

LOCAL HISTORIANS AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MALAY NATIONALISM 1945–57: THE BRITISH, THE UNITED MALAYS NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (UMNO) AND THE MALAY LEFT

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This article discusses the historiography of Malay nationalism based on the historical writings and interpretations of local historians. By utilising authoritative secondary sources and official British documents, this study attempts to trace the various schools of opinion on the political struggle that occurred in Malaya between 1945 and 1957. This study shows that the local historiography of Malay nationalism to date has largely focused on the history of political struggle within the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Thus, the role played by other nationalist movements has not received proper attention in historical writings, as such movements have been considered unimportant. Several recent studies emphasise the role played by the leftist movement, but they are insufficient and tend to associate or equate leftist movements with communism. This study attempts to explain that there were other Malay nationalist movements, in addition to the right wing, leftist and communist movements, who fought for independence from the British. This article suggests that the aggressive response attributed to the many Malay political movements and the declaration of emergency in 1948 by the British were caused by threats not only from the rightist and leftist nationalists and communists, but also from religious movements that demanded the independence of Malaya and the establishment of an Islamic state. In essence, their ability to mobilise support from the Malays and non-Malays was viewed as a threat to the political survival of the British-UMNO alliance.

Keywords: British colonialism, decolonisation, Malay nationalism, independence, Malayan Union, UMNO, Malay left, Islamic left

INTRODUCTION

The period between 1945 and 1957 is important in Malaysian history. It was the last 12 years of British rule, marking the end of western colonialism and the beginning of decolonisation of the Malay states.¹ The process of decolonisation took place, according to Furedi (1994: 11), "...at a time when colonialism and

empire had lost their intellectual and moral appeal and when, coincidentally, anti-colonial nationalism acquired greater respectability."² This was the period that witnessed the major European colonial powers, particularly Britain, surrendering control of their colonies scattered around the world back to their rightful owners. Among the countries that secured independence from British colonial rule during this period were Jordan (1946), India (1947), Pakistan (1947), Sri Lanka (1948), Burma (1948) and Malaya (1957) (Darwin, 1984; 1988; 1991).

Nonetheless, in the context of the politics of the Malay Peninsula, the series of key events that transpired during this 1945-1957 period can be more implicitly interpreted as a process of "recolonisation." Before releasing the Malay Peninsula from their grasp, the British wanted to ascertain that their influence and interests would remain intact even after they left (Stockwell, 1984: 64-85; Darwin, 1984: 195). Therefore, a new formula in the form of infiltrative colonialism characterised their governance before Malaya was given independence.

Before the Second World War erupted, the British were not in control of the entire Malay Peninsula. Despite Britain controlling the Straits Settlements as official colonies, British control of the other Malay states was limited by a series of preceding agreements made with the Malay sultans (Allen, 1967: 2; Stockwell, 1979: xi-xii; Khong, 1984: 669).³ These agreements ensured that the British role in the Malay states was confined to that of "guardian" and "adviser," while rights pertaining to culture, religion, sovereignty of the sultans and the independent status of the Malay states were not disturbed or threatened.

The autonomy of the Malay states before the 1940s was therefore regarded as an obstacle to British interests in several areas, namely, in the country's economy, administration and defence.⁴ Accordingly, the British made concerted attempts to unite these Malay states under a centralised administration between the 1920s and the 1930s. However, their efforts proved futile due to the continuous resistance to British manoeuvres by the Malay rulers until the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese. After the Japanese occupation of the Malay Peninsula, a political vacuum was created, and the British readily capitalised on this, causing a dramatic change to the landscape of the political situation in the country.⁵ Some British officials reckoned that the Japanese occupation was "a God-sent chance to clear up all the country's troubles..." (R. Braddell, as quoted in Stockwell, 1979: 17). Local historians, on the other hand, perceived the Japanese occupation as a blessing for the Malays (Ahmad Fawzi, 1986: 133; Ismail, 2006: 119-122). It was, in fact, another disastrous era for them.

Following the defeat of the Japanese, the British regained full control of the Malay Peninsula but did not immediately return the country to its previous political state. Instead, it formulated a new proposition to restructure the political and economic administration of the peninsula. Under a new colonial policy named the Malayan Union,⁶ all the Malay states except Singapore were to be united as a single British colony, "...to create the basic political infrastructure

allowing for movement towards eventual self-rule" (Allen, 1967: 8; Khong, 1984: 109).⁷ However, historians generally agree that the real intent behind the move was to safeguard British interests in the economic exploitation of Malaya. During the post-war period, the British were actually suffering from severe post-war economic destruction, and the wealth of resources of the Malay states was viewed as a perfect vehicle for revitalising the struggling British economy (Darwin, 1984: 197; Stockwell, 1984: 68-69, 78).⁸

Although the motion for the establishment of the Malayan Union was presented and passed by the British War Cabinet long before 1945 (Mohamed Nordin, 1976: 16; Stockwell, 1979: 17-38), its deployment was pushed through when the Japanese conceded an abrupt defeat to the British. According to Allen (1967: 9), the Malayan Union plan was based on three motivations: (1) the desire to prepare Malaya for self-government, (2) the desire to create a militarily more defensible polity, and (3) a motivation related to the "disillusionment with the Malay."⁹ In accordance with the third motivation, the Malayan Union's objectives underwent three major changes that led to the erosion of the Union's political strength. First, the sovereignty of the traditional Malay rulers was eliminated, with all their power—except on customs and religious matters—conceded to the British Crown. Second, the independent Malay states lost their respective autonomy through the unification of the Malay Peninsula states under centralised governance. Third, the Malays, who were the indigenous population, had to come to terms with the fact that non-Malays, especially Indian and Chinese immigrants, could apply for citizenship status based on the principle of *jus soli* (Stockwell, 1974: 341; 1979: 31; Mohamed Nordin, 1976: 21-22).¹⁰

The Malays naturally opposed the Malayan Union proposals, and subsequently, a nationwide movement to cripple this new institution grew at an unprecedented pace, threatening British dominance.¹¹ The resistance to the Malayan Union proposal was notably divided into two different ideologies. The first was the "Malay right" nationalism that was pioneered by Western-educated Malay elites, especially through the establishment of the UMNO in 1946. The group sought to defend the rights of the conservative and elitist Malays, under the premise of the slogan *Hidup Melayu!* (Long Live the Malays!). The other group that opposed the Malayan Union was the "Malay left" movement that aspired to liberate the Malay Peninsula from any form of colonialism (Khuo, 1981: 167-91).¹² Unlike the "elitist" or the "right" movement, the Malay left was against any type of colonisation by the British. Although the movement was open to any political consultation, it did not rule out revolt as a means to achieve independence. This Malay left nationalist movement had, in fact, begun before the UMNO was created, particularly via the birth of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) in 1945 (Stockwell, 1979: 44-47; Mustapha, 1976: 329-339).¹³

These two ideologically opposed movements have received differing assessments by local historians with respect to their political inclinations and progress. This writer notes that these assessments have invariably focused on the

development of one movement (the right) without due consideration of the role played by the other. In addition, the writer also notes that the role played by the British (the third party) have also been inadvertently overlooked, although the British were influential in dictating the political gains of these two movements. In other words, the assessments of the successes and failures of these movements by local historians to date have been mainly based on the strengths and weaknesses of the two movements' ideologies, principles of struggle and levels of support from the society, without taking into account the impact of British reaction against them.

Thus, this article will attempt to highlight not only the discussion of local historians who interpreted Malay nationalism based on the right and left perspectives but also information from official British documents in exploring the manner in which the British responded to these movements. This, in the writer's opinion, will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the development of the Malay nationalist movements. This article will also elucidate how the acrimonious rivalry between the right and left Malay nationalists was intelligently manipulated by the British to contain anti-colonial resurgence and ascertain that their new policy under the Malayan Union plan could be implemented.

MALAY NATIONALISM IN EARLY MALAYSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Studies on anti-colonial movements and their struggle for the independence of Malaya were largely undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s by prominent local scholars, such as Ungku Aziz and Silcock (1953), Soenarno (1959; 1960), Ishak (1960), Mohammad Yunus (1961) and Yusof (1967). Continuity was exhibited during the 1970s, a period that saw other writers emerge, such as Jang Aisjah (1972), Ongkili (1971/72; 1974; 1980), Maymon (1973/74), and many others. The 1980s and 1990s saw many related historical analyses, with the emergence of writings by Timah (1981), Khong (1984), Sidhu (1985), Ahmad Fawzi (1986), Cheah (1985a; 1988), Arifin Omar (1993), Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali (1995), Abdul Latiff (1996) and Ramlah (1992; 1996a; 1996b; 1998).¹⁴

Many of these scholars drew a covert inference that political will among the Malays to fight for independence did not exist before 1941. Their writings suggest that the Malays were living comfortably under British "guardianship" until the Japanese occupation of Malaya. For instance, Ramlah (1979: 1) argues that the Malay consciousness before the Japanese occupation was primarily preoccupied with the need to promote economic and social development and therefore did not show any signs desire for liberation from the British.¹⁵

Raden Soenarno's writings, which are among the earliest available documentation on Malay nationalism, posit that there were three distinct stages in the development of Malay nationalism: the religious (1906-25), socio-economic (1926-36) and political (from 1938 on) stages, which were marked by the births

of *Al-Imam*,¹⁶ the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS) and the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM). He also observed that the Malay political consciousness had actually begun to develop in the 1920s. However, they "...had not really entered into the political arena, but [were] still in the process" of preparation before 1938 (Soenarno, 1960: 29). In his opinion, political awareness and Malay nationalism had undergone a sluggish evolutionary process, and it was the modernisation measures carried out by the British that catalysed this awareness. Nevertheless, these modernisation measures did not drastically change the thinking of the Malays. Rather, they created a conflict imbued with "feudalistic" elements among them. As Soenarno asserted, the birth of Malay nationalism was more of "...an attempt by a feudal society to adapt to the new world of democracy and socialism, as opposed to a beginning of a nationwide resurgence among the people to achieve political liberation from a foreign nation" (Soenarno, 1960: 29).

