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## **1948 AND THE COLD WAR IN MALAYA: SAMPLINGS OF MALAY REACTIONS**

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*This paper is a preliminary report of an on-going research on the reactions of the Malays in Malaya to the coming of the Cold War to the region, with particular reference to the importance of the year 1948. For the majority of the Malays, the Cold War was most popularly associated with the Emergency, which British authorities had declared in the effort to quell the armed uprising mounted by the MCP. The vast majority of Malays in Malaya were not interested in the on-going Cold War between the Western bloc led by the United States on the side the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union on the other. The preoccupations of the Malays during the immediate post-Pacific War period was nationalism and the concomitant effort to gain independence for Malaya from Britain. In particular, they had been rather anxious that the Malays, who were the native of the land, were not robbed of the custodianship over Malaya and political privileges of the Malays in independent Malaya. Consumed with these issues, the Malays had little interests in external affairs. It was perhaps the lack of Malay support that foredoomed the fate of communism in Malaya.*

Keywords: Cold War in Malaya, 1948, Malay reactions, Malayan Union, Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya, Communist Party of Malaya, Malayan Democratic Union

### **THE YEAR 1948**

In the political history of Malaysia, and particularly Malaya, the year 1948 is significant in a number of ways:

To the administrators and the Malays, it marked the official formation of the Federation of Malaya beginning in February, which partly fulfilled

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the British scheme of a better coordinated and more uniform administration for the whole of Malaya (excluding Singapore), though not as centralised as envisaged under the Malayan Union (MU) scheme introduced immediately after the Pacific War. It also signified the official annulment of the MU and Britain's failure to recolonise the "protected" Malay States and the whole of Malaya as planned during the War. Although starkly incongruent with the spirit of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and in order to camouflage their imperialistic design to exercise complete control over Malaya (and Singapore), the British embellished the MU with the anomalous pronouncement of preparing the peoples of the colony for self-rule in the near future.<sup>1</sup> Conceived some time in 1943, the MU was officially inaugurated on 1 April 1946 amidst non-violent but intense and thunderous protest by the Malays throughout the Peninsula. In fact, all of the Sultans and Malay members of the Councils boycotted the inauguration ceremony. Politically, the introduction of the MU had, in a way, momentarily stalled the split between the Malays into the "Left" and the "Right", the "Upper Stream" and the "Lower Stream" in Malay leadership<sup>2</sup>, and between the *Rakyat* and the *Raja*. Faced with the threatening fate of being relinquished of their role and status as the determinant people in the new "political nation" (*bangsa politik*) imposed by the British, for the first time the Malays of all walks of life and shades of political inclinations throughout Malaya came together as a unified force to reject the MU.

But as was to be proven later, Malay "unity", as manifested during the early phase of the pan-Malaya Malay congresses from March to May 1946, was not to last very long. In June, *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM) (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaysia) and two other organisations left the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which they had helped to officially set up in May. As claimed by leaders of PKMM, the basic difference that set them apart was UMNO's

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942–1948*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> "Kepimpinan Arus Atas" and "Kepimpinan Arus Bawah", as discussed in Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, "Revolusi di Malaysia", in Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail et al., *Nasionalisme dan Revolusi di Malaysia dan Indonesia*, Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2006, 92–96.

unwillingness to gear the struggle towards independence from the British.

To many, in the context of the Cold War, 1948 is usually associated with the “Emergency” declared by the British Malayan authorities of the Malayan Union in June in their efforts to confront and quell what they claimed was an armed uprising led by the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP). Paradoxically, it was the Japanese invasion and British collaboration and assistance on the eve of the Pacific War and during the Japanese Occupation that had contributed to the burgeoning of MCP military strength, which was seen as the security threat that led to the declaration of the Emergency.

Another significant aspect of 1948 that is generally neglected in previous studies is the growing and increasingly forceful involvement and radicalisation of the Malay (and non-Malay groups, especially the Chinese) masses (*rakyat*) in political movements in Malaya during the few years prior to the declaration of the “Emergency”. Malay political leadership, which had generally been the preserve of the upper echelon of a community that consisted of aristocrats and emerging English-educated bureaucrats, had, since the period of the Japanese Occupation, been rivaled, if not challenged, by a new breed of “leadership from below”. This new leadership was composed of Malay-educated and moderately English-educated youth as well as religiously inclined intellectuals. The beginnings of this phenomenon are traceable to the formation and activities of *Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka*, KMM (more popularly known as *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*) before and on the eve of the war, *Pembela Tanah air* and *Kesatuan Rakyat Istimewa Semenanjung* (KRIS) during the war, and *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* in 1945, and it reached its climax with frequent gatherings and seminars on serious issues pertaining to the Malays, especially centring around the madrasah Ihya-As-Syarif, Gunung Semanggol, Perak in 1947 and 1948.

