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# The Historical Research on the Existence of Mainstream Struggles for the Independence of Malaya in 1945-1957

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**Abstract:** The existence of two well-known educational institutions in the state of Perak; namely, the Sultan Idris Teacher Training College in Tanjung Malim (SITC) and Maahad ll Ihya al-Syarif in Gunong Semanggol has been very significant to the people in the state. The former, located in the South of Perak while the latter, situated in the Northern part of the state, had successfully generated awareness among the Malays to put up a mass struggle against the British, the colonial holders of their land. The awareness created resulted in the formation of various political organizations such as Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWS), Hizbul Muslimin (HM), Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS) and Parti Rakyat Malaya (PRM). As a matter of fact, these organizations managed to shape the political landscape of the Malay States. They openly and persistently demanded independence from the colonialists. Hence, they were consequently labelled as the Malay radicals by the British. This study attempts to expose the roles played by the two educational institutions as well as the roles and contributions of Perak born leaders in the mainstream struggle for the independence of the Malay States.

**Key words:** Independence, educational institutions, Malay States, radicals, Perak

## INTRODUCTION

Calls and voices demanding freedom and independence for the Malay States started to be vociferously heard after World War II (WWII). The waves of the people's rise against the colonialists actually started in the state of Perak. The existence of the two well-known educational institutions in the state had created significant impacts towards the rise of the people to demand independence for the Malay States from the British regime. The institutions, despite their differences in approaches, contents and thoughts, had acted as catalyst in the rise of the Malays. The presence of these institutions not only produced a number of capable political leaders cum freedom fighters but also instigated the formation of radically-inclined political organizations. Thus, the roles and contributions of these two established institutions of education and knowledge would not be forgotten.

The two institutions were Maahad Il Ihya as-Syarif, Gunung Semanggol, located in the North of Perak (Maahad Il Ihya as-Syarif in Gunung Semanggol was establshed in 1934. It is a modern religious institution offering formal religious education. Its founder was Abu Bakar al-Bakir, a well-respected modern religious scholar. He was known not only for his expertise in the field of religion, but also in Islamic politics. Hizbul Muslimin, MATA and PAS were founded at this institution) (Abdullah, 1976) and Sultan Idris Teacher Training College, Tanjung Malim (SITC) located in the Southern part of Perak (An educational institution established in 1929 by the British to train teachers. It was regarded as the highest level educational institution for the Malays at that time. Its history has revealed how the institution had played its roles in creating awareness among the Malays and its involvement in the struggle to demand independence from the British) (Penulisan, 1985). Their presence had been very prominent in shaping up the mainstream political landscape of the Malay States. With the support from a few other small-scale educational institutions, they managed to garner tremendous support from the people to rise against the British colonialists. Besides being knowledge providers, these institutions were directly involved in the struggle to defend the rights of the Malays in all aspects. Moreover, they not only triggered the rise of the Malays in Perak but also succeeded to spark up a massive rise against the British regime throughout the Malay States.

Various organizations came into existence at both institutions. Pertubuhan Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar and Ikatan

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Semenanjung Borneo were formally formed at SITC in 1929, followed by Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) in 1938 (Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar and Ikatan Semenanjung Borneo was formed by Ibrahim Haji Yaakub (IBHY) at Sultan Idris Teacher Training College (MPSI/SITC), Tanjung Malim in 1929. After graduating from MPSI, together with other young Perak leaders such as Hassan Manan, Mustapha Hussein, A. Karim Rashid, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Yaakub Ahmad and few others, they formed KMM. KMM was the first political organization in the Malay States before the World War II. It aimed to protect and defend the rights of the Malays who were left behind in all aspects of their life). Later, in 1945, another Malay political organization, Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM) was established. At ll Ihya as-Syarif, on the other hand, Hizbul Muslimin (HM) was officially formed in 1948, followed by Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS) in 1951 (Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS), formed on 24 November 1951 at the Second Scholars Conference held in Bagan Tuan Kechil (Butterworth), was inspired by the struggle of Hizbul Muslimin and the commitment of its leaders. Among those involved were Othman Hamzah and Muhd. Salleh Awang) (Mohd, 1997). The formation of the organizations at these institutions has indeed revealed their significance in the struggle to demand freedom and independence from the British colonialists.

## ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN PERAK

Apart from the contribution of the two said institutions, the roles and commitment of Kaum Muda of the time had also significantly contributed to the rise of the Malays against the British (Kaum Muda was a term given to the youths who returned home after obtaining formal education from the Middle East. Being influenced by the struggle propogated by the Egypt's Ikhwanul Muslimin, they strived to influence the Malays to rise against the colonialists. Besides, they strived to stop the non-Islamic practices that were widespread among the malay community at the time. Unfortunately, the older generation who was not comfortable with their way of life had gone against the Kaum Muda's effort). Kaum Muda came into existence as a result of the awareness generated by those Malay scholars who returned home after studying Islamic education in the Middle Eastern countries. During that period, in the Middle East, Egypt specifically, the Islamic Reform Movement that was led by Ikhwanul Muslimin was actively planning strategies and recruiting freedom fighters in its effort to put up a mass struggle against the British regime in Egypt and the rest of the Muslim world (The Islamic Reform Movement was propagated by the scholars who obtained formal education in Egypt. In the Malay States, the movement was initiated by Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin, who was very close to Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir and Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy. Their relationship had ignited the spirit of youths and created a motivation for the Hizbul Muslimin and PAS) (Mat, 1993). In the process of training and preparing freedom fighters, the fighting spirit generated by the Islamic Reform Movement had spread throughout the world. It started with the waves of struggle in the land of Egypt, followed by Nusantara and finally the Malay States too had been affected by the intense heat of the struggle.

The burning spirit to resist the Western colonialists led by Kaum Muda and Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) between the years 1920s and 1930s had sparked awareness and developed courage among the people to defy the colonialists in the Malay States. The Middle-Eastern educated Kaum Muda who returned home were instilled with the spirit of the Islamic reformation to continue the struggle of Ikhwanul Muslimin against the Western colonialists. Their effort inspired the formation of politically-inclined Islamic movements in the Malay States, especially in the state of Perak. In fact, the formation of Hizbul Muslimin in Gunung Semanggul, Perak was the result of Islamic awareness created by Kaum Muda.

In relation to the rise of the people in Perak, the contributions of Maahad ll lha as-Syarif cannot be overlooked. This institution had, in fact, played a vital role in producing radical leaders of the time such as Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Ahmad Fuad bin Hassan, Othman Hamzah and Baharuddin Latif (Ahmad Fuad Hassan, born in Sitiawan, Perak, was the founder and the first president of PAS. Othman Hamzah, born in Lekir, Sitiawan, Perak was the ex-leader of Hizbul Muslimin Youths as well as an activists in PAS when the party was banned. He was active in HM, PKMM and also PAS. He was appointed as PAS Central Committee Member a few times prior and after the independence) (Radziah, 1987). If we were to look into the roles of educators at the institution, we would also discover that there were external factors that contributed towards the rise of the Malays against the British. This can be proven by the presence of scholars from Indonesia, specifically from Sumatra who were involved in the struggle. These scholars, who had gained the experience of fighting the Dutch regime in their land, possessed the same sentiment as the local leaders, i.e., they were all against the colonialists. Among those anti-colonialist leaders who had willingly rendered their assistance to the reformist movement centered at Maahad Il Ihya as-Syarif were Latif Zaki, Yunus Medan and Abrar Tarmimi (Abdullah, 1976).

In fact, if we were to review the proceeding of Majlis Agama Tinggi SeMalaya (MATA) conference held at Gunung Semanggul, the strong influence of Muhammadiyah, Osliah or Masjumi organizations could be clearly observed at the conference (Ibid, pg: 168). This proves that two major factors had developed from the institution that led to the struggle of the Malays against the British regime; namely, the factor from the Middle East and the factor from Jawa and Sumatera. In addition, the strength of Il Ihya as-Syarif was further elevated with the existence of Kaum Muda inclined institutions that supported and spread similar religious ideology. Thus, there existed a two-way communication and coorperation between Il Ihya as-Syarif and other institutions such as Madrasah Al Insaniah, Teluk Anson, Madrasah al-Huda Wal Busana, Sungai Parit, Pasir Panjang, Sitiawan, Madrasah al-Ulum al-Syariah, Batu, Bagan Datoh, Madrasah Yahayawiyah, Padang Rengas and a few others.