Soenarno's writings exerted a significant influence on a Western researcher, W. R. Roff, who published a more expansive analysis of Malay nationalism in 1967. His well-known book, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, claims that the Malays were too naive regarding anti-colonial awareness until World War II. The book further claims that Malay associations established in the 1930s were mainly state-oriented and that their struggles in championing the Malays were merely "...chauvinist or ethnicist rather than politically nationalist...professed complete loyalty to the traditional Malay establishments on the basis of the separate state structure, and an almost equal enthusiasm for British colonial rule, as the bulwark for the time being of Malay interests against the rapacious demands of Malayan-domiciled aliens" (Roff, 1967: 324).

The views of both Roff and Soenarno played major roles in illuminating other studies by local historians. These studies also acknowledge that Malay nationalism had not yet taken shape before the 1930s. The series of initial resistance efforts led by a number of Malay traditional leaders, such as Dato' Dol Said, Dato' Maharajalela, Dato' Sagor, Yamtuan Antah, Dato' Bahaman, Mat Kilau, Tok Janggut, Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong and others, were viewed as a series of primitive revolts driven by self-interest and fanaticism and as the results of "feudalistic" uprisings. The people supported their leaders not on the basis of political or national consciousness but rather due to blind loyalty or because they had been forced to support them under the "feudal system" (Azmi, 2006: 33-39). For instance, the struggle of Kaum Muda (an Islamic reformist movement), viewed as a faction led by "non-genuine Malays" in the 1920s¹⁷, is considered to be a struggle that focused only on religious aspirations. Hence, Kaum Muda was said to have failed in its struggle for Malay political domination, and its roles were consequently underestimated and overlooked by historians (Azmi, 2010: 254-71).¹⁸

Many historians also perceive the Japanese occupation of Malaya in the 1940s as the period that marked the beginning of Malay nationalism. During this era, political awareness among the Malays and their interest in claiming their

political and national rights became more apparent (Ungku Aziz and Silcock, 1953; Sidhu, 1985; Khong, 1984; Cheah, 1988; Ariffin, 1993; Ramlah, 2004a). Studies on the development of Malay politics during this period have generally focused on a few illustrious events, particularly the resistance of the Malays to the Malayan Union, the formation of the UMNO in 1946 and the declaration of the Emergency in 1948. On the whole, Malay opposition to the Malayan Union through the UMNO was viewed as the pinnacle of the Malay political movement nationwide.

THE MALAYAN UNION, THE UMNO AND LOCAL HISTORIANS

The Malayan Union plan in 1946 was observed as a threat to the position and political future of the Malays. The UMNO, declaring itself to be the champion of the Malays, aligned itself to lead the resistance. According to some historical accounts, during this period, the Malay nationalists who were ideologically split in the pursuit of their respective aspirations were united for the first time in fighting for a common cause (Ahmad Fawzi, 1986: 141; Cheah, 1988: 1 8).

Historians normally credit the UMNO as the earliest among the Malay nationalist movements that fought for Malay causes and eventually pushed for independence. As Ramlah (1998: viii, 1, 91) asserted, UMNO opposition to the Malayan Union "...was the culmination of Malay nationalism." Its founder, Dato' Onn bin Jaafar, stood out as the first Malay leader who began questioning the tyranny of the Malay sultans and is considered to have been the catalyst of Malay nationalism. Likewise, Ishak (1960: 99) asserts that Dato' Onn was "...the indispensable pioneer of the Malay national movement."¹⁹ Similarly, local politicians consider Dato' Onn to be "the first Malay who led the struggle against the British" (Fadzil, Kassim and Md. Zin, 2007: 131)²⁰ and therefore acknowledge him as a "political architect" and "founder of Malaysian independence"²¹ and to some extent, the "father of Malay nationalism" (Ismail, 2006: 9).²² Incidentally, the roles of other leaders, particularly on the left, are hardly mentioned in historical accounts, and they are typically labelled as subjects of manipulation by communist and non-Malay elements (Ramlah, 1998; 2004a).

According to some local historians, strong support by the Malays for the UMNO and bitter opposition to the Malayan Union eventually caused the British to abandon the proposal (Marwan, 1971/72: 82; Ahmad Fawzi, 1986: 141, 143; Ramlah, 1998: 1 21; Ismail, 2006: 9; Adnan, 2006: 21). The underlying reason for this was the fact that the British were concerned that if the UMNO-led resistance was purposely ignored, a more radical form of opposition might emerge. Subsequently, the Federation of Malaya that came into being in 1948 was viewed by local politicians and historians as the manifestation of the success of Malay nationalism and was particularly noted as the UMNO's achievement in

wresting the Malay Peninsula free from British exploitation (Marwan, 1971/72: 82-92; S. Hashim, 2009: 49; Ramlah, 1998: 1-21).²³

Historians also credit Dato' Onn and UMNO with the initiation of the earliest attempts at multi-ethnic cooperation in Malaya, when a few prominent non-Malay leaders, such as Tan Cheng Lock, H. S. Lee, Tan Siew Sin and V. T. Sambanthan, were roped into a coalition (the Alliance) that elevated the quest for independence to a new level (Abd. Rahman, Rajendra and Rajendra, 1979: 13). Hence, historical documents claim that it was a few key UMNO leaders and the Alliance that fought tirelessly for independence without any bloodshed between 1946 and 1957 (Ramlah, 1998: 1-21; Abdul Hakim and Muslimin, 2007: 121).²⁴ Accordingly, former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi asserts, "without UMNO, there would not be the Alliance and there would not be Tunku Abdul Rahman. Without unity between the UMNO, MCA and MIC, it was believed that the country would never achieve independence" (as quoted by Ismail, 2006: 10).

The opinions presented above have become the "official national history" presented in secondary school textbooks. In this writer's view, the aim of such historical accounts is to create a historical myth that the UMNO was the only party that fought for the interests of the Malays and sought independence from the British. However in the 1980s, a new generation of local historians who question the actual role played by the UMNO in the struggle for the independence of Malaya from the British, had emerged. These historians argue that the Malay leftist movement was not the only anti-British movement and that anti-UMNO forces also played an important role in the struggle for independence. Hence, the 1980s saw the emergence of significant historical accounts that were sympathetic to the left, especially through the publications of some memoirs of leftist-communist Malay leaders and their political ideologies.²⁵ In addition to memoirs, recent history books that offer more comprehensive accounts of the roles played by leftist movements and nationalist activities other than those of the UMNO have also been published. These new accounts provide an opportunity for a new interpretation of the history of the political struggle and Malay nationalism in the period between 1945 and 1957.

THE MALAY NATIONALIST PARTY (MNP), THE BRITISH AND THE COMMUNISTS

As clarified earlier, local historians have tended to pay more attention to the political role played by the UMNO, while consciously or unconsciously overlooking the contributions of the leftist movements (particularly the MNP). In fact, their contributions are often cast in a negative light, despite their leaders' involvement in the establishment of the UMNO itself. While Dato' Onn and the UMNO are said to have vehemently opposed the Malayan Union (Marwan, 1971/72: 82; Fadzil, Kassim and Md. Zin, 2007: i-iii), the MNP, in contrast, is alleged to have fully supported the cause (Abdul Hakim and Muslimin, 2006:

99 100; 2007: 53, 74; Ramlah, 1998: 40, 81 104, 201 25) because of its opposition to the monarchy and its struggle for free citizenship, which was in obvious agreement with the desire of the non-Malays. Despite its diplomatic stand of anti-colonialism and desire for independence, the MNP's aggressive approach caused the British to use aggression against them, fabricating the excuse that it was aligned with the communists and the non-Malays rather than the Malays.²⁶

The MNP was also portrayed as a radical group, influenced by the Indonesian nationalist movements that sought independence and aspired to merge with Malaya to form a republic based on the concept of Melayu Raya (Greater Malay) or Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia) (Ramlah, 1998: 40). Its leaders were described as radical hardliners who would resort to any means to achieve their individual political goals. This created fear among the Malays, who consequently distanced themselves from the movement. The British ultimately responded in a similarly aggressive manner by declaring a state of emergency in 1948 to annihilate the MNP's influence.