These rakyat-initiated gatherings involved peoples from all walks of life and political orientations from all over Malaya, including some members

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of UMNO who attended as individuals.<sup>3</sup> Leftists and even communists, such as Rashid Maidin, Abdullah Cek Dat and Musa Ahmad, and occasionally even non-Malay members of the Malayan Democratic Union (MDU), such as Gerald de Cruz and John Eber, attended the gatherings together with respected Islamic religious personalities, such as Fadhlullah Suhaimi, Abdullah Fahim, and Burhanuddin Al-Helmi. The dynamic Islamic scholar (*ulama*) and principal of Il-Ihya, Abu Bakar Al-Bakir (also al-Baqir), who hosted the gatherings was no doubt among the busiest and most active catalysts. It was from these gatherings that various working committees such as Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat/Council for the People's Education (LEPIR), Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya/ Pan-Malaya Malay Economic Centre (PERMAS), and Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya/Pan-Malaya Supreme Religious Council (MATA), etc., were formed to enhance efforts towards uplifting the Malays in all aspects of life. The gatherings even proposed the establishment of a Malay Bank and Malay University and, on 14 March 1948, established the first Islamic-based political party, the Hizbul Muslimim (Party of Muslims), which vowed to struggle for independence and turn Malaya into Darul-Islam (Islamic state).

## **OTHER RELATED DEVELOPMENTS**

In the meantime, partly due to the political manoeuvring of the Japanese and the blatant harshness of some elements of the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and Kuomintang agents, serious Sino-Malay clashes broke out, especially in Johor and Perak. These clashes added a harsh new variable, i.e., head-on collision between the Malays who claimed Malaya as their exclusive and native home and a major immigrant community who challenged such a claim. Thus, the complexity of the situation was compounded on the eve of the decolonisation process that Britain tried to stall after the War, which coincided with the beginnings of the Cold War.

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<sup>3</sup> UMNO officially prohibited its members from participating in the gatherings.

Among the Malays (and the peoples of Malaya), the first political party to emerge after the war was the PKMM, officially formed on 17 October 1945 in Ipoh, Perak. The party was established by young political activists, many of whom were associated with the periodicals *Suara Rakyat* and later *Voice of the People* which were put up immediately after the war with the organisational assistance of Mukhtarudin Lasso, an Indonesian member of the MPAJA. Among other things the aim of the party was to achieve independence within the Republic of Greater Indonesia. In detail, the stated policies (*dasar*) of PKMM were:

1. To unite the Malay nation (*bangsa Melayu*) and to inculcate national feelings in the hearts of the Malay people with the ultimate aim of making Malaya united 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 Malay 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 strive for freedom for the Malays to publish their own books, to encourage the spread of education democratically in order to enhance the position of the Malays in the political arena thus improving the sense of nationalism amongst the Malays.
7. PKMM is willing to cooperate with other peoples and to work towards the unification of all peoples living in Malaya (Malayan United Front) to make Independent Malaya prosperous and blissful as a component member of the Republic of Indonesia.
8. To support the Indonesian people in their struggle for Independence.

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Mukhtaruddin was elected President and Dahari Ali, an editorial board member of *Suara Rakyat*, was elected Secretary General. Interestingly, Dr. Burhanuddin Helmi, who was not present at the meeting, was chosen as Vice-President in Absentia. The twenty-five year old Abdullah Sani bin Raja Kecil (better known later as Ahmad Boestamam), the Chief Editor of *Suara Rakyat* and main initiator of the Party, was elected to the Central Committee together with the prolific writer Ishak Haji Muhammad and journalists such as Zulkifli Auni and Abdul Rahman Rahim, among others.

