, invulnerable to metal) had already moved southward from Batu Pahat enroute Singapore to assist the rioters revolutionary leaders. But the conservative UMNO president Dato Onn Jaafar allegedly collaborated with the British authorities in the Peninsula to pre-empt this convergence of manpower.[57]

On several other occasions, Dato Onn was reported to have criticized those whom he called "those who stirred up the riots".[58] He regretted that "not only the (British) administration but 80% of Singapore residents have lost confidence in us because of the actions of a few" [59] Such an attitude of Dato Onn was later described by his successor as UMNO

president, Tunku Abdul Rahman, as "my first disagreement with Dato Onn".[60] The resentment against Dato Onn's attitudes on this matter also took a minor violent expression when a small unruly crowd stoned his car while he was going to make a radio broadcast pertaining to the riot at the Cathay Building in Singapore.[61] The significance of Dato Onn's attitudes and remarks about the incident was that not only did he fail to empathize with the vast majority of his own Malay race, including many of his followers in UMNO, who felt their religious honor and dignity had been outraged in the Nadrah case, but his conservative outlook had helped the British to hamper Taha Kalu's plans to create a revolutionary atmosphere aimed at seizing power from the British.

Thus, in addition to opposing the formidable and repressive colonial authority, Taha Kalu's difficulties were compounded by the conservative Malay political forces which were opposed to radical changes and inclined to cooperate with the British. In addition, the potentially active support of the masses, who were generally sympathetic to the radical's cause, could not be effectively exploited due to the lack of local level leaders. As noted previously, they had been detained in 1948. Realizing all of these obstacles, Taha Kalu and his colleagues cut short their trip at Tanjung Malim. Less than 30 hours after they had started the journey from Singapore, they were back to the riot stricken island.

Before they could give a full report about their trip to Dr. Burhanuddin, the three were arrested together with other members of the Nadrah Action Committee, including Dr. Burhanuddin himself, Darus Shariff and Syed Ali Al-Attas. The arrests took place almost at the same time as the riots were quelled. This was followed by the suspension of the *Melayu Raya*.

About one month later on January 16, 1951, the Governor of Singapore announced the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry to look into the causes and consequences of the riots. On February 10, 1951, three commissioners, headed by a Member of the British Parliament, Sir Alfred Henry Lionel Leach, flew into Singapore from London to conduct the

inquiry . The Commission investigated the matter for about one month, conducting 19 sessions which involved no less than 165 persons.[62] The scope of the Commission's inquiry was apparently confined to the territorial colony of Singapore.For the purpose of this study, however, a brief examination on the fall-out from these riots (and the preceding agitation campaign) beyond the boundaries of Singapore, is necessary.

As mentioned earlier, the Emergency Regulations within the Federation had prompted many radical Malay nationalists to take "refuge" in Singapore where restrictions against political activities were less stringent. Other factors also made Singapore an ideal center for social, cultural, and political activities. Its strategic location on the international sea route between Europe, the Middle East, Australia and the Far East had made Singapore economically and militarily important. Accordingly, the British had developed the island's infrastructure not only to cater to international trade, but also as an elaborate military base. Singapore could also boast about its long tradition of secondary and tertiary education, its fine museum and its libraries. In short, historically and structurally, this cosmopolitan island was fully equipped to accommodate almost any kind of activity.

Additionally, due to its geographic location and strategic value, Singapore had been near the top of the list as a center for dissemination of ideas, to the Malay States in the North, since its initial settlement by the Dutch in 1824. It was there that the first Malay newspaper – *Jawi Peranakan* – was published in 1876. This was followed up by many other publications in the form of newspapers, journals and popular magazines which became significant agents of political, social, and religious change for the Malays in the Peninsula. Most prominent among these publications were *Al-Imam* (1906), *Utusan Melayu* (1907), *Lembaga Melayu* (1914), *Warta Malaya* (1930),[63] *Fajar Asia*, *Semangat Asia* and *Berita Malai* (the last three were published during the Japanese occupation), *Kenchana*, *Hiburan*, *Mastika*, *Qalam* and *Belia* (the last five were published between 1947 and 1955).[64] All

these factors made Singapore a focal point of interest, of contact with the world, and a constant source of numerous types of information. Accordingly, events and developments in the island were constantly monitored by the "informed" public to the North.

Hence, it was not surprising that when the Nadrah agitation campaign, and eventually the riots, began in Singapore, the Malays on the Peninsula learnt about it immediately and, with varying degrees of emotional and ideological commitment, identified themselves with the Malay cause. Like their counterparts in Singapore, the bearers of *cita-cita perjuangan* in the Federation, saw in these events an opportunity to revive and intensify and disseminate the anti-British feelings of API, AWAS and MNP.

Some other Malays, who were more conservative in their outlook and who did not seem to perceive the Nadrah-connected events as politically relevant, showed their sympathies in various "apolitical" ways. Certain organizations within the Federation, such as the Muslim League of Penang and Province Wellesley, the Perak Council of Religious Affairs and Malay Customs, and the Trengganu State Branch of United Malays National Organization, set up special committees to raise funds for Che Aminah (Nadrah's foster mother) to help pay legal expenses incurred during the trial.[65] In the northeastern state of Kelantan, a local political group, *Persetiaan Melayu di Raja Kelantan* , cabled the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. James Griffiths, in London, expressing grief and regret over the riots. The telegram also stressed that the Malays considered the situation (resulting from the riots) as deteriorating. They therefore requested the British Government to negotiate the early return of Nadrah to Singapore.[66] The *Kesatuan Melayu United Kingdom*, (Malay Union of United Kingdom), in its annual, general meeting on December 26, 1950, in London, criticized the manner in which the Nadrah case was handled in the Singapore court and also deplored the arrest of Muslim leaders accused of having incited the riots[67]

Not surprisingly in Indonesia as well, sympathy for the

Nadrah case was widespread. Besides various comments by several high ranking Indonesian government officials condemning the British authority in Singapore, there were also reports about the formation of volunteer groups in Indonesia to help their "brethren fighting against the infidels and the imperialists".[68] And indeed, the official report of the riot inquiry commission singled out Indonesians living in Singapore as having "played a large part in the ferocious attacks which were made on Europeans and Eurasians on the night of the 11th and the 12th December".[69] The Commission's report also noted that "on the 23rd February, 1951, of the 530 persons who had been detained or convicted for their part in the riots, no less than 181 were Indonesians, and of that number, 65 were Indonesians born outside the Colony". The participation of the Indonesians gained even greater significance in the light of points made earlier concerning the close relationship of Dr. Burhanuddin with leaders of the various sub-ethnic communities on the island and about the role-model affinity the former MNP leadership had for Indonesia. Taha Kalu's perception of the reality at that time should also be looked against this background.