Hizbul Muslimin, on the other hand, had not only spread its influence in Perak but also managed to gain tremendous support from those who were inclined to Islamic struggle from all over the nation to defend the Malay Muslims. The existence of Hizbul Muslimin in the political arena of the Malay States was not approved by the British, Umno and the Malay elite groups. This was made clear when Dato' Onn uttered the following statement on 26 April, 1948:

> I am not preventing but I do not wish to allow (UMNO members to Gunung Semanggul), while the danger from the mountain is still existing, another catastrophe (Hizbul Muslimin) has emerged which has grown from the land and spread its roots (Hizbul Muslimin movement) to defeat and to eliminate the Malays and indeed the Islamic party is truly red (dangerous) (Utusan Zaman, 26 April in 1948)

As a result, an act called the Emergency Act 1948, was employed by the regime as a strategy to curb the rise of the Malays at the time. The act was exercised to detain and imprison Hizbul Muslimin leaders to the extent that none was left to lead the organization.

Among those detained on 29 July, 1948 were Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Abrar Tarmimi and Abdul Rauf Nor. Then, followed the arrest of Abdul Wahab Nur, Muhammad Abas, Mohd. Nor Haji Mokhtar and Abdullah Hakim. Realizing the need that the struggle had to continue despite what came ahead, Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS) was officially formed in 1951 to take over the struggle of Hizbul Muslimin.

## NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN PERAK

The rise of the Malays against the British was further aggravated by the presence of Malay nationalist-based movements in Perak. These movements were initiated and led by those who had obtained Western or secular-based education that was introduced by the British regime, particularly at Sultan Idris Teacher Training College (SITC). The institution successfully produced people-oriented teachers who came to realize the importance that the affairs and the future of the Malays needed to be urgently protected and defended. The Malays had been colonized and made ignorant for a long period by the British regime through its divide and rule policy as well as by its dualist economic system. Both the policy and the system not only weakened the economy of the Malays but also made them a helpless lot in their own land and the effects can be seen till today.

This situation had consequently led to the emergence of nationalist-based movements orchestrated by Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), headed by teachers who graduated from SITC. However, KMM did not survive long; it was banned by both the British and the Japanese regimes after being labelled as a radical group that threatened the regimes' vested interests and destabilized their occupation in the Malay States. In fact, KMM had been very unfortunate for being banned twice, both by the Japanese and the British regimes.

As a result, KMM leaders were compelled to formulate new strategy to ensure the continuity of their unfinished struggle. They decided to form Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (KRIS) in1945 which was led by Ibrahim Haji Yaakub, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Onan Siraj and a few other leaders, followed by the formation of Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM) which was taken charge of by Al-Helmy (1965), Ishak Bin Saat (2007), Boestamam (1972) and Saat (2007).

These leaders were the pioneers of the radical movements in the Malay States and they chose Perak to formulate strategies and to execute their operations. This statement could be proven by the secret meeting held between KRIS and Parti Nationalis Indonesia (PNI) leaders in Taiping, Perak on August 22, 1945. The meeting was held to discuss the independence of the Malay States and Indonesia under the concept of Melayu Raya when the Japanese left their lands (Melayu Raya was a term given to a struggle aimed to gain independence for the Malay States and Indonesia organized by the Malay radical leaders. Among Perak radical leaders involved were Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Hassan Adli, Abdul Majid Salleh, Cikgu Mohd. Yusof Ayob, Ibrahim Singgeh and Rashid Karim). Leaders

representing KRIS were Ibrahim Yaakub, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Onan Siraj, while PNI was represented by Sukarno and Hatta. However, the effort came to a dead end when Sukarno and Hatta declared independence only for Indonesia, without including the Malay States (Buyong bin Adil, 1985).

When the effort failed, another political party believed to be able to destabilize the administration of the British regime in the Malay States called Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), was officially formed on October 17, 1945 in Ipoh, Perak. Among those who took responsibility to lead PKMM were Mokhtaruddin Laso, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Muhammad and Rashid Talu.