Despite some traces of communist manipulation and influence, the core spirit of the PKMM was nationalism (*semangat kebangsaan*). This became even more pronounced when Mukhtaruddin disappeared and the more religiously-inclined Dr. Burhanuddin was nominated President in his place. Anti-colonial sentiment and nationalism had no doubt united the participants, but two main strands of variant ideologies were observable at the inaugural meeting. Communists and communist-inclined members such as Mukhtaruddin insisted that the party be named *Parti Sosialis Malaya* (Socialist Party of Malaya), but the name *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*, proposed by the nationalists and supported by the majority of those present, was finally adopted. The nationalist character of PKMM was strengthened by the participation of many former members of KMM and later more popularly known as KRIS or *Kesatuan Rakyat Istimewa Semenanjung* (more popularly known as *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung*). Although the populist character of PKMM could be taken advantage of by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) to spread its influence through its “United Front” strategy, the participation of other elements such as Islamic religious teachers put a check on MCP’s success.

The nationalist character of PKMM was made clearer by the writing and speeches of Dr. Burhanuddin as is observable in *Perjuangan Kita* (Our Struggle), a monograph that he wrote in conjunction with the first anniversary of the party in October 1946. To Burhanuddin, the impetus for the formation of national organisations such as the PKMM was no other than “to achieve independence for the nation and the country”

(*kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah air*)<sup>4</sup>. Quoting a number of verses from the *Quran*, Burhanuddin expressed his agreement with the oft-quoted Arabic maxim, “Loving the Nation is part of the Belief in God” (*Hubbulwatan min al-iman*). With the involvement of Islamists such as Burhanuddin, Abu Bakar Al-Bakir, and many religious teachers and students, communist ideology failed to manifest among the Malays. As is evident in *Perjuangan Kita*, Burhanuddin even stressed that Islam was an essential element of Malayness; therefore it would be redundant and unnecessary to include the word “*Islam*” in the name of PKMM.<sup>5</sup> He elaborated that the nationalist basis of PKMM stood on five principles:

- (i) Oneness of God,
- (ii) Nationalism,
- (iii) Sovereignty of the People (*rakyat*),
- (iv) Universal Brotherhood,
- (v) Justice in Society.<sup>6</sup>

However, it was also noted in *Perjuangan Kita* that many people had joined PKMM in its first year of existence, and its success was to some extent attributable to the activities of *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API—the PKMM youth wing), *Kesatuan Buruh Melayu Malaya* (Malaya Malay Workers Union) and *Kesatuan Kaum Tani* (Peasants Union).<sup>7</sup> Existing studies generally view the API as communist-inclined and the latter two of the groups as front organisations for the MCP.

Formed and headed by the indefatigable Ahmad Boestamam on 17 February 1946, and inspired by and supportive of the Indonesian struggle for independence, API was vigorous in its efforts to gain political independence from the British. With the slogans “*Merdeka*” (Freedom), “*Sekali merdeka tetap merdeka*” (Once freed forever free) and “*Merdeka dengan Darah*” (Freedom through Bloodshed) as its war-cries, API reinforced the fighting spirit of its members through regular

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<sup>4</sup> Burhanuddin, *Perjuangan Kita*, Singapore: Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya, 1946, 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

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talks and military-styled marches, carrying mere sticks or bamboo poles in place of guns. It was at about the same time that the women's section of the PKMM was also reorganised and given the catchier name of *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS [Beware], the acronym for "Angkatan Wanita Sedar").

When the Emergency was declared in June 1948 and thousands of people were detained in due course, some members of the PKMM, especially those from API and a number from AWAS, were forced to go underground to avoid the police net. It was in this setting that some of them willingly or were forced by circumstances to join or work militarily with the MCP in their common efforts against the British (See, for example, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari Awas ke Regimen ke-10*).

In the meantime, following the publication of his *Testament Politik API* (The Political Testament of API) on the occasion of the first anniversary of the PKMM youth wing, Boestamam was convicted of sedition in April 1947 and API was proscribed on 17 July. The proscription hampered the activities of API members, whose urge to act facilitated the establishment of *Ikatan Pemuda Tanahair* (PETA), headed by the former API leader Wahi Anuar, who was also a member of the MCP. It should be noted here that when the Emergency was declared for the whole of the Federation on 18 June 1948, following the murder of three European planters in Sungai Siput by MCP elements on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the MCP continued to exist as a legal body. It was only on 23 July, i.e., about a year after the proscription of API and more than a month after the declaration of the Emergency, that MCP was finally banned as a political party by the British. This raises the interesting question of who was regarded as more "dangerous" by the Malayan British Government during those years: MCP, API/PKMM, or Hizbul Muslimin?