Two other points which should be stressed here, regarding the factors that influenced Taha Kalu's and his colleagues' perceptions, are the rocketing popularity of the *Melayu Rayu* newspaper and the reports of the formation of *jihad groups* within the Peninsula.

In the official *Report of the Singapore Riots Inquiry Commission*, three publications were singled out for their prominent roles in arousing public sentiments during the agitation campaign. These publications, which had become faithful organs of the Nadrah Action Committee, were the Malay daily, *Melayu Raya*, the Tamil weekly, *Malaya Nanban*, the English weekly, *Dawn* in accompaniment with its Malay edition, *Sinaran*. The official *Report* rightly pointed out that, "from the 4th to the 11th December articles appeared in the *Melayu Raya* treating the Hertoghs' case as [amounting to a religious issue] between Islam and Christianity".[70] What the official *Report* did not explicitly point out, was that such

articles had helped to bring to the surface political hatred while arousing deep seated, widespread Malay resentment against the British. Or in the words of its publisher, the *Melayu Raya's* coverage of the events had purposely helped "to awaken national consciousness of the Malays in order to come forward in defense of their nation and religion, their honor and dignity".[71] In relation to this, it should be noted that, during the agitation campaign, Dr. Burhanuddin was available 24 hours at the newspaper's headquarters to give advice as well as to monitor the development of the campaign.[72]

Another aspect the official *Report* failed to mention was that the *Melayu Raya's* coverage of the events had created an unprecedented demand for the newspaper among the Malay reading public in Singapore as well as in the Federation. Such a demand had inflated its price, at least in Perak, Penang and Province Wellesley, from 15 cents to one dollar.[73]

Perhaps influenced and inflammed by the *Melayu Raya's* reports and other forms of communication, Malays in the Federation showed their sympathies, not only by setting up committees to raise funds, but also, as it was widely rumoured,[74] by secretly organizing an army of *pendekars* (men who master the skill of traditional Malay martial arts). These men were to go to Singapore to aid in the cause of the radicals or to remain in the Federation, awaiting the opportune moment to begin an armed struggle as an extention of the Singapore riots. In addition to the *Melayu Raya's* inflammatory articles, Malays in the Federation were also exposed to subtle instigation in congregation places, such as prayer houses, especially during the well attended weekly Friday sermons where they were told about "the infidels insulting our sacred religion".[75] In private communications among Malays, however, the tone of the instigation was less subtle and the talks about *jihad* (holy war) flowed more freely. This explained why an old hand in Malay politics believed that if the British had not immediately acted to curb it, the Nadrah incident could have easily exacerbated into a bloody chaos of a larger magnitude.[76] However, as has been related earlier, the British

authority did act immediately and firmly. Among the immediate actions was the detention of Dr. Burhanuddin and Taha Kalu and the banning of *Melayu Raya* publication, both of which meant inflicting a severe blow to the pursuance of *cita-cita perjuangan*. Then, for about two years until early 1955, except for its expression in literary form, there was some kind of "interregnum" in the activities of radical Malay nationalism.

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[1] See, for example, *The Straits Times*, August 13 and 14, 1970; January 23, 1971. See also, cf. *Towards National Harmony* (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Cetak Kerajaan, 1971), p. 3.

[2] *The New Straits Times*, October 27, 1969.

[3] *The New Straits Times*, January 11, 1949.

[4] *Statement by the Communities Liaison Committee*, mimeographed copy, dated April 19, 1950.

[5] *Ibid.*, cf. *The Straits Times*, April 19, 1950; and Ishak bin Tadin, "Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (March 1960), pp. 74-75.

[6] Personal interviews with Baharom Basar, Lenggeng, Negri Sembilan, January 22, 1980; A. Hussin, Petaling Jaya, July 25, 1980. See also Keris Mas's *30 Tahun Sekitar Sastera* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979), p. 18.

[7] Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-62.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Personal interview with Baharom Basar, Lenggeng, Negri Sembilan, January 22, 1980.

[10] Personal interview with Taharuddin Ahmad, Penang, 11 May, 1980.

[11] Personal interviews with Datuk Mohd. Asri bin Haji Muda, Kuala Lumpur, January 21, 1980; Muhammad Fakhruddin Haji Abdullah, Pasir Mas, February 20, 1977, Baharuddin Latif, Kuala Lumpur, July 21, 1980.

[12] *The Sunday Mail*, February 21, 1960.

[13] *The Straits Times*, April 1950.

[14] *Report of the Singapore Riots Inquiry Commission 1951* (Singapore: Government Printer, 1951), pp. 30-31.

[15] Cf. Rahmah Bujang, *Sejarah Perkembangan Drama Bangsawan Di Tanah Melayu dan Singapura* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975).

[16] Personal interview with Mohammad Taha Kalu, Kuala Lumpur, June 2, 1980.

[17] Personal interview with Jaafar Mohammad Ali, who is currently a member of *Berita Harian* editorial staff, Kuala Lumpur, January 22, 1979.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Memoranda* – Kumpulan tulisan Angkatan Sasterawan '50 dengan lampiran rumusan Kongres Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu Ketiga (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962), inside front cover.

[20] See Syed Hussin Ali, "Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Bahasa dan Sastra Melayu (Di Singapura) selepas Perang Dunia II (Hasnya ASAS 50)", *Bahasa*, Jilid II, Bil. 2, (March 1960), pp. 2-66. Also cf. Keris Mas's *30 Tahun*. . . pp. 82-120.

[21] Personal interview with Asraf, Petaling Jaya, August 4, 1980.

[22] Personal interview with Keris Mas, Petaling Jaya, August 4, 1980. See also his memoir, *op. cit.*

[23] Personal interview with Tongkat Warrant (also known as Usman Awang). Kuala Lumpur, August 6, 1980.

[24] *Nadi Insan*, August 1980, p. 4.

[25] Keris Mas, *30 Tahun* . . ., p. 33.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[27] See Masuri SN, *Bunga Pahit* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1961) and Usman Awang, *Gelombang* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1960). In each of these anthologies, there was an introduction by Syed Hussin Ali and Ismail Hussein, respectively, discussing the social and political context of the poems.