In fact, the strength and the influence of PKMM had at one time affected the stability of UMNO under the leadership of Dato Onn Jaafar and also managed to destabilize UMNO led by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj. PKMM was strongly inclined to struggle for independence by forming a great collective Malay nation under the concept of Melayu Raya. The presence of PKMM in the political arena had not been favored by the colonialists. Its progress was obstructed and quite a number of PKMM leaders were imprisoned when the Emergency Act in 1948 was introduced on the rationale that its activities could threaten the national security. Among the leaders detained were Dr. Burhanuddin al- Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Abdul Majid Salleh, Abdul Rahman Rahim, Mohd. Yusof Ayob and Ibrahim Singgeh (Ibrahim Singgeh, a Natal descent from Tapus district, Sumatera, was born in 1920, in Banir, Tapah Road, Perak. He is 82 years old and currently residing at Kg. Banir, Air Kuning, Tapah Road, Perak. He obtained his early education at Sekolah Melayu Banir from 1930 to 1935. After completing his studies, he was offered a post as Assistant Teacher by the British but he had to reject due to his father's (Singgeh bin Merah Ganti) strong opposition to the post. His father was from the descendent of Tapus aristocrat in Sumatera. Being a fighter spiritually, he migrated to Banir in Tapah Road. Ibrahim Singgeh later migrated to Tronoh to work as a motor atenddent at Syarikat Perak Hidro, from 1937 to 1938. In 1939, he went back to Indonesia, where he joined Parti Praindra led by Sultan Alam Shah. Since, he was a descendant of Tapus aristocrat, he was appointed as Bendahara Muda but was not allowed to be active in the party. As a result, he resigned from the post for reason being a political fighter and finally returned to Perak in 1942, when the World War II (WWII) broke out. From 1942 to 1945, he joined MPAJA Sungai Lampam Branch, Banir, Perak. After the WW II, he returned to Banir and later moved to Behrang to work there. Then, he joined API and was appointed to be API Behrang Branch Deputy Head. He was detained under the Emergency Ordinance, 1948 and was imprisoned for about 5 years at Ashby Road, Ipoh Detention Camp and Tanjung Beruas Camp in Melaka. He was freed in 1953 and played an active role in Labour Movement as Perak Miners Association as Deputy Head. He was appointed to be the Information Officer Malay Division of Malayan Trade Union of Malaya from 1955 to 1960. He joined PRM when Ahmad Boestamam formed PRM in 1955 and became PRM Batu Gajah Branch Deputy Head. After the independence, he was still politically active and joined PRM, DAP and finally PAS. While in DAP, he was elected as Tapah Road State Assemblyman besides being entrusted the post of National DAP Deputy President. In the 1990s, he joined PAS as a lifetime member. The interview with Ibrahim Singgeh was conducted at Kampung Banir, Tapah, Perak on 30/12/2002).

However, they had not been demoralized despite the obstacles and the price they had to pay such as being imprisoned or detained. For them whatever the situations that lied ahead, they would persistently continue to struggle against the British regime till they dropped dead.

The Malay radicalism of Perak was flourished by the formation of radical-based political movements such as KMM, KRIS, PKMM, HM, API, AWAS, PUTERA and PAS. These movements were led and supported by young radical Perak born leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam, Mustaza, Abdullah CD, Musa Ahmad, Abu Bakar Al Baqir, Ahmad Fuad Hassan, Mustapha Hussein, Abdul Majid Salleh, Rashid Maidin, Zulkifli Muhammad, Hassan Adli, Abdul Rahman Rahim, Rashid Karim, Ibrahim Karim, Abdul Aziz Ishak, Mohd. Yusof Ayob, Ibrahim Singgeh and many other radical leaders who had vigorously fought the British colonials (Perak born leaders were Dr. Burhanuddin from Kota Baharu, Gopeng, Perak; Ahmad Boestamam from Behrang, Tanjung Malim, Perak; Ustaz Abu Bakar Al Baqir from Gunung Semanggol, Perak; Musa Ahmad, Rashid Maidin dan Abdul Majid Salleh from Tapah, Perak; Abdullah CD from Parit, Perak; Ibrahim Singgeh from Banir, Tapah, Perak; Hassan Adli from Bagan Datoh, Perak; Baharuddin Latif from Lekir, Sitiawan, Perak; Cikgu Mohd Yusof Ayob from Pasir Panjang, Sitiawan, Perak; Rashid Karim dan Ibrahim Karim were brothers, from Padang Rengas, Perak; Abdul Rahman Rahim from Tanjung Rambutan, Perak; Zulkifli Muhammad from Kuala Kangsar, Perak; Tuan Haji Ahmad Fuad from Sitiawan, Perak; Mustapha Hussein and Abdul Aziz Ishak from Taiping, Perak and others whose names are not listed due to some constraints. They were the figures who activated the Perak Malays Radical

Movement from 1938 to 1957 and indeed their struggle had gone beyond the people's expectation of that time).