Another very significant development that took place prior to the imposition of the Emergency was the emergence of the All-Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) (representing a number of non-Malay organisations including the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Ex-Comrades Association and Malayan New Democratic Youth League, which were believed to be MCP front-line organisations) and PUTERA (representing a number of left-wing Malay political organisations headed by PKMM), which collaborated to draft the *Peoples*



*Constitutional Proposals for Malaya* in July 1947 as an alternative to the Malayan Union and the Federation of Malaya schemes. The non-Malay-Malay AMCJA-PUTERA political coalition predated the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance of 1954. But the Peoples Constitutional Proposals was rejected by the British government and the *hartal* that the coalition launched towards the end of 1947 in protest failed to block the implementation of the Federation of Malaya. Conventional scholarship generally concluded that it was the MCP that was the dominant schemer behind the AMCJA-PUTERA negotiations and proposals. But taking into consideration the ten major points of the Peoples Constitutional Proposals, especially with regard to matters related to the Sultans and Islam, could it not have been otherwise? It should be remembered that it was after the British rejection of the AMCJA-PUTERA initiatives that a more religiously oriented political organisation, the Hizbul Muslimin officially came into being in March 1948, and the Emergency was declared in June. What was the decisive factor behind the declaration of the Emergency? Was it the MCP's terrorist stance or the upsurge in the people's political consciousness and anti-colonial spirit which united peoples of different ethnic groups against British continued presence and activities that transcended ethnic considerations and led the people to the brink of an all-out rebellion?<sup>8</sup>

## **THE COLD WAR AND THE MALAYS**

Back to the main theme of this paper, in what ways and to what extent were the Malays of 1940s aware of the conflict between the so-called East and West, and how and to what extent were the Malays involved in the historical process related to the phenomenon called the Cold War?

To answer these questions, ideally one needs to examine contemporary documents produced by the Malays themselves and related to the Malays, which consist of, among other things:

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<sup>8</sup> For an alternative view of the matter, see Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail (ed.). *Malaysia: Sejarah Kebangsaan dan Politik*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2005, 318.

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- i) Newspapers and periodicals such as *Warta Malaya*, *Majlis*, *Utusan Melayu*, *Suara Rakyat*, *Pelita Malaya*, *Suloh Malaya* and *Warta Negara*. Special attention should be paid to the editorials, reports on political and semi-political gatherings and resolutions, speeches of leaders of political organisations, and letters to the editors.
  
- ii) Official documents of Malay associations/organisations such as PASPAM, *Persatuan Melayu Selangor*, *Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka* (albeit *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*), *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM), *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API), AWAS (if any) and *Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu* (UMNO).
  
- iii) Memoirs and biographies of political personalities such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Onn Jaafar, Mustapha Hussain, Burhanuddin al-Helmi, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Rashid Maidin, Abdullah CD, Musa Ahmad, Shamsiah Fakeh, Abdul Samad Idris, Khatijah Sidek and Aishah Ghani.
  
- iv) Reminiscences of the past written by contemporary leaders such as Ahmad Boestamam, and mid-level and lower-level political activists of the time such as Abdul Majid Salleh, Kamaluddin Muhammad and Jaafar Hussain.
  
- v) Creative writing in the form of novels, short stories and poems by writers such as Harun Aminurrashid, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Keris Mas and Usman Awang.

Below are a few samples to demonstrate what transpired. Looking quickly at the sources at hand would immediately suggest that the Malays in Malaya, except for a very few, were generally unaware of the “Cold War” (*Perang Dingin*) and did not pay much attention to the East-West or Communist–Non-Communist issues before the declaration of the Emergency in 1948. As is evident from contemporary Malay newspapers, prior to the Japanese surrender in August 1945, literate Malays, including the intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s, were more concerned with the lot of their *bangsa* (nation/race) economically and socially, especially when compared to that of the immigrant communities. Politically, they were anxious to ensure that they were not deprived of “ownership” of “*Tanah Melayu*” (Malay Land/Malaya),

which they claimed to have inherited from their forefathers. With regard to British presence, as was seen even when opposing the Malayan Union, the Malays kept on pointing out that Britain-Malay States relations were based on treaties that recognised the sovereignty of the Malay governments headed by the Sultans and that Britain's duty was to "protect" and not betray the Malays.