[28] *Melayu Raya*, November 11, 1950.

[29] *Melayu Raya*, August 29, 1950.

[30]By the conventional method of translation, the Malay phrase should be translated as *Malayan Nationalism*, but Dr. Burhanuddin and his followers had taken exception to the word Malayan as an antithesis to Malay. To them the term "Malayan" referred to immigrant communities residing in Malaya.

[31]*Melayu Raya*, September 26, 1950.

[32]*Melayu Raya*, September 28, 1950.

[33]*Melayu Raya*, September 29, 1950.

[34]*Ibid.*

[35]*Ibid.*

[36]*Melayu Raya*, September 14, 1950.

[37]Personal interview with Mohammad Taha Kalu, Kuala Lumpur, June 1, 1980.

[38]Personal interview with Harun Aminurrashid, Singapore, April 26, 1980.

[39]*Melayu Raya*, October 2, 1950.

[40]*Melayu Raya*, October 4, 1950

[41]*Melayu Raya*, August 31, 1950.

[42]*Melayu Raya*, September 9, 1950.

[43]*The Straits Times*, March 28, 1951.

[44]*Melayu Raya*, November 2, 1950.

[45]*Melayu Raya*, November 3, 1950.

[46]*Melayu Raya*, September 11, 1950.

[47]Personal interview with Mohammed Taha Kalu, Kuala Lumpur: June 1 1980.

[48]Personal interview with Dr. Dali Mohamed Nur, Kuala Lumpur: August 2, 1980.

[49]*Ibid.*

[50]*Ibid.*

[51] "Perceptual group" refers to individuals who have similar perceptions on certain significant phenomena but are not interacting with each other. "Identity group" refers to members of perceptual group who interact based on their similar perception. For details, see Marshall R. Singer, *Weak States in a World of Power: the dynamics of international relationships* (New York: Free Press, 1972).

[52] Personal interview with Jaafar Mohammed Ali, Kuala Lumpur, January 22, 1980.

[53] Personal interview with Harun Aminurrashid, Singapore, April 26, 1980.

[54] Personal interview with Mohammed Taha Kalu, Kuala Lumpur, June 1, 1980.

[55] Personal interview with Jaafar Mohammad Ali, Kuala Lumpur.

[56] For further information on Malay cult politics, see Anthony Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: The Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Monograph No. 8, 1979), pp. 146-161.

[57] Personal interview with Abdullah Sanggora who was then a reporter with *Melayu Raya*, Kuala Lumpur, February 3, 1980.

[58] *The Straits Times*, February 5, 1951.

[59] *The Straits Times*, February 26, 1951.

[60] Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *Looking Back* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1977), p. 190.

[61] Personal interview with Abu Zaki Fazil, Kuala Lumpur, July 18, 1980.

[62] *Report . . . of Commission*, pp. 1-2.

[63] See William R. Roff, *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals* published in the Straits Settlements and *Peninsula Malay States*, 1876-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[64] See Drs. A.M. Iskandar Haji Ahmad, *Persurat Khabaran Melayu, 1896-1968* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1973).

[65] Rosemary Shanta Jesudason, *The Causes and Significance of the Hertogh's Riot*, unpublished long essay, Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (1968/1969), p. 22.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Personal interviews with Abdullah Sanggora, Kuala Lumpur: February 3, 1980; and Baharom Basar, Lenggeng: Negri Sembilan, January 15, 1980.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[70] *Report . . . Commission*, p. 13.

[71] Personal interview with Harun Aminurrashid, Singapore, April 26, 1980.

[72] *Ibid.*: also confirmed by Abdullah Sanggora.

[73] Personal interview with Baharuddin Latiff, Kuala Lumpur, July 21, 1980.

[74] Rumours are a significant form of political communication among the Malays in those days.

[75] Personal interview with Baharom Basar, Lenggeng: Negri Sembilan, January 15, 1980.

[76] Personal interview with Baharuddin Latiff, Kuala Lumpur, July 21, 1980.

CHAPTER SIX

The Politics of Opposition: The Regrouping of Forces

The detention of Dr. Burhanuddin and Taha Kalu in December 1950 completed the removal of important MNP leaders from public life as a result of the Emergency. Those who were fortunate enough not to be detained had to maintain a low political visibility. MNP's ideals and objectives, however, did not completely disappear; instead, as we noted in the previous chapter, they took different forms, seemingly apolitical in expression. As a result, organized Malay politics for the next five or six years was dominated almost exclusively by the traditional-conservative forces embodied in UMNO, which in February 1948 had become a single unit political party with direct membership.[1] Prior to this, it had been a federation of state or district-based organizations.

The change in UMNO's organization structure was followed by a series of other significant changes over the following five years. At its May 1949 annual conference, a new objective was incorporated in the party's constitution, namely "to make efforts and take steps towards the formation of an independent Government in Malaya".[2] Three months later, on August 26, the party formed a youth wing, styled *Pemuda UMNO* (UMNO Youth), which in February 1951, proposed changing the party's motto from the conservative *Hidup Melayu* ("Long Live the Malays") to a more radical *Merdeka* ("Independence" or "Freedom").[3] The change of the motto was viewed as marking a "change from UMNO's initial struggle, which was only for survival [of the Malays], even under colonial rule, to a struggle to live in an independent sovereign state".[4] This signified a growing anti-colonial mood within the party, despite the continued dominance of aristo-

cratic and conservative elements in its top leadership. However, as briefly noted in the preceding chapter, another form of change was also taking place within the leadership, with the involvement of the founder president, Dato Onn bin Jaafar, and a number of his senior colleagues in an elite multi-racial informal grouping styled the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC).

Dato Onn's involvement in the CLC and his unsuccessful attempt to sell the CLC's ideas to UMNO members eventually led to his resignation from the party on August 27, 1951. He was succeeded by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, a prince from the Kedah Royal House.[5] About three weeks after that, Dato Onn launched a new party, supposedly multi-racial, called the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). A number of his closest colleagues who joined him in resigning from UMNO, and most of his non-Malay colleagues in the CLC, provided leadership to this new party.[6] At about the same time, local UMNO leadership in Selangor fostered an electoral pact with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) to contest the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council elections in February 1952. Winning 9 out of 12 seats in the elections, UMNO-MCA cooperation looked like having a promising future. The IMP won only two seats and an Independent candidate won the twelfth.[7] Encouraged by the fruits of their joint performance in the Kuala Lumpur elections, UMNO and MCA extended their electoral pact to other municipal elections throughout 1952 which proved to be equally fruitful.