The above reconstruction of events has also been adopted and accepted as an accurate version of Malaysian "official national history."²⁷ As a result, these accounts have been assimilated into historical writings by local historians, presented in archives and museums and showcased repeatedly by the mass media in ceremonies held in commemoration of independence.²⁸ Similarly, primary and secondary school students learn the same historical accounts through their history textbooks. This version of history is arguably still a subject of debate, for a number of reasons.

First, many studies on the development of Malay politics focus on a rather small time frame covering the struggle of the Malays in their pursuit of independence, mainly between 1946 and 1948. Second, the UMNO is seen as the only champion in the quest to liberate the Malay Peninsula, while the struggle by the Malay left, including religious figures and local patricians, is ignored. These groups on the left are described as "rebels" and "traitors" influenced by subversive elements of the Malaya Communist Party (MCP) and the non-Malays. From another perspective, the Malay support that swung to the UMNO further fuels the argument that the struggle of the left was destined to fail. Little has been discussed on the fall of the left as a result of British reaction and its cooperation with the UMNO.

Indeed, the two key events mentioned—the resistance of the Malays to the Malayan Union and the establishment of the UMNO—undoubtedly played key roles in shaping Malaysian history, and more importantly, the historiography of Malay nationalism. It is nevertheless essential that all views and interpretations of historical events be considered equally, without taking the side of certain historical actors. In this context, pre-independence Malay nationalism must be viewed from a larger perspective. The roles of other parties must be considered objectively, and other periods significant to the formation of nationalist values

must be discussed in detail. Accordingly, this writer opines that the following pertinent contentions need to be clarified:

1. Was Dato' Onn the first Malay leader and nationalist who pioneered the struggle for independence from the British?
2. Was the UMNO the only nationalist party that fought for the cause of the Malays?
3. Can the UMNO's resistance to the Malayan Union in 1946 be considered the beginning of Malay nationalism?

A closer and more comprehensive observation would allow us to acknowledge that the move to free the Malay Peninsula from colonialism had begun long before the 1940s. In fact, the Malays first showed their spirit and sense of independence during the invasion of Malacca by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Later generations of Malays also rose to the occasion and fought with other colonial powers, including the Dutch, the Siamese and the Japanese. In the 1830s, the leader of Naning, Dato' Dol Said, led a revolt against the British. Malay resistance to colonial control also occurred in Perak, Selangor, Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu in the 19th and early 20th centuries. If these struggles are indicative of religious radicalism and ethnocentrism, it is nonetheless noteworthy to mention that the elements of the struggle did not conflict with the later concept of Malay nationalism. Beginning at the turn of the 20th century, a more subtle form of Malay-led movements emerged, as seen in the advent of Kaum Muda, Majlis Agama Tertinggi (MATA), Hizbul Muslimin and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP). The desire to emancipate the country from the British was reflected in the establishment of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) and the MNP, which were both established years before the UMNO.

Consequently, the roles played by Dato' Onn and Tunku Abdul Rahman can be more accurately described as amalgamating the efforts for independence rather than pioneering them. These efforts should be viewed as the continuation of a legacy of struggles prompted by earlier Malay leaders, such as Dato' Dol Said, Dato' Bahaman, Mat Kilau, Tok Janggut, Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong, Syed Sheikh al Hadi, Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Hj. Abbas Taha, Rahim Kajai, Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Haji Mohamad, Ahmad Boestamam and others. Although all these figures fought for independence under various ideologies and goals, one common cause linked them together: they all sought the independence of the Malay Peninsula from foreign hands.

Before the UMNO was established in 1946, the struggle for Malayan independence was driven substantially by the most prominent of the Malay leftist organisations, the MNP. In the history of the political struggles in Malaya before independence, the MNP was the main adversary of the UMNO. Therefore, a number of parties tend to have negative perceptions about its leaderships and the objectives of their ideological struggle.

The MNP was formed in Ipoh, Perak, by some communist-inclined members, together with some former leaders of the KMM and other Malay nationalists, on 17 October 1945, two months after the surrender of the Japanese. The members who were present at the inaugural meeting of the party were Mukhtaruddin Lasso, Arshad Ashaari, Baharuddin Tahir, Rashid Maidin and Abdullah C. D. (representing the communists), Ahmad Boestamam and Dahari Ali (representing the non-communists) (Mohamed Salleh, 2006: 61; Cheah, 1979: 64; Ahmad Boestamam, 1972: 23-24). The main purpose of the establishment of the MNP was to represent the interests of the Malays and to gain independence from the British.²⁹

Because the formation of the MNP was through the initiative of some prominent nationalists and communists, aided financially by the MCP, the MNP and its leaders have been accused of being a communist tool to obscure the vision of the Malays. However, the MNP came to be dominated by a group of nationalists from various ideologies, some of whom were anti-communist, that proved to be successful in driving the communist elements out of the party, according to Abdul Rahman (2009: 160):

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 communists-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.³⁰

Although the ideological struggle of the MNP was then termed "left," the term "left" itself had only a vague connotation. In an effort to facilitate an understanding of this term, Khoo (1981: 184-86) divides the movement into

several categories according to their distance from the establishment.³¹ The categories are as follows:

1. The extreme left, represented by some of the Malay nationalists who were directly involved in the MCP. Among them were Musa Ahmad, Rashid Maidin and Abdullah C. D.
2. The committed left, inclined towards socialism in a very broad sense or at least, eager to see structural changes in Malay society. Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam and Harun Aminurrashid are the outstanding examples.
3. The Islamic left, which, according to Khoo (1981: 184; 1991: 200), was the most anti-British group and was involved in Hizbul Muslimin's movement, led by Abu Bakar al-Baqir. Hizbul Muslimin had large supporters in many states in Malaya through the creation of various working committees such as Pusat Perekonomian Melayu SeMalaya (PEPERMAS), Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat (LEPIR) and MATA (Ahmad Fauzi, 2007: 388-89). Although Dr. Burhanuddin was not directly involved in these various organisations, their cause was one he wholly endorsed. Indeed, he was most likely the main brain behind the formation of these organisations, and it was Dr. Burhanuddin's influence that induced many *ulama*, including Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Ustaz Yunus Yatimi, Ustaz Wan Nawang and many others, to support the MNP initially.
4. The transient left, which was the most adaptable group. Its struggle was clearly not an ideological one. Its members merely wanted acceptance, and indeed, after the declaration of emergency, they moved without undue discomfort into the UMNO, where many of them eventually emerged into leadership positions. Many of them were found in the MNP, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) and the Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS). Among them were Aishah Ghani, Khadijah Sidek, Senu Abdul Rahman and Mohd Khir Johari.

A group of staunchly nationalistic figures. They were considered leftist not in an ideological sense but because they were opposed to the UMNO because of the UMNO's close rapport with the British administration and because the UMNO was seen as making too many concessions to the non-Malays. Many of them were involved in the Peninsular Malay Union (PMU) led by Ahmad Jamal and Hashim Ghani. The PMU worked closely with Dr. Hamzah's Kesatuan Melayu Johor (KMJ), which, in the early 1950s, changed its name to Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Semenanjung to gain national recognition.

Unfortunately though, these categories cannot be used to resolve the misconception surrounding the ideology and the political struggle of the Malay

leftists because there are no obvious boundaries that separate the left and the right, resulting in significant overlaps in their respective positions. For example, in the leftist movements, there were those who adhered to the ideological stance of the right and vice versa. In addition, categorising religious movements as leftist streams seems perplexing because the goals of religious movements such as MATA and Hizbul Muslimin were not just to achieve independence and establish an Islamic state but also to curb the growing influence of the Malay leftists who were inclined towards the socialist and communist ideologies that subjugated the Malays.

Given this ambiguity, Abdul Rahman (2009: 156) has suggested that the Malay nationalist movement be defined and separated into two main groups, namely, the Upper Stream (*Kepimpinan Arus Atas*) and the Lower Stream (*Kepimpinan Arus Bawah*). The movements of the Upper Stream involve those from the elites and the conservatives who fought substantially for their privilege and rights, while the movements of the Lower Stream were led by the middle class who fought for independence of their country. The division between these two groups is determined by their status and their stance towards the British. In fact, those from the Upper Stream had better opportunities and protection while Malaya was under British rule. Therefore, they did not harbour anti-British sentiments and were not fully ready for independence. This attitude was clearly visible in the point of view of Dato' Onn himself. To him, the Malays had no experience in governing their country, and he thought that because of that lack of experience, they were not fully ready for independence (Ramlah, 1998: 18).

The leaders of the Malay left consisted of the middle class and commoners, including *ulama*, lawyers, journalists, and teachers and students of the younger generation. Compared to the elites, the Lower Stream hated colonisation by the West and were single-minded in their quest for independence. They were highly critical of the Malay elites who benefitted from British colonial rule. On the other hand, they were very liberal, and even though they were totally opposed to colonisation, they were still willing to negotiate openly with the British. Above all, they were realistic about the desire for citizenship on the part of non-Malays, some of whom already considered themselves citizens and were ready to sever their allegiances to their home countries. On the whole, the Malay leftist leaders were approachable, and this made them a highly influential group among the commoners in the Malay community.