With regard to the Cold War, we can perhaps, as is generally perceived, link Malay history to the presence of a number of Indonesian nationalists-cum-communists who have escaped to Malaya since the 1920s. Personalities such as Tan Malaka, Subakat, Djameluddin Tamin, Alimin, Musso, Darsono, Nata Zainuddin, Burhan Djamin, Semaun, Sutan Djenain and Mukhtar Lutfi are known to have attempted spreading communist-socialist ideology among the Malays, but without much success. Except for a number of isolated cases, Malays in Malaya were not attracted to communism, which they perceived as foreign and particularly Chinese. It was only in the wake of the upsurge of the anti-imperialist/anti-British consciousness, i.e., nationalism, in the late 1930s, especially during the Japanese Occupation and more so following the Malayan Union episode and the enforcement of the Emergency Regulations beginning in June 1948, that some Malays began to join the MCP front organisations and later the armed-rebellion led by MCP. As narrated by Mustapha Hussain, Boestamam, Aishah Ghani and a number of other Malay nationalists, it was during these latter years that the impact of the activities of Indonesian communists/nationalists such as Alimin and Sutan Djenain was felt, especially among the Malay Left. Common anti-imperialist activities of some Malays and non-Malays (especially Chinese) during the Japanese Occupation had helped to thaw the racial sentiments and contributed to the MCP being seen in a better light among the Malay Left.

The AMCJA-PUTERA common agenda, as portrayed in their Peoples Constitution proposals, brought non-UMNO Malay political activists and the non-Malays, including those from the MCP, even closer. To ease Malay suspicion against the MCP even further, Chinese MCP members such as Chen Kwang Chan (Chen Nan) turned themselves "Malay" by assuming names such as "Haji Hashim" and lived and spread their propaganda works amongst the Malays. The Sino-Malay collaboration among the Left and especially within the communist-led anti-British groups grew to the point of symbiosis after the declaration of the

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Emergency and the formation of the Malay-Muslim Tenth Regiment within the MCP in May 1949. For example, a very experienced and persevering female MCP activist, Eng Ming Ching, was assigned to the Tenth Regiment and became Muslim, assuming the name Suriani Abdullah. She married the regiment's Malay Commander, Abdullah C.D., and both continued their "struggle against the imperialist".<sup>9</sup> The same was true with Chau Chi Chu, who became "Selamah Abdullah" and married Rashid Maidin.

### **AWARENESS OF GLOBAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: SOME SAMPLES**

Below are some samples of cases to demonstrate this phenomenon:

#### **1. Rashid Maidin**

In the preface to his memoir published in 2005, Rashid Maidin, the self-confessed first Malay member of MCP writes:

I got involved in the MCP struggle against the imperialist British for the sake of the independence of the motherland since 1930s.

I had suffered under British and Japanese imperialism. During the Japanese occupation (1941–1945) I fought against the occupation as much as I can effort to. The same is true when the British returned to colonize Malaya once again in 1945. During the peaceful struggle against the British between 1945–1948 I was one of MCP front representatives that got involved in mass-

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Abdullah C.D., *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman Pergerakan Sehingga 1948*, Selangor: Strategic Information Research Development, 2005; Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*, Selangor: Strategic Information Research Development Centre, 2005; Suriani Abdullah, *Memoir Suriani Abdullah: Setengah Abad dalam Perjuangan*, Selangor: Strategic Information Research Development Centre, 2006.

work for independence. After the imposition of the Emergency in June 1948 I was detained in the imperialist jail till 1952. Luckily I was able to escape and joined the Tenth Guerilla Regiment headed by my close friend Abdullah CD. In 1955 I was involved together with Chen Ping and Chen Tien in the Baling Talks.<sup>10</sup>

Rashid also tells of his admiration for “my political mentor”, Lai Raifel (Toh Lung San), the MCP activist who died “heroically” at the hands of the Japanese in 1943. It was Lai who helped set up the Kinta Mining Workers Association that united Chinese, Malay and Indian workers in their common struggle for better treatment by their employers. Rashid also tells of his visit to London and his transit in India, where he met representatives of communist parties from other countries, which enhanced his awareness of the global nature of his political activities.