Then, after a series of meetings between leaders of the two parties in 1953 – while at various local elections they continued to be successful – UMNO and MCA institutionalized their relationship in a coalition called the Alliance. At the end of 1954, the coalition was expanded to include the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).[8] Thus the Alliance acquired a multi-racial image as an organization to represent the three major ethnic groups in Malaya. With this, they stepped up their demands for complete independence by pressing the British to hold immediate national elections to fill a majority

of the Federal Legislative Council seats with elected as opposed to appointed members. Such an election finally took place in July 1955. Campaigning almost singlemindedly on the independence issue, the Alliance won 51 out of 52 seats. The other seat was won by the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP).

UMNO's, and therefore the Alliance's, political activities and other related events preceding and following this election have been extensively discussed elsewhere.[9] Our main purpose in briefly mentioning them here is simply to show that while leaders of the radical nationalists were kept under detention (for periods varying from a few months to seven years), the conservative forces as embodied by UMNO were organizationally and politically consolidating themselves, with the advantage of being "left unaffected by the Government's restrictions on political activities".[10] Thus, when Dato Onn's IMP failed to get off the ground and his attempt to start another party, *Party Negara* (National Party), was equally unsuccessful, UMNO's dominant presence in the realm of Malay politics was left virtually unchallenged throughout the first half of 1950's. However, a sense of disgruntlement persisted among supporters and sympathizers of the banned API and the dissolved *Hizbul Muslimin* and MNP. Among the sources of their resentment against UMNO was what they perceived as UMNO's increasingly accommodative attitudes towards the Chinese. One of the examples often cited to illustrate such attitudes was the highly disproportionate number of Chinese candidates fielded by the Alliance in the 1955 national elections. Whereas the racial breakdown of the electorate was 84 per cent Malay, 11 percent Chinese and the remaining 5 percent mainly Indian, the racial breakdown of Alliance candidates was 35 Malays (67 percent), 15 Chinese (29 per cent) and two Indians (4 percent).[11]

Thus, in spite of the imminence of independence as a result of UMNO's (and the Alliance's) constitutional struggle, subscribers to the ideals of MNP, API and *Hizbul Muslimin* were apprehensive about what they perceived as the "selling out of the Malays". In addition to the various activities described

in the previous chapter, an attempt to start another political party was undertaken in October 1949 by a number of less influential former MNP leaders and UMNO dissidents. This party, called *Persatuan Melayu Semenanjung* (PMS, Peninsula Malay Union), was formally launched on September 2, 1950 in Kuala Lumpur.[12] When its formation was first mooted publicly, its founder president, Hashim Ghani, claimed that PMS's aim was to "answer the need of the poorer section of the Malay population" and alleged that "UMNO represents the Malay aristocracy only".[13] However, except for making occasional headlines through its comments on political issues pertaining to Malay political and historical rights, and an unsuccessful attempt to form a second *Front Kebangsaan Melayu* (Malay National Front),[14] PMS hardly got off the ground. Perhaps this was mainly due to the lack of significantly influential or nationally prestigious political personalities in its leadership. In addition, the party was undermined by inconsistent and contradictory public statements made by its leaders. Most notably, Hashim Ghani was quoted as saying, in a speech in Selangor, that "the term *merdeka* (independence) has scared our Malay people . . . those who want to use this term should stay away from PMS".[15] Hashim's views were echoed by another PMS leader, from Kelantan, Nik Mahmood Haji Abdul Majid, who claimed that "the Malays are not yet ready for independence because they do not have adequate force to ward off any possible invasion".[16] Other PMS supporters especially those still faithful to MNP's and API's ideals, responded in anger and disapproval. PMS's chief publicity officer, Bakar Arrashid (a former leader of API, Kuala Lumpur branch) announced that members of the PMS Central Committee were shocked to hear Hashim's remark.[17] A PMS leader from Singapore, M. Mustaza (a former MNP leader there), insisted that Hashim was voicing his personal opinion and not that of the party's.[18] The head of the PMS Religious Bureau, Fakeh Mohammed Nor, threatened to resign unless Hashim withdrew his remarks.[19] Discontentment within the party was also caused by "monetary mishandling by certain personalities"[20] which led to the

resignation of its important woman leader, Khatijah Sidek in late 1952. However, despite the fact that PMS members numbered only between five and six thousand, and many of its leaders were strange bedfellows, the party managed to survive (although without any significant accomplishment) for about 14 years until it was deregistered by the Government in January 1964. Towards the end of its legal or registered existence, a number of its supporters were detained under the Government's Internal Security Act for alleged subversive activities.[21]

Another interesting note about the PMS is Dr. Burhanuddin's alleged "master mind" role in it. At least three persons, who at different times held leadership positions in the party, have claimed that they joined the party upon the "instructions" or "advice" of Dr. Burhanuddin. They are Khatijah Sidek (head of the Women Division of 1952), Osman Rashid (head of the Youth Division in 1955), and Baharom Basar (Secretary of the Organizing Committee of the abortive PMS-sponsored Malay National Front in January 1959).[22] Baharom even went so far as to say that "PMS belonged to Dr. Burhanuddin", although Burhanuddin is not known ever to have been a member of the party.

Dr. Burhanuddin's supposed mysterious role in PMS has also caught the attention of a University of Malaya historian, Professor Khoo Kay Kim. Professor Khoo has spoken of his "hunch" that Dr. Burhanuddin had a "grand political design" which until today remains an unfolded enigma.[23] Still another person, Abdul Latif Mohammed Saleh, a former Secretary of API, Penang Branch has claimed for Burhanuddin a behind-the scenes role in convening the *Kongres Pemuda Melayu Se-Malaya* (All-Malaya Malay Youth Congress, hereafter referred to as *Kongres Pemuda).* The *Kongres Pemuda* was held in Kuala Lumpur on April 8 to 10, 1955 slightly more than a year after Burhanuddin was released from detention where he had been put for his alleged involvement in the *Nadrah riots.* By this time, the Government's restrictions on political activities had been largely relaxed and many Malay political detainees, including Burhanuddin's senior colleague,

Ishak Haji Muhammad, had been released. Thus the radical nationalist forces once organized in MNP and API, and which had been subject to British colonial repression, gradually began to reorganize themselves. By this time, however, their rivals in the conservative camp, as exemplified in UMNO, had become more formidable organizationally and politically. And at the same time, UMNO's political stance had become a source of apprehension to the radicals, with respect especially to Malay historical and political rights. This was the impetus that led to the convening of the *Kongres Pemuda*.