Based on the above explanation, it is very clear that the Malay left nationalists can be considered to have been moderate, even though their struggle was constantly hampered by accusations that they were extremists who were radical in their approach. If the leftist movements are evaluated objectively, especially the MNP, one can observe that they always preferred to participate in negotiations in their quest to gain independence. They used diplomatic approaches in their demands, such as writing proposals and objections to the British government. However, the British constantly ignored their demands

because the colonial government did not want to give people who were anti-colonial any chance to demand independence. To enfeeble the movement, the British used the UMNO as a platform to distract the Malays from supporting the leftist movements and gave immense political access for negotiations to the UMNO. They also made concerted attempts to meet all the demands of the UMNO leaders, one of which was to eliminate some parts of the constitution in the Malayan Union plan that were considered threats to the privileges of the Malay elites.

At the same time, the UMNO used the issues of non-Malays and the communist threat to ensure that Malays did not support the struggle of the left-wing political parties. In fact, the MNP's struggle towards achieving the goal of Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya prompted several UMNO political leaders to cast doubt on their motives. The UMNO leaders were also concerned about the MNP's willingness to cooperate with the non-Malays. The rivalry between the UMNO and the Malay left became more visible after Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA) the Pan Malayan Council for Joint Action (PMCJA) [later renamed the All Malayan Council for Joint Action (AMCJA)] was formed in February 1947 to combat Anglo-Malay proposals for the creation of a Federation of Malaya. Throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, the PUTERA-AMCJA continued to oppose the Constitution of Federation of 1948 and the British-UMNO alliance.

Due to their willingness to work with anyone to achieve independence, the MNP was also accused of being a tool for foreigners, non-Malays and communists. They were also regarded as hypocritical and insincere in the fight for the interests of their community and in their demand for independence. According to Ramlah (1998: 81-105), the MNP was a "double-faced" party that fought for the interests of the MCP in the name of Malay nationalism and independence. In contrast, the UMNO has been presented as the only party that worked hard and fought intensely for the interests of the Malays against all the claims of the non-Malays that were considered "illegitimate". The UMNO's opposition to citizenship for non-Malays based on the principle of *jus soli*, for example, is often cited as the main proof of the party's determination in defending the interests of the Malays.

However, the UMNO's commitment and its success in defending the rights and interests of the Malays have also generated doubts. The UMNO's resistance to the Malay Union in 1946 has often been highlighted as a political success story, to the point where many heedlessly discount the consequences of this resistance. Although the period between 1946 and 1957 witnessed an increase in the erosion of Malay privileges and political rights, this erosion has not been given the attention it warrants (Abdul Rahman, 2007: 3). Under MacMichael's proposition, in 1946, the principle of *jus soli*, which is to grant citizenship to all locally born residents, was to be implemented. Although the plan was initially resisted, the Malay political elites in the UMNO eventually

accepted the idea in 1955, despite strong opposition among many UMNO members. In fact, the populist decision based on the principle of *jus soli* was not UMNO's central goal, and the events that occurred between 1946 and 1957 undoubtedly demonstrated that the rights and interests of the Malays were compromised as a result of excessive tolerance extended by the UMNO leadership to the British and non-Malays.

THE BRITISH, THE UMNO AND THE MALAY NATIONALISM

Studies of the anti-colonial movements and the struggle for Malay independence from 1945 to 1957 place substantial emphasis on two events: the UMNO's resistance to the Malayan Union and the MCP's emergence, which led to a state of emergency in 1948 (Khoo, 1981: 168). It is interesting to note that the UMNO's primary struggle was apparently not viewed as opposition to British rule and a desire for independence. Hence, it was the MCP, which failed to garner any significant support from the Malays, that was used as a "scapegoat" by the British to launch assaults on all types of anti-colonial movements in the Malay Peninsula (Furedi, 1994; Harper, 1999). On closer examination, based on official sources from the British, there was a significant degree of fear among the British about the increasing strength of the Malay left movement, which had the backing of both Malays and non-Malays.³²

The clash between the British and the Malay left (including the element of the Malay-Islamic movements) began before the World War II and gained momentum when the Malayan Union plan was unveiled in 1946. The British were hoping that the Malayan Union plan would win the support of both Malays and non-Malays. Malays however, as clarified earlier, ferociously opposed the proposals.³³ The majority of non-Malays, surprisingly, also did not lend solid support to the proposals, as they were mainly focused on the development of their original countries.³⁴

The negative reaction to the Malayan Union plan began to worry the British as they were at risk of losing support from people with a range of political ideals. In particular, they were very concerned about the enduring advance of the Malay left, the "Indonesian"³⁵ and the Malay-communist elements,³⁶ which became more aggressive in their approach to freeing Malaya. In an attempt to weaken the surging movement, the British designed a plot to divide the Malay resistance. Realising that the rightist Malay leaders were not entirely anti-British,³⁷ the British approached these leaders to seek a deal that would diminish the influence of the leftist movement. In return, these leaders were promised eventual independence.

British sources indicate that such a move was necessary to split the right and the left Malay nationalist movements to eliminate growing anti-British sentiment. This needed to be performed quickly as the "radical" elements had begun to penetrate the UMNO.³⁸ Many UMNO members and Malay associations

in the UMNO showed their support or sympathy for the Malay left movements, including members from Persatuan Melayu Johor (PMJ, led by Dato' Onn himself), Lembaga Kesatuan Melayu Johor and SABERKAS.³⁹ Realising the critical nature of the situation, UMNO leaders, through Dato' Onn, quickly warned the British to fulfil their promise made in the Federation of Malaya proposals of 1948 or risk facing even more anti-British activities (Stockwell, 1977: 497).

Unfortunately, the UMNO's demands in opposing the Malayan Union proposal were moderate in terms of both objectives and actions. The conservative elements in the UMNO only wanted the return of the status quo enjoyed by the Malay rulers and the Malay elites before 1941 (Mohamed Nordin, 1976: 23). Their main aim was to safeguard the Malay conservative right, not all the people. When the Malayan Union idea first came to light, the UMNO was infuriated with the British, whom they considered to have violated the rights of the Malay rulers. However, despite this strong opposition, the harmonious relationship between the UMNO leaders and the British continued (Stockwell, 1977: 497; Khong, 1984: 124, 143). The UMNO leaders knew that the British could somehow be of assistance to the party in achieving its goals.

The UMNO was also aware that the advance of the leftist movement, coupled with "Indonesian" and non-Malay influence, was beginning to pose risks to its political position. It was, therefore, willing to forego its earlier disagreements with the British and enter into negotiations with them. In fact, it was also poised to deviate from its initial opposition to the Malayan Union and ignore the Malay desire for immediate independence, as this could have further threatened its leaders' positions as Malay elitists (Stockwell, 1977: 513).⁴⁰ To justify this stand, the Malays were said to be not yet ready for independence (Stockwell, 1977: 510; Ramlah, 1998: 17-18). As further justification, Dato' Onn also cautioned the Malays that the communists would take control if the British left the Malay Peninsula (Stockwell, 1977: 510; 1995: 292-93).⁴¹ These arguments provided the British with a significant advantage, in that they weakened the Malay left nationalist movement and its quest for independence.

Eventually, through the British-UMNO compromise, an Anglo-Malay negotiation that marked the initial step in the formation of the Federation of Malaya was held in 1948. Khong (1984: 149) states that "The Federation plan has always been presented as an Anglo-Malay product, a compromise reached between the British government and the Malays (elite and conservative) as a substitute for the Malayan Union." This negotiation was a result of both sides wanting to mitigate the fear of and anger towards the British-UMNO leadership among the Malays. The British wanted to salvage and continue implementing some key principles contained in the Malayan Union plan (Stockwell, 1979: 92). On behalf of the UMNO, the Constitutional Proposals for Malaya (1948) guaranteed the sovereignty of the sultans, the freedom of the Malay states and the continuity of Malay privileges. Through the agreements in the Constitutional

Proposals, the British were able to establish a centralised federal government, create common (limited) citizenship application procedures and stabilise the economy of the Malay Peninsula (Stockwell, 1977: 496; 1979: 92).

This agreement between the UMNO and the British that gave rise to the Federation of Malaya 1948 proposal, against the desires of the Malay left nationalists, who wanted democratic governance that was geared towards independence. No guarantee was given concerning this self-governance policy in the Federation of Malaya 1948 proposal, and hence there were no plans for the institution of a parliament, the incorporation of voting rights or the introduction of the country's own flag. At the same time, the main objectives of the Malayan Union, namely a strong central government, financial stability and common citizenship, were preserved in the federal constitution (Stockwell, 1984: 70-71). The UMNO-British agreement can be viewed as a move that benefited the British more than the Malays,⁴² as the UMNO had made numerous concessions to the British.