## **2. Abdullah C.D.**

In his memoir published in 2005, the former head of the MCP Tenth Regiment writes:

... in 1939, when studying in English school, I became a member of *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM). I read struggle materials brought in from Indonesia and had the chance to be tutored by Indonesian independence fighters (including Alimin) who were forced to take refuge in Perak...

During the Japanese Occupation, I continued to be active in KMM in Perak while taking part in underground works against the Japanese under the leadership of MCP. When the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, I got

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<sup>10</sup> Rashid Maidin, *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*, Selangor: Strategic Information Research Development Centre, 2005, 1.

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involved in setting up PKMM in October... At that time I was already in the MCP Malay Mass-work Department together with Rashid Maidin, to arouse the Malay masses to oppose the imperialist. I headed the PKMM Workers Section and continued to actively organize the workers. I was together with Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Hj. Muhammad, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Baqir, and many more nationalist figures and independence fighters in PKMM at that time to struggle against the British.

Negotiating peace in the inter-ethnic disturbances instigated by Japanese and British agents in Perak, Johor and Pahang was a very important experience... (which) strengthened my determination to struggle to eliminate the imperialist and unite the people in our country...<sup>11</sup>

Describing the initiation ceremony in which he was officially admitted into the MCP in 1945, Abdullah C.D. continues:

In Mei 1945, Seman and I were admitted as members of MCP. We were the first Malays in Lambor to become MCP members. The initiation ceremony took place at Seman's house. Present at the ceremony was Tuan Kecil (Siao Hong) who presided... The ceremony was not done secretly because in Lambor at that time, not only were the Penghulu, Tok Imam and the masses supportive of anti-Japanese struggle, a sort of people's rule had been established. Apart from mass-army as the armed forces of the kampung, there were Anti-Japanese People's League and People's Court.

The main hall in the house was brightly lighted with gasoline lamps. The space (reserved for the) initiation (ceremony) was decorated with pictures of Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong. On the left and

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<sup>11</sup> Abdullah C.D., *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman Pergerakan Sehingga 1948*, Selangor: Strategic Information Research Development, 2005, 1–2.

right side of the pictures were the red sickle and hammer flags, the symbols of the Communist Party...

The Chairman's speech was followed with oath-taking ceremony... among other things we pledged to be absolutely loyal to the party, to sacrifice our body and soul for the sake of the party and the revolution, to be exemplary, disciplined etc...<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere in his Memoir, Abdullah also tells of the sympathy and participation of MCP members in the Indonesian and Vietnamese wars of independence.<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Shamsiah Fakeh**

In her memoir published in 2004 the former head of AWAS writes:

... I ran into the jungle to participate in the armed struggle against the British imperialist, to fight for independence for Malaya. At that time I was twenty-four years old. Since then, I had left my parents, family and village (to struggle) for the independence of the motherland.<sup>14</sup>

Shamsiah, head of AWAS, also told of her involvement in the military training that was especially held for Malay cadres of the MCP at Lubuk Kawah, in Temerloh, Pahang some time from late May to early June in 1948. According to Shamsiah:

At that time there was as yet no communist-scare for the MCP was legal with its main office at the Foch Avenue in Kuala Lumpur. Indeed, I often discussed and changed

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 55–56.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 156–160.

<sup>14</sup> Shamsiah Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari AWAS ke Rejimen Ke-10*, Bangi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2004, 16.

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ideas with Wahi Anuwar, Musa Ahmad and other comrades about the struggles within and outside Malaya including issues related to communist movements throughout the world... I had the occasion of attending a course conducted by Wak Karto, an Indonesian Communist Party cadre sent to assist the Malay fighters who were shallow in their understanding of politics and lacking of experience...

At midnight of 20 June 1948 the Emergency Regulations was declared throughout Malaya. The British imperialist authorities immediately detained thousands of cadres and members of the party, and of patriotic and democratic organisations of the Left... Thousands of independence fighters consisting of the cream of young Malay men and women were thrown into jail, detained in detention camps throughout Malaya, tortured, hanged or exiled (deported).<sup>15</sup>

The situation was intense. We were ordered to go into the jungle around Lubuk Kawah. I thus entered the jungle and began my new phase of struggle with weapons. The love for the country and loyalty to the struggle made me strong... The most important thing is to achieve independence.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4. Ahmad Boestamam**