Ostensibly the congress was initiated by a Penang-based youth organization called *Semangat Pemuda Melayu Pulau Pinang* (The Spirit of Malay Youth, Penang) but privately, according to Abdul Latif, it was the brainchild of Dr. Burhanuddin who remained in the background until a few days before the gathering.[24] Once his name was publicly associated with the *Kongres Pemuda* he became its main attraction. Then, throughout the congress, his dominant role became more evident. He delivered the keynote address and at the conclusion of the three-day gathering was elected chairman of the Steering Committee of the *Front Kebangsaan Melayu* (Malay National Front) formed at the congress. He was also unanimously chosen to represent the congress (as an observer) at the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia a few weeks later.

Burhanuddin's participation in the congress was described by a newspaper report as staging "a political come back".[25] Such a description was not inaccurate. Two very long articles in the souvenir program of the congress were written by him. In both articles he dwelt at great length on the importance of intensifying efforts to pursue *cita-cita perjuangan kita* (the aims of our struggle). He recalled the history of KMM, MNP and API and urged the revival of the ideas and ideals of those dissolved political organizations.[26] Then in his keynote address at the opening ceremony of the congress he deplored what he described as the disunity and indifference present among Malays and declared that the main aims of the

congress were "to bring together those of us who have been drifting apart and to inculcate a sense of genuine awareness in each and every one of us".[27] In accordance with its aim of striving for unity, the congress adopted a symbolic resolution in the form of an *Ikrar Pemuda* (Youth Pledge or Oath), which declared that "the ultimate goal of the struggle of Malay nationalism is to create one nation with one state and one language".[28] However, though attended by more than 800 participants representing 44 organizations from all over the Peninsula and Singapore, the *Kongres Pemuda* was boycotted by one of the biggest Malay Youth organizations in existence at that time, the *Pemuda UMNO* (UMNO Youth). Invitations to attend the congress had been extended to UMNO Youth and to Tunku Abdul Rahman, the UMNO President. (This is reminiscent of the "All-Malaya Grand Conference on Economics and Religion" held at Gunung Semanggul in April 1947, which, as noted in Chapter Three, was also boycotted by UMNO in spite of the organizers' desire to make it a non-partisan national Malay affair). UMNO's boycott of the *Kongres Pemuda* could not have been unexpected, for another intention of the congress was "to reactivate the left-wingers and members of the nationalist group who were not associated with UMNO and who perceived UMNO as being not progressive enough".[29] Ironically, however, a noted conservative leader with a well-known aristocratic background, namely Dato Onn bin Jaafar, did take an active part in the congress and was elected treasurer of the Steering Committee. An explanation offered for Dato Onn's involvement with the radical nationalists in the congress is that he wanted to revive his fading influence among the Malays as a result of his involvement in the CLC and his subsequent departure from UMNO.[30]

Among other important personalities involved in the congress who need a brief mention were Ishak Haji Muhammad (ex-MNP president), Zulkiflee Muhammad, Aminuddin Baki, Ali Haji Ahmad, Harun Aminurrashid and Hassan Adli. Ishak was elected Vice-Chairman of the Steering Committee and about six months later became Chair-

man of the predominantly Chinese Labour Party.[31] Zulkiflee Muhammad was at that time a young man in his late twenties who had just returned to Malaya a year or two earlier after studying at the American University in Cairo. Although he was an active student leader in his Cairo years and in 1954 was offered, but refused, a full-time position as UMNO Secretary-General, his participation in the *Kongres Pemuda* marked his political debut in Malay politics.[32] He was elected the member of the Steering Committee to be in charge of political matters. In December 1956, he was elected Vice-President of the PMIP and in 1959 won a seat in the parliamentary election. He proved an eloquent and efficient parliamentarian and described as one of "the four main opposition standard-bearers".[33] However, Zulkiflee's promising political career was suddenly terminated when he met with a fatal road accident in 1964 hardly two weeks after being re-elected to parliament in a general election.

Aminuddin Baki was better known as an educationist than a politician. But his concern and conscientious efforts for the advancement of the Malays in education and other fields, were widely acknowledged. He was one of the main formulators of Malaya's national education policy. Unfortunately, like Zulkiflee he died at a relatively young age . His participation in the *Kongres Pemuda* lent additional prestige and credentials to the gathering because Aminuddin was one of the very few University educated young Malays who were not "imprisoned" by their comfortable government jobs, but instead took the trouble to get involved in mass oriented activities.

Harun Aminurrashid, as noted in the preceding chapter was an important MNP leader, a prolific writer, a publisher and a former lecturer at the famous Sultan Idris Training College, dubbed as the "cradle of Malay resurgence".[34] He became chairman of the plenary session of the congress.

Ali Haji Ahmad attended the congress as a University of Malaya undergraduate and president of the *Gabungan Penuntut-Penuntut Melayu Semenanjung* (GPMS, Federation of Malaya Students' Union).[35] Before his death in a plane crash

in 1977, Ali was a cabinet minister holding various portfolios at different times, such as education, youth and culture, and agriculture.

Hassan Adli was involved in the *Kongres Pemuda* from the preparatory stage when his views and advice were sought by the Secretary of *Semangat Pemuda Pulau Pinang*. He was also mainly responsible for mobilizing support for the congress from various organizations in Perak.[36] Later, he became a leading member of the PMIP.

Two other noteworthy personalities involved in the congress were Abdul Wahab Majid who became Secretary of the Steering Committee and Melan Abdullah who 25 years later explicitly said that the *Kongres Pemuda* was held in order "to unite the other forces to oppose UMNO". Both of them later became among the driving force in the formation of *Partai Rakyat* (People's Party) in November 1955.[37]

From the foregoing brief description of some of the prominent personalities involved in the *Kongres Pemuda*, it is obvious that the organization enjoyed considerable support from Malay intellectuals outside UMNO. Thus, it was not surprising that UMNO was rather apprehensive about the possible outcome of the congress. This prompted its headquarters to send circulars to all its branches to boycott the congress, and an emergency meeting of UMNO divisions were held in Kuala Lumpur at the end of March to discuss the implication of the congress and the best way to execute the boycott.[38] UMNO's worries were perhaps compounded by the fact that the *Kongres Pemuda* was the first large scale event since the beginning of the Emergency at which anti-UMNO Malay political forces gathered with full fanfare and received extensive media coverage.