Most of these leaders, in fact, had left forever without wealth, leaving only their names for the future generation to ponder and to study. For those who are still alive such as Abdul Salleh Majid and Ibrahim Singgeh, they presently occupy small huts, waiting for the call of the Lord to be with their comrades who had answered the Lord's call earlier. Despite their old age, their tones stay as they were before. They hate cruelty, oppression and injustice in the political system of the Malay States. Their spiritual hearts remain radical although they are confined by their ages that have exceeded 80 years.

They were branded radicals by the British regime for their actions to demand independence for the Malay States. Various acts were introduced to surpress the radicals. The Organization Act 1920 was introduced to facilitate the regime's control on all anti-British movements in the Malay States and in 1947, the act was amended to further tighten the control on radically-inclined organizations. However, the organizations refused to give in to the act and to coorperate with the British. As a result, they were considered to be defiants of the regime. Consequently, the British, through the Malayan Security Service, listed them as radical movements that thretened its stability and interests in the Malay States. Among the organizations listed were PETANI, PKMM, API, AWAS, PETA, Barisan Tani SeMalaya dan GEMPAR/GMPR. Moreover, these organizations were found to link themselves with communist movements such as PKMM and the Malay States Labour Movement (Conference held under Chairmanship of H.E. the Governor General, at 10 a.m. on Thursday: 26th June, 1947 in the Governor General's office Singapore').

The British regime had also blacklisted radically-inclined leaders of the Malay States such as Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Abdul Majid Salleh and Rashid Maidin. The British considered both the leaders and the organizations as threats to their regime in the Malay States.

## INDEPENDENCE: A SACRED TERMINOLOGY

The formation of PKMM in 1945 with the aim to free the Malay States had terrified the British regime. The catch phrase, Merdeka, was a sacred word to the Malays. It had managed to spread influence and to create unity among the Malays all over the state of Perak. PKMM Central, which was set up in Ipoh, had gained tremendous support from the Malays. The formation of PKMM had been made public through a newspaper called Suara Rakyat. The youths grabbed the opportunity to register themselves and moved under the umbrella of PKMM. The first branch of PKMM was set up in Simpang Ampat, Kampar (PKMM Simpang Ampat Branch Committee Members, Head: Ismail Haji Qali; Committee Members: Salleh Nakhoda Hitam, Abdul Majid Salleh); followed by the second branch in Sitiawan, Perak in 1946 (PKMM Dinding/Sitiawan Branch Committee Members; Head: Mahmud Abdul Samad; Committee Membners: Mohd. Yusof Ayob, Ayus Nordin, Abdul Hanan bin Mat Bakri; API Head: Abdullah Ayob (Tan Sri). Information gathered from interviews conducted with Mohd. Yusof Ayob on 24 December, 2002 and Haji Arifin bin Mohd. Yunus on 23 December, 2002). Both the Sitiawan and Pasir Panjang banches, operated at No. 24, Jalan Haji Mohd Ali, Sitiawan, were the most active among them. PKMM of Gunung Semanggul, Taiping, Batu Gajah, Kuala Kangsar, Kerian and a few others were later formed. The demand for independence was vocally voiced out through PKMM official newspapers; Suara Rakyat and Voice of the People.

Numerous articles were written and published in the newspapers calling the Malays to unite and to rise against the British. The unity among the Malays was indeed required to achieve a self-governing nation. The calls for the Malays to unite and to strengthen bondage among themselves were made to realise their dream of gaining independence and placed themselves under a democratic rulership. Suara Rakyat called on the Malays:

> Rise, O Malays, who have not contributed to the people and the nation. We want all the Malays, young and old, male and female to be together to free the Malay States from the state of injustice and helplessness to the extent that we fail to govern our own land (Suara Rakyat: 25 January, 1946)

The calls and requests were directed at the Malays to unite and to rise and to get themselves involved in the struggle to gain independence for the sake of religion, race and the Malay nation. The aim would be achieved only if the Malays were to stay united and together rose and fought the British colonialists.