Ahmad Boestamam was one of the most colorful figures amongst the Malay nationalists and politicians in Malaysia in the Twentieth Century. A prolific writer and journalist, he has written a number of books about the politics of his time, in addition to reports, editorials in newspapers such as *Suara Rakyat* and *Pelita Malaya*, short stories and poems. His *Merintis Jalan Ke Puncak* contains much vital first-hand information about the politics in Malaya, especially among the Malays in the 1940s

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 56.



and 1950s. His *Testament Politik API* distributed to the API members on the occasion of the organisation's first anniversary from 22 to 24 December 1946 was a harsh jolt to the British authorities, who perceived it as a threat to peace and security in Malaya; consequently, *Testament* was banned. Boestamam was convicted for sedition and API was proscribed on 17 July 1947. Some excerpts from the *Testament* are presented below:

The world surely cannot ignore the energy of the youth... In all spheres there exist the essential energy of the youth... Isn't it the Indonesian youth who are behind the Republic of Indonesia who are defending the country?... We confront imperialism with revolution. We will not hesitate to soak (*membasahkan*) the earth with blood. Let the youth be squashed, safe the motherland is saved.

The stark evidence of the gigantic energy of the youth is the establishment of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. This organisation has been established in a huge conference of youth in London in November 1945 which was attended by representatives of youth from 64 countries representing 300,000,000 youth from all over the world.<sup>17</sup>

Boestamam then elucidates in detail the Constitution and future plan of the Federation and continues:

Like in other countries, in Malaya too there are youth movements. Since Malaya is domiciled by many races (nations/*bangsa*) the youth movements in Malaya are divided according to the races. Among the Chinese there are San Min Chu, I Youth Corps and New Democratic Youth League among the major ones.

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<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Ramlah Adam, *Ahmad Boestamam*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1994, 407–410 .

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Among the Indians the biggest one is the Hind Volunteer Service. Among the Malays there are a number of fronts which are mostly state and district oriented such as *Perikatan Pemuda Melayu* in Perak and *Ikatan Pemuda Melayu* in Selangor.

The one which is pan-Malaya is *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API) Malaya. Among the youth movements in Malaya only one, i.e. New Democratic Youth League, that has affiliated itself with the World Federation of Democratic Youths.<sup>18</sup>

Boestamam also touches on the role of the Irish youth in the Sin Fein Party, Russian communists headed by Lenin, and the Indian nationalist movement headed by Nehru. With regard to the aims of API, Boestamam, among other things, included:

to rebuild Malaya according to true Democracy based on the sovereignty of the rakyat, and to demand for (people's) representation in the governing of Malaya.

Boestamam divided API ideology into Politics, Economy and Social. With regard to Politics, he writes: "API envisages an Independent Malaya (*Malaya Merdeka*) based on true democracy, i.e., a Government of the *rakyat* by the *rakyat* through representatives of the *rakyat* for the sake, welfare and safety of the *rakyat*".<sup>19</sup> On the whole the API ideology is anti-imperialist, socialistic and anti-capitalist. He urged Malay youth to move fast and gain freedom for themselves, their nation and their country; if necessary by BLOOD, i.e., *MERDEKA DENGAN DARAH*.

As mentioned earlier, to spread its ideas of freedom and independence to the people, apart from *Suara Rakyat*, PKMM also published the daily *Pelita Malaya* and weekly *Suluh Malaya* beginning in March 1946. In the first issue of *Pelita Malaya*, published on 4 March, Boestamam, who was also a member of the Editorial Board, writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 410–413.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 417.

*Pelita Malaya* appears at the time when the world is loud with demands for independence from nations that had been colonised and subdued by the imperialist powers greedy of colonies. In Indonesia, the struggle of the Indonesian people to defend the independence that they had gained continues. The same is true in Indochina, Burma and India. In short, the one and only aim of those countries is complete independence.

Wither we?

For hundreds of years we had suffered. For hundreds of years we had been cheated politically. Are we to dwell in such a situation till the Doomsday? We throw this question to all Malays.... *MERDEKA*.<sup>20</sup>

## **5. A REPORT IN UTUSAN MELAYU (February 3, 1948)**

### **Rapat Umum membantah Persekutuan di Temerloh, Pahang**

Termerloh 2 Februari – Suatu rapat umum membantah Persekutuan [oleh] umat Malaya telah dilangsungkan di tanah lapang dekat masjid Temerloh pada hari Ahad tanggal 1 Februari 1948 semalam mulai dari jam 10 pagi.