Most resolutions adopted at the conclusion of the congress were reminiscent of MNP days and in dissonance with UMNO's political posture in the Alliance coalition.

The congress agreed, *inter alia:*

- that its participants should strive for the creation of a

single Malay nation, with single state and single language, to be called *Melayu;*

- to protest strongly the presence of foreign military bases in Malaya;
- to send an observer to the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia;
- to reject the principle of *jus soli* (granting of citizenship by birth);
- to ask the Government to form an economic commission to survey the natural resources and manpower of Malaya;
- to ask the Government to set up an economic planning board to consider ways to redress the unbalanced economic position of Malays and other communities;
- To ask the Government to grant 50 percent of mining rights to the Malays, and give subsidies to Malay coconut smallholders for replanting;
- to seek the establishment of a land development scheme with a view to opening up more land for the Malays;
- to seek the establishment of central marketing boards for rubber, copra, and other industries, to enable Malays to sell their produce without having to deal through middlemen;
- to ask the Government to introduce legislation to oblige private industries to employ at least 50 percent Malays out of their total employees.[39]

Obviously, most of these resolutions, especially those pertaining to economic questions, were at odds with the multiracial spirit of the Alliance, to which UMNO was (at least publicly) committed. Nevertheless, the resolutions were indicative of the apprehension that prevailed among the general Malay population. They were also symptomatic of the general economic deprivation felt by most Malays. But most telling of all, the *Kongres Pemuda* signified the reemergence of radical nationalist forces, once organized in

API and MNP. Although the congress did not lead to any perceptible or concrete accomplishments, the congregational and "reunion" nature of the event provided an opportunity for intensive communication among the bearers of the *cita-cita perjuangan*. It permitted a kind of "rejuvenation" of their sense of political romanticism. And all this prepared the ground for their re-entry into organized politics in a different political atmosphere. It was an atmosphere in which colonialism in Malaya was at a terminal stage, with UMNO ready to form an independent government. Hence the radical nationalists – regrouped along Islamic revival/reformist or secular socialist democratic or *marheanist lines* – found themselves in the opposition camp in an independent Malaya. By *"marhaenist lines"* is here meant a line of action based on President Sukarno's political philosophy of *Marhaenism*, which was supposed to be the ideology of his *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Nationalist Party) in the late 1920's. *Marhaen* is a common Sundanese (Javanese sub-ethnic) name and in this context it denoted "the little people" including all workers, peasants, fishermen, students and small businessmen. As a political ideology *Marhaenism* can be considered as a local brand of socialism.[40]

At the *Kongres Pemuda* former MNP and API supporters who subscribed to *Marhaenism* were most vocal in demanding the release of Ahmad Boestamam who had been in detention since his arrest in 1948. One of the most politically significant resolutions passed by the congress was a call for "the immediate unconditional release of former API's commander-in-chief, Ahmad Boestamam, and all other Malays detained under the Emergency Regulations".[41] In fact, the call for Boestamam's release had acquired something of a non-partisan air. About three months before, the liaison committee of Selangor UMNO had also urged the Government to release Boestamam.[42]

Perhaps due to this mounting pressure, Boestamam was finally released on June 28, 1955.[43] The release was not unconditional because for a few months he was required to stay indoors between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. and report to the

police every week. He was also not allowed to take an active part in politics. Nevertheless his release was welcomed with jubilance by his colleagues and followers. One of them regarded it as the "victory of the *rakyat* (common people)" and urged Boestamam "to go right on with the struggle until total independence is achieved".[44] Due to the conditions he had to observe, Boestamam was for some months mainly preoccupied with journalism while privately renewing contacts with his old colleagues and followers who had been in close contact since the *Kongres Pemuda*. Among these old colleagues were Dr. Burhanuddin, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Harun Aminurrashid. And among the subjects they talked about with Boestamam was the necessity to "have our own political party now".[45]

When the conditions upon Boestamam's release were eventually lifted, the idea of forming a new political party was made public and on November 11, 1955 the *Partai Rakyat Malaya*[46] (People's Party of Malaya) came into existence at a special congress in Kuala Lumpur, where, again, Dr. Burhanuddin delivered the keynote address. The following month the party was registered with Boestamam as President, Abdul Wahab Majid as Secretary-General, and Harun Aminurrashid as a member of the Working Committee.

In spite of his active involvement in the formation of the *Partai Rakyat*, Dr. Burhanuddin did not hold any official leadership position, but instead remained in the background after its formation. Then about a year later, in December 1956, he made the most significant national political news of the Christmas weekend when he was elected President of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) in the party's annual conference in Kuala Lumpur.[47] This was followed by an influx of Islamically inclined ex-MNP and *Hizbul Muslimin* members into the PMIP.

Eight months later on August 31, 1957, the Federation of Malaya became an independent nation, with UMNO and its partners in the Alliance coalition forming the Government and the radical Malay nationalists – now regrouped in *Partai*

Rakyat and the PMIP – making up the parliamentary and political opposition.

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[1] *UMNO 10 Tahun* (Kuala Lumpur: Ibu Pejabat UMNO, 1956), p. 52.

[2] Ramlah Adam, *UMNO: Organisasi dan Kegiatan Politik, 1945-1951* (Kota Bharu, Kelantan: Mohd. Nawi Book Store, 1978), p. 44. Cf. *UMNO 10 Tahun*, p.56.

[3] *UMNO 10 Tahun*, p. 59. This proposal was accepted by UMNO's annual general meeting the following month.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 67.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 68-79, Cf. Ishak bin Tadin, Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (March 1960), pp. 77-83.

[6] For further details see R. K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur : Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 37-82.

[7] For further analysis of the elections see F.G. Carnell, "Constitutional Reform an Election in Malaya", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. XXVII, No. 3, (September, 1954), pp. 216-35.

[8] *UMNO 10 Tahun*, pp.89-91.