To further strengthen its political struggle, PKMM had formed API and AWAS. Though at first, API functioned as the PKMM youth wing and AWAS as its women wing, both were then separated from PKMM to be political movements of their own due to their excessive radicalism. The decision was arrived at in a conference held in Malacca in 1946. In fact, it was a political strategy of PKMM; in case API and AWAS were banned, the parent body, PKMM, would not be affected and could proceed with the struggle.

The strategy obviously saved PKMM for a short while. API, under the influential leadership of Ahmad Boestamam and his secretary Ahmad Karim, had managed to spread its influence not only in Perak but also ignited fires of resentment against the British throughout the Malay States. The emergence of API had created more fear and terror to the British as it was more inclined to a semi-militant approach.

The slogan, freedom with blood, had adequately depicted the degree of radicalism in the movement. In fact, at that moment of time, API was ready to face any circumstances ahead. API members were clad with all-white uniform with arm bands on the right arm printed with the word API and songkok at their heads.

Besides being handsomely dressed, API members were also equipped with marching and parading skills and thus their presence feared the British colonialists. Some of API supporters and even the colonialists and their people translated the acronym API as Angkatan Pembunuh Inggeris (English Killer Force). Their committment and active involvement had led to the setting up of API Youth Training Centres as preparation to stage a struggle against the colonialists. API training centers were located in Pasir Panjang, Sitiawan, Padang Rengas and Kuala Kangsar. It was learnt that about 45 local youths were involved in a training conducted at the API training centre in Sitiawan. While at the training centres, the youths were indoctrinated with Malay nationalist ideology as well as undergoing semi-military training such as marching and parading (An interview with Haji Ariffin bin Mohd. Yunus on 23/12/2002. He was one of the youths involved in the training conducted by API. He is now more than 76 years old).

Indeed the British feared API more than they feared PKMM. Its anniversary was celebrated across the nation in 1947 and it was made grand with the marching of the armies of Semut API, accompanied by AWAS members. The most successful celebration was the one held in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. Although, there were efforts made by the colonialists to sabotage the anniversary, the strong spirit and commitment of API and AWAS youths had turned it into a real success. At that time, female radical leaders such as Sawiyah Jalil, the head of Perak AWAS and Sakinah Junid of AWAS Padang Rengas emerged. Sakinah Junid challenged the participants of about 300 people to march along 18 km journey from Padang Rengas to Kuala Kangsar to defy the British who had planned to block the conference. The marching, with members clad in all-white clothing, carrying the of flags Sang Saka Merah Putih ignited the spirit of PKMM, API and AWAS suppporters. The support had created tremendous fear and terror to the British and consequently in July1948, AWAS and API were declared illegal.

Realizing that the rise of the people mood become more intense through political movements such as HM, PKMM, GMPR, API, AWAS and PUTERA, the British regime had to come up with a strategy to suppress the rise of the people. The British were worried that the movements could form coorperation not only with the Malay movements but also with non-Malay leftist political bodies such as the All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) (AMCJA was a coalition of Council of Joint Action (CJA) that was founded on 13 December, 1946 in Singapore by Malayan Demokratik Union (MDU). It was then spread to the Malay States on 22 December, 1946 bearing the name All Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA), Tan Cheng Lock was appointed the Chairman), a coalition of Chinese radical organizations. The merger of PUTERA and AMCJA had made both the colonialists and their supporters realize that the Malays could coorperate with the immigrants to form and develop the Malay States. The success of drafting a constitution called People's Constitutional Proposals (PR) (Draf Perlembagaan Rakyat/People's Constitution Draft, National Archives, Kuala Lumpur) in 1947 had proven the political maturity of the left-wing Malays. The constitution received appreciations and praises from the various parties. However, the British appeared unconcerned and the PR was not given any consideration by the British. The situation created uneasiness and dissatisfaction among the left wing groups in the Malay States. As a result, to demonstrate their anger towards the British, the hartal of October in 1947 was organised and it earned widespread support from the people across the nation (Stockwell, 1979).