Rapat itu telah dianjurkan oleh PKMM cawangan Temerloh manakala saudara Jaafar Husin, YDP Cawangan Temerloh telah mempengerusikan rapat tersebut. Ahli-ahli dan orang ramai terutama rakyat jelata bangsa Melayu yang mengerti akan tanah airnya yang telah terancam oleh bahaya Persekutuan telah berduyun-duyun datang menghadiri rapat umum.

Rapat itu telah dibuka dengan lagu Internasional pada para hadirin yang diketuai oleh saudara Idris Haji Abdul Rahman (Ketua PETA Cabang Pahang) berserta menaikkan bendera lambang perjuangan rakyat setengah tiang. Istiadat itu diteruskan dengan tafakur selama 3 minit

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<sup>20</sup> *Pelita Malaya*, No. 1, 4 March 1946.

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sebagai mengingat sepenuh dukacita kerana kedatangan persekutuan itu. Saudara Jaafar Husin sebagai pengerusi rapat itu telah memberi penerangan yang panjang lebar terutama membayangkan bagaimana kebaikan perlembagaan Malaya yang dikenang oleh rakyat dan membandingkan bagaimana pula keburukan di dalam idea Persekutuan kelak. “Sekalipun hari ini kita rakyat jelata berupa gagal dalam memperjuangkan corak Malaya di masa hadapan, tetapi bukan kerana itu semangat kita akan hilang dan kita berputus asa. Tetapi marilah kita jadikan hari ini permulaan memantapkan lebih kuat lagi perjuangan untuk membantahkan kuku imperialis di tanah air kita.” kata saudara Jaafar Husin dalam penutupan ucapan yang panjang.

Saudara Idris Haji Abdul Rahman, sebagai sifat beliau ketua PETA cabang Pahang telah pula memberi sumbangan yang berapi-api yang menegaskan supaya bukan sahaja ahli-ahli PETA akan lebih bergiat berjuang di masa hadapan tetapi seluruh pemuda Melayu yang ada rasa cintakan bangsa dan tanah air di sanubari masing-masing.

Saudara Kamaruddin wakil Malayan Communist Party turut memberi pidatonya dengan menegaskan bukan sahaja tiap-tiap seorang itu mesti berazam untuk menghapuskan imperialisme tetapi juga tiap-tiap seorang dikehendaki menghapuskan warna kulit jiwa perhambaaan.

Saudara Musa Ahmad, Ketua BATAS yang telah dapat hadir bersama-sama dalam rapat itu di dalam lawatan beliau ke Pahang telah berkesempatan pula memberi sedikit sumbangan berupa pandangan bagaimana kelak kedudukan rakyat jelata yang tertindas itu tidak diberi mereka bersama-sama di dalam pemerintahan negeri mereka itu.

“Saudaralah yang menjadi habuan, dan kepada saudaralah terletaknya beban pekerjaan yang maha berat dalam mana soal memperjuangkan nasib saudara di masa ke hadapan”... Wakil-wakil dalam badan-badan lain yang turut memberi sumbangan di situ ialah wakil MDU dan wakil Persatuan Buruh Mentakab.

Derma untuk memperkukuhkan perjuangan menentang persekutuan telah dikutip di dalam rapat itu, yang mana berjumlah sebanyak RM28.35 dan wang itu akan dikirimkan ke pejabat PUTERA dan AMCJA.

Rapat itu telah ditamatkan pada jam 1 petang dengan lagu kebangsaan dan tiga tampik merdeka dan disambung di sebelah petangnya dengan

maesyuarat agong Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya Temerloh mulai jam 2 petang.<sup>21</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Prior to 1948, before the Emergency was declared, Malays in Malaya were generally unaware of the Cold War and of the conflict between East and West. Rather, their main preoccupations were with attaining political independence for Malaya from Britain, along with the attendant concerns that the Malays were not divested of their political rights and privileges as the “natives” of Malaya during the decolonisation processes after the failure of the Malayan Union experiment. After the declaration of the Emergency, the Malays were, by and large, not attracted toward communism, which they saw as foreign and Chinese in particular. The very few Malays who had participated in some capacity in the MCP and other socialist organisations were mostly radicalised by way of the Indonesian socialist movements.

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<sup>21</sup> *Utusan Melayu*, 3 February 1948.

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