The decision of the UMNO leadership to negotiate with the British and accede to their demands also created resentment among its members. Malay groups within the UMNO, such as SABERKAS, the KMS and the KMJ, responded with severe criticism and threatened to withdraw from the UMNO. Because there was no favourable response from the UMNO, the KMJ later left the party (Stockwell, 1977: 499).⁴³ Disunity within the UMNO worsened with the separatist attitude of leaders in certain Malay states such as Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu (Stockwell, 1977: 499). Unlike the UMNO, the MNP wanted independence without further delay. Thus, the UMNO's diplomatic approach created tension between the party and the MNP, which later escalated into more severe strain.

In response to the UMNO's favourable stance towards the Federation of Malaya, the Malay left garnered support from non-Malay leaders, such as Tan Cheng Lock, to initiate the formation of PUTERA-AMCJA (formerly known as Pan-Malayan Council for Joint Action, PMCJA) in February 1947 (Nabir, 1976: 107; Stockwell, 1979: 93). The Malay/non-Malay PUTERA-AMCJA political coalition predated the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance of 1954. The first conference of delegates of PUTERA-AMCJA was held in July 1947, and in August, a second conference of the delegates approved the "People's Constitutional Proposals for Malaya" as "...a blueprint for a democratic nation in place of the Anglo-Malay federal arrangements which, they claimed, perpetuated communal divisions, class inequalities and imperial control" (Stockwell, 1979: 94; Mohamed Nordin, 1976: 40). The PUTERA-AMCJA also embarked on a series of inter-racial negotiations on the rights of citizenship and the establishment of a national identity of the Malay Peninsula. The Malay left was fully aware that compromise was needed to accept the non-Malays on the Malay Peninsula to help in their quest for independence. Nevertheless, this required a delicate balance that did not sideline key Malay privileges related to the monarchy,

religion, language and national identity. The Malay left also wanted to ensure acknowledgement of and respect for the fact that the Malay Peninsula originally belonged to the Malays (Khong, 1984: 165-66).

Throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, the PUTERA-AMCJA continued to oppose the new constitution proposal of the British-UMNO alliance for the creation of a Federation of Malaya, as evident in the following claim by Stockwell (1979: 94):

Like those who had objected to the Malayan Union, the opponents of the Federation attacked both its content and the manner in which it had been designed. Indeed, the similarity between the original proposals of the Anglo-Malay Working Committee (published in December 1946) and the final form the Federation assumed, encouraged the malcontents to condemn the new constitution as a buttress for Malay feudalism and to attribute the success of UMNO in these constitutional negotiations to its favoured position with the British.

They also staged demonstrations in protest against the Federation through successful peninsula-wide *hartal* on 20 October 1947.⁴⁴

REACTIONS BY THE BRITISH AND THE UMNO

Despite the negative light in which the leftist movement was regarded, it remained quite strong. At one point, it was considered as strong as the UMNO (Stockwell, 1977: 501-502; Funston, 1980: 40; Khoo, 1981: 167-86). This worried both the UMNO and the British. Often, the struggle of the Malay left was associated with certain organisations such as the KMM and the MNP, but their strength also came from the primarily rural Malay society (Harper, 1999: 114-128). In contrast to the UMNO, which was monopolised by the minority elitist group, the Malay left movement was led by younger-generation and progressive Malays. Many of them were religious figures, teachers, journalists and intellectuals (e.g., Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Ustaz Abdul Rab Tamimi, Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Ibrahim Yaakob and many more) who hailed from the middle class. In addition to exerting an unconventional and non-traditional approach, the movement also comprised the well-respected Kaum Muda, which was characterised by its impeccable religious teaching. Many of the leaders, by choice or otherwise, had also received military training during the Japanese occupation (Khoo, 1981: 170).

The influence of the left was clearly observed in the MNP, API, AWAS, Hizbul Muslimin and so on. In fact, its influence extended into the UMNO via the KMJ and SABERKAS, the component groups of the UMNO, which had publicly shown their support for the struggle of the Malay left. One element that

distinguished the leftist group from the UMNO is that the former was significantly influenced by devout scholars from the religious schools, particularly the *Il Ihya As-Syariff* of Gunung Semanggol, Perak. The religious movement had begun to exert its influence before the 1920s and had grown rapidly after 1945 with the formation of key organisations, such as MATA and Hizbul Muslimin, that succeeded in galvanising support from the Malays (Nabir, 1976: 82-153; Harper, 1999: 114-128). The aim of MATA and Hizbul Muslimin was to take over the role of the Malay traditional rulers in the religious aspects of Malay daily life and establish an independent Islamic state.

These so-called "radical" goals were a cause for concern to the British and the UMNO, who portrayed the movement as groups typified by "communism" and "Indonesian" elements. Dato' Onn cautioned UMNO members about being too close to the *Il Ihya*: "...I am not prohibiting, but I am not also willing (UMNO members to go to the Gunung Semanggol Conference)...the danger from up the mountain is there and now we have an even more threatening (Hizbul Muslimin) which can bring the downfall of the Malays' (Nabir, 1976: 197; Ahmad Fauzi, 2007: 389).⁴⁵ This stance was meant to distance the Malays and the UMNO members from the Gunung Semanggol-based Islamic movement's activities. The UMNO further foresaw that without proper containment efforts, the religious movement in Gunung Semanggol would continue to grow and so would its support. The British held a similar view and believed that one way to address the problem was to engage the UMNO in influencing the Malays to withdraw their support from the Malay leftist organisations. To achieve this, Malay government officers, many of them UMNO members, were given all the space they needed to carry out politically driven activities using government facilities (Stockwell, 1977: 510).

Dato' Onn himself was given the freedom, as a district officer and later as the Chief Minister of Johor, to use his official title to strengthen the UMNO by converting his office into a centre to strategise UMNO's political campaigns. The UMNO was also viewed as having a seemingly unchallenged upper hand; the party was in a position to use key government officers to influence village headmen (*Penghulu*) to continue to support the UMNO (Stockwell, 1977: 511). These village headmen were key intermediaries who connected UMNO leaders with villagers (Harper, 1999: 127), and favourable treatment of both the headmen and the villagers was viewed as being to the UMNO's advantage. Being aware of this, British intelligence, in November 1947, proposed that the government develop the agricultural and educational sectors in the rural communities. These initiatives would be championed by the UMNO, and successful implementation would be viewed as a major moral defeat to the leftist and the communists.

Another key cooperative consensus between the UMNO and the British can be seen in their effort to annihilate the anti-establishment labour movement. Between 1945 and 1948, non-Malay worker unions influenced by the MCP grew rapidly in the Malay Peninsula and had been involved in major strikes against

European and British employers. To counter this, the British and the UMNO established the Labour Department, with the main aim of attracting the Malays representing pro-government unions (Stockwell, 1977: 511-512). Lack of Malay support for the MCP inspired unions put them under tremendous pressure. Thus, the unions began to weaken, beginning in 1947. Enforcement institutions such as the police and legal provisions were also used to subdue individuals deemed to be threats to the government, under the pretext that they were subversive elements. They were suppressed, arrested and even exiled. It should be noted in relation to this that the Malay left leaders were not spared from such actions.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that friction between certain UMNO and MNP leaders (since the establishment of the KMM) had begun to develop even before the Japanese occupation. Due to the growing influence of the leftist movement, the UMNO sought assistance from the British (Nabir, 1976: 107, 122-140). The British, who were already wary of the influence of the left, duly welcomed the UMNO request for help, as they realised that they would not be successful in imposing their aggressive policies towards the Malay left without support from the UMNO. Collectively, both had successfully manipulated the reasons for subversion to weaken the social, political and religious activities of the Malay leftist groups (Nabir, 1976: 189).

To continue strengthening his position in the UMNO, Dato' Onn restructured the party by assigning those who were aligned with him to key designations under the pretext of maintaining party unity. Numerous campaigns and propaganda initiatives were executed to encourage the people to desert the Malay leftist struggle. These include the launching of the flag raising campaign and inviting Indonesian leaders who were fighting for their own independence for discussions. Additionally, youth and female wings of the UMNO were formed, followed by the creation of the Religious Department. The UMNO attempted to win the support of farmers and rural Malays by building Malay schools in rural areas. Through the Economic Department, a five-year economic plan was conceived in Perak to cripple the left's influence in Perak, such as PEPERMAS (Nabir, 1976: 181). The UMNO was fully supported and financially backed by the British in these endeavours.

Despite all these efforts, the success of the UMNO and British was not really outstanding. The political and national consciousness propagated by the Malay left and religious leaders to the villagers was too strong to be disrupted. The UMNO was also unable to match the tireless efforts of the leftist group leaders in campaigning for the rural people. Additionally, when PUTERA-AMCJA came into being, the Malay left movement was suddenly transformed into a major force, with the backing of the non-Malays. According to intelligence reports from April and May 1948, the UMNO was "...steadily losing ground to left-wing organizations..." and its leaders were very "...vulnerable to attack by left-wing propaganda."⁴⁶ As for the British, with few options remaining, they

resorted to mass arrests of leftist group leaders, such as Ahmad Boestamam, and key strategists of the PUTERA-AMCJA establishment. API was subsequently disbanded in July 1947, and the British declared a state of emergency in June 1948.⁴⁷ According to Harper (1999: 119), it was the threat from the main Malay radical organisation that provoked the British to take drastic action and finally declare Emergency in 1948. Harper writes:

It was API, and not the Chinese left, that provoked the British government into passing legislation to narrow the parameters of political activity. The British were obsessed by the existence of secret inner organizations within API, and banned its quasi-military drilling. The trial for sedition of its leader Ahmad Boestamam illustrates the difficulties the British faced in confronting the new languages of Malay politics...The API had the distinction of being the first political party to be banned in post-war Malaya.