PUTERA-AMCJA played an important role to ensure the hartal took place successfully. Thus, campaigns, public rallies and local newspapers carried out propaganda activities to ensure the success of the hartal. The launching of hartal was supported by Col. H.S Lee, President of The Selangor Chinese Chamber of Commerce as published in The Times of Malaya and Straits Echo on October 18, 1947. The following statement was released:

> The committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at their meeting held at October 9 have decided that the appeal to stop work on one day on October 20, 1947 should not extend to persons having the following occupations, even though they may be in sympathy with our protest conservancy and scavenging labourers, passenger transport, doctors and government employers (Times of Malaya and Straits Echo, 18 October, 1947)

The move was also supported by A.A. Mohd Abdullah, the Chairman of Selangor Indian Chamber of Commerce, in his statement published in The Malay Mail of 18 October, 1947. He had given the consensus that their organization would be involved peacefully in the hartal. He also suggested that all members close their shops to avoid any untoward incidents (The Malay Mail, 18 October, 1947).

In relation to the hartal, Abdul Majid Salleh, Johore State Labor Chief, Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Union, reflected about the incident as follows:

> The labour groups acted in Malaya, under the Labor Union (Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Union). Its Headquarters was in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, the labourers picketed here and there, marched here and there, protested this and that, one expelled others followed. Public rallies were held in open fields, at movie theatres, the white masters were invited, front seats reserved for them; listen, listen and listen. Listen to the demand of the people

And as Ahmad Boestamam once noted, Kuala Lumpur on that day was quiet as if it was attacked by Geroda. Only PUTERA-AMCJA members were seen patrolling the city to ensure the success of the hartal. Something to be proud of at that time was that no untoward incidents such as arson, rioting and fighting took place. This proved the success and the maturity of the radical groups that was publicly supported by the people.

The hartal held across the nation on October 20, 1947 can be historically recorded and considered as the peak of PUTERA-AMCJA's struggle. However, the demand of the left wing was still ignored by the British regime. The British considered the hartal to be an undemocratic action that was influenced by unhealthy elements. Sir Malcom Mc Donald, the Governor General of the Malay States claimed that the hartal was beyond the legal jurisdiction. He stated:

> Sincerely, I respect the opinion of those members of the AMCJA and PUTERA who are at the heart democrats but until they are prepared to use the normal democratic methods like voting in elections to achieve their ends we must suspect that they are too much under the influence of undemocratic forces employing undemocratic methods to achieve undemocratic ends (The Malay Mail, 20 October, 1947)

As for the researcher, it was merely the British' excuse to reject the People's Constitutional Proposal tabled by the radical groups, as the colonialists had placed a high expectation to coorperate with the Malay elites, especially the children of the Malay rich and aristocrats of the time.

## BRITISH REACTION

Facing that critical condition, the British had to devise a strategy to curb the rise of the people initiated by the leftist groups. It should be stressed that during that period, the burning spirit among the Malays to rise against the British could no longer be curbed. The situation was made worse when the Chinese, being influenced by the struggle of the communists headed by the Chinese Communist Party, began to rise against the colonial power. Thus, in 1948, an act called the Emergency Act 1948 was introduced and employed to ensure the stability and to safeguard the regime's occupation in the Malay States. This act granted full authority to the British to detain en masse the radicals.

The British, under the excuse of safeguarding national security interest, took a drastic action to detain and to imprison radical Malay leaders without bringing them to trial in court. As a result, quite a big number of movement leaders branded as radicals were detained at British political detention centres.

According to a local historian, Zainal Abidin Wahid, the Emergency Act 1948 was in fact a political vacuum process aiming to curb the rise of the Malay radical groups in the Malay States. The fact was supported and strengthened by another local historian, Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, who claimed that the implementation of the Act caused the leftist movements to suffer a disastrous catastrophe (Interview with Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Professor of History cum Head of Centre of History Studies, Politics and Strategy. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, 25/01/2003).

However, as for the researcher, the Emergency Act 1948 comprised of various hidden agenda and the researcher strongly believes that the act had a three-fold objectives:

- Firstly, it served as a mechanism to curb the communist influence that was widespread among the Chinese communities in the Malay States
- Secondly, it granted full authority to the British and legitimised their Act to detain and imprison the Malay radicals without trial
- Thirdly, it acted as a weapon to supress the Islamic reform movement that was gaining momentum in the Malay States (Ishak Bin Saat, 2007)

The execution of the Act had caused a state of silence and calmness in the malay radicals' struggle from

1948 to 1955, as all their leaders were arrested and detained in the British detention camps. The period was declared as the dark years for the Malay radical movements in the Malay States. During the period, independence movements led by the radical groups were found to be quiet and passive. This situation opened opportunities for the Malay elites to easily take over the struggle for independence from the radical leaders.