[9] Among the relevant works are: K.J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965) especially chapters 5 and 6; G.P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976) especially chapters 10-13; Simandjuntak, *Malayan Federalism – 1945-1963* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969) especially pp. 70-93; Mohammad Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit University Malaya, 1974), especially chapter 43; Karl von Vorys, *Democracy Without Consensus – Communalism and Political Stability in Malaya* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) especially chapter 5.

[10] See Richard Stubbs, "The United Malays National Organizations, the Malayan Chinese Association and the Early Years of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1955" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. No. 19, p. 79.

[11] See Carnell, *op. cit.*

[12] *Melayu Raya*, September 3, 1950.

[13] *The Straits Times*, October 27, 1949.

[14] *Warta Negara*, January 21, 1959; *The Straits Times*, January 20, 1959. The first *Front Kebangsaan Melayu* was formed at the *Kongres Pemuda Melayu Se-Malaya* (All-Malaya Malay Youths Congress) in April 1955.

[15] *Melayu Raya*, November 7, 1950.

[16] *Melayu Raya*, November 13, 1950.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Melayu Raya*, November 16, 1950.

[19] *Melayu Raya*, November 17, 1950.

[20] Personal interview with Khatijah Sidek, Selayang (Selangor), February 3, 1980. Khatijah later became head of *Kaum Ibu UMNO* (UMNO Women's Section) from1953-1956. In 1958 she joined the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). For further information on her see "Ibu Khatijah Sidek Pejuang Nasionalis Wanita", Nadi Insan (March 1980) pp. 5-11. Also cf. Ardjasni (Khatijah bte. Mohd. Sidek), *Riwayat Hidup Saya: My Life* published serially in the monthly journal Eastern Horizon (Hong Kong), Vol. II, Nos. 1-8 (January-August 1962), and Vol. III, Nos. 1-5 (January-May 1964).

[21] *Utusan Melayu*, January 23, 1964.

[22] Personal interview: Osman Rashid, Kuala Lumpur, August 2, 1980; Khatijah Sidek, Selayang, February 1980; and Baharom Basar, Lenggeng, (Negri Sembilan), January 22, 1980.

[23] Personal interview with Professor Khoo Kay Kim, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, January 1980. Besides being a popular personality with extensive personal contacts, Professor Khoo is also in charge of dozens of graduation exercises (mini-theses for B.A. Honours degree partial requirement) many of which contain rich raw data about Malay social and political developments in recent decades.

[24] Personal interview with Abdul Latif Mohammad Salleh who, besides being former secretary of API Penang was a committee member of *Semangat Pemuda Melayu Pulau Pinang*. He was among the MNP/API leaders arrested in 1948. (Personal interview, Kuala Lumpur, August 9, 1981). Abdul Latif's information corroborates that of Yahya Kassim, Secretary of the Congress's Organizing Committee who testified that before Burhanuddin's name was publicly associated with the congress, his advice was sought at every stage of preparation. (Personal interview with Yahya Kassim, Kuala Lumpur, August 20, 1980).

[25] See *Sejarah Perjuangan Pemuda* (souvenir program of the *Kongres Pemuda*); n.p. (Pulau Pinang?), n.d. (1955?). One of Dr. Burhanuddin's articles bore a title similar to that of the souvenir program, *Sejarah Perjuangan Pemuda* (The History of Youth's Struggle). The other article was entitled *Semangat Pemuda Melayu* (The Spirit of Malay Youth).

[26] *The Straits Times*, April 19, 1955.

[27] "Ucapan Pembukaan Kongres Pemuda Melayu Malaya", *Belia*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (April 22, 1955) p. 49. Cf. also Leslie Hoffman, "Dawn of a new era in Malay politics: an enigma returns", *The Straits Times*, June 10, 1955.

[28] *Belia*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (April 15, 1955) p. 21.

[29] Personal interview with Abdul Wahab Majid, an important participant in the congress, who was elected Secretary of its Steering Committee, Kuala Lumpur, August 5, 1980.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] For further information on the Labour Party, See Vasil, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-166.

[32] In a letter dated April 22, 1950 to the famous Malay grammarian and writer, Zainal Abidin Ahmad (ZA'ABA), a respected Malay religious scholar, Idris El-Marbawy who had become a permanent resident in Cairo, expressed admiration for Zulkiflee's social and moral integrity, and talent for leadership among Malay and Indonesian students in Cairo. *(Surat Persendirian ZA'ABA: S.P. 18)*, National Archives of Malaya). For further information on Zulkiflee, see Mokhtar Petah, *Zulkiflee Muhammad dalam Kenangan* (Kota Baharu, Kelantan: Pustaka Aman Press, 1966).

[33] R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), p. 238.

[34] Cheah Boon Kheng, "SITC: Cradle of Malay Resurgence", *The Straits Times*, June 12, 1973.

[35]GPMS had been founded by Aminuddin Baki and a few of his colleagues at the University of Malaya, Singapore on August 15, 1948. It was described by Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister, the late Tun Dr. Ismail as "an expression of Malay nationalism in the field of education". See Abdul Karim Abdullah, ed. and comp. *Amanat Tun Dr. Ismail* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Budaya Agency, 1974), p. 7.

[36] See Hassan Adli's letter, January 20, 1955, to Othman Zainal Abidin, Secretary of *Semangat Pemuda Melayu Pulau Pinang* which sponsored the congress (Hassan Adli's Personal Papers, National Archives of Malaya, Petaling Jaya).

[37]Personal interview with Melan Abdullah, Kuala Lumpur, August 18, 1980.

[38]*Malay Mail*, March 30, 1955.

[39]*The Straits Times*, April 11, 1955.

[40]Vasil, *op. cit.*, p. 169-170. Cf. Ahmad Boestamam, *Sembilan Tesis Marhaenizem* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Tegas, 1960).

[41]*The Straits Times*, April 11, 1955.

[42]*The Straits Times*, January 19, 1955.

[43]See Boestamam's partial autobiography, *Tujuh Tahun Malam Memanjang* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Amir Enterprise, 1976) esp. p. 123.

[44]Ahmad Baiki Shuib, "Sepatah Kata Untuk Saudara Ahmad Boestamam", *Belia*, Vol. 1, No. 18 (August 5, 1955), p. 306.

[45]Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Melayu Raya* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Kejora, 1972) pp. 45-53.

[46]For further discussion, see Vasil, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-182.