A number of British documents from this period indicate that the threat of a "violent uprising" led by the MCP was used as the reason for the emergency declaration, despite the absence of substantial evidence for such a threat (Furedi, 1994: 160-162; Harper, 1999: 148).⁴⁸ According to Furedi (1990: 72):

This alleged conspiracy (communist conspiracy) has no foundation in reality and all the archival evidence appears to confirm that it was a piece of fiction. From our inspection of the relevant evidence, it is impossible to identify conclusively any single cause for the Emergency. It does appear, however, that one of the main motives for adopting special powers was to prevent the radical nationalist movement from gaining a major influence over the Malay communities. The main preoccupation of local colonial administrators from early 1948 until 1952 was the fear that the anti-colonial movement would spread from the Chinese to the Malay communities.

When Emergency was declared in 1948 to contain the "violence" supposedly threatened by the MCP, Malay leaders from the left and religious groups experienced major casualties. Many key figures of these groups were arrested and prosecuted. Between 1948 and 1957, close to 34,000 people were imprisoned without trials. Many others were arrested illegally without substantial evidence of having committed any crime (Mohamed Amin and Caldwell, 1977: 222). A large proportion of the total number arrested and imprisoned was made up of those who had sympathised with the anti-colonial movement. The rest were followers of the communist ideology. In addition, when the Emergency went into effect, the followers of the Malay leftist groups were forced to choose to join the

MCP, leave for Indonesia or align themselves with the UMNO. Some fled to the jungle and formed the 10th Regiment under the MCP to fight against the British (Mohd Salleh, 2006: esp. chapter 5, 97-115), while some others jumped onto the UMNO bandwagon. After 1950, the UMNO changed its slogan from "*Hidup Melayu*" to "*Merdeka!*"

To achieve the goal of extinguishing the remaining support for the leftist groups and kill off anti-colonial sentiments, the British spearheaded major prosecutions of the leaders and individuals who were considered allies of the left. With the weakening of the Malay leftist movement, the UMNO was seen as not merely the most powerful political entity in Malay but indeed the only political entity in Malay, which paved the way for the British to move closer to their intended goal.⁴⁹ Soon afterward, the Alliance was born, when the UMNO and several non-Malay parties finally agreed to form a coalition. Through this coalition, the British were finally able to implement the objectives they had initially planned for the Malayan Union.

CONCLUSIONS

The years 1946-57 represented an important period in Malay history, filled with key events, including colonial politics, negotiations, diplomacy, and even "real politics" and violence, as the British were put in a difficult situation with respect to Malay nationalists on both the right and the left. The attempt by the British to re-colonise the Malay Peninsula through the introduction of the Malayan Union plan in 1946 created a higher level of political consciousness among the Malays. The Malays showed their resentment through hostile resistance to the Malayan Union plan in 1946.

Key Malay figures from the right and the left were fully involved in the formation of the UMNO in a collective attempt to oppose the Malayan Union and retain Malay rights and sovereignty. However, the differences in ideology and methods of struggle eventually split the right and left apart. While the UMNO was eager to safeguard the privileges of Malay elites, Malay leftist groups wanted immediate and absolute independence from British colonisation.

These differences diminished the strength of the Malay nationalist movement and created room for the non-Malays to begin making their demands heard. Malay conservative leaders, in response to growing pressure from non-Malays, chose to seek help from the British. In mediating the situation, the British proposed the concept of open citizenship prior to according independence to the Malay Peninsula. As a departure from this point, despite the failure of the Malayan Union, the British actually managed to fulfil a number of key objectives set out in the Malayan Union plan.

It is often acknowledged that the way that the country achieved its independence was remarkable in that it did not involve any bloodshed. Rather, the leaders used diplomacy and negotiations to attain the goal. In reality, many

people were sacrificed in the process, particularly those from the left and those who were aligned with them. They included nationalist leaders, noblemen, religious figures and other patriotic citizens. It is imperative that their roles are re-examined and their influence re-assessed in the quest to reconstruct the history of Malay nationalism.

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NOTES

1. For more details about the meaning and the process of British decolonisation, see Darwin (1984; 1988; 1991).
2. Based on this opinion, the decolonisation process was seen as an inevitable response to the collapse of British power and as "í a deliberate step-by-step retreat of the British colonial power in the face of the floodtide of colonial nationalismí " (Darwin, 1984: 189). This view should be compared to another view represented by the orthodox conception of decolonisation. According to its most graceful exponent, Harold Macmillan; "It is a vulgar but false jibe that the British people by a series of gestures unique in history abandoned their empire in a fit of frivolity or impatience. They had not lost the will or even the power to rule. However, they did not conceive of themselves as having the right to govern in perpetuity. It was rather their duty to spread to other nations those advantages which through the course of centuries they had won for themselves" (Macmillan as quoted by Darwin, 1984: 188).
3. See also CO 825/35/423, A post war settlement in the Far East: Need for a definite policy, No. 52, August 1942 in Stockwell (1995: 23). For all the treaties, see Maxwell and Gibson (1924).
4. CO 825/35/6, No. 4, Constitutional reconstruction in the Far East, 14 May 1943 in Stockwell (1995: 50).
5. According to Mohamed Nordin (1976: 16), "í the swift Japanese conquest had clearly demonstrated the weaknesses and drawbacks of political fragmentation. On the other hand, the expected liberation was seen to provide a supremely opportune moment for revolutionary reform. There would be a *carte blanche* upon which the "New Malaya" could be built; for the Malay rulers who had obstructed British unification policy in the thirties would be in no position to do so again because they had been compromised by "collaboration" with the Japanese, and "none of the machinery of Government as it existed prior to December 1941 will remain." See also Khong (1984: 113).

6. For more information about the Malayan Union plan, see, for example, CO 273/675/15, Malayan Union and Singapore: Summary of proposal constitutional arrangements presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament, March 1946.
7. In the Spring of 1944, the British Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, which was chaired by J. Attlee, accepted the Colonial Office's contention that the "...restoration of the pre-war constitutional and administrative system will be undesirable in the interests of efficiency and security and of our declared purpose of promoting self-government in Colonial territories" (Stockwell, 1995: 1v; Allen, 1967: 8). See also CO 850/206/1, Governor of Malayan Union ó Appointment of Sir Alan C. M. Burns KCMG, 8 September 1945.
8. According to Darwin (1984: 197), "í it was Britain's very economic weakness after 1945 which reinforced the tendency to think imperially. When the war ended Britain's export economy was in ruins, her supplies of foreign exchange meagre, her debts ó especially to sterling and dollar countries ó colossal, while her requirement for food, raw materials and other supplies to aid economic recovery was necessarily enormous." Urging prompt action in Malaya in 1948, the British Colonial Secretary reminded his colleagues that "[Malaya] is by far the most important source of dollars in the Colonial Empire and it would gravely worsen the whole dollar balance of the Sterling Area if there were serious interference with Malayan exports" (as quoted by Darwin, 1984: 197).
9. See, for example, CO 273/675/16, Malaya: New constitutional measures, extract from Hansard Report Vol. 414, No. 13, 10 October 1945.
10. CO 273/675/18, Political position in Malaya with regard to the new policy proposals, No. 20, 31 December 1945. Under the Proposals of Command Papers 6749 on Malayan Union Citizens, it was stated that The Malayan Citizenship Order in Council will provide that the following persons will be the Malayan Union Citizens:
 - (a) Any person born in the Malayan Union or Singapore before the date when the Order comes into force, who is ordinarily resident in the Malayan Union or Singapore on that date;
 - (b) Any person of 18 years of age or over ordinarily resident in the Malayan Union or Singapore on the date when the Orders comes into force, who has resided in the Malayan Union or Singapore for a period of 10 years during the 15 years preceding the 15 February 1942, and who swears or affirms allegiance (i.e., to be faithful and loyal to the Government of the Malayan Union);
 - (c) Any person born in the Malayan Union or Singapore on or after the date when the Order comes into force;
 - (d) Any person born outside the Malayan Union and Singapore on or after the date when the Order comes into force, whose father is a Malayan Union citizen at the time of that person's birth and either was born in the Malayan Union or Singapore or was a Malayan Union citizen under (b) above or had obtained a certificate of naturalisation. The minor children (viz., children under 18) of a persons in categories (a) and (b) will also be Malayan Union citizens.