The radicals, despite being imprisoned, were always spiritually free and physically independent. This could be proven by the life styles they had gone through in British detention camps. Besides staying united and coorperated, they were optimistic to continue their struggle when they were freed later. While in the detention camps, they organized beneficial activities to occupy their time. Classes were held to make full use of their time. Those knowledgeable and qualified among them were made teachers to the others and they were loyal and committed to the classes held. Religious classes, for instance, were conducted by Abu Bakar al-Baqir, Abdul Rauf Nor and Baharuddin Latif. English classes were handled by Ishak Haji Muhammad, while Malay language classes for the illiterate were taught by Sharif Salleh. Organizational classes were conducted by Abdul Majid Salleh and political classes were taught by Rashid Maidin (Interview conducted with Abdul Majid Salleh on 16 August, 2002 and Interview conducted with Ibrahim Singgeh on 30 December, 2002). The activities were organized to prepare them to carry on with their struggle wherever they were after being released from detention.

## CONCLUSION

In 1955, anti-British spirit was reignited as the detained radical leaders were released from British detention centres. Those radical-hearted leaders continued the struggle that was long disrupted due to their imprisonment without any feeling of fear in them. Consequently, they formed political parties such as Parti Islam SeMalaya (PAS), Parti Rakyat Malaya (PRM), Parti Buruh Malaya (PBM) and so on. Ahmad Boestamam formed and led PRM from 1955 to 1967; while, Al-Helmy (1965) headed PAS from 1956 to 1969. Meanwhile, Parti Buruh Perak was taken charge of by Abdul Majid Salleh from 1960 to 1967. Leaders who were inclined to give loyalty to Ahmad Boestamam such as Ishak Haji Muhammad, Nazar Nong, Harun Amirulrashid, Yahya Nassim and Ibrahim Singgeh joined PRM. Those leaders who were loyal to Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy chose PAS as a platform for them to continue their political struggle.

According to Jais Anuar, Dr. Burhanuddin was a highly charismatic Malay leader who never staged personal attacks on his opponents and this opinion was supported by Abdul Majid Salleh (Interview conducted with Jais Anuar in Bangi on 30 August, 2003 and Interview conducted with Abdul Majid Salleh in Ipoh on 6 August, 2002.). As a result, he was chosen to head PAS in 1956. In fact, there were also those like Cikgu Mohd, Yusuf Ayob, Abdul Aziz Ishak and Mustapha Hussein who chose UMNO as a platform to continue their struggle. However, an interesting point to note was that they later left Umno for not agreeing with the party's policy which they considered to be non-radical and too tolerant. Leaders such as Abdul Aziz Ishak, Cikgu Mohd, and Yusuf Ayub left UMNO and joined PAS subsequently.

Indeed, the radicalism of Perak Malays had paved the way for the subsequent radical struggles all over the Malay States. They were the pioneering force to demand independence for the Malay States from the British. Their spiritual strength and commitment posed a great challenge to the colonialists and managed to destabilize the occupation of the British as well as the Malay elites. They had to undergo a tribulation in the waves of struggle towards the independence of the Malay States. Their struggle was too significant and meaningful despite their being harassed by their own people in its early stage but their effort was later appreciated and acknowledged by the ruling party. The late Tun Dr. Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman, then Deputy Prime Minister once said:

> Even though independence was gained by the moderate group, history has proven that the radical nationalists too had contributed towards independence (Speech of the Late Tun Dr. Ismail Dato' Abdul Rahman, Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia upon receiving Honorary Doctorate in Law at Universiti Sains Malaysia Convocation on 23 September, 1973)

Thus, this proves that the contribution and the struggle of the Malay radicals have been significantly meaningful. Indeed the struggles of the Malay radicals in Perak was too meaningful for it transpired awareness and served as the driving force in the struggle for independence for the Malay States. They were not only known as local leaders but also emerged as national political leaders capable of destabilizing the British regime and the Malay elites. Therefore, the concept history belongs to the winner should be reevaluated and corrected.

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