[47]For further discussion of the early years of the PMIP, see John N. Funston, "The Origins of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (March 1976); and Y. Mansoor Marican, "Malay Nationalism and the Islamic Party of Malaysia", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1977), pp. 291-301.

CONCLUSION

As it is obvious from the foregoing discussion, the inherent weaknesses of Malay opposition forces in present day Malaysian politics was rooted in its historical development which was plagued by surveillance and suppression since colonial days. This study has attempted to reconstruct the events and activities of personalities associated with such development. And in the course of this, the emergence of certain patterns, which are instructive to our understanding of Malay political behaviour, has been observed. Two phenomena have been particularly responsible for shaping these patterns: The Islamic reformist movement and the introduction of modernization infrastructure. It was further noticed that these two phenomena were not mutually exclusive. Instead, there were certain overlapping elements which were mutually reinforcing. In most existing studies of the role of Islam in Malay political development, the religion was viewed mainly as an agent of political socialization or as a passing phase or as an episode in the history of Malay nationalism. In this study, an attempt was made to look at Islam as a permanent force in Malay politics since the introduction of the Islamic reformist movement, into the Malay speaking world, at the turn of the 20th century.

Among the major socio-political patterns which can be discerned from the foregoing study are:

1. Islam has indeed played a very significant role in the life of the Malays not only in theological domain, but also in the political and social spheres. The political socialization role of Islam came into maturation in the late 1940's when the religion was viewed as a

source of political ideology.

2. The *Nadrah* incident demonstrated the potential role of Islam in an explosive expression of political frustration, and thereby in other forms of political violence.

3. The widespread of educational opportunity and modern media technology between the two World Wars created a new elite who demanded greater participation in the political process.

   The particular significance of the reformist religious educational system in radicalizing that elite has been demonstrated.

4. The inconsistent impacts of modernization have been demonstrated in several ways, most important were:

   (a) In the legislative recruitment during the colonial era where Malay legislators were appointed on traditional ascriptive basis, whereas representatives of the immigrant communities were appointed based on merit;

   (b) Unbalanced economic development among the various communities;

   (c) Unequal social services. All of which led to an unbalanced society in modernization terms and became a source of radicalism.

5. Non-party modes of political expression have been a part of the traditional Political Culture. During the organizational "interregnum" of radical politics in the 1950's these traditional modes which are always operative became more obvious. Radical ideas and ideals were channelled through the medium of arts and literature, while the recurrent importance of particular political figures within the radical movement demonstrated the significance of "personalities" in political mobilization.

These are among the major conclusions which can be drawn

from the foregoing study. However there is one further conclusion concerning the role of opposition politics in Malay society which provides an interesting area for further investigation. Even when political opposition has little organizational strength it does serve as an interest articulator by such means as convening meetings and conferences wherein the needs and aspirations of the general masses are articulated, made known to, and may be acted upon by, the governing authorities. An example of this which comes to mind is the All-Malaya Malay Youth Congress whose resolutions adopted 25 years ago are currently being incorporated into Government policy. The irony is that these resolutions were adopted at a time when the overall Malay political and electoral power *vis-a-vis* the other communities was much stronger, but they failed to commend themselves for implementation. The translation of the ideas suggested in the resolution as part of Government policy was only undertaken when overall Malay political and electoral power in the country was in decline. This was in a sense a kind of retrospective vindication of the views of the Malay radicals by their erstwhile contenders, the leaders of UMNO.

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E. Transcribed interviews

Wawancara Pegawai Arkib Negara dengan Tuan Haji Hassan Adli bin Arshad.
Wawancara Pegawai Arkib Negara dengan Datuk Ahmad Boestamam.

F. Selected list of persons interviewed

Abdul Latif Mohammad Salleh, ex-API leader, Kuala Lumpur, August 9, 1981.

Abdul Wahab Majid, Former Secretary *Partai Rakyat*, Kuala Lumpur, August 5, 1980.

Abu Zaki Fazil, former editor *BELIA*, Kuala Lumpur, July 18, 1980.

Asraf, former leader of *ASAS 50*, Petaling Jaya, August 4, 1980.

Abdullah Hussain, prolific writer, Petaling Jaya, July 25, 1980.

Abdullah Sanggora, former reporter of *Melayu Raya*, Kuala Lumpur, February 3, 1980.

Baharom Basar, ex-API leader, Selangor, Lenggeng, Negeri Sembilan, January 15, 1980; January 22, 1980.

Baharuddin Latif, an old hand in PMIP, Kuala Lumpur, July 21, 1980.

Dr. Dali Mohamed Nur, brother-in-law of Dr. Burhanuddin, Kuala Lumpur, August 2, 1980.

Dahari Ali, former Secretary of MNP senior journalist in *The New Straits Times*.

Jaafar Mohammad Ali, former youth leader in Singapore, currently a member of *Berita Harian* editorial staff, Kuala Lumpur, January 22, 1979; January 22, 1980.

Keris Mas, writer and leader of ASAS 50, Petaling Jaya, August 4, 1980.

Khatijah Sidek, for Woman leader of UMNO and PMIP, Selayang, Selangor, February 3, 1980.

Khoo Kay Kim, Professor University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, January 1980.

Khasnor Johan , Dr., historian at National University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, August 1980.

Koch, Margaret, (Columbia University's doctoral candidate in history who conducted her field works in Pahang, 1977) in New York, December 21, 1980.

Dr. Haji Abbas, formes president of PMIP, Kuala Lumpur, June 1980.

Hajjah Saodah binte Haji Salleh Masri (widow of the late Haji Ahmad Fuad, first president of PMIP) Seberang Perai, March 1979.

Harun Aminurrashid, writer, publisher, educator, former MNP leader, Singapore, April 26, & 27, 1980.

Haji Mohammad Tahir bin Dato Bandar Abdul Rahman, Dato Onn's close friend, Seremban, January 2, 14, 30, 1980.

Haji Yusof Rawa, PMIP vice-president, former Ambassador to Iran, Kuala Lumpur, November 5, 12, 15, 1976.

Ishak Haji Muhammad, writer, ex-MNP president, August 1980.

Melan Abdullah, former editor *Utusan Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur, August 18, 1980.

Mohammad Taha Kalu, ex-MNP leader and Nadrah riot instigator, Kuala Lumpur, June 1 & 2, 1980.

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Datuk Mohamad Asri Haji Muda, PMIP president, former Minister, Kuala Lumpur, February 1, 1980; January 21, 1980.

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