11. Initial reactions by the Malays to the Malayan Union plan were mixed. Some were in favour of it, while others were sceptical, as the details were still unclear. See CO 537/1581, Local reaction to the white paper, 23 February 1946; and CO 537/1528, Malay reactions to the white paper, 25 February 1946. The Malay Nationalist Party (MNP), for example, expressed its support under the assumption that the British would give immediate independence to the Malay Peninsula. However, when the official papers were released in January 1946, it was clear that the British were not ready to give independence, and the MNP immediately rescinded its support. In an effort to unite the Malays, the MNP and a number of other Malay establishments sponsored the Kongres Melayu SeTanah Melayu, held in Kuala Lumpur on 16-17 March 1946, which was an impetus to the formation of the UMNO, aimed at crippling the Malayan Union. See Central Committee Malay Nationalist Party, The Manifesto of the Malay Nationalist Party Malaya with regard to the British White Paper on Malayan Union, 3 February 1946.
12. The "Malay left" term, according to Khoo Kay Kim, referred to those who opposed UMNO because the latter cooperated with the British. See Khoo (1981: 167, 178).
13. The MNP was formed in Ipoh on 17 October 1945 by the people who were active in the pre-war Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM). According to Khong (1984: 128), "In contrast to the aristocrats and civil servants from the upper echelons of Malay society who were active in UMNO, the leaders of the MNP were from the lower-stratum, mainly school teachers and journalists."
14. This does not take into account the writings of British colonial officers, other academic studies by final-year university students and biographical writings on key national figures such as Dato' Onn Jaafar (Anwar, 1971; Ramlah, 1992), Tunku Abdul Rahman (Ramlah, 2004a), Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (Kamaruddin, 1980; Ramlah, 1996b; Ismail, 2008), Ishak Haji Muhamad (Abdul Latiff, 1977) and so on. It also excludes a number of studies conducted from different perspectives suggested by a minority of writers, such as Abdul Rahman (2007) and Ahmad Fauzi (2007).
15. In general, the local scholars are of the view that the political consciousness and Malay nationalism are modern cultural constructs created by the West. In his elaboration on the origin of nationalism in Southeast Asia, Ongkili (1971/72: 24-41) explained the view that nationalism, including nationalism on the Malay Peninsula, was a British creation. There had been no awareness of nationalism among the Malays before the British came. British colonialism gives rise to Malay nationalism through modernisation and the introduction of Western-based education. Those who received education from the West were said to copycat Western ideas on rights equality, freedom, and democracy and so on as a platform for fighting for independence. Based on these views, other writers, such as Ungku Aziz and Silcock (1953), Sidhu (1985) and Abdul Latiff (1996) suggested that Malay nationalism, which was born of the effects of Western education, began very slowly and grew rapidly after the World War II.
16. *Al-Imam* was a magazine that propagated the ideas of Kaum Muda or Islamic reform in the 1900-1920s. Religious reformers played a large role in developing and disseminating ideas with magazines and periodicals such as *Al-Imam*, published by Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin between 1906 and 1908, and *Neracha*, published by Haji Abbas Muhammad Taha between 1911 and 1915. While these

publications were primarily concerned with the Islamic religion, they also touched frequently on the social, political and economic conditions of the Malays. In the early years, newspapers were regarded as tools of nationalism to fight against colonialism in Malaya. Abdullah Jaafar even regarded *Al-Imam* as the "í first step of Malay nationalism in the Malay Peninsula." William R. Roff also suggested that *Al-Imam* was an important factor in the rise of nationalism among the Malays (See Ahmad Faisal, 2011: 410; Abu Bakar, 1981).

17. Virginia Thompson, Norton Ginsburg and F. Roberts define the Kaum Muda in Malaya before 1941 as "í a party of young Malays from the growing middle class, advocated progress along the Western lines through democracy and the seizure of new economic and cultural opportunities." According to Thompson, the term Kaum Muda refers to the modernists and the term Kaum Tua for the conservatives and traditionalists. She writes, "In the early postwar the modernists were represented by Kaum Muda, a party of about a hundred young Malays from the nascent middle class who attempted to progress along the Western lines against the blind prejudices of their elders. The conservative group, Kaum Tua, simply wanted a return of the old ways, and denounced the modernists as worse than idolaters and Christians. Kaum Muda desired more democracy rather than a revival of their obsolescent aristocracy, and they tried to inspire their apathetic compatriots to share more in the new economic and cultural opportunities." On the other hand, Roff asserted that the Malay terms Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua have a variety of meanings as used by the Malay in Malaya. Roff does not use the term Kaum Muda in Malaya to mean the modernists but rather associates the term Kaum Muda with Islamic reformists. According to him, "The Islamic reform movement, introduced into Malaya in the first of this century became the agent which crystallised for the first time much of the conflict between the new social forces and those elements, both in Malay society itself and in its political and demographic environments, which resisted change." Ibrahim (1994: 15-17). See also Firdaus (1985).
18. Cheah (1985b: 3) considered the Kaum Muda as Pan-Islamic and the recipient of only minority support. Its movement, according to him, did not influence the political awareness of the Malays. In reality, the influence of these religious "reformists" was apparently significant, as it became the foundation for political movements and Malay nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s (Azmi, 2010: 254-271). For more detail on the Islamic reformist movement in Malaya, see Ibrahim (1994).
19. According to another researcher, "The spirit of the Malays in liberating the country from the colonial power began with the establishment of the Pergerakan Melayu Semananjung founded by Dato' Onn in Batu Pahat." See Adnan (2006: 20). See also the statement made in *Buku Teks Sejarah Tingkatan 3 KBSM*, edited by Abdul Hakim and Muslimin (2007: 67).
20. Statement made by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, as quoted by Fadzil, Kassim and Md Zin (2007: 131). See also a similar statement in *Dato' Onn Jaafar Baba Nasionalisme Malaysia* by Ismail (2006: 10).
21. In the preface of the book mentioned above, Dato' Onn is described as a versatile figure. He was known not only for his opposition to the Malayan Union but also as "í a founder of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), a champion of Malay unity, a pioneer of national unity, a thinker of national development, an education advocate, a rural development reformist, the father of Malaysian

- constitution, a Malay nationalist and the founder of Malaysian political independence movement." For additional information, see Anon., *Dato' Onn bin Dato' Jaafar: Pengasas dan Perintis Politik Tanah Melayu [dan] Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj: Perdana Menteri Malaysia Pertama* (Johor Bahru: Minda Creative Advertising, 1977), 1.
22. In his more recent writing, S. Hashim (2009: 49) also considered Dato' Onn to be "the father of Malay nationalism in Malay Peninsula."
 23. According to S. Hashim (2009: 49), "...the success in crippling the Malayan Union was a major success to the Malays and UMNO. The Malayan Union, which took the British a long 40 months to be established, only lasted for 21 months. Dato' Onn Jaafar took little time to fail the plan."
 24. See also Abdul Hakim and Muslimin (2006: 119, 131).
 25. For example, Khadijah Sidek, *Memoir Khadijah Sidek: Puteri Kesatria Bangsa* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2001); Ahmad Boestamam, *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam: Merdeka dengan Darah dalam Api* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2004); Abdul Majid Salleh, *Memoir Abdul Majid Salleh dalam PKMM dan Kesatuan Buruh* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2004); Abdullah C. D., *Memoir Abdullah C. D.: Zaman Pergerakan hingga 1948* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Center [SIRD], 2005); Suriani Abdullah, *Memoir Suriani Abdullah: Setengah Abad dalam Perjuangan* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Center [SIRD], 2006); and Shamsiah Fakeh, *The Memoirs of Shamsiah Fakeh: From AWAS to 10th Regiment* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2009).
 26. The MNP has been consistently portrayed as a Malay political party that did not fight for Malay rights and was used as a tool by the communists and the British. Ramlah Adam, in a number of writings, put forth this view. See, for example, *Merintis Jalan Ke Puncak: Satu Kajian Kandungan Teks dalam Konteks Sejarah Politik Malaysia* (1996a: 271-292). See also Ramlah (1996b, 1998).
 27. Abu Talib (2009: 3) asserted that Malaysia is yet to have an official national history. Nevertheless, the historical accounts in the school textbooks are adopted as the official version of Malaysian history.
 28. Abu Talib (2009: 3-14) explained that the local archives and museums are only ready to present the historical role played by "certain Malay struggles." Apart from the UMNO, exposure to other Malay nationalist movements is very limited. The interpretation of the development of nationalism in the country, according to Abu Talib, is narrow and confined to UMNO and the Alliance (Abu Talib, 2009: 24-25). Those outside of these circles are considered unimportant and irrelevant to Malaysian nationalism.
 29. Among other things, the aim of the party was to achieve independence within the Republic of Greater Indonesia. The stated policies of PKMM were the following:
 - (a) To unite the Malay nation (*bangsa Melayu*) and to inculcate nationalist sentiment in the hearts of the Malay people, with the ultimate aim of making Malaya united as a large family, namely the Republic of Greater Indonesia (*Republik Indonesia Raya*).
 - (b) To strive for freedom of speech, press, assembly and freedom to pursue knowledge.

- (c) To uplift the Malayan economic position by promoting industry, commerce and agriculture.
 - (d) To strive for freedom of agriculture in the senses that no tax should be imposed on agricultural land and farmers should have the freedom to market their products as they liked.
 - (e) To strive towards the granting of complete freedom for the Malays to establish their national schools using their language as the medium of instruction.
 - (f) To strive for freedom for the Malays to publish their own books to encourage the spread of education democratically, to enhance the position of the Malays in the political arena, thus improving the sense of nationalism amongst the Malays.
 - (g) 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.
 - (h) To support the Indonesian people in their struggle for independence (See Abdul Rahman, 2007: 159).
30. According to Abdul Rahman (2009: 160-61), "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 evident in *Perjuangan Kita* (a monograph written by Dr. Burhanuddin in conjunction of with the first anniversary of the MNP in October 1946), 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." Abdul Rahman also stressed that the nationalist basis of PKMM rested on five principles that contrasted sharply with the principles of communism, namely, (i) oneness of God (ii) nationalism (iii) sovereignty of the people (*rakyat*) (iv) universal brotherhood, and (v) justice in society.
31. See also Khoo (1991: 199-201) and Mohamed Salleh (2006: 21-23).
32. See, for example, CO 537/3751, "Political Intelligence Journal," 15 April 1948 and CO 537/3752, Political Intelligence Journal, 31 May 1948.
33. CO 537/1543, Malayan Policy: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 30, 29 November 1946 stated that "An organised Malay nationalist movement extending over the whole Peninsula had emerged, and it will be recollected that certain features of the new constitution had met with vigorous and united resistance from the Malays, who did not consider that they had been sufficiently consulted before the new system had been brought into force. This situation threatened at one time to become extremely dangerous, with the prospect of the Malays, united as never before, pursuing a policy of wholesale non-cooperation which might at any moment have degenerated into actual violence."
34. CO 537/1549, Gent to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 May 1946.
35. The Malay left movements in Malaya were considered to be strongly influenced by their counterparts in Indonesia not only because of the idea of Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya but also because of the influence of the religious and communist movements in Indonesia, which had very strong relationships with the Malay nationalist movements in Malaya. Even the left leaderships had close relations with

- the people of Indonesia. Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir, Ahmad Boestamam, Zulkifli Oni and Shamsiah Fakeh were some of those who had family backgrounds in Indonesia. Others, such as Khadijah Sidek and Burhanuddin al-Helmy, received their education in Indonesia. Due to the close relationship between the Malay nationalists and their counterparts in Indonesia, the British and the UMNO considered these Indonesian elements to be a major threat to their political survival. CO 537/2177, Indonesian Influence in the Malay Peninsula, February 1948.
36. CO 537/1549, Gent to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 May 1946; CO 537/1549, MacDonald to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 June 1946; CO 537/3751, Political Intelligence Journal, 15 April 1948; and CO 537/3752, Political Intelligence Journal, 31 May 1948. See also the documents edited in Stockwell (1995), such as CO 537/1528, No. 95A, [Sultans' Constitutional Proposals]: Inward telegram No. 222 from Sir E. Gent to Mr Hall recommending conciliation, 4 May 1946; CO 537/1529, No. 100, [Sultans' Constitutional Proposals]: Inward telegram No. 267 from Sir E. Gent to Mr Hall on the strength of the Malay Opposition to the Malayan Union, 11 May 1946; and CO 537/1529, No. 110 [Proposed concessions to Malays]: Inward telegram No. 6 from Mr. M. J. MacDonald to Mr Hall, 25 May 1946.
 37. CO 537/1549, MacDonald to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 June 1946. See also CO 537/1529, Proposed concessions to Malays, 25 May 1946 in Stockwell (1995: 236-39).
 38. CO 537/1549, Inward telegram from MacDonald to Secretary for Straits Colonies, 22 June 1946.
 39. CO 537/1528, Sultan's constitutional proposals: Inward telegram no. 222 from E. Gent to Mr Hall, 4 May 1946; and CO 537/1530, in Stockwell (1995: 227). According to a secret report by Britain's Malayan Security Service, "There are yet further indications that the UNITED MALAYS NATIONALIST ORGANIZATION is steadily losing ground, and losing ground to left-wing organisations, particularly the MALAY NATIONALIST PARTY. In one area of Johore a branch of an organisation previously affiliated to UMNO supplied the members for a new branch of MNP. Unless UMNO is soon formed into a strong, unified and dynamic political which can implement a policy of social and economic progress, the intensive activities and propaganda of the left-wing Malay parties will relegate UMNO to such a subordinate position in the political world that it may become impotent because UMNO's present leaders are very vulnerable to attack (*sic*) by the left-wing propaganda." In another page of the same report, it was stated that "There is further evidence that UMNO is steadily but surely losing ground. A B2 report from Johore states that a new branch of the MNP was recently formed at Sungei Balang. Most of the members of this new branch have come from the PERGERAKAN MELAYU SEMENANJONG, which was founded by Dato' Onn. Reasons given for the change of front are slackness and dishonesty on the part of the P.M.S. official inability to produce any material benefit, and propaganda by left-wing organizations. See CO 537/3751 "Political Intelligence Journal," 15 April 1948. SABERKAS means "*Sayang Akan Bangsa Rela Berkorban Apa Saja.*"
 40. UMNO's struggle was said to deviate from opposing the British to cooperating with them when the influence of the left and the non-Malays grew. This change in attitude was severely criticised, not only by the Malay left leaders but also by the

UMNO members themselves. Rumour had that Dato' Onn was challenged by the UMNO members from Johor. In January 1947, during the General Assembly held to discuss the Constitution of the Malay Peninsula, Dato' Onn was heavily and openly criticised by the leaders of SABERKAS, KMS and KMJ for his handling of the British. This was followed by a threat to pull out from UMNO. See Stockwell (1977: 499).

41. According to Dato' Onn, "if the British left the Malay Peninsula, we would fall into the communist threat." Stockwell (1977: 510). See also CO 537/2174, Report on UMNO General Assembly, 10-12 January 1947, 27 January 1947 in Stockwell (1995: 293).
42. According to Mohamed Nordin (1976: 37), "The MNP was to argue that UMNO won a victory as regards its federation proposals because the British so desired it for an UMNO victory did not endanger the interests of the British imperialists in Malaya but helped to strengthen their hold on the country." Harper (1999: 92) writes that "It was perhaps the British who, in the short term, got the most out of the Federation. They felt that 90 per cent of the strategic aims of the (Malayan) Union were achieved within it. There was an underlying consistency: the principle of achieving a level of coherence and unity above parochialisms. The Union was abandoned to secure a unified federal system."
43. On the opposition within UMNO to Dato' Onn's leadership, see also Khoo (1981: 171).
44. According to Stockwell (1979: 94, footnotes 38); "*Hartal* was the Indian technique of peaceful work stoppage."
45. In his presidential speech at the 10th General Assembly of the UMNO, held at the Francis Light School on Perak Road in Penang on the 23rd of April 1948, Dato' Onn said "Since the Federation of Malaya was inaugurated the political atmosphere in Malaya has become more and more complex, and the Malays must be aware of the dangers. One and half years ago I reminded the Malays of the dangers coming from the forest and from the mountain. I may as well add now that these dangers are still in existence. Additionally there is a menace amidst us, which has just sprung from the ground. Its object is to bring about the downfall of the Malays. In regard to the Gunong Semangol Congress, I do not support it because I can see the danger it implies. Empty promises were made to the people there." See CO 537/3751, Political Intelligence Journal, 30 April 1948.
46. See CO 537/3751, Political Intelligence Journal, 15 April 1948.
47. According to Furedi (1994: 1), "The term emergency is itself confusing. These conflicts were either potentially or actually colonial wars. The term emergency was essentially a public-relations concept. It had the advantage of allowing Britain to adopt wide-ranging coercive powers while maintaining the pretence of normal civil rule. Above all, emergencies helped create the impression that the issue at stake was that of law and order rather than a political challenge to colonialism. An emergency was called to restore order by definition it aimed to curb those who caused disorder. Emergency measures allowed colonial governors to label their opponents as law-breakers. At a stroke, anti-colonial activists could be transformed into criminals or terrorists."
48. It was believed that the British actually had no solid evidence that the MCP was involved in the violence that was taking place in Malaya in 1940s. On 13 July 1948,

the British Cabinet concluded that whatever the origins of the unrest, "...there was little doubt that the situation in Malaya had been exploited by Communists, and similar attempts to foment disorder must be expected in other parts of the Colonial empire," but the British "...refrained from banning the MCP and it was not until 19 July, a month after the start of emergency and a fortnight after the death of Gent that the Cabinet decided to outlaw the party." See Stockwell (1995: lxvi). According to Abdul Rahman (2007: 162), "i 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 16th, 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 the 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?

49. In this context, Harper (1999: 128) writes, "The processes of social reconstruction, which had precipitated the political struggles of the immediate post-war period, continued into the Emergency years. UMNO's triumph over its rivals in 1948 was due primarily to its capacity to exploit the British government's fears of the Malay left, amongst whom it was a bitterly held belief that the intercession of Dato' Onn was responsible for the arrest of the leadership of the Hizbul Muslimin on the outbreak of the Emergency. A further sweep in December 1949 in Krian in Perak, led to the arrest of 107 more activists. UMNO and the conservative religious hierarchy lost no time in taking advantage of the disarray of the Malay left."

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